

10 BOOKS

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Literary Critics' Choice

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NINA DRAGIČEVIČ

SERGEJ HARLAMOV

NADA KAVČIČ

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BRANE MOZETIČ

SEBASTIJAN PREGELJ

VERONIKA SIMONITI

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NINA DRAGIČEVIĆ

Love Says Let's Go

(*Ljubav reče greva*, Škuc, 2019)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Photo by: Manca Jevšek

Nina Dragičević is a poet, essayist, composer and a holder of the Master's degree in Sociology. She is the author of four books: the novel *Kdo ima druge skrbi* (*Who's Got Other Concerns*, 2014), essayist monographs *Slavne neznane* (*Famous Unknowns*, 2016) and *Med njima je glasba* (*There Is Music Between Them*, 2017) as well as the long poem *Ljubav reče greva* (*Love Says Let's Go*, 2019). In 2019, she was the author in focus at the international festival of contemporary arts The City of Women. Nina is a member of the Slovenian Writers' Association.

In 2018, she won The Knight of Poetry competition, and was the first in its history to receive both the Jury Award and the People's Choice award. The same year she was presented the Outstanding Achievement Award of the University of Ljubljana. In 2018, she was shortlisted for the European award Palma Ars Acustica. Her poetry book *Love Says Let's Go* was in 2019 shortlisted for both the Veronika and the Jenko Award.

ABOUT THE BOOK



What I find interesting in Nina Dragičević is how she verbalises that which remains concealed and not talked about in the popular ideology of individuation. She takes on systemic inconsistencies and does not attempt to reconcile them at the level of private life, unlike her generational colleagues; she does not try to reinterpret the social-systemic relationship in order to legitimise her own subordinate position, but instead insists on the deprivatisation of her own subject, radically and on the verge of self-destructiveness.

Just as the hyperindividualised world is growing more narrow, Nina Dragičević is determined to expand it, also in the linguistic sense. She takes what used to belong to the chosen few, while simultaneously tearing down any sense of affiliation. The only possible form of belonging shows itself as "love". The latter exists as an idea that is being realised in the space of present-day-ness, the space of no exit. The idea of reality suffices, while the speaker tries to distinguish between the idea of reality and reality itself. Like the sound produced by her walking, while she is listening to other sounds. Apathetic sounds. Sounds which are socially regulative.

The long poem *Love Says Let's Go* is a carefully conceived artwork. On the micro level, Nina appears to be capturing present moments, although she actually generates an autonomous world. Departing is a conscious process and not an act of despair. She is raising up her arms against those, who, at a confluence, call to her "come disappear stay", while her only real concern is whether "love" will call. – Gabriela Babnik

/ EXCERPT /

Translated by
Barbara Jurša

i go, go, shoes on clothes on wrap myself weigh myself down, go out, vrā
go, stand still, go slow, go to the corner stop pause turn stop turn
become *together* squeeze eyelids copulating, more, yet more rubbing against each other chafing,
yet more yet more yet
more intensely more intensely snuggling creasing tightening in i look in front
step back turn step back turn
i think *together* and all in disdain,
carry myself over, turn, turning around, step back take step turn go home
i turn go to the city, i am not, something is saying don't, not something, not a thing, someone,
right, someone, thus something, not something, someone, right, someone i tell myself don't,
but what is going on with me, i know, know what it is, when i think about all that could happen,
and it sure will.

love writes, says *let's go* wants *let's go* all the time,
when thus haunted and chased she says *love me fast* walks slowly i walk from and to, when *love*
writes i take a cigarette it drops on the ground i stare think to myself, should i pick it up, outside
surely wouldn't lick the ground, but who knows what i've swallowed thus far, but still i am, *look*

*at me now, won't and won't die, someday there'll be a fine war, what if i win,
but when love writes,
when love calls, i answer because her call means
she is still alive.*

*love she says what are you doing i say i'm writing she says about what, love the master of
impossible questions,
i say what should i do she says what, what should i do i say i'm writing what else should i do she
says what will you do i say nothing she says what can you do i say what should i do she says what
you can, i say nothing, she says let's go.
i'm overly worried if she's alive, when i insist that there is no one, especially no living, while there
are many others as many as you wish, but i don't, but who cares. i postpone to whenever, say i'm
writing about departing, walls, i swear i have met haushofer, her wall is just a scam, she just does
not feel like it and neither do i, i love you.
i say i would go, i'm writing i would go, pause but where i'm dwelling on it, so, i go,
i say i would go, she says but where i say i would go she says with me i say nothing,
i would like to and can't wait till she comes.
further i say, thinking out loud, so she wouldn't worry that i'm not alive i sure am,
i say how wolf totally fucked us up, all of us, with that room, well she didn't say who had built it,
and she didn't say how many rooms she had, and she definitely didn't say that she most definitely
wasn't here, let alone now.
when i get carried away, get worried, what am i saying to her when i'm talking, don't know if she
is alive i curb myself, say are you even interested in this she is she sure is, we're talking only to
each other now,
the putsch has done its job, in the morning we go to sleep.*

*i say and what are you doing, she says i'm writing, thinking about you, living somehow, she really
is, i think,
she thinks i am bored, she says are you even interested in this of course we are in all of it, but we
are assuming the general antiinterest, wholly, we are interested of course in what we are saying,
but
neither of us knows how much longer the other will still be alive,
we're saving time, using it to ask ourselves whether we're interested.
she says you're writing about departing i say yes she says i know says i'll bring shepard says
shepard the cowboy always goes says patti smith says cowboy says love, jessica lange says cowboy
says love,
we are still here have been sitting here forever and for half an hour already we are saying but
where, but where she says come to me we go to me are sitting by me are lying by me and are
asking each other, where,
she says come to me comes to me.*

*love does not ask herself where, she is here playing resignation,
says i've done everything i could drilling into her head suppressing consolation,
and even this she had to carve out on her own to the core clearly on her own clearly says i'll bring
shepard read, shepard went into a car drove off across america slept in motels, shepard went,
shepard went,
sorry, i feel sorry when listening to her love i am looking out at the parking lot, where is shepard,
where is the car, there isn't anything, there isn't, i'm sorry,
there isn't, there isn't, which is why where possibly always means here.
i will finish her off, love, one way or another either with a revelation, a recollection
over and over again or with silence, she says tell me, tell me, i do know you that much she says,
knows what i will say, she hopes i will, so she will finally tell me that she doesn't make a living,
she hopes i won't so she will say we're happy,
when she says colette didn't make a living, friends helped, i say ethel didn't make a living, friends
helped,
she says see i say what she says, when thus comforting, when only much later she says
what a crime.*

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SERGEJ HARLAMOV

Melee of Mythologies

(*Mnogoboj mitologij*, Litera, 2019)

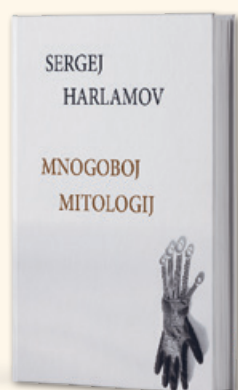
ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Photo by: Matjaž Rušt

Sergej Harlamov (1989) is a poet, sociologist, a literary comparatist, occasionally also a journalist, a literary critic and publicist. As the winner of the festival *Mlada literatura Urška*, he was the guest of the international literary festival *Pranger* in 2011; in the autumn of the same year, his first book of poetry *Jedci* (*Eaters*) was published by the JSKD. He has published his poems in all of the major literary magazines in Slovenia, and some of his poems have been translated into English, German, Hungarian and Serbian. His second poetry collection *Melee of Mythologies* has won him a nomination for the Jenko Award. In the framework of the festival Ignor, he created *Hypomnemata* (2017), a test sample of experimental, concrete-abstract poetry, and collaborated with jazz musician Žan Tetičkovič on the album *The Port of Life* (RTV Slovenija, ZKP, 2016), contributing prose poems. His interdisciplinary BA thesis *Michel Houellebecq and the Archeology of the Present* won him the University of Ljubljana's Faculty of Arts' Prešeren Award. In 2019, he received the Slovenian Book Agency's grant for up-and-coming young authors. He will present his poetry at the festival *Dnevi poezije in vina* (*Days of Poetry and Wine*) 2020. The field of his creativity also encompasses prose, poetry installations and performance.

ABOUT THE BOOK



The poetry collection *Melee of Mythologies* by Sergej Harlamov is intellectually and also aesthetically provocative. Beside being metapoetry, which questions the position and meaning of poetry in the contemporary world, it also questions other cognitive forms of social consciousness and their interrelations, which is also suggested by the book's title. The poems are diverse in terms of form, de-aestheticised and build their meaning on references to, above all, philosophy, religion, science as well as popular culture, in the sense of deconstruction and synthesis; the latter is usually revealed in lucid flashes. The questioning itself is based on sophisticated irony, in addition to sharp insights. In the world where nothing is as it seems, one needs to summon being through the total relativisation, total unveiling, this is where possibilities open up (or not) – or, as the author notes, “today the path to humanism is only possible through nihilism”. In the collection itself, the potential basis for persisting in being is shown to be especially playfulness, mental and linguistic. And it seems significant that the author expresses or communicates all of this precisely through poetry. - Nino Flisar

/ EXCERPT /

Translated by
the author and
Barbara Jurša

Confessions of a Ventriloquist / Postcards from Nowherehome

III.

supposedly
it has happened right next to me
life
or something similar
the sheer intrusiveness of its fact
was a kind of enlightenment
but
if you come from some hovel
in some shithole
the light of the world can only blind you

you're then crying and screaming and flapping
all your limbs
in order to, with a real name,

embrace the inconceivable
which has just taken you over
but the language of the land
from which you have been exiled
and into which you are
together with them
exiled alone
is foreign to them

and the world
what does the world do then
the world
first thrusts a pacifier in your mouth
and because this never really suffices
it also puts words into your mouth
words
that only affirm
its way of presence

ah
I would give all the turns and overthrows
in existence or perhaps still to come
for just one dictionary
which would exclude all of our vocabulary
and all of our grammar

but such a dictionary
would probably be perfect
and I
who can only exist as murmur
in the existing dictionary of the world
could never
even write about that

The (Lost) Famous Words of Yuri Alekseyevich Gagarin or an Anecdote from Life as it hasn't Been

the earth was green and blue
life was nowhere to be seen

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NADA KAVČIČ

The Ear and the Shadow

(*Uho in senca*, Šerpa, 2019)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Photo by: Tereza Kozinc

Nada Kavčič, born in 1991 in Ljubljana, holds a Master's degree in the Spanish Language and Comparative Literature. In the last decade, her poems have appeared in various magazines (Mentor, OtočjeO, the Mlade Rime Anthology, Apokalipsa, Literatura). In the framework of the edition *Mala ignorirana knjiga*, she has published her "demo" titled *Zamolklina* (*The Quiething*). In 2019, the MGLC published an extensive book of her translations of Alejandra Pizarnik's poetry. *The Ear and the Shadow* is her poetry debut. At the moment she is living in Spain, in Valencia, where she is working on her second poetry collection and preparing an anthology of contemporary Slovenian poetry in Spanish.

ABOUT THE BOOK



The title of the poetry collection *The Ear and the Shadow* is an attempt to juxtapose two principles – the sonic and the visual. The poet is trying to investigate through them her own relationship to the symbolic, and her starting point is crossing the borders that symbolically determine and delimit. The subject, who is addressing herself as a shadow, speaks about anxiety, death, and the vacuous fluidity of language, but especially about enduring such states, as it is only beyond the pathos most frequently delineated in the interpretation of both instances that we can see death and life as two possibilities. In this respect, the book follows the poetics of the Argentinian poet Alejandra Pizarnik and the understanding of the poetic word and the act of writing as a transition to a greater sensibility towards the world. Laura Repovš has described the poet's language as "extraordinarily sensitive and quiet, while also indestructible and penetrating. It confronts us with a world that wounds us and which is itself crushed into a wound, and with the otherness of this world and of the proximity of the other, and alienation felt towards oneself. The poet thus claims as her own the space of exile, beyond any connectedness; but it is precisely here that one finds the dwelling of poetic language: a place of extreme openness and inescapable, unrelenting freedom. The basic question is thus how to endure fluttering as a bird in the wall of hearing, singing in the fire among the ruins up to the point when this is no longer the question but only the answer.

/ EXCERPT /

*

Translated by
Barbara Jurša

Solitude is that I recognise myself among people
as a shadow.

Solitude is
that I recognise myself among people at all.

*

The glint of an earring,
as precise
as if the mirrors
in the wound were silver-plated.

As if
the shadows were cast
from one same saliva.

As if
the poem in the mirage were
the one dreaming.

The glint of the earring,
who are you calling to?

The world of ears
is full of cavities.
I have lit up
my anvils.

Come in.

*

A wall.
Inside it, a bird
is lifting dust,
the wall's hearing.
Bringing in space.

I am singing to the bird
asking it to persevere.

*

Translated by
the author

Rain on the windowpane.
Only the drops know
there is no entrance.

VESNA LIPONIK

eats away the hand

(*roko razje*, Škuc, 2019)

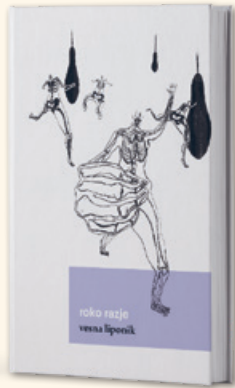
ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Photo by: Tanja Završki

Vesna Liponik (1993, Maribor) is a postgraduate student of Comparative Literature and Literary Theory and Slovenian Language at the Faculty of Arts in Ljubljana. Her work has been published in several literary magazines, including *Idiot*, *Literatura*, *Dialogi*, *Apokalipsa* and *mosaik22*. She has been translated into Serbian, German, Hungarian and English. Her first poetry collection *roko razje* (*eats away the hand*) was published in 2019 by Škuc-Lambda. She participated at the third international poetry festival *Lyrik für Alle*, organised by Babelspreh in Salzburg (2016) and the first international conference on the LGBTQ+ literature in Eastern Europe *Go East!* at the Faculty of Arts in Ljubljana (2018). Her photographs appeared in *Edit Paf*, a book of poetry by Andreja Štepec (Šerpa, 2018). She is a member of the Lesbian Quarter festival collective and collaborates with *For the Animals!*, a society for the assertion of animal rights.

ABOUT THE BOOK



The fragmented, ragged syntax in *eats away the hand* may be understood as very accurate thinking. As a “crawling” speaker. As her attempt at a dialogue with nonhuman beings. Pushing against the possibilities of speaking to them and about them. And constant catching of breath from the strain of these attempts. Catching breath as a rhythm. Here there is no agonising over the impossibility of such a task, just the extreme urgent necessity of making it possible. Although the manner of this strenuous work is linguistic, due to the nature of the medium, this language does not fit the usual metaphor of voice. This language works with hands, which are gushing in, digging, uprooting, poking, bringing, putting down, taking, catching, beating, wrapping, burying, scratching, chiselling, touching, pushing, holding, protecting, as well as vacuuming, folding, moving, caressing and, finally, hurting from all this “handling”. It seems the only thing the hands never do is rest. Perhaps the question here is not so much whose or which hands are these, but rather what is the thing they are reaching for all the time. The answer could be literally at hand – in a fist and on the fingers, in a kind of invocation of hand-ness itself: “there where hands.” Either in a passionate lesbian relationship, in dealings with animals and plants, in becoming soil as a fruit farmer, or in a costermonger’s relationship with the parents and death: in her furious earthy book debut, Liponik is “the tongue and the hand and all.” – Uroš Prah

/ EXCERPT /

Translated by
Erica Johnson
Debeljak

humour

one night
in the orchard
I see
my father
lying
interred in the innards
of an absent apple tree
and out of his
torn back
sprouts
a scabbed twisted
trunk
he laughs
and I know
he'll turn the whole thing
into a joke

Translated by
Vesna Liponik

you scratch
a trough hard plastic and
I'm afraid it will be in the sea then
it will
you know
I'm so small now so
I'm all
there I like you again before
little one
I don't know what you think
what racoon I did
wash you
near the morning
put you to bed
then again
I ran
again
a room a night and bambo and
I think I know
we are both there
through the nose the body the night
returns into the tunnel
between the hands
bent tumescent and
you seek me
there where hands

Translated by
Vesna Liponik

the rabbit ran with a rabbit mask he was touching death

Translated by
Vesna Liponik

the forest is burning
have you called this forest
mine –
do you think this is why it is burning

Translated by
Barbara Jurša

so give me your solitude
put it into my mouth
so I'll know where

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BRANE MOZETIČ

Dreams in Another Language

(*Sanje v drugem jeziku*, Škuc, 2018)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Photo by: Diana Anđelić

Brane Mozetič (b. 1958) is a Slovenian poet, writer, editor of the Aleph and Lambda book series and translator from French (Rimbaud, Genet, Foucault, etc.), best known as an author of homoerotic literature. His oeuvre extends to 15 poetry collections, a book of short stories, three novels and six children's picture books. He has edited four anthologies of LGBT literature and several presentations of contemporary Slovenian literature. He has more than fifty books in translation, his poetry collection *Banalije* (Banalities, 2003) alone being translated into twelve languages, making him one of the most translated contemporary Slovenian authors. He also

organises translation workshops, readings of Slovenian authors abroad, a small literary and music festival Living Literature, the Ljubljana LGBT Film Festival, etc. His last translated book *Unfinished Sketches of a Revolution*, Talisman House, 2018, was a finalist for the Lambda Award for gay poetry.

ABOUT THE BOOK



Dreams in Another Language take Mozetič's poetry back into the field of the intimate, but we need to emphasise that his poetry is too complex to be read as either solely political or solely intimate – both spheres, the private and the public, constantly intertwine in his writing, as, for example, in the poem "Vietnam", in which childhood memories mix with the then political iconography and the contemporary topic of the refugee crisis.

Dreams in Another Language are poems that are mostly dedicated to the author's deceased friends, lovers and acquaintances, among whom we find such famous names as Tomaž Šalamun, Aleš Debeljak, Jean Genet or Juan Goytisolo. As such, the poems are pervaded by a certain amount of sadness and gloominess, but these are not elegies – the characters seem alive or still living, which is why the memory material is not in the forefront; their separation from the world of the living is determined primarily by the dream logic, which the poems follow in spite of being written in the realist language, and the speaker's mostly failed attempts to communicate with the dead.

The tension in these poems is established, above all, between the realist expression and "miraculous" goings-on, which the poems articulate or describe. These goings-on are not softened with nostalgia and often turn violent, both in the poems that thematise homosexuality and those marked with fragments of childhood memories. In spite of the exceptional clarity of expression, we are in this respect dealing with dark poetry that evokes discomfort rather than pleasure. However, as soon as we surrender to its sharp, uncompromising language, we are all the more rewarded – this reward is emotional as much as poetic: by introducing the logic of dreams into his writing, Mozetič has significantly expanded his poetic field and written his possibly best poetry collection to date, a book which is also, without a doubt, one of the best poetry books published in Slovenia in the past few years. – Peter Semolič

/ EXCERPT /

Translated by
Barbara Jurša

I went to see the poetry master. I banged
on knocker of the old villa's door. He was sliding
around in his slippers and a bathrobe. I laid
my flimsy folders on his table, but he didn't even
look at them. He flapped his arms around, the room grew
larger, the walls were stuffed with books. Pay attention,
he said. Just listen. The voice will
come on its own. Then he lit a cigarette, measured
his footsteps back and forth, tugged a cord and drew
aside an enormous dark curtain. White space glimmered
behind it, but a pane separated us from it. Look, watch,
he knocked on the glass meaningfully. On the other side
boys started to appear, more and more of them,

all naked and wearing silver necklaces with
numbers around their necks. Choose, fair-haired, dark-haired,
yellow, black, chocolate, pepper-like, volcano-like,
a rhino ... he was licking his lips. Now he was
shouting: dwarf, fish, chair, pyramid, knife, blood, I'm
a giant. The boys came right up to the pane and
laughed at us. The master took my papers and
started to throw them in the air: Brilliant, they're all brilliant.
Can you hear what they're saying? Just choose, they're all
yours. I had already chosen. And then he disappeared.
The curtain closed. I was standing outside in the cold,
knocking on the door.

/ Tomaž Šalamun /

I'm walking down the road. With lots of people. They're
laughing, dancing, waving flags, chanting slogans,
whistling, they're tossing me to and
fro. I slip into a side street and down the stairs
into the basement. It's calm here. A few chairs in rows, people
are watching actors move quietly across a stage.
The scenery instantly changes into a dark night
club. I'm dancing. I stagger a little. I get entangled
with something. A hand grips me hard and I hear
a strong voice: Never step on a lady's frills!
Fearfully, I look into the face close to mine, with long
black hair. Jean Genet, I realize. As she
barks at me: Just look at yourself, you little tart, who's
going to buy you? She grins and turns around elegantly in
her red crinoline. I run to the toilet. It's only
in the mirror that I see my long black skirt. I'm pulling it
off, I flush the toilet and I'm rubbing my face.
The makeup won't come off. I take off my wig, I return
in pants and a shirt. I see him, now he is also wearing
pants, he's dancing with sailors in T-shirts.
We sit down at a table. He's smoking. We can't leave yet,
he whispers, there's a crowd of journalists outside, and we can't
afford to make these sailors angry. Look, each is wearing
a knife at his waist. He's nodding to them and smiling, as they
circle around us in some kind of ritual dance.
Until they're pushed away by others wearing black masks
across their faces. Sweat drips from their skin as they drag us into
the other room, knock us to the ground, lift up our skirts,
dragging our long hair, with large tongues they're licking
the lipstick off our lips.

/ Jean Genet /

I got a very small doggie. All shaggy, its head almost invisible. Just two small gleaming blue eyes.
It was so pretty that the whole town was coming to see it. But it kept getting lost all the time. We
were searching and searching, calling and joining our hands. And there came a time we did not
find it. It was only after a while that somebody told us how some Italian hid it in a wardrobe of his
hotel room. He probably took it with him. At home he turned it into a human being. But we did
not believe that.

/ doggie /

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SEBASTIJAN PREGELJ

Dear Elvis, Dear Ali

(*V Elvisovi sobi*, Goga, 2019)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Photo by: Manca Jevšek

Sebastijan Pregelj was born in 1970 in Ljubljana and is a History graduate. He has been publishing short stories in literary magazines since 1991. In 1996 he released his debut short prose collection *Jesters, Defilers, Oath-breakers*, and in 2004 his first novel *Years of Mercy*, nominated for the Kresnik Award, the novel of the year award bestowed by the daily newspaper *Delo*. He published six more novels, three of which were translated to German.

Pregelj's recent work is deeply characterised by social commentary. Since 2014, he has also been writing children's literature. He lives and works in Ljubljana and is a member of the Slovenian Writers' Association.

ABOUT THE BOOK



Jan is an ordinary child, going to school in the then 1980s. We get his first bicycle, later his first love, thugs at the school gates, attentive parents and a load of other little things that build our lives, from the early Star Wars episodes to colour TV. The one thing that probably distinguishes him (and his creator) from his peers is his extraordinary imagination. He is called up for military service just before the break-up of Yugoslavia, at a time when once irrelevant things became significant – for example, the religion of his school friend Elvis's Macedonian family, or the whisperings about what went on in the forests during the political purges after the Second World War. When the country falls apart, the door to Elvis's room, a place of bright childhood games, is also closed. *Dear Elvis, Dear Ali* is an exceptionally written novel about growing up, and probably the first Slovenian novel to convincingly depict, through a personal narrative, the period when Slovenia was in the process of gaining its independence.

/ EXCERPT /

Translated by
Barbara Jurša

Next day everything is going wrong. First, on the way from school – just as I have expected – the Hornets start chasing us, but they soon stop. They are standing still, grinning at us because we are still running and large, heavy schoolbags are bouncing and hitting our heads. Elvis finally drops his and darts out as a weasel among the parked cars, running past the garages, past the shop, and leaps across the main road in spite of the red traffic light. The car brakes are squeaking and the drivers are wildly hooting. Elvis is running on towards the old, dilapidated building in which he lives. I am running in another direction, and Peter is falling behind, but that actually does not matter.

Inside the block, I hurry up the stairs. In front of the door, I pause. No footsteps are heard from below, but I do not wait. The Hornets could be climbing the stairs on tiptoes. They are sly. It is better to go in immediately. When I unlock the door and step into the apartment, my mom and dad are already in the anteroom. What's going on? asks dad. Nothing, I shake my head all breathless and sweaty. And yesterday? dad looks at me from under his eyebrows. Did anything special happen yesterday? I don't know, I put down my schoolbag. Aha, he nods. You don't want to tell us? Well, you don't have to, because your mom and I already know everything anyway. They beat you up at the garages. Tell me, mom squats down, have they done this before? Do they often wait for you? Do they often beat you? Not me, I shake my head. And others? dad furrows his forehead. Sometimes, I nod. I thought so, he scratches his chin. Peter's mom called me and told me that you are being chased after school, she said that they are chasing you on your way home. A few days ago, they dragged Peter to the gym and shut him into the Spanish chest. He spent two hours there. Yesterday they broke his glasses. They've left me alone, I repeat. Yesterday, Robi flicked my ear. That was all. I could go away, but there were Peter and Elvis still there. Mostly they pick on Elvis and his brother Ali. Sometimes Peter, too. I wanted to help them. Aha, dad nods. What do they have to do with Elvis and Ali? I am quiet for a few moments, and then tell: Robi said that Elvis had slashed the tires of his daddy's car. His daddy's, father repeats. His daddy is a policeman. But this doesn't mean that the brat can do what he wants. And Peter? They call Peter nerd, I say. Nerds need to be beaten

up. That's what they say, I look at the floor. Kids, dad hisses between his teeth. I leave for my room. I hear my mom and dad talking so I do not close the door, but leave it ajar, I am standing behind it eavesdropping. I hear my mom say that she has spoken to Sonja, Neža's mom. Sonja knows the headmistress, beside holding a post at the municipality. I think this should do. You know, no headmaster can afford having at their school older students that bully younger ones, let alone those from the other republics of Yugoslavia. Do you understand? I get a hot flash, it is worse than the one that followed the punch into my belly. I do not understand everything that my mom is saying, but I understand enough to know I do not like what I hear. I have not been mistaken. The following day the headmistress comes into the classroom beside the teacher, and she does not beat about the bush. As soon as we sit down, she steps forward in the space between the first row desks: I've come here because I won't tolerate older students being mean to younger ones, I won't tolerate stronger students bullying the weaker, and I won't tolerate Slovenian students beating students from the other republics. Is that clear?! If anything of the sort happens to you, tell the comrade teacher. If you see anything of the sort, you're obliged to tell her, too! If you're just quiet, it'll soon be your turn to be bullied. If you're just quiet, nobody will be able to help you then. I swallow up saliva. My heart is pounding, my stomach feels tight, and a lump is slowly forming there, expanding and burning. I am sure that the headmistress has come here because my mom and dad talked. I do not understand why they had to do it. Why aren't they quiet like other parents? It will only get worse now. I do not even dare to look at the headmistress. Up to her last word, after which the teacher accompanies her to the door, I am afraid that she may mention my name, mention my mom and dad, and Peter and Elvis, and I am afraid she will tell what happened a few days ago. I am certain that the headmistress knows everything. Just like Tito, she sees everything. Peter and I have changed tables in the school canteen several times and observed the framed photograph of the president, and we realised that Tito is always watching us – regardless of where we sit down. It is the same with the headmistress: she knows everything regardless of where and when it took place. Once the door closes behind the tall, slender woman, I am relieved a bit. The lump in the stomach is slowly slackening and my heart stops pounding, but my legs remain soft till the end of the class.

VERONIKA SIMONITI

Ivana Facing the Sea

(*Ivana pred morjem*, Cankarjeva založba, 2019)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Photo by: Laura Sozi

Veronika Simoniti was born in 1967. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Italian and French from the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana. Between 1994 and 2009, she was self-employed in the field of culture as a freelance literary translator and authored many translations from Italian and French (Calvino, Magris, Marani, Niffoi, Camilleri, Galimberti, Todorov ...). She also worked part-time as a teacher in private schools and at the Faculty of Arts in Ljubljana (as a teacher of Italian) and in Italy. Since December 2008, she has been regularly employed. Occasionally she moderates literary events, especially those hosting Italian writers. She has been publishing prose texts since 2000; these included some fairy-tales for Radio Slovenia, and several short stories that appeared in literary magazines. In 2005, LUD Literatura published her prose debut *Zasukane štorije* (*Twisted Stories*, nominated for the Fabula Award 2006 and 2007). In 2011, her second short story collection *Hudičev jezik* (*Devilish Tongue*) came out at the same publishing house. In 2014, her novel *Kameno seme* (*The Stone Seed*, nominated for the Kresnik Award 2015) was published by Litera, followed in 2019 by another novel, *Ivana pred morjem* (*Ivana Facing the Sea*, nominated for the Blue Bird Award – *modra ptica*), which was published by Cankarjeva založba.

ABOUT THE BOOK



The female narrator returns from Paris to the Slovenian Litoral in order to clean and tidy up her deceased mother's apartment for a serious-minded buyer. In a heap of yellowed photographs, she discovers a picture of her grandmother, who is holding her five-year-old mother by the hand, while the grandmother's other hand is resting on her pregnant belly. The year when the photograph was taken, 1943, was characterised by difficult life situations and abrupt changes. What happened to the child in the belly? Through several parallel stories taking place across different time periods and different generations of a single family, readers are confronted with the collective past and individual fates. The latter are not confined to the space between Paris and the Slovenian Litoral, but all these movements cannot break human bonds. The hard times after the end of the war are depicted with the author's soft writing. A beautiful novel about not that beautiful times.

/ EXCERPT /

Translated by
Barbara Jurša

I took the train to Trieste, through a landscape that did not seem any more familiar, and from there I took the bus to our side, the line on which every socialist day domestic workers and caregivers commuted across the border and back; even now some passengers reminded one of old days, but their bags were not as stuffed with washing powders, packets of rice, new clothes, especially jeans for their children and grandchildren, and they did not brag about the favourable purchases supposedly made on the other side of the border. Nowadays they kept silent, staring blankly through the windowpane.

I unlocked the front door of the house and sensed that the spying and farsighted neighbour already knew about my arrival since the time the bus started to make its way downhill to the coastal road. It crossed my mind that I was not able to recall the time when I had started to be conscious of this house as a child. The house had simply always been there, from time immemorial, and belonged to the rare visits to grandparents.

The musty smell of the saturated staleness hit me. I opened the windows, ripped out the tentacles of the old wisteria, which had grown from the garden pergola right onto the house, possessively and protectively, and had glued itself onto the shutters. Once I plucked out the majority of tendrils, which had crawled in through the wooden slats, I loosened the shutters and hooked them onto the wall, so that the first breeze of the March bora would not bang them back against the frame. After a long time, the light flooded the rooms as though from theatre spotlights, and the shadowy tapestry of the swaying trees, through which the sun was forcing its way, was changing from moment to moment and made the rooms seem more alive.

As though the weight of the long shut-in air had inhabited me and had layered down on the exhaustion after the long ride, I felt a stifling headache pressing from all sides of the skull.

I lay down on the couch, looked for a blanket and covered myself with it: in soft creases it was falling towards the honey-colored parquet floor. I breathed in deeply the mixture of fresh air, the resinous pine tree in front of the living room window and the house's dust which smelled of old paper from long unopened books. In the balance of the light and shadow spots forming on the wall just as they are being erased, I grew calm and fell asleep.

I woke up next morning, hungry. The grocery shop on the corner had been closed for years, all business moved to the larger shopping centre a few kilometres away, which is why I had breakfast in a bar; I was probably the only respectable woman there at the moment, as two flashy and scantily clad fake blonds in their fifties were leaning against the bar. After all, the port and casinos are near, and those who are not officially involved in these institutions, are looking for their survival wormhole.

In the apartment, I was again enveloped by deaf solitude. I had to determine what to do with things alone, without suggestions, all by myself and with whatever had remained of the atmosphere of these rooms. For fourteen days I would be sleeping in the cold house, in the mornings I would go on the coloured stained-glass veranda to warm myself up with a cup of coffee, and I would be looking towards the sea across the garden and the road; there did not use to be so many kiosks and prefabricated bars between the garden and the sea. I felt like protagonists from American films who return to their provincial town after years of resentment, and they get caught up in their old gang or cannot resist their high-school love though it was precisely this person that made them run to the city.

But I had no unfinished business with this place and I also did not grow up here; events, scenes and coincidences here had been strung like pearls on intertwining threads that had only indirectly created also who I was and what I was thinking.

I got to work. When I moved away some cupboards and paintings, paint appeared on the walls, light green here, mustard yellow there, from thirty years ago or more. The faded paint was staring back at me, mutely and bluntly, although what I would most like to expect from it, stupidly, was some kind of quantum teleportation into old times.

Planes of colour with uneven edges on the walls made me think each time of some event associated with this or that space, this or that object. What would become of that grandmother's cardigan made of excellent wool that they did not know how to spin anymore? For me to wear it – would be almost morbid. I also could not sell these things or give them away, anyone would know that they had belonged to the deceased and would not want to have them due to the superstition that the previous owners' mortality might spill into them through clothes or shoes.

So I was putting things into boxes. Sorting. Shifting. Crumpling papers. Throwing things into the waste bin and large plastic bags. As an unrelenting judge I was deciding what would go to nothing for eternity and what would live on.

Until I found my grandmother's picture, in the room with the boxes containing letters and photographs. In the picture, grandmother was smiling and looking sideways at the person photographing her.

With one hand she was holding the hand of my five-year-old mother, and her other hand was placed on her pregnant belly. The year scribbled down on the back of the photograph was 1943. Grandmother gave birth to my mother in nineteen-thirty-eight and my mother was an only child. At least that was what I had believed till the moment I discovered this photograph at the age of forty-five.

There was almost nobody that I could ask what this picture meant: my parents were gone, and, among my closer relatives, I was left with mostly younger ones. There was only Sonja, a distant relative from the coast, it would make sense to inquire with her. I collapsed in an armchair which gave off the stench of mouldy horsehair.

LUCIJA STUPICA

Vanishing Points

(*Točke izginjanja*, LUD Literatura, 2019)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Photo by: Henrik C. Enbohm

Lucija Stupica is a poet and an interior designer; for many years she wrote articles on design and architecture in *Hiše* and *Gloss* magazines. Her poetry debut *Čelo na soncu* (*Cello in the Sun*, Beletrina, 2000) won the Slovenian Book Fair Award for the best debut and the Golden Bird Award (*zlata ptica*). Then three books of poetry followed: *Vetrolov* (*Windcatcher*, Beletrina, 2004), *Otok, mesto in drugi* (*Island, City and Others*, Beletrina, 2008), and *Točke izginjanja* (*Vanishing Points*, LUD Literatura, 2019). Stupica is the recipient of two international literary awards, the 2010 German Hubert Burda Award for young poetry, and the Swedish Klas de Vylder Award for immigrant authors in 2014. Her books has been translated into Swedish, Croatian, Serbian, and Macedonian, and she is represented in numerous international anthologies (e.g. *Grand Tour*, Carl Hanser Verlag, 2019). She is co-founder of Festival Pranger – gathering of poets, critics and poetry translators. Lucija Stupica lives and works in Stockholm.

ABOUT THE BOOK



Poetry may, of course, attempt to return to the mythic past and touch the possibility of alternative lives, but its main challenge in *Vanishing Points* seems to be understanding, at least to some extent, the (external) world which constantly penetrates it. The speaker's identity is now established anew also as a social function, related to family, ancestors and expectations of others. She is aware of the fact that even love may have an expiry date, which makes her perception more mature and precise as she puts her attention on the empty spaces, voids and gaps, and the relationships that try to shakily fill these.

Stupica's poetry debut from the year 2000 has left a significant mark on the Slovenian poetry of the new millenium. *Vanishing Points*, her fourth book of poetry, comes after a decade of silence, and Stupica's poetic has in the meantime become more complex and sensitive to the cracks in the world and time through which she observes fragments of life, imperfect, painful and real. Her expression has retained some of its tenderness, which enables the speaker to highlight imperfection and establish a deep dialogue with the world, the past and the present, the required appearances and the things they conceal. This is a dialogue characterised in equal measure by complete commitment and vulnerability, openness to the other and openness to one's own pain, to disappointment.

In this attempt at a new understanding of the world, Stupica is not writing out merely the story of her own role, but the role of women as the hidden movers of history. Or the role of those who see the experience of the other and are open to it, and they may be a man, a child or a random stranger whom the speaker's existence meets in a moment of fleeting insight.

/ EXCERPT /

Chinese Cake

Translated by
Andrej Pleterski

She said she would bake the cake herself.
Her mother's recipe, still in German,
in the slanted handwriting of an eight-hundred-page notebook
from the Graz domestic school, leather-bound.
She remembers, she can see her—
it was almost at the end of the double monarchy
in their hotel in Styria—
writing down new recipes in her Carniolan
dialect, almost a foreigner,
then throwing a glance at the youngest one,
wiping her hands in the white apron, then rushing off
to check, for one last time, whether everybody is doing their job.

The handwriting is entering the place, the now different time,
yet with the same copper bowl. First, the eggs.
Her husband is on a business trip, the children in the backyard,
the remaining furniture suggests there had been a war meanwhile.
A second one already. Years of destruction. Then the sugar.
The table is draped in the finest tablecloth,
the dessert forks and the chinaware are meticulously arranged.
She had read the letter first thing in the morning. The flour.
Her cousin from Ljubljana: It's hard,
but I'll keep your daughter with me somehow.
Every day, she creates the image. The baking powder.

All that is wrong in this image
is her life. It is hard to understand this.
The Chinese cake. *China-Torte*.
Perhaps there is absolutely nothing behind this name,
just a name, chosen to differ.

She said she would bake the cake herself. No instructions.
Irrevocably comes the hour. When all the losses cannot be born
anymore and one can no longer believe in the little presents of everyday life.
The cake is on the table. She heads outside, for the backyard,
a light summer breeze is lifting up the washing on the clothesline
stretched along the long façade, the bright colors in the breeze.
The birds are in a carnivalesque mood.

History

After a while, the walk through the town does not
stir me anymore. Its world is exploited and aged
like a Thai prostitute in her teens.
It's all just a poorly choreographed party.
And this street is a mere façade.
The same applies to the museum halls. The great men
hang on the walls, ready for the upcoming centuries,
while the women hide behind the doors, only
occasionally pressing the handle with their fingers,
sticking out their heads and smiles, then immediately
returning to their large rooms to write history.

Among all the others

Someone is dead and suddenly shows up among all the others.

Inger Christensen

The cirrus clouds, the curly locks of hair,
they do not lay shadows onto the path.
They are silky hands reaching from afar.
The icy crystals of clouds are gently
drizzling onto the black dresses like rice.
For a split second, I jump into death too.
Like a newborn. Still able to see inwards.

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ZARJA VRŠIČ

The Goathead

(*Kozjeglavka*, Cankarjeva založba, 2019)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Photo by: the archive of
Cankarjeva založba

Zarja Vršič (1993) holds a Master's degree in Comparative Literature and French Language at the Faculty of Arts in Ljubljana. She has received the Radojka Vrančič Award for young translators. She is a translator and a literary critic, and she also writes poetry and short prose. *Kozjeglavka* (*The Goathead*) is her first book and was shortlisted for the best literary debut of the 35th Slovenian Book Fair.

ABOUT THE BOOK



The short story collection *Kozjeglavka* brings together heterogeneous stories. Although they tackle diverse themes, they share the stifling, dark atmosphere, with occasional shifts into surrealism and grotesque. At first it may seem that different protagonists talk about the same enclosedness into their own worlds, sometimes the worlds of their imagination. The stories attempt to record the psychology of anonymous, undefined narrators as if with a motion picture camera which reveals their internal life through the external world.

/ EXCERPT /

The vole

Translated by
Barbara Jurša

"Has he returned?" asks Manca.

It's six fifteen in the morning. Manca is in her night gown, leaning against the jamb of the front door and wrapping her arms around her body. Mornings are still cold.

I am looking in the direction of the garden patch, at the two new mounds of dirt protruding from it.

The rootlets of the chicory which I pull out of the soil are completely gnawed.

"Yes," I reply.

Manca goes back into the house. I stay in the garden for a while. I crouch down with some difficulty and pull out of the soil the plastic bottles with a cut-out bottom which I jammed into the vole's tunnels about a week ago. The draft was supposed to drive him away, but the advice that Manca found in her grandma's old gardening book obviously did not help. Neither did the trap with a slice of an apple.

The trap was gone in the morning and the vole was nowhere to be seen.

I throw the plastic bottles into the dustbin for plastic waste, and bang the lid down with force.

"The damn devil," I mutter and lean against the fence separating our garden from the neighbour's, due to the sudden pain in my back.

On the other side, our overweight neighbor is stooping over a garden patch. While she is weeding, she is loudly gasping and wiping sweat off her forehead with hands dirty from the soil. I can feel her watching me. It does not seem that a vole would ever dig in her garden. A simple woman, Manca always says of her. Sometimes an overtone of irony can be heard in her voice.

At the door, I waver a while and keep glancing in her direction. Then I turn on my heel and set off back into the house without a word.

Manca is just making coffee in the kitchen. When she takes the Turkish coffee pot off the stove, the steam fogs the lower third of the glass of the kitchen window.

Quickly and thoroughly she wipes it with a dry tea cloth.

We are usually quiet during the morning drinking of coffee, but today Manca is chatting viva-

ciously about the vole. How we could try again and await him really early next morning. How he usually comes out of his tunnel in the morning at dawn or in the evening at dusk. But most often at dawn. She has read this in a column written for the newspaper by her colleague from the home and gardening editorial office. Then we would also know that he is truly dead, she adds. I am nodding mechanically.

I do not believe in anything of the sort. I do not believe that we will ever catch it, we two city klutzes who have only come to live in the country in old age. I am watching Manca's face, onto which a beam of light occasionally falls from the window, as she is explaining to me how we will kill the damn vole.

She is beautiful when the morning sun lights up her face for a moment.

Since she stopped writing for the newspaper, Manca seldom goes to her work room. This has changed suddenly and without reason; she only said she did not have time for these things anymore. That she was too tired.

Come on, of course you've got time, you're retired, I was persuading her. It seemed, to me, that she was good at writing columns.

She published her first and only novel at thirty-three. Writing for the newspaper was the only thing that at least roughly resembled literary endeavors, but she gave that up, too. In our old apartment I would, every once in a while, still come across a forgotten draft, a discarded piece of paper filled with her writing.

Eventually they stopped appearing.

Today, however, I find Manca behind the computer in her study.

She has her red plastic glasses for near use on her nose.

I say that I have come looking for some book; I am browsing a little through the bookshelves and watching what she is doing across the shoulder. She never likes me being in the same room when she is doing any kind of serious work. This time, too, she looks at me somewhat sternly from behind her glasses when I am still lingering in the room ten minutes later.

"I'm writing a story," she tells me all of a sudden.

"What kind of story?" I ask.

"About us. And the vole."

I nod, grab the first book that I can get my hands on, and quietly close the door behind me.

Next morning I get up at five. Manca is still in bed, rolled up into two creases like a child, and is peacefully breathing. She has always slept this way. I watch her for a while. Then I get dressed quietly and leave the room.

The vole usually peeks out of his tunnel at sunrise and sunset. Mostly sunrise, I recall Manca's words. Although the day has almost broken, it is still dark outside, all things have a slightly bluish hue. I take a spade from the shed; I am leaning onto the cold wall as I am calmly waiting.

Soon I hear a noise; the leaves of the endive start to move, despite there being no wind. I keep my eyes open and grip the wooden handhold harder. Then I suddenly behold his small head, almost black in the first light of the morning.

He looks like a stupid chubby mouse and not a dexterous rodent that is trying the patience of all amateur gardeners.

In no time, I am at the patch; with a spade lifted high in the air I strike at the lettuce, and then again, and then again. With the blunt part of the spade, I get the vole out of the leaves and push it onto the paving stones. Once I take a better look at it from close up, I pick the small body from the ground and throw it across the fence into the neighbour's garden. From the front door, I look once more at the garden patch, but then a cat sneaks up from the neighbour's shed, almost as fat as his owner, and runs somewhere behind the house with the still warm prey in his snout.

The light is already turned on in the kitchen, Manca is just making coffee. When she takes the Turkish coffee pot off the stove, the steam fogs the lower third of the glass of the kitchen window. Quickly and thoroughly she wipes it with a dry tea cloth.

"Did you get him?" she asks me with excitement, while looking for the cups in the cupboard.

"No," I reply.

"The damn devil," she mutters to herself.

She sets on the table our usual coffee cups, red with white spots. Although the coffee is still steaming, I carefully take a sip. It tastes really good today.

JERNEJ ŽUPANIČ

Behemoth

(*Behemot*, Beletrina, 2019)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Photo by: Matic Bajželj

Jernej Županič (1982) holds degrees in Philosophy and Comparative Literature, and works as a translator and proofreader. He has translated such authors as Jonathan Franzen, David F. Wallace, Taiye Selasi, Dave Eggers, Lydia Davis, and C.D. Wright. His translations of the latter three brought him the Radojka Vrančič Award for the best young literary translator. In 2016, he published a collection of poems titled *Tatar*, which was short-listed for the Best Debut Award of the Slovenian Book Fair in 2017 and the Jenko Award for the best poetry collection in 2018. His first novel, *Mammoth* (*Mamuti*), appeared in 2018, and his second novel, *Behemoth* (*Behemot*), was published in 2019.

ABOUT THE BOOK



The main characters in the novel *Behemoth*, Ana and Sonja, are sisters who grow up in a suburb of Ljubljana. After finishing university, Ana meets a group of anarchists through Sonja and joins them, but when the group does not seem serious enough for her, she shifts to a more radical one. Under the influence of their ideas, she leaves for an important European capital, finds herself a pimp, and works undercover as a prostitute named Manon on a special assignment. Sonja's friends spot and observe Ana in the foreign city, and at their parents' request, Sonja sets off to find her sister. She follows in Ana's footsteps, to some degree unwittingly, she assumes a new name and finds a pimp herself, but her and her sister's paths never cross. In the end, Ana does carry out her secret mission, but it turns out that it is only then that her journey into the underworld begins in earnest.

/ EXCERPT /

Translated by

Timothy Pogačar

She told her pimp she was going to work somewhere else, and he took it well, he understood. That didn't surprise Manon, anyone would understand her going to work somewhere else, it was a nice opportunity no one would let slip through their fingers, and the opportunity was even nicer for her, for Manon, even more important, but it wouldn't have been right to show or admit that to her pimp.

Manon doesn't think much about the past, distant or recent.

Now she only works hotels, the clients are rich, her apartment is unremarkable, and no one cares where it is or what it's like or what's the rent. The apartment is in a building on a street named after a locally prominent poet who lived in the city. Manon looks for a book of his selected poems, which she buys and reads.

She seldom reads poetry, she doesn't find purchase or support in it.

Manon knows she's on the right path, any girl in her place would know it. The way you know you've succeeded in this occupation is that you no longer have a pimp but a madam.

In this city, especially Madam Van Rink.

Her old pimp didn't cause trouble. When she met with him and told him she was going to work for Van Rink he whistled and congratulated her.

They were the ones who contacted her. She didn't have to do anything, she was in the right place, knew how to deal with clients the right way, and someone must have informed the madam, and they contacted her even before she contacted them.

One of the madam's main girls called on her, that was still in the old apartment, which Manon doesn't miss, it was as unremarkable as the one she's in now. The girl rang at the door downstairs. Manon asked who she was over the intercom, it was late in the evening and she wasn't expecting anyone, neither clients nor any of the girls, or Ling, the day had ended and the evening was clear, and Manon was sitting in her reading corner, reading something under a dim light, the kitchen still smelled of the dinner she had prepared for herself, it was going to be a pleasant evening, and then there was the ring.

The girl introduced herself, Manon didn't recognize the name, she spoke with a slight Russian

accent and when she said Van Rink, Manon let her up. She asked her what floor; the fifth, fourth, or third? she thought to herself, everything a little mixed up, shifting, one time just like another, places, people, and things spinning in a circle, and that's good as it should be, Manon should spin and spin, faster, like a figure skater that pulls in her arms, she has to spin and spin until an adventure falls into her hands and carries her off, she thinks and then immediately stops thinking. She's not worried they found her. It was no secret how and never was, she asked the girl, and the girl told her, via this and that client, via this and that girl, not her pimp or Ling, via a third party, and that made sense.

Later, Van Rink took care of something with her pimp, some formalities, Manon didn't get involved, these are civilized times and places, and a person doesn't have to understand the bureaucracy in order to become a cog in it, a cog in the machinery.

Manon sits on the inside sill of her apartment window and looks into the street. The window doesn't look out on a courtyard but onto a street, the apartment is a little larger than the last one and some of its windows look out on a yard, and others onto the street. The apartment is on the third floor of a building that doesn't at all differ from other buildings in this part of the city. It's exactly where it should be, that's useful, and even if it weren't, the sense of that would be pleasant.

It's where the right clients can find it, now all she has to do is sit on a shelf and wait for them to come by and choose her.

It's daytime, the wind carries daytime smells by.

Manon sits on the shelf and listens to indistinct, amplified noise coming from far away. Low tones, of which there are least, reach her first, then mid-tones slowly grow stronger, and finally high ones. Manon knows what it's about, protests were announced for today and now the protests are here. Manon steps away from the window, back inside, to her table, where she glances again at the spread-out newspaper in which the protests were announced, all about it. Manon doesn't know the size of the crowd—yesterday's newspaper predicted many thousands—that is slowly approaching, she guesses it will pass by her window, too.

She returns to the window, everything smells good. Manon inhales deeply and relaxes, if before she was tense.

It's now seldom she feels anxiety, the last weeks she has felt at ease, free, and she doesn't quite know why, but she doesn't question it either.

Everything is natural, this life is natural, she hardly ever thinks about who she is and what she's doing, and she never thinks about why.

Now her clients are rich and polished, everything is very professional, she can play everything out with grace, and charm, and distance, nothing touches her any longer.

I've become thick-skinned, she thinks, or thin-skinned as gauze, everything blows through me, in one side and out the other.

She no longer gets cold, it's that kind of time, a person doesn't get cold.

The glass in her windows and some items in her apartment, the glass items among her furnishings, begin vibrating from the deep bass drum beats or maybe the huge, low-tone amplifiers, Manon thinks. The glass in the kitchen cupboard, which is poorly framed. The wine glasses on the upper shelf, two touch and with the drums' rumbling the touch becomes humming and buzzing. Hearing the sound, Manon gets up and goes to take a look.

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Slovenia – Guest of Honour at the Frankfurt Book Fair 2023

The project will be carried out by the Slovenian Book Agency

Slovenia's appearance as Guest of Honour at the Frankfurt Book Fair (18-22 October 2023) was formally sealed in early 2018 when intensive preparations for this role began. The presentation of the Republic of Slovenia as the main guest at the most important international book fair is significant both from the point of view of long-term visibility and positioning of Slovenian authors and Slovenian creativity in the field of books in German-speaking countries as well as from the point of view of a greater recognition of Slovenian creativity and cultural and economic potential.

A successful performance of countries as main guests at the Frankfurt Book Fair substantially increases the number of publications of showcased authors in German-speaking countries and other book markets. At the same time, the performance enhances the cultural and tourist potential of the country and contributes to economic growth and the development of cultural and service activities and creates new employment opportunities.

In addition, Slovenia will be Guest of Honour at the Bologna Children's Book Fair in 2022 as well. The Bologna Children's Book Fair is, beside the book fair in Frankfurt, the international platform at which the greatest number of Slovene publishers from the field of children's and young adult literature are presented, either independently or as part of the Slovene national stand. The aims of the Guest of Honour programme are to support the publishing industry and cultural institutions of the selected country in order to integrate them internationally and thus increase visibility of its literature and the number of translations from its language. From the point of view of the book industry the programme leads to an increased trading of copyright and helps publishers develop international contacts even after the end of the fair and the country's role as Guest of Honour. The entire book industry benefits from the additional attention the showcased authors receive due to the increased promotion and presence of publishers at the world's largest book fair.

Guest of Honour role brings many benefits for foreign publishers of Slovenian literature – from new financial mechanisms for support of translations to highly increased visibility of the authors and their translated works.

More: www.jakrs.si/en/

Co-financing Publications of Slovenian Authors in Foreign Languages

Slovenian Book Agency (JAK)

Founded in 2009, the Slovenian Book Agency (JAK) is a government institution that deals with all actors in the book publishing chain, from authors to publishers and readers as well as promotes Slovenian literature abroad.

Subsidies for translation and publication costs of Slovenian authors

The main form of international promotion is the co-financing of translations from Slovenian into other languages, including adult fiction, children's and young adult fiction and essayistic and critical works on culture and the humanities, theatre plays and comics. Applicants can only be legal persons (publishing houses, theatres). The subsidy covers up to 100% of the translation costs. Grants cannot be awarded retroactively.

In light of Slovenia's role as a Guest of Honour at the Frankfurt Book Fair 2022 a special tender for translations into German language has been introduced in 2017. This subsidy can cover all types of costs connected to translation, publication and promotion costs.

Next deadlines:

24th April 2020 (publications in German language)

8th May 2020 (translations into all other languages)

Subsidy for printing costs

As of 2020 the Slovenian Book Agency also supports printing costs through a separate public tender and contributes up to 50% of printing costs for all the above mentioned works. There is a separate budget available for the production support of illustrated works (primarily picture books) if there is more than 50% illustrated material present in the work applied for.

Applicants can only be legal persons (publishing houses, theatres). Grants cannot be awarded retroactively.

This call for proposals will open on 20th March 2020 and will be open until the funds are used or by 15th October the latest.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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Mobility grants for Slovenian authors

Another form of international promotion is the public tender for mobility grants. The applicant can be a Slovene author (or translator, editor, rights agent) who has been invited to a literary or industry event abroad. The application must be enclosed with an invitation to and the program of the event. The subsidy covers up to 100% of eligible travel expenses.

There are two calls per year covering trips throughout the year.

10 BOOKS

from
SLOVENIA

[2020]

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