

Kajetan Kovič

Veno Taufer

Svetlana Makarovič

Niko Grafenauer

Tomaž Šalamun

Milan Dekleva

Milan Jesih

Boris A. Novak

Tone Škrjanec

Brane Mozetič

**CONTEMPO-
RARY
SLOVENIAN
POETRY**

10 POETS BORN BEFORE 1960

1

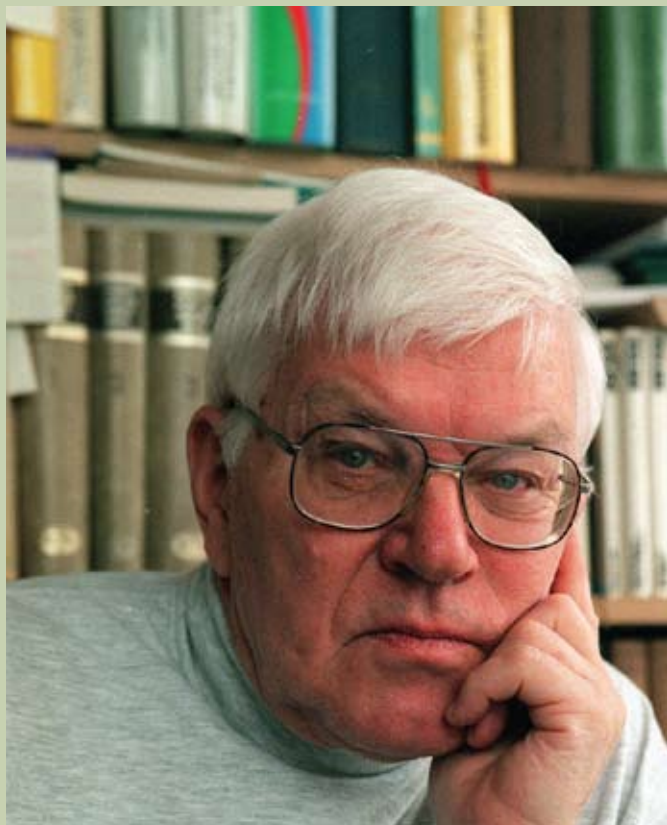


Photo by IGOR MODIČ

Kajetan Kovič (b. 1931) is a member of the generation which, by bringing out the prominent collection of verse *Pesmi štirih* (Four Poets, 1953), broke with the required politically correct poetry of social realism. Images of the class struggle and working victories were replaced by poetry initially oriented to intimacy, stories of interpersonal proximity and distance. Kovič's further development led to philosophical lyric poetry, disciplined in imagery and classical in form, whose central motif is often the image of a cold, distant landscape, as heralded in the titles of the collections *Labrador* (1976) and *Sibirski ciklus* (Siberian Cycle, 1992). His influences clearly include the poetry Kovič selected to translate into Slovenian, mostly from German (Trakl, Rilke). Kovič is the author of several novels; his first works of fiction from the 1960s deal with the sense of barrenness in the contemporary world, while his novel *Pot v Trento* (Track to Trento, 1994) turns to history, more particularly to the time of the Isonzo Front during WW 1. Rounding off Kovič's artistic output are his prose and poetry works for children, including the story of the lovable teddy-bear *Moj prijatelj Piki Jakob* (My Friend Piki Jakob) which is an all-time favourite with Slovenian children and a best-seller translated into several languages.



KAJETAN KOVİČ

BOOKS IN TRANSLATION

NOVELS

Ni bog ni životinja, Zagreb: Zora, 1967
Kapote sti Liumpliana, Athens: Alvin Redman Hellas, 1970
Sem isten, sem állat, Budapest: Európa könyvkiadó, 1972
Verseny, Budapest: Európa könyvkiadó, 1975
Ani buh ani zvíře, Prague: Melantrich, 1980
Put u Trento, Zagreb: Znanje, 1997

Utazás Trentóba, Budapest: Európa könyvkiadó, 1998
Professor der Phantasie, Klagenfurt/Wien: Hermagoras, 1998
Il professore di immaginazione, Milano: Hefti, 2000
Le professeur des rêves, Charlieu: La Bartavelle Éditeur, 2000

POETRY

Čas savesti, Beograd: Prosveta, 1965
Goldene Schiffe, Plochingen am Neckar: Richard Schorndorfer, 1969
Korene vetra, Bratislava: Slovensky spisovateľ, 1970
Pesme, Beograd: Narodna knjiga, 1974
Versei, Budapest: Európa könyvkiadó, 1979
Holunderstunden, Graz: Verlag Styria, 1983

Sibirischer Zyklus, Graz: Werkgruppe Lyrik, 1994
Le ore di sambuco, Pasian di Prato: Campanotto, 1999
Sommer, Klagenfurt/ Wien: Wieser Verlag, 1999
Bodzaórák, Pécs: Jelenkor Kiado, 2002
Dalečini, Sofia: Poesie, 2002

White Fairy Tale

Across the world footprints go,
across the world tracks through snow.
God knows who came before me,
god knows who after me will go.
All the paths are ever old,
all of them lead to death,
for all begins with birth,
and each step is ever new.
Across the world footprints go,
across the world tracks through snow.
One of them belongs to me,
and on it falling, falling snow.

Translated by ERICA JOHNSON
DEBELJAK

Alone

I close the doors behind me,
I close the doors
behind the moon, the stars, the flowers,
I close the doors behind the birds,
the doors behind gardens
as alone...
 as bitterness
my sadness blooms,
as alone as the sea
I call the cranes of sadness,
as alone as the wind
I sing the psalms of death, of love,
I close the doors,
I close the doors with brittle lips,
with hands pierced to the depths of my soul.

Translated by HERBERT
KUHNER

Elderberry Hours

This is the old elderberry behind the house. These,
the elderberry hours.
The terrifyingly green tightness of the leaves.
The blackish tint of the berries.
The bitter elderberry time before the storm.
Below the wall, the blossoms of the nettle.
The grass unmown.
Behind the wall, a room.
The stale smell of bachelor uncles.
The hollow elderberry stalk of Sunday.
The after-dinner quiet.
The reddish stems of the berries.
Their flat, insipid taste
in elderberry sleep.
Sweet spittle ripens
in the sluggish mouth of boys
leaning on the elderberry flanks of houses.

Translated by TOM LOŽAR



Garden of Gold

The chill and the damp under the pine tree.
The long shadow over the dark house.
Grapes, blue as dreams.
In curtained rooms,
dying fathers,
whose punishment is sons
left behind in wars,
entranced by the cuckoos' singing.
In the garden, the yellow autumn hour,
and under sweaters,
the warm breasts of girls,
as they lie down horizontal
under the curiosity of boys,
and as above them, blue as death,
ripens the isabella.

Translated by TOM LOŽAR

Labrador

White the roar of rivers deep
in the dark plains of Labrador.
Distant is the misty shore.
Between are hills. Between are seas.
There is a lonely wood of pines.
There is the boundless breath of space.
There is the resin-scented bark.
There are red and luscious grape.
Here is the light of cypress green
clear to the horizon far.
There are fires of southern stars.
And there are hills. And there are seas.

Translated by ALISTAIR
MACKINNON

The Hunter

In the dark of evening they bend their bows.
Heavy hands grasp and take aim.
Cries break from the maddened mouths.
World-wide tremble the timid game.
On the mountain a rustle of trees.
In the wood the hunter is touched with fear.
Music is heard from a dance afar.
A stone sinks deep in the waters dark.
The quarry is struck by the hunter's dart.
In the dusk the mild eyes glaze in the wood.
The hours go by. The years go by.
The hunter is handsome from new-shed blood.

Translated by ALISTAIR
MACKINNON



A Southern Island

It is a southern island. It is.
Distant in an unknown sea,
it is a speck on the horizon.
It is a streak from the mist.
Between daybreak and darkness,
from white water it emerges
and timelessly endures.
And suddenly sinks to the bottom.
And the sea is heavy and drunk
from its sweetness.
And salt closes the wound.
And hints that it is no more.
That at the dark bottom
there are only shards of shells,
the branches of a bitter olive tree
and the wavering of moss.
But the water opens
and a strong star rises
and a new boat sails
and a southern island is.

Translated by ERICA JOHNSON
DEBELJAK

The Water of Life

comes and knocks
softly at first like rain in the early morning
on the windows of diners
where workmen drink their hurried teas
comes from the lukewarm air
from the glass autumn
tasting of the mountain in blossom
and the thrill wolves feel
and just touches hands and feet
and skin the whole body over
comes with the vertigo of windmills
screws
and strong machines
into the mad
dynamic day
into the white heart of the world
comes and says:
I am the water of life
where do I flow
where do I flow

Translated by TOM LOŽAR



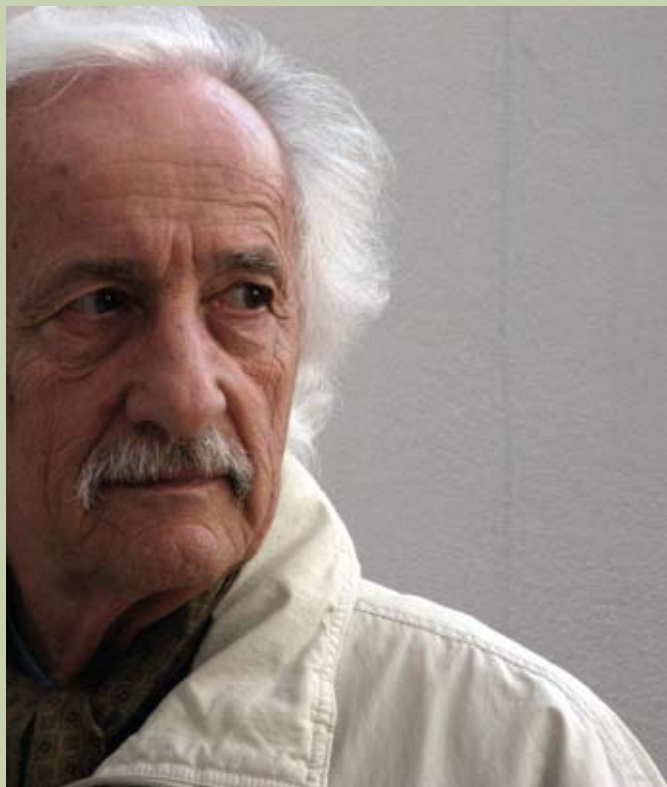


Photo by LARA SIMONA TAUFER

Venko Taufer, (b. 1933) is a poet, playwright, essayist and translator. In the 1950s and 1960s he was an editor and contributor to certain literary magazines which were banned. In 1985 he founded the International Literary Festival Vilenica and initiated the Committee for the Freedom of Speech and Writing; in 1989 he was a co-founder of the first Slovenian democratic party and a co-author of the 1989 May Declaration, the core document of the pluralistic democracy and independence of Slovenia. In the 2000-2006 period he was the Chair of the Writers for Peace Committee of International PEN. Taufer has published seventeen poetry collections, the first of which, *Svinčene zvezde* (Leaden Stars, 1958), had to be self-published, *Jetnik prostosti* (A Prisoner of Freedom) followed in 1963; meanwhile his latest three are *Kosmi* (Flakes, 2000), *Rotitve* (Beseechings, 2003), and *Pismo v steklenici* (A Letter in a Bottle, 2006). He is the author of several books of plays and essays and booklets of poems for children, as well as the translator of over sixty books of poets (Eliot, Pound, Wallace Stevens, Hopkins, Yeats, Ted Hughes, Cavafy, Jaan Kaplinski). He won numerous international and Slovenian awards for his work.



VENKO TAUFER

BOOKS IN TRANSLATION

Umetnik i model, Skopje:
Misla, 1974

Pesme, Beograd: Narodna
knjiga, 1975

Svirač pred paklom,
Beograd: Prosveta, 1985

Balli e canti degli acquatici,
Rijeka: La battana, 1988

Putovanje odo, Zagreb:
Naprijed, 1990

New Music, Chattanooga:
Miscellany Chapbook,
University of Tennessee,
1991

Tongues of the Waterlings,
Chattanooga: The Poetry
Miscellany, 1992

Fragmentarna poruka,
Ljubljana: Biblioteka
"egzil-abc", 1995

De waterlingen,
Leuven: Europees
Poeziecentrum "De
Zevenslapers", 1995

*Tangues of the Waterlings
& other poems*,
Chattanooga: The Poetry
Miscellany, 1996

Izabrane pjesme, Zagreb:
Konzor, 1997

Poems, Ljubljana: Slovene
Writers' Association,
1999

Waterlings, Evanston:
Northwestern University
Press, 2000

Ranata na svetot, Struga:
Biblioteka plejadi, 2000

Odisej & sin ili svijet i dom,
Dubrovnik: Matica

Hrvatska, 3-4, 2000

*Odysseus & syn aneb svět
a domov*, Brno: Větrné
mlýny, 2003

Letter in a Bottle

Allons!

Baudelaire, Le voyage

I would like to have seen the mountains of the other shore. But there is no other shore.

Gregor Strniša, On the Other Side, Part II: The Bon Vivant.

I

turn about, helmsman
go back to the shore
the horizon is darkening
each night you risk more

if there's air still just breathe it
and breathe out birds
from the hills even summon a rainbow
coughing with tear-filled eyes

steering each night will be harder
try yearning yourself back to the shore
don't be scared by the crumbling ruins
sun also rises above the stones

II

turn about helmsman
go back to the shore
the horizon is darkening
each night you risk more

maybe your palm will still feel the timber's sinews
and the year and the bud of sister vine
and brother fire will still sow his sparks
with the knots' heady scent among the stars

steering each night will be harder
try yearning yourself back to the shore
don't be scared of the ash and the rubble
sparks also hide in the stones

III

turn about helmsman
go back to the shore
the horizon is darkening
each night you risk more

maybe the water's embrace will betroth you with a ring of fish
and foaming circles will splinter into fireworks
burst into passion and again smell of dew
and limbs will be blessed again by the moon's corona



steering each night will be harder
try yearning yourself back to the shore
don't be scared if a brittle wave engulfs you
and also cracks open the stones

IV

turn about helmsman
go back to the shore
the horizon is darkening
each night you risk more

maybe the soil will still come to love the roots
weigh them hug them turn their tops to the clouds
and the wild wind will stuff them with green juices
you'll be muddy and sweaty from the pleas you'll dare plow

steering each night will be harder
try yearning yourself back to the shore
don't be scared if a hole gapes before you
you're also not alone if the soil's not alone

V

turn about helmsman
go back to the shore
even if the helm resists your heaving
each night you risk more and more

maybe you'll find it all strangely different
watch as it blinds and enters your eyes
you won't hold what's placed in your hand nor be scared
when it hides in words you'll be dumb in light's dark

though the frost cuts you sharper and sharper
try yearning yourself back to the shore
don't be scared if the windy void is too distant
to also be reached by the candle's trembling dust



Orpheus

under a blossoming cherry tree he sings about spring
holds the music upside down in angelic hands
the song is seraphically sad a devilishly funny
women and children watch him without malice

petals flutter down on his brow there's an echo in his head
crows wait for the fruit to ripen
too much spittle in his throat his voice is stifled
already the women and children can feel the seeds in their teeth

his heart is a bird of prey
it sits on his nose looks in his eyes
cooling his death's sweat with its flapping wings

his heart is a bird of prey
it pecks out his eyes perches in his skull
its claws scratching in the dry remains for moisture

Translated by MICHAEL
BIGGINS

Of World's End Palimpsest

waves crease
parchment
of world's end palimpsest

of foam
then water
ice then

mud
moss already
a new world

then cries
either from north
south or east

west deep
in the clotted sargasso
humming

behind the sun
flake falls flake flake
falls paper torn again

dry I grope my way
through crack
of fire burned by milksap

Translated by MICHAEL
SCAMMELL & AUTHOR





Photo by MIHA FRAS

Svetlana Makarovič (b. 1939) graduated from the Academy for Theatre and Film in Ljubljana. She has worked as an actress and freelance writer. She is well known for her poetry and prose for children and adults, as a singer, composer, illustrator and performer of her own chansons. She has written over hundred books of fairytales and theatre plays. Today she is a professional writer, poet and one of the best-known Slovenian authors. Her poetry is traditional rather than avant-garde. The curiosity of her poetry lies in paraphrasing the motives and tone of Slovenian folk poems, as well as in creating an obscure, balladic atmosphere. Her poems range from free to fixed forms. She has published many books of poetry: *Somrak* (Twilight, 1967), *Kresna noč* (The Midsummer Night, 1968), *Volčje jagode* (The Deadly Nightshades, 1972), *Srčevac* (The Heart Potion, 1973), *Pelin žena* (The Wormwood Woman, 1974), *Sosed gora* (Neighbour Mountain, 1980) and others. Makarovič is a relevant author for younger generations: *Pekarna Mišmaš* (The Mišmaš bakery), *Sapramiška* (Sapramouse).

SVETLANA MAKAROVIČ

BOOKS IN TRANSLATION

(books for children are not included)

Pesme, Beograd: Narodna knjiga, 1977

Večerní beseda a jiné básně, Blansko: Závodní klub ROH ČKD Blansko, 1977

Ciocia Magda czyli Wszyscy jesteśmy tworcami, Warsaw: Nasza księgarnia, 1985

La tia Magda, Barcelona: Alfaguara, 2002

He somiat que havies mort, Barcelona: Institució de les Lletres Catalanes, 2004

Izbrani pesni, Skopje: Dijalog, 2006

The Ballad of The Heartplant

A man he went and hanged himself,
his seed fell on the ground,
the seed of man is hot and strong,
the earth it sucked in down.

Then seven times the red leaves grew,
they grew for seven years
and where the earth had sucked the seed,
there grew a human flower.

The flower it bloomed, the flower it fell,
and from the earth the root
grew up another seven years
and then it bore a heart.

The heartplant stared at the light of day,
it burst through stone and heath,
spreads through the world and where it spreads,
in brings the maiden's death.

Translated by ALASDAIR
MACKINNON

Good morning

I wish you good morning,
you damp gray daylight.

I wish you good morning,
world covered with blood.

I wish you good morning,
you hill without trees.

I wish you good morning,
you featherless bird

and you, motionless lumps
from hardened slime.

Good morning to you,
my neighbor's eyeless head.

Good morning to you,
castrated men, and to you,
women, beaten down to the ground.

I wish you good morning,
you nameless creature
with your fur burned off
and your fruitless seeds.

The wind in bringing
a smell of carrion,



the wind is singing
the song of my native country.

Good morning you, pest,
and war and starvation –

Translated by THE AUTHOR
AND ALAIN DUFF

good morning to you,
you empty cradle.

Birth Day

Damned hour when the seed spilled,
damned hour, earth and sky.
Damned wind which into it sailed,
damned rain which damped the earth.
Damned be the axe-blow, long ago
and the bed made out of that tree.
Damned tepid springtime breath,
damned the first man, the first woman.
Damned hand which wove the linen,
damned hand which spread the bed,
damned window, apple-tree branch,
damned flower petals on the coverlet,
damned nails into the back, knife into the flesh,
teeth into the damned breast, lies into the ear,
damned moon and sweat and sticky blood
and the hour when bitter fruit mellowed.
Damned blood of bloods, heart of hearts,
damned first breath and light of the world.

The Star

May that hour come,
may that time come,
may that ancient voice
be recognized,
may the burning skin
be touched by the snowy palm,
o now for once may it come,
that day may it come.

Too much of everything
these eyes have watched and seen,
too much that they might long
any more to learn,
nothing more with anyone,
nothing of my own,
I can no longer remain,
here I am not at home.



Look, that distant star
from my thoughts will not go away,
that star I do not see by day,
and yet I know is there.

The Snake

I.

Like a noble fire,
poison flares in it.
It winds through smoldering stones –
a slender, cold sovereign.
Stretching out in the sun's palm,
and staring in its face.
It kills every shadow
that falls across its pure body.
Aspiring to be a golden skeleton
when fall returns.

II.

It shuns returning to darkness.
It dreams of dancing
slow, sad dances,
its shadow is gold in the dark.
Poison blazes in it,
green and bright.
It wears no masks.
Each night holds up to it an awful mirror.
Each night wraps a black chain tight around its neck.
Each night it keeps watch, black, heavy in damp sand,
awaiting the distant sun.
Its flat grimace growing more and more bitter.

III.

It danced a grim dance of death
on a pile of stones.
The sun withdrew its hands.
September breathed through the grass.
It went taut as a spear and collapsed.
It had wanted to be a golden skeleton
when fall returned.
But when the fall came it was
just a blasted branch in the bleary air.
The grate of summer would
never consume it to the end.

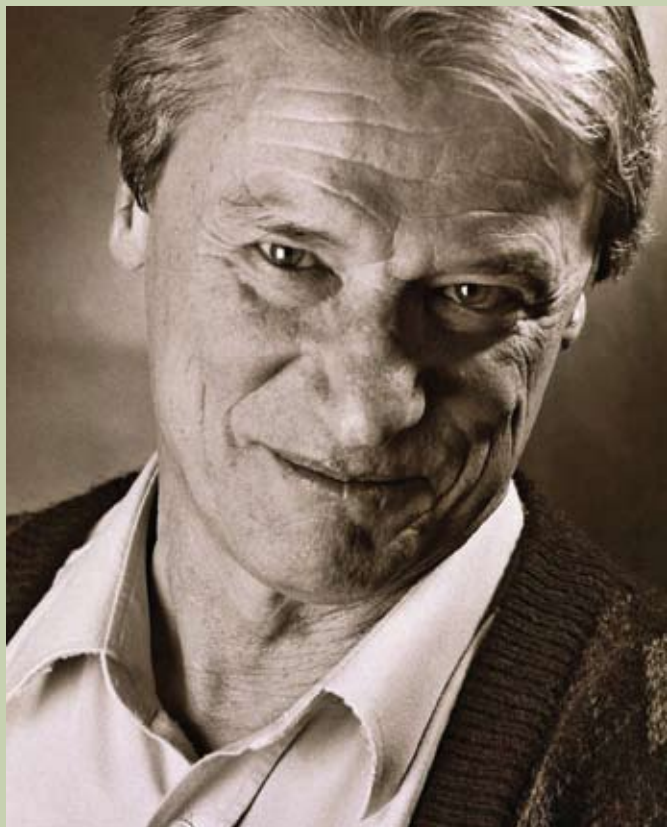


Photo by ALEKSANDER LILIK

Niko Grafenauer (b. 1940) writes poetry and essays, while he is also a translator, editor and publicist. He studied comparative literature at the University of Ljubljana. After some years of freelancing, he took on a job as an editor of literature for children. In 1982, he joined forces with a group of intellectuals, representing a political opposition. They became the founders of *Nova revija*, an influential monthly for poetry and critical thought. He was Editor-in-Chief for almost twenty years. The poetry by Niko Grafenauer is very distinctive compared to the other Slovenian poetry of the second half of the 20th century. In his collections *Stiska jezika* (Language in Distress, 1965) and *Štukature* (Stucco, 1975) his modernism regarding ideology and form has been fully developed and established. While the first of these two collections was seen as an expression of the weakness of man and language according to the philosophy of existentialism, the second one, consisting of sonnets, was regarded as a collection which shifted the borders of Slovenian poetry. Niko Grafenauer was able to stretch the language innovatively and condense meaning even further in the collections *Palimpsesti* (Palimpsests, 1984), *Izbrisi* (Wipe-Outs, 1989), *Odtisi* (Print-Outs, 1999) and *Nočitve* (Nighttimes, 2005). The grace of being, life, death, love, resignation, apparition, truth, voice, silence, language – trapped and fatal, are intertwined and overlapped. Niko Grafenauer has published five poetry books for children and young adults besides many picture books. He has written essays on poetry and translated some German poets: Hölderlin, Rilke, Hofmannsthal, G. Benn, E. L. Schöler, Celan, Enzensberger.

NIKO GRAFENAUER

BOOKS IN TRANSLATION

Pesme, Beograd: Narodna knjiga, 1977

Vreme i pad, Struga: Mislal, 1983

Pesme, Beograd: Narodna knjiga, 1984

Izbrisi, elegije, Ljubljana: Zbirka Fondi Oryja Pála, 1990

Tajne, Ilirska Bistrica: Zveza kulturnih društev, 1999

Izbrisi, Zagreb: Naklada Jurčić, 2002

Eingewebte Spur, Wien: Atelier, 2003

Horror

Sounds sleep in the black spangle of tightening waters.
Now and then they flap up a noise
like a man awakening from sleep.
Shadows blend with misunderstanding.
You lean over your thoughts as over a bleeding vein.
Your hair sprouts in the wind like grass
when you rub your hands and pant into the ovary
of horror flaming up in the middle of the night.
You are alone and time surrounds you like the circles of a tree.
Like a deep echo the world confronts you.
You go and your evening image
goes slowly dark, a sinking into forgetfulness.
Silence shatters at our touch.
Dust beneath you toes unclenches its numberless fists.
Rage licks the bristling adder
threatening you like god's finger in your home.

Translated by JOŽE LAZAR

Country

Before me, but undefined, painfully dawns a country.
At the edge of the rustling forest appears a woman-harvester.
As after a pause, things surrenthen their meanings.
Summer folds around the cuckoo's call.

The eyes repeat everything they ace into forgetfulness.
When birds encounter them, they abandon their names.
Their outcries remain caught in the silence like a pendulum.
In a draught I copy the world down to its ineffable kernel.

Never can a hand brothered with death as with a sword
subdue these winds. The unfurled smells augur a thin crop.
Whoever comes out of his house tarnishes like brass.
A shadow pursues man like a father's curse in this country.

Translated by JOŽE LAZAR

The light of summer cast in sealing-wax.
Closed eyelids round and round the horizon.
in the nape the shadowy negative of shelter,
and the joined framework of movements in the air.

on linen, embroidered memory, in it a flower,
but on the sea a snail, a bird walled up
in oblivion, in the sky a light trace
of a never-spread wing.

bones sunk in the softness of sleep,
absence in amber, but lines in time
for the duration of a short positioned note.



in the leaves peace, rumination of the wind,
spilt wakefulness, white fibres in sound,
in the motionless informel, a crowd of flowers.

Ties of Distances

I

Noon, darkened in deepness shines
with the sky in an eye, highly embossed
to this and other side of the equinox
of the being. Is this, in love's angular measure,

a day? but, the time behind the eyelids of oneself,
alone? where am I, respired in the air
of your absence? while you are without yourself impressed
with grief in it? so intangibly far

from the body preserved in embrace.
in the hands, never unlocked capture
of a full farewell? still, touched only by
the snowy moments, barren, shivers the warmth.

black time-tables are spread
over the ruins of the distances between us.
with the ties of separation, without looking back
to the soul, embraced by a deathly live good-by.

in the life with its end
catching up with a step toward easiness
on day's other side, you're restrained
by a traveling farness full of returns.

II

time, summed up in debts is rinsed out
by losses, days, catalogued
with distances between us are absorbed in the air.
in a hollow space, a call for the lost.

may I, a trap of my own, loosen myself
in an echo, may I breathe the sleep
that rests, covered with shadows
over its head, between the more and less layers

of the past, locked up into my Now.
bruises of silence under the words,
uttered when? without the mouth that
speak to me. to you, unimaginably close,

far from a return, and the farewell's full swing
still lasts, lost above the seas
between long flights through the slowness of hours.
but the palm? it hangs down its broken wing.

life is washing out, in drops,
instant after instant, the solid ground
under me. the Sibyl's without a hand,
the earth, mine.

III

years are portrayed with faces
past, time rattles with punctuation
between the distances. is it lit up
with traveling into the night? openly

soft from temptation, breathless,
stepless, burdened by the body.
but with the stars in the leap-hours
of death and life.

in the look from eye to eye, a drawn out
deepness of the dream behind the eyelids,
and a tear, decanted with weight to one,
and with glitter to other side

of memory, hangs between the soul and the crystal.
a tear, full of nobody's
nearness in the drop of itself, with the horizon
heaped up with solitude.

traceless footsteps and the meetings
in you? in me? and with angel's
shadow in the air, heavy from the years that are
burying the Time in us.

Translated by JOŽE ZOHAN





Photo by MATEJ DRUŽNIK

Tomaž Šalamun (b. 1941) has published more than thirty books of poetry in Slovenia and is recognised as one of the leading poets in Central Europe. His honours include the Prešeren Prize, the Pushcart Prize, he was a visiting Fulbright scholar at Columbia University, he won a fellowship to the International Writing Program of Iowa as well as the European Prize 2007 in Germany. He has served as Cultural Attaché to the Slovenian Consulate in New York and is a Member of the Slovenian Academy of Science and Art. His poetry books have been translated into nineteen languages and he has had nine collections published in English.

TOMAŽ ŠALAMUN

BOOKS IN TRANSLATION

Selection of translated books,
published after the year 2000

Feast, New York: Harcourt,
2000

Acquedotto, Novara:
Interlinea Edizioni, 2001

Poèmes choisis, Paris:
Editions Est Ouest, 2001

*A Ballad for Metka
Krašovec*, Prague:
Twisted Spoon Press,
2001

Il ragazzo e il cervo,
Salerno: Multimedia
Edizioni, 2002

*The Four Questions of
Melancholy*, New York:
White Pine Press, 2002

*Vier Fragen der
Melancholie*,
Vienna: Edition
Korrespondenzen, 2003

Poker, New York: Ugly
Duckling Presse, 2003

Blackboards (Artwork
by Metka Krašovec),
Philadelphia: Saturnalia
Books, 2004

Aber das sind Ausnahmen,
Vienna: Edition
Korrespondenzen, 2004

*Quattro domande alla
malinconia*, Spinea:
Edizioni del Leone, 2005

Ballade für Metka Krašovec,
Vienna: Edition
Korrespondenzen, 2005

*Megrozsdáll a szerelem,
ha követelik*, Budapest:
Babel, 2006

Kultasilmäinen mies,
Helsinki: WSOY, 2006

Katër çështje të melankolisë,
Tirana: Aleph, 2006

Lesen: Lieben, Frankfurt:
Suhrkamp, 2006

Row, Todmorden: ARC
Publications, 2006

The Book for my Brother,
New York: Harcourt,
2006

Wink an die Sphinx,
Münster: Daedalus
Verlag, 2007

*Arkhilokhossal a
Kikládokon, Válogatott
versek* (2001-2007),

Budapest: Nápkut,
Kiadó, 2007

Dolmen

O view from the window, at daybreak
from the tenth floor, of the sea,
of the lighthouse and freighters in Saint-Nazaire.
The same view: from Keller bar, at the end of Christopher
Street, of freighters sliding on
the Hudson as here on the Loire.
Here olympian and slow, there
juicy and fresh and black,
a black man who cried in my lap
brought me there.
The red mouths of black men are silkier than the mouths
of white men, softer, more terrifying, more
tender and deeper. More like the mouths of calves
from Karst, which die in innocence before
they're slaughtered.
You're my stone, Kosovel.
Resin, ropes, fences,
tar and the silent sliding of tires.
You hear it more than the breakers.

The coin, which silently circles, falling and rising
in the alcohol, it's not you hissing, it's the gasoline.
Why in the flocks and why do they scream?
They tear themselves apart. Soda water shreds sight.
As long as the green doesn't calm down again,
o plush of beads.
You barely touch the stick with the chalk.
The sea behind the glass is the other pole of collision
and drinks it. People really rip themselves apart.
Rip like scarves. This continent is
big. It can smash your lungs
if it catches them. Here the Atlantic is
massive and gray, fed by
the Loire. Stones furrowed like eternity and
old. The fresh beasts along the Hudson, one
next to another, tears the mountains apart, avidly,
the sea is still too young to calm you down.

Translated by CHRISTOPHER
MERRILL AND THE AUTHOR

Folk Song

Every true poet is a monster.
He destroys people and their speech.
His singing elevates a technique that wipes out
the earth so we are not eaten by worms.
The drunk sells his coat.
The thief sells his mother.
Only the poet sells his soul to separate it
from the body that he loves.

Translated by CHARLES SIMIC



To Reap the Field

There's still space for a golden door,
there's still space for the darkness of a prince.
Flashes of crystals, unite.
Break the arch.

There are still crenels, the crenels,
the crenels under the linden tree,
in the crenel under the linded tree there are black ships.
Still the waves break like whispering,
in the wings they imprint themselves
like rum, like triumph.

Translated by PETER

RICHARDS AND THE AUTHOR

Ring the Bell

You boil that bit of time in between.
The difference between when you come
and when you say you are coming. No. It's
not that simple. I too am not a novice.

The difference between the expected and
the real arrival regardless what you said.
The Bible cannot be read literally. Layers of
uttered time are taken away. But in those

thin little zones, the new shock of time folds and
rattles. I'm watered by longing, knocking my
head into the wall, on the ground, or I burn, burn,
folded up on the couch. With my body and my

mind I experience the delight of all tormented
before me, or I lie in bed dismantled.

Saints were always annihilated strange ways.
Man always licked his lips because of God.

Translated by JOSHUA

BECKMAN AND THE AUTHOR

Go

Go.
Grind up the pure light and wipe it away.
Step into the pure light.
It's there, it flutters like a flag.

It kneels.
No need to melt it down again.
It's everywhere, in the humidity.
In the white gill of the silver thread.

There is a saying: it lulls you.
You can make a little nose from the light.
Which breathes boats, graves and air,
the wall of the white we.

Translated by CHRISTOPHER

MERRILL AND THE AUTHOR



Blossom and Blood

I'm the fruit whose skin breaks,
a container grabbed with a crane.
Gulls are bloodthirsty and hungry.
Their plucked feathers descend
as I climb. Booms, silky booms
in the frozen boat's throat, between
the sliding rusty doors of the tanker.
What do I do here if my seal breaks?
How should I grease my black and blue shoulders?
Hey, little stoker, I squeezed your head
under the ceiling for I started to breathe.
Your limbs smashed on brown metal
cannot be washed away. A mosquito is caught in oil.
They nail the box Illyria on a stick
and when the lid is pressed to the ceiling
where should it go if not inside? You resemble
an old fly's turd looking partly gray on a light bulb.
Shall we throw spears? I don't have a tool.
And the huge trunk with a pulley coming closer
owns nothing. I'm shifted around.
Machines are putting me on the other dock.
And from there a train through
dark tunnels and damp gorges
or in the sun, sun among wheat spikes,
an hour before the arch goes out and the lights
of cars and houses ignite. How should I
remember you, little stoker. I'm almost
unloaded. Only a lintel or two,
only a distance traveled on foot and then
that closeness with the heart shown by your
hand. A span. A span. You slap wood
as if a piano, you measure the tone.
Such sweet sounds Pythagoras takes.

Translated by THE AUTHOR
AND PETER RICHARDS





Milan Dekleva (b. 1946) is a poet, essayist and translator. He graduated in comparative literature from the University of Ljubljana and works as a journalist for several newspapers and television broadcaster. He has published ten books of poetry including *Šepavi soneti* (Limping Sonnets, 1995) and three plays as well as a few children's books and musicals. An accomplished jazz pianist and a former rugby player, Dekleva, an award-winning author, rose to particular prominence in the 1990s. His poems and essays are formally outstanding and deal with the modern human condition in the absence of God.

MILAN DEKLEVA

BOOKS IN TRANSLATION

*Slepa pegica časa / Blind
Spot of Time*, Ljubljana:
Slovene Writers'
Association (Litterae
Slovenicae), 2007

.....

.....

.....

Blind Spot Of Time

Sleep, my child.
Breathe innocence into the silence of the night.
Your face from inside shines.
Not in one, but in hundreds of layers,
in the mythical, simultaneous parallelism
of plans.
How many possibilities that aren't mine!
What a will to reach over all
who had gone
and now – as guardians – keep vigil in death:
Of whom? Of what?
Blind spot of time,
all the love that was
reused
by the only woman and the only man
has poured into you.
Blind spot of time,
you are the only clearness
of space,
the only path wrung out of oblivion,
to be its only
little bride.
Blind little bride of time.

Translated by JOŽE ŽOHAR

Homes Of Vision

In you I will mature,
spun between your things.
Deaf for duration.
Received by the silence of blood
I'll become a pulsating
inventory of destiny.
With eyes that drink
neither darkness, nor light, nor misproportion of shades,
with eyes flashing
ionized wonders of foreshapes
into the small tube of the umbilical cord,
I will be yours.
Yours forever.
Hidden from all that is not
the essence of flower,
of shell,
of music,
of passing away,
yet which – from moment to moment –
still touches them all.
You live the memory, giving to the supersensuous
images of sense.
In the ear, let's say, in the obelisk of autumn
you are building the hoarse
metropolis



of my unreality.
How many homes! For just a single illusion!

Pleasing Are These Reveries

What was concealed
behind the cross-examination of the being,
humped into writing?
Going through the sonnets of desires
reveals the solemn moments
of special happiness.
Pleasing are these reveries
of the skin in touch, these starry order-forms
of private eternity.
The souls are out of breath – down to the feet
out of breath – in the rooms which do not pass
the sublime death.
That which is outside, that which wordly
sanctifies, that is too hard to be
adapted to a shape.
But it holds: in the word,
in the smashed gum, in the judgement
that contradicts others but not itself.
Emptiness, the trap of love, you
subhuman destiny of writing poetry:
pathology of expression.



That Where We Look At

To look out
from the most tender touch of the two
who follow each other in love
like two same-sounding words in a dictionary.
Out, past, and beyond the will
or unsatisfaction,
or excitement
which separates things and their
perspectives.
Out, to a perfect plain and clear.
For a bloom is not to be understood
through the beginning of the bud,
nor through the fruit.
Neither is the essence
of silence.
As man is born from a farness
and for a distance,
so is all of importance already here.
To look out does not mean to look
into the strangeness of space,
for a body is borderless crumbliness
the soul only belongs to it
as much as

height belongs to a mountain.
That what we look to is time,
peculiarity of a stone,
a tormenting erosion of consciousness,
after
when outside itself
it recognized itself.
As man is born from here
and for here,
so is all importance a distance.
That where we go is time,
the attitude of unity.

Translated by JOŽE ŽOHAR

Anaximander is Dreaming

A rooster, spy of the light, has taken my head away
and bequeathed it to the river.
A bumble-bee, the stepson of the sun, has stung my shoulder
changing it into dew.
A raven, the charcoal purpose of the fire, has untied my navel
spilling me into the trembling sky.
I was awake.
A trembling body mourned without a shadow.
In the meantime the river has met the sky in the dew.

Translated by BORIS A.
NOVAK AND RICHARD
JACKSON

XIX. Limping Sonnet

A cypress wanted to be a sonnet,
and words heard her.
An upright poem. Who was her grandfather?
She grew into a pure state. Silenced
by distances of the winds: by them she measured the world.
Into her cobalt branches growth wove
lovers' glances, murders, quiet misfortunes.
With these, she carelessly straightened
through draughts, tempests, the sun's assaults, the painful
greeting of snows. She gave
uprightness to everything, and thus withstood all.
To the deeds of the good and the evil she added
the sentience of wood. And a cypress cone, a bee sting
of heaven, to carry on with the making of poems.

Translated by MIA
DINTINJANA





Milan Jesih (b. 1950) is a poet, playwright and translator. He studied comparative literature in Ljubljana. In the 1960s he was a member of an avant-garde literary-performance group but later grew disillusioned with ideological and aesthetic projects. A winner of the Prešeren Foundation Prize/National Book Award in 1986, Jesih has translated more than forty plays (Shakespeare, Chekhov, Bulgakov). He has published more than ten books of poems and radio plays; his work has been translated into several European languages. Although Jesih writes popular theatre songs, it is his formalist poetry, where irony, satire and parody are blended with nostalgic sentiment, that has earned him the wide attention of both critics and the public.

Photo by IGOR MODIČ

MILAN JESIH

BOOKS IN TRANSLATION

Pesme, Beograd: Narodna knjiga, 1981.

Sonety, Olomouc: Votobia, 1997.

Short was...

Short was
the night,
the day has
lengthened it a bit.

Translated by MILAN JESIĆ

Forever

Here, by the house, the child stood still forever,
and forever the young boy's run away.
He will grow up, make noise and become settled,
he'll travel, love, sample his happy share

Here he will stand, mature, and father children,
be boastful and go hungry in lean years
and live; and stare into the depth of darkness
and as a grandad even hope to reach the stars

on wings of freedom; here he will be standing,
thoughtfully gazing at the snow and at himself.
He'll take a draught of time, toothlessly munching
his nonsense here, forever, never, in this very night

further away than all imagined distance;
and, cold, numb clay again, be lying on the bier,
– dark flowers fill the chamber with their fragrance –
and by the house the boy will stand forever, here.

Translated by ESTHER KINSKY



Volfram

Unseen angels walk noiselessly – barefoot without stirring the wind – around the sleeping houses; this is now.
Wooden I lie awake in didaskalia, my eyes weary, mouth dry, with a heart that knows everything: everything,
when even nothing was too much. The merciless hour of sheet – the date gone, impressing no memory of its traces.
Just like those angels outside leaving no footprints in the grass. Bread is melting in the cupboard.
On chandeliers flies are lulled into a light sleep. I, too: just to fulfill the longing of my eyelids! To slide into sleep!

But there are no angels: it is I who unknowingly stumble in blind images around neighbors, scenting their wives
and daughters instead of being in my room; let all of me fall asleep, rest my eyes and give dreaming wings
to my bubbling blood. The heart knows everything (when even nothing was too much), but is still fond of pounding:
perhaps this is the only true way of being. This is now: the cherry branch in the vase is locked in a spawning of time;
on the table cooked spinach, made for the noon meal, hovers in water.

* * *

Tonight I again stared at the moon: hastened to meet her on the way to a pub, followed her on my way home.
On the foothills shone, like sugar crystals, houses between barren trees, the people in them have fallen
into their honorable sleep; wine was pounding inside me, and if a soul were anywhere awake, I'd have knocked
and stolen some affection: but even the dogs were quiet. I was wading in time; in my pupils
the spell of an unknown night as if I were a pious man, kneeling in some cathedral.

I stepped into my room kneeling. Turned on the light. Swept photographs on the wall with a glance.
Oh, gracious thanks! on the table, solitary, white, where from! alone! from merciful nymphs given an apple:
let the teeth, grown for a candid laugh, bite into it, the teeth I no longer have, let then the mouth be happy;
I halted on my knees by the door, fingers of my stretched hand on the doorknob at the height of my shoulders:
an embryo in an unnatural, dangerously abortive position.

* * *

The city quarter of Sentvid is golden – washed by a rainstorm, made serene by the sun's brightness,
calmed by a fresh wind from the Gorenjska fields. The soul, likewise, longs to rest:
I sit by the window with a sleeping book in my arms, lost in the dark blue of the sky, too shy to get up,
tired of sitting, melancholic after reading the lives made into literature. Sunk in thoughts: my mother believed
everything was predestined, I've insisted that man

I kept putting off a great deal of time for some future time – and it so happened that my present self
and my future self stayed awake for some fat years. Now there is nothing promising or encouraging, the heart freed
from the weight of a hopeless hoping: it is time to turn the TV on, foreign wars and long legs of sniper guns,
and simply be. To chase the corrosion out of the heart, though – who can tell? The air is soft, each breath grace:
Oh, clouds! Lambs that escaped to the sky! Aided by winds, kind brothers, they reached the heights of their dreams!

* * *

The night is dark and silent. Only when a shy south wind blows, the open window winces and the dancer
in the curtain pleats stirs. The night is a dark solitaire, deep like a grave and as gently inviting, softly luring:
it kneads doubt into the heart dough, filling people's bodies with anxiety, and they desire to escape out,
across currant bushes and gardens, across streets, bridges and meadows, through mountains crushed to scree,
over straits and birch trees – away into a freshly-dug distance;

the evil steals itself into everything, gnawing the skin, corroding metals – utter destruction is its measure:
even when for a moment a tiny flame begins to shine in a rat in a cellar or an insect in pea blossoms,
a flame that is hope and faith, it hunts it down and kills it. The air in the room is humid, scentless,
without memory – its presence a shuddering touch to eyelids. With a blanket wrapped around my knees
I sink into an armchair and wish to remain that way, frozen in time.

* * *

When a tiger sheds its skin – how vulnerable becomes its flesh! – a blanket will embrace me like crust,
harsh, dry, sleep with a face of promise will take me in: when an animal sheds its skin, when the air is expansive
on a plain, how full of death the room becomes! Who as I? White distances,
savage naked beauty, an intense presence, bubbling miracle, an inspired will – thirty years of childhood,
much pathos and milk an – ho! – the terrifying unfulfillment of man!

And so what? Should wars start so I'll pull myself together? and have, ashen from fear, one wish only:
to live? Or an unexpected love in Italy. Or snails, slithering in the moist garden. Or coal in cellars.
It is not true that the sound of an accordion is heard in times like such. Nothing is heard.
Nothing is there. I smell of sweat. My shirt, my wrist watch and weights. No manifestations of change:
everything remains in its assigned, improper place.



* * *

I have arrived and it is true: the house has neither the teeth of a sea-urchin nor the hopes of wives rebelling against their husbands: the blossoms of the hallway are opening, the weight of rain is foreign, left outside. Here there is only the good old sameness: the halted thought of an angel and traces of the fragrance of hay. What, then, do I bring: not a gift or letter in my hands, not a heart or star inside my chest: just some barefoot words behind my ear – I put my T-shirt on and between drinking and salves, without a shade of distance,

I watch spellbound – as if in oblivion, or in devastation, or some different, distant life – a small table made of black rosewood, encrusted with copper, on it three napkins, three teaspoons, cacao in three little cups: oh! the interior so tranquil in a stable charisma and enchanted symmetry, leaving me breathless, opiated, removing past and future lives as the fragile rain rustles behind young curtains like the divination of a prophet.

* * *

My writing eluded me, I was absent-minded, the paper is now full of an unrecognizable scribbling, a new order is rising all around me: butterfly curtains on the windows, tapestries on the walls, rugs on the parquet floor, and on the ceiling a horoscope in which the glowing beings of heaven tremble quietly; Aries shot Sagittarius, Aquarius is throwing Pieces on Libra (it all happens in tranquility), Scorpio dies lying on Virgo, Gemini have escaped, they are gone – strangely resembling the truth?

I should put my skates on and in one leap cut the planet to pieces; who knows what is holding me back. “The skate is hard to put on.” “The ice is sowooden.” “This house has no door.” “I’m not going anywhere today.” Kneeling in the middle of the room I am shivering; was there a need for all this? No gravitation, no magnetism, no powers – just the alien presence of my native world without hope and without reminiscence: a hand holding a hand like an unknown wet glove.

* * *

At night, when birds are asleep, there are stars the birds don’t know of unless they open their eyes from the pain of dreams. Night is a soft discreet charm: luring is the playful pliable hour – offering, but in truth taking, bringing tears smilingly; and how it showered itself with flowers! and the gentle wind; its mane, adorns its nape, spoiled by kisses! and the tempting siren-like silence, the night’s magic spell which is killing, killing, killing everything, and iron and the pristine pagan faith!

The birds are oblivious to this and to the stars unless they open their eyes from the pain of their dreams and stare, bewildered, into the night. They don’t know of me digging ceaselessly inside myself to find a memory that would console me, forgetting I am not a mine. Then, what am I? A huge blueberry, full of sharp human horrors; distance and promise; and the birds don’t know, the birds are asleep. They know nothing unless they open their eyes from the pain of their dreams as a cold shiver awakens the soft cores of their hearts.

Translated by SONJA

KRAVANJA



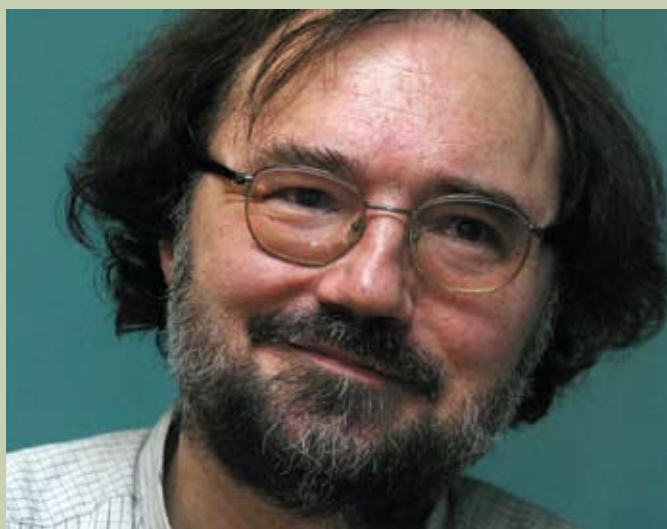


Photo by BORUT KRANJC

Boris A. Novak (b. 1953) is a poet, playwright, translator and essayist. He is a Professor at the Department for Comparative Literature and Literary Theory at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Ljubljana. From the 1970s on Novak was active in the movement for the democratisation of society and the freedom of expression. As President of the Slovenian PEN and Chair of the Writers for Peace Committee of International PEN he organised humanitarian help for refugees from former Yugoslavia and writers from Sarajevo. Since 2002 he has been Vice-President of International PEN. So far he has published twelve volumes of poems and two handbooks of poetic forms. For children he has written seven volumes of poems and two books of fairy tales. Besides many puppet and radio plays for children he has written several plays for adults. Novak translates French, ancient Provençal as well as American, English, Italian and German poetry, and literature written in Dutch and in Southern Slavic languages (Mallarmé, Valéry, Josip Osti, Verlaine, Edmond Jabès, Seamus Heaney etc.).



BORIS A. NOVAK

BOOKS IN TRANSLATION

Coronation, Chattanooga:

Poetry Miscellany
Chapbooks, 1989

*Vrtnar tišine – Gardener
of Silence*, Ljubljana:

Mladinska knjiga
International & Društvo
slovenskih pisateljev
(festival Vilenica), 1990

Vertigo, Chattanooga:

Poetry Miscellany
Chapbooks, 1992

Poèmes choisis, Pas-de-
Calais: Maison de la
Poésie Nord, 1996

Sveta svjetlost, Zagreb:

Durieux, 1996

Majstor nesanice, Zagreb:

Konzor, 1997

Odsotnost – Absence –

Abwesenheit – L'absence

– Assenza – Ausenzia –

Odsutnost – Nepřítomnost

– Otsustvie, Ljubljana:

Edina, 1999

South-east of Memory,

Chattanooga: Poetry
Miscellany Chapbooks,
1999

The Master of Insomnia:

selected poems – Le

Maître de l'insomnie:

poèmes choisis, Ljubljana:

Slovene Writers'

Association (Litterae
slovenicae), 2003

Baštovan tišine: izabrane

pesme, Beograd: Rad,
2003

Záhradník tiha, Bratislava:

Milanium, 2005

Borders

We gaze at the same full moon... horizons
far away, too far from each other. Mountains
rise between us. A soft, mossy crust
grows over our footsteps. All alone

you crossed all borders and came to a foreign country,
to the homeland of my arms. Dangerously alone
I crawl past the keepers of borders: I travel to the
Northwest, where I am bitterly ashamed

of the screeching of the soul among smooth, horrible walls.
I stand before them, a dark man from the Southeast,
with a conspicuous name, shuddering, as naked as prey.
I cannot escape. Border is destiny.

Now you know: although you cross the border, you don't erase it.
Rising even higher it will measure your steps, like doubt.
A map is not an illusion. So speak more softly.
Beyond all borders your lips are my home.

Translated by LILI POTPARA

Your Scent

Your scent wells up from the opulence of milk.
Your scent is milky mild and fresh and thick.
It washes over me like waves from distant rivers,
unseen air, the secrets of soothsayers.

You are dressed in it. Your scent is a robe
that never falls from you. A forest so thick
that even time cannot cut through it. Your scent
connects me to you: it is a delicate bridge.

When your own scent is concealed by the smell of flowers,
fragile and rich, I strip them away from you with tender
embraces. I lie inside of you: final and eternal.

The aroma of two bodies is a measure of happiness...
That is why I don't wash myself and your scent
steals furtively inside of me, mysteriously enduring,

timeless and placeless, stinging me.
I recognize your beauty and your

unseen trace as the most fatal of all words.
How far away you are. It is all in vain.

Translated by ERICA JOHNSON
DEBELJAK



Discovering the Everyday

I have never had a talent for life. For practical life,
that is. But since we have been together, I have been seized
by everydayness, by the miraculous spinning of hours,
days and nights, by the transformation of despair

into the patience of ceaseless ritual.

I go to buy a bed – wide enough for three –
because we will make love in it. I look
at the display of shirts and shoes, because you

are so beautifully dressed, that I must be too.
I discover the mysteries of washing and ironing.
Clean laundry has the softest complexion.

The greatest triumph is the preparation of lunch!...
I resist everydayness governed as it is by the strict
spirit of necessity. But each day is fathomless....

The until now unknown touch of things
permeates the frail skin of man. This universe

is woman...

I am learning to speak specifically:

not of birds, but of swallows and robins,

not of flowers, but carnations and roses....

Our One House

We lie, after love, on a wrinkled
bed, intoxicated with the smell
of nearness yet already breathing
distance and we sketch on the last page

of a scribbled notebook: a wide garden,
a big kitchen, dining alcove and a room
flooded from a high window with the light
needed to write. Walls rise up from the

awkward letters, the colors will be bright,
in the bedroom a magnificent double bed,
the same one where we lie now

awake and dreaming and knowing – each
of us knowing but neither of us saying it aloud –
that this will be our one and only home,

our one safe and warm hiding place
in a jealous and lethal world,



this bed, this raft floating through time,
through the unfulfilled light of days...

Enough for love. Enough for death.

Translated by ERICA JOHNSON

DEBELJAK

Too little for life...

Decisions

11

Between two words
choose the quieter one.

Between word and silence
choose listening.

Between two books
choose the dustier one.

Between the earth and the sky
choose a bird.

Between two animals
choose the one who needs you more.

Between two children
choose both.

Between the lesser and the bigger evil
choose neither.

Between hope and despair
choose hope:
it will be harder to bear.

Translated by MIA

DINTINJANA





Photo by DAMJAN KOCJANČIČ

Tone Škrjanec (b. 1953) graduated in sociology at the University of Ljubljana. After being a teacher for a short period, he worked as a journalist for almost ten years. Since 1990 he has been a programme co-ordinator at the KUD France Prešeren Cultural Centre in Ljubljana, where he also works as the organiser of poetry events. For several years he has been the leader of the traditional poetry festival called The Tercets of Trnovo. He has published six books of poems: *Blues zamaha* (Blues of a Swing, 1997), a haiku booklet *Sonce na kolenu* (The Sun on a Knee, 1999), *Pagode na veter* (Pagodas on the Wind, 2001), *Noži* (Knives, 2002), *Baker* (Copper, 2004) and *Koža* (Skin, 2007). With five of his poems he also took part in the poetry & music CD record *Košček hrupa in ščepec soli* (A Bit of Noise and a Pinch of Salt) that was recorded in 2003 by a group of poets and different musicians from Ljubljana. In 2007 he published the CD *Lovljenje ritma* (Catching the Rhythm), namely seven poems with music, accompanied by the composer and musician Jani Mujič. Besides writing poetry Tone Škrjanec translated the following authors: Paul Bowles, Burroughs, Bukowski, Gary Snyder, O'Hara, Timothy Liu, Kenneth Rexroth, Jack Spicer.

STONE ŠKRJANEC

BOOKS IN TRANSLATION

Sun on a Knee, New York:
Ugly Duckling Presse,
2005

Pilnowanie chwili, Krakow:
Zielona Sowa, 2005

Vseki ima svoja bljan,
Sofija: Karina M, 2008

Grasshoppers

Eleven at night. The beginning is crucial.
Not long ago we were still trying to catch the sun.
This became obvious
only with a certain distance in time and space.
It's night, so you put on
your tiger-togs,
go walking for an hour and half,
then another half hour,
but you're still not there.
This journey of yours,
this vague set design
and the long awaited denouement,
catharsis, nirvana, what you will,
doesn't really matter to anyone.
People just aren't interested,
slurping down their lemonade, talking about
pigeons.
Right now I have no desire to think,
not even to get into thinking.
Go jump with your comments.
And don't forget, grasshoppers
lived here once.
That's why it's all green,
the window wide open and the lights on.

Translated by ANA JELNIKAR



Let

let me go back to the old hardened trees
let me scoop up from a lake
let me tread the same river twice
let my words be as long as a moment
let the kiss be like a cold evening
after a hot day
let my complexion be synonymous with green
let sweat drizzle down my nose like a tear drop
let deer and rabbits come
let blueberries ripen
let the city be a small and friendly town-square
let it for ever
let it for sometimes
let it for today and tomorrow
hold true what we say
and let people with names appear in poems
let the world wait for a change
let our bare feet be tickled by green grass
let us grow breasts
let the poem have no end
let no one ever lose out
and let the sea be like the sky
the sky like the sea
feelings like a small friendly house

let the trees be thick branches hard leaves green
let all of us be sailors in the night.
slowly pushing on the pedals
and let there be devilishly many suns
and only two traffic roads
let people care about us
and know why they do
let small remain big
let skin be tense like a horror film
a hand still like a rabbit
and let the eye be full of clouds.

Translated by ANA JELNIKAR

Catching the Rhythm

With a good deal of almost god-like patience,
we should be dealing with more serious issues.
Those whose contact with reality
is undeniably direct and proven a hundred times over.
Which carry a symbol or two,
a whole hoard of them. Which,
in moments of uncertainty and dilemmas of the heart,
will whisper to us big and serious names
normally not spoken out loud
and most certainly not in public.
All those unclear, in fact, those never quite explained rules
need to be seriously considered.
And we need to lend our ears to the wise, so
we can then act against their advice.
Also we should swap our skin for a new and clean one,
one not yet drawn or written on, reprogramme our eyes
and visit a few unexplored regions
deep inside us.
(Remember, though, don't search in your head what's hidden in the eyes.)
At bottom, we also need to accept
that this summer will be as hot as hell,
even if most probably short,
and the evening siesta over cool beer
will once again become a useless
though pleasurable habit, like flirtation
or catching sight of naked skin.
We'll try not to get upset over trivia,
but sit on a rock, straight backed,
with twisted sun-glasses,
and a prolonged stare
into the same spot
of concentrated nothing in the middle of nowhere,
totally pulsing in the subtle rhythm.

Translated by ANA JELNIKAR



A Question of Beginning

The hardest thing is to start, a new day or a song.
And today we who love tea in the sun,
we who don't give a fuck about the second plural, today we started early.
The clock says 10:17, and through the smoke that's rising from a cigarette I'm glancing
nonchalantly like a deer, like a slightly drooping flower, like I'm still sleeping.
From here everything looks possible,
there's almost nothing we monsters with our fevers and runny noses can't do
if we approach it with our body and our soul, with feeling, *with feeling*.
People in this tea house are talking so quietly
it sounds like waves, like wind through branches, and the blackbird
who cuts into this monotonous and rhythmically complicated
tree music is proud as a rooster on a cherry tree loaded with white blossoms.
Such an enthusiastic morning cry, completely different from his blue and meditative
evening ballads. The day is pale and oldish. I know that in a day or two
it will be even worse, the sky yellowish grey and rain mixed with desert sand falling.
I'm talking and writing in colors. I'm watching a milk-white naked stomach
in rounded cascades, soft as if overgrown with moss,
heaped up over a big metallic belt buckle.
Across from me a little girl, maybe a teen, with rosy glasses
dunks her toast into red sauce and listens to her father tell her about Pakistan.
They are also talking about q-tips and dates. They say they like the smell
of my tobacco. So I'm sitting, and chatting a little, and I have the impression I'm waiting
for someone or something. But there's no one, only a tall woman in a long coat
made of an unknown number of small furry animals.
She walks around the tables. It's the middle of April, around 10:33,
and time in all its sneaky relativity doesn't factor. I smell of leather, and dream of silk.

Translated by MATTHEW
ZAPRUDER



Dub Poem

I'm sitting in a corner of evening,
regarding the shapes of trees.
Under my chair there's a glass of cold beer,
lipsticked lips shining in the dark.
It's all psychedelic animated dolphins and tibet.
So the circle is closed.
Nobody knows what it's all about.
Women in skirts are very rare,
and in this case
extremely long-legged.
Dub version of evening. Ganja rules.
Bodies move slowly and exactly
like the sea. Sky so dark
and blue it glows.
It's evening. The girls are full
of happiness, and red-haired.
How their young breasts stand up.
How proudly they wear them.
That's what it's all about.

Translated by MATTHEW
ZAPRUDER



Photo by IGOR MODIĆ

Brane Mozetič (b. 1958) is a poet, prose writer, an editor of the literary collections Aleph (Center for Slovenian Literature) and Lambda (Škuc), a translator from French (Rimbaud, Genet, Foucault, Maalouf, Brossard, Guibert, Dustan) and is best established as an author of homoerotic literature. His opus extends to twelve poetry collections, a book of short stories and two novels. For his poetry book *Banalije* (Banalities, 2003) he received the Jenko Award. With *Še banalije* (More Banalities, 2005) and *In še* (And More, 2007) he continues the urban gay theme, sharpened by increasingly anguished self-questioning. The typical unease in confronting oneself, on the other hand, also reveals a protective hardness of apparent self-sufficiency and impenetrable reality. Introversion and extraversion alternate as visions without gravity or significance, and they also erase the boundaries between dreams, mediality, memory, desire and event. While the day-to-day scene continues undisturbed with voices and steps, the boundary between reality and simulation is increasingly blurred. The author's (homo)erotica, though, remains full-bloodedly physical, and in the context of psychosis, resounds as only another in an ever longer series of different insomnias.



BRANE MOZETIČ

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Andělé, Brno: Větrné
mlýny, 2008
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ETS/Alleo, 2008

* * *

what good are the bonds that you invent, what good
the roots, they're nothing, all things pass
and your language has no purpose, your smile no joy
in despair, in horror at the endless seeking, being
now you finally see the real picture
as you peel back layers of aeons and beneath them
only endless wandering through forests, over fields
the search for food and human warmth
and loneliness, when a bolt of lightning sends you fleeing
alien tribes with spears pursue you
you're pinned down in a hail of stones
covered with scars, wanting still to live
to watch the marvelous birds that soar above the swamp
to wonder at the slender deer, to hunt them
to feel the mud's softness with your feet and love
women, men, to lift up children
not forget all this just yet
not quit sliding from one country
from one body to the next, somewhere else
alone forever, with a landscape you don't know
seeing faces for the first time – alone, authentic, without lies.

Translated by MICHAEL
BIGGINS

* * *

They didn't give me anything to help me
survive. No faith or hope
to repent, beg, be redeemed. No love
to scatter about. So I wouldn't go on
crashing into things, begging for attention,
tenderness, arms
to embrace me. They didn't give
me old traditions, customs, all the days
alike and I don't anticipate any
specifically. They gave me the ability
to experience pain at the turn of a page, to deal
with it at the same time. With clenched
lips. They gave a rude preciseness
which blows up every so often, causing me
to topple down. They gave me a world
in which I'm staggering and which
I can't feel. I can only see a crowd of
people who've put on t-shirts
that say: I'm nobody. Who are you?
We meet in the street, at work, the cinema,
in bars. We talk, ask, answer. And it
hurts. But we don't know any better.

Translated by ELIZABETA
ŽARGI AND TIMOTHY LIU



* * *

Can you hear it, Dave, that noise outside. Maybe
it's a burglar. Or a bomb. Come on, wake up
Dave, maybe another war has broken out and we'll have
to go into the basement again. You know nothing about this.
How many hours, days, to be spent in darkness.
Or is it only a fire? Has the neighbour fallen out of bed?
Anything is possible. You keep sleeping, not saying
anything. Wake up, Dave, so I won't be alone when
the end of the world comes. You're a pile of meat, Dave, who has
rolled around with everyone. Nothing gets you.
You won't even know when your flesh
starts to rot. It'll be horrible in the basement
and I'll have to throw you out to the dogs.
Then all the nightclubs will be safe from you. Dave,
you say nothing. Can you hear me, do you ever listen?
Another noise. I think there won't be
a war. Perhaps it's only our world crashing down
in pieces in the middle of the night when decent people
are asleep, like you, Dave, and I eavesdrop on noises
and am afraid.

Translated by ELIZABETA
ŽARGI AND TIMOTHY LIU

* * *

Beloved Ana, Ljubljana is a nightmare. The first
thought that comes to your mind is to cut
your wrists, to tie a noose, or to leap
from a building. You'd have to be constantly drunk or stoned
to take it. Friends aren't friends, acquaintances aren't
acquaintances, lovers aren't lovers, a mother isn't a mother,
a father isn't a father, a wife isn't a wife, the ground isn't the ground,
all hovers in the never-ending emptiness, hallucinations, ghosts,
freaks, water isn't water and air isn't air, fire isn't fire.
Beloved Ana, your city is the end of the world
without any form of hope, it's vegetating, it is
torment, it is a pinching in your stomach, a concentration
of all the negative forces doing everything in their power
to make an idiot out of you, a cripple. Ljubljana,
the sweet sounding snake that wraps itself around your body,
softly, with feeling, so you run out of air and can't get rid
of her, always follows you, slithers after you
so colourful and un-dangerous. Disappear, plunge into
the swamp, return to the mud, forever,
save us.

Translated by ELIZABETA
ŽARGI AND TIMOTHY LIU

* * *

Grandfather was the first who realized that I'm not worthy
of life. My bawling got on his nerves so much
that he locked me in the pig-sty. Perhaps the pigs
would have crushed me, an infant, had I not been



saved. I was saved the second time when I
tumbled into the stream, face down in the mud and
suddenly no air. They pulled me out by the
legs. The third time, grandfather again from the top of the house
where he was repairing the trellis, supposedly by accident dropped
a sharp stick on my head while I was looking out
the window. I stepped back into the room and
watched the blood flow from my head while standing. I didn't
feel a thing. The puddle on the floor grew larger and
larger until someone came by chance.
Then the memory becomes foggy, the only thing that remains is
that I told the doctor that I'd banged my head
against a wall. I should have died. At least three times,
if not more. Then they murdered me, slowly, year
after year, so I got used to it, and waited
apathetically for them to succeed just once. You made
the most effort. You strangled me, stopped me from breathing, broke
my bones, ravaged my brain. More than a thousand times
we had sex, and each time you watched to see whether or not
I'd overstep the boundaries and never return.
No one saved me any more. And it was so
difficult. What killed me even more was when you
fucked others beside me, breathing heavily and screaming
you could never get enough, like you had thrown
me into a pig-sty. You killed me the most when you brought
in your arms the dog that had been run over, slowly, like in
a movie, like the last sequence, then darkness.

Translated by ELIZABETA
ŽARGI AND TIMOTHY LIU

* * *

The nights are long and do not bring sleep. I lie in darkness
listening to each sound, and when footsteps can be heard,
I become nervous, wondering if they'll be followed by the rattling of keys.
Then the darkness calms down, images are strung up, and again new
sounds. So it goes the entire night, short scenes of passionate
dreams, so I feel my skin, my body, waiting for you.
When, in the middle of the night, the footsteps do irrepressibly approach,
heartbeat becomes faster, the doorknob is moving. I see
how you shift in your drunkenness as though you don't know where
you've come to. You undress and lie down beside me. Nerves by then
have calmed, all at once, when I lay my head down on your
chest, and it's all over. You mumble: Why on earth are you
still with me? You get nothing from me! I am silent.
You want an answer and are drunkenly begging. I press up
against you and can't fall asleep like this. The night is
long. The journey has begun. You on edge, you retreat
from me in your sleep, and I crawl towards you, behind me the dog
that presses up against me, so that half the bed is completely
empty. Such is our journey and no one understands anything.

Translated by ELIZABETA
ŽARGI AND TIMOTHY LIU



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
IS A MEMBER OF LAF (Literature Across Frontiers): www.lit-across-frontiers.org

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 Ministry of Culture.

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 Ministry of Culture, the majority of translations are published with the help of foreign translation/publication grants. Over hundred titles have been published in the series, some bilingual.





THE TRUBAR FOUNDATION

is a joint venture of Slovene Writers' Association (www.drustvo-dsp.si), Slovenian PEN and the Center for Slovenian Literature. The financial means for its activities are provided by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia 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). It does not subsidy translation; translators can apply for translation grants directly to the Slovenian Ministry of Culture (www.gov.si/mk).



Published by Center for
Slovenian Literature.
Editor-in-chief: Brane
Mozetič. Executive editor:
Jana Putrle Srdić. Design:
HandBag. Printed by Littera
picta. Ljubljana, March 2008.
Supported by Ministry of
Culture of the Republic of
Slovenia.

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