

**Taja Kramberger**

**Primož Čučnik**

**Aleš Šteger**

**Miklavž Komelj**

**Gregor Podlogar**

**Marcello Potocco**

**Stanka Hrastelj**

**Gašper Malej**

**Jana Putrle Srdić**

**Tomislav Vrečar**

**Alja Adam**

**Kristina Hočevar**

**Jure Jakob**

**Katja Plut**

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# CONTEMPORARY SLOVENIAN POETRY

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14 POETS BORN AFTER 1969

**3**

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Photo by D.B.R.

Taja Kramberger (b. 1970) is a poet, historical anthropologist, essayist and translator. She is the Editor-in-Chief of the *Monitor ZSA – Review of Historical, Social and Other Anthropologies*, lives in Koper and is employed at the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Primorska. She writes scientific articles and books and has had fellowships in Budapest and Paris. So far, she has published six books of poetry: *Marcipan* (Marzipan, 1997), *Spregovori morje* (The Sea Says, 1999), *Žametni indigo* (Velvet Indigo, 2004), *Vsakdanji pogovori* (Everyday Talks, 2006), *Gegenströmung/Protitok* (Counter-Current, 2002) and *Mobilizacije / Mobilizations / Mobilisations / Mobilitazioni* (2004). Her poems have appeared in various literary anthologies and reviews in Slovenian and other languages. She has translated books of poetry by Michele Obit, Neringa Abrutyte and Roberto Juarroz and published many essays and articles on literature. She has participated in a number of international literary festivals around Europe and in Canada. For six years she was involved in the international poetry translation workshop “Linguaggi di-versi / Different Languages / Langages di-vers”.

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# TAJA KRAMBERGER

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## From a longer poem »MOBILIZATIONS« (in III parts)

### II. Mobilization for Life

An eccentric, deserter and atheist,  
seeking refuge in agronomy,  
Goethe and the discipline of children. Whose life  
tosses him to and fro on a mine field  
like an unsaddled chess knight. Who depicts  
the letter L: *Lehrling*, but makes no use  
of the basic gears and never brakes.  
Who reads *Pigs Feed*, his feet in a cold bath – to  
improve concentration –  
and who hopes to discover a shelter in botanical books,  
the ground beneath his feet,  
but cannot find a coltsfoot leaf  
big enough to cover his own shadow.

Who brought my mother on their first date a bouquet  
of two ladles and then removed himself  
to a distance of 800 km. Once on the field, he  
changed the course of the bishop again,  
directing him back towards the regal chess piece;  
the one that can move painlessly  
in all directions, at times simply with a glance  
without a move, towards her  
hiding within herself  
the moves of all moves, watching over them.

And I: the outcome of a family vote  
in February 1970; nobody imposed a veto and the embryo  
freely grew into me,  
so that today I can calmly look upon my path,  
a trail, already longer than life, so I  
can see your life  
ahead of me, much longer than the path.

And so my father invested his  
unfinished herbarium into me,  
and my thoughts crammed between  
the piles of books like flattened flowers  
until, in my first collection,  
all this vegetative erudition exploded  
and all the blades, precisely ordered,  
could once again occupy  
their former volume.  
And now I am faced with an endless  
wasteland of flowers, words, willing and fresh,  
contracting and expanding at my order  
like the universe. What am I  
to do with it, here,  
in this twisted place,  
cold-blooded.

And now in front of my eyes: an endless  
featurless pampa



of *rat-tail fescue*, *Vulpia myuros*,  
covered with an envious spawn of  
amphibia.

Your dipphase, alternating current  
and the 1200 pages of frenzied notes,  
gushing forth with the magnitude  
of a hurricane spout. A siphonic  
burden you have laid on  
your children's shoulders, the way  
a war selfishly lays its bodies  
and its bloodied memory into  
an impenetrable mythical ring and  
buries it for the future generations  
amid the pages of an earthly book, a large  
unpublished hardback  
with no corrections and  
no editor.

Was God hidden amid chick-peas,  
sunflower seeds and carrots,  
in the mouths of dystrophic prisoners  
on their way home?

Was God hidden in the deaf eardrums of rifles  
the Gestapo prodded you with in Vienna,  
when you *lads* were shovelling  
sand inside the axes of the railroad composition?

Was God hidden in Jaroslav, an internment camp  
from World War I, between the teeth of rats,  
that, skipping across prisoners, did not surprisingly bite?

Mother's God or your non-God?  
Both announced  
in capital letters,  
both, in an hour of need, puffed into darkness  
without an answer,  
both numb and frail  
as if crouching in an enclosed barrel  
of *Mohojeva bolota*.

It was neither the Russian front nor hunger, nor wine,  
nor was it your studies, no –

*nothing matters but the quality  
of the affection –  
in the end – that has carved the trace in mind  
dove sta memoria –*

it was my mother who mobilized  
my father for life,  
the gentle and unfaltering love  
named Zorka.





Photo by MIHA FRAS

Primož Čučnik (b. 1971) graduated from Philosophy and Cultural Sociology at the Faculty of Arts in Ljubljana. His first collection of poetry, *Dve Zimi* (Two Winters), was published in 1999 and received the Best First Collection Award. His latest books are *Ritem v rōkah* (Rhythm in Hands, 2002), *Akordi* (Chords, 2004), the collaborative book *Ode on Manhattan avenue* (2003), *Nova okna* (New Windows, 2005), *Sekira v medu* (Selected Poems, 2006). *Delo in dom* (Work and Home, 2007) won the Prešeren Fund Prize. His poems were published in *A Fine Line: New Poetry from Eastern & Central Europe*. He translates mostly from contemporary Polish and American poetry, he has published books of (co)translations of the works of Adam Wiedemann, Marcin Świetlicki, Piotr Sommer, Eugeniusz Tkaczyszyn Dycki, Miron Białoszewski and Frank O'Hara, Elizabeth Bishop, John Ashbery. Many others have been published in Slovenian literary magazines and on the radio. His literary criticism and essays were published in the book *Spati na krilu* (Sleeping on the Wing, 2008). He works as an editor for the magazine *Literatura* and runs a small press Sherpa. He lives in Ljubljana.

# PRIMOŽ ČUČNIK

BOOKS IN TRANSLATION

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*Zapach herbaty*, Krakow:  
Zielona sowa, 2002  
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## Perception

I can see what has happened. Poetry has turned me into  
a monster. I haunt my own sleep, I haunt those who are calm.  
I awake in the middle of the night. Since I am gentle, those  
asleep get startled by the apparition of my other being. The name

I spell by heart. And all the more piercingly and distinctly do  
I feel: This is my other life, I have outdone  
myself. Ever stronger do I feel: This is my  
other death. Fingers are touching me, brushing over my face.

I am being crushed by the eyelashes of language, the pincers  
of history, the white-hot iron of blacksmiths.  
And every voice rouses me, every day I walk the same  
path, where the horeshoes of language leave their marks.

Poetry has turned me into a trail. I follow myself  
in my sleep, I walk behind my own shadow. My life  
is superimposed over the life of mornings I am awaiting.  
To live as a poet encompasses all moods.

Words are a torment and a gift. Victory and defeat.  
Everything and everything not needed.

Translated by ANA JELNIKAR

## Chords

*à Reverdy*

I.

Pick up castaway skates and glide  
across frozen pavements.

Point-blank honed, cut into the surface  
and let the legs with the skates be one.

Skate away quickly, alone, as though it were a race,  
pay no attention to shouts: "Where is he skating?"

It's good to skate this way, no bounds  
under skates everything is allowed.

You're the lone skater down here, you see  
neither marks nor shadows the skates cast.

You glide among the city lights,  
you hold your balance,  
you don't fall over backwards.

The skates leave a sharp trace of lines,  
grooves in the shimmering surface under them.

So, take a dusty old pair and skate away  
into a skidding substance, there you'll feel whole.



Skate by yourself and under you, ice will turn  
to a quickened liquid.

*Translated by* ANA JELNIKAR  
AND W. MARTIN

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Don't tell people about your skating.  
Skate as though you weren't skating alone.

### Sonnet

Forgive me for being so inconsiderate  
praise from the people close to you matters most  
love is a rushing homeland on a bicycle  
and war only frightful news on people's tongues

under coats stone particles crumble  
these don't overlook anyone's weaknesses  
but try and do whatever makes you satisfied  
fear is the forger of someone else's money

the body is an inner tube filled to the brim with air  
the universe an airless prisonhouse of the mind  
whoever dies won't say another word

is war merely frightening news on people's lips  
if only everyone did what made them happy  
change is a rushing homeland on a bicycle

*Translated by* ANA JELNIKAR  
AND W. MARTIN

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### In which case

I'm sure you absolutely have to  
Trust imagination and the tracks  
That language takes in pathlessness.  
It probably knows — in any case  
It's smarter than we are, might be our only support.  
When you walk through the desert you need water  
And spare parts for the jeep.  
So take everything you find in this dictionary,  
And everything you don't. You might need it.  
Even later, even when you no longer are —  
Apparitions of shooting stars above the dunes,  
And the stars will shine on.

*Translated by* ANA JELNIKAR  
AND W. MARTIN

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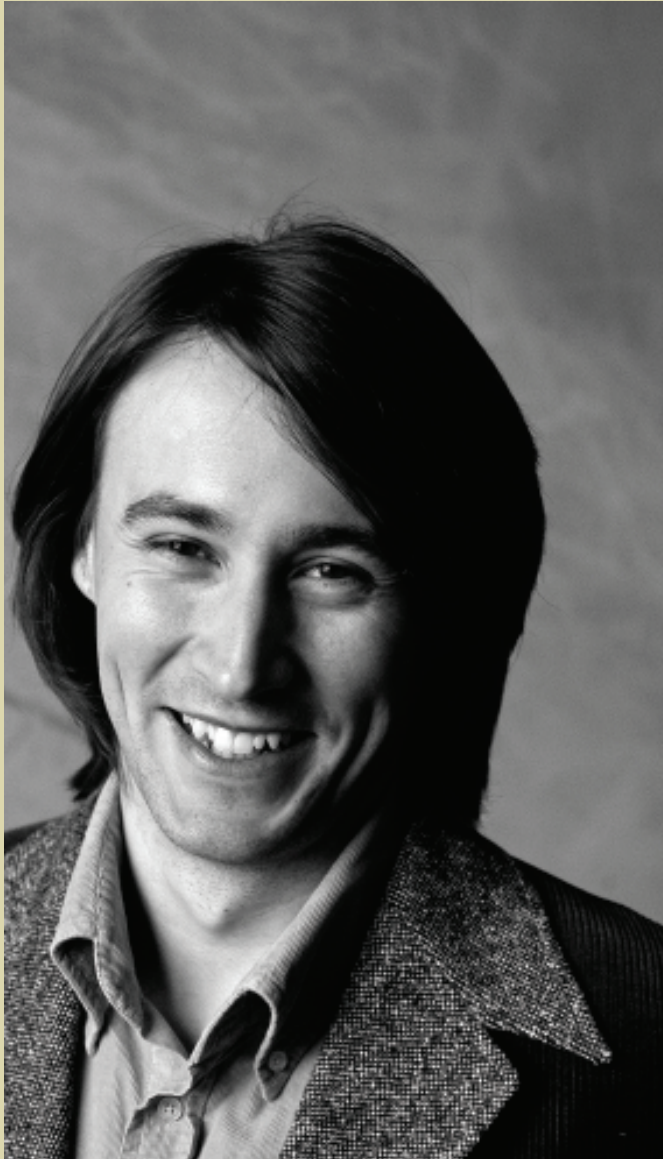


Photo by JOŽE SUHADOLNIK

Aleš Šteger (b. 1973) studied Comparative Literature and German Language at the University of Ljubljana. He has published four volumes of poetry, *Šahovnice ur* (Chessdesks of Hours, 1995), *Kašmir* (Kashmir, 1997), *Protuberance* (Protuberances, 2002) and *Knjiga reči* (Book of Things, 2005), a novel about Peru and César Vallejo *Včasih je januar sredi poetja* (January is Sometimes Midsummer, 1999) and a book of short prose *Berlin* (2007). He was one of the initiators of the *Days of Poetry and Wine* international poetry festival, held in Medana, Slovenia. He currently works as a freelance writer and editor of the theory-series *Koda* in Ljubljana.  
[www.alessteger.com](http://www.alessteger.com)

# ALEŠ ŠTEGER

## BOOKS IN TRANSLATION

*Solitude*, Chattanooga:  
Poetry Miscelanny, 1997  
*Kašmir*, Bratislava: Drewo  
a srd, 2000  
*Kaschmir*, Wien: Edition  
Korrespondenzen, 2001  
*Regreso a casa*, Ljubljana:  
Beletrina, 2001  
*Leden je nekdy uprostřed léta*,  
Brno: Vetrny Mlyn, 2002

*Protuberance*, Bratislava:  
Drevo a srd, 2003  
*Protuberance*, Zagreb:  
Meandar, 2003  
*Protuberance*, Sofia: PAN,  
2003  
*Protuberancias*,  
Guadalajara: Ediciones  
Arlequín, 2005

*Poezija Apsimoka*, Vilnius:  
Vario Burnos, 2005  
*Protuberancia*, Szeged:  
Veszprem, 2006  
*Buch der Dinge*, Frankfurt:  
Suhrkamp, 2006  
*Pesme*, Skopje: Društvo  
pisaca Makedonije,  
2006

*Knjiga riječi*, Tuzla:  
Bosanska riječ, 2006  
*Libro de las cosas*, Costa  
Rica: Casa de la Poesia,  
2006  
*Katkad je siječanj usred  
ljeta*, Zagreb: Meandar,  
2007



## Cat

Custodian of whose stone, whose breeze in his fur?  
A smirking sphinx, a castrated transvestite in a fur coat.  
When he lifts his tail, he still steers the sides of a cursed sky.  
A skeptic preserving the world in his hallucinatory way.

He avoids bad weather, unknown pants legs, membership in political parties.  
He'd rather sprawl like a mobster shot on a staircase,  
In a cathedral of afternoon light, near the chirruping of angels,  
Or he wriggles into the downy rings between space and time.

He has allowed himself to be stroked only twice.  
He knows that people have more dogs than love.  
When he closes his eyes, he falls through the barking in your heart.  
When he opens them, gold dust sprays out of his eyeballs as out of cracked amphoras,

Which lie too deep even for the divers with the longest breath.

## A

A died. And didn't die. Like his father  
A, like his grandfather he drowned in the village graveyard.

Drowned but didn't drown. He went into the mud.  
Into the mud and into the dumb stones in the mud.

Silent there now. Forgotten. Erased. Is there now and isn't.  
Because there is no place. He is without beginning and end. A-A-A.

Someone died. No one. His name—  
Forgotten. And his father's and his grandfather's name.

A sometimes rattles things. Sometimes gets up,  
Who went to bed, and continues dying, who keeps vigil.

Sometimes A-A-A an unbearable terror of space searching for its voice.  
Sometimes A-A-A a monotonous sadness of rain over streets.

A-A-A gurgles when it rolls out of the sea.  
A-A-A the sigh of quartz in watches.

Surely it is only—A is dead.

Whoever thinks he hears him sometimes should listen with the other ear,  
Whoever does not hear him will go on listening in vain.

## Walnut

You have remained empty-handed and you have a walnut in your hands.  
At first you squeeze it and hide it like some magic,  
But then everything squeezes you and you know that you must  
React and kill the magician to survive.  
In the middle of the walnut there is a kernel, but you don't care about it,  
You need the solution which is inscribed on the inside of the shell.  
The agony is too great, so you squeeze the empty fist and break the walnut.  
It grows silent, the broken signs become incomprehensible  
And the answer sphinx-like, but through the gaps you climb inside  
And eat the kernel. So you make room for yourself. So you become the kernel.  
And the kernel becomes You. You squats and waits  
For the shell to grow around it. Like some kind of foetus  
He squats and waits while in the walnut there is less and less light,  
And fewer and fewer wounds. Slowly You can begin to read the signs  
And the signs are more and more whole.  
You reads aloud, but when he reaches the end  
The shell grows complete and night falls around You. Caught in the dark,  
You hears how a white rabbit with murderous teeth jumps out of a hat  
And stops in front of the walnut, looking at it intently.

*Translated by* EVALD FLISAR

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## Europe

Even now you peddle the story of the Turks  
At the gates of Vienna, dismantling their tents only as a ruse.  
And how masquerading as kebab vendors  
Even now they're only waiting for the right moment  
To leap out from their kiosks and cut your throats.

No matter that your tribes are lost forever  
In the marshes of your barbaric designs  
And even you can't tell the skull of a Goth from the skull  
Of a Slav from the skull of an Angle from the skull of a Frank,  
Still you believe only your sons' spilt blood will rejuvenate you.

Still you think you'll give the lie to all of us.  
When I close my tired eyes, you appear  
In the form of a hairy fat woman who gives birth while snoring  
And of the man in the dark beside her secretly masturbating,  
Thinking about America.

*Translated by* WILLIAM  
MARTIN AND TOM LOZAR

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Photo by ROBERT BALEN

Miklavž Komelj (b. 1973) graduated in Art History at the University of Ljubljana, where he also received his Ph.D. His early poetry work sustains the form of sonnets: *Luč delfina* (1991) and *Jantar časa* (1995). In 2002 he published the book *Rosa* that was rewarded with the Veronika Prize. His last book, heading towards partly political yet still intimate poetry is entitled *Hipodrom* (2007) and for it Komelj received the Jenko Prize. He also writes art reviews and essays, translates from Italian (Pasolini), French (Nerval) and Portuguese (Pessoa) and writes poetry for children.

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# MIKLAVŽ KOMELJ

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### Episcopus Baptizans I

I wanted my hands to shake,  
I wanted to sway from old age and infirmity,  
  
that the time which existed before I existed would be nearer,  
that the day would finally dawn, when all those  
  
whom I had seen just vanishing would be born.  
That my forehead would become bloody at each birth  
  
of which I was not aware. I wanted to be large,  
that I would not deceive snowflakes with my great size.  
  
That they would fall through me. I wanted to be godless,  
so that I might continue calling on God. I wanted to be the Prophet  
  
that spider might save my life.  
I wanted to be King Solomon with his army,  
  
that I might hear the terrifying voice of the ant.

### Episcopus Baptizans III

Tightly hold this hand, child.  
Tightly hold on to this wall, child,  
I won't hold on any longer.  
Why are you writing down my words  
on pieces of paper? Let them disappear.  
All your tears at my death  
were shed before it happened.  
In the desire for secrecy  
you murdered all secrets  
and the fact that you murdered them  
is the greatest lie.  
The pillar is swaying,  
when it falls, everyone sighs with relief.  
What is obtained by force is desire for death,  
pure repugnance.  
You obtain by force what you are forced into,  
only that.  
Deafness.  
It leaves you also an ear for music,  
Just that again you might mould  
a roaring,  
in front of the altar,  
a simple roaring,  
no longer a singing.  
A weeping, long ago torn apart.  
A sickness from which you may scream.  
An imprecation, a gentle imprecation.  
What have I learned?  
That the whip flashes,



that the dead rise,  
do you want that?  
Where are the birds hurtling off to?  
After each dispute of washerwomen  
the return of the washerwomen  
to wood and stone.  
Amongst the bats  
on the defensive ditches  
on the evening city walls.  
Sorrowful necrophilia  
is in your eyes, child,  
you weep since you have no corpse at home,  
everything has been thrown out of the house,  
it does not matter whether it is mine  
or yours.  
You have discovered the manuscripts.  
Instructions for consecrating a Sunday:  
slaughter an animal on the preceding day.  
Too much cruelty for you to vomit  
in laughter at the absurdity.  
...  
The desire, during the ceremony even stronger  
than the desire that the sacrificed lamb  
might save all of us, might save me:  
the desire for the sacrificed lamb  
to save itself  
tore itself out,  
escaped,  
such a quiet desire  
that is always unspoken,  
for otherwise it would be a lie.  
Divine blood makes me feel sick.  
The lion weeps  
for his victim.  
Roaring.  
The cathedral pulping  
in Pisa.  
Enlightenment in prison.  
Gentleness, oil dripping from the fingers.  
You had to touch  
the corpse,  
with the wax which throughout its life  
flowed into  
this form,  
into the whisper of the sky.  
Nothing came into contact with the secret  
Nothing assumes  
responsibility for the alien voice.



Photo by LUKA UMEK

Gregor Podlogar (b. 1974) graduated in Philosophy from the University of Ljubljana. He has published poems in various literary magazines in Slovenia and abroad. His first two collections of poetry are entitled *Naselitve* (States, 1997) and *Vrtoglavica zanosa* (Joy in Vertigo, 2002). In co-authorship with the poet Primož Čučnik and painter Žiga Kariž an experimental book on New York City *Oda na manhatenski aveniji* (Ode on Manhattan Avenue, 2003) came out. His latest book, *Milijon sekund bliže* (A Million Seconds Closer) was published in 2006, the same year as a selection of his work appeared in *Six Slovenian Poets* (Arc Publication, 2006). He translates contemporary American poetry (Hawkey, Solomon, Killebrew, A. Berrigan, among others), edits the Slovenian side of the poetry web-site *lyrikline* ([www.lyrikline.org](http://www.lyrikline.org)) and drinks green tea in Ljubljana.

# GREGOR PODLOGAR

## BOOKS IN TRANSLATION

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*Závrát' extáze*, Boskovic:  
Albert, 2005  
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## E-mail

I may have already written to you.  
I find it more and more difficult to distinguish  
    between     what  
I dream & I write  
what I intended to do  
what I did on what level  
things are happening and now the record  
with the photo of David Oistrakh on the front  
    is snagging on one spot  
Anything urgent? Anything new?  
I don't really think there is  
so I threw out the newspapers in the end  
    the drawer of history is closed shut.  
        Ljubljana's sun's  
        shining.  
        Do you recall,  
green on a bike is a child  
    of the snow,  
Malevich is at his best here.  
And Joe Wenderoth,  
    who I'm reading now,  
is humming happily,  
    & eats in at *Wendy's*.  
Music. Music. Silence. Music.  
There's space here, I'm explaining,  
Noise here     noise  
pre-programmed piano,  
    rattle in the background,  
Raudive's voice about voices of the dead  
stealing his way through the loudspeakers into  
    *this world*.  
I'm running late again, it's better that I stop.  
Wherever I am, only until Monday,  
then I have a lot to do  
    mustn't forget  
to send Mustar's cell-phone number,  
    not Mustar the cartoonist,  
the Romanian who isn't Romanian,  
hey, send hellos to Cartarescu.  
    I'm having fun with the world.  
Sometimes love just goes out.  
The end of love,  
    the end of that film.  
And there's nothing wrong with that.  
I'm not asking questions,  
    because I can't find any.  
But it's understood, right.  
There are no more pigeons in town.  
And I have to see that film,  
The time on my mobile already shows 12 : 47,  
but it's more like



And Ljubljana's glowing in the sun.  
And people here are dependent on people  
the weather  
and light,  
which I'm eating today for breakfast.

*Translated by* ANA JELNIKAR  
AND STEPHAN WATTS

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### Random

Illusion is growing rank. I don't say much.  
There's nothing important about me on my ID.  
54 TV programmes  
just aren't enough.  
Things come to things,  
leave with greater solemnity than when they came.  
Thank you  
for being quiet.  
I share my image with the town  
in which I live.  
One deer is writhing in pain  
while others are watching,  
the ship is sinking  
down in the C20th.  
Pallid October light,  
some food that's gone off  
in the fridge,  
the drone of the central heating  
like a rhythm of electronic music.

*Translated by* ANA JELNIKAR  
AND STEPHAN WATTS

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The world is pulsing  
with dirty washing.

### Don't Leave This Town

I feel lost,  
my hands shake, I don't speak,  
clouds drift further to the east,  
the telephone will explode in flames,  
too many calls, not enough love,  
I am writing poems for a New Rome,  
nearby a hard rain,  
the old continent underwater in the middle of summer,  
like someone trying to clean sins, pain remains,  
you can call me anyway, whenever you are ready,  
Africa is not that far,  
I only miss Asia sometimes,  
I get closest to myself, when I am returning,  
when I'm almost home.

*Translated by* THE POET AND  
MATTHEW ZAPRUDER

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Photo by MURR

Marcello Potocco (b. 1974) first published his poetry in 1995 in the selection Young Slovenian Poetry. He has published three poetry books: *Lila* (2002), *Pripovedi o ovcah, ljudeh in drugih živalih* (Narratives of the Sheep, People and Other Animals, 2005) and *Popravki pesniške zbirke* (Corrections of the Poetry Book, 2007). His poems have been published in all major Slovenian magazines, while his appearances include readings in Slovenia and abroad. In 2006, Potocco obtained a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature with the thesis on cultural identity and the aesthetic value in English, Canadian and Slovenian poetry. He now works as an Assistant Professor at the University of Primorska, teaching Literary Theory and World Literature. He is also a literary critic and a translator of English Canadian Literature.

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# MARCELLO POTOCO

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## Each

Each worm has its own plum,  
its own piece of meat, which it colours  
with its own colour of rotting –  
we said in the car, after  
with a scowl on your face you  
had spat the red  
colour and coughed.  
Long trenches of worms were of interest  
to me only. The bends of the corroded path,  
the processing of the worm's ore, which burns out  
in the tiny body like the plum  
in yours. Do you kill a worm because  
it is burning out? We'll burn out some time  
or end up in a rubbish bin. The bin  
is always a solution: for the worm, the  
paper, for everything which is left,  
which we haven't even looked at yet;

for the time when we hide the fact  
that a short moment of weakness, one single careful  
look, following the bend, would be enough to make us say:  
let each worm have its own plum,  
its own piece of meat. Let it colour  
with its colour what belonged to it:  
all this mound around us.

## Unweighted

But sometimes a small  
miracle happens,  
as when closing the door of the washing machine  
after the dirty underpants  
to pull them out  
immaculate again, and later  
with self satisfaction  
as if I had anything  
to do with it, I compare this part of the day  
with the morning, when I clean  
the grime from the car and give  
its shine back to it, impeccably red –

again, as if in a contest, with the pieces of rubbish  
I gather round the world, I try to construct  
before my eyes

a perfect shine.



## duchesse anne

The city is shoving off. The lights are moving away, until they finally shrink into a single misty strip. Then also the strip vanishes. This sharp white light remains, which illuminates the joints of iron, the smell of petrol. People who sink into sleep. We are on a ship. We sail through complete dark. We sail in the dark, which cannot avoid us, through the blackness, which is doomed to us as if part of the ticket, for which we paid in port. An autopilot is driving us, the captain and the crew are here only to check the beginning and the final manoeuvre. They also sleep at night.

They also, like the passengers, dream confident that this is a route of the expected. We dream that in the morning we will cut our way out untouched. Exhausted by untouchingness.

## A Poem about Infinity

### I.

Animal beings come from here, they say. We cast nets for our fish ancestors into the sea, we observe it licking with countless tongues the lips of the land, and smoothing their cracks to heal the rocks,

we try to make an emptiness in it. Subjected like the air: boats and ships cut it in two levels with no visible end and no name, resplendent with the reflection of the ship, its name and number;

this is the remnant of the mainland habits, which we pay for soon enough with a surprised look at the impudent shade of anxiety, when the water unexpectedly becomes aware of the storm. The wind turns it into waves to break the surrounding ships, repaying them for all it suffered. And we are confident that the sea can heal itself, that it can heal the wounds on a thin and sensitive membrane of the skin, as if it could, with a thread of salt, sew the shore torn in half, because

we fear that only then can we delete our presence, when the water is completely smooth all the wounds are forgotten, only the jelly fish flow soundlessly through. Half visible. Like blood under the skin. They don't do anything.

Stanka Hrastelj (b. 1975) studied Theology at the University of Ljubljana. She has published poetry in several magazines and on radio, participated in national and international almanacs and in the anthologies *Fanfare* and *Antologija slovenskih pesnic* (Anthology of Slovenian poetesses). In 2001 she was named Best Young Poet at the *Urška* Festival of young Slovenian authors. She published her poetry collection *Nizki toni* (Low Tones, 2005) for which she received the Best Literary Debut award at the Slovenian Book Fair. She was named Poetry Knight at the Book Days in 2007.



Photo by BOŠTJAN PUCELJ

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# STANKA HRASTE LJ

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## Judith's Monologue in the Evening Darkness

Thunder accompanies you to the scent of raw  
not yet purified wool, you continue on your own,  
lines on your hands do not point out the direction  
and you sing, you try to sing in a language,  
which has been born too soon,  
but yet again it is already eroding,  
you communicate with the movements,  
with trembling of your buttocks, learned from the men.  
Assyria is on the North.  
You need only one thread to return.  
Is this what people call measuring time?

Being the chosen nation always feels like the knife in my back,  
it comes when I respond without any sparks,  
its aromatic oils  
in large quantities kill.  
Afterward, the moment comes when the thread vanishes  
and the light disappears.  
The voyage offers you a juicy orange  
in its stretched arm  
and in the other hand wide saltpans of fear.  
Just a little bit, just this lifetime.  
Book opened,  
voices started wearing out, fading,  
the same as the left and the right side.  
There was a behest which did not lead anywhere.  
There was that much.

Trick— men are unaware of:  
circling with the womb — not with the hips.  
There was language, premature,  
it sank into a page of Book  
and slipped on the slope of the text  
into loneliness and fear.

It is too late to back away.  
You have to learn a huge number of codes  
to be able to seduce—  
the direction and the length of looks you give,  
tones of voices, smells of armpits, the weight of movements.  
The game that goes to your heart.

Holding Holofernes' head tires me,  
and because we are talking about it:  
there was no fulfillment.  
Bluff, but the person is not always worth it,  
and is always underestimated.

## Scent of Paper

Rain smells of paper  
so does Versace's Black Jeans, here hides the reason  
I am reading and writing today, writing



and reading and learning how to live,  
though nothing is comparable to  
the changes March brings  
or with Aleš's belief that he is a great lover  
and the boys are starting to believe that he really is.

I enter Paper like I would enter Rome,  
barefooted across the Rubicon, Fellini ordered,  
I slip down the pages like I would slip down the rainbow,  
I believe there is also pepper hidden  
in perfume, but men do not smell of  
pepper nor paper,  
rather all of them use old doll Old Spice  
and consider every lighting of candles as the sign of being obsessed  
with the feelings of romance.  
There's no use in mentioning how they know nothing about a woman,  
there lived only a few who knew something about a woman  
Andrej Rubljov, Peter Abelard and John the Baptist.  
After all, who really knows anything about anyone?

The other day I lit all the candles I had found,  
wore a skirt and tied the scarf  
with fringes and small shells around my hips  
and danced the belly dance.  
The main point here is not romanticism my husband to be confessed  
and read aloud what someone has written in the magazine  
The womb does not crave a baby, it desires the phallus.  
Who really knows anything about anyone?  
Words do not show who we really are completely, and the same goes  
for our actions,  
maybe the fact that you cannot borrow Seferis  
from our library, tells us a lot  
or tells us nothing at all.  
Instead a librarian pushed Richard Burns into my hands  
and his eyes clung to my face This could redeem you as well,  
then after your salvation pull us with you.  
They wish to compose the book of books from world's literature,  
wanting to exchange "Pentateuch" for Grička vještica,  
"Joshua" for American Psycho,  
"Judges" for The Name of the Rose  
and we would come to "Apocalypse."  
The time for reading The Bible and Koran has passed by  
Judaism and Manicheism have grown old,  
Christ's teachings have lost their flexibility.  
It's not much to ask said Richard Burns,  
It's not much to ask, only the common miracle.

I am reading and writing today, writing  
and reading and learning how to live,  
I am touching the books like they were cutting knives,  
and they gracefully return with the same strength,  
never mind there are no great events in them,  
no Ophelia dressed in white, just thin  
human fragility, under whose power the ground collapses.  
Poetry, so that God does not need to create it all,  
Reality, so that Devil has a clear conscience.



Gašper Malej (b. 1975) lives in the bilingual environment of Slovenian Istria. He graduated in Comparative Literature and Literary Theory from the Faculty of Arts in Ljubljana. He is self-employed in the field of culture and writes poetry, short prose, literary reviews and essays which are published in Slovenian cultural magazines, daily newspapers and other media. His main activity is translating contemporary Italian fiction (poetry, narrative, drama and essays) by the following authors: Pavese, Tabucchi, Fo, Pasolini, Zanzotto, Marinetti, Barba, Tondelli, Buzzati, Loi, Merini, Ruffilli, Erba and many others. His collection of poems in Slovenian *Otok, slutnje, poljub* (Island, Premonitions, a Kiss, 2004) was nominated for the Best First Book Prize at the 21<sup>st</sup> Slovenian Book Fair (2005). He works in the field of theatre as a dramaturge and writer of stage adaptations. In 2006 he was awarded a one-month residency in Helsinki as part of the "Sealines" international literary project and was consequently invited to the 23<sup>rd</sup> Lahti International Writers' Reunion (2007). In his postgraduate studies at the Faculty of Arts in Koper he is conducting research into the anthropology of translation.



Photo by LENART J. KUČIČ

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# GAŠPER MALEJ

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## The Tree of Seven Sadnesses

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Something is happening among the leaves.  
And a different spring might  
fill the empty space with voices  
that don't belong to calmness.  
And there will be resounding -  
a persistent flow of experience  
whispering between the walls.  
You don't move. And  
the sea is here. There's a smile  
of children's games, a fairytale  
forgotten in the woods.  
Something is happening among the leaves.  
And it's rewriting your face -  
such that you don't know yet.

\* \* \*

You enter through an opening  
that is boundlessly foreign.  
Into the air-scented landscape  
which is a hollow manuscript. Far away.  
A mysterious hieroglyph instead of a hand  
you could recognize with love.  
How you fight for each premonition,  
for everything engendered by thought,  
leaving roots in the piled-up soil.  
Deeply, away. A mysterious speech  
of wind flowers. The landscape is  
inscribed by loneliness. An old man in the shade  
plays with stories. With defeats that linger  
like a seal.

\* \* \*

A name you choose to keep forgetting.  
To display emptiness  
even as accidental pulsation.  
Someone is ringing and covering you  
with artificial flowers. A bitter  
sign is left there as a reminder.  
What anxiety embraces you?  
Who will leave their ashes  
to open up a shell of light,  
a desert smile? White windows  
and a heavy trace on the hand.  
An escape, a burnt out sign, a shady  
setting. A premonition in blood.  
Of a turning point.

\* \* \*



The sea is flooding with the strength  
of all the elements. A plea for  
the passions torn apart, an unknown  
person you forget in the mirror  
or behind a curtain. All the awareness  
is in the waves. Perhaps inaccessible,  
underneath the surface. You're ripped  
into short, indeterminate shivers. And  
maybe you're still there, on the sands.  
In the impermanence of the castles built  
by a foreign hand. There is death  
coming with the sea. You belong to it,  
like everything else washed ashore.

\* \* \*

The child sees beyond the present  
blurriness. Among fir trees,  
in the azure, a premonition spreads.  
Ancient masters put aside their faces,  
the ring briefly held in the child's hand  
is an anxious eye. The child, the faces  
and the ring. The light slowly fades.  
The truth pales like a forgotten  
toy. Maturity is a frozen tear  
that cannot purify  
into crying.

\* \* \*

A time that only the July sun  
can redeem. Behind the fence dwell  
focused looks, words like arrows  
wound without protection.  
You put a lamp into the room  
where nothing gleams; you discern  
the wet altars of caustic idols.  
The clinking of broken kisses  
seeps carefully. No, the decay  
is not accomplished yet, under the window  
a purple flower soothes the trembling.  
On the roads there blossom  
rainbow touches wrapped in the warm  
insecurity of dawning. Which comes  
inevitably and announces the day.

Jana Putrle Srdić (b. 1975) is a poet, translator and masseuse. Occasionally she writes about alternative film and works as a cultural organiser. She has published two books of poetry: *Kutine* (Quinces, 2003) and *Lahko se zgodi karkoli* (Anything Could Happen, 2007). Translated into several languages, she has been published in foreign anthologies and literary magazines and has participated in international readings and festivals. She translates poetry from Russian (Timofejev), English (Hass, Sapphire) and Serbian (Ristović).



Photo by ZS



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# JANA PUTRLE SRDIĆ

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## Vanishings

Half a year after your death  
I called home,  
no one answered the phone and  
suddenly I was surprised by your voice  
on the answering machine.

As if the cactuses from the window shelf  
had circled my bed in the morning.

As you were talking from the cube  
of pink jelly

your voice  
was both familiar and strange,  
unusually determined like the voice  
of a thirty-year-old who is never  
at home and needs an answering machine

because he just came from handball,  
and is hurrying to a shooting exercise.  
Just as all shooters on the way  
to the range, he knows that he has to stare  
through the window of the bus  
at the same spot continuously,  
the moon on the afternoon sky,

so in front of the target  
his heart begins to beat with the black circles  
until he joins them with his pulse on a dot  
and pulls the trigger.

The familiar voice  
of a thirty-year-old who is now on  
a honeymoon to Venice with the tape of Glen Miller  
in the car. A women's hat with a wide brim.  
His light summer trousers – Gatsby's style –  
slip over his knees when he jumps over  
two stairs at a time.  
Stinky canals, damp walls,  
pigeons, he says to her, everywhere pigeons,  
at the same time as his cigarette, he leisurely  
lights the smiles on negatives.

I pass by this tall slender man  
in a light summer shirt who does not recognize me,  
I do not exist.



*Translated by* BRIDGETTE  
BATES AND THE AUTHOR

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I am thinking – when we erase the tape  
and your voice in my head  
becomes blur I will be  
a bit more porous,  
my vanishing  
will begin to prepare.

### **Construction at the End of Summer**

You can learn a lot, living near  
a construction site. First they set up  
azure-colored plastic toilets.  
Rain pouring down for three days and yellow  
helmets under jutting roofs,  
laughter from a warehouse. The leaves are still green,

but it seems like we are moving somewhere else,

bit by bit every night, we wake up in the same  
house, near the same construction, only the sky is

colder and the noise from the street is filled with  
obligations. What to do now with the hot stones  
we have been placing on the belly  
all summer? The leaves are still green,

the workers wear yellow helmets.  
Everyone has their own tricks for survival.  
Embarrassed salesgirls wrap naked  
mannequins in wrapping paper.  
Every morning Črnuče's bum makes a pilgrimage  
to the center for a Franciscan lunch.  
You spit across your shoulder at multicolored  
cats and the dog persistently carries off the slippers  
into the unknown. The leaves are still green, but the yellow ones

no longer look back when I pass by  
the fence. Helmets accompanied by buzzing, throbbing,  
pounding, rattling, deepen the hole  
in the earth. Next autumn,

10-20m in the air above, two people will make love

bathed in gentle light from erotic films  
and sink into the darkness – our house  
will stare in wonder.

*Translated by* TRAVIS  
JEPPESEN AND THE AUTHOR

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Photo by DK

Tomislav Vrečar (b.1976) grew up in Nova Gorica and attended the Primož Trubar classical lyceum in Stara Gorica. His first poems were published in a local magazine *Via Libera*. He left school in 1994 and moved to Ljubljana, where he has had various jobs: waiter, telephone salesman of cookery books, a DJ... At KUD France Prešeren he is responsible for the project *Club Evenings* of artists of various practices. Later he renamed the project *Abstractworkshop* and started his own multimedia performances, intertwining poetry with other artistic expressions (music, video, dance...) Among the best known is the multimedia recital *Ko se mi vse ponuja, se meni skuja* with the rhythm section of the 2227 group and the photographer Damjan Kocjančič. His poetry collections are: *Punk še ni hin* (1997), *Vaš sin vsako jutro preganja mačke po soseski* (1998), *Ko se mi vse ponuja, se meni skuja* (2003). He collaborates on albums of poetry and music *Košček hrupa in ščepec soli* (as a musician and a poet) and *Rokerji pojejo pesnike* (as a poet). In 2004 his collection of poetry *Naj me koklja brčne, potem bom pa še jaz njo* was published. He was awarded the Knight of Poetry 2005 at the Knight Tournament in Maribor. He translates literature from the Italian language, with one of his bigger projects being Pasolini's poetry. He lives and works in Ljubljana.



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# TOMISLAV VREČAR

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### Say It Straight

Ljubljana is a valley, all Ljubljanesi are valley-grown.  
They cannot spit in my face, they breed mists and aerial halogens.  
With their body parts they aim for the north and let reason sort out their blood.  
They stuff themselves in canteens, eat thick, mis-shapen food, protect themselves in herds,  
seek out laughter instead of taking on tears, grab snow with their teeth, white awnings  
that thaw like their faces, wrapped up in their fog. Anybody can be a poet here, until the sun  
is kissed and then they crinkle in their own juice, like a moth aware of its destined flame.  
They laugh here to fill their voids, even if this reeks of hysterical convulsions, rotten rattle  
eggs, absurd diligence, of being trapped in the Alpine mind.  
Their sea is like a pinch of salt in a beef soup, no  
greatness can be without corpses, no width without horizons.  
Their rule of law more noble than gold, and dung smells good  
in petit-bourgeois households, and smells like a noble herb.  
Their shield of selfconfidence is an accordion, the legal weapons for suicide a bloated face  
and cirrhosis of the liver. Everything else is a virus of the spirit,  
corpses without visas, dreamt-up realities.

### Desert Father

He sat down on the edge of the bed,  
lit himself a cigarette,  
and waited for the sound of silence.  
Ashes were falling to the floor,  
outside birds wouldn't be quiet.  
All he had on were his pants,  
in the dusk of the room his face was invisible.  
Shafts of light were slipping through the shutters,  
he knew this emptiness,  
the rustle of nothing  
that was enveloping his body as a solitary orgasm.  
He stepped out of his body and began to float,  
he was toppling into the bottomless sky,  
the deeper he sank,  
the sweeter were his spasms.  
In the void he was biting into his own flesh,  
he knew he would never land,  
the more he was moving off,  
the smaller he became,  
only fragments of himself were left behind,  
he was filling up some other dimension, name unknown,  
he was moving over into some other state,  
everyone's head turned to the sky, looking for the face ...  
He was way out there, laughing ...



### To Whom I Refuse Life, I Grant Death

Mornings are fresh and nights dark,  
your body is like the best part of the loaf,  
my tongue is losing itself there,  
my imaginary young man,  
I am weeping and your body is fragile.  
I can only destroy myself,  
I would crumble under the weight of my tears,  
so I won't pluck you like a flower,  
I will let you grow,  
I will caress you when the surly wind blows,  
your beauty and stature will be my spring,  
I will rise from mud and shine, give you warmth,  
offer you shelter against the weight of the world,  
which will want you only for itself.  
One day you will grow up,  
which is when I will turn into smoke,  
in the evening you will watch the horizon,  
a lot of time will have lapsed,  
you will be richer by a thousand colours,  
sharpened by countless ills,  
you will be marble-calm in the warm sundown,  
you will be reflecting the sky.

### Nice Weather Outside

Watch your bones when you are assembling your face of youth.  
You should know that when it is fully formed, it will no longer  
be yours.  
Others will lay claim to it, shattering it to a mosaic  
of fears and doubts.  
Pay attention to the birds that sing to the blue  
of the sky,  
every day singing the same song differently.  
Shatter the mirrors, shatter yourself in the eyes of others,  
your melody is become a thing of silence, being alone is not just  
killing time,  
solitariness will break you into your basic elements,  
you will swim there  
like butter in the lap of milk, you will be pouring into yourself,  
the smaller you are,  
the more it will be you, and you will be assembling your face  
and this face will no longer be the same.



Photo by URŠA VIDIC

Alja Adam (b. 1976) graduated in Comparative Literature and the Sociology of Culture at the Faculty of Arts in Ljubljana, where she continued her studies and received her PhD in the field of Women's Studies and Feminist Theory. Her poetry has been included in various Slovenian and international publications and translated into Italian, English, German, Croatian and Serbian. In 2003 she published a book of poems entitled *Zaobljenost* (Roundness). She has participated at numerous events and festivals. She often presents her poetry together with other art forms: dance, video and electronic music. At the moment she is preparing a new book of poetry entitled *Zakaj omenjati Ahila* (Why Mention Achilles). She is working as a post-doctoral researcher at the Institute for Postgraduate Humanistic Studies (ISH) in Ljubljana and is a member of Liminal, an association for social transfusion, creative and applied science.

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# ALJA ADAM

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## Piercing the Fear

words which fall uncontrollably  
are like translucent things.  
just like sentences which move between the open dams of commas  
and remain half-pronounced,  
due to eruptions of unclear meanings.

you listen to water gushing from the sky  
and ponder how the world is becoming ever more vulnerable.  
when it rains, hills sag,  
houses fall and innocent people die.  
mud and water sweep away roads.  
the earth spews fear.

you recall the story about  
the pot which cooked so much porridge from a fistful of millet  
that it fed every hungry mouth in the world.  
one day it was seized by close-fisted townfolk.  
from then on the pot cooked only at their behest, and as they grew rich,  
those who were hungry before went hungry again.  
but the pot-grabbers did not know how to turn off the pot and the boiling porridge swelled  
and flooded the forests, fields and towns.

you listen to water gushing from the sky  
and wonder when will this brutal destruction of the earth's skin stop,  
when will they who pass these unwieldy pots of power from hand to hand  
step from words to action,  
put an end to the flat slaps of their unkept promises  
and add full stops to their decisions.

## Naked Aphrodite

how very plastic I am, custom-made,  
words pursue me like desperate Charites  
and try to dress me up  
but they are running short of the fabric and the floral pattern, so I remain  
seemingly naked.

I am great, I feel how great I am,  
although I do not grow by words but by sighs:  
O, how I love to shop, how I love to pick and choose,  
try things on and flaunt my image,  
I am a Playboy bunny, through my ass's hole you can see the underwater world,  
my nipples, the red swelling sea-cherries  
preserved in the ocean for millennia, delicious, without conservation agents,  
sell at the lowest price

and Uranus's offspring, grasping at my ivory neck  
as if clutching at a straw  
tremble, while tiny, ever more perishable fish  
spawn inside their testicles.



## Pikado Bar

*Delle cose che bruciano non rimane che il sole.  
(From the things which burn only the sun remains)  
Pavese*

at the roadside bar where I sought shelter  
during a storm,  
amidst the clanking of glasses, the loud mingling  
of voices and intertwining fingers taking cigarettes from packs  
I felt that moments which light up matches  
die no quicker than decades which burn down  
moments

perhaps the waitress's round face  
floating above the ground like the moon  
or the people's magnificent apathy blending in  
with the surroundings, like pieces of a permanent exhibition

perhaps the two old women who were drinking beer and chatting  
about arranging flowers in the cemetery, the mud they had to trudge through  
to make it to the graves, the years  
they worked at the Litostroj factory,

were to blame  
that after the rain had ceased  
I halted on the doorstep  
to watch the sun rays, slight and sharp as knives,  
pierce the damp  
and throw the light of cigarette ends on the wet gravel outside.

## Why Mention Achilles

my anger  
is the anger of old women  
who drop seeds in the earth  
and wait for the rain to open up the land just as  
their bodies perhaps for the last time  
queue at the checkout small trembling  
heavy-laden with memories and shopping bags  
which fall from their grasp

it wrenches itself from the heel -  
the vine stem which ends in the grapes of my hair  
coadunate I bend back  
to my childhood before falling asleep  
I imagine death and am unable to  
swallow the saliva, clenched fists  
frighten even the tallest ones  
in the school yard  
where two girls, as if in a boxing ring,  
stare one another in the eye.



Photo by NADA ZGANK

Kristina Hočevar (b. 1977) graduated in Slovenian Language and General Linguistics. She currently works as a high school teacher and a newspaper editor. Besides poetry, she occasionally publishes literary criticism, works as a DJ at a lesbian club, shares two basenjis and lives in three different locations. Her first two books *V pliš* (2004) and *Fizični rob* (2007) were published by Cankarjeva založba. A third one will follow (publisher: Škuc Lambda) in autumn 2008. Kristina's poetry has also been translated into foreign languages, most recently into Hungarian (The Hungarian Anthology of Slovenian Poets).

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# KRISTINA HOČEVAR

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7

with every writing, with each one I am putting you  
where you belong, into a fantasy of a certain morning  
into a pure fantasy, that I love to repeat  
I do not dare to feel each stimulant from yesterday  
I cannot be destroying my upright pose with desperation or photos  
I will not kill the exalted soul with everyday facts  
I promise myself beauty, in every way I need it  
it can hurt, it can rub or sting, it can even possibly kill,  
but I want to float, I want to lie on soft clouds  
I will remove the first fascination and prolong the bright rapture  
it hasn't been that long since I was tired and real.

14

hold me tight before we descend to the bottom  
naked into a black sea because tenderness too warm  
catch a breath so we can endure the pressure and the depth  
*does a sky look at itself in waters or do waters see themselves in a sky?*  
before we vanish remember questions  
before you give yourself to silence tell who you are  
at the bottom a scream will be too late and unrecognized

36

grab it by the neck  
drag love in front of the door  
of a sunken city and let her go  
let her swim let her save herself  
only as she can

33

Remove my name from the text.  
Carry out the necessary violence.

Nothing will corrupt us.  
Moths will not infest.  
Nothing will be inconsolable.

Remove my name from the text.



I recognize the censorships for my physical death

I know fenced in walls, overhangs for the  
earth

I know my forbidden continent

A space of physical death ( A background of dignity)

Ankels are not untied  
The wrist is not unbound  
Lips are not soothed  
Pupils of the eyes are not calmed

Placements of a star

A space of physical death

As the sky turns (Betrayals of dignity)

Can you sense the censorships of my physical death?



## 69

Your white sea is not the opposition of my black sea.  
Your white sea is not the opposition of my black sea.  
Here you do not remember  
Emotion. Alternating, a fire is rising on the stage of a hall.  
In the opposite proportion you are approaching along the hallway.

## I

The content is new. It is new to all of you.  
The sky is a cut down cotton placed in a crack.  
It is new, because it's mine. Because it's Metka.



Photo by MURR



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# JURE JAKOB

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Jure Jakob (b. 1977) studied at the Faculty of Arts in Ljubljana and graduated in Philosophy and Comparative Literature. In 2003 LUD Literatura published his first collection of poems *Tri postaje* (Three Stations), for which he was awarded the Zlata ptica Award for outstanding achievements of a young artist. His second collection *Budnost* (Wakefulness, 2006) was shortlisted for the Jenko Prize for poetry. He works as a literary critic and lives in Ljubljana.

## Olives

You weren't in Medana. You weren't eating prosciutto. You weren't drinking from a glass nor watching how the glasses circled and how wooden spoons were hanging from the treetop of a walnut.

You weren't there when the sun was setting over the Dolomites mountains, on the smooth plains from the Alps to the sea lights were turning on like little eyes, and you weren't there to say that you could see Venice.

You weren't lying among the cicadae that would break the silence from the darkness and bodies from the bodies, you didn't soften like the morning mist in the low sun like my thoughts in the glimmering of images.

The tent was large and empty, and on the inside the canvas didn't smell like the linen of a skirt touching a skin fold, there was no skin.

I sat on the terrace and listened to languages that were touching me like a woman with whom I spent two years: incomprehensible languages.

You weren't there, woman. The Brda hills are fertile, the sea is nearby; the missing that I speak of is like olives that get pressed, cold. It is bitter, but good.

## Sailing Boats

They are white and precise when they lean against the air, when they open their arms of sails and capture it, trusting the sea, the swaying and the last line on the horizon,

between the blueness below and the blueness above, in the only possible place, horizontally, ready to move into all directions, always ahead, pushing out the future,

and radiant from all that has already passed, they move like half-fish and half-birds, what do they carry, what do they transport in the wind from which they live, where are they taken when they lean on the side

and change the direction of the sky, above the deep water, above the body of emptiness that seethes among the waves and the foam against which the traces of what they used to be are washed and wiped away for purity

that still awaits them, they are white from readiness and smelling of salt, like women who let go, in a soft movement and with certainty they know where they will be blown away to,





naked beauties, lovers of destiny, and when the bora arrives  
the sails flutter and beat into tense silence  
like hair let loose through which I would run my fingers,

and when the sky clears, they are even purer, attempted strokes  
contribute to their beauty, how can they manage, how do they not  
get lost, there, far away from the ports,

and the tall sails silently hold on to the gusts of wind when they  
move away, and the load remains in the white vessels of their bodies,  
untouched, as if it were truly underneath, in the depth

of water, or as if it were invisible like the wind that pushes them,  
tirelessly, the sailing boats on their way, swaying,  
moving into all directions beneath the radiant sun on the open sea.

### **I Will Wake up Darker**

I am lying and waiting for my skin to grow darker.  
Here are rocks, stones, sand.  
My thoughts are splashing like the sea, softly,  
but they continue in my time.  
A white seagull rises and shrieks,  
but this shrieking means nothing to me.  
I believe that what I see is true:  
triumphant brightness and the horizon,  
filled up to the edge with moving water.  
If I turn on my back and expose my belly to the sun,  
it is because I want to feel,  
and as long as my thoughts splash like the sea,  
softly, everything is good.  
But I waited long enough to see the day grow dark,  
and everything that I see only talks about  
how much I would love to be part of it.  
And every evening when I lie and wait for my thoughts  
to grow darker, I know that little has been accomplished:  
I will wake up darker.

*Translated by* MARTHA KOŠIR

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Photo by BOŠTJAN PUCELJ

Katja Plut (b.1979) wrote *Lotosovo prebujanje* (Awakening Of a Lotus, 1993) at the age of 14 together with Mitja Bukovec. A year later, her book *Do resničnosti izsanjan svet* (The World Dreamed out into Reality, 1994) was published. In high school she edited, designed and published *Dober tek!* (Enjoy your meal!, 1997), which was followed by *Ej!* (Hey!, 2001). In 2003 MC N'toko invited her to make a slam poetry recording which he used for his debut album (*Cesarjeva nova podoba*). The last book *Štafeta hvaležnosti* (Relay of Gratefulness, 2005) was nominated for the Veronika Prize. She received the Zlata ptica prize for literature in 2007.

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# KATJA PLUT

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## To become a human

*Perhaps mogoče peut-être if i was an angel če bi bila angel que si j'étais ange da sam anđeo it would be easier for me to get along bi se lažje shajalo il serait très facile pour moi à vivre bilo bi puno jednostavnije, in razumelo et à comprendre i razumljivije to understand or if i was human ali če bi bila človek ou si j'étais homme ali nisam but i am not*

I want to know it all,

all about me, about you, about all the people that are about to live, about the buried fiddlers,

I want to speak all languages and talk to every human every night.

I want to sleep with every man and every woman, I want to walk along every path whose roadside rites have not been rubbed off by the hordes of transitional corpses.

I want to return to the children and dolphin relatives, but before I do I want to contemplate things from the rational point of view and make love with all our hearts, as if they were stretching each over half of the Earth.

I want to have a quarrel with myself and become a fine human, an honourable human, a human in all directions, capable of walking in any footwear available, looking through my and your eyes, at any belfry or centre of the world or sky, but never crosswise.

I want to become a human in order to be able to go off aloud in any direction, but not crosswise.

I'm here playing something, not really concentrating on being and what I'm doing and why all the others are so much more firmly glued to the scene.

I was born and I'm always complaining, I take myself for granted, just as I take all of you and my troubles.

I'm starting to think that I should probably be paying a rent because my manner isn't at all contributing to the community we live in.

Excuse me and above all I shall first have to excuse myself, but before this happens I have to give me the rough side of my tongue in order to calm down then into one person again.

To become a human so I can walk away loudly and only then I'll be able to walk away.

Translated by THE AUTHOR

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## Cogito ego sum

I have always been  
too strong for you  
to fake it or to take it

and I have always been too fragile  
to handle  
the candle burning  
in between the quick shifts  
you were always turning,

yearning for love, nauseous for an embrace,  
scarred and scared of these, both to death,  
of course,  
and both until the day you die, until the day  
the fake self clicks and ceases, and finally sweetness  
makes the grouchy steps grow faint again;

it is a complicated thing  
for us two, we can only keep each other company  
through tunnels angels strain

for where people and things are so  
hard they can almost be held  
one can always get too clumsy.

... you call someone by name  
and Someone can always turn  
around too quickly not to sketch an elbow end in  
between the ribs, starting the scintillant candle flame  
turn red and leak on the wooden floor, lignify  
everyone else in the bar who has been stopped  
by the moment of gross, clumsy forgetfulness;

and any  
*no my god,*  
*I'm sorry*  
cannot outlive the outline.

I'd been halved.

One hand wanting to attain you,  
the other wanting to  
keep us both safe; this was the one  
that removed the distortion  
and wiped up the leavings  
after me  
and after you.

We left the table with less faith  
but undoubtedly a lot safer,

as leaking faith had left Hansel-and-Gretel traces  
all the way back down.

*Translated by* THE AUTHOR  
AND MARTIN BAILEY

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