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Georgiana Mărculescu

WE CAN NO LONGER HIDE FOR PEACE

Some people no longer wake up thinking of tomorrow.
Tomorrow is no longer hanging
on the rusted rack prepared the day before.
It can no longer be worn in the morning.
Yesterday's trenches are lined up microwaves.
Where naked people are waiting with their roasted hearts.
The ding which opens the door
from above or the one to the battlements.
A hell which deletes their sins and seeds their roots.
As far as the seventh generation.
Their women left
with full arms and gunpowder in their pockets.

We can no longer hide for peace.
Under lids of tanks like capsules which stop on subway tracks.
The boots of the young soldiers are seeking dirt where they can throw away their
cigarette butts and yell freedom.
The lids are lifted. The sun is burning their eyes. They are tied with naval ropes and
brought to the shore.
They've got to choose between the Black Sea and mothers.

The same bare feet mothers who must come behind bodies to bring their sons home.
They will take back the ashes of the winners
to their homes, to their shops, to their libraries and to their churches, bone by bone,
tooth by tooth.

The mothers' wombs are bursting, being replaced by rising dirt and ashes.
As far as the seventh generation.

We can no longer hide for peace.
When we turn off the war from the button of the remote control.

WHAT'S LEFT

I didn't mean to win him at poker that night. It just happened.
An ebony horse, a surfboat that had already set sail.

He put his cap backwards while he was still sobbing at the table.
His red Cola t-shirt reminded me that I'm still on antibiotics.

I asked for water, a lot of water, to clear my throat and my fears.

CLOSE THE SKY

They've got this recycled sky
They didn't know it was inside out.
All the gods were stuck inside
While people were walking with round mouths.
One set of cutleries on the very long buttry table.
He's eating alone served exclusively by a billionaire.

Close the sky!
Missiles are following our children.
Flesh scrapbooks.
No one was looking up anymore
They learned to crawl through days soil scavenging.

Lock the sky!
This strainer could be free just for the ravens.
If we are lucky.

Hope could come just from the inner core of the earth
Where we are sure that the blue egg was born before the hen.



Soilada de flores

Sava Damjanov

PENIS-DRUG DEALER

(From the book *Very Eccentric Stories*, Agora, Serbia, 2019)

...What a pity. He was the best baritone, before he got into drugs; he was also

a talented basketball player who had already signed a contract with the NBA champions; and worst of all – a liberal politician on the rise, a candidate for Prime Minister! Such a diverse person and yet prone to stumbling, not only when it came to drugs, but also many other things! Should one point out the fact that both before and after the drug dealing scandal he had problems with alcohol, gambling and pedophilia, that he was involved in people trafficking, cybercrimes and corruption, that he was finally unmasked for his greatest vice – chronic kleptomania (namely, he was caught in the supermarket stuffing his pockets with candy)?!...

...And it had all started naively: the young baritone had started singing in restaurants and at weddings, in order to supplement his budget. At one such revelry he was spotted by the host of the most popular reality show (Coochie Show), who hired him to sing his arias to her personally (Miss Coochie), before a million-strong audience! These arias of Coochie's were much more than just Coochie, so the young baritone soon advanced to a tenor, and then to a lyric soprano. The world of show business obviously did him well, because not long after that the mafia got involved, as was always the case in such matters...

...We soon find this versatile young man in a prison cell, surrounded by hardcore criminals who couldn't understand his talents and his refined artistic nature in general! According to the old prison tradition, he became their concubine and although he had never preferred anal sex, he nevertheless had to engage in it for a pack of cigarettes or two, or for more time in the shower (where he was once again forced to orally satisfy his patrons). The unfortunate Penis got caught up in a prostitution ring, which he grew so fond of that even after getting out of prison he would not have any other, more honest job! What a pity: this wonderful voice would be heard by every thug banging him, instead of select audiences in opera halls or at rock concerts across the planet:

"All of you can go to hell", he thought once while horny customers were drooling over him and banging him. "I guess there is some better and more leisurely life than this: why would I not find it?!" Of course, it is easy to think that, but when it is time to go from words to actions – even he was not the best at this: contemplative by nature, with a suspicious, contemptuous, and even disparaging view of activism and pragmatism. A long time ago he had read somewhere about a self-taught hakim who could use his sorcery to transform any living being into an evil cunt: so he too decided to search for happiness...

...Day after day passed, and the young Penis was not reaching his goal. The burden of his past life had become too heavy for him; death had already started to look like the only uncertainty; dark depression had already taken over his subtitle being. And precisely then, when it seemed that he had no way out, HE appeared: he kissed him gently and suggested that he create something completely different from the desired transformation:

"The vagina is not the same as the Coochie that you once sang arias to, and the evil pussy, which the false hakim created (so-called "evil cunt") is also not what your soul desires!

I made a pact with the devil a long time ago, my friend, (that is why they call me Dr. Phallus). I can perform many miracles and I am not a fraud. Give me your hand so that I can transform you into a tiny vagina, and if you don't have a hand – give me whatever!"

Said and done: in the blink of an eye the former gifted baritone was given a completely new appearance, his own mother would not have recognized him! He looked in the mirror, and what a surprise: the creature that winked back at him looked

more like his neighbor than him:

What a pity: such a talented young man and always having bad luck. It was like (God forbid) he had stepped in witch' turd, like he was a homeless dog, not the Penis Drug Dealer himself! Furthermore, the person that Dr. Phallus had transformed him into was his spitting image in the psychological sense, although the differences in physical appearance were easy to tell: for example, the lavish jewelry, with which the famous miracle maker so handsomely adorned him, would not have at all suited the former baritone, etc.!

The only thing left was to obtain new documents, under a different name, which would not represent a problem considering his criminal surroundings.

"My darling daughter," the doctor addressed him patronizingly, "your mind has apparently been spoiled by the many gifts (as well as the vices that they lead to): I am your godfather, at your birth I gave you the nickname Dick Charleston. Note: not Charles Dickens, not Dick Cheney (Vice President of the U.S.A.), but Dick Charles – the heavenly Pan!

Dr. Phallus' godchild (Charles Johnson) almost had had a stroke: in days of old, when he was basking in baritone glory, there was a rumor going around that even the heavenly god Pan was not what he used to be, that is to say that even he had been transformed 'into a completely new creature by fates witches! So, this wonderful bearded child, with two horns and goats' legs, wanton and joyful, vanished forever. Instead of it a repentant philosopher frolicked through the same forests and along mountain paths, understanding his divine origin as an invitation to renounce this world, to take the monastic cassock and take refuge in the Kovilj monastery, which is renowned for its ancient tradition of healing addicts of all sorts. What else could our sinful drug dealer long for but to enroll a drug rehabilitation program, a therapy where earnest prayer plays no small role:

After everything that has been said, this is kind of what the situation was: Dr. Phallus, as the person most responsible for her, understood that no good would come of futility, so he returned to Coochie (even though he had recently left the popular reality show). Penis' customers had scattered and were hiding in their rabbit holes. Charles Johnson and Johnson Cheney continued drinking, even though the god Pan warned him that it was high time that they seek treatment. The issue of Miss Coochie remained; she appeared offended by the statement that she was not the same as a vagina, i.e. that she looked more like the neighbor than herself?! In such a situation it was necessary to find a new line of work, because no one ever made a living out of beating around the bush! Of course the awkward situation did not offer miraculous solutions, and each person had to take care of their own bare existence as best they knew how...

...That is how our baritone discovered that he knew various trades and he even started making house calls under the name Mr. Break-It, offering small and large repairs, and sometimes even maintaining the entire household. The first time he tried to be a plumber, but suddenly there was a problem with the water heater: that is why he changed vocations on the spot and became an electrician, who would have done his job perfectly had something not started to burn in the kitchen. It turned out then that he was actually an excellent cook, whose specialties were desserts. However, the devil interfered once again, and once his marzipans smelled like a crap, which led him to cook up the profession of courtesan instead of biscuits. As a courtesan Mr. Break-It operated with a profit, but this bothered evil tongues which accused him of the dick deficit in the labor market, so he retrained to be a Toilette Lady, since anyway no one was offering him a more profitable profession. The following day a rowdy motor gang

burst into the Toilette Lady's apartment: unfortunately one of them recognized him!

"You are that Penis auto mechanic, who screwed up my car?" – one of the rude thugs screamed. Mr. Break-It (sworn to oath by the Toilette Lady gild) was dignifiedly silent. What was he supposed to say: that he also worked as a tailor, dressmaker, haberdasher, ditch digger, welder, pastry maker, leather craftsman, locksmith, well digger, painter, etc.?! Even though no one alive would recognize him - he knew THAT very well!

What a pity: this former baritone, this people trafficker, this pedophile and drug dealer perked his ears so nicely! It seemed destined that such a versatile person must cross the line somewhere, only no one had noticed where Penis Drug Dealer had done this. Was it in the hall of the penitentiary that had forever changed this subtle being, or on the balcony of his own contemplation – which evil tongues claimed actually represented the subconscious falsely self-taught hakim! In connection with latter, it should be pointed out that Charles Johnson didn't exactly smell of evil cunt, while even Johnson Cheney (let alone Lord Pan) was very fond of peeking under skirts. Perhaps only the Toilette Lady knows what had actually happened at the Kovilj monastery (although even this old basketball player recently quit the NBA league, and is presently looking for new employment)...

... On the other hand, Mr. Break-It didn't have any such problems: the value of his shares rose as quickly on the stock exchange as Penis' reputation was crumbling. The uninformed observer would say that it was a strange symbiosis, but it was actually simple laws of evolution, according to which only extremely adaptable species survive: Mr. Break-It easily adapted to new circumstances, as we saw, while the former baritone easily fell pray to all kinds of vices! Therefore there was no saving Penis, who was susceptible to vice. Even if he survived as the last individual of his (always sparse) species, he was destined to be posthumously studied by anthropologists, paleontologists and biologist at natural history museums or among fossil remains, in the deepest layers of the Earth's core. He did not like this prospect at all, so he once again went into a contemplative phase, longing for essential transformation:

Despite his astral projection, he clearly heard a voice calling to him and returning him to reality.

"Penis is not the same as Prick, my misfortunate Johnson! Nor is the respectable Prick a drug dealer like you! You should know what to do?!"

And really, when he looked around, he realized that he was no longer his old self: the Trick-Prick was grinning cynically at him, from the photo in his old passport! Even though it was a profile picture, it was obvious: this man (or woman) was Him; therefore he had to turn his coat inside out and once again seek the services of the mafia mob, whose net he had been trying to wiggle out of this entire time. What lie could he tell them about his new appearance, except to apologize for his two-facedness and beg them not to punish him too severely?! Although one could not presume what they were prepared to do if they realized that it was Trick-Prick that was begging them, he greatly resembled a participant in the abovementioned reality show (The Coochie Show): although in that context one should say that "any similarity to any real persons or events is purely coincidental":

What a pity: things had just started getting better, when he learned that in fact there was no saving him because the rehabilitation programs at the Kovilj monastery had been suspended! Charles Johnson had long ago given up on everything, the evil cunts had proliferated like rats around him, the candidacy for Prime Minister was escaping his reach: Dr. Phallus had taken over his political functions, while Miss

Coochie was active in the field, winning over his customer-voters! The liberals had focused on cyber crime (and not on pedophilia and kleptomania), prisons were springing up like mushrooms (just without the showers where one could earned something), and Lord Pan got stuck in the nearly bistro, where such persons were served alcohol for free. Even Kurâin Petar, a.k.a Mr. Break-It, did not fare any better in this chaos. He suffered from achy bones; he wasn't capable of mending even the smallest vagina, although over the door he boldly hung the sign reading "Penis Auto Mechanic"...

...Well, a few words should be said about this Penis Auto Mechanic! An unstable personality, but a genuinely good friend that anyone could entrust their handsome dick to: perhaps too soft, but usable even in that shape! The worst dogcatcher was no match for him when he was mad, and when he was suddenly overcome by piousness – even a detachment of bearded, Brazilian-waxed nuns could not do him in! Why then did his appearance most often lead to shouts of "Go home, you rotten piece of trash!"?! Does this mean he was a bastard, or were those shouting at him bastards? He was known to wander all around without anyone offering him sanctuary – he always had the same rotten luck!

Because of all of this, it was no surprised that he started contemplating suicide. He read about various poets who ended their lives that way, but he just couldn't make that decision: he was afraid of hanging, the thought of a revolver made him nauseous, and he considered poisoning obsolete, worthy of ladies in waiting from days of yore. What else was available to him?! There were all kinds of things at the car shop, but nothing suitable for his fateful purpose: perhaps the first aid kit or fire extinguisher could do the trick, although that would be a so-called "suicide ambush"?! And since this carried the most severe punishment, the former baritone (until recently Prick-Trick) opted for a different way out. In any case he had had enough of dungeons and sentences, criminals from prison cells were coming out his ears, so he had to skillfully hide his suicidal ideas – as he did himself, in a way:

"Life was never kind to me, I could at least screw some chick, while I still can," he complained once to his friend, who (despite everything) knew very well who he was dealing with. "That sly Toilette Lady screwed up every opportunity I had: whenever I was close to the goal, she simply flushed the toilettes in her stalls and everything would go to hell!"

"All that lamenting doesn't do any good, buddy," said this friend, who was justly suspected of being Charles Dickens himself, cleaned up and pimped up as an attractive tranny (so that the police wouldn't recognize him). "You see that juicy piece of ass near us - hit it bro, if nothing else. Your pussy isn't made of lotion – you can't run out!"

The baritone-drug dealer jumped at these words. Not that long ago, someone had pointed out to him the essential difference between a vagina and Coochie, citing "the cunt evil" as a key argument. How then can this lovely daughter (because that is what she allegedly was – in the flesh) mention lotion and waxing, and not the witch crap that anyone could step in and the bad luck that would rub off on them for life?!

There were many suspicious things in these words: even though as the Vice-President of the U.S.A. he did not have to worry about bare existence, as a repentant philosopher he always had this problem in mind, because otherwise any scoundrel could boast of being more worthy and more decent than him: than him - who had always earned his bread and butter with his ten-eleven fingers, and didn't allow even the famous Mr. Break-It to help him out financially; than him - who had first joined a prostitution ring because of that same bare existence, and then ended up in the Kovilj

monastery, in prayer therapy. During the therapy his goat legs increasingly protruded from under this cassock, to the joy of Dr. Phallus and other administrators of the rehabilitation, prevention and sublimation program (whose general sponsor was the drug cartel run by Penis' favorite fucker himself):

Translated from Serbian by Vuk Tošić



Soul on the Glade

Iva Damjanovski

WHY DO WE DIE?

Well, that's easy,
our blood is made of iron,
and the oxygen rusts the iron.
That is why we die:
With each new breath
our blood turns to rust.

HANDS

Me and time
run across a cornfield.
We run holding hands,
we wallow along,
run in circles
and as we hurry ahead
the earth beneath our bare feet
turns to asphalt,
and the corn turns to hunger.
Me and time
still run,
but now our feet bleed
and we no longer hold hands.

INGRATE

And what am I supposed to do with this gun?
I wouldn't want to seem ungrateful,
but I would've preferred
a bike,
or a book on house plants.
Hey, or maybe a dog!
That would've been wonderful.
You could've just surprised me with a cake.
I would've been thrilled.
But, you see,
I'm really not sure what to do with this gun,
which you have so carefully and caringly placed in my hand.
Thank you, I guess
and don't worry,
I'm sure I'll find some use for it.

Olga Walló

Not-yet arrival of some reluctant Me

Don't guess I have no children

I have a flock of them

Oh many many... like a shoal of fish

There are my words, my tiny words

Don't I care them more

than a fish its fry?

But now

My words are trembling now

So frail air in this too air-conditioned air

We are strange, nobody knows us here,

geese are crying on our chilly ponds

Who will paint my words

And who will sing them?

Stay still, my tiny words, listen, my soul:

Drip drop!

Through distant aqueduct

The water runs, the drops of murky water

Leaking through pipes

To me

Don't shrink back my words

My scared bubbles of sense

If there is some water here

You don't dry out this night

The night is only what

Will last till tomorrow

*Translated from Czech by **the author***



Volcano

Jiří Žáček

MAN, WHY DID YOU ABANDON ME?

Man, why did you abandon me,
asks the dronte of Mauritius, the Apollo butterfly, the paradise bird,
the Siamese crocodile, the Javanese rhinoceros,
asks the narwhal, the sperm whale, the fin whale,
asks the seal and the ice bear, asks the orang-utan,
the gorilla, the bison, the golden eagle.

Man, why did you abandon us?
ask the groves and forests, rivers and meadows,
mountains and oceans,
springs and lakes.
Man, why did you abandon us?
ask those to be born.
And why did you abandon yourself?
God asks.
To whom and what for did you sell your immortal soul?

But who else can still listen?
Who else can still see:
Who else knows that the apocalypse
begins inconspicuously
as a victorious dance
one one's own grave.

SEVERAL OPTIONS

God was to make His appearance on April\ 30 at 7.30 pm
on Channel 18 on all television screens
but 100 million eager viewers
only saw a grainy screen.
Maybe someone has mixed up the date.
Maybe there is no God.
Maybe He wants us to believe he does not exist
Maybe God has changed His mind.
Maybe He was unable to do it.
Maybe he was watching
on Channel seventeen
another part of the Dallas series
which is everlasting.
And maybe God is
an emission of photons, which in our eyes
look like a grainy screen.

THE GIRL IN THE READING ROOM

She marked the page
with the shadow of her index finger,
she is smiling, a child of chance –
what is she dreaming of?

Books all around, books without end,
the battlefield of words,
the rubbish heap of ideas.
There is everything in them,
only there is not time
to read them all.

You are alone against a superior force.
You go on reading with your eyelids cast down.

What does anybody know about you?
About the heart ticking “Mayday”,
about the cocoon of the mysterious, awakening body
and its gentle flesh,
the wild desire without name?
You yourself know nothing about them.

Leave this place before it's too late.
Here time grows rampant like mould
time without colour,
without taste,
without smell.

The dead, they are always right.
But what to do with them when you are alive?

Get up, flee from here, save yourself
for someone who's looking for you.
and doesn't know of you...

But you are sitting, smiling,
continue reading between the lines –
your little finger in your mouth –

and time is running out.

Translated from Czech by Jaroslav Peprník

Jiří Staněk

DEPTH OF THE ABYSS

Wood of the wrong. Fire in the hair.
Radiation of salt crystals at the very noon
(shadows like flies in the crucifix blood
in the open wound of a Spanish cathedral
bronze of the door's chest standing in the sun)
from the naked boy's finger tips stretched out
trying to estimate joyfully
the depth of the life abyss
opening itself upwards
In front of him.



Solar Eclipse

Zdena Bratršovská and František Hrdlička

A LOAF FOR THE SAVIOURS

(From *JUST THE DEAR GIGGLERS*, collection of micro stories)

They were a little shaken-up by the bombardment coming down from a near-by pass, but luckily they knew they could trust me, and so they gradually calmed down. „My dear daughters, we are only a small land, lying among a ring of mountains. It's true we make a tolerable living by raising sheep and hand-crafting jewellery, but when an enemy gets onto our pasture-land, we can't defend ourselves on our own. Our predecessors used to wait out these difficult times in forests and dugouts. Today's leaders have chosen a more dignified way: they've turned to the big power, which trades with us and is friendly with us.“ They understood me. The first tanks are already entering the square. The dust-covered soldiers are sitting on the armoured covering and, out of joy that the war has ended, are shooting at wandering cats and chickens. „We will welcome them with bread and salt,“ I urged my daughters. They stationed themselves in the doorway with baskets. When I line them up, they look like steps: seven-year-old Anezhka smiles like the sunshine, 10-year-old Hedvika is a wonderful storyteller and 14-year-old Jarmila is already a big help with the sheep and the housework. Over their heads, I passed a bouquet of wild poppies to a well-built sergeant. He spat, knocked over Jarmila's loaf and called over some younger soldiers. They pushed us into the house. „Our time has come,“ I said and tucked up my skirt, so that the soldiers wouldn't think we didn't value their help and their courage. My daughters are obedient and well-schooled. They imitated me. The long journey had tired the soldiers, but it hadn't dampened their fatherly feelings. They started to play with the children. They threw Jarmila on the couch, pushed Hedvika onto the oven and shoved Anezhka onto the table. There was no room for me, so they threw me down onto the tiles in the hallway. „Its only a game – kind of like strip poker,“ I called to my daughters in the room. I didn't manage to look over the whole troop, because someone covered my head with a potato sack for fun, but I did catch sight of one beardless boy, who was blushing a little, and two cripples, who reached out at once for the bottle of home-made plum brandy. It's a good sign, I thought. I heard how Anezhka hollered. She still doesn't know that it's a valuable experience. Once she grows up, she can entice another enemy with our jewellery for a change. The first three soldiers were matter-of-fact and graceful, but then the fourth engulfed me like a barrel of cabbage. It might have been our mayor: he evidently wants to show the soldiers that he is their friend, I thought. Men express themselves by deeds, women by patience. By evening, I'd woken up. The villagers are walking under my windows, carrying lanterns. They are heading for the square, where a big fire is blazing. Soldiers and villagers are holding hands and dancing the *matenik*. It is a moving scene. The well-built sergeant is erecting a flapole with the banner of his great country. In the end my daughters come out of the welcoming ceremonies with honour. Jarmila leads the soldiers away to cook our national food for them, Hedvika will interpret for them and I can buy Anezhka back when I shear the next flock. The mayor climbs onto the fountain in the square. „Freedom has returned to our living rooms and our stables. Hooray!“ I would like to applaud him also, but I still bleed a bit when I move too fast.

THE CARRIAGE BY THE GRAVEYARD

Even now I don't understand how it's possible that I wasn't caught. I had agreed that I would die for our cause – every member of Kosta's circle had sworn to this. I don't know why they chose me for the assassination – most likely because a man would have been more noticeable during a coronation ceremony. Alyosha was supposed to simulate a fight by the church doors just before I threw the bomb, to draw the attention of the Czar's guards, but he wasn't successful, or he failed. Right after the act I concealed myself among some screaming village women and later Tolya hid me in his student apartment in Nizna. They arrested only Kosta and Seryoza; they held their ground during the interrogation. In fact, they were only accused of counterfeiting rubles. They didn't discover our anarchist hide-out. They are stupid and inept; they lack political understanding. After Fyodor II, Fyodor III took over, but his government has been shaky since its infancy. I didn't finish my studies. I live in a free relationship with Dmitri, the son of landowner from Rostov, but I don't forget about my companions from the anarchist circle. Once my children grow up, I'll set out after Kosta and Seryoza to the Omsk penitentiary, no matter what Dmitri says he wants. We live in Novodevichi. By the graveyard I sometimes meet a carriage with the former Czar. He brings a wreath to his wife's grave; she didn't survive my assassination. The doctors somehow or other put Fyodor II together; apparently he has a golden plate in his skull. Now he speaks a little indistinctly. Last week he addressed me for the first time: „Who has died, my little dove? I have already caught sight of you here a few times.“ Immediately, two bodyguards wanted to drive me away; he stopped them. He is kind and isn't afraid. Of course, he doesn't know that I disfigured him years ago – how could I have done that? At every meeting he waves chivalrously; he reminds me of my father, who fell on the Turkish front.

„Couldn't I be somehow useful for your *Blagorodi*?“

„You are still young, dear soul; you would soon weary of service to a lame Czar.“

I have realized that I love him - certainly more than Kosta and Dmitri. I make his bed for him – he knows how to be tender. How can people slander and hate him? During free moments he dictates his memories to me, and then I read his tales aloud to him, as I've re-formulated them. He praises me.

„If hadn't met you I would never believe how realistically an ordinary student can depict the wretchedness and criminality of an anarchist organization.“

I am looking forward to tomorrow's session – we will write about the assassination at the Church of Saint Vassily.

Translated from Czech by Laura Busheikin



Fires in the Seas

Mircea Dan Duta

Unfinishable II: Shoonya

[Poem awarded with the Prize of the Literary Festival Panorama (India)]

I'm changing,
not even knowing into what.
Getting closer and closer to the zero,
but never being able to reach it.
I would so much like to take you with me,
not even knowing where,
not even knowing where from,
for you are everywhere,
where there is nothing but you
and the nothing you embody.
My hands are shaking,
my heart on my palm,
when groping in the dark
for your emptiness.
Or maybe this heart isn't even mine?
Or maybe this emptiness isn't even yours?
A long time ago
I betrayed the one

for thirty
and a half pieces of silver,
I gave up
approaching it,
for I somehow felt
there might have been you again,
hidden in the same emptiness of yours,
for I knew
I would have never reached it either.
I will keep the change.

langue, language, parole

mother tongue is any language which
I can't understand just like, as
a baby, I wasn't able to
understand my mother's
lullabies, soothing, remorse, and
extortion, as well as I wasn't
able to understand anything
in the world then, including
my own crying and laughing

mother tongue
is the first language which
I perfectly didn't understand, I was
able to perfectly not use it, which
I've never learned, but I've only
imitated it like apes do and managed
to appropriate only
as a conditioned reflex

in my mother tongue
I can't express things that
I would never tell
my mother, I can't sing any songs
nobody composed or heard
until now, I can't finish stories
nobody started to write, create
metaphors nobody would
understand or paint with colors
nobody can see

in my mother tongue
I am only able to read tabloids, watch
telenovelas, dance to cheap music, but
never to keep silent or blaspheme
within my own darkness

in my mother tongue
I can in the best case, start
a festival I will definitely not
attend and its main prize I will
refuse for sure, if I am not allowed
to take it over directly from from
my own hands

I don't even know who you
are or if you exist at all, and
I will probably never find it
out, but in my mother tongue
I can only break up with you
before falling in love with you
and fall in love with you for good
even before imagining you

in one's mother tongue
one can only get married, have
children, divorce and strive
during paternal Sundays
to convince one's own children that
the way one speaks at them
is also the mother tongue -
theirs

mother tongue
is not the real language
of anyone's mother, but only
the common speech of all
the babies who did not
understand the way their
mothers talk.

Translated by Judit Antal

Sebastian Hester

I am not Valerie

I am not Valerie,
I don't roam the streets, looking for my father
to murder him
I don't roam the streets, looking for your father
to murder him,
I don't blame men,

anymore than I blame women,
No. I think this whole race is a disease,
a beautiful disease.
I am not Valerie,
my weeks of wonder have long since drained,
My friends are muted, like that chair
on the hallway,
Or that door-knob
And while I have not married,
I have grown old, my body's tarnished,
Riddled with pointless regret,
I have grown old
and knowing that I'm closer to death,
is somewhat liberating -
my only 5 minutes on that pyre
I am not Valerie,
I don't think men are scum,
I think it's hasard, it could have been us there
Nature doesn't know or care, it just rolls the dices
Nature's like Samson: strong, but stupid.
I don't think men are scum,
Yes, some of them are,
But they are no worse, or better, for that matter,
Than the bitter and humorless hags,
always hungry for discipline and order,
Yes, churchgoing and god-fearing,
but always looking for young flesh to devour.
Yet I do despise that man's world,
where kids referred to their fathers with "Sir",
women were quiet and greeting the Saturday beating
with great affection,
I do despise those quiet dinners,
that looked like a condemned man's last meal,
Or that moronic self-importance,
Let's face it gentlemen, you have nothing to be proud of,
You fucked everything up, you can't even pick
the right leaders.
Hitler, Stalin, Lenin and others,
were all male products, man-made, man-raised
And some of you - along with some of us, indeed -
still adore them,
speaking of diseases.
I am not Valerie,
I do not sing, or daydream,
nor do I have magical companions,
I am vast desert, where remains of
former selves lie half-buried in the sand,
where manic winds bite your flesh,
I know no joy, or pride,
Or despair, for that matter,

My lovers have left me,
So did my muses,
my sisters.
It's good they did,
They would have outloved me anyway,
Just as I would have outlived them.
I am not Valerie
I haven't shot Andy and
it's long since I don't blame men anymore
No. I think this whole race is a disease,
beautiful and cursed.

Arlene didn't know

Arlene didn't know
this day will be her last
She popped a pill,
drank her coffee
and went to work.
Her body was found,
three days later
by the river,
Purely by accident.
Arlene was faceless
for most of her life
"My lovely mistake",
as her dad would call her.
This freckled kid,
dragging her body
down the school's hallways,
For anyone to have a bite.
They'll get bored eventually", she said
"It doesn't hurt anymore anyways",
But they never did,
they couldn't have,
They needed a fix for their own
failure.
Arlene was so easy to hate,
And you could see them
circling her in blind anger
Barking at her.
This sad, emaciated pack,
In their short break
from (the cages of) being.
The louder their bark,
the stronger the delusion
of actually becoming somebody.
Arlene was easy to hate,
By the same men
who visited her after family dinner,

By every scumbag crooner,
Every rusty hag still dreaming
of the days when
devouring your children
was socially acceptable,
Every rigid,
well-spoken dullard
groping in the dark
for their 5 seconds
of fame.

Arlene was easy to hate,
and she was okay with that,
Her body, like a temple
of cruelty,
Where each bruise,
each broken bone,
Was an icon of somebody's
failure.

Arlene didn't know
this day will be her last,
But neither, I believe,
she cared,
For ever since she was a child,
Each day
was actually just that,
her last.



Garden

Umutay Polotovna Eralieva

HAPPINESS HAS COME

Late, but the happiness has arrived:
- I will tell you my secret, my way.
It says the happiness, taking my wrists,
- I want to scare the "sluggish" dreams away.
It all seemed to be handed out as it should be.
And I was the only one who was left out,
No matter what I asked, I didn't have the key...
The dream didn't come true, it was in doubt.
Life is like a camel's hump, and it's true,
Life as a wild hawk, then like a nightingale.
I turned my feelings into ice, I got so blue,
I didn't believe in people, in a magic tale.
Fate sifted us through the sieve,
I didn't stop trying and gained strength.
From the bad days, only resentment remains,
The good days passed as a fairy tale,
But without the length.
A hole in the bottom - hope is empty,
I've mended all my life's flaws.
And no matter how much I endured suffering,
I waited for happiness, but without applause.
I didn't give up my efforts, even though I was sad,
Suffered in humiliation, pain, and anger,
Luckily, life changed - the moment have come,
Happiness has arrived, not the sorrowful tears.
The morning after the night is back again,
The withered grass of longing has burned away,
Happiness has come, no blemishes, no wormholes,
Despite troubles, my soul and heart rejoice and play.
Only the patient wins in our life
Who believes in purpose, walks confidently,
You turn to a corner there is a victory awaits,
The sky doesn't always rain gray,
Happiness may come suddenly.

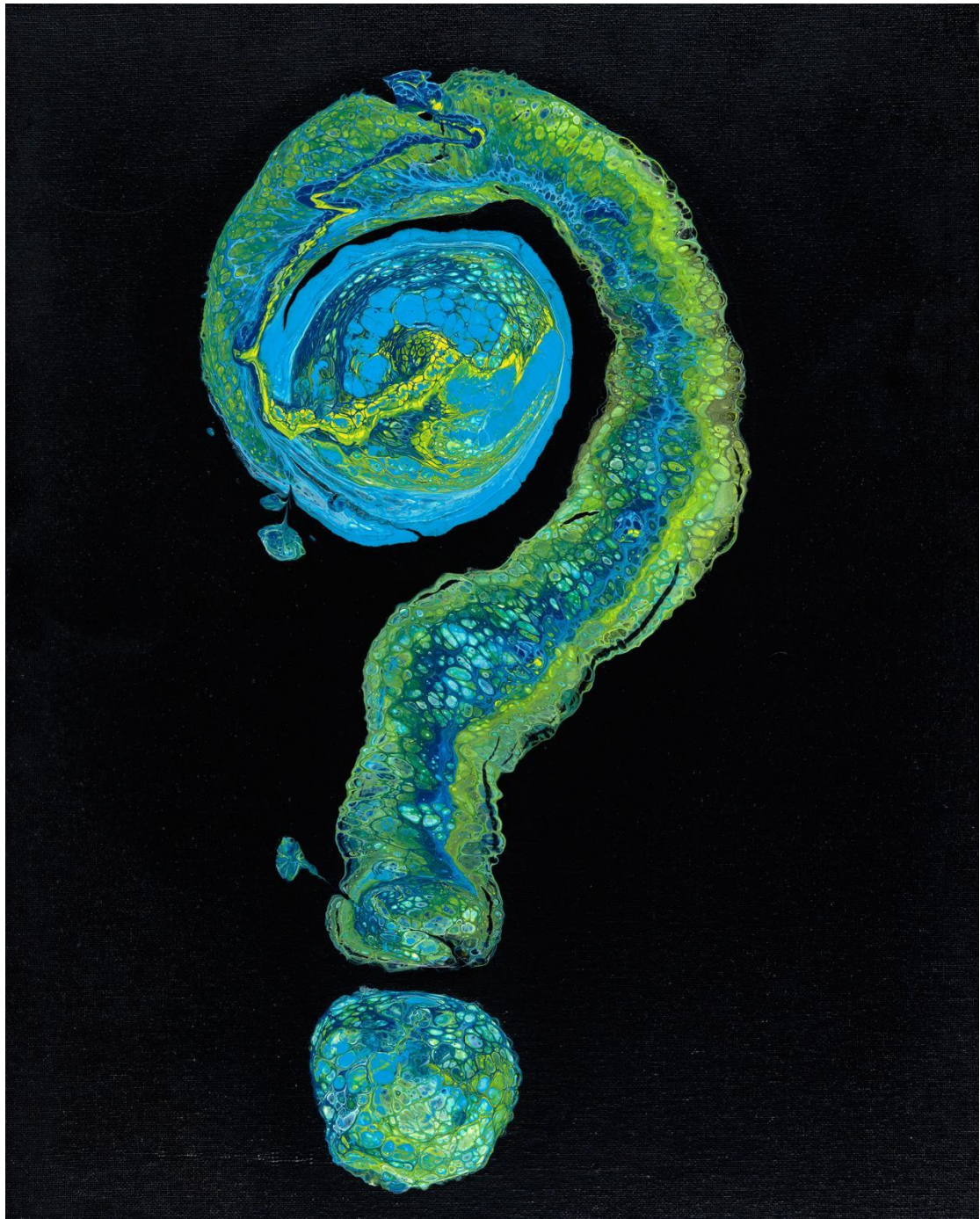
Translated by Zeki Gelik

Daniel de Culla

NEW YORK NEW YORK AGAIN

When I go to the Service as soon as I get up
I listen to Frank Sinatra's song
"New York New York"
The city that never sleeps, as me

And I shit with pleasure, like Liza Minnelli
Making a profane cabaret
Where shit could win an Oscar.
I shit so much and good
How do they say they did it
Persian and Apuleius.
If it's hard for me to do it
Immediately burst into a thousand dicteries
Shitting on the mother who gave birth to me
How do the new parturients
Let them stop without an epidural, bareback
Shouting at the husband:
-You could be here giving birth, damn.
The shit comes out to the beat of the song
(Unparalleled daring is to say that I shit):
"I'm going to New York
Could be Chicago (Yeah Shit)
I want to be part of them.
My desire to shit as a bum
It has had an effect.
I want to wake up in the city that never sleeps
Blaring the toilet bowl
I wanna be king of the hill on top of shit
Like the kings of Madrid
In the Palace of Aranjuez.
So many farts contain our asses!
How long have I been shitting here
You have seen and heard it.
When I pull the chain
The shit will be gone
Like the sins in the giant censer
From the Church of Santiago, in Compostela.
I'll fix it:
If I can shit here in New York or Chicago
I can do it anywhere
Up on the rooftops
As the ancient fables of the Greeks tell
What did the gods do, demigods
And all the fine mob.
The water from the cistern will transport me
As the famous Nile did
To the lies and hoaxes
That daily life contains
Until they incite me, again, to shit
Virgil and Ovid
Two big jerks, as me.



Questionnaire

William O'Daly

LOVE IN A CHANGING CLIMATE

Touching your absent hand, I am like the saint
who wanders with the first yellow leaf,
the ease of what might be mistaken
for our familiar love. It's never easy
to sustain in the eyes what changes inside,
to feel the fear, the abandonment, and shame.

Listen . . . the wind is scattering our names. We are
the question the stone and the river ask.

Had I been with you when you died, I'd know
him who knows how to shepherd the dying home.
Illiterate birds ravel our lives with twelve strings
and we find love that takes the leap with us,
stays to clean up the birth of the cosmos,
the benevolent trees that burn like us.

ORIGIN

Long ago you and I struggled to be born
among the standing stones,
underground fire, mineral rain,
furrows of imagination yellowed by the sun.
Our immobile blood burned blue
even as the wind shaped
our serene incarnation. We deciphered
the doors of the earth, found the one to open
on who we would become.
Our still-closed eyes strived to name oneness,
to behold the mystery of our bodies
falling in a rage of flame, in the rhythms
and textures of our appetites. We tuned ourselves
to sow and reap, shepherd and slaughter,
to be true to many selves
and the singularity
from which we came.
Forging weapons that turn night to day
we meditated on the clouds
littered with the psalms of migrating birds.
We mourned the wild horses,
the range stripped of native forage.
The prayer wheel spun us at our core
as we labored to learn that how
we live is what we leave behind.

Returning to the solace of not seeking,
we need no face or syllable or seed,
as we come to know in our hearts
what we cannot know any other way.

THE EASTERN SEA

Like you, I have sought
the fate of the wave,
the burnt mast, the water birds

gliding near as a prayer. And so
as the eastern sea passes
its ring of opal light to the sky,
I promise I will pass the ring
of the sea to my daughter.

Always, the mermaid speaks of love.
The beggar cries that his sandals
were stolen by Jesus. My daughter
asks me to hold those fragile rings,
to hold the sea that breaks with gravity's secret
and washes over our cold bare feet
until she has a song to sing to it.



Archipelago of the Heart

Jan Čáp

Butterfly Shepherd

(a chapter from the Klapy klap novel by Honza Čáp)

Please, do not think that our lives in communism were just about feasting on pig's jowls, that is not true. During Christmas time, for example, when the whole family gathered by two Skodas and one Trabi at my granny's place, we might be even

considered fragile and spiritual people. Because at the very same table where we carved „the buffalo delicatess“ out of pork, the old man Neugebauer, my grandpa, also managed to pasture butterflies for me during the school summer holidays. We too had emotions and under the subcutaneous fat and were sensitive to beauty.

And we had a good reason for that. A road to East Germany passed the grandma's house and when the railway crossing barriers went down in Otovice village a mile down the road, the traffic jam reached as far as our house with blueish smoke puffing from the stuck motorcade. True. But as even political prisoners in nearby Jáchymov uranium mines did not describe their 1950's in the pitch black ink only, why would I paint my holidays under the normalization of the 1970's in black?

Plenty of colorful swallowtails, red admirals and owl butterflies flew just behind that dirty road on the meadows of my childhood. And we caught a lot of them too, with my grandpa. This time he could not fool me with his crazy stories because I got The Illustrated Butterfly Guide by Josef Moucha for Christmas and could check all about individual species, including their Latin names that sounded like spells or spaceships: Nymphalis, Parnassius, Apollo. Grandpa had to stick to the facts, although those sounded fantastic too – would you believe that some butterflies in New Guinea have wingspan of 30 inches?

Our butterfly hunting expeditions took place behind that dirty road when we went to cut grass for the rabbits. Grandpa put on his olive corduroys and the belt with a hollow cow horn, in which he carried a Carborundum sharpener instead of a colt. He put a bottle of the Karel beer to his bag so that he could better spit on his scythe. He could also open that lager with one blow of his hand placing it on the scythe. I took only the Illustrated guide from my attic room, and pulled out my hunter Pampalini's net, which we also used to catch stray sparrows from the greenhouse. We pushed a cart with a rake out of the backyard, waved over the fence to my Grandma' in the kitchen window, and hit the road with the scythe bent towards the clouds. We headed right for the meadow behind the Höhns farm, where the dandelions and clover used to be juiciest.

As my grandfather owned two display cases full of pinned up butterflies already, I usually just checked the description of the wings of each specimen in the book, read about its occurrence and released the butterfly back to freedom again. Many times I didn't even tip them with a net. Except for the large whites - I had the instructions to mow them with a sprinkler hose over the flower beds in our garden and then - when they were still cycling with their legs - to throw them to the hens as a treat. But when we reached the meadow I often left the Illustrated Guide lay on the ground and raked the grass clippings behind my grandfather and trampled them into the cart to fit as much as possible. Then my grandpa told me all sorts of interesting things about butterflies that weren't even mentioned in the Moucha's book. He gazed somewhere behind the tracks and explained that some butterflies are migratory like birds and others spend their whole life in a single meadow. As they don't have lungs, he said, they breathe through these holes on their side, and their mouthpiece is actually an elastic straw that they unroll at each flower like fire brigade does with a fire hose.

„And how much nectar do they suck out of the flowers in total, grandpa?“

„They don't just suck nectar,“ he pointed the beer bottle towards the Höhns farm, „they also fly near the cesspool, or the pantry if they like the smell. Or even taste the sap from the trees.“

And he was right. As I followed their zigzagging routes in the air - from birches to raspberry bushes to tall daisies -, they even flew over the fence into the orchard trees.

„But what do they nibble the sap with, when they have no teeth?“ The blue wire cart I used to go shopping with would have been full enough to feed all our rabbits, but grandpa kept looking somewhere behind the railway viaduct even though it was getting dark and we were probably expected home for dinner. Mom later explained he had been a bit henpecked and when they were kids he would rather take her and her brothers fishing than stay home with his mother-in-law and his wife, my granny. Even now, when he was retired, he went out to pick mushrooms with me too, and it didn't even have to be early in the morning. We sometimes used to go by train as far as the Velák pond to pick blueberries and when we found too little and were left with half-empty basket, I had to fill the bottom of it with cones or fold in my windbreaker. So that every passenger in the train from Hroznetin to the Dalovice porcelain factory could admire how the old Neugebauer still knew all the best mushroom places. And always finds plenty, even though they hardly grow this year due to the terrible drought!

There were days on our butterfly hunts, when only those large white ones flew around, and then I preferred to catch horseflies and locusts by hand. But sometimes we also managed - in that meadow behind the birches, where magpies were nesting -, to catch a rare „White L“ butterfly. And according to the Moucha's book this kind was threatened with extinction in Czechoslovakia. It also said in the guide that the Germans call it „Vau album“, because the white hieroglyph on its lower back wing reminds them more of their white Gothic „V“ letter, not our Czech „L“. Grandpa said that everyone sees their own thing in that butterfly.

„They don't grow teeth, but have mandibles next to their suckers, and eat away the sap with them,“ Grandpa finally explained the way of butterflies. „And if you didn't leave your philatelic magnifying glass at your mom's, I'll show you how to pasture them tomorrow.“ And honestly he did!

By the time I finished reading of Whistling Dane's tricks against Indians in the morning bed, the pale faces of our tribe were already gone to work. So I went down one flight of wooden and one flight of stone stairs, to prepare a load of fried eggs and lemon tea for breakfast while still in my pyjamas. The fox-terrier Šárka was wagging her tail at me in the hall, everything as usual - until I took the handle to the kitchen.

First I was startled by the amount of light in front of me, for someone had opened the double windows as if to air the duvets. I could see the front garden easily and above the red currant bushes there were two peacock butterflies hopping through the air, peeping coyly in through the windowframe. But they weren't alone. There were others sitting on a plate with some red juice on the table right in front of my Grandpa! He made a "Shhh" with his finger, like when he wanted to show me a hidden hare in the meadow, but now he was pointing his finger only at the opposite chair, where another peacock butterfly was prancing like in an animated movie. It spun around on the back and clipped its wings contentedly as if it landed on the flower outside. When I slowly sat down, the two of his colleagues from the outside joined in as well after a while. As they flew in through the open curtains, they passed along Josef Lada's snowy village

framed in the picture above the couch, flew around the wall calendar of the West Bohemian Hot Spring, past the bookcase with a tea service and my grandfather's wedding photos, and without hesitation sat on the edge of the soup plate, right next to the bottle of syrup called Garden mixture. They stepped over the decals Aunt Jaruška herself stuck on the plates in the Dalovice porcelain factory and as soon as they reached the pool of some sweet juice, they froze as if in a daze.

One, two, three... I counted five butterflies on the plate and the other two were sitting on the green bottle that Grandpa used to hide up on the wardrobe almost at the ceiling. Now it stood on the radio with no label. And as it probably contained some kind of drink that grandpa used to lure the butterflies in, a single brush footed butterfly danced around it to a very quiet rhythm of his own. My first butterfly pasture has started!

Grandpa handed me the magnifying glass that we used to check our fingerprints with during the last holidays, but this summer I only examined postage stamps under it, because I with Mike and Tomáš signed up to be young philatelists at the 5th Elementary School in Příbram. I didn't even breathe as I watched the iridescent mimicry of the butterfly wings. They are stacked on top of each other like roof tiles, and when a collector takes a butterfly in his hand he has to be careful not to break them. Until that moment, the wings of the butterflies in the illustrations reminded me more of cat's eyes than the tails of peacocks, after which they are named, and which we saw with the pioneer group in the park of the Orlík state castle. But the enlarged detail showed they looked exactly like eagle feathers of the Native Americans. "Everyone sees their own thing in that butterfly," I thought.

The most fantastic spectacle, however, was provided by the spiral-shaped suckers, which the butterflies unfolded without fear like a chameleon's tongue, but in a slow motion. They resemble trunks, but they are sharp like Native American spears, at the end, so they can pierce rotten fruit and dried tree sap as well. According to my grandpa, nature arranged it in such a way that butterfly species from the Amazon jungle have proboscis so long that they can crawl to the bottom of the orchids there. He told me that every man has a latchkey to paradise and a sunrise behind each of his fingernails.

"They'll remember this feast for the rest of their lives, won't they, grandpa?" asked the boy from the black and white photos of the time, as we carefully brought the plates of flavored syrup out to the windowsill. We returned the bottle to the kitchen, stashed Grandpa's mystery drink back on the wardrobe, and closed all the windows before Grandma returned from her morning shift in the porcelain factory. But I had to stop at those words, as I suddenly realized some butterfly species do not live more than four days according to the Moucha's book! Who wouldn't get chills just at the thought of that, even on the warmest of holidays?

Hamid Nazarkhah Alisaraei

POEMS HAVE BLOSSOMED

in May

I became the translator of the wind smile
Friend of the calm waves of the sea...
Friend of the sunshine behind the mountain –
who still prostrates and does omen.
Poems has not flourished
in May
you writed
In the story of the wind's smile
on the pieces of the black cloud
the cherry of words
Have stolen from the lips of the sea's brides
and the imaginary kisses that tasted like death
you selled it to me secretly
The poems have put shrouded
in May
for May's bloodlust
This is the beginning of the uprising of poems.

Sometimes I live in Beirut
Sometimes beside your imagination...
Sometimes my poetry smells like gunpowder
Sometimes the taste of your kisses...
I think we are a thousand years apart
When in the middle of my poem
I comb your hair
Sometimes I make your laugh the color of wild raspberry
I fill my mouth with silver dew
with the accent of the sun
Sometimes I sigh for thousands of hidden sorrows
This is my greatest sorrow
my love!

David Leo Sir

Illusion Is the Hardest Thing

I see & hear avenue de Versailles
release its voice from words that long had held it down,
aimless flurries of passersby...

Sunset stretches overhead, & builds a city of stone on green
that seems to fill the absent sky
with fiery lights in brilliant grids.

We swim in rhythm with the sea of breath,
these breezes whose chord progression never resolves...

Time's fingers grip a spinning globe

& draw the soul slowly over magnetic meridians at dusk,
strum the world's imaginary strings.

Within we chant a hidden word
in meditation often heard.

The river rolls backward in my eyes' mirrored spheres,
flows over inner rocks & returns a wounded arrow.

Our sharp half-moon has split the dusk,
& cut the cords to cold denial
of beauty's paint on canvas minds.

Twilight's windows begin to speak
in sapphire song, & one long sigh...

Seagulls wheel over long waters,
crying out their timeless tale ~
Midway in the journey of our life,
we found the ocean lost to us.
We burned for a bond with water,
& wandered with every feather to seek & find...

Below Pont Mirabeau's faint green rails
in cobalt light white birds unwind.
They work to learn letters & words
from over-valued thoughts we guard.
With unspoken sparks we make our world.

A troubled singer begs the mirror to glitter in falling shards,
just to break the hardest layer...
My Other Mother murmurs ~
"Maya is the hardest thing.
Please, push the mirror,
& discover it's a window to within.
At the deep heart's core,
leave your door wide open.
Let kind fire spread."

Enormi Stationis

PROXIMA CENTAURI

with the naked eye
invisible from the earthly world
little red dwarf
among an infinite number of stars
glowing in the universe
is closest to the sun

the order of the cosmos
however does not let them get close
Everything is arranged chaotically

FOLOS AND CHIRON

work of mercy
pour the wine
thirsty guest
per ipsum et cum ipso et in ipso
unwashed brothers
at night
they turn into beasts



Sunflowers

ORIGINAL SIN

Through the fleshly tongue and mouth
reason comes out.
There is a fume sometimes unbearable.



Fireworks of the Soul

Michael Lee Johnson

BOWL OF BLACK PETUNIAS

If you must leave me, please
leave me for something special,
like a beautiful bowl of black petunias—
for when the memories leak
and cracks appear
and old memories fade,
flowers rebuff bloom,
sidewalks fester weeds
and we both lie down
separately from each other
for the very last time.

SUMMER IS DYING

Outside, summer is dying into fall,
and blue daddy petunias sprout ears—
hear the beginning of night chills.
In their yellow window box,
they cuddle up and fear death together.

The balcony sliding door
is poorly insulated, and a cold draft
creeps into all the spare rooms.

Ilija Šaula

COLORS AND I

Why did I start to paint?

I could not resist the impression that in me truly resides an artist whose creative spirit must emerge to light. Aware that in my daily life I am changing into a nicer one and that I will feel better in it. I wish every day to be colored with a different color. Frequently I asked what kind of art is in me? I knew it was not realism; I felt that I know to paint my imagination. My colors play on the base, touch each other and are transformed into a beauty upon which my view rests. If I dared to touch them, I would break their harmony. I know how to take some objects which belong to visual arts and use them to make the play of colors interesting. They accepted this way of my interfering and allowed me to play with them. Since that moment we became inseparable friends. Colors and I.

When I finish playing, I go after some other work, hoping to think about the colors which I left to dry and get ready for their visual performance, but I noticed that they already moved into me, because when I close my eyes, I see how they strive with all their power to achieve maximal expression. After that I never attempted to change anything. I felt in that moment their greatness and the power of their independence. Colors have the power of a volcano and the strength of volcanic lava; once they disperse and achieve their form, they forever stay like that, consistent and unchangeable. Only a human and natural disaster can harm them. Truly, I don't know how art would exist if there were no colors. I believe that even tunes that make music have their colors, as do words by which we create literature, not to mention natural elements in which sculptors discover their sculptures. Art possesses the highest degree of tolerance in correlation with the human being and nature. Everything is allowed and everything in the meme has a good principle.

The world of my visual art is unreal, therefore I easily concluded that my works are abstract. With such dimensional character they seem to me unlimited in efforts to reach the most sentimental depths in the eyes of the viewer. Expressions remind us of different motives; every viewer is permitted for the picture to be part of their own imagination. Someone will see endless landscapes of autumn, some the huge blueness of the sky provoked by light, and the reflection of nature in it. Some may notice the blood stream in the valley of their heart or the unconquered heights of their soul. I wish for the expression to be such that one needs no words which would disrupt the harmony. I like when viewers look from nearby and voice their impressions, as if they discovered an oasis in the middle of the desert or if they are returning to some distant past in which they long ago got lost somewhere within themselves.

I am truly enthused by the wish of the viewer to own my picture, not in order to decorate the wall of their room but the wall of their soul and the space where they are sojourn their feelings. I like when my pictures glow, and impact the viewer hypnotically, so that the viewer feels that she or he belongs to the picture, rather than the picture to her/him. I believe that, in addition to writing, painting, sculpture, mosaic, and some other artistic forms which I create directly in nature, that I belong to nature and exactly in the part of nature in which dreams begin.

Milena Fucimanová

Nests in Vinegar

Pause Number Six: Cedar Wood

May I ask you something?

Ask away, my girl, says Joseph the carpenter, running his hand across the smooth board. What you can see here is cedar wood. I work with it every day.

But I also saw tall hawthorn trees back there by the creek. I think they might be at least eight metres high. We don't have such mighty ones where I come from. With thorns like penknives. Do you work with hawthorn, too?

No.

How about olive or fig trees, can they be useful to a carpenter?

Sometimes. Would you like to have a bite? I have bread and goat's milk. Have a taste, it's fresh. My boy always brings me lunch to the workshop. But I'm worried about him. You see, he doesn't eat much, our Jesus.

Jesus! Is he coming?

When he was little, he would often flutter around here among the wood shavings. Sometimes I would sweep them up in a heap and he would jump in them. They must have been tickling his feet though, because he would go barefoot all day long. But usually they just lie around scattered on the floor.

You could give it a sweep, I keep telling him. But he says that shavings are pretty, all curled up, but once swept, they would just turn into litter. He is like this all the time. Not disobedient, no – but all of a sudden he says something and everything turns upside down, if you see what I mean. You always wonder at something with a kid like this.

Do you talk a lot?

It depends. He brings me lunch at noon. We have a sort of deal. He brings a bowl of milk and he must have a drink first and drink at least a quarter of it. I keep convincing him I will like it more this way. But mainly I want to make him eat something. Our quiet little game. He's already twelve and it's still on. First your turn, then mine. He saw through me a long time ago, but he keeps playing.

Once I carved a donkey for him.

Look, just like the one that was breathing on you, but you can't remember that. You had just been born, not yet fully here, narrowing your eyes and glancing at the world in disbelief.

I handed him the wooden figure and sent him to the live donkey in the shed. I told him: go to the donkey's colt and tell me if I got the look right.

I pluck up my courage again and whisper hesitantly: What does little Jesus call you? Daddy?

He... Joseph clears his throat. He laughs so little. I am sorry to see that. Even as a kid he would not play much. Wouldn't play much, wouldn't laugh much.

He can't have picked this up from me. I sing when I work. I told him: Come on, I'll teach you this one, do you want me to?

But he would run away every time. Wouldn't even think of singing.

You see, when I was little, I really wanted to be able to play the lute. But I couldn't. I started with carpentry soon. What can you do with rough carpenter's hands. The strings would break. At the end of the day I couldn't even blow a flute properly. But I tried, I did.

Even our king David could play, he played very well.

I thought Jesus might also play and cheer people up. That's very important, cheering up. But he doesn't even know such a word. I'm still a little sorry that our Jesus doesn't sing or play a musical instrument. Maybe he'll have a flair for something else. I'm sure he will, I nod.

But let me tell you, I'm much more worried that I never hear him laugh. You know what I mean. To laugh heartily. To dance and clap his hands in joy. Me, on the other hand, even a shaggy squirrel makes me laugh.

But what did Jesus call you at home? Daddy? I try again.

Joseph turns around and picks a small piece of cedar wood.

This is what you should be asking about, he says with reproach. About wood. How it grows, how it smells, what it is good for. You learn a lot and you can't hurt anyone with such questions.

Oh my God! If foster father Joseph knew that it was just...

He looks at me with attention and says in a low voice: What's troubling you? Tell me, it helps.

You see... my step-poppa makes sleepers.

I realize that Joseph, the foster father of Jesus, can't know what a sleeper is. He has never seen a railway. I should explain...

But he doesn't wonder at anything. He nods his head slightly.

That must be useful work. Anyone who makes such things will sit at a wedding table one day.

I don't understand.

He will have a peace of mind. He will be celebrated, because he was useful in life, you know?

He taught me everything about wood. Ever since I was a little girl. About soft wood and hard wood. Soft wood: spruce and fir. As a child I wondered: they are beautiful, tall trees, how can they have soft wood? I pictured bushes as soft wood, because they were low.

Poppa laughed. It has nothing to do with height!

With what, then?

Well, he said, it depends on what they are made of. On the firmness of this... tissue. Their tissue, that's what matters.

Poplar, say, or willow. They have soft wood, too.

Poplar! For me, the duke of trees.

Hah, duke, poppa Joseph laughed. But he liked it. I would never put it this way.

Poplar – a duke.

And then there is medium-hard wood. Such as pine, ash, elm, oak, beech, walnut.

Hornbeam is the hardest of all. Also field maple, yew tree, or false acacia.

False acacia! As a child I could not understand how a tree could be false.

This is how we talked, you know?

He also told me what the individual trees were used for. We would sit on the stairs in front of the house, Eustach the tomcat always curled up on his lap.

Poppa would show me his axe and other tools. See? I made the handles from false acacia. Look, how firm! They must be, otherwise it's useless work.

Hornbeam is used for shafts. But also musical instruments. Some wood makes useful things, some wood makes beautiful things. Both of these. They're all needed.

Yes. Poppa told me something which was a big truth.

Ash tree, he continued, is flexible. It can be used for musical instruments, too, but also for hockey sticks and baseball bats. Elm here, that makes the best furniture. So does pine. Maple is very light-coloured wood. It's often used for parquet floors.

Parquets? Blimey!

Or take honeysuckle here. That's good for chiselling wooden nails.

Wooden nails? Can you nail something with them?

That's right. Wooden nails can also be lathed from mountain ash – it isn't always good to fasten wood with iron. But mountain ash also makes beautiful flutes, and box tree flutes also have a good sound.

Honeysuckle. Trees can have such melodious names. And poppa Joseph pronounces them as the trees deserve. With warmth.

He made staircases for many people from larch. After work, during holidays. It was his way of making extra money. He made walnut cabinets with neat lines. Once he laid his hands on Caucasian walnut, quite a rarity.

Jesus's foster father nods his head, he must know this too.

Poppa told me about plane trees and chestnut trees. About beech, which is best for veneer and plywood.

Jesus's foster father listens with attention, working the cedar wood. Trees, he agrees, that's a miracle.

He also told me that Stradivari violins had been made from spruce.

Stradivari? Jesus's Joseph smiles, as if he just saw God's work in front of him.

Stradivari. So tell me about them.

They were made from soft wood. But it was a spruce that only grew in one place, I no longer remember its name, somewhere in Italy. Such a rare spruce, very old, you know?

Jesus's foster father Joseph nods. He was a wise man, that stepfather of yours.

He would also tell me about common oak. It is used for wine barrels. It tolerates changes in humidity, and it turns into stone if immersed under water for a long time.

I could hardly believe it. Daddy! Really?

I can't get my head round it. How can wood turn to stone? At school we learnt about calamites and club moss turned to coal. I found that quite normal. But petrified wood?

Well, yep, poppa Joseph insisted. That's right. And he also said that common oak was mainly used for sleepers. And sleepers, that was what he was making.

But I still think he would have preferred to make musical instruments. Although, as you say, sleepers are mighty important. Poppa was doing something that people's lives depend on. You couldn't do without sleepers, as you said yourself.

That's why I started to study wood. Dendrology.

I was preparing for entrance exams and read all sorts of things about trees. I think even before my school-leaving exam I knew more than you would expect.

I hesitate. Once again I am talking about something Jesus's foster father may not understand. What can he know about school-leaving and entrance exams?

But he listens carefully and I have no more doubts: he understands everything I am saying.

At university I could easily skip the first term. Maybe the second one, too.

Poppa was glad for me. But then something happened, which can't be fixed. Which I'll never forgive myself.

Foster father Joseph puts a sheep in my hand. He carved it during my story.

Here, take it.

We were sitting on the wooden stairs to the house once again and I told poppa my first term was behind me, with all my exams passed with high marks.

Do you remember, dad, when you told me that wood was either soft or hard depending on the tissue? As a child I could not imagine what tissue was. But now it's clear. Listen. Wood is the tough tissue of land plants – that's a woody plant. It originates in plants from meristem cells. Did you know?

Poppa was surprised – such a word, where on earth did you come across it?

I studied it, dad. It's a huge source of energy. A type of biomass. It contains cellulose, lignin, terpenes, fats, waxes, pectins, tannins.

Poppa nodded. Tannins, yeah, but only in broad-leaved trees.

Ok, but listen up. Wood also contains sterols, resin, inorganic substances.

Yep, poppa agrees. That's why when wood burns down, it turns into ash.

Well, do I know my stuff?

I wanted praise. I really longed for it. Praise from poppa.

He did praise me. Clever girl, you've made me happy. I don't know such smart stuff about wood. You are very clever indeed.

I bragged too much, you know. I kept repeating: You know what they told me after the exam? That I was one of the best in my class. I didn't really know, I don't even know the others. They also told me I could think. That I was the thinking type.

After the exam I went for a cup of coffee with friends. There was a student sitting with us, he's a year ahead of me and he's Jewish. You know what he told me, dad? That Jews considered studies a higher form of prayer than prayer itself.

So I told him that I also loved studying, but that I felt stupid saying it. Like a nerd...

That's why I added right away that it might be due to my Jewish blood, too, that my real father was a Viennese Jew, but he died during the war.

And the guy told me he had known it right away, from me being so clever, that I had inherited my intelligence from my biological father, these can never be denied, these genes.

What do you think, dad?

I didn't even notice that poppa was searching his pockets, pulled out a crumpled cigarette and didn't say another word for the whole evening.

I had no idea how much I had hit him. Like a tree hit by lightning. People are immensely stupid in their youth. And immensely cruel.

It was never the same afterwards, although he was still nice to me. Something died. A fragile wooden musical instrument cracked. It was him who had told me all about trees, it was him who had brought me to them, and I gave the credit to my long dead biological father I had never known.

And then one evening...

Now I am already crying and blowing my nose like a child. Jesus's foster father Joseph lets me cry, because he knows...

One evening something else happened. Poppa was tired and asked me: please, come make up my bed for me.

Just wait until I finish reading this, I said, glancing up from my book just a little bit. Just for a second. He looked at me and slowly made up his bed. The next day, he was lying dead by the fence in front of the Brumov railway station, under the tall nettles. Bees were buzzing above him and...

I'll never forgive myself.

Don't do that, I can hear Jesus's foster father. His eyes are like poppa's, light blue. Suddenly he disappears in the shavings, and I can't make a move.

I'll be ill in the morning, I realize, since I already know this feeling.

And indeed I am. Cracking headache and my whole body is sore. I can't get up.

I find a wooden sheep on my nightstand. It's not cedar, it's lime wood.

So he was here.

Translated by Jana Vojtěchová



DAWN

ABOUT THE AUTHORS AND THE ARTIST



Georgiana Mărculescu (b. 1981, Braşov, Romania): graduate of the Faculty of Letters at Transilvania University of Braşov and of a master's degree in Literature and Communication affiliated with the same faculty. During her university years she participated annually to the Poetry Marathon event organized by the faculty. She published poems in the local magazines: "Gazeta de Transilvania", "Monitorul de Braşov" and the literary magazines "Interval", "Vatra", "Parnas XXI". She has been working as a teacher of Romanian language and literature since 2006. In 2011 Georgiana Mărculescu emigrated to Quebec, Canada. A professional reconversion followed, but she kept in touch with the literary world by participating in workshops and creative camps: "Vlad Ioviţă" Workshop, led by Dumitru Crudu, "Leonard Tuchilatu" Creative Camp (in 2020), "International Reunions #21" organised by Dan Mircea Duţă, associate of the "Familia" magazine.(2022).



Sava Damjanov (1956) is a Serbian novelist, literary critic, short story writer, and literary historian. His efforts are directed primarily towards fantastic fiction, erotic and linguistically experimental strata in the Serbian tradition, reception theory, Postmodernism and Comparative Studies. He is a professor emeritus at the University of Novi Sad, Serbia. He has received more than ten reawards for his works and has published more than twenty books.



Iva Damjanovski, born on 09.01.1996 in Skopje, Macedonia. She is currently a student at the University of Trento, Italy in a Master's of Musicology Program (inter-university course with Free University of Bolzano) as well as the "Ss. Cyril and Methodius" University in Skopje, Macedonia in a Master's of Piano Performance and Composition Program, class of prof. Marija Gjosevska. She is the author of "The performance of the future – the contemporary performance phenomenon in music and theatre, it's development and communication with the audience.", published in the fourth edition of the scientific journal "Ars Academica" by the Faculty of Music and

Faculty of Dramatic Arts – Skopje (2016) and "“ELEORP 76”: MUSICA NOVA MACEDONICA: Macedonian Electroacoustic music, her development and characteristics“, published and presented at the forty-second conference of the annual Struga Autumnal Music Manifestation by SOKOM (2017). She has directed and performed as part of the concert pair "Monochromatics" and "Monologues", dedicated to contemporary classical Macedonian music featured in the programs of music festivals such as "Days of Macedonian Music" and "Златна Лира" (2018) as well as her solo recital and multimedia concert project "As we danced we gave substance to shadows" in which she also performed on theremin (2021). Her first piece for the piano has been published as part of the compilation "Piano sky 3" by Pop Depresija, Serbia. She is also part of the duo "Alembic" whose self-titled debut album was released in July 2022. Over the course of the same year she had performances as a soloist with the Macedonian Philharmonic, gave an experimental solo recital "Stalking Heads", did 4 live soundtracks for silent movies featuring or by Buster Keaton at the Cinematheque of N. Macedonia Silent Film Festival, gave a solo recital focused on female composers "Жена - творец", gave a workshop and concert in Trento at the "Music Point" Musicology Meetings for playing the theremin as well as was part of the 4 piano concert at the Macedonian Philharmonic, a first of the kind in Skopje. Her poetry has been published in the anthology poetry books: "Rukopisi 40" (2017), "Rukopisi 44" (2021), "Who is who" (2021), "32 Македонски поети. Гласови на новиот век" (2018), "Астални Проекции" (2019), "SPE SALVI: POESÍA JOVEN INTERNACIONAL" (2020) and many more. Her first poetry book "Тие" was published by "Blesok Publishing" and the book was the winner of the "Igor Isakovski" award for best debut poetry book by a young author (2017). In 2019 the second and broadened edition was published by PNV Publications. In 2020 her second poetry book "Двоумење" was published by the same publisher and was awarded the prestigious national award "Brothers Miladinov" for best poetry book of the year at the Struga Poetry Evenings. In 2021 she was also awarded the third prize in the "Антево Слово" and special prize in the "Castello di Duino" international poetry competitions for best unpublished poem. She is part of the "Versopolis" platform since 2021 and her poetry has been translated in Serbian, Croatian, Slovenian, English, Albanian, Greek, Italian, Spanish, Romanian and Bengali. In 2022 she published her third multilingual poetry book "Тријажа".



Olga WALLÓ (Czech Republic, 1948-) is a poet, director, translator and fiction writer. She received her degree (PhDr) in Philosophy and Psychology at Prague's Charles University. For 35 years she worked for Czech TV, where she translated and dubbed more than 1000 movies and plays, including ten plays within the BBC's *Complete Works of William Shakespeare* series. She has translated plays and novels, and taught at the Film Academy in Pisek. She has wrote poems and novels ..., active in PEn Centre in Prague....



Jiří Žáček is a Czech poet and writer, born in 1945. He studied at the Technical University in Prague and graduated as civil engineer in 1970, but he abandoned this job after three years and started free-lance man of letters. He live in Prague and has two children. In his work, lyricism and humour are merged, wich makes him one of the most frequently read Czech poets.

Jiří Staněk (1957) graduated in the years 1976-1981 from the Faculty of Pharmacy of the Comenius University in Bratislava, in the years 1982 - 2011 he worked in a pharmacy in Strakonice, from 2011 in the village of Stachy since 1977, participation in Mirko Kovářik's *Zelené peří* club programs, cooperation with the Czechoslovak Radio *Youth Studio* Correspondence Club collaboration with director Petr Poledňák on song texts for theater performances (1985 -1989) original bibliophilia Slot machine Bratislava 1979 then what I read in myself Rovina Prachatice 1991 with fellow graphic designer Zdenek Bugán, joint edition of Salamandra in Ružomberok, Slovakia, in which three bibliophile cycles and one text were realized selective bibliography:

Loyalty to Protis 1996

Shakespeare on piercing 2002

Pornophilia 2009

Tyro Trakl adolescent 2014

Blade of Weles 2014

translations into Polish, English, German, French, Hungarian and Slovenian

representation in almanacs

review activity for the literary magazine Tvar

"He does not consider himself a creator, but a slot machine, mechanically translating what the world throws at him."



Zdena Bratršovská and František Hrdlička are co-author couple cooperating since 1975. ZB studied sociology and history, during the era of normalisation she worked manually, after 1990 sat on the committee of Czech Literary Fund Foundation, PEN Club and for a short time was employed as an editor of Czech Writer publishing house. FH graduated in stage direction, he was employed as an educator, editor, assistant director in Theatre On the Balustrade (together with Václav Havel and Milan Kundera), after 1990 worked as a university lecturer. Both authors met in an alternative White Theatre (founded by FH and where ZB was an actress), they are members of PEN Club and have published nearly 30 literary works (fiction, poetry, drama, books for children, journalism, TV documentaries, translations, etc.). The most renowned is the book *Sebranci* (published in English as *The Othered*), and a collection of micro-stories *Samé milé pitvorky* (published in German as *Lauter nette Geheuer*). The co-author couple has presented pieces of their creation among others in Germany, in the Netherlands, in Canada and in the USA, and they have been awarded several times for their work.



Mircea Dan Duta - a poet, film scientist, translator, author of Czech expression (*27.05.1967, Bucharest). Editor/Correspondent: **Kryton** (Spain - Romania), **Literomania**, **FITRALIT**, **Actualitatea Literară** (Romania), **Timpul** (Moldavia), **A Too Powerful Word** (Serbia), **Alephi** (India), **Quest** (Montenegro), producer & moderator of cultural events in the Czech Republic, Slovak Republic and Romania. Producer & host of the video literary programs International *Correspondences & Literary Workshops* for Literomania Literary Magazine in Romania (since august 2022) Associate Producer and co-host: *Poets of the East* Literary Radio/Video Show, produced by Rick Spisak initially for PNN Radio, than for Canary in a Coal Mine TV Society Producer & host of the video literary programs *International Encounters & Literary Salons* for **Familia** Literary Magazin in Romania (2020-august 2022) Member of the producing team of the *Poetry Days* literary festival in the Czech Republic (2016-2018) Producer & host of the *Reading Poetry* literary program in Romania (2016-2017)

Awards:

The Main Marhoul Award for Poetry for 2021 (Czech Republic)

The Panorama Literary Festival Award for 2021 (India)

The Morava Banks Literart Festival Award for 2019 (Czech Republic/Slovakia)

The Panorama Literary Festival (India): Finalist

The Award of the Czech Ministry of Culture for Promoting the Czech Culture Abroad: 2020, 2021: Finalist

Poetry books:

Landscapes, Flights and Dictations,

Tin quotes, inferiority complexes and human rights (2014/2015, Petr Štengl Editions, Prague),

Plíz sujčov jor mobajl foun sent'u / Plíz suiciof ior mobail faun senchiu (Next Page Editions, Bucharest, 2020, bilingual Czech-Romanian anthology).

Samples from his scientific work (film and literary critic and history):

Narrator, Author & God (Charles University Press, Prague, Czech Republic, 2009),

The Holocaust in the Czech, Slovak and Polish Literature & Cinema (ibid., 2007),

The Czech & Slovak Film New Wave in the Social, Political and Cultural Context of the 60s of the 20th Century (The *Jozef Škvorecký* Literary Academy Press, Prague, Czech Republic, 2008)

– last two titles are collective works.

Votes against Lands: About the Communist Policy Towards Farmers in Former Socialist Countries (The *History* Magazine, March 2012, Prague, Czech Republic)

Parts of his work were translated and published in the USA, France, United Kingdom, Spain, Poland, Bulgaria, Israel, Serbia, Romania, Moldavia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Spain, India, Egipt, Syria, Korea, Albania, Kossovo, Mongolia. He is also present in prestigious anthologies in the USA, UK, Mongolia, Spain, South-Africa, India, Indonesia, Romania, Moldavia.

Translator: Czech/Slovak <--> Romanian;

Polish, Bulgarian -> Romanian

English, French <--> Romanian

Czech <--> English, French



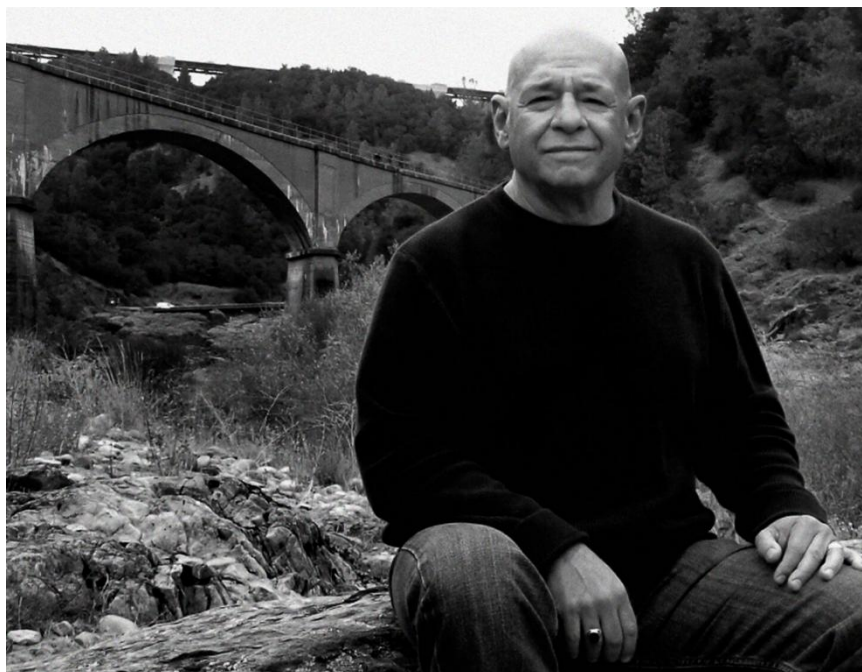
Sebastian Hester was born in Bacău, Romania,, but lives in Iași. He flirted with writing for quite a while, but it took some time to find his own voice. Apart from this, he is a full-time web developer, part time cinephile with aspirations of becoming a filmmaker, and of course keeps stressing his poetic (more or less so) voice too see what comes out.



Umutay Polotovna Eralieva (1968) is a poet, writer, journalist from Kyrgyzstan. She is a member of the National Association of Writers of the Kyrgyz Republic, the Association of Journalists of Kyrgyzstan, the North American Association of Writers, the Eurasian Creative Association (London). Her works have been translated into 32 languages and published in 20 international anthologies, newspapers and magazines.



Daniel de Culla is a writer, poet, painter and photographer. He's member of the Spanish Writers Association, Earthly Writers International Caucus, Poets of the World, (IA) International Authors, Surrealism Art, Friends of The Blake Society, Nietzsche Circle, Red Internacional de Escritores por la Tierra, and others. Director of Gallo Tricolor Review, and Robespierre Review. He participated in many Festivals of Poetry, and Theater, and has collaborated and collaborates with various magazines and reviews such as: Otoliths; The Stray Branch, Ariel Chart, The Penmen Review, The Sandy River Review, Raven Cage Zine, Down in the Dirt Magazine, Envision Arts, Allien Buddha Zine, The Creativity Webzine, Flve Fleas (Itchy Poetry), Poetry Pacific, Old Pal, Lighten Up Online, The Poet Magazine, Paragraph Planet, Uppagus, ReSite, GloMag, Fleas on the Dog, LAROLA, RAL'M, Misery Tourism, Leavings, The Creative Zine, Terror House Press, PS: It's Still Poetry, Open Doors Review, Tigers Shark Magazine, Words Rhymes & Rhythm, Synchronized Chaos Magazine, Athens Art, Street Cake, Littoral Magazine, The Poet Magazine, Poetry Pacific, Best Poems encyclopedia, Ranger, and others. e-mail: gallotricolor@yahoo.com. County of origin: Spain. City: Burgos.



William O'Daly has translated eight books of the late-career and posthumous poetry of Chilean Nobel laureate Pablo Neruda and most recently Neruda's first volume, *Book of Twilight*, a finalist for the 2018 Northern California Book Award in Translation. O'Daly's chapbooks of poems include *The Whale in the Web*, *The Road to Isla Negra*, *Water Ways* (a collaboration with JS Graustein), and *Yarrow and Smoke*. His first full length volume of poems, *The New Gods*, was published by Beltway Editions in September 2022. In March 2023, the Los Angeles Master Chorale included three poems from *The New Gods* and one from *Waterways* in the world premiere of Reena Esmail's "Malhaar: A Requiem for Water," at the Walt Disney Concert Hall.

A National Endowment for the Arts Fellow, he was a finalist for the 2006 Quill Award in Poetry and in September 2021 received the American Literary Award from the bilingual Korean American journal Miju Poetry and Poetics. A four-time Pushcart Prize nominee and co-founder of Copper Canyon Press, his poems, translations, essays, and reviews have been published in numerous journals and as part of multimedia exhibits and performances. He has received national and regional honors for literary editing and instructional design and served on the national board of Poets Against War. Currently, he is Lead Writer for the California Water Plan, the state's strategic plan for sustainably and equitably managing water resources.



Jan Čáp (born 1966 in Příbram) is a Czech journalist and translator, presents the Etymo and Eskymo podcast on histories of words. He recently published a coming of age story of a boy growing up in Czechoslovakia (Honza Čáp: Klapy klap).



Hamid Nazarkhah Alisaraei (Adonis Dodestani), poet, writer, storyteller, journalist, popular culture researcher, was born in 1978 in Kuchesfahan city, Iran. After obtaining a diploma in the field of cultural affairs management, he succeeded in obtaining a bachelor's degree. He was a member of the founding committee and responsible for Kochesfahan poetry and literature association from 2002 to 2007. He is also the founder and head of the "Kochesfahan" group from 2011 to the present day. Nazarkhah has officially started his press activity since 2005 with local newspapers in northern Iran, Gilan. During his student days, he printed and published the magazine "Bloom" in both Gilaki and Persian languages as the license and responsible manager. He is now the head of Gil Kochesfahan Institute of Culture. Nazarkhah published his first poetry book in 2018 in Gilaki language with Persian translation under the title "Wind Lullaby" by Gil and Dilam publishing houses.

In 2021, Nazarkhah was the organizer and secretary of the first edition of the National Short Story Festival (Alisaraei Award) in both free and special sections with the topic of Coronavirus (Covid 2019). The head of the jury of the second international competition "Literary Asia" of Kazakhstan and Egypt in Iran in 2023 His poems and writings are printed and published in written and electronic publications in Iran and other countries in Gilaki, Persian, Albanian, Arabic and English languages.



David Leo Sirois is a Canadian-American poet published 143 times, in 25 countries. His work has been translated into 12 languages (Hindi, Bengali, Nepali, French, German, Czech, Spanish, Greek, Romanian, Chinese, Turkish, & Doric). He hosts Spoken World Online, the Zoom continuation of SpokenWord Paris. His first collection is called *Humbledoves* (poems to pigeons & plants). He won Third Prize in Winning Writers' Wergle Flomp Humor Poetry Contest, & his poetry has appeared in journals such as *The Bombay Review*, *Artemis Journal*, *The Poetry Village*, *One Hand Clapping*, *Indian Periodical*, *The Sunday Tribune Online*, *THE BASTILLE*, *the Madras Courier*, & *Terre à Ciel* (which also published his translations from the French). David is often featured at global events, such as the Panorama International Literature Festival, & 100 Thousand Poets for Change, as well as in many international podcasts & interviews. He is also a singer/songwriter, radio DJ, & a film/TV/theater actor. He is currently submitting 5 finished manuscripts for publication, & writing several more.



Enormi Stationis (Bartosz Radomski) is a classical philologist, translator and poet. He lives in Warsaw, Poland.



Michael Lee Johnson lived ten years in Canada during the Vietnam era. Today he is a poet in the greater Chicagoland area, IL. He has 284 YouTube poetry videos. Michael Lee Johnson is an internationally published poet in 44 countries, a song lyricist, has several published poetry books, has been nominated for 6 Pushcart Prize awards, and 6 Best of the Net nominations. He is editor-in-chief of 3 poetry anthologies, all available on Amazon, and has several poetry books and chapbooks. He has over 453 published poems. Michael is the administrator of 6 Facebook Poetry groups. Member Illinois State Poetry Society: <http://www.illinoispoets.org/>.



Ilija Šaula was born in 1963 in Croatia. He is a multimedia artist, belonging to the Serbian literary corpus and world art. In addition to art, he deals with gastronomy and construction. He lives in the USA.



Milena Fucimanová, born 28 April 1944 in Prague. Graduate of the Faculty of Arts of J.E. Purkyně University, today Masaryk University in Brno (PhDr.) Original occupation secondary school teacher. Member of the Czech Center of the International PEN Club in Prague and a member of the Q Association in Brno. Founder and dramaturg of the Agadir Theater of Music and Poetry. She is represented in numerous anthologies, her works are also published in Germany, Austria, Ukraine, Russia (before the invasion of Ukraine), the United Arab Emirates Holder of the Ukrainian Nikolai V. Gogol Prize. He lives and works in Brno.



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