



ATLANTA REVIEW

SERBIA

Guest Editors

Biljana D. Obradovic & Dubravka Đurić

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WELCOME

The Pandemic Year, the year of isolation, has changed us all. One of the near constant refrains has been during the countless number of video meetings: “You are muted!” I’ve been thinking quite a lot about that phrase. For some writers this year has allowed them to focus, but for others the year has created an unprecedented kind of writer’s block. Reading this edition of the journal has felt like cranking up the stereo (dating myself with that reference for sure!) and spinning under a mirror ball. Like many of you, the editorial staff at *Atlanta Review* has done our best working remotely, and we are eager to return to a process that is less cumbersome—because editing remotely is at least twice as difficult. We are running a little behind, but we hope this issue lands in your mailbox in time for a return to outdoor reading.

One of the things people seem to most long for now is the ability to travel. Like Dr. Fauci, we are still side-eyeing the notion of getting on a airplane, so traveling vicariously is a welcome distraction. As we do each summer, we invite you to another part of the world to be introduced to the beautiful poetry written there. This summer our issue takes flight and touches down in Serbia, courtesy of the brilliant guest editing and translation work by Biljana D. Obradovic and Dubravka Đurić.

The pandemic has, in some surprising ways, brought the world closer. Technologies have evolved to enable better translations, but poetry translations confound algorithms. Metaphor requires closer attention—and the human touch. As Obradovic and Đurić negotiate the poem “The Mechanics of Language,” by Alen Bešić, readers are reminded,

Language is a pendulum, that simultaneously swings, and stands still.

Language is relative.

It is a whirligig. Or a drill bit.

Movement is the means by which language survives.

I cannot think of a better way to describe the world in which we find ourselves—spinning, standing still, all of us doing our best to survive.

Sending you all much love,

Karen

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Las Tías

They get together in the evenings
for coffee and *pan dulce*
when the weather is cool

and the white handkerchief out
for a sniff is a sign of colonial
elegance. They talk

in a tone of *hamacas*
in a hospice, medieval cathedral
in the form of a son

who can no longer reinvent
the sign of the cross. Eyeglasses
rimmed for the metal frame

of their lives in a small town. Belt
with a metal buckle to mark
the equator line around the barrel

of a gut. They come with flapping arms
around children saying, *vengan,*
sientense, vengan a comer.

Plaza pigeons are their lonely
apprentices, demanding a court case
for the death of their children.

Where are they going
in their proper sadness. Their lament
happens so gradually

no one ever notices the dust
settled on the lemon trees.
Once home, nap of pears

and baby's hair. Las tías
in their lavender and moth scent
in the blue flame of their stove

who boil their water and oils,
who board a plane every night
and never make it back.

William Archila

We Are This Far Into the New Life

and my head no longer aches. I can smell
orange peels again and coffee and garlic

browning in oil. Of the deaths, I have no right
to speak for the losses are not my losses

except that they are: we are all humans
and so we grieve and rage. The streets

are empty and our masks
hang on a hook by the door. Someone will ring

the buzzer so I will put a face over my face
again. Every morning in NYC I wake yearning

for my parents and my sibling
and Michigan's blue lakes. *Write about a couple fighting*

*over the state of the bathroom but that's not
what they're really fighting about. Write the fight*

*but not what the real tension is, my friend in Texas
sends me a prompt for a poem. The bathroom*

grows a lace of mold. We don't fight. The drain clogs
and we fall asleep and I dream of eating honey in a yard

where the bees gleam like rocket ships and buzz
like ill-tuned violins. For six weeks we have not left

our apartment. The way out, I know my friend is saying,
is to imagine people other than myself. But the windows

are closed and the door is locked.
This is the fight. This is the room.

Kate Angus

Of the Horses

When I think of them from a far city and older
by far than they ever knew me, I call first

their eyelashes, how delicate swept
from their fine faces tapered to the point
of the shoulder, from the flush of their muscles—

Checkers, Rainmaker, Nanny, and Bonehead.
To feed them, cool morning and simmered dusk, day coming,

day going, I copied my father's holler—*hooor-ses*—and deep.
I banged the tin bucket with the flat of my hand. We met
at the stable and I drained their feed into troughs

from the Chock full o'Nuts can more worn than I was, grains
stuck with syrup to the inside of my arm, shining ancient

as unearthed gilt. I curried their flanks to dust risen
in sepia sweet, in tobacco smoke. Their legs' night eyes
seemed to perceive the light and flaked like fresh bread

knelt in their coats. How they rippled
warm skin when a fly landed there. How the horses shake.

Emma Aylor

Amelia Earhart Teaches Me to Fly

I am a buoyant line of flight disappearing
into open blue, cutting upwards into lighted
sky. I am out here looking for you, Amelia.
They say you disappeared, but I know the truth:
women like us need freedom. In class, we learn
the horizon has two sides: our side, and the side
just over the curve. You're hiding there, I'm sure of it,
gliding past the hemisphere's crescent rim, floating
on airstream, leather flight jacket catching wind
like a wing. What's so special about the ground,
anyway? It's just dirt. When I was eight,
I almost fell off the Grand Canyon's edge.
At seventeen, every Tuesday for a whole year,
I fucked my Civics teacher. See? I'm like you,
Amelia—always restless, looking up,
searching for more. Still, even as I watch the atmosphere
rush into wholeness, I wait for my body to fill
with something other than air, to expand beyond
myself: a blue too wide for the skyline.
Did you ever feel so complete, Amelia?
as you raced through hot air in a shiny metal plane,
hair blowing wildly, each golden strand
illuminated in evening glow, as if, just for one glorious
moment, God decided to inhabit you
and you alone. Once, at a McDonald's
off I-40, the man I fucked every Tuesday asked:
What's wrong with you? Why do you want all this pain?
And as I bit into my Big Mac I told him:
I wish I knew, Bud. I need answers, Amelia! Please.
Tell me how to open my mouth to the world
and not cut my tongue on the horizon.
Tell me how to disappear from a man's arms
and dissolve into warm air like sugar into wine.
How do I build a home that doesn't become a cage?
Only you would know. I certain you're out there,
free and clear, on a white sand beach, sipping dark,

banana rum. Or, atop a sparkling mountain peak trying,
at last, to become sky. Maybe you're walking a bright city
block, spring breezes billowing under your yellow and
green skirt, listening to jazz drift out open bar windows,
watching airplanes slice through perfect, marshmallow
clouds overhead. I know just how you feel, Amelia:
you are *of* the world, but never *part* of it. You're too
expansive to be part of it, too threatening. Too rebellious.
But Amelia, I want you to know: you're not alone,
because every evening I open my window,
warm air rushing in, unfurling over the lighted
rooftops, over the Oak trees, and as I close my eyes
the dark sky rises beyond the green, and I ask myself:
what if everything is just a little further out?

Alaina Bainbridge

Last Dance with Mary Shelley

This poem is a hedonist, a gal about town.
You'll find her in a cabana
teetering on velvet platforms
tearing through Valley of the Dolls.

Sometimes the poem is gluttonous with ideas.
You could say she's drunk on her own aura.
As the poet laments age,
the poem bathes in immortality.

"I only have a short window of time
to be a beautiful haunted woman,"
the poet scribbles in her notebook,
while the poem giggles and does another line.

Emerging from numerous drafts,
at the crescendo of a thunderstorm-
the poem arrives in her wedding gown.
"It's alive!" the poet screams.

The poem arches her cobbled bones
against the surgical table.
She is the creature and the bride;
a lace veil caught and torn in her own mangled hand.

Carmen Cornue

Grape Ode

I for one, do not believe
in a wrathful god; after
you've gone to the trouble of creating something,
you might as well delight in it—
but who am I to criticize Steinbeck or
the Bible? The almighty grape—
botanically speaking is a berry,
and right up there with the apple in biblical
associations, although right now I'm thinking
more of Lucy's grape stomping episode:
that feeling of squishy-squashy purple pulp,
slippery skins, and tannins between bare toes. Oh,
to playfully wrestle and wallow in grape juice—
Adam & Eve should have been so lucky—
like how I feel when I'm sharing a bottle of red,
a Shiraz, with a bunch of friends,
sommeliers with impeccable taste, seldom bitter—
they don't mind if I welch off them. Dregs,
when you get right down to it, like all waste,
are a design flaw—
God's good grape is anything but.

Joseph Dorazio

Drought

Forty-eight days.
Cornfields scalding
under the hot July sun.
She's on the porch,
waving a church fan,
a white handkerchief
tucked into her bra.
He's killing a black snake
to hang over the wire fence
of the chicken yard.
It's supposed to bring rain.
Desperation leads to believing
in just about anything.

Beth Dulin

Horses Off Route 50

Every so often, the red dun filly
would free a soft frustrated blow

before returning to slow-blink
at algae ringing the trough

or the barn siding or the combine
working the hay field

as if it was an impossible riddle,

while the other, a quarter horse,
a healthy wad of clover

rolling over its molars,
seemed struck by an epiphany

perceptible only to a horse,

in communion with Hunnic harras
and the ebony warrior-stallions,

Alexander's Bucephalus
and Wuzhu, the Poet General's muse,

with the equines of prehistory
finger-smearred across the blonde

limestone of Franco caves,
fierce demigods before

the horse retired to the corral
and a placid emptiness

between the eyes,
except for when one cocks its ear

and its mouth salivates
with greens and a feral instinct to run,

because a horse in gallop is celestial,

while, per the First Law of Motion
a horse at rest is a shame,

and in accordance with Proust's Law
the natural composition of a horse

is the fiery earth of the Caspian plains,

or in the Classical mythos, unfurling
its alabaster wings, a single feather left

fluttering in the wild barley, the horse
rolling bridleless through the open.

Jae Dyche

The Koi Carp

On our honeymoon, we sat in the Imperial Palace.
Hue, central Vietnam, the country of your ancestors.

The palace had never been totally rebuilt.
Bombed back to the stone age by
an America that tried to save your people from themselves
through killing them.

In places, signs of the past, an exquisite mahogany throne room
battlements with views of a slow-eyed river,
vein-dark pools of Koi Carp ponds, where we sat
lowered our fingers into the gentle suck of vigorous mouths
the insistent kingly hunger of the oversized, overfed, fish.

It was the first time that day I had seen you smile

The current of you carried through your hands, into
the bodies just below

through gills, fins, open throats, into me, to tell me
of your love.

Alan Hill

The Phoenix

It was the worst pet we ever had.

My children got burnt when they tried to stroke it.
It ignited rugs, singed curtains,
tripped out smoke alarms

One year we moved eight times
neighbours whipped up petitions,
an angry mob, armed with pitchforks, chased us out of town

You get the idea. Yes, that bird was trouble, a pest

although, admittedly, handy at summer BBQs,
or that time when the boiler broke, but
that was never quite enough

eventually, I had to turn the garden hose its way

as every time it came alive again
popped smugly from the ashes of itself
flaunted its extravagant plumage

it was just as cocky as before, just as sure of itself
aware of its own beauty, immortality, of all that we
did not, would never, have.

Alan Hill

Up North

I drove over the bridge,
and there on the sandy river bank, a doe
stood waiting. It was evening, almost night.

The river was barely visible where the light
of the moon slipped through the pines, and even then
only its white froth shone. I was alone

with the windows open, and the deer
seemed to be making up her mind
whether to stay or run. I turned the headlights down

to try to make her calm. And then I heard
the soft breeze in the branches and the river rippling
over stones—what she was listening to

before I came along.

Patricia Hooper

Some Terrible Novel

I remember something about birds
inwardly flying. I think I was reading
Rilke's elegies in the corner booth
in that greasy aluminum cliché of a diner.

It was a half-decade before
the millennium, before I could vote,
when I still bumped around in that black
jeep with the shit engine.

The day was the same as any other day.
That is how I would describe it
if this was the opening of some terrible novel
with a title like *Those Blue Days*.

John Hyland

Black Bull

The fog is too thick to unlock the field.
Spent stalks of burdock and thistle
remain enfolded in softly shifting mist.
The grizzled black bull stands quiet and alone.

He knows that pasture as his beloved.
Knows each rise, each fallen limb
and the curve of her green shoulders.
Even the deer and squirrels traverse her belly,
breathe in her anise scented breezes.

He stands quietly, head lowered,
softly chuffing. She is with him,
invisible to all but him alone.
To all her moods he remains serene, consenting,
burying his soft mouth in her grasses
and tasting her sweetness.

Susie James

Side-Sewn

—*for Jenna*

You asked me once if I'm the kind
of man who truly knows his mind,
who, like a book blown in the wind,
returns to where my ribbon's lined,
or if I'm like a book whose bind
unfastens halfway through the plot.

I asked, in turn, if you could keep
returning to a book you've read.
Would I be like some book you bought
with good intentions then forgot?
Or would you keep me by your bed
to savor long before you sleep?

I knew my mind. You knew your heart.
So, soon enough, we stood and swore
to blend our pages, backed and sewn
so thoroughly as though, before
that day, we'd never been apart—
the only book we'd ever known.

And since that day, our book betrays
the wear of years of faithful use.
The gilding fades, the ribbon frays,
and yet the binding will not loose.
Our side-sewn, laid-out love displays
the words that only time can say.

Timothy Kleiser

Search Party

As we crossed Ogden Bridge the mood was grim.
Rain had muddied the main trails.
Nightfall was on our heels. Bloodhounds
had tracked all afternoon without a scent.
A crew broke off to dig Randy out
after his four-wheeler stalled on Maker's Hill.
On the talkie nothing but dead ends.
We knew the girl had gone to play in the woods,
had walked out at sunrise with pockets
full of bread to feed the creek minnows.
We knew her brown jeans and flannel jacket
would blend into the autumn foliage,
so we shuffled our feet through each leaf bed.
It was the girl's grandfather who kept us going,
who told us the girl once got lost while following
a wounded doe, and that she waited for the doe to fall
before building a tipi out of branches and bark.
He felt certain we'd find the girl somewhere
beyond Devil's Backbone, sleeping
under the call of a night owl roused by dusk.
This gave us hope, kept us on the lookout
for a makeshift shelter, until word came
that her mother's boyfriend had been caught
in a lie, and then another, and that we should
turn back, head south towards the levy.

Mark Lilley

Once There Was a Girl

Once there was a girl
who learned to sing,
then taught to be silent.

Once there was a girl
who heard a girl singing,
then told her to be silent.

Another story: once a girl
loved summer so much
she ran into the water.

Another story: once a girl
looked into the silence
so long she became it.

Same story: a girl is an abyss.

Same story: a mother cries
whenever she sees water.

Victoria McArtor

Nabash

Do not blame Eve for the apple's poison bite:
the garden teemed with things God caused to be.
"Eat, my love, eat, and then we'll know what's right.

Why should it be that knowledge gives you fright?"
the serpent asked unwinding from the tree.
Blame Eve no more for the apple's poison bite.

"Have you wondered what lies beyond the night?
It's just a piece of fruit—no blasphemy.
Eat, my love, eat, to know what's wrong from right,"

his forked tongue whispered in the fading light.
Naïve and young, she listened, true, but please
do not blame Eve for the apple's poison bite.

Slowly, the serpent twined her shapely thighs:
"God's breath brushed me too. Would I deceive?
Eat, my love, eat, and then you'll know what's right.

The Truth has little taste without insight:
Or is there something you don't want to see?"
Do not blame Eve for the apple's poison bite.
Eat, my love, eat, and then we'll know what's right.

David Melville

The Bridge

you're right to be uneasy here
halfway across and stopped
by a tremor

the slightest shuddering
in the structure
there's no guarantee for permanence

no real reason the asphalt couldn't crack
or the concrete steam
turn into vapor

while the girders detach
begin to lift
and float slowly to the stratosphere

you might have been mistaken all along
you might be walking not
on a bridge

but something
unexpected
a shifting
something that can't stand to be fixed

that has other inconceivable plans
like breath
visible
for an instant

or a scrap of song
meant to be lost
up there
in some city of weaving air

Peter O'Donovan

On a Winter Night

Stand long enough in the winter night
and you enter a vast but intimate landscape.

Stars like ice. Wind-lashed pines.
The distant, snow-framed faces of houses.

Watching your breath disperse in darkness,
you feel winter creep through your coated warmth.

Listen for the hushed footfall of the fawn.
Follow the flight of the moon-eyed owl.

Welcome night into your lungs and blood
and let the gusts bury your thoughts in snow

until you discover that deeper aloneness,
that denser cold, that emptier darkness.

Then you will come to know your kinship
with the owl, the fawn, the ice-enclosed house,

the stubborn pine and the resolute star,
as you stand in the winter night.

Tom Raithe

Into the Gorges

In the mountain mist
before dawn, just one lantern
beaming from the shore.

From my small cabin
I can see only one side
of the riverbanks.

Do not question the strange garb
of this river watcher—I
could not spare time. If my hair
is wild, it is the bow wind.

To be alone with the river
I go to the rail. Locusts
buzz their farewells. Tall grass
waves me by with white tassels.

On the rock perch nine black cranes,
at the far end, white herons.
Water still seeps from its cracks
as farmers resume hoeing.

A simple stone bridge,
steps cut into the mountain.
What need of altars?

Sluice into the roil and slick,
beside the curl of whirlpool,
the treacherous mirror swells.
I will not see this again.

The ferryman sculls
the rapids skillfully, but
he must breach our wake.

Think of the China
I have stored behind my eyes—
more precious than jade.

Jane B. Rawlings

Tufts of Him Drift Down

No longer the sandscape where I named the shells
and shorebirds rounding the waves, and praised the daily skies
unfurling coral sunbursts or gray solemnity, but always
a heaven in view—

Here, the yard is mostly moss, old time, old oaks.
I had a hunger for stars one night and lay on my back
for a glimpse, but the dark was tangled up in branches
and Quentin returned to my thoughts as he has of late, at night.

There's an hourless space before waking, a womb or urn
safe from hope's cruel feathers, an escape from hawkish time
that seizes what it likes from the sky and rips apart a future.
Tufts of him drift down.

So, where does this leave me now? You don't say.
Cicadas drown Your voice, or maybe it's my own heart
clanging in chains. The stars know. They sing in voices
far and pure. Unlike time bleeding into morning.

Suzanne Underwood Rhodes

Translating Bohuslav Reynek's *Morning in Winter*

Love, I have not seen in my life the beauty that you have seen.
I have failed. I am without excuse, and I am sorry.
And yet, when I translate a poem from a language
I do not know and ask you to check it from the Czech
You know, you say that my translation is more beautiful than what
You translated though not what the poet intended,
Confirming that from one who lives the language in Prague.

I understand that “memory fails, memory settles
In as painful as an elbow in winter” are
Not the words Reynek uses and not close to what
He means. Might he think my words as truthful and useful
As what he wrote? I am caught as if only half
Way to earth and still am falling or rising.

We agree that our mutually interpreted
Line “At the edge of snowy light,” belong in *Cold
Morning*. But those too are not what the Moravian
Said. So in that we are both wrong. But how I come
To write “Before the world gathered from mists and thorns,
The stark shape of one grain developed from nothingness,”
I do not know: that too is not in this poem.

I promise you, Love, gardens might still bloom from the
Emptiness I see. I will continue to go
Into the blinding fog to see what you have seen
All these years without the fog. And maybe yet I
Will say “Yes” to the beauty that you always see.

Michael Romary

Gnosticism After Hearing Ralph Vaughan Williams'
Fantasia On A Theme of Thomas Tallis

How long have I longed for thee,
the he that will vanish in me.
The you that the monk said he did not say
doesn't exist so as not to cause confusion.

So many times I have called
on the apocryphal Judas to betray me.
Were the perceived stumbles from a path,
from me, you, or that he? You are vast, I know.

And yet I renounce all for the nothingness
but the happiness that I seek, rooted in nothingness.
I no longer wish to return. I have no desire anymore
for self-annihilation, either in body or mind.

Knowing there is no difference,
that neither exist, have I then come closer
to non-existence, reconciling my dilemma,
a life-long conflict of the desire of birth and death

To evaporate within? Say the beginning and end
is near or nearer on the stumbled path
an I and a you, a he that doesn't exist,
always sees a me being in only now.

Michael Romary

Standing Guard

*We relive the past when we have no
way to make sense of what happened.*
—Masha Gessen, *The Future is History*

I

We relive things
and don't even know it
like Nadia, a woman who left her mother
standing outside the theatre in subzero cold. It was cruel.
It was dangerous. Why did she do it?
What unknown moment plowed back into her life
on the frozen sidewalk?
She didn't know, couldn't say.
A river Nadia couldn't see
had been cutting new tributaries, flowing
in directions unexpected
until she found the picture,
a gulag guard—her grandmother,
posed for a photograph
in Siberian snow.

II

We keep pulling cruelties
from the fur of our coat pockets
unable to ask
which one was handed to us,
and—in fear of it happening again—
which one do we now hand back
to our enemies, our kin?

Lao Rubert

Scapegoat

See: Leviticus, chapter 16

And two goats were brought before the priest,
one for a sin offering and one for a burnt offering.
Lots were caste. One goat was slain. The other took
on the sins of the congregation and was sent
forth into the wilderness.

I don't know about killing one of the goats,
animal rights folk would not be so keen on it, but I think
we could all use a personal scapegoat who lets us silently
pile our misdeeds on his wooly head: the petty foibles,
the stolen nights, the white lies and bottles of bourbon.

I clicked on Amazon and ordered a large Saanen goat
who arrived last night, a stinking ball of bleating
and farting fur that ate my prize-winning roses
and head-butted me with gnarly horns.
I fed him hay and tin cans and began to recite my sins:

sticky fingers in the tip jar, deductions to nonexistent
charities, stealing Percoset from my eighty-year-old aunt.
He wasn't at all interested and ate my peonies.
I continued with come-hither Kate and Leslie of the big boobs.
I noticed my goat was staggering around the yard,

falling to his knobby knees.
This is not how it is supposed to go.
I apologized and took back a few minor peccadillos:
a lingering kiss with Leslie next door, a forgotten first anniversary.
I put them in my pockets along with some used Kleenex.

Then I let him loose in the local park,
the closest I could come to a wilderness.
Hours later two police officers arrive in a van,
my goat standing proudly in the back,
chomping on the polyester seat.

Claire Scott

how we survived

after "Kyrie" by Ellen Bryant Voigt

Noses to window, we watch spring erupt
on empty streets, roll new words
around our mouths like loose teeth,
learn how quaranta became quarantine
became these days of deprivation,
first a winter now a second sleep.
We resign ourselves apprentice
to this new language of things,
dip our hands in alcohol, pass by rows
of empty swings, little funerals for plans
we made last week. Each night we scrub
our shoes before we sleep, then lay
corpse-still and grateful for all the beauty
of a world we cannot hope to keep

Rachel Smith

waking

knobby-kneed, fresh goat, just birthed, stabled—
miracles, such things are sometimes called, the way
life comes to us

I had an angry thought just now, hesitated to write it:
life comes to us, and then we slaughter it

I haven't been feeling very kind, not toward the
living or the dead lately, or generous

maybe I am never generous; I so rarely understand
how we wander through springtime with wet births everywhere,
creatures learning just to walk

I have mediated my trials *quietly*, that is what you told me,
and you thanked me for that, and I thought I might die
in that moment, from your blindness

have you seen a mother-animal lick her child, tongue against fur,
small creature huddled and safe

a din smolders in me, a deafening flare, it might be rage
though I'm only just nearing its edge

I don't know what happens after barn births—
I don't know if animals understand
that they are fated to die, as we are,
or when they come to comprehend it

I almost wrote that I am uncertain of everything—almost,
until I caught myself; what a lie that would be—I am so certain
of so very many things, of how every new birth makes me cry,
of the writhing envy in my chest for what I have not had,
of my volume and how one day you will be unable to adjust it
and will be forced to listen, if I desire it to be so

little goat, I want you to live well, but I can't speak anything
about your future—you will die, and if you don't know that now
you will soon learn it, but maybe you can think of how your mother
once cleaned you with her large, rough tongue, how there was no death in that,
how you were able to soon pull yourself up onto those unsteady legs

how it wasn't long until you could kill for yourself

if you had wanted

Lauren Swift

One-Eyed Hens

People, birds and donkeys are all
one-eyed in Egyptian tombs. The one-eyed

hen I hold by its tiny handle,
the hen that hides her other side, had been

my mother's favorite cookie cutter.
Afternoons in the sunlit kitchen

when she baked, no one could enter. Freed from
the form like hatched chickens, hen hieroglyphics

walked across her pans. Upside down,
the cookie cutter's other side forms

a deserted shell, hollow in air
where once she was. I enter her absence

dreaming of tigers on the blue sofa,
dinner plate face with its meat breath.

Marilynn Talal

Becoming My Husband

1

The label on my shirt said, “line dry”.
I saw clotheslines, clothes hanging
in sunlight on rope strung between brick houses
men’s shirts, underwear, jeans, socks,
dripping drops into cement backyards, bushes
among scrawny trees in my Bronx childhood
and his in Brooklyn
that little apartment where his mother

told anyone who’d listen
and those who wouldn’t
how wonderful her son was
until he and the world believed it.
His gentleness took away years
of my not feeling I was good enough.
His lines held me up.
Invisible lines connected us.

We did most things his way.
I was afraid to be myself
and envied his easy grace
longed for his tender humor.
His self-confidence took my breath away.

2

As my hands soap him in the shower
I remember his gentle hands washing
Andy and Melissa in the bathtub.
Strange, or maybe not, how I learned
from him during our long marriage.
I didn’t set out to become him, only to
admire and be grateful for his goodness.

He moved with confidence in the world:
floods in the garage, fire in our bedroom,
disaster didn't dominate him.
When toys formed obstacles on the rug
and I panicked with guests coming
he easily scooped them away.
He encouraged his employees to buck up
after disappointing experiments by turning
the results upside down.

When he became demented
terror ate me. He was my fortress and my shield.
Worry stifled sleep. I needed pills to keel over.
With his mind gone, lines snapped.
But life forced me forward.

We had shared everything: passion, boredom, loss.
I made choices amid confusion.
My magic sustained us.
Caring for him helped me learn to stand alone.
Between love and loving, strength grew
in my own capable hands.

Marilynn Talal

Hurricane Betsy, Horn Island, 1965

Twice I thought to turn back.
Twice the winds shifted
before I set my course between
two wide banks of cloud. All morning

I'd watched them drawing together,
twin giants thundering for control of the sky,
one blackness now, indistinguishable,
having hidden the earth's face.

When I touch the trees they smoke,
becoming fire and flame.
But when these waves touch the island
it shudders, the wind blowing one swell

after another over the outside beach.
I've moved closer to the island's center
where a young heron is climbing a dead pine.
Not yet able to fly, it must use its feet

and the hooked point of its bill to pull itself
upwards, and there stand proudly
in full silhouette, stretching, extending its wings.
In what supreme moment will it rise

beyond the flaming clouds, consumed in ecstasy?
I woke to music before light today,
a harbor bell tolling in the surf, brought
how many miles to rest after the hurricane's wind?

Four notes ring out. Four lost notes I chase
along the beach at first light. The sky a blank blue
slate. When I step into the tide the cold life there
wakes to tell its secrets again.

I listen as the bell tells its own tale
of white herons against a blackening sky.
Like a mockingbird, its voice, this gift,
this life from the storm, familiar, haunting.

Richard Weaver

Mohican Outdoor School
Pioneer Student Textbook P. 38

Rose colored leaves of sassafras, all thumbs,
textures or names of lichen, motion of chickadees
from branch to white pine branch, sound
of an arm-thick grapevine pulled, released, what is
the darkest place at this sun-slanting
hour, what's in the spiderwebs,
what story can you tell from these
glacial deposits, what is a home.

Margaret Young

International Feature Section

SERBIA



Thanks

The editors of this section of poems from Serbia would like to thank, Karen Head, Editor of Atlanta Review, for this opportunity. We'd also like to thank the poets, the translators, and our spouses, John Gery (for editing all the translations), and Miško Šuvaković, for their support. Biljana would like to thank Dubravka for helping her collect the poems during summer 2019. Biljana further would also like to thank Julie Kane and Grace Bauer, editors of the Nasty Women's Poetry Anthology, for inviting her to dinner in Portland at the AWP, to see Karen Head (an old classmate from UNL). This would not have happened without that!

Introduction

Dr. Biljana D. Obradović met Dr. Dubravka Đurić through a mutual friend, the poet, Charles Bernstein. After graduating with a B.A. in English from the Philology Faculty of Belgrade University in 1987, Obradović, a Serbian poet, first came to the US in 1988 for an M.F.A. in Creative Writing Poetry at Virginia Commonwealth University, then earned a Ph.D. in Creative Writing at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln. She has lived in the US ever since. Currently she is Professor of English and Creative Writing at an HBU, Xavier University of Louisiana, in New Orleans. A poet, translator and critic of Serbian poetry, she writes in English, having lived abroad from age nine, including in Greece and India. Đurić, likewise, also graduated with a B.A. in General Literature with Theory of Literature from the Philology Faculty of Belgrade University. She received her Ph.D. from the University of Novi Sad, in Serbia. She has been a leading feminist critic, Language poet, and Editor of ProFemina, a leading feminist journal in Serbia. She teaches at the Faculty of Media and Communication, Belgrade, Serbia. In association with the non-governmental women's initiative, she started the AŽIN School of Poetry and Theory. Once the two poets, Biljana and Dubravka, were introduced they began cooperating in publishing reviews of Serbian poetry collections in the US and writing papers about them for conferences in the US and Europe.

In 2012 they began work on a four-year project of compiling an anthology of contemporary Serbian poetry, *Cat Painters: Contemporary Serbian Poetry* (Dialogos Press, 2016), gathering work of 71 poets born after World War II which received the Mihajlo Misha Đorđević Book Prize, from the North American Society for Serbian Studies, in 2019. Charles Bernstein wrote the Preface. In addition, they have been eager to promote and work on translations of individual collections of poetry, such as Zvonko Karanović's, *Sleepwalkers on a Picnic*, a collection of prose poems, which has come out recently (Dialogos Press, 2020). Obradović has also translated a collection of Bratislav Milanović's poems, *Doors in a Meadow* (The Edwin Mellon Press, 2011), and is currently working on translating a collection by Đurić, as well. For this selection, they have selected additional poems by some of the same, but also other younger Serbian poets, with almost all poems not previously published in the US.

This selection of contemporary Serbian poetry, focuses on the generation of poets born between 1960s and 1980s. Our selection shows how Serbian poetry is rapidly changing under the influence of contemporary transnational tendencies and becoming globalized. We want to show a wide range of poems, from those that are narrative to those who insist on the fragmentary. In selecting and translating these poems we have noticed a prevalence of three-four directions poets seem to be taking in this generation: readers will find some poets dwell on individual experience outside of politics, while others use satiric devices to respond to dramatic political conditions or changes in the last two decades in Serbia, a third group cultivates experimental art and an interest in the avangarde, while a few write in the surreal voice about individual experience in imaginative ways. Some are preoccupied with domestic life, the imaginative, some are concerned with politics or avant-garde language play. Readers should immediately note that all the selected poets write in free verse. It is important to know that historically free verse in the Serbia (which had been overshadowed by the predominant practice of formal verse) represents a contemporary impulse to break from tradition into being modern, in both the style and content. In this selection we can single out a few characteristic thematic tendencies articulated in various ways. For obvious reasons, a large number

of poets remains preoccupied by the hardships of the Yugoslavian wars (1991-1999). They write not only about the actual war, and the mass murders, condemning them, but also about the experiences as refugees, in the search for that which was lost or for new identities (Tanja Stupar Trifunović, Dragoslav Dedović, Biljana D. Obradović, Nenad Milošević, Tatjana Bijelić, Dubravka Đurić, Natalija Marković, Bojan Savić Ostojić, Petar Matović, Siniša Tucić, Ana Marija Grbić).

In addition, this selection gives the impression that on the scene there are more women, than men. During the 1990s, the Anglo-Saxon feminist theories arrived in Serbia, and since then poets have turned to questions of gender and gender identity, especially in women's and less frequently in lesbian (Jelena Kerkez) poets. They rarely declare themselves as feminists, but feminist themes proliferate in the majority of their writings. In this selection, the women poets, dealing with the female identity, in the most direct way include Jelena Anđelovska, Danica Vukićević, Jasmina Topić, Ana Seferović, and Vitomirka Trebovac. Other women poets, such as Maja Solar, Ivana Maksić and Snežana Žabić, deal with the consequences of the brutal neoliberal exploitation of the human work. In short, contemporary poets have become very politicized, so that many poems offer critiques of the constitutionalizing of national countries and the imperial aspirations which has been achieved through brutal wars around the world during the 20th and 21st centuries (Ana Ristović).

Other poets broaden their scope to engage more diverse cultural circles: Central Europe (Alen Bešić and Oto Horvat) and the Mediterranean (Nadija Rebronja). They call on the classic European heritage (Enes Halilović) and indicate the experience of life and literature in North America (Alen Bešić). Another important element is how poets weave popular culture into their work as part of global experience, as in the poems of Zvonko Karanović and Marija Midžović. Poets are dealing with everyday life, gender roles, national and sexual stereotypes, the relation of local and global (Vladimir Kopicl, Marija Knežević, Dragan Jovanović Danilov, Nenad Jovanović).

Stylistically, poets oscillate between writing the short and concise lyrical poems (Danica Pavlović, Bojan Vasić), and those who use longer lines, especially in the case of narrative poetry. The narrative impulse, present in the majority of the poems, is important as it challenges the strong demarcation lines drawn between poetry and prose. Slobodan Tišma in fragments from *Blues Diary*, a hybrid book, mixes genres of diary, essay, poetry and prose. This selection shows the appearance of the prose poem (Bratislav Milanović, Nenad Milošević) which has seldomly been seen before in the Serbian poetry. Most importantly, however, is that we believe this selection demonstrates forms of poetry seldom seen before in Serbia and possibly the direction it is headed in, in the future.

Most poets here are of an Astern Orthodox background, but there are those who are Moslem or Catholic or atheist with a critical stance toward any religion (remember that Yugoslavia used to be communist but also post-communist euphoria for religious identity caused some of the poets resistance to it). Some of them are of mixed national heritage. Most of them live in Serbia, some of them in Serbian part of Bosnia and Herzegovina, others in the diaspora: Germany, Italy, USA or France.

Dr. Biljana D. Obradović & Dr. Dubravka Đurić

[The Cat and I]

The cat and I
had a big argument.

Early autumn evening...
Nothing's new.
A cat taps on the window.
I open it.
He enters with a bird in his mouth.
The bird is dead.
The cat's head is high,
its whiskers bloody.
He growls, takes a
deep breath,
a dull snarl.
I scream,
"Killer! Killer!"
We fight over the bird.
This is the scariest thing
I have ever done.
Parts of the bird
reflect in our eyes.
For days the cat and I
despised each other.
I detest him
for boasting of death.
He hates me
for grinding his dignity.

Jelena Anđelovska
Trans. Jelena Anđelovska
& B. D. Obradović

Two Little Boys

Two ten-year-old boys
Ride the train with no tickets.
Aw! What to do with them?
Dirty, on the run,
Scrappy looking.
Men and women
On the train
Roll their eyes,
Throw insults,
Click tongues, shout.
The boys sit
Next to me.
One grabs my thigh.
“No means, ‘No.’”
The boy apologizes.
We talk.
We know the same social workers.
Some of them we like.
Some we don’t.
Most we don’t.
They believe I’m human.
They speak.
“I was raped by
My drunk neighbor.
His wife beat me.
My mother died early.
I was left with my father.
He’s a wino.
He beat me up.
They took me home.
See this scar.
My old man gave me that
With an iron.
Got married.

Hated me.”
“When!?” We listen
To other passengers.
We can’t hear a thing.
The scum listen,
Numb with sadness over evil boys.
This state in the theater
Is resolved
By a change of lights.
In a play
The writer says, “Pause.”
“They beat you at the children’s home?” I ask.
“Oh, nooo.”
“They beat you. I know.”
“They beat us, but it’s shushed.”
“Each time we run, then return.
They don’t even look for us.
When we return we see
Our tutor, Sava Petrović
Who slaps and kicks us.”
Light. Break. Train.
Crying. Good train crying.
Boys comfort the train.
We are alive and such is life.
“Don’t cry.” They hand out tissues.
Light. Pause. Passengers
Don’t touch the tissues.
Yes, these boys may be miserable,
Still, their hands are filthy.

Jelena Anđelovska
Trans. by Jelena Anđelovska
& B. D. Obradović

The Mechanics of Language

At a Vienna supermarket, we are paying for bare essentials. The cashier places three or four coins on the counter and in our own language, says, “Thanks and have a good one.” Unexpectedly our faces light up. Afterwards we descend into the metro, and through the hubbub of train cars we listen to a conversation of two young men with acne, who were speaking calmly, as if commenting on a dull chess game:

“...And then I take the baton and hit him on the skull.”

“Did you open it?”

“For sure.”

“Did the teeth fall out?”

“Yes, three, maybe four...”

Language is a pendulum, that simultaneously swings,
and stands still.

Language is relative.

It is a whirligig. Or a drill bit.

Movement is the means by which language survives.

Alen Bešić

Trans. by B. D. Obradović

Bad Hamburg

Champagnerluft und Tradition, says an ad for Bad Hamburg. On the official internet page of this popular town, famous for its casinos and thermal spas, history lasted until the year 1912. That's when the city got its prefix *bad*—spa, hot baths. The time after that has been left to the unrestrained imagination of the readers. Bad Homburg still floats in a cute *fin de siècle* balloon, in the glass snow globe in which flakes fall over a colorful backdrop scene, again and again. I recall Kafka's "*The lie made into the rule of the world*," while I pass by the Nobel Laureate Schmuel Josef Agnon's statue with N. on the way to "Taunus Therme," a spa center in the middle of an immaculately landscaped park. Here Alexei Ivanovic, at the very end of *The Gambler*, meets Mr. Astley and finds out that Polina is in Switzerland and that she loves him. Soon after, wrapped in towels, we breathe aromatic vapors of eucalyptus, meditate on the warm stone deck chairs, sip cold beers in hot tubs. In these pools and saunas our personal histories don't have deep roots; so lighter than our bodies, we imagine other stories, other selves. Relaxed, model citizens, we enter the steam bath and get too close to the contours of someone else's naked body. At first, without glasses I cannot discern anything except for many submissively extended hands. Next arrives a tall uniformed man who without saying anything ladles something white from a bucket and pours it into bowls made out of hands. I, too, curl shape my own hand into a bowl to get my share of salt but I don't know what to do with it. We press forward. It's stuffy. In the mist of the spooky chamber, I search for N. in vain. I sense a precise, evil, wicked intent to harm us. With a final effort of will, I grab someone's tattooed forearm and extricate myself getting finally outside from that mess. Out into the air filled with champagne, calming muzac, we pass through a few last flakes. Or is it a shred of ash.

Alen Bešić

Trans. by B. D. Obradović

Notes:

Bad Hamburg: a spa near the city of Hamburg in Germany.

Champagnerluft und Tradition: from German meaning: champagne filled air and tradition.

Schmuel Josef Agnon: Israeli writer who received the 1966 Nobel Prize for Literature.

The Local Poet

“Are you reading anything written by local poets?” A cameraman and journalist are stopping passersby along the main street of a minor city. Some don’t understand, others can’t hear, as the microphone unwinds.

“So, local. I have no clue,” a literature teacher replies, “Do we have those here?” He looks into the distance; it’s getting dark. He cracks his knuckles, “I knew one from my aunt’s village. He lived alone, drank, was devoured by rats in the attic, and what he wrote about? Hard to say.” His colleagues in the schools handed art, world classics. “Dead poets are like wine,” he says. He has been serving up their intelligent thoughts for years. He sliced books up by underlining already marked lines. He will leave this world untroubled. In the meantime the local poet is going circulating the city through various shapes and forms. Not much magic there: at times he travels, frolics, runs, then performs in movies, eventually returning to his restaurant (a few steps from Bosnia Lodge), where he sometimes orders a soup.

The local poet is a plague that drives away innocent passersby who themselves suffer from bias headaches, incurable even when they, too, are local poets, in truth healthy, but existentially deceived.

The local poet is a poetess hated by the class and classless societies both because of her empathy and quick wit in solving riddles, and especially because of her sharp insight into others’ intentions with no need of a crystal ball. Her hands do many things, her love local yet global.

After the war, the local poet reassesses her life. She had a problem with the army and their shortcuts, as late as today needs to disappear into the chambers of the heart whose rhythm changes and protests. The streets are filled with children with shackled feet. Her pain avoids outdated rhymes.

The local poet, on the sly, reads
her early poems, a novel from her youth,
today's horoscope, predictions, books about the breakup of countries and the Last
Judgment.

She renounces and denies, watches TV, thumbs through novellas,
has anxiety about relationships in her Facebook profile
and is afraid of the laptop. She is convinced it reads her mind.

While at night she watches a culture show
the local poet thinks of the other local poet
and the wall that separates her from his apartment.
Inside the walls one writes everyday prose, the borders move.
He moved and reseeded on a button of his shirt, so he could breathe more easily.
Threw out the mold into the trash, moved into the empty balcony,
and began to breathe again.
Someone close moved away from the ball, the cones,
goalposts. They expanded the screen.
All else remained the same.

Tatjana Bijelić
Trans. by B. D. Obradović

A Twisted Perspective

As little as possible should be said about it, for there are no statements or obvious words that can describe the beloved, a temporary loss of orientation, the way she rides into your heart and fills it with amber.

Words deprive us of intimacy with reality; where there are words, there is always a danger of a twisted perspective.

Therefore, I am wary of words, even the most beautiful ones, yet there is so much I wish to say, for despite the fact that silence is the language with the greatest scope, I remain in love with words.

As is the case with poverty-infested favelas, there are no pillars in language either—only sentences assembled that no one has embraced yet.

A woman truly loves you only when, once again, together with her, you find your century-old feudalism.

When she looks at you, you get a halo around your head.

When she gives you her heart, you can never give it back to her.

Dragan Jovanović Danilov

Trans. by Novica Petrović

The Balkans

No insight comes quick of the tongue.
It comes from a dream. In this town,
which does not brag of the fact that it even
exists on a geographic map, the Balkans begin.
The street ravaged by hot, shameless shadows
has soaked in the heat of the day, year, century.
I see a workers' settlement with rectangular,
dilapidated buildings, hovels and shacks,
grown almost to the size of houses, next to slow, dusty
roads, at whose crossroads boys wash
the windshields of tin lizzies. Here, the day lasts
uncomfortably long. By the side of the road that can take you
anywhere, boys thin as lizards play
football. In this lane you can meet
a future Maradona . From a run-down truck whose
engine, as persistent as Hurricane Katrina, releases
clouds of smoke in the air, they are unloading goods.
The piled-up, long-discarded automobile
tires are worn down by so many excuses.
The truckers are bantering, sounding like two battered
tenor saxophones. The silence that ensues
is perhaps just an extension of their conversation. Two
women with dishevelled hairdos on the front stoop of a house are
combing each other's manes. The cat huddled beside them
hides a Hedda Gabler inside, desperate and wounded
in her soul. A skinny dog barks like mad at one of the truckers,
who, shrivelled as he is, looks as if he had
spent his entire life in this soulless truck.
From dilapidated cellars and the surrounding garbage containers, dozens
of sophisticated stench emanate. Bumblebees are buzzing, flying
Chetniks , repellent just as I am at this moment.
Right next to the shed whose architect has remained anonymous,
threadbare linen dries on a wire, a leitmotif of misery.
A massive beef liver trembles on the scales in a nearby
butcher's shop. The only thing lacking here are coyotes howling, a sadder
sight than you've never seen. Your heart can break if you pay

attention to every scene you see. Under the malicious sun,
poorly fed sparrows peck in the saffron-yellow
dust. What is a sparrow's horizon of expectations like?
And what can sparrows know about the dirty face of this neoliberal
economy? Personally, I like sparrows because they don't care about
philosophical speculations concerning the role of centrifugal
and centripetal forces in the Kant-Laplace theory .
If I had a say in this, I'd enter all sparrows in the register
of births and put them on a plane, in business class.
A child is crying rather a lot inside a parked Wartburg .
I watch that child, shining in an unusual way. Indeed,
the child has the face of Jesus, lovely. I think, if by chance
he lifts his wings, he'll pull down all these working class buildings.

Dragan Jovanović Danilov
Trans. by Novica Petrović

Notes

Maradona: Diego Maradona, a famous soccer player from Argentina, now retired.

Hedda Gabler: a Henrik Ibsen character from one of his plays with the same title.

Chetniks: members of a Serbian nationalist guerrilla force that formed during World War II to resist the Axis invaders and Croatian collaborators, but that primarily fought a civil war against the Yugoslavian communist guerrillas, the Partisans.

Kant-Laplace theory: Nebular Hypothesis. Kant's central idea was that the solar system began as a cloud of dispersed particles. Laplace's model begins with the sun already formed and rotating and its atmosphere extending beyond the distance at which the farthest planet would be created.

Wartburg: an East German type of a car acquired by Opel in 1991.

Hagiographic Joke

the country of my birth is at war
with my mother's native country
my mother's native country is at war
with my sister's native country
too many corpses i think
for a mere family quarrel
so i will leave
my son will be born in
the promised land whose language
in the previous war my father learned
in the concentration camp
in that language i will whisper
good night to the woman i love

in that language i will tell
my life story from time to time
as it endlessly amuses me
a frozen human face
which refuses to understand

Dragoslav Dedović
Trans. by B. D. Obradović

Longing of Fingers of the Left Hand

i looked for a guitar on that train
as it passed by the village at night
past countries' borders past
cities in shambles
a guitar with six strings a wooden box
i had not idea what i'd do with a guitar just
the longing of fingers on my left hand
from passenger car to car i woke up
people with banal faces do you have
a guitar it is perfect as
the corpse of a woman without arms or legs
a photograph from war
i lost
in this country from which i am escaping
a greek arab spanish word
guitar

Dragoslav Dedović
Trans. by B. D. Obradović

the rule of emptiness (after the war), 2015.

we want to develop something * but we don't know what * we want to reach something * but we don't know what * we want to be somewhere * but we don't know where * the concept of space leads to a reduction in tension * let's be more tolerant * the concept of the mind brings us to magnolias in the garden of vertigo * that is how the rule of emptiness of the background is created * in the sky-blue color of a baroque building * kinetics of bends * mysticism and poetry * the cold of coat * blister's bee * let's be more tolerant * your intolerance is threatening to me * flamboyant threat of a bite * bring a feminist * but make sure she is pretty * i don't want to say anything* about the process of writing * about the production of illusions * allusion leaps onto a lollypop * cats get attached to those who take care of them in a strange way * that's love * long ago in 2010 i didn't know all that could happen * wars were behind us * hunger and other new illnesses were raising havoc * i began to go do new research so i could find a vaccine that would keep me awake * but a transgender person came up to me and asked me when i had become a woman * i was surprised by such a question because darkness was seriously descending onto the deserted fields of the empty screen in that long ago year 2010 and the citizens of that ghost town didn't know what to do with themselves and whether a new disease was approaching or a new war which would destroy the rest of the cells of their organisms * everyone believed it had to do with a wide ranging conspiracy aimed at disabling us from leading normal lives * feminists know how to be strenuous and exclusive * locked in a closet they lose a connection with reality * we wanted to resist politics * the painter sat by the canvas and painted ethereal beings in the shape of young women * they are the losers * they don't have jobs * they are afraid so don't dare to confront the harsh circumstances stifling them * typical new york food * combinatorics i don't understand * while i go around town you ask me what are my political views * you know i am anxious because negative answers are unacceptable * because on the dock there are a bunch of hydrangeas so i ask myself how i belong there with my story * that year it was winter when hunger and harsh life conditions had left their mark * we buried the corpses in the

backyard in the once beautiful gardens * star wars has done its job * people couldn't stand it anymore * they'd fall into a coma or they would be overcome with insurmountable anger * they would destroy everything in front of them * i was afraid to leave home barely even to fetch water * we drank rainwater * and we all knew that it was a matter of a conspiracy which would lead to barbarous liquidations * i looked at old books written in an incomprehensible language that few people knew * the stench of corpses spread everywhere * no one remained untouched * i was obsessed with photographing it * i wanted to leave the mark from this draconian time * but i was afraid to leave the house * infections were spreading * at first people would get sick mentally * they would stop behaving like human beings * they became dogs cats or plants * then their bodies would suddenly begin to deteriorate * i was afraid for myself and my dearest near me * we were still able to cope with the hope that we would survive * only sometimes i would fall losing hope * which was dangerous considering i wasn't sure i would be able to return from that state * phones were not working and very means of communications was lacking * all until at some moment we developed our ability to communicate through telepathy * soon we began to believe in the occult * in everything we were able to discard in the past heartlessly * I didn't know where to hide so as not to be exposed more than necessary * i would put my head in the sand or i would read graphic novels which had once been so popular * people tried to overcome alienation * we slept next to each other in order to warm up * in order to feel the warmth of another human being * it was a feeling we had forgotten * we learned how to talk all over again to walk again as if doing this for the very first time * we could not sleep at night * the air was filled with different sounds * human voices * the noise of machines and cars * but without material proof they had really surrounded us * i was afraid to leave my hallway * the world seemed dangerous * destroyed * broken * and in that environment our selves were breaking and every attempt to try to restore them was once more prevented * stores had not been open a long time or people were bypassing them because they believed that an overabundance of goods in them would create a particular dependence which was unhealthy and would lead to the strangest feelings some psychological or physical trauma and they were sure that such a materi-

alistic civilization would lead to ruin * i was not sure what to do
with myself * i walked the same path to the bed to the bathroom to
the room to the kitchen * it was a simulation of ancient rituals we
had long abandoned * as a dew we discarded and now in misery
all that remained was to devise new trite rituals so as to be able to
reconnect with energies which gave us meaning and restored the
very vitality to exist on this planet * i forgot how to write and how
to talk * i still moved in some half-conscious state of being * some
new animal species had emerged that we knew nothing about
some new plants * we feared we would have to start all over again
* who are we now * everyone asked the same question * spatial
and time dimensions gained new meaning and new forms and we
knew the time had come for the uncertain restoration ahead of us

Dubravka Djurić

Trans. by B. D. Obradović

[My Name Is Ahmo]

my name is ahmo.

i was born two kilometers from sarajevo in '87.

i had the smallest sneakers in the world

and my mother was called Selma, then died.

like a sea urchin, she disappeared into the sand in front of the house
she didn't have a womb.

from then on, i, too, wear the trousers and everyone calls me ahmo,
ahmo, you look like your father; ahmo, you are quite a young man;
ahmo, what will the people say?

around the house, the yard, the street, the mosque,
around the dog house.

ahmo, have you ever kissed a boy?

have you ever smoked grass?

have you ever sat with your father at ramadan ?

emptied a room of air?

counted days, counted hours, counted minutes, counted
clouds?

dear son, ahmo, you are truly your mother's bastard.

—my father calls me that way—

takes out the false teeth from his mouth, hits me with them,

folds his fingers back into a fist

red as the sea, then hisses like a snake,

understands everything epically.

sometimes he eats quietly and then he is at his ugliest, because

he has nothing left then, but to be be angry and berserk,

breaking mother's pictures and haranguing me, while

i am going blind.

our room gets under my nails and gets black in between

the neighbor's houses.

ahmo grows his father's tail between his legs and

is turning into a man

the new millennium shakes our curtains.
every summer is warmer from the one before
and women are around the house, around the yard, around the mosque,
around the butchers.

Ever since then i too have worn trousers.

Ana Marija Grbić
Transl. by B. D. Obradović

Notes

My Name Is Ahmo: From the long poem *Zemlja 2.0* [Earth 2.0]. Belgrade: ARETE, 2017.

Ahmo and Selma: Muslim names.

Ramadan: the holy month in Islam during which Muslims fast for 30 days

[I Am Almost Thirty Years Old]

i am almost thirty years old, my name is anja,
i was born in Belgrade [1987]
they often used to take me to the village in a hot yellow yugo.
my parents would hand me over to grandma and grandpa who soon
 after would die
from a flowering of the brain, the tight tissue,
rigid heart aorta, and

they would then say how old people died off naturally but
i had dreamt how my legs had grown together,
had become an impenetrable skeleton of a fish's tail and
during the nights i would just count the wood floor tiles
under the bed, nothing else
and once again i became a wild animal knocking on the door with my horns
rivers would run, like this
just towing bovine cattle
some type of a man with a donkey head and
of course
anja is well behaved—said the caretakers—
but she's only a little detached, and maybe she's shy,
send her to acting school
maybe there she will learn how to speak more loudly to say less
and how my hair is the nicest when it's parted on the left side.

well, that's enough for a life.
*around oslo i discovered nature which i had to learn to love so i could
 leave the city once in a while.*
*often i wished i'd been born in a basket of tangerines or in the cold inside a
 pomegranate.*

Ana Marija Grbić
Trans. by B. D. Obradović

Notes

I Am Almost Thirty Years Old: From the long poem *Zemlja 2.0* [Earth 2.0]. Belgrade: ARETE, 2017.

Yugo: a type of a car, formerly manufactured by Zastava Automobiles, at the time a Yugoslavian company.

How to Use Darkness

nothing depends on you, says waiting.
turn off the lights in the room.
darkness will fall.
in fear of darkness
everything will disappear.
but wait.
be one of the patient ones.
and wait.

slowly,
things in the room will begin to reappear.
scared,
shy,
 things will exist again.

waiting speaks:
i am older than you are,
but I will outlive you.

Enes Halilović
Trans. by B. D. Obradović

Note

How to Use Darkness: This poem now appears as part of a long poem called, Manifest Kvantumizma [Bangladesh: Quantumism Manifest]. Novi Pazar: Edicija Sent, 2019.

A Woman and I

On the bus
a woman, next to me, was reading my book.
She was reading my words.
But curious, I kept quiet:
an woman unfamiliar to me and my book
and I were unfamiliar to her.

I was embarrassed, as if I were an embryo
looking at his parents at the moment of his conception.

Time lingered. That woman kept reading. Reading.
Like a kangaroo, she was jumping from line to line, from page to
page.
Then she pressed the book against her chest
and we traveled.

She was thinking something.

I felt safe, as if a baby kangaroo
in its mother's pouch.

Enes Halilović
Trans. by B. D. Obradović

Circus in Budapest

after a photograph by Andre Kertesz

Look at that clown on whose head
the elephant really is standing.
Horses are climbing on the trapeze
and jumping into a glass of water,
while the audience laughs.

The knife thrower hits the girl
in first her one, then the other eye.
Lions pull apart the fire eaters
and the audience is rolling with laughter.

Bear and tiger trainers
jump over their burning pets.
Midgets are caressing with their whips the audience's faces
which cracks like a bag of red sweets
and everyone is roaring with laughter
and from their fear of dying.

Oto Horvat
Trans. by B. D. Obradović

Festino Degli Dei

Eighty five golden ducats in 1514
were enough to stage the Feast for the Gods.
And pintor messer Giovanni Bellini wasn't the only one accountable.
We might also mention the old man, Ovid, who advised him
whom to invite and how. Even then there was considerable gossip
of his knowing all of them personally.

In fact, all of them in turn responded to his call.
(Oh, yes, not even Gods can resist free food and booze.)

As early as dawn Silenus arrived with his donkey,
his ward Bacchus didn't stop with his infectious laughter.
Jupiter, as always, was inseparable from his proud eagle,
Mercury didn't remove his large, absurd winged helmet even for an
instant,
Proserpina was cheerfully teasing Pluto, and Ceres showed up
on the arm of her lover Adonis,
just to name a few.

Later, when like a bee hive, the summer evening
began to fill with shadows, exhaustion overcame some of the guests.
First to give up was the nymph Lotis, who fell into the arms of the
invisible Somnus.

What peace and serenity. The gods delighted themselves.
History had not yet become our nightmare.

Oto Horvat
Trans. by B. D. Obradović

Notes

Festini Degli Dei: The Feast of the Gods is an oil painting completed in 1514 by the Italian Renaissance painter, Giovanni Bellini (with substantial additions by Dosso Dossi and

Titian); one of his few mythological pictures and his last major work, now in the National Gallery of Art in Washington D.C.

Pintor messer: master painter.

Giovanni Bellini (1430-1516): Italian Renaissance painter from Venice.

Silenus: n Greek mythology, Silenus was a companion and tutor to the wine god Dionysus.

Proserpina: was the Roman goddess of the Underworld.

Ceres: is her mother, the goddess of grain and the harvest.

Lotis: was a nymph at the Liberalia festival; Priapus tried to rape her when everyone had fallen asleep, but she was awakened by a sudden cry of Silenus's donkey and ran off, leaving Priapus embarrassed as everyone else woke up to see his intentions.

Somnus: sleep.

Sancta Simplicitas

Carnivorous plants obstinately feed on vegetarians.
Vegetarians obstinately feed on carnivorous plants.

When the path of the green to the red, and the path
from the latter color to the former close into one, a circle,

will we still be able to tell holiness from simplicity,
or will we need help then

from the dialecticians, those we rejected (it seems
only yesterday) on account of

their alleged obstinance?

Nenad Jovanović
Trans. B. D. Obradović
& N. Jovanović

Note:

Sancta Simplicitas: L. for “holy innocence”—often used ironically in reference to another’s naïveté.

Autumn

This sentence is a documentary
about itself. A documentary
photographed on large-grain film
stock. Soon,

spring will arrive and the grain
will sprout. Soon,
we'll see summer. The clitoris.

The subject of this sentence is itself.
Solitary. With three fingers
for crossing oneself that—like the rain Kragujevac—
circumvents the clitoris.

This sentence is as lonely as a histrion
in the era of documentaries.
When everything claims to be the truth. When all
claims soften and all that is moistened by rain

turns green. Here is a
sentence for the desert. For a
mirage.

The sentence that would be uttered in
the last shot of the documentary, if only
the film strip—the hymen—
were not broken.

If only autumn never came.

Nenad Jovanović
Trans. B.D. Obradović
& N. Jovanović

Note

Like rain Kragujevac: a Serbian expression referring to the low amount of rainfall supposedly in the city of Kragujevac, but actually meaning that someone or something is being illusive.

In a Hotel Room

He was sitting on the bed in a hotel room, wearing only in his white boxers reaching down almost to his knees.

He was talking on the phone with his mother.

His mother had been dead a long time.

The voice coming from the receiver only resembled his mother's.

"The depth of details is key in writing," someone said from the other end.

A large, naked woman, with broad shoulders and massive thighs, danced behind him.

She was slowly writhing to the rhythm of the electronic music coming quietly through speakers arranged neatly around the corners of the room.

Then he heard:

"Fascinated by machines, you are avoiding female characters... When I gave birth to you, your father was away on business..."

With an expression of boredom, the woman behind him came closer and disconnected the phone line.

"One shouldn't be writing about death; we live in a culture of happy endings," she said in a metallic, robotic voice.

He closed his eyes.

He found himself in a luxury apartment full of strippers.

The phone rang.

It took him a long time to reach out and lift the receiver.

"The lack of boundaries is the enemy of art..." he heard his mother's voice say, again.

He stopped listening.

He watched three blondes in high heels approach and then encircle him.

Two of them pulled the phone cable out of the wall, tied it around his neck and began to squeeze.

The third squashed his face with her enormous, silicone breasts, suffocating him.

He got a strong erection.

He didn't even try to defend himself, but instead helped them tighten the cord.

He tightened it around his neck as much as he could, but he had the sense he was tightening a kid's elastic band, to no effect, a limp gelatin band.

Zvonko Karanović

Trans. by B. D. Obradović

Note

Both this and the following poem, “Notes from a Cardboard Church,” have previously appeared in: Karanaović, Zvonko. *Sleepwalkers on a Picnic*. (Trans. By Biljana D. Obradović: Lavender Ink, 2020). Used with the permission of the author and translator.

Notes from a Cardboard Church

Only in the beginning did the visions come to him, full of fire and ashes.

Later they were replaced by others that seemed ordinary, like those in which the sea rises into the sun, or how in water a meter deep, he is riding a bicycle, or how he commands birds with his thoughts.

They weren't strange at all.

His job was to "have visions," to write them down, and from time to time to deliver them to those who didn't care about them anyway.

Even though he considered himself neither a prophet nor a preacher, still, he built a church on a beat-up dumpster.

Into the church, a cardboard box yellowed from rain and sunlight, he welcomed a mangy kitten.

It kept him company, while after midnight, mostly by candlelight, he wrote letters to himself.

Days passed peacefully until the big incident occurred, caused by this sentence:

When we are left alone we must concentrate on our image.

As soon as he put down a period, the thunderstorm began.

Magpies started to screech loudly on the gallows, while the bats of conscience peeped in from the rafters.

From out of the depths of darkness an inner voice began to whip him.

"Appearance is an illusion! Everything that exists is inside!"

Frightened, he wrote quickly,

The mode of existence...Negating superficiality...Life beneath the surface...

Then, he remembered he was writing only to himself with no need to defend himself, so he put down his pencil.

In the corner the mangy kitten raised its paw.

Attached to his chest as if a badge, the tiny, neon Coca-Cola sign flickered in the darkness, until he finally realized that he was there for completely the wrong reasons.

Zvonko Karanović

Trans. by B. D. Obradović

Embodiment

We are from the Poetic SenSei. Constituted? There is no being without a written record. There are no borders.

Do we have a sex without a grammatical gender? Only if the Female Author assigns it to you.

Are we at all physical? You'd have to experience that on your own.

Are you able to touch them? And they you? Are you able to resolve this Finesse—they don't want to be touched or are not tactile. Or perhaps they only touch each other? Touching is the final instance of the checkup, if the bodies of poets stand out. They know, but hide it, pretend not to be aware. Innocent and Naïve. Inexperienced.

From the end to the beginning, not hierarchically, not according to any particularly strict order. Flight among free association. So, do the Poetic SenSei have bodies and genders? That's up to the Female Author's energy, creative revival and urge to belong. Classification. Can you see me?

First in her own voice the Female Author calls you out and introduces you. Calls you by reading. Extraordinary. Then, if you appear on the world stage dramatized. Your role would be performed by character Actresses. The poetic body would plant itself onto the body of a particular character of the female gender with her consent. Unless the Female Author specifically decides for the nongender, or consistently implements the neutral grammatical gender. More precisely.

The Female Author's Double is another thing. In the poetic plateau astrally projected Author's Instance. Lived in. Centered. Teleported into text.

You have become alive in Words. Word is alive. Magic. All permeating, fluid. You impersonate yourself. Then the vision of the Book as if a gravestone of the female Author, ISBN... CIP, still not carved out date of the appearance, the departure, the transition... buried, saved in meaning, in your own record, inspiring your Book. Finally ready to move in. Signing yourself into the shelter. Imagining yourself in the nonexistent one.

Incomparable and Infinite. Concentrated Resignation. You don't give away an impression. You don't wait, but are all that is needed... which you are... Immeasurable. The excellent is recognizable, and she is prepared for all outcomes. Circumspect.

Jelena Kerkez

Trans. by B. D. Obradović

Madame

An heiress, she has the birthright
Of several native languages
And a long family history
Of well-bred women, camel riders.

She knows how.
She's allowed.
She is beloved.

Embellished by the cultivation
Of sentiments
For silk brooches and hairclips.
An upbringing of keeping to herself
She shows only a select few
The pressed kalatea leaf
Her great-grandmother was given,
Tenderly, she emphasizes, by someone's great-grandmother.

Because of that.

She despises material values
(She can't resist emphasizing that),
A whimsical mistress of secrets.
For caprice is always trendy!
She never shrinks from playing it safe.

A champion of competitions
In recognizing works of art.
A paradigm of style when she smokes,
A lady ruler of the diner
Where "her waiters" attend to her around the clock
Charmed by her weakness for chitterlings!
She dallies with contradictions;
Otherwise she's a well-educated stoic.

Elegant in men's pajamas,
Shabby running shoes, if not the most expensive,
True to one medalion around her neck,
A dedicated nudist.

She knows how.
She's allowed.
She is beloved.

Impeccably worldly,
She's petted baby elephants, and lion cubs,
Cuddled all kids of the young, alert to the quietest
Squeak of a litter in her as she roams.
She gave one long hug to a baobab, she'll say
She has to lick the sea.

Ah, that little flacon? She smiles.
That's sand, gathered just for her
By a very astute Nomad
from the Gobi desert!
Look, and here's a rug
Made from the hides of a Mongolian yak!
Seductive when she flirts
With poorly mimed amnesia.

Now—
As she tends to repeat wherever when the hour grows late—
Now she is ready to die!
So what's the big deal?
Death's a bugaboo only to the unenlightened!

She'd prefer to end her days in a deserted village,
Sharing a room with goats and cats,
She'd live on the bitter flora of the barrens,
Anything, just not to get on a bus,
Phooey! Just tourists and sandwiches and bums!
Oh, and how she orders the wine!

That erotica of an elbow on the counter!
How she carouses, how she cooks, how
Her house gleams, while she leaves
Servants to the nouveau riche.
No one can apply makeup the way she does.
No one combines cashmere with her sneakers,
No one catches sight of the dis-
Tinctive detail the way she does.

No one can resist her.
She loves to be beloved.
She knows how.
She's allowed.
Everything but solitude.

Marija Knežević
Trans. by Sibelan Forrester

The Stranger

*I can't be from here
Where tenderness doesn't even have a name*

I hadn't thought farther than the store,
This one here—where the clerk calls me “Hon.”
I took some small change without any other
Values or intentions.
It's 33 steps! I'm certain.
33—I've counted it many times.
Jedan, two, drei, cuatro...

Fünf!—I cry out the moment I hear:
“Watch where you're going, you cow!”
Πέντε—as they say: “Why do you walk mutts,
You stinking whore? I know what it is you need!”
Six—“You get fatter and fatter. You offend the view
Of the girls from the jazz ballet.”
Someone quietly wishes me a good day.
I quietly wish someone a good day.

Δέκα—I mutter a mantra just in case.
At about twenty-two, close to the entrance-shelter,
A granny in a feathered jacket, head wrapped in a shawl,
Whispers to a granny in a coat, a granny with a perm:
“No boyfriend, and no child! A mare, who knows?!

Maybe she's a lesbian? Ahaaa! Or something with her brother..., well
It takes all kinds these days.”

Twenty-three—two oranges,
A yogurt, a newspaper and bread in a plastic bag.
At the elevator—the screech of the sudden screech of brakes:
toop! clank! trass!
But it's already thirty and I don't see outside.
I make out the sounds.
The words are familiar to me.
I remember everything.

33—I know.

My excellent memory betrays me.
Never so alone
As on my way to the grocery store.

Marija Knežević
Trans. by Sibelan Forrester

Child

A child lies in his room, he does not know about this century.
However, once he woke up, he would drink his water with lemon.
The lemon floats in the bottle like an exploded planet:
it is dead, cut into pieces, squeezed out, but it refreshes the child
as if it were the list of his possible fathers. No one will see this,
nor read it, not from a book nor from the lips
for the lemon tightens the lips and the book closes a century.

So, as the water oozes down, the child is constantly growing.
It walks and reads, eventually leaving the room,
the way the summary of a book, once read,
enters the world for good. At the same time
the century gets squashed and dried out like a planet
and something fresh can be observed that floats and crosses our minds.
Everything is almost clear there, like a reflection of glass,
but this clarity is not real: the real is asleep in the child's room.

Vladimir Kopicl
Trans. by Nina Živančević

Here Comes Joy

Hey! Hey! Hey, hey! Why does Joy come to us?!
To speed up some slow affair
which drags itself, but we cannot even see its course?!
That course where our foot walks, upon which we place our hand,
its movement, its meaning, its spirit which if picked up
immediately, quickly, should not lie in the midst of the course.

The spirit is better than that. That's why Joy visits it
smiling with closed eyelids, with wrinkles encircling the eye
like the fairy's mouth which speaks out clearly
in order to hush the noise of eternity, that vague melancholy whisper
which does not recognize, "Hey, hey!" but flows blindly, wisely,
somehow lazily and slowly, the way misfortune flows.

And Joy rushes in the sextets, sometimes even in triplets
as if water were stepping over the pebbles
and the stones rejoice with them, with their eyes washed clean.

The stone likes the movement, too, you and us alone:
If Joy decided to visit us, it would only arrive promptly,
and if it disappeared soon after—it's none of our concern.

Vladimir Kopicl
Trans. by Nina Živančević

Infrastructure

Your city has a stable
Infrastructure
Kiosks with court bailiffs
Casinos and pawnshops
Second-hand windows
Army barracks are renovated instead of movie theaters
Army generals are grinning in bookstores
Priests + patriarchs and slava bread
Shacks collapse on their own
From some unbearable fear
And well-rehearsed silence
Sprout apartment blocks belonging to no one
Private business spaces
Sidewalks only occupied by
Jeeps and Land Rovers
With baby carriages colliding pushed by pale
Absent and overindebted parents
Icons of saints hang on walls
At the gynecologist's, dentist's,
Hairdresser's and mechanic's
Factories are working twenty-four hours
On the bones of their unpaid workers
Bodies are being imported and exported
To meet the needs of their private owners
Entrepreneurs and landed gentlemen.

Ivana Maksić
Trans. by B. D. Obradović

Note

Serbian slava bread or *slavski kolač*: an important part of the religious aspects of Krsna Slava or the celebration of a Serbian family's patron saint day. In many homes, the parish priest comes to the home to bless the bread before any festivities can begin.

I Am Your Propaganda Movie

(1916-1942)

Who will tell you how to film a war
You need to mesmerize but that it's not up to you
How, given that people will judge you
In the forest, so you become a big stain
On my coat without epaulets,
Fern, an illegal unit,
Drama of a battle, report from the front
You whisper leaning onto panties:
An explosion severed a comrade's head
So, you ran away, the sea was on fire
The fuel leaked out, the brandy flowed
We hate them so much as they are creating a state
You're not an extrovert, dressed for solitude
You lick my calf with your tongue sharp as a flame.
What are you doing? What are you up to?
I'm confronting you
It will last,
I know, it will, but then afterwards
Cover me nicely, you could do it
In the language we sent our boats sailing
To Odessa, that will be, it will, you know
Until we disembark, and everything will already have happened
Steve, it's better in water, in the iron
Casing of the camera, someone will already have
Unravelled the gallows

Ivana Maksić

Trans. by B. D. Obradović

Conceptual Store

The bicycle moves through the mechanism of declinations.
The music of fruit relaxes and the naughty self-defense movements
compile a meta-narration.

Stop! It's enough!

Tell me a story!/ Tell a story!

Turn on the alphabet and fall back into the synthesis of cyberspace.

In any case everything has already been bookmarked.

Dolls dream of pornography.

Socks & make-up become someone's dissertation,

Postpartum depression glimmers in the eyes of the cashier who
looks like Marilyn Monroe.

Appearance is only the disappearance.

(In these parenthesis just add your term _____).

I bought a whole case of melancholic jigsaw puzzles in twelve
installments

(one installment is the negation of war).

Take advantage of the fire sale of meaningless hours spent in cold
caves.

My writing provides really analytic evidence that I kiss in the style
of an cyber kiss.

I am a large octopus with felt pens and as I ponder with which
identity to draw \$@&

A past life of glamorous sensations and programmatic roles make
for a great identity escape plan.

The equal opportunity plan of closed associations.

In the supermarket one can listen to an absent minded intercom:
"You only have ten minutes till closing of your intermittent self-
consciousness. Hurry up or you will turn into powdered
sugar which has just blanketed our new city."

Natalija Marković

Trans. by B D. Obradović

Aliens Drinking Cedevita

Every year aliens throw parties on the planets in a discursive
universe.

The invasion of mosquitoes takes place on my body.

They are neighbors remind me of Jupiter's crowds,

All members of some ancient cult,

Who fly in saucers through a gloomy region.

"W-O-M-A-N," that is the language of water lilies made of large
waves.

Into the machine for grinding meat,

Mock soldiers of childhood march to the rhythm of star wars.

We grow the way balloons form into forgotten bakeries of
withered feelings.

The staleness of alcohol.

Trees grow under fingernails.

For my homework I am speed reading Heidegger.

You can hear a siren. Emergency....

The aliens have gotten drunk again on Cedevita,

And they are cruising on their scooters on clouds.

Weather forecast: For unexplained reasons, yellow rain has started
to fall.

Natalija Marković

Trans. by B D. Obradović

Note

Cedevita: a Croatian instant vitamin drink (orange flavored Cedevita) was created in 1969.

European Landfill

“I live in the Balkans,” I say to tourists from the EU,
“And I write poetry,” I explain;
even retirees from the Wolfsburg
Volkswagen plant nod with approval:
I don’t doubt them—here in the Balkans,
Western Europeans see poetry
as an exotic destination.

The wind lifts the hem of a tanned German woman’s skirt.
She is an older lady wearing an ethnic necklace.
I listen to their crusty voices which pronounce the names of countries
whose languages I’m not permitted to understand :
Montenegro, Croatia, Bosnia und Herzegovina, Serbia.

And the restoration of the monarchy is now in sight:
among the lilacs blooming in Serbian villages
feudalism this spring is arriving unapologetically.

I comfort myself with how business is taking place these days,
how they conduct piracy of everything from CDs to cosmetics...
In the center of this small city in the south of the country
they’re trying to persuade me that just across the border is the Far
East,
and everything is spoken with a mix of Chinese, gypsy
and Serbian syllables.

In the lava to the west, the sun sets over my lip.
Because it itches, I bite it, collect my belongings,
and I leave the square, without looking back... Behind me
I hear bangs, and gurgles, in the banter of both foreigners and locals.
“Is there a solution except for love,” for the Balkans,
we who are the official landfill of Europe!

Petar Matović
Trans. by B D. Obradović

Glass, Aluminum

Look, winter is passing by, and the ice is thawing
on the windows of buses arriving from the suburbs.
You recognize not only the locals who've gone abroad, but also
the mixed melodies of other languages during rush hour
(tolerance still exists among newcomers);
reflected on glass towers float the skies and contours
of apartment buildings seen from afar, as from inside the random
neon lights that break their monolithic reflection: again
newcomers arrive in Galicia, but Jews
never again (only on holidays do you spot them
as if a performance of memory): The "days of culture"
of communities now vanished occur in cathedrals. In ethnic centers
tourists gather. Synagogues have been transformed into specialty
markets,
and at long last, the ravens, the Shoa witnesses, arrive to flee
their perches. But, I pause from trying to understand their meaning
to observe one of them sluggishly jump with heavy hips,
even after seventy years. At last, when
the vast metroplex of skyscrapers filled with multinational
corporations, is finally finished, will arise massive gorges in their
reflections,
as the past grows older, and against them will be shine
ill times, the crippled present, but never history.

Petar Matović

Trans. by B D. Obradović

Notes to "European Landfall" on the previous page

languages...understand: Even though before the dissolution of Yugoslavia everyone in the above mentioned countries spoke a common language, Serbo-Croatian and could understand each other perfectly well. Today they all have separate languages, which are basically the same language, with dialects. The poet can understand all the dialects, but because each is a different language now, he is not supposed to.

piracy: In Serbia there is no legal prevention against piracy of any products. Peddlars sell all kinds of pirated goods on the streets.

I Wanted to Become Anthony Hopkins

I traveled sincerely
towards Anthony Hopkins
wanting to become a shark,

an incredible silk shark
with only one eye,

a little dark, plain and clear, but
with a mustache from corn silk.

My blood froze in my veins
at the thought
I would give birth
to living young ones.
Really? Me?

On the balance beam at the gym,
a man with Dracula teeth crouches.
Love never dies.

He's a happy vampire
who sleeps under a coconut
tree. As in an ad for sugar drinks.

I'm happy in my little kingdom of sex
and animals. Hair down to my waist,
legs up to my chin. But really
much colder.

The tap won't stop dripping.
Foreign below.
Touch.

May become a policewoman?

Marija Midžović
Trans. by B D. Obradović

A Marriage with Tesla

A lamp fell from my hand
the first time I
experienced great fear.

Since then I ooh and ah
at the innocent man who
is in awe of the hair
under his own arms

He is my own personal
work of art, a ship in a bottle,
living proof that Tesla is a myth:
that's impossible!

The jury at Cannes raves
at how I've matured.

I'll fill Emily Dickinson's
white dress full of helium.
All of it.

I'll introduce cowboys
into Serbian poetry.

Marija Midžović
Trans. by B. D. Obradović

How Abel Killed Cain

In the beginning it was all the same:
at the edge of the horizon two sacrificial altars
for burning, merge with the sky, as if on a picnic:
the smoke of Abel's sacrifice, provocatively,
caresses the sky—while Cain's smoke,
its spine smoldering, hovers across the ground.

And nothing points to the crime;
even God, possibly bribed, through
a tiny hole in the cloud, squints down on the scene...
And in the shadows of the generous fig, Cain
having knocked Abel onto the ground, waves
with his brotherly hand at the top of his head.

For seven thousand years, this image has been repeated.
But, more recently, among the figs,
smoke rises above the red lights
of the two chimneys of an oil refinery,
and through its huge piston, rushes Cain
clutching a murderer's key towards Abel.

But suddenly Abel stands up,
dusts the eons after his death from his shirt,
rolls up his sleeves, whispers through gritted teeth to himself:
And now it's my turn.

Bratislav Milanović
Trans. by B. D. Obradović

Under Ararat

The water has completely receded, my dear Noah
—only the desert sand ripples under Ararat,
as gone now are even the laws, God's and man's,
your ark stranded atop the mountain,
in it nesting now flocks of myths, all hollow,
while in the valley lawlessness rages.

Who by twos would you load in the ark now?
All the noble beasts have died.
Which sons and daughters-in-law would you bring now as seeds
for a new people when everything has gone to weeds,
my dear Noah?

The flood will surge soon, whose evil rides
on a terrible wave, and there are no boats to float on.
In vain, you send emails
to dead cities, in a dead language,
dead for thousands of years... asking for help to build a new ark...
the reply—no,

no: no tools, no carpenters, no gopher wood,
not for a deck, not for a rudder, nor for the rigging...
Only a ship made of God's materials
would be worthy of renovating: no vinyls,
no alloys, nor motors,
nothing which could get used up and not renew itself...

The Earth has been shaved and smitten:
instead of trees everywhere weapons grow...
Your descendants have punched a hole in the ozone layer
in their search for the secret of life
and everyone sleeps with everyone else, without love.

A great wave of madness rises
and for this reason, in this world, no arks exist,
yet we get no help from you, my dear Noah.

Bratislav Milanović
Trans. by B. D. Obradović

Note

Gopher wood: (in biblical use) the timber from which Noah's ark was made, from an unidentified tree (Gen. 6:14).

Dry Crying

After two months of flirting
during which two years
of fall and winter collapsed,
faith abandoned beauty
leaving her on the square to the mercy and disgrace
of post-ideological policemen without cause
and objectivity of the foreign press.
They announced, “We won.”
Even then the rest of us teared up
adding, “In eternity, yes.”

The betrayed snow melted, draining away,
getting thinner as it was getting warmer all day,
the dirty water soiling people and cars.
Come nights—ice—the blue beast—
formed on the streets and sidewalks, shining.

“Spring will return again!”
a poet repeated.
“We’re closer to death
closer than ever,” he added.
And: “To the brotherhood of roses
the closest is the brotherhood of poetry.”

Neither the beginning nor end of the season, it dragged on.
Over the theater square—
where only yesterday a tight fist was raised
and flags fluttered in the wind,
where one could hear the clapping after each speaker’s pause
during the sudden tension—
until people returned to their own business with heads half raised
and we rushed to the end of history;
until the resolutions have been implemented,
reconciliation of the warring parties will not be achieved,
until the century dies in our arms.

While something light was being cooked or fried
lowering the power of transcendence
pictures and the statements started appearing:
the ring, roughness, furs on a naked body,
a new political uncertainty.

Those who were broken apart and separated,
those unjudged, by the defused state, turned to stone.

She says, "I call this state 'dry crying'
since I've stopped crying in front of you,
yet it's not true that I've stopped loving you."

That love endured precisely
from the eighth meeting until the end of the civil uprising.

Nenad Milošević
Trans. by B. D. Obradović

Notes

After...foreign press: Two months of civil protests from November to February 1996-1997 in Belgrade were held due to the theft of local elections in Belgrade and seventeen cities around Serbia during the autocratic rule by Slobodan Milošević when the European Union envoy, Felipe Gonzales, supposedly helped in recognizing the results of the elections.

The eighth meeting: a meeting between the Central Committee of the Communist Union at which Slobodan Milošević took over the power, first in the party, then later in the state.

Notes to "Đemilji" on the following page

"Đemilji: name of the cat

Ostružnica: a village on the Sava river, downriver from Belgrade, where there is a bypass over a bridge

the night of the coup attempt: a failed coup attempt in Turkey on July 15, 2016

Demilji

During that stormy night we didn't know where to bury you.
I turned on the air conditioner to the highest setting and the
windshield wipers on high,
as we raced across the causeway towards Ostružnica.
You, my little, furry brother lay empty in my hands,
your death crushing my life.
My warm cousin, I wanted to stay awake as long as I could
through the night of your death and funeral.
My unknown gentleness,
my dear, sleepwalking under the moon friend,
through the night of the coup attempt in Turkey, you became poetry.
I can still feel your warmth on my palms
even though they stuffed you in a bag, then the trash bin.
You were still warm when we covered you with hard soil
under Ostružnica bridge.
(After they told me we may have buried you alive,
but I knew you couldn't have survived this fall from the 15th floor).
You, my musical tomcat,
I threw away my mother's serving spoon
with which I dug your grave.
Under my nails I still have
the soil from you as, pale from your death, I wonder.
You are my yin yang. For a long time,
I searched the banks of the Sava for your brothers and sisters,
until once again I thought I recognized you.
The next day I learned they had stopped
the traffic going towards the Ostružnica bridge levee,
and all these years they've permitted for more and newer
police commanders, together with their godfathers,
for the President's son, for Mrs. Secretary of State.
I would if I could put a curse on someone. I can't. But how I wish I
could.

Nenad Milošević
Trans. by B. D. Obradović

At a Periptero: Not Spying, but Loving

*after an old photograph of a periptero from Thessaloniki
(Sunday 1957)*

I bought Chiclets mastic chewing gum at a periptero near our house in Salonika, tasting like pine cones... Then proceeded to call my boyfriend, secretly, on the *periptero* phone, for a drachma or two, maybe five, so I did not do it at home, where my dad, an official in the Yugoslavian Consulate, wouldn't find out I was dating an American soldier from the base on Mt. Hortiati above the city...

My father was sure the sole purpose for the American base being up there was to spy on us. If he had found out about us dating, he would have gone crazy. The young man, older than me (even though I was in college), also felt awkward dating a communist's daughter, couldn't lie to his officer when he went to Athens to take an exam for a higher rank, even though his own friend, who was above him in rank,

told him they won't mind me, and not to say anything. But he didn't listen and flunked. It was not my fault. I was in the relationship for love. He was tall, blond, lean, strong... a nice Jersey boy, who taped Lionel Ritchie songs for me that he loved to listen to, mostly slow songs by this musician, I had never heard of before, but whose music I learned to love, then even saw live in concert, remembering every word, as I do that once forbidden love.

I remember how he would bring some American beer, Michelob Light bottles and cans to drink as we hung out driving to the Agia Triada beach in his Beamer, an old BMW he had bought for fun while in Greece. We double dated with another girl, an old classmate of mine, and another soldier. Once we even went away for the weekend to one

of the peninsulas, and were woken up in the morning to a flood—a pipe had broken and we had to move.

So much for trying to remain incognito. People stared at us, as he was over 6'4" and full of muscles. He worked out a lot, and I was so thin and pretty, tall, a former model. We both spoke American English. When we danced at clubs we stood out. At a bar, Rainbow, where we hung out a lot, people knew us. We never broke up. He left Greece. I never saw him again even though I moved to the US. The night before he got married, he told me, cried on the phone.

Biljana D. Obradović
Originally in English
by the author

Note

periptero: Greek for kiosk

Trendsetter

When I was younger I aspired to be
a model or an actress, so in my last few days
spent in India, in the mid-70s I did an ad
for Bombay Dyeing, a factory that sold fabrics,
with my friend Tina riding a tandem
with me in front, while she was in the back,
me in white shorts with open shoe strings sides
no underwear, in high heel shoes
(as if one could ride a bike in three-inch heels),
she in long white pants, also in high heels.
We were riding downhill over twenty times
to get it right after they kept fixing our make-up,
after I got permission to take the day off school.

I thought since I was leaving the country,
I would never see the ad, but
ten years later in grad school in Richmond,
on the other side of the planet, on PBS TV,
I saw myself on a report on advertising in India.
I was visiting my friends' place and told them
how I had done some modelling when I was there.
Suddenly, to our surprise, I appeared on TV
in that very ad. The reporter said how things
were changing in India, a conservative country,
where people in Bollywood movies didn't even kiss,
and how some ads had sexual implications.
I realized I was *it!* I changed ads in India
with the skimpy shorts they made me wear.
It wasn't a *Playboy* spread and I was not naked.
Still, I pushed the envelope and sex entered homes,
movie theaters—all of a sudden, everywhere.

Biljana D. Obradović
Originally in English
by the author

Desperado

I dig the dirt out from fingernail after fingernail
because it disturbs me. I kick and wake up
the cockroach. The little bag blurs the tissue.
The thirsty one is washing his face. Every Sunday I create
the impression I'm working hard, but in truth
I'm just sitting on the roof, waiting for the darkness to come
to gaze at. I'd be friends only
with poets of the older generation because I live with
perpetual writer's block. I just want to have fun
with my own fame. I don't have anything
better to do. Luck is good but, after all, superficial.
While choking and hungry on Salonika Street, I
became more burgeoning with ideas now, choking
and starving on Njegoš Street. Here I'm being cuddled
and everything is hunky dory, even though they robbed me
for the price of two chicken legs (335 RSD). I simply must find
a new language. From time to time
I sniffle, then hit the corner
of the bed. I leave the skin off my back
on an actually very comfortable table corner. But it's
no fun, though it doesn't hurt because I push myself.
What an opportunity! This new language will clearly show
how in Vračar they are chilling out, how
among the poor folk decadence blooms, enough to outrage
left wing radicals and liberals. I will get into that picture, won't
study it any longer, won't know anything,
but the conclusion by itself will soak my skin,
and I'll be able to breathe again and pee again. Desperado
rushes into state security, there where one becomes blissfully
silent,
and blissfully peeing into the long row of armchairs,
where they slap you on your ass, when in a bouquet
of roses you imagine you see an open umbrella.
I've envied long enough. Envy belongs to a past beauty.
From now on, what I eat I'll only look at

through a window pane. Or through a clear plate.
I've stepped on enough umbrellas by now with
the lame excuse that the rain will instead wash off the mud.

Bojan Savić Ostojić
Trans. by B. D. Obradović

Notes

335 RSD: Serbian dollars, approx. \$3.10

Vračar: a part of Belgrade

My Wife and I

My wife and I
love each other so much
we don't allow each other enough time
for reading.
When we go out for a coffee,
each one in his or her bag
carries a little
closed book.
We eat together.
We stare at each other in the mouth.
We stuff morsels of food in our mouths
at the same time.
We sleep together.
We get up at the same time.
When I'm not in a gay state,
we have sex together.
In a marriage there is no break to the climax.
Let me put it this way,
when I have just started to write,
my wife says something and
I nod,
as though to acknowledge her by nodding,
to pretend I have heard her.
The opposite doesn't apply however.
When she is writing, I start screaming.
There is no proper way.
We're not equal.
We depend on each other's glances.
Such a strange silence occurs
that it must be stopped
with a kiss in the air
or a clink of the wine glass feet.
When she needs to go to Stara Pazova
I walk with her to the front door
to see if she can manage on her own,
but as soon as she has crossed the threshold,

I lock the door;
oh, how triumphantly I lock the door,
I disconnect the phone
and fly
like Tišma
straight to bed, a Cola-Cola in one hand
a Carniolan sausage in the other.
In the mean time, she runs and runs
with her Srem luggage
and opens her Brkica,
Miodrag Vuković Brkica,
at last left alone.
All because she loves me.
From my envy seat next to hers I look over
at her and whisper, tenderly,
“Oh my dear, be careful! I think you’ve
missed a page.”

Bojan Savić Ostojić
Trans. by B. D. Obradović

Notes

Srem: a county in Voivodina, northern province of Serbia

Miodrag Vuković Brkica: a Montenegrin fiction writer and poet (1947-2013)

Street Butterfly Peddlers

Without a chip under the skin
I can sense the Earth's tremors
Not even a seismograph can detect
Moon Ribas
Lies
Calming the Earth
With its breathing
Not even a butterfly can feel

In the bin of bodies awaiting for love
The glance makes contact
Threaded with wind and hair
The hands' palms heavy with summer's ennui
A loess plateau

A quarter of a century later
They cannot recognize each other
As she looks through the toy store window
Looking sideways
He doesn't look at her

Only the air flickers and trembles
Like the butterfly's wings
On the other side of the planet

Only sometimes does she dream
Of the faces in those black-white photographs
Splashed with blood.

Danica Pavlović
Trans. by B. D. Obradović

My Past Is Merely a Sediment

I reject repression revolt
Rudimentary forms of nothing
Manipulation goal energy
I give myself over to impulses
And put on red lipstick and earrings
Glitter tinsel
I toss out the rivers trees buildings
Resources of hydroelectric power plants
Going straight to drinking water
Room and board
Crowds of people opportunities
The privileges of the wealthy
Incomprehensible poetry
Punk and jazz
Masks and tattoos
Endangered species and bumblebees
Faces meetings hugs
Stuffy rooms
Fulfilled
Pulsing of the stomach
Submodalities
Amigdala and the shaping of the world
I wake up under the shadow
The dismissal of fears
I abandon the map
I rise and exhale
Trajectories ether powder supernova

I cheer with a glass full of money
Turn off the light

I love and accept myself completely

Danica Pavlović

Trans. by B. D. Obradović

hisham, a pharmacist, in the yard of a moorish house

in another city
also called granada
my name is not hisham
and i died during the time of franco
watching lorca being executed

she took me by the hand towards death
the poetess al-rakuniyya
she told me the key to life is found
in the lines of poetry on the alhambra wall

in this city
also called alhambra
my name is hisham
i'm sitting in the yard and reading
a book of poems with the lines from the alhambra walls
i'm not afraid of walls
and i throw away the key to life
because the shape of time is a circle
and i'm forever in Granada
where it's not important
what i'm called.

Nadija Rebronja
Trans. by B. D. Obradović

Note

al-rakuniyya: Hafsa bint al-Hājj ar-Rakūniyya (c. 1135, died AH 586/1190–91 CE) was a Granadan aristocrat, daughter of a Berber man, and perhaps one of the most celebrated Andalusian female poets of medieval Arabic literature.

esma, oscar, dear friend

last night i discovered
the geography of your face face
and tried to figure out
whether i was born on the shore of your eye
or in the valley near your lips
although i still don't understand
why that even matters.

if you smile
maybe on your face
some earthquake will shake the earth's crust
dissolve yugoslavia
and your eye will shift west be closer to your ear
maybe i'll be reborn
as your twin sister in motril
even through i still wish
for all that to be
truly of no consequence.

Nadija Rebronja

Trans. by B. D. Obradović

Note

motril: a town and municipality on the Mediterranean coast in the province of Granada, Spain.

An Animal Fairytale

Belka and Stelka stuffed
in the Russian Cosmonaut Museum
with their barking reminds us
that they were the first beings
to return alive from the Cosmos.

Later
the President of the Soviet Union
offered Strelka's
little puppy
as a present to the
American President's daughter.

And ever since
history has been mostly
stuffed, too.

Ana Ristović
Trans. by B. D. Obradović

Notes

Belka and Strelka: Space dogs; Belka (literally, “Squirrel” or alternatively “Whitey”) and Strelka (“Little Arrow”) spent a day in space aboard Korabl-Sputnik 2 (Sputnik 5) on 19 August 1960 before safely returning to Earth.

as a present...daughter: One of the pups was named “Pushinka” (“Fluffy”) and was presented to President John F. Kennedy by Nikita Khrushchev in 1961.

Metamorphoses

Once an editor in a large publishing house
(in its place, today a bank
reads bonds and credits),
but now a circus director
who weighs, calculates and adds
how much and which
acrobatics and clown tricks
draw the biggest crowds.

On one side he places
the fire-eaters,
on the other
sword swallows.
But, the favorite act, of course, remains
the magic show, cutting a body in two.

In his new position, even so,
still there is room for books—
for the tiger tower with monkeys
and balls.

Up the pyramid of hardbound classics
a tiger and monkey bunch
climbs, with great skill
to then hit the ball
propped atop of that sturdy hill
of the Encyclopedia Larousse
Das Kapital by Marx
and Ovid's Metamorphosis.

Ana Ristović
Trans. by B. D. Obradović

The Past Is a Grotesque Animal

She never knew if what happened was for real
She wasn't sure if she should talk about it—
Maybe I invented everything
Maybe everything is just an auto-fiction

(Bravo! Sit down. You have straight As in your personal mythology!)

Saturated by images
Without context, with no continuity
History is exactly that—an overload of images to which we try to
assign meaning

The difference between a collector and a hoarder
I am a hoarder
I am hoarding images, memories
Bulking them one on top of the other
Leaving them to the moths, rats and rot
Misused, mistreated, deformed
But needed

I'm a "micro-abused child," she told just one person, once, as a joke
But never again to anyone else

Micro abusing
Micro self abusing—
Picking up your cuticles until you bleed

Ana Seferović
Trans. by B. D. Obradović

Note

The Past Is a Grotesque Animal: a song by the band, Of Montreal.

The Future Is an Animal Dancing in a Coffee Cup

If you have the gift, you can see tell future from coffee grinds—
Her mother would say, rotating her cup to mix well the thick black
residue

If you possess the gift, you will see shapes dancing and writing out
your story!

I can see hearts:

Empty hearts

Heavy hearts

And the most important one of all:

The reversed heart—

The one that has seen it all, yet survives full of love, but

With twisted

Twisted love

I see male figures and female figures

Entangled in a knot of causes and consequences tumbling down
forked roads

Disappearing more and more into irrelevance

And now you may make a wish:

Spin the cup, then poke the residue with your finger

Go on! Everybody wishes something!

What kind of person are you,

If you don't have have dreams?

Ana Seferović

Trans. by B. D. Obradović

wednesday children

death grew from inside a mulberry tree
broke through the bark
onto the bicycle path
then entered my breakfast
and headaches which you, small elephant,
cope with using your trunk really well

you spiced up your arms around my waist
you made wednesday giggle

but i now saw her, death
because i was running

death came even earlier
when the oregano stopped breathing
and you continued to whisper that I am your little bird
that i am all the birds in all the world the taxonomies
especially the swallows
as you kissed me
as though I were candied fruit

through the kiosks of laughter
death swayed into a hair color dyeing brush
parceling out hair so the greys could be covered
you—the part behind me, which I cannot see,
me the part reflected in the window

but not even there did i see death
because i was running

so it sprouted from your
radiant face
when you had the scent of a small child
when we were we

maybe that is why our two bodies have become too much
death boiled over

in a dream in which you were eaten by a crocodile
she hugged you with all her might
reminding us of a popular series from our childhood

when you wash dishes death made winter mornings glow
and heat up fingers with soap suds
you sit by the tv screen
knock on the wall
as an i love you reminder
aromatic death
in your always half-open mouth
with your high gums
while we dance our happy dance in half-darkness

you, who will not be upset by any natural disasters
you, because of whom i always dive into a fainting love spell
and desires
death has leaked out from dark knots
long jumped
but i did not see
because i ran persistently
because i looked at you continually
where she is not
where the sea is

and continued to run
as if it were wednesday each day
towards love

Maja Solar
Trans. by B. D. Obradović

CV

first name: yet-another-spinal-cord-to-bend
last name: not married, because marriage is a raw dough that for some
is a privilege
but for others not
life's path: steep and dangerous, mainly panicked but not very spicy
eighties: still in so-called socialism
nineties: an apartment torched
experience: flexibility mobbing obedience training school
and silences of disagreement with other shadows of work
inactivity: god-help-us, all must work hard to contribute to the rich
so they can be even richer
unpaid overtime work: it has such a pleasant feel to it, to be skilled at
overworking all weekend long
hobbies and other talents: dying and living for love. her six sisters and
she
always knew how to easily lose weight and to lose them for love's sake,
it is a family
tradition and talent. to resemble spaghetti
in your free time: if it is the beginning of summer, to listen
to swallows which can be heard on city streets. those are moments of
coming out of the tank shell.
they drown in the frequency of small city syncopation
phone; always turned on and available to all world's bosses. as their
protégés
body: rainy. knows how to cry tirelessly, to herself, so as not to disrupt
other coworkers
behavior: her spine is curved, but still inflamed, dedicated to the
bosses
psyche: bearable. works-ethically. well-trained in the belief that
everyone needs to be working till they die.
education: high school, for higher than that, college, there was no more
money
foreign languages: the language of capital, not fluently, but can get
around and crawl
other qualifications: hair neat, greying, but dyed, her tights
without runs

readiness: appropriate

at home: never paid. the home is a basket, so it is natural to be a woman who cleans her own house and takes care of children...

in the book for every woman in says that it is much worse to host guests without looking good than it is to have dust in the room, which is the only great relief if you happen to find yourself in the situation having to pick between the two

Maja Solar

Trans. by B. D. Obradović

Note

Syncopation: In music, syncopation involves a variety of rhythms played together to make a piece of music, making part or all of a tune or piece of music off-beat.

[Van Gogh was the Jesus]

Van Gogh was the Jesus
Of painting?
Nietzsche was Dionysus's (Severed limb, Crucified)
That's what he used to say
The dimension of error: he wanted to be
Dionysus equals Jesus equals Dionysus equals "The tiger was here"
Van Gogh equals Nietzsche equals Suffering equals Joy equals
Suffering
Metaphors jump into one another
Outpouring, spreading Joy or spreading Horror (differences, split)
Still, on the cross, horror is converted into eternal joy
Art begins again to overwhelm me
I have no idea where to begin

Slobodan Tišma

Trans. by B. D. Obradović

Note

[*Van Gogh was the Jesus*]: from "Sedefine," Blues Diary (Ruža lutanja, 2001). Neither this nor "[Crazy, You Wander in the Desert]" on the following page have titles.

[Crazy, You Wander in the Desert]

Crazy, you wander in the desert
Already half blind from the wasteland
In some grove you keep one eye ahead one behind
And especially to the side
You don't know any more where you've come from
Let alone where you're going
In this night, in this morning
Which was night
In a field a statue pulled down, broken,
Lies facing the sky, open
And blind, without lies, turned on his back
He looks within, inside himself
The beast of hell, who comes to sniff him at twilight
Doesn't recognize him anymore

Slobodan Tišma

Trans. by B. D. Obradović

Devoid of Pathos

It's important to stand up, take a deep breath, and be mindful,
as night ended before your wish to be someone
was sliced up by the dream,
before you allowed daylight
to carry you into whatever kind of day
this is, filled with a sense of the Other, distant,
filling the hidden force that circles the bed,
everyday errands, numerous interferences and
barely audible sounds, and then the call comes through,
while on the other side of the phone,
perfect words are uttered,
then those perfect words happen to you.

Everything will be all right.

It's important to have coffee and make breakfast,
as if you don't know, your most important meal
took place hours ago in your dream,
split into different seasons one lives in,
you recalled from *Norwegian Wood*,
even though you barely remember the plot or characters.
Still, you could begin a story about the woods, deep and dark,
and the roots there spread incessantly;
carries you to stray, more green hope.
You remember how, last night, a passerby mentioned, with a frown,
"It'll pass!"
"Well, of course it'll pass."
And he bought another beer to slip into the night.
Even so, conversations persist,

while you pass by.

It's important to say honestly, you're toying with things.
serious ones, but easy to say: *We'll see you*,
or, *I'm fine. It's great here*.
While you get up and breathe and breathe and gasp,

as the faces and messages spill over from today into tomorrow—
today with no chance of lasting until tomorrow,
tomorrow, into too much imagining that some touch
will soon be real.
That's our life together.
Devoid of pathos.

Jasmina Topić
Trans. by B. D. Obradović

Note

Norwegian Wood: a 1987 novel by Japanese author, Haruki Murakami (b.1949).

The Place of the Heart

In the place where the heart should be, now is a master craftsman,
with a short, red scarf tied around his neck,
feeling sorry for someone else's spilled blood, described telegraphi-
cally,
Death on the bottom of a newspaper column.

In the place where the heart should be, night passed,
and at the first moving hours, dust and hours move quietly,
with only a siren heard, far off, who knows in what part of town.

In the place of the heart, a young, well-groomed man smiles
at a wildly excited woman, and as they chat in a garden, by the street,
as joyfully as the sigh after recent sex.

In the place of the heart, there's a hidden street where through a
window,
behind a fence, sits an old woman, back bent, whether dead or alive;
even she doesn't know for certain herself, while near her, plays a
cuddly cat, who won't stop.

In the place of the heart, people gather in a square,
who meet to swear alliegence, then disappear with the blur of
twilight.

In the place of the heart, sits an empty trash bin with scattered pieces
of paper,
a broken handle, and below, a bench and wood moulding in front of
the building.

In the place of the heart you see a heart-shaped clover, pressed
for good luck. A herbarium. A soiled T-shirt, an empty plate and a
glass.
She sleeps in the afternoons.

In the place of the heart, is propped an open book,
and you read on a beach somewhere far away, a book about the

philosophy of the heart,
and the heart of the book reveals the secret of silence,
it really can—
no matter where.

Jasmina Topić
Trans. by B. D. Obradović

Opposites

out in front of
the olga petrov
retirement home
a man kisses
a woman's hand
she raises her head
and he blushes
and what happens after
i don't know
because the wheels of my bicycle
are big and already
i'm in another part of town.
here it begins to rain lightly and
there is the stink of mcdonalds
a girl plays accordion out in front
clean-cut families eye her suspiciously.
i would love to run them down
with my big bicycle,
but i am ever so polite
my upbringing does not let me
make any trouble.

Vitomirka Trebovac
Trans. by Tamara Božić
with B. D. Obradović

Note

accordion: national instrument of Serbia; but also street musicians of all ages play it in Serbia.

I Will Never Forget

the woman reading proust
in a tram in gdansk
and the fat cat who
when i was a child
ate my crepes and I
will not forget how
mom screamed when
they told her something over the phone
and the view
of the skyscrapers from a hotel
i will never forget
the waiting line for visas
and how drunk in a park
in berlin we played frisbee
before dawn
so then i will never forget
how because we were at war
they helped uncle to escape the draft
my grandmother's hands, trembling
I will never forget when sara was born
and I was at the pool
first second third
emigration
I will not forget
when I saw you
on the staircase of the bookstore.
never.

Vitomirka Trebovac
Trans. by Tamara Božić
with B. D. Obradović

Sappho's Little Sisters

If only I were Sappho's little sister
a soft, submissive lover of women's chests
and pink crotches, and girls with long hair tied into ponytails
or those with their hair cut to look like boys
with small spicy tits
and sharp tongues that penetrate everywhere
or a modern variation of Sappho herself, gentle and full of poetry
who greets them with her maternal breasts in her dimly lit room
with nude art on all the walls and cats in her arms
I could purr for hours warmly and gently
and they'd all be my students
my charming girls
wet with actual fountains of singing
in gardens overflowing with Lesbian muses
but alas, I'm shamelessly kissing the young kouros
which is my demise
because he doesn't care for poetry or any of my troubles

Tanja Stupar Trifunović
Trans. by B. D. Obradović

What Fell by the Wayside Forever

If from the start
the redheaded Lilith
had not disappeared
would the world be any different?

If it had been a different picture
of some other Christ,
would many lives
have ended up any differently?

How many people have been thrown out?
Seasoned communists, socialists, anarchists
from the very left-wing movement?

How many more texts, poems,
plays—censored?

Hundreds of pages
badly drafted paragraphs
unfinished books
have been thrown away forever.

How many hermaphrodites
were exterminated?
And different ones
and better ones?

A nonexistent pile of ideas
equals to an alluring picture of hell
made up of everything ever thrown out.

Just as
at the outskirts of every city
sits a junkyard full of cars.

All those cast out,
men and women,
could have
transformed the world.

How different the world could be,
a world without fear.

Nevertheless
even if the world were changed
all the blessed would be welcomed into heaven.

Siniša Tucić
Trans. by B. D. Obradović

Petrified Hypocrisy

My life has been discouraged,
in this city, in this vacuum.

First I studied technology,
then in the suburbs,
I worked in a warehouse under
the electric power transmission.

Oh,
I suffer!
I can't live anymore
immersed in all this smog
here in the petrified hypocrisy
Promise me you will stay with me.
People have cheated me.
Life has betrayed me.

And my thoughts demand—
—Abandon the world!

After cuddling in bed
in our stuffy room
we could flee the city
across the bridge in the east.

to the country where the sun shines
in a better world
a different life
whose houses are made of cardboard
and dusty children live in the streets.

Oh,
don't abandon me
to lie in bed.
I don't want to die in this stuffy room
in a box full of bureaucracy,

medicine and industry.
Electrocuted from the electric lines,
certified by the oncology department
without one black hair on the head—
I don't know how I will live,
with cytostatics
in the petrified hypocrisy.

Siniša Tucić

Trans. by B. D. Obradović

Note

cytostatics: any substance that inhibits cell growth and division

Of Trees and Grass

Only the green plants still tend to me
while in the evening, I lower my hands
to the ground, the wooden table boards
are still warm from the evening sun;
my palms go cold under the shadow of young
locust trees, here where I exist, under my skin,
under my linen shirt, with the insects,
at the roots of everything, crumps of grass
dance in the void of heavenly bodies, where
the steam rises from a wooden bowl
as if from roasted baby potatoes, where the air smells
of mint perspiration and the nettles sprouting
in the shine of leaves where your image dissolves
with the taste of the sheep stone hard salt I sprinkle
across the area, dandelion and the waxen
shine of wet plantains; where the day
becomes dark and blunt, and
the sun's knees pinprickle, while between my fingers
I pinch shadows, coriander, everything
that I touch, roasted chicory, the despair
of the fields which slowly turn their backs to the light;
I'll light up the night like home-grown tobacco;
in my throat I'll swallow transience, an acerbic wine,
and listen only to the crowns of trees,
how they protect us from the wind, from adversity,
from all the pain, protect me from you, and
you from the hollow eyesockets of the moon.

Bojan Vasić
Trans. by B. D. Obradović

Carrots

The Eastern European poet has
fingernails with which he taps on the table
or pulls out a cigarette from a just-
opened pack, removes from it
the shreds of reality always
using tiny syntagms; describing
desolate areas he speaks of civilization,
writing of contemporary life; he cries
over the dead, and as he passes through
the hallway, the ladies from Rotterdam nod
with their squeezed carrot-colored
buns, the stain of their great expectations
streaked on his jacket; at the
airport next he passes by a man
with his same name; one is squeezing
his suitcase in his hand, another
a brush, from constant change
words sting lightly, swell up;
departures are nowhere near
arrivals, but even closer are nails,
the same ones god shifts from
place to place, holding him mid-air
by the nape, blind, like a kitten.

Bojan Vasić

Trans. by B. D. Obradović

Note

syntagm: a linguistic unit consisting of a set of linguistic forms (phonemes, words, or phrases) that are in a sequential relationship to one another.

I'm Sorry, Farewell

He is dying.
He is dying.
Has been dying for days.
His mouth open
For days
He groans. He grinds from his throat
Doesn't eat. Doesn't drink a thing.
He can't die.
In the other room we watch
A recording of Đinđić—Šešelj
From ten years earlier
A child is playing
The sister approaches: this is how the doctor
Explained it.
The mouth is like some
Cave which leads to nothingness
I saw that it seemed
Burnt. He has suffered torture
Satan burned
His tongue
The demons are gloating
They laugh over their prey
One eye has given out
Others of this world don't see
He moves his arms like a praying mantis
He's defending himself. He has folded them
Today.
Mom is dying eggs.
I brought her a đevrek
She's hungry
I'm scared, today
I'm afraid to look at him
Time is passing irreversibly
We have begun to ignore him
Too long in the throes of death
No one wanted him, not the hospital,

Not even the lunatic asylum, VMA said fuck off
To the hero...
Tonight we talked,
I was scolding him,
My husband, this is,
A lullaby for men,
Petrified...
Goodnight, Dad.
Goodnight, death.
See you in the morning.
We talked about the funeral
Whether or not to hire a priest
But it takes too long.
We've gotten used
To seeing him in the bedroom.
The terrace doors
Remain slightly ajar.
When we undress
There is a stench. A death stench.
He is especially strong
With his king's name
My fearless father, Oedipus
Where he dies the ground will become sacred.
With his bed by the window
From where the wind was blowing
And his fingernails which we didn't want to trim...
He's enduring pain; over the phone
The doctor told us as much.
He's busy with that. Kolkata, leprosy...
Two days ago, I think he tried
To say something to me
But I couldn't understand. I lit him
A cigarette. He smoked it.
As if he were in a novel, standing
in a meadow somewhere.
I thought to myself, the last cigarette
Before an execution, death penalty,
I chatted with him, but he didn't speak.
I caressed his cheek.

He smiled with pleasure.
What is the weather like there?
What is the company like?
When will the mischievous demons
Take you, their Leader, the Devil
Will charge you with something. He calculates
Something.
I didn't want to dismiss him
He' yours, Dad. Dad,
See what you will do.
Decide together with him.
You can see the pain.
You can see how he suffers on his face.
His soul is retreating
He hides behind his face, a mask
His eyes suddenly going blind
Blind eyes, like Oedipus
Goodbye, Dad.
Farewell, my dear, Antigone.

Danica Vukićević
Trans. by B. D. Obradović

Notes

Đinđić—Šešelj: TV duel of two Serbian politicians with opposite points of view, of later killed, Prime Minister of Serbia, Đinđić, the symbol of change and progress and Šešelj, later the Hague International Criminal Court's convict and the symbol of the destructive and the backward.

Đevrek: a Serbian (and Middle Eastern) round, hard bread with a large hole on the middle covered with seame seeds.

VMA: military veterans' hospital center in Belgrade, the best hospital in Serbia.

Antigone: in Greek mythology, the daughter of Oedipus.

[Too Much Disgust]

Too much disgust
too much loneliness
too many wrong places
too many unwanted words
too many strange feelings
too much running around
too many walls
too many dirty filthy bathrooms
with crooked steps
too many department stores
crochet a Virgin Mary for me
to a place of comfort,
aromatic, for a little
wherever
whenever

Danica Vukićević
Trans. by B. D. Obradović

Note

[Too Much Disgust]: This poem does not have a title.

Poets in Translation

I fell from the train.
Did the agents storm the train
at a stop in a village by the border?
Did the provincial agents
search everyone's stuff?
Did folks panic and throw
papers out the window?
Do all documents contain secret words?
Are all the living, breathing
bodies hidden
to be smuggled across?

This is a poem about poetry,
a tapestry of fragments,
a dialogue at a crowded party
with not enough dancing.

S sounds, snakes with artichokes.
L sounds, apples with butterflies.
M sounds, praying mantises with gummies.

What do they sing?

And who can hear, whose ears?

Everything became something
everything turned into nothing.
All eternity: nothing!
I am beautiful but doomed
if sound and meaning
matter more than the labor
of fingers around pencils
fingertips on keys
moving in a trance.

Osip Mandelstam is blue.
He continued.
He knew you and
the fugues,

fake tresses,
tenderness.
The poet knows how to remember
all the paradoxes and the grasping.

This is my science of care—
my being and the other being
man-machine and poetry-science,

and sentences subject,
get verbed, object
until they get commuted.
Poets always worry
about beauty and botany and fire.

The border line was
end-stopped, once. Now,
it would break
through the margins.

Snežana Žabić
Originally in English
by the author

The Unemployed of the World

I shaved with a dull razor and applied
the rest of my cologne, stepped out
on the balcony to smoke. My world
is crumbling mid-century facades
and concrete that look better
disfigured and stained,
and stray dogs, and garages and storage units,
and bare-limbed poplars and maples.
I imagined planners in their positivist offices
and their checkered suits, with their
blue prints and their thick lenses
in oversized plastic frames. Did they
know how we'd intervene in their design
with our desires, our sad retinas
and glitchy nervous systems? We worked
and lost our jobs and collected printed
artifacts and now we sit and think
and sip our beverages. I sat on my parquet
floor and arranged boxes of tea in a semicircle
around me. Rosehip from Croatia.
Black tea from Russia. Orange Pekoe from
India. Linden tea from Mexico. Some mix
promising virility from Thailand. Most
of them a little past the expiration date.
I brewed and brewed all day.
I thought of domesticating a crow.

Snežana Žabić
Originally in English
by the author

Chopin (Body without Organs)

Body without organs is hard to describe or conquer.
It brings me back...not too much to Deleuze and Žižek, but to
Chopin whose body was
buried at Père Lachaise, but his heart, his sister di it—is built into
the Baroque cathedral
of St. Cross in Warsaw.
And many organs were buried like that
ashes in cathedrals, empty grave of Vasco da Gama in Cochin
and tombs of many other saints whose deeds exist only in legends.
They evaporated into thin air.
Why do people want to ground a corpse?

What are they going to do with the spirit?
How do you ground the spirit? Into a national history book?
Or, in the case of composers, could it be a history of music books?
There's no need to leave any corporal trace, whatsoever, whatever
we do in life,
we are doing it while we are doing it.

Nina Živančević
Originally in English
by the author

On Hannah Arendt

“What I meant by banality is superficiality of Eichmann—that’s what
I call evil
his banality—his refusal to imagine the life of others,
how other people live—that’s evil.”
She didn’t know she was Jewish, her family didn’t tell her as they were
not religious.

They were “the apatrids.”
Once pushed out of their countries—the refugees, the apatrids
become

“the scum of the earth” (Arendt).
Stateless person a refugee has no rights; he is worse
than a person in his own country and in jail who has some rights.
Lying being committed as necessary
is a crime, a psychological crime
which cannot be justified.
She was interned in a French camp in 1940, but unlike Weil, she
survived
and went to the USA.

EVIL is not only
conscientious, it is also sentimental
penetration of that energy of living on one’s own
I mean that ability to speak on one’s own

like she did and against the Jews who collaborated
with the Nazis.

Nina Živančević
Originally in English
by the author

Contributors

Jelena Andelovska (Belgrade, 1980, *also translator*) is a poet and columnist. She is working on her M.A. thesis, on American transgender poets. She has published poetry collections: *Homeland, Rage, Machine* (2013), *09:99 AM* (2016), and a textual experiment, *Cross Poetry* (2013).

Kate Angus is the author of *So Late to the Party* (Negative Capability Press) and the founding editor of Augury Books.

William Archila's poems have been published in *American Poetry Review*, *AGNI*, *Poetry*, *Prairie Schooner*, *The Georgia Review*, *Tin House*, among others. He's been featured in Spotlight on Hispanic Writers at the Library of Congress, Washington, DC. His second book *The Gravedigger's Archaeology*, won the 2013 Letras Latinas/Red Hen Poetry Prize.

Emma Aylor's poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *32 Poems*, *New Ohio Review*, *Pleiades*, *Colorado Review*, and the *Cincinnati Review*, among other journals, and she received Shenandoah's 2020 Graybeal-Gowen Prize for Virginia Poets. She lives in Lubbock, TX.

Alaina Bainbridge is a first-year MFA candidate in fiction at The University of Colorado at Boulder. Her work has appeared in *Cagibi Journal*, *Dreamer's Magazine*, and *Blacklist Journal*, among others. She lives in Boulder, Colorado. When she is not teaching or writing, she is out in the mountains rock climbing.

Alen Bešić (Bihać, 1975), has published four collections of poems: *U filigranu rez* (1998), *Način dima* (2004), *Golo Srce* (2014), and *Hronika sitnica: Izabrane pjesme* (2014), selected literary review collections, *Lavirinti čitanja* (2006) and *Neponovljivi obrazac* (2012).

Tatjana Bijelić (Sisak, 1974) is a professor of Anglo-American Literature at the University of Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina. She has published a number of scholarly books and articles, three award-winning poetry collections: *Rub bez ruba* (2006), *Dva puta iz Oksforda* (2009), *Karta više za pikarski trans* (2015).

Tamara Božić (Cetinje, 1996, *translator*) is currently enrolled in an MA program in English Language and Literature (Diversity in Sci-Fi novels). She seeks new literary works that deserve to be translated and introduced to the world. She hopes to travel all around the world and write about her thoughts on contemporary literature and culture. She lives in Novi Sad.

Carmen Cornue lives in San Francisco. Her poetry has appeared in *Southword*, *Dutch Kills Press*, *Mad Gleam Press*, and on the podcast, *Beyond the Screams*. She co-founded the literary collective Spleen with Donna Morton in 2015. Spleen endeavors to create radical documents of desire written by queer women. Instagram: @spleen1857.

Dragan Jovanović Danilo (Požega 1960), art critic, poet, novelist, and essayist, who lives in Požega, studied at Belgrade University's Law School and the Philosophy Faculty (History of Art). He has published fifteen poetry collections including *Euharistija* (1990), and most recently, *Kad nevine duše odlaze* (2011).

Dragoslav Dedović (Zemun, 1963), who grew up in Bosnia, received a B.A. in Journalism in Sarajevo where he worked as a journalist. After being publicly against the civil war, he left Yugoslavia and moved to Germany in 1992. He has published ten collections of poems beginning with *Izadišo u polje* (1988), and most recently *Unutrašnji istok* (2015).

Joseph Dorazio is a prize-winning poet whose poems have appeared widely in print and online, including: *The Worcester Review*, *The Southampton Review*; *New Plains Review*, *Spoon River Poetry Review*, *Yellow Chair Review*, and elsewhere. The author of five volumes of verse, Dorazio's latest collection, *Calendarium & Other Poems* was released in 2018.

Beth Dulin's poems have appeared in *The American Journal of Poetry*, *Beltway Poetry Quarterly*, and *Yes, Poetry*, among others. She is the author and co-creator of *Truce*, a limited-edition artists' book, in the collections of the Brooklyn Museum and the Museum of Modern Art. Visit her online at www.bethdulin.com.

Dubravka Đurić (Dubrovnik, 1961), poet, critic and Associate Professor at the Faculty for Media and Communication, Belgrade, has received her Ph.D. in Literary Theory from the Philosophy Faculty in Novi Sad. Involved in theory of culture, media, modern and postmodern poetry, gender, artistic and poetic performance, she has published six collections of poetry, critical books and studies of poetry, art, and dance, edited the magazines *Mental Space*, and *ProFemina*, co-edited anthologies *Impossible Histories—Historical Avant-Gardes*, *Neo-Avant-Gardes*, *Post-Avant-Gardes in Yugoslavia 1918-1991*, *American Poetry*, *New Poetry Order* and with Biljana D. Obradović *Cat Painters: Anthology of Contemporary Serbian Poetry*.

Jaе Dyche earned an MFA in Creative Writing from the University of Maryland and is a PhD student at Clemson University. She lives in Virginia and works as a Creative Writing Lead at a Fine and Performing Arts high school. Her poetry is forthcoming in *Poet Lore*.

Sibelan Forrester (*translator*) is Susan W. Lippincott Professor of Modern and Classical Languages and Russian at Swarthmore College. Her academic specialty is Russian poetry, and she is the editor of *A Companion to Marina Cvetaeva: Approaches to a Major Russian Poet* (2016) and, with Martha Kelly, of *Russian Silver Age Poetry: Texts and Contexts* (2015). She has translated Milica Micić Dimovska's novel *Mrena* (The Cataract, 2016) and numerous Russian poets.

Ana Marija Grbić (Belgrade, 1987), is finishing her PhD at the University of Belgrade. She has published the three collections of poems: *Da, ali nemoj se plašiti* (2012), *Venerini i ostali bregovi* (2014), and *Zemlja 2.0* (2017). She is an editor, radio announcer, an illustrator, an organizer of poetry events, and a mentor for creative writing.

Enes Halilović (Novi Pazar, 1977), storywriter, poet, playwright, journalist, economist and attorney, has published six collections of poems: *Poezija: Srednje slovo* (1995), *Zidovi* (2014), *Bangladeš* (2019), *Lomača* (2012), collections of short stories: *Potomci odbijenih prosaca* (2004), and *Kapilarne pojave* (2006) and *Čudna knjiga* (2017) as well as novels and plays.

Alan Hill is the outgoing Poet Laureate of the small City of New Westminster, BC in Western Canada. He came to Canada in 2005 after meeting his Vietnamese-Canadian wife-to-be whilst they were both working in Botswana. He has been widely published in Europe and North America.

Patricia Hooper's newest book, *Wild Persistence* (the University of Tampa Press) was awarded the Brockman Campbell Book Award for Poetry. Her poems have appeared in *The Yale Review*, *The Atlantic*, *Poetry*, *The Gettysburg Review*, *The Southern Review*, and other magazines.

Oto Horvat (Novi Sad, 1967) lives in Florence and is book selector for the University library of Florence. He translates poetry into Hungarian, German, and Italian. His collections include: *Olmóba menet. Válogatott és új versek* (2010), *Putovati u Olmo* (2008), *Dozvola za boravak* (2002), *Kanada* (1999), and others.

John Hyland teaches at Berkshire School. Recent poems have appeared in *Borderlands*, *Harvard Review*, and *Valparaiso Review*.

Susie James is by education a classical pianist. Her poetry has been published in journals and magazines including *The MacGuffin*, *Lyrical Iowa*, *Sierra Magazine*, and in several anthologies. James won the Blue Light Book Award for 2007 and her first book of poems, *Under a Prairie Moon* was published.

Nenad Jovanović (Belgrade, 1973) received a Ph.D. in Drama from the University of Toronto and teaches at Wright State University. His poetry collections include *Frezno* (1993), *Welt, XIX, Ignjat, Bela imena, Bolest vožnje, Živeti na moderan i umreti na starinski način, Lice mesta, Delfini, Klase* (2018); and he has published plays, short stories, and a novella.

Zvonko Karanović (Niš, 1959), has published a novel trilogy, seven individual collections of poetry, and one collected. His translated American editions include *It Was Easy To Set the Snow On Fire—Selected Poems* (2016), and *Sleepwalkers on a Picnic* (2020), and he has received several Serbian literary awards for poetry. He lives in Belgrade.

Jelena Kerkez (a.k.a. Jelena Labris; Belgrade, 1975), is a poet who works in the publishing house Deve which she founded and has lead since 2000. She has published collections of poems: *Lady M* (1995), *Uvodjenje* (2006), *Devičanstvom Zaklete* (2006), *Ostvarenje* (2007), *Sjedinjenje* (2012), as well as a monograph and edited poetry anthologies.

Timothy Kleiser is a writer and teacher from Louisville, Kentucky. His writing has appeared in *Still: The Journal, Fathom, Modern Age, The Boston Globe, Front Porch Republic*, and elsewhere. He reads poetry for *The Common* at Amherst College and teaches at Boyce College.

Marija Knežević (Belgrade, 1963), received an M.A. from Michigan State. She worked for Radio Belgrade and was a regular columnist in Serbian major daily *Politika*. She has published widely, including poetry collections: *Elegijski saveti Juliji* (1994), *Stvari sa ličnu upotrebu, Doba Salome, Moje drugo ti, Dvadeset pesama o ljubavi i jedna ljubavna, In Tactum, Uličarke, and Šen* (2011).

Vladimir Kopicl (Đeneral Janković, Kosovo, 1949), is a poet, conceptual artist, performance artist, theatre and film critic and theorist. He has published sixteen books of poetry, three books of his essays and criticism, two anthologies of contemporary American poetry, and many translations of poetry, theory, or other works by different authors. He lives and works in Novi Sad.

Mark Lilley was born and raised in central Kentucky. He earned an MFA in poetry from Butler University. His poems have appeared in *Connecticut Review, The Louisville Review, The Midwest Quarterly*, and other journals. His debut collection, *Lucky boy*, was published in 2020. Mark currently lives in Fishers, Indiana with his wife and two children.

Ivana Maksić (Kragujevac, 1984), writes poetry, nonfiction, and translates from English. She has published four poetry collections: *O telo tvori me*

(2011), *Izvan komunikacije* (2013), *La mia paura di essere schiava* (in Italian, 2014) and *Jaz sem tvoji propagandni film* (2018). She has translated poetry and prose by authors like Robert Creeley, Adrienne Rich, Anne Sexton, and others.

Natalija Marković (Belgrade, 1977), has published poetry collections *Membrana ogledala* (1999) and *Kiberlaboratorija* (2007), and her work is included in anthologies, *Nebolomstvo* (2005), *Poezija i poslednji dani* (2009), and *Iz muzeja šumova* (2009). She co-edited and is one of the authors of *Diskurzivna tela poezije* (2004). She has played in a women's band called Charming Princess.

Petar Matović (Užice, 1978), has published collections of poems: *Kamerni komadi*; *Koferi Džima Džarmuša* (2009), *Odakle dolaze dabrovi* (2013), and *Iz srećne republike* (2017). He received scholarships from the Ministry of Culture of Poland (2013), Baltic Center for Writers and Translators (Sweden, 2015), Traduki (Croatia, 2016), Kultukontakt (Austria, 2017) and Q21 (Austria, 2017), and awards for his collections.

David Melville's poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Water-Stone Review*, *RHINO*, *The Timberline Review*, *Pilgrimage*, and other journals. His work has also been anthologized in the college textbook, *Listening to Poetry: An Introduction for Readers and Writers*. He lives in Oregon.

Marija Midžović (Zemun, 1960) received the first award for poetry at the festival for young writers in Vrbas (1980). She has published two collections of poetry: **Beogradska sirotica** (1997) and *Poludragi* (2010) and a short story collection, *Ekstaze* (2015). She was the editor of *Književni magazin*, a Serbian Literary Society Journal.

Bratislav Milanović (Aleksinac, 1950), has published award winning poetry collections, most recently **Silazak**, (2004), **Male lampe u tamnini** (2006), **Nepotreban letopis** (2007) and **Pisma iz prastare budućnosti** (2009); as well as novels and plays. He wrote for and edited *Književna Reč*, *Relations*, and *Književne Novine* (which he edits now).

Nenad Milošević (Zemun, 1962), has published six collections of poetry: *Pospanost* (1992), *Umanjenja* (1996), *Jureći u raj* (2000), *Mesta, selected poems* (2004), *Pesme sa Save i Dunava* (2005), *Time Code selected poems* (2009), *Vode i vetrovi* (2012), and edited *Iz muzeja šumova*, an anthology of newer Serbian poetry 1988-2008 (2009). He is one of the editors of *ProFemina*.

Biljana D. Obradović (Bitola, 1961, also translator), a poet, translator, critic, Professor of English, Xavier University of Louisiana, New Orleans, received

a B.A. in English Language and Literature from the Philology Faculty, Belgrade University, an MFA in Creative Writing from VCU in Richmond, VA, a PhD in English from the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, has published four collections of poems, most recently *Incognito* (WordTech Press, 2017), two translations of collections of poems—into English from Serbian (Bratislav Milanović; Zvonko Karanović, *Sleepwalkers on a Picnic*, 2020), five into Serbian from English (John Gery, Stanley Kunitz, Patrizia de Rachewiltz, Bruce Weigl, and Niyi Osundare), and two anthologies of poems, the most recent co-edited with Dubravka Đurić, *Cat Painter: An Anthology of Contemporary Serbian Poetry* (2016). She has also edited a collection of essays by Philip Dacey, *Heavenly Muse: Essays on Poetry* (2020).

Peter O'Donovan is a scientist and writer living in Seattle, WA. Originally from the Canadian prairies, he received his doctorate from the University of Toronto, studying design aesthetics. His poetry has appeared, or is forthcoming, in *Orange Blossom Review*, *Qwerty*, *River Heron Review*, *Typehouse Literary Magazine*, and elsewhere.

Bojan Savić Ostojić (Belgrade, 1983), has published collections of poems *Stereorama* (2013), *Jeretički dativ* (2014) and *Prskalica* (2019); creative nonfiction essays, a notebook of fragments; and two novels; translated 25 books of fiction and nonfiction from French into Serbian. He edited an online poetry magazine *Agon*, and runs a blog, an online flea market (zasvepare.tumblr.com).

Danica Pavlović (Belgrade, 1976), has published collections of poems: *Vertikalni horizont* (2002) and *Slobodna teritorija* (2011), and was co-editor and author in the anthology, *Diskurzivna tela poezije* (2004), and has been included in the anthologies, *Tragom roda—smisao angažovanja* (2006) and *Iz muzeja šumova* (2009). From 2008 she was one of the editors of the magazine *ProFemina*.

Tom Raithel grew up in Milwaukee, WI and has worked as a journalist throughout the Midwest. He currently lives with his wife, Theresa, in Cleveland, OH. In addition to *Atlanta Review*, he has published poems in *Southern Review*, *The Midwest Quarterly*, *The Comstock Review*, and others. Finishing Line Press published his chapbook, *Dark Leaves, Strange Light*, in 2015.

Jane Rawlings is Archivist at a 19th Century historic house museum. Her poetry has appeared in *Prairie Schooner*, *The New York Times*, *Ikebana International*, and *Atlanta Review*, among others, as well as several anthologies. She has read nationwide from her novel-in-verse, *The Penelopeia* (2003).

Nadija Rebronja (Novi Pazar, 1982, translator), received a PhD in Literature and fellowships to study in Vienna at the Institute for Slavic Studies and

the Philosophy Faculty of Granada. She has published a poetry collection, *Ples morima* (2008), critical studies works, and a selection of poetry translated from Spanish by Alfa, Alef, Elif (2011), and translated Turkish poetry.

Suzanne Underwood Rhodes' poems have appeared in *Alaska Quarterly Review*, *Poetry East*, *Shenandoah*, and other journals. Two chapbooks, *Hungry Foxes* and *Weather of the House*, and a full collection, *What a Light Thing, This Stone*, have seen print. Her second full-length collection, *Flying Yellow*, will be published in 2021 by Paraclete Press.

Ana Ristović (Belgrade 1972), has published collections of poetry, most recently *Meteorski otpad* (2013), *Nešto svetli, selected and new poems* (2014) and *Čistina* (2015). She received several awards including the German prize, Hubert Burda Preis (2005). She has translated sixteen books of modern Slovenian prose and poetry into Serbian, and lives in Belgrade.

Michael Romary is a retired university librarian. He networked with individuals and with conferences and writing programs, including Bread Loaf for three years and Kenyon Writers' Program with David Baker, also three years. He has work published or forthcoming in *The Main Street Rag*, *Passager. Pandemic Diaries, 2020*; *The Laurel Review*, *Spillway*, and others.

Lao Rubert is a poet and advocate for criminal justice reform living in Durham, NC. Her poems have appeared—or are forthcoming—in *Adanna*, *Barzakh*, *New Verse News*, NC Poetry Society's *Poetry in Plain Sight*, *The Davidson Miscellany*, the *Raleigh News*, and *Observer and Writers Resist*.

Claire Scott is an award-winning poet who has received multiple Pushcart Prize nominations. Her work has appeared in the *Atlanta Review*, *Bellevue Literary Review*, *New Ohio Review*, *Enizagam* and *Healing Muse* among others. Claire is the author of *Waiting to be Called* and *Until I Couldn't*. She is the co-author of *Unfolding in Light: A Sisters' Journey in Photography and Poetry*.

Rachel Mann Smith is a poet and physician living in Atlanta, Georgia. She received her BA in English from UC Berkeley.

Ana Seferović (Belgrade, 1976, *also translator*), poet and writer, studied Oriental literature at the Philology Faculty at Belgrade University. She has published four poetry collections, her most recent, *Materina* (2018), and is a co-author of two plays and two poetry books. She explores the Balkan wars of the 1990s through a feminist lens, and garnered widespread acclaim in Serbia.

Maja Solar (Zagreb, 1980) has published a collection of poems *Makulalalalatura* (2008) for which she received Branko's award. Her work has appeared in an anthology of new Novi Sad Poetry, and in literary magazines. Her poems have been translated into English, German, Hungarian, and Romanian. She lives and works in Novi Sad.

Lauren Swift's work has appeared with *Cimarron Review*, *North American Review*, *The 2River View*, *The Rumpus*, *Birdcoat Quarterly*, *No Contact*, and *Poets.org* as the recipients of Academy of American Poets Prizes in 2016 and 2019. She earned an MFA from the University of California, Irvine, and continues to work and write in Southern California. Find her online at www.laurenswift.com.

Marilynn Talal earned the PhD from the University of Houston where she was awarded the Stella Earhart Memorial Award and a grant from the NEA in Creative Writing. Her chapbooks, *The Blue Road* was published in 2018, and *Burden Sparked with Eternity* in 2019. Both were brought out by Presa Press.

Slobodan Tišma (Stara Pazova, 1946), is a poet, fiction writer, musician, and artist. He has published collections of poems: *Vrt kao to* (1977), *Blues Diary* (2001), *Marinizmi* (1995), *Vrt kao to* (1997), and *Urvidek* (2005); short stories and novels, *Quattro Stagioni* (2009; Biljana Jovanović award), and *Bernardijeva Soba* (2011; Nin Award). He lives in Novi Sad.

Jasmina Topić (Pančevo, 1977), writes poetry, prose, also newspaper articles, columns, and essays. She has published collections of poems: *Suncokreti. Skica za dan* (1997), *Pansion. Metamorfoze* (2001), *Romantizam* (2005), *Tiha obnova leta* (2007) and *Dok neko šapuće naša imena* (2012). She is Editor-in-Chief of *Rukopisi*, and she edits *Najbolja*, contemporary poetry, from Pančevo, where she now lives.

Vitomirka Trebovac (Novi Sad, 1980) works at the publishing house, Bulevar Books, where she edits books as well. She has published three collections of poetry: *Plavo u boji* (2012), *Sva deca i svi bicikli u meni* (2017), and *Dani punog meseca* (2020), and she has edited the poetry anthology, *Ovo nije dom* (2018).

Tanja Stupar Trifunović (Zadar, 1977), has published four collections of poetry including *O čemu misle varvari dok doručkuju* (2008) which was short-listed for the ProCredit Bank Literature Award for East and Southeast Europe, and *Glavni junak je čovjek koji se zaljubljuje u nesreću* (2010) which won the "Fra Grgo Martić" Literary Award.

Siniša Tucić (Novi Sad, 1978), a poet, essayist and multi-media artist. He has published several collections of poems: *Betonska koma* (1996), *Krvava*

sis (2001), and *Nove domovine* (2007), *Metak* (2012), *Pobacani Pasvordi / Abandoned Passwords* (2015); and co-edited an anthology of new Novi Sad poetry, *Nešto je u igri* (2008). He lives in Novi Sad.

Bojan Vasić (Banatsko Novo Selo, 1985), has published the following collections of poems: *Srča* (2009), *Tomato* (2011), *Ictus* (2012), *13* (2013), *Detroit* (2014), *Volfram* (2017) and *Toplo bilje* (2019). He is the winner of the Mladi Dis and Matičev šal awards. He is a member of the Serbian Literary Society. He lives in Pančevo.

Danica Vukićević (Valjevo, 1959), is a poet, short story writer, editor, freelance writer, literary critic, and essayist who lives in Belgrade. Her collections of poems include *Kao hotel na vetru* (1992), *Kada sam čula glasove* (1995), *Šamanka* (2001), *Luk i strela* (2006), *Prelazak u jednu drugu vrstu* (2007), *Visoki fabrički dimnjaci* (2013), and *Svetlucavost i Milost* (2013).

Richard Weaver lives in Baltimore City where he volunteers with the Maryland Book Bank, CityLit, the Baltimore Book Festival, and is the writer-in-residence at the James Joyce Pub. He is the author of *The Stars Undone* (Duende Press). Five poems from this manuscript became the libretto for a symphony, *Of Sea and Stars*, 2005, performed four times to date.

Margaret Young's poetry collections are *Willow From the Willow* (2002) *Almond Town* (2011), and *Blight Summer* (2017, nominated for a Massachusetts Book Award). She has translated two books from Spanish, Sergio Inestrosa's *Espacio Improbable de un haikú* and *Luna que no cesa*. Young is on the faculty of The Global Center for Advanced Studies and lives in Beverly, MA.

Snežana Žabić (Vukovar, 1974), attended graduate school in Hungary and Germany before obtaining her MFA. at UNC and her PhD at the University of Illinois, Chicago. She edits *Packingtown Review* in Chicago. She is the author of a short story collection, a hybrid memoir; and poetry collections: *Po(eat)ry* (2013) written with Ivana Percl, and *The Breath Capital* (2016).

Nina Živančević (Belgrade, 1957, *also translator*), is a poet, essayist, fiction writer, playwright, art critic, translator, and contributing editor who has published fifteen collections of poetry, three collections of short stories, two novels and a collection of essays on Miloš Crnjanski. She has lectured English language and literature at La Sorbonne. She lives in Paris.



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