



**ATLANTA  
REVIEW**

**SLOVAKIA**

*International Section Edited by*

**Nina Varon & Miriam Margala**

Spring/Summer 2024

# ATLANTA REVIEW

at the Georgia Institute of Technology

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## WELCOME

When Dan Veach asked me to consider taking on the editorship of *Atlanta Review*, I knew it would be a passion project that bring joy in ways I couldn't imagine. And then, in the middle of what would be my tenure of editorship, the world shut down. The passion for bringing poetry to people became more important than it had ever been—it was a comfort for us all, and a tie that bound us when we felt so separated from one another. It has been an honor to be trusted with so many wonderful poems from so many amazing writers. Equally, it has been an honor to connect with every single one of our readers. This journey has meandered from New Zealand to South Africa to Poland to Taiwan to Serbia to Cornwall and Wales, with so many other stops along the way.

This spring we find ourselves immersed in Slovakia. Guest editor and translator Nina Varon and I connected through some Serbian writer-friends. Poets seem always to find one another. Never be shy about approaching one—just be prepared to talk for a while. Slovakian history is a tale of resilience and reconstruction and reclamation—and this poetry is enlightening and inspiring. Varon worries that too few people are willing to listen to Slovakian poets, and so we are pleased to amplify their voices.

It is impossible for me not to find myself in this collection of poems. It would seem that the person I was and the person I have become is being reflected back to me. The first poem, “How Is She,” begins with a series of questions:

How is the poem before she gets written?  
Is she young, naïve, does she want to know more,  
Will she not wait by my pen to be bitten,  
Or will she weave herself into my score?

Yes, that is what the beginning was like for me. The final poem, “Enclosure,” is exactly where I find myself now: “in spaces in buildings in cultures...I am thinking about how to get out.” This is an encapsulation of my time as editor.

When I published the first of my editor's notes, I said: “I have accept-

ed the position knowing that I will never accomplish what Dan has—building a world-class journal from nothing.” I leave my post proud to have (forgive my mixing of metaphors) steered this ship through some difficult waters—bringing her safely to shore in her new home. Throughout this journey, JC Reilly has worked beside me. You may not have noticed that she quietly slipped into the role of co-editor in the last issue. I can never fully express to her my gratitude.

Apologies for so much self-indulgence, but it difficult to say good-bye—even when you know that the time has come. As Ace Boggess offers in his poem “Moving Furniture,” “This is transition & conclusion / until the future tells us Start again.” Meanwhile, know that *Atlanta Review* will always occupy the most special of places in my heart, but, more importantly, I look forward to the brightest of futures for the journal as it remarkably enters its third decade of publication.

Sending you all much love,

Karen

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## Wanting More, or On Having a Baby at 42

The baby smashes giant black ant-like berries into her mouth, one by one. The juice trails; segments cling to her cheek, chin, and somehow, forehead. Especially slippery berries are sent rolling across the floor, destined for a delayed squish between unknowing adult toes.

And then! a sound previously unknown—one syllable made multiple and the pitch a frequency falling so far off the right of any known scale. With the context clue of the empty plastic mini-bowl, somehow you make out the word, “MORE,” from the multilayers of squeak and squeal

gushing from tiny lips. You and your husband share a look, automatically mimic the word, first to each other and then to the child. A mistake—the baby, witnessing the delight—and appreciating the immediacy with which her bowl is refilled—claims the word as one of her own six (now seven), destined for repeat. How many more years will you get to feed her glee? This is how deals with the devil get done.

*Erin Aube*

## Peacocks Will Have the Last Word\*

I walk at Andalusia with Mama and Charlotte  
in May, when it's not-yet summer, but trace sweat on my lips.  
In Georgia, I'll never know what spring tastes like.

We stroll the grounds, and Flannery's house  
is its own small paradise today. No other visitors  
crowd us. The museum's volunteers back inside leave us be.

I wonder if Heaven's like the place I've always called home;  
bursting oaks, with limbs like arms—Adam reaching for God,  
daughter for mother, friend for friend, self for soul—  
chords of cicadas that pierce the nightly honey-dipped haze,  
yellow sun that digs beneath the skin, it's in the marrow.

Will Mama be there? Will Charlotte? Will I?

At Andalusia, the peacocks hypnotize us. Astor, the male,  
teases us with his tail, a celestial blue I cannot memorize.

I'm about to graduate. I'm about to move away, and  
I wonder if I'll come back here. As if reading my mind,  
Mama fills the silence with stories—our first trip to Flannery's,

when I never thought I'd live in Milledgeville, and  
I guess Flannery didn't think she would either.

By my age, Flannery had already lived over half her life.  
By my age, Mama had been nine years a wife.  
I know only the oaks, the cicadas, the sun.

Flannery kept forty peacocks at a time. Have I ever loved  
anything as much as Flannery loved her birds?

I want answers. Astor watches me,  
and I almost believe he recognizes me—  
one wandering soul acknowledging another.

He steps toward me, eyes glint with promise,  
as if to show me a glimpse of Heaven,

and in an instant, his feathers close.

*Brittany J. Barron*

***Note:***

The poem title is inspired by Flannery O'Connor's concluding statement in her essay "Living with a Peacock" (1961).

## Hitchhiking I Met an Actor Who Appeared on TV with Lassie #17

Handsome at 6'4 Don looked like a young Rock Hudson and he loved to suck long Cuban cigars... He showed me how to play excellent croquet standing close behind me with his arms around me—his steady hands guiding mine on the smooth hard stiff mallet's handle. I was good, but he easily won early games with better aim and best ball speed.

An actor, he also did stand-up comedy in nightclubs in Hollywood. I read a framed newspaper clipping he'd saved about his appearance on the Lassie TV show, with a yellowing photo of him a "a local hometown hero shaking Lassie #17's famous paw!" Later we enjoyed spaghetti, red wine and French bread for a delicious meal together.

That night in his A-frame he copied Johnny Carson's best jokes in a three-ring binder and told me some funny L.A. gossip of his own... He said I could share his only bed or flop on a firm fold-down sofa. I was tired of sleeping in boxcars, laundromats, churches and barns. So I gladly took his friendly offer. Barely into my first dry dream

his warm hand stroked my young thigh as I knew it would. It felt okay, but I declined. He yawned, "That's fine. I never force myself on anyone." At breakfast I watched him lick yellow yolks over easy from the sharp tines of his long fork... Later his old white-haired father arrived—frowning at me as he delivered a wrapped package...

The father looked like Alexander Calder eyeing me suspiciously under two balanced bushy white eyebrows. Later, Don and I swam nude in a cool green quarry-pond following his ninth straight croquet victory. We sunned our wet bodies like lazy lizards on flat limestone hunks scattered across a grassy landscape like ruins of an ancient temple.

Don drove me to Boston the next day so he could "shop for sailors..." I met a nice guy there at the Y who let me flop on his floor free. He flipped hamburgers in a diner and smuggled some home for me. His penny-loafers curled up at their toes like used elf slippers. Lonely, divorced, missing his kids, we knew free hamburgers were temporary.

*R. Steve Benson*

## Moving Furniture

Around tight corners, down narrow stairs.  
Elbows bump doorknobs.  
Knees buckle. Back petitions  
for redress of grievances.

This could be living  
or the tiresome, painful path toward death.  
Or is it truth on Saturday  
reordering the staccato world?

The futon must go to the curb.  
Mattress, also. Save the box springs,  
put-together frame. Too many chairs—  
choices must be made.

This is the first farewell between  
lovers parting briefly in the rain.  
This is transition & conclusion,  
until the future tells us *Start again*.

*Ace Boggess*

## The Vibration of Water

Say what you will but I believe water  
speaks to water: glacier to cirrus,  
fog to aquifer. An amniotic sac  
breaks and groundwater quivers.  
I turn on my tap and fill my glass,  
water mixed with tree run off and tears  
from Aleppo. I drink, and my lungs,

mostly water, feels somehow  
some other mother's shuddering breath.  
I believed my son was safe in Syria  
in those early years, that karma could shelter  
him and all the other aid workers.  
I wouldn't hear from him for weeks  
but I'd stand at night in the rain

under the towering cedars and firs  
of the Pacific Northwest and feel him  
on my face as I beseeched the clouds.  
Something like a black locomotive  
made of rainclouds filled my dreams  
and I wept with relief. All that water.  
He would come home, and I knew it.

I felt it hum in the fathom of my bones.

*Michele Bombardier*

## Ugly Fruit

Last night I drove around  
behind the grocery store  
as I make a point to do.  
There are things to be found there  
like racks of cinnamon bread,  
still wrapped, just a little mold,  
bananas just a little brown.  
This time I spot a grocery cart  
with sagging pumpkins,  
jostled one on the other  
like kids crowded  
onto a rickety carnival ride.

I know how proud  
pumpkins can look,  
lined up on their seasonal stands,  
promising pies,  
aspiring to be jack-o-lanterns.  
And then there were these guys.  
At first I dismissed them,  
but then I kept thinking  
how bad could they be?  
It takes so little  
to be tossed out these days.

I thought of those pumpkins  
as I walked my dog  
and imagined one roasting,  
my little home filled with the scent  
of pumpkin muffins, pumpkin soup.  
I returned and sure enough,  
beneath the rot  
there was a white one  
with just a spot on its bottom.  
I carried it back, composted the pulp,  
set the seeds aside for toasting,  
brushed the halves with oil,

garden rosemary, coarse salt  
and I roasted its unspoiled flesh,  
yellow and forgiving.

*Grey Brown*



## Lubbock Storms

With the cotton harvested and packed  
into roadside monoliths, hollowed soil cries  
of hunger. Always a good listener, the sky

remembers its duty to spill and whips up  
an east wind bringing clouds of sand.  
Red dust makes a sunset you can touch

and fills your molars with grit.  
The storm's cough grates against buildings  
as pigeons tuck themselves into terracotta cubbies

in the library's walls. Courtyard grackles  
fall silent for the first and last time as I stare  
into the storm: heavy, gluttonous, dried-blood black.

At last, the faint sun glows like a pin-prick  
through tarp, and over the dust stripping  
car paint comes a grackle's single, throaty cry.

*William Brown*

## Lyrics

Being a trumpet player, my lips sealed  
in brass, I never learned the lyrics. Yes,  
I know the great jazz voices—Ella, Etta,  
phlegmy Satchmo—who sing like angels.  
Not me. Dumb as my dog when it comes  
to the words, in fact any language seems  
inadequate...

Compare the spoken word love  
to a horn player's muted solo, touching  
the pit of primal memory, a misty whisper  
before there were nouns, escaping  
reason, logic, thought. Truth is  
I can't remember what I didn't learn,  
instead tune to keys or scat or made-up  
verse. I hope you'll forgive me  
when I try to sing of love.

*Peter Neil Carroll*

## Wetlands

I am writing this underwater, to be clear, a mangle  
of wetlands, a tangle of marsh at the foot of the hill where  
my father built our home on the Rappahannock River

in Virginia, because wetlands were cheap, and he  
loved to fish. And crab. It's not hard to write underwater  
when you spend all day crabbing. I recall baiting traps, trapping

crabs, tripping over gills and claws shaken from trap onto dock,  
slipping on crab slime, how my summer was one slip-up after  
another, was the hoisting of our haul, was my father and his steel

pot bubbling, blue crabs boiling blue, was me in hot water, throwing  
crabs back in the creek, crabs skittering to freedom, their sideways  
flight so etched in my mind that I saw it when I went off the college

in Connecticut where it was too blue cold for blue crabs. I saw it.  
The splintered dock. The rusted traps. The slimed rope. My father.  
The barnacles. The stars. My father would spin us under the night sky,

quiz us—"Where is Cancer?"—each constellation his catch. "There is  
Pisces," he boomed. At dinner, my father would say a grace that  
began "Lord, thank you for this meal," which meant this catch,

our catch, bless our catch of the day, catch me if you can—my father  
praying with his bait-your-hook-now voice, "There is a girl here  
which hath five barley loaves and two fishes, and the two fishes

she divided among all and they all did eat—all five thousand," my  
father praying, his prayer catching on the wooden mallet  
that cracked open the claws, crabs crushed, hot pot boiling

over, how the water sustained us, and how we crouched low  
in the lightening, under cracks of thunder, how we hoisted the traps,  
and when I think of home—I think of our backyard sinking, the soil

reeking, fish heads floating, my tee shirt molding, how the jellyfish  
stings on my arm burned and itched like crazy, my father sprinkling  
Adolf's meat tenderizer on my arms, singing. "We are anglers, Annie,  
anglers,"

Adolf's flying in my eyes, a cigar in his other hand, my hair  
stiff with salt water, summers so long, winters lonely, sun  
like thunder, dock like train tracks, the creek running fast to the Bay.

*Ann Chinnis*

## Emily Brontë in Manhattan

A woman's pelisse—furry, like wild cotton-grass  
in the Haworth moorlands—brushed my arm.

    This textured city  
screeches, calling attention to everything at once.  
Crowds guide me to the tunnel where trains race  
toward a terminal with constellations painted on the ceiling.  
    I mind the echoes.

A bouquet of purple heather lures me. The chief distraction  
has been a round man sausageing from café to café,  
    neck glistening sweat.

Though frightening as an increase in taxes,  
the city's grey towers reach incredible heights.  
I pause inside a large, stretched shadow  
    to enjoy its coolness.

The orange-bellied birds (may I call them robins?)  
belong to a series of alleys. Matrices of streets  
    tease me with  
suspended boxes blinking colorful lights.  
The soles of my feet take over the conversation.  
The clouds here are half the terror of Yorkshire's;  
    I'd pay for some rain.

In the air, a meaty smell overwhelms a baby's wail.  
I discover an oasis of greenery. At the park's edge:  
    a triumphant arch.  
I settle on a wooden bench and peek  
into the window of a shop with a pink door:  
a case full of cakes, pastries, biscuits . . .  
    how sweet would the frosting taste?

*Chloe Cook*

## A Yard Full of Promises

The spade goes into the soil with a “clunk.” It’s a stone, I hope  
and I say it out loud because I want my daughter to think that, too.  
There is no room for morbid speculation  
about bodies buried in the garden, a box full of the previous owner’s dead  
cat  
when you’re the adult in charge. “Yep, it’s a stone,” I say again  
as I carefully push my fingers around the object,  
smooth, round, a pit for an eye socket. No, it’s a stone.

Next to me, my daughter rambles on excitedly about buried treasure  
the possibility of some other child’s old toys hiding beneath the soil  
all sorts of magical things. I bury myself in her speculations, fill my own  
head  
with thoughts of secret portals and tiny doorways,  
magical tunnels that lead to fairy kingdoms  
blocked off from the real world by a large, round,  
skull-shaped rock.

*Holly Day*

## Rings of Moon Light

In the park, I once heard  
a bullfrog croak  
  
and above the dark trees  
the moon peered down  
  
at me between branches  
like a face in a window  
  
looking at my little domestic  
scene, one that includes  
  
its rippling face in the pond  
that I am so fond of  
  
where the frog spoke  
and broke the water's tension.

*Deborah H. Doolittle*

## We Thirst

We are thirsty for mercy.  
Three times today a hummingbird  
came to my face.  
Searching my eyes.

The buzz more poignant than  
any lovers I've taken.  
Fearful at first by a sting that  
comes with a buzz.

Feed me feed me says the spinning jewel.  
There is a needy god in that click  
that flit of effervescent.  
I fall into the need to quench.

We are thirsty for love.  
Two times yesterday hummingbirds  
came to my lips.  
These lips that also whisper hunger.

So close I felt desire sizzling  
my unfolding passion wanting  
to open like the hibiscus so  
they could drink. Opening my mouth  
to your mouth. Breathe life into me.

*J.V. Foerster*



## Psamtik to Psammetichus

*(after Herodotus 2.2.2)*

The language of air is lightning—when it speaks  
the heavens split in a tongue as old as sound.  
The house communicates in sighs and creaks.  
The language of the lightning is called thunder.  
Two bodies speak in a language known as love.  
The mountain speaks by murmuring from the ground,  
or screams, in wind and flames and death. I wonder—  
if language is a language, then what of?  
The ash is the expression of the spark.  
Bodies speak to bodies using violence.  
The language of the dog is bite, not bark.  
The voice of air is written in flights of birds.  
There is a Language of Truth—it's simply silence,  
and the Language of Lies, which translates all, is words.

*Daniel Galef*

**Note:**

According to Herodotus, the pharaoh Psamtik attempted to discover the primordial and inherent language of humanity by having a pair of children raised without ever being taught or spoken to.

## Nocturne 60

Sheer night, night's sheen—  
faint curtain of starlight

between

I and nothing,  
nothing and nothing,  
I and the nevertheless of I.

\*

Frayed ends woven to patterns  
ending and/or beginning  
in an overhead array  
of spark and/or smolder.

I

between the nothing of  
and the nothing but

me,

beneath the stars as between the stars  
that gently rest in downy bedding  
of before the beginning  
and after the end.

\*

The tactile of the lightness of such lights,  
of the lightness of my striding through  
as striding by.

*Jeff Graham*

## Gillying

We spend Whitsun with family friends in Wells.  
On a grey, salt and slate morning, we set up  
on the quay with plastic buckets and fishing lines  
that unravel like kite strings. Our legs dangle  
over the stone dock whilst mothers attach raw bacon,  
the colour of bad wine, to blunted hooks.

We lean carefully, balanced on the edge  
of something, lower bait into the green water.  
The murk below begins to move: a congregation  
of crabs gather around our bounty,  
believing it offered by a benevolent God.  
They do not seem to know this has happened before;  
they clamber and grab with the claws of the starving.

Our lines are plucked like harp strings as we make  
the first haul. A crab is lifted towards the light,  
crashes through the surface, dripping seaweed  
from wriggling legs. Its black shell glitters  
in the strengthening sun. This is rapture.  
Crabs mass against the harbour wall,  
desperate to be one of the chosen.

An hour passes and our buckets, monoliths,  
miniature aquariums, become loud with  
a crustacean clatter. The saltwater is congealed  
with struggling bodies, dark and heavy as blood.  
Our parents grow restless, groaning for fish and chips.

After a hasty count, a winner is declared,  
and we scramble to our feet, tip the buckets.  
A tide of crabs, clacking at their salvation,  
is washed back to the depths; they drop  
like stones to the seafloor. We see an exchange  
of peace with the waiting, and imagine  
they are sharing their glimpse of heaven.

*Bex Hainsworth*

# Pandora

Don't  
    believe  
        for  
            one  
                second  
that I didn't know what I was  
doing. I opened that darn box,  
felt the weight of wrath, ran a  
finger down the cool metal of  
ruthlessness, and gave women  
the tools for their revenge.

*Bex Hainsworth*

## breaking: Roe

this is what the subject line read, and I know it's right, the concept or how to conceive as a woman now owned by a man and here, supreme court, hold my uterus. if it's such a fragile thing, so precious to you, if every red blood cell that has fallen through it is a gift from god, if every used pad, every child I did not have because I lost three pregnancies is somehow sacred to you, then I should be a saint in your eyes. every woman risen in the cloud of *holy-god-almighty-see-how-white-he-is*, see our menstrual blood born red as the martyrs but transformed in law to the purity of a lamb, if my scream of back labor was a heavenly cry worthy of archangels in flight, if my epidural sliced into my spine the wrong way has truly left me with the holy relic of arthritis in each boxed vertebra, if almost watching my one child be stillborn, and another miscarried, if waiting for a doctor to ask permission to save my life, if the birth of my youngest created in her lungs a stammer in harmonic time, to sing with the cherubim, if my life and my daughters' lives, they who carry the eggs they were born with, are so very alabaster and carved righteous as a stunning virgin from the very first day they opened their eyes, is my son no more or less holy, is my son born to be the christ of me, his mother mary, born to descend from a cross because it is the descent that matters most, condescending to pay for my sins, the sins of my body and never my ovum, and this is what I don't understand as I read the ruling declaring my uterus, my ovaries and theirs, my fallopian tubes so easily blocked, my surgery scars and endometrial hyperplasia, my grief pain scream loss as only an altar, waiting for a lifetime of sacrifice: if I am born so loved, when did the hate begin?

*Mare Heron Hake*

## Compassion

like the snow that falls  
last on the ground in the thickest forest  
because it takes so long to make

its way down through the pine boughs  
and branches but falls all at once on  
the roofs and yards, train tracks

fields and meadows roads and sidewalks  
frozen lakes, paths and riverbanks  
on people's hats, bare heads and hands

some winters the piles so high  
no one bothers to put their shovels  
away until spring, other years

there are vast distances to cross  
under cloudy skies that refuse  
to soften shine or give

*Joanne Holdridge*

## Losing His Light

Hard long sad slow hurting day  
up and out of the house before dawn  
to drive northeast before the traffic  
I got stuck in anyway, going and returning  
to see a friend whose cancer is back  
round 2 arriving at the start of plague  
chemo, radiation, stem cell transplant  
blood transfusions, the usual miasma  
of what's worse the sickness or its maybe

cure, even vaccinated and boosted  
isolating and testing before I go  
I wear an N-95 mask, stay at a distance  
hands washed and sanitized, wanting to  
be close, but too afraid to touch  
forget about hold his hand or stroke  
his hair, instead we sit and talk  
until he tires and then his wife  
and I go for a long walk out

in the blustery cold down the narrow  
spit of land where the road ends  
and the harbor at Ten Pound Island  
gives way to open sea  
the waves rough and gray  
rocks white with icy sleet and spray  
I imagine the wind blasting  
plague out to sea, blowing in fresh  
cold salty air healing my friend

who is too weak to stand  
and I know with all that's in me  
to know but wishes something else  
that he's dying, just before I leave  
I touch my fingers to the cold windowpane

and on the other side of that freezing pane  
he pulls out from somewhere intentional  
the ghost of his old grin

*Joanne Holdridge*



## Down Payment

Dad left me enough for the down payment  
and that was sufficient I don't blame  
him for not having more to parcel out

between us brothers he spent his life  
welding railroad track retiring early  
before his body broke apart

before cancer infiltrated his guts  
he took me fishing when I was young  
but I was an ungrateful wretch

pissing and moaning about the cold and dirt  
and the worms that gave me the creeps  
and the fish that we never caught

unable then to comprehend that merely  
being together was all he wanted and needed  
I remember his Brylcreem and the Vicks VapoRub

the way he smelled when he came home from work  
the dirt engrained in the skin of his hands  
and the fumes that permeated his work shirts

my brother sold the house and split the proceeds  
we'll probably never go to that town again  
never drink in the pub where dad sat with me

nursing his pint until my brothers were  
old enough to take his place after which  
he stayed home and slowly grew old

as the river gradually deepened its cleft  
in the stone beneath the viaduct and the crows  
flitted from tree to tree preparing us for winter.

*Paul Ilichko*

## Zeroes and Ones

The records show I've loved you  
since the birth of my databases.  
Files declare I've known you

since heaven sent me down here  
to find your embrace, to promise  
you I won't let you go. Folders

full of rough drafts of my affection,  
completed missives from my heart,  
are yours to delete or save to another

computer, one shaped like your heart.  
My system runs on images of you,  
eating an ice cream cone, taking out

trash. Every minor task you perform  
lets me access the only feelings I have.  
Your recorded voice, those MP3s,

are songs I play in my ear before I sleep,  
so I can recall each pitch and timbre.  
When my memory collapses, the end

of my machine, I'll try to remember  
that we loved once, zeroes and ones,  
in an order no one could take away.

*Donald Illich*

# All Around Us Would Be Spring

*For Rachel, May 2020*

In another version of this time  
you would let me hold your baby.

She would be curled, curled upon my breast as we walked  
side-by-side and tumbling toward the water.

There would still be wild daisies doubled overhead  
and a sea of grass turning gold beneath the green.

With your child in my arms, I'd feel like we were sisters  
—as I did sometimes when we were children.

I'd know for sure then, that some things come back blooming  
even after they've been fallow.

*Tess K. Jacobs*

## Reparation Montage

*“Have you ever dreamed it was all given back?”*

*—Jacob Meders*

I dream the hummingbirds tripled once  
Japanese honeysuckle untethered from the earth.

And we found all the frogs that disappeared in the nineties  
blooming from under leaves, eyes gleaming like the sheen

of black tulip petals. The oaks released their fingers  
from the throat of the underbrush. When people say

*for every 100 that are reported there are 10,000 you don't see,*  
this time they mean frogs and not women.

My grandmother walks alone when the sun goes down,  
that she naps as much as she prays—constantly, that the rosary isn't

a meal replacement, and she cooks *sos pwa* for both of us.  
Mothers sleep with their daughters in another room

and not beneath their legs. And worship  
is not a place but a rhythm, voice raised

in hymns and beating feet. And we greet  
each other with a hand shake or finger snap,

don't kiss each other at all when we leave  
the house—we know we'll see each other again.

*Siobhan Jean-Charles*

## Clouds Rise

in the north like templed shrouds  
above the prairie, shadows  
like the ghosts of snow.

Cold as memory, this road back  
holy in its lack  
of sentiment. The crow

awaits in nearby bracken.  
Sunlight hurts the eyes,  
a comfort only to the wise.

*P M F Johnson*

## chronometria

time passes through body,

a fact which I challenge with a walk  
at an equal and opposite rate  
in the obverse direction,

beneath a sky that's been bruised,  
by the splitting sun,  
which somehow still paints  
the city beautiful,

rosying the still cheeks of buildings  
over which a cool wind skims,  
stenting open the flue in my chest,  
and grazing the crease that was carved

in my lips with a kiss long ago,  
from the same one whose  
fingerprints ripened into freckles  
down my spine.

most things last longer than people,  
except for the body,  
which sheds huge drifts of nails and skin,  
and makes a snowglobe of my vacuum,

and an abacus for the kernels of time.

*Sophie Liebergall*

## The Water Garden

that summer there was no girl left in me—  
*so i cracked the wings of twenty butterflies, smearing my eyelids with  
neoprene blues*

and i know you thought i was crazier than you...

when I met you here I see you first  
beyond dimension shining forth  
as we carried so many glistening rain coats  
clapping endless, right into the night

*what is it about falling that makes everything seem so bright?*

(Hear that?)

(No.)

*and now, and now, and now...*

(Listen...)

somewhere, *here*,  
a new country is arriving...

the rain in trastevere is always a sound at first  
when small specks of black ash fall so slow all around us

i reach out to grasp something we can hold here, together  
before the world slips through our open hands like water

i uncurl my fingers  
and catch a faint black mark there...

*flocks of a million starlings gather each day in rome as  
though it were some strange natural phenomena caused by  
unseen forces though we cannot see or explain why this  
occurs. I search for the reason continuously*

*Jessica Lim*



## Bedtime Prayer on Behest

Matt tells me, after I beg yet again,  
*I already told you my answer.*  
My body makes the shape of silent  
pleading. He knows I want to hear  
his answer on repeat, the way our  
someday maybe child might want  
to hear the same bedtime story told  
every night for a year like a prayer.  
His voice has the same fond softness  
for me as the sweatpants I've stolen  
from his next-door drawer. He speaks  
into me, *I would be content even  
without a child. I will be happy  
as long as I'm with you.* His eyes,  
a sleeping mask for my insomniac  
soul. His arms, my favorite comforter  
especially when the weather inside  
my unmothered mind goes cold.

*Jenny Maaketo*

## Distal

It snowed last night in the south hills. Yet  
a friend has already planted her peas  
and the daphne's blooming under my window.

It snowed last night in the south hills, but  
we've started planning road trips again.  
Unfolding maps, imagining itineraries.

We think we're far from the action here,  
safely distanced from the warzones. We can read  
and watch history happening through a spyglass.

Ripples reach us diminished by the vast expanse  
of continents. And we're okay  
not being any closer.

Focused on the little local, tending our peas,  
we're liable to forget how close the fires  
that fall, that winter, that whole long year.

Ash drifting from the sky.  
Windows sealed tight.

*Karen McPherson*

## My First Orchid

Peach, fuchsia-colored sexes at their centers.  
When one bloom begins to dry, indicated  
by a line of brown along the edges, I think  
that I am fine. I haven't killed my first orchid,  
flower my daddy has babied since before  
he fathered me. His veins parallel, like theirs.  
And since my blood is half his, I must  
have some orchid in me, too. So I water  
with his care, soak & drain, cup the pot's  
surface so the chips don't litter the sink.  
I refuse to let oily fingers touch tendril  
roots, eye those that slither & burrow  
like snakes around pot's circumference,  
and I want to be them, for absorption to be  
synonymous with breathing. When I check  
the plant again, the bloom has fallen, I let  
its stem rest between pointer & middle, using  
fingertips to flick at once-thick petals, now  
feathery. Others are starting to go, more faces  
beginning to cave into themselves, so I phone  
my daddy, tell him how the blooms dry & fall  
and he says, among other things, he thinks  
my first orchid is not getting enough sun.

*Arianna Miller*

## The Way Home

Days grow shorter, but the heat still blisters. I long to flee  
from my own left bloodied eye and its blurred plans.

Today by the pool's jagged edge a great egret. I glimpse  
his black beak, his green eye and white feathers before he collapses

into the blue. At two beats per-second he'll be at Bolsa Chica wetlands  
in an hour. The escaped African song bird birders call a *parasite* is still here.

Like last year a solo, distinct in his small body and long tail. He tries to fit  
in, but the finches chase him away. Don't we all try to fit in? The neighbor,

his unleashed dog, Lola, his base that beats on and on. His voice rises,  
*Come home, momma* when he calls his dog. We wonder away.

Sometimes we adopt a new home like when I was the only single mom  
on Snowden Avenue. I stopped for a beer with a neighbor on his front lawn.

I tried to fit in, even if I didn't like the taste of Coors. On this scorched day  
the female whydah lays her eggs in the garden finch's nest. She abandons

them and joins the ground pigeons. She is still trying to fit in. A poet I know  
and I once exchanged thoughts on home. I remember him saying,

Where is home actually? When I consider what home means I recall back  
to when my father held on so tight. He lay in his hospital bed riddled

with cancer and filled with morphine. I think back about to what he wanted  
when he gripped my hand in his calloused hand and whispered the word,  
home.

If only, I could have had the strength of the egret to lift into the February sky  
on that dark day. If only, I could have carried his frail body home.

*Florence Murry*

## After Long Illness

You called me to the window. And I rose  
from bed and saw the two fawns

that had drifted into the yard. Dew clung  
on the grass. One of the fawns stooped

to crop the white morning glories  
stitched like initials in the green fabric.

And the flowers, without complaint or grief,  
yielded themselves to the nibbling teeth,

only to reappear on the soft brown pelt,  
like sunlight dappled on the forest floor.

*Derek N. Otsuji*

## Squall

Grey gulls in blown snow mar the absolute,  
scoring staggered arcs on the wet sky,  
iambic stroke of wings impaired by struggle  
to hold a course against the beating gusts.  
One dips to skim a shimmer from the water  
with mortal precision, despite wind-shear, a glide  
and spearing thrust, and the inchling fish is there,  
then not, a flick of the head to swallow, and wings  
work hard to climb again, as any mind  
labours behind events, where description is  
an account of the past, even the mind's story  
about itself. This is not a simple page  
of birds and weather, though the lake throws cold  
at me, wind shaves curls of foam from break-  
ers' crests. I need the words for this and think:  
*this icy winter hisses, this killing winter coos  
and coddles; it dawdles and strokes my brow,  
my hands, my neck, my poor measure of warmth  
inviting the lewd hunger of circling gulls.*

*James Owens*

## Heirlooms

Grandma six weeks dead and not a thing  
left to me—her diamond ring, her pearls  
distributed among my mother and sisters.

Last week, I watched a neighbor in the yard,  
untangling her tomato vines  
like king snakes from the wire into a trellis.  
Yellow blossoms punctuated each leaf.

I almost asked the neighbor  
for some tomato seeds, just enough  
to grow my own—two or three,  
maybe some basil or mint too—  
which Scott thinks is ridiculous,  
there's not a green thumb between us.

I'm no good at pretending the earth isn't dying  
with each wringing out of the clouds.

Once more, Scott and I try to revive  
the parlor palm from his father's funeral.  
The roots have gone to shit,  
the leaves like shriveled snakeskins.

*Christian*, grandma would say  
as my sisters and I played under her tangerine tree,  
*One day, I will watch your children.*  
Just to say I tried,

I dig myself deeper  
and deeper into the earth.

*Christian Paulisich*

## Fragments of History

An entire people carried theirs  
across a desert. Etched it in tombs.  
On Sundays, I heard parables  
of fire & water, whales gulping  
people whole. Now, I read them  
to my children. Perspective settled  
on me like a new wool sweater.  
All stories are ours. In sixth grade,  
my teacher swore he was haunted  
by the ghost of a miner. He would  
wake up at night to a man slumped  
on the foot of his bed, or heaving  
a wheelbarrow back-&-forth. *Ghosts  
are a type of history, too*, he said.  
Wind is the history of the atmosphere.  
Light, the history of the sun. A tree  
stump is the history of a flashing hatchet,  
but also the history of a tree. The road is  
a history of tires & wandering feet. I want  
my history to be told the way the moon  
gushes of the sun, devoted, glowing  
at the thought of it. Ancient astronomers  
made maps of the sky—space-ferried  
histories of stars—from light years  
away. So historical are we, scriptural,  
that even our bones are stowed like  
old letters. & when I die, I imagine  
mine will lie like a moon in the darkness  
—as precise as precise can be—  
all so someone behind the rot of time  
can peel back the lid from a pine box & say:  
*My, my, my. Hello, Gorgeous. Who were we?*

*Seth Peterson*



# The Circus

*Georges Seurat, 1891*

Hundreds of tiny dots,  
blue and yellow, converge  
on an alien green ballerina,  
balanced on one toe atop  
a pale horse circling the ring.

She is about to be flung  
sideways into space, a slanted  
accident before wide-eyed  
spectators ready to applaud  
her imminent demise but  
distracted by the acrobat  
walking on his hands.

In the foreground, a white-faced  
jester grins, bells jingling  
on a three-pointed red cap,  
and to his right, a black-suited  
ringmaster pulls back the curtain  
on the scene. The audience

wonders what it would be like  
to fly through the air in a tutu,  
arms akimbo, not knowing  
where to land. Or to exist in the flesh  
of a raucous clown, or an impresario  
who makes of life a show.

Seurat juggled dots on a canvas,  
settling them into patterns of old ochre.  
He carefully planned his palette,  
more important than the death  
of a dancer, the jokes of a jester,  
the balance of an upside-down  
acrobat. The painting, it's said,

remains unfinished, the spun gold  
of the big-top circus still spinning  
somewhere in the yellowish ether.

*Donna Pucciani*

Daphne,

I dreamt your roots retracted from the earth  
When I returned the shoots I'd pruned to make a wreath.

The branches intertwined and took the shape of limbs;  
The bark turned skin, the kind of white behind blood swims.

And metamorphosis continued as your leaves  
Went autumn brown in bliss, no rustling, now at ease,

Content to hang in quiet strands that spilled to trace  
The soft emerging limit of your placid face.

Soon every feature you had shed from memory  
Renewed, though fixed into a silent treasury,

Until your lips were broken, drawing air so deep;  
At once your eyes flung open—startling me from sleep.

\*

My eyes timed with the sun, and in the brightness searched  
For laurels that were gone. No doubt that they were perched

On someone else's head, since years had passed from when  
I'd paid them mind. Instead, to counterfeiting men

They traded every day, a trophy bought and sold,  
As none of them could say that anything would hold.

Daphne, what can I give but promise? I'll undo  
The wrong and you will live. The wreath I took from you

I'll win to end this curse that kept you from my hands.  
And let it be in verse, I have no more demands.

I'd rather see your face roam free where I can't follow  
Than trapped within one place. Forever yours,

Apollo

*Justin Pulice*

## Luck Will Still Smile on Us

—line from the *Ukrainian national anthem*

My husband says, *You can always find something to be sad about.* I tell him, my people were born like this, with hearts that murmur. Flutter.

Beat too much. Our hearts have singed edges.  
They rain cold soot on the streets of Kyiv.  
They regurgitate the crusted blood of soldiers

who lie wounded in a filthy ward of cots,  
and in walks Zelensky, to hand a medal  
to each one. Zelensky, murmuring thanks,

leans down to a soldier, in his weary bed,  
and whispers in his ear...

Wouldn't it be great if he started,

“A minister, priest, and a rabbi walk into a bar...”

After all, our hearts will kick-start with a joke.  
After all, he's a comic, one of us, but with biceps  
and steadier heart.

How does the world goes on?  
Murmur and flutter:

the doves are still arriving  
in Independence Square, and the soldiers

stationed with Kalashnikovs are tearing bits  
of rationed bread that fall to the pavement.

A woman hands out blue and yellow tulips.  
And outside the opera house a choir stands

lacquered in sun  
and birds fly out of each mouth

*Kathy Shorr*

## Zinnias Grow in My Adult Garden

I didn't plant them here in the shady corner of my backyard,  
the only flowers left behind by the couple who sold me this house.

It's late summer and they're tired of suntracking.  
Spindly stems lie across pavers like necks in a guillotine.

Heads rest outside the flower bed, petals paused mid explosion.  
Petals as spokes lodged in my throat: I haven't seen

such fireworks since Dad planted every pink,  
yellow, orange in my childhood. I colored fiercely

with those crayons, yet to see them within reach  
after so much time—bright and blunt—I am Pinocchio

got no strings to hold me down, save the phantom  
tug of Geppetto. It's wrong to plant zinnias in shade,

but how dare memory be the one to ask: Why reach  
for the sun just to become a myriad broken tipped knives?

I am a child entering a garden past its prime,  
the dirt-stained knees of his denim just behind the curtain.

Grief's dull edge: petals as grace notes.  
I too want to lie down, exhausted from reaching for sun.

*Caroline Simpson*

## Why My Father Insists on Arriving Early at Ben Gurion Airport

The first time through security,  
a soldier thumbs my father's  
American passport, stops  
at his birthplace, Aleppo.  
Suitcases removed from X-ray,  
outstretched arms order us  
to the back of the line.

The second time, a soldier motions  
for a group of men wearing yarmulkes  
to walk in front of us. We don't belong.  
A soldier asks my sister if she  
is my father's wife. When she says,  
"he's my father," he responds, "right,  
your husband."

The third time our suitcases roll  
toward the X-ray, now giddy  
as the machine swallows  
my Samsonite, I start to approach  
the metal detector until an arm  
cradling a machine gun points us  
to the end of the line, again.

*Jen Siraganian*

## Widow Fog

Houses huddle closely, shiver as the street  
forms a tunnel under the low, dark sky.  
The slowing down season begins. Cold creeps  
into bones, my heart now a dead end shut

by sorrow. Trees have dropped their camouflage.  
Naked branches rise, pure form in this false  
death. The ground digs into itself, takes on  
a husk, drab with faded grays, blacks, and browns.

Underneath small creatures keep earth alive,  
moving below the frozen shell. Having  
banked fires of desire, whenever  
I wake and face into cold air I feel

sharpness in my marrow, become quickly  
alert, bow my head, mourn Norman's passing,  
and hope soon to depart winter mind,  
spring with life into warm flowering sun.

*Marilynn Tallal*



## LBJ in the Rotunda

A long line of people in the cold black night  
And we were there, my father, twenty-year-old sister,  
And me, not quite ten, in my black coat. Earlier that school year  
Our fourth-grade teacher had asked  
The name of the only living ex-president  
And I, alone and proud, knew.  
I didn't know much more.  
Little about the Civil Rights Act, less about Vietnam,  
The angel and devil on the shoulders  
Of this gray-haired foul-mouthed living ex-president, now dead.  
What I mainly understood, as I stood under the black sky,  
Waiting to view not the man himself but  
His flag-draped coffin,  
Was that I was cold—and happy that  
My sister kept calling me a “trooper,”  
For being so young and waiting so cold, a Black boy  
Poised between pain and pride.

*Clifford Thompson*

## Before You Leave

You will be asked to thread the sun  
with a purple arrow as a needle,  
pulling a silver-stranded tail.  
When it spirals through and falls back  
into gravity, you must catch it and tie it up.

You will be asked to attach to its top rim  
a horizontal black shade to block  
its light, to allow night its covered  
respite.

Then you will be asked to love and forgive  
in whatever order possible,  
and to walk and talk and eat with loss  
after it ties your feet and tapes your mouth.  
And when it frees you, you must provide it  
with a room in your house forever.

*Marie Gray Wise*

## Of Poetry and Mourning

all the lovely poems  
begin in nature: with streams  
or orchids, turtles,  
or deer—

delicious sensual descriptions  
lead us to or are themselves metaphors  
that take us somewhere else—  
from ice to joy, or more likely,  
from joy to immutable reality  
and the pretense that it can be  
cushioned by the poignancy  
of pristine details

you and I did not have much traffic  
with nature beyond planting flowers  
or that early trip to Mount Shasta  
where you fished and I lit the small hibachi grill

after that we traded the sleek yellow Kharmann Ghia  
for a sturdy beige Volkswagen station wagon  
planning to camp, though we never did—  
that early yearning part of the nesting process  
a return to basics: man, woman, fire

and so, love, I have no spiderwebs  
or petals or anything delicate  
to wend my way to mourning  
all I have is plain flat sorrow  
and still, two clenched hands

*Marie Gray Wise*

*International Feature Section*

# **Slovakia**

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**Nina Varon**

## Introduction to Slovak Poetry

Coming from the central European region, the uniqueness of Slovak poetry remains undiscovered. It offers such richness of poetic voices, that it is difficult to categorize the contemporary authors in any way, all of them worlds unto themselves. Readers in Slovakia are fortunate to have many beautifully bound and illustrated collections at their fingertips to choose from. Whether they prefer traditional lyricism or modern experimental texts, they can be sure to read high quality poetry. In recent years, the popularity of poetry, and its readership, has been growing—a welcoming development.

The history of Slovak poetry includes a normative period, which was not conducive to originality and creativity. Poems published in the communist times of the post-war Czechoslovakia (mid-20th century) were highly stylized, celebrating the heroism of the proletariat. Any poetry that deviated from the communist ideals could not be published; with the exception of the 1960s “thaw” in the regime when art blossomed for a short time before the Soviets crushed the reforms of the Prague Spring in August of 1968. After twenty more years of normalization, Slovakia experienced enormous changes in the 1990s with the fall of the Berlin Wall. The changes resulted in fundamental shifts in literary expression.

Along the revival of “forbidden poets” from communist times, modernism and post-modernism swept the country; poetry became fragmented, decomposed; with evolving technology also less personal, but reflective of the search for a new identity. While this trend continues in the 21st century’s postmodernist times, there are also new voices that gravitate back to natural lyricism or go the opposite direction—radical voices criticizing the society, pointing to environmental problems—and it is difficult to point out one prevailing style. Within his concept of palintropic philosophy, author and philosopher Erik Markovič formulates the need to transcend postmodernism and suggests a unified view of contemporary literature in Slovakia. In his words, “palintropicism is not only an effort to reach wholeness, unity, holistic metaphors of the world, but on a personal level, it is an expression of attempts for realized creative bridging of poetic, musical, and philosophical creating inside of the person as an author.”

It is truly remarkable how diverse Slovak poetry is—while it may be caused by a span of generations and regime changes, I believe it is the creative expression of individual authors who do not compromise and do not imitate anybody but stay true to themselves.

Poetry has the power to reveal entire worlds in a few lines. My intention as the editor was to present a multitude of styles, to show how Slovak poets play with the language, transcending their experience beyond the words, into an unknown area that can be clarified and digested in the reader's mind.

The first poem in this collection questions the nature of a poem. In Slovak, the word “poem”—“báseň”—has a feminine grammatical gender, which evokes the association of a girl who is whimsical and hard to get. Two themes run throughout the following texts—the identity of a poem and the poetic or personal identity of authors. Mixed in are also themes of language, writing, and existential questions. Readers may enjoy beautifully crafted lyricism of Ondreička or Ondrejková, admire imagery in Luka, Podracká or Štrpka, wonder about author's experiences with Haugová, Repka, Kuniak, appreciate the boldness of Habaj and Pain. Other poems, like the ones from Dianišková, Gavura, Markovič, dare to hypothesize and predict; with a question mark, of course.

The last poem “Enclosed” is a good conclusion and almost a definition of hopes in Slovak poetry:

*I am thinking about how to get out  
it seems it won't be as easy...*

...as easy as for poets of Western Europe who are globally recognized and published? It seems that the contemporary Slovak poetry is trying to reach the world but few listen.

My hope is that this selection encourages a wider interest in Slovak poetry among English-speaking readers.

I would like to express my immense gratitude for a fruitful collaboration with these distinguished literary experts: Erik Markovič, who has provided many original collections of poetry from his extensive

personal library for me to read and choose from; Miriam Margala, whose impeccable reading and reviewing skills contributed to clarity and artistic rendition of each poem; and Sibelan Forrester, professor of Modern and Classical Languages at Swarthmore College and an active member of American Literary Translators Association (ALTA), who encouraged me to translate contemporary authors and put me in contact with *Atlanta Review* editors.

*Nina Varon*

## How Is She

How is the poem before she gets written?  
Is she young, naïve, does she want to know more,  
Will she not wait by my pen to be bitten,  
Or will she weave herself into my score?

I have nothing on her, she wanders around,  
Whistles a tune, snaps her fingers,  
I should trust myself, write her down,  
I have bits of her in my palms.

*Ján Buzássy*

## Slovak

The language is beautiful when it knows the accents  
That sing and themselves are songs,  
It is not suitable for battle cries,  
Yearful singing is a long weapon of maidens.

Through our modest rain the language is moist,  
It smells nice, steams, and has nutrients  
It is a reflection, a bar hoisted too high,  
Save, it, Lord, keep it among the living ones.

*Ján Buzássy*



## I Always Come Out of the Same Door

God often sits at my gate. Here and there he transfers his weight from one leg to another, chases out the last memory from underneath his fingernails. We got used to each other—it was easier for him than me.

When he doesn't know where he should hide, and the temperature drops to 18 Fahrenheit, he shrugs his shoulders and slides under the earth. If there was no frost, he would be afraid of getting soggy and leaving only a trace in small streams between the eyes of people passing by.

A social worker finds him there, or even the entire non-profit organization, perhaps two; naked, legs crossed, with a frosty look.

He would even pray to those up there if he were not God himself.

*Veronika Dianišková*

not quite alone...

the shadows of women  
that I could/should have become  
keep watch over me  
but for various reasons I've never become them  
although their image has  
deeply embedded itself onto my retina:  
multiplied looks, multiplying of the mind,  
of hesitation, fears, but also of joy, desires, hopes...  
especially on days full of misery  
the shadows of the other  
never realized women walk next to me,  
sometimes they shine light under my floundering feet

*Etela Farkašová*

basic uncertainty

I don't know  
how much uncertainty one poem can carry, how much melancholy  
and sadness  
as not to fall apart under too heavy a burden  
ending in tatters without any meaning...

and I don't know at all  
how much painful load does a human soul endure  
heavily trudging/wading through a bog  
when hopeless slimy mud sticks to its feet

*Etela Farkašová*

## fatherline

my father stands at my bed  
his shoulder touches emptiness  
his skin is pearly soft  
from skin holes  
mustache sprouts          cat's claws  
always catch my dress's hem  
when I am in danger of flying too high

he stays at my bed  
swaying

and the air suddenly undulates  
The waves thickening into a jelly

in them                          he opens his mouth  
  
                                        a woman with the eyes of ice  
                                        an old woman without legs  
                                        they knead a child  
                                        they pour water on hot  
                                        sheet

one glance at my father's face  
one touch the gate closes  
the lips come together the shoulder leans  
against the wall

they stand behind my back  
creasing the hem of my dress

*Mária Ferenčuhová*

## motherline

since childhood I have been spotting shadows in the corners of rooms  
small animals on the surface of things  
fast gray mice on the kitchen counter  
insect with a multitude of little legs  
my world was disappearing under the layers of other worlds  
I was not surprised  
if sometimes a strange man in a brown hooded sweatshirt stood  
in the doorway and when the vases changed  
into skulls with empty eye holes  
when suddenly the skin on my mom's face was gone and on my shoulder  
fell a shower of wrist bones instead  
of a caress

with trusting, I submitted myself  
when it was my turn  
thankful  
that we are made so  
that we would not recognize anything and sensed  
the end only as a transfer from one  
environment into another      from a room to the hall  
from darkness to light  
[or the other way]  
and were afraid only of the fact  
that we would not close the door behind

*Mária Ferenčuhová*

## My Wise Friend

To keep quiet is treacherous,  
As it is to crush  
Butterflies.

All those majestic ones  
With big wings  
Like written thoughts  
Of Socrates, crossed out  
With a spot of blood and poison.  
And also the ones of shadows and nights,  
Covered only with grey fine hairs.

Open your mouth  
And let the butterflies  
Fly into a frosty December morning  
Where I'll find them

On the sparkling snow, dried out  
As an ink handwriting.

*Ján Gavura*

## Profundis

Finally, the poetry is read sparingly,  
Superficially and with the gesture of a Scrooge.

From the learning more secretive  
Than a Masonic lodge  
Grew apprenticeship of futility.

Only few remain who search for  
Reflections of rhymes in the eyes of others,  
In rhythmic steps a metaphor jumps  
from one thing to another.

The one you write for is long dead  
Or has not been born yet.  
For now, only you are here.

Finally, the poet is alone.  
Finally, he is himself.

*Ján Gavura*

1.

< | enter | >

the first sentence: doesn't have a central being. the first being: doesn't have a central sentence. therefore one should not wonder there is nothing to lean on. there is no center. there is nowhere to move. there is no center. there is nothing to bounce back from. there is nothing to follow. there is no being. there is no center. there is nothing to estimate. the first center: doesn't have a being. doesn't have edges. there is nothing to fit into. there is nothing to step over. there is no center. there is nothing to discard. there is no sentence.

*Generator X*

26.

return. return. cyclization.  
near the sea an irrelevant sea:  
wind turns the pages of this text:  
a future text or its medium:

on the ship deck an irrelevant ship deck:  
someone checks the programming of this text:  
a future text or its medium:

it begins and ends in a very descriptive way:  
unreachable forgotten St. Ivan:  
today a horizon.

| > exit < |

*Generator X*

## ethnoshop:

the third world that has been us for a long time  
the third world we are all in one  
the third world of frozen poverty

citrus fruits  
from Dutch genofarms  
in a white stomach  
caramel tobacco  
in the saliva of a white man  
banana in chocolate  
in lip-rouged lips  
bizarre fruit in winter  
coffee and corn  
coconut and cocaine  
wooden rosaries  
and sandalwood sticks  
the third world built up by its denotation  
impoverished by the supermarket  
of a white man  
by shopping carts  
by philosophizing at universities

the biomass of the third world  
in a reversed move  
following the order of the unabomber  
let them take currency corpus christi

out of circulation  
the world is covered by the white spots  
of white men's leprosy

take corpus christi out of circulation  
touch my wound doubting Thomases  
in the third world it has grown bigger  
touch my wound  
supermarket Judases  
with 57 satellite channels



that feature a white man's poem  
about hatred of the color white...

this poem?  
this hatred?  
this white?

*Generator X*

Name (Age)

she has never stopped wondering  
how tiny  
every little poem  
about a person is

*Ol'ga Glušťiková*

Gabika (43) To Svetlana (38):

look what everybody around is  
yelling at us:

how much you should make  
how much to spend  
what to accomplish  
whom to marry and how to live with him  
and meanwhile they do not tell you at all  
that the human body  
is soft

as bread

ripped out of the earth  
for only a short moment

*Ol'ga Glušťiková*

## Writer Elena (48)

I.

they are asking me what my  
next books will be about:

about time and my mouth  
with first dead teeth

about how during one night I  
had sewn a wedding dress from curtains,  
it was too long

about what kind of daughters  
numismatic women have

about bathing a child and a mother  
who resembled father

II.

they are asking me what will be left after us:  
imperfect period cycles  
wigs  
red manuscripts:

after a home birth  
the child wrapped in  
a kitchen towel

*Ol'ga Glušťiková*

1805

I see scribbling, her blinking letters, she usually writes at night.

Now, when the letters fade, she goes to the curtain, children boast  
“we saw her at the window in the morning.”

Around Amherst a winding road, created for bundling.

Remove lines, plus signs, prefer “instant”  
to “sudden,” stick a red and white thread into places  
with thick holes.

A bit of breeze from the window and the face clears up, *her flat, full lips  
and dark eyes were not exactly masculine, her oval face and  
low forehead are not exactly feminine.*

It is not true that I loved women, I loved everyone.

*Erik Jakob Groch*

Mise-en-scene

to write the time, long, incomprehensible sentences

it is possible to dream even of animals in a calendar

to hear once and for all the heaped crows from košice

word selection is a natural selection

: it doesn't matter how the universe was created

*Erik Jakob Groch*

## Karmacoma

(1.)

Ashy faces do not foretell anything  
In another country you perhaps know your name  
You touch the sky with hair that does not belong to you  
Whoever says hello to you leaves without a word  
You don't belong anywhere  
Ageless and getting younger still  
You won't move forward if you misstep  
And you will lose balance between two steps  
Between two blades of grass in the wind  
You are a sudden word that a long-forgotten language accepted  
You are just the cry of a mute sky  
That touches you with stars that do not belong to it  
Whom does this dream belong to  
The one in which you stumble and stand in one place  
And ask about  
Addresses names numbers the future  
Destiny has lost balance between two lives  
Ashy faces foretell nothing  
You know that already  
You spit in your palms  
You'll never do that  
You know your name now  
In another country in another time in another future  
Those birds land on your hands a mute sky cries from them  
You are tearing the hair that does not belong to you  
You screwed up addresses names futures  
You mixed up steps words languages  
You mixed up faces hair destinies  
You don't belong anywhere  
You had thousands of mothers thousands of fathers  
Thousands of women thousands of daughters thousands of sons  
In another future in another past  
You don't belong anywhere  
You don't belong anywhere  
Bored, the Cosmos destroyed you

*Michal Habaj*

## Karmacoma

(2.)

A very simple poem  
You feel like saying  
But the words are so heavy  
You never saw such words  
Where did those words come from  
They are strange not known black creeping in the night  
Bodies that they took off from ooze on the porch  
Those words are wild unruly they are intelligent they are cold  
Heavy, they sneak through the hall they entered the house  
They entered the room the head they are in the head  
Now what  
You raise your hands you throw your hands onto the keyboard  
You throw your hands you rip those words you grasp those words by  
nothing  
by black wet nothing you rip words throw words  
Out of the head  
Out of the head  
These are the words common dust  
Lightly swirled dust nothing more  
You feel like saying  
But something sneaks through the night something entered the house  
Something scrambles in the nearby hall  
You never saw such words  
Where did those words come from  
You feel like saying  
But the words say that for you  
Task accomplished the area conquered  
Such horrible intelligence is breathing  
Who are you now  
Who is asking  
Hands on the keyboard write something

*Michal Habaj*

somewhere here. (un)certain dawn of the “text”

now. when the meaning in the infinite space of pure things  
without names pushes me out, when I fall through in that vortex,  
I live. in every word. that I become conscious of.  
and which I grasp.

in an Abrasion: suddenly I. “I” in an abyss, wedged in the interplay  
of new differences, silent through the nostrils full of dust.

the pressure in myself transcends the sign:  
(resist the spice of binarity, the power cult!) in the space of a parabola  
and a vertical, spider’s net where the consciousness truly IS:  
a sign in a manuscript thus leaks from every text  
into another: the boundary is smeared, I breathe again, the time

net is dissolving, only a moment remains: now. and coming up to the  
surface, a breath in, to see. myself. this way. from every side,  
to step towards myself from the outside of a bubble (in which THAT I  
decomposes and): only the fullness of clear breathing,  
loneliness in a naked stone, smooth glance.

placed in the silky vacuum of vegetation.

*Andrej Hablák*

I am

the echo of the big bang is present  
on smooth bridges, roads  
breathe here. yes. You-not-know-it-all,  
still a cold wind. slow glance. palm moving away  
the echo of the big bang is present,  
the sphere full of all movements seeps through my fiber  
still the wave full of outlines sticks to my head. that deafens  
on green platforms. on the bottoms of seeds light bursts forth

*Andrej Hablák*



(To My Poets-Peers)

In a forgotten house  
invisibly but clearly  
one can hear the rain  
it resonates in the wintry foliage;  
they photographed you at the first communion  
in front of the old church in the May sun  
an apple tree twig in your hair — — —  
the house from a dream an opened door  
windows colorless frames a slanted ray  
in broken glass a brick fence  
disappearing under the thin fingers of rain  
wind children decrepit plaster  
mold pastel spots  
infinite childhood early adulthood  
merge outside of my body deep inside me  
the shadows of trees the warmth  
prepared for a long winter I touch  
the scarred light the cold sun  
filters through the boy's  
fingers on my face scantily  
in the midst of future plants  
grows a heart of shadow  
unbuttons smoldering foliage firm shiny  
herbs will encircle the house well entwined  
roots reflected by a mirror the house  
is undeniably standing here with you  
and without you  
definitively mature — —

*Mila Haugová*

## Another Poem

Forever in an embrace, so gladly she welcomes the day, lets warm rays  
enter the ancient forest of sleep,  
she welcomes a poem, that very lively sister-twin  
that is moving freely in her  
and which she, to withstand the night and the shadow,  
always kills in the evening with another poem.

*Mila Haugová*

## Carnival

a face without a cause your young face  
in the left upper corner of the painting

she is carrying all masks already  
completely vulnerable  
the carnival—a grille not one face of ours  
will push through I have to do even what I did not want to  
I want even what I cannot want  
and so my hair grows now without you securing the footprints  
I know only this embrace, no other  
in my body I have another secret body folded gold scrolls  
changing surfaces as they  
submerge and emerge  
walk close and open through me through my life  
come up the stairs  
towards the gold foil of the sky falling on us

*Mila Haugová*

## Punctured Memory

I found out  
that I have a punctured memory  
but it functions  
on the principle of the black hole  
thus  
it pulls everything inside  
backwards  
it absorbs  
and so I remember strange names  
                  strange numbers  
                  strange troubles  
                  strange loves

I keep in my memory  
uncles aunts grandmothers girlfriends  
ID numbers of hometowns  
of the entire city and also county  
I am like an information service  
a public phone booth  
do not destroy me I serve all  
while I forget  
even my own name  
and also what I wanted  
to say here

*Daniel Hevier*

## Ministry of My Interior

Who again was  
searching me through?  
The Ministry  
of My Interior.

All my teeth  
they have inspected,  
if my heart loves  
they have detected,

(they have warned me  
with a smile  
that my heart  
won't make a mile)

they have fixed  
my tonsils' order,  
liver might be  
getting harder...  
Then they passed  
straight from my head  
into stomach  
acid ache:

how many acids  
I have, bases.  
If I still have  
all my graces.

A threat of the highest  
punishment for me:  
life sentence  
in my own skin.

*Daniel Hevier*

## Casting a Look

Tired, I am coming home from work,  
nothing exists yet—  
only when I open my eyes:  
By casting a look  
I spread the sidewalk under my feet,  
unearth a tree,  
by casting a look,  
I spread the sky,  
blow a cloud on it  
and the sun.

*Rudolf Jurolek*

## Anytime

I live. Just so, without engagements,  
just so, with hands in my pockets:  
anytime I can listen to music,  
anytime I can do something good,  
anytime I can make a somersault.

I live. Just so, without engagements,  
just so, with hands in my pockets:  
anytime a car can run me over,  
anytime I can get a heart attack,  
anytime I might not exist.

I live.  
So much on the interface  
of everything and nothing  
that I freeze sometimes.

*Rudolf Jurolek*

## Normal Children

As our children are growing out  
of plump new-born shapes,  
our disappointments are multiplying:  
those are not the children  
we dreamt of—  
they have crooked teeth,  
fat noses,  
eyes of uncertain color,  
they don't stun the adults  
with their smart answers.  
They will not become the prodigies  
that are always successful in life:  
they will have to earn money,  
their loves will leave them,  
they won't be able to sleep at night.  
Children are growing out  
of plump new-born shapes  
and with their imperfections  
they gain  
always the deeper and touching  
dimension of simple humanity.

*Rudolf Jurolek*

There are unique places in every person's life.

Not too many. According to Laco Lajčiak: A place where a person is from, where he spent his childhood. According to Laco Faga: A place where person lives. According to Ján Kudlička: A place in a landscape. I understand all three and I believe that MY unique place is equivalent to theirs, even when I have not been born there and live elsewhere, surrounded by a different landscape.

*Juraj Kuniak*

A point.

During flights on big planes to very remote countries, every passenger's seat is equipped with a screen, on which various films and information about the flight are being broadcasted, for example, the map of an area the plane is flying over is displayed, and the icon of the plane draws a red line—so that everyone can see how far we have flown already and where we are flying. I have flown like that many times, noticing these orientation points, *Wien, Warszaw, Moscow or Singapore, Sydney, Tahiti*, and have also noticed that such a point is not always the country's capital. Sometimes it was an entirely different place. Surprisingly different. For example, there is a point marked on our country's map close to the border of the eastern Slovakia with Hungary, with the name *Cana* next to it. The east-Slovakian village of Čaňa. As a native of Košice I know this village. For some, Čaňa might be unique and takes a central part in his soul. I personally would mark another place. I would put a point in the northern middle part of Slovakia and write *Cernova* next to it.

*Juraj Kuniak*

## Addition

I stay away from people and prefer to count the birds—  
crazies look at me—the madman—and sneer at him.  
So why should I be with them in cahoots?  
Little birdies will sum up my deeds without a grin.

*Ján Litvák*

## Happiness

Immense happiness came my way this morning,  
like when the first sunrays through leafy woods are shining.  
Today, I am content and will stay at home.  
I feel like being alone.

*Ján Litvák*

## Language of Languages

How many languages can heavenly birds sing in  
when they praise tidied-up gardens and yards.  
I suddenly understand them involuntarily  
when you speak to me so lovingly.

*Ján Litvák*



## Deepgreen Woman

She comes in quietly  
and with little drums in her wrists  
You sense their disquiet under the fragile apple skin  
A voice sleeps in her throat

A warm hairy animal

And all that blinking nostalgia!

She breathes on the flower  
The flower shivers in carnality just like after a bitter rain  
All ambience calms down

and flickers light

A deepgreen woman with lit up hair  
touches bird nests and thinks  
of mirrors and grievances

of forgotten jungles

In the country of her body  
in the shell of her silence

somebody is making wings to fly

*Eva Luka*

## A Poet

Like animals sniff the secret holes  
of their bodies on each other, so does the lover's hand  
approach the white paper, weaves in  
its foreplay, on the aorta the scythe of the moon  
like a shivering scarf, a frog's membrane  
among his fingers  
that he hides at noon.

Only this night  
can see him, impossible and sad  
hanging on a branch, swinging and asking for nothing  
all those useless, complicated questions. Drunk  
on cheap wine, he sleeps all night, gorgeous  
poems fly into his hair and they will never  
see the light of the day. Such  
strange trivialities. The bird man

very quietly plays on his street organ, blows off a thin  
hair from his face and disappears

in a grievous pirouette.

*Eva Luka*

## 7 Everyday Situations

The idea that someone heard our voice  
while the door was closed,  
is, honestly, filling us with feelings  
of uncertainty. Let's imagine it.

Let's imagine it thus: the person who  
suggested this had heard the voices from our room,  
he thought that he recognized them as ours,  
but he is not sure—it could have been a  
radio playing.

It's even possible that we weren't there  
but our radio was playing:  
someone else turned it on.

But it is not entirely excluded  
that we were there, but the radio wasn't playing.

That evening we were there,  
at the agreed place,  
in a clearly defined space.  
Or the radio was playing.

If we weren't there and the radio was not playing,  
then their assumption was wrong,  
it is not true that someone heard us.  
Let's hope we existed that evening.

Even then, if someone really talked  
in our room, even when we weren't there  
and the radio was turned off.

*Peter Macsovszky*

## Ec chajim.

And that something like this can still happen again, we could not have even imagined anymore. Moonikonika

And if You cannot imagine it—  
that not only the dark cattle wagons once approaching the smoke,  
but all the trains roaming the world are like torn pieces of some epic movie,

where the idea of winding film rolls is similar  
and somehow unconsciously derived from winding the Torah scroll *Ec chajim*  
on two wooden bars as a symbol of the Tree of Life.—

And if You really cannot imagine it,  
please try to see the just setting Sun as the reflector of a film projector,  
in a movie theatre that the Gestapo or NKVD\* burst in to seize

a forbidden film, ripped it to pieces and sent everybody to be transported,  
trains as scraps of an epic film that the setting Sun plays forever  
like a movie projector during an eclipse.

And if You really could never imagine it, please remember,  
what I was telling You that not the ages, but people started to be vulgar,  
when I told You that before the outbreak of the

Holocaust first the language and people's speech were becoming vulgar, also lies,  
remember, please, how I was telling You this, all of it only a few years ago,  
that all of this precedes

war, even if others looked at me like I was a crazy idiot,  
please remember how I was telling You that;  
but also to You when I didn't suspect yet that You would start swearing too,

which I almost did not survive, remember that I was saying all of this when  
nobody could have known or even suspected—unimaginable until then—  
that in a few years a war in Ukraine would really finally break out.

As it is written: by thoughts, words, deeds.  
Try, I beg You very much, to imagine that the excerpts and scraps of the epic film  
in the form of trains are not lit up during an eclipse by lights, but by the reflector

of the setting Sun shining through them and thus illuminating them,  
and even if the Holy Spirit blows these scraps around the earth surface as it wishes,  
not only our every deed but also the tiniest move and the most tranquil word,

a thought or only its suggestion, and inner stirring—  
they will never be lost in gas or in the smoke of the burning night or otherwise,  
but all of this will be sooner or later visibly and intensely projected

through us, illuminated in trains—  
truly all the way to heaven.

(written in 2014-15, published in magazine *Fraktál* 2020/4)

*Erik Markovič*

*Note:*

\*NKVD = from Russian (Narodnyj komissariat vnutrennich del), Soviet secret police agency, whose original goal was to root any potential opposition to Stalin by means of mass arrests, show trials, and executions. Forerunner of KGB.

# Palintropicity and the Concept of Postmodernism in the Current Slovak Literature (An Attempt at Another of the Theoretical Parts of the Past-Postmodern Manifesto)

2010 (extracts)

(...) Based on what I've seen, postmodernism is mostly disappearing from Slovak literature. It used to be influential and creative, but now it's running out of ideas. So, if we want to be innovative, we'll have to move beyond postmodernism.

(...) Most people are not aware of the situation, except for a few isolated cases. They don't have a clear negative or positive feeling towards it. I'm not talking about occasional criticism or texts based on postmodern principles. I'm talking about the lack of clear statements either supporting or opposing postmodernism. We can't fully accept or reject postmodernism. Ignoring recent history would be a mistake, but embracing it is unrealistic. Yet, we can try to understand postmodernism to some extent. We can talk about the good parts of postmodernism without accepting or rejecting it. We should approach postmodernism critically and differentiate between extreme positions. This should be the starting point for further discussion and understanding.

(...) Palintropicity offers a unique perspective on postmodern literature and its connection to postmodernity. It is an effort graded in several steps. The palintropic concept tries to explain postmodern writing in a theoretical manifesto. It aims to go beyond post-modern writing.

(...) When we say palintropic transcending postmodernism, we mean that we go beyond it. We also come from the postmodern era. This leaves behind something that needs more explanation. We don't completely reject all past postmodernism. Instead, we transform specific cultural traditions that we choose. Our goal is not to immediately stop postmodernity, but to make it better and move to a higher level. It's a slow process that only affects certain parts of postmodernism.

(...) Palintropicism is a way to achieve wholeness on a personal level. It involves creating poetry, music, and philosophy that connects the author's thoughts and emotions.

(...) This created space-time renews the world's faith. The proposed palintropics express it. Oculus Mundi is a dome that surrounds us. It is the world's temple with the sun as a lantern and its pupil. Oculus Mundi is also Oculus Dei, the eye of God that contains us all.

(...) This attempt will replace networks with postmodernity. We understand postmodernity as dispersed amorphous power. It is a structured retina being. The retina being is both an embodied idea and a schematic idea. It bends the ontological difference between being and being. If I shall answer the final questions, one places oneself on the flexible retina of the eye of God. This happens in a literary and ontological space. They call this light *Lichtung des Seins*, aletheia, unclosedness, which acts like a sun visor to the higher world.

*Erik Markovič*

### Summary

In his study, author at first tries to follow upon the concept of four key points in the development of Slovak literature, which was formulated by P. Zajac. According to the concept, the current situation in Slovak literature could be characterized as waiting for the fifth key point. The author tries to outline and argue that his proposed concept of so called palintropic philosophy could be one of the concepts that could contribute to the gradual formation of the fifth key point. It is an attempt to create a philosophically argued position of extra-postmodernistic and post-postmodernistic writing. The text also suggests how palintropic philosophy could relate to the Lyotardean, Foucaultean, and Deleuzean line of postmodernistic thinking about literature.

## les femmes fatales

women that spread sheets for men in coffins  
women born out of incest like divinity  
women in skin  
women tortured by other women in cold blood  
women swimming in the darkness of foamed salt  
women leeches with sensitivity for pain  
women bleeding from the scar in their lap  
women in men  
women morbidly desiring the touch of women  
women in white red and black  
women passionately faking orgasms  
women feeding dogs flesh from breasts  
women with trophies  
women with a plastic penis in a box under the bed  
women reviving the sense of craziness  
women a nightmare of the count de sternenhoch  
women putting a curse on their fathers  
women in pants  
women in bordellos with viper evil eyes  
women flexible as the limbs of an arrow  
women Amazonians  
women queens evoking passion in agony  
women worshipers of sleeping pills and abortions  
women obsessively grown together with horses  
women put to sleep by the fairy tales of psychiatrists  
women in posthumous masks  
women murdering sons shortly after the birth  
women that fornicate only with the dead

*Marián Milčák*



with a light feeling of shame

without portals and candles  
without saying goodbyes in the front room  
not guarded  
with a light feeling of shame  
the dead one is disappearing from our eyes

in the sterile hall of an autopsy room  
in awe he looks at the body  
after the expiration date on the bed of ice

he awaited an angel  
and a man in green entered  
a face mask on his mouth underneath  
a smile (sauna love-making  
with a nurse last-night basketball  
seven baskets beer)

in his soul a routine peace  
in his hands by now an unnecessary  
surgical precision

*Marián Milčák*

## the lord of the text

go in already  
the door is open

no need to knock  
no need to be afraid  
that it is too late

no need to explain  
anything

i rule here  
the death has no access  
to the text

after the revolt  
of the tropics after the coup of political figures  
history lost  
its power

similarly chaos

time and circumstance are overcome  
by only a minor patrol of verses  
on any borders  
of my world

*Marián Milčák*

## How to

How to accept the gift  
of decline and watch the grass  
at the same time, which repeats itself  
carelessly; how to buy the unchained joy back  
from the hands of a man who is walking away  
from himself; how to stand  
at the start line without trembling  
that is only the mirror of the mind  
welcoming nothingness, always suddenly  
present, itself curled in its own shivers  
that needs to be in the steady moment hugged, cuddled,  
wrapped in a warm blanket and then further  
I can ponder how

*Peter Milčák*

## 5 Times Perfection

The perfection of silence  
the perfection of flowers  
the perfection of breathing  
by a prayer-answered sentence

the perfection of light  
in the somber shadows of dusk  
when it joins the river of black  
in its words-on-paper flight

the perfection of a ball of wool  
that from our hands reels off  
and opens an abyss full  
of space named nothingness

*Erik Ondrejčka*

## 1. perfection (catching silence)

Silence is caught  
easiest at twilight  
when the day and night  
have an even fight

and trees point out  
with a silenced breath  
where that peaceful veil  
shall come down from  
filled with quietness  
from taciturn stars

and the forest stretches nets  
from the darkening air  
and immovably awaits  
the silence to land in the ear

and the connectedness  
of silence catch  
on the edges of moss  
and in primordial grasses

until someone somewhere  
from that silence  
releases its taste

A taste that is only fanciful  
and can never be heard  
in words

*Erik Ondrejčka*

## 2. the absolute (flower)

They separate  
coarseness from the fineness  
until the refinement in them  
is perfectly purest  
like the past  
from a future virtue  
in emerald tablet  
of Hermes Trismegistus

and in every curve  
and in all the creases  
they hide everlastingness  
of all the moments

also that the thorn is  
mostly spiky and thin  
also that temporality  
its petals cannot pin

and only ostentation  
compares to them  
such as when the grass  
wishes to reach the sun

but when the perfection  
truly mature is  
color, shape, and scent  
to the flower it gives

*Erik Ondrejička*

## From a Distance

Mommy, my mouth is hurting  
when I read your letter aloud.

I stand on a river bank  
and cannot wade through  
so I could taste  
your bread.

Long time ago did the festive chandeliers  
of chestnut trees wither,  
the only ones left here for me.

Mommy, sadness flows through my bones  
as if they were the ashes  
of linden twigs,  
that the wind carries away.

Mommy, here burn  
little lanterns with my blood  
in the black valleys of towns.

Mommy, I dreamt that  
the sun burst into primroses  
and flew towards me like the rain,  
when I returned to you.

I am stepping into the river barefooted...

*Anna Ondrejková*

## Lie interruptus

2/ house arrest

A flower from a man, / whom  
you don't love  
/, a woman, /  
thank-you comes later / First  
the master and then / the prophet-executioner /  
a feathered singer / Spanish bird / sings a swan song /  
hatha-  
titla / /  
Damn the whole world / a poisonous caterpillar  
already  
gathers in the throat / like a hairy  
word /  
A woman that doesn't love / / on the cross  
two gallows / silence  
bells toll the night / tear away  
from the dream / pinkish lids  
/ on sterile non-conscience / atom  
mushroom pickers whipping / Boy  
on the bed /  
kiss me,  
/ says the woman who doesn't love me

*Agda Bavi Pain*

## Oath

To spit out the soul: / into palms  
/ to clap / / to yourself  
you heard//nothing / you saw  
nothing / do not speak /  
/ but I will beat it  
out of myself

*Agda Bavi Pain*



## Untitled (and I love the tree with pure love)

and I love the tree with pure love  
I do not want anything from it  
it does not want anything from me  
a bird is flying between us  
between the whispering of the leaves  
and the silence of the mind  
we are joined only  
in the flight of a bird  
whispering in silence  
the wind agrees

*Daniel Pastirčák*

## Untitled (one eye looks out from its blindness)

one eye looks out from its blindness  
it stares: he is not there  
the second eye looks into its blindness  
it stares: he is there

God dances in that blindness  
he smiles from one eye to the other  
He sings  
I see myself with one eye  
with the other, I don't see myself

*Daniel Pastirčák*

## Untitled (just to be)

just to be  
not for nor against  
not to be a person  
only space  
through which you walk  
towards me through me  
in between me in me  
beloved enemy  
falling on you  
in a silent rain  
dropping from your lashes  
on the lips full of  
curses  
without hatred without affection  
warmly and without presence like the sun  
only to be present for you  
in the one who is  
and never comes close  
and never leaves

*Daniel Pastirčák*

## Theology of Ascension. Rúfus

The cell where he was a creator:  
a tonsure of light, a pulpit and a cross,  
nothing more

Pascha is in the mind, it's enough to transfer awareness  
from a smaller world into a bigger, one  
to be swallowed by the Existence

Totus Tuus  
He is all Yours

And in Him  
a girl with Down Syndrome  
gulps the light by spoonfuls  
at the highest level  
in excelsis

Lifting that little girl is enough  
and the flight of the lonely her to the lonely him  
ascends to the rupturing ceiling,  
opening an aperture

The end cannot be seen,  
Who's uplifting whom  
whether the father his daughter or the daughter her father

Pieta is in motion

*Dana Podracká*

## Untitled (The fog enveloped the sun and bright colors)

The fog enveloped the sun and bright colors,  
snow was falling—a bit too early.

I can be (only)  
your silent  
poem.

A happy exclamation point,  
a sad exclamation point,  
a gentle triple-colon;

with a sentimental beast behind the back.

*Stanislava Chrobáková Repar*

## Untitled (Frost)

Frost,  
hibernation.  
Norse on a horse

“My little soul is asking  
how is your little soul doing.”

Greet the forest and pet the snow,  
hug the playful landscape. Breathe on  
my heart, like I do on yours... I would like to  
watch your motion, the bending line of your body

on a sparkling snow on the hill.

And peek again into your life.

And dive with you to the bottom.

*Stanislava Chrobáková Repar*

## Eternal Life

There will be time when I won't comb the sand out of my hair  
on the road through liquid dunes.

I will become a permanent boat  
on the shore.

The light of your lamp  
swings on the waves.

/1972/

*Peter Repka*

# Running, Like Every Movement, Takes Away What We Had

1

Come, let's run.  
Let's enter the houses  
that will be burnt at night.

Bloody September  
in the heart.

We floated in the sky,  
children waved at us  
from a blue train:  
Hi, runners!

2

Now I go to run only  
when everybody sleeps.

Alone in myself  
and a day in a day.

The lonely of the world, unite!\*

Amen

*Peter Repka*

*Note:*

\*This sentence exemplifies Marx and Engel's Communist Manifesto and its motto: Workers of all countries, unite! Repka is using it in this poem to express the atmosphere of the 70s. Replacing "workers" with "lonely", he associates himself with the "Lonely Runners" (Osamelí běžci), a group of poets (Repka, Štrpka, Laučík) active in the 1960s through the 1980s and beyond.

## It Goes Anywhere

The planet of my eye flies through the moving universe  
and the rest of the body, formed around it,  
has a lot to do to follow its gravitation.

In the sand, the visible unceasing presence  
of improvising grains

Spreading anywhere,  
while it is possible to maintain the variable balance of the stream  
it carries forward!

Those who fainted won't stumble anymore from the grain to the  
stone, not even on the stilts of crosses.

Examples of summersaulting apples are of interest to many,

secretly spying  
their own fight for survival.

The best of them becomes a predator  
that by the claws of black seeds  
reaches for the center  
and still cannot quite grasp the age of giants.

So self-involved it cannot actually notice  
the growing stems of grass  
that help each other grow tall.

*Martin Solotruk*



## A View as If From the Gut

How long will my feeling of being lost  
last among the insides of the rockpile  
when the hammer, the hammer  
and here the heart so exactly interpret the opinions of the majority?

They need a point they would latch onto,  
even if it was a falling star  
that divides the horizon into the hidden and the obvious.

Many smiles then fight  
for their spot in the light.

Completely outside of myself a telephone rings, it inspects  
whether I am in the correct position,  
such as the one that I deserve for a few moments of concentration,

soon without the cord...  
...the clouds pass, each one with a different joy from colors,  
each one with its own human, each unique at the meeting.

The human experiences friendship this way  
already in the belly.  
The time of catching colors starts at the first moment  
and you too are back in the grass,  
rolling around

and sometimes, without the feeling of guilt,  
you wail with your feet over something unforgivable.

*Martin Solotruk*

## Where Is That Door?

We are (perhaps) that thing which is  
inside and outside at the same time. To the extent  
when inside and outside (for us)  
ceases to be (divided).

To be outside does not mean  
not to be inside. Outside voices are not  
only inside. We are not only  
inside (what we are). And we continue to  
(always) clash with divided worlds  
with each exhale and inhale.

The saints without baptism (also without  
holiness)? Initiated only through  
their own incessant fumbling: where  
is it? Where is (that) door that  
only has one side?

(Where is that door that  
eliminates all the other) doors? (Where is)  
that door, in which the light  
hesitates? Where (is that  
door), in which the laughter  
itself also laughs?

*Ivan Štrpka*

## Europe: a Slow Headache

The sun is setting and leaves  
us with empty hands here.

On the other bank, the last reflection  
of armor that gallops through the shadows  
incessantly, always following the light,  
is descending on rustling leaves.

The pounding is strong. The forms are empty.  
And we are passing a child: a glittering  
ball is falling in the water. Dizzily  
sinking to the bottom. And never ends its fall.

*Ivan Štrpka*

## The Fly is Sleeping

*“These are the days when no one should rely on his competence.*

*Strength lies in improvisation. All the decisive blows are struck left-handed”* says W.B. (1892-1940)\*

on the eve of inevitable defeat of dark forces.

Breeze does not circle. The fly is sleeping

like a log. Rosenkranz and Guldenstern

are dead for ages. Chipped-off bases

of Dorian columns point back to unity.

I roam in the night house as a live ghost

of my father (1914-1997). Moonlight

enters through the curtainless window

onto the empty bed of my parents

with full force. A voice somewhere

inside my sleep without sleep also without dream

is still quietly ranting: grasp those unconscious

movements, take aim without aiming, just so

cut down tall fragile stalks without seed that

lead the spring growth. You will not fall asleep

before the dawn nor during the day. You will not

extinguish lime-wash in an empty palm.

You will not adhere. You will not whiten. You will not succumb to blindness

(you will not extinguish in the middle of an enormous

unextinct eye that follows brightness).

Spring is a blow: the fly is sleeping, world is giving birth,

the grave is bottomless and empty. Apple trees

give light and continue. Now

is the morning of the whole question.

*Ivan Štrpka*

*Note:*

\*Walter Benjamin's quote

## Manual Work Good Feeling

actually I have a good feeling when something gets done  
the grass gets mowed the vineyard gets pruned the property and  
poultry are tended to  
the lunch gets cooked coffee made and then mineral water is a must  
the house the office or solar dust get vacuum-cleaned  
Pichler's stamped impressions get framed  
the first and second pages get printed  
a mushroom is picked and a basket gets new wildflowers  
all the computers are connected etc.  
but the fact is that I hate manual work  
(doesn't matter that it is accompanied by happy music like in the  
movies)  
so I am now drinking, spinning a crystal glass  
and I try to organize everything sitting on a bar stool  
occasionally I think of sex and the direction of the world  
of manual work and four proto robots  
I write poems similar to this one  
or the next one about the lives of tattooed dragons  
or I am simply writing  
and have a good feeling

a good feeling

perhaps

*Peter Šulej*

## Enclosed

enclosed in a cycle  
in spaces in buildings in cultures  
in languages in blind windows  
(of previously industrial facilities)  
I am thinking about how to get out  
it seems it won't be as easy  
as opening a plastic bottle with sparkling mineral water  
even if here too sometimes there is the danger of gushing out  
of the loss of reason during violence and speed

*Peter Šulej*

## Contributors

**Erin Aube** is a recovering attorney turned high school English teacher. Originally from a valley in Tennessee, she lives in Atlanta, Georgia, with her husband, Charlie and daughters Zelda and Marigold. Her work has appeared in *Poetry South*, *The Emerson Review*, *Door is a Jar*, and *UCity Review*.

Born and raised in Flowery Branch, Georgia, **Brittany J. Barron** graduated with her MFA in Creative Writing at Georgia College. Her poetry has appeared in *Plainsongs*, *The Examined Life Journal*, and *Poetry South*. Currently, she teaches at Florida State University, where she is a Ph.D. candidate in Rhetoric and Composition.

**R. Steve Benson** studied poetry with the late poet James Hearst at the University of Northern Iowa. Steve taught Art in Iowa schools for 33 years. His 46 ink drawings, illustrating phrases from poems by Dylan Thomas, were exhibited in Iowa City's Public Library. He's married with three children and two grandkids.

**Ace Boggess** is author of six books of poetry, most recently *Escape Envy*. His writing has appeared in *Indiana Review*, *Michigan Quarterly Review*, *Notre Dame Review*, *Harvard Review*, and other journals. An ex-con, he lives in Charleston, West Virginia, where he writes and tries to stay out of trouble.

**Michele Bombardier** is the 2024 winner of the NORward Prize. Her collection, *What We Do*, was a Washington Book Award finalist. Her work has appeared in *JAMA*, *Bellevue Literary Review*, *Parabola*, and others. She's a Hedgebrook and Tyrone Guthrie Centre fellow and the poet laureate of her town.

**Grey Brown** has three collections of poetry, *Staying In*, *When They Tell Me*, and *What It Takes*. She holds a Masters in English from NYU. Her poems have been published in *Greensboro Review*, *Blue Pitcher*, *Kakalak*, *Literary Trails of Eastern NC*, *JAMA* and others.

**William Brown** is a PhD student in poetry at Texas Tech University. His poems have appeared in journals such as *Copper Nickel*, *Crab Creek Review*, *The Hopkins Review*, *Tupelo Quarterly*, and elsewhere.

Intellectual metaphors with sensuous perception, free verse and sonnets, wide-ranging cyclical compositions, and delicate refined poetic miniatures—all these are the lasting features of **Jan Buzásky's** (b. 1935) poetry. Fascinated by ancient cultures in which he has found an aesthetic ideal: a balance of mind and feeling, a "sensitive intelligence and an intelligent feeling." Jan is a devoted poet.

**Peter Neil Carroll** recently published *This Land, These People: The 50 States* (2022), which won the Prize Americana; and *Talking to Strangers: poetry of everyday life* (2022). His poems have appeared in many literary journals. He is currently Poetry Moderator for Portside.org and lives in northern California.

**Ann Chinnis** lives in Virginia, is an Emergency Physician, and studies under Philip Schultz at the Writers Studio in New York. Her first chapbook, *Poppet, My Poppet*, is forthcoming from Finishing Line Press. She is published in *Speckled Trout Review*, *Sky Island Journal*, *Nostos*, and *Sheila-NA-Gig*, among others.

**Chloe Cook** holds a BA in English from Northern Kentucky University. Her writing is featured in *The Journal*, *Bayou Magazine*, *Arkansas Review*, and *Delta Poetry Review*, among others. She is currently an MFA student at the University of Florida.

**Veronika Dianišková** (b. 1986) studied dramaturgy and works as a teacher of theater and literature. Her original work is presented at events, in magazines, and through broadcasting on the radio. She likes to write when she is on the move, physically distant from her known environment, which enables her to tap into her inner resources and describe them as processes by using verbal impressionism and psychoanalytical language.

**Holly Day's** poetry has recently appeared in *Slipstream*, *Penumbra*, and *Maintenant*. She is the co-author of the books, *Music Theory for Dummies* and *Music Composition for Dummies* and currently works as an instructor at The Richard Hugo Center in Seattle and at the Loft Literary Center in Minneapolis.

**Deborah H. Doolittle** has lived in lots of different places, but now calls North Carolina home. Her recent publications include *Floribunda* and *Bogbound*. Some of her poems have appeared or will soon appear in *Comstock Review*, *Ibbetson Street*, *Iconoclast*, *Pinyon Review*, *Rattle, Slant*, and *The Stand*. An avid bird-watcher, she shares a home with her husband, six housecats, and a backyard full of birds.

Prose, poetry, essays, and translations produced by writer and philosopher **Etela Farkašová** (b. 1943) concentrate on the themes of women, family, intergenerational problems, ecology. Writing for Etela is about self-reflection, connection to the world, and a therapy. She is a member of SC PEN Club and established organizations for gender studies and women philosophers, among others.

**Mária Ferenčuhová** (b. 1975) studied film screenwriting and dramaturgy and contributes to multiple magazines in Slovakia and lectures at a university. As a poet, she is an exciting author who has been translated into many languages. Poetry for her is an experience on the edge and the poems have sources in her diaries. She features images as indexes of the world in her fragmented, imaginary, and beautiful poems, complemented by emotional discourse.

**J.V. Foerster** is a Pushcart nominated poet. Her book *Holy Mess of a Girl* also a mini chapbook *Truth or Consequences* were released in August 2023. She is published in many literary magazines. She has work in multiple anthologies. She lives in Ashland, Oregon.

**Daniel Galef's** first book, *Imaginary Sonnets*, is a collection of persona poems all from the point of view of different historical figures and objects, including Nossis the Epizephyrian, Christopher Smart's cat, and a breakfast taco. His flash fiction on J. Robert Oppenheimer was published in the *Best Small Fictions* anthology.

**Ján Gavura** (b. 1975) teaches versology, Slovak and world literatures of the 20th century in Prešov. His poetry is a cultivated and intimate expression of the search for cultural and esthetic values that last over the time. Based on mythological motives, the lyrical subjects in his poems are hunting but also yielding, being sensitive to sound and image.

A conglomerate of multiple authors, **Generator X** hides 4 authors: Maczovszky, Šulej, Habaj, and Hablák. It is also a name for an experimental poetry project, with its part featured in this presentation of Slovak poets.

**Oľga Glušťiková** (b. 1987) is a media specialist, poet and publicist, comes from Orava region in northern Slovakia. She studied journalism, wrote for the economic daily newspaper, and currently works for big construction and industrial companies. Her poems were translated into many languages and published in various media around the world. She is fascinated by femininity, nature, and symbiosis between humanity and landscape, in which the existence of one organism is conditioned by the other.

A wide selection of new poems by **Jeff Graham** has come out in the anthology: *Crystal Fire* (Moonrise Press 2022). Publications for 2023/24 include current and forthcoming appearances in journals such as *Iconoclast*, *California Quarterly*, *Haight Ashbury Literary Journal*, *Blue Unicorn*, and *The San Francisco Haiku Anthology: The Next 30 Years*.

**Erik Jakub Groch** (b. 1957) was a member of literary, art, and intellectual underground group Nace in Košice in the 1980s, publishing samizdat literature. Other than a poet, he is a publisher, editor, and a graphic designer. His sentences or verses float to the surface from his subconsciousness and memory. A poet-mystic, he connects nature with the need for human understanding and love, coming out of theo-physical tradition.

Employed at the Institute of Slovak Literature as a literary researcher, **Michal Habaj** (b. 1974) was awarded international prizes for poetry. In his own words, the real poetry has no choices; it is inevitable, like the roll of dice where the poet's task is to correctly interpret the numbers of destiny. Life experience and reconstruction of poetry with traditional and post-modernist elements is present in his work.

**Andrej Hablák** (b. 1977) is a teacher of Slovak language and literature philosophy, redactor, editor, literary critic. He worked as an editor in literary magazine *Romboid* and literary review *Pulz* in daily newspaper *Pravda*. He published 5 books of poetry: *Váhavo postavám nepripravený odísť*, 1995, *Jazyk*, 1999, *Ti horad*, 2002, *Leknin*, 2009, *Bahnokrvny*, 2019. In the present, he lives in Orava, northern Slovakia.

**Bex Hainsworth** is a poet and teacher based in Leicester, UK. Her work has appeared in *The McNeese Review*, *Honest Ulsterman*, *New Welsh Review*, *trampset*, and *bath magg*. *Walrussey*, her debut pamphlet of ecopoetry, is published by Black Cat Poetry Press.



**Mare Heron Hake** (she/her) lives in the Salish Sea region of Washington State. Until recently, Hake was poetry editor, co-owner, and co-publisher for *Tahoma Literary Review* and her work has recently appeared as a finalist for Terrain.Org's poetry contest. She has two books available in the usual places.

**Mila Haugová** (b. 1942) is a great dame of Slovak poetry with many literary prizes, and her poems have been translated into multiple languages. She is one of the most inspirational and prolific authors, who also translates and recreates the works of other famous poets. Her poems connect to the world of humans, animals, and plants, in search of humanity and caring for all living beings.

A popular writer of poems, children's literature, editor, publisher, **Daniel Hevier** (b. 1955) is also a pioneer of e-learning and courses of creative writing in Slovakia. He feels at home in various artforms—when he does not feel successful at writing, he paints or sings. As a universal creative personality, he is also very original and has a sense of humor that is appreciated by his readership.

**Joanne Holdridge** lives in Devens, MA, but spends as much of the winter as she can on skis in northern NH. She has published poems in a wide variety of publications, including a previous issue of *Atlanta Review*, and been nominated four times for a Pushcart Prize.

**Paul Hechko** is a British American poet and occasional songwriter who lives with his partner in Lambertville, NJ. His work has appeared in many journals, including *The Bennington Review*, *The Night Heron Barks*, *deLuge*, *Stirring*, and *The Inflectionist Review*. He has also published several chapbooks.

**Donald Illich** has published poetry recently in *The MacGuffin*, *Slant*, and *Okay Donkey*. His book is *Chance Bodies* (The Word Works, 2018). He lives and works in Maryland.

**Tess K. Jacobs** is a writer, folklorist, and visual artist. She holds a PhD in English with an emphasis in folklore studies from Ohio State University. Her illustration work has appeared in *She Votes* (2020). She currently resides in Munich, Germany.

**Siobhan Jean-Charles** (she/her) graduated with her Bachelor's from Salisbury University and is an MFA candidate at Arizona State University. Her work has appeared in *Tinderbox Poetry Journal*, *The Tusculum Review*, *Furrow*, *Broadkill Review*, *The Shore*, where she is the blog editor, and elsewhere.

**P M F Johnson** has won The Brady Senryu Award from The Haiku Society of America, been short-listed for The Touchstone Award, and won Honorable Mention in *The Atlanta Review* International Poetry Contest. His poems appear in *Evansville Review*, *Nimrod*, *North American Review*, *Poetry East*, *Threepenny Review*, and elsewhere.

**Rudolf Jurolek** (b. 1956) studied mechanical engineering, but worked as a teacher, journalist, and publisher. He likes to be succinct in his poetry, motivated to express his reconstruction of the world in intimate, introspective wandering. Nature is an exemplar of simplicity, which he follows in his poems. Rudolf previously lived in the Orava region in northern Slovakia and currently lives and works in Trnava.

**Juraj Kuniak** (b. 1955) is a poet, writer, translator, former constructor, mountaineer and businessman, founder, and editor of Skalná ruža (Rock Rose) publishing. He has published more than 20 books of various genres, but his main domain remains poetry. The author of ten poetry collections is perceived as a poet of the country and global problems. He translates from American poetry (Whitman, Hass) and lives in central Slovakia in the mountain village of Kordíky.

**Sophie Liebergall** writes from Philadelphia, PA, where she is pursuing an MD-PhD degree in Neuroscience and counting out haikus as she jogs along the river trail. Her poetry and prose have been published in *Third Wednesday Magazine* and *apenndx*.

**Jessica Lim** is a Pākehā, Chinese-Indonesian poet, curator and archivist. She holds a Masters in Sociology (First). Her poetry can be found in the anthology *A Clear Dawn* (AUP, 2021) and the literary journals *Starling*, *Sweet Mammalian*, *Takahē*, and *Dreamcatcher*. She currently lives in London. @jessicalim.tv

**Ján Litvák** (b. 1965) is a poet, editor, and a translator, a member of literary group Barbaric Generation. He translated, among others, works of Arthur Rimbaud, William Blake, and Julien Barnes. Since 2013, he is the editor-in-chief of the monthly magazine *At Home in the Garden*. He was born and lives in Bratislava and values authors who are able to express the essentials without a need to compete.

**Eva Luka** (b. 1965) is a highly sought translator and interpreter from Japanese. Her poetry is magical, emanating nostalgic cruelty, captivating images, playing with gender roles and words in masterful texts. Dramatic and emotional language of the poems reflect her deep personal experience with life and death to the point when readers do not have the words to answer this mesmerizing creativity.

**Jenny Maaketo** (she/her) is a neurodivergent writer, psychiatric nurse, former professional actor, and poetry candidate in the MFA Creative Writing program at the University of Mississippi. She was named a semifinalist in the 2023 Crab Creek Review Poetry Prize, a finalist in the 2023 Michelle Boisseau Poetry Prize, and runner-up in the 2022 Patty Friedmann Writing Competition.

**Peter Macsovszky's** (b. 1966) jobs included being a teacher, editor, copywriter, caretaker. He thinks that writing is an irresponsible activity, which releases the gin out of the bottle, while writers are gamblers, untrustworthy jugglers and cooks. As a bilingual person, he appreciates literature that amuses people and moves them.

**Karen McPherson** is the author of *Skein of Light* (Airlie Press) and the chapbook *Sketching Elise*. Her work has appeared in literary journals including *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Cincinnati Review*, *Potomac Review*, and *Chicago Quarterly Review*. Between 2013 and 2017, she worked as an editor in the Airlie Press poetry collective.

Co-Editor **Miriam Margala** (PhD), a multilingual speaker, dives into all things language. Miriam is fascinated with how people communicate and enjoys immersing into projects that further communication between people, as an educator, a translator, a writer, and an editor. As a literary agent associate, she relishes her role in promoting authors. This special issue, which Miriam edited on request, is a prime example of the type of projects in which she believes.

**Erik Markovič** (b. 1972) often doesn't know if he is more of a poet, philosopher or a songwriter/musician, so he alternately combines it all into one body of work. Apart from writing poetry, he defined philosophical and aesthetic terms in his post-postmodern manifest, which he had written during the times of peaking postmodernism (2000-2010). His related theory of palintropicity is encompassed in 3 unpublished books. He worked at the Slovak Academy of Sciences in the Philosophical and Encyclopedic Institute. In 2018-2021, he was the Chairman of the Association of Writers' Organizations of Slovakia (AOSS).

**Marián Milčák** (b. 1960) studied Slovak and German languages and worked as a teacher and a lecturer. His poetic expression is aimed at provoking the reader's thoughts while offering an artistic experience. Memento mori and paraphrases of biblical texts are present in his poetry. He currently teaches at a university in Košice and lives in Levoča.

A graduate in Slovak and English languages, **Peter Milčák** (b. 1966) taught at the secondary level of education before he established his own renowned publishing house Modrý Peter in Levoča, specializing in promoting contemporary Slovak poetry as well as poetry in translation. His own poetics are non-sentimental and philosophical, beautified by metaphors and faith in the good.

**Arianna Miller** is a poet and educator from Long Island, New York. Her poetry often intermingles nature, generational inheritance, and women's freedom. She received her MFA in poetry from the University of South Carolina and attended the Bread Loaf Writer's Conference as a Poetry Contributor in 2022. Her work has been featured in *Anti-Heroin Chic*, *Gandy Dancer*, and *The Notre Dame Review*.

**Florence Murry** is the author of *Last Run Before Sunset*. Her poems have appeared in *Slipstream Press*, *Blue Earth Review*, *Wild Roof Journal*, *Off the Coast*, *Bluestem Magazine*, *Westchester Review*, *Cumberland River Review*, and others. Florence lives in Southern California with her husband and two cats. Her website is <https://florencemurrywriter.com>.

**Erik Ondrejčka** (b. 1964) attempts to be communicative in his poetry, while striving for aesthetic and ethical quality. He combines a sense of time-transcendence with a contemporary vision of the world. By mastering classical poetic techniques, he seeks to rehabilitate traditional instruments of the poetic art such as rhyme and the music of verse.

A librarian working in Liptovský Mikuláš, **Anna Ondrejková** (b. 1954) has been writing since the 1970s. A poetry for her is not only a state of the world, but also a way of perception. She writes poems to express pain, beauty, and everything in between, while hoping that the human heart can find its relationship to poetry in any era.

Born on Oahu, **Derek N. Otsuji** is the author of *The Kitchen of Small Hours* (SIU Press, 2021), featured in *Honolulu Magazine's* "Essential Hawaii Books You Should Read." He is a 2019 Tennessee Williams Scholar and a 2023 Longleaf Fellow in Poetry. Recent work has appeared in *32 Poems*, *Southern Review*, and *The Threepenny Review*.

**James Owens's** newest book is *Family Portrait with Scythe* (Bottom Dog Press, 2020). His poems and translations appear in literary journals, including *Channel*, *Arc*, *Dalhousie Review*, *Queen's Quarterly*, and *The Honest Ulsterman*. He earned an MFA at the University of Alabama and lives in a small town in northern Ontario.

**Agda Bavi Pain** (b. 1966) is a Slovakian author from Košice. He is a poet, writer, screenwriter, and a frontman of the banned music band Liter Gena. Under several artistic names and brands, Pain has published works in the press, radio, and television in Slovakia as well as abroad. Apart from literature, he also writes for television, film and theatre and has created various TV series, shows and advertising campaigns. Agda Bavi Pain is the co-author of the *European Constitution in Verse* (Brussels, 2009) and he was chosen as one of the seven best Slovak poets after 1989 in a survey in the magazine *Revue of Contemporary Culture*.

As a preacher, **Daniel Pastirčák** (b. 1959) uncovers his spiritual world view in his poems and paintings. A charismatic person and a theological essayist known to a wider public, he considers words of others a building material of his soul and creativity. His personal philosophy is oriented towards high spiritual and esthetic values that are markers of his fine works of art.

**Christian Paulisich** recently graduated from Johns Hopkins University and reads for *The Hopkins Review*. A Bay Area-native, he currently lives in Baltimore, Maryland. He is a Pushcart Prize nominee whose work can be found in *Literary Matters*, *Denver Quarterly*, *New American Writing*, *Little Patuxent Review*, and others.

**Seth Peterson** is an emerging writer and physical therapist in Tucson, Arizona. His writing is published or forthcoming in *Bellevue Literary Review*, *Pirene's Fountain*, *Santa Fe Literary Review*, and elsewhere. He was a finalist for the 2023 John & Eileen Allman Prize for Poetry and teaches with The Movement Brainery.

Educated as a psychologist, **Dana Podracká** (b. 1954) was employed at the Psychological Institute and as an editor for literary magazines. An important figure in the poetry world, reflecting the depths of women's feelings to the outside world, Dana works at the Slovak Literary Center. Her poetry is full of original images often enhanced by pagan or Christian symbols and historical references. In her words, poetry is a never-ending rite of passage.

**Donna Pucciani**, a Chicago-based writer, has published poetry in *Shi Chao Poetry*, *Poetry Salzburg*, *Journal of the American Medical Association*, *The Christian Century*, *ParisLitUp*, *Gradya*, and *Atlanta Review*. Her seventh and latest book of poetry is *Edges*.

**Justin Pulice** is a poet and graduate of the BA Honours English and Creative Writing program at Concordia University. Recently, he has completed his first book of poems, a couple of which will soon appear in *The Antigonish Review* and *Blue Unicorn*. He lives in Montreal with his cat, Kira.

With a doctorate from literary science, **Stanislava Chrobáková Repar** (b. 1960) worked as an editor for *Romboid* and was a founding member of the Slovak PEN Center. In her research, she examines Slovak poetry of the 20th century and literary hermeneutics. She lives in Slovenia and is works for the Peace Institute in Ljubljana, supporting cultural and literary exchange among central European countries.

An editor and a reporter for the magazine *Mladá Tvorba*, **Peter Repka** (b. 1944) moved to Germany in 1974, and he feels like a domesticated foreigner there and in Slovakia. He is a member of the group of poets *Lonely Runners*, together with Štrpka and Laučík. In his opinion, poems are not written, but discovered in patient exploration.

**Kathy Shorr** has lived near the tip of Cape Cod for many years. Poems have appeared in *Prairie Schooner*, *Quarterly West*, *Passager*, *One*, *The Nebraska Review*, and other journals, and is forthcoming in the *Loch Raven Review*, and has been nominated for Best of the Net.

**Caroline N. Simpson's** chapbook, *Choose Your Own Adventures and Other Poems*, was published by Finishing Line Press in 2018. In 2020, Delaware Division of Arts awarded Caroline an Established Artist Fellowship in Poetry, and she has been nominated several times for a Pushcart Prize in both poetry and nonfiction.  
carolinensimpson.com

**Jen Siraganian** is an Armenian-American writer, educator, and the former Poet Laureate of Los Gatos, California. She has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize and awarded a Lucas Arts Fellowship. Her poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in *Best New Poets*, *AGNI*, *Prairie Schooner*, and other journals and anthologies.  
jensiraganian.com.

**Martin Solotruk** (b. 1970) has a Ph.D. on American Poetry from the Comenius University, Bratislava, where he now teaches. In his poems, he combines his socialist youth with the vividness of his grandparents' vineyards and a strong sense of the Slavonic Byzantine heritage. He considers the process of writing to be more important than the end product.

**Ivan Štrpka** (b. 1944) studied Slovak and Spanish languages at the Philosophical Faculty at the Comenius University. An author, whose poetry and prose were not allowed to be published in the 1970s, knows that he exists when he writes. He was the editor in chief for the literary magazine *Romboid* in the years 1999-2010.

Writing prose and poetry, **Peter Šulej** (b. 1967) established a publishing house *Drewo a Srd* and participated in many literary conferences. For him, poetry expands unclear boundaries by searching for answers. He cannot answer all the questions, but they are sometimes miraculously solved by the readers.

**Marilynn Tallal**, New York, NY, taught writing for more than forty years from nursery school to college to nursing homes, even a local jail. She won an NEA Creative Writing Fellowship and the Stella Earhart Memorial Award from the University of Houston where she earned the Ph.D. Writing credits include *Poetry*, *The New Republic*, *Paris Review*, *Rattle*, others, and two chapbooks from Presa Press.

**Clifford Thompson** is the author of five books and the recipient of a Whiting Writers' Award for nonfiction. His essays have appeared in publications including *The Best American Essays 2018*. His poems have been published in *The Georgia Review*, *Clockhouse*, *Auburn Avenue*, *COG magazine*, and *Subnivean*.

**Editor Nina Varon**, who grew up in Bratislava, lives in Rochester, NY, and works as a language teacher (MSEd) and translator. Spending time with inspiring people and in nature is important to her energy renewal. Seeker of beauty in everyday life, she finds time to paint, sing, and write poems, staying active in like-minded organizations.

**Marie Gray Wise's** chapbook *Anna and Her Daughters* will be published in 2024 by Finishing Line Press, and she has been nominated by *Naugatuck River Review* for the Best New Poets 2023 anthology. Her work can be found in *Main Street Rag*, *I-70 Review*, *Paterson Literary Review*, and at [MarieGrayWise.com](http://MarieGrayWise.com).



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