

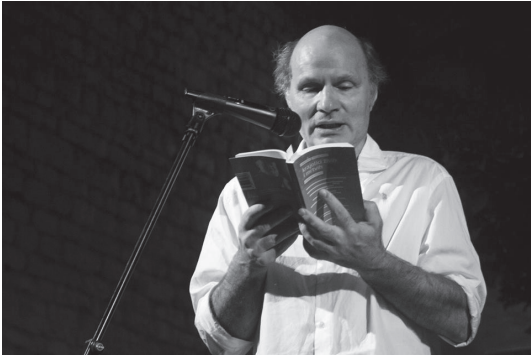
## Memory scars



Vojo Šindolić

**Memory scars**

(Selected poems)



## Old Hookers

*For Lawrence Ferlinghetti*

Look at them –  
their flaccid stomachs  
and sagging stockings,  
their worn-out démodé dresses –  
still standing at street  
corners of the old part of the town  
with nothing else to do.  
Their eyes of banished saints  
saw the blood stains  
on the beds of Benito's soldiers.  
Back then they were young and loved and  
all of them in love with Mussolini.  
They also saw the partisans  
riding tanks festooned with victors' flowers  
and the Western allies  
eager to rest and party.  
And now they talk about the times past

jealously eyeing  
the new young girls  
in mini-skirts and white boots  
– their young sweethearts killed in the war  
while the aging pimps play cards  
at nearby bars.  
Half-drunk, their cheeks rouged  
dogs and cats  
their only company  
in the solitary hours of the night  
while life takes place  
somewhere else – not their life tough.  
Their hearts have stopped bleeding  
for grown-up bastards  
because their wombs  
bleed no more,  
yet they still put lipstick on their lips.  
Toothless, they heckle at foreign passers-by  
as they stand leaning against  
the crumbling façades of the old houses  
in which they spent their whole lives.

The lights in the rooms are turned off  
the windows open  
to soak in the night air  
and soon they'll lie down in their beds  
never to get up again.

*Trieste, July 20, 1987*

## The Red World

I hear them on all radio and TV programs  
talking about the red world  
and I miss it – not theirs but mine –  
the red Dalmatian wine and the red Irish beer I  
drank with Italian  
    sailors,  
the red lipstick smeared on the coffee cup with  
its golden edge flaking,  
the red lipstick of a woman's kiss pressed into my  
bathroom mirror instead of saying goodbye,  
the red panties of a hooker I saw under the table  
in some old Danish porno  
    magazine in the early 1970s,  
the red Agro-Commerce commercial – never  
again such ceremonious and cheerful May 1



parades in Velika Kladuša,  
the red cards to the football players whose jerseys  
are red with their opponents' blood,  
the red hue of currants, raspberries, and cherries  
I munch with pleasure,  
the red flesh of the tuna, ah and  
the red flesh of gentle inner cheeks that open up  
to my curiosity,  
the bright  
red nail polish I notice only after they remove  
their black fishnet  
stockings,  
the red tomato juice stains on my white shirt of  
tie-wearing conformism,  
the natural  
red female hairs – both up and down there,  
the red colored hydrants on the New York streets  
of fear,  
the red skies in the fire of the sunset on the sea  
horizon,

the red tiles on ancient roofs of the old  
Dubrovnik,  
the red lanterns in the ports of crotch loneliness  
while the Soviet stern keeps company  
to the American prow,  
the red Adriatic starfish saved from the oil death  
in the pools of aquarium, the small  
red rooster of my morning stir,  
the red-and-white labels of the Smirnoff vodka,  
the red-and-white labels of the Campbell's soup,  
the red-and-white labels of the united Winston  
and Marlboro tobacco,  
the red checkbooks and foreign currency per  
diems,  
the red flag of the international brotherhood and  
unity finally exhibited in  
the Museum of the Reached Goals of a Better  
Tomorrow,  
the red plastic cucumber in the hand of the  
Khmer Rouge as the only appropriate hail to  
war industry,

the red carnation on my desk as I compose  
awareness statement

for May 1:

we'll have plenty of time to rest when we die.

*Dubrovnik, May 1, 1988*

## Neighborhood

Every evening  
windows opened by the summer  
release the sounds of TV channels  
as the frenzied dance of cathode shadows  
illuminates the windows  
of the apartments and buildings in my Trieste  
neighborhood.

The sounds of bad news and  
the politicians' false promises in the daily news,  
the whispers, groans and wet kisses of soap opera  
tragicomedies,  
the wrong and flawed weather forecasts,  
the screams and howls of horror movies.

Writing all this down  
I think –  
isn't it enough

what they,  
my neighbors,  
have to go through  
every single day,  
isn't it enough  
that they toiled all day long at work  
or searched for a new job  
or were lied to,  
that they were made cuckolds,  
that their wives cheated on them with train  
conductors, plumbers,  
butchers, taxi drivers, journalists,  
that their husbands cheated on them with office  
clerks,  
secretaries, shop assistants, nurses,  
that they devise unnatural deaths for each other?

Don't they,  
coming home in the evening  
have anything better to do but  
to turn on the TV

and listen to  
bad news  
false promises  
the psychopath's hysterical laughter  
screams and cries of the tortured  
and to watch  
death and murder  
by cleavers, knives, electric chainsaws...  
Because what they are watching  
every evening  
is but  
a reflection of their own self:  
the truth is  
their repulsive sore point  
and they are disgusted by it  
and afraid of it  
as much as of their own death.

People are strange creatures:  
always angry  
arguing and fighting

over trivialities  
but they hardly notice  
something as important  
as killing time  
let alone  
understand it...

I raise a can of cold beer  
and say cheers to Hank<sup>\*</sup>  
sit down on the couch  
in front of the TV set  
and watch myself in it  
without turning it on.

*August 10, 1997*

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<sup>\*</sup> Charles Bukowski (1920 – 1944) who always signed as Hank in his letters to the author of these poems and to many other friends.

## An Elegy for Allen Ginsberg

*Day after day the dull material world hangs on the  
breath –*

the silenced breath of the jaguar caged by the  
bars of the zoo evaporates into the wet  
night air of San Francisco  
the thick breath of the spring mist envelops the  
belltowers and chimneys in the fields just  
outside Venice  
the insistent breath of acid rain murmurs the  
deadly lullaby for European forests  
the unpleasant breath from the open mouth of a  
petty criminal who sleeps in the Milan  
prison cell, dreaming of the perfumed  
breath of a street hooker  
the unprocessed breath of the geological past  
spills from the tanker polluting the seas  
and the shores of Alaska and Britain



the indestructible plastic breath of Coca-Cola  
and the carcinogenic breath of Marlboro  
and Winston red kingdom of the  
Industry of Death

the stale breath of the New York subway  
ventilation seeping through the grate and  
blowing up the skirts of women passing  
by

the sleeping breath of tired passengers steaming  
up the windows of the second-class  
carriage on the Moscow-Venice line

the breath of every metropolis more and more  
the death breath of the turbo civilization

the addicted breath of an addict nervously  
snorting up the white lines of the  
Organized Crime

the radioactive breath of communism and the  
radioactive breath of capitalism – united  
by the atomic bomb of Insanity

the hissing breath of the cat startled by the dog  
and

the cold breath of blind faith in the marble shade  
of the church on a summer afternoon  
the weak breath of the sick person afraid of dying  
coiling the flame of the prayer candle  
the frothing breath gushing out of geysers and  
gas fields  
the foul breath of countless cars rising from  
exhausts into the air mixing with the  
singing breath of the birds in the scrubby  
tops of city trees  
the tuberculosed breath of coal dust in the  
miners' lungs and  
the stinking breath of nicotine fumes in the  
darkness of disco clubs of estrangement  
the unnatural breath of fruits and vegetables at  
evergreen glasshouses of profit  
the dusty breath of the past depositing in the  
attics and basements of ancient buildings  
of the monetary Empire  
the moist breath of aroused sexes  
and the fast breath of the voyeur hiding in the

darkness and watching other people  
panting  
the electronic breath of the media spreading  
their global policy “the whole world a  
global village”  
the cold breath of bureaucracy yawning and  
sighing at the counters of administrative  
relentlessness filling the waiting rooms  
around the world  
the hot breath of lead rows and the milky breath  
of the typesetters has been replaced by the  
impersonal cold breath of IBM and  
Macintosh machines  
the long breath of Walt Whitman has merged  
with the long breath of Guillaume  
Apollinaire and the long breath of  
Vicente Huidobro has merged with the  
long breath of Blaise Cendrars and the  
long breath of William Carlos Williams  
has merged with the long breath of Allen  
Ginsberg

now, together with your paranoid, tragic mother,  
    a Russian émigré and a communist,  
and your father, a poet  
together with Jack and Neal  
your breath in every drop of rain  
your breath in every gust of wind  
    filling our eyes with specks of sand  
and the eyes red from  
tears  
fumes  
smog  
fetid sulfur  
exhaust pipes, chimneys  
sewage drains  
pesticides  
herbicides  
insecticides  
suicides

your life's dread  
and dusty flesh  
has outlived your long poetic breath

*April 5-7, 1998*  
*On the first anniversary of*  
*Allen Ginsberg's death*

## In-Between

It's brave to be the spume  
and sing about the space.  
Billions of bubbles  
converging and doubling  
sing about the *inside* and *out*.  
That  
suppleness of membranes  
that's neither inside  
nor out,  
the ever-changing sizes,  
those  
fragmentations and formations,  
those  
round redundances of bareness  
whose name is  
immediate victory and defeat.

Those  
countless  
colorless eyes  
that gaze just the same  
inside and out  
that glisten just the same  
in the light and  
in the dark...

Poetry is the language of in-between!

*The Island of Lokrum, August 2, 1998*

## Up and Down

*A Poem for my 44<sup>th</sup> Birthday*

Lonesome  
I lie in my bed  
my eyes closed  
listen  
to the children outside  
(and seven stories below)  
playing  
as it's getting dark  
and I think:

as it gets old  
the body  
keeps  
slanting  
towards the ground



until one day  
it erases  
its shadow.

*September 14, 1999*

## Possibilities

Meteorologists, you modern shamans,  
brothers in unfulfilled promises,  
wasted explanations  
with you, just like with me  
everything is possible  
(the worst as much as the best)

how many times I used  
your predictions as a cover  
how many times indecisive  
I gazed out the window  
into the sky  
how many times attracted the passer-by's derision  
carrying an umbrella under my arm  
on a sunshiny day  
not dressed according to your forecasts

meteorologists, you daily prophets  
how many mix-ups  
    of words and numbers  
how many giant yet empty plates  
with which you spy on the sky  
    how many wires, computers  
        screens, big and small  
        measuring instruments  
        daily, monthly and annual averages  
        studied anomalies  
for words so simple and pretty  
as  
rain, fog  
wind, clouds  
clear skies, frost  
snow, dew, hoar  
ice...

meteorologists,  
    you're ne'er-do-wells just like me

finding right words at every opportunity  
odds-makers without the bookies

meteorologists, you modern shamans  
brothers in unfulfilled promises,  
wasted explanations  
with you, just like with me  
everything is possible  
(the worst as much as the best)

*February 2000*

## Solitude

There's no one else  
but my mother and her  
that have never  
left my side.

We must be bound by the umbilical cord.  
She's always there  
like cigarette butts on train  
and bus stations  
or slippers under hospital beds.

She rests in a box  
together with leaden posts  
of tin soldiers  
from my childhood.

To this day she hides in  
a can of sardines or tuna  
when I open it.

Sometimes I hear her  
groaning, moaning  
sighing  
from concrete rooms of TV alienation  
from marital beds of cheating spouses, or  
from shabby shanties  
from which turbo-folk music blares,  
sometimes she screams  
    her hands bloody  
    in the kitchen.

She's got gentle hands  
and long nails  
which she passionately sinks into your flesh  
leaving scars  
whether  
you declared your love for her or not.

In the morning, when I wash my face with cold  
water  
    looking at myself in the mirror

or when I sit on the toilet bowl  
shameless and immobile, she stands in the  
cobwebbed corner  
and watches me curiously  
as if the same  
monotonous routine  
does not repeat itself  
every single day.

What's more, sometimes she breathes  
obnoxiously  
down my neck  
as if we're pressed against  
each other  
on the city transport's  
bus or tram  
during rush hour.

She glares from the skin of an orange  
on a sunny day.

Still,  
she's the one  
I wrap myself into  
when I climb into bed at night.

She's an ideal woman:  
keeps quiet,  
never asks for  
anything  
and never demands to see  
*a proof*  
of your love  
and loyalty.

She's well-known all around.

She's mostly found in number 1.

*September 10, 2000*



## Old Story

When things got hairy  
and the farewell was inevitable,  
my former lovers, almost without exception,  
would try to tell me  
that we should separate for a while  
until things settle  
and that it was  
for *my own* good.

I remember I listened to Vesna  
and for *my own* good  
left the apartment we shared  
at the eleventh floor of a skyscraper  
(leaving behind,  
so she wouldn't get too lonely,  
a huge library  
I'd been collecting since my high school days.)

A couple of days later when I phoned  
to hear how she was doing  
and how she was handling the days of our  
separation

I caught her in bed  
with another man  
so she hung up on me  
for *my own* good.

After this I spent a couple of years  
drinking and renewing  
my library.

And then one day I met Sofija.  
She had left her husband  
for *his own* good  
and temporarily moved to Italy  
where I myself had been temporarily living.  
We shared a couple of years  
of love and harmony,  
she even met my parents,  
called them and talked to them more often than I,

showered them with attention, etc.  
Faced with the uncertain stay abroad,  
missing her old girl-friends  
and who knows what else,  
one day she announced  
she was going back to her husband  
and leaving me for *my own* good.  
Which she did do  
and really returned to her husband.  
The same story all over again  
except that this time I managed to save  
my renewed library.

When someone you love tells you  
she is leaving you for your own good  
because she wants a better life for you,  
because you deserve a different  
and better person than her,  
because she loves you so much she's willing  
to sacrifice her own future  
for your own good

and for your sake,  
the truth is she is leaving you for *her own* good  
and this most often means she is going  
to another man  
she has already been fucking  
while living with you.

*February 3, 2001*

## Circus

*In loving memory of William S. Burroughs*

For centuries  
the same circus show takes place:  
a couple of tigers trained to jump  
through flaming hoops,  
elephants forced  
to lean on their back legs  
and stand up  
one after another,  
horses running in circles  
while their victorious handlers stand on their  
backs,  
their legs stiff and wide apart,  
tightrope walkers,  
acrobats performing double  
or triple salto mortale,  
nimble Chinamen spinning

dozens of plates on sticks,  
monkeys and clowns  
monkeying around...

The knowledge at which humans laugh the most,  
trying to deny through laughter  
the truth of their origin

*February 23, 2001*

*On a train between Trieste and Venice*

## The Saint of Circumstance

Oh you great horrendous nothing  
you're my everything,  
with you I awake  
with you I lie down in bed  
you're my blanket  
    in the nights of solitude,  
I look at you  
in the morning as I shave,  
you I see  
when I flush the toilet.

You keep finding, testing, proving me  
    but you never offer,  
that little what I want  
    you never offer,  
I never followed you  
    yet you follow me incessantly.

Oh you great horrendous nothing  
I see you in the horizon,  
oh you great horrendous nothing  
I see you in the clear blue skies  
you're the most abstract still life  
I've ever seen.

Oh you great horrendous nothing  
I see you in every misery of this world,  
oh you great horrendous nothing  
I see you in the darkness  
in what's yet to come  
in everything still unborn.

*July 12, 2007*



## A Poem for my Fifty Second Birthday

Fifty-two years and I'm still alive.  
I've survived so many  
drunken nights, loves,  
injuries, accidents,  
it's a real wonder  
I still walk,  
think,  
write...

And the longer I live  
the less I write  
and I'd be happy if they could  
say of me:  
"He used to go out alone  
on an evening walk  
and when he came back,  
he would always write something,

a poem,  
a couple of sentences,  
perhaps  
just a single  
word.”

But, I fear,  
that's too much  
to expect,  
because,  
it could happen that some  
of my fellow-citizens or acquaintances say:  
“We haven't seen him in a while,  
maybe he's died,  
who knows  
if he's still alive?”

*September 14, 2007*

## Remembering Raymond Carver

Many years have passed since you've been gone.  
Before that  
we shook hands a couple of times,  
sat and talked on as many occasions,  
exchanged dozens of letters,  
you remarried,  
and then you died.

Many of those we both knew  
and spent time with  
are now gone.  
I wonder, can I even say –  
I knew them,  
shook hands with them  
and hugged them as friends,  
slept in their houses,  
read them, translated them.

I hope I'm fortunate enough,  
privileged enough  
for having known you,  
for being still alive  
and now I bear witness  
to all that with these words.  
Because for the one living  
there must exist something  
to look forward to –  
despite getting old,  
losing dear friends  
and sad memory of you.

*March 19, 2015*

## Gray, Grayer, Black

In my youth  
I used to get carried away by the verse  
“Death will come and shall have your eyes”  
and I truly believed  
death would not only have your eyes  
but the color of your hair  
even the color of your eyes,  
yet what other color of hair and eyes death  
could have but black?  
Years passed, decades,  
and I finally realized:  
it’s not all that nice  
or particularly interesting  
to stare into death’s eyes  
because it will come  
but, now I know, it will not have your eyes  
more likely

the gaze of some evil old woman  
who spends her days at the window  
and prays to God at night  
to take her before her time,  
or some old man, left all alone  
who by day dozes at a bench in a park  
his mouth wide open  
and groans and coughs by night  
his eyes all teary –  
for, death will come and have the eyes of death.

*March 25, 2015*

## The Color of Rain in Split

Not as sudden and unannounced  
as an unexpected guest in the deaf of the night  
or a summer fire whose  
flames of madness  
obliterate everything in its path  
not as strict as the mouth of truth in Cosmedin  
that bites off your hand if you place it inside  
and do not tell the truth,  
not as self-assured as  
the extravagantly lit houses and pools  
of the transition tycoons  
who came out of the darkness of communism  
and walked into the light of capitalism,  
not as relentless and frenzied  
as the big fish  
that bites into bait

and then on the hook of death  
    wiggles and fights for life,  
not as tempting as  
    the sun in a bunch of grapes,  
    the heat stored in  
        the seeds of a cracked pomegranate  
or a foreign woman who in the morning  
    her breasts naked  
        appears at the window of her zimmer frei,  
not as incessant and unyielding  
    as the chirping of cicadas  
        in the pine trees  
    in the incurable madness of the summer

but as slow as an old woman's step  
    when she enters the pharmacy,  
hushed and noiseless  
    as the breath of a patient  
        dying in his hospital bed,  
persistent as weeds  
    in all four seasons,



unstoppable as the old faucet  
dripping for years  
on end  
barely noticeable,  
disinterested and stubborn  
gray and gentle  
drizzles the first autumn rain.

*Split, Croatia, September 4/5, 2015*

## An Introduction to Illness

The doctor asks: "Again?"

I look at him

completely harmlessly,

apathetically and disinterestedly at first,

but he keeps watching

never taking his eyes off me,

scanning me with his gaze –

confused and helpless,

I now fix my eyes on him too

in the silence in which nothing is heard

not even the fly buzzing around the ficus tree –

the rage begins to build up in me

the fury flames up like the fire in the wind,

and now I'm already staring back at him

filled with anger and bitterness  
and I reply:  
“Yes, again!”

*October 1, 2015*

## The Park

*In loving memory of Gregory Corso  
and for Staša, of course*

Are the benches in the park  
a metaphor of youth or old age?

Of course, this is a park with lush vegetation,  
deciduous and evergreen trees,  
in spring, chestnuts and oaks come into leaf,  
sparrows, blackbirds, magpies  
flutter as they come and go,  
near the park there is  
a high school:  
in the morning or in the afternoon  
during recess  
boys and girls  
run about, chatter or  
tease each other –

in the evening, when everything goes quiet  
and the clamor of high school kids is heard no  
more  
at one of the hidden benches  
a shadow of a young couple is made out –  
they're not yet hugging,  
they only whisper a quiet and intimate word or  
two  
or just touch with their shoulders

in the recent years  
retired people prefer  
some other, more social places

from time to time  
and only in daylight  
pausing, two old women talk about illness

an idle loner too  
in his wanderings sits down for a while,  
pensive, staring into the ground

perhaps a rare passenger sits down  
on the bench to catch some rest and eat a  
sandwich,  
watching the dust on his shoes –

many centuries ago  
the park was imagined as a place of respite and  
peace,  
the earthly garden of contemplation and  
reflection  
but, with time, public parks have become the  
gathering places of alienation

early in the morning, the parks are as empty as  
waiting rooms,  
in those next to larger train and bus stations  
a drunk or a homeless person sleeps sprawling on  
the bench

the parks,  
melancholic like thoughts on a cloudy afternoon,  
solitary like a cemetery on a rainy night  
never too happy  
    like me on a drunken morning.

*Pazin, Istria, March 30, 2016*

## First and Last Names and Death

On a sunny and warm June day  
walking between the plots  
of the New Cemetery in Belgrade  
among the big, marble  
    rich people's tombs  
    just by the entrance  
and the graves covered by dirt  
    where only a rotten wooden cross  
    marks the place of burial –  
spreads the scent of blooming linden trees  
    mixed here and there  
    with the stench of decay

an endless line of first and last names  
    in justice and injustice,  
    in easy or difficult,  
    in the rich or poor man's,



in the minister's or the worker's,  
in the butcher's or in the professor's life  
brought together only by death

because all men are equal in death  
and the passer-by doesn't know  
of the difference between a hard and easy  
death –

who among them suffered for years  
dying a slow death,  
who went through chemotherapy  
or treated their sciatica in a luxury spa,  
who, while making love,  
got so excited his heart gave up,  
who died in a car crash  
and who was run over at the crossing  
by a drunk driver  
who got killed at work  
falling from a scaffolding  
and who was buried alive in a mine,

who drowned in a river  
and who was killed by a jealous husband  
on whose head a brick fell during a storm  
killing him instantly,  
who spent years confined to bed  
and who the nurses  
washed and changed,  
who in a state of frenzy and fear of unpaid bills  
committed suicide  
jumping off the eleventh floor of a skyscraper,  
who got killed in a shootout  
and who while crossing the railway tracks,  
who spent his life plowing a field  
and who got electrocuted and died,  
who fell asleep peacefully in front of TV  
never to wake up,  
who spent years in a wheelchair  
pushed around by his wife or daughter,  
who made it to retirement  
and died at a ripe old age

and who was brought back from abroad  
in a coffin,  
who died of tuberculosis and hunger  
as someone's lodger,  
who loved to be addressed as  
a "comrade" and who as a "sir",  
who was a bon vivant and a bum  
and who a philistine,  
which actress was a whore,  
which poet a drunk  
and which painter a madman,  
who was a respectable university professor  
and who a crook,  
who died free diving to extreme depths  
and who climbing to the top of the mountain,  
who was a hero and who a coward,  
who among them is  
a winner and who a loser?

*June 8, 2016*

## Spring Rain

From its high window  
the rain watches its fall

as it spreads its indifference  
in millions of drops

and it has  
no hope

nor any desire  
to change the world

as it paints the iron with rust  
and turns the dry brown soil  
into hues of green.

*March 31, 2017*

## Periphery

The last stop of the tram or  
bus line running  
all the way to the edge of the city  
reveals the meaning  
of socks and towels hanging from skyscraper  
balconies,  
undies, sweatshirts and sweatpants  
drying in front of rundown shacks

periphery sparrows as dusty  
as the files of civil servants  
scrawny trees and maimed bushes  
with big retailers'  
plastic sacks  
bearing witness of globalization,  
traffic noise by day  
and dogs barking at night –

wherever one turns  
this is a reality no one doubts.

*April 26, 2017*

## She and They

Facebook fans.

My wife

is one of many.

She spends more time on FB

every day at that

than cooking, washing,

taking the laundry out to dry,

watering flowers,

dusting decorations

and bookshelves,

or even taking care of herself,

looking in the mirror, fixing her make up.

My beard can be a week old

she doesn't notice it

or gives any

positive or negative meaning to it,  
but should someone post  
a photo of shaving  
a week-old beard  
she'll jump and comment on it enthusiastically  
and press "like"  
as if this is something  
truly important and significant.  
In the evening, before going to sleep,  
instead of a kiss,  
for the full hour  
she exchanges thoughts and news  
with countless male and female friends,  
she writes back or replies to each of them  
and when she's checked everything in detail  
she turns off the computer,  
turns her back on me  
and without a word  
falls asleep.  
The same scene repeats itself in the morning.



Without a word,  
without a morning kiss  
she fixes herself a cup of coffee  
turns on her cellphone  
or switches on her laptop  
and goes on FB.

And once again spends an hour  
or more there.

Then she gets up,  
puts her clothes on and begins her workday.  
Of course, during the day  
using her smartphone  
she goes on FB countless times  
to check “what’s new”  
or, if need be,  
to get in touch with someone  
or reply to a message.

Sometimes, in those  
pointless and painful moments

I become perfectly aware  
that the whole time  
I live alone.

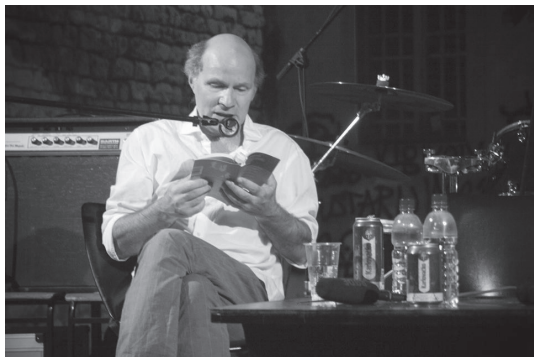
*August 26, 2018*

## A Happening

In the middle of warm winter  
a large fly  
buzzing  
flew into the refrigerator  
and  
forever ended  
its winter summer holiday.

*December 6, 2019*

*Translated by Tomislav Kuzmanović*



BEHIND  
THE DARKNESS

*Translated by the author with the help of  
James Laughlin, Allen Ginsberg, Gary Snyder  
Michael McClure, Jack Hirschman, Harold Norse*



## Chestnut Village

*for Gary Snyder*

A dog barks its nightly lullaby.  
From somewhere far off comes a distant car roar  
then the flashing of headlights.  
From the nearby auto-camp  
wind brings the sounds of music:  
*See the stars falling into the sea.*  
Hushed sigh of lovers on the beach:  
eyes looking in the darkened horizon  
for a moment turn a look to the flickering  
lanterns;  
smell of the sea, shimmering of the plankton,  
happiness of night flies and whisper of the dead.

*Summer 1978*

## The cinema at 3 p.M.

I stopped in front of the cinema  
pretending to be captured in a web of heavy  
thoughts  
– lonely, I followed a damp corridor  
through seeds and roving peanut hustlers  
and bought a ticket.

Inside the theater, in the front rows  
runaway schoolboys  
with outstretched legs are laughing  
with the joy and tender cruelties of boyhood  
to which I wouldn't return even if I could.  
Seats creak, candy bags rustle  
then lights fade to black  
whispers fall silent  
and the fingers of couples in love sweat  
while on the big screen



the movie keeps pace with the action  
exciting as the sea  
or a woman's dress brushing against your hand  
as she leaves to buy more peanuts.

In darkness that not even a star could brighten  
the lights shine again  
more opaque this time and dirtier  
the floor full of sticky wrappers and peanut shells  
lazy cleaners and usherettes leaning against a  
wall  
and me, the unsuccessful fugitive  
pushed back to streets  
and still captured in a web of heavy thoughts.

*April 22, 1980*

## The Body

What's the body, God?

A meat shape transformed into a robot with its  
own production

date and duration limit but no warranty  
the robot into whom you breathed a soul then  
left it to the corrosive

universe?

It's hard to love a robot.

The body digests food all day long, belly's full of  
malodorous mush,

a few inches below

bulges and hollows excrete genital glue and create  
new generations

to produce new computers, bombs, missiles,

poison wheat and

green automobiles

while dull-grey, uniformed generations of  
fat-bellied fifty-year-old  
    robots march the streets in a workday race with  
time  
the same time that paints our bodies with  
popping veins, wrinkles,  
    gray hairs, hanging skin  
“every day your skin loses at least 10 ml. of water,  
that’s why you  
    should use *Moondrops* moisturizing cream” –  
every day thousands of bodies in Bombay,  
Calcutta, New York,  
    Denver, San Francisco, Venice, Hamburg and  
Zagreb are buried  
    or burned because people believe the soul leaves  
them on its  
    way to eternity –  
yet, it’s the body that gives the soul its fleshy form  
and leads it to the  
    crossroads of heaven and hell

it's the body that craves luscious foods and high  
fashions  
it's the body that is full of love, shit and  
tomorrow's worms  
just like this 65-kilo, 25-year old body lying alone  
on a mattress  
    tonight, dreaming of someone's soft, tender  
touches  
just like bodies in cabs, space ships, tired workers'  
bodies bathed  
    in the grey lights of TV screens, pornographic  
bodies,  
    hospitalized bodies, retired bodies  
black bodies, white bodies, yellow bodies, red  
bodies, dumb, blind,  
    sick, crippled bodies and bodies in love  
so many beautiful bodies yet ugly souls are  
thronging Earth now –

*April 25, 1981*

## Before the dream – (Night news)

The night howls with cats' meows  
Stradun bell tower strikes one after midnight  
I am lying on a mattress  
eyes closed, hand on forehead  
star visions blinking behind blind eyelids  
mail plane softly buzzing  
grass quietly breathing in the arms of a hill  
mannequins dreaming new fashions in dark  
shop-windows  
neighbors snoring monotonous lullabies through  
half-open windows  
hospital lights turned off and temperature  
graphics sleeping  
dull, mute, yellow traffic lights sparking on the  
crossroads  
silent, languid police car wheels rolling over  
asphalt

somewhere in the distance a dog barks at night  
flies  
my legs touch the cold cheek of a stone wall  
my destiny and I have quarreled again today  
I leave a message to my consciousness  
before I disappear into a new day –  
the morning will bring form back to my body.

*April 25/26, 1981*

## Night flight

8000 meters over land and sea  
8000 meters over planet Earth  
and 8000 meter closer to the moon, not shining  
tonight  
8000 meters above the country, celebrating this  
day  
and only two seats away from an old woman  
whose skin reminds  
    me of peeled hard-boiled egg shells –  
but today is not Easter! Today is May Day!  
Night gently falls on shoulders tired from  
celebration  
the ends of electric connections timidly twinkle  
in houses  
even the small red light on the right wing of the  
plane is blinking  
    with joy

as the not-very-pretty woman with long dark hair  
is singing behind  
me, in the half-empty plane –  
a buzzing in my ears,  
a warm tea taste vanishing in my mouth,  
cigarette smoke in my nostrils –  
the flight is coming to its trembling end,  
the seats are returned to upright positions,  
cigarettes are extinguished,  
powerful beams of light illuminate the air-strip –  
today has become tonight  
and the red rose in the stewardess' buttonhole  
slowly withers.

*May First, 1981.*  
*(on a plane from Belgrade to*  
*Dubrovnik, 21:45)*



## Friends with unwashed faces

Oh Romanies, wild children of Nakulas,  
Tukhars, Venkos, Pakars,  
Karants, Konkans, of the stubborn, persistent  
people:  
Hitler is dead, World War II ended long ago, and  
not a living soul  
chases you anymore; moreover, you are left to  
yourselves.  
There's no use coming to these skyscraper cities,  
these labyrinth  
towns surrounded by TV, radio and car  
antennas, phone cables  
and sweaty dull faces  
dreaming of football games where no shouts at  
the top of angry  
lungs will echo: "Gypsies! Gypsies!"

dreaming of stories when no upset mommies will  
be yelling to

their spoiled kids: “If you don’t listen to me a  
Gypsy woman will  
come and steal you!”

dreaming a warm home, a kitchen abundant  
with joyous soon-to-be-

eaten food and clean, lavender-scented  
underwear in the  
cupboard.

Romanies, stop lingering in auto graveyards in  
search of cheap car

skeletons that will lead you to death! Better to  
ride upon trotting

horses, their manes fluttering in the wind.

Don’t waste your time selling smuggled jeans,  
because when

bargaining you’re caught in heartless cities’  
traps: you’d better go

back to burning charcoal and slaking lime.

You small, dirty-faced kinds, don't breathe the  
smog, begging in  
town squares, cleaning the windshields of cars  
that have stopped  
for a moment at the traffic lights, exposing  
yourselves to the  
bashful glances of the old pre-war gentry, or to  
the cruel eyes of  
passers-by reddened by dust and gas fumes:  
you'd better turn  
back to your merry kid-squeals, back to the rod  
baskets.

Young women's bodies the color of spoiled oil,  
wrinkling while  
selling love, making a play of reality: forget the  
dark urinal alleys  
around the railway and bus stations, and go  
back to the plains,  
the forests and be the princesses of Cleanliness  
washing linen in  
the last unpolluted brooks on the planet.

Forget the stuffy disco clubs and kung fu movies,  
throw away the

“Helen Frankenstein” perfume: the smell of  
wood smoke and

moist soil in your black hair is the most exotic  
and precious  
perfume of nature.

Unplug the refrigerators and boilers taken away  
from some junk

heaps at night, burn the bills for secretly  
connected electricity

power, turn off the portable radios that the  
electric generations

are screaming from,  
leave the slums and trash dumps with their views  
of frightful

skyscrapers and return to pure Natural  
kingdom, to the sweet

music of streams and the lullabies of branches  
swinging in the  
breeze.

Stay away from cemeteries where there is no  
room for even the  
dead. Stay away from towns, stay more away  
from towns, more  
and more away –  
the bureaucracy has long ago condemned you to  
death.

*May 1981*

## Small poem

I love rust!  
And everything that rusts –  
grows old with me.  
Neither hammer nor nail  
are more eternal  
than roots.  
And oil and coal  
once were  
fern forests.

---

There's no return.  
Nor ever was there.

*July 5/7, 1981*

## Heart

My heart  
is  
a honey bee  
slowly  
drinking  
nature's  
sweetest juices.

---

My heart  
is  
a hungry mammal  
whose species  
fall in love.

*July 11, 1981.*

Spontaneous poem  
for michael McClure

My body is  
the living ground,  
my heart  
is  
a small hump  
of everlasting coal  
slowly burning  
emblazoned  
by birth  
in the mine  
of my mother's body  
and my thought  
is  
a fox



that hides  
in the invisible den  
of my skull.

*October 11, 1981.*

## Earth: Mother of the ground

*For Michael McClure and Gary Snyder*

When we die  
– without fear of the dark –  
we devote  
our tissue and ourselves to the Earth:  
Mother of the Ground  
for  
We are She:  
plants, animals  
seas, rivers, mountains, plains  
and our bones  
become the roots  
of humanity.

*October 18, 1981*

## In collaboration with nature

Our bodies exist on a one-way street  
and  
there's no room for mistakes!

Hedgehog, wolf, fox  
and panda  
are all part of us.  
And we destroy,  
bulldoze,  
burn down  
their,  
our homes.

Is neo-modern furniture  
and chemical garbage  
more important  
then our mammal cousins?

They may not be  
as intelligent as we are,  
but we are not  
INNOCENT  
as they ARE!

*October 13, 1982*

## Politics and Nature

As long as boundaries exist  
we'll dream of  
promised lands.

But  
neither winds nor clouds,  
swallows, salmons nor eels  
know any  
borders.

FOR  
our souls  
are not  
the walking luggage  
of computerized  
tourist  
brains,

FOR  
our  
loving hearts  
are not  
parts of  
computerized  
robots

FOR  
we  
are not  
the products  
of computerized  
pollutions.

*October 23, 1982*

## For my cat

*Beginning with lines by Keats*

“What weapon  
has a lion  
but himself?”

---

What weapon  
has my cat  
but her own ingratiating purr?

---

When  
I call you  
*Muse Mala*  
while you are running thru our home  
you are  
big fur flake

and  
trigger muscle

while  
traces  
of your paws  
on my body  
are marks of your  
life

as much as mine!

*November 7, 1982*



## A Cloud

Everything I know  
is  
like  
a cloud.

Sometimes so condensed  
motionless and fertile  
that antihail rockets  
cannot penetrate its potential.

Other times  
it's hazy, swaying  
and transparent  
as cigarette smoke  
or  
damp firewood smoldering

from a chimney  
tickling nostrils  
in the cool autumn sun.

*November 13, 1982*

## Unboundaries

Beyond my desires  
forbidden zones are closed to visitors.

They are  
neither black nor white  
but they are  
as painful  
as humanity  
and surrounded like animals in a zoo.

Acid raindrops on my face  
are not God's mercy.  
Tears in my eyes  
are chemical reactions  
to what my body feels and meets with.

I am surrounded  
by splashes of unbounded diversity.

Food, clothes, tools and poison gas,  
    medicine and money,  
a lump of earth and uranium atoms,  
pine needles, kaleidoscope cat hairs,  
    faces of insolent evokings.

20<sup>th</sup> century economies  
    thrive on destruction!  
    But  
every breathing, blooming,  
    sentient being is sacred!

    ALL things repeat  
yet nothing remains THE SAME.

*September 25, 1983*

## Feedback

Butterflies in my stomach.  
Hot mustard on my lips.  
High school jokes on the bus.  
Ladies dressed in dead fur.  
Stiff, frosty stockings hung out to dry  
on balconies of skyscraper ghosts.  
Naked bodies in newsstands.

### WHAT I KNOW IS WHAT I FEEL!

I am eating  
a ham, cheese and mayonnaise sandwich,  
laying in bed  
watching educational TV broadcast:  
a condor is ripping flesh  
from a carcass  
and a moment later

feeding its hungry youngsters  
cradled in a nest whitened by shit.

Visions of community  
vanished  
in a  
city crowd.

*January 8, 1984.*

## How many?

How many first May Days, Second World Wars,  
and Third Reichs

before the Apocalypse?

How many nuclear mushroom clouds does it  
take to make a salad

of human bodies?

How many million intellectual and  
revolutionary skeletons are

mixed with the Siberian mammoth fossils?

How many Allah tears to drown a Wall of Cries  
and turn the Red

Sea bright red with fratricidal shame?

How many first leagues, second half-times, third  
dimensions,

fourth games, fifth paragraphs between  
amateurs and pros?

How many minutes to twelve?

How many illegal weekend cottages in the mist of  
self-management anarchism?

How many infected injections of national rabies  
before fraternity  
and unity triumph?

How many rusty roboty in front of bureaucracy's  
closed windows?

How many wild forests cut away until the last  
page of the  
administration?

How many tons of heroin to reach Nirvana in  
Necropolises?

How many messages from unknown poets  
written on the walls of  
barroom toilets?

"How much?" asks the potbellied sexagenarian  
turned on  
by fleshy lust in an hourly-rent-a-bed.

How many cursed and unwashed bastards in the  
correction  
houses of love?



How many plastic vibrators moistened between  
the legs of

sadness and loneliness?

How many telephone numbers, remembered and  
forgotten?

How many ladies left their blond hairs and long  
dark hairs on a

carpet in the small room full of poetry?

How many people do I hold in my heart forever?

How many? Have I ever asked myself – how  
many?

*January 13 & 14 – February 10, 1984*

## They and We

They tell us  
the human body is sacred  
but  
they send children to war  
and create more nuclear weapons  
every day.

They tell us  
the human body is divine  
but  
sell nudity  
in the pseudo splendor  
of glossy magazines.

They tell us  
our bodies deserve self-respect  
but

they are killing our mammal cousins  
and threatening our survival.

We know  
our bodies are sacred  
and divine.

We know our bodies  
are worthy of self-respect.

And we know  
how to celebrate our bodies  
with poetic justice.

*March 22, 1984*

## Patiently awaiting my next birthdays

Thirty-six years  
tracing my death.  
I am real and death is real  
but these two realities cannot exist together!  
Death is not mine.  
I have not met her.  
You hear of other people's death  
but never your own.  
I'll never meet my death.  
My friends say each man  
could be a terrific loser  
and I believe them  
more than ever.  
It is difficult to endure  
yet each lesson of death  
is an act of gentle generosity.

The older I am  
the more I fear beauty.  
I hush myself with Shakespeare's words  
"What's pretty is ugly  
and ugly is pretty."

Death exists but it does not last.  
To pass a dead cat on the road  
is like advancing beyond an impression  
like journeying through sentiments  
on a moment's notice  
and that's all I know of death.

*September 14, 1991*

## Hospital window

Hospital windows are always the same.  
It doesn't matter which bed you lie in.  
It doesn't matter which ward you are in.  
It doesn't matter what floor you are on  
or the view of the world  
you've been turned toward.  
The outlook is always the same.  
Through the hospital window  
you can see a treetop.  
On the opposite side of the street  
there is a neighbor's roof  
and patches of sky.  
It is a perfect view  
for patients.  
The scene is rich  
in nearby promises  
and faraway hopes.

There is neither exaggeration  
nor activity.  
There is only calm, passive patience  
unchangeable  
as time  
and death.

*May 19, 1995*

## Six months, three worlds

Six months have passed  
since we parted  
and now I find myself in three worlds:  
there is the everyday world  
that whirls around me,  
the one in my thoughts  
where you live,  
and the one in my ageing diaries  
where I read between the lines  
what we did  
when we were  
together.

*May 20, 1996*



## Raw meat

Raw meat governs the world.

Raw meat cuts the price of the raw meat on the world market.

Raw meat hygienically packed in plastic plates and wrapped in transparent sheeting.

Raw meat is walking down the streets in nylon stockings spreading the perfume fragrance.

Raw meat buys raw meat cheaply – so it feels like being on its own.

Raw meat requests a fair trial to the raw meat in The Hague.

Raw meat in Croatia will not stop praising the Croatian Catholic culture.

Raw meat in Serbia will not stop glorifying the  
Serbian Orthodox  
heroism.

Cruel raw meat has captured hundreds of tons of  
gold from the  
innocent raw meat sending it to the  
concentration camps and  
gas chambers.

Moreover, cruel raw meat has consigned  
hundreds of tons of the  
robbed gold for the very careful keeping to the  
merciless raw  
meat in the Vatican.

The heartless raw meat delivers sermons on how  
the only Hope will  
be reached in the after-life –

That is why everything is permitted to the raw  
meat in this life,  
since every sin may be redeemed by the money  
that the raw  
meat invented.

Raw meat in trousers buys the raw meat in skirts –  
Thus the raw meat becomes the raw material itself!

Raw meat wrote this poem on the raw meat,  
shamefacedly  
confessing the reign of the raw meat god

*August 4, 1997.*

## Prayer to the Devil

Devil,

protect me from the heartlessness  
of the woman who doesn't love me anymore

Devil,

protect me from the cruelty  
of the woman who wants revenge

Devil,

save me from falling in love with Beauty  
take Cupid's darts from my heart  
seduce some other seductive soul with an

apple

(because the soul is the ultimate creation of  
the almighty

and leads to the edge of the open tomb)

Devil,

when I see religious fanatics clothed in their  
Sunday best

and when I hear their accusations in your name  
I know they are ready to commit  
one more crime  
of closing their eyes to Reality  
Devil,  
I am tired of unanswered prayers  
to Him righteous and just  
and finally I realize  
not because of you but in the name of Him  
do exist vain hopes and loss

Devil,  
when I read about your presence,  
Inquisition  
stakes, burnings of witches  
tortures of heretics  
I do not have any doubt that those crimes  
were done by futile believers  
or, shall I praise you if I say  
by earthly devils

Devil,  
who invented ghosts

blind faith  
forgiveness of sins  
sinless life in the Other world  
even celestial people?

Devil,

I really don't believe these are your works  
because you never declared that  
the globe is a flat table  
because you never stated  
that bigamy is a sin  
because you never wanted  
anything to be holy  
nor celestial

Devil,

when the news on the radio or TV  
says that somebody  
set a time bomb  
that destroyed houses, killed people  
smashed dolls and other toys  
and ruined children's dreams

I know that such things don't have any  
connection with you  
and that you are absolutely not involved  
because a time bomb is just  
an act of people against people  
Devil,  
everyday I keep asking myself  
why did you destroy the rainforests of the  
Amazon  
why did you spill acid rain  
why did you put on the edge of extinction  
beloved  
lynxes and Mediterranean seals  
why did you make holes in the ozone layer  
why did you cause the greenhouse effect  
and now we feel hot  
very hot  
because as far as I know  
you don't care for the profit  
but solely for the human souls

Devil,

I pity you!

because I see much bigger power  
in the dollars

of red Coca~Cola Marlboro Winston

McDonald's

melting pot

compared with your old black beaten kettle  
of boiling tar and resin

Devil,

even you are a sad loner

a hobo like Charlie Chaplin

because you never cared

for a superior race

and Aryan blood

you never wore a small black mustache

and hailed with upraised right hand

you never conceived the Final solution

nor carried it out in

concentration camps and gas chambers



you never wore a military overcoat and big  
mustache  
nor sent 20.000.000 comrades  
to Siberian cold and starvation  
moreover  
I know for sure, if it was up to you  
you would give them some of your red heat  
to warm them  
but wait!  
here we are talking about  
*real* devils, Satans, Lucifers  
and for them  
you are just a sucker  
a farting movie star  
Devil,  
when I shout  
GO TO HELL!  
do you hear me at all  
and are you angry at me, or  
it is a compliment for you?

Devil,

I really don't know why the people  
dressed you in red  
because you were never a fireman  
and why did they put  
those red horns  
on your head  
as if you are a macho bull  
that runs after every red skirt  
you can see  
or, will it be more precise, if I say  
that religious faces of catholic faith  
dressed you in red  
because of their  
2000-year-long fear of the reds

Devil,

for me  
you are just a simple chimney-sweep  
that lives in a smokestack –  
and that's why all your cats  
are black

Devil,

I call you in evidence  
and I receive you in evidence  
for human stupidity  
and ignorance

Devil,

whenever I see the black cat crossing the street  
I know, I know very well –  
it's your greeting!

*Halloween, October 31, 1998*  
*on a train between*  
*Trieste and Venice, Italy*

## Wet nothingness

Has a man ever learned  
how to walk as a god?

Everything is legendary!  
Everything begins  
and ends here:

amid cemeteries of gray stones,  
gray heather,  
lavender-green leaves,  
bloody soil –  
the astounding faces of the rock!  
All so different.

(There is not only race  
and character in the face of each rock  
but *dignity*,

a quality now almost extinct  
in the human countenance.)

Hot air  
above the glassy sea surface.

No wind.

ICE CUBES ARE DRIPPING FREEDOM!

A perfect nothingness.

*August 3, 2001*

## Love poem

Touch me.

Let me feel

I'm  
still  
alive  
in  
you.

*August 15, 2007*

## The names

FOR JACK HIRSCHMAN'S 75<sup>th</sup> BIRTHDAY  
to be read aloud on December 13, 2008

*War, stupidity and fear are powerful.*

– Robert Duncan

What are the names of Croatian catholic bishops  
and Serbian

orthodox patriarchs sharing a common  
militant nationalism

while consecrating tanks and blessing death  
platoons,

What are the names of Croatian generals of  
dishonor and Serbian

generals of madness,

What are the names of Moslem fundamentalists  
and Jewish Zionists

creating hatred and destruction in every  
direction,

What are the names of intolerably intolerant  
monotheist Jews

Catholics Moslems,

What are the names of Corporations who have  
profited by

merchandising guns to all sides,

What are the names of the newspapers owned by  
these

corporations,

What are the names of military officers who now  
work in

investment trusts that control these industries,

What are the names of bank directors, makers of  
fates, causing

bankruptcy all over the world,

What are the names of narco-cartels run by the  
International

Monetary Fund,

What are the names of billion dollar advertising  
Dealers,



What are the names of soulless brokers with  
Stock market habits,  
What are the names of birdbrain Presidents  
eating star-spangled  
hamburgers,  
What are the names of the United Nations' high  
officials who  
trumped-up International multiethnic  
conspiracy,  
What are the names of the European Union  
commissioners who  
came up with the Final Injustice for Kosovo  
Gypsies,  
What are the names of humanitarian  
organizations that donate  
outdated food and medical supplies,  
What are the names of homeless refugees on the  
corner traffic  
under red lights wiping windshields with dirty  
rags,

What are the names of children we see turn to ghost,  
What are the names of armed forces and the names  
of children  
they've killed,  
What are the names of brothers with holes in their  
heads,  
What are the names of sisters that make no more  
living sound,  
What are the names of babies in pain,  
What are the names of mothers in rain,  
What are the names of fathers in woe,  
What are the names of families nowhere to go  
What are the names of the Capitalist Communist  
and Third World  
Peoples' Republics Dictatorships Police-States  
Socialisms and  
Democracies that have made money from this war  
we still live  
in?

*Dubrovnik, November 25, 2008*

## Song within a song

Down

down

down to the ground

all around

bound to the ground

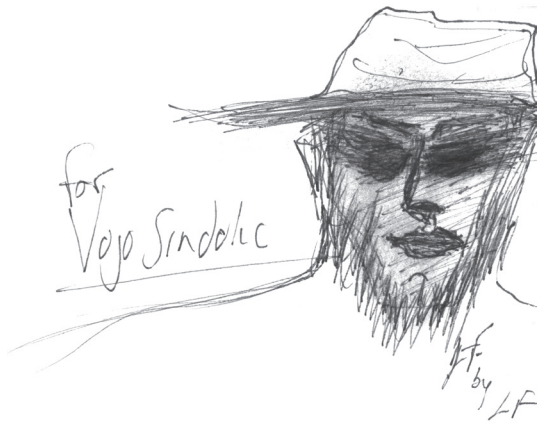
all around

where there's no sound

all around

under the ground

*November, 24, 2009*



BEAT GENERATION  
POETS

Tribute to Vojo Sindolic



Allen Ginsberg  
**Variations of reflections**

*For Vojo Sindolic*

Too many  
mornings I wake, forgetting my dreams  
with a mouth full of humiliated questions.

Too many  
noons I eat like a lonely neurotic  
while listening war gossip.

Too many  
nights I go to bed, unaccompanied, all alone,  
wishing to smoke 10.000 thoughts.

*Belgrade, October 26, 1980*

Allen Ginsberg  
**Snapshot poetics**

*For Vojo Sindolic*

Glittering soda-water  
Brilliant imperial flood-light  
Cigarette smoke rising through the illumination  
Cyrillic headlines  
Universal paranoia reflected in the mirrored  
walls  
Everybody's mind completely empty  
Like the blue sky over Lake Ohrid.

*Struga, August 23, 1986*



Allen Ginsberg  
**Prophecies that have now come true**

*For Vojo Sindolic*

The consciousness slowly learns  
I celebrate myself, and sing myself,  
I, now sixty-seven years old begin  
To diagnose the shifting-delicate tints of love and  
heart's delight  
To truly understand old age  
And what it brings from all its past experiences.

*After Whitman*  
*Belgrade, September 29, 1993*

Gregory Corso

## Identity

*For Vojo Sindolic*

During stopover in Split

one must feel like

a clown's bad dream.

Along the old waterfront

amid aged fathers partisans and their sons -

they laugh as they retell the stories

about retreats of

the defeated Italians and Germans

and native quislings

called *domobrani* and *ustashe*.

Every one of them lost

someone in the family

on either side.

Frightening stories of

World War II in the Mediterranean

I've often heard  
in Italy, on Greece islands  
retold in various languages.  
Only the eyes glisten  
with the same sadness  
and glow with pride.\*

*Split, 1962*

---

\* This poem was sent to me by Gregory Corso in 1981, only after my letter in which I described natural attractions of the Croatian part of Adriatic seacoast – which caused him to recall that he was in Split for about two days in 1962, while awaiting for his freighter to leave harbor on its route from Greece to Italy. Corso wrote me that he had completely forgot that he wrote this poem because the said poem was definitely lost/stolen along with his other manuscripts in one of his suitcases in mid-sixties and that actually I reminded him of that poem and that he tried to remember it and to bring it all back, and that this recollection is, in fact, the said poem rewritten as precise as possible. – Vojo Sindolic

James Loughlin  
**The beautiful one**

Vojo the night elevator man  
the old fellow from Zagreb

is much concerned about you  
it's clear that you're his

favorite in the building (he  
calls you *najljepša* the beauti-

ful one like the youngest of  
the three princesses in the

fairy tale) but he says you  
don't go out enough how she

get husband when she sit up  
there all time reading books

she have to go dancing to get  
husband is what old Vojo says

*(1988)*

Lawrence Ferlinghetti  
**And the Sun...**

*For Vojo*

And the sun at sunset

crying out

Again I have not succeeded

in burning down the world –

what fireproofing

those lovers

must have!

*5 / 2001*

Michael McClure

**Cityscape**

*for Vojo*

WE ARE THE PRIMATE WHO CAN SEE

THROUGH WALLS!

The City tries to rub

US

OUT!

To squeeze us into city shapes.

We are the threat to it!

BUT

IT

IS GREAT OUT THERE!

Look that girder is clear as glass!

WE'VE GOT VISION!

SEE THROUGH THE CONCRETE!

We're all one complex, streaming  
life. We've got real hungers  
not just these tinkertoys!

A red fox is running on the road.  
Every mitochondrion is in movement.  
A billion galaxies swirl in clusters!

*(1983)*



Michael McClure  
**Engravings of snakes**

*For Vojo Sindolic*

THE OCEAN SHURRS AND SLUSHES

and slurs like Jack said

and I hear it

here in the city of Dubrovnik

meaning

“little

grove”

&

I’m

always

putting too much into

a poem –

like a fleck of ashes

on this beige, orange, furred

plastic coverlet  
as  
I  
lie  
in  
bed  
waking up from my dreaming  
wondering  
what the ocean said  
and thinking of chic women  
with sly eyes and the gulls  
nestled half awake  
in Adriatic sand.

---

Tell me what truth is;  
let me smell the breath of Picasso  
and Pollock.

---

I've always wanted  
to be only one  
and I'm  
then thousand!

*(Dubrovnik, April, 1984)*



4/5/91

## Where can one begin except with his mindbody?

Many modern poets were solely concerned with human relationships – and what they considered to be urgent finally seemed arrogant. Their poetry was an extension of the academies which were an expression of one dimensional society which netted and bound up the possibility of deepening human, mammal consciousness. Finding a new poet like Vojo Sindolic who is hungry for wider vision is exciting. Sindolic feels himself as a part of nature and life – as a field upon which to work. Commitment to living beings is a profound stance. Where can one begin except with his mindbody? Sindolic starts there!

Sindolic is writing poetry that is intended as art but also it is, coincidentally, a tool of perception. Writing is like breathing – a very old and natural act. Sindolic is writing in a fresh way. He puts his

ear to his consciousness, which is flesh and a direct expression of the universe of flesh. That is very simple. That is direct and not an evasion.

*Michael McClure*

## On Šindolić's Poetry

I remember one evening in May 1992 when a motley crew gathered in Vojo's rented flat in Belgrade, the CNN was broadcasting the most recent shelling of Dubrovnik, and this one Yugoslav went on and on about Yugoslavia, how all was well and what good could come out of this separation, the formation of new states... He did not say a word about the war, though. Seeing a shell hit the roof of his house, 2 Za Rokom Street, Vojo interrupted the Yugoslav and his tale of Yugoslavia devoid of time and place, blurting out: "May you see your house on CNN!" I included this sentence in one of my reports on Belgrade, and it was repeated so many times afterward that those quoting it in newspapers proclaimed it an autochthonous Bosnian war curse, but little did they know its actual

author was – as I called him in the report – an old rocker from Dubrovnik.

Vojo Šindolić, a lone traveler, lost in the twentieth-century globalized traffic, never hides the fact that he set sail from the same home port as his literary idols: Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Gary Snyder, Gregory Corso, Michael McClure, Charles Bukowski, and many others he has been translating over the last few decades.

Šindolić walks the trails of everyday life with wide-open eyes and heart, so he must have noticed that tall trees never hide their roots. This must be why he writes about that same everyday life without hiding his poetic sources, the American poets of the Beat Generation. Following his idols, Šindolić obeys their rule of disobeying the rules, all the while spontaneously turning everything he sees, experiences, and feels into verses. In line with Ginsberg's words: "what began as desire will end wiser", he directs his poems toward an end wiser than an honest and open communication with the



reader. If it were any different, if Šindolić cared about the greater wisdom, he would probably be seen and heard alongside his local contemporaries, the many Pharisees and writers, participating in panel discussions on democracy, political pluralism, or transnational relations of former Yugoslavia.

Fortunately, he always has, and will, dwell in other places: the anarchic expanses of poetry, the solitude of a room, the nightmare of a street, the chatter in Dubrovnik bars and Venetian cafés, the highways of sinking continents. He is still well-aware that the joy and sadness of human life adhere only to laws that can neither be passed nor rewritten – the eternal laws of life and death – and he is still stateless, in his own bathroom as much as in the brothel of civilization, as for him, there exists no battlefield on whatever side of whichever border.

His lonesome flag without a pole is woven of pure clouds and flutters in spite of the rabbles of

destruction, all those polluting our minds, spirits and bodies, the air and the paper. He still gives his confession, to spite those who preach, and still honestly and casually calls to embrace the darkness, as though to counteract those trying to inflict the orderly whiteness in a commanding tone.

Apart from that, Vojo's poems marry the innate and nurtured Mediterranean melancholy, the joyous sadness of life, with the rebellious, liberating, wanderers' energy of beat poetry, and their call to open the mind, eyes, and heart, for both the wise masters from Western and Eastern cultures and the strangers one chances upon, and whose raw blues often has more poetry than the most celebrated verses... Even his elegies for Dubrovnik echo with the clear sound of beat rebellion against conformism and the planetary capitalist enslavement, just as in his poems unrelated to Dubrovnik one can sense an unwritten, local cat, from Bell tower or Upper Konol Street, walking along the rooftops of distant places. For his Dubrovnik is not

made of stone but of steps. And that beat rebellion is not solely born of reading the beats, but of reading the world inside and around oneself, something the Beats themselves found way more important. That's why in Šindolić poetics there is also this the clear, unpoetical everyday life, poetical in itself, to those who can spot and recognize a detail.

Predrag Lucić  
Split, September 2016



**Vojo Šindolić** was born on September 14th, 1955, in Dubrovnik. He attended secondary school in Dubrovnik, graduated in comparative literature from the Faculty of Philology in Belgrade, and later from Naropa University in Boulder, Colorado.

From 1976 to 1979, he was editor-in-chief of the only Yugoslavian rock'n'roll magazine, *Jukebox*.

He was a visiting lecturer in Contemporary American Literature at the University of California in San Francisco and Berkley.

He is an honorary member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters and the PEN America and a member of the Croatian PEN Centre, Croatian Writers' Society, and the Croatian Literary Translation Association.

Apart from writing and translating, he has been

making visual arts since 1979. His paintings and drawings are found in museums and private collections in San Francisco, Los Angeles, New York, Leeds, Amsterdam, Venice, Trieste, etc.

Since 1982, he has been working as a contributor at the Croatian Radio 3 (“Poetry Out Loud” and “Diaries and Letters”), broadcasting over 600 half-hour programs on contemporary American and world literature in translation.

From 1975 onward, he lived alternately in Belgrade, San Francisco, Venice, Trieste, Koper. In 2008, he returned to his hometown Dubrovnik, where, enjoying the sea air, the pine tree forest, and the cats’ meows, he lives as a freelance artist.

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### Poetry books:

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*Tuba Mediterana*, u rukopisu (SIZ Award for Croatian culture), 1983.

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*Sredozemna medvjedica*, (limited edition), Dubrovnik, 1987

*Dekompresija*, (selected poems 1980–1984), Dubrovnik, 1988

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- Smrt i druge ljubavi, izabrane pjesme 1973–2013*, Vuković i Runjić, Zagreb, 2013
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Rijeka, 2018

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- A. W. Knight, *Kralj Beatnika*, play, performance "Ulične ljubavi", Splitsko ljeto 1988
- Charles Bukowski, *Ispovijedi čovjeka*, selected short stories, Arion, Beograd, 1991
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