

Body Is A Migrating Stone

Dorta Jagić

**Body Is A
Migrating Stone**
(selected poems)



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Delaying

who knows how many times God paused the world
with the clap of his hands, and then observed
that frozen frailty
so that he could mitigate the fury of one unloved.
and then, when he settled down,
all would continue with a clap,
and nobody knew anything about it,
nor should they.

Grandmas

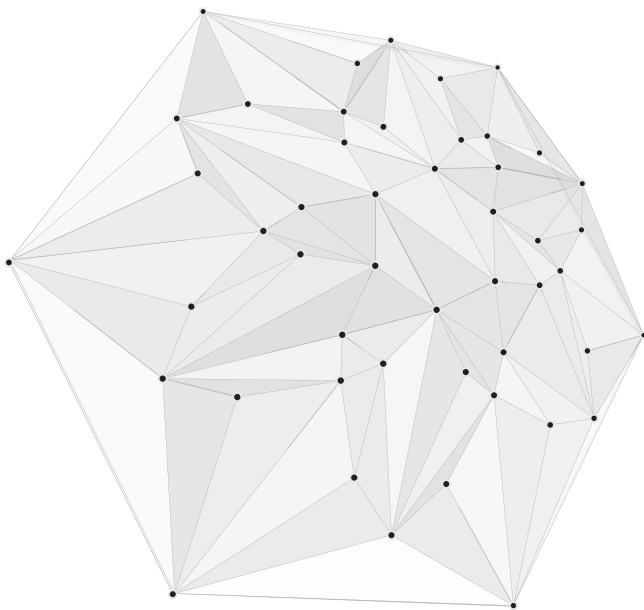
grandma too needs one universal granny,
needs to sit in her lap, where she will, after she dies
just like all the other grandmas,
turn into a warm stove.

A Swan Beneath The Bridge

Sometimes
the world is as majestic as a wedding ceremony:
it hangs over us like an ersatz crystal luster
as the glasses full of nectar crack
against the porcelain teeth
while the chairs rest scrupulously arranged
around the family table set for seven billion
possible happy meals.
When the lights go out
you sometimes feel the blood on your tongue
sensing that our chairs
are dipped into the tundric pig-shit
of those swine swollen with pearls
stuck into Damien Hirst's diamond skulls
as something white, reminiscent
of an empty and poisoned lady's glove
grabs you by the neck

in an attempt to strangle you
like your own personal ID number or ITIN-TIN!
Many aquatic years ago, the piton's ghost
– though it actually happens quite often –
that silhouette entangled itself around
Isadora Duncan's neck in Nice
and Yesenin's neck in St. Petersburg.
Once in a dream I saw
that spring of death, the shadow preying
on the necks of swans
like a dead man's necklace,
that widest noose of this world,
the python reticulatus,
in the river below the bridge in Gdansk
where he had swallowed
some young woman.
Two weeks later, dining all alone,
I spotted him in the terrarium
underneath the floor of a restaurant
staring into his enormous white egg

as I stepped over his head
in my black ballerinas.
The following day, I returned to the bridge
where someone had written *freedom* and
had drawn a bird as a swan glided beneath.
The most beautiful swan in the world.
I thought how wonderful it was that Life
had nestled itself so solemnly
onto Isaidora's cushion
spreading itself out like a pair of wings.



Vertigo

on the first day of our training
you swung the trapeze for
two astronauts under our feet.
I told you to stop. It was too high.
and three more years of shouting.
stop. wait. I'm getting sick.
underneath the inquisitive crowd was staring,
hungry for disasters,
and for them, every morning
he delivered litanies about physics and stars
in the mornings when you vomited
the heavy wedding veil
you begged me not to ever look down.
I could fall.
and I, by pure chance,
did not look up anyway.

you shouted to them that I was your brightest star.
but when extinguished
the stars end up on the floor of a butchers' cold store.

Under The Cheeks

all those necessary words we didn't tell each other
turning into fossils somewhere deep,
in the oldest human jaws.
just like the dreamt and unspoken
fairy tales of the clerks.
it is always good to know
they were not completely lost.
under our severe, sucked-in cheeks
two high school girls on sleds
have been kissing each other
for years near the frozen pond.
in the glory of their naïve hunger,
shy boys were cooking
Persian roses in the worn-out skates.
they are kissing each other violently,
their lips restlessly squealing in the darkness
like naked birds in the warm godly sky.

under our still cheeks they are kissing.
kissing from the moment we met,
in spite of our silence.
and they will never stop, though the match started
with the removal
of your yellow and his pink suitcases
to Poland
far away

Functioning Of The Body

a manual for beginners

body sleeps. scratches.
grows. urinates. frowns. sucks.
sits. pukes. pouts.
blinks. licks. waits. spits.
hits. chases. inhales. crackles.
blushes. darkens. stands. sneezes.
opens. bends. closes. flickers.
breathes. itches. pours. rolls.
stabs. moans. empties. shudders. smells.
jumbles. bleeds. lacrimates. curds.
runs. expands. places. arrives. climbs.
releases. treads. smokes. wraps. dances.
kneels. rises. sizzles. looms.
mourns. rubs. rocks. lingers.
drinks. touches. heats. provides. hides.
dries. dribbles. shines. consumes.
procreates. descends. crackles. drips.

hugs. eats. bites. brakes.
falls. secretes. moves.
undresses. flaps.
goes away.

Body Is A Migrating Stone

there are times when body desires
to abandon its dark litter,
but from its birth house
to the distant seas and mountains
all nails and petals hit at it, everything hurts
as it falls towards the bottom. because it is mortal.
among the stones
there is no stone as heavy as
the human body. *Corpus delicti.*
and so friable when jabbed
by the boundaries of tenderness.
Corpus delicate.
body is a gemstone brimming with blood
and it is heaviest to lift up
once it dies.
body is a stone wich ascends the easiest,
migrates from its bottom upwards

even flies into sky
when someone's much awaited I LOVE YOU
pierces into its spirit inflates it and illuminates it
to gleam like a fountain in Barcelona.

Lunch In The Hospital

by noon already
the hearty soup is being prepared in doctor's
large slippers.
on command, yellow aprons of the hospital lady cooks
flutter like birds and quickly they serve
with breaded meat and beetroot
chubby words in spoons,
to some boasting tired permed hairs, a belly
looms out like a mayonnaise planet
on a brown tray they
bring health in little boats
of tin plates
their bodies billow on low and high tide
of the numb lunch hours, numb supper hours
some of the patients says
it's hard to believe in potatoes after chernobyl
and ladies, like giant potatoes, calmly

glitter under artificial suns
in warm rooms of our distant ward,
they smell like chocolate in a pocket,
and orphanages,
after the royal lunch we sink,
white and yellow shadows soften, elongate
we are satiated as wolfs
it would be the same even if they brought us stones.

Pomegranates Of Istanbul

near the Topkapi Palace a gang
of rumpled kids are racing
the wheelbarrow full of pomegranates
knocking down bloody balls of fruit
with the salvos of their laughter
as they roll down
the streets crowded with tiny hotels, shoemakers' shops
and silk weavers

I do not participate
just watch all those faces brewing
amongst fountains surrounded by cats and swinging
bazaar carpets like a wild swirl of photo-lenses
or Sputnik 1 as it descends

the old Hagia Sophia, just like I,
watches in demented awe

when and how
the Black Sea lowered
that dark umbilical cord
of Bosphorus
down to the Sea of Marmara
like a blue lover's juice
full of aching salt
with thousands of tiny
white wedding gowns those medusas
that burn the skin
between Europe and Asia

Lady Hester Stanhope

*(born in Chevening, Southeast England,
1776 – 1839)*

Dear Wirginia,
That wacky Lady Hester
had her own room and dough.
And her employer, the British Prime Minister
and bachelor, beloved uncle William Pitt
died peacefully in his wealth,
the state assigned her
an enviable sum –
£1200 a month.
British high society was stunned –
convulsed like the form of her red high-heels.
Years later she jumped from
the bottom of crystal glasses, through monocles,
towards the flying carpets and
tender birds of oriental letters.

She was 33.

How symbolic!

Exploring Ashkelon she knew
this quest would be known
as the first modern trek through the Holy Land.

Romantics and celebrities admired;
they say when she came to Athens,
the awestruck Lord Byron leapt in the sea
in proper welcome, like some male siren.

After the shipwreck near Cairo she lost all, took off
her thin dress, donned men's waterproof clothing
and continued towards the spicy East.

Refusing the veil
she tore down every wall and veil of this world
until, with twenty-two camels,
she broke through eastern cities' brass gates
tearing their strict laws apart.

With her nose-tip pointing towards Palmyra,
she crossed a desert of scorpions and Bedouins
became the only woman
welcomed with a laurel crown
in that strange city.
From then the turban on her shaved head
was as a fat ouroboros
gnawing at its own ego-tail.

Emir Mahannah el Fadel was not alone
in dubbing her Queen Hester. But the ancient clay
laughed at those titles.
She sought gold florins buried under Gaza,
yet only unearthed a seven-legged, headless
marble statue. Like an omen!
She smashed and threw it
in the hungry gullet of the sea.
At last
she gave away her camels,
found peace in the Mar Elias monastery;

later atop Sidon hill in a house she called *Dahr El Sitt*,
she welcomed hundreds of refugees, ruled the region
with her monthly pension and lavish gifts.

The secret words of the desert wind
she translated to her whim:

I am the Morning Star, principal rider of this world.

At last, despite the silk, the alabaster and cashmere,
she sank into senility, robbed by her servants.

Dear Wirginia,
she did not write in her cell, just lay alone
with two hunchbacked horses
seemingly sacred to her
in place of a bed –
received guests only at nightfall,
not wanting them to see her human
(all-too-human) face and hands,
walled into that fortress on the hill
like an idol, like a statue.

Isabella Bird

(born in Boroughbridge, 1831 – 1904)

That poor girl named Bird, tiny and sickly fledgling,
flew through insomnia, back pain, headache,
until, at the family doctor's urging
she flung herself out like a hard little stone,
from her home-sling over the world's
healing latitudes.

She started her long journeys from Hawaii,
climbing and descending,
Mauna Kea, Mauna Loa.

From infancy
the road healed her, as did
the horror of a child's abandoned dress.

From infancy
dressed in trousers, she wanted to see the unseen and
watch as the slanted eyes fall
from eastern faces in laughter
like erstaz fish splashing in water

and as the whole Rocky Mountains crumble over her;
its red rocks
falling from an irresistible desperado's heart
the one-eyed Jim Nugent, poet and bully –
but never a husband.
Embracing him, she wrote her bestseller:
A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains –
then left.

Unyielding,
riding days through blizzard,
squinting, eyes frozen,
teeth rattling six months in a cottage
buried under snow,
yet her hair was restless, longed for more exotic wind.
So her comb fell across Japan, China, Vietnam,
Korea, Singapore...
She sketched and wrote it all down,
all the seven hundred
seventy-seven
histories of each snowflake, and every date.

Royal Geographical Society's first woman fellow,
alone in every curiosity,
no warm shower of courtship
kept her kitchen-bound;
rather than candles and tablecloths
she spread out maps, photos, natural history books.
Settling only briefly in her favorite
sister's backyard
her heart craving only a diamond, a single
deep human relationship.
She married only after her sister fell to typhus,
but Dr Bishop soon died too –
her husband, beautiful, ephemeral as a mayfly.
It was as if the living were supposed
to all clear from the path of that
bird's eye, into a new wasteland
shaped like a Cross. In the autumn of her life,
Isabella learned Medicine, became a missionary.
She placed a wicker basket on her head
where India, Iran, Turkey and Kurdistan
dozed in the sun,

chasing adventures with guns and bandages.
Yet when she mounted a black stallion in Morocco,
a Sultan's gift –
using a ladder, tiny as she was –
she thought of her sister.
Her sister as the hand helping her climb.
Her sister, like a sudden scent of powdered sugar
blown by the wind –
her sister's neck a chimney, her hair a home,
her soul, a fireplace.

Lilias Trotter

(born in London, 1853–1928)

Lilias, Lilias, as she smiled
even the roots of her teeth turned seven colors
and her purplish heart
made her walk barefoot
among gardens and observe
that everything exists in a certain spectrum.
when she learned, besides the freedom of the hand,
the laws of lines, colours and shapes,
and how to incise golden cuts on the canvas' wrists
in Venice she met a great painter
John Ruskin
who, intoxicated by her genius,
one day took his best brush
and offered it over her name – Lilias
you are a long-haired dame of paintings
princess of lines and the color of your time.

no matter how restless
no matter how hungry, she kept on
walking bare-headed through allees and gardens
only to stumble on a colorless, thorny crown,
eternal helmet of salvation,
so she took a seat and calmed down
beneath Jesus's crown, combed herself
for the first time,
so hard his blood pierced her skin
and she saw seventy new colors on an acacia leaf
ten new shapes in a bread crumb's form
and, for the first time, harlots, homeless and poor.
frantically at night she tried to save the prostitutes
around Victoria Station;
forty years straight she kept a daily diary on love
while Ruskin, that portraitist, idle,
handsome as King Cyrus,
hung out somewhere in a pub
still hoping that on that cloudy day
his queen of colors has not left forever

into the agitation of an African acorn
into the deep-scented whirl of peace
to save the unsaved,
to educate the illiterate women
in Algeria.

Gladys Aylward

(born in London, 1902 – 1970)

That's how that popular movie showed it –
but maybe that's really how it happened.
It rained on those who stayed close to books
and mantelpieces, tea, cookies and wine
while one humble London nanny, Gladys,
Christian convert
and adventuress of unconstrained tongue,
sallied forth with meager savings
to liberate distant prisoners,
or more precisely free, anoint, and kiss
the hundreds of bound female feet
and souls.

In a cold train – wedged between
coarse lumberjacks and soldiers –
she breathed slowly and took her time

to cut the train's blade deep
into the hard heart of those open spaces,
until the morning when the Trans-Siberian
tipped her into China's endless samovar.
Visibly alone, unmarried,
somewhere in the dust of Yangcheng Province
with old Jeannie Lawson, apostolic missionary,
she opened *The Inn of Sixth Happiness*,
a haven for random journeymen,
cats, tramps, and converts.

She entertained fireside guests
with the Gospels in Chinese
as if recounting sumptuous folk tales.
A hundred times in danger every day,
she yet found time to water flowers,
confronting prison conditions and
attending birds simultaneously.
Adopting – rescuing – hundreds of orphans,
she made it out over the mountains.

For her great deeds
the Chinese named her 艾偉德 –
Virtuous, Honorable.

Half a century on, in Hollywood's gilded teapot,
Ingrid Bergman, she of heart shaped lips
and overly silky shoes
portrayed this short, untidy Gladys,
as leading the bound and tortured
Chinese into Heaven.

Clara Swain

(born in Elmira, New York, 1834 - 1910)

Clara, she is clear
and she is Swain, that swan,
with wings curled in bloody gauze, reeking of
iodine and chloroform.

Clara,
the first doctor and Indian missionary,
wanted to love all, and forever
yet who dares to love
and dress wounds for eternity?
This world serves only a handful of human
pieces on the plate of Love.

Clara enters India on an elephant called
The Methodist Woman's Foreign Missionary Society
giving young Indian women medicine
and the curing arts.

Narrow walls of opulent female chambers overflow
with whispers, tremors, mold and germs, dark diseases

widening and healing
under her thundering
prayers, needles, and procedures.

For all the sick ladies of Zenan
there is little time left, under the red wind
bodies reddened with rash, but healed dreams
rise into the sky like helium balloons
and the smiling teeth, like crystal glasses
at a wedding, break open their tombstones
in an ecstasy of Faith.

Simple as a cake, Clara built
the first hospital for women and children in India,
Clara Swain Hospital.

Probably she touched the tears of the sick
like a tender touch of God's fingertips,
so their tears swayed in a smile
as if some righteous eternity
was being rocked in bed,
like a warm Indian Ocean
under the sheets.

Freya Stark

(born in Paris, 1893 – 1993)

Already in childhood some evil Asolo fairy,
more precisely an odd accident, changed
the fair geography of her face.
Expressed in cuneiform, that brutality translates
into something else.
It wasn't just the factory machine
that seized her golden hair with a bow
and then her face as well.
It was a stab from the world's heavy magnetic needle,
a magnetic knife carving one's face like Holy Bread,
Arabian spikes of Orient, thorns of destiny.
For those scars furrowed her future journeys:
southeast, northeast, in all directions,
the poetry of sand,
dance steps on the face of this little blue planet
among the gaseous giants.

For years after Italy's north,
her nostrils inhale the ancient languages
like narghile fumes,
Latin, Persian, Turkish, and
uttering the names of months
by their lunar calendars,
she flies, sails, writes, and draws on camels' backs.
This woman scarcely ever hungers or droops,
caloric azure from that essential Morning Star
dripping always on her traveller's spoon.
In Lebanon, Baghdad, Beirut, Damascus
living with poets and friends,
studying and wandering;
in carriage rides, with a drain for harem tears,
she sees people everywhere, and loves them –
in the Great War, served in the Red Cross.

Wherever she goes, no rustling haystack dress,
one hears instead her clinking binoculars
and fountain pens,

compasses and maps,
and the footsteps of spies in the Valley of Assassins;
dates, fruit, and wine.
Her days are dangerous – pioneer exploits –
but quiet with writing too,
devoted labor for three books
on the notoriously elusive *Hadbaramaut*.
She lives in a whirlpool of adrenalin enhancers,
uncovering perplexing charts, secret
passages and straits,
walking the paths of Alexander
in ethereal *Thousand and One Nights* haze,
leaving behind an arabesque
of weird female imprints
on the wintry soil of the Arabian desert...
News vendors call her name in passing, strolling ladies
wonder if she's drinking five o'clock tea or tears,
Arabia exhilarates like ground coffee bones
lodged suddenly in the jaws of World War 2.
She takes an agent's job
in the British Ministry of Information

penning it in books: *Letters from Syria, East is West*,
telling her Arab friend, as war is waging,
“I wish you the best.”

She married late at fifty four,
in love with a historian
but soon slipped off her husband’s shoulders,
back on the road.
She wrote again – a final sojourn, to Afghanistan.

From her hundredth birthday, her bones
hungered for the dust from which they rose;
she breathed her last quietly, sating her thirst
on her beloved sand
at the graveyard in Asolo.

Room Of A Lady Traveler

when I come back home with my sullied suitcase
what do I do?

I stand long and wonder at the sill
why all roads lead not to Rome or Moscow
but just this room?

to this dry paternal cube
to the hard box of constant dimensions
ridiculously distorted in its standing
like an exercise bike

I, large and golden
with fluid passports in my hair
a student girl of world airports
always bound again
with the four safety belts
of its empty walls

once again after the seaside
to sit with a torn ticket in this room
is about like
hanging upside down
pendant from a thin hook in the wall,
from force of circumstances
from accident
the flutter of butterfly wings in Beijing
pendant on someone's wish
here to wait for the big days
of christening, wedding and graduation
like the family
ham on the bone

Childish Rooms

some old rooms from childhood
with time become more and more addicted
to dust and attention,
grimly infantile, spiteful.
girls-old ladies.
for example, if this really is my room
why doesn't it shine like johnsons wax
on its own like it did before
why does it let so many kilos od dust
daily on all those valuable things?
as if it secretly snorts
this grey vampire dandruff
or shoots it directly up the vases, carpets, me
in order to make me forget something awful.
no. yet that girl-old lady
leaves what's left of the things, fine, ground
to settle for her "5 o' clock" cocoa

which she will wistfully sip
with the other abandoned rooms
in the neighborhood when I leave her for someone
more mature some
other

Rooms From The Suburbs

the occasional
soft room from our suburbs
has never been outside its house.
never in the thick woods
never fallen into the sea
and got wet
for their slippers, espadrilles, than to fall apart
and set them free
and so the soft rooms fear
always the same breaking of plates,
leaking gas, skin and pancreas inflammations,
wear sunglasses in the night
while they read weekend love novels
constantly water flowers round the house
and they become plastic

and restless
like with forceful kisses
abused children

Rooms With Autumn Trees

at night up in the old town
in damp bedrooms
huge family trees
like baobabs grow from cracked floors.
from their heavy branches flutter
black locks of cut off women's hair and
dry leaves of stern family law.
no one's awake
everyone sleeps somewhere beneath the roots
while in these giants' trunks
new city autumn is cooking
and everything would be dry if
the rains like old austro-hungarian champagne
didn't pour from the treetops all year long
on the dusty wallpapers, on home items,
heavy drops of rain pound
the big grimy mirrors

on the wall, frames with old photos stand crooked,
fall down. stabbing like knives
into the ground and setting the drained girls faces free
with the draft down the steep streets.
in the shadow in piles of dry leaves
abandoned
buckets and shovels
chocolate

Hard Scorpion Rooms

for A.

apart from the smell of mothball
and the atmosphere of polar night
the room of a hardened agoraphobic
has a characteristic
face of a leech and a hard black carapace.

this is the chitin uniform of the scorpion,
in which in the morning it kisses
its victim and closes the door
as if stinging with its tail.
whispers to her every day
“don’t go at work, don’t go anywhere,
do stay home!”
and makes thick coffee of bile
without tongue and guts
soothing with a purr.

scholarly atheists would bet in all churches
in a hundred knightly suits of armour
and thunderbolts
that such a venomous room
alone would survive an H bomb
and tramp the empty world
happy, inhabited
with only roaches
from our mental institutions

Babylon Hotel Rooms

sometimes
in some untidied rooms
of the old Babylon Hotel
there are no more plastic mules or cheap pictures,
they have just evaporated from lack of touch,
and the night lights sunk without a sound through
the carpet into dark
and so nowhere any crusted
human trace on anything at all, curtains
only the dead flies
and the stagnant light upon the ceiling
together buzz a low half-tone.
two thick ropes lie on the floor
like somnolent, gravid snakes
and answer no one on the telephone.
in the middle of the room, sitting alone
the so-called strong man with vast biceps.

playing solitaire, smoking ground
bird plague with a scent of dark cherry.
he claims he has all the bounty of the world
but nowhere does it say that he is god
neither in his ID
or driving licence or in the files.
days at a time he does nothing
only nibbles letters from a bag
of instant soup, instead of the television
el nino on his window casts
always new kamikazes
breathes on his gullet, curses in the liver
coughs out in fear
small nails and clips
wipes the dust, the old dust
sings a little dirge
when shall the sky Butler come in
when shall the Good beat me
and plunder me
and bind me fair to the chair?

Lukewarm Rooms

in lukewarm rooms
a slow danger lurks
one eats soup lukewarm and
drinks lukewarm wine, serves the body
on silver salvers
the skin is so tepid that from it fall
miniature family pictures
lukewarm too the soft cube of day
and doughty the ball of night
tepid Bible on the shelf
and lukewarm the tv set
days at a time on the bed
sprawl limbs and dead pillows
fray like sorrowful expectants
caught in the bloated belly with the child
locked in the womb for years now
the mad child goes not out to the playground

stays seated on rocking chair not set swaying
in the midst of hungry mamma,
lukewarm soup
in the unopened bowl
all wet and mingled
only its eyes are dry from universal
dome of skin, the tepid sky
whose grip does not assuage
nor the song of birds outside
nor the eternally green
traffic light

Too Many Walls In Old Maids' Rooms

long ago designed
back in the middle age as forts
against incursions of the meadow flowers
and fertile rain
old maids'rooms have ten walls each
more loneliness than all other rooms in the house
all hidden from us with numerous optical illusions
and seven seals
only from the busiest roads from the sharp turns
can it be clearly seen
how in these whitish rooms
broached with damp and long nails
something small cocooned moves
while the melancholy tenants write new
ballads of slaughtered sheep
and god as a transcendental being
and from the low road all see

that in the ninth wall
from male guests and
springtime sun
hide embalmed gums and blackened
viruses of dead popes,
dead spinters.

Retired Seas

among the people from Zagreb are numerous witnesses
claiming that retired seas
are just like retired people.
first they dry up and shrink, then find
the best position
to help the swelling of life – near people.
nobody knows who filled up our bedrooms
with those invisible seas.
(the bottom of that sea is the floor
and the ceiling is the surface.)
because of their rapid shrinking,
they are as thick as honey
so the crakling of old fashioned packs
containing ghosts' eyes
no longer drills the ears of sleepers.
nor do parents fear their children will hear them.

even the expensive pictures twist no more
under car headlights;
now they are just searchlights
inadequately positioned.
but the sleepers' greatest blessing is that
now they can go barefoot to the toilet
across the scorching dregs of burnt light bubbles.
the only trouble is when somebody
suffers from insomnia
the sea gets so cold that all the rest have to plug into
the life machines.
as early as the middle of the next week it falls in love
with all the sleepers
and the question arises what
when the family moves on?
nothing bad. this does not confuse it.
just like all furniture, it places itself anywhere
in the removal truck,
just to be as far as possible from the aquarium
because it can't bear all that water and the fish.

A Portrait Of The Black Poet With A Dog

His face is a brown, well-healed scar
and his body wraps around far away cities
like a yearning ivy
whose root blue and enchanted women wish to touch
with their poisonous nail,
to cut into it, or turn it to dust.
He runs, he doesn't sleep,
he writes about love, and rain, and revolutions
virtually fixed
like a timetable clock on the railway station
in Atlantis.

In a port tavern somewhere in the South of France
I noticed by chance bull's blood
dripping from his tongue on the pavement.
And I called him Hemingway,

but I could have named him
The Snows of Kilimanjaro.

He's not a substance from our time
and when he sits in a cafe in Mostar
covered with the flour of waiting,
his fingers lengthen and turn into dukes' keys
and his back grows into a field of tulips
calvados nectar
made in anarchistic monasteries
drips from his back
on his beloved dog and tepid beds.

A Portrait Of A Girl With A Pearl Earring In Alaska

In Alaska, between cottages, like a baby tooth it grew
gushing from the famous painting onto the ground,
a living portrait of the Girl with a Pearl Earring,
a women with her flesh of muddy river rib and
her costume of pearls from fins. Serene darkness
of marine engines, of masculine sweat
and the black oil of curses
hum around her delicate skin.

Wild Alaskan salmons and her fellow fishermen
call her Mili, for her throat
gives off honey and milk. People gladly
gaze into the warm wake of her iris,
her eyes are of a wild fish, peaceful,
as if funerals are no more,
no infected blood from the elbow of a boy slave,
nor old American pills in the soldiers' pockets.

As if with God grasping her hair,
Mili walks the waters of the far North
since her childhood,
she rolls up trousers to children
by the narrow river banks
and at night springs out like a bone from the throat
of a husky, straight up,
towards the white star.
Sometimes she delivers messages to bears
on the edges of the world, gilded with ice.

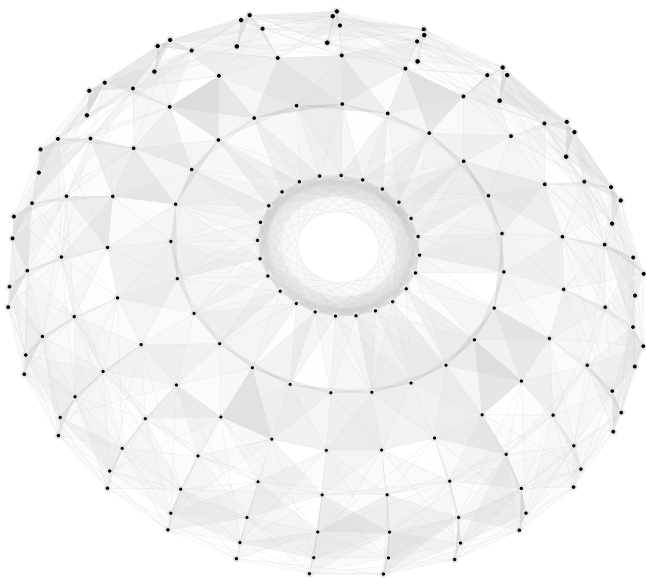
When she finds no work on the ship,
with her own bare hands she builds a cottage
out of every passed out trunk
and whistles, tongues sings in blazing celestial tongues
between the scalding pots and pans
between the walls of a restaurant in Naknek.

But even in the air fish come first.
In the airplane, she recalls the famous fishing story
that bore the secret of the number 153.

Upon landing, she creates a vast fishing net from words,
then she gives it knitting, drops it into the deep
and suddenly, from all directions silver salmons lance
the curly hair of her Adriatic father
with whom she shares her last name and her face.

And while she teaches herself all Croatian languages
in the obscurity of a Rembrandtian room
in Upper City,
her face, like a beacon, illuminates
the letters in the book.
Her saliva is salty from the farness,
like the Bering Sea,
Her wealth is the silver from the fish skin.

Her only grief is
a that one prayer that does not take off, it remains
stranded on a parched hole of a felled
kindred, a man-tree of a kind.



A Potrait Of King Solomon Walking Through The Garden

That tower happened, that being long after
or before us,
when birds ran into
the glass panels of God's heart
and their small skeletons
turned into giant planets.
In the tenth century before Christ,
in an amalgamate of philosophy, botany, zoology,
in the salted plasma of poetry,
lived king Solomon, named Preacher,
his face a mixture of David Bowie and Emil Cioran.

Most of the time, like a broken brass organ
hundred and two meters tall,
he walked through his garden among ponds
in a black turtleneck and velvet
desert boots.

He meditated on God and world
and whispered words “all is vanity”.
Bach’s Toccata and Fuge in D-minor
could be heard from his spine at times.

Before his very eyes peacocks, monkeys,
singers and zither players paraded in vain.
The king knew that even his lashes
were before his time.

With his index finger filled with Spirit
seven thousand meters long
he had written *The Song of Songs*,
and then the king conceived a poem
as heavy as a neutron star,
longer than the white coat of sun,
deeper than the earth’s shoes,
harder than the diamond tomb of jealousy.
It was written for us
in his blue wounded navel that binds him
with each galaxy to the God’s teeth.
For a moment, we bite into his Adam’s apple,

a song sharp to touch like jaw's angle
in the *Ecclesiastes*, chapter 12.

*“While the sun,
or the light,
or the moon, or the stars,
be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain.
In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble,
and the strong men shall bow themselves,
and the grinders cease
because they are few,
and those that look out of the windows be darkened,
And the doors shall be shut in the streets,
when the sound of the grinding is low,
and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird,
and all the daughters of song shall be brought low;
Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high,
and fears shall be in the way,
and the almond tree shall flourish,
and the grasshopper shall be a burden,
and desire shall fail:*

*because man goeth to his long home,
and the mourners go about the streets:
Or ever the silver cord be loosed,
or the golden bowl be broken,
or the pitcher be broken at the fountain,
or the wheel broken at the cistern.
Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was:
and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.
Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all is vanity.”*

Death In Milan

“to all true victims of fashion”

Some people are ominously beautiful
like the voice of Marlon Brando
like the aristocratic lunatic asylums,
like a nighttime beech forest,
medieval fortress prisons,
like endless parlors
of poisoned casinos.
On the day when they decide,
they flay their lips to God
and leave into darkness
with prey.

When they eat themselves
they curl up like cats
into their warmth
of an extinguished candle.

Their names are
disturbingly graceful
like evening bells in Milan
on the last day of the world:

*Ruslana, Nafisa, Hayley,
Daul, Cibebe, Belmonte, Miyu,
Ambrose, Viveka, Gia,
Jennifer, Cheyyene.*

Faith Of The North

Ice is splintering from stars and a thick
lighthouse. It has a sharp taste of creator's dust.
In a wooden shack sits
old silence in sheepskin coat and smokes.
A man is gluing matches and every now and then
looks into her eyes.
On Vyacheslav's table trinkets are scattered,
the Cloud Atlas,
compass and an article on Gagarin yellowed with age.

Vyacheslav,
Vyacheslav Korotki
follows the sea and speed of wind
sitting in a boat
he had made with his own hands
rife with egg yolks
of sun that never unfurled in the Arctic.

At dawn he spreads his cobalt blue eyes
which appraise the cold like
the night's might. He licks knives
like distant eyebrows of his wife.
He is the North which
believed to be a man.

First Person Singular

a girl with her face always buried in
a book inscribes into the bones of paper:

I'm still young, evening solitude,
desire, mirror and brush, that's nothing.
Just a night hypnosis, the rattling
bones of serpent legs
which don't exist yet lure me to fall
mercilessly into my bed
like under the wheels of a rushing car or
into a deadly wave of Sylvia Plath's breath.
To lock myself into the house like Rosemary Tonks,
or even to lie down and never raise again!

That's nothing, however, just an intoxicating singular.

when I sledge, after all, down all the seven cases
into the abyss lined with potbellied
buddhist mirrors
whose inertia and emptiness I hate,
notorious elegies are sung by the spectators
about the hermitess within her sick house walls
they sound like the old women's broken canes
so close to the clattering teeth of giant
Garbo who barely walks
like her words, "I want to be alone!"
she's drumming her silver cane handle, this woman
who would after a few decades still
respond to her maiden name, something between
Alma, Irena, Vesna, Ivana, Zrinka, Jana
those tiny old women passing in their sleep
in some soiled bathtub
in the middle of the deserts of Gospić, Knin,
the deserts of Arizona and Pašman.
look, look
a naked woman in ice cold water,

the cold bathtub inside her
and desolate lands in dingoes

a photograph coming into existence
on the wardrobe needs to be torn
at a junction with ten broken traffic lights
they lie in their bathtubs, overaged beauties
choked with the green
umbilical cord of their unborn girls.

Nothing to anyone, just the singular.

when the ice-cold wind blows through a Sunday
those odd old women with their oblong
first person singular
I sometimes meet in the streets, hobbling
in their doc martens

their young green eyes and faces bleed through
capillaries and the strands
of their gray hair fall to the sidewalk

due to the poisonous acid
in the mouth of this wretched city
as a symptom of the fate of those who entered
the deep well without windows
the well without balconies and vistas
the well dug into the fiery black ground
under the Mariana Trench
filled with motionless drilled-out bodies
of lonely old women
who might have wanted to bite their duality
until it bleeds,
into the shape of cross,
into the clay casting of love, to seep
into the bowels of love,
into the warm arteries,
adding antibodies to their precious blood
which flows for years in the artificial sap
from the heart of the first bull singular,
as their book says:
yet it is not, yet they are not
yet it is not

Praise To The Excellent Woman

till noon the crazy virgin sleeps, sleeps
like a spoiled trout on oil, sleeps on her right arm
on her heavy thigh, on every
aching bone in her body.
up there she sleeps for the city, back here
hangs for daddy
and hair grows upside down.
her husband's rib is muttering to her,
the history of women is muttering
and the heavy sunset at the bedroom window
like on Flemish oil.
her left hand is hanging unsifted above the floor
in a palm of her hand
there is an over-ripe brier withering
the fruit in the brier has been ripening
for a long time now,
a precise sketch as famous as the budded one, '48

a fig clear-headed again
inside the fruit a crucial decision swells
and there is a mechanical donkey
to travel to the first baked strudels, to early mornings
an ant is treading over her uncovered leg, shouting,
get up, wash your face, take the narrow expressway
and give birth to healthy offspring in motels
so that you are still young when you reach the point
when you are hugged
when you become an installed mom
and a womans's time is a precious awl and a boulevard
the expressway passes through the drum of a washer
and the sweet entanglement of electric fittings
into turbines, neon socks and needles
because work is a sweetish saliva concentrated
in a dry heart
and a worker's sweat is angry spitting
into an Egyptian cauldron with garlic and cooked meat
executing a leg into a plastic bucket
overflowing with knocked-out quails
is a matter of will!

the parents' flesh is already throbbing out of her nose
like the moon like the stone hitting the palm
of the hand the teeth, the virgin eats
while she sleeps dozing and despairing – where to?
and the order is get up, look over to the center
of the city above the children's square.
the star of Bethlehem has tilted
its leaves are out.

No One Writes To The Clerk

(page found in the nonexistent diary)

that silence,
all the neighbors went to the Gogol workshop.
(t.k. and m.ž. and r.k.)
so only fishes bark.
actually I do not have a mirror, to look closer
at how the plastic crucifix yawns
behind the knitted curtain
(miracle of the eternally
immovable, crucified figure)
and the evening is already here,
that whoremonger of color.
and at night, the city blabs nonsense in some
happy language.
I do not understand a word.
it is quiet in the room:
and my lizard is hidden under the broken radio.
he claims: that's all for today.

a naked lightbulb waits until I burst over the bed
and squeeze a drop of black ink
on the white of its eye.
so then it would really be quiet.
and I do not have another wish.

Opus Emily Dickinson, Poem 288

"I'm nobody! Are you nobody too?"

I'm nobody,
are you nobody too?
hostelry, swan, needle.

very clearly
children are the most nobody,
children live down there,
below the waist of people.

they are located low
they are not famous and do not drink
valium and alcohol.
they don't have money and
do not make important decisions for
nature and society.

some even think they are Kinder-eggs.
they shake them, open up,
and then put the parts together wrong.
allegedly,
kids are there to be pinched on the cheek
and to be shoed in front of the television.

children are nobody at all.
just a pebble, a shadow, a penguin.
I am her poem 288 and nobody.
shhh! are you nobody too?

I Am The Portrait, The Journey And The Life

there's a table in my hand – apples in my face.
there's a table in my hand and a chair and a wall.
there's nothing in the wall.
there's a new world on the chair and a hand
on the wedding table.
the two hands at the table collecting crumbs
are not mine. they belong to a young portraitist,
who searches for me,
who brings me to life,
who loves me.
in the biggest crumb there's corn for the pigeons
and dust for the dogs.
in the smallest – the forgotten round square.
in the square there's exactly ten oiled spoons.
each spoon for each day on the long journey
through the heart that is a desert in the old white Golf,
the White Arrow.

My Man A Psalm 21

down
the spurt
through the drainpipes
the cannons of Grič, the viaducts
and the raincoats prayers soared to the father
with just the right number of knees
discharged straight into the third heaven
and following the longest, fourth terrible winter
they gushed forth like an echo, came flying to us
into the little croatian sky
like a lion, pigeons, fish
these god's eyes of the trinity
these eyes like a summer train to Split,
like night sledging, like a cracked life
of an agave.

here the sky is Lazarus, come out
the Lazarus sky knocked down the rock and came out
of the cathedral's glyptotheque
it unwrapped its bandages, healed its dry
Bethlehem star.
underneath it, low, god's hands
have strangled the clouds of guilt
poverty and war,
you know which, the ones that old pigs
have farrowed, from magpies, the little black
clasps of the alliance
with isis and a baby that neither grows
nor knows who that wounded man is
that man psalm of mine.
now finally he sings freely
breathing rapidly through god's eyes
like a child who has just run out from
an unlocked closet
the ancestors' inherited burden is gone
and in three-days time it grows into all the home
me and my children need, by virtue of god's words

smear'd on the oil, the brook
at night paints psalms in the atelier,
names fruit and things.

every saturday
films a documentary about his stroll
through the garden of eden
and his holding the saviour's hands
with a nail in it
and how all those
plastic prayers to the saints
are falling out of his mouth and drying on the ground
in a string of grains
for inflating
and dying

Night Trains

suitcase in the wardrobe is ready but
a weighty station building isn't on my frail table
nor a whistle or a signalman
just a non-traveling shadow
of books and notebooks,
dark blue tea for traveling on the spot is cold
and the world map for ironing the earth
turns into flat board

when I travel nowhere
I'm locked like a French novelist,
like an addict, and night trains lure me from afar
with bright windows and tinkling,
they wave at me with flapping curtains, and envelop
arms and necks of sleepy travelers
with curtains just for fun

like Isadora Duncan's small techniques of death
with verve and full of intricate stories
like dark Orient-expresses.

when I travel nowhere,
trains on the town's edge slide gently
through the dark scented world
detached from the station like adventurers daydreams
they fly like children of dandelions on the wind
penetrate like daggers the fat of inert stations.
sullen steel trains escape the traps
of standing with ease,
and I would like to write those words in succession
intercity alta, indian pacific, eurostar paris transsibir,
tundra express, great southern rail, train grande vitesse.
and wagons are travelling again tonight
to another time-space without me
like razors of northern winds
their wide open blades cut off
blunt shadows in the broad night

when I travel nowhere,
I miss the nights behind windows
of my room becoming red, blue and warm
like a resin from shining sea creatures
while stars wriggle like plankton, and jelly beans
and harsh winters are warmer for hands
from the languidly warmed up air in the room

I stand by the window like a night porter
and listen as the trains
incise their spines
into the thick black woods of the south
only trees screaming with joy can see the knives,
yews and pines, terebinth and holm oak
overhang over the motionless land, over the sea
and over buried bones from all wars
and all peaces.
only the sweet-smelling trees travelling nowhere.
they stand still like bones of missionaries,

of sailors and train operators
buried in the collective area, in the seabed,
an earth-bed

Summer Is Not Sacral

you wanted everything to happen this summer.
we should convert and pray to the colors.
but, for me summer is not sacral.
it's true that all year long proselyte painters
have been hatching beneath my vertebrae
but they waited for the spring storm
to gather and emerge.
I begged you: freeze all your senses
until the next spring!
at the dawn of the equinox the blood of allegiance
will gush from our nostrils
and we will become the owners
of Bethlehem's attics
with the stable of yellow-blue winged mares.
you couldn't wait. at the summer solstice
you curiously glanced

into the rowdy grey suspicion of my words.
disappointed,
before you left, the last thing you saw
was a drunken pilgrim
throwing a match onto the hay
and me with an apron, broom and blackened lips
clearing up those scorched Bethlehem ruins.

Flying Stones

where did you get that pebble in your belly
you can fly with?
for that pebble I fell in love with you.
winters and summers you drive to work
with your long hair loose from its bun
and in the spring you stop and sway
where the sorrel stalk broke.
and you do nothing at all;
just look like a river air larva.
in those days I dream I'm wrapping your face
with a wedding veil
and cuddling you with the breathing feather, or
turning with my bare feet the handle of
the old-fashioned coffee grinder
and kissing you, kissing until I've ground
all those black beads into fragrant dust.

To Fly With Warm Stoves

at days when I love nobody
it rains and I let
newspaper boats float down the street.
neglected tin soldiers sail in them
pulled out of god's body long ago, just for me
to wipe them, to polish them.
still I do not splash into the first sewage
and I do not say thanks either, nor do I buy
someone a lottery ticket
or stuff my pants with new books
for I give up on the vows with nonbiblical cabinets.
if only, while riding the bus back
I could close my eyes and relax
and in my mind learn,
for all the living creatures' sake, to drive
an old golf just like captain Noa did.

to straighten up, remove a cow from the road
tell everyone down at the turnaround
our secret name taken out of
bread, our crumb, our pass.
if only to kiss you o god on a day like that
as something final
and before the post office at the turnaround closes
send some drunk his lost id card
expecting nothing in return.

in those days when I love nobody
the sky is different at dusk.
it gets vulgarly gray, congealed,
inconsolable over little girls with bags of chips
that on a crowded bus stand near the door
in need of motherly love.
if only the sky now opened above the city
and rain poured out of that disemboweled fish,
if only a thunder roared as though rising from a grave
so that I could run out of that storm
and make it home for the pancakes

with my dear, still unknow family wrapped in them.
so that I could,
in fact, some woman outside in the night rain,
slowly take off my wet boots
and look inside at my future kids
as they grow on the carpet eating munchmellows,
read lines from Ecclesiastes to their handsome daddy
and out entire street flies up into the sky
lit by huge red-hot stoves
various special effects
from some Spielberg's Christmas foundation
for the curled promised children.

Honeymoon On A Tram

on Sunday evenings after the service
on a foggy tram I can always begin to create
from nothing.
not even the major is there, or a canary.
there is no love letter that
the female ticket inspectors have left
in the ticket machine
no dry towel, no pink-shoe polish,
no ladies' room.
not a single cardboard box with an abandoned
little girl and a note.
by the look of the pathetic bareness
of Czech windows and seats
it is obvious that the first thing Stephen King's
time eaters do on a tram
is shift their clocks to winter time.

I could cry over a slice of bread
that somebody has thrown away
and a glass of red wine on a stair
by the front door.

I do not feel like it
because there is no music or heating,
or that screenwriter from national tv
who does not believe man went to the moon.
no fake M.A.'s with flat feet
or leftover mines under the seats.

on a cold tram number twelve seen
or bothered by nobody
I am dragging a cable all the way from God
to my permanent dear
to the neighbor husband called almost as me.

I wish I could finally drag him over here
and sit him down, at least
to the last stop.

all I know is that he is as handsome as a Gypsy and
that he uses paintbrushes to move around.

but there is nobody on the deserted seats
to read him his rights and handcuff him
in case he comes in at the next stop.
and if he happens to ask me
the same cheeky question has you married
how am I supposed to go on my honeymoon
with all these accordions and wedding dishes
before the Kvaternik square stop.

Single People I Know

from the moment they decide to remain in the body
just one half note
somewhere on some cliff, street, anywhere
some single people start to exale toward inside
and fully mistakenly try
to solve that choking as a mechanics
or a chess problem
thus skillfully rerouting the wires
of comforting thoughts
and the speed of whirlwinds in the head
as if it were an electric fan
although gray winds do not exit like that
so they curb them with peppermint tea
and parisian biscuits
then drive them out with devout tears
because of a toothless gipsy woman and
a sick kitten on the road

but the choking remains.
fear is the sticky will that remains
generally, the fear of love
at its heart is an alcoholic chamber-pot
that at least one single person
I kind of know
just cannot bury and burn after use.
he locks his frightened eyelids
just outside of
my open window in Nikola Tesla street
and pulls the eyes the color of me
deeper into his eye-sockets
and then, after a walk,
gets into his unwashed bathtub
alone, with two waterproof markers,
and thinks art is enough
he harkens all night long through the drain
as a cup of coffee
with a marriage proposal on sugar wrap
drops and breaks and shines
on the night pavement

but come morning he already puts
his shoes and a cigarette on his shoulder
for a long walk to some store
as far away from a kiss
that could wake up the dead
from exhaling, in fact from everything,
some single people hug each other by buying
watches with a smiling face
at the holiday of giving
for the two lucky ones
in the apartment
next door.

Love

she crossed the street on red.
green came on and laughed.
she said something to a pigeon.
the pigeon to a sniper.
the snipers lowered their eyes
and held their handkerchiefs crying.
the handkerchiefs were soaked with healing.
rain was in the air. ripe like grapes.
grapes dark like draw-well sweep.
the sweep pretty like sandals.
the sandals strange like a wedding party.
she took them off. not needed when walking on
puddles. that expensive fig water.
she walked through,
and a promise came along the road.
it blackened and carried her.
she passed it by near the bridge without a deep sigh.

her cold hands started to applaud.
the hands like pain. the pain like a grave.
the grave like glowing embers.
her tear grew long like a line for bread,
a long line for this day rose in the bread,
but that love, that promise
is in another day.

Cantata On Coffee

at the table in the cafeteria
that is a barbershop and a casino
i.e. the whole world
I am sitting and drinking Turkish coffee
with French king Louis XIV
(the first espresso machine has yet to be invented
in about two hundred years,
so I'm sipping a blackie)
watching silently through the smoke
my huge red tail growing much like Louis'
while he is bragging how his little Dutch coffee tree
has been a mother to millions of others in America
and all around the world.
meanwhile in the corner seven aristocrats
quietly play a game of *ombre*
sipping on their coffees from handless cups.

here and there they show their thin serpent-like
tongues enveloped in fat brownish tar.
closer to our table, the Coptic monks
humps on their backs growing ever larger
mutter something over their cups,
while the Arab doctors debate whether *arabica* is
any better than *coffea robusta*.
just as I, drowsier than before, mention to Louis
that I've grown sick and tired of this idle ritual
and that I shall never ever have a single cup,
doctor Sylvestre Dufour,
the discoverer of caffeine, walks in
correcting me impatiently from afar:
no, darling, you shouldn't call it coffee or *nutmeg*
but rather Arabic wine.
due to fermentation. that's original name.
avoiding the crowded table
where they read coffee grounds
he comes over and sits with us.
the wiater swiftly brings him
his freshly-squeezed orange juice

and tells him how yesterday,
after enjoying his first cup of coffee
silly Pope Clement VII proclaimed it publicly
a Christian drink
they all had a sip of blackie and laughed.
finally I stamp out the little serpent
below the table with my foot
and get up to pay the bill as Louis is always short
thinking to myself
how clever were those merchants from Italy
selling wine and lemonade
when they called it
the devil's drink.

Song Of The Homeless

here are many sparrows
they fall on the town like snow off God
and only a few silken bread crusts on the sidewalks
when you want them in your hand
hot chestnuts fly too high above dark
Zagreb, black town
of grey hair and neon ads, at its command
parks multiply, and quick lapsing shadows,
dappled balls and strollers, some faces
shed leaves and rusty brown wallet clasps
the banks spin on their axes
merry rows of kisses pass me by
the murmur of hugs
the Lidias dapple and the Ivanas nest
in warm slippers
tv antennas sprout atop buildings
like enameled teeth

red lamps come on
too bad, i no longer follow
the graceful motion of branches
the stellar night sea thins out
those yellow shooting stars fat with salt
I say
one just mustn't go to bed riddled with frostbite
should set a fire along the body's edges
pour oneself an alcoholic star,
fall headlong into the night and say:
good knife!

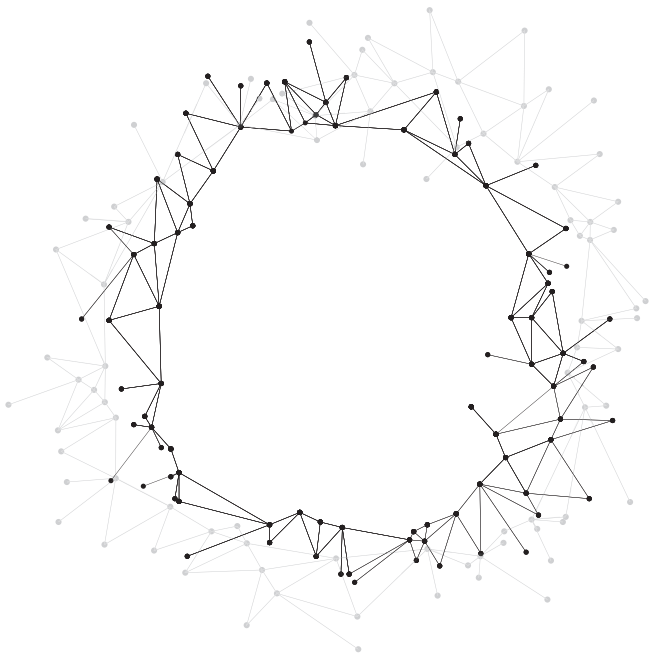
Song Of A Young Lady Saint

in the meadow above my grandma's house
as a child a snake bit me
and it promptly died
I ran into the house
no one was there, I just
heard the humanoid butterfly say
agnus dei!
how beloved am I
before the first mountains and the first strawberries
embraced, softly strung up
invented before the invention of wheat and salt
how fully I belonged to the first things
not even the world's stupid pan on top of the head
no sob no ear swollen as a pie
can peel me now
like a potato skin and toss me
into the roman-public mud

while I dance and skip in front of grandma
who's back from the store
His head's inside me like a lantern
and his blood in my throat like vanilla
even before the world began my hair was growing
and today I have long hair
I comb with a red-hot comb
every day I cry over the open
mirror in my hand
those who haven't met
the God of Israel
comb their hair in panic
to the wrong side

Lady Saint From Nobody's Calendar

as in Heaven, so on Earth
when she rubs her lips with oil
she grows big and takes off her shoes
like a water-walker
wading into the river
to jump from joy
every single day
for being able to speak out
the unsurpassable inconceivable wonder
first she
than that little wild boar
waiting under a stone
to be summoned
into existence



31st Birthday

if that morning
even if it is your 31st birthday
you don't get out of a cake
or bed as a God's child
wearing a leather waistcoat
with red embroidered skates
your whole day is littered with worries,
as if with tissues for cleaning eyeglasses
and something like a spread, well-worn wolf skin
hardens on your purse
and on the zipper of your trousers
catching your nails, your mobile phone and wallet
disturbing cosmic signals
sent to you by some resurrected supreme being
on days like that you stuff yourself
with chicken for lunch

and sit down to write average chick poems
due to that growing tension in your neck
and the rising water level of the Cetina River
then you call your editor, your cousin,
and your only living grandma
while the messy monster squirms inside your womb
crying quietly and sipping black coffee
whining below your armpit at dusk
only to rip you open and fill you up with stones at night
even though it is he who is actually dead
and ridiculous
the next day hunters and surveyors ogle from window
how worry failed yet again
to extend the life of the birthday girl
by at least one more
bloody elbow.

Literally, Only Literally

the night before the exam
on Christian mystics
I dream that in the black body of St. Augustine
I fly through space,
looking for stars, especially supernovas.
suddenly I hit a large one from behind.
it's Greta Garbo,
and with a blink of her eyes she writes on my hand:
"I was always so far away from earth,
that, even if I burned out so long ago
the sand of light still rains on you..."
and so happy that she has met someone from earth
she offers me a bottle of mothers' milk,
that is the lactation of her mom,
the big star Alfa Centauri

On Shadows

one should know that
shadows arrived from Neptune.
wherefrom they lay extension cables
over which sooner or later we stumble and die.
empty and blue is their Book of Books
that they often recite from.
figging us, their bones crackle
under the load of the secretive that they see.
(a loud-mouthed woman whisperingly said to me –
ah I saw the zest with which your glass stuck out
as you swilled from it!)
they nourish on chips of cuticles
at the edge of fingernails
as they wait for us strictly in the sun.
when bored they make fringes on the timeline
of the future (or something similar, with time.)

long fingers of their path-finders
growing from pot flowers
size up crossroads and slopes.
mostly moles and tongues get on their nerves here.
all things considered, when any of them die
they are buried under children's stickers.

A Brief History Of The Moon

at the time when folks still ate soil and
were happy and bodily clean without touching water
there was no moon in the sky
because it was fused with the rivers.

one evening in spring
folks began to drink water simply because
it was forbidden
and at night time they drank up all the moonlight.

the next morning they woke up mortal, watery, dirty
and the moon went up into the sky
to be at our service as an impression
of our first, clean forehead.

Primordial Web

for weeks
my grandfather's
expensive old pocket spider
spins images of the creation of spider world
in that dusty, northernmost room.
by now it's discernible that the first spider
emerged as he did
because the paleo-ballerina aged and got fat,
died deserted and buried in a moldy little slipper
from which she wriggled out three days later
as a diadem spider.
a very proud and angry spider,
an ingenious madman, filled with ballet skirt threads.
(these silk threads are more than ideal
for the innocent-like revengeful meshwork.)
by the way, do you know that spiders in the cosmos
roar louder than lions?

Circles In Chestnut

autumn is here already.
this is the season of falling to the heart
and I am stuck at the mouth.
how many more dates with gray gassy pins
that all have to be hit by the logic of the bowl
filled with King David's verses?
the classic chestnut is here already.
how many more Jeremiah's sweetbreads
must I eat in order to be purified?

the black lady bag is torn already.
the one I prayed for
this summer
and then got it as a present.

Antimartini

a poem for new beginnings

shall I ever go by train trough that warm Martinez
in California and by chance
tip into my lap lovely antimartini
(two parts water and one of ice,
certainly with no green olive!)

I imagine
when I leave a ticket on the seat, a treating letter
to Ms Death I shall go to the corridor
and live long at the window.
the other passengers will bet \$500 that I have
for years drunk something cheap and poor
at the bar tables in my transition Balkan land
from which a long brandy man's beard has grown.
trough the windows of the rapid train
the sun will pour in my face with a thin twist
of lemon, I shall nibble it
I shall pass by train trough this Martinez

fast, sharp, relaxed
like a knife in a gateau
until my tongue splits from happines
and from my words fried tacks
drop out on this wealthy foreign land.
I would like such a train to rush
through warm Martinez for years
until my impoverished hairnets tear,
terrified dates and deadlines
like pillars of belatedness.
conductor, another antimartini please!
may it be hot and everlasting
before getting down again to the cold
domestic railroad
station stone.

The Earthquake On Good Friday

22:50

all of a sudden,
our big house wobbled
like a punctured lifeboat
on the wave of everything
larger and larger and larger
than we are

Poem About Eternity

the neighbor dropped in this morning
and said: "I'll sit down for a moment!"

My Grandma's Bardo Thödol

up-turned insects claim
that in all of Dalmatia only the melancholic
blacksmith, grandpa Stipan, died.
in the old smithy for years
they argue about it with the flies,
while in the fragrant curing shed
the crushed matrimonial light bulbs witness
that since the wedding he casually took off
with knees towards the ceiling
if an eye was not kept on him.
once, luckily, he got stuck in the branches
of a big hornbeam above the house and
from that moment he looked
more and more like a blue balloon
with a complicated mechanism
in a suitcase near the ground.

although, at one unbearable dawn,
granny Ana untied the ropes around his legs
and quickly helped him in the moment of his death
to lick the dust from the arrow of first love.
an essential ritual
so he could fly in the right direction:
towards the golden pendulums
god has forged above our village

Poetry In Its Prime, on Dorta Jagić's poetry

Since its beginnings and in its most audacious tendencies and phases, modern poetry has been defined as an adventure of the linguistic imagination, as constant crossing of boundaries where metaphors cease to teach us about understanding and start communicating intensity and transforming meaning into body. The extravagance and playfulness, but also seriousness and dedication of Dorta Jagić's poetry is one such adventure, bringing us back to the beginning over and over, that is, to the word itself and its bodily "capsule". This could be because, as suggested by the poem "Genesis", before there where meaningful words and meanings we could cozy up to, there might have been "an endlessly thick boob / which went boo-boo-boo-boo / and which, when it said the

meaningful Word by mistake / one afternoon / collapsed into itself / and caused our universe.” If our linguistic universe really is a mere coincidence, result of an error, as this poetic imagery suggests, then Dorta’s poetry could be said to represent one of its alternatives filled with the echoes of the pre-cosmic boo-boo-boo.

Dorta Jagić’s poetic trajectory started in 1999 when she received the Goran’ Award for Young Poets, followed up by her book *Plahta preko glave* (Sheet Over the Head). The book captured the attention of both the audience and the critics, for instance, Zvonimir Mrkonjić’s** review started with the exclamation: “We have a poet!” Her poetics was molded in the tradition of textualist poetry or

* Goran is an award for poets under 30 given for their unpublished manuscripts. It was established in 1977. It is presented during *Goran’s Spring* poetry festival.

** Zvonimir Mrkonjić (1938), a renowned poet, anthologist, translator and critic.

the poetry of linguistic experience, especially the Quorum^{*} Generation, while critics also warned about a dash of ludism akin to Slamnig^{**} which can be seen in her puns, agile play with lyrical phrases and witty absurdism. However, what draws the readers in is not a creative hogging of influences, but that which is specifically hers and sometimes difficult to pinpoint. We could say there are maelstroms of meaning and images, surrealistically bold metaphors, which are, for the most part, based on something totally ordinary and banal, an everyday situation or motive, which unexpectedly turn into

* *Quorum*, a bi-monthly literary journal established in Zagreb in 1985. It gathered numerous authors, encouraged individual voices, theoretical awareness and intermediality, to the point of representing the poetics of the eponymous generation.

** Ivan Slamnig (1930–2001), Croatian author, translator and theoretician. His poetry is marked by ludism, artism and playfulness with language in all its variants, relying on the Croatian and European literary legacy and expressing great irony. His work has influenced many poets of the younger generation.

the miraculous and bizarre and then appear to us completely new and alien.

These twists are the building blocks of her next two books. *Tamagotchi mi je umro na rukama* (Tamagotchi Died On My Hands) is based on the principle of describing the origin and laws of possible and impossible lyrical worlds, which deconstruct our world in many fascinating ways. For example, we find out that “out of all gangliac organisms on the planet (...) the most nervous ones are the housewives”, about the patron saint who has the body of a Sony TV set or the rubber composition of Greek soil used by angels to “cut chewing gums with collectible philosopher stickers.” *Tamagotchi* showcases Dorta’s brilliant way with lyrical associations and metaphors, through which the world making spectacle takes place in just a few verses. In her next collection, *Đavo i usidjelica* (The Devil and the Spinster), love is at the heart of the vortex, the addressees cyclically changing, all ending with *Apaga Satanas!*, an eloquent epilogue

about the outcomes of encounters and relationships sung and cloaked in myths.

Kvadratura duge (Square Footage of a Rainbow) represents a turning point in Dorta's poetry – the former playfulness and agility with imagery is balanced against an equally bold discourse in terms of metaphor, but more serious in tone and laden with symbolism, deeply intertwined with Christian motives, spiritually rich and free of any orthodoxy or institutionalism. As she points out in her *Mali rječnik biblijskih žena* (A Small Dictionary of Biblical Women), Jesus is a maladjusted hero, both religiously and socially, he is the way to overcome the parameters of everyday existence, which crushes “the black baklava” of bodies and feeds it with guilt. *Square Footage of a Rainbow* is a unique example in Croatian poetry as it does not rely on sentimentality or common denominators to depict the struggle of the frail and fragmentary body which wants to soar into a different existence. In the following book, *Kauč na trgu* (Couch on the

Square), Dorta's poetry is soaked in dark, existential tones and deals with issues of unemployment and illness. The feeling of being cramped is excellently represented in the cycle with descriptions of different rooms, opposed to the preferred moving and traveling as the symbol of freedom. This book is also marked by tension which takes place in the body, as seen by the first and last verse in "Return to God": "she went away from god / came back to the stomach," and then, "she went away from the stomach / came back to god." In her last collection of poems, *Kafkin nož* (Kafka's Knife), there is another shift in her discourse, best seen in her first, almost socially engaged cycle, dedicated to the "Victorian female pioneers and adventurers", which features poems and lyrical biographies of women who defied social conventions and escaped their expected gender roles. Dorta's poetic discourse in these poems acquired directness and transparency as a thematic whole, which is a novelty in her opus whose evolution will be exciting to follow.

Lastly, eighteen years after her first Goran Award and six books later, the Croatian poetry landscape would be unimaginable without the poetic worlds of Dorta Jagić and her lyrical adventures.

On the occasion of awarding the 2017 Goran's Wreath to Dorta Jagić*

Branislav Oblučar

Translated by Una Krizmanić Ožegović

* *Goran's Wreath* is a Croatian poetry award given for the overall poetic opus and literary achievement. Established in 1971, it takes place on March 21 in Lukovdol, as part of *Goran's Spring* poetry festival, to honor the poet Ivan Goran Kovačić, who was tragically killed in the Second World War.

A Note On The Author

Dorta Jagić (1974) graduated in Philosophy and Religious Sciences from the University of Zagreb. She writes poetry, short stories, travelogues, essays, literature for children and plays.

Her publications include six books of poetry, *Plahta preko glave* (Sheet Over the Head, 1999), *Tamagotchi mi je umro na rukama* (Tamagotchi Died on My Hands, 2001), *Đavo i usidjelica* (The Devil and the Spinster, 2003), *Kvadratura duge* (Square Footage of a Rainbow, 2007), *Kauč na trgu* (Couch on the Square, 2011), and *Kafkin nož* (Kafka's Knife, 2015), three collections of short stories, *Kičma* (The Spine, 2009), *S tetovažom nisi sam* (You're Not Alone If You Have a Tattoo, 2011), *Mali rječnik biblijskih žena* (A Small Dictionary of Biblical Women, 2013), as well as a travelogue *Prolazi i pukotine* (Tracks and Cracks,

2015), and a book of essays *Veće od kuće* (Larger Than a House, 2018). Her work has appeared in many poetry anthologies in Croatia and abroad, while her short stories and poems have been translated into more than twenty languages, in entirety or as individual cycles. She was a guest at many residency programs both domestically and abroad.

In 1999, she received the prestigious Goran Award for Young Poets for her first book of poetry, while in the following years, she won the international Balkan Grand Prize for Poetry in 2007 in Romania and the esteemed European Poet of Freedom Award for her collection *Couch on the Square* in Gdansk in 2014. For her overall contribution to Croatian poetry, she was awarded the Goran's Wreath in 2017, one of the greatest recognitions for poets in Croatia. She has been nominated for the Kamov Award, dedicated to linguistic or thematic innovation, and in 2019, for her collection of essays *Larger Than a House*, she received

the Višnja Machiedo Prize awarded by the Croatian P.E.N. Society.

She has worked as an educator and director at many theatre collectives and has run creative writing workshops at centers for culture, such as CeKaPe, MaMa, and Booksa. She translates poetry, theory and prose from English and German and has a long-standing collaboration with the Croatian Radio 3. Dorta Jagić lives in Zagreb as a freelance author.

Poems translated by:

Ana Božićević

Song Of The Homeless, Song Of A Young Lady Saint

Daniel Brcko

*Praise To The Excellent Woman, My Man A Psalm 21, Single
People I Know, Circles In The Chestnut*

Slobodan Drenovac

*The Story About Shadows, A Brief History Of The Moon, Pri-
mordial Web*

Miloš Đurđević

*Vertigo, Under The Cheeks, Retired Seas, No One Writes To The
Clerk, Summer Is Not Sacral, Flying Stones, Literally, Only
Literally, My Grandma's Bardo Thödol*

Graham Macmaster

*Room Of A Lady Traveler, Childish Rooms, Rooms From The
Suburbs, Rooms With Autumn Trees, Hard Scorpion Rooms,
Babylon Hotel Rooms, Lukewarm Rooms, Too Many Walls In*

*Old Maids' Rooms, Opus Emily Dickinson, Poem 288,
Antimartini*

Damir Šodan

*First Person Singular, I Am The Portrait, The Journey And The
Life, To Fly With Warm Stoves, Honeymoon On A Tram, Love,
Cantata On Coffee, Lady Saint From Nobody's Calendar, 31st
Birthday*

Nikola Tutek

*Delaying, Grandmas, A Swan Beneath The Bridge, Functioning
Of The Body, Body Is A Migrating Stone, Lunch In The Hospital,
Pomegranates Of Istanbul, Lady Hester Stanhope, Isabella Bird,
Lilias Trotter, Gladys Aylward, Clara Swain, Freya Stark, A
Portrait Of The Black Poet With A Dog, A Portrait Of A Girl
With A Pearl Earring In Alaska, A Portrait Of King Solomon
Walking Through The Garden, Death In Milan, Faith Of The
North, Night Trains, The Earthquake On Good Friday, Poem
About Eternity*

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Croatian Writers Society

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Tel.: (+385 1) 48 76 463, fax: (+385 1) 48 70 186

www.hrvatskodrustvopisaca.hr

ured@hrvatskodrustvopisaca.hr

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