Kaj Smo,
Ko Smo

What We Are
When We Are
MINGLING VOICES
Series editor: Manijeh Mannani

Give us wholeness, for we are broken.
But who are we asking, and why do we ask?
—Phyllis Webb

Mingling Voices invites the work of writers who challenge boundaries, both literary and cultural. The series issues a reminder that literature is not obligated to behave in particular ways; rather, it can defy convention and comfort and demand that readers summon the courage to explore. At the same time, literary words are not ordinary words, and the series implicitly raises the question of how literature can be delineated and delimited. While Mingling Voices welcomes original work—poems, short stories, and, on occasion, novels—written in English, it also acknowledges the craft of translators, who build bridges across the borders of language. Similarly, the series is interested in cultural crossings, whether through immigration or travel or through the interweaving of literary traditions themselves.

Series Titles

Poems for a Small Park
E.D. Blodgett

Dreamwork
Jonathan Locke Hart

Windfall Apples: Tanka and Kyoka
Richard Stevenson

Zeus and the Giant Iced Tea
Leopold McGinnis

Praha
E.D. Blodgett

The Metabolism of Desire:
The Poetry of Guido Cavalcanti
Translated by David R. Slavitt

kiyâm
Naomi McIlwraith

Sefer
Ewa Lipska, translated by Barbara Bogoczek and Tony Howard

Spark of Light: Short Stories by Women Writers of Odisha
Edited by Valerie Henitiuk and Supriya Kar

Kaj Smo, Ko Smo /
What We Are When We Are
Cvetka Lipuš, Translation by Tom Priestly
what
kaj
we are
smo,
when
ko
we are
smo

Cvetka Lipuš
Translation by Tom Priestly
Contents

Foreword  ~ Donna Kane  vii

Odprti konec  2  Open End
Regrets  10  Regrets
Jutranja vožnja  12  Morning Journey
Kaj bi  14  What If
Zaposlitev  16  Employment
Sanje  18  The Dream
Dediščina  20  Inheritance
Vdova  22  The Widow
Deseti januar  24  January Tenth
Koncert za glas in nebo  26  Concerto for Voice and Sky
Težki od časa  30  Heavy with Time
Naj sonce ne zaide nad jezo  32  Let Not the Sun Go Down on Your Anger
Slovo  34  Saying Goodbye
Nespečnost  36  Sleeplessness
Novi naslov  42  The New Address
Poglej nas, kako lebdimo  44  Watch Us Float
Obisk  48  The Visit
Noč z grozo v gobcu 50 A Night with a Threat in Its Muzzle
Vodič 52 Guide
Gibalo 54 Perpetuum Mobile
Kje si, ko si 56 Where You Are When You Are
Negovanje 60 Caring
Prehod 62 Passage
Počitnice 64 Holidays
Lake Mendota 66 Lake Mendota
Pogled zavesti 70 The Look of Consciousness
Dreams Limited 72 Dreams Limited
To-Do List 74 To-Do List
Prijavni urad 76 The Registration Office
Na levem boku dneva 78 On the Port Side of the Day
Drago življenje, 82 Dear Life,
Čakanje 84 Waiting

Afterword 〜 Tomaz Toporišič 87
About the Author and Translator 91
Foreword

In “Passage” (as in many of her poems), Cvetka Lipuš reminds us that we come to know ourselves by each day’s experiences: “I thread days onto the year’s necklace. / The dark ones and the light ones, as they travel / through me, all start to gleam.”

The more experiences that travel through us, the greater our capacity to perceive the world. Lipuš expresses her experiences in Slovenian, which, like all languages, is a habitat for a group’s knowledge. Translated into English by Slavic scholar Tom Priestly, What We Are When We Are provides English readers, for the first time in book form, access to the knowledge of this gifted poet. And what is lost in each poem’s translation? As a monolingual person, I take heart in Swedish poet Tomas Tranströmer, who, in his acceptance speech for the Neustadt Prize, said, “The poem as it is presented is a manifestation of another, invisible poem, written in a language behind the common languages. Thus, even the original version is a translation. A transfer into English or Malayalam is merely the invisible poem’s new attempt to come into being. The important thing is what happens between the text and the reader.”

Each time I read a translated poem, an image, a thought, a perspective, once hidden from me, is revealed. I am given a new experience, a chance to widen the scope of my perceptions. Sometimes that new perspective is a recognition that,
regardless of language and culture, we share many of the same root concerns and questions. Seeing the familiar in the strange is not only a comfort but expands the gift of empathy.

Much of Lipuš’s work is concerned with the hidden, the invisible, the buried—the strange but familiar forces that reside just outside of our consciousness, as when “somebody in the depths of consciousness / makes for the surface, somebody within me / suddenly grabs my wrist” (“The Look of Consciousness”). Thresholds and liminal spaces are also felt throughout the book, and the poems move with the rhythm of breath, drawing us into Lipuš’s dreams and imagination, then releasing us back into her present.

In “Sleeplessness,” we read,

I shut my eyes and
sibilant consonants unscrew themselves from words,
they rent the five thousand fifth floor of the
Tower of Babel and they lose their harmony.

And later in the poem,

Just for a moment I shut my eyes and
shares fall on stock exchanges.
An alligator in the Florida swamps munches
the foot of a tourist and excretes it
in the shape of a cowboy boot
size thirty-eight.
Lipus’s imaginative leaps are playful and, at the same time, often so startling as to have a visceral effect. We feel ourselves launched from the ordinary into the extraordinary. We sense a glimpse of the unconscious, the hidden. Our perceptions widen.

Lipuš’s ability to step outside of herself creates arresting images. Probing the surreal experience of moving into a new house but feeling only the presence of its past inhabitants, Lipuš writes, “On the mailbox is written my name. Now I / check every day to find out if I have arrived at the new address.” And in the wonderful “Dear Life,” she situates her consciousness inside a body that no longer seems entirely her own. “Now that I am older than myself,” she begins. Such lines stopped me in my tracks, their insights exhilarating in their inarguable truth.

This is a magical book: magical in Lipuš’s imaginative powers and magical in its transformation into English. In “Holidays,” Lipuš writes, “On the neighbouring deck chair / crosswords in a language unknown / to you are being solved.” Originally written in a language unknown to me, What We Are When We Are may not have solved the questions Lipuš asks of who we are? what is real? what matters? But the ideas and thoughts the book provokes not only expand our perceptions of these questions, they also make us feel less alone with them.

Donna Kane
This page intentionally left blank
what
kaj
we are
smo,
when
ko
we are
smo
1

Karkoli bo, nobenega kesanja,
nobenega izpraševanja vesti,
če se zbudim v Kuala Lumpurju
s svežim tatujem na desnem ramenu.
Bodočnost skopni v sedaj.
Hic Rhodus, hic salta. Nobenega
nabiranja junahšev v življenjsko
poved, da bi odjeknila v elektronskih
koridorjih naslednikov.
Saj je samo nekaj zgodb:
poraz, zmaga, nadaljevanje in opustitev.
V katerokoli smer grem,
dnevi hodijo za mano
kot vdani psički za gospodarjem.
V Fargu jim zaukažem,
naj stečejo naprej in izsledijo,
kje in kdaj se zgodba konča.

2

Kakor na starih žetonih newyorške podzemnice,
»good for one fare«, življenje ni vaja s kostumi,
Open End

1

Whatever happens, there is no remorse,
no examination of my conscience,
if I wake up in Kuala Lumpur
with a fresh tattoo on my right shoulder.
The future melts into the now.

*Hic Rhodus, hic salta.* No
collecting of brave deeds into my life’s
sentence, which might resound in the electronic
corridors of my descendants.
For there are only a few stories:
defeat, victory, continuation and failure.

In whatever direction I go,
the days walk behind me
like obedient puppies behind their master.
In Fargo I command them
to run ahead and track down
where and when the story ends.

2

Like the old New York subway tokens
GOOD FOR ONE FARE, I read on the rattling local
berem na drdrajočem lokalnem vlaku.
V hipu se prelevim v kraljico modre krvi
in bogatih posestev. V palačnem steklenjaku
obrezujem vrtnice, cepim gredne na steblo,
vzpenjavke, skrbno negovane, se kot
balerine na konicah prstov vzpenjajo v slavoloke.
Ker je pogost nezaželeni učinek krone glavobol
ali v redkih primerih, svarijo svetovalci, celo izguba glave,
preidem pri naslednji postaji v pilotko.

Kapitanka zraka v temni obleki elegantno
švigam od prestolnice do prestolnice, a ko
varnostniki zahtevajo sezuvanje čevljev,
se preizkusim v globokomorskem potapljanju.

Kjer mrak meji na temo, molijo gruji glave
iz ustij amfor antičnih brodolomov. Prirasle
morske vetrnice stražijo ladijsko pokopališče.
Lebdim, kisikova buba, med mečarico in loparjem.
Ko se vlak ustavi na šestindevdeseti cesti, izstopim,
nenadoma ne povsem na jasnem, kaj
je iztočnica za moje življenje, ki čaka v
trenirki pred zaslonom.
train that life is not a dress rehearsal.
In a moment I change my skin into that of a blue-blooded queen with rich possessions. In the palace greenhouse I prune roses, I graft shoots onto the stalk, carefully tended climbing plants climb up triumphal arches like ballerinas on tiptoe. Since a headache is the often unwanted effect of a crown, or in rare instances, advisors warn, even the loss of the head, I shall become the pilot at the next station.

A captain of the air in a dark dress, elegantly I streak from capital to capital, and when the security guards demand that shoes be removed, I shall test myself with deep-sea diving.

Where the gloom borders on darkness, moray eels stretch out their heads from the mouths of amphoras of antique shipwrecks. Firmly attached anemones guard the ships’ cemetery. I, an oxygen chrysalis, hover between a swordfish and a basking shark. When the train stops at Ninety-sixth Street, I get out, suddenly not really clear as to what is the password for my life, which waits in a jogging suit before the screen.
Poskusi, stisni se obme,
boš videl, da vsaka porica
šepeta zgodbo: Spori, sprave,
tajne, večne in nekoliko krajše ljubezni,
nepričakovani zapleti, zamenjave,
ločitve, snidenja, srečni in skorajda
srečni konci vrtijo junake, večje od življenja,
na vrvici vsevednega pripovedovalca.
Zločini, izdaje, umori, prevare,
lepotna znamenja na razgreti polti.
Dotakni se pravega mesta: oblečem jih
v verz in potrkam na vrata soneta.

Brez besed postaneš meso, tempelj mesa.
Rebrasto ohišje na mečastih stebrih.
Vstopi v pljuča: razgrnjena, skrbo zlikana
v skrajnik za jambor hrbtenice. Dih ponese
telo, živi tovor, skozi noč. Preko vrtincev
zavesti, ki potegnejo v globino, da na dnu
ugibaš, kaj je pri genetskem zapisu šlo narobe,
zakaj se celice ne razporedijo v slavnostno
parado, mimo katere bi odkorakala v medenem spanec.
Try it, snuggle up to me, 
you will see, every little pore
whispers a story: arguments, reconciliations,
secrets, eternal and rather briefer loves,
unexpected complications, substitutions,
separations, reunions, happy and almost
happy endings, all spin the bigger than life heroes
on the string of the omniscient narrator.
Sins, betrayals, murders, deceptions,
beauty spots on a heated complexion.
Touch the right place: I shall clothe them
into a verse and knock on the door of a sonnet.

Without a word you become flesh, a temple of flesh.
A ribbed casing on pillarlike calves. Step into
the lungs: unfolded, carefully ironed into a forepeak
for the mast of your spine. Breath carries the body,
a live cargo, through the night. Across the whirlpools
of consciousness, which extend into the depths so that
you speculate on the bottom, what might have gone wrong
with the genetic record, why do the cells not line up in a solemn
parade past which you might march off into a honey-sweet sleep.
5

Včasih se vrnem iz sna
da tuja sebi: kdo je obesil
nazore visoko in svetlo kakor
lampijone na križarki?
Kdo je sestavil leta v življenjepis
brez naslova? Čemu gori vest,
pozabljena lučka na skrinjici
zavesti? Treba se bo vrniti
v telo, a vsaj še hip ali dva,
preden se navadim nase.
5

Sometimes I come back from a dream quite alien to myself: who hung the assumptions up high and bright like Chinese lanterns on a cruiser? Who composed the years into a biography without a title? Why does my conscience burn, a forgotten little lamp on the box of consciousness? I am dragged back into my body, but needing a moment or two before I get accustomed to myself.
Regrets

Ko bi lahko prestavil čas
kakor jeseni, ko premaknemo
urine kazalce nazaj,
a bi jadral skozi sebe
po nebesni karti prednikov,
mimo babic in dedkov,
ki z nasveti in svarili zaznamujejo
navigacijsko pot,
po kateri plujejo nasledniki
pod zastavo »kdor visoko
leta, nizko pade« –
v vedno večje število.
Bolj bi spustil komolec
angela in skočil,
skočil.
If you were to change the clock as we do in the fall, when we move the clock’s hand back, would you steer through yourself by the heavenly map of your ancestors, past grandmothers and grandfathers, who with advice and warnings indicate the navigational path, along which sail your descendants under the flag “who flies high, falls low”—in greater and greater numbers. Or would you rather let go of the angel’s elbow and jump, jump.
Jutranja vožnja

Jutro vrže vrv,
po kateri plezaš v večer.
Kamorkoli se povzprneš,
telo, samoglasnik s tujim naglasom,
vzdrži korak.

Dih barva kostni mozeg jesensko,
a ko se prikaže sonce, megazvezda
na zemeljskem odru, rano in
visoko skočiš v dan.

Obstret truda druži
zgodnje na podzemski.
Tam med pljučnima kriloma
mehki del zahteva svoj delež:
temu dnevu bi se prilegla
pesem z visokimi petami.

Ko se odpre beseda,
staromodno zardiš.
V poslovni obleki se ne
spodobi v enajsterec, kaj šele
v razuzdani verz.
Morning throws you a rope
you use to clamber along to the evening.
However far up you get,
your body, a vowel with a foreign accent,
keeps in step.

Breath gives autumnal colours to bone marrow,
and when the sun appears, a mega-star
on the stage of the earth, early and high
you leap into the day.

The halo of hard work unites
the early birds on the subway.
There between the wings of lungs
the soft part demands its share:
a song with high heels
should be suitable for this day.

When the word opens out
you blush in an outmoded way.
In office clothes it does not belong
in an iambic pentameter, not to mention
a line of free verse.
Kaj bi

Moj oče bi bil rad španski kralj,
mama Humphrey Bogart. Stari oče
bi bil chef de cuisine na ruski fronti,
namesto prekuhane žagovine in snežnega kruha
govedino stroganov za vse.
Prababica je trdno držala skupaj vogale hiše,
da je skregana žlahta ne bi spravila na boben.
Ko je v časopisu ugledala podobo zadnje
havajske princeske, je sanjala o čudovitem
klobuku prestolonaslednice, o otokih,
ki bi jih ona znala držati skupaj;
nje Američani ne bi spravili ob prestol.
Stari stric, preden se je armada njegovih
možganov obrnila proti njemu in mu
požgala mesta in vasi, bi bil Gagarin.
Ni ga veselilo v vesolje, a še manj domov.
Babica, ki si je želela biti rojena v znamenju cveta,
po smrti ureja rodbinske grobove na
svojem pokopališču – in kaj boš ti,
ko končaš šolo sanj?
My father would have liked to be the Spanish king, Mom—Humphrey Bogart. Grandfather would have liked to be the chef de cuisine on the Russian front, instead of cooked sawdust and snow bread beef stroganoff for everybody. Great-grandmother held the four corners of the house together, so that her quarrelsome relatives wouldn’t do her in. When she saw in the newspaper a picture of the last Hawaiian princess, she dreamt about the gorgeous hat of the heir to the throne, about the islands which she would know how to hold together; the Americans would not have dethroned her. My great-uncle, before the army of his brain turned against him and burned down his towns and villages, wanted to be Gagarin. He was not happy going into space, even less going home. Grandmother, who wished she had been born under the sign of the flower, after her death arranges her family graves in her cemetery—and what would you like to be, when you graduate from the school of dreams?
Zaposlitev

Oglasa ni več, a nebo še vedno vabi v svoje vrste strokovnjaka ali strokovnjakinjo za produkcijo oblakov. Zaradi povečanega obsega dela išče iznajdljivo in spremembo osebo, ki bi pomnožila oblake, ne da bi sprožila plohe ali neurja. Poleg tehničnega znanja pričakujemo dobre komunikacijske veščine ter odlične pogajalske sposobnosti. Saj boste morali prepričati stranke, ki že tisočletja sklepajo svete posle v zavetju kristalnih foteljev, da si bo treba v prihodnje deliti prostore. Kako jih prepričate o nujnosti ekspanzije, je prepuščeno vaši presoji. Če se bodo sklicevali na višjo oblast, jim lahko na samem, brez prič, zagrozite s striženjem kril. Predpostavljamo odlično znanje vetrnega jezika, narečja nebesnih smeri in vsaj osnovno razumevanje stare hebrejščine. Ste ambiciozni, ste že kdaj vlagali kresnice v kozarce in se ne bojite višine? Naslovite svojo prijavo na nebo s pripisom »računalniški oblak«.
Ads have been pulled, but the sky continues to invite into its ranks a specialist, male or female, in the production of clouds. Given the increase in the scope of the work, it seeks an inventive and skilful person to multiply the number of clouds without triggering showers or storms. As well as technical know-how we expect good communication skills and outstanding negotiating abilities. You will have to convince customers who for millennia have been concluding their holy business from the refuge of crystal armchairs that in future they will have to share their space. How you will persuade them of the necessity of expansion is left to your own judgement. If they should refer to higher authority, you may on your own initiative and without witnesses threaten them with having their wings clipped. We presuppose an excellent knowledge of the language of the winds and the dialect of heavenly directions, and at least a basic comprehension of Old Hebrew. Are you ambitious, did you ever put fireflies into jars, and are you unafraid of heights? Address your application to the heavens with the subject line “cloud.”
Sanje

The Dream

Freud smiles in his sleep when we, bathed in sweat and confused, emerge into wakefulness. For half the night we were wandering along sidestreets and cul-de-sacs of the unconsciousness, which was playing for us a compilation of evergreen hits. When they were right on our heels, we fell into bottomless pits; in the middle of bizarre tests we were gnashing our teeth, wearing Adam’s clothes we floated over a tsunami, which had engulfed the landscape of our childhood. On occasion it plays for us a tune to pass the time: Mother Teresa, young and chubby-cheeked, drops by for a cup of tea. I hurriedly prepare a tray of pastries, but the cookies pile up, pile up. Suddenly they are everywhere: on the table, on the chairs, in the bathtub, in the shoes, on the head of the noble guest, in the folds of her white dress, over which clumsy me pours Darjeeling tea. Ashamed, I offer her my wardrobe. Mother Teresa sighs, picks out my favourite jeans and asks her accompanying hares, who hop enthusiastically across the sky and pelt us with clover flakes, whether she can finally go back home.
Nekdo pravi, odkar sem se vrnil,
hodim na pogrebe gledat, kaj
se prenaša iz roda v rod.
Koktajl genov: nekaterim se
pozna na nosu, drugim na bokih,
določenim še primes tajne sestavine.
Sum, fusnota družinskih albumov.
Zgodbe se zaklenejo, ko protagonisti
sestopijo z zemlje. Skrivna ljubezen
spremeni preostalega v siroto,
saj ni več osebe, ki bi lahko s pogledom
odprla davno zgodbo v življenje,
v poletni večer na balkonu, ko je dan,
do vrha naložen kamion z vročino,
zapeljal sonce domov. Otroci so se na
zapuščenem pločniku igrali ristanc.
Pri počitku na razbeljenem nebu so bosi
poskakovali z ene noge na drugo.
Namesto domov k svojim se je
nepričakovano obrnil in jo prijel za roko.
Someone says, since I came back,
I go to funerals to see what is passed on
from generation to generation. The cocktail
of genes: some you recognize by
the nose, others it’s the hips, certain
people by a blend of secret ingredients.
O doubt, you footnote to family albums.
Stories are locked away when protagonists
come down from the earth. A secret love
changes the one who is left into an orphan,
for the person no longer exists who might with
a glance bring to light an ancient tale,
one summer evening on the balcony when the day,
a truck loaded high with heat,
was driving the sun home. The children were
playing hopscotch on the empty sidewalk.
Whenever they, barefoot, paused on the white-hot
rest area, they hopped from one foot to the other.
Instead of going home to his own folks he
unexpectedly turned and took her by the hand.
Vdova

Starost prispe kot tovorna ladja v gosti megli.
Zamolkli zvok roga jo najavlja,
a kljub temu presenečenje,
ko v izložbi zazna svoje obrise.
Temna podoba, potegnjena
iz vrtinca družbe, se potaplja
v tišini sten, večera, kjer se
osirotel krožnik privaja na
samski stan. Spomin se ob
dotiku preteklosti zapre kot školjka –
vse je para ali rezilo, ki
odpre prve objeme – izgubljeni
biseri na dnu desetletja v dvoje.
Old age arrives like a cargo ship in a thick fog. The faint sound of a horn announces it, but it is a surprise all the same, when it recognizes its outline in a window display. A dark figure, pulled from the turbulence of society, sinks in the silence of the walls, of the evening, where an orphaned plate gets used to being single. At the touch of the past, memory closes up like a clam—all is vapour, or a blade that opens the first embraces—lost pearls on the bottom of decades as a pair.
Nekdo odide
Razširi krila preko
krhkega gnezda diha
kakor da je sapa
samo mera časa
Nekdo odide
v temni žakelj zemlje
kakor da je svetloba
samo stvar izbire
Pogasi svojo zvezdo
na stropu sveta ko
prečka reko praznih ust
Nekdo stopi
v onstran kakor da
bi izstopil na neznani
železniški postaji
Položim glavo
na tračnice
Povozi me tišina

Deseti januar
January Tenth

Somebody is going away
He spreads his wings over
the brittle nest of breath
as if respiration
were just a measure of time
Somebody is going away
into the dark sack of the earth
as if light were
just a matter of choice
He extinguishes his star
on the roof of the world as
he crosses the river with empty mouth
Somebody steps to
the other side as if
he were exiting at an unfamiliar
railway station
I lay my head
on the tracks
Quietness runs over me
Koncert za glas in nebo

1
Adagio

Januarski mraz grize rebara hiše.
Sneg v debelih kosmih pada
na križišče, na utripajoči semafor,
na čakajoče avte, na golve je,
na ptičjo krmilnico, na tilnik, ko
stopiš na balkon, da premešaš bol
v skrbno odmerjene zloge, ki se
bodo vrtinčili v reki pogovora
kakor snežinke v svetlobnem stožcu.

2
Allegro misterioso

A se gore uležejo na prsi kot
senca na rentgenski sliki, bolj
zasujejo sapo tistim, ki padajo,
padajo vse, padajo skozi ure,
ki se vlečejo in vse stoji, padajo
skozi dneve, ki so jim vsi enaki –
nikogar ne pričakujejo posebej,
padajo v premore sredi pogovora,
padajo kot sneg na nago zemljo,
v kateri obležijo, slečeni življenja.
1

*Adagio*

The January frost gnaws at the ribs of the house.
Snow in fat clumps is falling
on the crossroads, on the pulsating traffic lights,
on the waiting cars, on the bare branches,
on the bird-feeder, on the back of your neck when
you step onto the balcony, to mix
your pain into carefully measured syllables,
which will swirl in the river of your conversation
like snowflakes into a cone of light.

2

*Allegro misterioso*

Do the mountains settle on your breast like
shadows on an X-ray, or do they bury
the breath of those who fall,
fall into themselves fall through the hours,
which drag on as everything stands, fall
through the days, which are all the same to them—
they expect nobody in particular,
they fall into the pauses in the conversation,
they fall like snow onto the bare earth,
in which they remain lying, denuded of life.
3

*Andante*

Ko se na Rimski cesti zvezde
sprehajajo v parih, v brezhibni
razporeditvi tolmačijo prihodnost:
kako dolgo bo še novoletni hlad
stiskal zobe, kdaj se bodo sneženi
možje stalili do korena, kje bodo reke
vdrle v klet, kdo bo stopil v temo,
ti bo nebo vrnilo koga v objem.
Kaj nosiš v sebi, koliko diha, koliko
utripov, koliko besed, preden se
stopiš, snežinka, na polti sveta.
3

Andante

When on the Milky Way the stars stroll along in pairs they interpret
the future in an impeccable formation:
how long will the New Year’s cold make
you grit your teeth, when will the snowmen melt to their roots, where will the rivers flood into
the cellar, who will merge with the darkness, whom will the sky bring back into your arms.
What do you carry within you, how much breath, how many heartbeats, how many words, before you, snowflake, land on the flesh of the world.
Težki od časa

se osipajo dnevi, se leta luščijo kakor barva s sten. Goli čas splaši nekatere v cerkvene veže, pred stranske oltarje, drugim življenje nenadoma zadiši po nevihti, s treskom jih bo odneslo kam drugam. Srečneži samo zatisnejo oči in upanje se obarva rdeče v siju gorečega grma. Ti se odprejo v prijaznost, drugi se zapirajo kot lokvanj v močvirju. Nekateri se hrabijo, ko prisluškujejo tiktakanju rakove ure v telesu, redki splavijo bojne ladje in jih naperijo vase. Marsikdo ugiba: se bo spomin zametel kot sled snega, se bo pojem poslovil od pomena, bodo obrazi zašli v zapuščeni hiši duha?
the days are shed, the years peel like paint off walls.
Naked time frightens some people into church vestibules,
towards side altars, for others life suddenly smells of a
storm, with a thunderclap it will carry them off somewhere.
The lucky ones simply close their eyes tight and hope
turns red in the brilliance of the burning bush. Some open
themselves up to friendliness, others close like water-lilies
in a marsh. Some become bold when they notice the sound
of the ticking of the cancer clock in the body, a few
launch warships and point them at themselves. Many try
to guess: will memory be swept away like a trace of snow,
will the term take leave of its meaning, will the faces go astray
in the abandoned house of the soul?
Naj sonce ne zaide nad jezo

V tišino prižgeš butaro besed.
Uvod v začušenje, kaj te je
zavedlo v ta predel mesa.
Bojna enota se razporedi v žrelu.
Pehotni vod koraka po zobeh:
vsı nared za napad. Prekipeva žolč,
tla se zibajo pod nogami,
krvni tlak trka po aorti kot
strojevodja po kolesih vagona,
dokler nisi do grla polna zamere,
slepe potnice, ki ošili obraz.
Strahopetno srce se zavije v
belo zastavo in spodbuja razum:
Daj, zaustavi armado razdraženih
celic, preden jih premaga bol.
Let Not the Sun Go Down on Your Anger

Into the silence you light a bundle of words.
An introduction to your bewilderment about what
has misled you to this region of the flesh.
A battle unit is forming in your gullet.
A line of infantry is marching around your teeth:
all of them ready for the attack. The gall boils over,
the floor lurches under your feet,
your blood pressure knocks in your aorta like
an engineer checking the railcar’s wheels,
until you are fed up with resentment,
that blind companion who sharpens your face.
Your timid heart wraps itself in
the white flag and encourages good sense:
Come on, stop the army of irritated
cells before they are vanquished by pain.
Podoben neurju stopiš iz spomina, pretesnega za dih, in se pripneš na uspeh. Od glave do peta naravnan na delo zavihaš rokave in se lotiš sveta z golimi rokami. Voljo napneš kot mrežo, v katero se ujemajo dnevi, raskavi, odrgnjeni, dodobra obtolčeni, kajti nekdo loputa z vrati v tebi, nekdo, ki je prestopil prag.
Like bad weather you step out of your memory, which is too tight to breathe, and you clutch at success. From head to toe focused on work, you roll up your sleeves and take on the world barehanded. You tighten your will like a net in which are caught the days that are rough, worn away, thoroughly bruised, because someone is slamming the doors inside you, someone who has crossed the threshold.
Samo za hip zaprem oči in
Boston se prevrne v svoj pristan.
Osemdeseta leta me obiščejo v neonskih
barvah, me zvijejo v cigareto.
Portoriko se naveliča Karibov.
Potone kakor podmornica in se
pojavi sredi Mediterana. Presenečene
ladje vabi s temnim rumom v postoj.
Na palubnih ležalnikih me čakajo
moji dragi soproge in soprogi.
Gremo se človek ne jezi se,
poraženec potaplja nože.
Samo za hip zaprem oči in
šumevci se izvijejo iz besed,
najamejo pettisočpeto nadstropje
Babilonskega stolpa in zgubijo sozvočje.
Šesta soproga se preseli v Panteon,
vzame s sabo vso srebrnino, celo poročni
rogaški kristal za božansko služinčad.
Haiti pretrese Guantanamo do kosti.
Tirolska osvoji Italijo, odredi obvezno
opoldansko jodlanje z vsakega kampanila.
Sicilija skoplje tihotapski rov do Soha.
Sleeplessness

Just for a moment I shut my eyes and
Boston tumbles into its harbor.
The eighties come to visit me in neon
colours and roll me into a cigarette.
Puerto Rico is tired of the Caribbean.
It sinks like a submarine and surfaces
in the middle of the Mediterranean. With dark rum
it invites the surprised ships to anchor.
Waiting for me on deck chairs are
my dear wives and husbands.
We play the man-don’t-get-mad game,
the one who loses sinks his knives.
Just for a moment I shut my eyes and
sibilant consonants unscrew themselves from words,
they rent the five thousand fifth floor of the
Tower of Babel and they lose their harmony.
The sixth wife moves into the Pantheon, taking
with her all the silverware, even the wedding crystal
from Rogaška Slatina for the gods’ domestic staff.
Haiti shakes Guantanamo to the bones.
The Tyrol takes possession of Italy, decrees mandatory
noontime yodelling from every campanile.
Sicily digs a smuggling tunnel to Soho.
Šesta soproga se vrne praznih rok.
Samo za hip zaprem oči
in povšter se loti lobanje:
a bo že končno mir?
Jupiter povabi izvidniške satelite
na medplanetarno zasedanje.
Za zaprtimi vrati radovednežem grozi
z medgalaktično vojno. Antarktiko
bodo stopili kot sladoled na plaži,
nebotičniki, svetilniki sredi oceana.
Peti soprog odpelje prvo soprogo
v Soho na sicilijanske sladke zvitke.
Sinoda zdravnikov mi meri tlak,
pravi, naj se samo sprostim.
Samo za hip zaprem oči
in delnice padejo na borzah.
Aligator v floridskem močvirju
pohrusta nogo turista, jo izloči
v obliki kavbojskega škornja
številka osemindvadeset.
Sosedovo prekrasno mačko na
slemenu strehe ljubkuje mesec, da
vsi moi soprogi kukajo izza zavese
in si razneženo brišejo solze.
Atlantik položi na Adrijino dlan
naftno ploščad in jo prosi za roko.
The sixth wife returns empty-handed.
Just for a moment I shut my eyes and
the pillow gets down to business with my cranium:
will there be peace, finally?
Jupiter invites the reconnaissance satellites
for an interplanetary conference.
Behind closed doors he threatens the snoopers
with an intergalactic war. They will melt the
Antarctic like ice-creams at the beach,
skyscrapers, light-houses in the middle of the ocean.
The fifth husband makes off with the first wife
to Soho for Sicilian sweet rolls.
A synod of doctors measures my blood pressure,
they tell me I should just relax.
Just for a moment I shut my eyes and
shares fall on stock exchanges.
An alligator in the Florida swamps munches
the foot of a tourist and excretes it
in the shape of a cowboy boot
size thirty-eight.
The neighbours’ splendid cat on the
gable of the roof is kissed by the moon, so that
all my spouses peek from behind the curtain
and emotionally wipe away their tears.
Mr. Atlantic places an oil rig on the palm
of Ms. Adriatic and asks for her hand.
Odprem oči in naštete ovce se poženejo čez plot, se napasejo solate v vrtu najljubše soproge, ki se jezi, name se ni zanesti, in se izseli v Babilonski stolp s pogledom na razjarjene jezike. Amsterdam zajame potovalna mrzlica, odpluje na izlet v Rotterdam. Spotoma si ogleda vrtove Keukenhof. Ovce se lotijo tulipanov in narcis. Nizozemska ponudi Brooklynu zapuščeno zemljišče. Modrooki soprog, lastnik rumenega taksija, se razočaran vrne domov. Urina kazalca obležita v ovinku pol pete. Ponovno zaprem oči in levo zrklo vpraša desno: A končno že spiš?
I open my eyes and the sheep I have counted
dash away over the fence, graze on
the salad in my favourite wife’s garden,
who gets angry, I am not to be trusted,
and moves away to the Tower of Babel
with a view of the wrathful languages.
Amsterdam catches the travel fever,
swims away on an excursion to Rotterdam.
En route it looks round the Keukenhof Gardens.
The sheep start on the tulips and daffodils.
The Netherlands make an offer of their
deserted property to Brooklyn. The blue-eyed
husband who owns a yellow taxi
comes back home disappointed.
The hands on the clock stay down in the corner
of half past five. Once again I shut my eyes
and the left eyeball asks the right:
Are you asleep, finally?
Novi naslov

The rug in the middle of the living room, the flag hanging, whose colour immediately makes me sick, the west window whining, not to mention the patterns on the couch and the pillows. The door squeaks, most of all its hinges: How am I to tread on their heels, no one closes me? The chairs have checkmated each other. It is still unclear who will get the best place. The occupants cling to us like guests, whisper the cutlery. The glasses, the cups, the coffee pots cluster close together in very cramped quarters. Watch you don’t chip me, they tell their neighbours. The neighbourhood stretches its necks: who or what has moved into that place under the gables, with a view onto the rocky ridges, the incisors not fitting into any jaw ever imagined. On the mailbox is written my name. Now I check every day to find out if I have arrived at the new address.
POGLEJ NAS, KAKO LEBDIMO

1
Ko se priselimo, začnemo hoditi na koncerte.
Kot begunci, ki jih je zaneslo v neznani kraj,
sledimo dirigentu skozi metež zvoka,
dokler klavirske tipke ne potrka na razglašena srca.
Sledimo vodiču, lovcu na podgane, ki vleče
za sabo krdelo obiskovalcev skozi cerkve,
palače, mimo kipov generalov, ki jim golobi
urejajo obrvi. Bronaste jezdece zasrbi pod podplati,
ko jih obkrožijo tuji naglasi. Prišleki sledimo
drobtinicom dobrodušlic vse do omizja domačinov.
Postrežejo nam z letnicami na hišnih pročeljih,
s šepetom zakristij, z okruški trdnjavskega zidu,
poškropljeni s soljo kakor preste na šanku,
da se pijani od tuje zgodovine vračamo domov.

2
Snubimo pokrajino, ki nam ponudi zeleno roko
v pozdrav, šele kasneje, po rokovanju,
zaslutimo reko, vodne žile. V toplih žepih kostanj
navaja prste na jesen, ki nas bo stisnila v precep,
da bodo obrazi obledeli, da bodo v bunde
zabubljene postave čudežne barvaste pege na sivkasto
1

When we move here we begin going to concerts. Like refugees who end up in an unknown place, we follow the conductor through a blizzard of sound until the notes on the piano knock on our muted hearts. We follow the leader, the pied piper, who drags after him a troop of visitors through churches, palaces, past statues of generals who are having their eyebrows tidied up by pigeons. The soles of the feet of bronze horsemen itch when surrounded by strange accents. We new arrivals follow the crumbs of welcomes right up to tablefuls of locals. They serve us with the years marked on housefronts, with the whisper of vestries, with chips from a castle wall, sprinkled with salt like pretzels on a bar, so we return home drunk with alien history.

2

We woo the land which offers us its green hand in greeting, only later, after we shake hands, are we aware of the river, the veins of water. In warm pockets a chestnut accustoms our fingers to the fall which will squeeze us into a corner, so that faces will fade away, so that shapes that are bundled in parkas will be fantastic chromatic spots on the grayish

3

Izza zavese škilimo na oder mesta, ki se pripravlja na delovni dan. Širi se šum pločevinaste gosenice, ki iz predmestja leze v blišč sredine, kjer si baročni vrt popravlja pristriženo pričesko v ogledalu tankega ledu, nared za kamere neštetih gostov, ki še dremajo po hotelskih sobah. V tujih jezikih sanjajo o rogljičkih, ki jih vitezi mečejo iz trdnjavskega zida v orkestrsko jamo. Ko vstopimo v ulični prizor, sprejmemo vse, kar nam pade v naročje – zastavice s konic dežnikov azijskih vodičev, slepi pogled putta, hitro hojo podeželske noše –, in nastavimo obraz hladnemu zraku, da se zasolzijo oči in se nad reko prikaže mavrica golobov, not in belih lasulj.
brown watercolour. When we are alone we slip off into the past as into a bathrobe. How softly it clings to us. In a glitter of gold it rises above us, as in the morning quiet we sip our coffee and, half asleep, stare at the puzzled chairs which are carefully placing their legs on the new floor.

3

From behind the curtain we peek at the stage of the city preparing for the work day. The noise of a tin caterpillar reverberates as it creeps from the suburbs into the glare of the centre, where a baroque garden fixes its clipped haircut in a mirror of thin ice, ready for the cameras of countless guests who are still dozing in hotel rooms. In foreign languages they dream about croissants being thrown by knights from the castle wall into the orchestra pit.

When we enter the street scene we accept everything that falls into our arms—the flags on the tips of umbrellas from Asian tour guides, the blind stare of a putto, the fast walk of a rural costume, and expose our face to the cold air, so our eyes start to weep and above the river appears a rainbow of doves, notes and white periwigs.
S slino loščim luno, ki plava na
površju sna. Sezona lova na princeske
se nikoli ne konča, me svari, ko tema
ovije svoje tace okrog mene.
Brez skrbi, tudi ko punca sname nogavice,
pelje večerno kožo na sprehod skozi
blodnjak zavesti, kjer se sprehabajo noži,
ki bi radi zapustili sled, ve, da muze kakor
muhe padajo na sladkor, na blišč, na rdečo
preprogo, zato jih za lahko noč nakrmim z boljšo
bodočnostjo. Odprem šampanjec srca,
natočim si peneče se krvi in – da ni zamere –
nazdravim še zemlji, a ta se ne zgane.
Dovolj ji je prelivanja rdeče tekočine,
ki ji maši pore: niti kihniti ne more, ne da
bi mi snela kosti s kavlja. Zbujena odtavam
po kozarec vode v nočno kuhinjo, kjer
sediš ti in me prosiš za ogenj. Mrtvi ne
kadijo, rečem, prave princeske ponoči spijo,
ne vabijo preminulih v goste, se nasmehneš
in zblediš v siju lune.
The Visit

With my saliva I polish the moon that swims on the surface of my sleep. The princess-hunting season is never-ending, it warns me, as the darkness enfolds me in its paws. No worries, even as a girl takes off her socks, taking the evening skin for a walk through the maze of consciousness, where knives stroll that would like to leave their trace, she knows that the muses like flies fall on sugar, on the glare, on the red carpet, and so as a goodnight treat I feed them with a better future. I open the champagne of my heart, I serve myself bubbling blood and—so that it forgives me—I also toast the earth, but it does not budge. It is fed up with the outpouring of the red liquid that fills its pores: it cannot sneeze, lest it take my bones off the hook. Awake, I wander off to the night kitchen for a glass of water; you are sitting there, and ask me for a light. Dead people don’t smoke, I say, real princesses sleep during the night, they do not invite those who have just died to visit them, you smile and grow pale in the moonlight.
Noč z grozo v gobcu

Iz štiriindvajsetega nadstropja hotelske sobe so rjasti vagoni na starem šanghajskem kolodvoru podobni jeklenim barkam, v katerih ponoči potuje tema v spremstvu zime. Noč za nočjo stražim v svetlem hotelskem stolpu železniške pragove za davne potnike, ki so že pripotovali do svojega konca. Noč za nočjo polnim njihove obrise z dihom, dokler se nenadoma nekdo ne obrne in se mi zazre v oči. Spreleti me samota, potuje kot hlad iz okončin do središča sape, kot krogla skozi mehko tkivo, da panično pokličem dežurno receptorko na pomoč. Čez trenutek ali dva vstopita ženska in otrok, razporedita čopiče po postelji, jih potunkata v moj mrzli pot in začneta risati vodene živalce po koži: bivola, tigra, opico, psa, mačko, zajca, kobilico, ovco, vola, kačo, bizona, leva, kuščarja, petelina, metulja. Osvobodila bova bitje, ki se skriva v tebi, šepetata, ko se na polti množijo podobe. Ko izrišeta zadnjo zver, stopim k oknu in se poženem z ognjenimi krili v nebo.
A Night with a Threat in Its Muzzle

From the hotel room on the twenty-fourth floor the brown rail cars in the old Shanghai station are like the steel boats in which, at night, the darkness travels in the company of winter. Night after night I keep watch in my bright hotel tower over the railway platforms for the travellers of old, who have already reached the end of their journey. Night after night I fill their outlines with breath until suddenly someone turns round and looks me in the eye. I am overcome with loneliness, it travels like the cold from the extremities to the centre of the breath, like a bullet through soft tissue, so that in panic I dial the receptionist on duty for help. One or two moments later a woman and a child come in, they arrange paintbrushes on the bed, they dip them into my freezing sweat and start to draw little water animals on my skin: buffalo, tiger, ape, dog, cat, hare, filly, sheep, ox, snake, bison, lion, lizard, rooster, butterfly. We will set free the being that hides within you, they whisper, as the images multiply on my flesh. When they finish drawing the last animal I go to the window and leap with fiery wings into the sky.
Ko si otrok v odročnem kraju,
kjer sove voščijo lahko noč,
kjer se odrasli odpravijo s puško
ali z vrvjo, kjer si vsako vozilo ogleda
pešca na trdo, kjer ima zgovornost
vinske botre, kjer se izgubiš v potočnem
žuborenju, laježu psov, kjer razen
poštarja in peka samo smrt trka
na vrata, se zaneseš na strah.
V sredini poseke, kjer se nabira
vročina, ti napolni sapnik s smolnato
tišino, da z odprtimi usti drviš domov.
When you’re a child in a remote place,
where owls wish you good night,
where the grown-ups leave with a rifle
or with a rope, where every vehicle draws
a bead on the pedestrian, where eloquence
has wine-godmothers, where you get lost
in the murmur of a stream, in the barking of dogs,
where other than the mail-carrier and the baker
only death knocks at the door, you rely on fear.
In the middle of a clearing, where heat
collects, it fills your windpipe with the resinous
silence, so that with an open mouth you race home.
Babici v onstranstvu,
enapa pepelnato mlada,
druge pokrita s starostnimi
pegami in prstjo,
a bosta vedeli za nitke,
ki jih pletejo v novo zgodbo?
Prva, junakinja brez besed,
brez telesa, prgišče prahu
na dnu jezera. Druga,
protagonistka z očmi pelargonije,
s prsti, v katerih domujeta
delo in sad. Skupaj sta poved,
ki jo nadaljujemo v trajnost,
os, okrog katere se vrtimo v število.
Ko bo gravitacija popustila,
kobomo seštvek podedovanega
in pridobljenega, ko nas bo
odneslo na vse strani,
a bosta kdaj potegnili nit,
sparali svoj delež?
Both grandmothers in the beyond, one ashen young
the other covered with age spots and earth:
will they know about the threads that knit them into a new story?
The first, a heroine without words, without a body, a handful of dust on the bottom of a lake. The other, a protagonist with the eyes of a geranium, with fingers in which reside work and fruit. Together they are the confession that we extend into permanence, the axis around which we spin into a number. When gravity slackens off, when we are the sum of what is inherited and what has been acquired, when we are carried away in all directions, will those two ever pull the thread, unpick what they share?
Kje si, ko si

1

Pesem, ki bi rada šla na fešto,
se zazre na papir in vpraša:
A je to vse? Skozi zid udarja
bas, na sosedovem balkonu
se gnetejo kadilci, na stopnišču
se opotekajo parčki, zadeti
od hormonov, zakaj jaz večer
za večerom zrem trdno, trajno,
skorajda večno v nebo, merim
utrip vesolja, zvezdni prah na
obrveh nočnih prividov? Nehaj
me plesti v kitice; raje me
pregani v papirnat avionček
in spusti skozi okno.

2

Pesem, ki noče na svetlo,
se brani papirja, kakor še
dremav otrok hladne obleke.
Okleva na konici jezika, postopa
v odročni kamri zavesti, medtem
ko ji prigovarjam, jo pazljivo
Where You Are When You Are

1

The poem that would like to go to a party looks at itself on the paper and asks: So is this all? Through the wall comes the sound of a bass, on the neighbour’s balcony the smokers are crowding together, down the staircase are staggering the twosomes, high on hormones, why is it that I evening after evening keep looking fixedly, without stopping, almost forever at the sky, measuring the pulse of the universe, the stardust on the eyebrows of night-time mirages? Just stop weaving me into verses; rather, fold me into a paper airplane and launch me out the window.

2

The poem that shuns the light shrinks away from the paper, like a still sleepy child shrinks from cold clothes. It hesitates on the tip of a tongue, loiters into remote chambers of consciousness, while I try to convince it, carefully
priganjam: Spusti se v besedo, v gnezdo, polno zvočnikov in šumavcev; z veščimi dlanmi te bodo zgnetli v obliko, da boš zakorakala dol po vrsticah kot manekenka na modni stezi. Poslovi se od klepetavega srca in se izseli iz mene. Morda bom že jutri nekdo drug in ti ostaneš v temi.

3
Pesem, ki me vara že od samega začetka, prispe odeta vsa v črno, da se prikupi žilici, ki je udarjena na mračno stran. Primem jo za laket in povedem na plesišče papirja, kjer jo občasno oprezno zavrtim v rimo, da resnobni dami ne skuštram prispodobe. A gospa nenadoma bije v drugem ritmu. Preden se zavem, vodi ona in jaz lovim korak s tujimi zlogi.
urge it: Drop into a word,  
a nest full of voiced consonants and  
sibilants; with expert hands you will be  
kneaded into shape, so that you will  
parade down the verses like a  
mannequin on a fashion runway.  
Say goodbye to the chattering heart  
and move on out of me. Perhaps  
I shall be somebody else tomorrow and  
you will stay in the dark.

3

The poem that has deceived me right  
from the very beginning arrives  
dressed all in black in order to  
worm its way into a vein that has moved  
to the dark side. I take it by  
the elbow and lead it onto the  
the dance-floor of paper, where I shall  
from time to time carefully twirl it into  
a rhyme, so that I do not ruffle  
the metaphors of the serious lady.  
But she suddenly strikes up a  
different rhythm. Before I know  
what is happening, she is leading and I  
match my step to other syllables.
Negovanje

Caring for people is an uncertain activity, unreliable as the weather, one single stubborn breeze and you yourself are in an inhabited area. It is better to test yourself in tending indoor plants, carrots, or field salad. It is easy to care for cats: soft paws bring them home, given the right enticement. Any nook is right for them as long as a mouse is living there. I myself like, most of all, growing ghosts, little ones, pocket ones, at the decisive moment they tug my sleeve, in safety we help each other guess: what might happen if inside us suddenly bloomed audacity.
Nabiram dneve na ogrlico leta.
Svetli ali temni se vsi zalesketajo,
ko potujejo skozme dragulji,
ki drgnejo dušo, da si utrujena zaželi
oddih od časa. Ko pojema zagon,
v oseki malodušja nespečna ribarim
po kanalih malega zaslona, kjer plavajo
mesojede ure, polne drugih življenj.
Ugasnem luč in kakor otok, ki
si ga je luna izbrala za to noč, stavim
na plimo, ki me bo v kratkem odnesla
kamorkoli, s komerkoli, naji bo
z moro dol po sanjski poti.
I thread days onto the year’s necklace.
The dark ones and the light ones, as they travel through me, all start to gleam—jewels that chafe my soul until, exhausted, it wants a rest from time. As the eagerness subsides, unable to sleep, I fish in the low tide of my dejection among the channels of the small screen, where swim carnivorous hours, full of other lives.
I turn off the light and, like an island chosen by the moon for this very night, position myself at high tide, which shortly will carry me off anywhere, with anyone, even if it should be with the nightmare, down the path of dreams.
Kako si je lepo
oddahniti od sebe,
smukniti iz kože,
iz pričeske,
iz oguljenega imena.
Zaznati lastno senco
kot tujca s slamnikom
in prekratkimi hlačami.
Ko priplava katerakoli
ambicija na površje
vročega dneva, se potopi
kakor ladjica, ki jo fanta
spuščata v plitvini zaliva.
Na sosednjem ležalniku
se v neznanem jeziku
rešujejo križanke.
Vodoravno: poletje
v narečju morja.
Si prazen kvadratek,
ki čaka svojo črko.
Navpično: prošnja
za lahen odtis.
Holidays

How great it feels
to take a rest from yourself,
to slip out of your skin,
out from under your haircut,
out of your time-worn name.
To perceive your own shadow
as a stranger with a straw hat
and overshort pants.
When some ambition or other
makes its way to the surface
of the hot day, it submerges
like the little boat being lowered by
two boys into the bay’s shallows.
On the neighbouring deck chair
crosswords in a language unknown
to you are being solved.
Across: summer in
the dialect of the sea.
You are an empty square
waiting for its letter.
Down: please
print lightly.
Lake Mendota

1
Kajaki, kanuji, jadnare, ribiški
in tekmovalni čolni, četverci in osmerci,
zložljivi, eno- in dvosedni, dvoji brez
krmarja stegujejo vratove, ko lovijo
popoldanski piš na čopasti modrini.
Okrog lesenih trebuhov, nekateri zibajo
v drobovkih nalovljene ščuke, muskalunge
in sončne ostriže, se opletajo vodne rastline,
cvetenje alg. V temi ledeniških usedlin
ugibajo, a so ribe, ki so v hipu in navpično
zginile na površje, zapadle siju enojambornikov,
iznenada verjele belim zastavam,
ki se v ducatih občudujejo na lesketajoči
površini jezera in šepetajo: »Zrcalce, zrcalce,
povej, katero voda vzela bo prej?«

2
V prazničnem vzdušju spominskega dneva,
dolgo preden ognjemeti zacvetijo na temni vodi,
ko veslač, še v pižami, na verandi motri ujetе
oblake na sončnem svodu, vesla še dremajo
v čolnarni, v globini razkrojevalci klepetajo
Lake Mendota

1

Kayaks, canoes, sailboats, fishing boats and racing shells, fours and eights, collapsibles, one- and two-seaters, coxless pairs, their necks stretch as they catch the afternoon breeze on the crested blueness. Around the wooden bellies, some rock in the entrails of caught pike, muskellunge and sun perch, the water weeds swinging to and fro, the bloom of algae. In the darkness of glacial deposits they guess whether the fish that suddenly disappeared vertically, up to the surface, has fallen for the glare of cutters, or suddenly had faith in the white flags that in their dozens admire the sparkling surface of the lake and whisper: “Mirror, mirror, tell us, which one will the water take first?”

2

In the holiday mood of Memorial Day, long before the fireworks blossom on the dark water, as an oarsman, still in pajamas, on the veranda scans the captured clouds on the vault of the sun, the oars are still drowsing in the boathouse, in the depths decomposers chat
o starih znancih, ki so namesto naprej zapluli navzdol, v rajon prerasti, živalskega planktona. Med mezinci rmanca so se hočeš nočeš lotili limnologije, dokler jih ni posvojila. V zatišju zaliva, kjer se valovanje in veter lovita v sestojih trsa, se nekdo, ko plivkajo skozi špranje čolna, nenadoma spomni govorice bivšega telesa.
about old acquaintances who have sailed not ahead but right downward, to the region of undergrowth, of animal plankton. Between the pinkies of the milfoil they willy-nilly took up limnology until it adopted them. In the lee of the bay, where the waves and the wind are brought to a halt in the reeds, someone, as the splashes come through the cracks in the boats, suddenly recalls the sayings of their former body.
Pogled zavešti

Ko čakamo na jutranjem peronu
dremave postave v poslovnem šiku,
se sapa dviga kakor para nad lokomotivami.
Za ogrevanje zagona na mobilcu
preverjamo vozni red dneva:
minute se grmadijo v sestanke,
ure obtičijo v metežih pogovorov,
kjer vsi na tihem iščejo izhodna vrata,
za katerimi plavajo kakor krapi
v ribniku besede za osebno uporabo,
tiste, ki jih bomo snedli na hodniku,
da nam bo posel lažji. Niso zabeleženi
trenutki, ko se bosta obraz in duša
utrujeno zazrla skozi okno dneva –
za hip se bodo tabele in grafi sešteli v ničlo,
v kateri plava srce kakor rumenjak.
Naposled zvočnik najavi vlak.
Premraženi stopimo iz zavetja na robnik,
a ko se zazrem v tirnice, se mi zavrti,
se nekdo v globinah zavesti
napoti proti površju, se nekdo v meni
nenadoma oklene zapestja, nekdo,
ki je in hkrati ni, šepeta,
tudi brez Vronskega smo lahko Ana.
When we wait on the morning platform of the drowsy station in our business chic, our breath rises like the smoke over the engines. To get our keenness warmed up we check the day’s schedule on our mobile: minutes accumulate into meetings, hours get jammed in blizzards of talks where everyone secretly looks for the exit beyond which, swimming like carp in a fish pond, are words for personal use, the ones that we will scarf down in the corridor, so work gets easier to take. There is no entry for the moments when face and soul will tiredly look at each other through the window of the day—in a moment tables and graphs will add up to a zero in which the heart swims like an egg yolk. At last a loudspeaker announces our train. Bitterly cold we step from the shelter to the platform edge, and when I look at the rails I get dizzy, somebody in the depths of consciousness makes for the surface, somebody within me suddenly grabs my wrist, somebody who at the same time both is and is not whispers: even without Vronsky we may be Anna.
Nekateri govorijo o denarju
kakor o ljubimcu, ki je samo
skočil v trgovino po cigaretne in
se nikoli več ni vrnil. Allison pravi,
da ga bo, če se kdajkoli pojavi,
ugrabila in skrila pod blazino,
da se ji bo končno kakor princeski
na grahu zeleno dremalo. Drugi
sanjajo, kako se mu zarijejo
v papirnate grive, mu razkuštrajo
bankovce in z njim vsaj enkrat
skočijo čez plot. Tina bi si ga zataknila
med nedra, kajti če diši po denarju,
dan zgubi potni vonj. Moški,
s s kozarcem bourbona v roki, bi ga
rad ujel v sod. Preostala bi mu samo
še ena dosmrtna skrb: kje so ledene
docke. Vsi na skrivnem sanjamo,
kako mu sežemo v žep in mu
izmaknemo kovanec, pravi kovanec,
tisti, ki nas pripelje preko reke.
Some people talk about money as of a lover who just dashed to the store for cigarettes and never came back. Allison says that should it ever appear she will grab it and hide it under her pillow, so that she will finally have a green sleep like the princess on the pea. Others dream about how they will claw through its paper manes, fondle its banknotes and, at least once, have an affair with it. Tina would like to stick it down her bra, for if the bra smells of money the day will no longer reek of sweat. The man with the glass of bourbon in his hand would like to lock it up in a barrel. He would be left with just one final worry for the rest of his life: where the ice cubes are. We all dream in secret that we reach into its pocket, lifting one of its coins out, the right coin, the one that will take us over the river.
Že navsezgodaj te odkljukam,
kjer še vedno spiš. Skupaj s soncem
zavrtiva rundo, seštejeva ulice v četrti,
odštejem tisto s psom. Med sestankom
potapljam ladjice. Ko nekdo reče »a štiri«,
pade projekt. Po kosilu vržem puško
v koruzo, nato ves popoldan seštevam
zrnca in preostalo municijo. Domov
grede skočim v trgovino po robo,
v katero zložim trud. Noge najdejo pot
v sosednjo gostilno: tam znanci
izenačujejo prazna leta in polne
kozarce v liho število. Ko se vrnem,
že napol spiš. Dremavo pregledaš
svoj seznam in me črtaš.
To-Do List

First thing in the morning I check you off the list, as you are still asleep. Together the sun and I make our rounds, we add up the streets in our district, I subtract the one with the dog. During the meeting, engrossed in a game of Battleships, when someone says “A 4” the project goes belly-up. After lunch I throw in the towel, so that all afternoon I am counting the threads and strands. On the way home I pop into the store for merchandise into which I put my efforts. My legs find their way into a nearby bar: there people I know balance up the empty years and the full glasses into an odd number. When I get back, you are half asleep. Drowsily you look over your own list and cross me off.
Stalno bivališče imamo v telesu, 
ki potuje med oceanoma, 
a je dovolj prostorno za nas vse, 
po tukajšnjem zakonu za tujce. 
Navadno prebivamo v njem, 
le ob jutranjem teku se večkrat 
spravimo na varno, dokler se ne 
ogreje ohišje. Ko se odpravi 
na delo, vzajemno strmimo v ekran, 
mu nosimo kavo, navijamo živčne 
končiče na papilotke, samo domotožni 
slonimo na oknu in štejemo letala 
a nebu. Ko ga obišče gripa, se 
potuhnemo v upanju, da nam ne 
bo zmedla ustaljenega hišnega reda: 
sprva dolžnost, trma sledi ambiciji, 
nato veselje. Edino strežnice 
pokrivajo, odžejajo vročično telo, 
sicer bomo vsi ob streho.
We have a permanent dwelling in a body that travels between two oceans, but there is enough room for all of us, according to the local law for foreigners. Normally we reside in it, only when we go running in the morning do we often take refuge somewhere safe until the housing warms up. When it is leaving to go to work, we get together to stare at the screen, bring it coffee, wind the nerve endings into ringlets, just feeling homesick we lean against the window and count the planes in the sky. When it catches the flu we duck low in the hope that the established rules of the house will not be overturned: first of all duty, obstinacy follows ambition, and then pleasure. If it weren’t for the serving women who do the tucking in, cool down the feverish body, none of us would have a roof over our heads.
Na levem boku dneva

1
Ko si zavest pomane oči,
se dogodki usedejo za mizo
in me vzamejo v precep.
Pustim, da pristajajo in
se dvigajo kakor lovska letala
na obleganem terenu.
Pozabila sem nanje. Zakaj
so se spomnili name?
Vsiljive spominčice – stisnejo
se med platnice zatajenega
poglavja. Cvetijo znotraj
mene, komaj vidno.

2
Ko se zazrem v zenice laži,
mi je nanagloma jasno,
da sem v njeni pesti.
Nepremišljena beseda
potuje nad mano, nizek oblak –
v trenutku pozabe, ko brez
dežnika stopim v pogovor,
se bo srd zlil name.
On the Port Side of the Day

I

When consciousness rubs its eyes,
events sit down at the table
and interrogate me.
I let them land and move
like fighter planes
on occupied territory.
I had forgotten them. Why
did they remember me?
Intrusive forget-me-nots—they snuggle
between the covers of a concealed
chapter. They bloom inside
me, only just visible.

2

When I look into the pupils of a lie
I suddenly realize
that I am in its fist.
An unconsidered word
travels above me, a low cloud—
in the moment of forgetfulness, when
with no umbrella I step into a conversation,
wrath will pour over me.
Oblije me obžalovanje,
a še sveža laž sikne: tudi
če zbežiš iz moje hiše,
planeš brez padala iz vrtoglave
prevare na tla resnice.
Kdo bo verjel, da nisi
moj stalni gost?

3
Ko je pobegnil pogum,
po lestvi levega rebra,
je spotoma pretipal žepe
za besednim drobižem, dovolj
za kariero kje drugje. Morda
je še prostor med drugim
in tretjim oblakom, ki složno
potujeta preko obzorja.
Pod mentorstvom ozračja bi se
lahkotno oblikoval v gobo,
iz gobe v ovco, iz ovce v zmaja,
nato v tornado, ki bi me odnesel
drugam, ostala bi samo lestev,
prislonjena na zrak.
Remorse envelops me,
and the lie, still fresh, hisses: even
if you escape from my house
you will zoom down from a vertiginous
deception onto the floor of truth.
Who is going to believe that you
are not a permanent guest of mine?

3

As bravery was running away
up the ladder of the left ribs,
on the way it ran its hands over its pockets,
looking for small change in words, enough
for a career somewhere else. Maybe
there is space between the second
and third cloud, which are travelling
hand in hand towards the horizon.
Under the supervision of the atmosphere it
might lightly change its shape into a mushroom,
from mushroom to sheep, from sheep to dragon,
then into a tornado that would carry me off
elsewhere, only the ladder would remain,
leaning against the air.
sedaj ko sem starejša od sebe,
si želim, da mi čas preneha mečkati
telesno obleko, da spomin bolj ali
manj ljubljene prince in druge
prijazne junake pošlje dol po stezi
pozabe kakor poprej čebelico Majo,
Piko Nogavičko in odrezane kite.
Sedaj ko sem starejša od sebe,
si ne želim činčina kozarcev,
čestitk »sploh se ti še ne pozna«.
Sedaj ko je noč starejša od mene,
si za obletnico želim obisk lune:
obzirno kakor frizerka stari stranki
mi razčeše zemeljsko telo.
now that I am older than myself,
I want time to stop making creases in
my bodily clothes, I want my memory
to send all the more or less loved princes
and other charming heroes down the path
of oblivion just like it did to Maya the Bee,
to Pippi Longstocking and to the braids I cut off.
Now that I am older than myself I don’t want
the chinking of glasses, congratulatory
wishes, “No one could tell by looking at you.”
Now that the night is older than me, I wish for myself
for my birthday a visit from the moon:
considerately, like a hairdresser with an old
customer, she combs out my earthly body’s hair.
Čakanje – čakanje,
zdaj zdaj se bo pripetilo,
zdaj zdaj se bodo iztirili
robovi sveta, zaneslo nas bo
v neznano krivuljo vesolja,
drveli bomo, žogice hrepenenja,
po brezimni orbiti.
Alo stara mama, alo prababica, alo dedek!
Kako brezhibno, elegantno se gibljete,
hitreje od svetlobne hitrosti,
v tihem šiku smrti,
mi lovimo sapo in korak,
gojimo strah,
grejemo dušo na oltarjih,
prosimo, prosimo,
prosimo tako dolgo, da zaslišimo glas,
ki nas bo pospremil in predstavil
gluhonememju vesolju,
nam zapel uspavanko,
aja tutaja, aja tutaja,
iz mene izhajaš, k meni prihajaš,
ko prestopimo mejo zemlje
Waiting—waiting,
right now it will happen,
right now will be derailed
the borders of the world, we will be taken
away into an unknown curve of the universe,
we will speed, balls in the game of longing,
along nameless orbits.
Hi, grandma, hi, great-grandmother, hi, grandfather!
How perfectly, how elegantly you move around,
faster than the speed of light,
in the quiet chic of death,
we catch our breath and check our pace,
we tend to our fear,
we warm our souls on altars,
we ask, we ask,
we ask for so long that we get to hear the voice
that will accompany us and introduce us
to the deaf mute universe,
that will sing us a lullaby,
rock-a-bye baby, rock-a-bye baby,
from me you go out, into me you come,
when we step across the border of the world
Afterword

Cvetka Lipuš is a nomadic poet who writes in the Slovenian of her own Austrian Carinthia and, at the same time, thinks in the German and in the English of her two other linguistic homes: Austria and the United States. Poetry enables her both to feel most at home in language and to express herself in it most skilfully. For this reason, in her seventh collection of poems (her first in some time), a collection originating in America rather than in Europe, she writes, “When we are alone we slip off into the past / as into a bathrobe. How softly it clings to us” (“Watch Us Float”). But this bathrobe, paradoxically, speaks to her journeying from language to language, from culture to culture, from Železna Kapla/Eisenkappel in Carinthia—where she was born into the family of the author Florjan Lipuš—to her studies in Celovec/Klagenfurt and Vienna and her fifteen years in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. And then to life in Mozart’s city of Salzburg. In her poetry Lipuš experiences new surroundings and simultaneously realizes: “In whatever direction I go, the days walk behind me / like obedient puppies behind their master” (“Open End”). For this reason she may, concurrently, sink into herself, into questions that, as she herself says, “we prefer, actually, to avoid: how are
we to fit our own story into the wider one, how are we to say that we are part of a story that transcends our own?”

Lipuš brought herself to our attention with her debut collection, *Pragovi dneva* [*Thresholds of the Day*], in 1988; this was followed by *Doba temnjenja* [*Times of Darkness*] (1993), *Geografska bližine* [*Geography of Closeness*] (2000), *Spregradev milosti* [*Conjugation of Mercy*] (2003), *Obleganje sreče* [*Siege of Happiness*] (2008), *Pojdimo vezat kosti* [*Let’s Go Tie Up Some Bones*] (2010), and *Kaj smo, ko smo* [*What We Are When We Are*] (2015). Four of her collections have also been published in German translation. Her poetic voice is independent and original; it pierces our mundane, automatized perception; it goes beyond the barrier of language and culture to discover new territories of freedom and into them seductively invite the reader:

Sins, betrayals, murders, deceptions,
beauty spots on a heated complexion.
Touch the right place: I shall clothe them
into a verse and knock on the door of a sonnet.

Her poetry laces traditions together and, in so doing, leaps over the geography from New York to Kuala Lumpur, so that

*Quoted in Valentina Plahuta Simčič, “Nagrada Prešernovega sklada: Cvetka Lipuš, pesnica” [Prešeren Fund Award: The poet Cvetka Lipuš], article and interview in Delo, Sobotna priloga [Saturday supplement], “Kultura,” 5 February 2016.—TP*
it endows the reader with delight in poetry as a pathway across the border between language and culture.

Tomaž Toporišič
(translated by Tom Priestly)
Cvetka Lipuš was born in 1966 in the town of Železna Kapla/Eisenkappel, which is situated in the Slovenian-German bilingual part of the Austrian province of Carinthia (Koroška/Kärnten). Southern Carinthia includes several districts where the Slovenian-speaking population firmly maintains its linguistic identity. Writing in Slovenian has never been in question for Cvetka; other writers of the Slovenian minority have meanwhile shifted to German, the language of the majority population.

She studied comparative literature and Slavistics at the universities of Celovec/Klagenfurt (Carinthia), Ljubljana (Slovenia), and Vienna. She lived in the United States from 1995 to 2009 and studied library and information science at the University of Pittsburgh. She moved to Salzburg, Austria, in 2009.

She has published seven collections of poetry: the first three in Klagenfurt, the remainder in Ljubljana. The poems in the four collections preceding this one (all mentioned above, in the afterword) were written in the United States; *Kaj smo, ko smo* was written after her move to Salzburg. The seven thus represent her life in three countries. Five of these have been published in book form in German translation. Among her
awards, she has received the Carinthian Provincial Literature Prize; a grant from the Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Art and Culture; the Austrian State Grant for Literature; and, most recently, Slovenia’s prestigious Prešeren Fund Award, in 2016.

**Tom Priestly** was born in Uganda in 1937, grew up in England, and emigrated to Canada in 1966. He taught Russian language and Slavic linguistics at the University of Alberta and conducted research on dialect structure and language maintenance in the Slovenian-speaking part of Austria. Since 1992, he has published translations and co-translations of the work of over fifteen Slovenian poets into English, ranging from seminal work by the nineteenth-century luminary Francè Prešeren to recent popular children’s songs.