

10 BOOKS

from
SLOVENIA

Evald Flisar

Jasmin B. Frelih

Anja Golob

Tadej Golob

Jure Jakob

Davorin Lenko

Sebastijan Pregelj

Robert Simonišek

Gašper Torkar

Glorjana Veber

[2014]



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EVALD FLISAR *The Enchanted Odysseus*

About the author

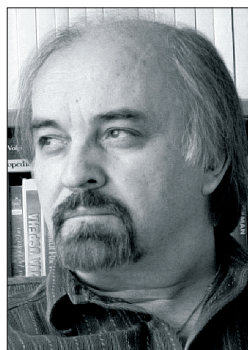
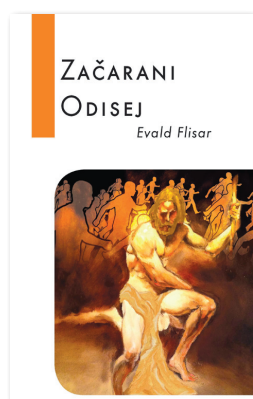


Photo by Igor Modic

Evald Flisar (1945, Slovenia). Best-selling novelist, playwright, essayist, globe-trotter, underground train driver in Sydney, editor of (among other publications) an encyclopaedia of science and invention in London, author of short stories and radio plays for the BBC and the ABC, president of the Slovene Writers' Association (1995 – 2002), since 1998 editor of the oldest Slovenian literary journal *Sodobnost*. Author of eleven novels (seven nominated for *kresnik*, the Slovenian "Booker"), two collections of short stories, three travelogues, two books for children and fifteen stage plays (eight nominated for Best Play of the Year Award, three times won the award). Winner of the Prešeren Foundation Prize, the highest state award for prose and drama, the prestigious Župančič Award

for lifetime achievement, three awards for Best Radio Play, etc. Widely translated (so far 124 translations into 33 languages). His stage plays are regularly performed all over the world, most recently in Austria, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Japan, Taiwan, Serbia, Bosnia & Herzegovina and Belarus. Attended more than 50 literary readings and festivals on all continents. Lived abroad for 20 years (three years in Australia, 17 years in London). Since 1990, resident in Ljubljana, Slovenia.

About the book



The main narrative flow carved in the matrix of the novel *The Enchanted Odysseus* is unlike any other we have seen in Flisar's works. Between the banks of the Internet and the globalised society runs the river of the everyday, bearing all the signs of a familiar crisis and arbitrary freedom. That is the perspective adopted by the main character, the first-person narrator of his own story, from which he positions, reveals and defines himself. We are no longer dealing with a strictly defined person, a national of this or that country, but a cosmopolitan living on practically all continents, as if the planet has become a global republic with wide open borders, the character seemingly unable to function in any other environment. Thus, the essence of home is not always a house standing on a plot of land in a particular country – home is perhaps, above all, a strong awareness of what keeps us and our world sane and creative. That is the subject of this challenging and current book of superior literary quality. The title itself suggests that the narrator is actually a modern everyman representing all of us, the human race as a whole, someone who does not know at whose pleasure he serves, going around in circles, unable to find his way home and hence the way to his redemption. Modern man remains enchanted and with no answers to fundamental questions; that is the fate of mankind standing on the edge of a cliff. Every event in Evald Flisar's book thus also has a wider, symbolic component and a parallel in society.

From the foreword by Jože Horvat

Excerpt

The Enchanted Odysseus

Translated by
Špela Bibič

Dear cassandra@yahoo.com! You don't know me. I chanced upon your e-mail address on the Internet. What you are about to read was written by an unusual individual who has lost touch with himself and the past as a result of brain damage. There are, of course, many such people out there; amnesia is the subject of study (and a lucrative source of income) for innumerable scientists. My unusualness is limited to the fact that I may be the only amnesiac who has been granted, blessed with or saddled with the chance to find his way back to himself through a labyrinth of events, whether planned or coincidental is impossible to say.

I need your advice, cassandra@yahoo.com.

Not long ago, I was at the Cairo market where I came across a potter who not only sold custom-made pots and bowls made of fresh clay but also did surprisingly authentic portraits of his customers. Let me tell you: the clay head sculptures bore such a remarkable resemblance to the customers it was quite uncanny! What's more, it took the potter only ten minutes to make them!

I couldn't help commissioning one of myself.

When I looked at myself in the mirror an hour later back at the hotel, I was most astonished

to discover that the clay head looked *exactly* like the one I carry on my shoulders (and use for thinking). Naturally, it was monochrome, grey-brown and did not blink its eyes nor change expression and yet, it seemed almost alive.

And I thought: If the exterior can be modelled, is it not possible to do the same with what lives inside one's head that, for lack of a better term, we call *the Self*? In my case, this *Self* is the past that I am unable to access. But why bother trying to access something that is merely a memory, something that no longer exists? Why not model a new *Self*?

Why not be Somebody if I think myself a Nobody?

What do you think, cassandra@yahoo.com?

Is it possible to artificially create what we carry inside ourselves, and for which we have invented different names – mentality, soul, mind, memory, mental makeup, character, self-awareness? It is certainly easier to remodel something that is already inside us. It is easier to create a new, different, handsomer face out of the clay that already exists; composed of memory fragments, ties to the past. Anyone can do it, but few take on the challenge.

But I, Mrs (Miss?) Cassandra, have nothing inside me to remodel. The only thing floating within me is sorrow. This sorrow, this longing for something that remains obscure, out-of-reach, is the only thing that I could call an emotion. Everything else is sheer automatism; I do what other people do; I eat, I sleep, I go to the toilet, I bathe, I comb my hair, I shave, I get dressed. In fact, I am most aware of my body and its characteristics. If a small piece of beefsteak gets stuck between my teeth and I can't get rid of it without using a toothpick, it gives me such pleasure I can barely describe. The feeling of unease is proof that I *exist*, that I am alive, that there is such a thing as my *Self*, though only made up of responses to minor irritations.

There is something else inside me that could perhaps be described as a feeling although it is more, I feel, a form of stubbornness. Besides living my life automatically, I follow the instructions I receive from unfamiliar people more or less automatically too. I get them in e-mails, in text messages, in letters left for me by strangers at hotel receptions and elsewhere, including, believe it or not, under rocks by the side of the road. I am not exaggerating when I tell you that I follow these instructions faithfully, to the letter and to the best of my abilities, without considering whether I am doing right or wrong, whether I am bringing joy or misery; I don't think about it at all. I am like a retriever jumping after every stick that someone throws for me. And much like a dog, I do it thinking of the reward that my loyalty to my master might earn me.

My master is the world-famous expert in rare forms of amnesia, Dr Krauthaker (but more about him another time). And the reward (or rather the promise of it, for there has been no sign of it yet) is the hope that every task I fulfil complies with the instructions as much as possible and is a step on the path that, in the end (what end? whose end?), will lead me back "home", to myself, to "Who-I-Used-To-Be". But isn't "hope" also an emotion?

To conclude. I carry that clay face I had made in record time by the potter at the Cairo market (I don't know why I keep referring to him as the potter, the Artist would be more appropriate) around with me in a carton box. Every time I check into a new hotel room, I place it on my nightstand and look at it every night until I drift into sleep. Often, believe it or not, it even appears to me in my dreams. And last night, just one day before I found your e-mail on the Internet, I dreamed of it coming toward me completely alive. Not just the face, my own body as well!

Right before we collided (or merged), I felt myself (and the person coming toward me) catching fire, simultaneously burning into ashes, into darkness, into Nothingness. But the dreams, so alive they remain rooted in my memory longer than anything else, have led me to think that there could actually be two of us in wakefulness too: the former Who-I-Used-To-Be and his look-alike "clay" double. The first is unreachable to me, while the second one I could form; for I am my own potter, sculptor, painter, blacksmith, craftsman; I could mould it from clay. Though I do not carry it within me, it is available in everything that surrounds me: in people, events, beliefs and most of all, you might agree, in philosophy.

That is what I intend to do. If I receive a reply from you, any reply, even just a "Fuck off", I will be overcome with an immense feeling of joy. The only thing I need right now is someone who is willing to talk to me.

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JASMIN B. FRELIH *In/Half*

About the author



Photo by the author

Jasmin B. Frelih was born in 1986 in Kranj, Slovenia. He is a writer. During his studies of comparative literature, literary theory and history at the Faculty of Arts in Ljubljana, he and a group of poets founded the paraliterary organization I.D.I.O.T. that publishes the *I.D.I.O.T.* biannual review, featuring poetry, prose and theoretical writings by the youngest generation of Slovenian authors. He is the prose editor at the review and assumed the editor-in-chief position for its latest, tenth edition. His short stories, essays, translations and theoretical texts have been published in all major Slovenian literary and cultural reviews – *Literatura*, *Sodobnost*, *Dialogi* and *Pogledi*. He is currently working on a short story

collection.

His debut novel *Na/pol* (*In/Half*), three years in the making, was published in the summer of 2013. It has garnered considerable media attention, a slew of positive reviews, and was awarded the best literary debut prize at the annual Slovenian Book Fair.

Its author remains committed to literature as an art form, and to the possibility of language as the ultimate mediator of societal relations and the final arbiter of the value of human experience.

About the book



The author was born in 1986, but his debut *In/Half* is a surprisingly mature, structurally complex, thematically sly and, above all, a stylistically accomplished work, rather than a half finished product of youthful rashness. The novel traces a paced exchange of three very distinct narrative threads, *Pancake Palace*, *Abraham!* and *Poetrylitics*, weaving into a braid until finally intertwining in the last chapter X. The novel ends mid-word. /.../

A determined, yet unforced commitment to a cause shines out of Frelih's debut novel. It is brought about by the realisation that the world in the third millennium is out of joint and by the acknowledgment of the fact that it is hard to pin-point the original, unambivalent source of the mistake, with which we have found ourselves in this dead end. This is a world in which we are haunted by the state of inescapability; and we are searching for a safe harbour – the compassion that we all lack. Frelih does not embellish the world; he merely takes it on as it is, sharpens its edges and dissects the patterns of evil in it. /.../

Frelih condenses words to a level where he can capture all dimensions of a single moment; all the sounds, images, feelings and thoughts that fill up a moment are revealed at once, thus painting an impression of synchronicity: all is here at the same time, alive, cacophonous. It is understandable that such a reading is intense and mentally exacting. But anxiety, the prevailing effect, is continually challenged and enriched by a never-ending stream of linguistic bravura – the constant innovations hardly allow us to catch our breath.

From the review by Tina Vrščaj, Pogledi, vol. 4, no. 17, 11 September 2013

Translated by
the author

look ...

... at this street and all the people on it. And this branch, freely floating in the air just a few inches from his window. During storms with heavy winds, it lightly taps against the glass as if wishing to hide itself from the weather. When it rains, it dresses in black and makes a silent bow to the march of raindrops. The tree is not visible from here.

Look at the battle of shadows on the yellow canvas of the street-light. Listen to the keys of the typewriter. Its teeth clack without end. As a herd of wild horses makes its way along the stone-covered riverbank. People beneath the window make all kinds of sounds. They have yelled out all the names, they have called to their children and shrieked in sheer pleasure at people they have not seen in centuries, they laughed loudly, without choice, almost under duress, to a thousand salty jokes coming from the mouths of travelling strangers who had come here from rainforests and deserts, under wide-brimmed hats, with cracked skin on their lips and the thumbs of their hands ... They dragged the steel spits right onto the street. Bodies are rolling above the flames. Through tiny cracks in the walls and the frames of windows, a sweet smoke crawls in. The smell of flesh stops the sounds of the keyboard. The chair creaks as the body sitting in it leans back. *The things you do to escape trap you within them.* He thinks of the story about a man who once, in his prison cell, made a small cage from the frame of his bunkbed and closed himself inside. He was trapped under his own conditions and so became, he told anyone who would listen, completely free. *It was not in vain.*

Twenty-five years have already passed since he left his home and made himself a new one among the cannibals. They are not picky. They eat everything, from memories to respect. As long as he types, they leave him be. As soon as the typewriter goes silent, they come nosing around. Black-haired and clear-lipped girls sneak around his body. He is already too old to succumb to their charms. On their account, he once almost lost his fingers. Back then, he still believed it to be a matter of courage. And what was left? As for the men, they are even worse. They want to know everything. Who is he, where is he from, who are his parents, what does he want? Raffle him off in a lottery – and that is who he will be.

The smell of flesh will not leave him at peace. The machine remains silent. He turns his head in the direction of the door and listens intently should the floor creak under the intruder's steps. The house remains silent. All of its ghosts have banded together into the doorpost above the entrance doors and are now waiting to pour down on the first person to enter. The bell in the reception remains silent. Is there really no one there? He pushes his glasses higher up his nose with his index finger. Sweet smoke. He did not come here to pull anyone's leg.

He makes it to the door in three quick steps. The door opens onto a hallway of swollen wallpaper, patterned with pale-pink flowerbuds (on the floor above a year ago, the fat Schat fell asleep in his bathtub with the pipe open and drowned – the wallpaper has peeled off the walls in a display of mourning), and he squeamishly peeks over the railing of the stairwell onto the floor below. There is no one there. He presses the inside of his wrist to his ear to make sure if the time is still passing. Ohm. Sssk. Ohm. Sssk. (*try it*)

With his fist on his chest, he crunches the lapels of his jacket into a ball. The fabric tightens over his shoulders and a single stitch moans. Under the dead gaze of trophies hanging from the walls (cats, cuckoos, cattle), he runs down to the ground floor. All the chairs are bound with red velvet. All the tables are made of ebony and covered with a fat layer of lacquer. They have been bitten by forks. The chairs have been punched through by cigarette butts. The fan is turned on, facing the wall. There is no one here. A bloody trail, decades old, that has destroyed the backs of whole generations of housewives and remained stubbornly present, leads from the common area to the kitchen as a reminder of the gunslingers' quarrel that has been thoroughly investigated by the police and over-reported in the contemporary daily press. The battle of Schiv. The owner's ancestors won. The owner's ancestors always win. He flicks the brass stump of the bell with his palm, and lets the sound eat up the air.

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ANJA GOLOB **Bent Hang**

About the author

Photo by Grace Schwindt



Anja Golob (1976) studied philosophy and comparative literature at the Faculty of Arts in Ljubljana. Until recently, she was a theatre critic, publishing regularly for over twelve years, mainly in the daily newspaper *Večer*. She now works as a dramaturg for contemporary performances, a translator and an author. At the end of 2013, she and four bold individuals started a small publishing house called VigeVageKnjige, where she holds a position of an editor in chief.

She has published two books of poetry: *V roki* (In the Hand – Litera, 2010) and *Vesa v zgibi* (Bent Hang – Mladinska knjiga, 2013). Her poetry has also been published in literary magazines *Literatura*, *Apokalipsa* (Slovenia), *Edit* (Germany), *Wespennest* (Austria), and in thematic collections (*Jahrbuch der Lyrik* 2013, *Mlade rime ENA*).

She lives between Ljubljana, Brussels and London.

About the book



Claiming that *Vesa v zgibi* (*Bent Hang*), the second book of poetry by Anja Golob, differs from her first book by the title makes no sense at first sight. The key is not the title as such, but rather the way of framing poetic language at a given time. As much as *V roki* (*In the Hand*) was a witty wordplay combining the author's surname and the well known Slovenian proverb, *Vesa v zgibi* leaves the reader paralysed at first. And yet it would be a challenge to find a title more suitable for the content it represents. From behind a clear, simple and transparent poetical structure lurks a premeditated scheme built on inherent contradiction. Poems create seemingly solid, recognizable images that the author loosens, in the body or at the end of a poem, by ironic or humorous bent and gives it a shade of meaningful ambiguity.

Poetry of Anja Golob faces the test of endurance – just like bent hang, a gymnastic exercise in which the performer has to overcome the concept of his/her own strength. When the arms can no longer hold the weight of the body the challenge presents itself: how to go against gravity and endure *more*? That *more* can be but a cry of protest of the agonized body, but it is also a desire to go beyond, a belief that it is possible to go on and demand more. It is, above all, an unremitting desire to endure within poetry at times when there is not much of poetical left in this world.

By Ana Geršak

Excerpt

Bent Hang

Translated by
Katja Šaponjić

The Concert of the Fat Lady

Some of us will end up alcoholics,
one or two will drown, fly off the road or get crashed on a bike.
Major depression here, Hepatitis C there,
most of us will kick all kinds of buckets,
I safely bet on a stroke during sex for at least one person,
some of us will slip on the bathroom floor and stay there.
One or two will kill themselves.
Now and then, someone will fall asleep in the evening, and never wake up.
Some of us have already had abortion,
some of us still will,
some of us cannot have children,
and some of us don't want them.
Those with more money will end up in a nursing home
surrounded with slashing second hands of hallway clocks,
a stale smell of incontinence and withered flowers,
the rest of us on a street, far from eyes and hearts,

maybe in crumbling houses of our parents...
Whose diagnoses have already started to seep out of handsets,
their check-ups already noted down in our diaries,
next to physiotherapies, names of drugs; apprehension of powerlessness
has commenced its slow descent – us : old age = 0 : 1.
It happens already, seldom but still, that we buy flowers,
send sympathy cards, delete numbers
from phones. It happens already, seldom but still, this feeling
of growing recurrence of blackness.
But for now, before we one by one leap into the abyss, we work.
We work a lot, we work on what we get, mostly seated in front of screens
on bad chairs, with bent spines and sandwiches for lunch.
Sometimes a piece of good news or a hand-written letter comes along,
sometimes a good book, a film, a music album, an exhibition, a concert,
sometimes a sentence is spoken on stage that pierces through
the fourth wall and lingers. Sometimes someone defends their
PhD thesis, sometimes someone wins a lottery,
sometimes someone has a child. Sometimes someone goes on a trip
and sends a postcard – life is fine and there's no hidden meaning,
sometimes someone ends at someone else's place and sex is great,
and then in the morning no reproaches, only mutual
Thanks, see you 'round, take care... and *ciao*, sometimes,
and only sometimes, a rainbow.
We watch, we read, we listen, we talk,
we write a line now and then. We follow progress, buy
appliances and secretly learn how to use them.
We rarely climb hills, we rarely smoke hash,
we rarely watch stars, we rarely sing, we rarely take a risk,
we rarely close our eyes.
But until there is still someone leaning against a bridge fence
in the setting sun, dreamily gazing at trains below;
until someone still jumps on a bike to rush off with a spray can
to an abandoned container in the middle of idyllic Dutch landscape
and covers the whole front side of it with a big fat RELAX;
and until there is still in the most far-off corner of a kindergarten backyard
a quiet child, withdrawn and utterly absorbed
in picking dirt with a stick or a handle of a little spade,
reaching out through a crevice in a fence;
until then we are safe. It is not for real yet, for real.

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TADEJ GOLOB *Ali Boma Ye!*

About the author

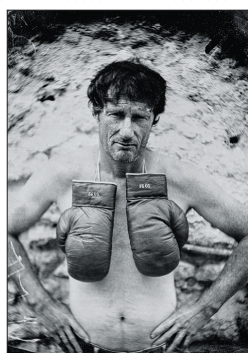


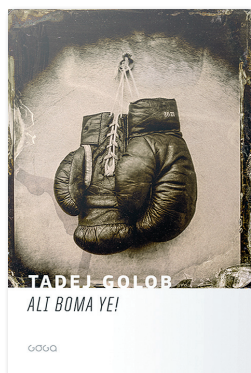
Photo by Borut Peterlin

Born on 16 September 1967 in Maribor. After finishing secondary school in Maribor, he joined the Yugoslav People's Army and then went on to study journalism in Ljubljana. In 2000, he published his first book *Z Everesta* (Descending Everest), a travelogue on Davo Karničar's descent from Mount Everest, followed by *Peter Vilfan, biografija* (Peter Vilfan, A Biography) in 2004, *Moške svinje* (Men Pigs), a selection of Playboy columns, in 2006, *Zgodba iz prve roke* (A First-hand Account), a biography of Zoran Predin, in 2008, the novel *Svinjske nogice* (Pork Legs) in 2009 and the young-adult novel *Zlati zob* (Gold Tooth) in 2011. Also in 2011, his short story *Plaža* (The Beach) was published in the Summer Stories section of the Slovenian daily *Delo*. In 2012, his short story was featured in and lent its title to the anthology *Monte Cristo, kolesa, kurent – Nova mariborska zgodba* (Monte Cristo, Bicycles, a Kurent – A New Maribor Story).

His biography of Peter Vilfan was a hit and held onto the top of all Slovenian bestseller lists for approximately six months. *Pork Legs* won the author the 2010 Kresnik Award for Best Slovenian Novel and *Gold Tooth* was included in the 2012 *White Ravens* catalogue (a selection of the best international young adult books prepared each year by the International Library for Young Adults in Munich) and chosen for the national project Growing with a Book with a print run of more than 20,000 copies distributed to all 7th graders in Slovenia and Slovenian communities abroad. Golob took part in the Modra ptica competition organised by the Mladinska knjiga publishing house with his young-adult book *Kam je izginila Brina?* (Where Did Brina Go?) and was one of the five finalists for the award. The book came out in 2013 with Miš publishing, followed by his adult novel *Ali boma ye!* with Goga publishing that same year.

A mountain climber since 1987, he has conquered two eight-thousanders, Dhaulagiri (1998) and Mount Everest (2000). He is a father of two, the twelve-year-old Brina and nine-year-old Lovro.

About the book



Primož Kotnik, a 40-year-old journalist, writer and amateur boxer is about to have the last fight of his career. When he wins, he is offered an opportunity he can neither accept nor refuse. A story on midlife crisis in a country and society that don't know how to move forward and, most importantly, where to go. Told with a classic twist of Hollywood westerns and boxing movies. Lots of boxing, lots of sex and lots of swearing.

"... and now these demonstrations, this mob standing there screaming that their country's been stolen away from them. It's been stolen from me by all of them. Why should I go out on the streets and start throwing cobblestones? Who should I throw them at? The people I'm marching against or the people marching behind me?"

"This is all shit," said Avgust. "They have different cobblestones in France, bigger than the ones we have here," he said, pointing to a cuboid in the size of a brick, "those aren't for uni people. It takes someone from Renault to make them fly."

"Once I would have preferred a good novel to a good fuck," says Primož, "but right now I would go for a fuck, even an average one would do."

Translated by
David Limon

“Today I found out that I can’t read that small print any more. What you get on product labels,” said Primož.

“When you’re young you think it’s for ever, but it’s not. Then you think that being old means having grey hair like Richard Gere, otherwise everything’s the same. Then you think the worst thing is if you can’t get it up, but that’s not it either. The worst are your teeth. Mine are all wobbly at the front and I have to get the whole lot changed, and do you know how much that costs?”

“It’s not that I want to be young for ever,” said Primož.

“Once I look cool if I don’t shave, now I just look like a vagrant. That’s what getting old means,” said Avgust.

“Right, but I don’t want to be young again, I just don’t want to be old.”

“I’d be young again,” said Avgust. “No problem.”

“I don’t know if I’d start boxing again. I wouldn’t feel like it.”

“You’ve got books. Write books.”

“It’s not the same. A book’s a book, if it’s good it’s fine, if it’s bad it’s just bad. One more, what’s the difference?”

If you’re bad at boxing it hurts. There is pain, fear, but there’s also the pleasure of mastering all that, the pain and the fear and the ape opposite you. If you took a hundred people at random and put them in the ring with Šarh, even though he’s got a glass jaw, how long would they remain on their feet? They wouldn’t, they’d be on the canvas at the first punch, and he had remained standing, for three rounds, and at the end Šarh was the one on the ground. How could a book give the same satisfaction? And there’s no bluffing. Well, less. Okay, there are judges and points and all that shit, but in the end it’s all the same. If you’re good, you win and go forward, and in the end you’re world champion. If you’re good at writing books, you’re nothing, if you’re really good, it doesn’t mean anything in this country, nada, there are people queuing up...

“I’m a good writer,” said Primož and Avgust grinned.

“Of course, we’re all good.”

“No, really, I am. Sometimes I think I’m not and then I go and read some Slovene writer, others as well, and I see that I am. If I wrote like them I’d kill myself. But it doesn’t help. If I was as good a boxer as I am a writer, I’ll be able to live of it. But there are only two million Slovenes, the market’s not there, you can’t live off such a small market.”

“Get the book translated and publish abroad?”

“You know what our problem is?” said Primož.

“What, Slovenes?”

“Yes, Slovenes, writers. Besides the fact that we are fucking useless... They are fucking useless.”

“My Slovene is not all that great,” said Avgust. “Most of it I don’t understand, then I can’t be bothered to read.”

“No one knows who we are. If you’re from Romania you’ve got Dracula and Ceausescu. If you’re from Bosnia, you’ve got the war. But from Slovenia, you’ve got nothing. We don’t exist.”

“We got Carniolan sausage,” said Avgust.

“And the Avseniks. We invented Oberkrainer music, accordians and that,” said Primož.

“You didn’t invent nothing. That’s German music. If that’s Slovene music then we’re better off with nothing.”

“When we went to that presentation in Munich it was Carnival time and at the airport there was a brass band playing ‘Golica’. Giving it all they’d got, like they were going to attack Stalingrad with it.”

“When I first came back to Yugoslavia I played in a folk group. That’s Slovene music, not the Avseniks.”

“If we don’t have the Avseniks, we don’t have anything,” said Primož.

“But if that’s Slovene music we’re better off without.”

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JURE JAKOB *Particles of a Work*

About the author

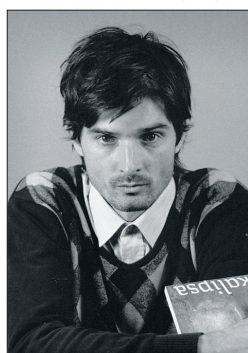


Photo by Tihomir Pinter

Jure Jakob was born in Celje in 1977. He obtained his master's degree in comparative literature at the Faculty of Arts in Ljubljana, where he currently lives and works as a freelance cultural worker. Up to date, he has published four poetry collections. Upon its release in 2003, his first book, *Tri postaje* (Three Stops), seemingly reservedly, but thoroughly reshuffled the cards of contemporary Slovenian poetry. It won Jakob the Zlata ptica Award and also earned him a prominent spot in the anthology of young Slovenian poets after 1990, which borrowed a verse of one of his poems for its title. The poetry collection was quickly sold out and reprinted in 2009. Jakob's second collection, *Budnost* (Awake), came out in 2006, followed by *Zapuščeni kraji* (Abandoned Places) in 2010 and his most recent, *Dela* (Particles of a Work) in 2013, establishing him as one of the stand-out poetic voices of his generation. His first collection was translated into Croatian and translations of individual poems have appeared in many other European languages.

About the book



The beginning is clean and simple. There is something mesmerising about it. That is the most fitting description for these poems. Words, uttered fully, images of nature. Cornel, the rustle of young leaves, a garden. The comings and goings to and from a landscape where time stands still or, better yet, pays no heed to human time. It is not important where we go to in between. The fingers clutching a walking stick are *the snares of our insecurity*. We breathe the words together with the poet. For us, there is only the trying, says T. S. Eliot in *Four Quartets*. To do as if there could be another first time. The poems are like arrows piercing the air, falling to the ground in marvellous arcs. They grow roots inside us like cornel; they are crampons that give us a firm footing to reach even the places where the earth lifts the darkness high up into the sky. This is an exercise in steadiness. Not just the steadiness of gaze, but also that of perseverance, existence. Neither the poet nor the reader claims anything as their own. They simply are, open, so that the scene can remain completely bare and impenetrable. Offering no final answers. *The kingdom of animals, plants and ghosts is running at full blast so you cannot get to the bottom here.* What we have here before us is the work of light and dreams. Every verse contains a box of matches. The glow they give lights up even the invisible, dreadful border with the world beyond the darkness, but only so that we can stay on this side, that we can take in and give out, that we can appease the hunger within us, full of gratitude, as we move forward. To be a part, a particle of a bigger work, still far away, but connected with everything. *And to find something in that that will speak on.* A spark, a vision of fire, an infinitely small god particle? Despite the doubts, despite the risk of destruction, despite the fragility of not only our life but of the lives of others as well, of every living thing. These tiny particles of reality, a ferry, ants, tomatoes, birds, a forest, a river, weaved into a *cosmos* where a poem is the only approximation of love. It awaits, ready for us to enter. The work (of the poem) continues within us. Incessantly. Silently, we ask that tomorrow may finally come. As I read, I am also part of this journey. I do what needs to be done. *So important is everything and keeps changing and it smarts like hunger.*

By Veronika Dintinjana

Excerpt

Particles of a Work

Translated by
Barbara Jurša

I

Two small tomato saplings
on the windowsill
are catching light into their pots.

Their little hairs
are wrapped in the air
I breathe.

Below, on the road
that perhaps you sometimes
take to work,

the traffic flows from the left
and right
to here.

I'm watching it
because it flows,
because I want to

find in this
something
that will go on speaking.

6

A swollen night
criss-crossed by lightning,
and a cigarette burning.

I'm drinking the last
beer.
Small streams after the storm

are pouring back
into bare footprints,
that which is gone.

A stick insect,
which went numb in an instant,
cannot move on.

I'm still sitting
and when the lightning strikes again,
I see

a slightly bent world
showing something,
but not to me.

There's something
behind my back.
It's good

that I'm
here
in between.

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DAVORIN LENKO *Bodies in the Dark*

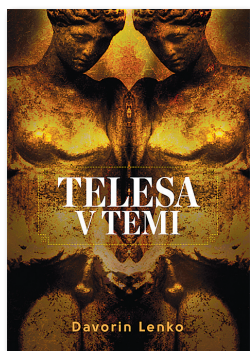
About the author



Photo by Marija Terpin Mlinar

Davorin Lenko was born on 8 February 1984. He studied comparative literature that introduced him to the magic (and the snares) of postmodern poetics and diverse metafictional techniques. He obtained his bachelor's degree in 2012 with his thesis *Intertextuality and Metafiction in Stephen King's Dark Tower Book Series*. For a number of years, he worked as a music critic for different media, writing on metal and rock. He publishes his short fiction – and occasionally poetry – in various Slovenian literary magazines. In 2012, his story *Zver in brezno* (The Beast and the Abyss) won him first prize in a bilingual competition in Bleiburg, Austria, and his story *Samoumevnosti* (Self-evidences) was nominated for the Best Short Story Award at the 17th Slovenian Book Days that same year. His texts generally deal with gender politics, crossing the boundaries between “the linguistic” and “the pornographic” and the integration of metafictional techniques into the narrative. In October 2013, the Center for Slovenian Literature (the Aleph book series) published his novel *Telesa v temi* (Bodies in the Dark) that was nominated for the Best First Book Award at the Slovenian Book Fair.

About the book



He is a writer. He is most likely the person behind the answers attributed to “O” in the quoted passages from the interview. His friend Andrej refers to him by his fictitious name “Hank”. Neither he himself nor his students nor his psychotherapist nor “his” women – Mandy, Sara and her daughter Tea, Anita (like the character from one of Wallace’s stories), Anette (the author’s bizarre invention) etc. – call him by “his” name. Not even the signifier of the personal name settles on a definitive signified. And so “he” unfolds like a sequence of fragments in editing: his discursive “identity” is constantly on hold. It is generated by analogy with references to contemporary music, film and literature, quotes from autopoetic reflection, quotes from others and quotes from his own stories. He is – “feedback”. Who is he then? And does he even exist? He is what he speaks. A metafictional character blurring the line between “fiction” and “reality”. He is an author in a time when Barthes declared “the death of the author” which Foucault then replaced with a set of discourse “author-functions”. The cited interview with “the author” also meets traditional readers’ expectations in that the author “O” distances himself from them. There is only one phenomenon that truly angers him: his readers keep associating his erotic writing with the biographical fact: the loss of his libido after his testicular cancer operation. – O! If the author is unable to live what he writes about, how can the reader continue to believe in this omnipotence of meaning that he is saying something – true? In a post-modern fashion, the composition of *Bodies in the Dark* dismantles the illusion of truth in literature. (...)

Vanesa Matajč; an excerpt from the foreword

Excerpt

Bodies in the Dark

Translated by
Špela Bibič

I wanted to sniff cocaine; quantum mechanics, anal sex. I wanted to immerse myself in the occult, establish telepathic communication with the dead. I wanted to take LSD, magic mushrooms, fuck magic women; take part in a Wiccan Sabbath, feel God, feel the cool of old churches in summertime, see the small ancient villages in the south of France, write something that would transcend Slovenian mentality, become a mentor, have sex with teenage girls, get a tattoo ...

Then sometimes I become aware of the linguistic undertone of all my internal monologues and I check myself.

Why do I talk about myself in the past tense?

Yes, of course I could do something to make my life easier. I could broaden my sexual horizons to include all intimate contacts with human beings that I have left after my castration: smell, taste, touch, oral sex ... Countless people have advised me to do so but, for some reason, I am unable to.

I am alone in my apartment, only the deep voice of Leonard Cohen keeping me company. I sit there drinking red wine, lighting candles in my mind. One for Sara and one for Andrej. One for Edita and one for Tea. One for Anita. I was never a great romantic, but I did like my sex. I liked the feel of it. And another thing. I fondly cherish my memories of those moments right before the sexual union. In one of his texts, Cohen talked about the orgasm as an indication of having met someone: "When I see a woman's face transformed by the orgasm we have reached together, then I know we've met. Anything else is fiction," he wrote. But I am not that kind of person. Metafiction and metaphysical nihilism have left their mark on me and I have never perceived orgasm, neither mine nor my partner's, as a confirmation of reality. Everything is as fictitious as anything else, including orgasm. And that is why I have always been more interested in the process of narration. The story. The clumsy foreplay. The fumbling in the dark. The discontinuity of desire. I value this quote of Cohen's and revisit it in my mind almost every day, but in essence, I cannot agree with it though I actually – and ultimately – would like to make my sex life easier and embrace it like my adopted child.

But I cannot escape myself. My time is ticking and experience shows that I find it increasingly difficult to commit myself to – this or that – body lying next to me. I close my eyes and, quite spontaneously, a fragile chain of events unravels before me again that, some day, somewhere, somehow had led to a sexual union; even though it was ages ago and all of the actors are now long gone.

So: not the orgasm nor the face nor the scream nor the spasm, but the narrative. The narrative of the state of bodies and minds before sex is the only thing standing against the clichéd, conventional logic of orgasm.

Sure, I can satisfy my partner in a number of ways, but all that is left for me in such a union is the cold logic of her orgasm. Therefore, I cannot really blame myself for not giving it a go more often; for preferring to go to sleep at night instead of finding myself a pair of lips, breasts, armpits, some genitals. There is no libido and no mystery of gradual coupling. My love is sad, but also quite egocentric. That's how I've been ever since I was a child; I can't really change. Cancer has only shown me something that should probably have been obvious to me for a long, long time. My whole life ... But it wasn't and there is no way back now. And, yet, in spite of all my pain and suffering, I still love myself. But I miss sex ... And of course those fragile moments before it.

"There is a crack in everything," says Cohen. And he's right. That's how the light gets in.

/.../

And then I'm drunk, somewhere in the open air. It is a beautiful, warm summer night. I think I can smell the sea. I look around and there is Sara, her name is biblical and I realise I don't know whether she's Jewish or not, but that doesn't matter because it doesn't matter to me. The wind is ruffling her hair. I have no idea when we are. I tell her that Barthes wrote about text as a form of pleasure and she says: "I know," letting out a laugh. "It's right here with us." Right here. Right there. Now. Then. I listen to Cohen, the room is full of warm doom and this is a text – a pleasure – that will never really be written.

SEBASTIJAN PREGELJ *Under a Lucky Star*

About the author

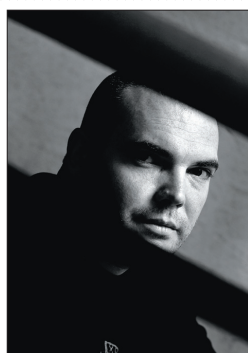


Photo by Jože Suhadolnik

Sebastijan Pregelj (b. 1970) belongs to the younger generation of Slovenian writers. He obtained his degree in history at the Faculty of Arts in Ljubljana and that same year published his first book, the short story collection *Burkači, skrunilci in krivoprišežniki* (Jokers, Desecrators and Perjurers). Then followed two more collections of short stories, before in 2004, his first novel *Leta milosti* (Years of Mercy) came out. His next two novels were *Na terasi babilonskega stolpa* (On the Terrace of the Tower of Babel) and *Mož, ki je jahal tigra* (The Man Who Rode a Tiger). All three novels were shortlisted for the Kresnik Award for Best Novel of the Year. In 2011, Pregelj published his fourth short story collection *Prebujanja*

(Awakenings) and two years later his fourth and most recent novel *Pod srečno zvezdo* (Under a Lucky Star).

The author's stories have appeared in several anthologies in German, Slovak, Polish and English translation. The German translation of his novel *On the Terrace of the Tower of Babel* was published in 2013 and an English translation is underway.

Sebastijan Pregelj is a member of the Slovene Writers' Association. He lives and works in Ljubljana.

About the book



Under a Lucky Star is Sebastijan Pregelj's fourth novel.

The main part of the novel is set in Trieste. In what at first glance seems like a pleasant seaside town, something is brewing under the surface – prostitution, drugs, violence towards immigrants, the Roma people and homosexuals that most of the residents prefer to shut their eyes to or even secretly approve of, all under the supreme rule of evil in human form – a sadistic police officer named Gianfranco who has taken power and justice into his own hands, sparing no one. When he crosses paths with a Romanian couple on their way to a better life, it quickly becomes clear that the couple does not stand much chance to actually reach that better life.

In short and dynamic chapters suggestive of movie scenes, the author interweaves the lives of protagonists from all social backgrounds and from both sides of the border, serving as a backdrop for the problems of modern as well as the old Europe (unsolved post-war killings, hatred towards migrants, hatred towards each other and those who are different).

Pregelj's latest novel is once again a hybrid of genres (a thriller, a psychological novel, a social commentary) mercilessly digging its way from the present day to the times of fascism.

Translated by
Špela Bibič

Dreams about a Car on a White Cloud

Botticelli is lying under a yellow ford. For some days now, he has been spending all his spare time under the car. If his wife were willing to listen, he would tell her that he had had a vision and that the feeling that had come over him in his sleep that night had not left him yet, nor was there any indication that that might change before his destiny was fulfilled. And his destiny was no trifling matter!

In his dreams, the mechanic saw a yellow Ford Capri Mk I; but the car wasn't standing in some dusty backyard or a garage but on a white cloud, up in the sky, above the garage and the house, perhaps even high above the city. It was hard to tell how high up the cloud with the car was floating, for, in that dream, Botticelli didn't have human eyes or a human mind; he was more like a spirit who had left his body for a while. Anyway, it wasn't that important how high up the cloud with the car was floating. What was more important was the fact that the car standing on the white cloud wasn't dented or rusty as it actually was, but shiny like the day it had left the factory decades ago; only the car in his dreams couldn't come from any regular Ford factory, but one that was quite special, with a studio in the back where *the great master* would adorn the cars with painted motifs almost too beautiful for the human eye.

From the sheer beauty of his dreams, Botticelli first whimpered and then started crying. His chest tightened, his stomach ached and his bowel was irritated. When he woke up in the middle of the night, his pillow was wet from tears and his body was weary and drenched in sweat. He slowly got up and went to the bathroom. He sat on the toilet and closed his eyes. He was still sitting there long after he finished peeing. The breeze coming through the small, partly open window first dried off the tears on his hairy cheeks, then his sweaty shirt. Then he went back to the bedroom. He lied down on the bed and closed his eyes, hoping that the dreams would continue. But he slept soundly until morning and didn't dream at all. Still, as he woke up at the crack of dawn, he felt that everything was different than the previous evening when he had gone to bed and, most of all, that he himself was different. He didn't have time for breakfast but went straight out into the backyard and pushed the yellow ford into the garage.

Ever since, Botticelli has been spending all his spare time under the car, convinced that destiny itself is at work. Things like dreams about a car standing on a cloud don't happen to people very often. In fact, they happen to very few people. That is a special kind of blessing. Looking at the car still sends shivers down his spine. Botticelli is convinced of what he suspected before: that he is not just an ordinary mechanic and that he is not going to spend the rest of his life in some filthy garage on the outskirts of Trieste. Everything is about to change with the yellow ford!

It's almost nine o'clock and Botticelli is examining the chassis, when he is interrupted by a car pulling up to the driveway. By the sound of the engine, he knows that it's an alfa. It comes to a halt outside the metal gate and a moment later, two men emerge from the car. By the sound of the sand under their soles, he knows that there are two of them and that they are not strangers but are from around here. One of them has a stiff walk, the other one's is as slick as a fox. Botticelli turns his head. Even without looking, he would know that the boots and the men coming towards him were police. Botticelli pulls himself from under the car, stands up and wipes his smeary hands in his trousers, as if expecting to shake hands with them.

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ROBERT SIMONIŠEK *A Room Below the Castle*

About the author



Photo by Boštjan Veber

Robert Simonišek (1977), writer, critic, poet and art historian, studied philosophy and art history in Ljubljana and Graz. He holds a PhD in art history. Up to date, he has published three poetry collections (*Potopljeni katalog* – The Sunken Catalogue, 2003; *Avtoportret brez zemljevida* – A Self-portrait without a Map, 2008; *Selitve* – Migrations, 2013), a short story collection (*Melanholična zrenja* – Melancholic Gazes, 2011), a monograph (*Slovenska secesija* – The Slovenian Secession, 2012) and a novel (*Soba pod gradom* – A Room Below the Castle, 2013). During his studies, he worked as a journalist and tourist guide travelling all over Europe. His literary works interweave travel motifs with existential issues and the author's individual experience of nature and art. His collection *Melancholic Gazes* has breathed fresh air into the generation of young Slovenian prose writers, marked by poetic references and the second-person narrator. His writings have been translated into Croatian, Serbian, Czech, Spanish, English, etc. and have appeared in a number of anthologies. He also selected and translated the poems of Desmond Egan (*Too little Peace*, 2013) into Slovenian.

About the book



The main character of the novel is Peter Mrak, a middle-aged intellectual, journalist and writer who is looking for a job and ends up stuck in a provincial town. There he runs into a colleague, a rival from his student years and a modern upstart who is one of the initiators of the protests that took place in Slovenian cities in the autumn of 2012 and the winter and spring of 2013. As unrest among the people of the Alps grows and fervent calls for revolution increase, the protagonist unravels the web of intrigue woven by the protesters and townspeople involved. He finds his only symbolic support in a mysterious Viennese professor with whom he often has philosophical discussions on the purpose of life, art and ghosts in some abandoned house. In order for P. M. to settle the debt imposed on him by state institutions during the period of transition, he must get over his former relationship, find a way to sell his only possession – a famous painting by a Slovenian impressionist – and start over. In “paying his dues”, his everyday is caught up between the troubling *now* and the idyllic *before*, creating a two-fold structure. There seems to be no end to the protagonist's troubles and his own blunders, not even when he decides to travel to Italy and Germany where he is supposed to meet up with a painter who is always on his mind. The novel constructs an expressive profile of a middle-aged sceptic, pausing at long monologues of his thoughts and emotions that are interrupted by often absurd conversations between the characters. Simonišek offers a fresh mix of a psychological novel, metafiction and a *künstlerroman* dealing with an individual's personal dilemmas and reflecting the social chaos of this time of crisis.

Translated by
Špela Bibič

As the protests spread, the anonymous website was filling up with posts from Mirt's followers. P. M. would hear about the various causes for dissatisfaction on the radio, on the street, at the editorial office, he would read about it in the papers, on social networking sites or be told about it by the receptionist, even at times when he would have preferred to avoid it. Those who had no intention of protesting soon succumbed to the fashion trend of having pseudo-intellectual discussions about it over beer. Different forms of autism were spreading throughout the land and anyone could seize a government building or make the front pages. The only thing people weren't protesting against yet were the protests themselves, thought P. M. But even that would change. You couldn't even strike up a conversation with the townspeople before declaring for or against. Journalists came rushing in like fire-fighters to a burning house to fill their pages and increase their circulations and clicks. Casual sensationalism, exaggerated statements, calculations and stories turned upside down. That was how he saw it from within now, though, truth be told, he didn't want to. He became part of this rolling snow ball.

Instead of going to the office or writing back to Mirt, something else was going on in the hotel room. If the statues on the frieze of the neighbouring building representing the emblems of the city could break free and the sculptures of beings could spread their stone wings and fly to his window, their senses would sooner pick up a shadow than a man of flesh and blood in his thirties on the inner side of the wall behind which breathed P. M. The hand that laid a book on the table just now could be the hand of some student in London, New York, Delhi, Sydney, perhaps the hand of a businessman in a well-stocked bookstore or merely a hand of some choosy woman getting ready for her trip to Italy.

The author of the study on Renaissance painting, published more than twenty years ago, was Viktor Eckhart. A number of faculties had included the book in their reading lists and such a decision could not be considered random. The reproductions showed the development of the 15th and 16th century European painting. P. M. had put the book on the table to check some fact on Verrocchio's portrait against a detail on exhibition. This parallel was unnecessary like many other things he did. At first glance, the book was nothing special; you could find tons just like it on the shelves. Even an expert would have a hard time making his choice and no one could blame him if he settled on some other author.

If air could open its eyes and trigger the necessary movements to leaf through the third English edition, it would see reproductions by masters, explanations on the specifics of individual techniques, theses and conclusions on the spirit of a time that casual and subtler art lovers turned to with sparks in their eyes. Not even air would be able to discover much more about the circumstances of this book, unless it was that exact same element that P. M. had breathed in the galleries and museums in Vienna, Berlin, Paris or London. Some of that air was also breathed by Viktor. Perhaps with all the other students he had met, the author had confused some of the events, which was not uncommon for older people. But even he should be able to remember that he had run into a young man one autumn afternoon on the stairs of the largest old masters gallery in Vienna, where the Professor would go to look at Giorgione's compositions and to where P. M. would accompany a painter called Ana who went there every week to study the masterpieces.

As he was skimming through the book, concepts such as harmony, classic proportions, grace and decorum rose before him. He regarded them as remnants of an idealised past fit for no other purpose but explanations in the classroom, as pieces that could no longer be put together, not those of his life, much less those of this country. The concepts that Viktor had analysed would someday be studied by Ana who would put her own spin on things to suit her character. He would also like to do something in those lines – but now, ah, now we live in strange times when everything stands still, he thought. So began, as he closed the book, an unfinished story that continued outside an old house below the castle where P. M. found himself standing.

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GAŠPER TORKAR *After School*

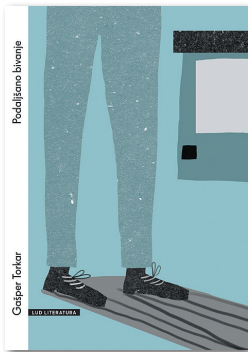
About the author



Photo by the author

Gašper Torkar was born in 1992 in Novo mesto, where he grew up and finished secondary school. He is currently living in Ljubljana and is a student of sociology and philosophy at the Faculty of Arts. In addition to writing poetry, he is also a DJ and occasionally translates from English. In 2013, LUD Literatura published his first poetry collection entitled *Podaljšano bivanje* (*After School*) that received a special mention from the panel for the Best First Book Award at the 2013 Slovenian Book Fair. His poems have appeared in a number of magazines, including *Literatura*, *IDIOT* and *Liter jezika*. He attended the LUD Literatura poetry workshop under the mentorship of Uroš Zupan (2010, 2011) and a poetry workshop in Almere, the Netherlands, under the mentorship of Maria van Daalen (2011, 2012). In 2012, he was a participant at the international poetry translation workshop The Golden Boat. He has attended several readings at the poetry festival Mlade rime in Ljubljana, the Dichters in de Prinsentuin Festival in Groningen and the 2014 3P Festival (The Future of Poetry in Pina) in Koper.

About the book



As he accumulates his thoughts on the past and the present, on the crushes that used to be and the crushes that still remain, on the limits of love and memory or journeys (to nowhere), such verses emerge that would capture the attention of even the most wandering of minds. Verses that, despite their singular youthful openness and inclination, are tailored with precision and accuracy and at times seem to shoulder much more than twenty-something years. And that is one of the greatest merits of this collection. Gašper's first literary work is not merely a young poet's "farewell to youth", a curiosity or a nostalgic immersion for all readers over twenty-five. *Podaljšano bivanje* (*After School*) is a well thought out and weighty debut, paving the way for a young poetic voice while convincing us that he is not someone who is likely to run out of ideas for writing shortly after his comparative literature studies are behind him. In his very first book, Gašper Torkar reaches beyond that, proving that one can be sensitive without being oversensitive and that poetry offers an endless variety of lyrical expressions: "You want to say: we were there but had / no control over our verbs, they came and went / naturally" or "Our words / are euphemisms for what we really feel."

By Staša Pavlovič, *ludliteratura.si*, 13 November 2013

Excerpt

After School

Translated by
Barbara Jurša
and Will Dunn

Journey

for J. P.

Of course the journey helps with its promise
that you will encounter some detail,
a thought you didn't know before,
that you held in the palm of your hand or let freely
float around your head, touching all memories
and connecting them in an unfamiliar way
which makes you restless and impatient:
that there's always been something you've overlooked,
some unaware obviousness, a truth
you forgot while you were searching for it.

White Rose

I will never be able to say: I wasted
my youth because I wasn't thinking
or didn't see what I had, what I lived.
I can constantly see this light
that will slowly fade, this lightness of the body
carrying one through the air, all the health
I don't have to fight for yet.
I'm constantly surrounded by awareness
that it's real and that later I won't be sure
anymore. I know that for the time being I can still leave
and remain welcome when I return.
That I'm not just welcome, but that I have to
come back regardless of what I've done.
All the time I wasted, I would waste again;
now I'm looking at the quicksilver escaping my hands
and, without interruption, everything is beautiful, everything is tragic.
To give all away and keep it and pulsate with life all the time.
Only that silent voice which you once knew,
the silent analogue photograph of a half-forgotten world
which none of us will ever live again, is looking at you;
this is how you're looking at yourself, reproaching yourself from the past,
the eyes before which you are the smallest, a grain of sand,
the terrible eyes leaving to you the guilt of the present.
As if the foundations you'd started building from necessity, too young,
were slowly being pulled down, as if you'd discovered the plans
of your unfinished sculpture too young and you'd been drawing
some dangerous corrections, additions, as if you'd been stealing from yourself.
All the smallest details which even then demanded
incredible focus and precision.
I can still clearly see my exit,
my own perfectly calm figure in the doorway.
I who have shed myself from myself can finally admit:
yes, it was me, the one who only surmised what he was doing,
I was that child whose body I have inherited,
the child who didn't realise things were real,
only a child playing with his own end.

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GLORJANA VEBER *Free Fall*

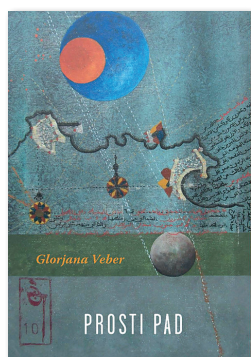
About the author



Photo by Peter Gidoani

Glorjana Veber (1981) holds a BA in political studies from the Faculty of Social Sciences, the University of Ljubljana, where she is currently completing her MSc in sociology. She is also working on her PhD in literary studies at the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana (*Poetry as an Element of Social Change*). She publishes her poetry in the main Slovenian, as well as foreign literary magazines and journals and has received a number of national and international awards for her poems. She is the founder of the Institute for Innovative Arts Research – the IRIU, working mainly on the development of experimental and innovative projects in the field of art, mostly literature. She is also Director of the Celje Youth Centre, a public institution dedicated to youth culture, education, information services and sports. In 2013, her first poetry collection *Prosti pad* (Free Fall) was published by the Center for Slovenian Literature.

About the book



The motifs and themes of Glorjana Veber's poems surge like an endless mass of water and come crashing back in incessant waves for us to view them from new perspectives, seamlessly blending with the flow of the poetic expression that extends from the zeal of Orphic notes in the poems *Zemlja* (Earth), *Čas* (Time), *V bližini nedolžnosti* (Close to Innocence), *Kaplja* (Drop)... to the more realistic style of the poems *Ali misliš, da to pomeni, da bo tudi poezija vedno druga?* (Do You Think that Means Even Poetry Will Always Come Second?) *Pomirjen* (At Peace), *Čudež pri Kobaridu* (The Miracle at Caporetto) ..., poems that take shape before us in a wide range of emotions, from elegy to irony. All of this tells me that I am confronted with a complex and ever changing world, drawing equally on the poet's private life and politics, art, music, poetry, metaphysics ... Whereas the first is the source of this poetic expression, this does not mean that the others function as mere supplements, for they appear on the same structural level and are, particularly when it comes to social motifs, subject to criticism. The poet's social engagement does not stop at the level of motifs but also takes place at the level of poetic utterance – what we see before us is an individual, authentic poetic voice with a vehemence and, at times, sombreness evoking the poetry of Slovenian high modernism that is, however, no stranger to the less restrictive, lighter tones of Slovenian poetry today. Veber's poems are therefore both existential and intellectual and, above all, highly erotic in the sense of Bataille's eroticism: this free fall is thus not only the free fall of the author of these verses but also that of the reader. The world I am gazing into in this book is the world of precipices, the world of vertigo on the edge of an abyss; it is the unconditional surrender to poetic expression as the other. But beware! There is no bottom, oblivion or reconciliation with the world and with ourselves waiting for us at the bottom of this abyss. It is ourselves as the Other that we meet down there.

From the foreword by Peter Semolič

Excerpt

Translated by
Petra Meterc

Free Fall

In God's proximity

They bring God to the funeral parlour for us
precisely at four
the minister hangs himself as well
and there's dirt everywhere
no one to hear their confessions
and their bodies get covered with bugs
no one to bury them
how to bring God to a funeral parlour
Stephen Hawking

just when you write down
God does not exist

Stephen, at four I calculated
that there are 3000 letters on one book page
that there are 3 million in a book with thousand pages
that till today we have published one hundred and fifty million books
which makes approximately five hundred billion letters
and that the universe has one hundred fifty billion stars more
than we have letters in our books

Stephen how can anyone capture God into a calculator
and trustingly forget Chopin's Ballade in F Minor
and convert life percentage into death percentage without horror
mister Hawking, when I was little
I used to carry a brown suitcase with armbands and a towel to the cemetery
- an association of words with an ideal weight¹

I don't know, I don't know Sir what it's like to die completely
but when a bug lands on my coat in front of the funeral parlour
it seems to me
that God isn't so stupid that he'd prove himself

Names

Yesterday I dreamt of a virus erupting on earth
and deleting all names... On that morning in my dreams
people got up as usual felt their bodies drank their coffee...
It could be any place in the world Ljubljana Tokyo Cairo
It was a place in my head absolutely identical to this one here
with the same roads buildings limitations options
with the same sun equally filled with emotions but also equally empty
In that place, too, people opened newspapers in the morning
switched on their cell phones radio internet showed their documents
to the police
their health insurance cards to doctors... I remember
them looking at each other in confusion
searching for each other talking suddenly needing each other
touches conversations and opinions became currencies and shares
They were searching for feelings the sky and the wind the traffic
signs were empty a direction was needed
Suddenly they started asking themselves where does this fear come from
why are their hands shaking why are their eyes wet who are they
Everything was exactly the same and yet different
People's names roots titles had disappeared and they were left
only with the feeling that they once had them
that there used to be signs marks denotations
arrows ... As if someone had removed the glass from the windows
and it became clear why the trees outside are bending

**Contact for
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¹ The Slovenian word for cemetery, *pokopališče*, sounds similar to the word *kopališče*, which denotes a public swimming pool (or a complex of swimming pools).

The Center for Slovenian Literature is a member of LAF – Literature Across Frontiers

www.lit-across-frontiers.org

The Center for Slovenian Literature is a non-governmental organization dedicated to literary and publishing activities. It was founded to contribute to the international promotion of Slovenian literature and began operating in 1999.

The Center is dedicated to attracting support for, and encouraging work in the following areas:

- making quality translations of contemporary and classic Slovenian literature possible,
- drawing the attention of international publishers to the rich, albeit not very well-known, heritage of Slovenian literature,
- presenting relevant information to the interested public in the international context.

In this way, the Center responds to the needs which other institutions in this field are either unable or unwilling to meet. While the Center's primary task is to address an international audience, it is no less committed to informing the Slovenian public about important international literary trends, authors and publishing events. It is open to collaboration with other local and international institutions and individuals working toward similar goals.

The Center finances its activities with funds raised both locally and internationally. Its priorities include, but are not limited to, creating computer-assisted databases of translations and translators; providing information to chosen target-audiences; presenting selected works and authors abroad; enabling, coordinating and promoting international collaboration; integrating into existing international programs and networks with similar aims; and developing a creative approach to the promotion of Slovenian literature.

The Center for Slovenian Literature supplies information on contemporary Slovenian literature to its foreign partners through mail and contacts at various fairs. It sponsors translations and translators' visits to literary events and residencies. It supplies translators with books and literary magazines; occasionally, it provides them with grants for translations given by the Slovenian Book Agency.

The Center for Slovenian Literature is the publisher of the *Aleph* book series, which includes new Slovenian literary works as well as translations of contemporary world literature. While the Slovenian authors are supported by the Slovenian Book Agency, the majority of translations are published with the help of foreign translation/publication grants. Over a hundred titles have been published in the series, some bilingual.

The Trubar Foundation

The Trubar Foundation is a joint venture of the Slovene Writers' Association (www.drustvo-dsp.si), Slovenian PEN and the Center for Slovenian Literature. The financial means for its activities are provided by the Slovenian Book Agency and by other sources. The aim of the Trubar Foundation is to subsidy publications of Slovenian literature in translation.

Foreign publishers can apply for subsidies to publish Slovenian authors in their native languages. The Trubar Foundation contributes up to 50% of printing costs (see the form at: www.ljudmila.org/litcenter). It does not subsidy translation; translators can apply for translation grants directly through the Slovenian Book Agency www.jakrs.si

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