

Vlada Urošević (North Macedonia)

ARGONAUTS

There were long debates about the quality of wood,
the height of the rail about the boat,
the length of the oars; several times
we had to begin again,
the planks were not well matured,
would not fit in well, the edges curved upward.
The sailing season was approaching,
the preparation went too slow,
there were confusions about payments,
various rumors spread about the absurdity of the voyage,
the idlers who watched the construction of the hull
came up with numerous remarks.
In the inns around the port endless questions were asked
about wind directions, sea currents;
the data on the customs of the coastal peoples
was contradictory, everything was unclear,
the white patches on the maps couldn't be filled in.
There was no end to the preparations,
the smoked meat went bad,
the water skins were not well tanned,
the tradesmen tried to sell us
expired goods from their storehouses.
There were tensions, disagreements,
squabbles. Even the prophecies
were incompatible with one another.
All that effort was tiresome; too many people were involved,
everyone gave his personal opinion.
Too many little things remained unresolved,
no one was found responsible, the initial excitement waned.
Yet the ship was finished. And when the companions got on it,
when the ropes were tightened, when the wood squeaked,

when the foam churned at the bow – they knew:
there are moments when everything gets its value eventually
and when any false premise, even the most far-fetched,
is the only path to the miracles.

Gavin Bradley (Ireland)

GOING HOME

When Heaney flew for the first time, and looked down,
he saw his patchwork quilt of greens, nourished by the rain;
a home comfort, something stitched by his grandmother,
passed down with care, for his own children to hold.

Now, flying home again, the prairies without snow seems strange,
makes for the look of an interrupted lover,
caught in some stranger's bed and clutching at slipping sheets,
their canola out for God and everyone to see.

Perhaps, through a window, a white bird in the distance;
it seems so small, but I am small also.

Why, here, no patchwork quilt? he says.

I know this one.

Because this land wasn't made by my grandmother.

He nods, and becomes sky once more.

Dimitar Bashevski (North Macedonia)

THE ROAD

He arrived at a place and as if reminded
of something, he stopped.
And so he turned back
along the long road, staring. He stared
at the road eaten away, at the potholes,
and then with the tatters of his shirt,
with his socks, his scarf, and even with his hat
he plugged the holes and the eroded
spots.
When darkness fell, they saw him sitting on
a stone, like a drudge exhausted by
futile toil.

Alexis Bernaut (France)

DRINKING AT SUNDOWN

To Sam Hamill, on his 74th birthday

We're drunk again tonight
and I think of us in France
in Dordogne at sunset
We're drinking red wine by the river
I mention Augiéras, whom you've never heard of

I think of us again, this time in Brittany
where I'm beginning a new life, where you won't come visit
It is sunset again, on the beach at Montsarrac
and barnacle geese call
from behind the horizon

And I think again, as we're drinking too much
of all those places where we will not be together
because your health
will not allow it
because reality
will not have it that way

I think of us as kids in the darkness
who imagine worlds and tell each other stories
to stay awake
borne on the edge of the world
on the feathers
of their whispers

As they promise each other
never to grow old.

Anacortes, 9th May 2017

Zoran Anchevski (North Macedonia)

LOST WORLD

At first they gathered crops with their eyes
and were full of life in the fertile fields and woods.
The mountains greeted them with happy smiles,
the shamans foretold their bright prospects.

Then their hands became sharp sickles
that handful by handful reaped ripe wheat
and stacked it against the threshing-floor pole –
they hopped and leapt in dances of joy.

Finally, sated but spiteful, they waged wars
against each other: their hands – sabers and knives –
severed heads, impaled souls with no mercy;
despising tears, they trampled on brotherly love.

Compassion waned, hatred flourished
and, like a dreadful disease, abolished their world.
The mountains sank in shame and pain,
the prophets bent their heads before the wrath

and like bewildered compasses
wandered off aimlessly to the ends of the world.

Milutin Đuričković (Serbia)

UNKNOWN WORDS

At the bottom of the sky
on the tip of the tongue dear
you are hiding your rhymes
and even the thick shine
or big winters
can't come near.
Gentle plains
are waiting again
to return, on my own.
You appear occasionally
with your words
unknown.

Ivan Djeparoski (North Macedonia)

AN APPLE OUTSIDE THE SYSTEM

“Paradise is a park where only brutes,
not human beings, can remain.”

G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of History*

In Hell,
sitting,
their Apple laptops
in their laps,
and quite unexpectedly,
Hegel yearns
to be Nietzsche,
and Nietzsche
to be Hegel.

In Purgatory they both,
quite unnecessary,
have the same worries.

In Paradise, however,
there's neither a system,
nor a destruction of a system.

Only Eve departing,
with her apple,
bitten off by Adam.

Besnik Camaj (Kosovo/Switzerland)

WHIRLWIND OF SIGHS

In a foreign land, smoky
In my own country, foggy
The day has come
Dogs eat chocolate cookies

Wretched
They don't know it's the beginning
of their end

Sorrow crystallizes the morning dew
Regrets ignite neurons of love
And the wind rifts stained lips
Patience becomes epic
The heavy chorus flows like a river
full of tears
On the waves we sail with no sails
Intermittently the path forks
And turns into a whirlwind of sighs

Damn,
I prefer to swim upriver

Slave Gjorgjo Dimoski (North Macedonia)

DANTE RETURNS FROM HELL

Dante is a black cloud. He covers half the planet.
Dante is contorted rainstorm. He floods half the planet.
Dante is a rock. He tumbles down onto the sea waves.
Dante is a spectre. Endless darkness pulls him.
Dante is the apocalyptic breath of John the Apostle.

Dante returns from hell with fiery breath.
Dante will erase everything in a flash. Dante returns.
Dante arrives. Dante kisses us.
Dante hugs us. Dante dejects us.
Dante burns us. O fire! O John the Apostle!

Snezhana Stojchevska (North Macedonia)

EMPTY SPACE

Around the dining table there are four chairs.
We sit across each other,
my mother opposite my brother,
me opposite my father.
That's the father-daughter
mother-son connection.

Eventually, my brother moved out,
now my son sits in his place.
Sometimes my mother
calls him Vlade instead of Kalin.
Now, more often, she only says "son",
it's how she knows she won't make a mistake.

Since my father left us
each of us eats alone, at different hours.
If we sit all at the same time,
the absence that gapes from the empty chair
will hurt us all.

There are three of us, but the pot
and the quantity of the meal remains one for four.
The leftovers I give to the cats
the next morning.

I lift the lid from the pot with mashed potatoes
and subconsciously split it in four.
My mother looks at the cross
and crosses herself
thinking of the one quarter of us
that is in heaven.

Gonca Özmen (Türkiye)

LAMENT FOR THE LAKE

If I'm an old lake hidden away
Waning each and every day
And if I've ebbed for an age
Come to the very end

Roots, roots oh give me roots

If I sleep in a ceaseless whirlpool
Buried under skin and word
And if I'm a burden to my own heart
Fallen silent down in the depths

A voice, a voice oh give me a voice

If I'm tangled up in knots
Weary of staring at my echo
And if in my mind I go where I cannot
As the birds are about to take wing

A branch, a branch, oh give me a branch

If I'm a long-keening howl
Expected, belated and bitter
And if I'm withered away
Trickling now in threads

Breath, breath oh give me breath.

If I'm darkened with the darkest
Layer of soot
And if I've run dry
Drained from all this waiting

A hand, a hand oh give me a hand

Vesna Acevska (North Macedonia)

ELUCIDATION

One day

I will say to the mountain “Oh my shadow”:
and to the water “Oh my light”.

The mountain will shrivel up from shame in my eyes,
the water will joyfully caress itself against my fingers.

One sunny day

what secretly sleeps in the shadows
will settle its own shadow within me,
and what trickles through my palms
will rise from the darkness of the pupils.

But one day, a day to remember,
where the silence subsides
the elucidation will flow into the stories,
full of soaring promising hills
that envelop our visions.

Adam Horovitz (United Kingdom)

ORPHEUS IN THE DOWNLOAD UNDERWORLD

We make our disappearances day by day,
absence speaking for absence
through a waxed veil of leaf and seed-pod.
Territories are marked with a wing beat,
the bounds of tenderness negotiated in magpie semaphore
as we are subsumed by books,
magazines, downloads, DVDs,
gewgaws, gizmos, all those pretty
fig leaves bought to cover shame.

The house is hollow,
an echoing cave of certainties lost,
where Persephone picks pomegranate seeds
that catch in her teeth, spits them out and curses.
Cats howl around her like furies
after mice, scraps of paper,
the dust born of silence,
screwed into fists of guilt.
The goddess cries for us to stay indoors.

There is majesty in certainty if you can stomach it
but I prefer the random melt of stars,
waiting in the darkness for trees to bud,
listening for the metallic scrape of growth
as foxes slice the winter with their tongues
and owls stamp prints of mice on frosty turf.
I am walking the path away from home,
a love song balled foetal in my hand.
Follow me. I'll not look back.

Hristo Petreski (North Macedonia)

EMPTY LETTER

May the God not allow any letter to be always empty
May the luck allow letter to be totally blank
Because in letter shall be message of love
But also greatest money award and also jail fine.

Someone was sending messengers even without fast horses
Else one was sending barkers with drums in their hands
Third one was sending scribes and firmen who knew to speak up whole message
Forth one was sending pigeons with messages around their thin necks.

But to who shall I send a message, and in what time of day and night
If not to her, while hers body restlessly sleeps and dreams of me
Or when she is away, in hers thoughts, in arms of someone else
Oh blissful words, (may you) don't travel away from lips of mine...!

Željka Avrić (Serbia)

THE RIVERS STILL FLOW

rivers of no return flow within us
their waters are murky
haunted shores
they resemble our consciences
sleepy stirred up
spring up in the mists
waves of unrest
pour into oblivion

we are waiting on raised bridges
and the rivers still flow

in us the turmoil of the river of delusion
passions are bubbling
swirling torrent
the waves splash with tears
the troughs are silent indifference
the depths threaten silence
the fish laugh at the hook
drowning people are grasping at straws by the neck

we stand on opposite sides
and the rivers still flow
rivers of memories flow in us
the days line up and tangle like beads
mornings look forward to waking up
moonlight insomnia
we look for a secret sign in every word
silences raise questions
what's in the drop on the rock
under the willow in the heather

we come and go
and the rivers still flow

Sande Stojchevski (North Macedonia)

ROAD

Does He Who is
waste his power
or a tiger burning bright
scratches the bark

in the forests of the night?
From above letters rain,
half-lit grains
upon black paper,

so a finger is able
to draw a furrow:
mane, tekel, fares.

So remember, my son,
it was more than difficult
to write a book.

Roza Boyanova (Bulgaria)

When something made sense and I found it
I'd pack it in a parcel
And send it round the world
(Like my granny's bread roll did go round its small field,
Before she broke it into chunks).
And I'd wait for it to come back.
If I recognize it – that is it.
It might have grown up,
It might have become smaller, like an old man,
It might wish to be my fellow-traveler,
Or it might say as a bored lover:
Don't look for me.
It doesn't make sense.

Then I'd look around
And embrace the first person I could see in the street.
“Obviously, only you have made sense all my life”, I'd tell him.
And I'd frighten him.
He would not bear the responsibility, he would bend down
And drop me.

Birgit Kreipe (Germany)

fortuna primigenia

i am everywhere, you can always ask me
i am in every plant. every stone.

all the solace, my architect
i've been climbing the stairs my whole long life

the ones i cannot see and neither
the hooves, boots, pebbles over me and not

how the stones high above loosen
in the roof that's receding, in the house, whose stairs

you're standing at dizzy and whose
entrance and exit you are unfamiliar with

that grows and falls and grows with me
—warmth, once more, is that still the sun

or fire already, once more, odors—
i climb, grow, slowly, up the stairs

that verge out to the sides
at night, you can see me, practically, i am the wind

that passes through the collapsed corridors
i am the air, the draft and the madness in your expanses

the bright dark border of waking brooding
and your dreams yank my slow growth up, my
unhoped-for climbing—

i am the dew on the deep pasture in the morning
i am the honey that flows from olive trees
i am the miracle, bitter, that you see.

Resul Shabani (North Macedonia)

A CONTEMPLATION THREE DAYS BEFORE AUTUMN

As I pass the tepid autumn day
Near the foot of the water-bridge,
The bridge with worn planks
From madness , hatred – jealousy,
The bridge with a fence made of laurels
From goodness, from beauty – love,
Where your beautiful feet tread,
Under which your fluffy hand swims,
You blow away the thick mist,
From my withered portrait.
But you, mermaid from waves, lake fairy;
And bride of light, bride of sadness , bride

of flame;

What do you want from my poverty
Poorer than poverty?
While you're following the violet
In my ravaged soul;
While you're carrying spring wind
In my late autumn,
I am unable to give you
A dream for dreaming
A hope for hoping
Only a bouquet of beams
That cannot even bring light to light
Nor bring daylight to the night;
Even if I light a candle to Virgin Mary
To keep you safe from harmful stares
Jealousy's harmful stare.

Chema Paz Gago (Spain)

IX.

I discovered
in your eyes' depth
that brilliant blackness,
the depth of your words.

You smiled and talked,
with strange words,
and you brought me
towards the interior
of your resplendent body

Your enigmatic beauty
fascinated me in a new way,
inviting me to that unexpected
voyage through your eyes,
from the night and your skin

I dug deep
in your heart
that wrapped me
with its radiant clarity.

I dove in your blood,
kissing
the skin of your soul,
your eyes, your words.

Nikolina Andova Shopova (North Macedonia)

I TRAVEL

I travel, and very often
I slip into different roles, thinking
What it would be like to be that woman sitting opposite me
With a filigree brooch on her blouse
How I would live, where I would go
Who I would return to
Or to be that napping man with muddy shoes
And a comb peaking from the pocket of his old coat
Or to live in that dilapidated house with murky windows
That we've just passed by
Or in that one, a bit further down, with petunias on the balcony
And neatly trimmed green bushes and an empty swing on the porch
Or to be that sky-pointing sunflower in the field
That welcomes us with a drizzle over the panes
Or the stray dog that barks at the bus passing by
And wistfully gazes at it, who knows why
And after all these journeys I always come back with multiple lives
Intertwined like the knots of a wool rosary
And I can never tell which one is the first, which one is the last
Where I begin and where the next one comes

Pavle Goranović (Montenegro)

LOST MANUSCRIPTS

I don't deny it: I write untruthful,
deceitful lines. The method
is the same from text to text.
However, here and there it's possible to find
a line or two with a worrying degree of truth.
Not long ago, looking for completely different
texts, I found among rare
manuscripts the following words:
*The most important cities are those
already buried – new ones are not
worth founding. The best languages
have died out – there is no point in inventing better ones.
The most respected schools were situated
in gardens now abandoned.
The most interesting manuscripts are lost...*
It is worth discovering, them. For us,
surviving members of the Babylonian library.

Nikola Madjиров (North Macedonia)

USUAL SUMMER NIGHTFALL

1.

This is what summer nightfall is like:
the adulteress comes onto the balcony
in a silk nightgown that lets through
the trembling of the stars,
a twig drops from the beak of a bird
that falls asleep before it has built its home,
a soldier lowers the flag of the state
with a letter from his mother in his pocket
and atomic tests in the womb of the earth
secretly revive the dead. At that moment someone
quietly interprets Byzantine neumes,
someone else falsifies the exoduses
of the Balkan and the civil wars
in the name of universal truths.
In the factory yards
the statues of participants
in annulled revolutions sleep,
on the symmetrical graves
plastic flowers lose their colour
and ordinary ones their shape,
but this peace of the dead
we have parted from
is not ours.

2.

In the village with three lit windows
a fortune-teller foresees only
recoveries, and not illnesses.
The waves throw up bottles enough
to hold the whole sea,
the arrow on the one-way road sign

points to God,
a fisherman rips off a bit of the sky
as he casts his baited line into the river,
some poor child searches for the Little Bear
and the planet he'd like to come from,
in front of the doorstep of the killer with an alibi
a feather attempts to fly.

This is what usual summer nightfall is like.
The town combusts in the redness of the moon
and the fire brigade ladders seem
to lead to heaven, even then when
everyone

 is climbing
 down
 them.