

## 1. JEAN PIERRE SIMEON (FRANCE)

### ELEGY AT OHRID LAKE

*To Jordan Plevnesh*

Like how those too credulous,  
With a moving and poor faith  
Put their ear on the missing body  
Of Saint Naum's tomb  
Believing they would hear the saint's heartbeat.  
They hear nothing  
But the beating heart of their dream  
As so, one day, somebody similar to the Almighty  
Had placed on the land of Macedonia  
And this definitely had to be a poet  
The Ohrid Lake like an ear given to the world  
To hear the underground resonance of the lake  
And the beating pulse of the world  
For what would a man be  
If he were not swayed about as a haggard boat  
Seeking vainly for the shore by the waters of millennia

And what would the passing of an ordinary day be

If it did not include beneath it

The concerned confusion of distant nights

Where amphorae and bones echo

And what would a man be

That eternal eater of horizons

If he did not know that his trail on the lake

Would soon leave nothing

Within the shadows of the past,

Sleeping forever in his consciousness

This is his timeless testament

Of rituals and dreams

And ultimately,

What would the world be like

Without its Ohrid Lakes

Without its monasteries hidden in the rocks

Without the forever abandoned hope

Without the ruins of so many wars

And without its poets who weave legends

Walking on the waters of memory

Barefoot, hands open to the storm

Because only they understand

That the poem of eternal secrets

Shall defend them from the timeless threats

And the laws of the hurricane

## 2. KATRIN PITZ (GERMANY)

### STUDIO NIGHTS

leaving a window open for yourself you had to  
be adventurous like the sisters said  
providing reliably for themselves  
you had to you had to who was it who chose  
to fall asleep on the floor  
to visibly slip into darkness  
leaving a window open for yourself who chose

to be the first to take off the sweater  
take off someone else's sweater  
turn down someone else even though the window is open  
we all froze solid like fish caught in ice really all of us did

crumple on thermals, cushions and pads  
someone is rocking themselves not rocking to sleep  
over the course of the night a nose bleed froze solid  
frozen blood on the fingers we can't keep to ourselves

steel ropes with which we intended to hang froze solid mid-air  
goosebumps of steel standing up from our frames with cheering loose ends  
and no rails no helping hands and no eyes  
stabbing the canvas like it was alive

someone said this room was a prison  
but the windows easily opened and no one stood guard  
for us there was still hope  
the upcoming contracts a collective sense  
of normalcy when the professor came by  
the windows were open the works slowly dried

some of our paintings will make it through  
some will be hung  
some will be restored  
how much of our madness did we acquire up front  
how much can be cured  
the windows are open some fish froze to death

### 3. KATICA KJULAVKOVA (NORTH MACEDONIA)

AT SUNSET, GENTLY

Light is at its gentlest when the Western sun  
Sets behind the mountains,  
Leaving its balmy afterglow  
Between sky and earth.

Then, the distance between sight and apparition  
Is small, and dusk lures into the depths.

Then, the eyes blink and the soul crackles  
Like a dying fire.

Then, I read Borges' elegies  
And I join Cavafy  
On the way to Alexandria.

Then, I imagine Gilgamesh  
Roaring like a lioness  
In the steppes of Mesopotamia,  
Fearing immortality  
More than death itself.

Then, I long for people  
Worthy of yearning.

Then, I wander in my mind  
Through Macedonian villages, now empty,  
With crumbling churches and miraculous icons.

Then, I enter monastery gardens  
Where once books were burned on pyres  
Out of pure malice,  
And the moon, maternal, tossed about herself  
Her delicate veil –  
Not to stifle the flames,  
But to not gaze at the hell  
That man prepares for man.

#### 4. PETER ZAVADA (HUNGARY)

$C_{17}H_{21}NO_4$

1.

In April 1505, as Spanish cruelty was soaking into the ground on the Inca coca plantations. the coca bush, with its characteristic velvety swishing, marched into Europe.

You're telling me this, your fingers embracing the bottle's cool neck, and the bottle in turn the black, ribbed taste: a double encirclement.

A pact, I'm telling you, between the market and tradition, and just look at the privileges that came along with it! The name stayed, but the active agent was left in the past, dropped from the list of ingredients early in the century.

Now all we speculate about is the proportion of sugars in the Eastern European versions: how they adjust this to the local political climate, the prevailing meteorological conditions.

2.

It took time for Amerigo Vespucci to notice the the Peruvian silver miners' unusual staying power.



By then, they'd been paying their taxes to the Spanish  
with the bright green leaves for ages.

You say what was internal strife in the mother country  
was stifling calm in the colonies.

So, I'm Abraham Cowley, trustworthy,  
discreet secretary to the King of England,  
and I'm just composing the first written record  
of the coca bush in verse form:

'O, Western Africa, Mexico, Columbia!

You can cut the diversity in your jungles with a knife,  
and the evergreens tower twenty to thirty feet high!

Produce for us your longish, egg-shaped leaves,  
Your golden, red-veined flowers!

Put out for us your clustering, five-follicled fruits!

O, mallow-flowered order, O pantropical taxon, O!'

3.

You're picking at the label resignedly, the twirly  
Spencerian script, the white ribbon on a red disc.

We'll never know what secret ingredients were held  
in the secure vaults of the Sun Trust Bank. If they contained  
tears of Corsican prickly pear, sweat of fire salamander.

What is the patching up of a recipe torn in half  
between two company directors prone to taking offence?

What is it, if not the loveliest token of the meeting of two minds? Meanwhile, the spicy black scent of the cola nut lingers in the air, weaving its way through the centuries.

4.

The glimmering liquid reflects sleepless Freud wandering at night through almost every ward of the Allgemeines Krankenhaus, while morphinism, migraines and impotence lose, for now, their battle with benzoylecgonine methyl ester.

Next, a group of '56 emigrants, clambering excitedly off the ship at Camp Kilmer. Lining up at the port's only cola vending machine.

And now, before our eyes, the star-shaped freeways are smudged strips of brightness in the watered-down Atlanta night. Crows between dark furrows in the fields, somewhere near the bottling plant at Dunaharaszti.

## 5. IVAN DJEPAROSKI (NORTH MACEDONIA)

### THE VILLAGES OF MOUNT ATHOS

*“The monasteries of Mount Athos  
are villages of the Holy Mother of God”  
Domentian of Chilandar*

The bigger  
the cities  
we come from  
to Mount Athos  
the greater  
our loneliness.

And here the monasteries  
wait for us –  
the serene villages of the Mother of God,  
the flowery meadows  
with blossoming trees.

The fragrant alleys  
of monks  
who piously,  
in peaceful prayer,  
sing like  
heavenly birds.

The bigger  
the cities  
we come from  
to Mount Athos  
the greater the joy  
to meet the *heavenly citizens*.

## 6. RUI CÓIAS (PORTUGAL)

### CROSSING

These hands will stroke the ordinary hours of journeys —  
columns and tower mosaics reflecting  
the shine of stars, the architecture of vineyards, and  
the ashes, and they will walk in silence. Afterwards  
not even nothing will seem like a centre to us, and again  
we'll watch the swaying of the sleeping travellers and the sombre  
darkness of the night outside — does it make sense  
that we disappear without a trace? That we leave  
behind the life that was, our history, and given  
it was it that created us, shaped our memories  
that the spark will cease? — even if the breathing rises  
till it becomes restless? We can see  
only fragments since nothing exists — the vast dunes were there  
naked like the nape that might softly lay  
on them; and so were the fields with their dark silhouettes, and  
the people who live on them, but in seeing them, in the far distance,  
it was as if conclusions erased certainties. Nothing  
is certain, for nothing becomes conceivable so as  
to comprehend the world in which, actually, each one of us follows  
a path that suddenly reaches its end, vanishes,  
and whose essence we don't know whether we touched — We don't  
know whether that which is ours and will touch others, and will  
touch with our hands the places we cross, represents either

the cut of the broken glass through which each one of us sees the parting,  
like clouds in the horizon, of the moments that connect us to life,  
or whether each point is in itself infinite, dust  
that lies next to us, the reflection of its shape, the abstract  
soil where sky, sea, timelessness dwell, there where  
we contemplate the underlying end of matter, which the end is.

## 7. DIMITAR BASHEVSKI (NORTH MACEDONIA)

### A LAKE AMONG THE MOUNTAINS

A lake with an islet, a holy scar,  
adorned with a necklace of anemones.

The eye of the dragon, the lord of  
the deep, from it shines.

Below, at the bottom, the ring  
of the girl, betrothed to the poet.

He sharpens his pen, turns  
the globe. He makes heavens  
a blazing sun piercing the fierce  
eye of the dragon.

In the last verse, the lake is set  
ablaze. He finds a cloud that would  
neither cover it nor burst rain.

So, the lake dries up and the poet  
descends the ladder of verses  
to take the gold ring from  
the lakebed with a single vowel,  
as his folk` poetics required.

## 8. PATRIC COTTER (IRELAND)

### CHART SONG

Before the war, the boy who walked only on his hands  
could have trod on his feet had he wanted to, but liked  
his eyelashes occasionally touching the ground where  
he was entertained watching the adventures of ants

capturing long-bodied, long-haired caterpillars, before dragging  
them back to their nest for a flossy feast. When the earth  
was dank flocks of snails abounded and their antlers tickled  
his nose. He could have confidential chats with his own shadow

speaking right into its ear in whispers heard by no one else  
except the worms and the earwigs scuttling beneath leaves.

At home he ate out of a dog bowl on the floor because  
his mother indulged him. When he slept at night he hung

loose as an empty noose, upside down, from the attic rafters.

His mother told everyone he was home-schooled, claimed  
he was so intelligent because more blood flowed to his brain.

All this stopped the day he had no body to cry next to, only

the offal stains on the pavement where his father stood  
when the spray of shrapnel shred him. Before the war  
whenever he whinged his father would stoop down low,



put his face up close and say “Where did you learn that song?

That’s a great song. That should be in the charts. That’s one of the greatest songs I’ve ever heard.” And the boy’ whine would segue straight into laughter. For after all what did he really have to cry about before his father died in the war?

## 9. ZORAN ANCHEVSKI (NORTH MACEDONIA)

### NATURE AND SOCIETY

1.

The lake has sunk, and then  
the wells – its younger sisters.

The fish spawn high and dry –  
easy spoil for birds and men.

The frogs stopped croaking –  
it's our turn now to sing dirges  
to what we denied ourselves.

A shaft of rays splits the autumn sky

and searches the surface of the lake  
for fish that have escaped  
the dense, grasping nets –  
to instill a new faith in life.

2.

It is dark again in my lake country –  
its beauty is hung on dry alley trees:  
shadows of monks in a slow procession.

Painful migrations trickle from its eyes –  
the thrashing pole cannot hold the departing

souls with the colour of new snow.

There is no one to dance our heavy dance,  
even the zurlas have renounced the memory  
of the tall peaks we no longer deserve.

There is no one to gather the chamomile  
in meadows now covered with frosty scales,  
mold feasts on the corn left in the fields.

I see furry moths arrive in thick swarms,  
cattle bells freeze in fear of them –  
such silence and horror have no precedent:

they fold densely like dried tobacco leaves  
and announce a winter heavy with an upturned sky.

## 10. LAURE CAMBAU (FRANCE)

I COULD HAVE FALLEN IN LOVE WITH A CHAIR

but you sat down  
under the femur clock  
you took my eyes for doors

my ghosts melted with the rain  
a few slow stones were left  
that danced and turned  
you didn't have eternity on every floor

I could have fallen in love with a chair  
but you sat down  
under the femur clock  
I sorted the rains by colour  
age range and temperature

I left your eyes and all hope with the suitcases  
at the company counter  
and returned to the belly of the devil  
following the green moon of great occasions,  
you asked me for the colourless path  
the way to contagion

so through an ancient keyhole

I showed you the real life after  
the other side rubble and shards of the river  
loaded with souls and angel sap from all countries  
united to make words and heads fall  
toss a coin

I could have fallen in love with a chair  
but you sat down.

## 11. LULZIM HAZIRI (NORTH MACEDONIA)

IT IS AUTUMN

*(To Lindita Ahmeti, a poetess)*

The magnolia leaves fall this autumn  
As aged angels fall in a dream  
Silently spreading on the green grass  
Covering each other so their backs don't freeze  
Then a wind blows through, awakes them from sleep  
For other angels arrive, yellowish from illness  
As if fallen from the sky, they float slowly  
Lay on the ground, make room for rest  
It is autumn...

## 12. TOM PETSINIS (AUSTRALIA)

### OLD MAESTRO

*(Mikis Theodorakis, Palais Theatre, Melbourne)*

He plods, flat-soled, to the waiting stand,  
head heavy with seven decades of dreams,  
compositions that defied parallel lines,  
echoes of what would become Zorba's tune.

Hair grizzled like an ancient prophet's,  
grown too wild for comb from years of exile,  
he sounds the score's unscripted rustle  
and readies the orchestra with a nod.

Allegro: hands plump as spotted toads  
turn to swallows unravelling winter clouds  
above the village square, weaving nests  
from bits of hope, darkness, despair;

become the master potter's, working as one,  
kneading, turning, moulding mute time,  
giving roundness to a rousing theme –  
an amphora with youths in Pyrrhic step;

then the old midwife's, fearless of life,

plunging wrist-deep into the cello's womb,  
extracting an infant note, a protracted cry,  
raising it high for all to celebrate.

Pianissimo: his gestures are caressing,  
comforting the girl hounded from Salonika,  
who, crying a concentration of stars,  
braids barbed wire twisting from her scalp;

embracing the cemetery ploughed by tanks,  
now covered in a mix of moonlight and lime,  
where souls gather their scattered bones  
to join the bride in tomorrow's dance.

Crescendo: eyes closed, enhancing sound,  
he's thrashing in a net of wrinkled skin,  
wrestling against gravity and space,  
punching back the silence between notes –

his angled shoulder blades protruding  
and vigorous beneath the loose black shirt,  
as though an archangel's wings whose sweep  
would raise the breathless to paradise.

Perhaps seen by none, his left heel lifts,  
stays, like a sprinter's poised for the finish,  
but only for a heartbeat, maybe a half,



when it drops again, together with his arms.

Disconcerted for a moment by the end,  
the tiered audience then springs in applause,  
strains on tip-toe, calling: encore, encore,  
maestro, magician, worker of miracles.

Spent from quickening a thousand hearts  
he bows once and walks off the way he came:  
all body again, balanced by dumb fists,  
dead-weights grounding him to his shadow.

### 13. FILIPA SARA POPOVA (NORTH MACEDONIA)

#### ECOSKIN

My body is dry red clay,  
and my soul a correspondence between dead gods. Alone,  
like a sleeping fish, I swim upside down  
in a dried-up river. I search  
for a splash of the sea, but my ear  
transforms into a broken shell,  
all thirst into garbage  
and every murmur into asphalt.

My body is dry red clay  
that used to keep vigil over lush water. Now,  
I keep vigil over myself  
I mutter all the spells, I follow all the rituals,  
I wash my body until it fades  
I stare at myself until I disappear.  
Once again, I have shed my skin,  
will there be another one?

## 14. OLIMBI VELAJ (ALBANIA)

### THE TIME OF BELLS

We hope yet  
Here comes the time of bells  
With the dead sighing  
Under black suits  
And dry flowers  
Air tightens under the silent weight  
Of anxiety in the church yard  
Surrounded with smelling paraffin  
Angels wandering on the walls  
According to faith and desire  
Time takes another shape  
Under tired faces of saints  
And rumbling psalms  
I would like to die  
In one of these days  
Without my atheism  
Or the distant erotic  
Reaching the sky  
Before prayers and candles

## 15. IVICA CHELIKOVIKJ (NORTH MACEDONIA)

### A SUSPICIOUS POEM

The sailors in the ports on the northern seas  
speak in strange tongues  
and with blurred bodies  
leave their faces on the hard stools in taverns

someone wrote a few lines  
holding the crucifix on his chest  
in the shadow of the faded covers of the Bible  
filled with new chapters

it's hard to discern the letters  
that wage a terrifying war  
which yet not knows how to expand  
to the continent

no one knows  
yet everyone is suspicious  
they let down the sail  
and turn to the expanse of the sea  
left on their own

they grumble that the return that was taken away  
simply does not exist

## 16. XI CHUAN (CHINA)

### I BURY MY TAIL

I bury my tail, taking my place amongst everyone else burying their tails.  
I bend down, thinking I could approach my shadow,  
but my shadow bends down, too, getting ready to sprint away.  
Drink a bellyful of ice water and you'll drown all the voices in your head.  
Walking, I unfold my hands, but am not praying for anything on earth.  
But, oh, what will fall on its own into my outspread palms?  
A shard of glass slices a finger, an unseen mosquito flies over.  
I train my eyes, train them to be eagle-eye sharp.  
Finally seeing everything clearly, my heart's dead-end  
will have nowhere to run.  
If you come too close, I can't use my telescope.  
I set it up just to watch you, so you should keep your distance.  
Petal on the street, are you not Xi Shi's broken fingernail?  
If others repeat my foolish mistakes, I can't stop them.  
If I repeat them, it's just to show how cunning I can be.  
Neither able to stand by the mad with hands tied by the evil of the sane,  
nor able to stand by the sane with hands tied by the evils of the mad.  
The intelligent hurry to use up a day's reason before nightfall.  
Looking up at the moon, I fiercely ring my bicycle bell,  
and at the same time can't keep from snorting at  
the moon like a horse. On the moon it's very quiet.  
Tuesday, a thin strand of smoke above the blown-out candle.  
Wednesday, a fly from the south defeats a fly from the north.

With car exhaust I receive a gathering of mice.  
Their hearts and minds are satisfied, and in accord: the  
world is damned, but they are not.  
Don't scare people, go scare those people  
who aren't even people, since they need to be scared, just like  
they need to be kissed up to.  
I chart a map on your skin with a coin.  
You calculate the weight of the sky. For fun, fine.  
But if you mean it, I'll have to pinch you to death.  
Wanderers in the night, we avoid meeting each other

## 17. SANDE STOJCEVSKI (NORTH MACEDONIA)

### DOWNWARD

The angels fall from the high  
symbols, disfigured they turn  
to the comfort in the old  
verses, their eyelids hit

by sharp hoarfrost from above,  
from the gaping cosmic  
funnel, a tear in a merciless  
eye, gazing at worlds

that wait to step over  
the threshold of old or new  
symbols, blown away in the cold.

If only there were a tree  
on a hill, a squeak of a dray branch,  
as in those famous elegies.

## 18. CLAUDIO POZZANI (ITALY)

### SHADOW MARCH

Ropes are falling from the sky  
and frozen chains dance round you  
It's a world of knots to be unraveled in the dark  
between a bolt of phosphorus and one of cries  
It's a tangle of ropes that defy the scissors' hands  
A comb that gets caught in an unthinking mane

Shadow... shadow  
Another blink of the eye and then it's...

I look around myself and all I see is walls.  
Even my mirror has become a wall.  
On your breasts a skin of wall has grown  
My heart, my senses reincarnated in walls  
And prayers and curses keep on raining down  
Evaporating as soon as they touch the sand.  
And adverbs, adjectives and words without a sound  
Slither away in a poisonous silence

Shadow... shadow  
Another blink of the eye and then it's...

Of the sun I see only its reflection



In iridescent puddles of rainwater  
Of the moon I perceive its presence in the dark  
In the faraway barking of chained dogs.  
My peace is not the lack of war  
My peace is the absence of the concept of war.

Shadow... shadow

Another blink of the eye and then it's...

## 19. GLIGOR STOJKOVSKI (NORTH MACEDONIA)

### COMING IN

It comes  
Out of the mouldy cellars  
Of the black beam's hand  
With a full swing  
With cramped fingers  
Scraping inside a thick wall  
Releasing a curdled warmth  
Going through the metal strings  
Widening them  
Melting them  
Opening a way for the captured  
For the strong  
It grows on the palms  
It comes  
With a rotten plank on the forehead  
Uttering important words  
Into the pits  
Into the forgotten abysses  
Creating them again  
For renovating  
The great purgatory  
Above the living field of ashes

## 20. KALINA IZABELLA ZIOŁA (POLAND)

### TWO PLANETS

we speak different languages  
not because we live in different countries  
but because we come from different planets  
you are from Mars, I am from Venus  
you are a warrior conqueror  
I am a romantic star wanderer a dreamer  
you Tarzan, I am Jane

sometimes we meet halfway  
we are looking for a narrow path by the sea  
to catch the wind in hands or count the stars in our shared sky

then we move away again  
we lock in ours separate worlds  
where not mean yes, and yes means no  
I cannot hear you, You cannot understand me  
You are Tarzan, I am Jane

## 21. SUZANA V. SPASOVSKA (NORTH MACEDONIA)

### SACRED TREE

It's always in the centre of the garden

No matter which garden

Every garden

has its own sacred tree

and its people to protect it

Many nations

have their own sacred tree

that they guard with their lives

Only underground

All the sacred trees

feed from a common root

– the tree of life

## 22. DAVOR ŠALAT (CROATIA)

### YOU OUGHT TO TALK TO THE INSOMNIA

The dust of guilt has settled on you,  
the fire flickers alternately in your thighs and eyes.

The word is a ball,  
the harder you grasp it,  
the easier it slips from your hands.

You ought to talk to the Insomnia,  
with that small theater of falls  
where the actors gift you with catharsis,  
as if it was a healing herb.

Morning is a trickery for the naive,  
an outdoor light  
not reaching the mole at the bottom.

Your guilt saves you  
from a staged victory,  
brings you a merciful mirror  
that examines and comforts you.

Like a mother stripped of everything  
that is not motherhood.

### 23. JOVICA IVANOVSKI (NORTH MACEDONIA)

#### A POMEGRANATE IN MY HAND

Dawn has dressed the wounds of the night.  
Morning has dripped from the pines, not like  
A cone, but seeping like tar over a car.  
The blinds can be raised using two hands.  
The bay tames the sea like  
A toilet bowl drawing in loose shit.  
I keep chewing on my straw while grass  
Keeps growing 3 to 4 millimeters a day.  
A canoe with no paddle is like a paddle without a canoe.  
Pomegranates have opened for my hands.  
The swimming trunks are getting dry wirelessly.  
The evening is young, I am older than most.  
Fireflies are fallen stars  
Searching for a way to our foreheads.  
Short lived is the Beaujolais, short lived is  
All that has been born or sprouted on this perfect planet.  
I am all covered in blood from  
The pomegranate that only a short while ago,  
Like a wounded partisan girl, died in my arms.

## 24. FARID HUSEIN (AZERBAIJAN)

### LIKE A DREAM

We have so much  
wonderful days left,  
For the sake of those moments  
We have the right to talk about the past forever,  
Our names were sealed  
to a tree with shades  
in great disaster;  
We have no wrath for yesterday,  
The intention of our story is good,  
To talk only with you the same topics  
is not considered to be old.  
Our eyes are dazzled of sins,  
We can't look at our sun,  
But parting won't sting  
and wound our living delight.  
The world was a window,  
I looked through it and saw you,  
And where I moved,  
took that window with me  
that looks at you.