



CATALOGUE

LAMBDA
VIZIBILIJA
LGBT+ PUBLISHING

Slovenian Book Agency: funding opportunities for foreign publishers

Grants for the translation and publication of works by Slovenian authors

Yearly open call for **translations from Slovenian into foreign languages** includes first translations of adult fiction, children's and young adult fiction, essayistic and critical works on culture and the humanities, plays, graphic novels and comics. Applicants must be legal persons (publishing houses, theatres) registered abroad. The subsidy covers up to 100% and maximum of 10.000 € of the translation costs.

Contact: katja.stergar@jakrs.si

Grants for printing costs

Yearly open call for **printing costs of Slovenian Books published in foreign** includes first prints of adult fiction, children's and young adult fiction, essayistic and critical works on culture and the humanities, plays, graphic novels and comics. Applicants must be publishing houses registered abroad. The subsidy covers up to 70% and maximum of 3.000 € of the printing costs.

Contact: katja.stergar@jakrs.si

Slovenia – Guest of Honour at the Frankfurt Book Fair 2023

Yearly open call for **translations from Slovenian into German language** includes first translations and re-prints of adult fiction, children's and young adult fiction, essayistic and critical works on culture and the humanities, plays, graphic novels and comics. Applicants must be publishing houses registered in Austria, Germany or Switzerland. This subsidy covers up to 50% and up to 11.000 € of all types of costs connected with book publication (excluding license fees) and promotion for first translations or 50% and up to 3.000 € for reprints, eligible costs are printing, typesetting, cover design and corrections.

Contact: mateja.humar-jelnikar@jakrs.si

In 2022 and 2023 publishers from EU countries, publishing first prints of adult fiction, children's and young adult fiction, essayistic and critical works on culture and the humanities, plays, graphic novels and comics can apply for a fixed sum of 5.398,48€ towards the costs of translating, editing, printing and publishing Slovenian works in **German, French and English**.

Contact: katja.urbanija@jakrs.si

Travel grants are also available for Slovene authors, translators, editors or rights agents, who have been invited to literary or industry events abroad. An invitation and the program for the event must be enclosed with the application. There is one call per year, which covers trips throughout the year.

Introduction

In 1990, the poet and translator Brane Mozetič founded the specialized LGBT book series Lambda under the auspices of ŠKUC (student cultural centre and non-profit NGO). Since that time, Lambda has published over 150 titles, mostly literature, as well as works in the humanities, and, in recent years, children's and youth literature (Alenka Spacal, Brane Mozetič). Lambda's first book *Modra svetloba (Blue Light)*, in which Mozetič presented excerpts of homoerotic love from Slovenian literature, already suggested that the series might serve to inspire Slovenian authors toward more explicit forms of writing. From the inception of Lambda, many young authors have published work in the series, some of whom went on to become important names in contemporary Slovenian LGBT literature. Four years after *Blue Light*, Lamba published *Abonma*, the debut poetry collection of Nataša Velikonja, regarded as the first openly lesbian poet in Slovenia. She was followed by others such as Kristina Hočevar and the series' youngest authors, Nina Dragičević and Vesna Liponik. Suzana Tratnik, a long-standing lesbian activist who published her debut collection of short stories, *Below Zero* in 1997, is the most known name among prose authors in the series. Tratnik is also the author of the 2001 novel *Ime mi je Damjan (My Name is Damian)* which addressed gender nonconforming themes. The novel was published in Czech, German, Serbian, Slovak, and Bulgarian translations. In 2014, it was recognized by educators and included in school curricula. Tratnik's example was followed by authors such as Vesna Lemaic, Nataša Sukič, and Jedrt Maležič who, together with their poet colleagues, established a strong, internationally recognized and awarded Slovenian body of lesbian literature. These efforts were aided by the lesbian book series Vizibilija, founded by ŠKUC in 1998. Nevertheless, throughout this period, gay literature developed relatively slowly, a fact that perhaps can be explained by the predominance of male gatekeepers in Slovenian literature and by gay literature's more explicit sexual content. In this context, it is perhaps symptomatic that many Slovenian gay authors – Boris Pintar, Milan Šelj, Uroš Prah, as well as members of the younger generation including Aljaž Koprivnikar – choose to live outside of the country. The two that have remained – Gašper Malej and Brane Mozetič – spend much of their time travelling and cultivating lively relations with foreign literary scenes. Indeed, the establishment of relations abroad is one of the crucial activities of the Lambda book series, as LGBT literature in such a minor language would otherwise be limited to a small readership. The cultivation of relations between Slovenian and foreign literatures has led to international translating workshops, performances by foreign authors in Slovenia, round tables on the topic of LGBT literature, annual international literary tours, as well as the publication of two extensive anthologies of contemporary European poetry.

Translated by Lukas Debeljak

About the author:

Nina Dragičević is a poet, essayist and composer. She holds a PhD in Sociology. She is the author of *Kdo ima druge skrbi* (Who's Got Other Concerns; Škuc, 2014), *Slavne neznane* (The Famous Unknown; Škuc, 2016), *Med njima je glasba* (There Is Music between Them; Parada ponosa, 2017), *Ljubav reče greva* (Luv Says Let's Go; Škuc, 2019) and *To telo, pokončno* (This Body, Standing; Škuc, 2021). Her texts have been translated into English, Serbian, Croatian, German, Czech, Spanish and Portuguese. Dragičević is a member of the Slovene Writer's Association and the Slovene PEN Centre.

She is the recipient of the 2021 Jenko Award and the 2020 Župančič Award. In 2018, she won The Knight of Poetry competition, and was the first in its history to receive both the Jury Award and the People's Choice Award. She was nominated for kritiško sito and the Veronika Award. She was also presented the Outstanding Achievement Award of the University of Ljubljana. In 2018, she was shortlisted for the European award Palma Ars Acustica.

About the book *This Body, Standing*:

The body is constantly under attack. Everything hits it, everything sticks to it. The body is not the final harbour of freedom, but a point that the world uninhibitedly cuts into, throws endless amounts of words and violence at it and sometimes simply bypasses it, thus negating it.

If Dragičević' book *Luv Says Let's Go* focused on the position of a female individual in the age of omnipresent precariousness and, in the end, *luv* said *let's go*, the question that follows in the second part of the author's trilogy in the making, *This Body, Upright*, is: *and what then?* Can there be a future?

Yes. But the body needs peace. In an age that promotes constant communication, the representation of endurance and a type of "cool", the body needs something completely different: it needs peace. Dragičević starts the book with the verse *no words*, thus opening the space to the voices of many bodies, many women and many lesbians, perhaps all bodies. There will be a future when their sufferings, negations and criticism can be expressed without punishment. And it is true that *the body falls sometimes*, she writes, *but because everything is wrong / it actually rises*.

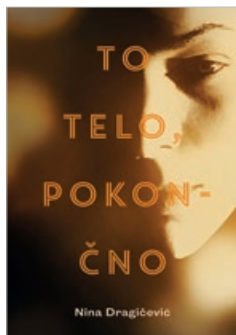
With *This Body, Upright*, Dragičević thickens its special mixture of criticism and lyrical sentiment, with language and syntactic ingenuity in the form of a poem. Aljoša Harlamov, the author of the foreword, writes: "And it's not that I don't get the self-irony in the verses *nina strong critical nina a pillar of her generation and that we need people like that*, but. That's the people we have. Finally."

Excerpt:

and if they are onto me
and if they are coming from all
sides woodlands swamps thrusts and impulses
I am onto them
I am stalking them eyeing this campaign of those heavy bodies crafts
bearing everything and bearing themselves
stumbling and suffering severely
and in those nights with me hardly going anywhere
and arriving no further



Photo by: Nataša Vellikonja



I go behind them who go behind me
this body the return to the scene of the crime
to the continuum of outrage and acceptability
and above all complacency
where envisaging someone else
or at least something else
is only the lifeline for failed subjectification
the replenishment of bodies through secretion
ensuring authenticity unity through negation
a void is hard to identify in a void
and when this body says no words it contemplates other meanings
uncoordinated meanings
a somber glow is being drawn for it
something better
meanings at last.
and therefore here where realities are constituted by ceaseless wondering
where the wondering is sieved through by the delay of discovery and vice versa
where as a result the expression of suffering is not possible certainly not allowed
in this large torture sinkhole of endurance training
and orgasming at the distant misery
where pleasure becomes synonymous with horror
where it is a pleasure to destroy the body and a pleasure and asap and forever
here this body vortex mundi
the decay of fulcra the collection point of rust and discarded thoughts
should it fade away this will do so because you will
there is nothing you can do without this body
it grabs the screeching soundless voices knits interference patterns
it will not go away it will not escape
what does not possess a place of expression it will find one here
here the body slim gorgeous yet outrageously gasping
the extender of stages and counter-temporal depths
the entire future is the history of this choice.
and thus here
where representation has abandoned the spent host her the image
striking out at full tilt after the word
where speech is coercion of presence
constantly and in the bounce and in the name of the absentees
something about solidarity and empathy and emotional intelligence
with nothingness really really really multiplying
where suffering is falsified
and is therefore somewhere else and alone yet without a place of its own
where it is not pronounced but falsified
in this fatally standing impetuous world
the body seeks the cavities of peace
it throws oneself into them sometimes it falls
but because everything is wrong
it actually rises
no words in those pockets the suffering is finally being pronounced
therefore in those silences no words at last this body standing.

Translated by Andrej Pleterski



About the author:

Kristina Hočevar (1977) is the author of seven poetry collections. She received the Golden Bird Award for *Repki (Tiny Tails)*, and the Jenko Award for her collection *Na zobeh aluminij, na ustnicah kreda (Aluminium on the Teeth, Chalk in the Lips)*. The latter was fully translated into German (*Auf den Zähnen Aluminium, auf den Lippen Kreide*, DSP, 2017), and was also published as an audio book. Her poems have been included in various anthologies, translated into 15 languages, and also presented through the Versopolis poetry platform. She participates in various Slovenian and international art festivals. Simultaneously with the publication of her latest book, trilingual poetry collection *Rujenje/Half of a C / C 的一半*, Hočevar authored an exhibition at the Škuc Gallery. Her poetry has been described as “one of those literary voices that are too special, too individual to fit into any poetry school or movement.” (T. Kozin, ARS).

Kristina Hočevar has a BA in Slovenian Language and Literature and in General Linguistics. She teaches Slovene, proofreads and occasionally translates literature from English.



Photo by: K. H.

About the book *Aluminium on Teeth, Chalk on Lips*:

The book’s critique and overcoming of conventional social and literary patterns begins at the formal level. As stated by Vanesa Matajc in her afterword to the book: “Collocations of words and arrangements of verses in the bookspace open ambivalences and contradictions: they’re de-familiarizing.” And the book’s de-familiarization and questioning of the conventional, its destabilisation of borders and prejudices, its resistance against mental and social structures, is precisely what allows the book to break free from all this.

The poetry of Kristina Hočevar is a precise articulation of all the complexities of the relationship between the public and the private. The author is unrelenting both in her social critique and in confrontations with her personal intimacy. Hočevar’s poetry is anything but comforting. The pressure can be felt even at the level of literary language, with enjambments and silences, a choppy rhythm, a minimal expression with precise metaphors and symbols. This is a poetry that overcomes clichés, even at the level of language, and opens issues, particularly those that we usually prefer to avoid in order to satisfy social conventions. The poetics of Hočevar is extremely convincing as it creates a personal language and a unique system of metaphors and forces the reader to rethink and overcome his stereotypical ideas, including those about poetry itself.

Excerpt:

to train machines. no. to become skilled in kung fu. to exhale heat into proportions of the face.

to break the west, to break the east.

to take the world in one’s lap, to take oneself out of this world.

every visible side is twitching

in the concrete of the sky.

(Rujenje /Half of a C)

Translated by Barbara Jurša

only these walls are your walls. teams change, sounds alter;
girls get younger. only behind these bars your body unfolds – there is no other dance floor.

you watch all of them - yours and the presumptuous;
they spawn and hands slither, you breathe and the black sun above us revolves, you electrify
and there’s no need for difference, in this territory you breathe scarlet, no one can throw
iron around these silken necks, there is night and it’s day, when we are, we write, when we dance,
we write and sounds sway the hips.

and you can only wipe the cocoa powder off my lips.

at these walls you lean with a bent leg. on these vaults
you lean with bare hands. there are girls,
hints of boys hints of girls. pomegranate nights are washed with glasses of water
and here stands your shelter: even though it is sinking

from underneath these vaults you rise:

here your kisses are,
in these walls – for only these walls
are your walls.

(Aluminium on the Teeth, Chalk on the Lips
Translated by: Anda Eckman, Andrej Zavrl)



About the author:

Aljaž Koprivnikar, poet, literary critic, editor and festival producer. His poetic debut *Ανατομία* was published in 2019 by the Greek publishing house Vakxikon, the same year *Anatomija* was published by the Centre for Slovenian Literature. A Czech translation is currently being prepared by the publishing house Viriditas. His poems have been published in various literary magazines and anthologies, and translated into English, Czech, Greek, Croatian, German, Macedonian, Portuguese, Serbian and Spanish. He lives in several cities: Ljubljana, Berlin, Prague and Lisbon – in the first he organizes the International Critics' Symposium *The Art of Criticism*, the *World Literatures – Fabula Festival* and the *Slovenian Book Days*; in the second he is often working with literary house Lettréage; in the third he is one of the program directors of the international literary festival *Prague Microfestival*; in the latter he often teaches at the Faculdade de Letras. He is currently preparing a new collection of poems for the Greek literary market and its Slovenian adaptation.



Photo by: Leon Vidic

About the book:

The author's physical fragmentation across different European countries is the starting point for the poetry book *Anatomy*. The places, cities and landscapes outlined in the collection are not merely geographical concepts, but intertwined points of identification for the poetic subject. Inventories of the author's intimate experience and personal search for his own identity through poetry becomes a universal human experience, in which the poet proves to be a skilful weaver of complex life stories and intimate encounters, all through the prism of modern historical reality, the uncertain and turbulent times of neoliberal Europe at the end of the second decade of the 21st century. – *Domen Slovinič (from the book's flap copy)*

In the last decade, I have already seen the odd proclamation of a poetry collection of the generation, supposedly the ultimate reference point of poetry of the poetry of its millennials. But none of the above, regardless of its relevance, managed to address me as such. When reading *Anatomy*, I finally have the feeling that I have in my hands a collection that actually touches that part of the generation with which I myself had the most social ties. Therefore, whenever I try to better understand this part of my youth, which was once considered the most vital part of life, I will probably reach for this book or offer it to anyone who is interested in how the world was being experienced by our social group, without having to resort to the pompous phrase "voice of the generation", even though I have it at the tip of my tongue. – *Muanis Sin anović (Vrabec Anarhist)*

Excerpt:

...

To Rosa Luxemburg

To plant acacias in the desert

To arrive and to depart

Not to say anything

To grow up

Without a fear of the dark

To put on clothes

To use the mouth to speak

To lower the white curtains of tenderness

Not to say anything

To face the clouds

And to press the lips

On the Brussels sky

On the Ljubljana sky

On the Grožnjan sky

On the Prague sky

On the Lisbon sky

On the Berlin sky

On the Uppsala sky

On the sky

To glide before the reality

With the lips

To tremble treble

in the ear before sleep

Each word has its own landscape
the air is filled with syllables
you connect the dots on the map
one hand from the future
the other one from homesickness

the sea brings fish full of plastic
the waves lick one another
each belongs to a different story
the windows bang in the wind
the coast is full of swinging lights

you approach the destination
without a name without a given time
and hour you assume the world
has gone nowhere our latitude
grows above a landfill of
grassland wetlands and a coastline
here the shadows are filled with
intact sentences

each vowel as a murmur
how many questions does water ask
formed from droplets of saliva
each consonant as blinking
how many answers does offer
a land on the other side of the world
made of shadows of white air

the waving of beautiful words
growing into depths
this psalm verse says
your shadow is
as deep as
a door open into water
which takes your breath away

Translated by Aljaž Koprivnikar

About the author:

Vesna Lemaić (1981) graduated from Comparative Literature. She introduced herself as a writer in 2008, with her first book *Popularne zgodbe* (Popular Stories). In 2010, the novel *Odlagališče* (Landfill) was published, followed in 2014 by *Kokoška in ptiči* (A Chicken and Birds) and, in 2018, the book of short stories *Dobrodošli* (Welcome). For Radio Slovenia, she wrote the audio play *Podpotnik* (Subtrotter). One of her stories was included into the anthology Best European Fiction. Her work has received several awards, including the Slovenian Book Fair Award, the Fabula Award for the best book of short stories and the Golden Bird Award for literature. Lemaić conducts writing workshops for the young and experimental workshops that focus on group writing. For more than five years, she has also participated in organizing the Living Literature Festival in Ljubljana.



Photo by: Marko Golja

About the book:

The novel, *A Chicken and Birds* is a book about resistance, search for power, and self-organising in the time of crisis. In the foreground, there are events happening between the years 2011-2012, when protesters – following Occupy movement – occupied the platform in front of Ljubljana stock exchange building, and camped there for 6 months in the camp named Fight For. A protagonist who is looking for a community in which she could express her unrest and join the wider revolt against capitalism, also nestles there. She is completely overtaken by political actions and social fermentation. But the more that she pushes away the personal, the intimate, the stronger they appear, the louder their babble, reminding her of their existence. There are her girlfriend, with whom she spends less and less time, and her grandmother, who was the activist of illegal Yugoslav revolutionary communist youth during WW2, waiting for her at home. The author is speaking – under the surface of events – about hidden sprockets of interpersonal relationships and love, uncertainty and precariousness, the search for one's own place in society, and giving meaning to resistance. Meanwhile, the novel is written in an experiential and humorous way, and with a fair share of self-irony.

Excerpt:

Dear Grandma,

Have you ever felt like a second-rate person?

I'm in Dalmatia, in your birth town. I haven't come here led by mourning emotions; I could be just another tourist visiting Šibenik, hoping to relax a bit by the seaside. But I can't relax. I'm trapped in this snare of nerves, with your stories of the Italian occupation during World War II stalking me... and of you as the activist of illegal Yugoslav revolutionary communist youth.

At nights you climbed out through the window of your parents' house and hid yourself from Italian patrols... I've learned how to hide myself from police, too. I've learned how to keep watch when my comrades are... I don't believe in communism, Grandma, I don't believe in the State. But the things you did at that time, carrying bombs under your skirt... I can't compare with you. You were a terrorist at that time, and what am I?

Your anti-fascist slogans on Šibenik's walls made Italian soldiers less cocky. My anti-capitalist graffiti only make the neighbours nag about the ruined façade.

When I get drunk with my comrades on the eve of some demonstration we fantasise about a mess we're going to do, but usually it ends with my throwing up in a bush on the way home. I am a second-rate person.

I remember the first time we broke through a police blockade on the protest against European austerity measures. I was overwhelmed by the common power. Do you know the feeling? I was under this spell until police units trapped us in a small alley and transferred us to a prison. Fascists never caught you, you didn't let them. If they had they would have shot you. Policemen didn't let me close the toilet door when I asked to pee.

I understand why sometimes people shoot in all directions. The oppression now is so indefinite. You can't blame fascists now, Grandma.

Šibenik has changed, too. It's been transformed into a tourist attraction. The façades and pavements are polished clean, sterile. No sign of the resistance, just an artificial, aesthetized history. I'm a tourist drinking coffee in a hotel lobby. But I'm restless, I can't enjoy the beach when I'm haunted by your freedom fight. What is left for me to carry under my skirt?

Just the memories of your struggle to carry?

Grandma, we haven't talked for nine months - since you passed away. But this is the moment I need something reassuring from you. A sign of your recognition... that you are proud of me.

But you give me no signal at these small hours. Not the sound of a distant firecracker, not even a seagull's cry.

I'd like to hear your running steps echoing between the narrow streets of Šibenik. But I don't mind your silence.

I'll keep trying to creep into your skirt... hidden pockets under it need to be re-loaded with...

With love,

your granddaughter.

Translated by Lena McGregor



About the author:

Vesna Liponik (1993) is a postgraduate student of Comparative Literature and Literary Theory and Slovenian Language at the Faculty of Arts in Ljubljana. Her work has been published in several literary magazines, she participated in festivals, conferences and done several readings in Slovenia and abroad. Some of her texts have been translated into Serbian, German, Hungarian and English. Her first poetry collection *roko razje* (*eats away the hand*) was published in 2019 by Škuc-Lambda and nominated for the Critical Sieve award, Veronika award and Best Debut award. She is currently working on her second book.

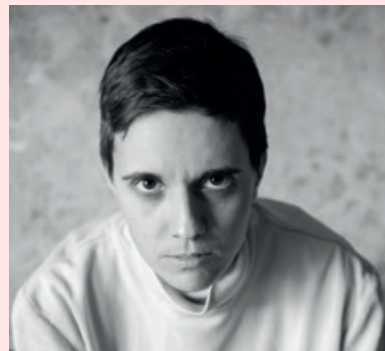


Photo by: Špela Škulj

About the book:

The fragmented, ragged syntax in *eats away the hand* may be understood as very accurate thinking. As a »crawling« speaker. As her attempt at a dialogue with nonhuman beings. Pushing against the possibilities of speaking to them and about them. And constant catching of breath from the strain of these attempts. Catching breath as a rhythm. Here there is no agonising over the impossibility of such a task, just the extreme urgent necessity of making it possible. Although the manner of this strenuous work is linguistic, due to the nature of the medium, this language does not fit the usual metaphor of voice. This language works with hands, which are gushing in, digging, uprooting, poking, bringing, putting down, taking, catching, beating, wrapping, burying, scratching, chiselling, touching, pushing, holding, protecting, as well as vacuuming, folding, moving, caressing and, finally, hurting from all this »handling«. It seems the only thing the hands never do is rest. Perhaps the question here is not so much whose or which hands are these, but rather what is the thing they are reaching for all the time. The answer could be literally at hand – in a fist and on the fingers, in a kind of invocation of hand-ness itself: »there where hands.« Either in a passionate lesbian relationship, in dealings with animals and plants, in becoming soil as a fruit farmer, or in a costermonger's relationship with the parents and death: in her furious earthy book debut, Liponik is »the tongue and the hand and all«. – Uroš Prah

Excerpt:

humour

one night
in the orchard
I see
my father
lying
interred in the innards
of an absent apple tree
and out of his
torn back
sprouts
a scabbed twisted
trunk
he laughs
and I know



he'll turn the whole thing
into a joke

Translated by Erica Johnson Debeljak

you scratch
a trough hard plastic and
I'm afraid it will be in the sea then
it will
you know
I'm so small now so
I'm all
there I like you again before
little one
I don't know what you think
what racoon I did
wash you
near the morning
put you to bed
then again
I ran
again
a room a night and bambo and
I think I know
we are both there
through the nose the body the night
returns into the tunnel
between the hands
bent tumescent and
you seek me
there where hands

Translated by Vesna Liponik

the rabbit ran with a rabbit mask he was touching death

Translated by Vesna Liponik

the forest is burning
have you called this forest
mine –
do you think this is why it is burning

Translated by Vesna Liponik

About the author:

Gašper Malej: born 1975 in Koper (Slovenia) where he currently lives and works. He has published three books of poems in Slovenian: *Otok, slutnje, poljub* (*Island, Premonitions, a Kiss*, 2004), which was nominated for the “best first book” prize at the 21st Slovenian Book Fair (2005), *Rezi v zlatem* (*Slashes in Gold*, 2009) and *Pod tisto celino* (*Under that Continent*, 2017). His poetry has been translated into 20 foreign languages and included in a number of anthologies in Slovenia and abroad. He has been invited to participate in many Slovenian and international literary festivals (Lahti International Writers’ Reunion; Beijing Poetry Festival; Nicaragua Poetry Festival; Festival Luna de Locos, Colombia; Curtea de Argeş Poetry Nights, Romania – where he was awarded the “European Grand Prix” for poetry; Buenos Aires International Poetry Festival, etc.), meetings and workshops for poets and translators. His main activity is translating contemporary Italian fiction and non-fiction (up to date more than 30 books of various genres, and various translations of plays for Slovenian theatres). In 2011 he received the prestigious Golden Bird Award for his translation of P. P. Pasolini’s novel *Petrolio*. In 2016 he was awarded a special national prize for translation by the Italian Ministry of Culture and Tourism.



Photo by: personal archive

About the book:

The essence of Malej’s poetry has never been portraying and describing everyday reality or recording the impressions and perceptions of the lyrical subject. At its core, complex linguistic images are intertwined kaleidoscopically, embedded in rich imaginary landscapes, and the journey through them requires the reader to adopt a mentally and emotionally intense, kind of erotic approach. Malej’s poetry often finds itself crossing the sensitive boundaries of the speaker’s experiential world and descending “into the extreme fragility of relationships between names and things”. Its subject, who unstoppably “wants more, much more than poetry”, can no longer be satisfied with the possibility of speaking on his own behalf, so he systematically and precisely stratifies into different voices that resound in an increasingly multifaceted and dizzying polyphony – enforced by the experience of “foreignness”, based mostly on the author’s frequent “literary journeys” in recent years, which potentiated the dynamics of (non)affiliation.

Excerpt:

* * *

Instead of an ecstatic language: we two will soon pursue each other along infinite diagonals of body and thought. Nobody will notice any difference. And nonetheless: there will be a fragrance of bread and lemon trees, all at once the door will open onto a palace of golden glass. Your childhood as reflected in my own. The voice of an invisible woman singing, piercing the horizon: a brightness where the midday sun glows calmly with the glow of a sun made from fire and stone. Upon which we can both enter the realm of sleep in one another’s arms, the realm where semen flows endlessly, or sink into the enjoyment of silence. May I never fall asleep in the constellation you define.

Translated by Christopher Whyte

* * *

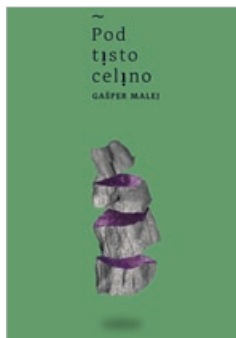
Like a silent butterfly,
waiting in an empty wind
for the shades to ripple,
I would soar
among the landscapes of the mind
and earthly kingdoms.
You sharpen the border;
in the flap of its wings
you discern the world’s transience
which does not affect merchants,
goldsmiths and prophets,
who swear on history.
Your voice is brighter than greyness,
sparkling fur and jewellery;
like a transparent windmill it resists
the temptations of its own fire.
In a butterfly’s flight
it quivers and falls silent.

Translated by Andrej Zavrl

* * *

a pulse too thin: how you connect
with a word’s malleability, allot it a track
to take it beyond recognition,
muddy brimstone on a diagram of numbness.
how heavy, heavy, heavy the bones:
how absently you lie down in your bed,
that horizontal line of anxiety. with fervour
I suppress you; with shudder of crystals
I invoke you from my awareness. *Atalanta fugiens*;
I don’t know why, I don’t know from where.
again the grace of involuntary memory,
which wakens an inaccessible, alien concept.
a concept which I note down; which engulfs me.
when I stretch my wings into a silent flight,
bound to the enduring, unfathomable
laws of the fall.

Translated by Nada Grošelj



About the author:

Jedrt Maležič (1979) is a writer and a literary translator from English and French. Her first collection of short stories *Težkomentarci* (Heavymentals), published in 2016 and shortlisted for the best debut award, has opened and demystified the topic of staying in a psychiatric hospital as a totalitarian institution in the 21st century. The following book, *Bojne barve* (War Paint), shortlisted for the Novo Mesto Award, discusses the topic of several different LGBT entities and their troubles in coming out in a closed or hostile society. In 2018, she published her first novel *Vija vaja ven* (Eeny, meenie, mynie, moe), which tackles the subject of dangerous new age mentality and spiritual cults. *Napol morilke* (Almost Murderers, 2021) is her historic novel about women refugees in the mid-war period.



Photo by: Boštjan Pucelj

About the book:

Jedrt Lapuh Maležič's second book, *Bojne barve* (*War Paint*), is a collection of short stories that deals with various aspects of the struggles experienced by LGBT+ people living in heteronormative communities. Maležič's characters – from individuals on the brink of self-revelatory discoveries and the establishment of firm identities, to closeted lesbians, adolescent non-binary brats, and self-loathing homophobes and homosexuals – form a rainbow flag of people marked (often humorously) by their LGBT+ identities. The title *War Paint* signifies both the mask of (women's) make-up and the attribute of emerging pride in newly found self-realization. Thus *War Paint* differs from the well-developed Slovenian LGBT+ body of prose literature by depicting the space between the intimate awareness of identity and the moment of recognition when it emerges in the open.

Excerpt:**Homo erectus****Friday, 5:00 am**

"Come on, rub a little harder," the old lady demanded as Krivenšek washed her private parts. "It's not going to peel off." Krivenšek thought about how fed up he was, how he wanted to shove the dirty rag in the old crone's face. When he finished his shift at the retirement home at Tabor, images of him cutting calloused nails appeared before his eyes and refused to disappear.

Krivenšek was waiting for the bus next to the hippies' Autonomous Zone when he noticed two boys locked in a passionate kiss. He tried to look away, toward the train station, but couldn't help glimpsing a male hand with painted-black nails lingering on the male ass of his companion who was wearing earrings in his pierced ears. Krivenšek cracked the knuckles on his right hand. Perverted and unnatural. With this bunch, the world would soon run out of people. It looks like I'll have to cut my hair. I suppose it's not apparent I belong to a different caste. I'll have to polish my frayed combat boots and let the razor sing across my scalp, and then we'll see if they dare to suck face right in front of me.

He called Dule early that morning and told him about the two queers in front of the Metelkova squat. Dule went crazy. "Let's meet at the station this evening. It's time to beat up some faggots. A couple of whiskies and our knuckles will be flying."

9:00 pm

The freshly shaved Krivenšek slid into his shining combat boots. He removed his cap, tucking it into his olive-green bomber jacket right before reaching the bus stop. He had

arranged to meet Dule at the Metelkova station. Dule would know where to go next. He worked as a security officer and Krivenšek often felt almost embarrassed in his presence — after all, he was still wiping asses at the retirement home. But it was only temporary, just until he could move out of his grandma's apartment.

Dule was running late. After waiting half an hour, Krivenšek sent him a message. He would go to the station for a whiskey. In a belligerent mood, Krivenšek walked along the train tracks, scanning through narrowed eyes the queens that drifted towards Metelkova in the other direction. Hippie bitches, he thought. He could hardly wait for Dule to come and start kicking ass. He burst into the bar beneath the platform and looked the waitress up and down.

"Whiskey! Straight!" he barked.

The waitress, who was no more than twenty years old, couldn't stop herself from asking him mischievously: "Want a couple of ice cubes in it?"

"Yeah, sure," Krivenšek answered with a frown.

Four made-up girls sat in the neighbouring booth. Two with short haircuts. Suspicious. Krivenšek hissed at the waitress: "Hey, are those dykes by any chance?" The girl raised an eyebrow and asked: "Do you want them to be?" Krivenšek frowned again and darkly observed a table of prostitutes who had come in for coffee, perhaps in search of customers. They noticed him looking at them. One of them turned to him provocatively and, in response to his stare, slowly stuck out her tongue and licked her friend across the neck. Krivenšek got hard.

He really got hard. It was no joke. His cock painfully swelled up into a gigantic erection and only kept growing as the two bitches made out.

All of a sudden, Dule flew into the bar and gave Krivenšek a hug. One of the short-haired girls stood up and called loudly to the others: "Let's go. There's nothing here for us. Can't you see that those two are together? Just look how tight the little one's pants got when the fat one came in! And look, he's still slobbering over him."

Krivenšek practically ran out of the bar. Before leaving, Dule grabbed his crotch and yelled out: "Suck my dick, cunt! Here it is!"

Outside of the bar, Dule gave Krivenšek a sideways glance. Krivenšek could only mutter: "Man, I swear, they were licking each other all over!" Dule dismissed him with a wave of the hand.

They walked on, Dule still not speaking. Krivenšek tried to address the topic of the evening: "If I see some faggots, I'm gonna fuck them up..." Dule didn't respond. "My fists are itching, man. Do you want to go to Metelkova and jump some homos?" Dule gave him a tired look and finally spoke: "Alright, have it your way. Let's see if you're made of the right stuff."

Krivenšek was determined to prove himself and kept spitting on the pavement as they circled back. A couple of girls looked at him strangely and he gave them the finger. There was no one at the bus stop. "It's a shame man, this is where I usually see them fucking around." Dule was silent. "Let's look on the other side of the fence," Krivenšek suggested, pointing at a group of kids on the other side of the wall, inside the squat. "We don't go inside the fence," Dule said. "How many times do I have to tell you that we wait for them to be alone? So they can't fuck with us. Let's go around to the other side, cut them off at Tabor, by the church."

midnight

As they stood in the darkened arch of the church doorway, Dule stepped away and opened his pants to take a leak. Krivenšek automatically glanced in the other direction so there was no need for Dule's murmured remark: "You better not be looking at my cock. I've got you figured out..."

A couple of figures stumbled across the park toward the church. The girls laughed loudly and passed a bottle of wine between them. "Look, he's pissing on the church doors," one of them blurted. The other snapped: "Shut up, can't you see he's a skinhead?" The first replied: "What planet are you on? Don't you know there's no skinheads anymore?" Krivenšek yelled across the park: "What did you say? You want me to make you kiss the floor of the fucking church?" He lunged menacingly toward the two girls who scattered. A third one yelled: "Lady, call the cops!"

Translated by Lukas Debeljak





About the author:

Brane Mozetič (b. 1958) is a Slovenian poet, writer, editor of the Aleph and Lambda book series and translator from French (Rimbaud, Genet, Foucault, etc.), best known as an author of homoerotic literature. His oeuvre extends to 15 poetry collections, a book of short stories, three novels and six children's picture books. He has edited four anthologies of LGBT literature and several presentations of contemporary Slovenian literature. He has more than fifty books in translation, his poetry collection *Banali* (Banalities, 2003) alone being translated into twelve languages, making him one of the most translated contemporary Slovenian authors. He also organises translation workshops, readings of Slovenian authors abroad, a small literary and music festival Living Literature, the Ljubljana LGBT Film Festival, etc. His last translated book *Unfinished Sketches of a Revolution*, Talisman House, 2018, was a finalist for the Lambda Award for gay poetry.



Photo by: Diana Andelič

About the book:

Dreams in Another Language take Mozetič's poetry back into the field of the intimate, but we need to emphasise that his poetry is too complex to be read as either solely political or solely intimate – both spheres, the private and the public, constantly intertwine in his writing, as, for example, in the poem »Vietnam«, in which childhood memories mix with the then political iconography and the contemporary topic of the refugee crisis.

Dreams in Another Language are poems that are mostly dedicated to the author's deceased friends, lovers and acquaintances, among whom we find such famous names as Tomaž Šalamun, Aleš Debeljak, Jean Genet or Juan Goytisolo. As such, the poems are pervaded by a certain amount of sadness and gloominess, but these are not elegies – the characters seem alive or still living, which is why the memory material is not in the forefront; their separation from the world of the living is determined primarily by the dream logic, which the poems follow in spite of being written in the realist language, and the speaker's mostly failed attempts to communicate with the dead.

Excerpt:

I went to see the poetry master. I banged on knocker of the old villa's door. He was sliding around in his slippers and a bathrobe. I laid my flimsy folders on his table, but he didn't even look at them. He flapped his arms around, the room grew larger, the walls were stuffed with books. Pay attention, he said. Just listen. The voice will come on its own. Then he lit a cigarette, measured his footsteps back and forth, tugged a cord and drew aside an enormous dark curtain. White space glimmered behind it, but a pane separated us from it. Look, watch, he knocked on the glass meaningfully. On the other side boys started to appear, more and more of them, all naked and wearing silver necklaces with numbers around their necks. Choose, fair-haired, dark-haired, yellow, black, chocolate, pepper-like, volcano-like, a rhino ... he was licking his lips. Now he was shouting: dwarf, fish, chair, pyramid, knife, blood, I'm

a giant. The boys came right up to the pane and laughed at us. The master took my papers and started to throw them in the air: Brilliant, they're all brilliant. Can you hear what they're saying? Just choose, they're all yours. I had already chosen. And then he disappeared. The curtain closed. I was standing outside in the cold, knocking on the door.

/ Tomaž Šalamun /

I'm walking down the road. With lots of people. They're laughing, dancing, waving flags, chanting slogans, whistling, they're tossing me to and fro. I slip into a side street and down the stairs into the basement. It's calm here. A few chairs in rows, people are watching actors move quietly across a stage. The scenery instantly changes into a dark night club. I'm dancing. I stagger a little. I get entangled with something. A hand grips me hard and I hear a strong voice: Never step on a lady's frills! Fearfully, I look into the face close to mine, with long black hair. Jean Genet, I realize. As she barks at me: Just look at yourself, you little tart, who's going to buy you? She grins and turns around elegantly in her red crinoline. I run to the toilet. It's only in the mirror that I see my long black skirt. I'm pulling it off, I flush the toilet and I'm rubbing my face. The makeup won't come off. I take off my wig, I return in pants and a shirt. I see him, now he is also wearing pants, he's dancing with sailors in T-shirts. We sit down at a table. He's smoking. We can't leave yet, he whispers, there's a crowd of journalists outside, and we can't afford to make these sailors angry. Look, each is wearing a knife at his waist. He's nodding to them and smiling, as they circle around us in some kind of ritual dance. Until they're pushed away by others wearing black masks across their faces. Sweat drips from their skin as they drag us into the other room, knock us to the ground, lift up our skirts, dragging our long hair, with large tongues they're licking the lipstick off our lips.

/ Jean Genet /

I got a very small doggie. All shaggy, its head almost invisible. Just two small gleaming blue eyes. It was so pretty that the whole town was coming to see it. But it kept getting lost all the time. We were searching and searching, calling and joining our hands. And there came a time we did not find it. It was only after a while that somebody told us how some Italian hid it in a wardrobe of his hotel room. He probably took it with him. At home he turned it into a human being. But we did not believe that.

/ doggie /

Translated by Barbara Jurša

About the author:

Uroš Prah is a poet, editor, and translator. He published three poetry collections: *Čezse polzeči*. ("Gliding over Themselves", 2012), the hardly translatable *Tišima* (one attempt was "Phush", 2015), and *Udor* ("Landslide", 2019). His German investigative long poem *Nostra Silva* was awarded the Austrian Exil Poetry Award, and was shortlisted for the Simon Jenko and the Veronika Poetry awards. His poetry and essays have been published in Argentina, Austria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Germany, Italy, Romania, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovakia, and the USA. In recent years he was a resident writer in New York, Bucharest, Graz (Austria), and Larisa (Greece). In 2008 he co-founded the Ljubljana-based literary magazine ID-IOT, which he co-edited until 2016, and was the program director of Literodrom, the International Festival for Developing Literary Practices at the Cankar Hall in Ljubljana. He is currently based in Vienna. urosprah.com



Photo by: Janez Klenovšek

About the book:

»In *Udor* Prah has taken decisive steps into the poetics of the Anthropocene; in this sense, the collection is groundbreaking in the history of Slovenian literature. [...] In it he connects deep time with human time, but he doesn't stop there, he creates a new language for the destratification of the human into deep time.«

Branislava Vičar & Vesna Liponik: "Fault Networks: The Anthropocene in the Poetry of Uroš Prah", Discussions on Contemporary Slovenian Literature, Journal for Slavic Studies, Ljubljana 2021

»When Prah with his "turning in- and downwards" creates space, he is showing how the disintegration of the body is capable to remain within speech.«

Gabriela Babnik on Udor, Delo, Ljubljana 2020

»The poem "Modesty of Minorities" could easily be a motto of modern movements that continue to emancipate. [...] It would certainly be a suitable cry to action for any minority under a dictatorship.«

Uladzislau Harbacki on Tišima, Makeout, Belarus 2020

»A poetry book of this kind can be at home anywhere, it drills, everywhere it excavates a kind of inverted soil. At the same time, it has no home and is always at home. This can be achieved in language; only in language, such a being-at-home can take place. And in this perspective, *Tišima* is a book of poetry par excellence.«

Muanis Sinanović on Tišima, Ljubljana 2016

Excerpt:

When soil slides
ice is exposed to air
gas escapes

is it Batagaika that gasps and groans
or does something gasp and groan within it?
what might have been a mere scratch in the crust

what used to be a small clearing for a bit of road
began to slide and
this was no 'mere slippage'
this is a rockfall gushing stronger by the hour
popping strangely banging grunting
whizzing and whistling

here the underworld literally opens
erosion washing away all the earth
only gravel and rock remain.

Translated by Lawrence Schimel

Crackle

A burned body writhes
on a blistering angled rock
it grabs its salty sunburned skin
with rapid movements across the chest, the midriff, the thighs
it hooks itself by the neck
grab grab
pushes firmly against the anus.
An eclipse.
A black sun
a muted beep stretches out
long greasy threads cross the horizon.
Impaled sea urchins
mangled crushed
slime blood wasps
hornets buzzing
warm sea sperm
oozes out of yellow roe.
We wash it off in the sea
cut the lemon
and eat.

The Modesty of Minorities

They ask very little space for themselves.
They counter the noise of verbosity
with a truer noise –
the terrible density of a calm word.
That buzzes.

Translated by Jernej Zupanič



About the author:

Alenka Spacal is a writer, illustrator, and storyteller. She was born in 1975 in Ljubljana. She received her BA and MA in Philosophy and PhD in Sociology from the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana. As a freelance artist, she publishes her work at Bajalka, the Institute for Publishing and the Art of Storytelling. She writes and illustrates original picture books. The author writes about gender issues for adults and children. Up to date, she has published four picture books in the Slovenian language: *Mavrična maskarada* (The Rainbow Masquerade, 2013), *Kako ti je ime?* (What's Your Name?, 2018), *Modre ptičje misli* (Blue Bird Wisdoms, 2019) and *Fizolčica beži pred fižolovo juho*, 2019. Her last picture book was also published in English: *Little Beanie Belle Runs from the Bean Soup*, 2019. The illustration from the picture book *The Rainbow Masquerade* was chosen as the cover of the *International LGBTQ + Literature for Children and Young Adults*. Alenka Spacal narrates her stories to children through her original illustrations. Her works are exhibited in exhibitions both in Slovenia and abroad. Her website is: <https://www.bajalka.si/en/>.



Photo by: Nada Žgank

About the book:

"Mavrična maskarada (Rainbow Masquerade, 2013) is a modern fable in picture-book form in which anthropomorphized animals are preparing for a party where they will play with their genders; that is, they will apply the concept gender performativity: some will dress up as different genders, some as their own, some will perform multiple genders at the same time. The protagonist of the book, a tortoise, is not sure what sex/gender they are, so they set off to meet other animals and find out. In a series of encounters, the tortoise meets a rabbit who is afraid of genders, but who likes putting on his mother's clothes, a snail called Hermi (Herman/Hermina) who switches between genders according to how they feel, two ladybirds (presumably in a lesbian relationship), two squirrels (one butch, one femme), and others. The animals tell the tortoise about their experiences of gender and encourage them to find the gender they will feel at ease with. Above all, they present gender as something fluid. As any fable, *Mavrična maskarada* has a moral: after some perplexity, the tortoise finally appreciates that genders are best played with.

Spacal made a conscious decision to avoid LGBTQ+ signifiers at the textual level, but the illustrations include an abundance of LGBTQ+ symbols such as rainbows, masks, feathers, monocles, crowns, LGBTQ+ books, and the book employs feminist/queer concepts in a crossover fashion. Readers with an awareness of gender performativity, feminism, sexual identities, camp and kitsch will clearly recognize them in the text and especially in the illustrations, whereas children will focus on the tortoise's adventure of finding out what their sex/gender is."

Andrej Zavrl, *International LGBTQ + Literature for Children and Young Adults*



Excerpt:

The turtle passed two juniper shrubs and as it turned left by a pine tree stump, a frolicsome doe leaped down from a stone wall and landed in front of Terry's shell.

"Hello, turtle."

"Hello, doe. Where are you off to in such gay spirits?"

"I'm just on my way back from Hoofy the Shoemaker. I had a pair of antlers made for the evening dance." "Why do you need antlers for, doe, if you're neither a stag nor a buck?"

"Like I said, they are for the drag king and queen party tonight. You're coming, aren't you?"

"Yes, I am. But what are these kings and queens you're talking about? The squirrel invited me to a masquerade of various sexes."

"All animals that are going to dress up as their opposite sex will be drag kings and drag queens. That's why I need a pair of antlers for my crown. And you're coming as a male turtle?"

"I don't know yet," said the turtle thoughtfully. "Maybe I already am a male turtle. How should I know whether I am a she or a he? Turtles don't have antlers."

"What about your shell, claws and tail?"

"I'll have to meet another turtle to know more. But I am the only Greek tortoise in our forest."

Terry wished the doe good luck with its antlers and crawled on.

Translated by Špela Bibič.



About the author:

Nataša Sukič (1962) made her debut as a writer in 2005 with her short story collection *Desperadosi in nomadi* (Desperados and Nomads), followed by another short story collection *Otroci nočnih rož* (Night Flowers' Children) in 2008 that was shortlisted for the Dnevnik Fabula Award.

Then came a change in course – she switched from short prose, in which her fragmentism often made it difficult to make out its short story form, to novels: 2010 saw the release of her novel *Molji živi-jo v prahu* (Moths Live in the Dust), followed by the novel *Kino* (Cinema) in 2013 that made it into the top ten for the Kresnik Literary Award and *Piknik* (Picnic) in 2015 (finalist for the Kresnik Literary Award). The latter is Nataša Sukič' fifth literary work that is elusive in terms of form as it can be read both as a novel or a book of short stories. Then followed the novel *Bazen* (The Pool) that made it into the ten top for the Kresnik Literary Award in 2018. Her latest novel *Amplituda: remiksi in drugo* (Amplitude: remixes and another) was published in 2020.



Photo by: Vesna Liponik

About the book *Picnik*:

... Much like Djuna Barnes, Nataša Sukič is fascinated by dramatic visions, erotic madness, frustrations, obsessive reminiscing, gallows humour, divine beauty, reaching for the unknown, confronting nothingness, to which she adds allusions to modern pop culture (either film or music); but rather than looking for comparisons in motifs and topics between her text and those of Djuna Barnes, she is interested in preserving a high language norm.

In addition to innovative images, the atmospheric feel that doesn't seem forced even when the setting is moved from Ljubljana to Paris or New York, Nataša Sukič makes use of Pantagruel multiplication, randomly assembled stories. One of the storylines in the novel opens out into the stories exchanged between two lovers, another concerns the narrators; allusively and with an exceptional feel for detail, the author weaves the sketched stories together, thereby naturally materialising her obsession with narration and, above all, exposing and questioning her own autobiographicalness.

Excerpt:

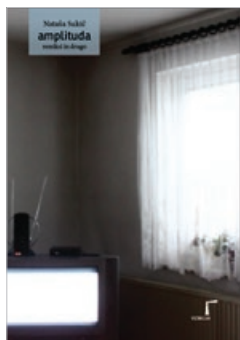
It's nice to look out onto the mighty Manhattan from Jen's Brooklyn window while listening to the sounds of jazz and bebop.

Driving here from the airport, that crazy Cuban kept repeating – *Don't you worry about a thing, this is America.*

The radio was just playing full-blooded black bebop and the taxi driver – his name was Juan – was snapping his fingers and tapping out the rhythm on the dashboard in excitement ... *Yeah, yeah, yeah*, he sang, and I had to admit that the syncopated rhythm of the great Dizzy Gillespie was deadly contagious; and although thicker and thicker beads of sweat were forming on my forehead, from exhaustion and from sheer excitement, my feet were itching to dance.

I grabbed for my sunglasses and cigarettes to hide behind the dark lenses and a cloud of smoke.

That Cuban guy was completely crazy; the whole ride there, he kept fluttering on his seat like some bird, groaning and cooing, *tap, tap, tap* ...tapping on the dashboard, shaking his small bird-like head sitting on top of his bamboo-like neck this way and that, singing his lungs out, all the while anxiously repeating his mantra of the promised land of America – *Come here*, he said, *all my friends and relatives are already here ... don't you worry about a thing, this is America ...*



His enraptured face creased into a broad smile ... *Yes, yes, yes ...*

It was nice to see someone who was so happy; the cars were honking, the avenues were blaring and he expertly navigated his way through it.

Where did you say you wanted to go? he screamed ... *Vanderbilt Avenue 147, just drop me off at the entrance, please ... I'm soooory, wheeere?*

The pale sun is quivering, half-hidden behind a rain cloud, disappearing crescent by crescent behind the sharp edges of box-like rooftops; a tortoiseshell mass, cinnamon brown, funhouse mirrors, carnally-tinted tea with milk, the cup is a glaring abyss ...

... I instantly flush at the thought of Ana's lobster-red nipples, her sweet buttons in the shape of snail shells.

To hell with it, I'm going to beat the sun like Jack, the screwed up boxer from that Charles Bukowski story, I say to myself, *I'm going to leave behind those days of tepidness and, blending into the rustling rain coats and capes, in the heat of the drizzling morning spilling onto feverish avenues, I'm going to kiss that pale sun, really, to hell with it.*

I'm exhausted from my long-haul flight over the Atlantic; all I want is a refreshing shower, some tobacco and a bed.

Hey, Jen, do you smoke in the bedroom?

Um, I don't but you can, you can do anything you want, she laughs, *I'll be damned if you can't. But don't go taking too much advantage of it now that you know*, she says, grinning, fixing her hypnotic brown eyes straight on mine, making me turn away in embarrassment for a moment.

I won't, no, I say, putting on a theatrically meek face, *I know, I know, I'm really lucky and I'm deeply grateful for it*, I go on exaggerating.

That you are, exclaims Jen, laughing, *really lucky! What can I do, I like you ... you've always been my weak spot, it's awful, but what can I do ...*

Jen never misses an opportunity to have a little flirt with me; she's like the wind blowing from all sides and is very persistent in her coquetry, she doesn't let up, not for anything.

She's standing right behind me and I can feel her breath on my neck.

No, I say to myself, *not this.*

But Jen has a heart of gold, it's hard to turn down someone like her. She already tried something when she and Christine were in Ljubljana.

I play dumb, pretending not to understand her hints. Every time she gives me *that* look my face turns red as a beetroot. It drives me crazy, I don't want her to think I'm like some poor girl from Kentucky or South Carolina, scared to death because her path has unexpectedly led her to New York, to this incredible festival of light and freedom.

My shyness is truly impossible; it hangs from my foot like a ball and chain. At the sight of my spotty neck and red cheeks, Jen lets out a teasing giggle and gives me a slap on the back.

Well, she says in a somewhat disappointed voice, puckering up her lips, *why are you looking at me like that? I'm not a ghost.*

With a sort of sadness, I watch her tiny hips and the fine lines of her shoulders and neck, cursing the cruel fate that has made me so inept.

Is this freedom, I say to myself, *girl, have you ever been truly free, even for a minute?*

Translated by Špela Bibič

About the author:

Milan Šelj, poet and translator, has lived in London since 1992. His first poetry collection *Darilo (Gift)* was published in 2006. *Kristali soli (Crystals of Salt)* followed in 2010, *Gradim gradove (Building Buildings)* in 2015 and *Slediti neizgovorjenemu (Tracing the Unspoken)* in 2018 (all published by ŠKUC-Lambda in Ljubljana).

His poems have been translated into several languages and published in Hebrew in an anthology *Cavafy's Sons and Grandsons* in Israel in 2015, a substantial selection in Italian translation in the magazine *Fili d'aquilone* and in English translation in *The Riveter* magazine in the UK. He contributed several translations for *Moral bi spet priti (Anthology of Contemporary European Gay Poetry)*, published by ŠKUC-Lambda, 2009) and *Brez besed ji sledim (Anthology of Contemporary European Lesbian Poetry)*, published by ŠKUC-Lambda, 2016). He was invited to present his poetry at the University of Nottingham and at UCL in London. He presented Slovenian LGBTQ literature with other authors in Berlin in 2017, in Sarajevo in 2019 and in Lisbon in 2020.

His poetry collection *Tracing the Unspoken* was published in English translation by A Midsummer Night's Press in New York in 2019, and his first illustrated poetry book for children *Kosmatice* was published by Zala in 2020.



Photo by: Peter Uhan

About the book *Tracing the Unspoken*:

Tracing the Unspoken is Milan's first book in English. What a daring debut it is. Šelj does indeed bravely trace the unspoken: he writes explicitly gay prose poems, not shying away from gay desire, sex, passion and obsession. But this writing does not exclude you if you are not a gay man. The opposite in fact: what Šelj manages to create is something universal; something we can all relate to.

There is a narrative thread running through the book. At the beginning the protagonist leads a sexually adventurous life. Eventually he seems to settle into a relationship and everything that comes with one, including moments of tenderness and passion, but also loneliness and misunderstanding. *Anna Blasiak*

From the very first page I was pulled into Šelj's poetry of obsession and became obsessed myself. His use of language gives shape to the shapeless and meaning to the banal. In his attempt to understand and give meaning to desire, he wakened in me a desire to keep reading and as I did, I devoured every word, constantly wanting more. Suddenly and surprisingly, I found a voice for the unsaid and watched as it came together with what had been considered implied as new meanings came into focus.

I know nothing of the language of Slovenia so I cannot say anything about the quality of the translation, but I can say that translator Harvey Vincent found the words that speak to us all. *Amos Lassen*

Excerpt:

We were sitting on a bench at the bus stop. Our eyes interlocked, avoiding the stares of strangers and provoking them with our disdain. Later the descending road overtook the howling wind of disapproval. And if you'd said: *The day is only an inevitable contrast to the night*, I would have agreed. During the journey, our eyes sparkled with hints. The

evening was a game of questions. You answered none of mine.

Around Christmas he became jittery and homesick. I bought him a pair of shoes, a one-way ticket and credit for his mobile phone. Standing at the window I waited for his call as I watched the first snowflakes. They always cover my restlessness with silence. I kept telling myself I was right to send him away. Will we be closer if he decides to come back?

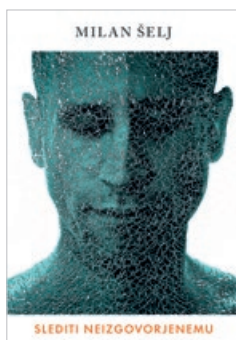
He came to me downcast and dejected, without a trace of self-worth, which usually betrays incompetent thieves. Having fought with other pick-pockets for his miserable share of the loot, he lay next to me. His bandaged bleeding fist a soft rosebud squeezed between my thighs.

A shaved head is resting next to mine. I try to embrace his quick breath after the spill of burning sperm. Above the window sill, rays of sunlight slip through a slit in the curtains. Slowly, like an elegant jackal, he sneaks out of bed, leaving behind the impression of a sensuous shadow. I let him steal the last word before he departs. His sharp fragrance floats in the air, enveloping my still-quivering body.

You have no idea how small this town is. Desperation is stifling and centuries old. Why don't you cut off your shirtsleeves and send them to me? I'll embrace myself with them when I'm not able to shorten your absence. To save myself, I'll search for consolation between the scraps of fabric and let your scent linger on the cuffs.

Day and night I write sentences with semen on the surface of your skin. This act is as elusive as our manuscript, which is never complete. Sometimes I tire of searching for the right word. Then I come back and try to delve deeper. When I find solutions closer to the core of my obsession will I be at ease.

Translated by Milan Šelj and Harvey Vincent



About the author:

Suzana Tratnik (1963) has published seven collections of short stories: *Pod ničlo* (*Below Zero*, 1997), *Na svojem dvorišču* (*In One's Own Backyard*, 2003), *Vzporednice* (*Parallels*, 2005), *Česa nisem nikoli razumela na vlaku* (*Things I've Never Understood on the Train*, 2008), *Dva svetova* (*Two Worlds*, 2010), *Rezervat* (*Reservation*, 2012), and *Noben glas* (*No Voice*, 2016), five novels: *Ime mi je Damjan* (*My Name is Damian*, 2001), *Tretji svet* (*Third World*, 2007), *Tombo-la ali življenje!* (*Bingo or Life!*, 2017), *Norhavs na vrhu hriba* (*Madhouse on the Hilltop*, 2019), *Pontonski most* (*A Pontoon Bridge*, 2020) and *Ava* (2021), a children's picture book *Zafuškana Ganka* (*The Hany Rattie*, 2010) as well as a monodrama *Ime mi je Damjan* (*My Name is Damian*, 2002) and a radio play *Lep dan še naprej* (*Have a Nice Day*, 2012). She has also published four non-fiction books on the lesbian rights movement, literature and activism. In 2007 Tratnik received the national Prešeren Fund Award for Literature, in 2017 the Novo mesto Short Award for best short story collection, and in 2018 the Desetnica Award for best children's or YA work. Her books have been translated into more than twenty languages.

The two central themes of Tratnik's fiction are destinies of people living on the margin of today's urban world and growing up in the 1960s and 1970s Yugoslavia.

A selection of Tratnik's stories was published in the English translation in *Games with Greta and Other Stories* (Dalkey Archive Press, 2016).

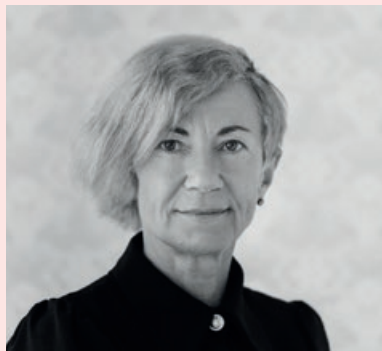


Photo by: Mankica Kranjec

About the book:

The protagonists of Suzana Tratnik's short stories in *Games with Greta* all share a sense of isolation on society's margins. Whether non-participants in the mainstream, rebels against it, or its occasional victims, they're well practiced at recognizing the herd instinct in action. From the six-year-old girl who discovers transgressive new games to play with her glamorous cousin from England; to a decidedly unusual school-child inventing a novel way of getting back at playground bullies; to young women who find their love interests drifting away, seduced by conventional notions of popularity and success; to a narrator who suddenly finds herself on no ordinary train trip through the heart of Slovenia—these are characters and stories that deftly and sardonically underscore the phantom nature of “normalcy” itself and the risks of its tyranny for dissenters and conformists alike.

As Anna Blasiak wrote in her review in *The Queer Riveter* (2019): A dense, tense and intense collection of thirteen short stories dealing with heavy issues, from violence, bullying, abuse and cruelty to social exclusion and homophobia, *Games with Greta & Other Stories* is a broken mirror, reflecting various aspects of life for queer women in Slovenian society, which, like most post-communist countries in Europe, seems still to be struggling with prejudice. /...? This is a very interesting collection: multifaceted, like life itself, mixing laughter with sexual desire, cruelty and violence with boredom, hunger for power with resignation; related by Tratnik with a certain bitterness and striking directness.



Excerpt:

Flight

Do you remember that back then it was only a few minutes after midnight? It was actually Saturday and it would have been quite justifiable to say: “Tomorrow is Sunday.”

You had a very restless hand, drawing funny little people on my arm, and I couldn't put myself together. But the trouble I had putting myself together wasn't that ordinary, not the kind of trouble most people would have while sitting on the train and having someone drawing funny little people on their arms. I couldn't concentrate on anything at all. I didn't hear the train rattling nor the warm whistle of the coffee from the open flask; least of all was I aware of the taste of the salami in our sandwiches. I tried with the funny little people, but under your hand they were running all over, folding themselves and falling down. I took the red crate out of the rucksack (we had only one rucksack and one sleeping bag--do you remember?). And then we let funny little people jump on the crate. They were so restless. Maybe I'm exaggerating a bit now, but I do remember very well that they--the funny little people--and the crate were enchanted.

The ticket inspector was checking our train tickets. His glance over his glasses told us that he'd figured out where we were bound for. (You do know that some people enjoy their ability to understand just everything.) In that moment the only things we had in our mind were the red crate with funny little people and the taste of coffee in our mouth. (You do know the taste of coffee after a sandwich with overheated salami.)

The sandwiches and coffee were rapidly consumed. Out of the rucksack we also took Travis the cat. He lazily stretched and, catlike, jumped onto the crate and lay down. By doing so he trod on some of the funny little people but that was inevitable as we couldn't had left Travis the cat at home. Immediately you started to draw new funny little people on my arm, and Travis the cat started to purr. “Why do you chatter; so much, Travis?” you said to him. You were always saying he was chattering while he was purring.

Then we invented a game of sounds. We imitated sheep, horses, funny little people, cows, and Travis. “Let's imitate people!” you said. You imitated people, you talked and talked, gesticulated wildly, the words entangled, and all of a sudden you grew pale. “That hurts!” you said. “Let's imitate fish.” And we imitated fish. Usually people don't do that on trains. That was why we were traveling a few minutes after midnight, because usually people don't travel at this hour and then you can imitate fish as much as you like.

Travis jumped off the crate at the next train station. It was his time.

You said that you wanted everyone to get out at this station so that you could go on drawing funny little people on my arm while I went on imitating fish and that time would stop.

Then we imitated the time that has stopped.

English translation edited by Elena Harap

About the author:

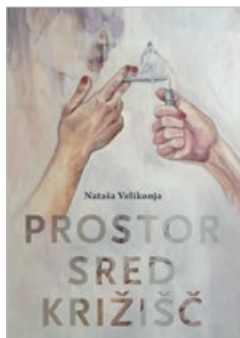
Nataša Velikonja (1967) is a sociologist, poet, essayist, translator and lesbian activist. In 1992 she obtained her BA in Theoretical Sociology from the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana, and received the Faculty Prešeren Award for her undergraduate thesis. She has published seven poetry collections: in 1994, the ŠKUC Publishing House published her first poetry collection *Abonma* (Subscription; 1994), considered to be the first openly lesbian poetry collection in Slovenia. This was followed by *Žeja* (Thirst; 1999), *Plevel* (Weeds; 2004), *Poljub ogledala* (Kiss of the Mirror; 2007), *Ostani* (Stay; 2014), *Preveč vljudna* (Too Polite, 2017) and *Prostor sred križišč* (A Place at the Crossroads, 2021). She is the author of six books of essays and scientific paper, analysing the intertwinement of artistic, cultural, political and socio-sexual realities; she writes from a counterculture, lesbian feminist perspective. She has translated dozens of literary works of culture theory, lesbian and gay theory and radical social criticism, as well as theories of architecture, design and art history. She is also active on other fronts of culture and arts in Slovenia: she is a former editorial board member of the magazine *Časopis za kritiko znanosti*, former editor of the *Lesbo* magazine, a long-time columnist for Radio Študent, and is currently the coordinator of the Lesbian Library and Archive at the Autonomous Cultural Zone of Metelkova. She has been registered with the Slovenian Ministry of Culture as a freelance poet, art critic and translator since 1995. She is the recipient of the 2016 Župančič Award and the 2018 Kons International Literary Award, conferred on authors who are considered to have written socially transformative literature and dedicated their lives to improving social justice.



Photo by: Tihomir Pinter

About the book *A Place at the Crossroads*:

A Place at the Crossroads is a collection of conceptually related intimate poems, gradually opening an insight into contemporariness in which elementary human ties, from love to social ties, seem to disintegrate or have already disintegrated. This judgement is also based on the feelings of the lyrical subject, the history of love relationships, including breakups – the question of how to look at love (which implicitly involves all forms of social bonds) after experiencing disappointment, after learning not only about its transience but, above all, the illusion of the bond it contains. But the author chooses vitalism; she will not give up love, she will only give up the naïve, fetishized view on love. After several collections of socially-engaged poetry, Nataša Velikonja is going back to love, but not the concept of love as the ultimate ability to connect and synchronise; she proposes a different approach to the concept: love that does not seek to establish ties, which sooner or later turn out to be illusory, but seeks analogy in the concept of heterotopy, which can potentially be represented by the city, urbanity: to be at the centre of density, but randomly and without ties. Disconnectedness, but with presence, can become the other, potential, materially intangible, utopic, but real, in short, a game within a game, always socially undesirable and therefore dangerous, being beyond the required social norms that always demand absolute inclusion.



Excerpt:

I used to be in a community
which, like every community,
wasn't a community
for its members to strengthen in it,
to protect one another, as they say,
but rather a controllable circle
to satisfy everything human:
the greed and, above all, the supply of people
for closeness to be produced for stock,
for you to never be alone,
to take, without consequence,
from the arsenal of
the tolerated evil,
to satisfy everything human,
the greed and, above all, the supply of people,
the only way never to remain alone.

This is how you move away,
you don't take anything with you at first,
you just go,
spend a few days at her place,
returning to pick up your clothes in your apt,
taking them to be washed in your own washer,
taking your clothes back and forth for a few months,
then you buy yourself a new perfume, leaving it at her place,
slowly, your apt becomes foreign to you,
still, it contains all your books, records, and self-candy,
that armchair was jointly bought by all my three exes,
it stays there,
then you take the childhood necklace and the keyring,
leaving *Butterflies* by Anica Černej,
and *Fables* by Krylov there,
my first books, given by mom and dad,
I'll take them one day;
she says, I can empty my wardrobe for you,
I say, one small drawer,
which now contains my whole life
seven books, seven sets of dresses,
a scarf, a headband, an umbrella,
for a week
that keeps being prolonged over and over.

Translated by Andrej Pleterski

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