



# CALYPSO EDITIONS

SUMMER 2016 CATALOG

*“Speak, Immortal One,  
and tell the tale once more in our time.”*

*—Invocation of the Muse, Homer’s Odyssey,  
translated by Stanley Lombardo (2000)*

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

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### CLASSICS IN TRANSLATION

- Leo Tolstoy / *How Much Land Does a Man Need* . . . . 5  
Anton Chekhov / *The Little Trilogy* . . . . 6  
Anna Swir / *Building the Barricade and Other Poems* . . . . 7

### FICTION IN TRANSLATION

- Hubert Klimko-Dobrzaniecki / *Lullaby for a Hanged Man* . . . . 9  
Jana Juránová / *Ilona: My Life with the Bard* . . . . 10  
André Gide / *Morasses* . . . . 11

### POETRY IN TRANSLATION

- Sylva Fischerová / *Stomach of the Soul* . . . . 13  
Jarosław Mikołajewski / *Froth: Poems* . . . . 14  
Gellu Naum / *Athamor & Other Poems* . . . . 15  
Martin Woodside, ed. / *Of Gentle Wolves* . . . . 16

### NON-FICTION IN TRANSLATION

- Efraín Bartolomé / *Ocosingo War Diary: Voices from Chiapas* . . . . 18

### ORIGINAL FICTION

- Margaret McMullan / *Aftermath Lounge* . . . . 20  
Anthony Bonds / *The Moonflower King* . . . . 21

### ORIGINAL POETRY

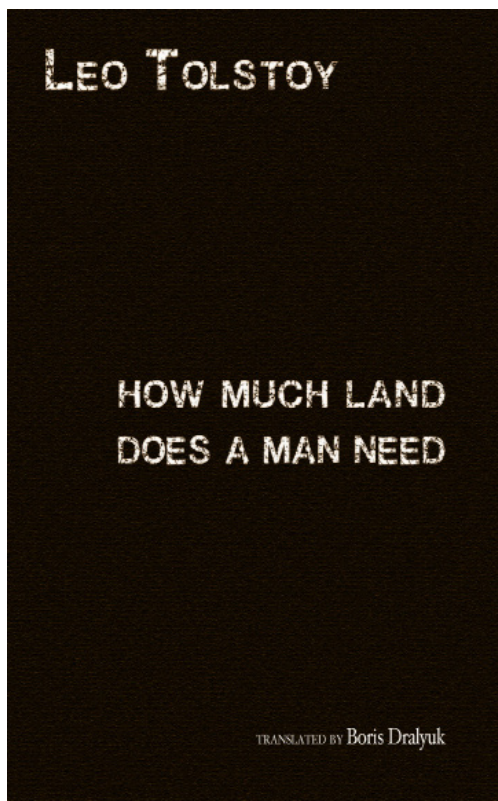
- Erika Lutzner / *While Everything Slipped Away From Me* . . . . 23  
Derick Bursen / *USE* . . . . 24  
Robin Davidson / *City That Ripens on the Tree of the World* . . . . 25  
Elizabeth Myhr / *the vanishings & other poems* . . . . 26

### CALYPSO SAMPLER . . . . 28

CALYPSO

CLASSICS IN  
TRANSLATION





## **How Much Land Does a Man Need**

by Leo Tolstoy  
Translated by Boris Dralyuk  
Foreword by Brian Evenson

Fiction / 66 pages / 2010  
ISBN-13: 978-0983099901

“The greatest story that the literature  
of the world knows.”

—James Joyce

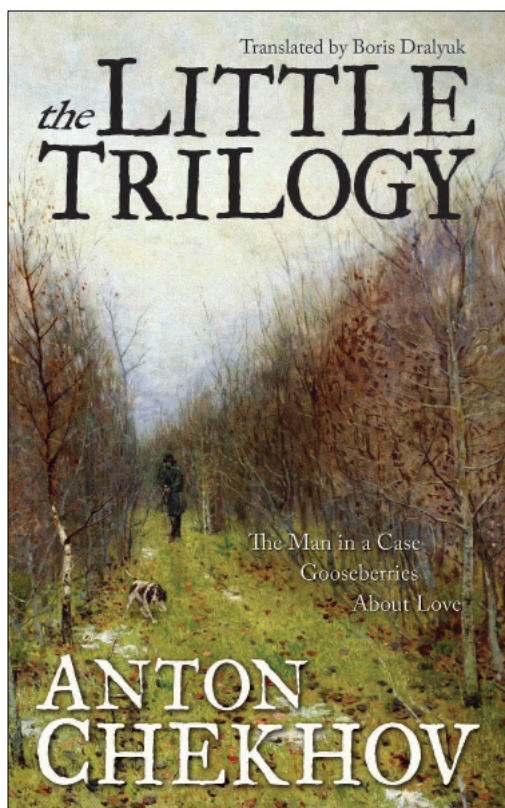
“How Much Land Does a Man Need  
is a small gem, a story that feels at  
once quickly recited and very sure of  
itself, and Calypso Editions and Boris  
Dralyuk are to be congratulated for  
giving it a new and better English-  
language life.”

—Brian Evenson

Calypso Editions presents a new translation of this frequently overlooked classic. In *How Much Land Does a Man Need*, originally published in 1886, Tolstoy departs from the realist mode of his great novels—*War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*—and adopts the markedly oral narrative style of *skaz*, a language at once rich and easily accessible to the simple folk he now wished to address. While previous translators have smoothed out the idiosyncrasies of the form, Boris Dralyuk’s translation retains the color and voice so vital to the tale.

**Leo Tolstoy** (1828-1910) is a Russian author regarded as one of the world’s finest novelists. The short story, *How Much Land Does a Man Need*, was penned long after his ambitious novels, *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina* and within a year of his novella, *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*.

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visit [www.CalypsoEditions.org](http://www.CalypsoEditions.org)*



## The Little Trilogy

by Anton Chekhov  
Translated by  
Boris Dralyuk

Fiction / 86 pages / 2014  
ISBN-13: 978-0988790315

“Reading Chekhov was just like the  
angels singing to me.”

—Eudora Welty

“Chekhov makes everything work  
— the air, the light, the cold, the  
dirt, etc. Show these things and you  
don’t have to say them.”

—Flannery O’Connor

**Anton Chekhov** (1860-1904) is universally regarded as a master of the short story, and nowhere is his rich contribution to the genre on fuller display than in the so-called *Little Trilogy* (1898): “The Man in a Case,” “Gooseberries,” and “About Love.” These interconnected stories reflect the entire range of his gifts, his ability to hold comedy in balance with tragedy, to wrest beauty from ugliness, and to transform the pathetic into the sublime.

Written rather late in his career, *The Little Trilogy* also serves as a kind of artistic autobiography, charting the evolution of his own approach to story-telling from humorous caricature, to Tolstoyan sentimentality, to a uniquely Chekhovian study of “individual cases,” in which generalities are dispensed with and judgment is withheld.

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## Building the Barricade and Other Poems

by Anna Swir  
Translated by Piotr Florczyk  
Foreword by Jericho Brown

Poetry / 68 pages / 2011  
ISBN-13: 978-0983099918

"In all, this is certainly a volume worth reading, and Swir's humane yet unsentimental poems are among the best "war poetry" written during the twentieth century."

—*World Literature Today*

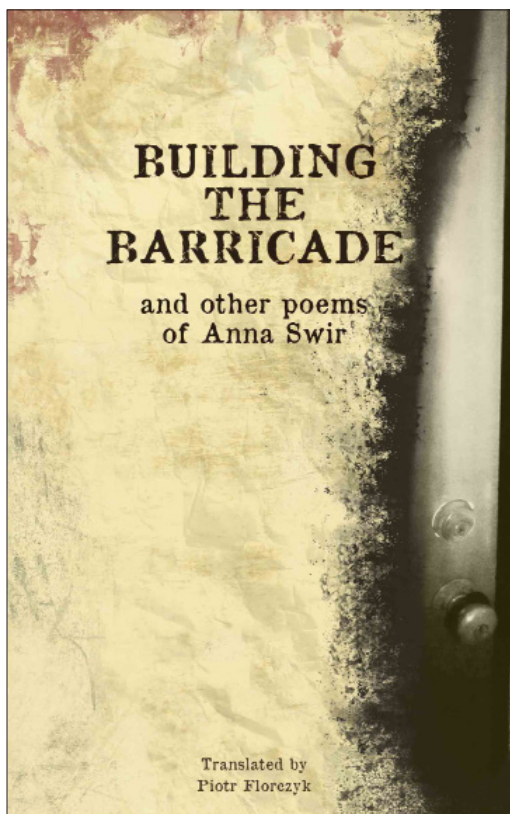
"William Blake was inclined to see human sins as phases through which humans pass and not as something substantial. In . . . Anna Swir there is a similar empathy and forgiveness."

—Czesław Miłosz

"To translate Anna Swir is to translate a cemetery's stories as nakedly and starkly as any human can. It is to tread on hallowed, stunned ground—the ground of an earth stricken not by its own nature but by our species' own warring, bombarding instincts. Only reverence could lead someone properly into the reaches of Swir's numbed witness of the atrocities of WWII. Piotr Florczyk has the reverence and skill to bring Swir into English verse with crystalline witness and warnings."

—Katie Ford, author of *Blood Lyrics* and *Colosseum*

**Anna Swir** (Świrszczyńska) was born in 1909 in Warsaw, Poland, to an artistic though impoverished family. She worked from an early age, supporting herself while she attended university to study medieval Polish literature. In the 1930s she worked for a teachers' association, served as an editor, and began publishing poetry. Swir joined the Resistance during World War II and worked as a military nurse during the Warsaw Uprising; at one point she came within an hour of being executed before she was spared. In addition to poetry, Swir wrote plays and stories for children and directed a children's theater. She lived in Krakow from 1945 until her death from cancer in 1984.

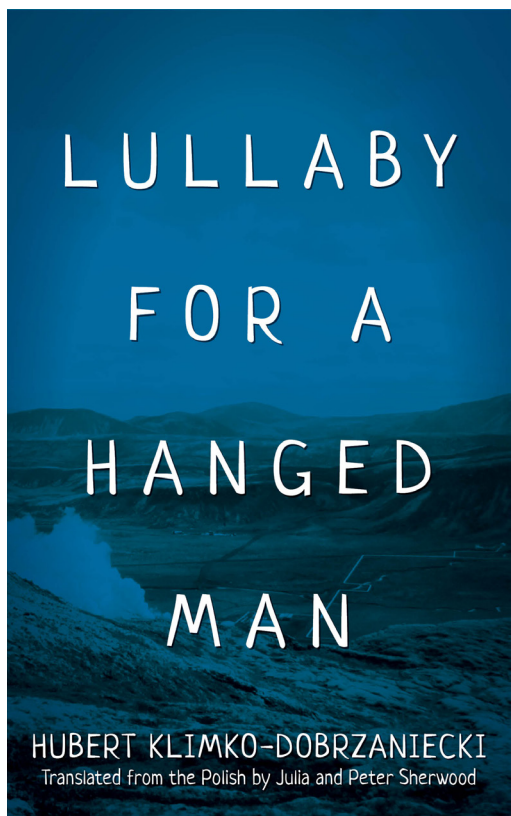


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FICTION IN  
TRANSLATION





## Lullaby for a Hanged Man

by Hubert Klimko-Dobrzaniecki  
Translated by  
Julia and Peter Sherwood

Fiction / 86 pages / 2015  
ISBN-13: 978-0988790391

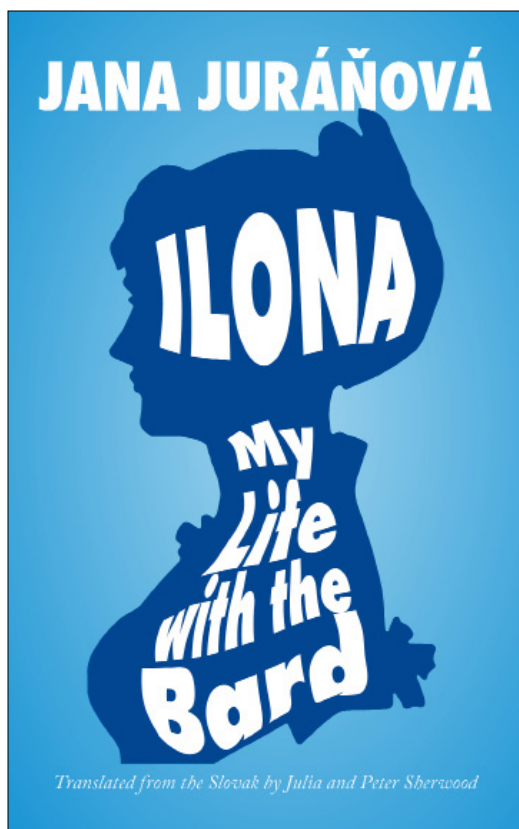
“This requiem-book is unclassifiable, just like its author, who was in turn turkey plucker, diamond smuggler, and art dealer and who studied Icelandic language, theology and philosophy . . . Or maybe it is, but in this case, we must leave the world of literature and consider this novel as a klezmer concert in New York’s Central Park. A world of eclectic poetry, offbeat/quirky, at the roots of old Europe, funny, tender, violently melancholic.”

—Juliette Morillot, *La Revue*

*Lullaby for a Hanged Man* . . . tells the story of three East Europeans—a Polish musician, a Croatian artist and a budding Polish writer (the author’s alter ego)—trying to build a new life for themselves far from home, in dark and cold Iceland. Dedicated to the author’s friend, the composer and violinist Szymon Kuran, this sensitive exploration of friendship, love, insanity and death as well as a depiction of the immigrant experience and an artistic and spiritual quest, is by turns wildly comic, moving and poetic. The book was nominated for the Cogito Public Media award as well as for the prestigious “Passport” prize.

**Hubert Klimko-Dobrzaniecki** is a Polish writer, the author of several novels, novellas, and collections of short stories. He has published two volumes of poetry in Icelandic, as well as a children’s book and a crime novel. Klimko-Dobrzaniecki’s books have been translated into ten languages. He has been nominated or shortlisted for a number of Poland’s top literary awards, including the Nike, the country’s top literature prize; the Cogito Public Media Award; the Angelus Central European Literature Award; and the prestigious “Passport” prize awarded by the weekly *Polityka*. He is currently based in Vienna with his family.

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**ILONA:**  
**My Life with the Bard**

by Jana Juráňová  
Translated by  
Julia and Peter Sherwood

Fiction / 154 pages / 2014  
ISBN-13: 978-0988790353

“Jana Juráňová has set out to subvert the traditional division of roles, focusing, instead of P.O. Hviezdoslav, on his wife Ilona Országhová, a perceptive, intelligent and sensitive observer with a rich inner life.”

—Pavel Matejovič

“An extraordinary account of a woman who sacrifices her own creative and intellectual potential to support her husband – the late nineteenth century Slovak poet Pavol Országh Hviezdoslav. Her unrealized dreams, desires, and ambitions, however, find a surprising outlet in Jana Juráňová’s book, one that seems even more relevant today than a century ago. Written in a melancholic tone with subtle tinges of irony, which the translation captures brilliantly, *Ilona: My Life with the Bard* is a delightful read.”

—Hana Píchová, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

**Jana Juráňová** is an acclaimed Slovak writer, playwright, essayist, translator and publisher. She also served as editor of the literary magazine *Slovenské pohľady* and freelance contributor to Radio Free Europe. Her novel *Beadswomen* was nominated for the Anasoft Litera Award and received the Bibliotéka award for women’s fiction in 2006. *My Life with Hviezdoslav* (2008) was shortlisted for the 2009 Anasoft Litera Award for original Slovak fiction. Jana Juráňová’s translations from English include Virginia Woolf’s *Three Guineas* and *Gender Trouble* by Judith Butler as well as books by Margaret Atwood and Jeanette Winterson.

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## Morasses

by André Gide

Translated by Tadzio Koelb

Introduction by John Reed

Fiction / 80 pages / 2015

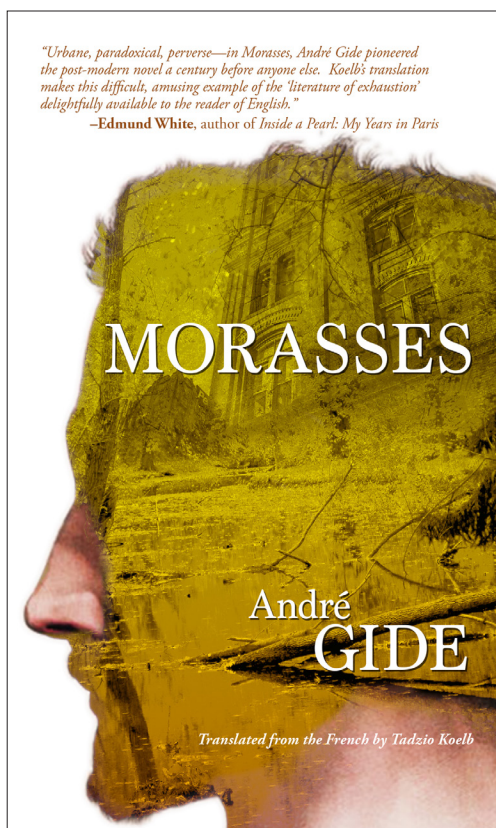
ISBN-13: 978-0988790384

“Tadzio Koelb has found a voice in English for Gide that artfully recreates the elegance of the prose in *Morasses* and also the humor. An assured and delightful translation.”

—Idra Novey

*“Urbane, paradoxical, perverse—in *Morasses*, André Gide pioneered the post-modern novel a century before anyone else. Koelb’s translation makes this difficult, amusing example of the ‘literature of exhaustion’ delightfully available to the reader of English.”*

—Edmund White, author of *Inside a Pearl: My Years in Paris*



“Urbane, paradoxical, perverse—in *Morasses*, André Gide pioneered the post-modern novel a century before anyone else. Koelb’s translation makes this difficult, amusing example of the ‘literature of exhaustion’ delightfully available to the reader of English.”

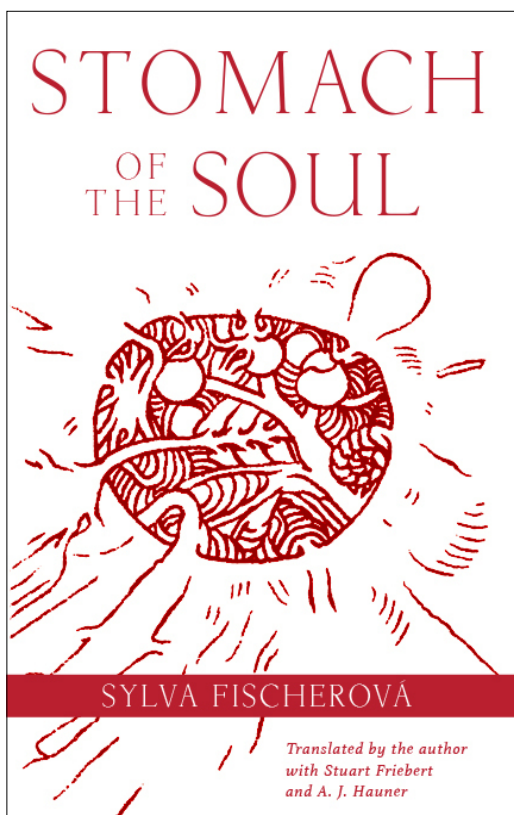
—Edmund White

**André Gide** (1869—1951) was one of France’s most controversial and influential writers. A novelist, playwright, critic, essayist, translator, and co-founder of *La Nouvelle Revue Française*, he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, and became the first living author to see his collected work published by the Bibliothèque de la Pléiade. Following trips to Africa and the USSR, he published anti-colonial and anti-Soviet works that earned him enemies of every political stripe. The Catholic Church placed his work on its Index of Forbidden Books shortly following his death, claiming, “He made of his sin a coefficient (and not the least) part of his fame.”

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POETRY IN  
TRANSLATION



## Stomach of the Soul

by Sylva Fischerová  
Translated by the author  
with Stuart Frieibert & A. J. Hauner

Poetry / 162 pages / 2014  
ISBN-13: 978-0988790346

“Sylva Fischerová is a poet like no other. She is not just one of the most important European poets alive, she is also one of the few European poets who are a great fun to read, without compromising the truth, without selling out the magic. She entertains in the old way, teaching the lesson . . . Fisherova teaches me something new each time I open her book. This is a poet to live with.”

—Ilya Kaminsky

These new poems from Fischerová are fierce in their complete devotion to the revelation of a new way of seeing the world. They represent no less than the redefining of significant ideas such as fate, death, poetry, and even god, reshaped through the jarringly original vision of the world that drives these remarkable poems. The coming together of Fischerová and Frieibert — one of our most distinguished literary translators — is great news too for the lovers of poetry among us. We used to say: These are the kinds of poems that literally transport you to other realms of seeing and feeling and knowing. Hold onto your hats.

—Bruce Weigl

**Sylva Fischerová** (born 1963) is one of the most formidable Czech poets of her generation. A distinguished classicist who teaches at Charles University in Prague, she writes poetry with a vivid imagination as well as an historical reach. She has published eight volumes of poetry in Czech, and her poetry has been translated and published in numerous languages.

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## Froth: Poems

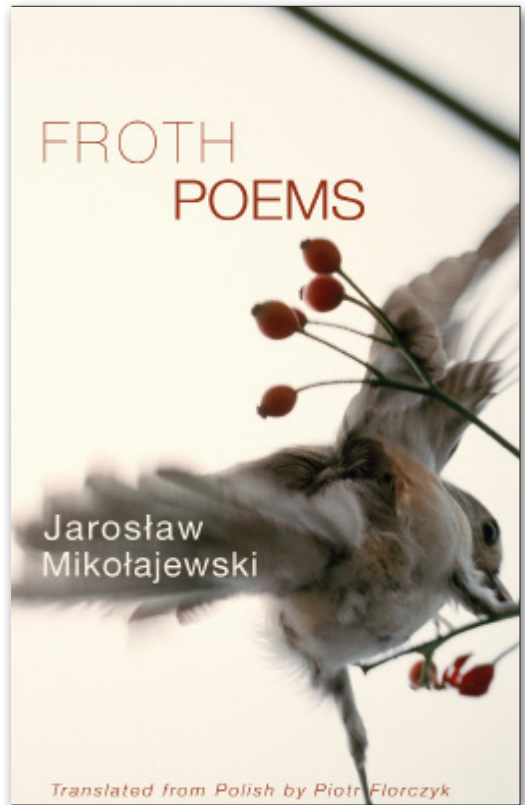
by Jarosław Mikołajewski  
Translated by  
Piotr Florczyk

Poetry / 102 pages / 2013  
ISBN-13: 978-0983099994

“This is contemporary European poetry at its best...tender, unpredictable, hymn, a love poem, a moment of laughter, of revelation.”  
—Ilya Kaminsky

“Froth is a mixture of short, striking poems and long, meditative pieces, both equally interesting in their own right. Because his poems are personal yet universal, readers will absorb a sliver of Mikołajewski’s life while also learning about themselves.”

—Rachel Gellman,  
*World Literature Today*

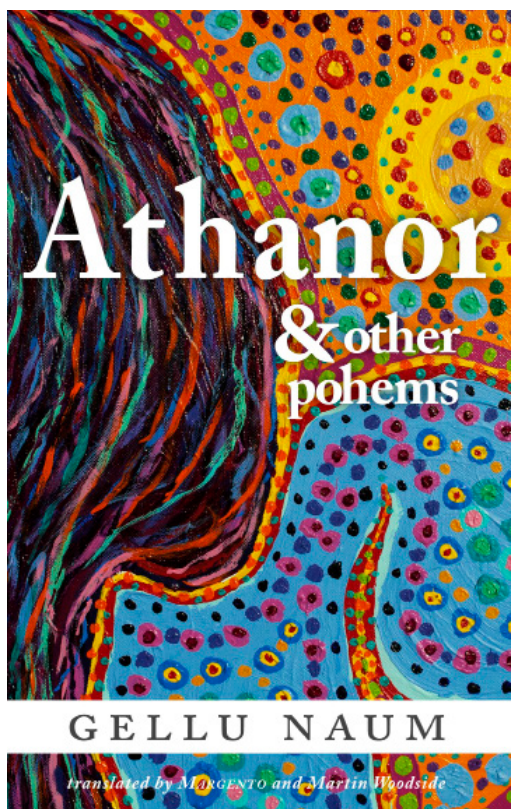


Froth gathers thirty-two of Jarosław Mikołajewski’s best poems. Adam Zagajewski writes, “Who’s Jarosław Mikołajewski? Is he an angry poet? No, not really. Is he pater familias? Yes, he is, but this doesn’t tell us much about his poetry. Reading his poems we follow his itinerary, we go with him to Rome—he’s at home in the Italian culture though his first home is in Warsaw, we see his wife, his daughters, we remember his father. Mikołajewski’s poetry is alive. This is a huge praise, maybe the highest one: it’s not an academic enterprise. His poems are kicking, running, appealing to us, readers. His poems live.”

**Jarosław Mikołajewski** (b. 1960) is a poet, short story writer, essayist, journalist, and translator from the Italian. His ten volumes of poetry have been met with wide acclaim both in Poland and abroad, winning the poet many prizes, among them the Capital City of Warsaw Literary Award and the Kazimiera Iłakowiczówna Award. His collection of essays, *Rzymska komedia* (Roman Comedy, 2011), inspired by his prolonged stays in Rome and The Divine Comedy, earned him a nomination for the most significant literary prize in Poland, the Nike Award. Jarosław Mikołajewski lives in Warsaw.

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## Athamor & other pohems

by Gellu Naum

Translated by

Martin Woodside and MARGENTO

Poetry / 107 pages / 2013

ISBN-13: 978-0983099970

“For those who thought provocatively experimental writing left Romania with the person of Tristan Tzara, in 1915, or Paul Celan, as late as 1947—which is pretty much all of us who read poetry in English—the work of Gellu Naum is a revelation. In these wonderful translations we feel the life of the poetic imagination flowing freely long after Dada, Surrealism, and their discontents had faded into manner or silence elsewhere. Naum is Tzara’s truest heir, with the gravity of Apollinaire and the eye of Breton.”

—GC Waldrep

“In *Athamor & Other Pohems*, there is a thrill of discovery in the presence of a mind and voice that brings new complexities and tonalities toward the rebirth of something that we thought we knew and that even now astounds us.”

—Jerome Rothenberg

**Gellu Naum** (1915-2001) is one of Romania’s most important poets and a key figure in the surrealist movement, Gellu Naum remains almost entirely unknown to English speaking audiences. Sampling some of Naum’s best work from a unique literary career spanning over more than 60 years, this collection offers a long overdue introduction to one of the greatest figures in 20th century European poetry.

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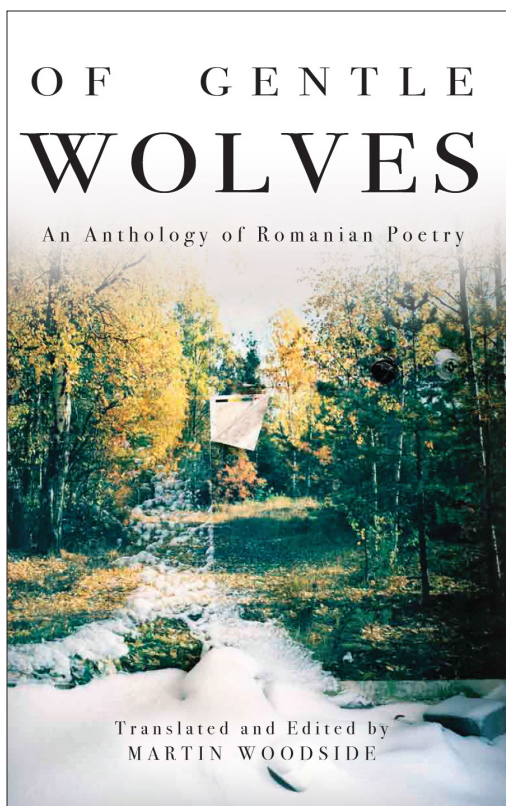
**Of Gentle Wolves:  
An Anthology of Romanian  
Poetry**

Translated and Edited by  
Martin Woodside

Poetry / 76 pages / 2011  
ISBN-13: 978-0983099925

“A scintillating, eclectic sampler of voices from across half a century of achievement by one of Europe’s strongest and most vital poetry traditions.”

—Adam Sorkin



**About the Book:**

Amidst a history of upheaval, from Roman subjugation to the fall of communism in 1989, Romania’s fostered a persevering spirit and a strong poetic tradition. “Every Romanian is born a poet,” goes a popular idiom, and *Of Gentle Wolves: An Anthology of Romanian Poetry* aims to bring the very best of the country’s contemporary poets together in a single volume.

Individual poems from *Of Gentle Wolves: An Anthology of Romanian Poetry* have appeared in *Brooklyn Rail*, *Poetry International*, *Poesis International* (Romania), and *qarrtsinluni*. Translated authors in this anthology include Marin Sorescu, Gellu Naum, Constantin Acosmei, Radu Vancu, Angela Marinescu, Dan Coman, Ioan Moldovan, O. Nimigean, Robert Șerban, Leonid Dimov, Gabriel Decuble, Ana Blandiana, Chris Tanasescu, Nicolae Coande.

Editor & translator **Martin Woodside**’s poetry chapbook *Stationary Landscapes* came out in 2009 (Pudding House Press), and he spent 2009-10 on a Fulbright in Romania. He lives with his family in Philadelphia where he’s pursuing a PhD in Childhood Studies at Rutgers-Camden.

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NON-FICTION IN  
TRANSLATION

## Ocosingo War Diary: Voices from Chiapas

by Efraín Bartolomé

Translated by  
Kevin Brown

Non-fiction / 222 pages / 2014

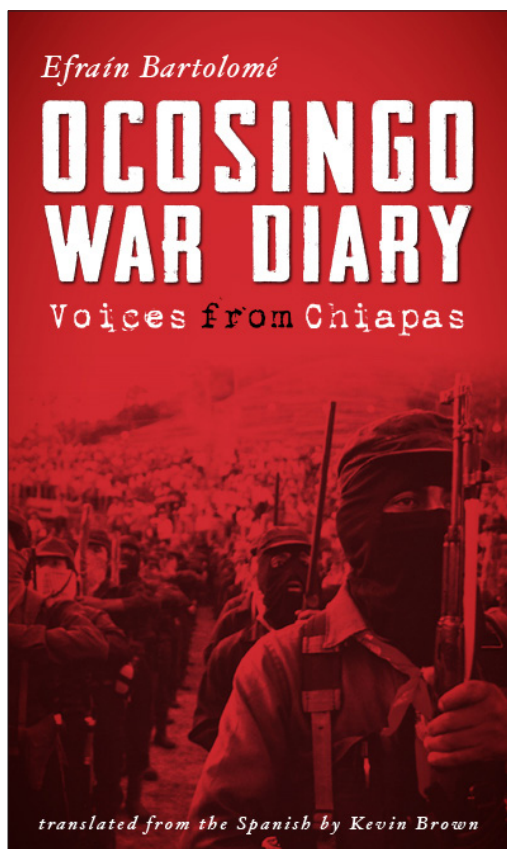
ISBN-13: 978-0988790339

“A poet from Chiapas, Efraín Bartolomé, lived through the [Zapatista] uprising in an intense and painful way. His poetry took on a deep historical dimension without ceasing to be poetry.”

—Alberto Ruy Sánchez

“In Ocosingo War Diary: Voices from Chiapas vibrantly immediate idioms and rhythms come alive. Kevin Brown’s translation bridges the fluid border between prose-poem and prose narrative.”

—Thalia Pandiri, Smith College



### About the Book:

Efraín Bartolomé, a poet from Chiapas, lived through the entire beginning of the Zapatista uprising in 1994. His family, like many in the village of Ocosingo, received death threats from the Zapatista guerrillas who demanded they join them at risk of being declared enemies of the Revolution. This book, equal parts poetry and diary, is his account of that conflict.

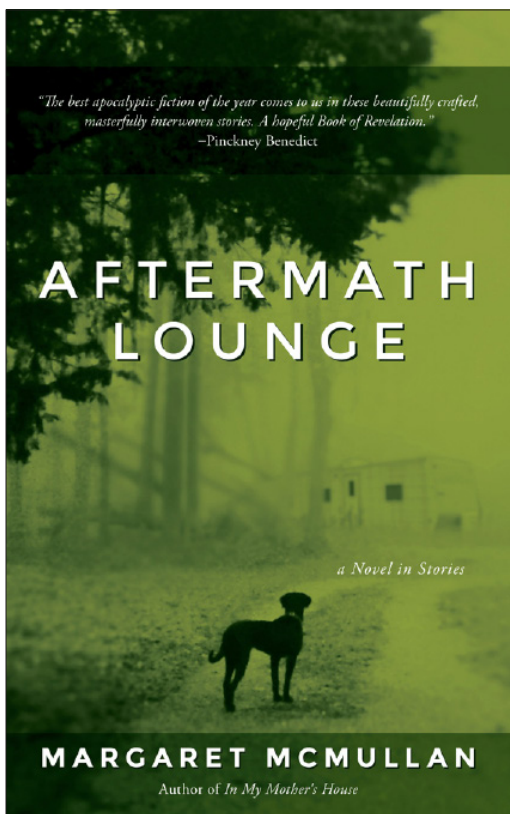
**Efraín Bartolomé**, born in 1950 in Ocosingo, State of Chiapas, Mexico, is an internationally recognized poet and prize-winning environmental activist. His verses have been collected in the following volumes: *Agua lustral* (Holy Water: Poems, 1982-1987); *Oficio: arder* (Poet Afire: Poems, 1982-1997); and *El ser que somos* (Being Who We Are). Bartolomé is the recipient of the Mexico City Prize; Aguascalientes National Poetry Award (1984); Carlos Pellicer Prize for published work (1992); Gilberto Owen National Literary Prize (1993); and the Jaime Sabines International Poetry Prize (1996). In 1998 he received the Chiapas Arts Prize and, in 2001, he received the International Latino Arts Award in the United States.

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ORIGINAL  
FICTION





## Aftermath Lounge

by Margaret McMullan

Fiction / 146 pages / 2015  
ISBN-13: 978-0988790360

"I love these stories. They're so smart, beautiful, true—and so real—that they seemed like part of my own history. I felt homesick in the best way, flooded with a kind of saddened joy. They snuffed the gimlet-eyed adult and brought to life again, for a while, the wondrous child."

—Brad Watson,  
*Aliens in the Prime of Their Lives*

Aftermath Lounge is a beautiful, compelling collection, the emotions as powerfully charged as the winds of a hurricane. Margaret McMullan writes movingly about those living in and pulling themselves out of destruction and chaos and loss to salvage all they can of love and redemption. From the voices of orphaned children to the least likely man to don a Santa Claus suit, there are moments of devastation, comic relief and grace."

—Jill McCorkle, *Life After Life*

"In Aftermath Lounge each short story, like a homing pigeon, returns to the Gulf Coast to explore how its people struggle with the ghost of Hurricane Katrina. With riveting prose, Margaret McMullan tracks the weblike connections of family and friends haunted by the storm from Pass Christian, Mississippi, to Chicago.

—William Ferris, *The Storied South: Voices of Writers and Artists*

**Margaret McMullan** is the author of six award-winning novels and editor of the new anthology *Every Father's Daughter*. She currently holds the Melvin Peterson Endowed Chair in Literature and Writing at the University of Evansville in Indiana.

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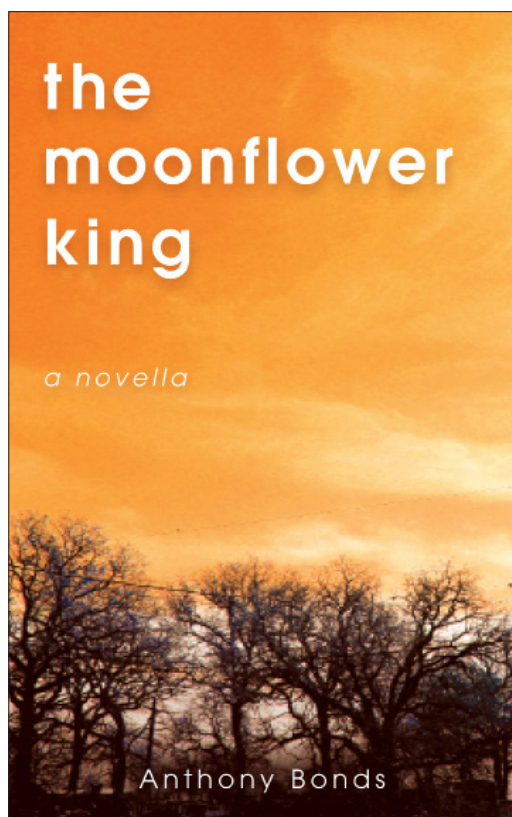
## **The Moonflower King** **A Novella**

by Anthony Bonds

Fiction / 98 pages / 2012  
ISBN-13: 978-0983099949

“In taut and inspired language, Anthony Bonds gives us an unflinching vision of humanity and one family’s fate. A compact tale that manages to be as vast as the Texas landscape it evokes, *The Moonflower King* poses age-old questions about loyalty and love, and answers them with a story that is surprising, entertaining, and moving. A wonderful debut.”

—Katherine Towler,  
author of *Snow Island*



“The Moonflower King is an incredibly imaginative new book by an exciting young writer. Get ready to for a crazy ride. It’s fast-moving and intelligent. Anthony Bonds is someone to watch out for.”

—Daniel Chacón

### About the Book:

When Ash Moone learns that his twin brother Oscar’s botched suicide attempt has left him confined to a wheelchair, Ash is forced to leave his life as a writer in Brooklyn for the family’s dilapidated emu ranch in a remote East Texas town. At first a reluctant caretaker, Ash must confront the once-familiar faces that inspired his first book, but soon learns the terrible and devastating truths about his family’s dark legacy. As his brother Oscar’s continued obsession with death threatens to ruin both their lives, Ash must make a choice: abandon his brother or risk his own humanity to create a peace between them. Anthony Bonds is a writer and book designer. He works as a publishing editor in San Diego where he lives with his wife.

**Anthony Bonds** is a writer and book designer. He works as a publishing editor in San Diego where he lives with his wife.

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ORIGINAL  
POETRY

## While Everything Slipped Away From Me

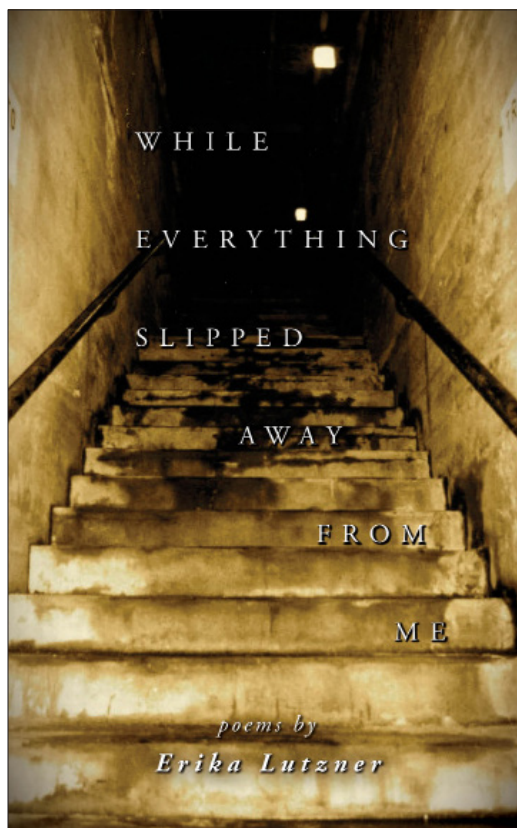
by Erika Lutzner

Poetry / 78 pages / 2016

ISBN-13: 978-1944593001

“While Everything Slipped Away From Me is a story about grief, love and loss. It speaks of unbearable tragedy. This is a collection of lyrical poems about the aftermath of 9/11. How can one go on when one loses the love of one’s life? This collection delves into that question. Perhaps out of grief something beautiful can grow.”

—Nin Andrews



“Lutzner approaches the unapproachable space that is what of which was once whole. Here we share our skinned knees in ash. We eat the news like it is a mass processed mechanical attribute. She writes, ‘tell me how to capture sadness.’ The story is one of a true love, lost in 9/11; one of desolation and divinity.”

—Jillian Mukavetz

**Erika Lutzner** is the editor of *Scapegoat Review*. She is the author of two chapbooks with dancing girl press and has a third coming out later this year. She also has a chapbook with Kattywompus Press. Her work can be found in various journals across the internet such as *Eclectica Journal*, *failbetter*, and *wicked alicia*. She grew up in Garrett Park, Maryland, next to Porcupine Woods and behind the train tracks. She’s a former violinist and former chef. Currently, she is a writer living in Brooklyn with her two cats Nikki and Neo.

*For ordering information,  
visit [www.CalypsoEditions.org](http://www.CalypsoEditions.org)*

## USE

by Derek Burleson

Poetry / 60 pages / 2012  
ISBN-13: 978-0983099956

“Burleson sees what we all see, or are willingly blind to, or cannot bear to see: that we are here for only a moment, that we are meaningless in the very same instant that we are nearly godlike with meaning.”

—Zinta Aistars

“Burleson’s poems are engaging because he reaches out to his audience, and the audience he imagines is as lively as any poet could hope to have. The respect which he gives his readers (and listeners) creates layers of meaning, and allows his audience to participate—by which, I mean, there is a feeling as if we are in conversation with the poet.”

—Mercedes O’Leary

**Derick Burleson’s** latest book of poems, *Melt*, was published by Marick Press in 2012. His first two collections of poems are: *Never Night* (Marick Press, 2007), and *Ejo: Poems, Rwanda 1991-94* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2000). He directs the MFA program in Creative Writing at the University of Alaska Fairbanks and lives in Two Rivers, Alaska.

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## City That Ripens on the Tree of the World

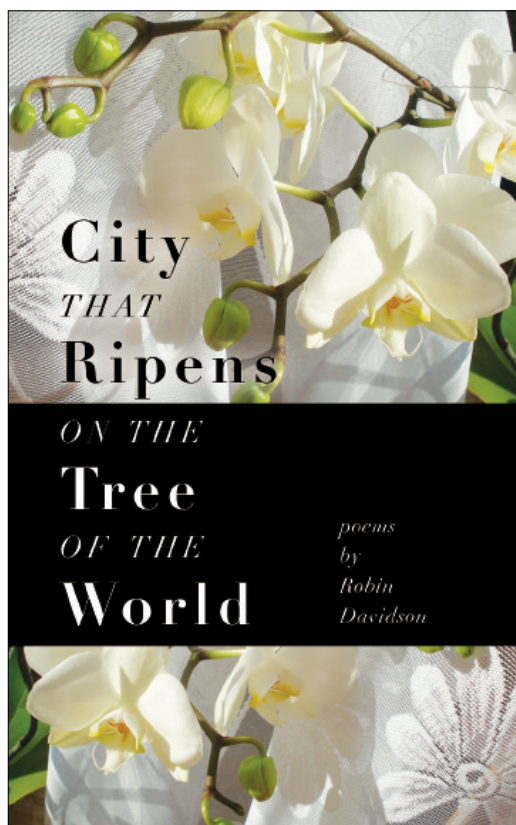
by Robin Davidson

Poetry / 47 pages / 2013

ISBN-13: 978-0988790308

“Davidson brings an unusual sense of history, especially as it impacts women, into her own very American poetry. Her work is deeply engendered, and she writes of ordinary women—rooted in earth, reaching for light—caught between personal, social, and historical forces. She is a learned poet—her verse rings with the work of photographers, painters, and other poets—who understands the work of poetry to bring light out of darkness and music out of silence.”

—Edward Hirsch



Robin Davidson’s *City that Ripens on the Tree of the World* is a cycle of twenty-seven poems emerging out of her time in Kraków, Poland, and conceived as a response to poet Ewa Lipska’s figure, Mrs. Schubert, a kind of European “every woman” of modernity. The cycle addresses Lipska’s poems, *Droga pani Schubert* (Dear Mrs. Schubert), as a polestar for Davidson’s own verse. Through the creation of an equivalent persona (Mrs. Schmetterling), she explores poetry as the uncertain intersection of personal and historical forces—what Lipska might call the accident or “the spectacle of our lives,” which one both participates in and observes as witness.

**Robin Davidson** is co-translator with Ewa Elżbieta Nowakowska of *The New Century: Poems* (Northwestern University Press) from the Polish of Ewa Lipska and the author of *Luminous Other: Poems* (Ashland Poetry Press). She has received a Fulbright professorship at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków and a National Endowment for the Arts translation fellowship. She teaches creative writing as Associate Professor of English for the University of Houston-Downtown.

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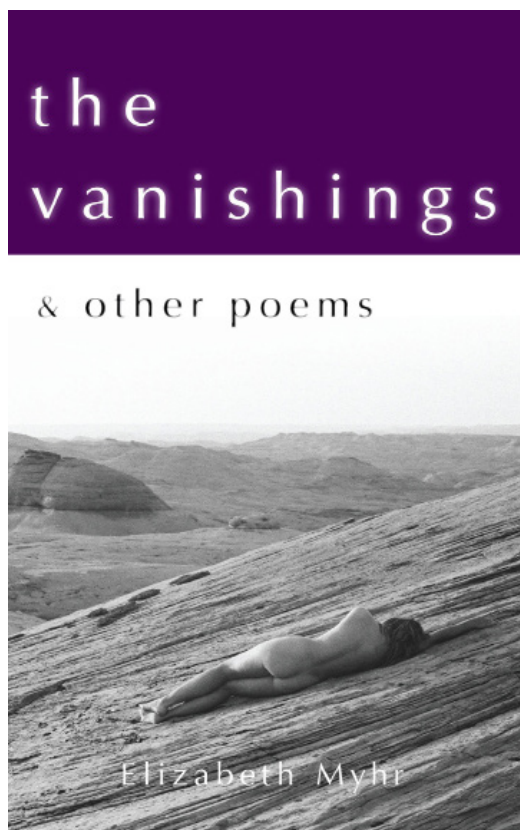
## the vanishings & other poems

by Elizabeth Myhr

Poetry / 60 pages / 2011  
ISBN-13: 978-0983099932

The themes of this collection are time and light, and Myhr explores the limits of language to express emotion and experience. Calypso Editions is a collectively run press of sophisticated poetry and fiction, and Myhr's work is no exception. In fact, it sets the standard."

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"I marvel at the beauty, fragility and longing of these poems with their lost masterpieces, the house one can't find or can't get into, the orphans, the telephone that rings and rings. Not that the poems regret a lost love or any particular past. They knock at some door of mystery, which, because we exist in bodies, we simply can't open. the vanishings is deeply thought provoking, untranslatable and brilliant."

—Jeanne Murray Walker

**Elizabeth Myhr** is a poet, editor and freelance product development manager. She holds an MFA in poetry from Seattle Pacific University and lives in Seattle with her family.

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W H I L E

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*poems by*

*Erika Lutzner*



## Old News

I was sleeping, it was almost nine. Your mother called and said, Turn on the news. I knew. You'd been at the job for a week. I didn't know where you worked, what floor, which building. But I knew. I saw the plane hit the tower, the building begin to go down. I knew. People kept calling to ask if you were alright. I hung up on them or said you were dead. My sister came over to try to comfort me as if that would change things. I could smell you among the others rotting along the river. It was a particularly warm September. The smoke didn't leave for weeks. The news covered your death over and over as though something new would be discovered. I sat glued to the television for a month waiting for a recovery that never came.

I speak against *your* God  
My heart, an empty capillary—

Ophelia lost her way; her mind  
Not far behind

Divinity is not an absolute

Humans become horses

Horses become trees

Whether you accept it or not—

Tongue buried,  
Your mouth becomes death

I remember the shape of your eyes—  
Ancient, in the image of books

The Note In The Mail Says: *Are you still affected by 9/11?*

*But don't call the Red Cross—*

*The New York City Dept of*

*Health and Substance Services*

*is at your service*





LULLABY

FOR A

HANGED

MAN

HUBERT KLIMKO-DOBZANIECKI

Translated from the Polish by Julia and Peter Sherwood

# 1

HERE, AT THE END of the physical world that is visible from a boat or a car, the world that forms part of history that is narrated but not yet fully recorded, is where I sit. It is August. An August like any other. Seemingly similar to last year's, even the ocean smells the same. The same ebb and flow of the tide, the same waves and seagulls, the same wind and rusted container ships on the horizon, the same black volcanic sand beach, the same notice indicating the hours when the stony mound covered by a strip of grass merges with the larger whole. Everything appears to be the same as before, as if nothing was missing. Nature follows its perennial rhythm. Sunrise and sunset. Day and night. I breathe, I live, I exist, I love, I see. And yet one thing is missing from this August image: it's the figure of a man in blue shorts. I miss the man in the checkered shirt, rolled up and tied in a casual knot above the navel. I miss the man carrying three bronze hands mounted on long metal rods, as he glides through the gray water toward the coast. The ocean expands, swelling and filling the crescent between the end of the peninsula and the edges of the tidal island. Now I can see clearly that it's all just an illusion, something is always missing. The puzzle no longer seems complete. Someone unique is gone. Sentences, words, images, music jotted on a staff, his way of smoking a cigarette, his chipped beer mug. What was special about him lives on, morphing into memories handed down from one generation to the next, distorted, magnified or diminished. Oral transmission, my personal dilemma with the Bible . . . I've decided not to wait for twenty years. Perhaps I've had to lay my own issues with

God aside for a while but now I can no longer resist the urge to record the story of a particular friendship, a small snippet of life. Szymon is gone. He isn't in town any more. I'll never run into him in the street again. That's what I miss more than anything else . . .

## §

A line lingers in the clouds until it dissolves or is intersected by the trace of another plane. A few words exchanged on a bus headed downtown, during a train journey. But no, we didn't meet on a bus, nor on a train or a plane. Our meeting wasn't accompanied by the sound of a purring engine, the rumble of tires, there was no swaying or turbulence. The name of the guy who introduced us was Boro and he was a "liberated" madman, who went on living on the ward. He would still go off the wall from time to time. Mostly in the summer, when everything was green. He had a whole assortment of pills for greenness. The doctors had concluded that he was fine and no longer needed to be locked up. As long as he took his medication. I once drove him somewhere and thought he would sprout leaves in my car, turning green any minute. He started to sweat and reached for his pills shouting, it's happening, it's happening! He screamed that he was turning into a field of moss, then into a big lawn. I wonder if it was the presence of madmen that helped me preserve my sanity . . . Maybe the fact that I'd been driving around a lawn, a field of moss, a huge cucumber or a watermelon, is what stopped me from turning into Napoleon or St Theresa.

Boro was allowed to stay at the nuthouse but the doctors were putting pressure on him to move out. They stopped feeding him. I used to pick him up and drive him to Ikea where they had the cheapest hot dogs in town. We would stuff our faces, washing down the hot dogs with a soda. One day Boro said there was a Polish guy on the ward, a violinist. He added a few "fucks" because he loved swearing in English, he said that to feel alive he needed to spit out a few profanities, and he did so with a vengeance.

In the local psychiatric jargon, Szymon was classified as a “rabbit in a hat.” A rabbit is a patient who turns up for a while and then disappears, only to turn up again, then disappear after a while, and so on and so forth. The doctors patch him up a bit, and off he goes back into life. Depression strikes and he’s back on the ward. In and out of the ward, in and out of life. In short, a rabbit . . . I asked Boro to speak with an orderly and ask him to have a word with Szymon and the doctor, to see if I could take him out for a hot dog at Ikea. And then one day, in the shade of the towering frame of Boro, the toothless human oak, I saw a frail figure wearing wire-rimmed glasses. Car headlights struck the silvery frames and, in a second, transformed Boro into the quintessential thunderstruck Slavic oak, one the locals might gather around to indulge in their ritual dances. The figure in silvery glasses walked around him, tilting his head back unnaturally and staring at this small bit of Croatia, part of a mythical forest, a tree, an oak and a lunatic. All of a sudden the psychiatrist turned off the engine and the headlights went out. The doctor climbed out of the car and asked: So you’re off to Ikea, right? Yeah, just to Ikea, for hot dogs. The two men walked up to me, nodding in unison.

§

The man, who resembled doctor Korczak, Maximilian Kolbe and Ghandi all rolled into one, hiding behind glasses that in fine weather could have set fire to a cornfield or a large barn, introduced himself. My name is Szymon Kuran. Pleased to meet you, I replied. No, the pleasure is entirely mine, you only imagine that you’re pleased. Maybe he was right, and maybe he was indeed the one who was genuinely pleased while I only imagined that I was, a feeling instilled in me by my upbringing. That’s what generally passes for good manners, I guess. Szymon was eating his hot dog and just as I was about to ask him something, Boro cut in. So, what about those stones, he lisped. It’s quite simple, I said. You just do the same as chicken or ostriches, they have no teeth either, and to get their digestion

to work properly they swallow little stones that grind their food like teeth. Hearing my brief lecture on gastroenterology and nonplussed by the mental shortcut that seemingly brought up a new topic at random, with no introduction, Szymon put the hot dog wrapper down and began to chuckle, although Boro and I had only resumed an unfinished conversation from a month back, on the relative merits of new dentures versus a small bag of stones. Szymon's response made Boro wrap things up in his customary way. Succinctly and in English. Fuck you, he said and finished his hot dog, ostentatiously stuffing a last huge piece into his mouth. After swallowing it with difficulty and washing it down with tap water he'd brought from the bathroom in a Coke cup, he repeated, fuck you.

I drove them back to the nuthouse. Szymon shook my hand and said, when I fly out of this coop, we must meet, the three of us, I live downtown, right by the British Embassy, it will be a pleasure. No, it will be my pleasure and maybe you'll just imagine that it's yours. He laughed and it was as if we both felt that good manners and all the cultural overlay of memorized clichés was just a kind of general neurosis, whereas genuine kindness, which bears no relation to hackneyed words, is buried somewhere in the subconscious. Only Boro remained his natural self, untouched by convention or good manners, although he was an educated man, a painter, graduate of the Zagreb Academy of Fine Arts, and as Szymon opened the door to his lodgings, Boro shook his hand and said, fuck you too. We went our separate ways. I returned to my empty room, Szymon to the ward and Boro went to the bay to summon Plamen, his tame killer whale, for whom he used to play the harmonica and whose existence was supposedly a secret only I knew about.



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—Pinckney Benedict

# AFTERMATH LOUNGE

*a Novel in Stories*



**MARGARET MCMULLAN**

Author of *In My Mother's House*

## HURRICANE SEASON

---

Baby Charlie was already there in the kitchen squalling when a woman from some office in Hancock County called to say they had Donna's will and it looked like it had been Donna's wish for Norma to become legal guardian. As Charlie arched his back and howled on a blanket on the floor, Norma shouted into the phone, "Are you sure?" and opened up another beer.

Norma went drunk to the funeral with her husband, Sam, and baby Charlie. In her blur, she held out hope that she would meet up with some of Donna's people. They would know what to do with the child. But the only other people there were the priest and the few people Donna had gone out drinking with that night, the night of the wreck. At the grave site, they all stood without moving as they watched a man in a truck lower a cable that held the pine box in which Donna lay. Norma could feel the wet grass through her shoes as she watched. The casket bumped the side of the hole as it was lowered, and for one long instant, it hung on the lip. Clumps of soggy red dirt rolled down the side into the hole. Some people left, but Norma stayed. She had heard that sometimes a crooked undertaker would dump a body out of the casket then resell the casket. Her white heels sank deep into the ground, and she stayed until the man with the backhoe had shoved the last pile of red clay on Donna.

Afterwards, they ended up at somebody's place near a fish store, and as they all kicked around the oyster shells in the driveway, they talked about how someone must have screwed up the brakes on Donna's car when she had them fixed the week before. Surely someone was to blame for this *devastation*.

The petunias all around the driveway were sticky and spent and whatever was left of anything was ghost grey. Sam sat on the porch swing smoking, watching Norma, and



rocking Charlie who was wearing the same Cheeto-colored t-shirt he'd been wearing the night his mother died. Every now and then Charlie knocked against the cast on Sam's leg. Neither one of them seemed to mind. Sam had broken his leg putting the roof on a new video store two weeks before. Donna had left Charlie with Norma that last night she went out, had even kissed Norma goodbye, her lips moist from beer, and said, "Wish me luck" because she wanted to meet a man. As Norma drank and listened to the talk in the driveway, she settled back into what she already knew: She didn't want Donna dead and she didn't want Donna's six-month-old baby boy, Charlie.

That night, in the bedroom Norma sipped bourbon straight and tried singing her own version of "It's a small world, after all," but she didn't know all the words, so she fixed on "Amazing Grace," a song she recalled her mother singing to her. Still, Charlie cried. Norma imagined he cried because he didn't have any words. She watched in amazement as he wailed, his lips growing plump, his dark little head turning red and hot, until at last he arched his back and thrust his face skyward in a final spasm of anger and sorrow.

"Holy hell," Sam said, looking in on them. He limped away, then closed the door to their bedroom, saying he'd sleep on the sofa.

"I know, I know sugar," Norma said to Charlie. "Maybe you and me can make a nice eggnog later on."

She knew Charlie would have no memory of his mother but she also knew his body remembered in ways that his mind could not. She did not know how she knew this, she just did. Neither Sam nor Norma had ever had any children. It simply had not happened, and by the time they had reached their mid-forties and their second marriages, it was too late. Norma put her little finger in her glass of bourbon and touched Charlie's lips. The baby stopped crying at first only because he tasted something new, then he cried more because of the newness. Norma tried another finger of

bourbon, and finally Charlie quieted down. Rocking him in her arms, Norma cried and drank, hating death and hating Sam for being the only thing she had left.

It rained all day the day after Donna's funeral. It was almost October and hurricane season wasn't over yet on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. For years, people in Gulfport were predicting a bigger one—bigger than Andrew, bigger even than Camille. There had been quite a few tropical depressions, a sure sign of bigger things to come. By the time Norma finished setting up the crib, she started a second six pack, and the rain came down in sheets.

"Maybe it's a blessing," she said, putting down the beer to rock Charlie with both hands. They had already gotten Charlie's things from Donna's place and the bags of clothes, diapers, and formula were all around them.

"Some way to get blessed," Sam said, scratching the skin around the top of his cast.

That night Charlie finally fell asleep, leaving Norma awake and alone, staring at her husband's back as he typed at his computer in the next room. Sam hadn't worked since he'd fallen off that roof. He had talked about getting a job at the new casino when his leg healed, but then he went and bought a computer at a yard sale and spent \$450 to take an on-line computer class. At least they were both off the cocaine.

Norma went over and nuzzled up to Sam. She wanted to lose the feeling of being tired, to forget about Donna and death. She concentrated on Sam's shoulders and attempted to get back the feeling of being in love. She thought about that warm, rainy night, inside Sam's first car—the blue one. They had fogged up all the windows then, leaned back in their seats, and with his big toe, Sam drew a heart on the windshield, writing *I Love U* on the inside. Norma thought about this, trying to recall that feeling she had had then when she read the inside of Sam's heart.

"You're hanging on me, babe," Sam said, reading something on his screen then copying it down on his cast.

The cast went all the way down to his toes, but Sam's notes only reached as far as his knee.

"I can keep on cleaning houses. I'll just bring Charlie with me the way Donna did. You find out anything more about that casino job?"

"Leave me be," Sam said. "Can't you see I'm in class?"

"We have another mouth to feed, you know."

Sam swirled around in his chair. There were dark rings under his eyes and he hadn't shaved. "Don't you think I know that? Would you leave me alone for one minute? I'm trying to do something here."

"OK, OK," Norma said, backing up.

Sam turned back to his computer. Norma stood in the doorway, staring at her husband's shoulders rounded like a woman's. The room he called his office smelled of coffee and unwashed bodies.

Norma got another beer. Ever since Sam had hooked himself up to the worldwide web, he didn't look at TV and he didn't look at her. Norma wondered what they said to each other in their on-line chat rooms—her husband and these other people—women, most likely. She'd read about such things in the newspapers, heard about their stories on TV talk shows. Even Donna had warned her, and everyone knew that Donna had some Choctaw witch in her.

If she e-mailed someone about her life now, Norma thought about the mountain of dirty dishes and laundry that would fill her on-screen letters. Then there were the groceries and the water, electric and phone bills. And now there were the diapers and ointment and bottles of formula. There was and there was and there was, and these all filled whole days, weeks, and months that would make up the years and Norma wondered who would be interested in all this junk that made up her life. Changing into her nightgown, Norma wondered, momentarily, if she should start going back to church. Then she considered leaving Sam.

She lay in bed with the windows open, and even though she didn't mean to, Norma caught herself thinking back

to the times she'd spent with her first husband, Catch. His fingertips smelled of shrimp shells and she had liked the tobacco taste of his mouth. But after she left, she had to put a restraining order on him, then he landed up in jail anyway for a handful of DUIs. He was a freckled, brown-haired man who did drink too much and who did hit her once or twice—it was true—but he was always trying to make Norma laugh.

Hot and tired, Norma got up out of bed. She had a taste in her mouth now for bourbon and Coke.

All along the waterfront people were closing up their houses, hammering fitted plywood over windows, and locking their shutters. Miss Betty was yammering on about how she just loved the tail end of hurricane season and how it seemed to her such a lovely, dishonest time. Miss Betty had had a party the night before and the house smelled of fish, perfume, and alcohol. There were crumbled napkins and dirty glasses still in the living room and Miss Betty told Norma to recycle any empty bottles from the liquor cabinet. The bottles were standing on a marble side table under a picture of Miss Betty's great-grandfather. Miss Betty had the good stuff and there was a lot still left. As Norma passed, following Miss Betty to the back bathrooms, the floor rumbled and the bottles shook and clinked against each other.

Sometimes Norma walked into a house with just a little mess and she'd wonder why the woman couldn't clean up herself, why she had to hire someone to do her cleaning. Donna had explained it once and Norma figured she understood as well as anyone: There were times when a person needed somebody's help to get back to ground zero just so they could get on with their lives. Some did their own dishes, stripped their own beds, bothered about their own laundry, but it always took people like Norma and Donna to know that behind every microwave lay cobwebs, under every refrigerator was dirt.

Most people along the Mississippi coast weren't entirely comfortable with white maids. They figured something was wrong with a white woman who would be a maid, but Norma could tell that Miss Betty had gotten used to her and to Donna, maybe because they did not look at all like Miss Betty. Norma and Donna could have been mistaken for sisters. They both had heavy, hanging breasts, narrow hips and dark hair. Norma often told Miss Betty that she and Donna were like Lavern and Shirley from that old TV show—always laughing and getting into trouble, spending more time with each other than with anybody else.

Cleaning other people's houses was better than working third shift at the shirt factory, a dismal place with no windows and no air-conditioning. The outside of the building was painted with pretty, false windows and planters, and wisteria bloomed eternally over fake open doorways. The other girls who worked there were all younger than Norma, and they reminded her of all the mistakes she had made. On breaks and at lunchtime, she sat outside in the shade, smoking and watching them eating their hamburgers, going on and on about plans that would never materialize, houses that would never be bought, men who never were what they pretended to be. These girls still laughed and their laughter still sounded like giggling, and even if they smoked, the sound of their giggles came out clear and sing-songy. Norma had met Donna at the factory. They were about the same age and they were put to work side by side—Donna doing buttons, Norma zippers.

Norma put baby Charlie down in his car seat, and then she set to work on Miss Betty's bathroom. Norma was tired, but she was used to waking up feeling heavy and hung-over, working and waiting for the end of her shift, waiting for another drink to give her a few hours worth of light-headedness. She thought everyone worked through their days this way. She could not remember spending the waking hours of her life any other way and she felt she had finally

become what she was meant to become—a tired old woman. At least she knew who she was and what she was.

Miss Betty had already packed her bags. She was dressed up, ready to go out, trying to hook a gold bracelet around her wrist. All summer Miss Betty had felt smug, telling everybody how good her bone density was ever since she had been shopping at that expensive health food store at the corner downtown.

“I was sorry to hear about Donna,” Miss Betty said, looking up from her bracelet. “How’s Charlie?” Without touching him, Miss Betty bent over to examine Charlie in his car seat on the bedroom floor. She neither smiled nor frowned. Miss Betty did not say so now, but she was of the belief that the reason there was so much e-coli in the world was because there were too many people with too many pets and too many babies and there was just too much “dookie.” She had used that word—*dookie*—when she told this theory once to Norma and Donna. That was before there was Charlie. Later, over a pitcher of beer, Norma and Donna had laughed long and loud, repeating the way Miss Betty had said *dookie*.

“Charlie’s doing real good,” Norma said, on her knees, scrubbing out the tub. She went on to tell Miss Betty what a wonderful woman and good friend Donna had been, how such a thing ought never to have happened, how she hated to think of Donna all alone out there on the highway in the middle of the night, it raining and all, and Miss Betty interrupted and said, “I know, I know. Why on earth didn’t she just take a cab? Drinking so much then driving. All those times she used to call in saying she was too depressed or too tired to work. What was it last? Oh yes. She said you were both laid up with sick-headaches.” Miss Betty shook her head and Norma thought she saw her smile. “Now we know, don’t we? We know all right. She was just hung over. It could make a person livid.”



*"Urbane, paradoxical, perverse—in Morasses, André Gide pioneered the post-modern novel a century before anyone else. Koelb's translation makes this difficult, amusing example of the 'literature of exhaustion' delightfully available to the reader of English."*

**—Edmund White**, author of *Inside a Pearl: My Years in Paris*



# MORASSES

André  
GIDE

*Translated from the French by Tadzio Koelb*



## HUBERT

*Tuesday.*

The weather cooled at around five o'clock; I closed my windows and went back to writing. At six o'clock I had a visit from my great friend Hubert; he was on his way home from the stables.

He said, "Oh! are you working?"

I answered: "I'm writing *Morasses*."

"What's that?"

"A book."

"Will I like it?"

"No."

"Too clever? . . ."

"Boring."

"Then why write it?"

"If I don't, who will?"

"More confessions?"

"Hardly."

"What then?"

"Sit down."

When he was seated:

"I read two lines from Virgil: *Et tibi magna satis quamvis lapis omnia nudus / Limosoque palus obducit pascua junco*. I will translate: one farmer is speaking to another. He says that his field is admittedly full of stones and marshes, but that it's good enough for him; and that is he very happy to make do. When you can't hope for a new field, there's no wiser approach, wouldn't you agree?" Hubert didn't say anything. I went on: "*Morasses* is specifically the story of someone who can't change places—in Virgil he's called Tityre—*Morasses* is the story of a man who, stuck with Tityre's field, doesn't look to change things, but rather to be contented; here, I'll explain: the first day, he notes that he is just getting by, and wonders what to do about it. The second day, in

the morning, as a sailboat passes, he kills four scoters, or wood ducks, and towards the evening he eats two of them which he cooks on a measly little scrub-wood fire. The third day, he kills time building a hut from tall reeds. The forth day, he eats the last two scoters. The fifth day, he dismantles the hut and plans a better house. The sixth day . . .”

“Enough!” said Hubert. “I get the idea; dear friend, I’ll let you write.” He left.

Night was falling. I put away my papers. I wasn’t dining; I went out; towards 8 o’clock I went to Angèle’s. Angèle was in the dining room, finishing some fruit; I sat next to her and started to peel her an orange. Jam was served. Once we were alone again, Angèle, spreading jam for me, said, “What have you been up to today?”

I couldn’t remember doing anything and thoughtlessly I told her: “Nothing,” and then immediately, fearing I would be criticized, I recalled my visitor and cried, “My good friend Hubert came to see me at six o’clock.”

“He’s just left,” replied Angèle; then, deciding to renew old quarrels, she said, “At least he does something; he keeps busy.”

I had told her I had done nothing; I felt irritated. “What? What does he do?” I asked . . . She got started.

“Plenty of things . . . first, he goes riding . . . and you know quite well: he’s a member of four industrial companies; he and his brother-in-law run another company, providing insurance against hail: I just took a policy. He is taking biology classes and gives public readings every Tuesday evening. He knows enough about medicine to be useful in an emergency. Hubert does a lot of good: five indigent families owe him their living; he helps unemployed workers find understaffed employers. He sends sickly children to the country, where he has homes. He founded a chair-caning workshop to give work to young blind people. And on Sundays, he goes hunting. And you! What do you do?”

“I!” I answered, feeling a bit embarrassed. “I’m writing *Morasses*.”

“*Morasses*? What is that?” She asked.

We had finished eating, and I waited until we were in the drawing room to answer.

When we were both seated in the corner near the fire, I said: "*Morasses* is the story of a bachelor in a tower surrounded by marshes."

"Ah!" she said.

"He's called Tityre."

"An awful name."

"Perhaps," I replied, "but it's in Virgil. And in any case I can't invent things."

"Why a bachelor?"

"Oh! . . . to keep matters simple."

"Is that all?"

"No; I explain what he does."

"And what does he do?"

"He looks out at the marshes."

"Why are you writing?" she asked after a brief silence.

"Me? I don't know, probably so I have something to do."

"You'll read it to me," said Angèle.

"Whenever you like. I happen to have four or five pages in my pocket," and taking them out, I read with all desirable monotony:

#### TITYRE'S JOURNAL OR MORASSES

*From my window I perceive, when I lift my head a little, a garden I had not carefully observed before; to the right, a wood shedding its leaves; beyond the garden, a fen; to the left a pond of which I will speak again.*

*The garden had formerly been planted with hollyhock and columbine, but my carelessness had let the plants grow wild; because of the neighboring pond, rushes and moss had invaded everything; the trails vanished beneath the grass; there was nowhere left to walk except the wide lane which led from my room to the fen, and which I took one day when I went strolling. In the evening, animals cross from the woods to drink from the pond; because of the gloaming, I can distinguish no more than gray shapes, and, as night then falls, I never see them returning.*

"I would be frightened," said Angèle; "but go on, it's very well written."

I was very tense from the effort of reading.

"Oh! that's about all, I told her; the rest is unfinished."

"Notes," she cried. "Oh read them! it's such fun; one can see what the author means far better than he'll write it later."

So I continued, disappointed in advance and, so be it, trying to give these phrases an unfinished air:

*"From the windows of his tower, Tityre can drop a fishing line . . .*

*"Really, these are nothing more than notes . . ."*

"Go on!"

*"Bleak prospect of fish; insufficient bait, multiplication of lines (symbol); it's vital he catch nothing"*

"Why is that?"

"For the truth of the symbol."

"But what if he caught something?"

"Then it would be a different symbol and a different truth."

"There's no truth at all since you're arranging things the way you want them."

"I'm arranging things so that they conform to truth more than to reality; it's too complicated to explain it to you now, but it's important to feel that events match characters; that's what makes good novels; nothing that happens to one could happen to another. Hubert would already have made a miraculous haul! Tityre doesn't catch anything: it's a psychological truth."

"Well fine: go on."

*"Extension beneath the water of the mossy banks. Indecisive reflections; algae; fish pass. Avoid, when speaking of them, calling them 'opaque stupors.'"*

"I should hope so. Why such a note?"

"Because that's what my friend Hermogène calls carp."

"I don't find it a felicitous expression."

"That's too bad. Shall I go on?"

"Please do; your notes are very amusing."

*"Tityre, at dawn, sees white cones appear on the fen: salt works. He goes down to see them work. Non-existent landscape; narrow slope*

*between two salt marshes. Overwhelming whiteness of the hoppers (symbol); smoked-glass goggles to protect the workers from eye disease.*

*"Tityre puts a handful of salt in his pocket, then goes home. —That's all."*

"That's all?"

"All that I've written."

"I worry your story might be a bit boring," said Angèle.

There was a gaping silence, after which I cried out, deeply moved: "Angèle, Angèle, when will you understand, I beg you, what makes the subject of a book? The emotion that gives me life, that is what I want to express: boredom, vanity, monotony, it's all the same to me since I am writing *Morasses*, but that of Tityre is nothing; our outlooks, I assure you, Angèle, are far more dreary and mediocre."

"Well, I don't think so," said Angèle.

"It's because you're not trying. That is exactly the subject of my book; Tityre isn't unhappy with his life; he takes pleasure in contemplating the swamps; they vary with the weather; but look at yourself! How long have you occupied this room? Low rent, low rent! and you aren't the only one! windows on the street, on the courtyard; we stare at walls or at other people who themselves are staring at us . . . But am I now going to make you ashamed of your clothes? and do you really believe that we have known how to love?"

"It's nine o'clock," she said. "Hubert is giving his reading this evening, please don't detain me."

"What is he reading?" I asked despite myself.

"You can be sure it isn't *Morasses*!" She left.

Back at home, I tried to set the opening scene of *Morasses* in verse. I wrote the first quatrain:

*From my window I perceive  
When I lift my head a little  
The border of a little woods  
That has known no celebration*

Then I went to bed, having completed my day.



# STOMACH OF THE SOUL



SYLVA FISCHEROVÁ

*Translated by the author  
with Stuart Frieibert  
and A. J. Hauner*

## OSUD

Osud: ale ne jako v řecké tragédii,  
kde ho neseš v sobě  
kde ti kouká z očí.

Osud jako déšť: větev spadlá  
přímo před tebe  
ukazující ke hřbitovu;  
rána kladivem, setkání dvou raket,  
otlepená pitomost náhody  
výhry těla nad duchem  
výhry hráče nad vrhem kostek.

## FATE

Fate: but not as in Greek tragedy  
where you carry it inside  
where it's written in your eyes.  
Fate like rain: a branch fallen  
right in front of you,  
pointing to the graveyard;  
a blow of a hammer, a rendezvous of two rockets,  
a bloated stupidity of chance,  
of victory of body over spirit,  
victory of a player over the throw of dice.

## UŽ DLOUHO ŽIJU S MRTVÝMI

Už dlouho žiju s mrtvými. Znáám jejich zvlněné  
neukončené

pohyby a matné úsměvy  
zanechané v jasném vzduchu smrti  
jak dračí vejce a obří kameny,

*To všechno pro tebe,  
pro tebe ode mě, mé dítě.*

Dokončuju jejich pohyby,  
usekávám zemřelé ruce  
a ptám se, *Zklamu tě příliš?*

Otče, muž odkryl Majin závoj a nikdy nepromluvil.

Jako mrtvý – byl mrtvý?

Ale mrtví křičí, slyším je za noci,  
kdy musím proplout

všemi jezery tvé a mé krve,  
přes dno paměti,

kde tvář je krajina do které uléháme  
na smrt unavení  
a někdo houpe kolíbkou vzduchu  
a zpívá

*To všechno pro tebe  
pro tebe ode mě, mé dítě  
jak stálý dluh  
a jako věčný dar  
a vždycky je to málo  
a vždy to bude příliš*

## I'VE LIVED LONG WITH THE DEAD

I've lived long with the dead. I know their  
wavy unfinished  
gestures and opaque smiles  
abandoned in the crisp air of death  
like dragon eggs and giant stones:

*All this for you,  
for you from me, my child.*

I finish their gestures,  
chop off their dead hands,  
asking, *Will I disappoint you too much?*

Father! The man unveiled Maja's veil and never spoke  
again.

As if dead – was he dead?  
But the dead scream, I can hear them in the night,  
when I have to sail through  
all the lakes of your and my blood,  
over the bottom of memory  
where face is landscape in which we lie down  
exhausted to death,  
and someone's rocking the cradle of air,  
singing:

*All this for you  
for you, from me, my child  
like everpresent debt  
like an everlasting gift –  
it's always too little  
and it will always be too much*

## OLOMOUČ

Domy jsou tu naskládáné na sebe  
jak dýhy v nábytku,  
jako epochy.

Snaživost lidská  
přestavuje domky jak kostičky,  
přemalovává okna s muškátem.  
Ani chrámy tu nejsou o jiném –  
desetkrát je přestavěli, ale nepřestavěli sebe,  
chtěli zanechat zprávu, nebo  
vydat svědectví?

Chtěli se vepsat doprostřed nebe,  
jako když vyryješ srdce do stromu,  
jméno a čas –

Chtěli vytesat kamenný čas,  
kamenný kvádr z Hospodina  
a vztyčit sen, jaký se jim nikdy nezdál,  
sen, o jakém jen snili –

Přesazovali Boha jako květinu,  
zalívali Boha jako muškát,  
chtěli zanechat zprávu  
o snu, jaký se jim nikdy nezdál,  
o jakém snili,  
jaký se ani snem  
nedá vypovědět.



## A LITTLE TOWN IN MORAVIA

The houses are stacked  
like veneer  
like epochs.

Human diligence  
rearranges those little cubes,  
repaints windows with pelargoniums.  
Not even churches speak differently:  
they rebuilt them ten times, but didn't  
rebuild themselves,  
did they want to leave a message, or  
just witness?

They wanted to write themselves down  
in the middle of the heavens,  
like carving a heart on a tree,  
the name, the time –  
they wanted to chisel a stone time,  
a stone block from the Lord  
and raise a dream they never dreamt,  
a dream they had only dreamt about –  
replanted God like a flower,  
watered Him like a pelargonium,  
wanted to leave a message  
of a dream they never dreamt,  
which they only dreamt about,  
which not even in a dream  
you can tell.

## PLÁŽ V BLOOMSDALE, HOLANDSKO

Tohle se nedá přežít.  
Na tohle se umírá.  
K čemu zdvořilost, vlídný  
sarkasmus oslovení –  
Měj se dobře,  
řekne a nasadí úsměv  
jak masku piráta.  
Toho bych vyzvala na souboj  
a střelila bambitkou  
a královně k nohám  
přinesla poklady jižních moří.  
V tomhle chladném světadílu,  
který vynalezl filosofii i stroje,  
se všechno otáčí,  
polokoule,  
rovnoběžky dne,  
citu, pocitu,  
rovník je Mléčná dráha, tam nahoře,  
a oceán mě vymaže  
v tomhle větru,  
plujou po něm bachratý holandský lodě  
a vezou koření a zlato a Rembrandt  
skupuje starožitnosti, nejede  
do Itálie, nepotřebuje italský světlo,  
já taky ne, moře mě slízne jako med a nechá ze mě  
smaženku, placku, jikru,  
něco do kaviáru  
který sní panstvo na hostině  
ale třeba se to zatřepetá  
a začne růst znova  
na tomhle moři, v tomhle větru.

## A BEACH IN BLOOMSDALE, HOLLAND

It's a plague that brings death.  
Politeness, the decent  
sarcasm of an apostrophe –  
what is it good for?  
*Have a nice time*, he says,  
putting on a smile  
like the mask of a pirate.  
Whom I'd challenge,  
shoot with a blunderbuss,  
and then I'd bring all the treasures  
of the south seas  
to the queen.  
On this old continent,  
which invented philosophy and machines,  
everything's rotating round and round,  
a half-sphere,  
parallels of a day,  
of feelings and their cabaret,  
equator is a Milky Way –  
the ocean will wipe me out  
in this wind, beamy Dutch ships  
are crossing it, carrying  
spices and gold, while Rembrandt  
buys up antiques, doesn't go  
to Italy, doesn't need Italian light;  
neither do I, the sea licks me off  
like honey, leaves just  
a croquette of me –  
Flatbread, fish egg,  
something for caviar,  
which the lords gobble up at the banquet –  
but perhaps it will start to flutter  
on this sea, in this wind.

## POLOSMRT

Nemusí to být smrt.  
Může to být jen polosmrt,  
a desetkrát za život.

To jsou ty dopisy ve Strážní věži, plátku jehovistů:  
*"Děkuji vám z celého srdce za vaše články  
o samotě, neb jsem si myslel, že takto trápen  
jsem jen já sám, že totiž nenávidím sporák a nůžky  
nad sporákem, že nevím co s oknem..."*

*"Moc jste mi pomohli, myslela jsem si, že už jsem  
na světě sama, ale jak vidím, je nás mnoho,  
i ten váš tropický krokodýl, co jste ho tam přetiskli  
nad obrázkem záby, mi pomohl, řekla jsem si:  
jak je mu asi v tom vedru? A pak jsem se konečně  
objednala k doktorovi, aby mi udělal brýle."*

Je to jen polosmrt a jako každý vyléčený  
zapomněla bych na ni, nebýt dokladu –  
slov, co vypadly ze skříně:  
rádoby básně, hlušina času, nedomrvené  
nic –

O to bych měla být mladší: o ten čas, co nebyl, jenom  
provanul, jenomže ve faktu  
je to naopak  
a já už jsem za koncem, přiblblé lidstvo jako armáda  
juvenilních důchodců –

## HALF-DEATH

Not necessarily death.  
It can just be a half-death,  
and ten times life.

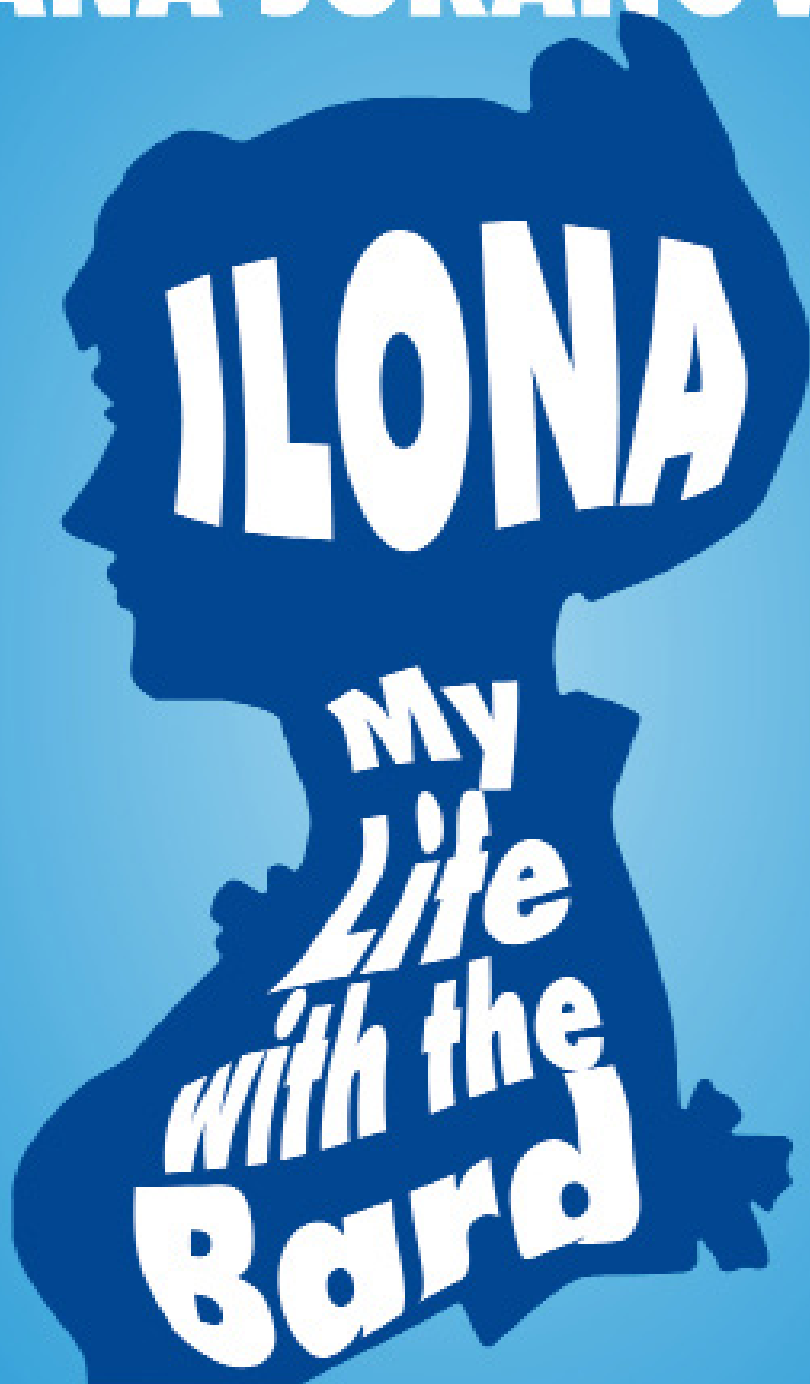
It's those letters in the Watchtower, Jehovahist pulp:

*"I thank you with all my heart for your articles about  
loneliness, I thought I was the only one hagridden in this  
way,  
namely that I hate my stove and scissors above  
the stove, that I don't know what to do with windows..."*

*"You helped me so much, I thought I was all alone  
in this world, but now I can see we are many;  
even the tropical crocodile you printed under  
the frog's photo was very helpful, indeed,  
I said to myself: How does he feel in that heat? And then,  
I made an appointment with the doctor to finally  
have some glasses made."*

It's only a half-death, and – like everyone who's cured –  
I'd forget it if there weren't a record,  
words fallen from the cabinet:  
would-be poems, debris of a time, a half-baked  
nothing –  
I ought to be younger by this amount,  
by the amount of time which wasn't, just flew by  
but in fact  
it's quite the reverse  
and I'm done, mankind gone gaga like an army  
of juvenile retirees –

**JANA JURÁŇOVÁ**



*Translated from the Slovak by Julia and Peter Sherwood*

## THE LETTER

Ilona is standing by the window. Autumn has come, the woods run wild with color. Red, yellow, orange with the odd splash of green is streaming down the hills. Everything is full of color, only Ilona's hair, once dark brown, is now gray. She is holding a little green tin can and watering the flowers. She has removed a few flowerpots from the window-sill so she can throw the windows wide open and let the fresh air in. In summer geraniums hang from the windows, red and beautiful. But for now they are tucked away in the hallway, safely stored in the shade, to stop them from sprouting new shoots that would wear them out. Ilona tends to her geraniums, making sure they come back to life in the spring and burst into bloom in the summer. They will be her pride and glory again, as they have been for many years now.

The geraniums are a reminder of earlier, happier times. In those days she also had exotic flowers growing on the porch—an oleander and a palm tree. And roses in the garden. Lots of roses. She had always had lots of flowers for her husband to feast his poet's eyes on their beauty. Where have those days gone? The geraniums are all that's left. She looks after them as if they were her own children. For they are indeed living beings, they need her care and attention, her gentle, loving hand.

But right now it is the houseplants on the windowsill she is attending to. The houseplants need light and moisture too, as well as little snips taken off their leaves from time to time. She must not overwater them and neither must she forget to water them. All her life Ilona has been keenly aware of what needs to be done and when, and she still remembers what has to be done. Activity helps her pass the time, and she finds it rewarding, in its way.



She waters the plants carefully and deliberately, making sure the water does not trickle down to where it is not supposed to. It is a skill she has developed over the years and it has become quite routine. But routine, too, needs to be cultivated; it has to be kept in good shape. It is routine that helps one go on living, it helps to conquer the unconquerable. It is like your skin: even if it gets covered in sweat, tears, abrasions, blood, it always heals itself again. A protective coat, if not completely waterproof. The red thread of Ilona's life. She must not let it fray or fade.

With a practiced movement she checks the watering can and her flowerpots. She smooths down her hair. Her hair has always been unruly. If she's not on her guard, she can easily appear badly groomed, untidy even. That is why she smooths her hair down from time to time. Now that her hair is gray it is even more unruly than the dark brown hair of her youth. The tufts of gray that frame her face need smoothing down more often. It used to be amusing when she was young and her hair stuck out like that. Her husband sometimes called her "my little frizzle-mop." Her spirited, straggly hair was often tousled, framing her narrow face like so many unbridled little fans. And now—the piercing eyes, the distinctive pursed lips, the tousled gray hair, like a halo that has lost its radiance—that is Ilona now. An old frizzle-mop. But there isn't anyone around to call her that anymore.

In her young days her face would sometimes take on an insistent, almost annoyed expression. A well-meaning person kindly drew her attention to this. People say all sorts of things but they mean well, of course. So she started to watch herself. Sometimes, when she was in the middle of doing something or lost in thought, she would stop to look in the mirror. And as soon as she spotted that expression on her face, she would pull herself together. Surely nobody could find her attractive looking like this? On occasion, flashes of annoyance would still break through to the surface but that was just a little slip-up. She had conquered her facial gestures and body language making sure they no longer posed a threat. She had gotten

herself under control. The eyes are meant to be mirrors of the soul, that's what she had been told ever since she was a little girl. Ilona's gaze has long been directed inward. Her eyes have taken on a meek look, as if asking for permission. They haven't always mirrored her soul. And why should they? What for, and for whom?

She stretches out to reach the leaves of the houseplants. She is here, she is still here. All alone, without him. He has slipped away from her. Just like he had always done. To his study, for a walk, to the health resort. And, eventually, to the cemetery.

She leans out of the window as she airs the room. It is pleasantly cool outside and she lets the crisp air waft over her face. Cautiously she peers out into the street to see if anyone is around. Holding a pillow in her hands, she looks around and gives it a good shake, to let it absorb some of the fresh autumn air. Her movements are calm and nothing suggests that this day should turn out any different from many other days before. Ever since she has become a widow her days have been even more monotonous. But she has gotten used to it. Today is going to be a glorious day. Soon the surrounding woods will shed their foliage. The bright October colors will fade, and fall will push nature into austerity, stripping off everything superfluous, allowing nature to gather strength before new green exuberance arrives in the spring. She wonders if it will be of any concern to her?

Once again, Ilona pushes open the window and leans out to let the clear air refresh her brow. The dining room windows look out onto the main square. The city is still aslumber, as if afraid of scaring away an old, half-forgotten memory. The mailman is crossing the square, as he does this time every day. He is young, he hasn't been delivering mail for long. She remembers him as a little boy. But perhaps he is not one of the children who used to lurk on the hillside waiting for her husband to return from his daily afternoon walk, lost in thought. He would stop by them sometimes and give them

candy, at other times he took no notice of them. Depending on the mood he was in.

Other people's youth seems so brief compared with her own, long faded youth. How many childhoods and youths do fit into a single adult life! Some people change beyond recognition with the passing of years. She hasn't changed, only shrouded herself in the gray veil of old age. No folds of fat and jowls of drooping skin have obscured her features. Only the colors have vanished somewhere. As she looks at herself in the mirror, what flashes through her mind is that the day may yet come when she throws off these gray cobwebs. Her face has become a web of delicate wrinkles. Her distinctive pursed lips are pressed together firmly. She is no longer fresh and full of life. Which one of her many countenances is the real one? All too often she has to chase away these sneaking thoughts that are eating her up inside.

Ilona takes a closer look at the mailman. She doesn't recognize him. It has been a while since she stopped recalling the names of the local children, and she can no longer tell which one comes from which family and which one resembles whom. They have all merged into a blur of alien, unfamiliar faces. The only faces she still knows intimately are those transformed by wrinkles. She scans them for features she used to know when she was young and never ceases to wonder at the malice of old age. Whenever someone younger says hello to her, she says hello back but no longer tries to search her memory, it would be in vain. She is preparing to say hello now, for the mailman has raised his head toward the window and Ilona is about to respond with a non-committal nod before disappearing into the gloom within. The mailman pushes his hat aside by way of greeting, and says loudly, with a smile:

"Good morning. I've got a letter for you." Ilona's heart begins to pound. "Will you come down, Aunt Ilonka?" She flinches a little. Who is he to address her in this familiar way?

"Yes, yes, of course," she replies obligingly. After all, he's gone to all the trouble of bringing her a letter, but what can it possibly say? She smoothes down her hair hastily and takes

off her apron. She walks down the stairs taking care not to trip. She has to be careful. But what if the mailman is getting impatient? Who knows how many more letters he has to deliver and now she's holding him up. But she mustn't fall over either . . . Cautiously she steadies herself with her hand against the wall, only a few more steps left to go. She opens the front door. She narrows her eyes under the assault of the fierce autumn sun but it's too late, it has blinded her. She shades her brow with her hand. Yes, just like an old woman. In her young days she could look the sun in the eye, or at least shrewdly avert her gaze. Now she finds everything too confusing. And she is constantly aware of everything, everything.

"Good morning, Auntie. A glorious day, isn't it? The summer's over but it's still nice and warm in the sun. So, here's your letter. Registered delivery from Prague. Sign for me here, please. I'll hold it for you. Here you are. I hope it's good news."

He has waved good-bye and is gone.

"Thank you. Good-bye," she said, but it was too late. He might not have heard her. He was in a hurry anyway. Now he was probably wondering if she was just rude or confused, as she didn't even manage to say thank you and good-bye.

She stands in the doorway clutching the letter. There is a chill in the air so she hurries inside. She remembers every mailman since she got married. They always used to address her politely, by her surname. They would arrive, she would accept the delivery, usually for her husband, say thank you, and they would exchange a word or two. And now she has become Auntie Ilonka. The mailman knew her. Mailmen know people, there's nothing odd about that. She climbs the stairs carefully, she must watch out. Her eyesight is poor, she might trip, she uses one hand to support herself against the wall. She enters the room and sits down gingerly, letter in hand. Her name and address are on the envelope. There is an official stamp right up in the corner. Hopefully they are not about to revoke the pension she receives because of her husband? How the poor man had fretted in his old age that she might not be able to

make ends meet after he died. They had both come to terms with the fact that she would survive him. After all, it was her job to look after him till the very end and then bury him. How would he have managed without her? She will muddle along somehow until the end comes. She had looked after him all her life, and she would manage after his death. All she had done all her life, ever since she had grown up, and into old age, was look after him. She won't be around for much longer so hopefully they won't take the pension away from her. She is annoyed with her hands for trembling so badly:

*To the honorable Mrs Ilona Országh-Hviezdoslav, DolnýKubín*

That would be me, she thinks. She used to be called Helena or Elena, but he only ever called her Ilona. And after marrying him she would flaunt his name to the whole world. How proud she was! Mrs. Ilona Országh, the wife of . . . But before long he raced ahead of her to the stars and after he assumed the name Hviezdoslav, "glorifier of the stars," there would be less and less of the Hungarian-sounding Országh the attorney left in him and more and more of Hviezdoslav the Great Slovak Poet. But people showed their understanding and started addressing her as Mrs. Hviezdoslav. Now he was not the only one with a double-barreled name, she also had two names. After all, she was the Bard's wife first and foremost, rather than the attorney's. And since in the letter they chose to address her by this glorious title, perhaps the news won't be too bad.

*Dear Madam Ilona,*

*We would be greatly honored if you would kindly accept this invitation to attend the unveiling of your husband's bust, to be displayed in the National Museum's Pantheon.<sup>1</sup> The ceremony will take place in Prague on the anniversary of his birth, February 2, 1930 . . .*

*Yours respectfully . . .*

If only her husband had lived to see this, he would have been so delighted that they hadn't forgotten him and wanted to honor him in this way! How he would have wanted to be there! What a pity that people are only given busts after they've passed away. Will the bust be a good likeness? He had always taken great care of his appearance. He would gaze into the distance, a bow tie around his neck. Will his bust also sport the bow tie he wore to disguise his neck ailment? The bust won't show any ailment, of course. Will it be made of bronze or stone? What will be the expression on his face? What will it be modeled on? A photograph? His death mask? Cast in plaster after his death, his face looked so sad, so spiritless and swollen it bore little resemblance to him. But they will know how to go about it. And what about his eyes? How will they look at her out of the stone or bronze? Or will they gaze into the distance, somewhere above her head?

This might finally have convinced him, once and for all, that he was truly famous. In his lifetime he had never been sure whether he was treated with sufficient respect and whether people actually read his work. And although everyone tried to reassure him, nobody could answer this question, because, after all: how do you define what is "sufficient" and what is "actually"?

Ilona sits down at the table, opens the letter again so she can take another good look, rereads it from beginning to end, then reads it again, and then two more times. She sits still, but her thoughts are racing. She has worked so hard all her life to keep her thoughts tightly under control but right now she can't keep pace with them. Perhaps, at this very moment, they are knocking on heaven's gate to give her dear husband the joyful news.

The unveiling in Prague is not until February. They have given her plenty of notice, to allow her to make all the arrangements. She has to reply as soon as possible, she must not cause any trouble. But first she will go and see her sister-in-law. What a pity her brother didn't live to see this! How he would have loved to accompany her. How will she manage on



her own, the old woman that she has become? Since she turned seventy things have been going downhill. But how could she not go? Hopefully she can persuade a family member to come along. The thoughts keep racing. She can't keep up with them.

When he went to Prague it was usually without her. Only when he was no longer well enough and needed to be looked after did he start taking her along. How glorious those visits were! He was famous and she basked in his glory. It didn't happen all that often, he had to get quite seriously sick first. But it was wonderful anyway. The welcomes at the railway station, the flowers, the festive atmosphere. She was also with him on his last visit to the sanitarium. But in spite of the time he spent there he never recovered. He wondered if he ought not to be buried at Vyšehrad.<sup>2</sup> Ilona found the thought of a grave frightening enough but it was even more frightening to think how and when she would go and visit him so far away. Later he himself rejected the idea, never mentioning it again. He was too modest. That was when he bid his final farewell to Prague. And now she will be going there, without him, to see him but also not to see him. How strange are the ways of fate. She will get there somehow, even in the midst of winter and foul weather. He wasn't well on his last trip there. Still, how nice of them to think of her. She will definitely make the trip. She will accept, they can count on her.

Her days were filled with musings. Life went on as before, mechanically, like the regular striking of a clock. And although with her husband's death Ilona's life had lost its purpose, it hadn't lost its meaning. Ever since he had passed away in the physical sense, she had been looking after his legacy. And it was quite a legacy to look after. Now she had a new goal—to give a send off to his bust. She would accomplish this last task and then . . . Her husband's fame would go on living a life of its own, like his poetry, the articles about him, and now the bust.

That very day she walked over to the cemetery to share the news with him. What a relief it was to be able to bury him here, in Dolný Kubín, not high up in the mountains as they had originally planned. She heard that the architect

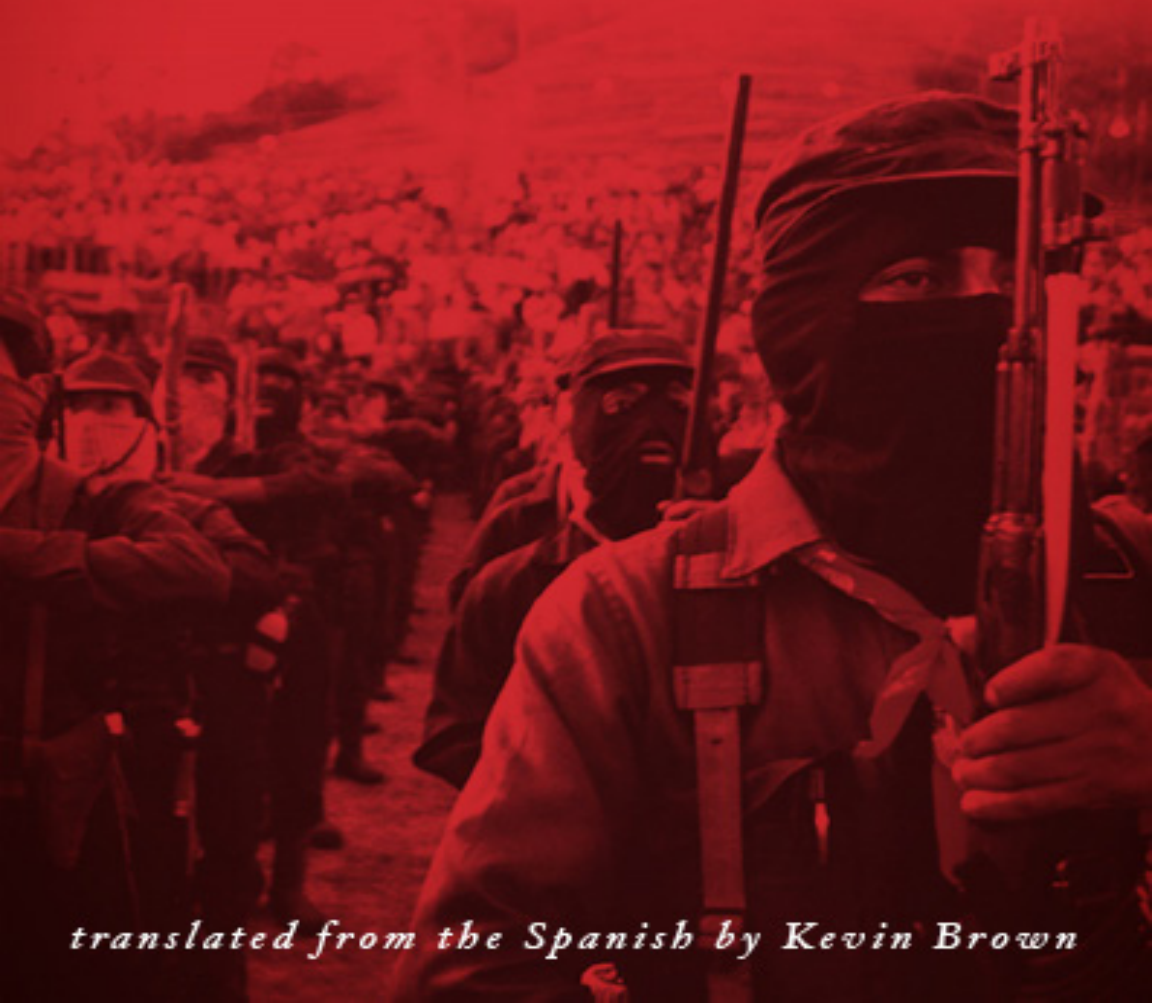


Jurkovič<sup>3</sup> had chosen a place for his burial mound soon after her husband died. It was meant to be at the end of the Bard's favorite walk. But she wouldn't have been able to visit him there. Nor would other members of the family, or only rarely. He liked solitude, that is true, but not all the time. Now, for example—how could she have given him the news? He would have felt quite abandoned there.

*Efraín Bartolomé*

# OCCOSINGO WAR DIARY

Voices from Chiapas



*translated from the Spanish by Kevin Brown*

## 6 JANUARY<sup>75</sup>

7:00 A plane.

Throughout the night those brutal impacts of previous days were heard.

Far away, in the direction of the Jataté River.

8:00 The sky's absolutely clear.

Sun above the roofs and above the highest eastern hills.

The area where the Virgin River runs, behind the church, appears sunk in white mist, as usual.

Soon, without anyone noticing, the thick mist disappears.

It's cold, but today's sun seems different.

We'll see.

8:10 On my father's initiative, we make a sign to post on the entry gate: "There's no water or telephone."

The news has reported that life in San Cristóbal returned to normal already.

"But not here, and if the press is coming to town, like yesterday, it should be known that life here's still interrupted," is my father's argument.

There're people in the street.

Carmelino's doing business.

Since there're no classes, the nieces and nephews ask me for things to do.

I put them to work sweeping the patios because today we're going to take coffee beans out to dry.

While they're doing their chores I paint the cobbler's shoe repair stand red: a cast-iron foot, welded at a point that's been firmly nailed upon a base of solid oak, hatchet-carved. Once the iron's painted, I place the piece upon an oak half-trunk, about two feet high and just as wide.

There it stands against a white pilaster of the southern corridor.

A wartime homage to Joan Miró.

08:45 Now we take the coffee out to the patios.  
There was moist coffee that was already getting moldy.  
Although there's been good sun the past few days, it wasn't  
possible to take it out, on account of the shooting.  
But now the piles are on the patios.  
My father spreads it out with wooden rakes.  
Uncle Rodrigo made a fire on the old kitchen stove.  
There, my sisters will roast more coffee.

The two Pablos are set on leaving.  
Aunt Maguita doesn't want to but won't let them go alone.  
Pablo Jr. asked Toño's son to move his truck.  
They've now moved it.  
There's movement of cars on the patio.  
Ready to leave.  
I give Pablo Jr. my children's telephone number so he can  
tell them we're alright.  
Our aunt and uncle's departure worries us a bit, but their  
minds are made up.  
Since day before yesterday they began discussing it.  
They want to take advantage of the convoy that will set  
out for Palenque today.  
Aunt Maga's arm was very swollen last night.  
My mother prepared her a poultice and today my aunt's  
arm appeared normal.  
My mother dictates the recipe: five large mango leaves;  
one tablespoon of striped curare, split into pieces; a rib of  
purple agave; a big branch of marigold.  
"Any old marigold," she adds, while I come away savoring  
the image.  
"It's used for fomentations and for compresses, in  
inflammations. As hot as you can stand it."

09:20 All the patios are covered with perfectly raked  
coffee.  
It's my father's job this time of year.  
In the street white flags continue waving.

I now see them accompanying some women on bicycles and adorning a red Volkswagen.

09:24 "Hey, Carmelino, gimme my flag!" shouts one man from a group that just exited the store.

Ten people, forming a group, await their turn to go inside.

A dog barks at a man on a bike.

My wife brings me the most beautiful Brazilian cherry that she found in the garden.

A perfect waning moon bejewels the blue sky.

The children work together with their parents in roasting the coffee.

The heavenly aroma's now inundating the patios and the house.

The passengers are about to depart.

Don Pablo is a 77-year-old Spaniard who was a political prisoner under the Franco regime.

Was sentenced to 30 years in prison, of which he served six.

Now he's a pensioner of the Spanish government, and the husband of aunt Maga.

Pablo Jr.'s father.

El Paraíso belongs to them.

Don Pablo's tried everything there, on his 35 acres, his orchard, his natural spring and his spacious house.

"There're no reshponsheeble people anymore, nothing but thievish," has been his catch phrase ever since I've known him.

At this point he'd started breeding chickens and producing eggs.

Finally got it right.

Everything was going well, but the war blocked his progress.

When will he be able to return to his Paradise?

Will he be able to?

I get along well with don Pablo: he's very cooperative and very daring and very naïve.

On day 2 he went down to the corner to chat with a group of Tzeltal guerrillas: "OK, but you guysh, whowhat do know about Marxishm-Leninishm? Bee cause I know more tthan you. Bee cause I wash een thee Shpanish Theevil War."

"And how did they respond, don Pablo?" I ask him.

"No thing. Yesh, shir... yesh, shir... and I didn't kick tthem out of tthere."

"That's great, don Pablo. If you come across any Central Americans, how about if they enlist you in the ranks eh, commandant?"

With this recollection and with this dialogue we say our goodbyes.

Hugs for aunt Maga and Pablo Jr.

Good luck.

09:58 Calm has increased.

Some women come around selling pork and chicken.

In a house up the street they're slaughtering a pig: long, piteous squeals are heard.

"We're craving us some pork rinds now," says my smiling sister Dora as she passes.

In the store people report that the guerrillas holed up in some houses in Barrio Magisterial, a new development, for ISSSTE workers, that was constructed far from town, outside Pequeñeces.

That they carted off things.

10:05 My mother's crying because her sister left.

Aura's whining like a little girl: "She doesn't even cry that much over me."

A youngster reports that 12 cars left for Palenque.

Carmelino closes the store for a while: they're going to lunch.

When they finish they'll continue doing business.

Today I wanted to see how the mist disappears in the depression, but I forgot.

All clear already.



You can feel the absence of Aunt Maga, the two Pablos, Angelica and Arturo.

There're 20 of us left in the house.

10:22 The store opens again: the small door.

Shoppers enter one by one.

10:50 Edgar and Mingo play ping-pong, very lightheartedly.

Since they haven't brought milk from the ranch, there's no queso fresco.

But all the hard cheeses, held in reserve, that my mother sells as cheese for grating, are being consumed with gusto.

Even those are already running out.

This is a typical day in the valley: high and clear, cloudless, extremely blue, above the intense greenery.

The dazzling bursts of bougainvillea, the floral explosions, the swaying of plantain trees, fields of maize and palm trees.

But someone said a while ago that amid the *canchishal* thickets some dead bodies remain, abandoned to the dogs' jaws.

10:58 The helicopter returns.

Everyone in the street with their white flag.

A bannered peregrination to the tortilla shop.

They come see Edgar for a doctor's visit on account of diabetic crisis.

Inform us that one girl died.

They found Doctor Talango already.

He's dead, apparently since day two.

11:22 Four cars carrying civilians pass by towards Palenque.

Some with Veracruz license plates.

They say there're dead bodies near the agricultural technical institute.

The street has come to life.

Passing in front of me a young girl in a red T-shirt, with a low-cut neckline and big firm tits, very big for her stature.

She busts me staring at her.

Smiles.

# the vanishings

& other poems



Elizabeth Myhr

the third limitation of language

we look back at the childhood meadows  
the grass shot through with sunlight

and walk together  
into twin countries of midnight and snow

and of course I cannot say  
and the letters we wrote turn to ashes

turn to flames and banners across the flagstone floor  
night begins its vespers in the garden  
you reach for the window's slim latch

I light the red candle and stoop to gather  
what's left of our secret reckless pages

I have left for a country

where the ancient loneliness restores itself  
between yucca and beetle piñon and wash

an exiled country  
where hard rains hoist life  
from an inch of sand

and grass drenched with lemonweed  
offers a hillside prayer  
to the sphinx moth

to its tilt and quiver  
and to an orange butterfly  
gliding in from the distant kaleidoscope

you are a boy on your small mare searching

but neither of us can find her

in the oysterbed of hoofbeats and wind  
in the torn light between grasses and dunes

the lost sword washes up on the sand

I urge the white horse of memory

with a whip and a branch of heather  
your wildest sorrow wet and bright

racing the cloudy stallions of afternoon

but inside the bedsheet's dry white tent

you hold in your face the salty blade  
and I wear by your tears' consent

her wet crown and the pearl at my neck

as over your shoulder great and riderless

he comes for you snorting with loose bit  
and reins trailed through hoof gouged moor

his saddleless highbred back soaked

to one long muscled darkness with rain

## sword and water

her turquoise hilt's inlaid with braided faces of the sun  
and one silver dagger the piscine body  
shoots through uncut by her wavering

shoots through her clear salt to touch  
fresh rock kissing the pink throat of the gull  
with its black virgin tongue

the turquoise hilt of the sea laughs  
and doubles over in white laughter  
and doubles and triples over in white laughter

rib and fan of stubborn palm glossy and banging  
in that wind which shreds each afternoon  
with yellow frangipani kisses



# FROTH POEMS

Jarosław  
Mikołajewski

*Translated from Polish by Piotr Florczyk*



rzym 3.37

cicho jest nad rzymem myślę że nad całą  
ziemią

nie ma barier dla ciszy która wieje z warszawy

jest bryła nad światem  
może raczej kryształ  
albo ciszy mandorla

nad nami  
ponad tym co pomiędzy  
i daleko dalej

doskonała jest cisza tak że gdybyś westchnęła  
albo zakasłała  
rzym w jednej chwili byłby pełny ciebie  
jak za kilka minut wypełni się mewą  
i mową

powiedz  
czy cisza jest też w stronę odwrotną

mój krok czy pozwala ci spać  
i ten list

rome 3:37 a.m.

rome is silent and I think so is the rest  
of the world

there are no barriers to the silence that blows from warsaw

there is a solid clump over the world  
or perhaps rather a crystal  
or the silence of the mandorla

above us  
higher than what's between  
and far beyond

the silence is so perfect that if you sighed  
or coughed  
rome would be full of you in a moment  
just as in a few minutes it will fill with seagull  
and speech

tell me  
is there silence in the opposite direction too

my step—does it let you sleep  
and this letter

## Kręgosłup mojej żony

W porze oczekiwania  
kręgosłup mojej żony jest gałęzią  
pękającą od nadmiaru jabłek

pokorną aż do ziemi  
z braku odporności

W nocie czuwania  
jej kręgosłup jest szalikiem  
zaciśniętym na wychudłej szyi

W nocie miłości zwierzęcej  
Jest suwakiem walizki  
która nie chce się dopiąć nawet pod kolanem

W nocie miłości ludzkiej  
jest stalową liną  
szeleszczącą na wietrze pod najwyższym napięciem

Na południowym spacerze  
kręgosłup mojej żony jest chorągiewką  
przewodnika pielgrzymów w przeludnionym kościele

Na wieczór po dniu marszu  
jest grupką wylęknionych dzieci  
które zepsuły przedszkolne pianino  
jest samą klawiaturą  
zepsutego pianina

Pod wieczornym prysznicem  
jej kręgosłup jest żmiją  
w czujnym lenistwie na rozgrzanej drodze

Pod północną kołdrą  
kręgosłup mojej żony jest jak drzazga płonąca w piecu  
z którego rano wyjmę ciepły chleb

## My wife's spine

And when my wife's pregnant  
her spine is a bough  
breaking under the weight of apples

humble all the way down to earth  
from lack of resistance

On nights of keeping watch  
her spine is a scarf  
tightened around a slender neck

On nights of animal love  
it is the zipper in a suitcase  
that won't close, even under a knee

On nights of human love  
it is the steel rope  
rustling in the wind, at the highest voltage

On the noon walk  
my wife's spine is the flag  
carried by the pilgrims' guide in a crowded church

In the evening, after a day-long march,  
her spine is a bunch of frightened kids  
who broke the kindergarten's piano  
it is the keyboard  
of the broken piano

When she takes a shower  
her spine is a viper  
lazing watchfully on a sizzling road

Under the midnight comforter  
my wife's spine is like a wood chip burning in the oven  
from which I'll pull out warm bread at dawn

## Materac

Ojciec nadmuchiwał nam go co lato.  
Ma lat trzydzieści, może nawet więcej.  
Ze szczelin wciąż jeszcze sypie się piasek.  
W zgrubieniach wciąż oddycha powietrze jego płuc.

Dopóki go nie wyrzucę, dopóki nie przegryzą go szczury,  
mój ojciec może pojechać nad morze.

Konserwa kaszlu.  
Relikwiarz na leszczynowe kołki.  
Pamiątka organiczna.  
Balsam tchu beztroskiego.  
Wieczny odpoczynek.

Miech zmartwychwstania.

## A Mattress

Father blew it up for us every summer.  
It's thirty years old, maybe older.  
Sand still falls out of the deep creases.  
The thick spots still breathe the air of his lungs.

Until I throw it away, until the rats chew through it,  
my father can go to the beach.

Tinned cough.  
Reliquary of hazel pegs.  
Organic souvenir.  
Balm of carefree breathing.  
Eternal rest.

A bellow of resurrection.



piana

coś śmierdzi  
powiedziałem kiedy weszliśmy do domu

że coś śmierdzi istotnie  
powiedziała córka kiedy zostaliśmy we troje  
(najmłodsza poszła do kuchni)

no coś śmierdzi niemożliwie  
powiedziałem kiedy we dwoje weszliśmy na górę  
(średnia została w salonie)

ale żeby aż tak pomyślałem  
kiedy zostałem sam

obwąchałem ręce  
obejrzałem nogi  
przeszukałem kąty

nic nie mogło śmierdzieć prócz mnie

wziąłem prysznic  
została żółta piana

wykąpałem się w wannie  
znowu piana

wenus była z piany  
gęsta piana jest ze mnie

splukując  
stałem w wannie nad pianą

nabrała wody i pękła  
a wtedy zobaczyłem że stoję nad sobą

froth

something stinks  
I said when we came into the house

something really does stink  
said my daughter when three of us were left  
(my youngest daughter had gone into the kitchen)

yeah something stinks unbelievably  
I said after the two of us came upstairs  
(the middle daughter had stayed in the living room)

but what can stink so bad  
I wondered when left alone

I sniffed my hands  
I looked over my feet  
I searched around in the corners

nothing could've stunk except me

I took a shower  
yellow froth stayed behind

I took a bath  
yellow froth again

venus was made of froth  
this thick froth is mine

rinsing  
I stood in the tub over the froth

it took on water and burst  
and then I saw that I was standing over myself

uciekając do rury wielkie oczy robiła  
wydzierała usta  
odpłynąć nie chciała

płynny mój szkielet był u stóp moich

escaping down the drain its eyes widened  
a scream twisted its mouth  
it didn't want to float away

my liquid skeleton lay at my feet



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