
The world is nearing its end, while the boy in a shortsleeve
tee and bermudas attempts
to tame wheat. Spying on its rites
connected with births and burials.
The tree in the yard is a black man. It has European origin
but African color of skinbark.
The neighbor lights a cigarette, waving with her hand,
slicing the smoke. She says: I've nurtured my trees
to grow slender, yet they became fat
like a listless housewife.
To grow forest like, but they took the traits
from my character.

The world is nearing its end.
Every time a mountain burps,
a volcano erupts somewhere.
The dormant Earth lifts its eyelid
and a chasm opens.
On the path from the yard to the mountain lurk
many surprises.
On the path fit a cavern
the Red Khmer and Revolution,
the American Marine.
While they all clutch weapons,
the Earth does not stop turning.
The Ire this morning changes God
holding the earth on its palm like a globe
which now and then He shakes
only because of the snow.

Translated from Croatian by Boris Gregoric

SAHARA WHICH CARES NOT FOR A COMPASS

I don't know where on the palm of my hand
to distinguish exactly where does the Sahara begin
yet neatly one can pick out
its sand drifts making the dunes.
But this Sahara never knew
the forty nine degrees allegedly claimed
by a tourist guide
when he took
another group to see
the dunes south of Zafrane.
On the Sahara of my skin
there's no life except sometimes
the mirages traverse it
like camels.
On it the rain often ponders—
should it fall down or not
yet having none of that firm, ascetic character
of a primeval desert.
It merely forgets a compass.
On the Sahara of my palm it's still possible
to camp out, to pitch a tent even with the Pag^[1] salt
not the salt of Chott El Jerid
with its soft pink hue because
to it geographic distance means nothing.
It swallows handshakes and touches
like the original Sahara
which once swallowed desert roses
now salvaged by local peddlers
with whom I just bargain for one.
Still no answer
how can something like the Sahara
transplant so easily into human tissue.
And who or why would have had it
planted there.

[1]Croatian island in the Northern Adriatic.

BEFORE THE BOOK

Before the Book a snake shed its skin
and the tree grew fat. Its crown unhooked
its bra not asking itself how St. Leonard
will react while stretching towards the sun
from the fresco in a forest chapel.
Waters should have been brought in, hoses set up
into the waterfall, before the Book.
The river raised the ravine and all the way to its estuary,
before the Book, she drilled its character.
And the ravine tempered the rash river's locomotion.
But the making of the Book also involved the Mediterranean.
He descended from the Alps into an olive grove.
Even before the Book legs of trees became
arthritic and seemed still more stationary
than they are.
Before the Book God switched on the radio at the Adriatic,
and the sea was its loudspeaker.
Before the Book mother's soup in Crikvenica simmers
so nicely and quietly that
she doesn't even notice it.

Translated from Croatian by Ana Janković

TRIBES

This morning Crikvenica[1] took three poses
for a photo shoot. But Davor and I want
to visit the small continent of Rab[2].
If it were an evening, if it sparkled across the sea,
I would have said: tiny planet in the foamy
darkened galaxy.
At noon though, Rab is but a hive where
four belltowers rise.
I can trace the heavenly furrows, what a relief for farmers
not to become bored up in the heaven.
Not to be merely idle in the celestial retirement.
At noon the bay is a sunny pillow
of a diminutive Sahara. Only later will the pictures
on the camera display repeat the summer
as if it was a matter of studying something dear to heart.
A few months later still it will have seemed that
the camera hosts the summer. Extending
its lifespan served by tiny alliances.
Like the alliance among the cove, the sunscreen,
the swimsuit and the grain of sand.
Or the alliance between the wave and the shore, while
the inexperienced eye might claim that these allies resist
each other.
Just like the way the actual Sahara provides meagre sustenance for its
tribes, this diminutive Sahara
initiates the tribes of memories.
With the sundown we are back on the ferry.
Davor wishes he could send the plump Morning Star
to the fitness center.

In Crikvenica we eat jam of apples
and lavender.
So the moths[3] would not eat us on the inside out.

[1]Croatian resort town on the Northwestern Adriatic coast.

[2]Croatian island in the Adriatic Sea

[3]In Croatia, and elsewhere in Southeast Europe, the sprigs of dried lavender are customarily placed in closets and used for moth control.

FANS

While we stand in the field, sparrows are in the bush.
Their broad, popular front peeking from the branches.
It almost would appear they are cheering. Following
the game of football. Later you think, the followers
of Marx and Engels. In fact they chirrup:
Sparrows of all countries,
unite, so together we can kick some football!
Later still, you've got the notion they read the Bible
you are able to discern the psalms in their
inchoate language, you hear them mention
Moses and the chosen team.
You draw attention away from the birds.
Someone, with a sharp blade of grass nicks the tip
of your finger making it red like a strawberry
pressing his cut finger
on your blood. You are happy. It means truly
he has come. A nascent brotherhood with Pan.

Translated from Croatian by Boris Gregoric

PAGES

I'm a bee when my tongue exudes honey
and caresses the sunlit meadow.

With this layer on speech
into a Sunday album I glue
women from Drškovci who, from their baskets,
lower fever and landscapes on the stalls
instead of walnuts and fresh cheese.

The youngest of them inscribes with a gaze:

*I'd like to stay on the grass so long
that I could leaf through the sky as pages
– one cloudy, one bright,
one blurred...*

*And even get soaked while I wait for the valley to
define dioptré anew.*

Women from Drškovci readily admit
that mist is the breath of the sky and that this morning
it only lay down a little.

While it seems that the sky isn't breathing,
during the afternoon basketball, Monday
shoots clouds into it languidly.

It cheers up sincerely only a few times
to so many balls with which it has been transposed
into a slow-motion film.

Translated from Croatian by Ana Janković

COPY, PASTE

Women are, according to my home philosopher Davor,
an objection embodied.

Even God rests on Sunday, while I'm not allowed to,
says Davor.

Under a plum tree, day in day out,
his dream is being put together as if someone
is repeating the *copy-paste* operation on a computer.

In the shade I dreamt him wondering:

Does a shadow signify presence or absence?

This afternoon, I too sleep under a tree
for it can simultaneously, with its treetop and roots,
grow in two opposite directions,
and not disturb the serenity of the garden.

And so I call Davor into the kitchen.

But he doesn't eat last year's plum dumplings
before he can taste their relish
blended with cinnamon on my face.

The wind spreads the smells across the plains.

The wind trades in spices.

Translated from Croatian by Ana Janković

TSUNAMI

I put down my cup of tea at the very moment the
TV screen is flooded with pictures of tsunami.
You comment: *Once again has death become the laureate.*
This time demonstrating one
of its martial arts in Asia.
I am uncertain whether the waves surging from the screen
compete for its medals, or whether they are
lapping against the Apocalypse in their deadly fashion.
I say: *Death is sending them.*
Each escaping wave is a letter in its handwriting
and I really don't know what graphologists are going to say
when they identify segments of its calligraphy.
Combinations are many.
Two shores exchanging letters via the waves.
It's either order and disorder.
Or the tiny tongues of restlessness and the centre of the Earth.
You ask me: *Can you imagine a siren in uniform,*
declaring war on the crashing sound of waves
by still more deafening singing?
Even Odysseus shuns her.
Can you recognize sand which dresses up
in camouflage attire, knowing that
it has lost all memory of Hitler and the world wars?
I try to assure you:
God watches all killers from the universe
including these waves today
arranged into foam.
And without a telescope He discerns that foam
as accursed bindweed.

Translated from Croatian Ana Janković

THE BAND

Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter comprise a jazz band.
They let the mountain or the river sometimes step out
to sing a solo section.

Yet they don't demand perfect performance.
Allowing the wind to retreat abruptly.

Winter, Fall and Summer let Spring
separate, and play its own part from the kitchen
where she mixes Dawn, Warmth and Moonlight
into fresh buds.

Spring would like to cede the World Refugees Day
to Fall when the leaves are in exile too
and she also attempts to take over
by creating a refugee database made of leaves.

When addressing Spring, Summer is a saxophone:
Who has exiled water from its spring, forcing
it to run away through the strait?

When it starts inventing things, it is a harmonica,
and when on the mountain, climbing to the top,
I can recognize the fossil of my loved one.

Fall drums along: You shall study the anatomy of the meadow
but only if you'll order some as your home square footage.

A packet of rain, a face moisturizer
with which sky conquers the birch tree is but
a gentle introduction to that season.

Winter? A pause between other voices.

It keeps silent and I believe that out of the front entrance ceiling
the snow starts sallying.

Translated from Croatian by Boris Gregoric

TREECROWN

The sky is a giant treecrown hanging overhead.
All weather conditions inside it appear to have
the same root, but turned upside down,
like the blueness that here stands instead of the greenery.
For an instant it is held by the old Slav stormgod Perun,
for another by Mitra, the Persian god of Sun,
and with it thus turned, like a bouquet of forgetmenots,
casually stands the Ancient Greek rainy goddess Diana.
If gods are like giants,
they can hold the crown of tree with a hand leaning
against their thigh.
But unlike the floral ornament,
from this boundless blue bouquet, birds fly out.
As one lifts off, it all seems like a brooch become
loose.

The December sky
at times hides the brides
stealing the Whiteness from Snow.

One bride, upon leaving the house,
merges with the horizon, disappears,
with her dress counterfeiting Snow.

Translated from Croatian by Boris Gregoric

DR. JANUARY

Medvednica^[1] teaches Logic.
On her foothills attired in trees
I take a nap.
In the second premise, she is clothed
in the darkness of the fifty minutes past midnight
I propose, thus, it must be wearing the pajamas,
or her top part must be black.

I wake in snow.
The window resembles the New Year's crystal globe
in which I am confined, or so I believe.
The morning washes off the snow, every certainty,
the final count of angels' downhill rides.
One cannot discern where exactly does snow turn
into the pale washedoff sky over the mountain,
and are this morning those skiers angels once again?
On Dr. January's precept
they are assigned and sent on to the path
even with the smallest dosage of snow flurries.
As the day becomes clear,
quicker they vanish from the foothills
replaced by other skiers.
Yet a few, winged, linger on.

On Tuesday I have a dream:
For two days it's been snowing like crazy on Medvednica.
Instead of teacups a waiter
hauls snow and buries the patrons' bodies.
These turn to whiteness on chairs watching
the waiter get away with an empty platter.

[1]The mountainous region north of the Croatian capital of Zagreb.

Translated from Croatian by Boris Gregoric

THE CONCLUSION

Three days with no handyman in sight,
our toilet tank squeals like a mafia shootout,
economic crisis, and the war in Gaza.

I bet the neighbors can hear it as
this year is divorcing the present
in order to marry history.

They may hear its voice like they
hear adulterers' voices in soapoperas
or voices of announcers speaking of democracy's
adulteries.

It is exactly the toilet tank that concludes the year
anticipating another adultery.

I imagine that inside it Winter hides
a reserve of fog, as part of its treasure,
thus the squeal is a protest against the tropical condition
of the fake Caribbean Sea in the bathtub.

I slice the cornbread.

On the dry knife's blade
a waterdrop sparkles, a tiny lake.

It encourages the bread to not dry,
to live over the fading year for a day or two.

But who will in the name of the year gone recall the recruits
which still believe, who will stop the refugees flow
ending exile that she is forcing upon them?

Through the passing year I go as through the Mexican kitchen.
Her independent clauses are the unbendable
taco shells.

Her dependent ones are the softer tortillas,
aptly wrapping around the events
that are filling them.

The plumber not showing up
causes the tank to increase the unease with its squeak
and instead of a sociologist, a judge
or a social worker, it divides words not wanted
from the dear ones.

Like a merchant taking the inventory.

About to give the final blow to the crumpled old year.

Because all the clocks, like the Judas,
have already betrayed her to the new boss.

Translated from Croatian by Boris Gregoric

YUCATAN RESTORED THE BEACHES ALL OVER THE BODIES

Even the silences recognize each other by their ranks,
A rock is a smooth-bodied blind man.
Only the light transforms the crowns of the waves
into a visible procession that crosses the Atlantic
bringing the sound.
Yucatan restored the beaches all over our bodies.
So many bays towards which the waves have trouble
finding secret stairs, so it is easier for them to climb
up the voices or up the dusk than up the skin.

Even though he sees in the dark,
at dawn God again turns up the light.
He's the only one with no need for spies
and whom no one questions why he chose
a particular time of day for a certain purpose.
I think he could preserve one and the same
expression as if a face is a fossil,
despite the changes on the Earth,
in the universe.
But he doesn't want to.
It is enough that he leans over one of the seas
and in each island recognizes a bird
who just happened to stay there.
So he gets taken by tenderness.

Translated from Croatian by NGORwDAC

DISEMBARKINGS

Darkness visits all four corners of the Earth.
Performs a ritual dance on each of them.
In the North it is more ancient than the Eskimo dance,
more ancient than the boomerang dance of the South,
or the fire and the eagle dance of the West.
In the East it is more archaic than Kathakali.
Here I disembark with the dark
and in the morning wake up just as it is leaving.
At breakfast only the hunters who hunt
its shadows stay; those who followed it
from the West, but have forgotten to bring warrants.
Disbelieving, they look for it even in the lotus pool.
In the Padmanabhapuram Palace.
On the beach that hides seashells
like tiny arks in the millions
of sand pockets.
Pursuers know that entire
docks of shells sank under
the eyebrows of darkness that
landed in India before Vasco da Gama.
Who, at the very spot where
the Arabian Sea, the Indian Ocean
and The Bay of Bengal meet, although completely blind,
opened his third eye fascinated
by Shiva.
The darkness is a box modifying meanings.
Every day everything gets thrown inside it.
Every single body geography.
When I think of it, with fervor I wait for
it to appear again.

Translated from Croatian by NGORwDAC

THE MECHANICS OF THE EYES

Luka from the building next door died yesterday.
I wonder if he's now taking his long-dead dog
for a walk across heaven,
if he's dusting his new room,
and making coffee for the angels.
In Slavonia, Spring with its signature
on plants confidently guarantees the contract
between the seasons.
I'm sleep deprived,
as a parasite I nestle
against the train seat whose vigor I lack.
The train removes me from the town through
the milky sky of *Organic Valley* brand.
I don't even got no milk.
As passengers swallow this milky sky
the whites of their eyes show.
Such curious mechanics of the eyes.
When passengers milk the sky
the place where the train meets the clouds
becomes a farm.
Although to me it's more of a field of milk.
A milk rig in the sky to which, along with the milk,
all mammals, the whole Noah's Ark, ascend.

Translated from Croatian by NGORwDAC