

After Regaining Independence

When we walked out of the church, stars viewed through grimy glasses were gathering round the crumbling crescent of the moon above the red cornice of the post-office. My mother wore a black felt coat – winter dragged its chalk across it like a pupil across a blackboard. Later, on the bedroom wall, I drew a gate while a plaster bust of a woman was watching me from the top of the wardrobe. Did the faraway off-beat – from the railroad and highway – raise hopes for a different, larger landscape? Gardens burned with the ravens' dark, cawing flame.

(translated by Ieva Lešinska)

Circles

We were throwing stones to see who would make it farthest across the stream. At times they flew high up in the air, only to sink in the slow water like hot iron bullets, with a hiss. At other times they flew straight to the other side where trees caught them with their manifold hands or they

darted through the foliage silently announcing the name of
the winner. When you throw a stone across a stream in which
you floated on a raft under a pirate's flag, you remember
who you are. With a single throw you have conquered time.
Circles appear or a branch breaks. The stones that failed to
reach across, sit in the riverbed like a constellation. If one lay
next to them, could one see the shadowy dike across which,
hands in their pockets, people rush? What do you think?

From Photography and Scissors (Fotogrāfija un šķēres, 2013)

(translated by Ieva Lešinska)

Summer on the Abyss

“Ever more light,” you say standing in the green rectangle
of the window. Soundlessly, the wind blows into the sails of
birds, fog sinks into the abyss like a leaky boat. When I bury
my head in the pillow, I seem to hear all the alarms of the
village – I share my morning with the butcher and the chair-
man, our common sun rises accompanied by excited beep-
ing, the world is born on the clock face, streets roll out of the
second like a nut out of its shell when its broken by a shoe
against the hot pavement. – If only it all could be said sim-

pler – to get to point zero or on the border and write: “It was tough without you” to be followed by: “How good of you to come” but instead: “You are standing in the green rectangle of the window; apples resemble crystals” or: “You will leave again, your scent will abandon this room slowly and painfully, like headache after a long day.” A black dog walks into the house from the garden, the road vibrates in its emptiness and the heat opens small cafés in verandas. “Ever more.” Birch’s pointer touches the moon, which, having sucked the night dry, recedes into the blue. Grasshoppers are ticking in the grass like lost watches. Birdcalls come from the abyss. – “Our luck is accidental.”

From Photography and Scissors (Fotogrāfija un šķēres, 2013)

(translated by Ieva Lešinska)

After Rilke

– it will all remain in a word cut short, yet at one time someone wrote – my chest is like a lamp ignited by a glance, and it really did glow for cicadas to enjoy as I was breathing the night-time scents of the mountains. The cracked screen – snowed up as if after a heavy blow – shows a raven stuck in

oil and a lyre with broken nerves, a scribbled on page thrown
in the grass, and I too am like paper – half burnt, but my
eyes silent like fruit trampled down in acid. What once was
music and light, tones and cascades, is now a feeble whisper
and the flame from a lighter, see, how it fades on the face of
the last muse before she comes and cuts

(translated by Ieva Lešinska)

An Inland Lighthouse

Poland at night – a black, taciturn landscape, as if was
photographed with the lid still on. Emptiness after empti-
ness. Pulsating here and there – HOTEL FOX, DRIVE-IN –
the light of which, reflecting in the dark screen, is an inland
lighthouse for weary truckers. A bus sways on the bends
of the narrow road, and awakens me to an already-read
book. Anonymous villages on the other side of the hills,
on which the golden age of industry slumbers. Images from
the past unite in fine facets like in an insect's eye. An insom-
nia machine with windows clouded by drunks that has been
pushing me towards Europe's lowest point.

(translated by Jayde Will)

Servant's Concern

The tapestry is sick with the pale paraffin light: reddish dark is the gently sloping path of the hunters. "Just like Diana on a thorny hillside, so a misty illness is running into my master," muses the kind servant, setting to work: first, he moistens a clump of cotton in alcohol, then lights it and holds it for a moment inside a cup like a small lantern. "It could not be cardiac asthma," he consoles blindly, placing the lanterns on the pale back, to which they suck up like the noses of wild beasts. The aristocrat wheezes heavily being buried under the reddish dark golden-hued. "I see my master," looking back at the tapestry, the servant lingers in the doorway, "with the foliage atwitter," and then he practically twitters, "on a hunt along with princes: dogs rush into the bramble, the sun is aflame on hilltop, bayonets shine with demise and the might of my master."

(translated by Jayde Will)

Smoke Cisterns

The exhaust hydra blows gray, suffocating clouds billowing
with a blizzard, – it is a veil for the reddened eyes of build-
ings following me when I wander searching for the address.
Too weak is the bulb swimming like a mysterious fish in the
deep of the corridor and throwing light on the numbers on
doors. In a bar, a guy sits next to me, a cracker once deto-
nated in his hand and therefore even inside – in these cis-
terns of smoke – he wears a black glove. The thumb missing,
it resembles a small rake with which to collect money from
the sticky counter. Oh, season of ashes and boredom!

(translated by Ieva Lešinska)

Laureate

The applause makes him all the more distant.
Each prize bends over the paths of truth like
branches. The horse rider portrayed understands him –
both are imprisoned by people's fortunes.

(translated by Jayde Will)

Letters to Susette

A northeasterly blows, Hölderlin's favorite wind – after 1803 at any rate, when he composed the hymn "Andenken" in Tübingen, and until this very moment under totally different poplars. They could be buds in a gradual explosion or September shadows, filling with blossoms (if you ever wandered in time), but I failed to die there with you, who forever remained in a foreign land. To Susette that's how Hölderlin lived, the wife of a Frankfurt banker, Diotima in later texts – to whom he wrote much, until he lost his mind and Zimmer the carpenter, an educated man, gave him a room in a tower with a view to the river and meadows. No trace of that brown-tanned flesh exists anymore, just an eclipse of characters.

(translated by Jayde Will)

Monstrosities

What will remain of market stalls, where brown coins reposed on red velvet, where stuffed plush beasts broke loose from the hook, yielding to an expectationful drop? Like blood

smudged with a palm, that's how faces dissolve – her heavy
countess's face, which I hate, has been blown off like sand
off glass, – and tiny loves, dressed for nighttime strolls, and
accidental glances die down in this gold that was not des-
tined to wash me out next to you. Everything mimics in
a thousand tongues, gentle words break down in a babble
and, as if yanked by the hand, life vanishes. It had to hap-
pen and the trumpet was sounding, yet I could not believe
in these monstrosities, which now rush into me like into
a hive. – Heartless is this merry-go-round, which throws me
out of the landscape.

(translated by Jayde Will)

1941

Bombs fell. My grandmother was taken by horse cart to
Nereta to be baptized. The pastor, who was thrown out
of the church, received her at home, an ashen-gray face,
as if cut out of a photograph. Red, a far too red childhood.
A swimming redeemer hidden among water lilies.

(translated by Jayde Will)

Post Factum

See, they have been dug up, our loving remains: a finger
digging into another finger for the sake of a nice motif, the
mute sluice of a barrette next to cheeks adorned with broken
off legs – the proud coterie of dust, even if it's just a reflec-
tion of the lost glory, and in the crescent of the mirror our
intolerable features fade like a cruel joke, for the briefer
than brief moment was trampled when – on the inside, like
a key in a dark room – the beak of forgiveness was still
hacking.

(translated by Ieva Lešinska)

The Janacek Embankment Windows

Prague before Christmas. An enthusiastic guide, dressed as
an angel, demonstrates the brightly lit façades, naked gods
and armed saints. Tourists whisper among themselves under
the tatters of spread wings. I escape to a side street with
a snow covered hearse and the stained glass of a church. The
star of Bethlehem quivers between red and blue, faith loses all
seriousness. In the Janacek Embankment windows, a fam-

ily gathers under a chandelier – only gentle music is missing
while I am standing down on the pavement, blinded by the
blizzard. And even in the night tram that takes me, slightly
tipsy, back up the mountain, there is no place for undis-
turbed sadness. For in the depth of the car someone's peel-
ing a tangerine.

(translated by Ieva Lešinska)

Hanza Street

To stand on the balcony at night – to the left, there is the
fugitive moon, to the right, a couple disappears through
Alexander's Gate – and, in a lonely show-off, to twid-
dle with the stopper of a carafe made of clear Bohemian
glass. To stand like an aristocrat dressed in a robe in front
of a landscape, not knowing that this moment, supposedly
only yOURs, belongs to a totally different life, which unexpect-
edly – like a ribbon caught in a gust of wind – has unfurled
here to return to darkness a brief moment later. – What kind
of shards are hidden by this perfect form?

(translated by Ieva Lešinska)