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GETTING DRUNK
WITH WIND
AND FIRE

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Heuteranistic-belletristic Wreath

**DREAMING OF THE STAR
OF HEUTERANIA**

The Fifth Belletristic Volume

GETTING DRUNK WITH WIND AND FIRE

Poetry

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FATE OF A POEM

The poem is more truthful
if there's greater solitude,
a more fateful mistake,
if there are deadlier beliefs,
and vain expectations,
in words, if the bitterness
of its unfortunate creator,
the poet, is greater.

The poem is more pleasant,
more potable and exciting,
if it is, like the aged wine,
more often found on the spiritual and emotional table
of the wealthy, healthy, beautiful and loved,
in words, of those who have
generously received the role
of the fortunate.

I

VARIATIONS ON THE PRIMEVAL THEME

In the beginning there was a poem. A poem – motto. And inside that poem, one of the most simplest and profound truths I have ever discovered. I know: for many it won't be particularly deep. But, I am not convinced that any profound truth about life, world and art can be discovered today. Within concrete dimensions, primarily in science, important truths are still being discovered. However, at the level of the most general examination of reality all important facts have already been discovered.

Let's consider the revealed truths and start searching for other well known ones.

Almost all poets are miserable, or at least, discontented people. A satisfied man does not have a need or motive to write poems. Naturally, he sometimes feels a desire to talk about his happiness, but a serious poetic mining through Heavens is such a hard work that only a person with burdens heavier than the burden of creation is searching for salvation in it.

However, there are individuals who write poems in order to obtain someone's admiration, to earn someone's affection and to materialize wishes coming from the desire to succeed. But just because they aspire from ambition, those desires are, for the striving narcissi, driving forces of misfortune. Especially for those whose creative path has to be strewn with thorn roses – their own anthological poems.

Only poets who grow and throw flowers without thorns at their own feet, those who write easily and spontaneously, just as they breathe, those who are not forced into writing by incapacity to live an authentic life, or by ambition or any other hardships; but by a need for

entertainment, a need to pull out the most of the pleasures from their insignificant creative torment. However, such poets are rare. And, in contrast to the self-sacrificing Heaven miners, they do not dig up precious diamonds from within.

It is not advisable to dress the same notion into different metaphors in a small verbal field. Nevertheless, when anthological poems are concerned, I embroidered flowers and diamonds into the paragraphs. To facilitate, in a rough classification we can differentiate two varieties of exceptional poetic accomplishments: those which are too beautiful yet fragile and transient, and the others which were dug up from the deeper layers of the poet's being and then meticulously polished, having the value and endurance of a diamond.

Each anthological poem is written with great effort, and if I had written several stanzas every time I was unhappy, or at least discontented, I would have written a massive and valuable poetry opus in the past thirty years. But the unique weight of the poem only partially depends on the effort put in its creation. I was seldom motivated to drip over the stanzas, so in the first days of the poetic year of 1991 – the year of finalization of this volume – forty of the poems I considered rudiments had to be remodeled. I remodeled them. Afterwards, during the first half of the year, I added nearly as many new poems. That's how the first six poetic cycles came into existence, first six chapters of the fifth volume of my belletristic opus.

At the end, the reader should be warned that in each of these chapters he will come across two poems which originate from Alek's diary, essayistic, reflexive, meditative and intimate notes. In the seventh chapter, the reader encounters twelve poems written on the basis of Boris's diary and other notes. I treat the mentioned poems as versed diary notes of my two fellow colleagues, adjusted to the structure of this volume.

THE CALL OF AN ENAMORED

Give me your hand, and come with me.

We will leave behind the streets
and dark halls, this whole city,
the poisonous ant-hill.

I will decorate your forehead with a single kiss.

We will walk, lonelier and lonelier,
until we leave behind even the last village.

We will become smaller.

And one late afternoon, having lost everything,
we will fall asleep in the grass.

In the evening, staring at the dark blue ashes
left behind after the fall
of a burning hot gold ball,
we will peacefully on a bud close the door.

At midnight, in the moonlight,

where the Pegasus flies towards the flower,

I will kiss your bare feet,

and in the morning we will swim, naked, in dew drops.

Away from everybody, different from everything,
protected from the evil forces which rule *the other* world,
we will play under the cupola of our sky.

Come. We will be two grains

of star dust. At the end of the world,

guardian grasses and landscapes

of cosmic silence await us.

Oh, come! We will be naive and happy.

Embraced we will become one,

we will become invisible – incorporeal!

TO AN INEBRIATED QUEEN

You, an everyday secret,
covered with
a transparent veil,
still undeciphered.
Eternally longed for,
and unattainable.
You are drunk with red wine,
from a gold-plated glass,
cracked to the bottom,
and you consented to be
your master's queen
– so you can,
together with him, drunk,
in the blaze of passion,
remain a slave
of human weaknesses.

IN THE ARENA

Guitar,

calm your strings.

Let them vibrate silently,

so silently that the hearts can feel the pain

and the deep sorrow.

Toreador is bleeding in the Great Arena.

Look: a victorious smile

still flickers on his face,

but the cold tear, already,

puts out the flame in his eye.

Are you crying?

Cry, you beautiful girl.

The flags are at half-mast,

peace is all around you.

But still, why are you throwing

chrysanthemums upon the battle field?

Your toreador is gone,

but the Arena is still here,

and as soon as tomorrow, fanfares

will announce a new bull fighters' feast.

THE THOUSAND AND FIRST NIGHT

There is so much sorrow, melancholy,
so much genuine beauty
in the midnight wandering through
province streets,
dreamy, lost.

There is so much peace in this wasteland.
As if the darkness has annihilated the small town.
Only the street stars still twinkle,
and the wind moans and swirls
an old photograph on the pavement.

Crying can be heard from somewhere, far away,
from the periphery, it seems,
or is it a lingering song of a drunkard,
abandoned,
maybe beaten.

Above the empty square, up there,
in the dark, an inhuman creature is uttering.
What is that? Ghosts? Could this be the final hour?
No. It is just the clock tower
striking midnight.

Yet another night will pass in vain.
It will die out with the wind, it will not become a memory.
And so the thousand and first night goes by
– and my Scheherazade
is still gone.

A MEMORY OF THE LAKE BANK

And this evening, I said to myself,
when the yellow moon ray
 intertwines with her moist hair
 and lies on the fresh hay,

when a naughty lock lowers
on her smooth, marble forehead,
 flooded with longing, provocative, hot
 – this evening you will be happy.

And tonight, I said to myself,
when the lightening tears the sky,
 sharply, as the scream of the dying
 tears heavy, ominous silence,

when a feverish glow
blazes in once dreamy eyes,
 which are now wide open
 – tonight you will be happy.

In the morning, I said to myself,
when the wind grows weary,
 and a torn branch lies still in the mud
 like a beloved child in a fresh tomb,

when the shattered leaves lie aside,
mixed with rags of a dirty dress,
 like a dream suddenly torn by awakening
 – in the morning you will be happy.

And one day, I said to myself,
when the rain penetrates the stumps,
 showing through the autumn fog
 like the remains of a house on a charred ground,

when your fury starts to rain through,
and the cold water soaks deeply into you.
 And you won't have any tears left,
 – that day you will be very sad.

GRAYNESS IN THE CITY OF LIGHT

Gray is the Foch Avenue.

Gray is the sky above it.

Sadness crawled
into my soul.

On paths of Jardin du Luxembourg

elderly couples are renewing their memories.

The young are kissing on benches, before the rain.

The students are studying, some are writing love letters.

On Pigalle,

near the entrance of a dilapidated dump

a made-up slut merrily chats
with a driver with an Neanderthal face.

She has long hair,

and a wide, baggy behind.

He is laughing, his strong,
tanned jaw is quivering.

On the Place Vendôme,

from the top of the Pillar of Austerlitz,

Napoleon is calling the French and the tourists
in the name of glory attained in the battle field.

There is no reply. Just one pigeon,

a pigeon of peace, flew down on his shoulder.

It cooed in his ear for a while,
and than fluttered and flew away.

That flight, Gigi, reminded me of...
Where are you now? I thought.
Do you sometimes still like to say:
"Life is longing, above all."

Are you happy, like before,
or are you wearing a black crape around your heart,
like you, laughingly,
promised than?

Gray is the Kléber Avenue,
gray is the sky above it.
Sadness crawled
into my soul.

BEFORE THE RAIN

Soon,
 maybe even tonight,
 begins the season of rain concerts
 upon black roofs,
partly rotten, asleep,
 like ships
 sunk in a battle.

A friend who left suddenly
 without saying goodbye
 and dropped a short line
 in the tomorrow's newspaper:
Killed in a car accident!
 dwelled
 under this roof again.

In the penumbra,
 among pillars,
 died a woman who liked to
 be silent in her sorrow,
and who, staying truthful to herself,
 took all her secrets
 to her grave.

We curse the bad luck, with a whisper,
 for scattering a hundred big wishes,
 for tearing a thousand plans,
 and we know that his whole
life would not be enough
 to make all his conceived
 dreams come true.

While gazing in the darkness,
we are trying
to imagine the dead lips.
In vain. We remember her occasional
mysterious smile,
but we were far away
when she was dying.

The rain hasn't started yet.
Just the organ
sadly and monotonously drones
in a chamber, like distant bells.
We are waiting, someone is coming.
Yes, it's him...
No, it's – her!

AFTER A FEW YEARS

If it hurts,
 throw back your head,
relax your hands,
 close your eyes
 – and watch.

Maybe you will see
 the sun in the branches,
the sky in the hair,
 leaves over water
 – or my face.

If you see me,
 the pale moonwalker,
if you see me
 still standing straight
 – that is not me.

Open your eyes,
 wipe your tears,
clench your fist,
 put your head up high
 – and keep walking.

AFTER MANY YEARS

Let's smile, not too
sentimentally. And, with a stoic tranquility,
accept the fact that the youth
unnoticeably became
irrevocable past.

In some streets night scented gilliflowers still bloom.
On the benches under the cover of branches,
protected from the traitorous moonlight,
hugged couples whisper stories about their future together,
and start love avalanches
with kisses.

Let's smile, not too
resignedly. In the present, we can find
many new, beautiful, interesting things,
which bring comforting joy,
although they do not bring back the youth.

Somebody is still waiting for the western coal to burn down.
But we find the biggest bliss
in the red evening sky,
in the darkening twilight which erases the contours,
in the wind which secretly whistles
and embraces our fairy of yore.

Let's smile, not too
self pitifully. Now, when the elated time
is a swaying memory, we think to ourselves,
gazing into a colourless day,
maybe it was just a dream.

II

DISAPPEARANCE OF THE HOME VILLAGE

Based upon the first cycle of this collection of poems, we can deduce that the entrance to the poetic creation is usually through the gate of love. Or through the landscapes of home village, I may add. So many things are said about the home village that there is not much left to say.

But, maybe, not all things have been revealed. For example, I haven't heard nor read an explicit thought that the place we call 'home' is primarily a rural category. Therefore, here I write my personal belief that only children who were born and raised in a village, a small town, or in a province have a native place. The population born and raised in cities, unfortunately, does not have a native place.

My friend Alek Vislavski and I implicitly repeat this disputable belief in the poems which follow the lines I am writing and the reader is reading in this moment.

Since I am already mentioning the reader, I would like to call his attention to the twin poems, as I call them. They are unique in my versified part of my opus. There are three twin poems in this chapter, and they are present in other chapters as well. The first sister pair appeared unintentionally, I liked it, so I created twin poems when ever I could break the theme in half.

Another uniqueness in the versified part of my opus – although I came across it in the works of other poets – are spontaneous, accidental, wandering rhymes, as I call them. These rhymes provide the artist of words with the possibility to create relatively strong and modern poems, with traditional roots, by using the advantages of free verse. Those rhymes are created...

Why am I saying this? Why am I explaining the details of my creative work? Why am I doing what mustn't be done?

It is probably because this volume is conceived as a collection of poetic parts written in prose and verse. Now, while I am writing the second part which should be lyric prose, I see that the dissipated narrator and the sinful autobiographer beat the sublime poet. (*Not even Hercules against two.*)

When the dilemmas grow into discontent, I tell myself that this volume develops two novel tetralogies, so it is not a pity if there is something novelistic about it.

Then I remember Heidegger's saying that the poet is half God and half man, and I feel how my discontent grows bigger and bigger. Unlike the poet, the novelist is more of an earth miner than a Heaven miner, I say to myself. While creating poems, I mustn't let the novelist influence the poet. The expressive power of poetry – at least good, authentic, highly valuable poetry – is a lot greater than the expressive power of prose.

I am saying this now, but...

I must admit, I read some stanzas, even whole poems with pleasure.

I would be happy if at least the poetry lovers would conclude that, in most chapters, there are two or three, and in the whole volume about twenty stanzas worth remembering (at least for a while). Because I consider that every poet who has a few impressive, fascinating, memorable poems in his opus, accomplished his mission completely.

Are there such poems in this volume?

Maybe only Erato and Calliope know that.

In any case, I don't.

And I don't need to know. We said, there is no need to talk about yourself, about your own creative work. You only need to create – intuitively, spontaneously, suicidally; like a bee, like a silkworm, like a pearl shell.

A VIEW FROM A FAR

Oh, our green,
golden times!
Times of revealing truths
which we perceive
only after many years.

Big meadows,
where we grazed cows
on the horizon, padded with grass
levee of a beloved but distant canal,
bordered with a string of equal,
blue green poplars,
which reminded me of an endless
column of walking soldiers.

I sometimes used to wonder:
What is out there, behind that border,
in the colourfull wide world?

Even my village,
hidden away at the other end
of the horizon, merged into the greenery,
with only the black and white church tower sticking out,
seemed mysterious to me, from time to time,
even though I knew
its people and streets well.

Then, I did not know
that many phenomena of life
seem beautiful and fascinating (to the naïve)
only when seen
from a far.

A VIEW FROM THE DEPTH

Oh, our green,
golden times!
Times of diving into dreams
which we, like bad pupils, repeat
even after we graduate from all the schools of life.

On Big meadows,
I would sometimes talk my friends,
the cowherd on vacation, into driving the cattle
to the beloved but distant canal.
After having a dip in the tepid shallow water,
I would take a dive into the cool, dark depth,
where songs of sedge do not reach
and storks do not tread.
There, I would open my eyes for a moment
and gaze into the sunlit
water surface.

I would wish to forever stay
at the bottom of the canal, at the foot of the
sedge thicket, under leaves of water lilies,
amongst fish and white water nymphs,
carefree, sheltered from the dry land,
eternally indifferent
to everything outside the water paradise.

Than, I did not know
that I would spend a big part of my life
in the muddy depths, looking at
the clear Olympic,
unreachable heights.

SUNNY SEPTEMBER IN THE YARD

The refreshed wind, which rushes at times,
and jumps over the torn down wooden gate,
once again, surprised,
stopped for a moment
over the yard full of plants, sun,
sharp shadows and silence.

Peace, followed by a howl, and again the soft rustle
of dry, curled lilac leaves
beside the garden wall,
sweet cherries over the fertile grapevine
and a few stumps of an aged plum
in front of the summer kitchen.

I'm sitting in the middle of grassy yard,
in an used out arm chair, sunlit amongst shadows,
bathed in golden dust, I'd say,
and, like a convalescent, I'm gazing
dreamily into the dark blue sky.

I hear: the kitchen door lazily creaks,
hinges squeak in a familiar sound.
I know: it's grandma, going out on the sun carrying a stool,
and the nosy wind starts again,
and through the chimney upwards it goes.

SUNNY SEPTEMBER IN THE FIELD

Sometimes, on Sundays, when I come to the village,
I have a late lunch, I get on my bike
and after visiting some old streets,
I go on to the fields, where
the meadows seem broadest,
the lines longest, and corns ripest.

I go deep into the sunlit, faded empire,
being followed by a rustle of
frail, dry, but alive corn leaves;
I stop at the very last crossroads in the field
in front of a derelict wooden cross,
never calmer, never more excited.

I am not excited only by the cross in the field,
with a torn tin ark and rusty crucified
Jesus; besides the whisper of the corn leaves,
this place calms and excites me with wideness of the sky,
abundance of memories and cosmic solitude.

I remember: we used to reap grain here.
Granddad already fragile, used to hide the sickles in the evening
and say: "Children, they are here under this big cross.
Remember, so you wouldn't have to look for them tomorrow,
in case tonight I lie in rest forever."

BUS, RUSHING DOWN THE PLAIN

Comfortably leaned back
in the seat by the window, you squint
in abundance of light.
On the vast, spring screen,
under the milky - blue sky,
green carpets, needles and threads of power lines,
locust trees around the ramshackle farms, pass by.

In the distance, behind landscapes covered in wheat,
bordered by mustard plants and field poppy,
the whole family stepped into the young corn
up to their knees.
Oh, I could use a shower of healthy sweat
instead of a tie,
the freshness of scented wind instead of a briefcase,
and, at least for two or three days,
a hoe full of ticks instead of
miserable, daily worries of a clerk.

The bus is rushing, milky - blue sky
is sunbathing in the rays which will
fertilize the generous Pannonian plain.
Blaze of wishes and shadow of torrent joy-sorrow-sadness
stirred up inside you.
On the horizon, yet another farm appears
– unfathomable like a Secret.

TRAIN, RUSHING THROUGH THE NIGHT

With a warm forehead
 leaned on the cold windowpane, you stare
 into the endless dark depth.
In the distance, oh, in the solitary distance,
a cluster of small lights.
 A part of the twinkling galaxy
 crouched at the end of the field.

There, covered with tavern mist,
 village idlers carouse.
 Along the fence, through all seven streets,
 barking of dogs resounds and the Autumn's sigh
 streams through the muddy secluded place.
In the kitchen, under a flickering light,
an old man is taking off his peasant shoes in silence;
 dinner is on the table. In the third street,
 a drop out student is sneaking
 on a young widow.

The train is rushing, the abyss of darkness
 is yawning above the black cape
 of Pannonian pastures.
 Inside you, there is a longing for the unknown
(though known), and a painful, sweet shiver.
In the distance, yet another light appears
 – like an indestructible Hope.

I CHERISH THEM IN MY STANZAS – AMULETS

I started absorbing life in the fields
which Gabriel Kostelnik,
as a seventeen-year-old high-school pupil,
in the idyllic collection "From my village",
with an everlasting love, romantically,
inspired with immature youth, naïvely,
yet brilliantly composed.

*Sun is scorching hot, wind is blowing, grain is swinging,
the nightingale flies out off it higher and higher.
It has already started singing, in a sweet voice:
at times sadly, at times happily – indescribable.*

*It flies high, under the clouds, look how high,
it flies, flies, barely to be seen,
its song sweetly echoes from a far
the whole tranquil, silent field resounds.*

*It already sang its song, still hanging in midair,
now it is flying back, fluttering its wings
above the wheat, it will merrily flap one last time,
and on the ground, it will warily quiet down.*

The verses of the idyllic collection string,
scenes of reaping, threshing,
harvesting corn, pressing grapes.
It is already snowing from the clouds – the children are happy,
sleigh riding, skating, Christmas carols and presents,
weddings, the return of spring, field work,
on Sundays, people sit on benches in the streets...
A hundred and seventy verses from my dear home village,
a hundred and seventy Kostelnik's, my
(maybe even your) scenes amulets.

I remember Djura Papharhaji
as an older friend from childhood.
His initial poems were
melancholic, more pungent than Kostelnik's.
This pal used to sing in his youth:

*I am the song of the wind, flower in the hair,
a seed thrown in the greasy, black furrow;
I am an eagle, a bird tired of endless wandering,
I am the pupil of the eye cried out
in years of waiting.*

"This universal stanza is worth
more than diamonds," I said to my friend.
"If you didn't belong to a small ethnic group,
it would have been often recited in many parts of the world.
Nevertheless, there are local flowers in your lyric wreath,
those flowers bloom the longest, happiest, more nostalgic,
have overpowering fragrance in the souls of the (un)happy
who think that they spent their most beautiful hours, days,
years of childhood and youth
in the furrows of Kerestur fields."

*Furrows robbers, elegant furrows,
the world does not know of a more mysterious road.
You have stolen the village, abducted the fields,
tangled the hooligan flight of the wind.*

*There, behind the poplars, far away, behind many fields
next to the gutter, blossomed a wild flower.
There, behind the years, behind many minutes
with it, you see off every long forsaken world.*

*Furrows in the fields, furrows guards,
where did you take my youth dreams?
Where did you take the long time thief?
Will he ever come back to the village?*

The most precious allure of the wider home village,
the most exciting and beautiful days of my youth
I left in Potisje, under the sky of Becej.

I cherish them in some stanzas
written by Stevan Raickovic.

*We did not expect, but still:
we take off just put on rags
and throw them wherever, in corners, on piles.
The Sun is here again. Suddenly, we think: it's summer.*

*That means: life! Once again, we are naked by the water.
But we are standing still, nobody says – enough
and dives in. (We were watching her from the bridge, wearing a
coat!) a branch with rotten leaves passes by our side.*

*We are thinking about summer coming back. But: it is a deceit!
From the invisible hills we hear something else:
wind is liberating, acorns and fir cones are falling...*

*We are standing on the bridge again, under the late sun, for a long time:
In front of us a glow in the middle of the town, a distant tin roof.
Beneath: the river flows away, lonesome, like a widow, gray like smoke.*

The enamored with Potisje longed for
allures of the wide world,
from time to time. This is evident from
his most beautiful, most fascinating,
most impressive stanza (in my opinion).

*It seems that we were standing, like in this moment
the whole time, for a long time,
because the islands in the far seas remained intact
by us and our voyage. Far cities
were alone without us in the moment the leaves fell upon them.*

There is no one who could so easily
give in to associations,
reminiscences, emotions,
and intoxicated with wind and fire,
traveled the real and imaginary
world, like Milos Crnjanski.
Therefore, he is (at least for me)
the greatest of them all
who can compare the trivial reality
to dreams.

*Now we are careless, light and tender.
We think: how silent and snowy
are the peaks of Ural.*

*Does a pale face we lost one night
sadden us,
We know that, somewhere, a spring
ruddily flows, instead of it!*

*A single love, a morning abroad,
wraps our soul, tighter and tighter,
with infinite peace of the blue seas,
from which grains of corals blush,
like sweet cherries from home.*

*We wake up at night and smile, dearly,
at the Moon with a drawn bow.
And we fondle distant hills
and icy forests, gently, with our hand.*

DREAMING WHILE HALF-ASLEEP

Yesterday, while I was half-asleep
a loud bang entered from the street.
It carried me over to a time long passed,
to another, much paler world.
A couple of days ago a sound of a trumpet
in early dawn, also carried me
into the childhood years.

When days become hot, and nights warm,
when scents of spring leaves and dewed flowers
rushed through the open window,
every morning while I was half-asleep
first loud bangs of heavy cow whip flew into my room
with black, muddy, sedge end,
and a bit later judgment day blasts of
Jericho's trumpet of a slobbery swineherd.

As soon as the cowherds awake the long streets
with bangs and shouts and lure out the treasure from stables,
they will meet at the end of the village
to hand over the gathered herd to two pals with dogs.
They will drive the herd towards Municipality pastures.
The swineherds will also meet at the other end of the village
to hand over the herd to a fellow
who will drive it to the swine meadow.

When mother comes into the room to wake me
I will sleepily mumble for a while.
Shirt, whip, bag with bread and bacon,
a ball of cheese and a greenish bottle of milk.
So parents wouldn't pay for the pasture,
kids from Makavska street
will drive the cows towards Big meadows.

The bang which came from the asphalt
of a street in Novi Sad
into the room on the highest floor,
wasn't a greeting from an ornate cowherd whip.
It was the cough of the car engine,
because of a starting glitch or something else.
The blasts of trumpet which
flew into my half-asleep, in early dawn a few days ago
wasn't the calling of the swineherd,
but a shriek of the truck horn.

The village is expanding, the Swine meadow
has been recently parceled out
and stuffed with row houses.
A large portion of the Big meadows is now
plowed and poisoned
with artificial fertilizers and pesticides.
The vanished world comes alive only
when deceptions, associations
embroider in my memory,
or in dreams before awakening.

GAZING INTO CHILDHOOD

I see the high, smiling sky
and a green-yellow-blue open field.
 And on it an archipelago of gray roofs,
 where I can make out my favourite island:

grandpa Aron's farm, dreaming
in the tranquility of a hot summer afternoon,
 surrounded by greenery, piles
 of straw, pigsties and sheds.

Behind the farm, in the shadow
of a horizontal white, partly peeled wall
 I see a lonely, pale,
 absentminded five-year-old boy.

He is sitting on a dry hillock,
carelessly spilling a fistful of soil through his fingers.
 A gander is honking above his head
 through an opening in the shed.

Even higher,
in the azure above the roofs,
 thinned locusts tops
 sadly murmur.

Windmill is left without wings.
Husker which grinds corn next to the threshing floor,
 is set in motion by bay Keselj
 who is slowly roaming in circles.

Grandpa Aron and uncle Janko are working
on the husker and horses. In the middle of the
threshing floor grandma Serafa, surrounded by poultry,
floats over spilled bread crumbs.

Now, when I look at her
with inner eyes,
it seems like, a saint
has just come down from Heaven.

Four grandpa's grandsons,
Joakim, Boris, Miron and Alek,
in an old, drafty shed
their kinder garden, their work shop,

dashed off something resembling a cart.
With grandpa's help, we learned doggy
harness, so now we try to turn
Rigov and Belka into our little horses.

Gazing into the childhood,
I see,
a silver flock of pigeons flying,
high, very high in the infinite azure depths.

And down, over flown with heat waves,
amidst green-yellow-blue fields,
a farm nostalgically dreams
in the tranquility of a summer afternoon.

MY RETURN TO THE HOME VILLAGE

My old, lacquered black fiacre
still, slowly sways, and like
 a comet, drags after itself
 a whitish dusty cloud (of oblivion).

After visiting different
fairs and scaffolds
 it has been rickety roaming through
 for years, even decades,

maybe it will eventually,
smoothly and discreetly, dive into
 the shadows of mulberry trees beside the road.
It will be my quiet return to the home village.

With a frozen smile on my face,
under a closed black roof,
 reclined on a chapped leather seat,
 which is strewn with the finest powder, like me,

I am passing along
the wonders of the world, motionless,
 indifferent towards the sights
 which still call my eyes.

I gaze into the sky more and more
and into pale (changed) landscapes,
 which I will visit one last time.
I see my quiet return to the home village.

I would like
to sway there in early spring.
Let's say, on a windy,
chill morning in March.

Under the fiacre roof
I would fist glimpse
at the golden border above the horizon
and at the light blue open sky.

It would be decorated with floating islands
as well as coral reefs on rims.
at that moment, young wind would play placid tremolo
on branches, like on strings.

Then, getting closer to the gardens
and threshing floors of the first houses in the village
I would see wooden, darkened,
partly broken fences. And ravens on them.

Behind them hills of cornstalks and
heaps of partly rotten but still fragrant hay.
I would see a landlord wearing a fur vest, merrily urinating
down the wind, in the middle of the threshing floor.

I would see a curious colt
jumping and roaming without a halter,
sniffing hens, daring the barking dog
and rushing through the hills and heaps of hay.

Those Pannonian gardens,
and those peasant threshing floors,
used to be my childhood paradise.
Now they are a dream of home village.

The black carriage
could role up in summer.
 Let's say, on a scorching hot,
 lonesome July afternoon.

It would fly through the fields
cutting the heat waves
 and husking the ripe wheat
 on both sides of the narrow line.

At the entrance to the village,
from the threshold of the windmill next to the sluice,
 miller and his cat would be the first to see me,
 naturally, both of them would be squinting and yawning.

Then, like in the old days,
when a magician used to come to the village
 my fiacre would bypass a bunch of tanned children
 swimming in the sweet-scented canal.

They would look at me,
not knowing that this
 seemingly ripened, burned out weird man
 is in fact their lost peer.

Who was,
according to the art relativity theory,
 rushing through expanse with the speed of fantasy,
 aging only in his dreams.

Finally,
he returned to his home village
 infinitely old and eternally young
 (like human longing).

Maybe I will return home
in the middle of autumn.
 Let's say, in twilight
 on a mild October day.

I still remember: during that season,
the clang of peasant wagons
 tired, slow, full of corn,
 resounded through the streets.

I hope that I will again,
like in the old dusks
 when we used to return from the fields with father,
 pass by piles of dry leaves.

Exactly then, in the dusk,
the neighbours would burn those leaves.
 And after all the wandering years
 I can still smell that strong, pleasant smoke.

Near our home,
on the Main Street,
 the smoke from burning piles mixed
 with the smoke from the kitchen in pantry.

While waiting for her husband
and their four children, mother would
 stir the fire in the stove,
 so she could make dinner sooner.

Polenta with milk
tasted better
 than last night's
 caviar snack.

Should I return to
the point of departure in winter,
 I will wait for the first snow
 and for darkness to coat the village.

It hides, all the sinners,
even the wanderers from the nosy.
 (Woe, it also hides dreadful vagabonds,
 thieves, bandits, murderers.)

Snow, without wind. Silence,
just the rustle of snow flakes.
 Here and there, on the Main Street,
 a sad light bores the dark.

That dilapidated pantry, in the middle
of the family estate,
 with a darkened wooden gable,
 a small window and silhouette

of the sooty chimney, asleep under
the roof slope, I know still awaits me.
 Every night, his squinting, old,
 dreamy kitchen eye lights up.

Inside, a lid clangs
from time to time. So that
 my lonesome pensive mother
 wouldn't fall asleep over dinner once more.

So she wouldn't
dream about me again:
 that I am ill,
 and that I am coming home.

An while the old
lacquered black fiacre
 sways like an ark, and already beaten up
 travels through the great, wide world,

I still, carefully
(although, tiredly)
 gaze into landscapes I call home,
 where, surely, I will never tread again.

And, though I am full of knowledge,
and world's experience,
 I feel how my soul
 already stiffened, freezes.

Because, Heavens,
I am the winner who
 recognized himself
 among the concurred.

III

FOR THE ARTIST'S BIOGRAPHY

During my youth years, I had a fairly strong inclination towards painting. I even used to paint a lot while living in Subotica. Before and after that, I used to socialize with some of the members of the Fine Arts club (mostly painters and sculptors) at the Adult Education Centre in Subotica. But, after a couple of colourful months I concluded that I could never catch up with Alek on his fine arts path. And that one painter is enough in the Book about us. And that I would not get far if I try to take both fine arts and literary path. And that I will be less useful to people as a painter than (maybe) I will be as a writer. I gave priority to literature. Because of the above mentioned reasons, and because of the fact that I consider the art of thoughts, emotions and words more relevant than the art of lines, emotions and colours. Or any other, for that matter. (Back than, I used to say that music is the purest art, painting is the most pleasant one, in the process of creation at least, theatre and film can be the most attractive forms of art, but, considering its role in human spirituality and human intellect, literature is the most relevant form of art.)

Brief painting experience gave me an opportunity to convince myself that I could have been a fairly good painter, but it also gave me a chance to notice my big flaw: I coloured my sheets of paper for aquarelle and tempera, hardboards and canvases stretched out on a frame to the last square millimeter. I knew that the artist needn't explicitly say everything, that he should give his exterior collaborator in creating a work of art an opportunity to think hard, to complete it, but still I coloured the entire surface of the paper, hardboard, canvas.

The undestined painter has forwarded this defect to the writer. He cannot eliminate it either, so he will give his friends three paragraphs of new, maybe useful, maybe superfluous remarks.

A few dozen years ago I asked Alek to introduce, in his diary and other notes, reflexions not just about his own public and private life but about his artistic efforts, difficulties, results. My friend granted this request, and wrote quite a lot of notes about his paintings. Those notes became models for the poems in which he is the main character, that is, if I were to use poetic syntagm, poetic subject. The titles of these poems are in fact names of his paintings. But this does not mean that based on the poems one can always get a good idea about the content and form of the mentioned paintings. The artist's visions and associations in different kinds of notes are sometimes very different from the artistic episodes and totalities which were the motive for making the notes.

For a while I was thinking about enriching this volume with reproductions of quick witted, praised, poetically varied paintings. However, Alek suggested to give up that idea. Because, he said (smiling), the visual creations will over shadow the verbal ones. I agreed.

Artists who exclusively write poetry are able to turn nearly everything they see, hear and feel into poems. Everything that preoccupies them. Artists who consider poetry just a "hobby" are usually choosier. I was like that too, until the beginning of the year I finished molding the fifth volume. I used to think back then, that it should contain about a hundred poems. Two and a half times more poems than I have written in the last three decades. So, during the poetic 1991. I mercilessly spurred my own imagination – and wrote various poems.

A sin which maybe has some good sides.

A FAIRYTALE FROM THE MEMOIR

A long, long time ago,
before Kalidasa, even before Ovid,
when the poet, sad and tired of life,
strolled along the beach in the moonlight
and listened to the song of the sea,
a secret moon beam
whispered to him:

"Where ever you go,
where ever you are, whatever you do,
always bare in mind
that your life is just a dream.
Sometimes beautiful, sometimes bad, cheerful or sad,
but always just a dream, deceitful
and transient."

Beaming with the fatal knowledge,
the versifier become a chronic drunkard,
without any hope for recovery.
Since the beginning of time,
drunk and thirsty, he has been sitting by the water
which has taken his life
into its depths.

Thus, if you see a weird man
on the beach in the moonlight,
know: it is a poet
getting drunk with dreams instead of reality,
creating inimitable verses
– because sleepwalkers write the most exquisite verses
on moon beams and sea waves.

AN INTERVIEW FOR MEMOIR

"Poet,
the last man
amongst people.
Lost man,
crucified on the cross of life
and its meaninglessness.
Where does this tempting night
lead you? Will you
love, sing, grieve,
or kill your sorrow tonight?
Or will you, perhaps,
think in one moment:
Man is Prometheus,
and life is Sisyphean task,
and you will end it all?"

"My friend,
good man,
curious skeptic. I don't see
the time I rush through.
Maybe I will
love, sing, grieve,
or kill my sorrow tonight. And maybe I will,
drunk, wave my hand and say:
"Let everything pass by. This is not
the first nor the last wild night.
Let the considerate amongst us
figure out the meaning of life.
My soul is happy
if there is enough wine,
dreams – and poetry.

CONVICT

Morning after morning, it's the same thing:
as soon as the foggy dawn
falls upon the dungeon,
I wake up in a stone cell,
rusty chains squeak inside me.

Still drowsy, I rush
to the prison yard, I greet the others
with a deep, silent disgust,
and the stroll starts, oh, upon the paths
trodden by convicts surrounded with an impenetrable wall.

Days are pacing, without a sound
years are passing by, sounds are falling off
a dusty bell like mortar,
one requiem for an ex friend, he asked:
"Metete, are we men or wolves?"

I'm returning to my stone cell,
I always go back only to it. Four walls,
a few buttons to play with, and a window to the world.
Neither full, nor hungry, defeated without a fight,
I'm looking at the picture in the distance, and I know it by heart.

And now, what should I do? Should I rebel?
Oh, no! "God, leave me here,
and I will praise You: Osana!
I still don't feel like going to the fields of Eternal Liberty,
I want to be a convict to the last day."

ATHEIST

I, the architect of the universe for all eternity,
trembling and transient, like a lump of foam,
I set off for the Lord's landscapes,
to look for the light, to illuminate me.

My cry flew through the universe:
"Teach me, oh Almighty, grant my wish!
Light up the intergalactic crossroads,
or at least give me blind faith.

I see, before me, a thousand paths.
But, I know: only one is right.
Teach me, oh Almighty, how to discover
which one will lead me through life undefeated."

I asked the Lord many more questions,
but I didn't learn his secrets.
I finally realized that the sky is empty,
and I bitterly shouted to the chimerical bearded fellow:

"Nothing on this Earth, except naïve fairytales,
retains my wish to believe in you!
So, what gives you the right to punish me
for believing only in myself?"

AN ARTIST TRAVELING AROUND THE WORLD

Somewhere, the dawn is breaking.

Dark blue and ruddy.

Still drowsy, it rushes above the sea,
already awake, it rushes above the land.

In some palace, a maid
is checking if the flowers are fresh.

Under a baldachin a lady,
sweet scented and warm, is stretching and purring.

Somewhere, the street newspaper vendors
are gathering.

An engineer, in a factory hall,
is worrying about an old machine.

In a hospital room, a young man
is dying. In the forth, a grandpa.

In the ninth a woman saw her baby's head
for the first time.

On some meadow, a peasant
is strongly swinging his scythe.

The morning sun is burning him,
dewy grass is fondling him.

Somewhere, the winds are struggling
with a gray mountain.

They are driving dark clouds upon it,
among the reefs they are whistling a song.

Some province town
is sinking into twilight.

It handed over the streets to the calmness of autumn,
its bells toll in harmony.

A rather old construction worker
is rubbing his frostbitten face with his hand.

His assistant is passing him mortar,
they are mending the corner of the lowest stair.

A gangster gang is partying
somewhere on the other part of the world.

Someone will lose his gold tonight,
and the action will take a few lives, too.

There, and here, the artist is sitting
on the throne made of reality and imagination.

He feels how mad, adventurous, vane
powers crucify him.

Fever is striking behind his forehead,
a thought is widening the glowing eye.

Somewhere, the dawn is breaking.
Dark blue and ruddy.

WRITER IN A LEXICON

I squeeze in two busses
in order to get to work. I got out of
the first, the second will arrive in a quarter of an hour.
I'll drop by a bookstore. Maybe I'll find
a good, cheap book.

I find "The Lexicon of Yugoslav Writers", the third volume.
I am leafing through it, curiously, in a hurry: I am looking for
myself. Here I am! My name and my photograph. Is it possible?
I find out when I was born, the schools I graduated from,
where I worked, my wife's name.
Man, I in a lexicon! On page 140.
And Krleza is all the way on page 446.

I arrive to work, I show the lexicon
to my colleagues. Some are indifferent, others are
smiling mockingly, some can hardly hide their envy,
others their hate. I knew that
I would repent after bragging.

At home, at the door, I shout to my wife:
"Honey, you too are mentioned in the history of literature!
Here is the proof, see the page 140."
Honey first looked at the last page. The price is there.
"Until when are you going to spend money on those books of
yours?" The children grumble, too: they feel bad
because their names are not in the lexicon next to their mother's.

In my room, I am leafing through the relic in peace.
And I come across a bunch of
half-educated, untalented scribblers.
Parcae, everybody can be a writer! Everybody is in the lexicon!
I put the relic in a closet. Let the fine dust gild it.

PIECES OF VERSIFIED PROSE

Today, many poets write
versified prose. Without rhymes,
without rhythm. A twit
comes up with a few simple sentences,
he turns them into verses by breaking them into pieces,
and here is a poem, in just a few minutes.

"Versified prose also has rhythm", says the fool.

He knows that, but he doesn't know that there is a huge difference
between rhythm of prose and rhythm of poetry.

Rhythm of prose is like driving on a road,
or sometimes on a meadow, or even through a forest,
flat or bumpy, rugged;

rhythm of poetry is like sailing on a river,
sometimes on a lake, or even on a sea,
with small, bigger or big waves.

Murmur of waves is a harmonious rhyme.

PS:

Having written the previous stanza,
I started leafing through the manuscript,
and examining each page,

I concluded that, sometimes,
I also write versified prose.

Maybe some poetry tasters
will like it more than my other poems, I thought.

Still, I decided to correct everything
that can be corrected,

in the undulation of
inspiration, imagination,
intuition, reflexion and emotion,

I turned the rhythm of prose
into the rhythm of poetry.

LITERARY REUNION I

In a city which is considered
a bigger cultural center,
according to the population,
and number of schools, cinemas, museums,
concerts, theatre plays,
and other things,
that pleasant autumn evening,
many pupils, students, young
professors, engineers and doctors,
educated strivers
form different fields;
thus, representatives of
the so-called intelligence,
mingled on the promenade.

That evening,
in the City Library,
which drowsily looks over
the mentioned promenade
with dilapidated windows,
six so-called distinguished writers
form another cultural centre
were guest artists.

The literary reunion was attended by
(not counting the librarian
and a couple of cultural department employees,
who had to be there
ex-officio)
five devotees of kind word.

LITERARY REUNION II

Educated strollers,
 who considered mingling on the promenade
 in front of the City Library
just an introduction to
a fairly good film
or theatre play,
 who were able to have
 meaningful conversations,
 or at least enjoy the allure
of a mild autumn's evening,
didn't have the reason to
regret the missed
 reunion with the co-called
 distinguished writers.

In the City Library,
 during the literary reunion,
 self-contented artists,
 with their over extensive
autobiographical introductions,
 incoherent, glean verses
 and banal, dull
 prose parts
 bored the librarian,
 kind cultural department employees
(who sat there
 ex-officio) and a few
 naïve, seduced, betrayed
 devotees of kind word.

THE ABSOLUTE POET

*He was traditional and modern,
classical and contemporary. He was one of the rare
original creators. He wrote poems
to discover why he lives. He walked without a road,
and the road created itself behind him. He was a genius
for revealing glances, cosmic orientation.*

He maximally condensed everything that he learned and felt.

*For him, poetry was the highest expression
of the human creation. His room was
an alchemist laboratory of spirit and language.*

*Every letter of his poetry is swollen with
multiple meaning explosive. Every word
has a filigree precise position in a verse.*

*Every word is functional, burdened up to the highest
carrying limit. With the risk of baring it,
he purified his poetry from the redundant singing
accessories. He deprived it from rhymes of chanson music,
and from everything that is fragile and transient,*

*from everything confessional and sentimental. From the rich
treasury of life, he took only the essence. The perfection
of his metaphors and symbolism is brought to its peak.*

*His verse is free, but the architecture of the stanza is
strict, and, in its own perfection, it does not allow
neither reduction nor addition of details.*

The whole universe is fit into his every poem.

*He was able to find a visible frame to every abstract thought,
but that thought was never fully revealed,
and nobody can say that he discovered
the secret poetic cosmos of his work.*

His verses are riddles with many answers.

*He took an oath of loyalty to poetry, and he
kept his promise. That is how he became one of
giants who marked our epoch.*

Having read this abundance
of impressive panegyrics, my colleagues
and acknowledged poetry experts wrote
in the honor of a recently deceased poet,
I remembered my friend Boris's habit,
he writes important quotations from newspapers
and books in his own diary notebooks,
so I made a stanza out of the panegyrics.
Then I took the deceased's
representative collection.

After the fifth poem, I started wondering, in confusion:
Am I reading the book of a praised genius,
or some other author with the same name?
After the tenth poem, I started to despair,
because I didn't have the patience
to examine the work of art.
Somehow, I got to the fifteenth
or sixteenth poem. But there,
I finally gave up, I was angry at myself
because I wasn't motivated,
maybe even capable, to decipher
the meaning of the divine verses, meant for
the superb members of the selected
choir who know the secrets of the poetic cosmos,
I concluded that the creation
of the absolute poet is
subtle, at times brilliant
spiritual play,
or, metaphorically
or symbolically said,
a crock of shit.

A SINFUL POEM

A poem needn't
clearly state something.
Its existence is enough,
say the most competent
poetry experts.
It is not a banal story,
but a brilliant,
mysterious, unreachable
bead of spirit, emotion
and imagination.

There, I exist.
I am trying to be silent.
But, alas, my entire soul is fidgeting
from within, it doesn't let me be,
it wants to communicate with everybody.
Regardless to the price, I'd rather
be a sinful living soul
than a shiny jewel,
a mysterious star
in the infinite universe.

BAD WEATHER FORECAST

Some utopists said
that when
the ideal time comes
everybody will write poetry.
They didn't say,
that probably
nobody will read it.

Sometimes, bitter,
I think that
works of poets will
only be read by other poets.
To find out
whether they write better
than their rivals.

CAPRICES OF INSPIRATION

This morning, while standing
in an overcrowded paunch of a city bus,
I took a notebook out of the
bag hanging on my left shoulder
and between two traffic lights,
with distort, half drunk letters
I wrote three short verses.
Traveling companions secretly stared into the notebook
and eyed the writer, as if he was a spy
or an absentminded crank.

In the morning, while sitting
at work and listening to a colleague
who was explaining the problems
of the next assignment to his collaborators,
I took my notebook again, and wrote:
You whetted
my sensibility to the bone
with a verse.
My colleague asked me
if I was writing down his work problems.

A few minutes ago, while lying
in a hot bathtub,
staring at the ceiling like Archimedes,
I knocked three times on the door.
"Ah my boy needs his back soaped,"
said my wife while entering the bathroom.
"Get a piece of paper and a pen, and write:
This morning, while standing
in an overcrowded paunch
of a city bus..."

MORALS OF A BOOK PROMOTION

Last night, after I had a bath,
and typed the poem I dictated to my wife
in the bathroom,
I put on my best suit, sat in my car
and drove to the night club "Condor",
to a promotion of the third collection
of the rachitic poet onanist.

The talented but silly honoree
wouldn't attract more than ten friends
to the promotion of his little book,
but the publisher is competitive and influential,
so about a hundred lovers of aperitifs,
loud music, white teeth, long legs,
gathered in coloured half dark of a hippie bar.

The publisher greeted the guests from the stage,
the musicians sang their two songs,
the critic read his positive review,
the honoree recited his best three poems.
The whole time, merry guests didn't care about
writer's babbling, they murmured, sipped their drinks,
mingled, flirted in the colourfull half dark.

I accidentally found myself close to the poet
when he got off the stage still trembling from stage fright.
He was staring (like me) at white necks and
long legs, eyes and ears that didn't hear the actor
reading poems form the collection under the spotlight.
Tonight, happy stallions will ride these show girls once again
and, alas, the honoree will painfully onanite.

TO CREATE OR TO LIVE I

Struggling and fate
of many mortal immortals
hold facts which provoke
a much greater envy than admiration.
Fortunately for the unfortunate, some
illusory or really great
evoke pity as well.

Businessmen and politicians,
holding levers of major powers:
money and authority, are subscribed
on earthly god's privileges.
But, enjoyment in power is dirty,
and very often covered with a shadow
of hatred, turmoil, shackles.

Shinny stars of show business,
athletes and pseudoartists,
have attractive everyday life,
full pockets, love adventures.
Fragility of popularity devastates them,
the emptiness they carry within,
and leave behind.

Genuine, relevant artists,
after years of hard work,
get satisfaction from both people
and vocation they devoted themselves to.
Nevertheless, pity peeps from praises,
because, preoccupied with their Work,
they lost their own life.

TO CREATE OR TO LIVE II

Certainly, there are still lucky people
who, like semi divine beings,
write verses dictated
by pure inspiration,
in the beauty of nature and life,
amongst black locusts or ash grove,
in some girl's embrace.

If my memories weren't so stirred up,
I could also find verses in my opus
written under olden stars,
in happy times of big dreams and expectations,
in humid willow groves and dark poplar forests,
in lusty and exhausting embraces.
(The wind blows away that time the quickest.)

Now, I write poems with anxiety in a comfortable apartment
(a hole between concrete bones of a skyscraper),
daily, I stare at verses
on a computer monitor.
My body cries out for a walk, and my soul for life.
In vain. When I feel the creation fever,
I don't leave the comfortable-somber solitary cell.

From time to time, in silent despair,
the rebel part of my spirit screams
that I live like a black slave
in a monk cell.
I silence the rebel. I console myself
that, after my requiem, I will
live my real life in my Work.

POET'S LETTER OF THANKS

Friends awarded
their friend the Believer with
a Decoration of the eagle beak
with golden claws.

Gentlemen treated
the gentleman Opportunist with
a Charter of the meritorious
with silver stripes.

I hope I will never
get on the list
of those who award the cunning
cultural-political
bureaucratic groups.
But maybe, at one time,
by good old custom,
the "godfathers" will try to
buy me off with a cheap recognition.
I am gratefully thankful in advance
and I recommend them to
dump my declaration,
to wipe their asses with
the charter.

POET'S CURSE

Oh, poetry,
the intoxicating tyrant,
damn you!
You whetted
my sensibility to the bone
with a verse.
And you made
a cobweb out of
my strongest nerve,
to expect from life
things that many people
didn't dream of,
you, magician,
you taught me that!

IV

RURAL IN JAWS OF URBAN

Now, we are carefree, light and tender. / We think: how silent, snowy / are the peaks of Ural... I used to recite out loud on Friday afternoons. While relaxedly pressing the pedals of my bicycle, I used to leave behind Becej; gazing into wide fields, on the right, in far mist, which were bordered by bluish levee of Tisa. On my way to Tot's Village, which is about fifty kilometers long, under spring (or autumn) sun, I will sentimentally, nostalgically or pathetically recite "Sumatra" and "Serenata", and seven or eight Milos's unsurpassable poems, as well as a rather long string of Raickovic's verses devoted to Tisa, plain, grass, silence.

My wife Enikő was a kindergarten teacher who had just begun her career in a village kindergarten. She was a tenant in uncle Pista and aunt Terez's house. They were very mild middle-aged peasants without children. On Sunday afternoons, before riding my bicycle back to Becej, I loved to sit in their living room arranged that afternoon, perfumed with a cheap perfume, turned into a guest room - and gaze, from the half dark interior through a three pane window on the frontal wall, at catalpas and poplars across the street, trembling in gusts of spring (autumn) wind, and at fields behind the trees. (In Tot's Village, you can see fields from any place in any street.) Those calming and exciting moments, I experienced in a room which was so much like the rooms where I spent my green and half ripe years, in that people's house, the people who led peasant lives pleasing to God, not knowing about my tortures, hopes and dreams on my life and literary path, those idyllic moments from the time of Great

Expectations still rest somewhere in the half dark of my being like a precious picture amulet.

When our daughter was born, a rather small room Enikő lived in until then wasn't enough for her anymore, so she rented a part of a house on a grass square in the middle of the village, across the street from the church. The owners were two old sisters. One of them lived, with the husband, children and grandchildren, in Kanjiza, the old-fashioned little town on the river Tisa, and the other, the spinster, remained attached to the beloved village and mutual home. We got to know her as the octogenarian aunt Viktus. She lived in the back part of the house. Enikő, Konstanca and their periodical guest in the form of a husband and father had at their disposal one of two front rooms and a small anteroom, which served as a kitchen to my darling wife.

Autumn is my favourite season. From of all its gifts I like wind the most. It makes me happy because it is capricious, at times strong, raising dust in the streets and fields, whistling among branches and chimneys, dispersing clouds on stormy sky. I like clear, sunny, warm autumn; I adore gloomy, rainy, cold autumn.

When cold autumn rains would shower Tot's Village, I used to love sitting in a rather small fort room of the peasant house and staring at spacious, deserted, weedy square and the church on the opposite side. It was surrounded by a meadow bordered by a low fence and a line of black locusts of uneven height and different age. I thought to myself more than once that the place where Enika worked could become my permanent residence, like Clear Field for Tolstoy, Vjesenska for Sholohov, Oxford upon Mississippi for Faulkner.

I haven't been to Tot's Village for a long time. I still have Great Expectations, but I definitely moved from the rural into the urban world. After having written these lines, in a room on the eighth floor I am gazing upon the fields behind Novo naselje over a dense cluster of four stores buildings. Soon skyscrapers will sprout out of that field.

A BUTTERFLY WENT ASTRAY INTO A CITY

Look, a butterfly went astray
into a city this morning.
Bright yellow,
illuminated by rays of
wintry sun,
vivacious,
naïve like all butterflies.

It landed
on a huge appliances
store window,
it stood still, hesitated, wandered,
and then fluttered its wings again
and flew into
a new adventure.

It flew around the bun of a big headed lady,
(probably attracted by the smell
of her hair spray),
than around the hat
of a pensive professor or bank employee,
and finally it
landed, on the edge of the pavement,
on a dead, gray
shrub mummified with
dust and dry mud.
On the sketches of
the Town planning institute
the shrub is
marked as city greenery.

It stood still there,
it hesitated, wandered,
and then fluttered its wings,
made a few pirouettes
and after blazing in the sun
once more,
it disappeared under the wheels
of a green truck.

STREET MUSICIANS

Merry is the tune
springing
from their instruments,
but their hearts
are stiff
because of the callousness
of the passers by.

In their land,
behind seven seas,
in the Gypsy quarter,
they used to count
thousand dollar bills
in advance,
merrily chatting with one another.

The passers hurry by,
not looking at the empty box,
and the Gypsies need to eat.
The musicians
will sleep
on the railway station
with their stomachs empty.

STREET VENDORS

They set off from a dreary mountain
with a fervent wish
to concur the city by storm.

They neither had powerful fathers,
nor scholarships,
soon
they comprehended hunger.

Christmas is coming,
and the New Year. Festive mood,
on the boulevard,
is contributed by the students-vendors
wearing windcheaters, who
endure behind counters
all day.

The wish to concur the city by storm
is stiffening.
Bitterness arises in their souls.
Not even the title of a doctor, engineer,
will erase
these days, this silent
humiliation.

OLD WOMAN ON A BALCONY

Dressed in black, wearing a kerchief,
 silent and still,
 like chiseled in stone,
she is longsomely standing near the fence
of a narrow open window
 in a two room cage on the third floor.
 Her daughter and son-in-law are at the office,
 her grandchildren are at school. There are no neighbours here.
 She dusted and vacuumed the flat,
 watered the flowers in pots,
made lunch. Through a narrow,
 crevice filled with sky,
 between two adjacent skyscrapers,
 once more she gazed into the distance,
 into the time long past.

In the village, on a long street,
 a dear, dilapidated house,
 where she spent the best forty years of her life,
 longs for her like a faithful bitch.
 She has sold it recently, at her children's demand.
 Unforgettable, irretrievable neighbours
will get together at the corner tonight, too.
 Will they, alas, talk about her a bit?
 She visited her husband's grave
 three times a week for eleven years.
 And now the old man is sleeping under weeds.
 Dear God, will the children fulfill
at least one of her requests:
 will they bury their mother,
 wrenched out of the dear village,
 from the native soil,
 next to their father?

AN ENCOUNTER IN THE CITY THROG

Have you ever seen,
while minding your own business, in the city throng,
where nobody looks at anybody,
a man in a worn out suit
with a crooked sniveling mouth,
wiping his red eyes, full of tears,
walking with his head bowed,
looking for a clear passage near the wall,
like he wants to hide
from every glance.

In that moment,
did you wish to ask him:
"My friend, what misfortune befell you?
What terrible thing happened to you?
Maybe, your blood brother died
or your beloved wife left you?
Or, maybe you found out
that a cancer is nesting inside you,
or, while you
were peacefully working
for an honest pay,
a car run over your child
who was the spring and mouth
of the river of your life?

I met such a man this morning,
but I didn't ask him anything.
I was blaming myself for that first,
and then I sought for salvation in the thought
that everything is in the hands of the Inconceivable,
who assigns a fatal cross to everybody
in the minute of his conception.

THRESHING ON TROCADÉRO

Harvest lasted for days and nights,
this summer, under the aegis
of Chaillot, the symbol of flakon,
in the Field of Mars.

Harvests lasted for centuries
under the aegis of palaces and castles,
on the cultivated fields and meadows,
near villages, rivers, main roads.

I managed to revive this world last year,
on the two thirds of a triptych.
I accidentally asked myself twice:
Would I like to live in it?

Children used to await the threshing
on the Big street, like an attraction.
The threshing machine itself, enormous, with freight
elevator, looked like a powerful shaggy dragon.

I didn't know that Danilo Homza
will drive it on the Paris square.
That he will stuff the dragon with harvested people,
and that he will curse his assistant Gering.

My hand obeyed, my eyes enjoyed
while the third part of the triptych was being born.
So I needn't ask myself
if I would like to go back to my childhood.

VERSAILLES – BEAUBOURG

Castles on mountain tops,
palaces on lake and river banks.

Wigs and crinolines, polished carriages,
boudoirs, love whispers, intrigues.

Proud officers, two-horned hats,
shiny swords, restless horses.

Cannonades, mass assaults,
balls after bloody meadow feasts.

I am trying to revive this world, these days,
on a half of a diptych.

I have asked myself several times already:
Would I like to live in it?

Chimneys like ever burning cigarettes
among apartment houses and forests.

Cadmium and mercury in the world's seas,
oil and feces in regional rivers.

All computer monitors,
firing pads and space-suits.

Laboratories, formulas, genetic mutations,
plastic in galleries resembling refineries.

My hand is giving out
while I am portraying the second part of the diptych.

So I needn't ask myself
if I would like to go live in that world.

SUBOTICA

Ah, that City hall!

(Hungarian variant of secession)

Its corridors labyrinths
with decorated ceilings
and blue carved benches.

It is a girl's treasury, where I wandered so many times,
yearning for the very thing I could never become
its lifetime prisoner.

I am saddened by a memory of two or three fiacres,
of a dilapidated palace and a forsaken synagogue,
of long, silent, mostly rural streets,
through which I used to come back home
from the editorial office of "Rukovet"
(placed in one of innumerable rooms in the City hall),
from the library and bookshop.

I was coming back to an old earthen house
covered with reed, slightly damaged by humidity flowers.
Its thick walls, and low, so called blind door,
made me sure that I am, somehow,
prolonging lives of my ancestors.

I stopped wandering the corridors-labyrinths
and long, silent mostly rural streets a long time ago.

The city I considered my own for a while,
where I intended to spend my whole life,
to me, is again the same as before

I got to know it: meaningless province town.

I wouldn't accept to languish in it today.

But, that corner of the world, so dear to me,
where I spent a part of my life, I still carry
inside a part of my soul, so I can, whenever I want,
at least, shortly peak inside.

NOVI SAD

"I would like Novi Sad to be my town, "
I used to say fifteen years ago.
My home and family were still in Subotica,
but I was working in RTV Novi Sad.
Accidentally, I was a tenant near the house
in front of which, along the fence, in my student days,
I had whispered to a high school girl about eternal love.
The fence was still here, youth and love were fading
in memories. Still, I wanted
to merrily sing to the reoccupied town,
to talk tenderly and amorously to it: "You white Pannonian dove!"
My heart is heavy with memories and the thought
that I am starting from scratch for the second time,
lonely, sometimes because of scarcity of money,
discreetly hungry at but stops,
or in front of different windows,
in long queues, waiting at the railway station,
in the smoky waiting room
(where I wrote these lines as well),
dreaming of better times.

After the long fifteen years,
it is certain that Novi Sad
will be my life habitat.
My family is here, my flat, car
bearable work (to hell with it!),
There is some hope for my literary work here.
So, I am staying here. Besides,
I don't know where I can go now.
I am past the existential crisis;
I am settling down – yet sometimes I feel
bitterness in my mouth.

WAITING FOR D-DAY

Fifteen years ago,
when I became a zealous worker
and an inhabitant of Novi Sad
for the second time,
I wrote these five stanzas:

Something seems to be wrong with me
in the city full of numerous memories.
At times it seems that I am embittered with it
without a reason, at times I have a feeling that
it maliciously conspired against me.

Not only does it not
fulfill my expectations as a writer
but it
causes unpleasant surprises
to me as an ordinary citizen.

For instance, at bus stops,
I usually arrive exactly when the metal colossus,
having swallowed many depersonalized bodies,
closes the pneumatic door
in front of everybody's faces. (Ha-ha!)

At the supermarket, where I buy
my solitary dinner, a rather long line awaits me
in front of the cash register,
at least one house wife with two full baskets
is standing in it, as if she is preparing for a war.
Usually, there is an older man behind me
he is accidentally pushing me with his basket,
and he is constantly coughing behind my neck.

In a restaurant, where,
as a holder of a meal ticket,
I eat semi tasteful lunches,
I follow the holy waiter with my eyes
for a long time before he notices me.
(This, actually, has good sides too,
for example, I scrawled this poem on
a paper napkin, while waiting for the feeder.)

This is what I scribbled
fifteen years ago,
when I started living and working
in Novi Sad for the second time.
In the mean time, something around me
and something inside me changed.
I don't consider this town my enemy
any longer, what is more I intend
to stay in it until the end.
(As a writer) I am still waiting for
D-day, but I don't know
whether it will bring me what I wish for.
Sometimes, I suspect that the Inconceivable
will sooner send a Black Angel
– to give me
another form of existence.

OUR BEAUTIFUL HOUSE

When Novo naselje was being built,
my dear wife and I
approached two long eight stores skyscrapers,
I thought that I was looking at two concrete galley
skeletons at the bottom of the Pannonian see.

After a while,
settlers form all over Balkan
started occupying the numerous ship cabins,
all four entrances were full of furniture
and marry babel, which can often be heard
at the beginning of a new life itinerary.

We rarely remember those happy beginnings.
We are more occupied with what we see and experience
daily the minute we get out of the flat.
In both elevators the mirrors are often shamelessly spitted,
the walls are scribbled, floors sometimes pissed.
Switches in the halls are frequently smashed,
mailboxes at the entrance are demolished.

"I would first send most of these people,
who grew up in forests, to a civilization course
before I let them live in skyscrapers."
says uncle Stojan, while looking at the broken birch
in front of the entrance, and at the crushed decorative bushes,
the grass trampled and polluted with trash.

Someone urged us to come to our senses,
to tidy the entire building we are going to live in
for a long time, in a voluntary action.
In vain. Although we want order, we don't act,
like we just temporarily live here.

OUR WONDERFUL YOUTH

Teenagers from the neighborhood have been
annoying me during many summers,
gathered on parking lots in front of the building,
until midnight, sometimes even longer,
awake, screaming, laughing.

Just now, in newspapers,
on pages with obituaries (which I sometimes read
for no reason at all),
I caught sight of a wonderful twenty-year-old,
one of those who irritate me in summers
when they race around on their mopeds.

*Little brother! Mother is crying
days and nights, but she doesn't hear
the dear voice: "Here I am, mom!"*

Next to this obituary, there is another one with the same face,
another cry from earth to sky:

*My most precious eyes,
your sister will always love you!*

Maybe I am crazy for saying
the things I say,
but I have to say that for a moment
while gazing at the black, murdered mother
and wounded, aching sister,
I shed a tear over the obituaries.

I understand youth more and more,
its great hunger for life
and caprices springing from immaturity;
I can hardly bare the game of Fate,
my weaknesses are crazier than before.

IN THE ELEVATOR I

"Sorry, madam, can I help you?"
"Why do you think I need help?"
"You look confused. Maybe you are visiting somebody,
and you forgot the number of the flat."
"I am not confused, I am recollecting.
The cashier seems to have given me less change."
"I thought that you are looking for somebody."
"I am not, I live here."
"Really? On which floor?"
"On the seventh. On the North side."
"Is it possible? I live on the eighth.
On the South side, though."
"Than we are first neighbours, so to speak."
"Do you live here long?"
"About ten years."
"Unbelievable! I have lived here ten years, too.
Is it possible that we have never met?"
"Your face is familiar."
"I think I have seen you somewhere.
Maybe in the hall or even in the elevator."
"Now we know that we are neighbours.
And close ones, too. Only the stairs separate us."
"I am glad. We are still relatively young,
hopefully we can get to know
our whole neighbourhood before we die."
"I hope so, too. Goodbye, neighbour."
"Goodbye. Now that we know we are neighbours,
maybe we will meet more often."
"I don't think we will,
but at least we will recognize each other."

IN THE ELEVATOR II

"Good afternoon, neighbour."

"Oh, good afternoon, neighbour.

After six months we meet again
in the elevator.

Now we know each other,

but, unfortunately, we can't see each other."

"It's really depressing. For three months now,
there's no light in the elevator. The light bulb burned out,
and there is nobody to replace it. It's tolerable during the day,
but at night I'm just afraid to get in.

I call this negligence imprudence!"

I agree, neighbour,

it's imprudence, but I don't know whose."

"Who has been replacing the light bulbs so far?"

"The president of the tenant's council.

When he got bored, he asked me to
replace him, so I changed them for a while.

Finally, I got bored as well.

We, the president and I, suggested
to some neighbors (to your husband, too,
I might add) to take over the "baton".

Nobody cares! I swore

not to replace it,

even if the elevator stayed dark forever."

"We are strange people, really.

Everybody is waiting for somebody else. Then
we ask ourselves why everything is wrong."

"If we endure carelessness and primitivism
for about a hundred years more,
it will all be easier after that."

TRAUMA OF THE GLUTTON

Great-grandfather, grandfather and father
plowed the wide fields of Banat
all their lives.

Owing to the Sun, rain, winds
and daily hard work
their bodies were healthy,
enduring, strong and tough.

Father meant to school his son.

He wanted him to be a doctor, but the son
only partially granted his wish: he became a veterinarian.
He made his parents angry for the second time
when he sidestepped his native village
and found a job in a big slaughterhouse in the city.
He has been living next to piles of meat ever since.

Now, he weights a hundred and forty kilograms,
his blood pressure is often as high as a hundred and sixty.

We suggested different diets; we don't understand,
he tells us, that he gains weight by drinking water.
And without water a man can't live long, it's a fact
(especially if he succumbs to the sweetest vice
and devour almost the whole roasted piglet).

Because of obesity

his life is turning into a painful dream.
He envies his good father and dear mother
who are together lighter than himself.
And we, who feel his trauma,
gaining weight yourselves, give him advice on
how to resist his eating temptation.

TRAUMA OF THE BOOK LOVER

On the attic of my grandfather's house,
in a wooden soldier's suitcase,
a pile of yellow, dusty,
shabby pamphlets, chronicles, and calendars
used to lay for a long time during my childhood.
I sometimes approached that treasure chest
with a joy that adorns a pirate in such occasions.

As soon as I grew up,
I yearningly started buying books.
I still have that passion
after about thirty years and a fortune spent
on this food for the soul,
though, in the mean time I realized my own foolishness
disguised as a wish to absorb the world's wisdom.

Now, I have two thousand books
(I haven't read many of them).
The shelves of my wall system are occupied,
some shelves in the pantry are filled, too,
even the smell space under my sofa is full.
These days, I'm persuading my wife to put a wall system
for more books into an overcrowded living room.

Because of excellent unread books,
my life is turning into a trauma,
into unpleasant dream,
I envy those who have their own houses,
who have enough room for wall systems
and time to read many good books,
people who live as they like – thus those who enjoy themselves.

A CIRCLE WALK THROUGH DETELINARA

Pleasant, windy,

chilly spring dusk.

After I have been sitting in a warm room all day,
with my fingers sliding over the computer keyboard,
with my glance nailed on the magic monitor eye,

I am getting up, putting my jacket on, taking my notebook and pen.
I am getting down to the street and walking through Novo naselje,
to the weeded wasteland and railroad tracks,
behind which a neighboring periphery settlement twinkles,
once rural, now urban Detelinara.

Twenty nine years ago,

I was a laborer of the firm "Kanal",

I used to rush down these tracks, every morning,
jumping over the stripes, to the concrete body
of the railroad bridge on Little Backi canal,
which was built by a workers' gang in those days.

It was there that I hid from glances of my compatriots
every time passenger train went by.

The workers laughingly pointed their fingers at me
and shouted: "Here he is, here is Rosven from Kerestur."

Today, my shame for being a temporary laborer
seems ridiculous. What's more, in the last few years

I feel happy, even a little proud
to have experienced bitter fruit of life in my youth.

However, I am sorrowful because of Detelinara,
which used to be a neighbourhood of lied out
ground floor houses, and three decades ago,
with the burst of skyscrapers
(my friend Alek Vislavski built them among others),
its fragile soul had been crushed.

Some of its streets still remind me
of idyllic, drowsy village lanes,
 although they are covered with asphalt bands,
 polluted with small stores, newsstands,
 posters, city buses,
fluorescent lights, although
smoke and noise are their inalienable guests,
and soulless hundred eyed mastodon skyscrapers raise
 towards the dark sky
 from gardens of their dilapidated ground floor houses.

Some houses are so small
that their windows are as high as my torso.
 On some of them, the curtains are
 semi transparent. I like to stop by
 such windows in the dark and
 observe the interior of the rooms
for a couple of seconds. That sinful act is not just
a fruit of mere curiosity but also an affinity
 towards the people living in those houses,
 and a wish to join them just for a moment.

Every year
 some of those houses yield to
 the jaws of (urban) time.
 On the remaining rural streets of Detelinara
 there are more and more wrecks
 which are withering away.
Soon the yards, gardens, and porches
will be covered with concrete
 and asphalt and turned into
 ugly parking lots.

A CIRCLE RIDE THROUGH FIELDS

For a long time, while preparing
for the Big Events, I have been living a dull life,
trying (mostly unsuccessfully)
to do the important things the best I can,
to waste as less time and nerves as possible
on everyday trivial things,
and to somehow overcome shallow spots
of the season I hate the most: summer,
the doughtiest part of the week:
Sunday afternoon.

Such barren hours are passing by.
I am filled with torment, like clay,
because I spent almost the whole sunny weekend
sitting in the concrete bunker beneath a flat roof,
hot like boasting bull's gut,
voraciously devouring newspapers and books,
nibbling myself over my own manuscript.
I am taking my notebook and pencil,
I am getting my bicycle, and already in a good mood,
I am setting off to a road trip worthy of a poor man.

Ten minutes later, after having left
three-story, four-story, eight-story,
fourteen-story buildings of Novo naselje behind,
I am getting drunk with pollen from bloomed corn.
And my eyes are enjoying, while gazing at three farms.
Truly, the first is dilapidated, the second is still preserved,
but it was also deserted a few years ago,
the third looks more like a nouveau riche, market farm,
surrounded by secondhand tractors and trucks,
than an authentic, old peasant estate.

Slowly pushing down the pedals,
I pass under the wires of power lines,
by ugly cottages in the fields,
through reeds polluted with carrions and waste,
which were brought here by residents of the near by Veterenik.
After I pass that urban village I am awaited by fields
where the traces of the new life are hardly visible.
I stop at the end of a marshy meadow,
where the grass rug is decorated with arabesque of
sempervivums, milkweed, vetch, buttercup, sorrel.

In my childhood, while fantasizing about cities,
one night I dwelled in a wonderful, fairytale dream:
My grandfather was driving a carriage on a dirt road,
we were approaching a wreath of colourful, impressive buildings,
which glared in the mist on the horizon.
The dream dispersed before we entered the city.
From the bottom of the field, from the edge of marshy meadow,
I am gazing at Novo naselje which is shining in the mist
on the horizon, and suddenly, amazed, I realize
that it looks like the impressive buildings from my dream.
After four and a half decades the dream came true,
but the dreamer has changed in the meantime.

I put my bicycle in the shade of blackthorns,
I pull out, smell, chew buttercup and vetch,
enchanted, I gaze at the farm on the other end of the meadow.
It is old, surrounded with locusts and fruits,
it has a big threshing floor, a road, belvedere, XXX
members of the household are always mingling around them.
A genuine old-fashioned estate, the farm of my dreams.
I spent many summer Sunday afternoons here,
gazing at it from the distance, suffocating my wish
to get close to it, to meet its owners.
If I visited it maybe the dream would disperse.

A railway levee, with a spine rail,
divides the fields of Veternik from those of Futog.
Whenever I cross it, I stop
and I stare at the shinny arrow of the rail.
In my imagination, I follow it to the first, third, fifth,
seventeenth station, all the way to the groomed landscapes
and fascinating metropolises of the big wide world,
I used to gape at them over the past thirty years,
now, I am slowly seizing to long for them.
In fact, I cover the longing with a painful belief
that I will probably never visit many of them.

Nevertheless, hope still slumbers underneath resignation.
It awakes and stirs up the fantasy, when
after a long quake on the wide dirt road
between vast corn board, on one hand,
and sunflowers on the other,
my bicycle takes me by the agricultural property "Planta".
Rather big, attended, with a little park
with birches, plane trees, weeping willows, lindens and chestnuts,
it reminds me of a modern, mechanically equipped
landed estate, lost in the depths of fields,
deadened in lethargic silence of the summer afternoon.

Whenever I pass by the wired fence,
behind which there is a new, long cow barn,
I obligatory stop. On the wasteland between the fence
and the barn, raises a water tower: a steal, blue pillar,
with a ball on top, coated with shinny white tin,
connected with earth by cords placed in a circle.
That water tower – I can hardly discern, in evenings,
when I gaze into the west side of the horizon
from my bedroom window – here,
while I listen to the howl of the wind in the slanting cords
stirs memories of the world I am yet to visit.

I'm entering Futog through a quarter of new, ugly,
unplastered row houses, which were mostly built
by volunteer workers, mainly newcomers from the Balkans.
They are good and hardworking people,
but they don't care about the architecture
or the ambient values of the milieu they live in.
It is not until the middle of the village
that I enjoy in the beauty of old homes on big estates
which tell stories about times long past,
about wealth and peasant dignity of a once authentic,
genuine Voivodinian village.

I am pressing the pedals and climbing the levee.
Near Futog the Danube is as wide as Volga.
I turn right, towards the fish pond flooded
between the river bank and village periphery.
Grassy levee, reed border, tepid, scented,
greenish water, like in my Little Backi canal.
I am throwing my bicycle in the grass, and taking my T-shirt off.
Like an uninvited stranger I pass the crowd of children,
parents, neighbours; I start swimming in the deep, clear water.
I am back in my home village, in my childhood.

The return. From the levee, I interchangeably gaze at
the Danube and at rows of old and new houses.
When I leave behind the village,
in the distance, behind the fields,
the skyscrapers of Novo naselje will blaze up again.
And after a half hour's ride at the speed of the main current,
I will catch sight of ground houses of green Telep.
Physically exhausted, spiritually refreshed,
as usual, I will drop by my friend Boris Hardi's house,
to chat and dream about the Big Journey.

THE LAST VICE

In his youth,
during puberty,
he onanited excessively,
then he ran after whores.
For a long time,
his passion was playing cards
and getting drunk, which made a good pair.
He harassed his wife and children a lot in those years.
He barely managed
to pull himself out of the two vices.

The second half,
different life changes.
First, wanting to return the money
he wasted on cards and drink,
he invested the inherited patrimony
in a risky business.
After the loss, wanting to
learn the essence
(of what?), he gulped
daily newspapers.

THE LAST GOODBYE

You were a good friend,
you were a hot shot.
Even recently, when you were sick,
and absorbed reality
only through newspapers,
every meeting with you was a circus,
a holiday, a happening. But, neither
our business nor other mutual interests,
brought us together like before,
so we didn't see each other so often.

Now, when you are leaving,
all of us, you friends, remember
our mutual dreams form the beginning of the journey.
Why did we let selfish reasons and petty jobs
concur them?
Our egoism doesn't touch you any longer,
because you are above all earthly anguishes,
temptations and sins.
And we still chase the remains of
our boyish dreams.

ON THE CITY CEMETERY

On that wide, hedge fenced place,
still empty and grassed on one side,
and studded with arbovitae, fur trees, birches
and many graves, on the other,
torn from fertile fields,
I spend two or three hours from time to time,
participating as a friend,
compatriot, neighbour, husband
of the widow's friend, not so dear
clerk or literary colleague,
in funerals of people
(I apologize to the stiff, for my
brutal honesty)
I don't care about.

After the ceremony, in front of the chapel,
the procession, following the coffin on a black carriage,
whose movement is facilitated and dignity ruined
by four motorbike wheels without fenders,
starts walking towards the grave
at the end of the furthest lot,
when from the loudspeakers, fixed to little pillars
stuck in the soil, a distant tool starts echoing
from a tower inscribed in a magnetic tape,
which will be discretely played for about ten minutes,
from the graveyard administrative office,
in a moment, having been splashed by the pastoral,
I felt nostalgia for my childhood and home village,
and then, suddenly saddened, I was filled with aversion
towards the surrogates of the epoch
I ever melancholically, live in.

As long as I am allowed to pace
at the end of the procession,
I will pretty easily,
execute my boring,
conventional obligation,
once in two or three years,
the only pleasant thing about it
is the fifteen minute walk
in the fresh air,
from the chapel to the grave
at the end of the furthest lot.

I am watching the gray clouds,
and the crows playing
in the wind,
and at the same time,
like a repentant believer,
I am silently sending a big request
to Fate:
If I have to change my position
in the procession and
pace right behind the black carriage
with motorbike wheels,
let it not carry a coffin with a body
of one of a few ordinary human beings
who mean to me more than
everything a man can have in his life.

V

GREEN, EVER GRAY

It has been said, in this volume, that an artist need not speak about himself and his art. (The person who said that, often does not believe those words himself, but let's not talk about that now.) of course, most artists feel an irresistible need to talk about themselves, about their world – outer and inner. A big part of a novelist's world is satiated with other novelists and likewise a poet's world is satiated with other poets.

R.G. Shelgardon is a novelist whose spirit and tonality made poetic strings tremble. While writing the book which divides the First and the Second novelistic teratology, he felt a need to present his favourite writers to his readers, to make a small, personal anthology of their poems, or more precisely poem fragments. An anthology of stanzas based on fascinating, unforgettable, mainly Prustonian memories which help him evoke memories of the most impressive, real or imaginary characters, events, milieus, sights, feelings.

There is more imaginary than real experience in my work. Thus, I am grateful to the horse chestnut which gave me the ability to enter the spirit of other people's lives, worlds, art.

However, I didn't assemble the small personal anthology of my favourite stanzas – which I intended to braid, like the most beautiful flowers, into the wreath of my own introductory, connective and commentary stanzas. After only a few attempts, I realized that it would be a complete disaster. It would be a big disservice to the poets whose poetic peaks would enter the anthology as well as to those who wished to help themselves with someone else's stanzas like with cookies "Little Malden" dipped in linden tea. I was not able to resist the temptation, so instead of the chapter "Stanzas Amulets" I wrote the poem anthology "I Cherish them

in my Stanzas – Amulets". That poem is very dear to me, yet I'm happy that it's just a rudiment of something which was not realized.

"Books feed on books." It has been said many times by different analysts.

Since I have already missed the opportunity to include the great poets into the "team work", I don't miss the opportunity to hitch the two of my closest friends – Alek Vislavski and Boris Hardi – to the cart. As I mentioned at the beginning of this volume – and here I am varying and broadening that remark – I'm occasionally feeding my First picture postcard book with adapted results of their work.

For example, the title of this chapter is the same as the title of Alek's ecological fine art cycle.

Although, he's well aware of the fact that tendentiousness is not welcome in art, he painted the cycle anyway. Surrealistic paintings "Meeting in the Vensen forest" and "Grass in Bologna forest" – the reader will get somewhat acquainted with them while reading my poems with the same title – are maybe the last flowers in a fairly faded ecological wreath of A. Vislavski. The author is not satisfied with it. (By the way, neither is Alek's friend with his cycle of ecological poems.)

"I created a rather big cycle of ecological paintings, and as an architect even a small cycle of ecological houses", he said on Easter, while, at Myron, I was gaping at the album with the color photographs these works. "But all that is just a drop of water in the polluted ocean, I'm afraid."

"Add one more drop to it: the cycle of my ecological poems. Two of which will be dedicated to your brilliant works."

I didn't console him much.

BENT PLANE TREE

*Wherever you find a good spot,
plant a tree!
A tree is noble
it will recompense thee.*

*It will recompense with abundance
of shade and fruit,
it will recompense thee
or thy brother.*

This is one of the first poems
in Serbo-Croatian language
which young Ruthenians
learned by heart
at school.

We only partially understood its meaning
at that green age,
we did not comprehend
the deeper sense
of the poem at all.

There were many trees
on village streets,
in peasant yards
and gardens, in fields,
by meadows, lines, farms.
We used to play
between the tree trunks,
on pitchforks, in treetops;
we never asked ourselves who
planted the noble trees.

City children
of Novo naselje
are mostly spoiled, wild,
inconsiderate. (Like the ones who raised them?)
Thirsty of games, like all children.
A few years ago, one of them, probably
recalcitrantly shook just planted
young plane tree
in front of a skyscraper
in the next street.

First, he shook it,
than he probably hung on it
with his peers.
The poor child tree survived the torture,
but it bent severely.
Little tyrants have parents,
of course. (Many of them consider themselves
intellectuals.) The primitives passed by
the plane tree millions of times;
nobody helped the child tree.

I happened to walk through the street
in which the bent plane tree
silently weeps. I tried to straighten it, but I failed.
It should have been done
a few years ago. I wished to scream
at the windows of the skyscraper:
"What are you thinking about
when you see this miserable tree?
If I could I would bury you all up to your knees
in the ground, bent you and leave you in that position!"

ECOLOGICAL ROSARY I

Carbohydrates,
narcotics, antibiotics.
Detergents, medicaments,
pigments, cements, ferments,
halogens and the rest of chemical elements.

Chlorides, nitrides,
aldehydes, pesticides,
sulfonamides, fluorides,
amides, herbicides, cyanides,
phosphides, carbon and the rest of oxides.

You crawled out of the Earth,
and unified with human efforts,
announced the promise: Paradise will arise!
Now, united and powerful, you engage in crazy orgies,
preparing the people and the world for a miserable end.

ECOLOGICAL ROSARY II

Explosion of science,
 explosion of technology,
explosion of art,
 explosion of big inventions,
 explosion of human stupidity.

Explosion of cities,
 explosion of crime,
explosion of neuropathy,
 explosion of cancer phobia,
 explosion of nuclear heads.

Explosion of population,
 explosion of world records,
explosion of fast communication,
 explosion of tourism and traveling,
 explosion of political manipulations.

The dynamic twentieth century has decorated itself
 with such attractive explosions.

It is unjust that all the living world on Earth
 will perish because of them. It would be righteous
 that the only culpable take the blame – humans!

HOME LABORATORY

I turned on the light in the bathroom,
closed the door and sat on the toilet.

During short idle time before the relief
I stared into a bunch of plastic bottles,
tin tubes and carton boxes
on the washing machine.

In such moments, I used to get angry
with myself for reading the adds,
but it was then that I noticed
that the labels from shower gels and shampoos,
antiseptics, cleansers and polishers,
powder and liquid detergents
leer at me from the washing machine,
bathtub and floor.

After the relief, I felt like exploring,
I opened the cupboard above the radiator.
On the top shelf, there were clean towels,
on the middle shelf, our home pharmacy:
three or four kilograms of poisonous medicine
in boxes, bottles, tubes.

The top shelf was also packed with
"humane" chemicals:
pastes, crèmes, more shampoos,
tinctures, sprays, powders.
In the cupboard above the sink,
crouched the most delicate cosmetic chemicals.

I wished to have a bath,
so I turned on the faucet. A horrible sent
of chlorine struck my nostrils.
If I wanted to turn my bathroom into a laboratory,
I would have a diluted chemical in my bathtub.

THE BEGINNING OF THE END OF THE WORLD

Another mild, lean, sickly winter
passes by.
A thin, dirty, torn (like the ozone layer)
snow cover
lasted two days for three times.

(And, as I recall,
a thick, scented, bright white feather quilt
used to keep our fathers' corn fields
and our joyful young hearts warm
during all the three coldest months.)

In dusks without wind, when there is a lot of
bluish, smelly, poisonous smoke
in the air,
the skyscraper settlement I live in
reminds me of a huge gas aquarium,
filled with motionless monsters
with many shinny eyes.

(The gas aquarium is no good.
In a lack of a better expression, I'll say
that the settlement reminds me,
from time to time,
of a gas chamber in the open space.)

The city heating plant is at the end of
the profit collecting season,
so it squanders fuel.
The radiators are burning, you can't touch them.
I would open the window – but there is no fresh air.
There is no difference if I call my cell
a diver's bell or a magnified gas mask
– I will suffocate in it for sure.

A MONTH FOR THE CHILDREN OF CHERNOBYL

The rifles were not roaring, nor did
cannons spew fire on the horizon,
the sirens were not howling, nor did
the bombers drone in the sky.
Yet, preoccupied
with everyday worries,
we started to perish,
we started to lose our own
still healthy, smiling, playful,
little children forever.

Death was attacking
our gardens, fields, forests, our cattle
with a new weapon,
it bombarded us and our little children
with black sun rays and rain drops.
"Can rain kill?"
asked those who still didn't know anything
about iodine, cesium, strontium isotopes,
about the devil forces which growl like an evil ghost
in a nuclear station.

"This radiation is not harmful",
the soulless bureaucratic Satan was assuring us,
considering a human life cheaper
than displacing a few regions.
Five years after the irresponsible mistake
and the escape of the evil genie
from the nuclear bottle,
eight thousand little children of Belarus,
Ukraine and Russia slowly fade away,
eight thousand of them have pale foreheads.

Mothers kiss and anxiously look at
their little heads, stamped with anemia;
many secretly sob, because they found out
that their children suffer from leukemia.
We live on an extinct radioactive volcano,
eating, drinking, breathing in deadly particles.
Our children's immunity is so weakened
that even mumps, poxes,
and harmless flu germs
kill them.

In order to become fairly stronger,
and increase their resistance to illnesses,
they should spend at least a month
in healthy natural conditions.
Good people all over the world,
be salutary hosts to our feeble children
for a month.
God will pay you, and we will pray for
your children never to be compelled
to seek health in foreign countries.

FUTURE CAME EARLY

Inspired by the predictions of
futurolgists of that time,
our elementary school biology teacher
explained to us that
a thousand years from than
people will exclusively
feed on concentrations in capsules.

"In that far future,"
the good man used to say,
"intellectual abilities of our descendants
will be very intensive,
and physical ones will be reduced to the minimum,
consequently, their big heads
will be attached to stunted bodies."

I remember, on one occasion,
the openhearted elementary school futurologist
(may his soul rest in peace)
asked himself in spontaneous doubt:
"Will humans, apart from their own bodies,
degenerate the whole living world
which they had submitted to themselves?"

He didn't answer that question in class.
Today, I wonder if he suspected
that some things
which were supposed to happen
after a thousand years,
started to come true
yet during the lifetime of his pupils.

During the time I was working as a TV journalist
being in charge of the agricultural programme,
I saw many herds of bullocks, pigs, chicken,
who vegetated from the moment they saw the light of day
until the blaze of a butcher's knife,
like lab rats, in the half dark of small, closed spaces,
stuffed with concentrations and drugs.

As a newspaper reader,
I have recently found out that some farmers
in the West, under the influence of greedy merchants,
stuffed calves with hormones and chemicals
in order to gain necessary weight.
The meat from those calves causes people
allergies, cancer, heart problems.

As a patient,
I sat in a dermatologist's office yesterday.
I showed him the parts of my body
which itch horribly after I eat certain food.
The test results will, hopefully, reveal
which harmful substances,
from distant future, penetrated my body.

A MEETING IN THE VENSEN FOREST

We, the oldest living beings,
with chlorophyll tissue,
 give other beings a lot,
 but the man gives us all sorts of evil.

We don't have a mouth to complain to him,
so we endure the misfortunes, stoically, like all plants.
 We protest against the inhuman crime
 only by perishing silently.

The poisonous smoke and acid rains in the air,
mountains of litter in a once clean landscape,
 chemicals in the soil, around our roots,
 all arise from human dementia.

We, the winged sky wanderers,
loyal to one place or migratory,
 are terrified of the noisy metal dragons,
 the Mighty uses to concur our world.

The higher up, the greater the fall,
say the builders of the dragons;
 we fall only when their
 other infernal invention, the rifle, kills us.

The nature intended a part of its resources
to every creature,
 but the Mighty disturbs that balance,
 thus threatens the survival of us all.

We, the eternal masters and prisoners
of river, lake and sea depths,
 think that the source of all evil, of the present masters
 of land, water and air, is their ability to talk.

If they didn't have that power, if they were mute like us,
people wouldn't convey messages and instructions
 to each other so easily, they wouldn't make
 all sorts of deadly weapons so quickly.

If they didn't have the power of speech,
they wouldn't nurture their vices so successfully,
 they wouldn't destroy their loved ones, and the whole
 living world, so selfishly, madly, humanly.

We, the lively decorations and cleaners
of steppes, savannahs, shady forests,
 are the prime victims of man's
 egoism, malignity, madness.

In his attempt to kill us so efficiently,
he made more and more perfect weapons.
 Consequently, he uses all the worst inventions
 to destroy his own kind.

People insult us when they loathly say
"Brutal as an animal, fierce like a beast."
 If there was justice, the scream: "Brutal, fierce,
 monstrous like a man!" would echo the world.

GRASS IN BOULOGNE FOREST

In my atelier, for days, weeks,
I stare at shapes and colours on easel.
 In studio "Kriskar",
 I gaze upon the contours of buildings I project.

On Paris boulevards and squares,
in theatre halls, in galleries,
 I curiously or indolently glance at
 all sorts of actors, all sorts of paintings.

From the pages of newspapers I leaf through
from time to time, from the colourfull TV screen
 which sometimes glows in my room,
 the conscious ones are warning me.

The sky is wounded, the ozone layers are spreading!
Forests are weakened, acid rains are destroying them!
 The Earth is poisoned with different chemicals!
 Algae and corals, fish and whales die in the oceans.

When I was a child, my dear Georgette,
in late autumns, I was looking forward to
 the first ice scum on lanes
 on the muddy Kerestur streets.

In early springs, the first main event for children
were snowdrops in hidden places,
 than scented hyacinth in our gardens,
 flowers of dandelions on infinite meadows.

A few minutes ago, Georgette, I wandered
if dandelions have flourished yet.

It's May, which means that
there is a ray of spring somewhere here.

Honey, the scent of greenery didn't swarm
through the opened window into our room this morning
or I don't feel it because my sense of smell has been
stunned by the exciting sent of your armpit.

Jump out of bed, my love, get dressed.

I will hastily pack the painting kit.

We will go outdoors, in the Boulogne forest.
To pick dandelions, to cuddle the grass.

VI

POWDERED WITH THE ASHES OF LIFE

There is no poet, in his ripe age, who hasn't longed for youth in his poems, or written about love that has been living only in his memories for a long time, about sorrow for walking through life in only one direction, about bitterness for the cross we all bare, pondering about past and future. It has been said a lot about suffering and longing for youth that nothing more can be told.

Yet, I write about the mentioned phenomena in some of my versified pieces. Most directly in the poems in this chapter which is rather short thank God.

Regardless to the mentioned handicap, it seems that I will gladly read them form time to time in a few years when I rest from the verse torments I am enjoying now.

So, I will read even the stanzas composed from fragments of Alek's reflexive notes. Even though I wrote the two poems to realize the concept of the fifth volume. Even if I haven't been able to comprehend them completely.

My friend was building a cycle called "Memories of Byzantium" in Belgrade and Munich because he wanted to revoke remarks of enemies disguised as friends who said that his paintings were too illustrative, of course, hence in some segments even banal. He treats that cycle as the embodiment of abstract surrealism. In Paris, he sometimes covered a few grounded boards with abstract Byzantium-Balkan motifs, however while wrestling with his fixations, he started braiding yet another inextricable wreath a few years ago. "Mirror in the Sky". Only God knows why he named it like that. It mainly consists of universal motifs – if one can distinguish universal from local motifs in abstract painting, even if it hasn't been completely purified from figuration. Paintings "Morning in the dream

atelier" and "Evening in the dream atelier" which I tried to extol in this chapter belong to that cycle. These are the only abstract surrealistic poems I have written.

I decided to write those two poems because I realized that my poetic opus, like Alek's, is too illustrative, narrative, and on many pages banal. What's more, (I don't know whether it is good to reveal this secret), for some time, I had been exploring the conceptual idea about a cycle called "Stanzas on Abstraction", which was supposed to be the brother cycle of the "Stanzas Amulets", at least formally. Fortunately, or unfortunately, the two cycles weren't born. Only some fragments have seen the light of day.

While working hard and persistently on the two cycles permeated with abstraction, Alek Vislavski tried to prove to the world and to himself that he is capable of being a very modern creator as well. And what have I achieved with the poems I dedicated to the two of his abstract surrealistic mirrors?

I proved to myself that sometimes it is worth to force yourself to do something. Namely, I have a feeling that I have created remarkable, even very substantial poems. Only, I can't fully decipher them.

I don't know whether I will manage that during my life time, but I'm certain that I will not write versified poems ever again. Neither conventional, narrative, nor modern, semiabstract. I can't wait to finish this volume, so I can say goodbye to writing verses and stanzas. Let "pure" poets deal with that painstaking problem. I will only write prose poems from time to time if Lombardy poplars and European ashes inspire me.

THE AWAKENING

We were sleeping for a long time.
We were dreaming good dreams,
sometimes even bad ones,
sometimes colourful,
often intertwined.

We finally awoke,
and having looked through the window,
we realized
that the late afternoon
sends us tepid sun rays.

Now, while trying to wake up,
we are asking the shadow on the wall:
"Where have the years gone,
the years we still remember
(and the ones we have already forgotten)?"

THE ROUTE

We have dispersed running, brave, in different parts of the world,
still young, disposed for great things, naively curious,
stiff, yet desirous of wandering through Siberia taigas,
still longing for the Mediterranean gardens,
where the sent of nardus and jasmine is so intoxicating.

We dissipated, confused, among villages and cities,
still persistent, ready to sacrifice, plumped with will,
joyful, still rarely gazing into the corners of our own darkness,
indifferent to the knowledge that it is there that fatigue rests,
like the silent beggar which will soon disappear.

We are saddened, scorched, in the attractive foreign country,
still restless, gazing into dreams, heavy with wishes,
unbroken, but already sore from countless hopes,
already decorated with scars we have been collecting
for a long time in a haughty chase in the hurricane of life.

We settled, finally, in our part of the world,
already too ripe, full of wisdom, calm like plants,
cheerful, because we conceived the transience of recent charms,
because we realized that wonders are all around us, in books,
in our window a peony is blossoming.

MORNING IN THE DREAM ATELIER

Today, in this place, even hangover is pleasant.
We have told stories about our cherished intimacy.
 Tables and easels, chest and cupboard.
 Secret psychological life, says Baslar.

Greenish olive oil
roles through the Bercy gate
 The rhythm of our inner time
 grinds the layers of associations and memories.

In the blue zone, a Picasso revolution:
a woman looking both left and right.
 My shadow is sullenly smiling
 at the wide swing from the shoulder.

Do you remember the wind in the Yorkshire wilderness,
heavy with an almost silent call?
 No, I thought, there is no point in knocking a nail
 neither into purple nor into blue wall of the "Jamber" gallery.

Sleepwalkers with distorted look in their eyes
followed the trails of the sun and rain.
 Intuition and wisdom of heart called out
 to the art quarters of the old metropolises.

Fellah is still sitting by the well,
in the shade, on the Nubian sand.
 And the water, purified from weeds,
 filled all fifty jugs.

EVENING IN THE DREAM ATELIER

Four close black and white couples
leisurely glorify pieces of cake.
 Whisky at the end of the full table
 is cooled by indolence, the wisdom of heart.

"Wind Drover" yells the duet
at the darkness, from bunkers in the levee of Tisa.
 Georgette can be the incarnation of Zeljana,
 and you are ready for ritual self burn.

Even the immortal BB used to be a babe,
now she slips on turtle skin.
 Guests are taking their places in "La Closerie des Lilas",
 the epigones are trying to escape grayness.

In the distance, white walls are blazing
and bell tool can hardly be heard.
 Green are the roofs, and gilded are the church
 domes amidst Russian and Ukraine steppes.

Windy were our emotions as well
at the edge of Argentinean pampas.
 Under that sky there are three Mudéjar palaces
 which, unfortunately, make the haughty and rich happy.

On the subcontinent of the poor
the goddess Kali is glorified by fires.
 Sunlit are the banks of Jamune,
 and my anchor is in the riverbed of Sienne.

SALUTARY ILLUSIONS

In a student's room,
sometimes in the iron bad,
sometimes at the table with dry food,
for hours, days,
we used to chew things we had to study,
it sometimes made us sick,
at the football stadium,
on Saturday or Sunday afternoons,
surrounded by pupils and soldiers,
we used to cheer in the stands behind the goal,
at dances, on Saturday and Sunday evenings,
in adapted halls,
dining rooms and gyms,
we used to gaze with glowing eyes
at smooth white young girl's necks
like hungry dogs at a feast,
through wet socks
and soles of old shoes,
daily, in different rooms,
we used to count ribs in the floor with our feet,
we were certain:
The days of asceticism will pass.
Sooner or later a better time, our time
will come.
And then, unnoticeably, the memories
will guild these hardships.
"Yes, life!"
we used to yell.
"We will collect dearly
for all this!"

Drunk, and in a mellow mood,
amidst wine-tobacco tavern fog,
on a farewell civilian binge,
we used to hug our friends, instead of girls
we will fantasize about in the Army
and whom we will send love letters
only in our thoughts,
with our hair cut short, a bit confused,
in a new uniform, in the Autumn wind,
we used to wait in line
for the first mass, recruit dinner,
during night watch,
lonely, but experienced,
we used to defy the blizzard,
believing that the fever which keeps us warm
is in fact the life fire,
while we were at the firing range, in the ditch,
while we used to take out the safety
on a hand grenade,
before the worried captain,
who was wondering if the excited soldier will
drop the little pear,
disheveled and cocky
we used to leave the military club,
where we had played
the last game of chess with future,
we used to scream:
"Oh, world, remember!
These moments
when seemingly nothing happens,
can be the turning point in someone's life,
can hide important meanings,
maybe they will serve as an unusual
theme for a poem."

At a little province station,
in the ruddy eve,
we used to get of the train, and smilingly greet
the tall elms and the dear silence,
while we were walking towards the little village
on a dirt road, happy,
almost moved with tears,
smelling the grass, weeds, bushes,
and fondling the distance which seemed so close
with our eyes,
while we were rushing in the dusk
through thick, rustling corn,
on a stamped path, towards the street
where a single lit window used to be
a lighthouse for a new husband and father,
bent over the cradle
we used to kiss the baby's sleepy little forehead,
and than having turned off the lights,
we used to embrace and kiss
the one who gave birth to that child,
we used to mediate:
The beauty of such elms,
the charm of such ruddiness,
the peace of such fields,
the exalted parent love,
the excitement of such an erotic love,
became and will become the essence of some
(verbal, visual, musical...) art pieces.
Unusual, even usual phenomena,
if they have been processed in the creative minds,
imagination, intuitions
can stir many emotions.
They can ennoble, enrich,
improve many people.

Agile, supplied with
degrees, knowledge and experience,
sometimes we solved problems in the factory halls,
sometimes, in clerk-engineer biros,
smilingly, we waged necessary or unnecessary,
constructive or destructive wars
with our colleagues,
while we used to secretly draw vignette
and write gleaned verses
on the forms, in the afternoon,
at the end of working hours,
tired and already absentminded,
while we were restless, eager for erotic storms
(like all deliberate or non deliberate actors
in a temporary diluted marital life),
in the allure of tavern and street lights
we used to wash the muddy town silts,
and not only once, like a trapper
eager for gold, did we stare at the empty sieve,
while we were opening a can
and whistling an operatic aria
with no libretto,
heavy and without splendor, alone,
at midnight,
we realized:
Nothing is in vain.
Nothing is futile
in solving a variable task.
Every battle, won or lost,
every wound, sacrifice, bitter or sweet,
will help us concur yet another stage of our journey,
in a long run, it will help us
swim to the sunny banks
of the River with no Return.

There, everything is finally over
and left behind.
Tired, clam, powdered with the ashes of life,
we find ourselves in the present,
while it was future,
we used to put it in the centre
of our fantasies and beliefs;
we expected it to pay
our investments back with big interests.
And what is left?
A poem, where we used to seek refuge,
because we didn't know how to live?
The doubt that we wanted more
than we could achieve?
Bitterness, which sometimes chokes,
or a consolable thought that some pieces
of the things we wanted,
tried to achieve and lived through
maybe found a reflection
in some corner of the Universe,
in somebody's soul?
Nevertheless, it doesn't matter.
Although wounded, sometimes defeated,
we are resolutely determined
not to give in.
Thus, as long as we exist,
we mustn't stop investing in the future,
we mustn't stop fantasizing
and believing.

DUSK INSIDE US

Our wishes
didn't come true,
yet we are
relatively satisfied,
or at least serene,
because, in the meantime,
thank God,
some of them refocused,
other shrank,
a few extinguished.

DUSK AROUND US

The sun
was screaming in the zenith,
the azure sky was luring birds,
freed bodies longed for
passionate embraces once more,
the willows fondled the river.
And now the romping is over.

While we were drinking,
brooding, traveling,
whispering, fondling, blossoming,
in our personal theatre,
the velvety curtain has dropped,
and the dilapidated balconies
are resting in the dark now.

Neither cry, sob, nor even a sigh,
echoes for the summer past.
That cracked mask (that old love)
that pain and melancholy
just languish at the bottom of the stage.

We are waiting for a long time,
outside the leaves are falling down.
We suspect: there is a little infinity
in our left thigh,
some of it is whistling between our temple veins.
Its blue, intergalactic peace
dissolves us
like gentle summer's touch,
like a shiver of a shadow,
or murmur of distant waters.

And, while smiling,
we fly to the abyss,
toward a dream,
we still suspect:
from the dark blue depths
an almost silent echo passed us by.
The last captain roars:
"Stand straight!
Stay at the bow
of a sunk ship!"

After everything that has happened,
comes a healing calmness.
The silence is whispering.
Outside, the yellow, moist leaves
are still falling down
in the dusk.
And, in the half dark,
we are waiting for a change,
and listening:
Who is laughing at us?"

VII

FRUITS OF DEMENTIA

On the second day of the ominous 1991, I talked with Alek and Boris about the fifth volume and mentioned my aspiration to write abundance of poems inspired by their selected notes. At that time, I didn't have a clear idea about that conceptual witticism. Nevertheless, I gladly took a few notebooks from the "Events and Thoughts" series from the basement of Boris's house where our friend from Paris keeps his selected paintings, projects and notes (in a rather big depot). But, it was a few months later, after reading his early notes again and the recent ones for the first time, that I decided to versify the notes engineer Vislavski embroidered in the reflections on his art and architectural works first of all.

At that time I was so preoccupied with writing of poems I had started earlier that I didn't think about Boris's diary notes at all.

It was the middle of summer, once I was a bit more disburdened, when I took his notes about the everyday life of the first half of the current year. The Gulf War started at the beginning of the year, and at the time I was reading the notebook of a philosopher - historian, the interethnic-interconfessional war in the land of South Slavs was blazing up. The idea of versifying the notes about the fateful events in the world and in Yugoslavia was unavoidably imposing. I gave myself an assignment to find an entity suitable for adaptation among notes he wrote every month. Soon after that I started writing poems about war, both happy and sad for not being at the front, shocked by all the horrors the Balkan non-brothers prepared for one another in war zone. All the poems are here in this chapter, damn it!

When I first told him about my intention to versify his notes about the Gulf War and in Yugoslavia, Boris told me that not only historians but also writers of artistic texts must bare in mind the theory of distance.

Writers who write about the earlier history have a greater advantage; consequently, those who write about their own time are handicapped in many ways. After a while, the interpretation of an unripe theme almost always becomes a collection of mistakes, so to next generations, the witness and the writer of current events seems to be a pretentious, naïve, funny, poorly informed sinner. Yet, in the eyes of his contemporaries he has always been a secondary artist, because the phenomena he writes about are well known, so nobody is excited about them, and many are not interested at all. It takes a genius to create a remarkable work of art from current banal events.

"So, if you are determined to succeed in your intentions, you should radically redo my notes, to maximally generalize, befog, synthesize, poetize them" said Boris at the end.

"I will not make any interventions except the necessary poetic ones because I don't want to ruin the authenticity of your observations. And as far as the handicap of insufficient time distance from the events we will discuss in the seventh chapter, it has one advantage. A live word of an authentic witness is more suggestive than any other kind of review, as your uncle and my friend Miron Vislavski used to say. We are witnesses of big historical events, so we should leave our live word about them, even if it is not completely accurate."

I didn't console him much.

THE GULF WAR THE BEGINNING

"No, there mustn't be war in the Middle East.
God simply wouldn't allow such madness",
my sister-in-law Vesna said then.

"Nonsense", snapped Teofil.

"We have been preparing for the media spectacle for
months. Even if there were no other reasons, this could be
a good one for starting the war. But, if the war doesn't start
you will be sorry, too, darling. Because, feeling betrayed,
I'll tear out the radio loudspeaker, then
I'll throw an umbrella, like a rocket, at the TV.

He was euphoric when dramatic news about the war
finally started flying through the ether.

For three days now, from dusk till dawn, he has been
glued to the tube, he has turned his ear
like a satellite antenna towards the radio.

The pilots are smiling, combat planes are rolling on runways
the scenes are changing, one more fascinating than the other.

Steal comets are boring through the night sky,
sirens are howling, anti-aircraft artillery is grunting,
Baghdad is in flames, even Tel Aviv is showered with rockets.

"Bare subsistence finally became exciting",
my brother-in-law said, satisfyingly rubbing his hands.

Comparing to this beautiful spectacle,
Balkan fights and all the local fraternal and existential tortures
seem meaningless, pathetic and boring.

Eh, if only there was an interesting war
at least once in three or four years, somewhere in the world,
far from us, giving us the opportunity to have cheap fun,
we would blame Fate much less,
for Fate makes us plod hopelessly through our lives.

THE GULF WAR

THE END

It was a three days' wonder, but it lasted for forty-four days. From the political and economic point of view, the war was debatable, ecologically it was dirty, but militarily, it didn't seem so bloody: we saw more dead cormorants embalmed with oil than dead soldiers and civilians.

Nevertheless, I get goose pimples when I think about the thousands of poor souls who sizzled like cracklings in hit tanks, or they squirmed like worms in the dead rattle in destroyed trenches, warehouses, homes.

Finally, Saddam Hussein declared victory of the army and nation he had destroyed, and now the Allies' analytics are estimating who made a profit in the "Desert Storm" and how big it was. Last night, Teofil and I agreed that we made the biggest profit in the Marvelous little war; namely, we bought a satellite antenna, so now the whole planet lands on our TV screens, and we watch the Balkan charade only in passing, as if it takes place on the other side of the world.

"We will not benefit from the world if the same thing that happened in Kuwait and Iraq starts happening in the Balkans", said Jasenka. "Decades of hard work bring prosperity, and the dementia of one tyrant is enough to destroy all the good things in a flash. When I think about the mentality of the Balkan people, who are not so different from the Arabs, when I count the local Saddams, I don't expect good things in the future."

KERESTUR MEDITATIONS I

Since the day I was born,
I have spent all the Easters, except the twenty-fourth
(when I was in a soldier's uniform),
in Kerestur, in my family house on Kurti street.
Here, with my family, this afternoon as well,
at moments absorbed in thought, at moments talking, I'm happy,
oh yes, truly happy, even though I've been Miron and Oksana's
guest in my own home for a quarter of a century now.

"You, your mother and your family
are our guests five or six times a year,
but we are your guests 365 days,
it has been like this for twenty-five years
ever since I bought the house from aunt Makrena",
said Miron this morning, on the grass in the front yard,
where we were sitting back in easy chairs made of withe
drinking wine brandy, chatting with Alek
and waiting for the women (my mother, Oksana and Jasenka)
to come back from church yard with Easter holy feast.

He bought the old house, and shortly after that tore it
down, and, living on grandfather's farm for many years,
he was building a rather big ground house without hurry
(following student Alek's debutant project)
for his aunt and uncle, Miron was creating a picture amulet,
an outbuilding on the border between two yards and garden.
We renovated, painted, and renewed it,
then we filled the two small rooms and a peasant kitchen
with mother's furniture, shelves and dishes,
so now we have a weekend cottage on Kurti street,
a real weekend cottage, surrounded with grass and flowers,
we stay in it whenever we come to the village.

The favourite Easter holy feast:
bread mixed with milk, ham, boiled eggs,
lamb made of fresh, scented butter;
after an exalting mass procession moves to the church yard,
clatter of holy water on a string of willow baskets,
and after the ceremony in a small greenery around the church
the neighbours are racing through village streets,
for, it has been said that the first woman to come home
will be the best harvester.

The Easter Monday, the splashing merry day: idlers
would adorn their horses hitched to a new cart, others
would decorate their bicycle wheels with crepe ribbons,
colorful, singing, loud, tipsy hordes
would stop in front of young girls' houses,
who, hidden on attics or in sheds,
awaited to be found, and than in the yard,
splashed with cold water form a well,
or tepid water from a painted pitcher,
or often with cologne water,
joking, laughing, screaming, and shrieking.

The Easter Thursday, the girls strike back:
some jokester would disguise himself as a girl
wearing powder,
lipstick, head scarf,
brassiere filled with cotton and a skirt,
he would head to the splashing tour with others;
this "girl" could be distinguished from her girl friends
by standing among ladders
of festive cart with harmonica in her hands,
by singing in a very squeaky voice,
by relentlessly splashing the visited idler,
by pouring the whole bucket of water from the well,
by peeling and eating up a coloured egg,
by being the only one who drank two or three glasses of wine.

There are no more horses or decorated carts
on Kerestur streets, which are now clean, neat,
covered by asphalt, with mostly new houses
(these ugly prisons made of bricks drive Alek mad),
nowadays, tractors, trucks and combines are panting
on once beautiful, old, muddy, silent streets,
limousines are parked in front of many houses
(there are three in front of our house: Miron's,
Alek's and mine), yet, we are neither cheerful, nor happy,
I have an impression that my village is diminishing in prosperity,
I remember, I don't know why, grandpa Aron's words:
"Life used to be harder, but more beautiful."

Alek is gloomy with nostalgia and melancholy:
Oksana and Jasenka told him during lunch
that they saw Blazenka Papova in the church yard
(her maiden name was Dorokazieva);
she used to suffer a lot because of the capricious,
scatterbrained student of architecture, today she is mature,
happy mother of two grown up children. Alek said:
"I couldn't love any woman for a long time. It's a tragedy!"
"Who is in love with himself, can't love anyone
for a long time", replied Jasenka.

It would be nice if our lives
were flavored only with such things,
if we were amused by, say, Alek's latest
love tragedy: the break up of a seemingly strong
relationship with Jadranka Bojovic, if our mutual tragic love,
Yugoslavia, wasn't breaking into pieces too;
but, I have already written so many notes on this misfortune
that I'll pass it at least today, on Easter.

DARK CLOUDS ON THE HORIZON

Serbia, with an Albanian knife
in its stomach, with a Slovenian
and Croatian hatred under its throat,
simply can't come to its senses, harmonize or compose
itself and prepare for the more certain "Balkan storm";
at the beginning of the last month, in Belgrade,
the nationalists, democrats, liberals and students
demonstrated joined in a battle against the police
who defended the bosses, ex communists,
since then, for about a month now, they have been fighting
and trying to determine, by watching TV programme,
who is responsible for the charade
they organized together.

"Long live the differences! Thanks to them,
we'll have an excuse to kill each other!"
yelled Teofil, he appeared on the threshold
wearing a Territorial defense uniform;
Vesna took Irinej's army photo,
she was watching him for a while, and then,
having decided that the uniform looks better
on her husband than on her son, she suggested Teofil
to volunteer for war operations instead of Irinej, if necessary.
"I'll get over your loss more easily than our child's."

We laughed, seemingly jolly,
but our laughter got stuck in our throats;
until a while ago, we were happy because our ancestors
moved from the East to the South of mother Europe,
And now we feel like mice on Balkan,
mice who can't flee off the ships
even though their sixth sense tells them
it will sink in a forthcoming storm.

FIGHTERS FALL, FIGHTS RENEW

"Some of my friends have fallen on time",
our neighbour uncle Bogdan Sabljic said
last night, on the Victory Day.

He is an early resistance fighter in retirement.

"Some were struck by a bloody blaze on gallows,
others facing enemy's firing squad, others in battle positions,
in trenches or in attack, and they become martyrs,
glorious heroes. And we, who survived, lived to see
the times of shame, when the new bourgeoisie,
those chauvinist and fascist pests,
want to shape Yugoslavia's destiny."

"Some of your friends, uncle Bogdan,
fell after the victory in the Most Glorious war",
said my friend Jeremija to the bitter soldier.

"Some became agitprops,
others Cominform supporters,
third became poltroons and unscrupulous careerists,
only to reach pension as totalitarians
or revisionists, anarcho-liberals or techno-bureaucrats
uneducated destroyers of national economy,
paddy rentiers or bitter detractors,
party statist or nationalists.

"True revolutionists never betray
the ideals they were imbued with in their youth",
taught us Teofil, and than he said to his neighbour:

"If I could, uncle Bogdan, I would send all the dreamers
to the military testing areas and I would hand them guns.

Who wants glory let him put his head onto its altar.

I would give us, the ordinary people without dangerous ideals,
an opportunity to watch the fights and to cheer loudly
while eating seeds."

Uncle Bogdan and his peers neither
chased fame in their youth nor after it",
I answered to my brother in law, a province abstinent.
"First, they fought for bare existence,
then they fought for their bright ideals
like patriots, humanitarians, freedom and justice lovers,
knowing one of the biggest morals of history:
Mediocrities who have always
minded their own business in hard times
have always made mistakes and harmed themselves and others."

"You may consider that all of us
who initiated the National Liberation war
and started creating Yugoslavia of today
later revealed a hundred flaws", said the old soldier.
"Still we are a hundred times better than today's
selfish Slovenian and Ustash Croats chauvinists,
Bosnian Islamic fundamentalists,
wild Albanian separatists
and blinded big Serbian illusionists.
We created a proud country
which was respected by the whole world
and the scoundrels turned it into a hated madhouse,
into a poisonous, pussy wound of Europe."

A poorly informed reader of these diary notes
could think that this is a model for
one of my historian, moralistic lecture;
in fact, this quasi philosophizing and moralizing
took place during a game of chess
between uncle Bogdan and Jeremije,
while the two of us, Teofil and me,
watched the fight very carefully
and sometimes cheered very loudly
while eating seeds.

A JOURNALISTIC POEM ABOUT THE YUGO SPLIT

Those who used to say
that the future readers will find journalism
more interesting, or even more important
than anachronistic fiction were right.

Slovenians and Croats, considered that they belong
to a union of European nations with a higher cultural,
economical, political, civilization level,
carelessly turned their backs to ominous
union of Southern Slavs.

For a few days now Jasenka has been doing all the house work
by herself, because I am preoccupied with incomparably
more important things than the trifles of everyday life:

I'm constantly listening to the radio, watching TV,
reading Belgrade and Zagreb press
and diligently circling the most powerful paragraphs.

*By combination of historical circumstances,
being at the crossroads between
the Eastern and Western Christianity,
between the two often opposed
civilizations and cultures
and different political, economic
and other interests, the Croatian people
have been defending their national country,
as well as the nations who live to their west.
In the period of the imposed
centralistic and totalitarian regime of SFRY,
the Republic of Croatia could not promote
and protect its political, economic, cultural
and other interests, thus the aspiration
towards the separation
from the Yugoslav state community
grew stronger and stronger.*

*For whom this bell tolls?
For a long time, we fearfully listen to it
resounding from the chapel
of Ljubljana and Zagreb cemetery?
A long time ago, poets taught us
never to ask for whom the bell tolls – because it tolls for you.
This marked the end of a big epoch
in our history. It is left to see
who died in this epoch.
Today is a rare day,
that many historians never live to see
– the day when a history ends
and when that end reveals a historic meaning
of things that happened.
The historic meaning of our communism
lies in the fact that it created a model for destroying
a democratic country which was united in 1918.
And the historic meaning of democracy
which won in Croatia and Slovenia in 1990.
lies in the fact that it is trying to make peace between
the historic achievement of fascism from the previous war
and the new European democratic principles.
Today's separation of Croatia and Slovenia
is not the end of Yugoslavia.
Clericalism has always been too transient in history
to forever destroy
a natural result
which the history created for several centuries.
The historic attempt of Tadjman PhD. to make peace
between the aims of the Ustash movement till 1945.
and the modern democracy will fail at one time.
The third great fall of the Croatian nationalism is
destined to happen in this century,
because anything long lasting
– a state or federation of states
cannot be built on its ideology of intolerance
towards a neighbor of different religion.*

*The Parliament's decisions about the sovereign Croatia
is a part of that historical knotty string.
Despite the repressed Vidovdan state,
its bosses considered it
an expanded Serbia in Titoistic Yugoslavia
which was convinced in its historic mission
and the proportional distribution of bread and brains
to Yugo-nations, Croatia covered its traumas
with oblivion and silence.
But as soon as the opportunity arose,
it became clear that it was just an illusion.
The yearning for separation has never been discarded.
It was just suppressed.
The opportunity to show itself was given by
the world affairs and the break of the communist regime.
But, the appearance of Slobodan Milosevic
and the turning of the Serbian politics into
a Holy War in the West
had the decisive influence on the
disclosure of the strive towards independence.
Precisely because of today's Great Serbian politics,
established after the famous Eighth conference,
perhaps Croatia will more easily deal with
the European West than Yugoslav East.
The roots of the so called anti bureaucratic revolution
sowed everywhere
sprout in Croatia a long time ago.
In fact, they didn't sprout, they completely covered the land.
Under the shell of "anti bureaucratic revolution"
are hidden the seeds which call out:
"Serbs get together". Croatia has been prepared
to become a fertile ground for the acceptance
of such political seeds.
The parts inhabited by Serbs have been thoroughly
cultivated so the "export of revolution"
could be more successful,
and its fruits more ripe.*

*The development of European Union
is nothing more than americanization of Europe,
the sign that Europe has accepted the "American challenge".
And the basic component of the "American challenge"
is the separation of a nation from its territory!
No nation will have its own territory
in the future.
From the moment the citizens of Europe
obtain equal political,
economic, cultural and all other rights
in any European country
(and it will happen in a few years),
national states will no longer exist,
not even in the limited sense
they exist today.
Europe will become America.
And to become America can mean only one thing:
nation, ethnos, race – can be realized
only through culture.
There are no more national countries,
national armies, national economies.
And no matter how many mistakes Lenin made
in his theoretical and practical work,
he was absolutely right in one thing:
in the request that Russia "must abreast and outrun America".
No matter how wrong Marks's teaching was,
he was right when he claimed
that country is an evil which will die out
sooner or later.
And really, the countries, in the classical sense,
are dying out.
It is not only that the Western Europe is uniting.
In due time USA, Canada and Mexico
will form a union.
And this leads only to prosperity,
wealth and appreciation of human rights.
It leads to a true pluralism.*

*Tanks in a demolishing invasion
in the middle of Europe... is that the Balkan contribution
to the creation of the "new European architecture"?
Naked force against a dialogue offer...
Is that what the federal government wanted
when it warned Ljubljana and Zagreb
that independence carries the risk of war?
The renovation of interventionism in the heart
of reconciling Europe... Is that the kind of
internationalization of Yugoslav crisis
the West had in mind, trying with all its powers
to keep the doors of federation,
where the Great Serbian imperialism came back to life,
locked, together with all the other
nations as hostages of European peace?
Budapest, Prague, Beijing – Ljubljana...
Is this the last step of the downfall
of an ideology which holds on only to violence,
becoming an instrument of Serbian
national-hedonism? Naked force in the name of
maintaining the unity and equalizing the victims with the culpable...
Is this what all the special envoys
with ambiguous diplomatic messages wanted?
The formula for keeping the inner balance
in the feuded Yugoslavia... hasn't it been clear for years now
that this serves as a cover for the Great Serbian appetites
which have always, during their invasions, first deceived
and then swallowed those who are the last to understand
the essence of Milosevic's strategy
and the Lie about the salvation of Yugoslavia,
even if those are Markovic and James Baker?
Are the scenes of violence on TV the last image
the Western capitals want to see
and is really everybody here equally
irrational, incapable and mentally incompetent
to be left to their wild Balkan fate
in a sort of a group punishment.*

*Distressing was the image of a mother,
on a border crossing,
walking from a soldier
of the Yugoslav National Army
to the member
of the Territorial Defense of Slovenia
begging them not to shoot
at each other.
"One of my sons is in
the Territorial Defense of Slovenia,
and the other in the Yugoslav National Army",
said the distressed woman.
"There, in the bushes, lies my soldier,
his name is Jeler. He has a brother who is
a policeman in Sezana", says the lieutenant
Zoran Manojlovic from Kozina,
his division came
to the border crossing Krvavi Potok
on Wednesday morning
to prevent the new board
with title "Republic of Slovenia" to be put up.
"No board is worth a human life",
commented the commander
of the border police station
Slavko Grozelj.
Brothers, hidden behind boards
"SFRY" and "Republic of Slovenia",
are watching each other over the gun-barrel
these days
on many border crossings
in Slovenia.
Is there a common board
that both of them can stand behind
and hug there like brothers?
Or is Krvavi Potok (Bloody Stream)
destined to justify
its name again?*

*After Slovenia, the Army is faced
with a real threat to find itself – say:
having little or no fault – in the same
situation the Yugoslav Army was in April 1941.
Drawn into someone else's political games,
mostly without its will, it seems to be forced
to pay the biggest price. It is pulled by its ears
by the left and the right, by the domestic and foreign.
And its activities in different places in this country
was beneficial and noble
(the idea to conquer the Yugoslav border in Slovenia
was no different, we believe).
But, what's the use when the Army is an objective
obstacle in the reckless and violent
realization of someone's ideas and strivings
and, because of that, it suffers the strongest propagandistic fire.
Facing some truths is indisputably painful,
but it is even more painful and more dangerous
to close your eyes to real problems.
Not noticing them on time, not resolving them
and not adapting yourself to the changes
which happen in a country and a society
may cause the Army
to become a benevolent, lethargic giant,
a bit sleepy, and difficult to himself and others.
Slovenia didn't care much about Yugoslavia
even before the two day war
which it could and must have done without
if it were wiser and more responsible.
Now, it will not care at all.
Because today's Yugoslavia will definitely no longer exist
after the Slovenian war.
It is the world which pressures us,
that suggests (dictates?) solutions
which will implicitly include
a common state, a bigger autonomy
and independence of the republics.*

*In today's process of unification of the mankind
in one society settling the entire globe,
the basic problem is the peaceful abolishment
of all states and borders,
so every man, no matter where he lives,
would have all human and citizen rights
guaranteed.
The problem is disappointment in global proportions,
and not the "right" of every nation to its country,
its borders and its Army.
There is no political pluralism
where there is no ethnical pluralism.
In that respect, Yugoslavia could have,
and I believe it still can,
despite the situation in Kosovo,
despite the Slovenian and Croat separatism,
become a model for (ex) communist,
as well as for the third world.
The true potential wealth
of this Balkan country
is the astonishing mixture of different ethnoses,
tribes, religions, cultures, traditions.
The whole mankind concentrated itself
in Yugoslavia like in a lentil.
To destroy that miniature mankind
for the demands of either Serbian or Croat nationalism
means to make a path for your own nation
to extra historic existence,
dark provincialism, nothingness.
In fact, it is the repetition of the road
Bokasa the First took:
from the crowning
and the golden throne
the newly established monarchy
to anthropophagy.*

JUBILEES SPATTERED WITH BLOOD

Destroyed roads, burnt trucks,
shattered tanks and armored transporters,
bodies of soldiers in the greenery of Slovenian forests,
irrepressible tears and harsh words of parents
who broke into the Serbian National Parliament
pursued by bitterness and despair,
the suffering of a mother who has been begging the murderers
to hand over her son's dead body in Ljubljana for nine days,
the sights more disturbing than the scenes from
antic tragedies – God, we haven't recently
seen such things even in our worst premonitions.

"Now you are even more excited
than last winter when forty four days of the Gulf war
kept you warm", I said to Teofil
right before the end of the seven day war in Slovenia,
actually, that was the last joke in our home.
Vesna and Jasenka were wiping their tears
only in front of TV screens, recently they have cried more often,
because they fear that Irinej and Igor will dawn
on the front line like reservists one morning.

"The day before yesterday was the Fighter's Day,
tomorrow is the Day of Serbian Uprising. These two
holidays are celebrated almost secretly
for the first time in Yugoslavia and Serbia"
uncle Bogdan Sabljic reminded us, gloomy and broken.
"Fifty years ago, I had little faith in my survival
in the fight against the fascist dragon
let alone living so long.
And I didn't dream of living to see the madness
of anti Yugoslav monster half a century later."

"Dear friends, since you know
that I'm an ardent slovenophile, and even srbophile,
you will not hold it against me if I repeat
my old objection about your people's mentality",
I was speaking to uncle Bogdan, Dusan and Jeremija.
"Serbs are searching for causes of their own tragedies
everywhere, and the big majority of these causes
come from primitivism, careerism,
disagreement, insufficient intelligence of our leaders,
those from Tito's one party circle,
as well as these from multiparty times."

"I agree, our politicians are good for nothing,
and now even our generals have failed", replied Dusan.
"They let a handful of Slovenian fools
defeat and embarrass the Yugoslav National Army.
Fat army leaders are not excused by the perfidy
of the Boche bastards, who attacked the soldiers
after the truce has been announced, nor confusion,
stupidity, incapability of politicians, who, obviously,
failed their history exams. Even a layman wouldn't send
tanks without air raid, infantry or some other protection
among the hated enemies,
and this is precisely your distinguished generals did."

"They didn't even give the lads a proper protection
nor a permission to fight", added Teofil.
"With an explanation that an army mustn't shoot
at its own people. And Slovenians, as well as Croats,
have been proving for decades now that they don't belong
to Yugoslavia. Not even the tender Slavic race.
(It is said that the first have Germanic, and the second
Iranic, Gothic and Romanic blood in their veins.)
If the Army had won in Slovenia,
it wouldn't have been so humiliated and endangered
like the poor Yugoslavia itself."

"The Army made big mistakes earlier", said uncle Bogdan. "It must have introduced emergency measures last autumn, or last spring the latest, when it was already known that the anti Yugoslav pests are massively arming themselves. The Army must have disarmed them. The Yugoslav presidency should have been dismissed.

Because a quartet of traders are sitting in it:

Mesic, Drnovsek, Bogicevic, Tupurkovski.

If the generals were more intelligent, braver, if they had initiated the process of creation of a new, modern, democratic, even confederal Yugoslavia, Europe and the world would have excepted their cause."

"Now, it is certain that the selfish Slovenians and especially the serbophobe Croats, are writing another shameful page of their history",

said Jeremia, adding oil to the fire of the witty conversation.

"Europe enhanced disturbance in the dark Balkan tavern by offering Yugo leaders, like immature youngsters,

firstly to elect Stjepan Mesic,

a con who presented himself several times

as a really irresponsible, rotten filth,

as an enemy of Serbia and Yugoslavia."

"More than seven decades our brothers from North West somehow survived in the union of South Slavs;

if they had patience for another six or seven years,

all of us would find ourselves in Europe,

happy, relatively rich, civilized and respected people",

this was my synthetic, utopian conclusion.

"Hm-hm, the devil never sleeps, now they are showing us,

who were convinced that there will be no war,

what kind of brother was Cain."

TOGETHER UNTIL TERMINATION

A long time ago,
after the Bloodiest war,
school teachers told us that, on fascist's orders,
the degenerated people
poisoned their own nation with hate
and killed people of other nations.
But nations are stronger than the rare weeds
inside them, said pedagogues.

Since the war, all the important factors
starting with the Biggest Son of our brotherly nations
to the paddy official of the Socialist union,
we were told to build a richer life and a happier future
in peace, unity and concord.
But the happy future changed its mind,
and suddenly distanced itself from us.

In a District Office we discussed the issues of our village,
bearing in minds the principles of both
past socialistic and new multi party democracy.
We concluded that the situation was very complex
and that the international relations were endangered.
we didn't come to an agreement
on what caused the problems,
but we sensed the consequences.

After the mentioned political meeting,
a few of us who were good friends
continued the discussion in the Wide street.
We concluded, more joking than serious,
that since we are not capable of building our happy future together
it would be best to go our separate ways
before a disaster happens.

Both sides were convinced that
we would take the parting pretty easy
after everything that has happened
in the country and in our village.

If only we could stuff our beautiful houses,
our green gardens, our splendid fields,
the whole native land in some chests or bundles
and merrily take them on our own backs.

We can't move our homeland, our dear land,
we concluded unanimously, and for the first time
we came into an open conflict because of it,
even though we were joking more than we were serious.

"Since this is Croatia, it would be best
if you Serbs moved to Serbia", said the Croats.
"This is Yugoslavia. The whole of it is our homeland,
especially those parts which we, as a majority,
watered with our blood and sweat for centuries"
we replied.

After a bit of a row,
I don't know if we were serious or not,
we agreed that all of us are going to stay
here where we are, that we would avoid
all the heated exchanges, and the other
even more fatal ones.
If Fate compels us, like it compelled our fathers,
to fight for our homeland,
we too will destroy each other's houses,
we too will kill each other.

KERESTUR MEDITATIONS II

The eighth day of the holiday excursion,
and of our attempt to hide inside some sort of peace,
even though we know that we can't escape
from ourselves, from our Fate, from what we are,
this was clear to us even fifteen days ago,
so we didn't accept Alek's gentleman invitation
to spend two antic weeks in Greece
with him and Georgette at his expense.

"We are fine in Kurti street."
said Jasenka last night. "But, I feel bad
for our boys, our only sons, our lives,
Igor and Irinej didn't go to Greece with Alek and Georgette,
and then alone to Cyprus, or even further,
I'm sorry because they aren't somewhere very, very faraway,
like a Parisian would say, out of recruiter's sight.
I envy you." she said to Miron and Oksana. "Little Aron
(now a head taller than his father) has already settled in Canada,
and our sons have some sort of incoherent ethics."

"Your sons are, thanks Jesus,
on Telep, in your beautiful, two storey,
non endangered house", said Mojsije Provc
in a cracked, tired voice.
"And what can we say, our dear relatives and friends?
What can my wife who moans all day say,
what can these two confused little daughters say
whose house, school, youth, future and faith in life
were shattered in Vukovar?
We are thankful to Miron and Oskana for their hospitality,
but what will happen to us? We ask ourselves that all the time.
Will we ever see Emil, our son and brother?
We haven't heard anything about him for three weeks now."

Alek and Georgette came back from Greece last night,
so today, the Vislavski house on the Main street is
full of marry, always welcome foreigners.

Namely, Mizo, his wife and son flew from Melbourne
to Belgrade and than came to Kerestur two weeks ago,
and last week, the Vujkovs: Leonka, her husband Branko
and their younger daughter Leonka came from Geteborg in a Volvo.

There will be a feast in the honor of the children:

Joakim, Leonka, Alek and Mizo
at uncle Jevrem and aunt Melanija's house on Sunday,
and Miron and I are invited with our families.

After today's lunch, Alek and Georgette
rode their bicycles to Kurti street,
with Aegean blueness in their freshened eyes,
with the Mediterranean sun on their tanned faces,
with Oriental scents on their carefree smiles,
with Corinth pillars in their inspiring stories.

Alek said: "Inspiring are the stone cities on Attica,
splendid and picturesque are the villages of Peloponnesus,
inspiring is the old dark green Helada
but you enjoy all that the most at home,
when you go to the Little Backi canal for a swim.

"Lucky you who are with us at the moment,
yet, your destiny threw you so far away from us",
said Mojsije Provci to his distant cousin and peer.

"I was left without my house, job, maybe even without my
son. Surely, a similar or God forbid even worse fate awaits our
compatriots in Vukovar, Borovo, Miklusevci and Petrovci.

Because they are forced to declare themselves Serbs or Croats,
to shoot at each other, to destroy each other's houses,
only because they live on a land
where the Balkan people kill each other.

No matter how this war ends, a part of our people
will get the worse of it, without their fault.
Lucky for you, you are far from all this."

"I understand you, Mojsije, I know it's hard for you.
But I assure you it's not easy for me too",
said Alek to his troubled friend. "Not far away from here
(just forty kilometers by air),
in forests, on fields, streets, in yards,
pitched, bloody, exciting battles are fought.
I have a chance, like many other idlers,
to live to see the wonder named War,
and I only shoot at Georgette on a soft bed."

"Yes, it sounds funny, but in fact it's all tragic",
continued the one who both loves and hates war
after a short break which we filled with
laughter and jokes.

"Tell me, people, what to do. From early childhood
which war full of my father's and grandfathers' stories
about the beauties and horrors of war
I wanted to feel the fiery and icy breath of the Fascinating Monster
at least once in my life.
Now I have a unique, unrepeatable opportunity,
but I don't know which side to choose:
I like Serbs, but I don't hate Croats at all."

"You choose the fascinating miracle
named Georgette, at least this summer.
And that is not only the most pleasant,
the safest, but the smartest and
the most cultural solution", said Jasenka.

It's not appropriate for an artist, creator,
intellectual, worldly person
to participate in killing or in any kind war.
And this is not just any war, it's a horrible, dirty,
criminal, insane, cutthroat, monster war."
"It is unusual for the fact that we, ordinary people,
have never asked who is Russian, Serb, Croat
in the brotherly Vukovar", added crushed Mojsije.
"Hell was brought upon us by others: crazy politicians."

Nevertheless, Alek will participate
in the Yugoslav civil war in his own way:
armed with brushes and palette.

He firmly decided to name his newest,
eighteenth fine art cycle "The Balkan Storm".

The peace fighter is to clash with the war beauties and horrors
in Paris, in his atelier, before that, in his home village,
he will paint the last, sixtieth canvas of the cycle
"Farms and Fields Behind the Tall Bridge".

Tomorrow, the most reduced homeland will be "buried".

Today, the artist, Georgette and myself visited the
burial site on our bikes.

This afternoon, as always throughout August,
water in our canal under the Tall Bridge was tepid,
scented, greenish when you watch it from the distance
and transparent when you step into it. Water can't grow old.
But, my God, the Tall Bridge is already a neglected ruin,
a pile of rusted iron, without the local railway.

My heart was heavy while I was listening to the almost silent, sad
howl of the wind among the powerful arcs
and watching the fields which were once (hm, once)
guarded by silent, gray, old, dilapidated farms.

"Really, you little blind girl, don't you see?"
said Alek to smiling and amazed Georgette.

"There among the corns and stubble, farms are sleeping.
Look, there are the horses, the peasants and plowmen.

And up, among the clouds, grandpa Aron
is working in the windmill. If you don't see all of that now,
you little blind girl, you will see it in seven days
on my surrealistic micro cosmos."

AT THE FLEA MARKET

Gogol, Dostoyevsky, Gorky...

many big, mediocre and trivial realists
have bothered and deepened their knowledge
about folk, genuine, rural and urban provincial types
on streets, squares, markets and fairs.

I don't appreciate that method, yet sometimes
I walk on their footsteps.

Quasi-peasants, workers, clerks

who find the flea market a Sunday past time
and sometimes even a source of additional income.

Housewives, old black marketers, resellers
who don't have another existential sanctuary.

"Come on, people! Abrasive paper for sharpening
knives, scissors, as well as razor blades! Make
a penknife out of your boat hook! Only thirty
dinars a piece! Here you are, madam!"

"Cheep cassettes with the newest hits!

They calm down nervous wives and drunk husbands!"

"Let's go, citizens, everything is on sale is here!

Buy German goods! Gensher-quality!"

"Here are mothballs against all kinds of moths!"

"I'm not volunteering, but if they take me..."

This semi sentence barely reached my ear,

it reminded me on the tragicomic time I scrape along
and on the absurdity of my position:

If I were a few years younger, I would be on the front now,
somewhere in Slovenia. Instead of market noise and laughter,

I would be listening to bullet whiz and grenade bang.

Or I would be flying towards the high,
indolent sky!

LOVE LUSTS FOR HATE

Not caring about nationalities,
for years, we used to flirt
and splash each other with fresh water
by the artesian well on Curved street.
Some Croats fell madly in love with some Serbian women,
and, some Serbs with Croat women,
soon after that they crowned their love
in front of a registrar.

People from HDZ soon came to power.
Leaders started to persecute Serbs with the help of spies,
bragging and screaming about democracy.
They released hardened criminals from jails,
ardent Ustasas came flying from abroad.
At that point, we hadn't figured out what was going on.
Worried parents told us that
the Balkan Gestapo were coming.

Many things weren't clear
to our peer Croats as well.
They asked us why we had become suspicious.
They said that, in democracy, everybody, even nationalists,
have the right to stand up for their beliefs.
They said that nothing will happen to Serbs
as long as they were loyal.
They will only lose some privileges.

We realized that things were pretty serious
when some loves between Serbs and Croat women,
Croats and Serbian women
suddenly broke without any reasonable cause.
Friendships between the lads started to break,
girls started to avoid each other.

Sometime between our and their Christmas,
tension was materialized in a pub fight.

One of our young men broke the ribs of his undestined
father-in-law, the other, somewhat older, smashed the head
of his brother-in-law who was, until recently,
more dear to him than his own brother. An angry
neighbour broke an arm to the third with a chair.
And, he used to hug him over a glass of wine.

Finally, three days ago, the tension grew
into an armed conflict which still lasts.

Our young friend demolished his father-in-law's house
with a rifle grenade yesterday. The other
cut his brother-in-law in half with a machine gun this morning
yet, until recently, he was more dear to him than his own brother.
A grenade shattered the third and the fourth into pieces
a few moments ago. A bullet cut into the fifth's shoulder.
We think that it was his neighbour that shot him with a sniper.
The one who used to hug him over a glass of wine.

In those happy times, when
my Serbo-Croat generation was finishing
elementary school, one of our teachers,
an unfulfilled actress, prepared with us a play
for our parents, her colleagues,
and other pupils.

She chose "Romeo and Juliette".

We didn't dream that soon
many loves in our neighbourhood
will end up in suffering and despair.

EUROPE ON THE BALKANS

Besides the married couple Domovic, and our beloved neighbour uncle Bogdan Sabljic, Jeremija's and my friend from college Davor Belamaric and his wife Silvana were here last night, and after the introductory chatting a live discussion flared-up about the bloody Yugo tragedy and the Soviet putsch drama with a happy ending, the main orators in the discussion were Davor and Jeremija, and the five of us, lovely Silvana, Ljubica, Jasenka, uncle Bogdan and I calmed them down with humor, in bursts we even flared up a conversation.

This paramilitary game of the variable rhythm lasted perhaps the entire twenty minutes, until our friend Jeremija remembered that he has herd such, only slightly tumultuous debates countless numbers of times in the past few months, that he thoughtlessly participated in many of them, and then, ashamed, he critically analyzed himself, he always bitterly realized that he betrayed the profession of a serious historian and the spirit of the true, objective intellectual.

Even Davor concluded that this time he stooped beneath his level on several occasions, so, as a punishment, he proposed that, in the continuation of the debate, Jeremija and himself can criticize only their own people, especially the esteemed members of the nation, political aces, Jeremija accepted the proposition with delight, and as an arbitrator, I was instructed to wonder about the replicas, and to show an imaginary yellow card to a critic who is not harsh enough.

"It's hard even now,
when many facts are known to us,
to say what was to be done a few years ago",
Jeremija was the first one to utter a sound. "Sometimes
I think that the biggest mistake of Slobodan Milosevic,
autocrat who inoculated nationalistic ideology
to Bolshevik one, the orientation
towards byword: *All Serbs should live in one country!*

Every nation would like to live in one country,
but God granted that wish only to some.
Homogenization of Serbs – which was, it's good to bear in
mind, a reaction, to a great extent, to homogenization
and aggressiveness of the Albanians on Kosovo – provoked
the homogenization of Croats, Muslims, Hungarians.

If only Milosevic and his advisers
accepted the disintegration of Yugoslavia into republics
with the current, administrative, Tito's borders,
Serbs in Croatia and in Bosnia and Herzegovina
would face rather big problems for a while,
but, in long term, everything would end
in a civilized manner, in organized, united Europe,
and not in Hell where we are frying now".

"If only Croatia wasn't ridden by the hard chauvinists,
pathological Serb-eaters, riding the coat-tails
of the biggest Serbian enemies, Germans and the Vatican,
Serbs in Croatia probably wouldn't rebel",
Davor Belamaric answered. "But the ominous
resurrection of the butchering Ustash movement, on one side,
and thoughtless, nationalistic agitation
from a majority of Serbian politicians, on the other,
flared-up the desire of Serbs in Croatia
to separate forever, on the territories where they live,
from the alienated Croats. That's why the ethnic and
confessional leopard skin from these territories
is bleeding now. Furthermore, the blood is always shed
when the battles for territories start."

"I wonder again what would happen to Serbs if all of them had accepted to live in the independent Republic of Croatia. I suppose that nothing terrible would have happened to them. For a while, Croatian nationalists would have gloated, some of them would have even harassed certain Serbs in various ways, but soon, when those Neanderthals would have excessed themselves, and Croatia became a country of law and democracy under the political, cultural and civilized, moral pressure of Serbia, and especially Europe, no Serb would have been hurt. And now, the same as Croats, they are being hurt!"

"Perhaps Serbs in Croatia could use the methods of Mahatma Gandhi, with the help of the mother country and influential Europe, and obtain through struggle a normal position in the new, sovereign country. (Although, I admit, it's hard for me to imagine Serbs as followers of Gandhi.) But, the Croats could also separate themselves from Yugoslavia in a peaceful, cultural and civilized manner.

Now, when the oppressed communist regime is torn down, every nation could accomplish all its major goals in its peaceful manner. If only they had explained to Europe and to the world that they didn't want to live in Yugoslavia anymore especially in the claws of the psychopath Milosevic, if only they agreed on boycotting the Parliament and other Federal institutions, Croats would sooner or later gain desired independence without armed conflicts.

Besides, as Boris has told us for several times (even we knew that earlier), soon Europe will be a confederation, later even a fragile federation. Nationalisms, flags, territories, borders, everything would be, as our colleague said, obsolete.

However, chauvinists will not easily become cosmopolites, members of various confessions will not stop looking at each other with the eyes of an enemy any time soon, but those evils too will eventually be lost."

"Europe, my dear Davor, will never do anything to benefit Serbs, but will always try to damage them", uncle Bogdan Sabljic said bitterly. "That is the way the old whore expresses her gratitude for what Serbs had done for her in the First and Second World War.

Europe, now peaking underneath the German boot and Vatican robe, is culpable for everything that has been happening in Yugoslavia this year. If only she had warned Slovenians and Croats in time, if only she had ordered not to do anything forcefully, today, we would have had the beginning of a peaceful, cultural, civilized separation on these territories.

But the Old Lady with pounds of make-up is pulling shameful moves that will embarrass the next generations. Serbs mustn't kneel down, for they are on the right path! Slobodan Milosevic isn't a Bolshevik or a Nationalistic autocrat, even less a psychopath, but a modern democrat. He gave back pride to Serbian people, which was taken away by the Comintern's agent Tito.

I hope, Jeremija, that your understanding of the acceptance of Serbs to be broken into several banana-countries on the territory of Yugoslavia is just a part of a game for Davor and you. But Serbs would be humiliated in Ustash Croatia, even in fundamentalist Bosnia, you are aware of that, too. Mother Serbia couldn't help them, Europe, the whore, would play deaf. She would wait for the Orthodox outside Serbia to evaporate."

Uncle Bogdan, "Croats and Muslims can't take the culture and the national identity from Serbs," replied Jeremija. "That identity consists of a few different factors, but the most important amongst them is, as we know, language. It gives a distinguishable mark to every nation. Our Croat and Muslim brothers use jekavian and ikavian dialects of Vuk's Serbian, our language."

"It goes without saying that Croats and Muslims can't destroy the Serbian national identity", continued Davor calmly. "Because Muslims are, in fact, Serbs and Croats of Mohammedan religion. I mean: a religious community Tito gave the status of a nation.

And, alas, Serbs and Croats are two tribes of the same people. They speak the same language, with inconsiderable differences, they have the same Christian religion, with inconsiderable differences, a major part of their history, tradition and culture is the same, with inconsiderable differences, even some marriages are same.

How can Croats superpose the identity of Serbs with their own, or vice versa?"

"We have the same primitive, wild, killing hatred, my brother", replied Jeremija.

"That hatred brought upon us many evils in the recent past, in the Second World War, and now, when it is renewed, it will be our biggest shame for centuries.

Maybe Europe is a whore, like Uncle Bogdan said, self-centered, demented whore who only looks after her own interests. But, if we were not primitive, stupid, wild, the Old Lady and her big girl friend America couldn't be so perfidious.

I often wander where the fundamental roots of our evil lie. In politicians, shallow, fame-seeking fakes who didn't put out the flames of international hatred, but, on contrary, they constantly inflamed them, in the Yugo nations who were fallen out, and deceived, nevertheless, they were dead wrong when they voted for the fakes on free elections, or are the fundamental roots of evil in the human scum who is on the front cutting limbs, taking eyes out, slaughtering, burning down, robbing, turning life into Hell instead of languishing in psychiatric institutions? I claim that the roots of our evil are triple."

"I agree with you, the political leaders are to be blamed, as well as the nations and their scum",
I said to Jeremija, concluding that it was time to stop solving the problems which can't be solved.
"Still, I don't believe you really think that Yugoslavs are primitive, stupid, wild arsonists.

These epithets are the fruit of a negative, momentary inspiration of the part of you which is not under the influence of the objective historian Jeremija Domovic. I know you know that religious and national conflicts are not the misfortunate fate of just Yugoslav peoples, but, they flicker or burn in many other even in the most civilized regions of the world.

And as far as Europe is concerned, uncle Bogdan, it is not a whore, the poor thing is confused, very confused, because it is clear to its politicians and to all thinking people that if they allow the borders to be redrawn, no matter how, interethnic conflicts will blaze up in many countries. If the borders remain the same, many nations will still partially be in Diaspora which will make them unhappy and unsatisfied for a long time.

Problems, problems, fruits of human immaturity; speculatively speaking, it would be best if we kept out national identity since all of us want to live like this in our own national pens, thus, theoretically, it would be best if another great movement of the peoples took place so people with great national feelings could join their packs. As far as nationalists are concerned, it would be the best solution; but this will not happen, nobody will make this happen. Nations will still irrationally bicker, people will still childishly amuse themselves and they will still pay dearly for such amusements."

DARK GREEN HELICOPTER

I'm one of those lucky citizens
who hasn't been seriously affected
by the civil war (yet).
In the morning, two or three times a week
I go to the editorial office (nobody has offered me,
nor have I asked my superiors
for a chance to report from the front),
in the afternoon, two or three times a week,
I go to the football field and run after the ball
with my peers, mature people,
and often with boys.

Three or four times a day, almost every day,
even during my football recreation,
a massive, noisy, military helicopter
marked with a red cross flies over Novo naselje.
It's gut conceals bloody young men
from the front in Vukovar and Vinkovci.
I ask them: "What have you lived through a few hours ago?
What do you feel now, besides pain? What are you thinking about?
Will all of you poor things get to the hospital alive?
Who will amongst you lose his eye, leg or arm?"

Touching the dark gray helicopter
with my eyes,
I'm touching the renewed wonder called
War. Will this be my only close encounter
with the Fascinating Monster?
Yes, like Alek Vislavski, I also think
that it would be far better
if people would vent their vanity and aggression
in sports not in war battles.
Still, I'm a bit sorry that I...

YELLOW AND BLACK

In the café "Yellow Tulip", a literary evening
dedicated to a semi intelligent verse monger.
In the corner, near me, a forgotten TV
silently broadcasts news about the current war.
"The author with whose work we consort tonight
uses fresh metaphors to write about the transience of life
says the literary critic to guests and glasses.
"The metaphysics of his poetry will not..."

*There have been war actions
in some regions of Croatia today, says the newscaster,
while horrible images follow one another on TV screen.
In Vukovar and Vinkovci, hard battles are waging.
Reporters say that there are many dead and wounded.
Grenades fall on...*

"His poems are concentrated around
well contemplated theme focuses
which allow him to show
his talent in all its glory.
Hoping that his fruitful journey
will be continued, I invite the poet
to read a few poems,
please greet him a warm applause..."

Filled with contempt towards
fifth-rate literates,
regretful towards the anonymous
victims on battle fields,
filled with disgust towards national leaders,
filled with despair because of the suicidal madness
of people and nations amongst which I barely subsist,
I got out of the smoky "Yellow Tulip".

GOD, SONS ARE WARRIORS

Yesterday and today, our two household home
has been filled with joy, words, words,
sometimes silence, outpouring of love and fear:
For the first time since they have been on front,
Irinej and Igor, got the permission to spend
a weekend in peace, with their parents and fiancées.
Vesna, Jasenka, Seka and Tamara fed them up with
cuddling, kisses, advices and tears.
"Alas, don't worry", said Irinej last night.
"It's not so bad there. Not all of us will die.
Every forty fifth reservist gets killed.
The rest have a better luck: they get wounded or go insane."
These words crazed mothers and girlfriends once more,
and the two of us, Teofil and myself,
haven't been sane, healthy people for a while now.

"Dad, I can comfort you by saying that
I haven't been myself either", Igor told me
this morning. "Yesterday afternoon, in the city,
while strolling the boulevard with Tamara, I was
watching the civilians, all dressed up, carefree, window
shopping, absorbed in cozy petty bourgeois banalities,
yet I saw ruins, burnt tanks and trucks,
I saw wounded people, corpses, bloody limbs.
And I wondered: Where am I, who am I, whose life am I living?
Or am I having a surreal nightmare?
On Thursday, on the front, during lunch, Milojko Ilic,
a French professor, a nice guy, merrily said:
*Peace is a time when sons bury their fathers,
war is a time when fathers bury their sons.*
Two or three hours later, in the heat of fierce battle,
a piece of a grenade detached a part of Milojko's head.
I saw the brain which kept the Herodotus' thought."

Irinej and Igor told us,
Teofil and me, a few more similar,
masculine, war, bloody, horrible stories,
but I have neither will nor strength to write them down,
for days and weeks, I have neither will nor strength
to do anything, I console Jeasenka and Vesna,
yet, I silently despair, I don't sleep at night,
I'm tired and sick of both Croatia and Serbia,
Germany and Europe, America and Russia,
I'm sick of politics, even history, I abhor
the pitiful selfishness and incurable irrationality
of the most rational being, I'm even sick of the words
I'm writing, I only wish for one thing:
that our sons stay alive, oh yes, that's the only thing I want,
God, if only you could grant this wish to everyone,
no, you will not grant it, many fathers
have already buried their sons, and sons their fathers,
mothers, daughters, sisters, wives have been buried as well,
many of Your children, big and small, have been buried,
some are still rotting in the sun and rain, shot,
slaughtered, dismembered, partly burned,
war, war, one of the most horrible in history,
it was nice to listen to the stories our grand fathers and fathers,
post festum, in the safety of peace,
then, in the wonderful time of childhood, we couldn't imagine
that one day the blood red and black stories
will come from the lips of our dearest, our only sons,
and not *post festum*, in the safety of peace,
but in the blaze of war, where they had to return
today afternoon, our little children, an anarchistic wonder
befell you, a monster whom we, your fathers,
often debated and fancied about,
and whom you didn't even want to think about,
you were right, in vain, now, we only want
one thing: for you to survive, to survive!

REFUGEES I

For centuries, our ancestors
lived in the Catholic Croatia.
Five decades ago, In the Darkest War,
inflamed blood thirsty Ustashes
slaughtered entire families of our beloveds
with no reason.

Descendents of the Ustashes have recently renewed the slaughter.
What should we do? We asked one another,
looking at the doorsteps and thin, soft children's necks.
We have always got along decently
with most of honest Croat neighbours.

We have been living in Belgrade for two months now.
(Hence, fulfilling, in the most horrible a way,
our youth dream which died out later.)
There are ten or more of us in a room.
During the day we think that we are living in a horrible nightmare,
during the night we gaze into the dark reality.

Relatives, neighbours, friends
who stayed in the village are at war, they bleed, die.
Here, our own consciousness and appeals from everywhere
are forcing all of us, men capable of fighting,
to make a decision.

Some of us haven't hurt a fly.
They weren't interested in politics at all.
The thought that they have to kill terrifies them,
and the dread that they too might be killed distresses them.
People, is there still justice, kindness, sanity in the world
or are we all becoming embodiments of injustice, evil, madness?

REFUGEES II

For centuries, our ancestors
lived in the beautiful Croatia.
Five decades ago, In the Darkest War,
many of them scarified their lives
fighting against the enemies,
Germans, Ustashes and Chetniks.

Descendents of the Chetniks have recently renewed the slaughter.
What should we do? We asked one another,
looking at the doorsteps and thin, soft children's necks.
We have always got along decently
with most of honest Serb neighbours.

We have been living in Zagreb for two months now.
(Hence, fulfilling, in the most horrible a way,
our youth dream which died out later.)
There are ten or more of us in a room.
During the day we think that we are living in a horrible nightmare,
during the night we gaze into the dark reality.

Relatives, neighbours, friends
who stayed in the village are at war, they bleed, die.
Here, our own consciousness and appeals from everywhere
are forcing all of us, men capable of fighting,
to make a decision.

Some of us haven't hurt a fly.
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The thought that they have to kill terrifies them,
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People, is there still justice, kindness, sanity in the world
or are we all becoming embodiments of injustice, evil, madness?

GOD, SONS ARE CRIPPLES

My first entry log, my first hero
in the gloomy month of November,
so much has happened in the last twenty days,
and now, I don't know how to fill a few pages,
in fact, only one thing has happened, the worst,
no, not the worst, the worst is the Final Departure,
and our boys weren't killed, thank you, God,
Teofil's Irinej just (hm, just) lost
both of his legs, my Igor lost his right arm,
a mine, small one, black, green, perfidious mine
tore our sons' flesh and crushed their bones,
they have been inseparable since they were born,
they were like that over there, on the front, in East Slavonia
which we loved as much as our Voivodina,
we have relatives there, they sometimes came to Kerestur
for our Saint Patron's Day, we couldn't imagine
that our only sons will be at war,
that they will lose their legs and arm
in the beautiful, peaceful, tame, fertile East Slavonia.

"Alas, don't worry" said cheered up, legless Irinej
today in the hospital.

"I'll learn to walk with prosthesis in no time.

I feel sorry for Igor. He'll have the trouble
learning to write and draw
with his left hand. Fortunately,
we, the electrical engineers, draw less and walk less
than say, civil engineers, so it could be said
that we have a bit of luck in this misfortune."

Fathers smiled, mothers furtively
wiped their tears, Seka and Tamara tenderly kissed
the wounded fiancées once more time.

The only fortune, little fortune in the great,
sheer misfortune that befell us,
I see in the fact that now there isn't any suspense
which was shattering us for days and nights,
our nerves were on the edge, we didn't sleep;
we no longer wonder whether the Ustash monsters
will capture our sons in action
or capture them wounded, will they take their eyes out
while still alive, cut their ears off, will they break them,
spear them, slowly slaughter them, burn them alive.

"Don't worry, mom", said Igor a month ago.

"Your son will not be captured by Ustashes alive.

A "kasikara" bomb, my little sister is always beside me.

Should the devils come close, I'll activate it

and in the next moment I'll be amongst angels."

This "console" made Jasenka cry so hard
that her son had to promise her that he will throw the "kasikara"
in the first battle as soon as he returns to the front,
and that he will always be very, very careful.

Thank God, all that is in the past,
recent, but irreversible past, further than distance,
past, past, I deal with it so much,
yet, this anaphoric past, crippled my son
who was always gazing into the future.

MONSTERS IN THE FOG

Cold, wet, foggy evening.

I'm strolling the empty, asphalt streets
of the periphery of Novo naselje.

I'm walking slowly and breathing deeply,
I'm listening to a chat of invisible
wild geese high in the sky.

From time to time,

from the grassy firing range of the barracks
on the edge of Detelinara, single and
automatic fire can be heard. The soldiers are training
before leaving for Slavonia.

In one moment, from the fog on the road,

a vicious rumble of powerful machines reached my ears.

I was speeding up curiously, and a bit later

I saw a column of military trucks, transporters,
jeeps, big trucks carrying tanks, all sorts of wanders.

Some of them were hidden under dark green tarpaulins.

I was very excited, I was trying to walk carelessly

(in order not to look suspicious),

I was watching the officers, noncommissioned officers, soldiers,

standing by vehicles in groups, chatting,

joking, waiting for the command to leave.

Soon some of them will be dead.

If I had any power, I thought helplessly,

I would put many politicians

who commit so many crimes

in the name of national interests,

into these machines tonight.

ESTEEMED MEN ON THE FRONT

From time to time, I watch TV, read or listen about
individuals and delegations visiting fronts.
Congressmen, senators, members of the parliament,
ambassadors, military attachés, party leaders, mediators,
even some artists, thoroughly secured,
go on one day appealing fieldtrips.

They gaze upon demolished buildings,
bodies of shot or slaughtered miserables,
they observe the other side of the front with binoculars,
give advice to the participants in the war games,
and relate their impressions in front of TV cameras.

Some of them are satisfying mere curiosity,
others are collecting piteous political points,
some (even domestic party representatives)
go on fieldtrips to war zones with a latent wish
to have fun, and often shoot out of
automatic or a machine guns for five minutes.

Josip Broz Tito, his ass kissers,
and left and right wing worldly friends,
amused themselves in a similar way for decades:
they organized hunts, shot well fed bores,
deer and wild bores, hence satisfied
their "spiritual" needs.

To shoot people or animals...
Political mobs don't see a big difference
between these two things. It is important
to satisfy your own needs, and at least
from time to time, to shoot – to kill.

VUKOVAR, PERSONALLY AND FACTUALLY

My best friend from childhood Ivo Lahvac told me
the first fairytales about that beautiful, idyllic town.

After finishing elementary school in Kerestur,
he went back to his Srem,
to become an apprentice in his beloved Vukovar.

As a TV mechanic, he was very meticulous, respected,
he had many customers, he made a good living.

He worked tirelessly for years, diligently saving
and building a new house together with his wife, son and mother.

At the end of August of the Doomed Year
when the grenades started showering Vukovar

I dialed their phone number once more,
but the connections were cut. What happened to Ivo,
Spomenka, Darko and mother Olga?

I often wondered.

*A Spanish magazine "El Pais"
is one of the most eminent journals in Europe.
Its correspondent from Belgrade is
our own Mrs. Mirjana Tomc,
but this doesn't affect the objectivity of her writing.
"I'm shocked with the things I saw
on battlefields in Croatia. I was in Vukovar
before it had been surrounded by the army.
I talked to Serbs and as well as Croats.
I was in their homes. The tragedy of these people
horrified me. They had good lives in Vukovar
and other war zones.
These are mostly rich regions.
I watched people leave their houses,
summer cottages, stores, cars and considerable riches.
Whole families left their home towns forever.
These are thorny human dramas."*

I was in puberty when my cousin Jevdokija Glanko
married Venedikt Miklovs, a master
in a rubber and shoes Complex "Borovo".

Both of them were working very hard
and diligently saving to buy an old house
on Mitnica near the water tower.

(Not even in their wildest dreams did they think
that one black Autumn, the whole world will learn
about Mitica and the water tower because of the battles
which were fought there.) For years after that they built a new nest
in Borovo settlement since they gave the old house to
their daughter and son-in-law. They lived peacefully and happily.

"My dear aunt, life is so good, everything comes easy to us,
that sometimes I fear that something bad is going to happen to us,"
said Jevdokija to my mother once.

She died of liver cancer at the beginning of this year.

We buried her at the new City cemetery

(where countless known and unknown Vukovar victims
are being buried these days). Jevdokija's daughter
and her two children are staying with Venedikt's sister
in Novi Sad, the brother-in-law is on the front,
and Venedikt himself is guarding the house in Borovo settlement.

We, the cousins, don't know anything about his destiny
at the moment.

*The destiny of Vukovar cannot escape
its historic symbolism. In that town, in 1919.
the Yugoslav Communist party was founded,
the police squad which was ambushed in Borovo village
started its journey six months ago
on 1st May from that town.*

*Vukovar, the town where the Croat Communist Party
won the elections, Serbian Democratic Party
had the misfortune of being the first to experience
– what we all experienced later –
the final consequences of
the idealistic and nationalistic intoxication.*

As a TV reporter, I often visited Vukovar
and the nearby villages Petrovci and Miklusevci,
where my compatriots live.
And exactly ten years ago,
in the summer of the carefree '81,
my crew and I were making an eight minute TV portrait
of a smiling high school girl Nadjija Zdinjak,
a member of the rowing club "Vukovar".
We filmed the portrait in the athlete's house,
in her school, in the rowing club on Danube.
Her parents chantingly said that we are distant relatives.
(Namely, Nadjija's grandmother on her mother's side
originated from Glanko family.)
Nadjija's friends from the coxed fours
told me that there are Serbs, Croats, Ruthenians
as well as Hungarians in the Club. And they are
harmonious like a family. Yet, nobody told me,
because nobody knew, that ten years from then,
on the small pier where we talked, horrible things were going to
happen. That the journalist Milan Zegarac, among others,
would write about them – in his last war report;
that he would write it before,
he was mowed down by a machine gun burst
even though he was brave and careless.

*Serbian freedom fighters and their patrol
who managed to get to
Borovo settlement and Vukovar many times,
found out that the Serbs were most brutally tortured
in the basement of the Territorial Defense building.
After the torture, their heads were smashed with a hammer
and Uastashs took their bodies to the Rowing club
in the centre of Vukovar.
There, the chosen Blackshirts
would cut their stomachs open,
and they replaced their intestines with stones,
and then threw them in Danube.*

These days, in the third decade of November,
recently after the end of infernal battles
in the demolished Vukovar,
I wonder what happened to Nadjija Zdinjak,
And her friends from the Rowing club.
I wonder what happened to
most of my friends, acquaintances,
relatives from Vukovar, Petrovci, Miklusevci.
Generally, I'm convinced that they didn't
hate Serbs, Croats, or any other nation, that they
wanted only one thing:
to live peacefully and harmoniously.
But, sometimes ordinary people don't decide
their own fate. So, I wonder again:
are they alive, are they wounded, did they move away?
Maybe some of them are shot, slaughtered
and thrown into Danube with their stomachs cut open.

*Still, Mrs. Tomic can't help herself but
announce some sad data as well.
"Both Serbs and Croats I met proudly showed me
tapes on which they slaughter their "opponents"
I was horrified by them. Serbs in Vucovar,
considering me a Serb, confidingly showed me
"how they can defend themselves",
and Croats were convinced that as an "El Pais" correspondent
I can understand their "self-defense",
they showed me tapes of them slaughtering Serbs.
It made me vomit, and I was horrified for days.
I have to admit, firstly as a human being,
that one scarcely could see
such horrifying images in his life.
This war in Yugoslavia is incomprehensible to me,
and I think that it is a result of conflict of interests
of certain nationality elites
who can sacrifice their whole nation
in order to preserve their totalitarian power."*

The day before yesterday, on the 22nd November,
Spomenka Lahvac called from her uncle's house in Indjija.
She is a refugee.
My first question was: "What happened to Ivo?"
"Eh, Rosven, my Ivo is gone", she said in a crying voice.
My wife and I went to Indjija this morning.
Spomenka told us everything about the family tragedy.
Until the middle of August, Ivo didn't want
to leave the unfinished house he was building for years,
the house he was filling with furniture,
appliances and different domestic necessities.
And when the grenades started to fall nearby,
when he realized that the war is not going to stop,
it was too late. You couldn't get out of Vukovar any longer.
(Fortunately, Darko had escaped on time,
soon he was at his aunt's house in Germany.)
The basement was the only refuge for many families
and for the Lahvac family as well. Bullets were whizzing,
grenades were thundering. The new house was being destroyed.
Ivo's misfortune was an insidious disease: thrombosis.
In the morning on the 10th October, after an enormous explosion
nearby, a deadly blood cluster started moving through his leg.
The drugs supplies were out, we couldn't reach the hospital.
"I don't feel well...I'm suffocating!"
said Ivo to his wife, mother and brother. He was dead
a minute later. A scream, a helpless cry.
They wrapped him in nylon , took him out to the garden.
In the moments of silence they buried him shallow.
My friend Ivo is sleeping in his garden, now.

*Vukovar fell after exactly three months of siege.
The beautiful old town is completely annihilated,
it resembles Warsaw of 1945. the most. Only ten thousand
(the exact number is not known yet)
out of 45000 saw the surrender.
All of them spent the last three months in basements
and they are having trouble seeing when they go outside.*

Spomenka Lahvac will go to Germany soon
she'll stay with her sister (who is Serbian) and her
brother-in-law (who is Croat). At least she will see her son.
She will never see her Ivo again. Neither will Darko, brother
Slavko, nor aggrieved, lost mother Olga.
Their Ivo is sleeping in his garden.
Many Vukovar people will never see their
own children, parents, life companions,
streets they walked on countless times,
houses where they spent the best years.

*Vukovar is annihilated now!
It is not news anymore.
It is a fact we live with
since 1991. until forever.
Vukovar of today represents
the symbol of people's dishonor. An admonition.
Its location should be left
for time to devour the evil accumulated in it.
The annihilated Vukovar is a warning
about what can happen to us.
The future Vukovar is the proof
of what is happening to us today.
Vukovar symbolizes us, forever.*

KERESTUR MEDITATIONS III

Since the day I was born, I have spent
all the Christmases, except the twenty-fourth
(when I was one of the guards in barracks),
in Kerestur, in my family house on Kurti street.
Here, with my family, I spent this Christmas Eve as well,
at moments sad, nostalgic, at moments happy, oh yes, singing,
the celebration is over, my in-laws are already fast asleep
I'll dive into my diary passion for a while.

Easter, family's saint patron's day and Christmas were
our favorite holidays, we especially loved Christmas,
I'll never forget the excitement which overwhelmed me
when, on a Christmas Eve, my mother would bring
a fairly big armful of straw into the room, we spread it all over
the floor, and then dinner – fish with rise on a copper pan,
it goes without saying – after dinner mother would put
a linen, whitened, bag made exclusively for
Christmas caroler around my neck,
I would sing the carols in my neighbourhood, and "earn"
walnuts, apples, dried plums, figs, chestnuts, a few dinars,
and then I would rush to the Big street, where Joakim, Leonka
and Alek were already waiting for me, we would visit
their whole neighbourhood and the relatives we have in common.

*Today brings wonderful news:
the purest Virgin gave birth to a son.
She shanged the little child in the crib;
joyous is the sky, joyous is the Earth.*

*Heavens proclaim the words of angels,
shepherds announce the birth of Christ.
The emperor came down from the skies
to Betlehem to save all human race.*

We sang a beautiful carol tonight as well, all of us:
Miron and Oksana, Alek (Georgette was watching us,
astonished, delighted, with her eyes open wide),
Mojsije Provci, his wife, both of their little daughters,
Jasenka and I were singing too, Igor and Tamara,
my mother sang as well, resonantly, the first stanza,
she choke during the second, so she went to the anteroom,
I don't know whether she started to cry because she was
happy or sad, there was a reason for both,
all of us have reasons for both being happy and sad,
every year, on Christmas Eve, when neighbours' and relatives'
children line up, when we start singing carols ourselves,
we are especially excited, mellowed, tears always
flicker in our eyes, even tonight we are mostly happy,
maybe because Igor is happy, it seems that
he is rather easily getting used to life without his arm,
it's good, I hope it will get better, better and better,
in our family and in our misfortunate country,
it can't get any worse; or maybe it can.

In all likelihood, the Parisian is the only one among us
who isn't sick of this bestial war,
even though the suffering of ordinary people upsets him,
that suffering and other war atrocities are depicted in his paintings
of the cycle named "Balkan Storm" he works on it in his atelier
far away from gunpowder, smoke, bullets, knives and blood.

"I sometimes have a guilty conscious because of that, I swear",
he told us tonight, when, after singing wonderful carols,
we started a cheerless discussion about current events.

"I feel like a war profiteer. Because I cashed in
some of the canvases of the "Balkan Storm" last week.
The battles last, and I haven't picked the side.
I still like the Serbs, now I even pity them a bit,
I don't hate Croats yet, I feel a little sorry for them, too.
Tell me which side to pick."

"I really feel sorry for you", said Jasenka ironically.

"You can be on Serbs' side for seven days,
and the other seven days you can take Croats' side."

"I liked Serbs until recently, too, but lately I'm confused, bittered", said Mojsije Provcic who has been Miron's guest for several months now. "I found out from our newspapers and from some new refugees from Vukovar, Petrovac, Miklusevci, that some Ruthenians had been treated like enemies. That there are lists of those who will be thrown out of their own homes and moved to Croatia. It's a disaster! It's true that some of our compatriots were pro-fascist followers, on their misfortune and on our regret. Some of them were even in the Croat Army, voluntarily or under force.

But, is that the reason to punish their families and relatives? And so extremely unjustly: by throwing them out of their homes where they have been living for decades, which they built with their own effort and sweat. We all know well that our people is sparse in Yugoslavia, that it has always been peace loving, diligent, loyal to every authority. We never wanted to take part in destructive Serbo-Croat conflicts. Yet, we must bear the consequences."

"Those who are in power in Vukovar, Petrovac and Miklusevci need the rich, nicely arranged Ruthenian estates acquired with great effort and sweat", added Mihaljina, Mojsije's wife. "We understand and pity their refugees, who were left without their houses and estates in Croatia. But it's not ok for our completely innocent people in Srem to be harassed, even murdered, thrown out of their ancestor's hearths."

"All those things are very painful and tragic", I added, which was not very wise, even I didn't know why. "*It's hard for the generations who live to see epochal events*", said Josph de Maistre, and we, my friends are fortunate, actually unfortunate, to live to see exactly those kind of events."

As I mentioned, I didn't say anything wise,
I can't write in my notebook anything important
even now, after midnight, before sleep,
nevertheless, different reflections spin around my head,
at times I condemn the unrestrained, primitive, irrational,
grumpy Balkan people, at times I condemn all our comrades,
the good-natured, submissive, Slavs who are marked
with a personal and collective inferiority stigma.
They allowed to be humiliated, crushed, turned into a third
race by the brutal Germanic and perfidious Romanic people.
Lenin was an utopist, Stalin a monster, frantic killer
of his inferiors, still the two of them turned the Slavic
mother country into a powerful, influential global factor,
and Gorbachev and Jelcin, two incompetent mediocrities
submitted to the West, turned the Eastern Slavs into
pathetic, humiliating slaves of Germanic and Romanic people.
After the second World War the Soviets
were in Warsaw, Berlin, Prague, Budapest, Sofia,
partly in Belgrade, they were in the middle of Europe,
and now when the Soviet Union tragically, stupidly,
elementally, shamefully disintegrated (as God is my witness,
I don't miss the totalitarian Bolshevik
empire, but I'm convinced that everything could have happen
in a better conceived, more appropriate and dignifying manner),
the Americans are not just infusing into the heart of Europe,
but they want to take over the whole Balkan, too,
almost all the Eastern European peoples are fawning over them,
but not the obstinate, defiant Serbs, who have always been
the Americans' allies, but never their inferiors.
Now, brother Serbs, different winds are blowing,
Americans, the selfish, conceited parvenus,
squanders, vulgar materialists, power turned their heads,
they want to make a new world order,
to be inviolable masters of the whole Earth,
Americans, Americans why do you need that tragicomedy,
hegemony never made anybody happy.

BROTHERHOOD-CHILDHOOD

As children,
at school and at home,
we used to sing Croatian, Dalmatian,
Bosnian, Slavonian,
Macedonian, Serbian songs.
Singing those songs we were learning the language
of our beloved Yugoslavia.

Some of my most beautiful memories
from childhood and boyhood
are school excursions.
Our stays in Slovenian
and Bosnian mountains,
at the beautiful Adriatic seaside
are still my pictures amulets.

If my memory doesn't fail me,
Slovens, even Dalmatians,
Croats, but mostly Bosnians
often smiled.
Nobody suspected
that maybe we will be hated foreigners
to some of them.

Comrade Tito, dear father,
we grew up under your wing.
Fed with ideas about brotherhood and unity,
we idealistically gazed
into a happy future.
Comrade Tito, what have you done?
Why didn't you live to see *this*?

MAN, IT SOUNDS AWFUL

Since I have started thinking
with my own head, I have often loved,
frequently even admired other people.
But, I have never been
so overwhelmed with such a scorn,
such bitterness, almost disgust,
like lately.

I don't know which of my brothers
is more miserable, worthless, worthy of scorn.
The uneducated, rude, intolerant,
excited and poisoned
with religious and national envy,
or allegedly civilized, but heartless,
sleaze balls who only care for themselves?

Who are the greater evildoers?
Those blinded, insane,
infected with hate, who kill fellow sufferers
in the Valley of Tears, and demolish houses,
or those who could have prevented this madness,
but for their selfish interests,
they behave like repulsive philistines?

Miserable is the world ruled
by the scoundrels
at the end of the twentieth century.
I was afraid that it would disappear,
and now this fact rarely despairs me.
More often I'm convinced that that world
is supposed to disappear soon.

CHANGE OF YEARS, CHANGE OF WORLDS

Dark red eve of the last day of the war '91.

Merry songs, games and jokes could be heard
on the radio until a moment ago,
now, I'm listening to a report from
a region taken by the dark red, blood fire.

I'm listening about a father and a son in the battle field together,
about a woman who lost her husband and children,
about a refugee boy who was beaten by
the children from his old neighbourhood
only because his parents are Serbs.

"Tell them that you are a Yugoslav", his grandmother advised him.

"Yugoslavia doesn't exist anymore" Croats told me this.

"Tell them: it exists and it will always exist!"

I got dressed and went down from the eight floor.

Melancholic, I walk the streets of Novo naselje.
Firecrackers are crackling. Children are having fun.
I used to enjoy the New Year's crackling.

Now, I think about the fact that guns, Kalashnikovs, cannons
are being fired only sixty kilometers from here.

Nicely dressed, perfumed couple
enters a car in a hurry.

They will await the New Year
at their friends' house or in a restaurant.

I will await the awful '92

(during which I'll celebrate my fiftieth birthday
with a minute of silence and ponder,
in the New '92 I plan to publish
the first five volumes of my life's work)

very modestly, with my wife, in our flat.

I told her just now: "Darling, our time
must come once."

In a such or similar,
dark red, maybe snowy eve,
thirty years ago,
I was getting ready for the New Year's dance
in the Kerestur Youth Centre.
Then, I was, oh, firmly convinced
(now I see that I was wrongly convinced)
that I'll be a happy man in the wide world
ten years from then.
Those were really nice dreams.

I couldn't even imagine
that I'll await my fiftieth birthday
in an infringed Yugoslavia poisoned with hate,
lit with the fires of war.
I couldn't even imagine that the world will promote
a new order, based on the interests
of the rich, powerful and selfish.
If only I were able to realize
that I should change my idealistic view
of the world and of life.