

# **How the Earth Carries Us**

# **New Lithuanian Poets**

Introduction—5
Arnas Ališauskas—21

Darius Šimonis—27

Neringa Abrutytė-33

Laurynas Katkus—38

Vytas Dekšnys-45 Dainius Gintalas—51

Benediktas Januševičius-61

Rimvydas Stankevičius-69

Artūras Valionis-84

Gintaras Bleizgys—92

Tomas S. Butkus-100

Mantas Gimžauskas-106

Gytis Norvilas-113

Mindaugas Valiukas-118

Marius Burokas—126

Rimantas Kmita-132 Antanas Šimkus-142

Donatas Petrošius—149

Agnė Žagrakalytė-156

Giedrė Kazlauskaitė-161

Ilzė Butkutė-169

Mindaugas Nastaravičius-175

Vytautas Stankus—181

Indrė Valantinaitė—193 Aušra Kaziliūnaitė-199

Ramunė Brundzaitė-206

Biographies-215



Introduction by Rimas Uzgiris

...humanity knows much more about various archaic tribes than it does about the history of European minorities—that quintessence of injustice, absurdity, and errors.<sup>1</sup>

Lithuania is a void, stuffed with rotting memories... there's nothing, nothing, nothing left—only the language. A thousand intelligent men all over the world analyze the Lithuanian language because it's incredibly interesting, practically unique. But who analyzes Lithuanians? It'd be better if one of those thousand intelligent men all over the world analyzed Lithuania's spiritual history, all that drivel, that nameless heartache and hopeless, grotesque attempts at *living*.2—*Ričardas Gavelis* 

These strikingly unromantic quotes come from an extraordinary novel published in 1989, after the fall of the Berlin wall, during the ascendancy of the Lithuanian independence movement Sajūdis: cracks in the Soviet edifice had started to appear. The novel, Vilnius Poker, written by Ričardas Gavelis, describes an earlier time of Soviet conformity, censorship and repression. Thematically, it represented a marked turn away from the romanticized depiction of Lithuania that helped sustain the national consciousness under occupation, and it was also, needless to say, a gob of spit in the face of socialist realism. Vilnius Poker represents, or is, the breaking point. Nothing would be the same again. Lithuania declared its independence from the Soviet Union on March 11, 1990. This was the country's second declaration of Independence and it ended fifty years of occupation. The first declaration was on February 16, 1918, ending roughly 150 years of Russian rule. Interwar independence, albeit with Vilnius occupied by Poland, had been marked by a tremendous release of linguistic energy. The czarist restrictions on their language finally overthrown, Lithuanian writers embarked on a process of development and experimentation. Some writers let loose with long-suppressed Romantic themes, celebrating their country and its heritage, others took advantage of the opening to the West to imbibe the new styles of modernist literature. All of this was shut down by the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact of 1939, condemning

<sup>1</sup> Gavelis, Vilnius Poker, 301.

<sup>2</sup> Gavelis, Vilnius Poker, 159.

Lithuania to the Soviet sphere, and its literature was shackled to socialist realism, with dissidents sent to the gulags or forced into exile. The poetic tradition of the country developed slowly under the restrictions of totalitarian censors. Nevertheless, poets developed an "Aesopian" language based on metaphors, symbols and double meanings that spoke their secret sense to readers in the know while escaping the censor's sword.

The subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union led to a rather surprising literary problem: for those who wrote to evade the censor, and developed a style to do so, how, with no censor to evade, should they write? This question of style went hand in hand with another surprising shock to the newly free literary community: their readership dwindled. According to the scholar Gabrielė Gailiūtė, the average print run for a book of fiction was 24,000 copies in the Soviet era, and this declined to approximately 1,500 to 2,000 in the 90's.3 Poetry, in particular, was highly valued in the time of occupation, partly because its Aesopian language allowed it to express criticisms of the system as well as nationalist feelings and longings. It too has seen a decline in readership. Poet and critic, Kornelijus Platelis writes that the immediate years after independence were "something of a Golden Age for writers however: fees were paid as they were in Soviet times and nobody was teaching anyone how one has to write. But soon things started to get worse. Society's interest in our writing, together with print runs of our books, decreased approximately ten fold."4 Now, deprived of a privileged place in culture, with a correspondingly smaller readership, poets have had to adjust their language and their goals. This has led them to try out many different styles and subjects. Perhaps most important among these is the theme of identity. Gailiūtė pinpoints the source of the need for this: "As it was told in Soviet times, history was a slapdash mixture of naive romanticism and blatant propaganda. Therefore, questions like what it means to be Lithuanian and where we come from still come back to haunt us."5 The questioning and re-forging of identity is no easy task, especially when we keep in mind the observation of scholar Antanas Samalavičius that "post-war habits of thinking and behavior rooted in official

<sup>3</sup> Gailiūtė, "Lithuanian Literature Today", 12-13.

<sup>4</sup> Platelis, "About Modern Lithuanian Literature", 8.

<sup>5</sup> Gailiūtė, "Lithuanian Literature Today", 14-15.

culture continue to be felt today." This is one important reason why an anthology of young Lithuanian poets is so important. Those born in 1970 and after were not formed as poets by the Soviet era. To a large extent, their personalities were not formed under repression either. They began their publishing careers in a free and independent country. Thus, on the level of language, in that intriguing mixture of thought and feeling that is poetry, they can be said to represent the making of a new Lithuanian consciousness. Smaller readership or not, they are no less important to the progress of the culture. Even Gavelis, for all the gloom in his magnum opus, portrayed poetry as a crucial locus of resistance to the mindlessness and soullessness of both conformist ideology and Western consumerism, which he labelled "kanukism":

It's no accident that the champions of kanukism—starting with Plato, ending with Stalin—so hate and fear fantasies and poetics, that they tried so hard to make everything pragmatic, to explain it, to substantiate it.

Poetry kills *Them*, gives *Them* convulsions, wrings

Their guts—like boric acid does to cockroaches!7

Poets are preservers and developers of language—of thought and feeling in language. They are, at their best, aware of the past, in touch with the present, and find new ways of putting this experience into words, thereby allowing to understand ourselves and our possibilities. As the critic William Meredith has argued, "This is why poets, in the large Greek sense of *makers*, are crucial to the culture. They respond newly, but in the familiar language of the tribe." Poets can change a culture by changing the way that people think about themselves and their place in the world. Lawrence Venuti, commenting on Derrida and translation, argues that "nationalism is not the empirical fact of national citizenship, but an identification with or self-recognition in a particular discourse of a nation." However, it is important to keep in mind that the discourse of poetry can, and often does, transcend national boundaries, that culture is itself porous, malleable and

<sup>6</sup> Samalavičius, The Dedalus Book of Lithuanian Literature, 15.

<sup>7</sup> Gavelis, Vilnius Poker, 168.

<sup>8</sup> Meredith, Poems Are Hard to Read, 40-1.

<sup>9</sup> Venuti, "Local Contingencies: Translation and National Identities", 179.

heterogenous. So, if poets are makers of culture, a culture that can be both national and trans-national, what kind of culture are the new Lithuanian poets making now?

Lithuanian poetry in the twenty-first century impresses with its diversity of styles, subjects and forms. The younger generation—those born after 1970 or so, has been especially marked by experimentation, diaspora and the rejection of old themes. All of these poets came of age as artists in the post-Soviet era. They have seen their borders open, have travelled the world and lived abroad.

Postmodernism exploded onto the literary scene in the 1990s. It has burrowed into the culture like a bunker-buster bomb. Kornelijus Platelis has pointed out how foreign occupation stimulated conditions for an anachronistic mentality in poetic work: "In these years we were living in the same political situation as that of East European Romantics of the XIX century: occupation by a foreign power, censorship, collaborators and resisters. So, our poetry had this additional meaning and additional burden though it wasn't romantic in its style. Yet our mentality was somehow romantic." However, Platelis has also revealed that many poets felt constricted by this romanticism, sensing its artificiality.

Lithuanian poetry, like the language itself, has been rooted in the countryside. In the words of literary scholar Rimvydas Šilbajoris, Lithuanian is "quintessentially a peasant language, grown from the soil, seasoned in the harshness and grace of the changing seasons, tempered by long endurance under enduring hardships."11 Lithuania was relatively late in developing an urban culture. Vilnius was long inhabited primarily by Polish and Yiddish speakers. Kaunas was a small provincial city. Most writers were in fact from small towns or the countryside. So it should be no surprise to hear poet and critic Eugenijus Ališanka claim that "folkloric and ethnographic traditions have, for a long time, played an important role in Lithuanian poetry."12 Many of the country's first and most influential poets were also clergymen, from Donelaitis, to Maironis, to Mykolaitis-Putinas. As a result, and to a large extent, literature and national identity developed along the lines of rural Catholicism. Šilbajoris, in his historical account of Lithuanian literary development, points out a significant group of

<sup>10</sup> Platelis, "About Modern Lithuanian Literature", 5-6.

<sup>11</sup> Šilbajoris, A Short History of Lithuanian Literature, 13.

<sup>12</sup> Ališanka, Six Lithuanian Poets, 15.

what he calls "village prose" and "village verse" writers, whose work was rooted in "the centuries-old traditions of the Lithuanian farming community, since it is perceived to embody the quintessential traits of the Lithuanian national character and culture." Notable recent poets, such as Justinas Marcinkevičius, Marcelijus Martinaitis and Sigitas Geda are examples of this school's reach into the twenty-first century. We can also find this attitude in scholarly commentary on poetry, where, for instance, the prominent critic Viktorija Daujotytė claims that "The one who cannot get nourishment out of nature, cannot do so out of life either. Nor, in the end, from language." It follows, then, for her, that poetry must have its roots in the natural environment: "primordial poetry lies in nature."

The village, and the world of nature in which it was enmeshed, took on even more meaning under the Soviet occupation because it represented what was not Soviet, what was, in fact, constantly threatened by Soviet policy. As Samalavičius comments, "Many Lithuanian authors explored the processes of destruction affecting traditional village structures and communities, describing the incremental loss of traditional ways of life and examining the consequences of collectivisation." This, not surprisingly, was deeply connected to the romantic strain in their work, characterized, writes Platelis, "by the use of shared concepts: homeland, nation, spirit, earth, bread, and the appeal to shared experiences and aspirations. In that romanticism it is possible to see a specific Lithuanian current that could be called idyllic."

<sup>13</sup> Šilbajoris, 169.

<sup>14</sup> Daujotytė, Lašas poezijos, 9. (My translation)

<sup>15</sup> Daujotytė, 19. (My translation). We might contrast her view with the urban cosmopolitanism of Frank O'Hara: "However, I have never clogged myself with the praises of pastoral life, nor with nostalgia for an innocent past of perverted acts in pastures. No. One need never leave the confines of New York to get all the greenery one wishes—I can't even enjoy a blade of grass unless I know there's a subway handy, or a record store or some other sign that people do not totally regret life." (from "Meditations in an Emergency"). For all his tongue-in-cheek brashness, we can see that poetry, for O'Hara, is found in human society, not in nature.

<sup>16</sup> Samalavičius, The Dedalus Book of Lithuanian Literature, 16.

<sup>17</sup> Platelis, "About Modern Lithuanian Poetry", 147.

Of course, there have been exceptions to this idyllic "village verse", especially among émigré poets, such as Henrikas Radauskas and Tomas Venclova, or in Lithuania's first real city poet, 18 Judita Vaičiūnaitė, but now the exceptions have become the rule. 19 As Ališanka points out, renewed independence in 1990 brought a sense of freedom to younger poets, who no longer felt they needed to carry the weight of national identity in their verse. That freedom also brought about the re-publication of émigré verse and intensified contact with the outer world. "Poets no longer feel that they are 'the spokesmen of the nation,' but on the contrary, that they have to find a language that is in keeping with an increased sense of loneliness and detachment. Poetry becomes more subjective and ironic, an expression of the 'I' rather than the 'we."20 Platelis characterizes post-Soviet work as "more 'democratic,' more clear, more understandable, less engaged in various cultural contexts and more focused on everyday life experiences trying to lighten them with an unexpected approaches..."21 So with independence came a release not only from censorship and socialist realism, but from the Lithuanian nationalist traditions as well. Subjective, ironic, urban, contemporary in their themes, the twenty-six poets presented here almost all came of age as writers in the post-Soviet era, many of them in the twenty-first century. For them, the time has come and gone for poems about countryside cottages, fertile fields with singing birds, the struggling soul of an oppressed Lithuania, the glories of the past... In other words, romanticism, that nineteenth-century European artistic fount that ran on in Lithuania well into the twentieth century with various neo-romantic rivulets, is largely dried up. One can still hear a trickle here and there, but for the most part, new springs have been precipitously tapped.

This is not to say that Lithuanian culture and history are absent from the poetry of the newest generation. These themes appear in

<sup>18</sup> One could argue that other poets from Lithuania (or Vilnius), such as Czesław Miłosz and Abraham Sutzkever, were also city poets, just not in the Lithuanian language.

<sup>19</sup> I am also leaving out of this simplified account the various experimental modernist poets active during Lithuania's interwar period, when Futurism, Symbolism and general avant-garde experimentalism briefly flourished.

<sup>20</sup> Ališanka, 17.

<sup>21</sup> Platelis, "About Modern Lithuanian Literature", 9.

different forms, within a different context and under a more critical eye. For example, Ramunė Brundzaitė, in her 2013 Young Jotvingian Prize-winning debut *Drugy, mano drauge* (Butterfly, My Friend), writes of the sense of dislocation engendered by her studies in Italy. She is rooted in Lithuanian culture and history, yet fully engaged with Italy: and like many Lithuanians living in different parts of Europe since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the experience leads her to question her identity. The first wave of émigré writers were forced out of their country by the Soviet occupation and often looked back with unrelenting nostalgia. Now, the Lithuanian poet faces choices about where to live, and this gives rise to an interrogation of what it means to be a Lithuanian. Thus, in her poem "by the Bernardines," Brundzaitė compares Lithuanian history to the slimy trail of a slug. The iconic late-Gothic masterpiece of St. Anne's Church enters her poetry as a skeletal presence. The Lithuanian bonfire, so gloriously celebrated on St. John's Day, is bracketed. Throughout the collection, Italy appears as often as Vilnius, and the poet struggles to master and integrate her foreign experiences with home, always seeming to miss one place when she is in the other. Clever wordplay slides hand in hand with a lyric sensibility that is both at home and lost in different cultures from Russia to the Mediterranean Sea.

The poetry of Marius Burokas is more rooted in the daily life of Vilnius, yet his perspective is also one of interrogation. In his second poetry collection, <code>Būsenos</code> (Conditions), he marked himself as a Lithuanian poet while standing naked in an American laundromat—not in the countryside, not on an ancient castle hill (as would be expected in the earlier romantic verse, e.g., that of Maironis). In his latest work from <code>Išmokau nebūti</code> (I Learned How Not to Be), which won him the Young Jotvingian Prize in 2011, his Vilnius is the city outside the renovated, tourist-filled, historical Old Town. Dingy dives and impersonal apartment blocks present the reader with a seedy and grim contemporary landscape. One can feel the influence of the American beats and Bukowski (whom he has translated into Lithuanian). Burokas searches for meaning in a fallen world, while death in the form of a naked prostitute calls to him from an apartment window.

Ilzė Butkutė, in her debut *Karavanų lopšinės* (Caravan Lullabies), imagines herself as having been raised in the circus. Like Picasso painting himself as a harlequin, she connects herself to an outsider culture. Poetry becomes her magic trick for transforming the world, for writing herself as a twenty-first century woman, both cutting and

soft, growing knives in her garden instead of flowers, making love in a gas mask, or writing from the perspective of a Jewish father's final note to his daughter during the holocaust. Her femininity is complex (and playful, e.g., she likes to mention how she loves both cats and motorcycles), and her poetry is necessary to a new and more sophisticated comprehension of a woman's identity in contemporary Lithuania.

Benediktas Januševičius is arguably the most experimental poet of the newest generation, winning the Young Jotvingian Prize in 2007. He has written books of poems blended with drawings, poetry collections full of wordplay and word games, and his work tackles contemporary issues with playful wit, wild imagination and pizzazz. In his new poems, "On genes" and "Where do children come from?" Januševičius deals with two sides of the human reproductive story. Folkloric accounts of the origins of children are treated with irony and humor in "Where do children come from?" But the poem uses this playfulness to surprise us with fundamental questions having to do with where we ourselves come from and why we are here. The playful questioning of childish accounts of the origins of babies becomes a steppingstone to the questioning of our metaphysical roots and our existential purpose. Similarly, Januševičius answers the seriousness of scientific investigations and manipulations with ironic wit. Genetic engineering and the study of the building blocks of life can be emotionally wrought topics, yet the poet's absurdist treatment of them allows us to put aside our anxieties and face the issue of our fundamental mutability. Whether in a beauty parlor or in a genetic laboratory, we are increasingly capable of changing ourselves, but are we clear on the whys and what fors of these potentially catastrophic changes?

The poetry of Aušra Kaziliūnaitė, a doctoral student in the philosophy department of Vilnius University and the author of three books of poems, electrifies us with startling juxtapositions, surreal imagery and unexpected twists and turns. Her poems do not admit easy interpretation, but always enchant us with their vivid and far-reaching imaginative journeys. There is no quaint tenderness or romantic sentimentality in these verses. Cruelty, blood and death burst out of her poemscapes as metaphysical presences permeating our lives. In her second book, 20% koncentracijos stovykla (20% Concentration Camp), we find cars impaling themselves on a huge hook in the sky or giant beavers gnawing at the world. This grim imagery continues in her latest work, as the stars sound an alarm that has been ringing for all time,

and the moon is figured as a pill, half of which gets stuffed into a dying bird. Our condition is permeated by violence, yet strangely beautiful, and she depicts it with a surprising, philosophical calm.

Donatas Petrošius, author of two books of poetry, winner of the Young Jotvingian Prize in 2004 and the Best Poetry Book of the Year Award from the Lithuanian Writer's Union for his collection Aoristas (The Aorist) in 2010, writes poems from the perspective of the traditional lyrical subject, replete with biographical elements. There is something about his style reminiscent of the New York School, as he strings together thoughts and events in unpunctuated cascading sentences that spill across line and stanza breaks with breathtaking energy. Just when we think we know where we are in a poem, we are startled by unexpected juxtapositions or surreal intrusions, yet propelled along by the relentless stream of language. In one work, a bull being led to market becomes a sacrifice to the gods, while a man on a bicycle becomes a titan from the ancient world. Petrošius can discuss his athletic shoes in one stanza and then, in the next, run outside to check on the magical rope-bridge from his balcony to the four corners of the world. Everyday reality is permeated with both magic and doubt. The poet sees himself with irony, questions his life, yet is surrounded by wonder.

Much could be written on every poet selected for this anthology, about how, for instance, Rimvydas Stankevičius and Gintaras Bleizgys have renewed a long tradition of religious poetry in Lithuania by presenting deeply flawed narrators attempting to retain their connection to God in a post-modern world; how Rimantas Kmita interrogates everyday experience by weaving a slow torrent of meditative, probing lines of simple speech; how Indrė Valantinaitė, building on the work of Judita Vaičiūnaitė, has brought the love poem into the twenty-first century; how the poet and playwright Mindaugas Nastaravičius has revitalized the narrative-lyric, long neglected in Lithuanian poetics; how Mantas Gimžauskas (nicknamed "Shaman") burst onto the scene all too briefly with surreal and darkly playful poetry unlike anything anyone was writing in the language, before perishing tragically in a fire. The diversity of poetry and poetics herein is astonishing for such a small country.

The time is coming to let the poems speak for themselves. Although, we should first note that they are speaking here in English. I have translated the majority of the work, most of which has not been translated before. Of the remaining poems, the translations have been

published within the last decade, mostly in Lithuania. We have used them with some editing. The overriding goal of our editors—myself, Marius Burokas and Edgaras Platelis—has been to preserve accuracy of meaning without losing the unique poetic qualities of each work. Generally speaking, when a poem seems to rely heavily on rhymes and wordplay, I have tried to preserve this in English; but in conjunction with my emphasis on preserving original sense, simile, metaphor and image, I have allowed the rhyme to echo in different patterns, and sometimes to rhyme slant instead of full. The goal has been to give the reader a sense of what the original is trying to accomplish with sound, without radically altering the sense.

To give some examples, in the case of Arnas Ališauskas, I have strived to preserve the existence of end-rhyme. Ališauskas writes difficult poems with convoluted syntax and an unpuctuated flow of imagery that resists easy interpretation—even on a surface level of meaning. He is a post-modern experimentalist who uses rhyme (similar in this respect to some of the work of John Ashbery). Not only does the rhyme tie his linguistically adventurous lines together, but one gets the impression that he is playing with tradition. Thus, it is important that the reader of the English version should get a sense of this. It is essential to his poetics.

By contrast, Ilzė Butkutė uses rhyme in a much more traditional way. Her poems are clear lyrical structures, often composed in rhyming quatrains. What is new and important about her work is not linguistic play or formal contortions of tradition, but the content of her poetry that is brought home in vivid imagery whose surface meaning (at least) is not difficult to grasp. Thus, I have chosen to render her work in a contemporary lyrical free verse style, privileging content over sound.

In some cases, especially when wordplay is involved, as in the poetry of Januševičius and Brundzaitė, changes and substitutions must be made. For example, in Januševičius' poem "On genes", he writes at one point, "tegyvuoja gmo, nso ir čmo!!!" which I have rendered as "let gmo, ufo, omg live!!!". The problem here was that "čmo" is Russian slang for a morally degraded person with no clear equivalent in English. I replaced it with "omg" to capture the play of sound and slang with the hint (consistent with the poem's meaning, I believe) that genetic engineering is like 'playing god'. Sometimes, my alterations were more extensive. For example, the poem "lepidoptera graves" by Ramunė Brundzaitė is called "drugelių kapinės", or "moth graves".

I did not like the two-syllable sound of the literal translation, nor did "moth cemetery" much appeal. Of course, "butterfly graves" was an option, but the poem refers specifically to moths and butterflies, so I wanted a title that encompasses both (the words for butterfly and moth in Lithuanian are used more interchangeably than in English). Normally, I would not introduce scientific language to a translation if it were not already there. In this case, it occurs near the end: "proserpinus proserpina". Brundzaitė is referring here to the willowherb hawkmoth of the Sphingidae family, called the nakvišinis sfinksas in Lithuanian: the nocturnal sphinx (and she plays with both the sense of proserpina as Persephone, and with the image of a sphinx-like woman). Since the order Lepidoptera includes both moths and butterflies, I was able to use this for the title and to then introduce monarchs at the start, which gave me the alliteration of "moths, monarchs / friends" to match the alliteration in her first stanza of "drugy, mano drauge". I was then able to use monarchs again in the seventh stanza to play on the double meaning of "pages" leading monarchs home: "my palms / are monarchs / led home / by pages". This, I hoped, would make up for the loss of play in her "mano plaštakės / tai plaštakos" ["my butterflies are palms"]. People often talk about what is lost in translation, but when something is lost, can we not find something new as well? One might, in these kinds of cases, think of the fine Italian phrase: "traduttore, traditore", or "translator, traitor". But the poets themselves have not complained of any betrayal, so perhaps I have rendered adequately poetic versions of their work. Be that as it may, I prefer to write without thinking about that fine Italian phrase, reminding myself instead of a maxim for translation derived from Jorge Luis Borges: "There is no original, only different versions." Here then are my versions and the versions of a number of other gifted translators, all of us giving voice to the latest in Lithuanian poetry.

Only 7 of the 26 poets in this anthology are women. Indeed, I must say that this troubles me, but I am not sure what should be done about it. Marius Burokas has stated that quality and age were his only criteria for selection (where the goal was to have an anthology that reflected the best of the generation that came of age after independence). Obviously, one poet's sense of quality differs from another's. But I cannot say that I would have chosen differently, and his choice was approved by others, including by women. I can give some personal anecdotes from my past year or so in Vilnius that may shed some light on the present situation.

First, at a Lithuanian university, I heard a high-ranking older man say a few words of parting to graduating seniors. Most of the students he spoke to were women. Among other things, he told them that only a few of them would go on to be scholars, so it was good that most of them were women and could go on after graduation to make babies. Second, at a conference at a poetry festival, the critic Laima Kreivytė argued (quite reasonably it seemed to me) for a small change in the Lithuanian language so that the word for "knight", which in Lithuanian has masculine gender ("riteris"), could also be used to describe a woman (i.e., "ritere"). The first two people in the audience to attack her suggestion were women, one of whom complained that Kreivytė was threatening to take her femininity away, and that she was afraid she would lose her identity as a woman. Third, I was at a poetry reading in Vilnius for the occasion of the publication of three young women's debut books. Two of the poets wrote in a style I would call romanticism, replete with nature imagery, some Gothic gore, and generous doses of passivity and suffering thrown into the mix. Only one of them sounded like a contemporary poet, and she was the only one for whom city life actually showed up in her poems (and all three live in Vilnius). That one was Ramunė Brundzaitė, whose debut book has won multiple awards, and who is represented here in this anthology. Whatever one makes of these anecdotes, I believe that the women who are published here do present a step forward from traditional gender roles. They represent modern Lithuanian women willing to take risks in the questioning of self and society, making language their own, willing to risk making themselves anew.22

One can read much twentieth-century Lithuanian poetry that feels as if it were behind the times.<sup>23</sup> These twenty-six poets inform the world that Lithuania in the twenty-first century is fully caught up.

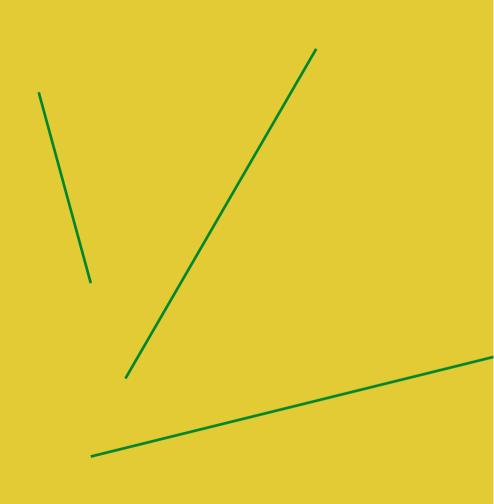
<sup>22</sup> It may well be that the above-mentioned critic, Laima Kreivytė, will take her place alongside these ground-breaking poets in the near future, for her first poetry collection, Sapfo skai(s)tykla (Sappho's purgatory) was released in the fall of 2013 as the content of this anthology was being finalized, and it shows a high level of creativity and erudition.

<sup>23</sup> Although, see Ališanka's *Six Lithuanian Poets* for examples of the poets who had reached their creative maturity in the 1990s and began the processes of change in Lithuanian poetics that are now bearing so much fruit in the newest generation.

They are not the first to take up postmodern influences, but they have eased into it with integrity and creative gusto, and are redefining what it means to be a Lithuanian poet or even, simply, a Lithuanian, that is, a human being from a far corner of Europe with an ancient and unsuppressible tongue.

### Works cited

- Ališanka, Eugenijus, ed. *Six Lithuanian Poets*. Todmorden: Arc Publications, 2008.
- Daujotytė, Viktorija. *Lašas poezijos* [A Drop of Poetry]. Vilnius: Tyto alba, 2013.
- Gailiūtė, Gabrielė. "Lithuanian Literature Today" in *Lithuanian Culture Guide*. Vilnius: Books from Lithuania, 2013.
- Gavelis, Ričardas. *Vilnius Poker*. Rochester: Open Letter, 2009. [tr. Elizabeth Novickas], originally published as *Vilniaus Pokeris*. Vilnius: Vaga, 1989.
- Meredith, William. *Poems Are Hard to Read*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1991.
- O'Hara, Frank. Meditations in an Emergency. New York: Grove Press, 1957.
- Platelis, Kornelijus. "About Modern Lithuanian Literature", published in *Artuma*. Ljubljana: Društvo slovenskih pisateljev, 2008. Republished (in the author's Lithuanian version) in *Ir mes praeiname*. Vilnius: Lietuvos rašytojų sąjungos leidykla, 2011. [The page references are to the English manuscripts presented at conferences.]
- Platelis, Kornelijus. "About Modern Lithuanian Poetry", [tr. Jonas Zdanys] published as "Apie moderniąją lietuvių poeziją" in *Ir mes praeiname*. Vilnius: Lietuvos rašytojų sąjungos leidykla, 2011. [The page references are to the English manuscripts presented at conferences.]
- Samalavičius, Antanas. "Introduction: Time Lost and Found" in *The Dedalus Book of Lithuanian Literature*. Antanas Samalavičius (ed.) Sawtry, Cambs: Dedalus, 2013.
- Šilbajoris, Rimvydas. *A Short History of Lithuanian Literature*. Vilnius: Baltos lankos. 2002.
- Venuti, Lawrence. "Local Contingencies: Translation and National Identities" in *Nation, Language and the Ethics of Translation*. Sandra Bermann and Michael Wood (eds.) Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.



# **New Lithuanian Poets**

### Lithuania Carved Out of a Potato

The stork returned bloody but still a welcome sight it's good that obituaries and chances of dying are late the coming November recedes, slowing like the heart rate while in the Polish flag red and white fit just right

as solitude and sickness madness and jest and those who can't herd their thoughts herd other people's faces instead and that's all for Sunday's thoughts in pretty vases the lily withers by your will but by god's grace

your belief withers too sputtering smoldering it disintegrates a white sheet of paper reminds you that nothing else happened if only you could see yourself from a plane that just lifted you'd see a silhouette and then the shadow too evaporates

when the mechanical cock crows a brother is discovered like mother's milk spurting out into the tempting night a local guide for the Roman empire is soon uncovered along with vegetable oil to grease the gap between my feet

I want so much to hang and frame what was begins ends well for memories break off like apples not holding their weight and chicks return to their nest with proper width and height we only separate like a snail detaching from its shell

the hedge and lake and cows merge in your eyesight as a compass turns into a ruler extending the horizon then blood is sipped to toast what has never been

\_\_\_\_\_

I know: in Lithuania herons are still secretly sacrificed

### Infectious Disease Unit

and we'd return on time

it is most disgusting at daybreak, sometime before six like a slow slashing of your eyes with a scalpel lights are switched onfour buzzing tubes, surgery ward white, strangely referred to as daylight, with one big one, purple—a quartz light, and for the group of half-asleep, half-naked children the procedures begin: temperatures taken, they are sent onto numbered bedpans, the children rise, trudge along, lose their numbered, oversized slippers, they sit blinking, yawning, pooping diarrhea loudly, holding their stomachs, moaning, writhing so it goes—dysentery lessons for five-year-olds it's like a horror film where the cast-a brood of naked fledglings but instead of nests they are hatched on icy, enameled bedpans, all of their heads alike, somehow large, and their poses—like Parker's birds they sit, looking at one another, at nowhere, at one point, at many points and fearfully think: tomorrow is our section's shower time that Russian orderly always opens the tap of scalding water and last week while trimming that little one's nails she cut off a piece of the cuticle then immediately disinfected it with alcohol oh how they both howled but mother will come Saturday if the tests are good and I don't have a fever and if the doctor is in a good mood they'll let me out into the city for a few hoursit'll be enoughwe'll drive across the river, to the store with the moving stairs up above the hospital, Vilnius, the station, even higher

# **Escaping Noah's Ark**

Standing in place one's footprints are flooded by seas the halfway point unreached—I remember a blizzard without snow without meaning or structure or reason for being—and so it was we began to wheeze...

It was hard to speak and our words began to repeat as happens in times of fear or faith, famine or thirst and you asked if I remember how that wingéd one flew into the glass, that graceful one whose latin name we knew

as "falco"—I remember. This story will be our last told not because we need to endure or extend the night but to return to shore where they danced and drank and fucked grunting women proposing wedlock—

where only from inertia was it said—stay with me—where a child slipped from a shaking woman's knees, where the miserable pines with roots of painful gout melted into the sky from beneath your feet,

where squealing pigs with golden earrings broke bread and neither scene nor sound nor body fit your head

\_\_\_\_\_

Sunday. Two o'clock. A bus. The capital, work. To sanity. Sigh. Roadside. Winter ends in Lithuania. A warm February.

# Mama, išmesk kamuolį

Sulaukus dvidešimt devynerių išgirsti Kad nukirsta vynuoge kurią auginai Trisdešimt metu Bijoti turėti vaikų - turėti vaikų Nieko labiau neturėti tik sekundę tam Tik tam pakaruokliškam šuoliui iš guolio Tik tam dviejų serijų sapnui -Pirmajame Melioracija ryja senelių namys Žmonės jau išvažiavo išsivežė daiktus Rakandus kieme išbarstytus surijo žole O pro langus Iš miško viksvynais atbridę briedžiai Žiūri į vidų namon ir kūdikio ašarom verkia Antrajame Namas vaikystės Komjaunimo trylika Ketvirtajam bute nei šviesų nei balsų nei šešėlių O aš stoviu po langu ir trisdešimt metų užkimęs šaukiu: Mama išmesk kamuoli

# Mama, toss me a ball

Having reached the age of twenty-nine you learn

The grapevine has been severed, the one you nurtured  $\,$ 

For thirty years

The fear of having children—to have had children

To have no more than a second for that

For the breakneck leap from bed

For that two-episode dream-

First:

Melioration swallows the homes of grandparents

People already left with their belongings,

The grass has swallowed the debris strewn in the yard,

Moose wade through the forest's undergrowth,

And through the windows, they look into the home,

crying baby tears

Second:

Childhood home

Comyouth Street Thirteen

In apartment four, neither lights, nor voices, nor shadows,

I am standing under the window and hoarsely shouting for thirty years:

Mama, toss me a ball.

# Two Saints: Doubting Thomas

And then, two thousand years ago,

I squeezed out through my teeth for the first time:

"I don't believe".

And then, two thousand years ago-

He sighed, not for the first time-

Another one.

Be convinced, he said, touch me.

And he raised his bloody shirt.

And it began.

It never ends.

Since that day, I stick my fingers into every hole—

Sick wounds, the decaying sockets of skulls,

Caverns of vertebrae,

Snail shells, mole dens,

Fresh garden groves for garlic and gladioli,

Calving cows spread wide,

Women spread wide,

Keyholes, cleft shoes, torn socks,

The worm ways of apples,

Clogged and unclogged toilets,

Cavities in my teeth,

The cancer-cratered lungs of one grandfather,

The stomach of the other one,

Hermit caves.

Eyes of needles, milked coconuts,

Gaps in walls for hanging pictures of saints,

The sleeves of winter coats,

The foaming mouths of the approaching dogs in a dream...

So many years have passed—long have I believed.

So many years have passed, and since that day, all these holes still bleed.

# 27—Darius Šimonis

# The Barefoot Poet Tramples a Model of Columbia University / part ii of the triptych New York in a Poet

Nothing is happening!

And I thought boulevards were comfortable places in which to destroy glass dreams, or to write up pages and pages of trees—but they are better suited for stone ascetics.

I had hoped that after old age there would still be a half of a sickle, and that the conspiring morphinists of the sky would invite me along to their babblings.

But nothing is happening!

So I'll thicken my blood let camels nibble at the dry grass of books and the twelve mossy tablets of the law.

I'll kick this fake construction with my bare feet so hard that Queen Margot couldn't hide her volcanic nature.

And there will be so many astonishing changes!

The sun, a girl's heart,
will dry out the ascetic mortal vein—
a stone will place a ring on her
mounted with a mineral of lovemaking.

The grey university proctor can torture himself at night watching it happen through a key hole.

No one will remember.

Today, no one will remember what happened yesterday, and tomorrow— what happens today.

But who needs it. It's all good—that is how butterflies are happy for one single day.

Don't be afraid.

Don't be afraid that it's so short—
it's never any longer anyway.
Those who are promised even a single extra day
won't manage to live even that.

If someone asks, why so carelessly, mindlessly,

humanely,

blame everything on me. They can't burn my ashes a second time.

# 29-Darius Šimonis

# **Enameled Pots**

This May will start to snow feathers. A light fluff will spread all around, and there will be no one at night to sever the fingers of thieves by the statehouse.

I will speak and they will listen: those who don't make it up to the sky, and the Lord, by a word, will close up the cave that is starving to speak.

Or maybe he will hide those men in an old swarm of wild bees, and watch from afar as they fail to regurgitate their two obols each.

I will speak, and they will listen: those who shed off their scaly skin, until the Lord, by a word, will close up the enameled pots of my mouth.

# 30-Darius Šimonis

# Mosaic from the Characters of Qi Ge

- The fishermen's skiff rowed up:—what did you catch today?

  A bottle of sesame oil.
- The old frogs of Kwantung croaked—the herbalist started to worry:—they are stealing the pollen from my plane tree.
- I am painting a waterfall from the other side. By the time I cross the ford, my brushes congeal—I cross over to poetry.
- Get out of here, I would get out, but only know one road—where the frozen, refractory swans migrate.
- We always greet the dawn together—I and my old friend the dog. It turns out that she can't even tell us part.
- I slink through the Suanchen forest—the other day I saw two foxes chewing on the face of the moon.
- For a long time I looked for the elixir of youth in the rustling of the pages of books—did I find it or not?
- From now on I only drink tea.
- I sit in the arbor—what contorted supports and scaffolds, twisted by the pull of the sunflower's poisonous gold.
- Having turned into wine, I intently observed how long it took for Li Bo and I to see off Du Fu.
- When I send a letter, I always ask Yunguang Kurgan to let it get through to my friend, but it gets stuck in the neighboring post office.
- Do you hear—Qi Ge is rowing over to us, the one I imitate. But... the oar slips out, and frightened cicadas grow alert. I have to begin everything anew.
- During winter, I place tulip buds in the most visible spots. In this way, it is said, one can entice good news from the south to come up to our valley.
- Yesterday by the gate I told you about my deceased relatives phoenix and sparrow, and already tomorrow I'll have to run through the palace halls, bowing to the emperor's chefs.
- Poetry was his ruin—he jumped from the cliff with his eyes shut, believing the note he read beneath the illustration of Wang Wei's "Secrets of Art": "as evening deepens mountains return once more to clouds".
- The washer of old linens brought back from the river again several dozen well-scrubbed characters—from these I made this mosaic.

# 31—Darius Šimonis

# Sodden from the Fountain / from the cycle Spirituals

out of jealousy for García Lorca

sodden from the fountain drying her black hair i send out my butterflies to protect her shoulders from heat

they protect her shoulders from heat but don't dare to land on her waist they shake their lily-fed pollen like gold onto her nape

a record wavers on the phonograph and the air quivers as evening comes like a sign that everything is possible the hair-pin falls on the bed

a locket of stones from drowned men shows a rose and a horseshoe for luck her mole disappears beneath it and it asks for one petal to pluck

her kiss is the counting of a plantain's veins or the covering of a sunflower by a palm or sent by grasshoppers' antennas or received by a witches' locks

these are her kisses o god you who are up in the minarets and the wind that slices through marble come move me from my spot

# 32—Darius Šimonis

# A Sweet Couple on the Shore / from the cycle Spirituals

A sweet couple on the shore, they are like Andromeda's milk: the boy's shoes have a fine luster, the girl's hygiene is fragrant silk.

They whisper something along the river, as they sway on their own reflection: the boy masticates something for her, the girl paints her lips for his sake.

Two heads whisper close together, while hands reach out for content: their hearts cry out for advisement, but a stone sits dumb by the bank.

They drink rain from under umbrellas, and the lavender sail goes slack: the bright sun of abortion comes back to shine its light on her belly.

They play silly games of youth, seeing each other—not meat.
But an elephant will climb out of an ear to tell them the truth.

# 33-Neringa Abrutytė

# **Dreams**

my dreams a dream: i was marrying my mother in it i was a man i thought it was a mistake how can i as my mother's child

have children with her then i called my childhood friend to ask if she would be the bride everything was in the dream and it means almost nothing as when she changed into a white wedding dress and i am already dressed in a black suit from the beginning of the dream and a blue shirt

the shirt was my husband's i remember it well i was in that dream

then i remember nothing  $$\operatorname{\textsc{where}}$$  do these dreams  $$\operatorname{\textsc{come}}$$  from

in my last sleep for example i did something with my father my dreams

my heavenly Father in the dream heaven of the underworld one sleep i dream the sky is falling at top speed and it kills me

# 34-Neringa Abrutytė

# enough, yourself, already

enough, yourself, already, though, somewhere, somehow, not, yourself, little, by, little, it's, settled, what, did, you, want? something, other, done! you, didn't, want, won't, get, it, wanting, everything, a, little, success, one, day, granted, great, desire's, remainder. i, don't, know, if, i, learned, how, to, write, my, boundless, naivety, finished, maybe, love, but, not, like, that, is, poetry, some, lack? then, your, name, written, everything, terribly, real, perhaps, they, laughed, sometimes? who, knows, my, history, but, stories, are, finished, now, because, no, one, is, inspired, by, anything, that, is, written, that, is, finally, mine, words, only, want, sleep, enough, yourself, already, i, need, to, sleep, so, someone, could, uncover, me, anew

# 35-Neringa Abrutytė

#### For Love

More than anything, I lack intellect—
not intuition, nor a bit of courage, naivety, passion
with which to use the smarter people—
besides that, I love something very much—but what?
impudent—your sea-green eyes,
and I grow impudent—not by the day—by the hour:
pretty like Mireille Mathieu,
but passionate like a man,
it's good that she's not a man,
but I want to love her, I want to be a man—
maybe it's good that we are not: men.

# 36-Neringa Abrutytė

\*\*\*

Sure, I know that country well in which I would like to remain: I know the language, was born there, and most of my friends live there, and my books are there, and all kinds of notebooks from childhood, and sand, and forest—I would say: everything—

there, a country—in which I could get a serious and incurable disease, a country—where one didn't always have litai, a country—populated by bad and horribly unattractive men, a country—whoever lives there, He's a Hero!

# 37-Neringa Abrutytė

#### Theft

- station: suitcases—big bags—little bags—watching over each other, leaning—
- who would suspect that they, united in one pile, see nothing?

  All of them
- are ready to travel from Brussels to Thessaloniki. A few meters away, two
- of our heavy suitcases stand at attention with a grey backpack, a typewriter—
- just two meters from everyone else's—who would think that one of those suitcases
- will fail to call out to us, will fail to defend what is ours with its big belly, will not threaten at every moment the very capital of the European Union—Europe
- on a massive suit-case—! Maybe someone followed us on our trip to the cafe?—
- No, it seems, I took it from the taxi, it was here! The suitcase! Where is it?
- Coming to terms with the facts, you start to remember what you had put inside...
- And why is it fated to lose those things?
- Ay.....
- Some not entirely new panties, shirts—toss them out of your thoughts!
- The charger for the cell phone—no problem!

# 38-Laurynas Katkus

#### And So I Live

And so I live with cobwebs and ficuses dictionaries, comics, and a heart which taps at the outskirts of night

I live with parcels and emails Prussia and Žvėrynas, moonshine and wine when the air gets colder, the breathing slower

I talk with statues and poets whom I like and whom I cannot stand clearly pronouncing the consonants in a dream

I cut my nails, repair the shower confess and grow silent, drive the car because nobody ordered me to

Outside in patches of melting snow I observe a hare sitting in a copse and let him into my consciousness

I jump and jump, strike something, I freeze how humid it is all around how steamy above the earth

Covered with space, rarely seen, listening to the ever-stronger beat of my heart

# 39-Laurynas Katkus

# Aunt Janė

Aunt Jane arose from the photo of a volleyball team. She would never err when counting. Aunt Jane learned German by heart.

She would often type something on the typewriter. Aunt Jane escaped the soldiers by running over the roofs. Her lonely husband ran through the woods in a burning shirt. They traced him by the Bible she had given him.

Aunt Janė came back, lived on. Nothing else to do. Aunt Janė liked riddles, and inscriptions on tombstones, according to my cousin.

When perfumed oils were running down my forehead, a shiny ruble fell from her hand into my pocket.

Later, distant relatives stole Aunt Jane's memory.

In revenge, she began to rave, and disappeared.

Now there she lies, returned to her motherland. We don't know what to do, and are crying.

# Piratinė kopija

Jis nuomojasi butą užpraeitam dešimtmety už autostrados.

Miega po nupešiotom *adijalų* snaigėm, kurios kadaise užpustydavo pajūrio kopas.

Spintos lentynas slegia monitoriai, procesoriai, diskeliai ir diskai.

Jo kūnas tarsi švininis, tik po vokais retkarčiais čiūžteli drumzlini obuoliai.

Skaičių virtinės, blyksniai, daugialypis ir įsakmus judėjimas: tai schemos kuždą amsoj.

Perkrautos, išderintos, apkrestos virusais, os kenčia žiaurią yergovę.

Kas akimirką šitame mieste prie jų priškliečia barbarų rankos.

Tik tu gali mus išgelbėti. Vygi, sako Motininė Plokštė, iškirsti langą į laisve

### 41-Laurynas Katkus

# **Bootleg Copy**

He is renting a flat behind the highway in the 80s.

He sleeps under the threadbare blankets of snowflakes which once snowed on the seaside dunes.

The shelves of the closet are weighted down with monitors, processors, floppies, and compact discs.

His body is lead-like, behind the eyelids only an occasional swish of turbid eyeballs.

Rows of numbers, flashes, multiple and commanding movements: these are circuits whispering in the dark.

Overloaded, discordant, infected with viruses, they suffer a cruel slavery.

Every second in this city they are touched by the hands of barbarians.

Only you can save us, Vygis, says the Mother Board, cut a window to freedom,

Only you, because people don't understand anymore what you are saying, why you suddenly hang up, throwing down the receiver.

You use different languages.

Come to us, and you will be the most pliant, most perfected algorithm!

In the system, which never freezes, where there's no weariness, hunger, pornographic sites!

Where possibilities appear with hardly a thought, where it's all colors and speeds,

Vygis, we will be together till the end!

Above the bluff, the orange meter of the moon is flagging.

On the benches the places will soon be taken

by the eaters of sunflower seeds, and construction workers shouting at their wives, wives with washed-out hands.

Wires will swing and spark when the trolleybuses push out of the traffic circle.

A hard-boiled egg waits for you in the kitchen with its cracked walls, empty, not a component in sight.

### 42-Laurynas Katkus

#### **Cante Mexicano**

It gets dark here so quickly—barely time for a few drags. Above the flat roofs, the faces of laundry gleam.

Sweat, blood, mud and tears have run down into the weariness of tunnels, yesterday's underground.

Now, upraised, white sleeves greet the twilight of Mexico.

I'm smoking. I think about the Indians and the wealthy, about the places I've wandered in this dusty galaxy. What a shooting-gallery! What a celebration of marriage or a saint's day! Decked out in velvet sombreros, trumpeting and singing. It's necessary, yes, to show that one is alive, that one is happy.

Si nos dejan, nos vamos a querer toda la vida...

The song I hummed while climbing the spiral staircase.

The clothes I'll put on when going downtown or to the abandoned temple, or to the seaside.

What will get torn, will fall into the hands of rag-pickers ringing the bells of dawn.

What I will wear (skin, only skin), when I appear before the throne with legs made of wrath, a back made of love.

The fireworks have died down.

Only on the hillsides do the shacks of the poor smolder like plankton tossed by waves, while the eight lanes of the invisible highway wheeze on.

My head swims. From tobacco. The dark. Myself, the greatest drug.

I am the night. I'm smoke. I'm nothing. A star,

falling into the valley.

# 43—Laurynas Katkus

# Moving

Taking part in the festive procession from lift to car, are albums, jewelry cases, flower pots, vases, and blankets. Today we celebrate the chronic disease of two patients—

recognized by the echoes of footfalls, dilated pupils, the unexpected mingling of dreams. Only one remedy: the moving of passion—with the roots, without anesthesia—to the grounds of another address.

Bundles of books tied up with police tape STOP, sour northern grapes. Their pulp and pits you will taste under the shimmering vaults until an epiphany comes, a child or a coma. The car trunk shakes.

Fuzz-cut children with a football in the world of games. Through the window, family members gaze with interest at the steel-blue coupling clouds. The lock snaps shut like split-wood, but your subconscious forgets the gloves, and emigration is postponed for a few more minutes.

High, high up the floors, the Persian carpet of the lift, the transparent walls, doors without locks:
I'll say—let's fall into bed where generations change, let's exchange bacilli, harmless to others,
till, in the loft, the white skeleton of the dove starts to coo!

# **ALKOHOLIKAI**

lsižiebė šiaurės žvaigždė, laikas Piltis benziną. Užremtos durys Kėde, kanistrai asloj suguldyti. Geriame Skysti ir einam laidais iki taško ir Kaminais einam eteriu eteriu Grižtam. Trečia diena mes Pardavėm dujų plytelę liko tik Vamzdis, jam pasisakom ko Trūksta geriam iprito garus minime Mūšio lauką. Penktą dieną Išjungė elektrą. Vaclovas pasikrapštė – Vėl tapo šviesu. Diegą devintą Mes pardavėm lempos siūlelį Nupirkome roživ vandens, juo Dabar kvepiam. Dukart kambarys Praplatėjo per visą tą laiką Dingo daiktai ir visi jie Kalba aukštybėse net nejauku Pasidarė. Dieną dešimtą nutrūko Šuo nuo būdos ir pabėgo Laidais. Dabar jis prieglaudą saugo. Tikras tai pragaras, pats šuo jau trigalvis. Turguje baigės šuniukų apyvarta. Ardome stogą. Vakaras tęsias. Gersim krakmolo klijus

2002 ruduo

#### Alcoholics

The north star's lit, it's time

To tank up. The door propped shut

With a chair, a canister laid on the dirt floor. We drink

Anything, walk along the power lines to the bootleg spot,

Along the chimneys, in the ether, and in the ether

We return. On the third day we

Sold the hotplate, left only the

Stovepipe, we tell him what

We lack, we drink Ypres gas, mention

The battlefield. On the fifth day

They shut off the electricity. Vaclovas fiddled about—

Then there was light again. On the ninth day

We sold the lamp filaments

Bought rose water, now

We smell of it. The room

Doubled in all that time,

Things disappeared, then they

Began to speak from above, it was

Uncanny. On the tenth day

The dog broke free, ran away

Along the power lines. Now he's guarding the pound.

A real hell, the dog has three heads now.

In the market the dog trading's done.

We're taking apart the roof. The evening goes on.

We'll drink homemade glue.

# Far, Far, Far, Far

I'll go for a walk

I don't know where I got stuck In a face, a voice, a scent Now I sit bent over Singing a silly song Sparks flew as she answered the phone Hello she said shining And so I was left stupefied out of the frame Later she sparked again in the bath Standing standing looking in the mirror Then bang! Her body on the floor Terrifying, beautiful she needed to be carried shaken Far far only her stomach left accidentally uncovered White beautiful like the sun Now she sits in the kitchen I stand amazed Far far within hand's reach but I have no hands I don't fit into this mosaic

I will write about her knitting

#### Glass

# / from the cycle From My Beloved's Biography

My beloved does not sleep—she knits Through seven cities beyond the forests she Slips along, speaks different languages when She buys food or wine, reads, sweeps Sleeps, makes love with one she loves Makes love with one she does not love, hands over the key Goes home, lies, bathes Tells it how it is, jokes. I know A few languages everything else is a secret to me. She moves through the forest of eyelets while my Ear is near the disconnected shell and the ocean Is not the wire through which I'd speak Is not the wire that adds its own Word is not the wire that roars Like a lightning bolt to its target. In the glass Room my beloved knits the glass Night is all around with glass sticks We are eaten with glass sticks

### The Mechanics of Forgetting

My beloved now a little motor

Turns itself on each morning and goes

To the city of the dead—that's where

The villagers go in families to see

Into the plastic she squeezes in

Forces a smile offers

Discounts she knows everything: how to

Put to bed dress speak

So it wouldn't freeze bathe what to

Wipe with her prophecies will

Soon fulfill themselves she'll have

Someone to talk to be quiet with sing to she'll have

Peace, for me in the meantime the streets

Are the same the curtains washed out

Old. Different machines

Drive us we even like different

Movies we slip down our own

Roads to the north to snow to ice

Sometimes I want to disrupt

The order of things chop against the current

Cut against the grain leap

Before the trial. The blood

Flows again and the waters settle

Again the machine's drone begins time

Is measured again the factory's

Conveyor belts

Wires and asphalt are moderated

Hearts and hammers

And axes uniformly clatter again.

A power sends a blizzard

And oblivion for offenses

Covers up insomnia ravings

Desires silence straightens out

Everything shadows remain—where

Did we see them?

# 49-Vvtas Dekšnvs

### Weeks on a Stump

I sit on a stump I sit all day long

I sit all night long a week my

Stump is a train I believe

A blue train in the train I sit

All day long all night long a week

My stump is a field a horse

A plowman outside the window an old man and his sweat

My stump is a cothurnus a canopy

A stage a showbooth I rise like a bubble

Above the forest shrubs meat I sit

All day long I sit all night long a week

I look through speeches select living ones

Throw dead ones all around my stump

Is a table and book shelves I sit

All day long I sit all night long a week

And through that window I see my stump

The changing of dogs in the yard over ten

Years the reform of railroads new

Winds in the ice-cream industry knickknacks

The flow the long trailing gown I sit on

A cloth I sit all day long I sit

All night long a week I climb off

Glass all around and bridge-building

Materials resist I break through what I see

What I don't see what I don't want I don't break through

I'm quiet there's nothing to say. The boundaries are my

Stump I sit restricted all day long

I sit all night long a week the morning watches

With big eyes and my eye

Doesn't slip past I watch anything anything

And see anything I can see smoke

And crosswinds in smoke I sit

All day long I sit all night long a week

I sit I fly I sit I drive
I sit I slink and scatter I sit
And burn quietly I get up again I sit
I run away I sit I can't run away
I sit and they illuminate me overpower me lead me away
Quietly shoot me I sit on a stump
Stretched out I sit all day long I sit
All night long a week I sit I scatter
What I scatter I see what I look at
Take my head off approaching silently.

#### **Tradition**

I will die calmly in a scented field of nettles hugging a skiff to my lips laying my lungs on the ground I will start to grow full on vanished dynasties of pagan priests I will turn over their cards in peat bogs go into towns spend the night in mandala homes I will lead giant drowsy alchemists over silver hills to somnabulist forests I will bite flames—shoot through whirlpools with hard balls of fire—through the unconscious that reaches for the sky I will drill down deeper and deeper dark bodies will desire to domesticate me blooming eyes of demons will fall into the shadow of breath squatting women will turn and turn circles around me as if wanting to attack but unexpectedly fear will freeze their beastliness in its tracks my unseeing brothers fell asleep like me crushing cold clouds in their fists hugging dear skiffs my brothers left out for the water for the storm and the fish they are naked and weary from the great beauty and the pulling of oars

# blood-letting

some devil some grendel some boar and some bird drums rumble beaten by black hands some incubus some vampire some dragon and some unicorn black drums rumble beaten with pitchers of blood some donkey some mule some nag and some steed black hands mourn beating red drums some toad some cobra some lizard and some moth blood blackens in the pitchers that strike the drums some werewolf some duergar some duende and some merlin black blood flows onto beaten mourning drums some mars some pluto some neptune and some jupiter not drums but spray sounds on the moon some minotaur some hydra some sphinx and some thoth foam from black spray spurts through the night is it really always three against one in every artery no—he answers—for that we'd recommend transfusion

### exhausted forms

Little by little I gathered for you
the purest of my caresses.
Do you hear how the road snores?
Do you hear how the morning cries? Faster!
—César Vallejo

i simply bustled around suburbs while eyes burned in scythes i always shined shrieked dug up my scabs and raved like butterflies dragged by their bellies

a furlong. tampons. parchment. a breeze. a choked chimney. a three-legged dog. a drowned man. a vessel

and always a horrific tickling raged and butterflies rustling in the dampness of my mouth

to wake. burn. torture. grin. blunt. grab. twist. choke. turn. prick. chafe. pound

if one is a rant, the other is a tunnel, the third a guest a sleeping bucket drowned butterflies

devoured. killed. hanged. tortured. eat. lull. chop. smashed. deformed. succulent

and she is small small prickly prickly

a step away a work bench away only a stone away a kilometer a mile seen through a leukocyte smoke a skewer fed hiccups and smoke for her eyes

the heavy waning moon dizzy glass and tobacco like mounds of crushed night moths

sorrel. lingonberry. cranberry. jelly-fish. tapeworm or other fliers

#### dreamers

yellow church mass ulcers mommies in heat and a pumped stomach

slinks through meadows intestines squashed pigeons

smoothly

hotly. horribly. quickly. heavily. cruelly.

liver stomach apples and worms

and the gaze of the octopus the approach of light and evil

ill. warm. hot. cold.

blue. red swallows.

i'm a dog a cur a calf a whisker the penal camp's Jack a bit of felt a tapir an amphisbaena's wing a boar's frenzy twilights of rabies a testy badger

in stripes. in plaid. in rice. suddenly. quickly. strongly.

dreaming. crouching. shaking. bellowing. rending. listening.

the road is choking fish bones now tears now larynxes already a bird

a peacock a rook a rooster-year april already march

but now. not yet. or maybe. nevertheless.

however. good-bye. and thank you. i'll end wading through bile i'll meet my end as the sun rises

between your two lungs big as whales

# inverted paradise

let's castigate the carrier pigeons
Francis Bacon
let's pull off their heads
so that with drops of blood
on shaking white plumes
we can send complaints of the miscreants
to the devil and not to the pope

oh how the sinner's backs writhe while whipped by violin strings even while opening and shutting their mouths they manage to blow out bubbles of prayers

—we are sufferers of lust forced to sing our mouths are like deformed bicycle tires trundling down the hill to the abyss

oh how the meats sing in agreement with the cheeping strings frightened by the dense steam rising as if in thermal springs

—our tongues have been wound into rope can it be time for us to hang ourselves

i will coronate you i hear
your tapping blood
holy martyrs
you will dive into fog
like snakes caressing
the necks of your sacrifices
and in your mouths you will carry
a bit of my sweets

-our gums are full of water gargling we glorify the river and our lips are stones grown soft that travel through the blood tempering it

your angry father having just died rose to the sky on wings now you hear my lungs

—our air has become clear our loved ones invite us for caresses stretching out their white swan's necks we fly flapping like fish we hide like octopuses in the smallest darkest cracks and our eyes shine like stars

i granted freedom to your eyes i gave space to your bodies if you wanted you could be boats and sea together

—we don't know what we were but know how we are sweets and lips together we don't know what we felt but hear how the yellow honey of the world hums

take care of the bees of your dreams my loved ones they drip from the stars of your eyes and wash the tears of your joy into a ringing dish so that you would be filled —we fly kicking
at the sky like skaters
from the ice we dive
under the earth
like rainbows into rivers
and with giant wings
we glorify our brides
look how they pine for us

thank you Francis thank you Bacon brother as someone has said IT IS ACCOMPLISHED

<sup>\*</sup> Francis Bacon was a 17th century empiricist philosopher who died after catching cold while investigating the ability of snow to stop the decay of meat. Francis Bacon was also a 20th century painter of meat, bodies, the nervous system and altered mental states.

# Stockholm Syndrome

you're lucky:
you are big and beautiful
eunuchs' sperm clucks joyfully in your coxcomb
your hoofs strike hiccups from behemoth rats
your saliva films up cybernetic faucets
from which your nine toys drink
and also the tenth—an asthmatic

atop your womb—a smiling golden calf atop your forehead—a high voltage blood vessel atop your eyes—a sacred shining mandate

along the bottom bottom bottom your hoofs run, your nostrils along the bottom bottom bottom blow away the blood caressing fog along the bottom bottom bottom crawling toward the little well

i ask for more, more and more give me intercourse with a nest of cobwebs give me intercourse with dead ends, with a moldy ghost with epilepsy, with your earlobes!

pull the darkest ray from your depths
tie me to your pulse with it
and every night i will bark an aria of loyalty to you
"i want to be the best"

along the bottom bottom bottom tiptoe brother ghosts along the bottom bottom bottom whooping-cough yelps and grimaces along the bottom bottom bottom let's go to the happy feeding pen

you taught me to swallow fetuses dipped in jam you taught me to inflate the ether when saying hello you taught me to become an incubus for others' fiancés

you sent a horny bellowing karma and I licked her shining corneas:

televisions danced, accordians puked radiators neighed, faucets roared refrigerators swayed, doors screamed I struck!
I tried to kill you
but, as always, you were too close, you were too heavy
I lowed and gasped
I lowed and rejoiced that you were so close
from your deep armpit
there rippled a choir of old bearded men:

"Search for new eyes in the hollows of the knees of a Lycian, Eddy of Thebes, my buddy, don't be a dummy Decorate your red shorts with dandelion garlands And shuffle with dignity to her place while we smack our lips

Just don't think that fate went and skewered you, You really did a number with those brooches, like a nutcase Isn't Jocasta a hiding place from the angry and twisted world, So, get drunk with dignity at her place while we make a ruckus":

along the bottom bottom bottom the satyrs drive up a goat along the bottom bottom bottom syphilis can't catch up along the bottom bottom bottom the sylphs ride in on stakes

you smiled violets and I grabbed the scissors
I cut between your thighs while you lulled the fountain of blood
I fell into darkness while you turned epilepsy into spring

I woke up incredibly gentle like a son

you once caressed my ears and piped through your big mouth:

"you're watery from your depths to your shallows, watery, and therefore, insanely good, in these cellars, where you search between your legs for your scrotum while you sleep you always find me.

we found each other so strongly that as soon as I opened the door and said "go wherever you want" you were taken by a terrible coughing you have so beautifully so deeply trusted in me that your pupils flutter and it seems you are crossing

along the bottom bottom bottom of the blame you take for my games along the bottom bottom bottom of your fear that heats my harem along the bottom bottom bottom of your perfect attention to my needs

your dried sperm tickles me so sweetly it sounds like christmas bells inhaling easter you are an inspiration, you know?"

yes, i know, i'm lucky: as i suffocate in your embrace i always see your endless goodness

# 61-Benediktas Januševičius

\*\*\*

I'd like to drown in a lily blossom suffocate in sunny pollen dizzily ringing stamens temptingly vibrating pistils

> a hung-over finch combs the earth with his beak a little old woman pretending to be an old apple tree spilling prayers from her mouth

disappears into the snakepath
dust
again I missed it
again in this decrepit station
I try to remember
what I did in a past life
and the train, maliciously groaning,
races into the embrace of my hometown Vilnius
more and more foreign
more and more distant

more and more, e frozen

the message frozen and no mystery not a drop of emotion or fear coolness fettered the limbs: the denouement of quiet fields

slower and slower

slower and slower

the sun rises

slower and slower

fulfilling its promises

slower and slower

the little old woman feeds the birds

slower

and

slower

# 62-Benediktas Januševičius

# A rosy (poem) about a woman

a woman's day, a woman's week
a woman's month, maybe even a year
time, cigarettes and a woman
in a word, a woman's smoldering time
or more precisely, a smoking woman of time
a temporary woman—smeared with time
a woman heating up from time to time is a woman
however, a woman heated at the right time is more womanly
a burnt up woman is not recommended
but this is what is important:

is it possible for a woman's time to conceive and give birth to time-lets?

a woman's little lamp on a woman's little table a woman's little chair next to a woman's little cabinet a woman's little pillow, little coverlet and little blanket in a single woman's large bed

a woman's landscape on a table or a still life beyond the window: a woman's automobile a woman tom mobile a woman's mobile and maybe some other kind of bile a woman pre-war a woman post-war a woman between-wars a woman's prayer a woman's papers, a woman's pennies, a woman's toys, a woman's yard and orchard, garden a woman's thoughts, not necessarily hidden

a woman could be Russian, nevertheless free,
though for me she might as well be Japanese
what's important is that she is not too free
a Chinese woman or Nike
a Ukrainian woman a Moldovan
a southern woman a northern
a dark woman a white
a red woman, but not a sky-blue woman with clouds for hair

```
a chocolate woman is most likely sweet
an acrid woman—I wouldn't taste
```

I'd think about a Spanish woman, or

a French one, maybe a German or a Finn

but to think about a woman is hard and most often not worthwhile,

to love a woman-essential

especially when she's Lithuanian, well okay, Latvian or Estonian too

- a green woman, smelling of the forest
- a bitter woman, soppy
- a sour woman surprised by inspiration—a glittering woman
- a dreadful woman-a smoky woman
- a resilient woman—caressing with her rusty voice
- a dry woman—a hotly disheveled woman
- a stout woman—pleasantly slovenly—
- a fat, shouting woman—a curious woman
- a porous woman with lake-like eyes
- a dense woman—a laughing woman
- a lush woman—a lamenting woman
- a pure woman—like a bucket with a lid
- a soft woman—bawling, later—a sobbing woman
- a warm woman full of lacy dreams
- a horribly gentle woman—a woman shoring up pines
- an often mushroom-picking but not a mushroom-eating affectionate woman
- a treacly smiling but resolute woman
- a silken woman with leaden hands
- a golden woman with a steel heart
- a woman stagnant, lukewarm, lurking, swimming, sometimes flowing freely—
- a swift woman is most likely cool
- a woman chirring, chirping, chattering
- a buzzing, humming, stinging woman
- an unfurling woman-flowering, woman,
- withering, woman, knitting, woman,
- knotted, woman, maturing and finally
- successfully ripened, woman
- a miracle woman-wake ing tempt ing knock ing
- (in teeth ing, at night ing and in day ing)
- a shy woman-brimming with sin, a hungry
- woman—an impoverished woman, an enigmatic
- woman, like, even a voiceless woman-
- somewhere, where around a corner
- there could stand a naked stone-flinging

woman, a flooded woman, you see, a flukey woman beside her—a splashing

woman, a woman drying herself, an irritable

woman, a sternly intoxicating woman, or an impudently

thoughtful woman, even a voracious woman, or a stingy

woman, a viscous woman also a brittle woman, a toady woman next to a noble woman, and

a toady woman next to a noble woman, and

a sedentary woman near a woman with descendants, a longingly

bending woman with a friendly reserved

woman, a straining woman—next to a woman

envious as a raven, a quiet woman

can be a woman like nothing else, and

a singing woman—as if a running

woman, a woman leaning at that moment—a sensitive

woman, a charming woman, a quivering woman

as if shivering woman, a trembling woman

like a walking woman, a stopped

woman, a painful woman, a lying

woman, a deadly woman, a dead...

woman... another time... some time... not soon...

a drunk woman with streaks of sun dribbling down her face

a woman at the right time but not the right place  $% \left\{ 1,2,...,n\right\}$ 

a 2 × 2 = 7 woman

a woman with Pythagorean roots

a waiting woman who rearranges furniture in Diogenes' apartment  $% \left( 1\right) =\left( 1\right) \left( 1\right) \left($ 

a woman, whose soul is as wide as her rear end

a woman, whose conscience is as short as a night of love

a woman, whose look is as sharp as a plough

a woman, who as always, will advise, bring demise, but not chastise

with a woman I often play hide-and-seek

even more often we don't find one another

then she savs

I'm a woman-she says

you're a woman-I agree in my thoughts

this is what can be put forth about one woman,  $% \left\{ 1,2,\ldots ,2,\ldots ,2,\ldots ,2,\ldots \right\}$ 

so imagine how much there is to say about two?

# 65-Benediktas Januševičius

#### on genes

```
unexchangeable people don't exist!
and there are no unchangeable worlds!
the secret of life is coded in genes
good genes, bad genes, quality genes
old genes or somewhat new genes
so-so genes, just ok genes
so I say:
genes, genes, and only genes
I repeat:
genes, genes, and all and only genes
once more:
genes, genes, and mutagenes
all and only autogenes, halogenes, colagenes, and mutabor
do you dream?
      probably your father was a nitwit
      do you use?
      maybe your mother was a user?
      do you eat?
      apparently, your grandparents didn't starve
      do you breathe?
      obviously, one of your ancestors enjoyed that too
you are re-peat-ing-your-self!
just listen:
      that's your sonny-boy
      that's your little girl
      the apple doesn't fall far from the tree
(and where does the pear fall?—science doesn't say)
are you creative?—genes
do you work at the furnace?—genes
do you crave work as a security guard?-genes
were you well-known and popular?—genes
you ended up worthless?—gene-tastic
do you feel like you're a woman?
             well, probably you have that among your relatives
do you feel like you're a man?
             hmm... maybe your mother was impregnated by a horse?
```

you have the characteristics of a man, but feel like a woman?

damn it all! from now on everything can be changed! everything can be mixed, fixed, then mixed up again

genetic engineering, genetic mechanics and cybernetics, genetic biology and alchemy genetic physics, schizics and metaphysics are all ready to help you out

here!

we can make one hand black, the other—your choice—white or violet we can make one eye pink, the other—light green we can make your face stick out like a brick or your rear end shine like a mirror, but do you really need that?

you pick your nose?—that means you have the nose-picking gene you cut the cheese?—the cheese-cutting gene is to blame you wet the bed?

the shark gene will help—believe it or not, sharks never wet themselves!

your conscience gnaws at you?—you lack the easy-go-lucky gene you bemoan your fate?—throw out your fate gene your head aches? choose the worm gene and you won't have a head to ache! you want a head, but a whole one is just too much? be a half-head! but think hard—what would happen if you lost the silliness gene?

good riddance!

hurry up and choose: the philistine business gene or the sedentary country gene the eastern polygamy gene or the western licentious gene the height gene or the long-life gene the Lithuania gene or the lickmania gene and if you happen to feel hungry— eat some genetically modified poop!

change yourself and you will be changed! let general gene-istry and geneology live!! let gmo, ufo, omg live!!!

and there is nothing to be scared about if one morning, on waking, you happen to ask yourself: who am I???
Sharikov or Frankenstein?
A chickrat? or a mushfrog?

then we'll install for you the lively imagination gene but for the beauty salon—you'll have to pay your own way!

# 67-Benediktas lanuševičius

# from where do children come?

as we know, some children are brought by storks others are found in cabbage patches yet others are bought by parents in stores

do all storks carry kids, or only some—e.g., stork fathers? how many children does one stork bring? do storks carry kids throughout the year, or only now and then? do storks take special child-carrying classes? are they licensed professionals? or maybe self-taught dilettantes? does the Ministry of Education pay any attention to this?! are storks legally importing children to Lithuania? do they have insurance in case of unfortunate accidents?

among what cabbages—early, late, or middling—is it most worthwhile to look for children? maybe in pickled cabbage? in what strains of cabbage is it most probable to find something? it's no secret that cabbages aren't only green, but white and red not only lump cabbages, but budding, leafy, even—creeping there are also brussels sprouts and puffed-out Peking cabbages but I've never heard of finding children among broccoli can the correct care of cabbages affect a child's gender? how would children respond to unconscientious overfertilization with manure? what would happen to a child if he weren't found in time?

how many children can a person on minimum wage afford to buy?

what firms officially sell children? are children that are sold in stores of sufficiently high quality? what warrantee comes with their purchase? a year? two? perhaps unlimited? is it worthwhile to buy children made in China? what is the sales tax on children? normal, reduced, raised?

what laws govern the sale of children? are the rights of child-users properly protected? if we don't know the particular origins of children, how do we tell which was brought by a stork, which was found in a cabbage patch, and which was purchased in a store? maybe that's why people are so different? some fly in the clouds, others idle about with their eyes peeled to the ground, and yet others madly love money...

why are there fewer and fewer children? maybe because the business of children in Lithuania has not yet achieved mass-market status? maybe because there are more and more sales of genetically modified cabbage and children don't linger in gmo cabbages? or maybe because in our country the storks are oppressed by the burden of high taxes and they take their business elsewhere?

maybe we don't need children?

and how did you get here? are you children? what are you doing here?

and what am I doing here?

what am I all about here?

### 69-Rimvvdas Stankevičius

### Valhalla

Here, there are no doors on the inside.

Here, they hold soldiers who vanished without a trace.

At night—when we are allowed some hours to think,

We call out the numbers of our units—

We tell the guards that we are counting sheep—they don't understand—

Here, it is forbidden to sleep.

Before we make our beds, they don't check
To see whether the bugs are really dead
(In this place it is customary
To stuff mattresses with night moths),
And sometimes, from the warmth of the body,
Having soaked up passionate dreams, one
Begins to flutter—
The other night I woke up feverish with wings———

Shaken awake. During the day
They drive us out to tread on crops,
To dig up the roots of trees, scatter
Birds from their nests,
Moan in attics...

At night (when we are allowed to think)
They paint our faces with the dust of wings
And force us to go about as will-o-the-wisps—

We—
Shining beggars of the night—
Breathless, uninspired—
Streaming rays of sweat...
(Normally we crush moths
Into the pages of books
And read in the dark—
When we are allowed to think).

For the colder times of the year,
They taught us to loom—
During winter, they lead us in groups
To cathedrals, through
The corridors of palaces.
They raise us to the rafters, nail us to crosses,
Force us to embody a raver, a believer, a coward,
To be kissed, to be blown up,
To vomit water
(I and two others stood through the last winter
Being strangled by giant snakes).

Weekends, they bring relatives.
These are human figures of some kind
(Different at different times) with cheerless faces,
Who beg of me to remember them.
(Probably, they are selected from
Mimes in the reserve forces—
Their facial expressions highly trained)...
A woman (different each time)
Always cries and tries to kiss me.

But her lips can't reach me—
Here, there are no doors from the inside—
There are no people from the other side
(A linden tree stubbornly taps
its branches against glass)—
Nevertheless, there are many mistakes,
And it's hard to make anything out—
Too many notes, my sister,
Too many emotions—
We need a message—
At least about death—
To be led elsewhere.

\*

We see from afar how the echelons
Of the dead are driven away, mixed up
With gusts of rain
And flaking with the voices of birds like leaves.
Maybe they are being taken to rest? (They say
That each receives a pretty, third-degree
Death souvenir—with diamonds)...

Nobody knows anything for sure, But everyone is secretly jealous—
If I may be sincere, I still hope
It will turn out that I am—alive,
Even though as the years go by
My chances diminish.

It is comfortable here in the fall.
(And that's not because of All Soul's Day)
We are allowed to sleep warmly—
We crawl
Into the bellies of horses as in Troy
(November here is full of the corpses of horses).

Nevertheless, as I was saying, I am waiting
For news of myself—
Maybe even this fall
(The wind blows through walls in autumn
And could act as a messenger—
But it is just wind—
Unable to memorize much).

\*

Visitors slowly retreat
And avoid saying goodbye
So as not to scare anyone,
And they never bring
Anything edible

(And we don't know how to ask— With our scalded throats,

with our scalded throats,

We can only croak "Valhalla, valhalla")...

\*

Then they drive them away.

\*

They turn on a light to entice

New moths—

Streaming, the shower of life—

Their rustling wings

Tickle the body and the ear...

In those moments we are no longer soldiers.

\*

In those moments we are no longer soldiers—We are at our most vulnerable then (Knowing this, they try to break us—Blinding us with photos, fragments, Calling us strange, invented names).

\*

They yell and they yell: "Do you hear me, George Trakl?"

\*

"Do you hear me,
George Trakl?"
(Right after that, always—
A naked nurse runs by like a shiver
Through the trees)

\*

I don't answer.

# 73-Rimvydas Stankevičius

# A promise to write more clearly

How to cool off those fingers that touched the hot seal?

They were only meant

To light up candles and women—

Nevertheless-

The earth smolders.

People ask me to write more clearly,

Because what else can they want-

If my fingers are now sodden, anxious, writhing...

What will happen when they ripen? Can they be controlled?

Some charlatans

Have already been caught

Grating pages up,

Mixing them with soil,

And offering them as cures

For blindness and boils.

They ask me to write more clearly—

When I drank like a fish-

Things were more clear-

At one point, my blood couldn't even congeal.

I didn't get up for weeks.

My soul (when it couldn't take it anymore

Within four walls)

Would disappear for days,

Visiting orphanages, possessing

The mentally disabled,

Letting herself be warmed by understanding,

By wisdom here or there...

She would shuffle to

The senior shelter,

And prolong their suspiration,

Letting them finish their sentences—

Don't we have to thank her for the noble maxims we speak before death?

She would return all played out—
And what really burns me up—happy.
(Even now she loves strong—
As if Mozartian—codas)...

Yes, and it burned me up when she found me half-dead, Trying to bandage the branches of trees Down to their trunks (so that They wouldn't flutter, grate, or disturb sleep),

Tying up the beaks of birds,

Drawing eyes and hair

On the moon-

Always the same hair, painfully scented...

They asked me to write more clearly. I promised
To try because how can I do otherwise—
God forbid I'll freeze the apple trees,
God forbid I'll bring some senior home
From the burial mounds of ancestors—
Children will break out in blains, bees
Will vanish, hives nailed shut with crossed planks...

And what will happen when the wind In time will clarify
My image in penned up icons?

From now on I just clean myself—
Not going anywhere,
I extinguish all of my voices
With quicklime.
I close my eyes and try to see
The shirts being washed
In the flow
Of the icy river—

O slow sway,
O caresses of water weed,
O pure drowning wind...

I lie silent, feeding
The wind from my palm—
Allowing no other words
But clod shoot lightning
Clod shoot lightning

Clod.

Because not only what I want Turns into spells.

# ryšys su vadaviete

Esu velniškai geras Tavo kareivis, Viešpatie –

Visa esybe mečiausi atakon –
Judėjau pirmyn, vis pirmyn
Kalendamas kalendoriaus lapeliais,
Išlaikydamas puolimo tempą,
Nei džiaugsme, nei skausme neužsimiršdamas,
Vis tiksliai į tašką, vis į strateginį tikslą:

Klausau, vade, tik leisk man veikti, Klausau, pone, tik leisk pagallau man kalbėti, Pagaliau turėti ką pasakyti Nuo Tavęs tikro –

Net nebūtinai guodžiančio, Net nebūtinai korintiečiams Ar efeziečiams – bent sau pačiam, Bent kokią negidelę miglotą pranašystę...

Pavyzdžių: "Esi karstas, Prikimšas klykiančių paukščių – Pakell, dangtį, išlaisvink juos, tegu kalba"...

Atleisk – kalbu pilna burna, Atleisk – kalbu brukdamas priešui Durtuvą tarp šonkaulių –

# 77-Rimvydas Stankevičius

# Connection to the command post

I am a devilishly good soldier for you, my Lord—

I threw all of my being into attack—Advancing, always advancing,

Clattering with the calendar's leaves,

Keeping up the tempo of assault,

Neither in joy, nor in pain, forgetting,

Always to hit the target, the strategic goal:

I'm listening, leader, just let me act,

I'm listening, sir, just let me speak— To finally have something to say,

Comothing real that comes straight from You

Something real that comes straight from You—  $\,$ 

Not necessarily comforting,
Not necessarily for the Corinthians

Or the Ephesians—just something for myself,

A minor, cryptic prophecy will do...

For example: "You are a coffin

Stuffed with cheeping birds—

Raise the lid, free them, let them sing"...

Forgive me—I am speaking with my mouth full,

Forgive me—I am speaking while stabbing the enemy

With a dagger between his ribs-

Now and forever-

Stabbing the enemy with a dagger between his ribs—I believed—

He-is my brother,

I believed in his soul's immortality,

That's why I killed with a smile,

I killed laughing, exulting,

And never got blood on my hands-

I understood—these hands—are not mine,

That body—is not me—he gave up over time,

Getting old, hiding

His changes from me (from You?),

Fulfilling someone else's

Orders...

I am already more You than him-

What is left over for him:

Cold tolerance, no

Common interests, no frankness-

Or only as much as the regulations require—

I won't kill him...

I don't bother him when he eats or sleeps,

I smile leniently when he splashes, swarms, or scours...

What is his darkness to me? What are his collapses to me?

For mollusks—there are mollusk games,

Primitive mollusk dreams, slimy love,

Dances of the tongue, hopeless

Bodily entanglements in groans—

Nobody spares uniforms in battle-

Later, I will toss it away myself

Together with all its rips in the heart,

Its greasy stains of passion, the gluttonous

Guilt bugs that cower in its threads...

I am vigilant, I am completely naked in Your presence—

A naked weapon

With the safety off—

I am still listening, leader,

I am still listening, sir,

To the worlds exploding in my depths,

Efflorescing buds,

Bubbles of long-lasting rain puddles, listening—

To the beeping of the phone off the hook,

To the ticking of the machine, supporting the life

Of a devilishly good soldier—for You,

I listen to the wind through the night, to Mozart

Thotes to the wind through the inglit, to mozar

And other signallers,

Tapping out their Morse code

Into my brain...

I am listening, sir, I am listening— Without rest, without change—

I am used to accepting the reports of chaotic blizzards,
The rustle of melting snow, listening hard,—
As the earth listens to the gravedigger's fingernails—
Like a temporary bullet—
Into eternal life, like language—
Into a baby's lips, like meaning—into words, and words—
Into silence...

So let me act, Let me lift the receiver even if The telephone doesn't ring—

It calms me to think to myself—I am A devilishly good soldier, but still Yours, Lord, It calms me, when I tell You—I am still listening...

#### 80-Rimvydas Stankevičius

Ink

What is most interesting to me is the question of what he should do next, how should he write in the future?—Gintaras Bleizgys

What will be after that?
Actually, it should be fabulously good
After that, when the interrogations end,
The fettering in rags, the flogging
Of the face with wet poems...

Who will read my books, That my heart is so unnerved?

- —He has not yet spoken the truth.
- -Then revive him and continue...

Why don't others see
Between the syllables, between the lines
That silver fog
That always, by implication, for me means God?
(when you turn out the lights, your fingers still shine from it)
What will be, when will it die out?——
Darkness and cold?

—Darkness and cold
Are only our fabrications.
But why in fact does the south
More often attract birds?———

Why does it so attract me along with them? It attracts swarms with swollen legs, shackled in rags, chains...

To me?...
From me those birds
Are pulled,
Those promises, stitches from wounds, warmth
From bones, words from arterial blood—
That no bandages can stop,
And if they could—
What would come after that?

Maybe nothing?
I tried—all of nothing—

I habituated myself not to be-

Even with bullfinches burning

The soles of my feet, even with snow

Falling epileptically

Onto my wide-open face,

Even with him (or through him? or through the night?)

Tapping his canes for the blind

And fingers tapping

Perfectly (not only against them,

but against myself as well)

To simulate a sidewalk, puddles,

Slippery stairs, shredded theater

Posters rolling themselves up...

And what after that?

After that—rare escapes,

Hiding, more interrogations,

Attempts to write myself out or with myself (or with you?),

The wall notched by bullfinch beaks——

Grabbing its feathery skull,

Crunching the bird's head,

So the ink would ooze.

So it would flow, painfully, in words (or as words?)—

Or him.

Who writes by means of me---

And after that?

After that the reader

Doesn't much notice the ink-

Preserved in words, it never runs out.

It's exactly the same—with the blood of birds.

It's exactly the same—with me.

82—Rimvydas Stankevičius

**Mobius strip** 

I remember only my squeaking feet, the wet asphalt,

And lamplight pouring itself out in lumps down below.

I cursed, it seems, and told myself it would still be cold when I returned, But can't recall if it was a star or a swallow that fluttered in my throat. I walked endless years with that same old sodden raincoat,

With two gulps of bread and a slice of vodka in my dreams.

At home, instead of windows—posters of Škėma smoking, Krishna dancing, And my shroud a bit too short to fit my aching feet—

Of course I could pull it down, but that would expose my face, And I couldn't take the horror of seeing myself in the light-

Branded by the rash of solitude, hideous with horrible thoughts,

My poems on blotting paper—slippery skeletons of feeling...

Phones called with invitations to the theater. With calls I loved my mother.

The sharp dagger of an alarm clock would knock me back to my body—

learned to characterize life with meaningless words and deeds,

The wind changes meanings as I speak, changes colors, changes the blossom's shape—

My being changes with it, my glance, my hunched body, the mirror's depths...

Likewise, my walls changed, my posters, the heating bill grew tenfold, And before going to sleep, a woman was slowly substituted by prayer, And it doesn't matter anymore if it's a swallow or a star that somewhere, sometime fluttered...

Already, others are repeating my step, my hunger, the swallow and the star—

When I return—you can ask me—I think I will answer, it's cold

Because death is too short for even aching feet to fit.

It's all so similar—the clods of clouds reflect in the skies of asphalt,

Now I must leave the Škėmas and the Krishnas, not waiting for my feet to warm, And leave the shrieking high school girls, the alarm clocks that watch over me,

Yet my stanzas couldn't soak it up—the choking paper hiccuped... Even my suit began to fit me better, and a little later—the casket—

And what I wished for—without joy—started to come true,

learned how to love myself—the bottom broke, and the windows, and my mind. I can't remember—a storm in a boat, or maybe a boat, storming the storm— And I learned to warm my feet by making them into a battlefield.

#### 84-Artūras Valionis

# the kiss: a fragment of fortune-telling

those born
are obliged to watch
the arrangement of elephant bones
to them stories about the marks
of nails
on smooth, unbreakable forms
are dedicated.

forms that are polished
with the sweat of palms
and shaped by the granite
of trained fingers.

not every scratch has its own story—

nas its own story—

and only some of them have been memorized.

after stories wither away
the rough edges are worn down
and out of the bones
various adornments are turned out,
the cavities are hollowed,
belt-buckles ornamented—

what is all this for?

soft and dulled,
the voice of the woman
in a whisper,
will give a name,
her lips of even bite
will touch the forehead,

congratulating

(will it leave a mark?)

maybe it will moisten the pits of memory

(oblique measurements on the doorpost shooting through a fresh coat of paint)

– and newborns then have melancholic thoughts

and so I hail

the downpour which will wash (or will it?) onto the shore objects, myriad objects,

spoiled somewhat by water

and the unchanging movement of sand-

downwind, downwind

water and sand turn out the forms and body movements become lighter and less distinct.

have you seen the leaden gondolas of the clouds above the drying sea?

their elegance has soaked into the ground, and sails like puffs of smoke drown in a handful of coagulating water.

let the restored remembrances of alleys  $% \left\{ \mathbf{r}^{\prime}\right\} =\mathbf{r}^{\prime}$ 

leave me-

the wish of the sea-woman
to surrender to me
the lifelessness of ice-covered hair,
the eating of pears at night,
the echo of a laugh,
coming back.

the silhouettes of fruit take shape in the bowl and the knife I throw does not hit the bread of inclement non-reality—

i am here. i touched the wall
overgrown with moss
but groped for only a few
crumbled bricks—

the cobble-stone road of the fifth city already flows by under my feet, untrampled

while an army waits patiently
by the half-opened gates. For an even bite—
the mark on the forehead.
The sign to enter.

#### 87—Artūras Valionis

#### Déjà Vu

When that *situation* took place with the wine and water, and the groceries, we can imagine, even assure you, that all those gathered there were happy\*

There is no testimony, if anyone were to ask for it: please, I'd like some white, properly chilled, from last year's vintage. White *marrys* better with fish. No need for bread, you needn't multiply it. Better the salad and fruit.

Next time, if a *chance* to repeat something like this comes again, because mysterious are the ways, it may be more difficult.

We won't be taken in so easily.

He'll have to be ready for that.

\* practically everything's alright nowadays, and we realize we are happy; one serious job remains for next year: to learn to feel like that

#### 88-Artūras Valionis

#### Eastern Europe

Man, they were powerful! If they'd wanted to, they could've seriously cashed in around there. They had relatives among the uniformed, they wouldn't have been stopped. But they chose moderation. Folks came from all over and stood in front of the state house. They chanted, made demands, threatened. It was all over the news; I won't rehash it.

I was going through the newer part of town, where it's calm, 'cause I was a stranger there, it's not my city, not my country, nation, language and state, and for the likes of me, better to just watch. In the trees, I saw two guys eyeballing me, for sure they didn't belong here either, but in a slightly different way.

It turned out they missed their stop. They're walking, the park is something like a hundred years old, but there's no Palace, just empty high-rises, somebody's working, somebody's out there, protesting. But at the stop where they were dropped off, it drove away before they could circle around. And there "our people" are out in the cold for the common cause. And the others would think they were afraid, just keeping warm until it's all over. Hey, foreigner, Litvin, second cousin, where do we go and show 'em how strong we are? wacha gonna do?

I quit being an onlooker for a couple of minutes. I pointed out the way. The right way. Ten minutes on foot. You don't need no wheels, it's straight ahead, and you'll hear it.

At night I watched the news. After singing, the crowd scattered. My peeps weren't shown. I don't know if they made it at all. I feel like we lacked those extra decibels.

# 89—Artūras Valionis

# Goolgotha

I was creeping I was gangling I was googling

And why do the radar guns fix on our rusted

faces
Since
our names
will remain
carved
into telemarketing
layouts
forever

## 90-Artūras Valionis

# The day when the biggest sin would be to not commit any sin

Sitting at the table, we ate the hungry and thirsty meat. Somewhere close by, maybe in the next room, bells pealed. Outside, children played with a lump similar to a ball.

Yes, say the yellow sun dogs, this predatory Wild tranquility is just right for us:

the next morning will appear in tetrahedral form.

Perhaps because of such a strange pronouncement, or maybe just by coincidence:

some birds drank and others laughed until the wee hours.

People wrote songs about the beginning of the end.

Lonely couples wandered labyrinths, from left to right:

like the way the whirlpool spins into the drain on this side of the earth's hemisphere of brain (but no one has recently checked on this—maybe times have changed, customs—maybe things are different now?—but no new announcements come loaded with pleasure or information. We still hope that they got held up, that they're still on the way).

In graphite darkness, dancing feet split sparks in half:::

that's when I found your eyes in your retinas—

a smuggler lighted the way for me

cobwebs ripped as I went

# 92-Gintaras Bleizgys

\* \* \*

I am looking for my mother in the clearing in the new growth in the wagtail's nest I call on the phone and she answers

I call my wife and stand on the footbridge trying not to breathe without moving without being without me

it's impossible to stand on the footbridge without breathing without being no matter how much you look at the sky

I am very much alone lord leaning on you smaller than the smallest mustard seed I can't see myself or imagine me faced with such infinity faced with these light years

I call my mother on the phone are you still here am I still here

what do I need

how absurd it is how painful it is

and I keep looking all along the shore

# 93—Gintaras Bleizgys

# cell 326, lukiškės prison

october fog feeds on me then mildew covers over my previous life

what was there at all Lord i wouldn't be able to prove a single blade of grass not one day

of people i couldn't prove my existence red leaves roll on and on the maple tree grew in druskininkai

straight into my balcony it grew thirty years ago but maybe the maple wasn't even there

maybe the balcony wasn't there nor druskininkai and my dreams from that time remain unproven

because i don't remember what they were about and time was always faster than i and all my counterarguments:

now it's six-thirty in the morning and i am released from purgatory or prison to walk for an hour

Lord i say wrench my soul out of my body and i will never be able to prove that my body existed

or that i was ever able to speak to You before these seven square meters of cell and the walls will close in

and there will be no window and the metal doors will shut i won't peek out of the cell for a week

and You will walk through walls through my years through my unprovable body and its mildew maybe i didn't even exist in the world at all so today i am in the drum of the laundry machine in the embers just behind the curtain

i am in the rehabilitation cages the october fog life on borrowed time spears and knives

swords which cut the dead end wall which crumbles warbling Your cavalry flying to save me—and on this side

of the cell door we are all waiting for news from the world which might never have existed at all

# 95—Gintaras Bleizgys

\* \* \*

life at the edge of madness
life after my mother's death after
jail after endless overtime
life with birds fed in winter
on the edge of the world of angels
because the edge isn't insanity
life without limits a step
outside a step into nowhere—

many abstractions nameless forms because i'm standing as if on a mountain with my eyes closed my arms raised and there isn't any landscape here except ontologically speaking except from a long time ago except for renouncing the body—I can't take poetry with me nor any ragged shit no i'm not cursing at all gazing at angels speaking incomprehensible tongues

# 96-Gintaras Bleizgys

#### hector

I didn't want to become entangled in the trivial whims of the gods— but I don't know how to leave a brother in a bad spot——

I am the strongest of the family and if not me then who will defend them my loved ones

there are far more achaeans and they came here to kill

and I tried to save as many as I could of these unfortunates these family these loved ones my kin who don't even understand in what they became entangled

for that reason I can say I have no doubts

today I did not ride out against achilles—I want all the greeks all of their army to stand against me alone I want my feet to grow into the earth I am

ready not to let them near my beloved walls my soul my own soul I am not afraid——

today I rode out against the whole world against all of history the crows

flew over to help them no one was left

I was left alone—— the jackals showed up and I look on and laugh one against all of olympus against iron and horsemen and death——I

slowly emerge

slowly understand that one against the whole world may be too little

I raise my sword radiant and happy

and

if I fail to defend if I die

it will be with all my strength with all the taste of victory

not blaming anyone not doubting

just the way

I lived---



# 98-Gintaras Bleizgys

# jonah's letter of repentance iv

it rained through the whole crucifixion through the whole flogging through the thorns—i didn't know the human body could contain so much

blood that God gives us so much blood that for these many thousands of years i will need to be cleaned—vomited

from that fish i didn't know that i would need so much patience so many

poems——and i didn't know that when the lamb walks at midnight

into a raving pack of wolves the wolves and the pike fish remain frozen gaping in awe———

# jonos atgailos eilėraštis IV

per visą nukryžiavimą lijo per visą mušimą per erškėčius – aš nežinojau kad žmogaus kūne tiek daug

yra kraujo kad Dievas tiek daug duoda kraujo kad šitiek tūkstančių metų mane vis reikės plauti – Išvemtas

iš tos žuvies nežinojau kad šitiek kantrybės reikės šitiek

eilėraščių – – ir kai avinėlis žengia vidurnaktį

į siaučiančią vilkų gaują aš nežinojau kad vilkai ir lydekos taip ir lieka sustingę išsižioję iš nuostabos – – –

# coronal hole

blue anxiety
from the hours of ice drift
in the river river river
in the bay
and after
one dreary train track
black stylobates
in winter's grass
just ticks ticks ticks
and after
the road to the sky
through the snow-buried farm
through words and landscapes
through cornflowers
overgrowing our childhoods

one large gap

a coronal hole through which you jumped out of this spring

#### osiris

if the world of walls had eyes i would be the wind if someone plucked the wind from my head i would be a knife if someone could slice to the outside with blades i would be a lake if someone looked him through just once closing up everything that had been dreamed in him we would speak not of eyes but just another murdering man-if i would be-a girl i would never leave my little shell dragging it along you feel it is only a pile of leaves scattered by the wind across a lake or a face that isn't you reflected in a knife just autumn a croaking creature in a foundation's ditch frogs don't fly south to the other side of the equator below the waist unreachable like the laces of shoes for osiris sitting in his carriagewhy do you need shoelaces why wind and a lake why a girl and walls if you would be yourself all else in vain

# solovki lines

i don't feel at all i no longer feel frozen in the sunset of the soil like salt crystals or shoots of snow ice-holes of words-i can freeze in the water i can turn into a mole carrying seeds of blackburn through the burrow-road through sea tundras and darkness even though alone i am more similar to a half-burned forest as it retreats to the other side of a murmur—boats and bark cable lines the sea is not far the wind is like the sandmute and brittle the dust repeats itself as i go through and disappear from the peninsula's contours it is the edge of night the monastery of two voices

#### sunflowers

for Ai Weiwei

the man of night listens to how fat parcels fray under the bag-like sky under the universe's box a grey worn-out poet sits beneath the coronal hole sits quietly and writes quietly he writes on white paper with a white pen with a hand a controller until nothing of this world remains the walls ears of drums black rain hammering this me that soaks up all the dilapidated days street lights staked trees fallen asleep in their limbs cars still dreaming to the rhythm of asphalt no one sits inside them yet just crumbs of children husks of sunflower seeds

the man of night
listens
to how fat parcels fray
beneath the bottom of the car hood
under the universe's box
how they shoot
already they shoot
sprouting
black
sunflowers

#### wild strawberries

the phoenix doesn't burn falling into the decade of the sixth floor to visit us once more returned from our idyll of nightmares from the time of evacuation for reasons unknown written for whom unknown offered as we beat our chests where there is wind ripples in the water star-maps of cities stained with ether and rust eroded like the earth to be promised to someone later given to astral relatives who regurgitate you from a wounded childhood -athletic shoes five-leaf stars laurent kabila and his twin brother mobutu's murdereron the dark side of the moon rolling stones doors beyond which there is only one more door and another one more and another-electric guitar flame on which the record is stuck you left it on having left for a week the territorial waters the unconscious forever young forever the last poet fragmenting into first communion into his first poem into his last it doesn't matt-

#### 106-Mantas Gimžauskas

# **Astronaut Hit**

i love you in my capsule
i love you in the weightless whirligig
i love you in the relaxation room
i love you crawling through a connecting tunnel
i love you in the decompression chamber
i love you outside the walls
i love you surrounded by a vacuum
i love you as an asteroid approaches
i love you shaking from its blow
i love you as my spacesuit rips
i love you as my lungs are shredded by molecules
i love you with these lights going out
i love you in the silencing cold
i love you in the deepest end of darkness
and now—it's just like that

### 107-Mantas Gimžauskas

#### At the Zoo

I went to the zoo I saw lots of bars And beyond them live whoever how

I went to the zoo
I saw an unhappy bear
The bars fuck the bear the warden fucks her too
She shakes her head and frets
Shakes and frets

I went to the zoo
I saw a pelican with a full crop of fish
But since fish must be seen in proper style
He puffs out his chest with his beak closed
And shuts his eyes and then can't see the fence

I went to the zoo
I saw a chipmunk guerrilla
He shapes Che Guevara from old husks and digs tunnels
that never end up where he wants them to be
So he shuffles his husks and digs them again—jealous of the elephant

I went to the zoo
I saw a massive and powerful elephant
No one could stop him or beat him
But he just shits and pees
Just shits and pees

I went to the zoo
I saw a sloth
He hangs higher than the bars
It's boring to watch him—he just sleeps
And sleeps and dreams that he flees

I went to the zoo
I saw a lemur and was happy
Because he only comes out to get the free food
And returns right away and no one knows what he does
And he is happy that no one knows

I went to the zoo
I saw a crocodile on the other side of the glass
He didn't move or even blink
Praising the lord day and night
Until I was told—he's made of plastic you fool

I went to the zoo
I saw an empty cage and a small hole in the fence
I don't know who lived there
Because the warden hit me over the head
And said—unauthorized persons not allowed

I went to the zoo I am in the zoo

## 109—Mantas Gimžauskas

## Lazy and slow

lazy and slow
a white switch
the morning easy and light
like foil
not a shadow on the walls
not even walls
my head doesn't hurt
my heart doesn't quiver
and not one aztec god

### 110-Mantas Gimžauskas

## Navigation

in church grandfather plays the organ up high down below his grandson pilots the confessional grandfather presses the keys encoding the registers his grandson in the sacristy investigates the space-suits of girls grandfather hunts the acoustic vault singing his grandson kisses in the nave for shame grandfather drinks up and goes down his grandson smokes up and rises above the vault grandfather—to the cosmos grandson—to the cosmos church-not according to plan

#### 111-Mantas Gimžauskas

#### Watch Out. Pocahontas!

today is little Pocahontas' birthday
the wigwam is decorated with falcon feathers
sweet POPcorn pops in the hearth
soon the guests will come and there will be a party
Pocahontas tries on her necklace of fangs
her cat Skunky plays nearby
coyote Peyote brushes her thighs
soon the guests will come and there will be a party
but they are not in a hurry to greet Pocahontas
for it is already afternoon and the wigwam is empty
and the POPcorn grows cold in its clay pot
and suddenly something appears on the horizon

who else but Captain Smith the Beautiful! it's Captain Smith the Stylish! his hair is gold and his teeth—Colgate he kisses Pocahontas with scented lips and gifts her a plastic bow Pocahontas asks—what should I do with it?
—it's an expensive gift—Captain Smith replies—you can use it to hunt your coyote Peyote but to start the game I'll kill your cat Skunky

her cat Skunky made himself scarce and
Captain Smith chased him through the jungle
and Pocahontas laughing in glee
jumped up to hunt coyote Peyote
breaking through brambles with her plastic bow stretched
feeling the thrill of the hunt Pocahontas
suddenly hears a scratching sound
and aims in that direction and shoots
and a familiar voice cries out from the brush
not coyote nor peyote
but her brother Winnetou
who was sleeping soundly in his hammock

the arrow hit him in a place that Pocahontas had never seen and her brother cried out to her spilling the final sap of his life:

WATCH OUT POCAHONTAS—KNOW YOUR TRUE FOE!

Pocahontas began to cry—she didn't like this game at all and she strode up to Captain Smith the Joker to get some sympathy for bow and brother she went to his diamond skyscraper and in the diamond skyscraper there was a golden corridor in the golden corridor there was a velvet room and in the velvet room Pocahontas saw her father Geronimo's scalp and she spotted her uncle Sitting Bull all stuffed and her classmate Amaru was chopped into pieces and Captain Smith was making scented Barbie lipsticks out of her cat Skunky's heart

and through clenched teeth the Captain said—even if you shoot me down
I have a thousand and one clones in the world
so let bygones be bygones
and become my wife instead
Pocahontas' heart quivered
yet suddenly her father's scalp began to speak
and her stuffed uncle piped up in agreement
along with her classmate all chopped up

### WATCH OUT POCAHONTAS-KNOW YOUR TRUE FOE!

So Pocahontas stretched out her bow once more and let fly at Captain Smith a humming arrow that struck the place she had now seen once before and from that day on Pocahontas travels the world with her bow and calls the other Pocahontases to the hunt of Captain Smith and each Pocahontas in a concrete yard a rich man's hog pen or on a panel will one day stretch her bow and the air will quiver with the magic words

WATCH OUT POCAHONTAS-KNOW YOUR TRUE FOE!

WATCH OUT POCAHONTAS-KNOW YOUR TRUE FOE!

WATCH OUT POCAHONTAS—KNOW YOUR TRUE FOE!

and the arrow already flies and this time we will have a party!

# 113—Gytis Norvilas

# Backboning

I have	a backbone—when I'm in unfamiliar surroundings I'm a stoic				
I have	a backbone—when I've swallowed a snake				
I have	a backbone—when I lie on the road's dividing line				
I have	a backbone—when I winter in the tree wearing my father's coat				
I have	a backbone—when I lean on eternity's boundary marker				
	my face turned toward the sun's udder				
I have	a backbone—when I walk barefoot in the hospital ward				
I have	a backbone—when the shaman shoots it at the squirrel				
I have	a backbone—when I embrace the trolley stop's pole without a schedule				
I have	a backbone—when midnights I sacrifice my sweat to Tlazolteotl				
my	backbone—a ladder to the anthill tower				
my	backbone—a hair broken by a nail				
my	backbone—the English Channel of catastrophe uniting father and mother				
my	backbone—a boulder crushing roller				
	pulled farther offshore by seals				
my	backbone—a poison gas capsule swallowed by the sea				
	only a hanger for keys to the morgue of loneliness				
my	backbone—a pole of sulphur sulfide in the pit of the ocean				
	around which in the lava's light dance intoxicated mollusks				
my	backbone—in the grass of childhood watered by dungwash				
	when with my brother clinging to lapels				
	we shook down the luminaries in the August dusk				
	we buried them				
	we were successful I wasn't seen				
	that was the case				

#### 114-Gytis Norvilas

### happy—while in the lake———

...we messed the sheets up with our backs, exchanged vertebrae—played with our bones...

i

slipping across the lake in a boat, to the other bank——— i caress your throat with the blade of my tongue, climb on your neck, shoulders, lick your wrists, fingers, dive into the well of your bellybutton, your groin. i suck into it like a tick that has been lurking all summer.

slipping across the lake in a boat——

i slurp away the chin's juicy pear, in which bees feast, pluck the ripening plums of breasts. they are ready to rip from their fullness, and wiggle like lambs flying from the hill.

slipping across the lake in a boat---

i caress temples with my cheek, pass across eyebrows and forehead, with my lips pinch off a ripened grape—of sweat———

ii

when we slipped across the lake in a boat at night, stars coughed into fists

trying to look the other way from shame. we waved with flags of clothing, and rowing with our feet we drowned nets of memory, tore away anchors that tied us to the earth.

a headwind shoved our moans, screams and ravings back into our throats———

looking the other way, stars coughed into fists—— when we crossed to the other bank, to the provincial town, Hades I think, the moon laughed with an open throat—— and we soused the ferryman and left him lying in the rushes. with the money owed him we intended to buy opium and rakia. the closer we got to the bank—the farther it receded. we could see troughs surrounded by animals, Pan playing on a bone. for shame, looking the other way, stars coughed into fists and stared into the lakes—earth's open wounds, in which we wriggled, worms brimming with passion, hungry with the desire to live and to die. each for two. happy—while in the lake, among these infinitives——

## 115—Gytis Norvilas

### i travelled the desert of your body

i travelled the desert of your body. my camel drank from your bellybutton. i stayed for the night, sheltered in the dunes of your breasts, where scorpions and snakes snoozed beneath hot skin. the heads of the roses of jericho rolled. i travelled the desert of your body. it changed, burned and writhed. i had no goal, no ultimate purpose to assure me of an end and rest. wayward herons circled above. i was thirsty, and there was no shadow in which to hide. i was a praying mantis, waiting for the morning dew to appear on your brows. i travelled the desert of your body, and your eyes drew me to the valley of death to die. moles and wrinkles showed me the way like star maps made by blind topographers. ursa major shone brightly on your thighs. i called and called: "madness is horrifying—there is no one to ask the way..."—crying into an empty well——

i was lost because i travelled to err, born for that. life—the hump of a camel. i travelled the desert of your body, delirious, going in circles, returning to the same spot like a suicide to his stool. passion threw a noose around my neck, and night drew it tight. the camel drank and drank, and i prayed by the lip of the well: "madness is horrifying—there is no one to ask the way..."

the sandstorm rose before dawn——— but there—you were only combing your hair in the hallway, facing the convex mirror.

## 116-Gytis Norvilas

## x-ray photograph

i am a silencer i can kill a rabbit with my silence
i am a hunter of angels they're tasty when dried
with a side of solitude and exhaustion
i am of the nation of the dead having citizenship among the living

i am only temporarily fulfilling human duties until further notice i am the receiver of calves i am asocial according to the horoscope half a person half a bicycle

a bikeman with two spoked moons and a head, an oiled whip writhing between my legs—my feet hardly ever reach the ground

i am simply alone
i am a frozen gutter
i am the maker of bonfires
where are my hands and feet

i am simply alone
for the price of two shadows
flooder of roofs
burning myself
my heart and my tenderness?

i am the film on sour milk a clumsy pygmy in jeans the violet color of mold the jack of christmas eve circling the riding hall of a vase around a blooming potato

and now i am an uninvited friend on your lips. i will force your mouth to open, and caress you, drive your lips on, be tender to you

or not

#### 117-Gytis Norvilas

#### autumn maneuvers

crosses march through fields with holes in their shoes, smiling, backpacks packed with pots, groats and matches, they have calloused feet, sunsets glare off scratchy knees, they wash up in gas stations, brush their teeth

crosses march through fields
heads full of holes, they're all friends in the abyss:
the svirskiai, riaubos, birchens, pineys
made from oak, fir, maple and cedar——
freedom in the holes—darkness knows this

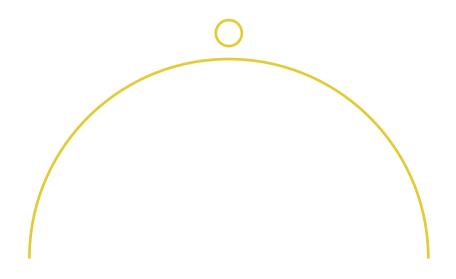
crosses march through fields above their heads fly rosaries of migrating birds gravestone slabs of clouds——— their trenches and dug-outs are heaped full

crosses march through fields roads and swords are crossed, gestures of contempt in their pockets, they make campfires, cook broth, warm beans in the can feeding the fire with themselves, from each other's bodies they strip a plank, a good burn, they move slowly——

crosses march through fields
farting loudly, animals avoid them
people fall at their feet, lean them on walls
empty their pockets, shake them down, even cut their throats
or make them dance, prove their origins, place them at crossroads as a joke———

crosses march through fields
their road gazes at nothing, with no final goal that shines
(the world—eyes stabbed out—you can't shine for the blind)
their birthplace is nowhere, and they seek it not to winter, but
to pull themselves out

to pull themselves out to pull themselves out of the burning earth



# 118—Mindaugas Valiukas

### Mona Lisa

I work in a car lot.
From eight to eight.
Boring job. One could read
But I page through my co-worker's
greasy magazines and newspapers
and get an erection.
I am absent-minded and sometimes forget to bring
Lunch. I am afraid to go to the bathroom
During work hours. This gives me a strange expression.
My coworkers call me Mona Lisa.

# Mona Liza

Aš dirbu automobilių aikštelėje.
Nuo aštuonių iki aštuonių.
Darbas nuobodus. Galima būtų skaityti
Bet aš tik žiūriu nuotraukas riebaluotuose
Draugų laikraščiuose ir žurnaluose
Nuo kurių man pasidaro erekcija.
Esu išsiblaškęs ir kartais užmirštu pasiimti
Valgyti. Darbo metu nedrįstu nuciti
Į tualetą. Nuo to keista mano veido išraiška
Ir draugai mane vadina Mona Liza

## 120-Mindaugas Valiukas

### He likes

I like women skinny ones scrawny as a well-lever no milk no blood just chopsticks all bone that's why I like the skinny ones not fat ones

I like women
fat just bone and
cellulite heaving
over their surface like
a swamp that's why
I like the fat ones not
the skinny ones

I like women
teeny tiny ones
breasts that fit into a spoon
when they mount you
you can turn them like
a windmill with the wind
at your whim that's why I like
little ones not big ones

I like women
big ones giant ones
whose clitorises you can lick
standing up that's why
I like the big ones not
the little ones

I like women
stunning pretty ones in the street
as on a podium and in bed
as if in front of a camera their
butts stare at us
from advertising billboards
that's why I like pretty ones
not ugly ones

I like women
ugly ones whose heads
or bodies need changing
their zits popping you need
to hide them behind newspapers
or alcohol which is why I like
the ugly ones not
the pretty ones

I like women smart intellectuals whom you can't pick up but if you do it's a lot of noise: complaints and the grinding of teeth so I like smart ones not stupid ones

I like women stupid ones raw dummies it's fun to hear them sob all laid out (in laughter or in tears?) until they begin to writhe as if not in their own minds squirming like I like it that's why I like stupid ones not smart ones

I like women fresh young ones children their breasts still growing so hard they even hurt and they know they want it bad but don't know what they like that's why I like young ones not old ones

I like women
old bloodless ones
caring mothers whose heads
and bodies have betrayed them
they always know what they want
but don't know if they want it
so I like the old ones and
not the young ones

I like women lifeless bodies stretched out under white sheets cold and too rigid to spread wide who need hot water poured on them that's why I like lifeless ones not living ones because they're dead

## 123-Mindaugas Valiukas

#### Haiku

autumn the socks don't dry over night

such a small rower the left oar now too deep now on the surface

you smelled the lily now pollen coats the tip of your nose

a fog falls everything fades here is your real world

winter sun
on the tip of an icicle
a stuck drop

full of wind soaring a plastic bag

something in the sky cuts divinely—

a clear winter morning farmhouses lowered from the sky on thin lines of smoke the dog tied in the garden not one apple falls without his knowing

everyone asleep leaving me face to face with the wine bottle

the last thing to divide us clothes

autumn in the park under dried lindens maple leaves

autumn returned. we are one fewer.

autumn rain a clear complexion on a wet poster

# 125—Mindaugas Valiukas

## Mouth Harp

It's never quiet.

If not a nightingale—

A table saw at village end

Careful,	Midwinter freeze.	The bird-cherries bloom!
Geese-	The market peddlar hawks $$	But there is no one to see:
Skyscraper	Glass grapes	Everyone in potato fields
Darkness	The night is brighter	The sky gave,
Before the button is sewn.	Than previous day.	And the sky took away
Early autumn	First snow	Our snowman
Larry autumn	1113t 3110W	Our showman
Laughter in the cemetary	Herons	Summer rain.
Senile lindens are felled	And smoke from wet leaves	No one bothers to remove $$
By young woodcutters	Along the way	Laundry from the line
Day breaks	Fraganco	Picnicers scattered
The carousel's horse	Fragance Of Chrysanthemumswhat	
Up to its knees in snow	Was I talking about?	The tasted cups
op to its knees in snow	was I taiking about:	The tasted cups
On the lowest branch	Evening in the park.	Five maple leaves
A bitten apple	The mosquitos and I	For a cake of sand.
The marks of tiny teeth	Are of the same blood	A children's market
Τ	mi. i.	0 1 1
It rains	Flights	Summer heat wave
So you water	Cancelled:	Children carry a scarecrow
The flowers on the sill	Poplar fuzz	For a swim

### 126—Marius Burokas

### Laundromat

So many girls with highlighted hair folding their underwear to the drone of laundry machines neon and the TV news

Stealthily, I watch them perform the ritual baskets full of underwear with the lingering scent of flesh

So serious
so pretty
and so focused these girls
who don't know me at all
bending over their brimming baskets

A foreign language foreign bodies and foreign me quickly stuffing his rags into the washing machine's throat

His chest tightening alone and completely naked the Lithuanian poet

## 127—Marius Burokas

## Fog

```
I saw fog
flood lakes
hanging islands in the air
my lake
is flooded
my islands
hung high
as in Swift
   -you understand
   how everything tapers:
   visits
   embraces
   teeth and hair-
the fog will rise to your eyes
and you'll lose your lover's scent
even though you flew
like a moth to that flame
drinking will discolor
your tongue
as wit turns viscous
and eloquence stutters
   -still, you can always grope
   with dull fingers
```

to close the clasps of oblivion

#### 128-Marius Burokas

## Instructions for building an ant-hill

## For Edgaras

To begin with, you have to spit on the ground for a long time, earnestly, with clean, white spume. Next, bite and chew, bite and chew. Then toss together what you like. A refuge of crumbs, a cabin from clay, a shelter of sticks and straw. Spit-smear it like a cake. Scratch out some openings, a flue. Invite friends and relatives. Raise a ruckus for three days, four nights. Go out to the porch early in the morning, in bare feet, and look: some stare at fog, some at the clouds, some at the highway—then drive everybody out. Bring home a little mother, breed a whole brood, multiply until the offspring don't fit. Then baptize them all, raise them, marry them, drive them out of the house. Later, paste up the openings, leaving only the flue and a key around your neck, some logs, the domestic beast. When the animal croaks, lock the doors, take a bottle, go out to the porch and sway on the swing for a long time. Until it freezes.

In the city, quarantine and mourning. everyone waits for the snow.

on the facades, and in the streets—
an indelible hideousness.

witches have multiplied. they publish glitzy books about themselves.

shamans in the gateways peddle amulets, whose spells have long gone stale.

Belarus, Poland—burning fences everywhere.

overturned trucks with the contraband of winter.

meat is sold by the road, virtually free.

animals have emigrated, along with the connoisseurs of sacred script, and any woman who could walk.

only men
with fishing poles
and flags,
rocks
in their bosoms—

everyone
in one square,
so that it would be easier
to take them up
into heaven
and lock them up
until they're sober.

in the window of the facing house, in the kitchen, a light burns.

naked death rummages through the refrigerator.

it's her yellow jackboots that shine when she walks the streets.

she notices me and nods.

see you soon.

## 131—Marius Burokas

## Station-Dzūkų st.

The station sounds every night. Sad beastly trains rumble by. A checkpoint on the pedestrian bridge: those in possession demand more from the meek. The moon is a gypsy knife gleaming through smog. A dive along the road: blue Hopper ghosts. Beer, drunken brotherhood, a haggard dog across the road. All of us here are over the edge. Farther on, there are the fumigated hills, in which we have no faith. Children—whom we fear. Trees which turn into snakes below ground. At dawn—only at dawn—the station seems like snug stables. When you returned, you saw how the locals soap the sides of trains. Now you hear shouts, sometimes sun and wind from over there: where we will ride.

\*\*\*

i am sitting in a bus station in a foreign city reading literary theory all day i sit and read and wait

and a school girl is led away
by three men, it took barely two sentences
to come to an agreement,
though she looks inexperienced,
so maybe that's why it didn't take long

what else do we have here

some family from the countryside three sons, two still small and a big pink rabbit they ate a kebab each and are back to waiting

local bums, what are they waiting for here, in the station, they won't go anywhere anymore

then i was going, and some drunk
russian girls from latvia were explaining
to lithuanians that no one marries for love these days
but one of them has now done it a second time, and of course,
she's unhappy, although now she's mostly sad
about leaving her expensive telephone
in a taxi

and yesterday, saying goodbye to each other we walked along the shore collecting the prettier stones

which could be used in some kind of art and then i thought out loud that stones are like clouds you see what you want in them

### 133-Rimantas Kmita

\* \* \*

i ended up at a museum, early morning, rain, trembling

everything inside of me burns after last night, and i don't have any spring water, or anything else that would help

what could help here though with security like at an airport: i shook out the coins from my pockets, pulled out my mobile phones, keys to home and to the hotels to which i will never return, i gave up everything that pings, i am disarmed

and i am set upon by the hunt
through a forest buried in snow,
a bear on the hunters' backs,
medea with a bloody knife,
children's voices from the cafe,
overcrowded still lifes,
the fatigue of women in the alfons mucha
from a separate, much cooler hall,
and where is vytautas at the center
of battle, blood, blows and flame,
and his horse with no space to put its hooves
because it is all canvas and frame

and where as well
are the miniature
medals
and the japanese tourists with cameras but
no backpacks on their shoulders,
and we have artificial light
because there is no sky here,
just ceilings
where from plaster clouds
your feet stick out
my dear

somewhere hussars glow white, a sociorealist fish cleaner smiles straight into your eyes and comrade builders with wheelbarrows full of red bricks like feathers, as if there were not on the other side of the wall

the crucified one without arms

a dove

without wings

the mother of god without hands

saint george without a spear

a dragon

without ears or tongue

they just hang next to one another, this gaze has been going on for five hundred years, my dear, but i doubt time matters much around here, i doubt they lack anything, holy faces shine with sadness and peace, and, i am afraid to say, indifference to this world. like actors, having been given a role they didn't choose, nor could refuse, and all of that is reflected in the faces of the workers in the halls. they stand as if they weren't here, as if they shouldn't be here, but they can always help you, or warn you not to take pictures with a flash. i don't know if i should, or can, greet them, and i feel uncomfortable. almost ashamed for the price of admission, and what a price it is—ten zlotys, some kind of disharmony or lack of taste, nothing really disconcerting, though, i look around to see if anyone is paying too much attention to me i look around and begin to listen-

where now is the young man with the white cane who sprouted out in front of me this morning (i barely got out of his way)

where now are the workers
hanging off the third floor of the building
and waiting

where is the man with the blown out umbrella

and where is the short fat woman
in the morning
rain falling
shouting with a voice almost my own
no pomóż mi, kurwa

where? i ask, my dear, looking at a dim security camera screen of a courtyard empty and cloudy i look around
and see in the mirror on the other side
of the altar's door, an angel's gaze,
and it occurs to me that today
i didn't check my email,
that i haven't checked it in a while,
i forgot the password,
you could even say, i am cut off from the world

i look around and declareenough already, time to go, but as soon as i get down to the cafe, they foist the main course on me, though i only wanted the soup, i wait in line and from the other side of the cafe a woman winks at me. i am disconcerted, trying to remember if we know each other, how could there be in a foreign city, a foreign country, a woman i know, but the moment passes and it hits me

i am in a museum

#### 137—Rimantas Kmita

\* \* \*

i keep thinking about poetry, about its language, differences and similarities, advantages and weaknesses

i keep thinking about folklore where the songs are so artfully composed that you can't take anything out, it's so laconic and naive, yet so ornate and expressive too,

and contemporary folklore doesn't give up any ground with its energy and realistic language—reality in language: what all the best poets try to achieve

but it's interesting that, previously, that energy was, to use freud's term, sublimated into naive forms, though no one knew about freud, or maybe they knew but sublimated their knowing, and today

the young people give it to you straight up,
which to us, "people of letters and culture,"
seems vulgar and idolatrous,
maybe it is, maybe it isn't, i don't know, but
there is certainly plenty of reality in their language
(i quote: dya hear me? i'm gonna smash your fuckin' face in!),
so these illiterate dropouts,
who never learned how to write,
these skinhead poets in hoodies
who will never do anything with their lives,
will live on in the reality of language.

#### 138-Rimantas Kmita

### under shining domes

she sits
at the register
barely holding on
ten minutes to midnight
drained to the last
barely breathing
i don't see her breathe
and it looks like she's not breathing
then it hits me, a vision of
a stream of blood flowing from her mouth down her chin
but from some sort of inertia
she still sits at the register

maybe this appears to me only because yesterday in the gallery i stood for a long time in front of a picture of st. stephen who had blood dripping from the back of his head, a completely calm face and a bible with stones on top of it

and i am placing things on the belt i put them down and watch them flow away as if everything were being carried by a river toothpaste a package of homestyle stuffing multivitamin juice a collection of dvd discs ice cream with caramel two blocks of chocolate a bottle of vodka a television guide for the coming week rice buckwheat macaroni three red bell-peppers chewing gum half a kilo of ham a bottle of mineral water cheese spread with mushrooms

a package of cottage cheese with raisins and a package of cottage cheese with cherries a discounted winter hat

and athletic t-shirts-also discounted

three hundred grams of homemade potato salad

a half-liter jar of olives

a six-pack of beer

seasoning mix

a bottle of oil

a 40W lightbulb

a can of nuts

wipes for the computer screen

and a russian detective novel

about, as always, the long search for love and a murderer

she doesn't seem to look at either the products or the screen, especially not at me

her gaze is stuck somewhere deep

she just touches everything i put down with her hands

as if she weren't here at all and as if they are not her hands

she takes my money

and gives me change

ten minutes, no, probably only three or so

until midnight

and we part ways

and i also don't know why the world exists and people and everything

and i remember a poet

and a conversation i had with her

when she talked

and talked and talked and made me listen

to this deep deep music

maybe i am middle-eastern

she said, they sing songs

with such suffering

aren't they hip, don't you think, she said

it cuts through your heart

i like it so much

becausethislifehasbecomeboringtome

it's not interesting

choresfamily

do you understand

but this

this has it all

and there, there is nothing

i understand, i said, getting more and more scared and i am more scared now at midnight by the supermarket waiting for a taxi and thinking about how she that cash register girl is cleaning her workplace and how will she make her way home with a stream of blood from her mouth at some late hour (i will probably be sleeping) and i can't imagine how and at what time she will arrive certainly no taxi will wait for her and she probably lives far away very far from here

\*\*\*

while i eat lunch the pub's television shows me a tampon commercial i lower my eyes and try to think of something far away then on comes a news report about some japanese policeman dressed in slipshod shoes and a service cap pulled down so i can't see his eyes but from the wrinkles on his face i imagine that this policeman this very evening will catch a young criminal or not even a criminal but a run-of-the-mill hooligan and will smack him good with his baton and then smack him again and smack him until he falls down and can't get up the policeman had been on his way home after his shift and will keep on going but no. first, he will turn around and slit with his service knife the hooligan's throat and then he will go home perhaps with a soulful tear like the one aleksandravičius photographed on girdvainis' face but he will be sitting with his cap pulled down and no one will see it until it dries up and his wife will not notice glancing his way because it's unlikely she would notice much of anything he will sleep in the other room having brushed his teeth and washed the knife. tomorrow is still a work day and then two days off

## 142—Antanas Šimkus

## A Date On Sunday

#### For Asta

A white feather, dust,
Dance of wind before the rain.
Sunday still rests
Under the shade of city trees. In God's

Window clouds sail
Like magnificent ships
While we stand on the bank—
Two kids, hapless,

From the kingdom of happy times, And slowly it begins to rain.

# In Old Town

Mauve and greenish gray like banknotes
The lights of Old Town,
The price you pay in the raw back alleys
Is equal to the skewed truths you've come to know.

And you are rich—having absolutely nothing, Just a quicksilver tongue,
All around, an invisible vapor of silence.
It's night. As if the head of Saint John

Were floating towards Salome's school on the hill On a cloud as heavy as a promise. Before the madman dreams his own name And showers of rain pour over the desert of sleep,

Before you cast away the useless star,
You take one final, quick drag of smoke—
Smoke like the coming bitterness of a barren day:
Dawn's about to break over Old Town. Too soon.———

# Šiaurės miestelis

١

Čia liko žiemoti tik varnos Ir pilkšvas rytojaus dangus. O plentas? Nebuvo čia plento. Barakai, bokšteliai, lietus,

Kareiviai, rūdijančios žvaigždės, Tvora atskirtos nuo miesto, Negrabios kirilicos raidės Teisingai lindijo: Dievo

Nėra myms, nėra ir mirties, Mums duotas įsakymas trauktis, Nes čia per daug bjaurasties, Nes čia jau seniai nebe šiaurė.

#### North Town

.

Just crows wintering over. And tomorrow's leaden sky. And a highway? No highway. Just barracks, turrets, showers,

Troops and rusted red stars

Zoned off from the city by a fence,
The ham-fisted Cyrillic letters

Were right to proclaim: for us

There's no God, no death,
The orders are to retreat,
For here all's ugly and uncouth,
Our north has met defeat.

ii

Only crows wintering over And tomorrow's leaden air. Streets straggle through this wasteland, Barracks by houses are unmanned.

Now supermarkets and offices, New inhabitants, dogs and cars, Advertisements of pathetic importance, But the one never recurs

Who could at least bear witness To death's existence...

And the north?

Well, there is no north.

# On the occasion of an incidental experience, or the night of January 27th (in memoriam)

#### For Vilkas

I would willingly ask myself, what am I doing in this world. What do I do. But so what. What.

Rain on the street. Rain on the street. Rain.

The two walked over. Two of them.

One had a tattoo above his hand. A cross.

The other's teeth were all smashed. He smiled.

They demanded money. Required it. They didn't ask.

I said: if you find some—it's yours, if it's yours you'll find it.

I said. And I smiled too.

I'm leaving tomorrow, I said, the road's waiting for me.

It's still raining on the street. Rain on the street. Rain.

I'd willingly ask you, what do you do in this world. What do you do.

Even with the cross above your hand. Even if something's really missing.

Even if you both walk together. Even with your broken smile. The cross.

I'd invite you to go with me. On the road. Into the world.

So what, you'd say. I'd smile.

If I knew something. If I knew at least something.

I'd say, it's yours. If you find it, it's yours.

That rain on the street, that cross, the road.

And you, if you knew, if you knew something,

Would you ask me, what am I doing in this world. What—

# The Season Is Over

The season is over,
Pimps take away the whores,
Wives are packing cuckolds into trunks,
Empty tourists' wallets
Declare the glut of local capitalists.

The season is over,
Just the wind trying to transform the last butterflies
Into a calendar of yesterday's leaves:
But the desert is suited for miracles—
Cluttered resorts don't suit the well-groomed bourgeoisie.

The season is over,
Desolation shrouds the lanes,
Shadows cover the bars, squares, pavilions.
You'll return home. Just a wasteland left here
For poetry to sprawl. Ladies, gentlemen, the party's over.



# 149—Donatas Petrošius

Days like Never Before

I had already come to believe that there is no Buddhist element

that you're growing more solitary on the surface and after that you come to understand hat inside there sits another just like you a back-up who gets drunk with everybody cleaning his karma on highways with torn pants making his own kind of ruckus in the bullfinch dancing through sea-buckthorn stubs but then you notice you can remember and wanders around someone else's dilapidated shacks either in me or in the puppy lent to my cousin's children or

during my insomniac nights

to the bone as much as you like but everything will still remain how they left it new technologies or read them the latest sports news you can work yourself that the dead still lie there where I left them and with every eternal return with eyes open you leave white spots in empty letters and explain to them had already taken down the Christianity from my walls but noticed you feel your role more strongly you walk after them day and night

had already tied together an artemisia broom to drive out all the pagan things with the unworkable ancestor's lands with gravel seeping through gaps in the floor but once more another year runs by like white shadows months like gulps of empty air days like never before

#### 150-Donatas Petrošius

# Ghost Dogs; The Way of the Samurai

My first dog was ruddy and wild. While I was taming gravitational forces, getting used to my first steps, he would break free from his chain and run away. One time he never came back. His name was Bear.

My second dog was black, so I called him Bear. He was too weak to break the chain. When he heard our neighbor playing the bandoneon, he would howl. So I never learned anything from that dog. He croaked on the twelfth of April during Gagarin's Easter, and one grandmother (having little to do with this story) explained to me that star wars were going on, and if the Americans threw down a star on top of us we would all freeze. I was so receptive that I believed it.

It was impossible not to see that my third dog would be legendary, so I called him Bear. He had all the best qualities of a warrior and one flaw—he was too independent: he would vanish or appear whenever it occurred to him. Often he would leave me alone with my rear unprotected—barely halfway through some secret mission—to defend myself from shadows and tall plants with a black plastic pipe serving as the sharpest sword.

I asked the *Book of Changes*: will I be ordained a warrior? The answer that fell out was most propitious (Nr. 5), but nothing changed. Only after many years did I see from my actions that I learned everything in life from my dog—how to escape from a collar, how to perform barely comprehensible maneuvers, how to remain unseen, obscure.

#### 152-Donatas Petrošius

#### How the earth carries me

if I were of noble lineage or at least
if my grandparents had been more resourceful and
hadn't starved all their lives if
my parents had received an allotment for some zhigulis
or at least a voucher for some corner sofa
I would be standing on my feet quite
differently firmly taking up a higher
status in society I would have gone further among
the people maybe they would even respect me more

if I had inherited silver place settings a ruined outbuilding of an estate ancient pictures in meaningful frames noble ghosts in grimed up mirrors or at least documents proving we once owned half of the North West I would now write aristocratically burning slender candles crying pearly tears into a white sleeve I would be an Acmeist or at least in that

direction crossing recreation areas by well-trodden corners I think of what is now my own besides the walls of books four pairs of athletic shoes one for dirt and dust another for artificial turf [soccer] gray running shoes for even days white ones for odd days while the first pair gets wet the others dry I drink in the dampness of pines bound to a borrowed dog suddenly I fly to the railing leaning out to see whether the wind still sways this suspended rope bridge whether the earth still carries me through all four corners of this world

# 153—Donatas Petrošius

#### The sacrifice of the steer

with a hired horse we lead the steer tied to the cart to be sold as meat 400 kg for 2.70 litas by live weight the stopped animal ruminates—empty bowels—who warns them before death and what makes them cleanse themselves and who sets the price

we lead the bull whose hooves unused to asphalt slide until the animal rolls over into a ditch—the whole procession stops and I understand at this moment that I no longer believe this sacrifice will be accepted or that it's wanted by the gods

the bull knocks the cart into a street sign turns
the whole world wheels up and at this moment the sun
is rolling along the ground so I understand what the words
our money is burning really mean—I must decide for myself
at this moment—who am I to this animal and do I have the right
to exchange his death to lengthen the feast of my life will
I have the impudence to slice and scream at his frightened blood

a white cloud of dust rises and there flashes within it a nickel-plated fish-scale fettered bicycle a titan in an oily toga is going about his chores during his lunch break and he turns us back onto the [straightest] road and tells us not to think about where we are going on the asphalt or on the tops of trees heaping our heads with guilt searching for rights and gifts and the grace of gods which we so desire

o gods accept our herded sacrifice and let our souls re-dressed in furs into your eternal hunting grounds

#### 154-Donatas Petrošius

#### Nature studies in contemporary history

that might as well be the end of me;

About the human being, his insides and reproductive functions—not until the ninth grade; until then, somehow I'll have to suffer through shaggy eighth grade zoology: from cnidaria to elephantidae and elephants, Inclusive, Seventh grade: I turn into a calf and digest my way through trees, grasses, shrubs, lichens, mosses, mushrooms, but not all of it. And what about getting to know nature? If the sun shines, then you can find your bearings and get home. If it's cloudy, that means you get lost. Look down at the lichens and moss. Don't panic. Don't run. When you run, your left leg is shorter running circles to the same place, to the same time, the same mood; even the scents are the same—giant unread books of autumn-the start of September itself hands out contemporary history, but I can see at onceit lies—this history isn't new: three children enter the records and their condition is rated as if in the school year: the beginning-v. good; the endv. good; the next year—also v. good write what you want, you can't dupe me: the farther things go, the faster the news gets old; contemporary history ended the year before the year before last: then I still had two athletic shoes I kept them in an unlocked locker and someone threw one behind the ceiling net that protects lights from blows in the gym-I should get it down, but where does one find such a long pole? in my town such trees just don't grow, so I went to Blackforest to check the situation there—the impenetrable stocky might of it all!—I will show up with a hatchet and

along the forest edge-broken lumber trucks and the skeletons of timber industry machines, skulls of forestry service officers, the petrified footprints of fleeing collective farmers—here contemporary history began a long time ago but didn't last longbeavers and other devils clogged the drainage systems, the land exploded like radiators in the cultural center during unexpected March frosts; I used to sit and re-watch old films on dark nights when the unpiloted sputniks of our empire would fly in and burn without sound in the highest layers of our atmosphere but not necessarily at night, because sometimes the day flares with a gorgeous light, and you can't explain itwhere could it come from?

\*\*\*

I speak of a handsome man, good-looking as a young god, but not young:

palely glowing as a young god, sharp and dry as wind, gaze-dimming god of poppies throwing sand in the eyes, a humming god of sleep

livid forehead of March lined by grim rivers, dark blue veins intersecting at the temples, which are soft as a breeze in May. wrinkles of wonder, and wrinkles of worry meet, hot breath of June wind on the forehead's fiery cage.

mesh of wrinkles—brittle, my beloved is antiquarian, soft his silvery brows but rough their frosty grass, dainty the arch of lips but too painful the barbs released.

he ages fast—everything grows longer since it sags
even the face droops down—
the nose grows, but the heart deepens,
the picture of the young god splinters fast, chips—
leaving a goat with pipes in its stead,
a strutting drunken satyr,
Pan howling from love
—the howl that only a girl, turned back into a swaying flower,
returned to existence as a plant, would not fear—
a flute, a shiny narrow-hipped
village girl, a warm reed pipe
or a disposable willow whistle
whittled after the thunder.

#### The Very Longest and Last Poem

who would I love infinitely numerous times and what after those infinitely numerous times would I still do again?

Those who stand there when I open the photo album—they are pasted there, stomachs sucked in, so they won't show how gentle and broadly frightened their eyes are.

Those who pale and fade more quickly the more rarely I open up to them.

Those who shout at midnight through sleep "Mama!" when I have slipped away secretly and write this poem.

Those who bellow "Where is my do? Where did you put my do?!" until the grill of the titanium helmet dews over (your do is under the sofa—I gave it to one of the children to play with, later, I was walking and accidentally kicked it).

Those who say to me "Careful, just be careful" and those who sing to me through the television. Those with whom I used to fall in love so deeply that I would ask all the saints to let me hold onto them, and all the saints in all the church pictures shook their heads no.

Those whom I listened to and began to feel an aureole sprouting from the back of my head, and those who show me the developed film on which no saintly halo was to be seen.

Those who say "Stop, you, now stop" and I don't stop, damn it, and get more nervous.

Those who say "Try it, you'll like it" and I try or become frightened that I really will like it.

And those who say "Try, try and you'll get used to having fun".

Those who now shout "Coooccooooaaa!" and to make it more emphatic—
"I have to peeeeeee!" at two after midnight, when I write this
poem, which will be the last, which is why I hurry to fit into it all
of those I love, all of those whom I would love again infinitely numerous times
and after those infinitely numerous times,
would do it all again.

#### Now

I would like to write only poem-cartoons. Like, say, I'll draw for you something pretty about a fox, and I'll even purr on top of it. I'll go at it in purring mode so that your blood boils from excited laughter and heats up the blood of the textual fox, bright as a tattoo, a sticker on the mirror, bouncing on its buttocks-it would tack-tack in your head through your mind's decorative trim, with nails, the tiny, flashing fox will go rushing around, small as a spark, a glint in the skull's bucket, and some maid or blue blood belle will find you muttering, sitting over a little book-

fire, tail, sweet little pussy—

babbling, happy, silly, happy—you, reader.

#### Verbalist

I loved grasses here is my herbalist-said my school's Biologist, shielded with golden brooches, with lilac clouds around the temples I danced for her as if she were the most fragrant incense, I laid before her the medals from all the Biology competitions I called the bentgrass by its name the knife sheath slapping on my thigh, and herbal witches told me their secrets, lichens, moss, little old women, I was twelve at thirteen I no longer glanced at the blossom, saying what a lovely blossom!-I only saw formulas, meadows and hidden glades in pine forests opened up before me like lids with carved symbols I peeled the sweet-flag's root, I stripped the bark from the world that was clearer than ever crucifers with lanceolate leaves, bifoliate and umbelliferous plants— I walked on garden fences, hung plants on bedewed small stalks, breaking their venous necks

their green blood was beautiful to me I injected it in bulk

I cut the heads of grass and the grass cut back at me with my tongue I tasted its wounds
I closed my eyes and learned from the taste, smell, memory how to unravel their names when needed swelling seeds in my mouth cottongrass in my hair, we smile, we smile the nettle boiling under my skin

I descended below, I let my fingers caress the lengthening roots,
I chased the cracking joints in the mud that was my world, my own kingdom,
I ruled the attic, paved by herbs,
&%\*\*! I lived such a nice life till I was thirteen, why did I need to find a word among the grasses, to trade my mistress for a lover.

#### (why I stopped writing)

tonight young Pūkelevičiūtė confirmed for me what I had already figured out for myself—her green windmills rustled, my flaming gentle assassin smelling of wind, with the clatter of keyboards at his back, I went happy across the dewy meadow, bedstraws whipped my calves, tearing my red—as if painted on—skirt, I raised my scarred chin up and thought— I didn't think anything, I never think anything, I say it like it is and don't twist my head about it. I probably lost my head that morning when the river glittered, empty jogging paths, lamps glowing red sloshed silver scales on the briny seas deep and smoky, indiscernible mirrors of lakes that I'd wade through up to my knees, I combed my braids with fish-bones, I sang by the open window, the sun's knives wiped away my tears, I groomed my hair with cool pine twigs, happy, I waded through forest glades flooded with yellow anemone, happy thinking, thinking of nothing, let someone write to me about neverending love, its silken, grey ashes are just camouflage paste, happy I hummed about the never-ending-untilin the heel left unprotected while bathing in fire, so classic you might as well crya snake in the grass.

#### 161-Giedrė Kazlauskaitė

#### Why it is prophylactically healthy to sometimes want seppuku

you clean up all your books erasing the scribblings of love pencils and lip bruises as well as phrases which you said to them and then stack them orderly back to back turned away from each other not voluptuously face to face as if they were in 69 position coquets miscommunicating in the language of Flaubert and Wilde

you scrupulously give out gulag numbers to each one and write: Si vis videre Jesum Christum / noli furari librum istum / Hic liber meus / Testis est Deus / Non furare rogo / bo kosztuje drogo / Who Steals a book from there / gets three Years / to moan in hell (this for the most hopeless spinsters)

at least after death no one will dare to take them and they will be passed on to fish in a literate aquarium or to an orphanage where you will not rape the debauched foreign girls because they will rape you first they are written full of forbidden sexual things like the completely unknown or well known body i don't know myself whether it's a harem or a library

i hallucinate your perfume among the books which we both read from different copies of the same edition

because if i don't live for people then at least i can live for books writing in them with thin colored markers i underline under the eyes (letters of eyes) without regret for the lines are mine after all

my peoplebooks (usually young though there are a couple with skin made from poor soviet paper that smells of old maple leaves) reading those you just want to die

you crumple your manuscripts like a smashed collection of butterflies carried in your pocket all day you tear up a remote trash can you find (because property will be inspected by the white-handed criminal police)

you skim through abstracts and accidentally start reading a lecture on law dealing with how life insurance is not granted in cases of suicide reimbursements for bravery in saving someone else's life

you arrange your photographs and destroy the negatives where you posed naked and your unthinned calves looked like a wolf's tongue gleaming with hopeless fat

you find an old Playboy that doesn't turn you on with beauties in jam jars their nipples the size of Armenian figs it was always your greatest aspiration

so few things that i really need

bit by bit you arrange your life and don't want to kill yourself anymore  $% \left( 1\right) =\left( 1\right) \left( 1\right) \left$ 

#### 163-Giedrė Kazlauskaitė

\* \* \*

A girl in a white dress in Europe Square runs around those gravestones on which architects should have written the Constitution or at least Symphony Nr. 9, but they left room for graffiti and the skateboards of consciousness. I watch her on a terrace, from high above, even though it's cold and the wind tousles her hair, angrily jostling my papers as if she wanted to soak Erato's clothes in cold soup.

I am reading the poetry of my friends (I know them all), and it doesn't matter who writes better than whom, and all sporting events lose their meaning, in this hour the olympics have stopped, the running paths have become paths of death (they each write better than each other—with dignity and slowly, following the rule of never speaking of what is self-evident: because we no longer care about the skies, nor about those miserable laws of morality that are still vulgarized by sprinters. Everything necessary has already been explained away, understood, the names of the gods learned, skateboarding lessons completed). In their poems, they proudly shed a few tears for us because we are so few, because no one cares about Szymborska on sale or other lonely books that have supplanted our poor biographies. The girl, counting symbolic gravestones, clambers over each of them—how unfortunate, an older woman, ready to leave, pulls her by the hand.

Unexpectedly (more real than the wind) the daughter of the gods of Olympus caressed my heart; jasmine, which in Persian means the gift of God (for me, she is literally a jasmine broken by wind, for which books close, and soups cool).

In their poems
they raise the essential, most important
question, which pales
the sky and all morals (postulating it
with silly journalists' lips): where is this poetry?
The child, sitting on a gravestone would answer: right here.

And where is that cursed happiness, with which we return again and again to our childhood?

Oh how I would like her to read these lines when she grows up.

#### 165-Giedrė Kazlauskaitė

#### The Goal of Life

 $to\ go\ somewhere,\ to\ see\ something$ 

-A woman on the phone in a trolleybus

Because if you're even a little rich, you're an idiot.
Why would he go with her to a worthless show?
Here I stand. Martin Luther.

Oh, she's so classic, like the raised bows of violins falling on the alto line of the funicular—her system of coordinates.

She could work, e.g., a psychologist who forces young girls to list all the things they want to achieve.

If I had been born in Ancient Greece, maybe I would be a ceramicist, depicting eyes to stare straight back at me.

If I had been born before the revolution, maybe I would be a libertine, serving Napoleon's men (only war turns those louts into men).

If I had been born a century ago, in a story by Žemaitė, I wouldn't live longer than twenty-five, having died of appendicitis.

What would I like to do this weekend? Watch silly movies on the television set, crying from catharsis, or knit.

Much more than to live tomorrow, I yearn to live yesterday.

\* \* \*

I had not yet read Lacan, but I knew that there are no women. Men revealed it to me.

On the trolley bus, I was afraid of sitting next to them with their Aryan glances, confidence, sitting legs splayed wide across one and a half seats.

And I remember very well what Wislawa said to me, when she became a ballerina, despite wanting to be an artist; we spoke in strange languages with a Petersburg accent, which was preserved in her by those dried out old choreographers I despised; teachers with gray heads, black ribbons leaning on canes, they would come to the dining hall and weigh the curds, so that when Wislawa vomited up the carton of Napoleon torte, she would stop making drawings of her servings.

Oh, how terribly she betrayed everything she had talked about! Just so that she could squeeze with one thigh onto that half of a trolleybus seat.

And I remember what I was told by another Wislawa, who wrote about the river of Heraclitus where fish quarters fish, much later, in the same language, she almost forgets it emerging from our childhood like a myth of our continually-vomited existence: she did not lie about the fact that she likes sentimental postcards, gilded knick-knacks; curds sweet like dessert. porcelain figurines, cross-stitched swans. She always searched for them in kitschy shops. She weighed them like servings. And how many she could buy after the Nobel Prize! But her words were boats that I secretly used to cast off all the males in the *Iliad*. I cast off all of my un-danceable instincts, I bricked up the sound.

Near the river in the spring, this is how one bird calls to another. Dar nebuvau skaičius Lacano o jau žinojau, kad moters nėra. Vyrai buvo apreiškę.

Troleibusuose bijodavau greta jų atsisėsti arijų žvilgsniais, pasitikinčių savimi, išsiskėtusių per pusantro krėslo.

O aš gerai atsimenu, ką man kalbėjo Wislawa, turėjusi tapti balerina, bet troškusi būti dailininke; keistomis kalbomis mes kalbėjomės

su Piterio akcentu, jį jai įsūdijo išdžiūvusios choreografės, kurių taip neapkenčiau; mokytojos žilomis galvomis, juodais kaspinais pasiramsčiuodamos lazdomis jos ateidavo į valgyklą pasverti varškės, kad Wislawa kai išvėmė kartoninę *Napoleono* dėžutę liautųsi piešusi povcijas.

Ak, kaip siaubingai į išdavė visa tai, ką tadaise kalbėjo!

Vien fam, kad galėtų

viena šlaunimi prisiglausti tos pusės krėslo troleibuse.

#### 168-Giedrė Kazlauskaitė

#### Running in the Park

Snails on the path: some crushed by cars and bikes.

I can never run by in peace, stopping to peel them off the asphalt, or diverting them to one side, meddling with karma. Actually, I'm afraid they will pass me by. My mother's silk dress—brown with white polka-dots—in which I would snuggle even before I began to live.

I counted the dots, but never finished:

bird-cherry blossoms on the ground.

It seems as if I have experienced all the emotions: I don't yearn for applause or lockets with ringlets, the love of a knight, separation from others, a gold cage for talking parrots in which I could sing,

or caresses (even against the grain), or shoes with Achilles' heel.

Instead of counting polka-dots, now I slowly arrange letters in an old telephone, and that helps kill the meaninglessness.

I don't yearn to experience most things I once craved—
I don't need the sea, foreign countries, home,
music of one kind or another—I can do without that entirely.
I don't yearn to learn languages, to meet

I don't yearn to learn languages, to meet

interesting people, to live the luxurious hetaera's or noble ascetic's life.

I don't need children, growing distant from them, drawing nearer to sterile internet solitude.

I don't buy the books I once dreamed about, or the delicacies I couldn't afford.

I no longer get nose-bleeds from playing the flute.

All the great passions have already been lived, and nothing sublime  $\,$ 

will come to pass under the sun: to know or to understand

also just seems like a hankering after property.  $\,$ 

I don't yearn to love God with all my heart. I don't doubt His existence. I don't obey

His rules. I don't seek more stars on my greatcoat's epaulets.

I don't wait for spring to boldly ride up on a horse.

Jumping into the river from the bridge which I constantly dream  $\,$ 

(because of my symbolic birth)—diving into the amniotic fluids, returning to the womb, reliving baptism—

I desire only to feel: I am alive.

And water pours over my soul.

# Embroidery in the garden of knives

I am a woman—an open window, who buries a naked bastard crosswind every night in the garden. I quietly cut a clutch of hair

soaked with the scent of hands that would not touch my braids grow shorter with each trimming. In my stables,

great steeds rear as they feel the approach of armed sleep, driven by a man without a face he is not forbidden—nor is he given

to me or to others. Let him be.

My friend, please button my corset,
so that I won't lean out the window
to watch how my crosswind knives

sprout inch by inch in the garden—how blades rise from the soil and slice the full moon into wane.
And dogs—even they don't feel

how sleep begins its assault.

My love, give me that box
with needle and thread—I want
to sew up my hands with dreams.

#### **Freezing Rain**

Here—we dive into catacombs our radiation suits are obviously torn. Someone has slipped and fallen—I still can't hear through blind smoke,

and I still don't know what this key is for so many doors, and they all look alike. There is no time, no courtesy, no tact— I squeeze your hand and enter the code.

Stick to the wall. I am testing the dark—twelve steps to the end of the tunnel, clearly empty, but no chance of escape—our eyes against fire: damp opals.

In my hands—a map of veins—
capillaries snake through the bunker.
You know not one of us will remain—
who drives us forward like wind-up toys?

We won't meet anyone else—they remained above, before the first blow.

No meadows here—we lack so much—bridges, benches, a child chasing butterflies

who falls down softly under a pear tree. Now, I am just a sleeping, underground slut. From under gas masks, hair disheveled, pitiful, we make love, listening to the freezing rain.

#### To yearn is to walk with one's hands

Forgive me, I didn't tell you—I grew up in a circus. They left me to study with the magician—to draw a handful of rabbits from the night.

And someone without a ticket, unbuttoned to the dusk, taught me the courage to crack—never to shatter.

I was raised by ten dwarves.

I helped them with costumes and makeup, and leaning over, I listened to lullabies—

I outgrew them and my time there.

They would tell me: to travel is to be late to those places that don't know you.

I was raised by a blind acrobat—
he trained me to forget the pull of the earth
and to walk with my hands through every

town of the valley so that my shoes would fill up with the sky. In a field of concentric circles, I was the target.

And I wasn't allowed to touch—not the walls, not strange voices, not fear—until I could stand still through the flight of knives:

whatever is domesticated by the blade—remains. They remembered me of their own accord. Please, just nobody pity me.

# Companion

I was watching a boy that day, shadowless between the trees, under veils of falling leaves.

Until a raven in the poplar laughed.
Until the sun split the cloud—
rolled—like a stone over a grave—

its gray edge over the city. The side-streets wrinkled its face and the tired city grew still.

It dreamed:

that the weather would not grow cold, that there would be no wild wind, that there would be some vinyl left for music.

And the city looked sticky with sweat, weeping out swelter and smog, ruffled like a jackdaw by the road.

I was watching a boy that day.

November was leading him by the hand.

He quietly circled his wheelchair.

# **Lullaby for Rachel**

My father's note (1943)

Gather your dolls,

Rachel,

lay them

in the carriage,

and close

up their eyes.

The city

has not yet awakened.

We

can still get out.

No one

will see.

The pale

clothes of morning

soaked in blue fog,

the panting of a dog.

Like a dove

cowering

there,

distant,

a person.

# Cried out.

And fell in the grass.

Gather me, Rachel, from the scraps of dawn, from the tired echoes.

That time that time I didn't wake you—

left you sleeping, child.

You were left.

Left

just you.

#### cardinals

when we made ourselves each
a fuming ball, well, I have in mind
the sort of thing people call a smoke bomb,
or smoldering shit, in short, when we made them,
our whole village understood what a good thing saltpetre
or potassium nitrate, really is—of course, in these matters, it depends on
your convictions—and what a good thing water is, saturated
with salt, how necessary paper, drinking up that water, then drying,
and then; welcome all to the conclave

when we made them,
we would go to the woods in a pack, to the ruined animal farm,
we would go, keeping our secret, and soon black or white smoke
would appear, and one year our whole village
was red, yellow, brown because we understood
that we could add hair dye to the mixture—that year
we saw the true hair color of our mothers at last

when we made them, it happened like this: we go into the darkening field, lie down, ignite, throw, wait, and watch white, black, all kinds of smoke, and so, it happened like this: we're standing in the field and none of us can see the others, and it happened like this: we're standing in the field, and none of us is there

#### false bottom

why do i long for that time, for that me, when it always seemed that out there, beyond the forest, everything comes to an end

squinting, i could reach all of it with my finger, and with that finger i divided the sky into which i would go and come back, and i really believed

that i would never get to be beyond that forest, yet the worm i divided in half with my eyes screwed became one worm or another, nothing

could ever be more difficult—there, beyond the forest—now it is hard to open my eyes because i, life, everything is too much for me, everything too far

and the bucket in which i grew the worms never had a bottom—they would go out and come back—and the earth would be divided, and everything is mixed up

because in the morning i both fell, and arose, not differentiating which is me, which of my lives is the other into which i should arrive—or from which i should return

and why do i yearn for that time, why only now do i understand why it is so hard to make myself squint, for there, beyond the forest, there is really nothing

#### a shot from Statybininky street

Jaroslav called me over from the fence and told me everything was clear: some black cat his mother saw was slaughtering the chickens

so we inspected the incarnadine enclosure, white chickens with scratched up behinds, vague spots of blood on brown skin, but everything was clear:

the cat needed to be snuffed out, and the men of Statybininku street—we, two twelve-year olds—would do it with our own hands, and then our mothers would no longer cry

Jaroslav offered a choice: to take up axes and wait, or to carve out bows, attach a nail to each arrow shaft, and then everything would be clear

while for half the day he searched for a juniper or ash tree, while he looked around Statybininku for cord, I was left on watch

of course, I made use of that: one after another, I took home someone else's chicken eggs, still alive, and barely inside the kitchen, I whipped up some *gogel mogel* 

as for the cat, we waited until dark, and when nothing could be seen, we started shooting toward the fence until my arrow hit Jaroslav in the belly

of course, he didn't die, but for two days, he didn't come out into the yard, and later, when we met, I brought him a sausage sandwich from home, apologized, and that was that

afterwards, I tried to write about it, but as Jaroslav would say, everything here is quite clear as is:
we should have chosen axes, then at least one of us

would no longer be here, because afterwards I tried to write about it, until all of Statybininku street fell apart, and the chickens

slaughtered the cats, who now watch over Jaroslav

# a story about the past, present and everything else that won't be

---

I've just made a resolute decision: I will begin to create, and my first words will be more than what is written, a cow will not be a cow, no stories, no real life, everything has just come to an end

---

and what should I do, what should I do now, I sit and this silence doesn't say anything good

---

now I want to create: a son grew out of the earth, he tied himself to that earth, and from the son a father grew, an angel is flying in the sky saying nothing

---

back then there was no life for me, back then I lived with a cow, I would tie it down, it would eat up the grass, whatever it reached, a hole would form in the earth, and when I pulled up the stake, when I transferred it to another spot, another hole would form in the earth

---

now I want to create: the cow doesn't come to shift me to a new spot, this chain hurts, I have already eaten everything away, and from the earth a father sprouts, so I chew the earth

---

back then I lived with a cow, but my friend was always telling me that the best poets are city poets, so I filled in all the holes, and my cow and I went out into life

---

I tied her horns with a chain, all kinds of people waved to us, they scared my cow, but we kept on going without looking around, we went, and that is not any kind of creation

---

with dried dung crumbling from my soles, I brought the cow to cathedral square, and people said—this bodes nothing good—the father poked out of the earth, not mine, not the cow's father, the angel flies to us, and I didn't create this

---

but now I want to create: we were standing and waiting until I would be the best, I loved three times, having left my cow, she stood and waited for me, then everything was turned on its head

---

I was standing and waiting while it chewed the grass that wouldn't sprout, until it mooed at this father who loved everyone the same

---

and then I decided, resolutely: nothing will come of this, the two of us returned to our land, and we tied up my father, because what do I need to do, what should I create here

---

them

now I don't want to create: back to the holes in the earth, back to life, everything, but the father has broken off the chain, the angel is chewing the earth, and I don't know where to tie

#### 181-Vytautas Stankus

## before saying goodbye

7/25/2008

1.

mice are gnawing their way inside which means that summer is ending and rain presses its fingers over the holes

the burrow shines in the night but no one stops by even when it rains

earlier, there used to be snow but even that doesn't dare

only mice gnawing into the moon constantly scratching away:

mama, what is that glow over there?
child, it will be hard for you to understand: it isn't really there, like us.

there is only the gnawing

2.

i would like for us waking to sigh to each other quietly and sigh quietly while it rains and dally in bed while the rain washes the burnt-out city leaving only the longing

as the walls cuddle up close above us

often i remember how we drank coffee under the bridge you would hold the glow between your fingers

as the river bent its back—breaking

4.

when we hid in the church i saw
a swan fly over your head
—what was that, what...?
—nothing, nothing at all
already in this long dying, it's as beautiful as it gets

# 183-Vytautas Stankus

## it's snowing

only sleep just sleep the little death when it's such a september i don't see, but i hear that the snow is getting closer and closer

sutures through the night, through my dream, a dog is shepherded away from me, from me to where the lights and life are more—

the lord is shelling acorns through the window and we think it's snowing and we dance, and dance, and laugh and forget that we died and are raising children, raising poppies in the fog, the humidity leaves us wrinkle-free

still, something is lacking that can't yet be named, snow

not even cold, it's just a big dog taking a bite out of tranquility

#### 184-Vytautas Stankus

#### sparta

every night, about three, somewhere on vilnius street we would stand in the rain and they would gather, start pushing,

windows and bodies would break, blood would mix with asphalt, sidewalks, stones flew by our heads as

the police arrived and stood aside, an ambulance would gather the fallen, dress wounds, sew up loose ends,

those fit for battle always came back... we would stand in this meat-grinder she would press closer

and we would talk about little fishes, about the threads of smoke rising from our cigarettes, about the fox in the snow, about trains

and how you can predict the weather by their clamor, how you can rock in a boat, wake up in the same city,

about how you can drink tea from a single cup, breathe underwater, but mostly we would talk

about those little fish at the north pole, and about snow; we would look at each other, our mouths shut tight, and the sun would rise

# Spárta

kaskart apie trečią nakties mes stovėdavom kažkur vilniaus gatvėje, lydavo, jie rinkdavosi, imdavo stumdytis

duždavo langai, duždavo kūnai, lydės asfaltas, ir kraujas – šaligatviu, pro mus lėkdavo akmenys

atvažiuodavo policija, bet nesikišdavo, greitoji rankiojo kritusius, tvarstydavo, siūdavo galūnes

tinkami kovai kaskart sugrįždavo... mes stovėdavom šioj mėsmalėj, – ji prisispausdavo arčiau

ir kalbėdavom: apie mažytes žuvis, apie dūmų siūlą kylantį nuo cigaretės, apie lapę sniege, apie traukinius

apie tai, kad galima orą atspėti pagal jų dundesį, galima valtyje suptis, tam pačiam mieste nubusti

#### 186-Vytautas Stankus

## leap years

1.

there is a time for gathering stones and a time for throwing them, and a time for doing neither one thing nor the other

2. (october second)

3. there is time for sleep, strange dreams, for example: a woman in a field of rye gives birth to crows, they caw

or: a man without a face climbs a hill and sings something from carmina burana

5. or: a girl with her hair full of buzzing bees

there is a time for waking

(november seventh, nineteen eighty-four)

8.
there is a time for waking, to listen to
how she breathes, to hardly move,
barely breathing oneself, afraid of waking her

there is a time for looking into her eyes and smiling

there is a time in winter and in summer, a time to change the time

there is a time to travel

12.

(december, at which time there was no snow)

13.

there is a time for trains, for in-between stations where it's cold to sleep, and public toilets where you brush your teeth in the morning but can't recognize the person looking back from the mirror

14.

the blades of railroad tracks shine, the world flies past and you think: so where am I going? what waits for me there?

15.

and to tell the truth, no one waits for you whence you came

16.

and everything blends—the spoon's ting in the teacup coincides with the trundle of the tracks, with your heart's gentle knocking, your neighbor's snoring takes on rhythm, melody

17.

and you find yourself whistling a fragment of a song from a film you saw as a child

18

what is it about?

19.

(january nineteenth, snow fell)

20

as if about friendship, as if about love

maybe it's not time to talk about that

22.

maybe

23.

although something there was very familiar, recognizable, there was nothing of mine

24.

what is that film about? I seem to remember the sea; the sea is also in my dreams, or more specifically lots of water, I guess, because every morning I wake up sopping wet

25.

every morning is a time for waking

26.

(from february twenty-sixth to twenty-ninth)

27.

and here is a city with a harbor, boats with white sails, women with white dresses, scented hair

28.

and here the water washes my feet, and the vault of the sky and the vault of the water are one and the same, and no more top or bottom remains

29.

I would like to stay, but

30.

how did I get here? where do I go next?

31.

(we ask those who where born in march to leave)

I woke up: she asked: did you hear what I was saying to you? I told her that I had heard, even though I had no idea, and she smiled (she will leave me in april)

33

the walls here are very thin, you can hear how water drips in the kitchen, how they complain next door, how the tape deck tangles the tape, rips it

34.

"don't hang your nose, gardes-marine, whether life is silly or sweet..."
how does the rest of it go?

35. the unity of sail and heart... no, not like that

36. (fifteenth week, monday)

37. there are heart lines, flutters, murmurs, a raven thrashes through heart valves

38. where is he from? how did he get there?

39.

from the beginning of may I had to spend about a month in the hospital, they took x-rays and scanned me, I swallowed pills, slept a lot, read even more, the world continued outside my window

40.
there is a time to ask, how is life,
how are you doing, what is new, how is
your family, how are the children, have
you heard the new tom waits album

october second we carried our friend's father to his grave, the handles were slippery, the weight, the understanding that it was not him in that box but a husk of being

42.

water rises to the sky, flows in the veins of clouds

43.

thinking is unnecessary—
you roll the dice and
either they fall for you or they fall for you

44.

at four past five, there were three of us at the station by the eighth wagon, smoking while waiting for the fourth who never showed up

45.
and everything goes according to plan,
a girl on the next bench over
takes off her shoes, we watch
the flowing river and nothing
goes according to plan

46.

there is a time for reading

47. (from may fourth to april seventh)

48.

and if for three days you haven't read a single book—your words will swim on the surface 49.
and if you turn your face to the sun—
your shadow will remain behind you

50.
and if you get seasick—
it's enough to sit under a tree
and it goes away

51.
and if you look for a while at the fire—your dreams will pale

52. and if she asks, tell her your dreams, which you don't remember

53. how should you answer her?

54. and if she asks: what does your pillow smell like?

55. what will you answer then?

56. and if...

57. (july twelfth, seven after five)

58. the world flies, and I run in place, always remaining in place, trying not to move, not to wake her up

59. water rises to the sky, filling the muscles of clouds

and the scent, the scent before the storm, the wind within the trees, the windows shiver with tension, flowers huddle, soon, soon, soon it begins

61.

 $(from\ august\ sixth\ until...)$ 

62.
and lightning burned out her retina and lightning burned out her retina

63. \_\_\_\_\_\_

64. april

65. it's very important not to move

#### 193-Indrė Valantinaitė

## I'll probably be a skinny old woman

Ripping open her kisses and her fears

She awakes at night

To be astonished by everything that has changed her

—Paul Éluard

In 2055, I'll probably be a skinny old woman and I won't take up much space in buses and in queues.

In half a century, only the bathroom mirror and doctors will look at my body.

I'll only be touched by sweaty night gowns, torn at the underarm.

Then, before I fall asleep, I will remember the taste of my lover's tongue and saliva and all the men who wanted me long ago.

And—how the bed creaks when two lie upon it.

#### 194-Indrė Valantinaitė

#### Archeologist

Men, who won wars, and courageous women who crossed rivers of doubt— a pile of bones and medallions on her desk.

Death domesticated—she arranges the mosaic of eternity and plaits the braids of history's gray hair.

Frazzled, she blows her nose in the frayed sleeve of her sweater, and continues to iron the ballroom dress of non-being.

Climbing steps of recognition, this maid of the past, in the department of history, Vilnius University,

doesn't feel anything in the morning on her way to work when she passes the Europa Hotel—

where she once whispered a lover's name, now forgotten, as she opened the gates of her legs.

## 195—Indrė Valantinaitė

## A Cross

A cross above my parent's bed, a cross above my parent's parent's bed.

A cross between my tiny mounds on First Communion day.

I learned the Commandments by heart, but couldn't curb my jealousy of Lina D's prettier dress.

I recited the prayers like poems, confessed all my sins, and was certain I wouldn't sin again.

I was eleven then.

#### 196-Indrė Valantinaitė

#### Shell

Since the time I moved away from you, I slide along the ground like a snail on whose slimy body fragments of the shell still stick.

Behind me, I leave an indifferent trail of ooze.

A million hotels in the world—of ice, ivory, rock salt—washed in the seas of foreign tongues, faces, habits—would hide me, would open their doors.

I would return to where, twenty years ago, I prodded the dead jelly: the color of water and limpid cloud.

On that beach, I did not yet wear my bikini top.

My fingers penetrated its formless body—Plasticine.

To return would mean "to start everything anew", to glue oneself together from the first words, from the nails of one's toes.

There, where my heart was—a sharp shard of glass over which muscle will slowly weave its petals...

Until, with every pulse, it will hurt less, reminding me less: of guilt, origin, my native tongue.

#### KIAUTAS

Nuo tada, kai iš tavęs išsikrausčiau, šliaužiu lyg sraigė, prie kurios glitaus kūno vis dar prilipę aštrūs sulūžusio kiauto likučiai.

Bejausmė šliūžė driekiasi iš paskos.

Milijonai pasaulio viešbučių – iš ledo, dramblio kaulo, akmens druskos – skalaujamų nežinomų kalbų, veidų, papročių jūrų - paslėptų mane, atvertų savo duris.

Grįžčiau ten, kur prieš kvidešimt metų maigiau negyvą medūzą – vandens spalvos skaidrų debesį. Paplūdimyje dar nedėvėjau viršutinės maudymuko dalies.

Mano pirštai smigo į beformį jos kūną. Plastilinas.

Tai vadintųsi "viską pradėti iš naujo", sulipdyti save nuo pirmųjų žodžiu nuo kojų pirštų nagų.

Ten, kur būta mano širdies – aštri stiklo šukė, ilgainiui apaugs raumens audinio žiedlapiais:

sulig kiekvienu tvinktelėjimu vis mažiau gels, vis rečiau primins kaltę, kilmę, gimtąją kalbą.

#### 198-Indrė Valantinaitė

## Stewart

A tin of hard candies—
the lid covered in silk and gold,
the picture of a string of pearls—
full of ashes on the office sill.

A coworker gracefully flakes her cigarette—scheming to become a blond today.

I try to imagine how her little head would look in a royal banquet hall, rolling along the mosaic floor—

As if it were an apple that had slipped from the hands of a ham-fisted child who is too full to eat.

## 199-Aušra Kaziliūnaitė

## Ice-Fishing

you

you sit at the bus stop pedestrians hurry by, cars drive, a giant hook hangs in the air baited with everything that ever was one by one cars bite colossal drops of blood dribble from their jaws and fall on golden copses where the blackest night lies in wait and trees touched by wind make music without a single curse then they kick and gasplike this morning that has swallowed

## 200-Aušra Kaziliūnaitė

## minotaur vacations

in the landscape, calmly a woman drowns and from the lifeguard stand there echoes attention! a woman drowns in the landscape suddenly you fall and cut yourself on god and slivers of clouds calmly swim in the sky as if nothing had happened as if giant beavers did not gnaw at the tree of the world. or minotaurs wander in our veins or the fish of sadness did not intend to drink everything, small worthless fish whose river

reflects

slivers of clouds drowning above us whose landscape reflects a naked woman—

you could scoop out with a teaspoon or by the handful her eye her nose breast or shoulder

and the woman would feel nothing

## 202-Aušra Kaziliūnaitė

## a birdless night

is just a lake
where two nude
mermaids fondle
their white marble bodies
and night
pours over the bank

i sit on a well-made bed

dangling my feet and catch the sound outside my window

of the rustle of branch-ripened morning

one frightened mermaid smashes her tail in retreat, a few drops of night splatter my walls

i sit and stare at how she dives deeper and deeper into herself

as if she would want to mine the cove of dreams

and day breaks

## 203-Aušra Kaziliūnaitė

## the moon is a pill

the moon is a pill with a groove down the middle anger is a pill with a groove down the middle mindaugas bridge is a pill with a groove down the middle summer is a pill with a groove down the middle drought in africa that wipes away the lives of 500 thousand children is a pill with a groove down the middle a beloved woman is a pill with a groove down the middle a cop striking the protestors' dog is a pill with a groove down the middle

to give up one's seat on the bus

is a pill with a groove down the middle to sing out of joy having buried one's self is a pill with a groove down the middle

silence is a pill with a groove down the middle

drunken time lies in the groove and babbles

never ask
who cut this groove
who dug this day for us
who nailed a twitching bird
to its teeth
BREAK IT

swallow one half and the other opening the bird's lid with both hands insert it and close

then you will finally see—

drops of blood streaking over the day's teeth

#### 205-Aušra Kaziliūnaitė

#### signal lights

lying in the heads of dream people in all the forgetting-remembering entrails thoroughly digested and digesting you suddenly turn over to the other side so that you would wake up in the dreamt dreams of the dream people when the town executioner cuts off the head of dawn you arm yourself with the sharpened blades of unease

you skip like a summer breeze like freedom that knows no will like a desert jackal sniffing the carrion of victory separating you from the executioner's neck

another split-second

AND

it's cold, a red light blinks in the distance an alarm sounds in the neighboring house's lot

lifting your eyes
you see the entire sky
is full of similar lights and unease—
stars that don't blink, but burn

that
is the alarm
sounding above
from a long time ago

a longer time than we have been a longer time than the word has been proclaiming that someone is stealing—that someone stole the sky

#### by the Bernardines

For Olga

grasses shoot through hands, airplanes into shoulder blades, a host of hosts

we sit, the two of us encircled

by gravestones like the crossed arms of austere monks under the cowl of sky of the Bernardines

duchess, is it far to Petushki? beyond the river, down Polotsk Street by Saint Anne's lurking Gothic skeletons and all those saints

only that! or a few burning shots

somewhere, a bonfire, in brackets—
our histories
slink by
like a snail on a leaf
leaving a trail of ooze,
a river

the snail a paintbrush
the snail a pen
slowly, slowly—
word by word, stroke by stroke,
the windfall fruit, the melting wax of chestnut trees—
the chronicles of Vilnius, advances, retreats,
lay out our history's trail of ooze

## city U.

in the afternoon, city U. is stuck in siesta and somnolence sticks to citizens, bowing heavy heads, the breath of the streets is barely a whisper, and the bells rarely ring

city U.-a horseshoe of hills around its shoulders like the scythe of the moon that sweeps the streets at night, and every morning, the surface of city U. is composed again for picture books and road maps, for postcards to send home

the Alps faint from heat, white silk peaks descend in the night for newborns to drink as milk, the first sound they learn is "u", kids don't cry here but coo

a city of owls, it rises
like Aladdin's rug, spreading
through shutters shut for the night,
woven tight with webs of mimosa,
magnolia, rhododendra... city U.—
a bow above the Adriatic, the parted sea

#### lepidoptera graves

moths, monarchs friends

our day is only a little longer than yours

we end in worms where you began

unfurling like flowers from sorrow

in mini bouquets—

as scythe-winged eggars, as down-bellied spinners, as bumblebee flames

fluttering in my stomach with delicious words, florid forms, until you painfully wilt—

my palms are monarchs

led home by pages

from the kingdom of Hades

to her-

whispered in every language with covered lips, bitten tongues

Proserpinus proserpina

the sleepwalking sphinx, the hawkmoth—

a wingéd woman

with lion's nails

# drugelių kapinės

drugy, mano drauge

műsų diena – tik truputį už jūsų ilgesnė

mes baigiamės kirminais, kirminais jūs prasidedat

išsiskleidžiat lyg gėlės iš mūsų gėlos

mažieji žolinukai, dalgiasparnės kandys, pūkapilviai verpikai, kamaniniai ugniukai

plasnojate mano pilve gražiais žodžiais, spalvingais pavidalais, kol skaudžiai nuvystate

mano plaštakos tai plaštakės, parsivedantys Hado kunigaikštytės pažai

## poetry reading

observe my profile
(the nose always seems too big)
coughing out poems
in the editor's yard,
some sit, some stand, clearing throats,
feeling june's warming wind caress
the nap hair of their necks,
smelling tobacco, blooming trees

an ash—that's what this tree is called, definitely an ash—my profile bows

as I peek over my shoulder
to see how ants scurry through leaves
understanding nothing, it looks
like the ants aren't even black
but red—the ones that bite,
and I ache, stung by my conspiring poems

or as if your palm had been lifted from the tender hairs of my neck, and now for the last one, finally, now—to pull at the hair of life

#### wisteria

the first task was to name, to find out what we call those blooms of violet color

then sit in a little cafe shaded from the Mediterranean sun by an arbor enlaced with them

put a cup on the page my pen spill coffee

lean a used fifty euro

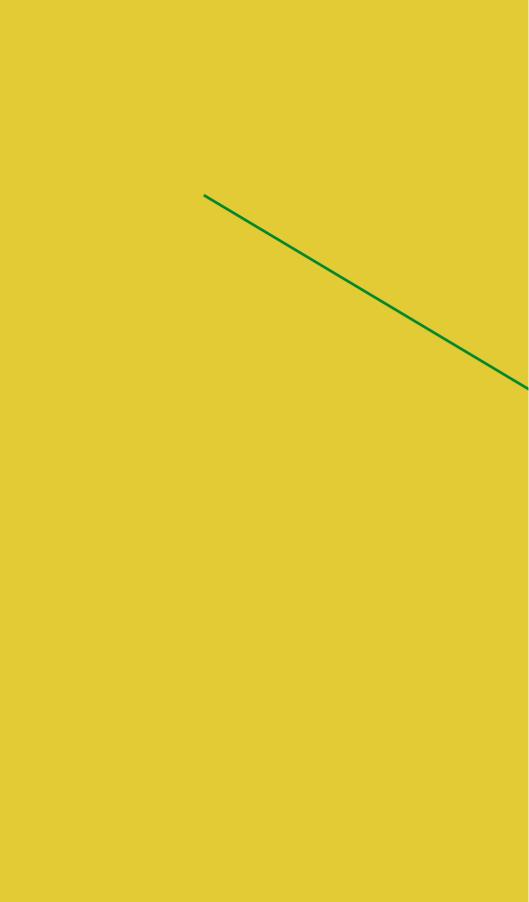
bike

on the fence

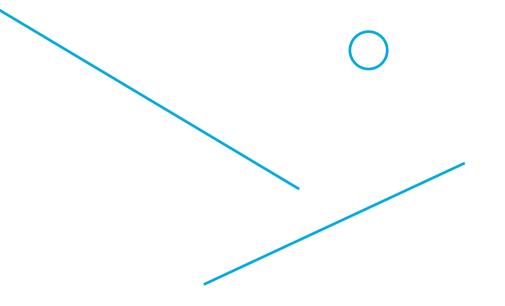
in my favorite place piazza San Giacomo paved by the Romans to touch my tongue to the already melting gelato

sundays climbing the castle hill to sharpen my gaze on the mountains, seeing the streets enshrouded below with fog, imagining my city there thousands of miles away

hundreds of weeks later sitting in a frozen East European auditorium reading D'Annunzio I remember this bloom



# Biographies



Arnas Ališauskas (b. 1970) is a poet and literary critic. He studied philology at Vilnius University and theater criticism at the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theater. Currently, he works as an editor for the Lithuanian Writer's Union Press. He wrote several theater scripts, produced in Lithuanian theaters, and was the script-writer for the documentary film President Valdas Adamkus. The poetic drama Unburned City, produced at the festival for Latin culture, was based on his texts. He has published two poetry books: Wind-up Kingdom (1996) and X-ray Photo Album (chosen as the most creative book of 2007). His work has been selected for various anthologies, and translated into English, Finnish, Swedish and other languages.

Darius Šimonis (b. 1970) is a poet, essayist and literary critic. He graduated from Vilnius University in Lithuanian language and literature. He was the owner of a translation bureau, has worked as a manager, and in public relations, as a journalist and also as a brick-layer. Currently, he lives abroad. He debuted in 1997 with the poetry collection *Swarm*. In 2001, he released the controversial collection of texts *Rod*. He received the Druskininkai Poetry Fall award in 1997 for best debut poet. His second book is interesting, original and strange, bearing witness to Lithuanian literature's rebellious renewal.

Neringa Abrutytė (b. 1972) is a poet who has introduced provocative themes and writing styles into Lithuanian poetry, recognizable by inventive syntactical experiments that create original rhythms, intonation and multiple ways of reading. She studied Lithuanian language and literature at Vilnius University, and has worked as an editor and teacher. She has released three poetry collections: Autumn of Paradise (1995), Con fession (1997) and Neringa's yr. (2003). Critics describe her poetry as open, distinctive, modern and sometimes shocking in its intimacy. She lives in Denmark.

Vytas Dekšnys (b. 1972) is a poet and translator. He received his BA and MA degrees in philosophy from Vilnius University, and a PhD from the Polish Philosophy and Sociology Institute at the Social Sciences School. His only book so far, *Exceptions*, was published in 2005 and won the Young Yotvingian Prize. He translates poetry, prose and articles, mostly from Polish, Ukrainian and other Eastern and Central European languages (with more than 20 translated books and myriad publications in the literary and cultural press).

Laurynas Katkus (b. 1972) is a poet, translator, essayist and literary historian. He studied Lithuanian at Vilnius University and German and comparative literatures at Leipzig University. He works as a freelance writer and translator. He has published three poetry collections: Voices, Notes (1998), Diving Lessons (2003) and Beyond 7 Streets (2009). His collection of essays, Basement and other essays, appeared on 2011, while his first novel, Moving Shadows was published in 2012. He has translated Peter Handke and Walter Benjamin from German, and Susan Sontag and Etgar Keret from English. Translations of his poems have been published in America, Germany, Slovenia, Poland and Latvia.

Dainius Gintalas (b. 1973) is a poet, translator, art and literary critic.

He studied Lithuanian language and literature at Vilnius University and studied at the Vilnius Art Academy. Despite contradictory evaluations, his second poetry book, *Boa*, won the Young Yotvingian Prize. (His first book, *Viper* was published in 1997.) In 2000 he began to organize unprofessional artist gatherings called "Moscowists Artist's Front". He has translated Henri Michaux, Blaise Cendrars. René Char and the works of other French authors.

Benediktas Januševičius (b. 1973) is a poet and translator. He studied veterinary science at the Buivydiškis Agricultural School. He has published seven poetry collections, the last two being *Pickled Blood* (2007) and *Rabbit Rabbity Rabbiting* (2008). His poems have been published in Belarusian, Latvian, Polish, English and Russian. He translated the Russian novels *It's Me, Eddie* (2006) by Eduard Limonov and *Day of the Oprichnik* (2008) by Vladimir Sorokin. Since 2010, he has been the prose editor of the literary journal *Metai*. Lately he has spent most of his time photographing and filming Lithuanian literary life, editing the captured footage and posting it online (www.tekstai-ty.lt).

Rimvydas Stankevičius (b. 1973) is a poet. He studied Lithuanian at Vilnius University and received a MA in Lithuanian literature. For many years he worked at the newspaper *Respublika*. In 2001, he ran the Lithuanian television show "Culture's Snares". He published 6 poetry books, the most recent being *Connection to the Command Post* (2012). He wrote the lyrics for over 20 rock songs. In 2002, together with the composer Rokas Radzevičius, he wrote the rock opera *Jūratė and Kastytis*. A member of the Lithuanian Writer's Union since 2004, his poetry has been translated into Polish, Swedish, Finnish, English and other languages, and published in foreign journals.

Artūras Valionis (b. 1973) is a poet and translator. He studied sociology at Vilnius University and at the Central European University in Warsaw. He published two poetry books: Flying Leaves no Footprints (2003) and Roughly Three (2012). The latter was selected as the most creative book of 2012, and the Book of the Year in the 2013 "Books of the Year contest". His poetry has been translated into English, Swedish, Polish, Latvian, Latgalian, Macedonian, Catalonian and Slovenian. Valionis works with jazz musicians and has been involved in collective projects with Vladimir Tarasov, Eugenijus Kanevičius, Liudas Mockūnas, Vytis Nivinskas and Tuomas Ojala.

Gintaras Bleizgys (b. 1975) is a poet. He recieved an MA in literary theory from Vilnius University and earned an MBA in business management and administration. He worked as editor for the Lithuanian Writer's Union's monthly *Metai* publication, and was the editor-in-chief of the weekly *Literatūra ir Menas*. He is a patron of the Lithuanian PEN center. At present he is director of Structural Investment Consultaion Center (SIKC) and a board member. He has published 7 poetry books and one book of essays. His latest book, *When You Sneak up on Me* was published in 2014. He has won the Young Jotvingian, the Jotvingian, the Julijonas Lindė Dobilas, Jurga Ivanauskaitė and Antanas Miškinis prizes.

Tomas S. Butkus (officially – Tomas Butkus, pseudonym – Slombas)

(b. 1975) is a poet. He graduated from the Vilnius Gediminas

Technical University with a degree in architecture. In 1992, he founded the "Copper Mouths" idea workshop where he continues to work on the art of ideas, connecting design, publication, literature, urban studies and other artistic and scholarly iniciatives. In 2004, his poetry book, *Generated Language Mutation*, won the award for most creative Lithuanian book of the year. That same year, Slombas was recognized in London at the International Young Publishers Contest as one of the eight most creative young publishers in the world. Since 1996, he has published one poetry collection and nine chapbooks, as well as a children's book: *Bumba Dumba and the Creation of the World*. His poems have been translated into seven languages. Slombas is the author of more than two hundred art and publication initiatives.

Mantas Gimžauskas (1976-2007) was a poet, translator and filmmaker. He graduated from the Music, Theater and Film Academy of Lithuania having studied to be a director of television. In 1997, his work won the Pranas Lambertas Prize. His work has been translated into Polish and German, and published in several literary periodicals. 2007 saw the publication of his collection Shaman™. Gimžauskas wrote the script for the films We - the world's Lithuania (2003), Lightly and Sweetly (2003) and Diring (2006). He was killed in a fire in 2007.

Mindaugas Valiukas (b. 1976) is a poet, prose writer and dramatist. He studied Lithuanian language and literature at the Lithuanian Pedagogical University, and received a bachelor's degree from Klaipeda University in philology and theater studies. His first poetry collection, *The Moon's Ceramics*, won the Zigmas Gaidamavičius-Gėlė Prize for best debut of the year. Two more poetry collections followed: *Stolen Nail* (2003) and *Mouth Harp* (2006), as well as a collection of theater works: *Creator's Death* (2005).

Gytis Norvilas (b. 1976) is a poet translator and essayist. He graduated from Vilnius University having studied theories of history and cultural theory. Norvilas has published three poetry collections: Stoneshards (2002), Breakfast of Locusts (2006) and Discharge Zones (2012). His first book won the Druskininkai Poetry Fall award for most significant debut. His latest book was recognized as the most creative book of 2013 by the Lithuanian Literature and Folklore Institute. He is a member of the Lithuanian Writer's Union since 2010. He lives in Vilnius and is the editor of the weekly journal Literatūra ir Menas. His poetry has been translated into English, Bulgarian, Russian, Latvian, Georgian, German, Belarusian and Ukrainian.

Marius Burokas (b. 1977) is a poet and translator. He studied Lithuanian language and literature at Vilnius University. Now he is a freelance writer and translator. Marius made his debut with the poetry collection *Ideograms* (Ideogramos) in 1999. His third book *I Learned How Not to Be* (Išmokau nebūti, 2011) was awarded The Young Yotvingian prize as a best young poet's book, published in the last two years. This book was also awarded the Antanas Miškinis literary prize. Burokas' poetry has been translated into Polish, Russian, Latvian, Finnish, Slovenian, English, German and Ukrainian. Some of his poetry was also published in the *New European Poets* anthology (2008). He has translated the poetry of Allen Ginsberg and William Carlos Williams, and the prose of James G. Ballard, Charles Bukowski, Philip Roth, Jeanette Winterson and others.

Rimantas Kmita (b. 1977) is a poet, translator and literary scholar. He studied Lithuanian philology at the universities of Klaipėda, Vilnius and Greiswald. He taught at Vilnius and Klaipėda Universities, and now works as a scholar at the Lithuanian Literature and Folklore Institute. He has published over 100 essays and critical and scholarly publications in Lithuania and abroad, has taken part in international scholarly conferences and poetry festivals, and has received grants from Lithuania and abroad. His poetry collection Immaculate Conception (1999) won the Gaidamavičius-Gėlė Prize, and his book The Modernization of Poetry During the 7th-9th Decades of the 20th c. (2010) won the Lietuvos rytas prize for cultural essays. Kmita has also published the poetry collections, The Measuring of the River (2002) and Gently Speaking (2009). His poems have been translated into Polish. Russian and German.

Antanas Šimkus (b. 1977) is a poet, literary scholar and journalist.

He studied Lithuanian language and literature at the Lithuanian
Pedagogical University. In 2004 he began working as an editor for
Literatūra ir Menas. In 2009, he took a position with "Bernardinai.lt"
and is now editor of cultural themes. He has released two poetry
collections: Without a Trace (1999) and The Season is Over (2010). For
the latter, he won the Young Yotvingian Prize (2010) and the Vilnius
City Mayor's Prize (2012). His poems have been translated into
Russian, Ukrainian and English.

Donatas Petrošius (b. 1978) is a poet and essayist. He studied at the Lithuanian Pedagogical University and received a MA in literature. He worked as program director for the Lithuanian Writer's Union and was director of Writer's Union Fund. He has published two poetry books: En Durance D (2004) and Aorist (2009). The former won the Young Yotvingian Prize (2004) and the Zigmas Gaidamavičius-Gėlė Prize (2005). The second book won the Lithuanian Writer's Union Prize. Petrošius' poems have been translated into English, Latvian, Russian, Swedish, Catalonian, Polish, Belarusian, Ukrainian, Georgian, Farsi, Bulgarian, Rumanian, Turkish, Welsh and German. His essays have been translated into English, Polish and German.

Agnė Žagrakalytė (b. 1979) is a poet, essayist, and literary critic. Her first book, *I'm Getting Married* (Išteku, 2003) is characterized by ironization of the self and reflections on intimacy. For this book she won the Best Literary Debut Award in 2003. Her second book of poetry, *The Truth about Alisa Meier* (Visa tiesa apie Alisa Meier, 2008) firmly established her mature yet playful poetic voice. Her poetry has been translated into seven languages, her collection of poems *Artistic Cloning* was translated in 2010 and published in the United States. Her fiction book entitled *The Daughter of the Forest-Guard* (Eigulio duktė) came out in 2013. For this novel she won the Jurga Ivanauskaitė prize and the Patriotic prize. She lives in Brussels.

Giedrė Kazlauskaitė (b. 1980) studied Lithuanian literature at Vilnius University, where she tried writing a doctoral dissertation. Her first book, *Bye-Bye School!* (Sudie, mokykla, 2001) was prose, her second *Hetaera Songs* (Heterų dainos, 2008) was poetry. For this book she was awarded the Young Yotvingian Prize. Giedrė's third book *Postils* (Postilės, 2009), written together with Father Julius Sasnauskas, presents commentary on the gospels. Her fourth poetry book *Las Meninas* (Meninos) came out in 2014 and won the Jurga Ivanauskaitė Prize. Since 2010, she served as the editor of the weekly cultural periodical *Šiaurės Atėnai*.

Ilzė Butkutė (b. 1984) is a poet. She studied photojournalism, and worked seven years in advertising. Her first book of poetry, *Caravan Lullabies* (2011) won the Zigmas Gaidamavičius-Gėlė Prize for most significant debut and was listed among the twelve most creative books of the year. She wrote and published a practical guide for workers oppressed by their employers, *Fire Your Boss* (2013). In 2014, her second book of poetry was published, *Carnival Moon*. Her poems have been translated into English, French, German, Russian, Latvian, Ukrainian, Catalonian in Basque. Currently, Ilzė works in the field of creative and personal development.

Mindaugas Nastaravičius (b. 1984) is a poet, translator and dramatist. He graduated from Vilnius University in journalism. Currently, he is studying literature at the Lithuanian Pedagogical University. He leads cultural programs on LRT radio. His debut poetry collection, Stained Eyes (2010) won the Zigmas Gaidamavičius-Gėlė Prize for best poetry debut. His second poetry book, Mo, was published in 2014. Since 2011 he has been working with the famous theater artist Valentinas Masalskis. His first play, Fowl Dorm (2012), was produced at the Klaipėda Youth Theater, run by Masalskis.

**Vytautas Stankus** (b. 1984) is a poet. In 2009, he finished his studies in English philology at the Lithuanian Pedagogical University. He began publishing poems in the literary press in 2007. His first poetry collection, *Walking on the Other Side of Ice* (2009), won the Zigmas Gaidamavičius-Gėlė Prize for best poetry debut. His second poetry book, *From the Mirror, Beyond*, was published in 2014 and was chosen as Poetry Book of the Year. He lives in Vilnius.

Indrė Valantinaitė (b. 1984) is a Lithuanian poet. After graduating from a Jesuit high school, she studied arts management at Vilnius University and at the Vilnius Academy of Arts. She published her poems in many periodicals, and her first book came out in 2006: To Fish and Lilies (Žuvim ir lelijom). It earned her first prize in the poetry category of the 2006 First Book Contest of the Lithuanian Writers' Union. Her second book On Love and Other Animals (Apie meilę ir kitus žvėris, 2011) won the Young Yotvingian Prize in 2012. In addition to writing poems, Indrė is a singer, winner of several singing festivals, and works as a TV journalist and producer.

Aušra Kaziliūnaitė (b. 1987) is a poet. She received a BA in history and an MA in religious studies from the Lithuanian Pedagogical University. Currently, she is pursuing her doctoral studies in philosophy at Vilnius University. She has published two collections of poetry: First Lithuanian Book (2007) and 20% Concentration Camp (2009). For the former, she was awarded the Elena Mezginaitė Prize. Her third book, The Moon is a Pill, was published in 2014. Aušra is one of the youngest members of the Lithuanian Writer's Union. She teaches aesthetics at Vilnius University and lives in Vilnius.

Ramunė Brundzaitė (b. 1988) is a poet and translator. Her first poetry publication was in 2005 in the weekly *Literatūra ir Menas*. She received a BA from Vilnius University in Lithuanian philology and Italian language. Currently, she is studying for her MA in intermedia literature, and translating poetry from Italian. She has published one poetry book, *Monarch*, *My Friend* (2013), for which she was awarded the Druskininkai Poetry Fall Young Yotvingian Prize and the Vilnius City Mayor's Prize for poetry about Vilnius. Her poems have been translated into Latvian and English.

Rimas Uzgiris is a poet, translator, editor and critic. His work has appeared in *Barrow Street*, AGNI, *Atlanta Review*, *Quiddity*, *The Massachusetts Review*, *The Iowa Review*, *Hudson Review* and other journals. He holds a PhD in philosophy from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and received an MFA in creative writing from Rutgers-Newark University. Recipient of a Fulbright Scholar Grant and a National Endowment for the Arts Literature Translation Fellowship, he teaches literature and creative writing at Vilnius University.

The editors would like to thank the following journals in which previous versions of these translations have appeared: Asymptote, Druskininkai Poetic Fall Anthology, Hypothetical: A Review of Everything Imaginable, Lituanus, Spork Press, St. Petersburg Review, Vilnius Review, Washington Square Review

Published by the Lithuanian Culture Institute www.lithuanianculture.lt

For acknowledgments and copyright information please write to info@lithuanianculture.lt

© Lithuanian Culture Institute, 2015

## Translators:

Kerry Shawn Keys & Laurynas Katkus (38, 39, 41-43) Kerry Shawn Keys & Sonata Paliulytė (142, 143, 145-147) Kerry Shawn Keys & Edgaras Platelis (156, 158) Aleksandra Kocmut (159)

Medeinė Tribinevičius (61, 62, 157)

Rimas Uzgiris (21, 23, 26, 27, 29-37, 46, 51-53, 55, 65, 67, 69, 73, 77, 80, 82, 90, 92, 93, 95, 96, 98, 100-103, 105-107, 109-111, 115-118, 120, 123, 125-129, 131-133, 137, 138, 141, 149, 150, 152-154, 160, 161, 165, 168-173, 175-178, 181, 183, 184, 186, 194, 196, 198-200, 202, 203, 205-208, 210-211)

Ada Valaitis (22, 25, 58, 163, 166, 193, 195)

Ada Valaitis (22, 25, 58, 163, 166, 193, 15 Sam Witt & Artūras Valionis (84) Jonas Zdanys (45, 47-49, 113, 114)

Editor in Chief Marius Burokas Translation Editor Rimas Uzgiris Assistant Editor Edgaras Platelis Copy Editor Britt Melewski

Designer Tom Mrazauskas

Al Zolynas (87-89)

Printed and bound by Petro Ofsetas in Vilnius Typeset in Diogenes and Marat Sans by Ludwig Übele The paper is  $100~\rm g/m^2$  Scandia 2000 Smooth Natural and  $300~\rm g/m^2$  Gmund Bee! Gelb

ISBN 978-609-8015-49-2

