

FIVE BALKAN
WOMEN POETS

POEMS IN BOSNIAN/CROATIAN/
MONTENEGRIN/SERBIAN

by IVANA MAKSIĆ, MAŠA SENIČIĆ,
MARIJA DRAGNIĆ, DIJALA HASANBEGOVIĆ,
AND MARIJA DEJANOVIĆ

Translated by MIRZA PURIĆ & VESNA MARIĆ

NEW POETRY FROM THE BALKANS

The feature before you contains the work of five women poets from Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Croatia, Montenegro, and Serbia. These countries were once a part of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, dismantled in a series of wars during the 1990s.

The fate of Yugoslavia is reflected in the fate of its language: Serbo-Croatian splintered into Bosnian, Croatian, Montenegrin, and Serbian. Official linguistic dogma insists on the distinctiveness of these languages, although in purely linguistic terms they are four variants of the same polycentric language. But taking a purely linguistic approach would be, at best, naïve, for language is always a matter of politics and ideology. In Yugoslavia's successor states, language became both a result and a tool of the ethno-nationalist homogenization of power. Official language policies sought to define insular nationalist

identities and coerce the speakers into a rigid linguistic practice that perpetuated the basic principles of the post-socialist reaction.

The poets presented here—Dijala Hasanbegović, Ivana Maksić, Marija Dejanović, Marija Dragnić, and Maša Seničić—are at the vanguard of the current poetic production in the region. Poetry in the Balkans is, as they say, having a moment. A proliferation of new voices has infused the literary mainstream with new sensibilities, and it has been widely recognized that the freshest, most innovative poetry (and prose) is being written by women, though this recognition, sometimes reluctant, has not translated into a shift in power. On the one hand, women writers are migrating from the margins to the center, establishing themselves as major figures on the literary scene. On the other, they are still operating under the duress of a patriarchal, male-dominated, market-driven structure, with all

its attendant condescension, commercialization, and exclusion, without managing, so far, to conceive and implement radically different modes of publishing and valorizing literature.

I'm reluctant to use the term generation because it is notoriously slippery, but Hasanbegović, Maksić, Dejanović, Dragnić, and Seničić are relatively close in both age and literary status. They have achieved critical acclaim and reached readers across the region. Their styles are diverse: lyrical, ironic, expansive, introspective . . . Their themes include alienation, migration, and the experience of existing in the world in a woman's body.

When I was thinking about this feature, I wanted to do more than simply present these poets. I wanted to create an exchange that would mirror the kind of conversation that takes place in reality, and the influence—sometimes overt, sometimes subterranean—that flows between them and their

peers across both state borders and the wholly manufactured linguistic ones. I suggested to the contributors that the process unfold in two phases. In the first phase, each poet would upload an existing poem to a joint document. The choice of poem would be entirely theirs. They could opt for their most recent work, or a poem they believed best showcased their approach to poetry, or a poem that was special, for whatever reason. In the second phase, they were to produce new work as a response to one or more of the poems submitted in the first round by the other poets. To my relief, they enthusiastically agreed.

We made just one slight change to the plan: Marija Dejanović, whose book *Kindness Separates Night from Day* (translated into English by Vesna Marić) was released by Sandorf Passage in March 2023, did not write a new poem specifically for this issue of *Barricade*. She used as her response-poem one of the pieces from her book. We

figured this would be the perfect opportunity to announce her first full-length poetry publication in the US.

All other poems in this feature were translated by the indefatigable Mirza Purić. Purić is based in Sarajevo, where he works full-time as a translator. Making a living from translation is always a precarious endeavor, especially so in BiH where the field is completely unregulated and translators are underpaid. Somehow, in addition to translating thousands of pages of reports, manuals, and medical documents, Purić has managed to produce exquisite translations of poetry and prose written by Balkan authors. He has distinguished himself as a champion of up-and-coming writers who challenge the status quo.

I would like this feature to be an homage to poetry and translation. Both are arts of the seemingly impossible, of protean spirits that cannot be arrested within artifi-

cially constructed state borders, language borders, or the borders of the mind. It is also an homage to the complicated and wondrous place we come from. May we find hope in our collective past, and the strength to dream and work toward a fairer future.

– Selma Asotić

Postscript: poet Ivana Maksić in conversation with *Barricade*, on borders, traditions, textual practices, gender, power, and what makes a language a language

Barricade: The question of what makes a language a language is fraught with political and institutional imperatives, as well as cultural and identitarian concerns. Often, the question gets answered by top-down measures: policy, schooling, media, which conscript university professors, elected officials, party leaders, NGOs, and other actors to legitimate claims of difference—or the opposite. But

language is a living thing, ungovernable in certain respects. How would you venture to answer the question: What makes a language a language?

Maksić: We all know there is nothing “natural” about one’s language. Of course we are aware of institutional imperatives and policies, as well as a great deal of power (or even violence) involved. Language has oftentimes been equated with national and cultural identity, which I find particularly problematic. As a poet and as a reader, I cherish the fact that we can all understand each other without translation. And at the same time, I have no problem with the language being called differently—Croatian, Bosnian, Montenegrin, Serbian . . . even though we can say it is in fact one and the same language, with some variations that demonstrate particular richness and beauty which can be more than resourceful in writing. On the other hand, naming that common language is,

especially nowadays, problematic, and because of former strong Serbian and Croatian supremacy I even feel it is particularly important not to emphasize or impose, or even assume that the name of that common language should still exclusively be Serbo-Croatian because that would only make me insensitive to all the complexities involved. Anyone should be able to name one’s own language, one’s mother tongue, and writers, just like other people, can work either in the direction of affirming the similarities, or, on the other hand, in the direction of emphasizing the differences (no matter how small and insignificant they are). These tendencies in Serbian society often end up in violent attempts to prescribe new norms that would, for example, privilege Cyrillic letters (script) over the Latin ones, as opposed to letting people decide which one to use on their own. In poetry, it is of course possible to do something that is otherwise

inappropriate in 'administrative' language reality—for example to mix Latin and Cyrillic letters within the same text in order to create a visual effect as well as to express a political stance. I did that not only as a pure experiment, but to underline that I do not accept political language's exclusiveness nor policies that imply I cannot use certain letters, words or make vocabulary choices just because some particular words are considered by Serbian linguists to be Croatian, Montenegrin or whatever. I am absolutely against this kind of puritanism and narrow-mindedness because these practices usually go arm in arm with ever-so-lethal nationalism and chauvinism.

Barricade: As a poet—or “protean spirit,” as Selma writes in her introduction, “that cannot be arrested within state borders, language borders, or the borders of the mind”—how does your own creative work shape and express your feelings and understanding of what it means to

belong, whether to a language, a community, a tradition, or a generation? How do you see poetry itself as participating in community—whether creating or subverting its inclusions and exclusions?

Maksić: I agree with Selma entirely. I am always more concerned with questioning the borders and limitations rather than affirming or establishing them. We belong, but at the same time we transcend that be-longing. Belonging is never fixed and, regarding the tradition, we can choose the tradition that we would like to be a part of by consciously employing some of its textual practices. Moreover, I think literature, as opposed to current political situations or tendencies in the Balkan region (and globally), has the power to subvert present narratives and divisions. But it happens quite unexpectedly and not always as a preconceived agenda in writing. That is precisely the beauty of being open to texts and textual practices both as a reader and as

a writer. Something that is not articulated in official narratives in our political realities, something that is even being censored (no matter how subtly), can crack open in poetry and shed a new light in such powerful ways that we can feel transformed and liberated. I know this can sound rather utopian, but we cannot deny that this is how any powerful piece of literature has always worked in reality.

Barricade: This poem cycle is explicitly framed as new work from women Balkan poets. In her introduction, Selma has written that it is “widely recognized that the freshest, most innovative poetry (and prose) comes from women, though this recognition, often reluctant, has not translated into a shift in power.” What does the disparity between cultural salience and political efficacy, as a woman poet, mean to you?

Maksić: We can witness how female authors have become more visible and truly innovative, but at

the same time men still call the shots—their authority is never questioned, they occupy positions of power, and they are always part of cultural institutions, whereas women are underpaid and quite often struggle in the sphere of precarity. There is also a great deal of often tasteless commercialization of female authors as if they were something trendy and exotic, which is just the opposite pole of their former marginalization and discrimination. Women can write and publish their work more easily but they still cannot make decisions regarding many important things in the field of literature.

I

R U M I N A T I O N S

translated by Mirza Purić

*

Birds wake at the break of dawn like my depression.
Another mountain disappears from the horizon,
all vegetation retreats before the desert.
I'll fall for the sake of accountability and mangle the city.

*

This memory is hard and impenetrable,
indestructible like a genitive metaphor
of fervour,
or vigour,

I

RUMINACIJE

by Ivana Maksić

*

Ptice se bude pre zore kao moja depresija.
Sa horizonta nestaje još jedna planina,
pred pustinjom uzmiče sva vegetacija.
Pašću zbog odgovornosti i unakaziti grad.

*

Ovo sećanje je tvrdo i neprobajno,
neuništivo kao genitivna metafora,
ne znam koliko ima komora,
koliko pretkomora,

if I shoot
and miss,
it pushes on with yet more force,
if I hit,
I kill myself too.

*

I guess I've never killed or wounded anyone.
Facts are of little help, statistics are doctored.
I don't let even the greatest of diggers among therapists
so much as dent my ground.

*

Rage is the curer. Sorrow—
a procurer. If I know
that I mustn't
turn, every tendon,
every vein, divorces
me to you,
betrays me as the pulse
of the dying.

*

Shovels are buried, hatchets are hung,
bulldozers doze in a daze.

ako pucam
 i promašim,
 nadire daleko snažnije,
 ako pogodim,
 i sebe ubijam.

*

Valjda nikog nisam ubila ni ranila.
 Činjenice slabo pomažu, statistike se šteluju.
 Ni najvećim ekskavatorima među terapeutima
 na mom terenu ne dam da zagrebu.

*

Gnev je dobar provodnik. Tuga—
 svodnik. Kada znam
 da ne smem
 da se okrenem, svaka tetiva,
 svaki kapilar, razvodi se
 od mene, k tebi
 izdaje me kao puls
 samrtnika.

*

Lopate su zakopane, sekire obešene,
 bageri dremaju ošamućeni od sunčanice.

I house hamas and mossad, karst and pomegranates.
A minefield in plain sight, like the crime section
in a tabloid.

U meni je hamas i mosad, krš i nar.
Minsko polje na izvolte, kao crna hronika
u tabloidima.

A M E A L O F O N E ' S O W N

translated by Mirza Purić

in the beginning was the dining table
and the dining table was in the family
and the family was the table.
then I grew up and recognised the
cutlery—heirloom—and I saw
that the tablecloth was straight.
that someone had, quite certainly, ironed it,
and that someone was the woman looking at me now
from the chair closest to the kitchen; her hands
must knead and serve, bring and take away.
then I grew up and became that woman—
on my behalf, the table decides

S O P S T V E N I O B R O K

by Maša Seničić

u početku beše sto za ručavanje
i sto za ručavanje beše u porodici
i porodica beše taj sto.
zatim sam odrasla i prepoznala
escajg—nasleđen, i videla
da je stolnjak poravnan.
da ga je neko, sasvim izvesno, opegla,
i da je taj neko žena koja me gleda
sa stolice najbliže kuhinji; njene šake
moraju da mese i služe, donose i odnose.
zatim sam odrasla i postala, ta žena—
umesto mene, sto odlučuje

which place I'm to take,
 which conversations I'm not to start.

I still haven't dunked my hands into dough.
 I'm rocking on the chair's back legs, one foot
 in character, the other in this body,
 the text. at distant shores I hear that the *smell of the sea*
is actually the smell of death; what about the salt, I ask,
 and my arm stretches from the castle over the harbour
 full of sludge, over all the dishes
 as my hand reaches for the spice.
 screams of birds kidnap the scenery from sundown and the
 tower
 incandesces briefly before reverting to stone,
 an outstanding skeleton, a meal for the visitors
 who are a meal for the seagulls,
 like wet grass abandoned by the ebb.
 above the sea salt rise both spectacles
 which I inhabit.

from a long way off, hunger finally drags me
 back home for supper; hot air
 in a small kitchen appliance obediently
 moves the particles of a packed meal,
ding! I open the door and stick in the fork
 whose tips have roamed strangers' mouths.

o mestu koje zauzimam i
o razgovorima koje neću započeti.

šake još uvek nisam zaronila u testo.
njišem se na rubu stolice, jednom nogom
u svojoj ulozi i drugom unutar ovog tela,
teksta. na udaljenim obalama čujem da je *miris mora*
zapravo miris smrti; a šta je sa solju, pitam,
i moja se ruka proteže od zamka preko luke
prepune mulja, preko svih sudova
posežući za tim začinom.
ptičiji krici otimaju predeo od zalaska i toranj izgara
nakratko pre nego što ponovo postane kamen,
izvanredan skelet, obrok za posetioce
koji su hrana za galebove,
poput mokre trave napuštene za osekom.
nad morskom solju dižu se oba prizora
koja naseljavam.

daleko od kuće, naposletku me glad
odvlači na večeru; vreo vazduh
unutar malog kuhinjskog uređaja poslušno
pomera čestice spakovanog obroka,
ding! otvaram vrata i načinjem ga viljuškom
čiji su vršci lutali po ustima nepoznatih ljudi.

I've always been convinced that the smell of death
is actually the smell of a feast; amongst the concerns, this one
is key.

*if I am not the one who devours, I must be the one
devoured.* only through precise verbs do I see clearly:

I land on an unknown shore
yet I don't venture far from
the family silver
no matter which tongue I'm trying to get
off the tip of all my tongues.

uvek sam bila uverena da je miris smrti
zapravo miris gozbe; od svih briga, ova je ključna.
ako nisam ja ona koja jede, moram biti ona
koju proždiru. tek kroz precizne glagole vidim jasno:
iskrcavam se na nepoznatu obalu
ne udaljavajući se ipak
od porodičnog srebrnog pribora—
koji god jezik da prevaljujem
preko svih svojih jezika.

IT'S AUTUMN AND AT TIMES IT
SEEMS POSSIBLE TO DEFEAT ME

translated by Mirza Purić

The world is falling ill. Faster.
When a new mutation of the present virus appeared,
a whole country bought all the available bullets.
People happily take their tracking devices everywhere.
In the agreed-upon part of the world an endless,
yet quite concrete war has been established:
a war in and of itself and for its own sake, without winners.
But not without casualties.
People wrote about this a long time ago.
Though there are new premonitions.
Rattlesnakes no longer give a warning rattle
when they see someone.

J E S E N J E I N E K A D S E U Č I N I D A M E
J E M O G U Ć E P O B I J E D I T I

by Marija Dragnić

Svijet se razbolijeva. Brže.
Na pojavu novog soja aktuelnog virusa,
cijela jedna zemlja pribavila je sve dostupne metke.
Svoje spravice za praćenje ljudi nose rado i svugdje.
U dogovorenom dijelu svijeta uspostavljen je beskrajni,
ali vrlo konkretan rat:
rat po sebi, zbog sebe, samo bez pobjednika.
Ne i bez žrtava.
O tome se davno pisalo.
Ima i nekih novih slutnji.
Zvečarke više ne upozoravaju na napad
kada vide čovjeka.

They simply bite.

This has sent the fatality rate soaring.

Space becomes a negligible category.

Anytime, anywhere, anything can happen—

thus only endings used to happen,

only love.

Children disappear.

They die within reach of shores, fall out of planes,

emigrate into digital reality.

They sew the garments for our seasonal fantasies,

or are simply never born.

Let's not get into human rights,

nothing is guaranteed at birth,

though some things will be taken away.

Simply put,

I wish to state that evil exists.

I wish to make it clear that evil exists,

though I won't be describing its methods in detail.

I also wish to say a few words

about the beginning of autumn. Pasta cooks too fast,

but the steam is pleasantly warm, the meal will be torporous.

It's a murky day outside, coldish, no one feels like going out.

If you have a place to stay, have a hot meal, play some music,

spread open a book, someone's palm, legs or soul,

you're the guardian of the world today.

Good isn't complex at all.

It doesn't even have to have eyes.

Jednostavno ujedaju.

To je značajno uvećalo procenat smrtnog ishoda.

Prostor postaje zanemarljiva kategorija.

Bilo kada, bilo gdje, može se desiti bilo šta—

tako se nekad događao samo kraj,

jedino ljubav.

Djeca nestaju.

Umiru nadomak obala, ispadaju iz aviona,

emigriraju u digitalnu realnost.

Šiju garderobu za naše sezonske fantazije,

ili se jednostavno ne rode.

O ljudskim pravima nećemo,

ništa čovjeku nije rođenjem zagarantovano,

mada postoje stvari koje će mu biti oduzete.

Jednostavnije,

želim da kažem kako zlo postoji.

Želim da bude jasno kako zlo postoji,

mada neću ja živo opisivati njegove metode.

Isto tako želim da kažem nešto

o početku jeseni. Makarone se prebrzo kuvaju,

ali para prijatno grije, i obrok će se variti omamljujuće sporo.

Napolju je tmuran dan, prohladan, nikome se ne izlazi vani.

Ako imaš gdje ostati, pojesti nešto toplo, pustiti muziku,

otvoriti knjigu, nečiji dlan, noge, ili dušu,

danas si čuvar svijeta.

Dobro uopšte nije kompleksno.

Ne mora da ima ni oči.

If it does, it gazes through the window
at the first drops of rain hitting the tops
of an old lady's leather shoes.
She's dressed modestly, but wears her hair in a neat bun.
Still, she takes cover from the rain only to keep her feet dry.
That's the kind of poetry I need, says Good, simple,
one that's taken care of itself.
It'll find time to notice that I exist,
and that I need help.
Tidy your room, eat your pasta in peace, thank the radiator,
wish me
on everyone, yourself included.
Switch off your phone. Look, a crane hangs
over the crown of the plane tree.
Like a guillotine. Or perhaps a set of scales.
You decide.
I never ask that of you.

Ako ima, sada gleda kroz prozor
u prve kapi kiše što padaju na kožne cipele
jedne stare žene.
Ona je skromno obučena, ali nosi urednu punđu.
Od kiše se sklanja, ipak, samo da ne bi skvasila stopala.
Takva mi je poezija potrebna, kaže dobro, jednostavna,
koja se pobrinula za sebe.
Ona će naći vremena da primijeti kako i ja postojim,
i da mi je potrebna pomoć.
Spremi sobu, pojedj na miru makarone, zahvali se radijatoru,
poželi me
svima, pa i sebi.
Isključi telefon. Pogledaj, kran se diže
nad platanovom krunom.
Kao giljotina. Možda kao tas.
Ti odlučuješ.
Ja to nikad ne tražim od tebe.

S T A R R Y S K Y

translated by Mirza Purić

There's a room in my home
a station for ghosts
a trap for shadows
a room long empty of anyone
I love and anyone who would
love themselves.
It's cold even in summer
as if it were a refuge
for all the puffing winters
as ruthless as anniversary presents
as though all the winter months were moving in
with all the asphalt overgrown with snow and all the grass,

V A S E L J E N A

by Dijala Hasanbegović

U mojoj kući postoji soba
koja je stanica za duhove
klopka za sjene
soba u kojoj već odavno nema
nikog koga volim i nikog ko bi
volio sebe.
Hladna je i ljeti
kao da u nju bježi dah
svih uspuhanih zima
nemilosrdnih kao poklon za godišnjicu
kao da se u nju useljavaju svi zimski mjeseci
sav u snijeg zarasli asfalt i trava

stunted and grey, sprouting out of the clayish soil.

There's a room in my home
full of leaving and plans to leave
full of clothes in which limbs no longer fit
clothes with no one to wear them.

In my room
facing the east
the sun eclipses the eyes at sunup
and I shut the door like eyes are shut
to spare them a horrid spectacle
each time I go there to put away
one of my lives.

There's a room in my home in which
not a sound has been uttered for four years
yet it's full
packed.

I'll never get everything out of it.

I'll just put that room away someday.

Yesterday the room and I got a present:

an egg that plays lullabies and casts
a starry sky on the dark ceiling.

I watched, to the sound of a Chinese lullaby,
for the first time in four years,
the swaying of all things ever created,
all that ever will be
all that will ever disappear.

kratka i siva, izrasla iz glinene zemlje.
U mojoj kući ima soba
puna odlazaka i namjera o odlasku
puna odjeće u koju udovi više ne staju
ili koju više nema ko da oblači
u mojoj sobi
na istočnoj strani
sunce u zoru zaklanja oči
ja je zatvaram kao što se oči zatvaraju
od strašnog prizora
svaki put kad tamo idem ostaviti
jedan svoj život.
U mojoj kući ima soba u kojoj
niko nije progovorio niti glasa četiri godine
ali puna je
prepuna je
iz nje nikad neću sve iznijeti
nju ću jednom samo ostaviti.
Jučer smo soba i ja dobili poklon:
jaje koje svira uspavanke i u mraku
po zidovima šara vasseljenu.
Gledala sam prvi put
nakon četiri godine
kako se uz zvuke kineske uspavanke
ljulja sve što je ikada stvoreno
što će ikada biti
što će ikada nestati.

P A S S P O R T

translated by Vesna Marić

The first couple of months
I didn't speak
When I finally spoke, I couldn't stop

I found out about the difference between a sponge and a
lightbulb
learned grandma's words and created my own

I could talk about everything
except myself

P U T O V N I C A

by Marija Dejanović

Prvih par mjeseci
nisam govorila
Kad sam progovorila, nisam prestajala

Saznavala sam o razlici spužve i žarulje
učila bakine riječi i izmišljala svoje

O svemu sam mogla govoriti
osim o sebi

That remained in place
for the first twenty years

*

My first words were wha-dee
uttered before a plate of bean stew
What's this?

There was no one around that morning
who might see themselves in those words
who might wish to tell lies about my first word being *daddy*

My first words cheered up mostly me
Father was sad because he'd missed them
Mother was angry because they were a mark
of his absence

He worked in a different town to put food on our table
That's why he never ate with us
That's why we ate in silence
That's why he ate our silence upon his return

Mother sees him at the door and says
I wish you weren't back
What she meant was
I wish you'd never left

To se stanje zadržalo
prvih dvadeset godina

*

Prve su mi riječi bile ta-to
izgovorene ispred tanjura graha
bilo je to pitanje što je to

Tog jutra nije bilo nikoga
tko bi se u tim riječima pronašao
tko bi želio lagati da mi je prva riječ bila tata

Moje su prve riječi najviše veselile mene
Oca su rastužile jer ih je propustio
Majku su naljutile jer su bile znak
njegovog odsustva

Odlazio je raditi u drugi grad da bi nas hranio
Zato nikad nije jeo s nama
Zato smo jeli u tišini kad jedemo
Zato je jeo našu tišinu po povratku

Majka ga vidi na vratima i kaže
bolje bi bilo da se nisi vratio
Ono što je mislila reći bilo je
bolje bi bilo da nisi odlazio

I wish no one had to leave
For such departures belong to those
who never wanted to go

They are the departures of those with nowhere to return

*

A shortage of home, too many apartments
The first five years in Bjelovar, Zagreb, and Sisak several times

We arrived at Germany's doorstep, they didn't let us in
Despite my granddad saying *I built those apartments*

At university in Zagreb they asked me where I was from

I was in my birthplace
only at my birth
And over where I grew up I was always
the girl with a funny accent

All this was resolved when I went abroad
Where our accents all sounded equally

Now I leave only when I wish
And remain as long as I need to

Bilo bi bolje da nitko nije morao otići
Ti su odlasci bili odlasci onih
koji nisu htjeli nikamo ići

Tako odlaze oni koji se nemaju kamo vratiti

*

Manjak doma, previše stanova
U prvih pet godina Bjelovar, Zagreb i nekoliko Sisaka

Prvo smo došli pred Njemačku, nisu nas pustili unutra
Uzalud je moj djed govorio ja sam te stanove gradio

Za vrijeme studija u Zagrebu pitali bi me odakle sam

Tamo gdje sam rođena
bila sam tad i nikad više
Tamo gdje sam odrasla bila sam od početka
djevojčica čudnog naglaska

Ovu moju nedoumicu riješio je odlazak u inozemstvo
Tamo naši naglasci uglavnom zvuče isto

Sad odlazim samo kad želim
Ostajem koliko mi je potrebno

If anyone wants to know the difference
between leaving and returning:

the difference is in me

*

He drinks a Greek drink, the same as the Croatian one
just triple
a nut mix always comes with the drink
a sign of hospitality

The first tree I ever saw here was an orange tree
the cities are so full of concrete they plant these fragrant suns

If you look up a little, you'll see greenery hanging off the
balconies

The Greeks have these floating lawns and we have gardens

That is why I joked that he was a bird
who lands on the balcony and pecks at the almonds

I have to have a garden
because I sit there and drink homemade elderflower juice
I have a lounger and I sunbathe my legs

Here, sunbathe, you lizard, he says
and points at the sea

Ako nekog zanima u čemu je razlika
između odlaska i dolaska:

razlika je u meni

*

Pije grčko piće, koje je isto kao hrvatsko
samo trostruko
uz piće uvijek dolazi mješavina orašastih plodova
u znak gostoprimstva

Prvo drvo koje sam ovdje vidjela bilo je stablo naranče
građovi su puni betona pa sade ta mirisna sunca

Pogledaš li malo gore, vidjet ćeš zelenilo koje visi s balkona
Grcima su ti lebdeći podovi ono što su nama dvorišta

Zato sam mu se smijala da je ptica
da sleti na balkon i gricka te bademe

Moram imati dvorište
jer u njemu sjedim i pijem domaći sok od bazge
U njemu imam ležaljku i sunčam si noge

Evo ti, pa se sunčaj, gušterice, kaže
i pokaže na more

*

Most of my childhood
I played football with the neighborhood boys
entirely like the other players
then my breasts grew

I could no longer remove my t-shirt
and pour water on my bare torso
when the sun bakes the cars
on the cracked asphalt of the suburbs

the city's courtyard that sat so lonely
it accepted even us, even though it could hardly stand itself
offered us a job and a place to live

What did I witness in that childhood?
A fight here and there, a cat having her litter
under the stairs

A hill covered in snow
tons of mud on the hill after the snow
and snowdrops sprouting out of it

*

If I had wanted to travel
from Sisak to Dubrovnik

*

Većinu svog djetinjstva
 igrala sam nogomet s dječacima iz susjedstva
 posve jednaka drugim igračima
 onda su mi narasle grudi

Nisam više mogla skidati majicu
 da se polijevam vodom po golom torzu
 kad sunce zapeče aute
 na ispucalom asfaltu predgrađa

dvorištu grada koji je jedini bio toliko usamljen
 da prihvati čak i nas, iako i sebe jedva trpi
 ponudio nam je posao i stan

Što sam u tom djetinjstvu vidjela?
 Poneku tučnjavu, mačku koja se okotila
 ispod stubišta

Nasip prekriven snijegom
 pusto blato na nasipu nakon snijega
 i visibabe koje izrastaju iz njega

*

Da sam htjela doći
 iz Siska u Dubrovnik

I would have needed a passport
In my first twenty years
I only saw Dubrovnik
on Game of Thrones

*

I say, *what's that*
he says, *tsipouro*

The tourists think we drink ouzo
but ouzo is the rubbish that the tourists drink

*

I don't like tourists
Big shopping centers usually follow in their wake
community leaves with them and a slave state takes over

He says tourists come to the beach in front of my house
and then I can't go out on my kayak
That beach is for him what that bit of the road was for me
that I used to play football on
and the tourists are like cars

They pass by in loud numbers

They remind us that a space doesn't belong to us

trebala bi mi putovnica
U prvih dvadeset godina
Dubrovnik sam vidjela
samo na Igri prijestolja

*

Kažem, što je to
kaže, tsipouro

Turisti misle da pijemo ouzo
ali ouzo je smeće koje piju turisti

*

Ne volim turiste
Nakon turista dolaze veliki shopping centri
s njima odlazi društvo i dolazi robovlasnička država

Kaže turisti dođu na plažu ispred moje kuće
i onda ne mogu voziti kajak
Ta mu je plaža kao meni onaj komad
ceste na kojem sam igrala nogomet
a turisti su kao auti

Prolaze u svojoj glasnoj brojnosti

Podsjećaju nas da prostor nije naš

even if it is where we spend
a significant part of our lives

They teach us that to own and to belong
are not one and the same thing

*

Historic men
and the few remembered women
are tourists in flip-flops on the Velebit of the world

They wrote either of friends, or the dead
That is why they decorated all truths
made them look more like lies

They remembered the things that could be retold
in the garden or on a balcony
photographed and stuffed in a pocket

taken along

*

In my youth I presented
an uglier version of what we are
myself and the world—but not my loved ones

čak ni ako u njemu provodimo
značajan dio života

Uče nas da posjedovati i pripadati
nije ista stvar

*

Muškarci iz povijesti
i ono malo zapamćenih žena
turisti su u japankama na Velebitu svijeta

Pisali su ili o prijateljima, ili o mrtvima
Zato su sve istine uljepšavali
činili ih više nalik lažima

Pamtili su ono što se moglo prepričati
u dvorištu ili na balkonu
fotografirati i spremiti u džep

ponijeti sa sobom

*

U mladosti sam prikazivala
ružnijima nego što jesmo
sebe i svijet—voljene ljude ne

I let them rest in silence

That silence was the best
I could give

Today I try to say it
exactly as I think it is

—remember who you are while there is still something to remember
—a garden is bigger than a country

But still I catch some devils by their horns

—an evening that bites the face
—a lounge with an indelible stain

There are days I'd fight myself

Threw an axe onto the moon because it was shining
chased a train with a knife because it was running late

—people's flaws are most dangerous
when we mistake them for virtues—

I don't strike the weak even if they strike first

As I walk along the road
I am careful to remember all

the irrelevant things

Njih sam puštala da miruju u tišini

Ta je tišina bila najbolje
što sam mogla dati

Danas se trudim reći
tačno kako mislim da jest

—dođi k sebi dok još imaš kome
—dvorište je veće od države

Ali i dalje hvatam pokojeg vruga za rogove

—večer koja grize za čelo
—ležaljku koja se ne da oprati

Ima dana—sa sobom bih se posvađala

Bacila sjekiru na mjesec jer svijetli
nožem jurišala na vlak jer kasni

—na ljudima su mane najopasnije
kad povjerujemo da su vrline—

Ne udaram slabijeg ni ako udari prvi

Dok hodam cestom
pazim da zapamtim sve

nebitne stvari

T H E W A I T

translated by Mirza Purić

Murderers live in our midst.

People who instead of “grieve” say “leave.”

They cure pain, longing and rage with the same word—migration.

To justify their forgetting of all the faces, all the tortured bodies.

They run swiftly to salvage consensual blindness. By displacing
the body they move the soul indefinitely. They think they
don't leave tracks as they run. Their tracks are seen by the sick,
those who stay (to die) and those whose souls float in their bodies
only.

There are bodies whose souls can't escape.

Č E K A N J E

by Ivana Maksić

Među nama žive ubice.

Ljudi koji mesto preboleti kažu otputovati.

Protiv bola, čežnje i gneva imaju istu reč—seljenje.

Begom pravdaju zaborav svih lica, svih napaćenih tela.

Trčanjem saniraju sporazumno slepilo. Izmeštanjem tela sele dušu na neodređeno, po ugovoru. Misle—dok beže, ne ostavljaju tragove. Tragove koje potom vide bolesni, oni koji (na smrt) ostaju i čije duše ne plutaju nikamo osim u telima.

Postoje tela čije duše ne mogu da pobegnu.

Bodies that are workers. Workers whose souls drown
in the surf at unguarded beaches.

To plunge into the self.

To be where to wait is to rise and to fall.

The wait is a glass that never overflows. Never
empty enough.

Tela koja su radnici. Radnici čije su duše utopljenici
u valovima plaža bez spasioca.

Sunovratiti se u sebe.

Biti tamo gde čekanje znači padanje i ponovno ustajanje.

Čekanje je čaša koju ne možeš prepuniti. Nikad
dovoljno prazna.

AT TIMES IT SEEMS POSSIBLE NOT
TO REPEAT YOURSELF

translated by Mirza Purić

rain is forecast along with sand from the north
of a distant continent. still no need to clean:
balcony, flat, intentions. we await the only wilderness,
road-weary, wind-blown from across the ocean,
which our slick surfaces are ready to receive.

contrary to big promises, the crane sways
above the protected plane tree, arches above
buildings, institutes, conservation areas.
even language no longer moves in multiple directions,
only in that one. stock phrases—war unto itself.
even water no longer moves in multiple directions.

NEKAD SE UČINI DA JE MOGUĆE
NE PONOVI TI SE

by Maša Seničić

najavili su kišu a sa njom i pesak sa severa
tuđeg kontinenta. još uvek ne treba čistiti:
terasu, stan, namere. zavitlanu preko mora
i izmorenu od puta, čekamo jedinu divljinu
na koju su spremne naše ugladene površine.

protivno velikim obećanjima, kran se klati
nad zaštićenim platanom, krivi se iznad
zgrada, zavoda, urbanističkih celina.
ni jezik se ne kreće u više pravaca, samo
u tom. niz poznatih formulacija—rat po sebi.
ni voda se ne kreće u više pravaca.

I observe: forecast, river, tap: distrustful of
received flow rates, I repeat
events anyway. I assign fatigue. even
uncertainty I reduce to the same practiced move.

space is never negligible, but hunger
is stronger. in the force of its onset I first see
cities and construction sites. sly cracking of asphalt.
familiar foodstuffs tumble down my throat, a ritual
for which we have agreed-upon vocabulary.
we pick up parcels regularly and remember
each other's names. I practice disagreement only
in private, though no one's ever asked me to.

I offer downpour, dusty and brief, as distance,
word order inversion. respite from sentence.

posmatram prognozu, reku, slavinu: prema
naučenom protoku nepoverljiva, događaje
svejedno ponavljam. umor raspoređujem. čak
i neizvesnost svodim na isti, uvežban pokret.

prostor nikada nije zanemarljiv, ali glad je
snažnija. u silini njenog udara prvo prepoznam
gradove i gradilišta. podmuklo pucanje asfalta.
grlom se kotrljaju poznate namirnice, ritual
za koji takodje imamo utvrđen vokabular.
pakete preuzimamo redovno i pamtimo jedni
drugima imena. neslaganja uvežbavam tek
nasamo, premda mi to niko nikada nije tražio.

pljusak, prljav i prolazan, nudim kao odmak,
zamenu reči u rečenici. predah od rečenice.

TO A WOLF HEART LIGHT
AND FIRE ARE THE SAME FOOD

translated by Mirza Purić

All that was ever created
testifies to the necessity of making.
No one has evidence in favour of unmaking
and it's becoming easier to say such things—
I've become a queen of interstitial spaces,
the sun of imaginary solar systems.
Outside them I'm a she-wolf.
Who speaks poems.
Who becomes human.
First I had to wrest myself from the creatures
of the forest.
Then I set out.

Z A V U Č J E S R C E S V J E T L O S T
I V A T R A S U I S T A H R A N A

by Marija Dragnić

Sve što je ikada stvoreno
svjedoči nužnosti postanka.
Niko ne barata dokazima o nestajanju
i sve mi je lakše govoriti ovakve stvari—
postala sam kraljica međuprostora,
Sunce nevidljivih sistema.
Van njih sam vučica.
Vučica koja kazuje pjesme.
Vučica koja postaje čovjek.
Prvo je bilo potrebno otkinuti se od bića
šume.
Krenula sam na put.

Yet I knew that somewhere far
away, my brother the fawn,
now a strong buck,
and my brother the runaway bull,
and my father the ever-young forest mage
and my mother the mother of mothers,
who follows me with her heart,
were with me.

Silent ancestral shades
walked in silent shadowy strides
in my wake and the wake of those who
inscribed themselves into my skin,
those whose mind and will was doled out to them
in line with their indelible inscriptions.

I left behind pieces of self
which are not for the deserving.

I turned around
to light up their shadows
and now I have
fire behind me, light ahead.

I return alone.

I respect my tactical order.
Behind my back an army of me,
in my jaws an unabashed platoon.
Now I carry flame in my eye and see
flame in all things.

I no longer light up anything but my heart.
In it lives
all that was ever created.

Ipak, znala da je negdje daleko,
 daleko, uz mene,
 moj brat lane, već snažni jelen,
 i moj brat, odbjegli bik,
 i otac neosjedjeli šumski vrač
 i majka moja majka svih majki,
 što ide ovim srcem za mnom.
 Za mnom su hodali sjenovitim korakom
 nečujni duhovi predaka—
 za mnom i za onima koji su se upisali
 na mojoj koži,
 njima su misli i primisli udjeljivali
 spram tih neizbrisivih spisa.
 Za mnom su ostajali komadići sebe
 koji se ne daju po zasluži.
 Okretala sam se
 da upalim i njihove sijenke
 i sad imam
 vatru za leđima, svjetlost pred sobom.
 Vraćam se sama.
 Poštujem svoju borbenu formaciju.
 Za mnom cijela vojska mene,
 u vilici neskriven istrenirani vod.
 Sad nosim plamen u oku i vidim
 plamen u svemu.
 Više ne palim ništa osim svog srca.
 U njemu živi
 sve što je ikada stvoreno.

F O R E C A S T

translated by Mirza Purić

Come autumn we will be quite sick,
we'll know that each rustle
is an echo of the ailing summer.
Somewhere, someday, someone
will see autumn as a feast on a narrow board.
I see it
as drops searing the skin like scores
of July suns.
In my callused shoes I carry
my ailing memories
blossoming into the savage flesh
of autumn fruits.

P R O G N O Z A

by Dijala Hasanbegović

S jeseni bit ćemo sasvim bolesni tada
znat ćemo da je svaki rašuštajs
razboljeloga ljeta odjek.
Negdje, nekad, nekom, neka
jesen značit će bogatstvo na uskim trpezama
a meni
kapi na koži koje prže jače nego stotinu
sunaca julskih.
U nažuljanim cipelama nosim
svoje razboljele uspomene
rascvjetale u divlje meso
jesenjih plodova.

I smell the autumn.

It threatens the summer like hail menaces verdure.

All things will burst and rustle forth

into a hundred colours and roar

til the first snow.

They will roar whitely, roar mightily

yet none will be victorious.

I'll shake my own hand anyway,

congratulate myself on my painful trudge

through the summer

and let sprout from the autumnal rot

my overripe fruit

above which swarm fruit flies

celebrating

a succulent ending.

Mirišem je—jesen.
Prijeti ljetu kao tuča zelenilu.
I puknut će sve rašuštat će
sve u sototinu nijansi i grmit će
sve do prvog snijega.
Grmit će bijelo, grmit će snažno
i niko neće biti pobjednik.
Stisnut ću sama sebi ruku ipak
jako ću si čestitati na bolnom hodu
kroz ljeto
i pustiti da proklija iz jesenje truleži
moj plod prezreo
moj plod nad kojim rojevi vinskih mušica
slave
slastan kraj.

KINDNESS SEPARATES NIGHT FROM DAY

translated by Vesna Marić

She keeps two dogs in the garden—mutts
of who knows how many breeds.
Behind the house, the pomegranate shrub resembles a wound
made by a lack of grooming,
shampooing, care.

I hear her yelling at him every day
screeching like a gray-haired bird and then, all too humanly,
weeping from the throat.
When I prick my ears to hear her
as if through water:
you've ruined my life and I have no one because of you

DOBROTA RAZDVAJA DAN I NOĆ

by Marija Dejanović

U vrtu drži dva psa—mješance
tko zna koliko različitih pasmina
Iza kuće, grmlje šipka nalikuje na ranu
nastalu izostankom češljanja
šamponiranja, brige

Svakog je dana čujem kako više na njega
krešti kao sijeda ptica i onda pretjerano ljudski
plače iz grla
Kad se napnem da je poslušam
kao kroz vodu
upropastio si mi život i zbog tebe nemam nikoga

and the barking of the dog
but you'll see, one day when I'm gone
whose blood you'll leech off then

and I don't know if she's speaking to the husband
treating him like a dog
or the dog, treating him like a husband.

I am sure that love divides a pet dog from a stray
just like goodness divides day from night
and I am ever more convinced that nothing worth mentioning
separates humanity from other animals.

Nothing tangible is visible in the dark, the pomegranate shrub
seems to flood fast through its fur.

Pomegranate fruit are polyps
that form on the neck where the chain digs in
and they peep out from under the fur.

I am unsure if it's death rushing through the skin
or life breaking through the chain.

One especially cold winter
she slipped on the frozen path when feeding the dogs
and broke her leg.

I dreamt that she had finally died
and stopped torturing herself and the dogs,
that the frost had settled and covered the pomegranates,

i lajanje psa
 ali vidjet ćeš, jednom kad me ne bude
 kome ćeš piti krv na slamku

i ne znam govori li to mužu
 tretirajući ga kao psa
 ili psu, tretirajući ga kao muža

Sigurna sam da ljubav razdvaja domaćeg psa od lualice
 kao što dobrota razdvaja dan i noć
 i sve sam uvjerenija da ništa vrijedno spomena
 ne razdvaja čovjeka od drugih životinja

U mraku se ne vidi ništa opipljivo, grmlje šipka
 kao da naprasito buja kroz njegovo krzno
 Zreli su šipci polipi
 nastali na vratu usijecanjem lanca
 i vire ispod krzna
 nisam sigurna navire li to smrt kroz kožu
 ili život probija ispod lanca

Jednom je došla hladnija zima
 Poskliznula se na zaleđen put dok je nosila hranu psima
 i slomila nogu

Sanjala sam da je napokon umrla
 i prestala mučiti sebe i pse
 da je pao mraz i prekrio šipke, nogu i polipe

the leg, and the polyps.

I dreamt that I came with a saw, cut their chains

and liberated hundreds of her dogs who,
alive and dead,
finally left.

They left on the path
that leads out of the courtyard
to eat her sadness and lick her wounds.

Sanjala sam da dolazim s pilom, režem im lanac

i oslobađam stotinu njezinih pasa koji

živi i mrtvi

napokon odlaze

odlaze na stazu

koja vodi iz dvorišta

da joj pojedu tugu i poliču rane

IVANA MAKSIĆ (b. 1984) writes poetry, prose fragments, nonfiction, and translates from English. She has published several poetry books: *O telo tvori me* (Oh Body Em-body Me, 2011), *Izvan komunikacije* (Beyond Communication, 2013), *La mia paura di essere schiava* (My Fear of Being Enslaved, 2014), a chap-book *Jaz sem tvoj propagandni film* (I Am Your Propaganda Film, 2018) and *Kćeri, zar ne vidiš da gorim* (Daughter, Can't You See I'm Burning, 2020). As a precarious English teacher, she has been giving online lessons to thousands of people all over the world.

MAŠA SENIČIĆ (b. 1990) writes and works in the field of literature, film, and media. She obtained her BA and MA degrees at the Faculty of Dramatic Arts in Belgrade, where she is pursuing her theoretical PhD research in the field of New Media and Memory Studies. She has taken part in various local and international film, theatre, visual culture,

and poetry projects/workshops/events—as a participant, a lecturer, and an editor—while also contributing to film festivals as a writer, a moderator, and a programmer (Brave Balkans, Belgrade Auteur Film Festival). In 2015, Seničić won the Mladi Dis prize for an unpublished manuscript, which led to her first poetry book *Okean* (The Ocean). Her second book, *Povremena poput vikend-naselja* (As Occasional as a Vacation Home) was published in 2019 (Treći Trg) and awarded the Dušan Vasiljev prize for best regional book. Her literary work has been published across the ex-Yugoslav region and Europe, in print and web magazines, as well as in anthologies and collections. As a freelance author Seničić contributes to various publications, galleries, and happenings. She is interested in exploring spatial and material boundaries of both printed and digital material/text.

MARIJA DRAGNIĆ was born in Nikšić, Montenegro in 1990. Her

poems have been published in all relevant literary periodicals across the ex-Yugoslav region. Dragnić is the recipient of the second prize for poetry in the regional literary competition Ulaznica 2016 and the first prize in the competition Ratković's Poetry Evenings 2018, which is also of regional character. In 2019, she won first prize in the literary competition PAF-POETRY for best unpublished poems in Montenegro. In 2021, she won the second prize in the regional Milo Bošković competition. Marija used to work as an editor in the PPM Enclave publishing house and web poetry magazine *Enklava* (Enclave). She is now an editor in Raštan publishing house based in Belgrade. Dragnić organizes a lot of poetry events, introducing experimental and inventive formats for presenting poetry. Her work has been translated into Albanian, Macedonian, French, Slovenian, Ukrainian, English, and other languages.

DIJALA HASANBEGOVIĆ is a poet, freelance journalist, and literary critic. She studied Comparative Literature and Bosnian language at the University of Sarajevo. She worked for the Bosnian weekly magazine *Dani* as a literary and theater critic and as an editor at Radio Sarajevo news portal. She has published essays, poetry, and critiques for various literary magazines. Her poems have been translated into English, Polish, Norwegian, Macedonian, and Greek; her first poem in English translation was published in *The American Poetry Review* (September 2007). She is currently a columnist for *Prometej.ba* and *Žurnal.info*. Her widely popular columns are, in fact, designed to present different life stories of fictional characters, describe the specific problems of those who are considered to be socially deviant, but they also address the loneliness, emptiness and search for love and light in the modern world. Her first book of poetry, *Kids For War* (Vrijeme, Zenica)

was published in 2017. A second edition of the book was published in Belgrade, Serbia (Kontrast, 2020). During the pandemic, she published her most recent book of poetry titled *Woman in a Pink Dress* in 2020 (Vrijeme, Zenica). She lives and writes in Sarajevo.

MARIJA DEJANOVIĆ was born in Prijedor, Bosnia and Herzegovina, in 1992. She grew up in Sisak, Croatia, and currently lives between Zagreb, Croatia, and Larissa, Greece. She studied Comparative Literature and Pedagogy (University of Zagreb). In 2018, her poetry book *Ethics of Bread and Horses (Etika kruha i konja)* won the Goran award for young poets and the Kvirin award for young poets. Her poetry book *Heartwood (Središnji god)* won the Zdravko Pucak award in 2019. Her third poetry book, *Kindness Separates Night From Day (Dobrota razdvaja dan i noć)* was published in Croatia (Sandorf, 2021), Serbia (Treći Trg, 2022), the USA (Sandorf

Passage, 2023), Greece (Thraka, 2023), and shortlisted for the biggest Croatian award for poetry, Tin Ujević, and for the regional award Avdina Okarina (BiH). She was awarded the Milo Bošković Award (2021), the Castello Di Duino Award (2022), the DiBiase Poetry Contest Award (2021), and the Marin Držić award (2020) by the Croatian Ministry of Culture for a dramatic text *Ne moramo više govoriti, svi su otišli* (We Don't Have to Speak Anymore, They Are All Gone). Trilingual selections of her latest poetry were published in Greece (Kyklos Poiton, 2020) and in Germany (Hausacher LeseLenz, 2022), and translated poems by the author were published in around 20 world languages. The Macedonian edition of her book *Kindness Separates Night From Day* is upcoming in 2023. She presented her poetry at numerous international festivals and readings. She is a member of the Croatian Writers' Society, Croatian PEN Centre, and the international poets' and

festivals' platform Versopolis. She's an editor for *Tema* and *Libartes* magazines. She is the assistant director of Thessalian Poetry Festival (Πανθεσσαλικό Φεστιβάλ Ποίησης), and works as the editor of translated poetry for the publishing house Thraka.

MIRZA PURIĆ is a literary translator, editor, and musician. His recent book-length publications include Marko Pogačar's *Neon South* (Sandorf Passage, 2022) and Faruk Šehić's *Under Pressure* (Istros Books, 2019). He has published shorter pieces in *Agni*, *Asymptote*, *The Baffler*, *Literary Hub*, *EuropeNow*, *The Well Review*, and elsewhere. He was an editor-at-large at *Asymptote* and currently serves as a contributing editor with *EuropeNow*.

VESNA MARIĆ was born in Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina, in 1976. Her memoir, *Bluebird*, published by Granta in 2009, was Radio 4's Book of the Week and was longlisted

for The Orwell Prize. An excerpt from *Bluebird* won a Decibel Penguin Prize for new writing in 2007. *Bluebird* has been translated into French, Dutch, Spanish, Marathi, and Croatian. Vesna left Bosnia and Herzegovina when she was sixteen on a convoy of Bosnian refugees heading to the Lake District, later moving to Hull, Exeter, and London. She studied Czech literature at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University College London. She went on to work for the BBC World Service and now writes *Lonely Planet* travel guides and translates literary fiction and non-fiction from Croatian to English.