

Tomaz Šalamun

**Woods
and Chalices**

*Translated from the Slovenian
by Brian Henry and the author*

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To Metka

The Lucid Slovenian Green

To step into the splash. To adorn oneself. I strode
the Karst valleys and bloomed. The underworld
is plastic and juicy. Whales dunk a little,
shoot a little. Chile is dewy, spring
is paper-wrapped. Girded like an ant,
like a cadet with argil. How do you reckon this? Bruised
like an icon? Blasted with small and large candles?
Slices are also in the trunk, there, where
squirrels and hornets fertilize tiny eggs. Caesar
walks staccato. Rome crawls by your feet. Wherever
the grape plucks, it starts to purl. The Irish saved Europe.
They piled sagas at fire sites. Everything northern
(Styria). There, in the forests, live char men
with flashing eyes. They snack on the *Book of Kells*.

I grew up with eggplants. I stepped
from the truck, honey, chestnuts
rolled in honey. The higher, grayer part
creaked. It tottered. For a raven
that you snatch by the legs and spin like a bundle,
as long as it doesn't crash into a windowpane,
you don't know if it hits with its back or its eyes
closed, glued from fear. The windowpane
is not its beak. The raven has no beak.
The raven has only a sail with drawn-on
seed. Stars, ricocheting into the moon's
glass, go out. Between the time someone's
in the sky and the time he burns
in the sky is the beat of an eyelid. Water spins the logs.

In the Tongues of Bells

I decant a blossom. It goes before you.
You're filled with Uriah. Green, tiny, and pressed.
Blueness is a furious cake, a round
cake where yearning sleeps. Are the balls
the balls of the earth? At wells
and fountains? At Adas's pillar?
You say that you'd be my property.
You'd lose everything instantly.
I still wouldn't notice you anymore, injured.
I choose from the thickness. Honey collects
cries. And when the body thickens and you get up
because I dress you, because I congeal you.
I erase you back in the past. I draw
a white flap, shine a white flap.

The Clouds of Tiepolo

The flock fell behind a hill. God
tottered. I chased a stall. Faded
and flew. When there's no syrup in the eyes, there's
no black man in the body. Virgo is in the loaf and creels.
She throws snowballs while standing. Plans unravel.
Clouds are rosy, as by Tiepolo.
As by Deacon and Aritreia. Tasso
kills a cricket. The knot spreads and advances
into the jacket with many *and's*, as with the Danes,
who also translated the Bible like this. And so we have
and, and, and—no more—which the French
don't have. They have crouching planks there,
they call them elegance. The bridge goes in the eyes.
The soul in the railway. I puff, for I'm a pillar.

The Edge From Where We Measure

Shiva gleams on a white pansy
and a penguin kicks the sphere. The radar
switches off. After speed? Nothing.
We only slept some twelve hours.
We were eating pizzas from Santa Fe
to Boston. Our minds sprinkled. The wheat
cleaved. I wanted to lick you on the neck.
What? Where? You rob the steering wheel
and the air. You stop. You smoke
and build a hut for little birds. Triangles,
you split open their feet, their toes
with the drawn-in bulbs for fingernails
which may be a football ground, a sea
or your screen. You inherited six of them.

Ferryman

I know you toil and loiter. The mourner
bids adieu. Her leaves' whiteness
recalls stalks. The graffiti of the poor
is under the earth. The adieu has staccato poses.
Drowns and flees. It resounds in the hut
when you wipe off the saddle. So we have
a wet ship and a dry rider. A worm
from a trunk and an oudine from grain. The position
between the land and the river is wiped. The position
is wide. The river is cold. As long as he travels
parallel he doesn't need a draftsman.
But then, now will it whistle? Will there be
a bell, will it be perforated? Will the earth
split, as then within vineyards?

Tiepolo Again

The pill percolates. Methadone is technology.
Eyes in the Sava. There will be no more white tuck-ins.
Christ was exposed. Roe deer
kept their paws apart. Quilts
fluttered, and the wheat-like ones. We shelled
tweezers. Is there always skin under
the skin? Is the situation in the niches
and cockroaches and in the deep
Piranesi caves taken care of? Will lights be
by the legs? Will the dust burn? I gather myself
by Mormons. I embroider from lace, I have
a butterfly, Tasso, who drinks
from a bottle. Clouds rush like crumpled
wash, faster than watered guests.

In the Tent Among Grapes

Don't sneak me onto mountains, chicken. Don't verify
your neighbor. You creep on my vaults. Where
paws and stars flash. Where Nietzsche
bites his knees (*Komarča!*) on the path above
Nice. What an azure milky whiteness!
Did you knead a little flour into torpedoes?
Did you sponsor a robbery of bees? Ears
adjust to the sky. Tendrils—if wholly
in white garlic—do you then tear them
like berries? We hear the engine, not the horse.
His eyes are poured out onto my hands.
Stumps and columns and stalks that you dunk
into the Mediterranean. Steve and Ken (asleep)
water flowers. The chimney branches out.

Mother and Death

There is no grinding. Consumption is embittered.
The shove twists a white feather. The law
is in Kent's throat. White green violets.
The *schmeketa* pump is knocked down.
You revolt in the color of spilled wine.
You bring cakes and name them,
sell them here. White quails
have top-notch wings. The bone is among
the found. The found is expected
by witch doctors. Confirm to her what she saw.
Confirm to her that she was chatting.
That there are no remains. That the way is easy
always. That there is not even a drop
of reproach in front of the white mute.

Along Grajena River

I helped
the peach
to braid itself.

Why did you already shut
your mouth on the mountain?
The sled

rolls,
turns round its axles.
It runs with

dogs and moose.
Boka is an ink stain.
Cut into the icy slope

and scattered powder.
The stone gives heat.
Ormoź begs a hen.

I am Ban's daughter.
I played piano
in Poker,

the garden
did not keep.
Surely I must have died.

The Dead

Ou peut-être pas.

Perhaps their trumpets curve.

They forgot doorknobs in the floods
and now they dive for them.

Maybe they press the buttons
to rescind the aberrations.

Maybe they use crepe paper.

Maybe they're not so talentless

and crackle underwater like shells

and stones, such that every thousand years

of crackling harvests us

a tiny white stone.

Is it cold?
Are you snowed in?
The tent, does it still creak?

In a field near the Hrpelje-Kozina station
in the year 1911,
a cadet shot himself
in the mouth with a pistol.

Academy of American Poets

Muldoon says Heaney is like the Vasa
ship. Built on three floors,
it was the world's biggest battleship.
It made half a mile
and capsized alone in a harbor.
The warriors are killed by insects
and lack of glycerine.
Scurvy corrodes their skulls.
Spruce trees shake off their seed and snow.
Between Zlatorog and the Savica waterfall
there is no hoarfrost.

Enamel

The tongue doesn't bind itself. It's a cleanser and a clean freak,
the marble-smooth skin of refined ladies,
a cork, a self-satisfied little clod.
When Alexander burns Persepolis, it can
meditate. It takes apart fighting lions
as if it's a silky little onion (diminutives strengthen,
they flood), their kindness is worse
than K's, who wishes us all well.
Am I a cold fish that kills Christ
with its tail? Saws through the cross? Should he fall
on his knees again, although he's still perforated
with nails? How will we do this, take him off
the cross so the knees will bend?
But what if they're already cold and stiff
like Cletus's corpse, whom Alexander undid
out of a guilty conscience, since he burned
Persepolis. Clearly Persepolis had to be
burned, the Rothschilds denationalized.

Vases

The sold-out butter rolls are padded.
Torcello burns. The khan who spat
over the drop is driving. The data is where

the woods shove. When we come through
the woods to the corpse, fond of air,
did we already see this hide?

Is it borrowed? Where are its signets
and crinolines and my stamps? *Die Gestalt*,
all scratched, cracked on the fork.

Or further inside. What do I know.
Did he ramble as in some kind of pot? We,
the types, must borrow a little stove. Atanor

wheezes. Cumin is brutally alive.
Waterlilies go through little needles. Dwarves
jump off. The does with snouts do not.

Frightened, they kneel on leaves. This lumberjack
appears in a porno. He's drenched.
He has an axe. The shirt fits him well.

The birdies accept him, and the elephants, marching
into the daylight, trod the reservoir alone.
The curtains only hindered them.

Pessoa Scolding Whitman

The whore of all solar systems and diligent
little ant, let's begin with this restriction. Until here,
cows, but here the guests can already wipe

their backs, except we dry this laundry
outdoors and the muffs also hang, although
it's summer at Jama in Bohinj. Špela is already

a great-grandmother now, she has a grandson
who plays hockey at Tufts, already forgotten as well,
like those who played chess here:

Cvit, Raša, Avčin, the awesome Montanists,
you can be Mister God in your country
(Raša), but here in Oxford we wear coats

differently, also stutter a little, out of pathos,
so this then pours into our Carinthian blood,
and after my sister, who got married

to Detela, bore a genius (deceased), and one
good and important writer,
now the living and the dead pull each other's hair

and with Barbara we're civil servants, telephones
constantly bang against us, and she was a little
in love, and I, too, and we sang

žure, put together for us by our mothers,
Madam Silva in her instance, and out
of this are born poets and civil servants,

who every free minute break for the Strand,
give search for Mikuž, another boy scout,
another nephew, another son, translating

that dreadful Latvian, I can find him
nowhere, and then Lojze arrives, the type
who would not believe I wished him well,

and yet today, first he gets lost in Harlem,
then he still comes up to Phillis,
who was wildly searching for him, and together

they watch *Microcosmos*, Phillis
howls with enthusiasm and they talk
fourteen hours without stopping, while

I, with Metka, rush to the same film:
how the snails fuck doesn't move us, hardly
staying upright against catatonic fits

of sleep because I must save my energy
so I will wake up in the morning because then
I furiously type and sniff everything: Barbara,

if Govic rises, I will stare once more
at the muscles of the inflated Avčin
rowing, how should I be interested in

the little sex lives of insects
and robbers, and whether I truly
forgot a gift for her birthday.

The Pacific Again

Open the bread.
Oil the wound.
Throw it up, puke it, speak it.
As long as you won't speak, it will hurt.
It will hurt, too, when you say it.
A caraway seed is a bath towel.
Chafers that fold on bones.
Puteshestveny's bundles are clearly starving.
The hunger reflects.
From the statue, from Oregon,
south of your Mihec, who is poured
by a lotus blossom emptying.
Order a mouth.
You don't know you can order it.
Few things are always technical.

The fan carried Liquido in his arms.
If I make him a face L will spring.
We also capitalize the countermand
and mythological monsters help us
so our apertures don't squirt.

Crown witness, crown garden,
watch the white lamb!

Boštjan read me and then
died underwater.

Ophelias on hooks, I'm a statue.
I'm a statue, fairy tales rustle.

Boštjan read me and then
died underwater.

Who will be the third Saint Sebastian?

The world wants to forget.
We want to forget
the dead and youth and freedom.

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