

SAMPLE
TRANSLATION

ANJA GOLOB
SELECTED POEMS
ENGLISH

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Anja Golob: Selected Poems

YESTERDAY, EVERYTHING WAS MORE BEAUTIFUL

[Agota Kristof]

Yesterday, we lived elsewhere and
wore different attires,
we didn't think of weather,
we even collected honey!
By their flight we distinguished our bees
from the neighbours', the taste of their honey
lingered in the air way into
the sombre autumn. Yesterday, we didn't waste
time by meditating on time
we were living, we didn't quietly moon about in corners,
we didn't squeeze coins in our hands
as holy bread... yesterday, we recognized
our faces in mirrors, our gestures,
our thoughts and our words. They were ours,
unestrageable, tender but firm, agile in
articulations. They bore our name.

Today, the sun was late to rise,
too late to still be able to escape
into yesterday, to pretend that here,
where we live now, we know everyone,
that we know exactly how to handle
machines, who to call when there's
fire, where hospitals are, where

the port... Here, today, we may think
we maybe have one, but one is
precisely one too few for us to be able to say
that there is at least someone we have.

Because yesterday we lived elsewhere
we left all our belongings there;
so here, now, we are wholly unable
to sweep in front of our own door. We would like to
write our names on the doors, we would like to
fortify embankments, we would like to have our proper
chalk, our dustpan.

There-yesterday and here-today are standing next to each other
like total strangers queuing at some airport,
waiting for the ashes to abate before
embarking the chosen planes.

There-yesterday will bring a newspaper from the journey,
here-today a box of matches.
We will wait, we have time. When
they return, we will be saved.

Here, where we live today, we will make
a small fire. With awkward flame it will
lick up into the hard night for us
a rickety footbridge
between Today and Yesterday.

LIGHT COMES FROM BENEATH

Light comes from beneath,
A body sleeping next to yours does not see
How it lurks from outside, bangs on windows,
Feels under the door,
Trickles out of you.

Your body is cold and folded
Like a burnt out wire in a bulb,
It is motionlessly blinking in sharp rhythm
(imagine a really precise lighthouse of that kind)
to sleepy steersmen on cruisers.

Light comes from beneath.
She did not know I was a glowworm, but also had
long tentacles and a wax nest –
it is written on my fingertips, but she did not notice.

It could be that I carry in my hands whatever it is she may love,
But it is more likely I only have a flintstone and handful of dry wood
And do not know how to use them to make them be fire.

For all that she rolls over in her sleep, says my name
And takes me, although
Light does not feed on light.

Together we then
Breathlessly play for a long time
On the skin of the air, so

That it shines into the night with sombre glow, and
Slowly, in the thick dusk, it sifts through
Her body, the light from the dark.

"Go back to sleep, go back to sleep," I whisper to her,
may she go blind, I silently beg, may she never see
what I really am, and may she never understand
that nothing I have is really mine,
because everything, all beauty,
just as light,
comes from beneath.

INTO RETICENT HEARTS OF FLOWERS I'M WRITING

For G. F. S.

Into reticent hearts of flowers I'm writing,
Into resinous trunks of woods in the spring,
Into chattering crowns of birches on road sides,
into regular shapes of flocks amongst clouds,
Into swarming of bugs amongst steaming clods
Of ploughed up soil in the fields,
I'm writing down endless winding rivers, into sharply
Pointed raindrops, into filled up puddles and on
worms joyously scrawling up to them for soaking,
I'm writing on yearning dawns sloughing off
out of black bosom of nights,
on fiery heather in hollows, on foaming moss, on crumbling spruces,
on heavy honey in honeycomb, on the keen wind,
I'm writing on pulsating bodies of fearful wild herds,
On pregnant bodies of machines, into buzzing noise of metropolis,
Nimble cranes, rumbling aeroplanes, I'm writing on front pages
of newspapers,
On policemen in the middle of crossroads, trapped between
Metal snakes,
On microchips, on display windows I'm writing,
On bent steel girders of constructions, in e-mails,
Into tic-tac of clocks without hands, into stock market crashes,
Into healthy nutrition, into movies, on gallery walls, theatre houses,
On façades of churches, mosques, synagogues, oratories,

I'm writing into prayers, on shutters of time, into medical checkups,
Into red blood cells, some tests or others, into what we are doing,
Into languages we speak, under the tongue in your mouth,
On your restless hands, amongst stars on your shank,
I'm writing into your curious eyes, I'm writing into hair which, as you say,
is not red at all, I'm writing into palms, into hips, on breasts, on your
Palish complexion, on pubic hair, on labia, into internal organs,
On your forehead I'm writing with capitals, on what you're thinking,
on dreams,
On laughter, on the voice you're calling me with,
on the one you're scolding me with,
on the one you're saying my name with, on your smell, on sweat,
on silence that is sometimes between us,
on everything gone by that binds us,
I'm writing on the rhythm, the beat, on remembrance
and on a sheadow, on the air,
on what will be tomorrow, bloodthirstily I'm grabbing everything
I can grab
for the barren canvas I'm writing on
that I do - and why and when and how -
love you.

WHERE A CHILD CAUGHT A BUG

A shallow hole was left in the ground
Where a child caught a bug.
In time, it filled with dry needles,
Dead ants and fallen leaves
That the wind rushed in.
Once the sunlight had streamed over it long enough
The world inside it grew calm.
Down under, life has slowly thickened.

At first the space in it had the power to shift frames,
But now dark, faint shadows left behind
The caught animal permit no peace.
Where the child caught a bug
A tiny stump has been left in the air.

The child did not know what he had gripped – that the insect
Belonged to the family Lampyridae, order Coleoptera,
That it had wings and it glowed at night along its own trail,
The light it produced being cold,
The spectrum of it being cut short, its wavelength
Ranging between 510 and 670 nanometers.
So instead of shouting "Nano, nano!" he shouted
"Creepy-crawly!" cutting the air
with his clenched fist as an assaulter
following the order but fearing the consequences.

Where the child caught a bug
The wind has blown the clouds apart.
There now, in the night,
Through a narrow crack
It shines
Onto the shallow hole,
Onto the tiny stump
A meager flicker of an empty sky.

TO RISK IT ALL BECAUSE
[SAPPHO]

To risk it all because,
Because the wind does not look over its shoulder
In doubt, searching for the right moment,
Because books grow no thinner to seem
More approachable,
Because names are not easily forgotten,
And anyway, there is no other way.

To risk it all,
To shut the mouth, find a stone flat enough, turn around
And let go of one's self,
Wholly. As long as there is any chance of rising,
To risk a fall, a shattering, an erasure
Is namely not a matter of choice but of unconscious necessity.
Like breathing.

To risk it all,
For it is utterly impossible to think no;
No is so impregnated with yes, it's constantly reviving itself in front of itself,
While you are shutting your eyes tight, standing utterly still,
Taming them, those thoughts, running wild from blinding
Fear of new.

So, to risk it all.

However – do not risk it all for reasons of principle:

He who risks it all does it out of cowardice.

There is no passion in this,

To risk it all absolves you of responsibility

And, while awarding tin medals

For such "heroic" unconditionality,

Only shifts burden onto someone else's shoulders.

There is nothing more void.

Instead, perhaps...

Get up, plastered with cat's eyes,

Bend your head,

Bear one part, sacrifice another,

Risk one part and bargain another – because.

Because the risk is in persistence,

In life with shorter end, silent but without

Resignation, and most of all in mastering

How to let the one who wants to risk it all

To risk it all, without because.