

VERSOPOLIS THREE

Imminent autumns

Neumitne jeseni

Goran Čolakhodžić

Translated from the Croatian by the author

Versopolis at Ledbury Poetry Festival

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VERSOPOLIS
is a unique, Europe-wide platform.
It gives emerging European poets
the chance to reach an audience beyond
the boundaries of the language they write in
by translating and publishing their poems
and inviting them to perform at festivals.



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The poems in this chapbook first appeared in *Na kraju taj vrt* (*In the End that Garden*) by Goran Čolakhodžić, Zagreb, 2015, published by SKUD Ivan Goran Kovačić — apart from the following:

‘Noćas sam nakon godina i godina’ (‘Tonight after years and years I’)
Nagovještaji (Adumbrations)
Sve polako (Everything in Time)

GORAN ČOLAKHODŽIĆ was born in Zagreb, Croatia, in 1990. He holds MA degrees in English and in Romanian. He translates literature from both those languages, as well as into Romanian. Goran writes poetry and prose. In 2015 he was awarded the Croatian *Goran za mlade pjesnike* (Goran for Young Poets) award for his volume *Na kraju taj vrt* (*In the End the Garden*). The book was published later that year in Zagreb. In July 2015 he won the first prize awarded by Petrarca Fest, a no-budget festival organized in Zagreb which celebrates the sonnet. His poems have appeared in a number of literary magazines in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as on-line in various ex-Yugoslav countries, and have been included in two anthologies of contemporary poetry from the region. He participates in public readings and poetry festivals; earlier this year he was Versopolis guest at the European Poet of Freedom Festival in Gdansk. He has plans for at least two more books of poetry and hopes to see them through.

Noćas sam nakon godina i godina
opet odveden tražiti pustinju i
nisam je našao iznova
je šuma odnijela prevagu
opet je zavela zavezala
zamračila staze i
zujala noć

Miris nalaska
mogućih gljiva i
prazna fazanerija tišine sve
vuklo za ruke prema
pružanju sjene i šuma se
dahom stiskala u kičmu i
granama svjesnost mumljanjem šuštavi
skrivala pijesak



Nagovještaji

Na Dnevniku se mijenjaju dnevne politike,
a sintaksa lica i hordi rečenica ostaje pretežno ista.
Dugi i skliski puževi golaći leže po lokvama pod smokvama
nalik na govna crvenih pasa, mađarskih vizli.
Dozrijeva škola. Popodne, zajedno sa suncem, niz ulicu
kotrlja se štropot kotača dječjih kolica. Urlici djece i očeva,
povratak zlačanih hordi u Xanadu.
Sve raste po mongolskom ratnom sistemu, na deset,
trava i šljive, galama i jabuke. Raste i hrpa otpada ljeta
između šupe i živice, prazne i prozirne ljuske lubenica
sa sve manje prugica, kožice rajčica.
Raste i mnoštvo zelenih starica koje nam ruju kompostište
tražeći plastične boce. Gađam ih sazrelim bobama,
a baka već prijeteći istresa debelu deku sa zebrama.

Tonight after years and years I
was led once more to look for the desert and
I did not find it again the
forest took over seduced
tied up darkened
the paths and
buzzed in the night

The smell of finding
possible mushrooms and
an empty pheasantry of silence all
dragged me by the hand to where
shadows spread and the forest
breathily entered my spine
hiding with branches my sentience with murmurs
soughing sands



Adumbrations

In Daily News daily politics shift,
while the syntax of faces and sententious hordes remains
largely the same. Long and slippery slugs lie in the puddles under the figs
like a heap of turds left by red dogs, Hungarian Vizslas.
School ripens. In the afternoon, together with the sun, down the street
rolls the rattle of perambulator wheels. The shouts of kids and dads,
the return of the golden hordes to Xanadu.
Everything grows in accord with the Mongol system, by tens,
grass and plums, apples and uproar. The mound of summer waste
grows as well between the shed and the hedge, the hollow and translucent
watermelon rinds, the skins of tomatoes,
the host of green old ladies who rummage through our compost heap
in search of plastic bottles. I pelt them with ripened grapes,
while Grandma shakes out, threateningly, her thick blanket with zebras.

Rukama grobljima

Ti nemoj mene voljeti. / Moje su ruke ljetno groblje komaraca
T. Augustinčić

Lako je nekoga voljeti kad ne znaš
kako provodi zadnjih pet minuta prije spavanja,
kad si uvjeren da liježe anđeoski
i da mu nevini san odmah gasi sve nagone.
Trebalo se, međutim, opijati smjesama
smijeha i snebivanja, čežnje i gađenja,
seksa i ranjavanja. Moje su ruke u listopadske večeri
groblja komaraca, oni isti živi dlanovi
kojima ti, kao šafran proljeće, obuhvaćam lice
i sve tvoje mekosti i napetosti,
kao što usta obujme udove.
I hajde sad reci kako me voljeti
kada te milujem grobljima,
kada te dvama poljima stratišta vodim kroz ljubav
i krijem to od tebe?
Slutim da si majstor stapanja,
zato te i volim krvavih dlanova.



Lov

Lovio sam zečeve
obilno i nečujno:
nišan je ubijao, nije bilo pucnja,
krznene su vreće padale bez odgode
na suhu travu sumraka. Ostajali su
kruti, otvorenih očiju, bez kapi krvi
na stegnutim ranama, zapravo smiješni,
neopasni u toj smrti koja nije
preotela život, pa je bila prozirna.
Meni nije nestajalo metaka,
a ni njima smrti: stalno su je producirali
po humcima i jarcima.
Spušta se jesen, bit će da je to.

With Hands-Graveyards

Do not love me. / My hands are a summer graveyard of mosquitoes
T. Augustinčić

It's easy to love someone when you don't know
how he spends the last five minutes before going to bed,
when you firmly believe he lies down angelically,
an innocent sleep quenching all his urges.
One has to be always drunk, however, with blends
of laughter and indignation, of longing and disgust,
of sex and wounding. In October evenings my hands
are graveyards to mosquitoes, the very living palms
with which I, as a crocus does spring, cup your face
and all your softness and firmness
as a mouth enfolds members.
Now tell me, how can you love me
when I caress you with graveyards,
when I lead you through love across two fields of death
hiding this from you?
I sense that you're a master of merging,
that's why I love you with bloody hands.



Hunt

I hunted hares
abundantly and inaudibly:
the crosshair killed, there were no shots,
furry bags fell promptly down
on the parched grass in the dusk. They remained
stiff, eyes open, with not a drop of blood
on their clenched wounds: in fact ridiculous,
innocuous in their death which had not
taken over life, and so was see-through.
I did not run out of bullets,
and neither did they of death: they produced it constantly
in ditches and on mounds.
Autumn is falling, it'll be that.

Zadnja košnja

Zadnja košnja još jedan tih ritual.
Ne mora se nužno, ali je dobro,
a i lijepo, jer vraća u kolovoz,
vrijeme kad je košnja zarazna kao i zijevanje,
kad upališ motor i kreneš,
a kad prvi put staneš,
čuješ čitavi motorni zbor iz bliske
daljine, od svake strane svijeta.
Svi svladavamo travu, igramo se krava,
igramo se susjeda u predgrađu Chicaga.

Zadnja je košnja ljepša i muškija:
sam si u tome, često je magla i sumrak.
Obavljaš nešto travi ružno i bolno
u njezinu korist, kao liječnik ili otac.
Vodiš računa o stroju, kupaš ga pred san,
izlijevaš benzin, baviš se, kao što se ne baviš nikad,
jer si filolog, pisar i gej, uljem i čelikom. Na kraju
zaključavaš vrata, izdišući jedno „sve je spremno“ –
sad može zima, sad mogu duge noći bez rasta
provedene daleko od zemlje,
odatle uzdah.

Last Mowing

The last mowing another quiet ritual.
It is not obligatory, but it is good,
and pleasant too, because it re-enacts August,
the time when mowing is as contagious as yawning,
when you start the engine and begin,
and when you stop for the first time
you hear the entire motor choir from the near
distance, from all the four corners of the world.
All of us conquering grass, playing cows,
playing neighbours in the suburbs of Chicago.

But the last mowing is beautiful and manly:
you are alone in it, it's often dusk and there's fog.
You do something unpleasant and painful to the grass
for its own good, like a doctor or a father.
You take care of the machine, you clean it before it sleeps,
you pour out the petrol, dealing with – as you never do,
since you are a philologist, a scribe and gay – oil and steel. In the end
you lock the door, breathing out an 'everything's ready' –
now winter may come, now the long nights without growth
spent far away from the earth,
that's why you sigh.

Stajali smo i koristili perfekt
razgovarajući o tvojoj smrti –
zapravo ne o njoj, jer se već bila dogodila,
njome smo baratali tečno kao glagolima.

Trebalo je riješiti pitanje-dva
u vezi sjetve i proljeća, sunca;
nekoliko napomena prije odlaska na rad,
izostanak hrabrenja tvoj je izraz uzdanja.

Tek oko podneva, poslije magle,
dok si lopatom rezaao korijenje,
sjetio sam se da sam noću i plakao, probuđen,
kratko, prevrnuvši tugu u mraku, kao i zemlju

pri jesenskom kopanju; ušla je
natrag, u humus, kao gujavica.
Sada obojica guramo šake u podatnu tamu,
sve se dogodilo dok još i nije, dobra je zemlja.

We were standing and using past tense
talking about your death –
in fact not about that, since it had already happened:
that one we'd mastered as fully as we did verbs.

An issue or two wanted solving
related to sowing and spring, to sunlight;
a couple of remarks before setting off to work,
the absence of encouragement your way to show trust.

It was only around noon, after the fog,
while you were cutting roots with a shovel,
that I remembered I cried, also, at night, awoken,
briefly, having turned over the sorrow in the dark like the earth

during autumn digging; it went
back into the dirt, like an earthworm.
Now we both push our hands inside the supple darkness,
everything's happened while it still isn't; earth is good.

Sve polako

U svibnju smokva cvate u granama,
ispod kore. Prvi od nizova zelenih pupaka
dolazi, dakle, na red.
Mogu se brojati
godine unaprijed, sve dolje do korijena.
Smokvino drvo je prepuno budućih rujnova
kao kundak stare puške metaka: teška zrna
izlijeću i praskaju tamna, zabijajući pticama
perje i cvrkut i sreću u prsa.
U još neprobušenim trbusima,
svaka smokva nosi kukca po izboru.
U jednoj je zapretan pauk,
u drugoj je mala i prugasta osa koja se godinu-dvije
još neće probuditi; ponegdje grupica mrava
nalik na sjemenke maka. U slatkom snu
mrmljaju, meškolje se i rastu.
Sve se to lagano podiže gore,
k suncu i sjeni neumitnih jeseni.

Everything in Time

In May the fig tree blooms within its branches,
under the bark. The first rank of green belly buttons
comes, therefore, up front.
One can count
years in advance, all the way down to the roots.
The fig's wood is full of future Septembers
like the butt of an old gun is of ammo: heavy bullets
fly out and darkly burst, driving feathers and chirping and mirth
into the chests of birds.
In bellies yet unpunctured
each fig carries a bug of its choice.
In one of them is hidden a spider,
in another a tiny, stripy wasp that will not wake
for a year or two more; in some there's a group of ants
much like poppy seeds. In their sweet sleep
they mutter, shift and grow.
All of this slowly rises up
to face the sun and the shade of imminent autumns.

Pomak prema crvenom (I)

živio sam dosad između
nekoliko zgrada, na dvadesetak ulica,
u tri ili četiri hektara šume i livada.
nisam mislio – u onom je smjeru prostranstvo,
a meni ga pripada zamjetan dio.
dugo su pravokutnici zaokruživali obzor,
reproducirajući odavde vidljivi uzorak prostora.
sada, s ovoga visokog, tamnoga gledišta,
promatram s rubnika središte, uviđam
šprance ponavljanja, oblike stalnosti.
loše iscrtan, trapez grada odavde do rapske,
od nje do džamije, odande
do neke točke na istoku (*traži se kut
nasuprot poznatog a*) pa opet do sobe u kojoj,
zakratko sâm, zaključan i miran, motrim
kroz široke prozore. on će se bezbroj,
ili nešto manje puta, ponoviti, kako bi stvorio grad.
tek će s visokih mjesta, pri malome zumu,
postati jasna generičnost prostora.
unedogled će se nastvarati nekoliko zgrada,
dvadesetak ulica, tri ili četiri hektara šume i livada.
unedogled onih tvornica žarulja, koje će,
u jednu jedinstvenu bakrenu mrlju stoljenih svjetala,
svake večeri činiti zapad

Redshift (1)

I have lived until now among
a couple of buildings, on some twenty streets,
on three or four hectares of woodland and meadow.
I never thought: vastnesses are over there
and a considerable part of them belongs to me.
long have rectangles encircled the horizon,
reproducing the specimen of space visible from here.
now, from this high, dark viewpoint,
I observe the centre from the margin, I perceive
the patterns of repetition, the forms of permanence.
roughly sketched, the trapeze of the city from here to rapska street,
from it to the mosque, from there
to a point in the east (*find the angle
opposite the known a*) and again to the room where,
momentarily alone, locked up and calm, I look
out of the wide windows. the trapeze will be repeated
infinite times, or a couple fewer, in order to create the city.
it is only from high places, at a small zoom,
that the generic quality of space becomes apparent.
there will be spawned endlessly that couple of buildings,
some twenty streets, three or four hectares of woodland and meadow.
endlessly those light-bulb factories which,
with their lights fused together into a single copper smudge,
every evening constitute the west

Imam nešto neriješeno s gradom,
odnosno, mislim da danju nismo u stanju
reći si sve. Nadoknadim, hoću
ili neću, noću, kad mi se primaknu živice
i brda se počnu kotrljati pod nogama.
Bude tu podosta prilaza ulica volti arkada
bude i podosta bronce, zelene od vlažnog mraka
u rijetko košenim parkovima.
Stalno me šalje od pročelja do pročelja
nezgodno vezanim linijama tramvaja
i često sasvim neznanim jezicima
ispisuje nazive zgrada i trgova.
Valja me po pločnicima, dobacuje haustorima,
krijući ipak unutarinja dvorišta –
dokaz da on može sanjati lucidno, ako već ja
bauljam kud moram kroz hodnike i pothodnike.
I onda me ujutro tjera u smijeh
i u podsmijeh, jer znam da se hvalisavo množi
u meni cijele noći, zamazuje mi oči, trubi propagandu,
trudeći se napraviti većim crnjim dubljim
graditi se beskonačan, uzalud u privid.

I have an unsolved issue with the city,
that is, I think that during the day we're unable
to tell each other everything. I make up for it, willy
or nilly, at night, when the hedges draw closer
and the hills start rolling beneath my feet.
There's usually a lot of drives streets vaults arcades
also a lot of bronze, made green by the wet darkness
in parks rarely mown.
It keeps sending me on errands from façade to façade
by inconveniently connected tram routes
and often it spells out the names of buildings and squares
in completely arcane languages.
It rolls me down sidewalks, chucks me over to entrances,
hiding, nonetheless, its inner courtyards –
the proof that it can dream lucidly, while I
clamber where I have to through passages and underpasses.
And then in the morning it makes me laugh
and deride, because I know that it multiplies braggingly
in me all night, pulling wool over my eyes, blaring propaganda,
trying to appear larger blacker deeper
building infinitely, illusively in vain.

Ponekad se prerušava u Sofiju,
Bukurešt, Ruse, u Debrecen,
nekada davno je volio Pariz.
Uvijek, međutim, ostavlja dovoljno rupa
koje ga odaju kao masku.
Za trulim limenim ogradama
dugim na kilometre,
oaze mraka i korova, šljunčane bare
obložene gumama, prljave
od taloga noći; one i zidovi
s rubova zaljeva
krajeva ulica
grubi su, ne mogu biti uđeni
ni izađeni, ne lome se
i ne lome zvukove sablasno
prisutne u snu. I tu
otkrivam slabost: grad se nije
gradio dalje. Ostatak nije tu.
Nedostaje koda.
Njegova je igra ograničena sviješću
da noći brzo lete unatoč jeseni
i mišlju da je spremio
dovoljno ulica. Kuckam o zaslon
i budim se prepređeno.

Sometimes it's disguised as Sofia,
Bucharest, Ruse, as Debrecen,
a long time ago it was fond of being Paris.
Always, however, it leaves enough loopholes
that betray it as a mask.
Behind the rotten iron fences
spanning for kilometres,
oases of darkness and of weeds, gravel pools
padded with tyres, murky
with the sediment of night; they and the walls
on the margins of the bays
of the ends of streets
are rough-hewn, they can be neither entered
nor exited, they do not break
nor do they break the sounds that are eerily
present in the dream. And here
is where I discover its weakness: the city has not
built itself further – the rest is not here –
code is missing.
Its game is curbed by the awareness
that nights fly by in spite it being autumn
and by the thought that it's prepared
enough streets. I knock on the screen
and slyly wake.

Povremeno se sjetim izbrojenosti susreta i to me rastuži. Rastuže me fragmenti prostora, tako i grada, koji će, dok ja budem imao ozbiljna razloga vjerovati da se mijenjam, morati uvijek ostati isti, isti u sve tri ili četiri točke posjeta: u šest, u deset, u tri, u osam. I onda gotovo, nećemo se više imati prilike dodirnuti, iako će možda oni imati prilike negdje i do neke točke u vremenu (koje je rezultat prostora) biti isti. (Oni ne bivstvuju, oni istuju.) Duboko žuto popodnevno nebo ondje gdje više nema ničeg osim ljuske grada – popodne i prozori, popodne i prozori, mutne ovčice oblaka u njima odražene. Ne znam što će bez mene; važno je što ne znam, ne ja. Hoće li na njih utjecati promjena doba (koja je predmet žučne rasprave), hoće li onaj Parižanin kojeg sam početkom stoljeća ostavio u rano jesensko popodne u tihoj slijepoj uličici na rubu središta grada da kopa jarke za odvođe kopati i iskopati, hoće li trebati ručak, hoće li i s kim više razgovarati? Najviše – hoću li ga naći u šest, u deset, u tri, u osam, a da mi ima što reći, hoće li se slomiti, puknuti kao zora? Uvijek tražim više od *scripted NPC*-ja, ali oni su vrhunski umakli vremenu, svejedno ne umakavši tuzi, dubokoj tuzi. Ne znaju što je akcija-reakcija: taj manjak im obilno otvara spremnike sjete. Oni su dokaz mog djetinjstva, njegovih lica i srpnjeva. Njihova je patnja zbog nesvijesti o patnji daleko gora od ljudske, kaže Nietzsche, a ja onda iskapim piće, odaberem jedinu nebezizlaznu opciju na kotaču razgovora, jednako odlazeći, satima, tjednima kasnije dolazeći, Njihova je patnja zbog nesvijesti o patnji daleko gora od ljudske, baš kao u djetinjstvu, u šest i u deset, puknem jezikom, iskapim i recimo odem.

I remember the fact that meetings are numbered, and that makes me sad. I am made sad by fragments of space, therefore of the city, that, while I will have all the reason to believe that I'm changing, will have to remain always the same, same in all the three or four points of visit: at six, at ten, at three, at eight. And then that's it, we'll have no more chance to touch each other, although they might have the chance, somewhere and up to a certain point in time (which is a product of space), to be same. (They do not be, they same.) A deeply yellow afternoon sky where there is nothing but a husk of the city – afternoon and windows, afternoon and windows, blurred sheep-like clouds reflected in them. I do not know what they'll do without me; the important thing is not knowing, not I. Will they be affected by the changing of the times (the change being a matter of heated debate), will that Parisian whom I left, at the beginning of this century, on an early autumn afternoon in a quiet cul-de-sac on the edge of the city's centre to dig trenches for drainage pipes dig and dig out, will he need some lunch, will he ever talk to anyone again? Above all – will I find that at six, at ten, at three, at eight he will have something to say to me, will he break, break like the day? I always ask more of scripted NPCs, but they have escaped time perfectly, not escaping sadness, though, a deep sadness. They do not know about action-reaction: that lack opens up for them the copious reservoirs of melancholy. They are the proof of my childhood, of its faces and its Julys. Their suffering, because they are not conscious of suffering, is far greater than that of men, says Nietzsche, and then I down my drink, pick the only non-impasse option on the conversation wheel, leaving still, coming back hours later, or weeks, Their suffering, because they are not conscious of suffering, is far greater than that of men, just like in my childhood, at six and at ten, I smack my lips, down the drink and let's say leave.

