

VERSOPOLIS FOUR

Featurettes

Trumpametražiai

Indrė Valantinaitė

Translated from the Lithuanian
by Ada Valaitis and Rimas Uzgiris

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TRANSLATIONS:

*Freedom Boulevard, Sight, Angkor Wat ,
Hour of Hunger, Year of the Wolf* and *Hotel Room* © Rimas Uzgis
Lena, Shell, Four-year-old queen, I'll probably be a skinny old woman
and *Blessed be the calf* © Ada Valaitis

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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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INDRĖ VALANTINAITĖ was born in Kaunas in 1984. After graduating from a Jesuit gymnasium, 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 *Of Fish and Lilies* (2006) earned her first prize in the poetry category of the 2006 First Book Contest of the Lithuanian Union of Writers. Her second book *Tales about Love and Other Animals* (2011) won the Young Yotvingian Prize in 2012. Her third book *Trumpametražiai* (*The Featurettes*) appeared in 2017. The title alludes to the velvet cover of the book which is reminiscent of the velvet covering of the cinema seats on which we sit while watching movies. In addition to writing poems, Indrė is a singer, a winner of several singing festivals and a TV journalist and producer.

ON POETRY:

I 'draw' my poems. I see an image and dress it up in the clothes of poetry. I've done this since I was six, just barely having learned to write. There is this idea, with which I would have to agree, that artists are pretend scientists trying to understand or to clear up how and from what the world is made.

ADAPTED FROM JURGA TUMASONYTĖ'S ESSAY ON INDRĖ VALANTINAITĖ:

It is a common belief that an avant-garde movement is associated with the birth of a new art which not only breaches conventional rules, but also involves the artists' personal lifestyles. So the labelling of Indrė Valantinaitė's poetry as avant-garde seems strange. The author by no means seeks to 'blow up the world from its foundations', declare manifestos of creation, join groups and get involved in breaking traditions. Nevertheless, her poetry is evidently related closely to lifestyle and appearance, thus grounding the aesthetics of her poetry in the everyday world.

Valantinaitė is also recognised outside dedicated poetry circles in Lithuania as she is often filmed and participates in music projects. Further extending her aesthetics, women's magazines interview her

on matters of style and fashion and she is a familiar sight at celebrity parties. All these experiences are reflected in her poetry where she scrupulously analyses her feelings and predicaments, as in 'Laisvės Alėja' ('Freedom Boulevard') [see pages 6-7].

The author's self-reflection, the motifs of bodiness and eroticism have been revealed most vividly in her book *Žuvimi ir lelijomis* (*Of Fish and Lilies*). Literary critic Eugenija Vaitkevičiūtė discusses its 'areas of woman's nature, modern social anxiety, graceful *femme fatale* romance, immediate jumps to physiological peculiarities – as the author does not avoid experiments and connections between subtlety and more vivid and dramatic language. Her poem 'Angels Also' reflects this: *Angels also masturbate sometimes / When they mould forming teenage breasts. / While maidens are dreaming of the mouths of their future lovers / And of babies / Who will mouth up their towers. / And the lakes between their legs have names already.*

Five years later her second book, *Pasakos apie meilę ir kitus žvėris* (*Tales about Love and Other Animals*) appeared. The title was chosen 'because I often referred to my works as rhymed tales for adults'. Her poetic world is remarkable for its fairylike aesthetics in terms of sleeping nymphs, apple orchards, halls, crowns and people turned into animals.

Virginija Cibarauskė writes that 'Valantinaitė's poetry is a high-quality product of popular culture which can be consumed in two ways: the reader may either identify himself/herself with the lyrical subject or desire her, admire her helplessness and fragility'. When Valantinaitė speaks bravely and sometimes flirtatiously about her experiences as a woman, separate picturesque poems emerge suggesting a film narrative. Valantinaitė tells us, 'I have always said that a poem is successful if the reader experiences something like a film. I believe that films and poems have one more thing in common, namely: a film may often encompass the life of more than one generation and compresses entire epochs into two hours, while poets seek to find room for the whole world in a few words.'

Laisvės alėja

Senamiestyje, name,
kuriame tarpukariu gyveno
mano močiutė ir gimė tėvas,

po palėpe, kurioje jie badavo,
įrengtas madingas restoranas,

kurio atidaryme aš,
su įmantriausiu maistu burnoje
ir keistos kaltės jausmu pilve,

tik lubomis teatskirta nuo erdvės,
kurioje ji paliko raštelį,

žieduota ranka keliu taureę prie lūpų
ir švenčiu gyvenimą
už mus abi.

Freedom Boulevard

In the Old Town house where
my grandmother lived between
the wars and my father was born –

under the loft in which they starved,
a trendy restaurant has set up shop.

I attend the opening, standing with
pretentiously prepared food in my mouth
and a strange feeling of guilt in my belly,

for only the ceiling separates this space
from the one in which she left her note.

Lifting a glass with a banded hand,
I celebrate life
for both of us.

Regėjimas

Būna dienų, kai nuryti gurkšnį –
toks sunkus, bergžias darbas.

Dienų, kai svaigintis į tave linkstančio
žiedo kvapų derme nėra jėgų.

Visa tai tam, kad išiktų akimirkos,
kai praskrendanti bitė perspėja:
viens, du, trys – atsimerk!

Ir pamatai įtemptą,
švytinčią būties stygą.

Tuos vos virpančius, perregimus siūlus,
besidriekiančius aukštyn nuo kiekvienos
krutančios gyvasties.

Paskui vėl būna ilgos
ilgos dienos . . .

(Juk esti dovanų, per didelių,
kad būtų dailiai įpakuotos.)

Sight

There are days when it's so hard –
so vain – to swallow even a gulp.

Days when I lack the strength to be dazzled
by the fragrance of flowers leaning towards you.

All of it exists for a moment to remain,
as when a bee flies by with advice:
one, two, three – open your eyes!

And you see the taut, shining
strings of being –

quivering, diaphanous threads
stretching up high from every
animate thing.

Later, there will be more
long days . . .

(But some gifts are too large
to be nicely wrapped.)

Angkor Wat

Šventyklos šokėja
su kulka
akmeniniame pilve

Vis sukasi ir sukasi
raitydama klubus ir riešus
kartoja amžinus

Nepermaldaujamų dievų
garbinimo judesius
ištrupėjusiose freskose

Kol jų perparduotos galvos
patogiai įsitaisiusios
šio pasaulio turtingųjų interjeruose

Angkor Wat

The dancer of the shrine
with a bullet
in her belly of stone

Turns and turns and
twists her hips and wrists
repeating eternal

Movements of veneration
for implacable gods
in crumbling frescos

While their resold heads
are comfortably ensconced
in the wealthy interiors of this world

Alkio valandą, vilko metais

I

Alkio valandą
atlaužei man gabalėlį karūnos

kartais brangakmenio trupiniai
papuldavo
įpjaudavo

ir neberekėjo nė vyno

vilko valandą
šalčio savaitę
šukių mėnesį
velnio metais

II

Vidur neįžengiamos girios

Iškaptavai man akmenį sostą
tylos kailiais apkamšei
aplink šukių pabėrei
idant miško žvėrys radę nesudraskytų

Galiausiai išsikrovęs grotuvėlis
ir perskaitytos knygos
nuslydo nuo nutirpusių kelių

Burnos mėnė sugijo belaukiant
aštrių karūnos likučių

Hour of Hunger, Year of the Wolf

I

In the hour of hunger
you fed me a piece of crown

while the crumbs of precious stones
fell to me, at times,
cut me

I didn't need any wine

the hour of the wolf
the week of cold
the month of shards
the year of the devil

II

In the impassable forest

You carved for me a throne of stone
and covered me with furs of silence
scattering shards all around
to keep the beasts away

When my music player died
and all the books were read,
they slid off these benumbed legs

And the hall of my mouth healed up
waiting for the sharp remnants of a crown

Lena

Kurorto kavinukės virėja Lena
rūkydama atsilošia į lauko durų staktą.

Per lietaus portjerą į jūrą sminga žvilgsnis it peilis,
išskrodamas dar nepagautas žuvis.

Kiaurai permerkto žiurstelio su žirniukais kišenės tuščios –
ji ką tik su visam atidavė raktą.

Kurorto kavinukės iškaboj aštriadantė žuvis –
čia firminis patiekalas „Ucha“.

Virtuvėje girdėti kapojamos lydekų galvos:
čak čak čak . . .

Savininko meilužė nusivalo rankas į džinsus –
jaunutė skundikė saulės spalvos plaukais.

Lenos rankinėje sugedusiu užtrauktuku
šąla trys nugvelbti kotletai –
vakarienė dukroms ir sau.

Paskutinis autobusas į namus po dviejų valandų.

Lena

The resort café's cook Lena
leans smoking against the doorjamb.

Through the curtain of rain, a look sharp as a knife pierces the sea
cutting fish not yet caught.

The pockets of her soaking wet apron are empty –
she just returned the key.

A fish with sharp teeth adorns the café's sign –
the signature dish here 'ucha'. Fish soup.

The sound from the kitchen of fish heads being severed:
chop, chop, chop . . .

The owner's lover wipes her hands on her jeans –
young snitch with hair the color of the sun.

Lena's handbag with the broken zipper
holds three lukewarm cutlets –
dinner for her two daughters and herself.

The last bus home leaves in two hours.

Kiautas

Nuo tada, kai iš tavęs išsikrausčiau,
šliaužiu lyg sraigė,
prie kurios glitais kūno vis dar prilipę
aštrūs sulūžusio kiauto likučiai.

Bejausmė šliūžė driekiasi iš paskos.

Milijonai pasaulio viešbučių – iš ledo, dramblio kaulo, akmens druskos –
skalaujama nežinomų kalbų, veidų, papročių jūrų –
paslėptų mane, atvertų savo duris.

Grįžčiau ten, kur prieš dvidešimt 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 žodžių,
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 kalnę, kilmę, gimtąją kalbą.

Shell

From the time I moved out of you,
I slithered like a snail,
with sharp shards of its broken shell
stuck to its slimy body.

An unfeeling trail left behind.

Millions of the world's hotels – made of ice, ivory, stone, salt –
awash in unknown languages, faces, customs, seas –
would hide me, would open their doors.

I would return to where, twenty years ago, I mangled a dead jellyfish –
a transparent cloud the colour of water.
At a time when I didn't have to wear my bathing suit top.

My fingers poked its formless body.
Plasticine.

This would be called 'starting over',
moulding yourself from the very first words,
from the tips of your toes.

Where my heart once was – a sharp shard of glass,
in time it will grow over with petals of woven muscle

with each heartbeat it won't sting so much
it will remind me less of fault, provenance, native language.

Karalienė ketverių

Man buvo ketveri, kai tapau karaliene.
Aš po namus, po kiemus,
Varnų chorui giedant ant antenų.

Delne tik kelios linijos:
Šlovės ir gyvybės.
Lūpų kampe – šokolado dėmė.

Bijau tik tamsos,
Kai prietema išskečia kojas prieš mane,
Įreminu tapeto hieroglifą žvilgsniu ir nemirksiu,
Kol nepareina jie.

Karaliauju ir verkiu
ant tamsiai raudono fotelio
ilgai ir garsiai,
prieš neįjungtą televizorių.
Be priežasties.

Nusmukusių frotinių kojinių rombais,
Aitvaras ant marškinėlių,
Įstrigęs – neskrenda.
O kaūna blizga – už rublį keturiasdešimt.

Four-year-old queen

I was four when I became a queen.
At home and in the yard,
while a choir of crows sang on the antenna.

Only a few lines on my palm:
Glory and life.
A stain of chocolate in the corner of my lips.

I only fear the dark,
When dusk spreads its legs before me,
I frame the hieroglyphics on the wallpaper with a glance,
and I don't blink until they come home.

I reign and I cry
on a dark red armchair
long and loud
in front of the blank television screen. For no reason.

Drooping diamond-patterned flannel socks,
A kite on a shirt,
Stuck – it will not fly.
And the crown – one ruble forty – glitters.

Greičiausiai būsiu liesa senė

Praplėsdama savo bučinius ir baimes
Ji atsibunda naktį,
Kad stebėtūsi viskuo, kas ją pakeitė.
Paul Eluard

Kokiais 2055 greičiausiai būsiu liesa senė
ir užimsiu mažai vietos autobusuose ir eilėse.

Už pusės amžiaus į mano kūną
Težiūrės vonios veidrodis ir daktarai.

Prie manęs liesis
tik prakaituoti naktiniai marškiniai
praplyšusia pažastim.

Tada prieš užmigdama prisiminsiu
mylimojo liežuvį ir jo seilių skonį.
Ir visus kitus vyrus,
kurie manęs kadaise geidė.

Ir dar – kaip girgžda lova
Į kurią sugulama
po du.

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 Eluard

In 2055, I'll probably be a skinny old woman
and I won't take up much space on 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.

Tebus pašlovintas teliukas

I

Tebus pašlovintas teliukas,
iš kurio odos pagaminti
mano batai.

Tebus palaimintas jo skerdikas,
odininkas ir batsiuovys,

tos pardavėjos rankelės,
suguldžiusios aukštakulnius į tamsiai žalią dėžutę,
siauros senamiesčio gatvelės parduotuvėje.

Tebus pašlovintas teliukas,
iš kurio odos pagaminti
mano batai,

atvedė tiesiai pas tave.

II

Tebus prakeiktas.

Blessed be the calf

I

Blessed be the calf
from whose hide
my shoes were made.

Blessed be the butcher,
the tanner and the shoemaker,

the salesgirl's little hands
that placed the high heels into a dark green box
in a shop on a narrow street in the old town.

Blessed be the calf
from whose hide
my shoes were made.

Shoes that brought me to you.

II

Accursed be.

Viešbučio kambarys

Jis daug keliauja.

Kiekvienąkart jam rodos,
kad išnuomotas kambarys
primygtinai siūlo
visus septynis kelius.

Nors jame tėra
mini baras ir Biblija.

Du būdai
įsitverti rytojauš.



Hotel room

He travels a lot.

Every night it seems
that the rented room
urges him to take
all seven roads.

There is, though,
a Bible and a mini bar:

Two ways to grasp at
tomorrow.