

V E R S O P O
L I S T H R E E
L E D B U R Y
T W E N T Y T W E N T Y

cold-shiver-oil

þorskalýsi

Sigurbjörg Þrastardóttir

Translated by Pétur Knútsson, Bernard Scudder,
Sarah Brownsberger and the author

F L E M I S
H G E O R
G I A N I C E
L A N D I C I
T A L I A N

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The Þ in the author's name is the Icelandic thorn character (lower case: þ) which is pronounced 'th' as in 'thick'. The other distinctive Icelandic letter is the eth character (lower case: ð; upper case: Ð) pronounced 'th' as in 'breath'. Both these characters feature in Old English (eg in *Beowulf*) and some dialects of Middle English (eg in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* but not in *The Canterbury Tales*).

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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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VERSOPOLIS THREE

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Translated from the Icelandic by Pétur Knútsson,
Bernard Scudder, Sarah Brownsberger and the author

Versopolis at Ledbury Poetry Festival

2020

SIGURBJÖRG ÞRASTARDÓTTIR (born 1973) is the author of eight poetry collections, a couple of novels and a few staged plays.

Her poetry cycle *Blysfarir* (*Torch Marches*) was nominated for the Nordic Council Literature Prize in 2009 and subsequently published in German and Swedish. Her poetry is widely translated for readings and anthologies in Europe and beyond.

Her mini-play *Decent People*, about Nobel Prize author Halldór Laxness, was staged at King's Place in London in 2016, and her radio drama *Boneshakers* was listed as Highly Commended in the BBC International Radio Playwriting Competition 2018.

Þrastardóttir is the translator of Simon Armitage's poetry collection *From Where We Stand* (*Þaðan sem við horfum*) published by Dimma in 2019. She also collaborates with musicians and visual artists, most recently with composer Ingibjörg Ýr Skarphéðinsdóttir on *Klakabrennur II* (*Ice Fires II*), a piece for mezzo-soprano and string quartet whose theme is climate angst. Her latest work in print is the poetry collection *Hryggdýr* (*Triste Beasts*).

TRANSLATORS OF THE POEMS IN THIS CHAPBOOK

requiem: the author

cold-shiver-oil: the author with Pétur Knútsson

by the exit: the author

my breasts: the author with Pétur Knútsson

washout: the author

immigrant / june: Bernard Scudder

home delivery: Bernard Scudder

murder story: Bernard Scudder

we dry our tears: Sarah Brownsberger

the arctic circus: the author with Pétur Knútsson

requiem

Allt fólkid í kórnum
á eftir að daprast sundur
eins og sálirnar í messunum
sem það syngur;
allir barkar
munu
verpast og stökkva í tvennt
kjálkabein veðrast
og þindir þyngjast í svörð, en
þó ekki fyrr
en flutt hefur verið eitt verk
enn eða tvö eða átta hundruð fyrir
fullum sölum af brjóski og snittum því
á meðan holdið hreyfist er
mikilvægt að halda
hópinn

requiem

All the people in the choir
will wither apart
like the souls in the services
they sing;
all windpipes
will
warp and crack in two,
cheekbones will erode
and diaphragms sink into soil, but
not until
they have performed
one more piece or
two or eight hundred before
halls full of cartilage and canapés for
while the flesh is moving it
is important to clutch
together

Þroskalýsi

Einu sinni þegar Elísabet Englands-
drottning var tuttugu og tveggja ára
stóð hún snögg upp af baðkari
og teygði hendurnar svo hátt til himins
í einhverju bjartsýniskasti að hún
fékk sárt tak í síðuna. Hún smeygði
sér stillilega í mjúkar teygjubuxur sem
einhver hafði smyglað inn til hennar
og lá fyrir það sem eftir lifði þess dags.

cold-shiver-oil

Once upon a time when Queen Elizabeth
of England was twenty-two she
suddenly stepped out of a bathtub
and raised her hands so high towards the sky
in some fit of optimism that she felt
a stinging stitch in her side. She slowly
slipped into a pair of soft long trousers that
somebody had smuggled into her room
and lay quiet for what remained of the day.

við útganginn

Sitjum ekki
svona nálægt dyrunum,
það gustar um
glufur og

engin okkar vörn
þegar nýju þjónarnir

koma
og
láta ískra í lömum, af ásettu —

sitjum ekki þar
sem
okkur er sagt; við
erum fimm, þeir
nýir

og hlýtur að
vega þungt að þrjú okkar eru
börn

by the exit

Let's not sit
so close to the door,
there is a draught through
cracks and

we have no defence
when the new waiters

show up
and
make the hinges screech, on purpose

let's not sit
where
we are told; we
are five, they are
new

and it should
carry weight that three of us are
children

brjóstin mín

Allegro non troppo, adagio non troppo, allegretto grazioso, piano, diminuendo, a piacere, allegro con spirito, tenuto, (agitato), grave, presto ma non assai, leggermente crescendo, con slancio, fortissimo, grandioso, larghetto, quasi andantino, allattante, mezzo forte, staccato, affettuoso, legato, giocoso, vivace, forte, meno mosso, amabile, alla marcia

Hratt ekki um of, hægt ekki um of, allgreitt með reisu, veikt, smám saman mýkra, að vild, hratt með andagift, haldið, (órólega), með alvöru, fljótt en þó ekki, lítillega vaxandi, með áhuga, mjög sterkt, hástemmt, nokkuð breitt, næstum á gönguhraða, mjólkandi, af hálfum styrk, slitið sundur, af tilfinningu, bundið, með gleði, líflega, sterkt, minni hreyfing, ljúflega, marsrandi

dolente — með sársauka

my breasts

Allegro non troppo, adagio non troppo, allegretto grazioso, piano, diminuendo, a piacere, allegro con spirito, tenuto, (agitato), grave, presto ma non assai, leggermente crescendo, con slancio, fortissimo, grandioso, larghetto, quasi andantino, allattante, mezzo forte, staccato, affettuoso, legato, giocoso, vivace, forte, meno mosso, amabile, alla marcia

Quick but not too quick, slow but not too slow, pretty lively with grace, soft, gradually softer, at pleasure, fast and spirited, held, (restless), solemn, very quick but not extremely, lightly growing, with enthusiasm, very strong, magnificent, rather broadly, as if at walking speed, suckling, moderately strong, detached, affectionate, bound, merry, brisk, strong, less movement, pleasantly, on the march

dolente — mournful

útvatna

Í ákveðnum bjarma undir
baðljósinu er ég tekin eins og langalangamma
mín sem átti átta börn á þessum aldri og
var hress, níunda barnið dó
úr berklum, ég hlusta á Joan Baez
úr málmhlut innan úr stofu og dýpka hrukkurnar
til gamans því ég veit að þessir dalir
undir augunum koma úr
fjallinu ofan við sveitakirkjuna
ömmu minnar sem var hress og ég
maka á mig bláleitu kremi, mæli mér
þverhandarbreiðan tannþráðarspotta
úr glæru hulstri og slekk
ljósið eins
og
hún hefði gert til að fara vel með

washout

In a certain glare under
the bathroom light I am haggard
like my great-great-grandmother
who had eight children at this age and
was swell, the ninth child died
of tuberculosis, I listen to Joan Baez
from a metal object in the living-room and
dramatize my wrinkles for fun because
I know these dales
beneath my eyes are from
the mountain above the country church
of my grandmother who was swell and
I smear myself with bluish cremes, measure
a dental floss the size of my palm
from a lucid case and put
out the light like
she
would have done to skimp

innflytjandi / júní

mér finnst það ætti að blanda
beinaflísunum í malbik og að
þú ættir ekki að vera í svona
háhæluðum skóm hér (þeir
gætu sokkið hún er
heit sólin)

ertu með svona há kinnbein?

að ganga alveg hljóðlaust
gráta sig í svefn rífa e-ð
í sig

er eina markmiðið í dag á
morgun fáum við nýja
hugmynd

mér finnst ég hafi séð þessi
augu þín áður kemurðu
oft hingað? hér voru
miklu fleiri aðdáendur
áður en vegurinn var lagður
svona beint

hún er heit sólin, við samt
þetta langt frá

immigrant / june

i think they ought to mix
bone splinters into the tarmac and that
you shouldn't be wearing such
high heels here (they
could sink it's
hot the sun)

have you got such high cheekbones?

walking without a sound
crying yourself to sleep wolfing something
down

is the only goal today
tomorrow we'll have a new
idea

i think i've seen those
eyes of yours before do you come
here often? there were
many more admirers here
before the road was laid
that straight

it's hot, the sun, though we're
this far away

heimsending

kemur maður hjólandi
inn í stofuna hjá mér
eyrnastór og drýpur af honum
óeirðaolía
nefstór og skálmarnar tættar
stígur af hjólinu
munnstór en segir ekki orð
olíubrák á gólfinu
kannski er ég hætt að skilja fólk en
hvað vill þessi maður?
er að hugsa um að bjóða honum eplasafa
þá skemmir hann þögnina
píreygður, skoðar sig um og segir:
já, varst þú að panta byltingu?

home delivery

a man comes cycling
into my living room
big-eared and dripping
riot oil
big-nosed and ripped pant legs
dismounts from his bike
big-mouthed but doesn't say a word
an oil slick on the floor
maybe i've stopped understanding people but
what does this man want?
i consider offering him apple juice
then he ruins the silence
squint-eyed, looks around and says:
yes, did you order a revolution?

morðsaga

haustið hætti við að fara
kom aftur um jólin
ég setti skóinn út í glugga
og fékk píanó
en líka þetta laufblað af björk
setti það í þykka bók
sem ég hafði aldrei lesið
sé fyrst núna hvað það er kunnuglegt
það hefur sama lag
og hálsinn þinn innanverður
ég gæti gert eitt
ég gæti lagt það varlega í kokið á þér
þannig gætirðu hætt að anda
fyrirhafnarlaust
rammíslenskt laufblað
næfurþunnt
er fallegasti dauðdaginn
finnst þér ekki

murder story

the autumn decided not to leave
came back at christmas
i put a shoe in the window
and got a piano
but also this leaf of a birch tree
put it in a thick book
that i had never read
see first now how familiar it looks
it has the same shape
as your throat
and i could do one thing
i could place it carefully in your gullet
so you could stop breathing
without effort
a genuine icelandic leaf
wafer-thin
is the most beautiful way to die
don't you think

við þerrum tár

Þá fara
jakarnir
í
hungurverkfall
einn
ganginn enn

(ok við þerrum
óskær
tár)

„Hér er engin mannabyggð og langt á daginn liðið.”

we dry our tears

There go
the icebergs
on
a hunger strike
yet
again

(and we dry our
cloudy
tears)

‘This is a lonely place, and the hour is now late.’

heimskautasirkusinn

Tja,

maður er þetta, hva, fjórir
aflangir skankar sem
liðast út frá
bráðhræddum
bol

er nema von að manneskjur brotni

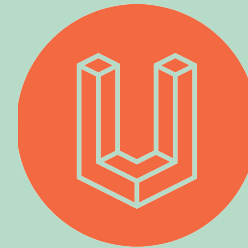


the arctic circus

Well,

each of us is, what, four
oblong extremities
snaking from a
flare-scared
trunk

collapse is quite on the cards



VERSOPOLIS

where
poetry
lives

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