

DELA  
OTONA  
ŽUPANČIČA



I

MCMXXV!

LJUBLJANA

**Oton Župančič (1878–1949)**

Longest lived of the four Moderna writers, Župančič spanned several literary styles and worked in a number of different genres. His best poetry was written before World War I, and was by and large neo-romantic. A play, *Veronika Deseniška* (1924, “Veronica of Desenice”), based on an episode in Slovene history, had clear symbolist dimensions to it. In the 1930s he engaged in some publicistic activities, in his polemic with Josip Vidmar, the ubiquitous Slovene literary critic, concerning the Slovene-American writer Louis Adamic. During and after World War II he took up poetry again in the service of the Slovene resistance movement and the new Communist government, in which he served as Slovene Minister of Culture. Župančič’s impact on twentieth-century Slovene literature has been profound, even as the value of his contributions to it continues to be discussed. The Slovene texts come from Oton Župančič, *Dela*, vol. 1 (Ljubljana: 1935), and vol. 2 (Ljubljana: 1936). The translation of “Duma” (1908, the word refers to a Ukrainian folk genre), perhaps his most important poem, is taken from *Slovene Studies: Journal of the Society for Slovene Studies* 8.2 (1986): 88–92. The other translation is from Oton Župančič, *A Selection of Poems*, ed. and tr. Janko Lavrin (Ljubljana: Državna Založba Slovenije, 1967) 34.

## Duma

Slišal sem pesem in čul sem glas pojoč,  
glas moža, kot da je odgovor ženskemu glasu;  
čul sem, kako je zvenelo moje srce.

Pesem moža in odgovor ženski pesmi:

Sredi poljan si in poješ mi pesem zeleno vso,  
pesem vetra in vej in trave in sonca na travi,  
pesem hitečih in pesem stoječih valov,  
pesem srebrnih in pesem zlatih valov—  
pesem potokov in pesem žit.

“Kakor s trakovi so zvezane s cestami tu vasi;  
cerkev je dvignila glavo preko streh,  
z viška motri nehanje ljudi pod seboj,  
ure jim meri in delo deli.

Hiše so hišice, okna so okenca, nagelj iz oken  
lije zelen se po steni, rdeče se peni  
v soncu tihi ta slap—  
znamenje fantom, ki hodijo mimo čez dan,  
znamenje tajno za noč—”  
poješ; in pisanih rut so vesele tvoje oči,  
zdravih, rjavih lic in bisernobelega smeha,  
kretenj oglatih in hoje nerodne in kmečkih zadreg,  
kletve robate ušesu so tvojemu vino,  
krepka primera—dala bi zanjo cekin.

Sredi poljan si in poješ mi pesem zeleno vso,  
poješ in vabiš:

“Hrasti orjaki za poljem stoje in se z burjo borijo,  
sanje stoletij vrhove jim zibljejo v daljnem šumenju,  
vsake pomladi novina poslušna skrivnosti davnine;  
ti pa se mučiš v tujini in dušo dušiš—  
jaz pa sem z rožami roža: pomešam se mednje—  
mimo bi šel in me ne bi razbral iz mojih družic.”

Sredi poljan si in poješ mi pesem zeleno vso,  
vriskaš in vabiš,  
kličeš na kmete.

## Duma

I have heard a song and I have heard a voice singing,  
The voice of a man, as if the answer to a woman's voice;  
I have heard my heart ringing.

The song of the man and the answer to the woman's song:

You are amidst the fields and you sing me a song entirely green,  
A song of the wind and the branches and the grass and the sun on the grass,  
A song of the hastening and a song of the standing waves,  
A song of the silver and a song of the golden waves—  
A song of the brooks and a song of the grain.

“The villages here are bound by roads as if by ribbons;  
The church has raised its head above the roofs,  
From above it observes the toil of the people beneath,  
It measures their hours and divides their labor.  
The houses are tiny. the windows so small, the carnations from the windows  
Pour green along the wall, red foams  
This quiet waterfall in the sun—  
A signal to the boys who walk past during the day.  
A secret signal for the night—”  
So you sing; and your eyes are glad at the patterned kerchiefs,  
The healthy, sunburned cheeks and the pearl-white laughter,  
The angular motions and the awkward gait and the peasants' straits;  
Coarse oaths are wine to your ear,  
The strong simile—you would pay good money for it.

You are amidst the fields and you sing me a song entirely green,  
You sing and invite:

“The oak giants stand beyond the field and fight with the wind.  
The dreams of the ages rock their crowns to a distant roaring,  
Each spring novelty pays heed to the secrets of the past;  
You struggle abroad and suffocate your soul—  
While I am with roses a rose: I mix among them—  
You could walk by and not distinguish me from my friends.”

You are amidst the fields and you sing me a song entirely green,  
You shout out for joy and invite,  
You summon back to the countryside.

Glej in moj ponos se pne in pesem z njim,  
 drzno in smelo gleda tvoji pesmi v oči.  
 Tvoji pesmi jaz zoperstavim pesem mest,  
 pesem obzidanih cest in korakov, po tlaku hitečih,  
 ritem rok in ramén, ki dvigajo kamen in hlod,  
 takt železnic, pod zvezdami vsemi enak,  
 tok velerek, ki jim tovor in breme je dika,  
 žic brnenje, ki vežejo sever in jug  
 in vodijo glas zapada k ušesu iztoka.  
 (Rad nastavljam uho na drog brzozavni:  
 v službi stoji, nepremičen kurir, in poje in poje,  
 z motnim mrmranjem vesti spremljajoč, ki oddaja jih dalji—  
 pesnika srce pripeva tako idejam, hitečim  
 z dobe elktriko preko njegove glavé.)

Kje je tujina? Kako me duši?  
 Videl sem matere—kakor pri nas so bedele nad zibelko,  
 dete po njihovih nedrih za mlekom je tipalo;  
 videl može sem v borbi za trdi kruh  
 silne in mračne,  
 in za ljubezen; bil sem med njimi sam;  
 videl krvi sem naval,  
 strast in boj;  
 videl zemljó in zemljaka na grudi domači,  
 njemu bila je najdražja kot naša nam;  
 gledam zemljó—in lepa bila je kot naša,  
 vredna enake ljubezni kot naša;  
 videl sem hišo ob cesti in krenil sem vanjo popotnik—  
 vina in hleba dobil sem in dobro besedo,  
 šla mi je v slast bolj od vina in hleba.  
 V vélikih mest valovanju bil sam sem val,  
 o, in moje srcé je utripalo  
 v taktu mogočnem, potisočerjenem;  
 v novo življenje planila je duša seljaka,  
 nova mu vera objela srce je utrujeno.  
 Videl sem čela: kot da jim pod kožo lazijo želve,  
 ali to misel jih je razrila tako;  
 videl sem lica: v njih brazde za seme bodočnost;  
 roke so stregle stroju ves dan,  
 ali zvečer je zablislilo čelo to sájavo,

Look and my pride rises high and a song with it,  
Bold and daring it looks your song in the eye.  
To your song I oppose the song of the cities,  
The song of the immured roads and steps hastening along the pavement,  
The rhythm of hands and shoulders that move stones and tree trunks,  
The beat of the railways, the same beneath all the stars,  
The flow of great rivers, whose boast is materials and cargo,  
The hum of the wires that bind north and south  
And lead the voice of the west to the ear of the east  
(I like to put my ear to the telegraph pole:  
It stands on duty, an immovable courier, and sings and sings,  
With muted murmurs receiving the news which it sends on farther—  
So does the heart of the poet accompany the ideas hastening  
With the electricity of the era over his head.)

Where are foreign lands? What is suffocating me?  
I have seen mothers—standing guard as in our country over cradles,  
The child groping at their bosom for milk;  
I have seen men in battle for their coarse bread,  
Strong and gloomy men,  
And for love; I was among them myself;  
I have seen the surge of blood,  
Passion and struggle;  
I have seen a country and a countryman on his own soil,  
To him it was dearest, as ours is to us;  
I look at that country—and it was as beautiful as ours is,  
Worthy of the same love as ours is;  
I have seen a house along the road and have entered it a traveler—  
I have received wine and bread and a kind word,  
The last more pleasurable to me than the wine and the bread.  
In the great cities' surging I myself have been a wave,  
O, and my heart has beat  
In their powerful, thousandfold rhythm;  
The soul of the villager has risen to new life,  
New faith has embraced his tired heart.  
I have seen foreheads: as if turtles were crawling beneath their skin,  
But it was thought that wrinkled them so;  
I have seen cheeks: in them furrows for the seeds of the future;  
Hands have served the machine all day,  
But in the evening that sooty brow glistened,

in oko je krožilo po svetlih pokrajinah,  
sanjalo smeje sanje bodočnosti,  
spremljalo silne kretnje govornika  
in verovalo za rod, ki še rojen ni...

Slišal sem bojni krik iz Mandžurije,  
sredi Pariza čul sem odjek stoter.  
Gledal sem dleto kiparja: z ljubeznijo  
šlo kot poljub čez belino je mramora,  
s skale narahlo je snov odpoljubljalo,  
plahoma v nji je življenje zavzdihnilo.  
Videl sem misleca: pisal je zákone  
ljudstvu ne zemskemu—zvezdam je kazal pot,  
pa nesoglasje v vsemirju zasledil je,  
novih svetov je zahteval njegov račun,  
“Bodi!” je rekel—in noč mu je dala nov svet...

Tu, tu se žile življenja stekajo,  
pota vesoljstva tukaj se sekajo,  
ljubim jih s hrupom in šumom, ta vélika mesta—  
skoznje v svobodo gre, skoznje v bodočnost gre cesta...

\* \* \*

Čul sem, kako je zvenelo moje srce:

Sveta si, zemlja, in blagor mu, komur plodiš—  
z oljem mu lečiš razpokano dlan,  
shrambe mu polniš in vina mu vračaš za znoj,  
daješ sena in otave za vola, ki vlačil je brano,  
hodil pred plugom in družno potil se z oračem;  
točiš cvetlicam v čaše medu, da pride čebela,  
gnana od tajne skrbi spomladi na delo za božič;  
ni gospodinje strah mrazov, zakaj nje družina  
dvojno obleko ima, in čuješ na tnalu  
trlice? In osnutek na stativah čaka že votka.  
O, tam sveti duh razprostrl je krila nad mizo,  
blažen je trud in blažen počitek družini.

And the eye wandered through bright regions,  
It dreamed daring dreams of the future,  
Followed an orator's powerful gestures,  
And kept faith for a generation which is not yet born.

I have heard the martial shout from Manchuria,  
In the middle of Paris I have heard its hundredfold echo.  
I have watched the sculptor's chisel: with love  
It went like a kiss through the whiteness of the marble,  
From the stone it gently kissed out its material,  
Shyly life began to sigh in it.  
I have seen the thinker: he was writing laws  
For a not earthly people—he was showing the stars the way.  
And a disturbance in the universe he investigated,  
His calculations demanded new worlds,  
“So be it,” he said—and the night gave him a new world.

Here, here life's veins meet,  
The ways of the universe criss-cross here.  
I love them with their noise and sound. these great cities—  
The path to freedom goes through them, through them goes the path to the  
future.

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I have heard my heart ringing:

You are holy, O Land, and blessed is he for whom you bear—  
With oil you heal his cracked palms,  
You fill his barns and return him wine for sweat,  
You give hay and grass for the ox who pulled his harrow,  
Walked in front of the plow and together sweated with the plowman;  
You pour honey into the flowers' cups, so that the bee may come,  
Driven in spring by a secret care to toil for Christmas;  
The housewife does not fear the cold because her family  
Has doubled clothing, and do you hear the hemp-brake on the block?  
And the warp on the frame is awaiting the woof.

O, there the Holy Spirit has spread his wings above the table,  
Blessed is the labor and blessed the repose of the family.



Hodil po zemlji sem naši in pil nje prelesti.  
 Ljubil sem jo. Kakor grudi deviške razgaljene  
 duhtele pod soncem so njene poljane razpaljene;  
 potapljal sem se v valove njenih žit,  
 sam, sam s seboj, le z mislimi svojimi skrit  
 v molčeči družbi mladega hrepenenja,  
 mlad, mlad—to se pravi: v srcu vsega življenja.

In vsa širina je z mojimi sanjami snivala,  
 in nébes in gor sta mojim željam se odzivala;  
 škrjanček—pojoča raketa—je pesmi pršil:  
 je čul moje srce, od njega se peti učil?  
 Livada, si videla cvetje moje duše,  
 pa si ga posnela, okitila z njim svoje ruše?

Tvoja roka, moj otec, zemljé mi lepoto odpirala  
 in—čudo za čudom—zavesse prirode odstirala;  
 ti kazal si njiv mi plodove, sprovajal me v les,  
 razkladal skrivnosti glasov in družine dreves,  
 in vedela sva, kje kosi mladijo, kje drozdi,  
 kod divji mož hodi, kje vile se skrivajo v gozdi.

Na Gregorjevo—otec, še veš?—se ptički ženili so,  
 za šolskim vrtom v mejici gostili se, pili so;  
 midva preko ceste sva slušala... “Čuješ živ-živ?  
 To je ‘živio’—zdaj starejšina je mlādi napil.”  
 In ko razleteli se svatje iz meje so z vriščem,  
 povlekel si me za rokav in mi rekel, naj iščem.

Pa—s čudom še v srcu in strahoma—ve mejo iskat sem šel,  
 za ptiči in njihovim pirom paberkovat sem šel;  
 in glej, tam pod grmom, pod gabrovim—majhnih potic,  
 in sladkega vinca, rožičev, in fig, vseh slaščic.  
 “Pa ne bo jih nazaj več?” — “Ne, to so vse tebi pustili,  
 kar ti si jim trosil po zimi, so zdaj ti vrnil.”

O rodni dom, o hiše očetove streha ti!  
 Siromaku si grad in popotniku v dalji uteha ti:

I have walked over our land and drunk her delights.  
I have loved her. As of the bared breasts of a girl  
Have her scorched fields smelled beneath the sun;  
I have dived into the waves of her grain,  
I, I alone, hidden only by my thoughts,  
In the silent company of youthful yearning,  
Young, young—that is to say, in the heart of all life.

And her whole breadth dreamed with my dreams,  
And sky and mountains responded to my desires;  
The lark—a singing rocket—showered down songs:  
Did he hear my heart, did he learn from it to sing?  
Meadow, did you see the blossoms of my soul,  
And imitate them, and use them to adorn your own sod?

Your hand, my father, uncovered for me the beauty of the land  
And—miracle after miracle—rent apart nature's curtain;  
You showed me the fruits of the fields, led me into the forest,  
Explained the secrets of the voices and the families of the trees,  
And we two knew where the blackbirds nest, where the thrushes,  
Where the wild man walks, where the fairies hide in the woods.

On St. Gregory's—father, you remember—the birds got married,  
In the hedge behind the school garden they celebrated, drank;  
The two of us listened from across the road. “Do you hear chirp-chirp?  
That's ‘cheers’—the head of the table has now toasted the bride.”  
And when the guests flew away from the hedge all aflutter,  
You tugged my sleeve and told me to go look.

Then—with marvel in my heart and fearfully—I went to look in the hedge,  
I went to glean after the birds and their feast:  
And look, there under the bush, the white beech, little cakes,  
And sweet wine, carob, figs, sweets of all sorts.  
“But won't they be back?” “No, they've left all that for you,  
What you scattered for them during the winter, they've now given back to  
you.”

O native home, O roof of my father's house!  
A fortress for the poor and a joy for the traveler going far:

golob izpod tujega néba trepeče nazaj,  
 hrepenenje mu je pokazalo i pot i kraj.  
 Kaj lastovka v južnem poletju strpeti ne more?  
 Na gnezdo spomin jo nese čez morje, čez gore.

Golobje nad hišo gorečo omamljeni krožijo...  
 moje misli nad rodino pusto osamljene tožijo...  
 Siv dan je prišel; razšli smo se vprek in v šir,  
 kamor gnala je sila življenja in srca nemir;  
 ostale pod streho so lastavke v varnem zavetji—  
 med nas je usekalo in nas razteplo po sveti...

Mladost je zdaj moja bujno glavó povesila,  
 a misel se tajna je v ptico podnebno vtelesila,  
 ni bila golob več, ki obletava požar,  
 zdaj bila je orel, ki so mu peroti vihar,  
 oči so mu bliski, hiteči v temino-daljino,  
 iskale, našlé so; ne doma, vse več: domovino...

Hodil po zemlji sem naši in pil nje bolesti.

Sveta si, zemlja, in blagor mu, komur plodiš;—  
 ali poljane poznam—čigave so v soncu bleščeče?  
 Pustil si plug in motiko, v zemljó se zalezal,  
 stavec, in križ ti na grobu rjaví in poveša se;  
 sin tvoj zaril se je živ pod zemljó—v Ameriki koplje,  
 v rovu še zarja poljan mu mračne misli obseva,  
 sin njegov več ne bo jih poznal, ne sanjal o njih.

Čul sem vdovice jok:

“Moj Máte, jó, moj Mate!”

Pel je véliki zvon—

“Moj Máte, jó, moj Mate!”

Hamburk, Hamburk! kliče ji zvon...  
 tam ji v smrt omahnil je sin,  
 solze nobene biló ni za njim,  
 znamenja ni za grob njegov.

The dove trembles, back from under an alien sky,  
Longing has shown him the way and the place;  
Why can the swallow not stand the southern summer?  
Memory of her nest bears her over sea and mountains.

Confused the doves circle over a burning house.  
Lonely my thoughts lament over an empty homestead.  
A grey day has come; we have dispersed far and wide,  
Wherever life's force and the heart's restlessness have driven us.  
The swallows have stayed under the roof in safe refuge—  
We have been cut up and scattered through the world.

My youth has now bowed its exuberant head,  
But its secret thought has been embodied in a lowering bird,  
No longer a dove flying over a fire,  
Now it is an eagle, whose wings are a storm,  
Whose eyes are lightning, racing into darkening distance,  
Seeking, finding; not a home, much more: a homeland.

I have walked over our land and drunk her miseries.

You are holy, O land, and blessed is he for whom you bear;—  
Do I know the fields—whose are they, shining in the sun?  
You have left the plow and the hoe, you have burrowed into the earth,  
Old man, and the cross on your grave rusts and sways;  
Your son has buried himself alive beneath the earth—he is a miner in  
America.

Even in the shaft the sunrise of the meadows suffuses his dark thoughts,  
His son will no longer know them. Nor dream of them.

I have heard the widow's lament:

“My Matty, O, my Matty!”

The great bell has sung—

“My Matty, O, my Matty!”

Hamburg! Hamburg! calls the bell.  
There her son collapsed and died,  
There not one tear fell for him.  
There no marker graced his grave.

Hamburk!—Misel ji blodi okrog,  
 pa ne ve, kam naj poleti,  
 kje se naj na grob spusti,  
 da potoči nanj solzó.

Da sem takrat bil Bog,  
 —“Moj Mate, jó, moj Mate!”  
 vzkliknil bil v grob bi njegov:  
 “Moj Máte, vstani, Mate!”

Hamburk, Hamburk!—Véliki zvon  
 poje ji, bije,  
 toži, vpije,  
 pada trdó na njeno glavó.

Hamburk, Hamburk!—pada črnó,  
 meša se, lije,  
 vse ovije  
 v svojo motnjavo, zemljó in nebó.

Da si takrat bil, Bog,  
 —“Moj Máte, jó, moj Mate!”  
 vzkliknil bil v grob bi njegov:  
 “Moj Máte, vstani, Mate!”

Pa so ramena in pleča kot skale,  
 tilnik—naloži mu breme nasilnik—  
 nosil ga bo in ne bo se krivil;  
 pa so srca tiha in močna—  
 njihov ponos je brez besed;  
 pa so možje—  
 kot da se niso rodili iz matere,  
 kot da gorám se iz bokov izvili so:  
 morajo v svet, in tujina se diči  
 z deli njihovih rok;  
 tamkaj v Ameriki, tamkaj v Vestfaliji  
 so nam izginili—več ne doseže jih  
 naše oko...

Hamburg!—her thoughts stagger wildly,  
Not knowing where to fly.  
Nor where to alight on his grave,  
Nor where to shed a tear.

If I had been God then,  
“My Matty, O, my Matty!”  
I would have called into his grave:  
“My Matty, arise, Matty!”

Hamburg, Hamburg!—Beats the bell  
Singing, swinging.  
Weeping, keening,  
Falling hard upon her head.

Hamburg! Hamburg!—falling blackness,  
Sweeping, sluicing,  
All entrapping  
In its turmoil, earth and sky.

If you had been then, God,  
“My Matty, O, my Matty!”  
You would have called into his grave:  
“My Matty, arise, Matty!”

But their arms and shoulders are like rocks,  
Their necks—let a tyrant lay on a load—  
Will bear it and not bend;  
But their hearts are quiet and powerful—  
Their pride is without words;  
Yet they are men—  
As if they had not been brought forth out of a mother,  
As if they had sprung forth from the flanks of the mountains:  
They must go into the world, and foreign lands are adorned  
With the works of their hands;  
There in America. there in Westphalia  
They have disappeared from us—never again will our eye  
Catch sight of them.

Kje, domovina, si? Ali na poljih teh?  
 Še pod Triglavom, okrog Karavank?  
 Ali po plavžih si, ali po rudnikih?  
 Tu? Preko mórja? In ni ti mejá?

Hotel nekdam sem, da bi se razširila,  
 da bi razpela svoj krog čez zemljo—  
 glej, in zdaj vidim: silna, brezmejna si,  
 v daljo kot seme razsipaš svoj plod.

Boš jih kot lastovke k sebi priklicala?  
 Kakor golobe prizvala pod krov?  
 Ali jih tuja bo slava premamila  
 in jih nikoli več k tebi ne bo?

Kje, domovina, si? Ali na poljih teh?  
 Še pod Triglavom, okrog Karavank?  
 Ali po plavžih si, ali po rudnikih?  
 Tu? Preko mórja? In ni ti mejá?

Slutim te, čutim, te. Sanja poetova  
 letala dolgo je let nad teboj,  
 gledala, slušala, plakala, upala,  
 izpraševala za tvojo skrivnost.

Školjka na morskem se dnu razbolela je,  
 v biser je stisnila svojo vso bol—  
 srce poeta—kaj v tebi se zbralo je?  
 Srce poeta—od nje si bolnó.

Where are you, homeland? On these fields?  
At the foot of Triglav, near the Slovene Alps?  
Are you in the forges, or in the mines?  
Here? Across the sea? And have you no bounds?

Once I wanted for you to grow broad.  
For you to spread your circuit over the world—  
Look, and now I see: you are powerful, boundless,  
You scatter your offspring like seed far and wide.

Will you call them back like the swallows to yourself?  
Like the doves will you summon them under your roof?  
Or will they be seduced by foreign glory  
And never return to you again?

Where are you, homeland? On these fields?  
At the foot of Triglav, near the Slovene Alps?  
Are you in the forges, or in the mines?  
Here? Across the sea? And have you no bounds?

I sense you, I feel you. The poet's dream  
Many a year has hovered above you,  
Watched, listened, cried, hoped,  
Inquired after your mystery.

The oyster on the sea-bed grew ill,  
Into a pearl she pressed all her pain—  
Poet's heart—what has coalesced in you?  
Poet's heart—you hurt from that pain.

*Henry R. Cooper, Jr.*



## Telesa naša

Telesa naša—vrči dragoceni,  
v njih shranjena vsa dedščina davnin;  
pekó nas v prsih soki njih ognjeni,  
kipeča sla radosti, bolečin.

Vzgon bitij nerojenih kri nam polje,  
življenje njih, ki bodo, rije v nas,  
in kal s kaljó se za prvenstvo kolje,  
bodočnost oblikuje svoj obraz.

Nje volja je močnejša nego naša,  
in vkup nas biča, ženo in moža—  
proklet, kedor volján je ne prenaša,  
sam se izobčil je izmed svetá.

## Our Bodies

Our bodies are like vessels made of gold,  
containing all our ancient heritage;  
in us their sap keeps throbbing as of old—  
the passions, joys and pains of every age.

In our blood countless lives unborn pulsate,  
the coming lives of our entire race;  
each germ, each cell fights for its destined state,  
and this is how the future moulds its face.

Its will is stronger than the will of man;  
it lashes us together: husband-wife.  
Accursed be he who puts on it a ban—  
he banishes himself from world and life.

*Janko Lavrin*