

TOMAŽ ŠALAMUN

sokol

MLADINSKA KNJIGA
1974

Tomaž Šalamun (1941–)

From his very first collection, *Poker* (1966), Šalamun has been a poet to reckon with. Where he might travel, what he might write, whom he might fall in love with next are impossible to predict. Word-play, free form, macaronic language (Slovene, English, Spanish all mixed together) characterize his poems. Extensive contact with the United States and Mexico lends his work a cosmopolitan air. His own excellent knowledge of English allows him to collaborate in the translation of his work into that language. The first poem is from Tomaž Šalamun, *Poker* (Ljubljana: T. Šalamun, 1966), and its translation by the author and Anselm Hollo is from Vasa D. Mihailovich, *Contemporary Yugoslav Poetry* (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 1977): 221-2; "History" is from Tomaž Šalamun, *Pesmi*, ed. by Kajetan Kovič (Ljubljana: Državna založba Slovenije, 1980); "Ljudska" is from Tomaž Šalamun, *Maske* (Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 1980); and "Brati:Ljubiti" is from Tomaž Šalamun, *Mera časa* (Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 1987). The translations of "History" and "Ljudska" are from Charles Simic, ed., *The Selected Poems of Tomaž Šalamun* (New York: The Ecco Press, 1988): 1, 69. The translation of "Brati:Ljubiti" is from Christopher Merrill, ed., *Four Questions of Melancholy: New and Selected Poems* (Fredonia, NY: White Pine Press, 1997). "Beseda" is from Tomaž Šalamun, *Sokol* (Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 1974); its translation has not been published before.

Hommage kapi stricu Gvidu in Eliotu

Kakor je Cerar postal svetovni prvak
ker je imel nekaj na nogi ali kaj
tako bom jaz postal blazno velik poet
ker so me zamorili
s tisto modro kapo od Francoižka
poslano za Božič 1946
tako da sem ga potem moral
zmeraj preskočiti v naši molitvi
visoki pesmi panšalamunske religije
blazno demokratični in ljudski ustanovi
ker je zaobsegala vse
od znamk keksov Cilke Horaka Kajfeža
do tistega ubogega norca
ki je zapil svoj hotel v Ventimigli
in usahnil v svetu
kakor je usahnila naša molitev
njen zadnji večji reformator je bil stric Gvido
ki je bil sicer znan med ljudmi
ker je izumil novo cev za parne kotle
a to ni bil njegov glavni poklic
njegov glavni poklic
je bilo zalivanje rož
in tak kot Spinoza
samo da je bil večji
je neprestano razmišljal o smrti
nam kupoval sladoled
in vsak dan znova odkril
kar je bilo med
magnolija Brandenburg in Amerika

pred dvema dnevoma je umrl Eliot
moj učitelj.

Homage to a Hat & Uncle Guido and Eliot

Just like Clay became a world champion
because there was something wrong with his leg
I'll be a great poet
because they double-crossed me
with Frank's blue cap
sent for Christmas 1946
and since then I've left him out of my prayers
song of songs of paňšalamunian religion
terribly democratic people's institution
which takes in everything
from stamps biscuits Tzilka, Horak, Parmesan
to that poor idiot
who drank his hotel away in Ventimiglia
and faded out somewhere in the world
just like our prayers fade out
its last important reformer was uncle Guido
known among the folks
for his invention of a new pipe for a steamboiler
but that was not his main occupation
his main thing was
watering flowers
just like Spinoza
a bit taller though
meditating on and off on death
buying us ice cream
each day made new
that was between
magnolia Brandenburg & America

two days ago Eliot died
my teacher

History

Tomaz Šalamun je pošast.
Tomaz Šalamun je drevča kroglja v zraku.
Nihče ne ve za njeno orbito.
Leži v polmraku, plava v polmraku.
Ljudje in jaz jo gledamo, začudeni,
upamo dobro, morda je zvezda repatica.
Morda je kazen božja,
kamen, mejnik sveta.
Morda je taka pika v vesolju,
ki bo dajala energijo planetu,
ko bo zmanjkalo nafte, jekla, hrane.
Morda je samo igra celic, bula
ki bi ji bilo treba odtrgati glavo kot pajku.
Ampak nekaj bi potem posrkalo
Tomaža Šalamuna, verjetno glava,
bolj verjetno glava kot telo.
Iz glave bi zrasle nove noge.
Verjetno bi jo bilo treba stisniti
med stekli, fotografirati in dati
v formaldehid, da bi jo otroci gledali
kot fetuse, morske vile in človeške
ribice. Vratarji bi špekulirali
z vstopnicami in jih dvakrat prodajali.
To je dobro za ljudi, ker jim daje kruh.
Drugo leto bo verjetno na Havajih
ali v Ljubljani. Ha Havajih je zelo
toplo. Ljudje hodijo bosi na univerzo.
Valovi so visoki do sto čevljev.
Neprestano trese, trese zemljo.
Po mestu drvijo dobičkarji.
Kraj je fantastičen za ljubezen,
ker je sol v zraku in blag veter.
Ampak v Ljubljani rečejo ljudje: poglej!
To je Tomaz Šalamun, v trgovino je šel,
s svojo ženo Maruško kupuje mleko,
da bi pil mleko.
And that's history.

History

Tomaž Šalamun is a monster.
Tomaž Šalamun is a sphere rushing through the air.
He lies down in twilight, he swims in twilight.
People and I, we both look at him amazed,
we wish him well, maybe he is a comet.
be he is punishment from the gods,
the boundary stone of the world.
Maybe he is such a speck in the universe
that he will give energy to the planet
when oil, steel, and food run short.
He might only be a hump, his head
should be taken off like a spider's.
But something would then suck up
Tomaž Šalamun, possibly the head.
Possibly he should be pressed between
glass, his photo should be taken.
He should be put in formaldehyde, so children
would look at him as they do at fetuses,
protei, and mermaids.
Next year, he'll probably be in Hawaii
or in Ljubljana. Doorkeepers will scalp
tickets. People walk barefoot
to the university there. The waves can be
a hundred feet high. The city is fantastic,
shot through with people on the make,
the wind is mild.
But in Ljubljana people say: look!
This is Tomaž Šalamun, he went to the store
with his wife Maruška to buy some milk.
He will drink it and this is history.

Ljudska

Vsak pravi pesnik je pošast.
Glas uničuje in ljudi.
Petje zgradi tehniko, ki uničuje
zemljo, da nas ne bi jedli črvi.
Pijanček proda plašč.
Lopov proda mater.
Samo pesnik proda dušo, da jo
loči od telesa, ki ga ljubi.

Brati: Ljubiti

Ko te prebiram, plavam. Kot medo s šapami me
potiskaš v blaženost. Ležiš na meni, ki si me
razdejal. Na smrt sem te vzljubil, prvi med
rojenimi. V enem samem hipu sem postal tvoj kres.

Varen sem, kot nisem bil nikoli. Si dokončni
občutek zadoščenja: vedeti od kod je hrepenjenje.
V tebi sem kot v mehkem grobu. Režeš in prežarjaš
vse plasti. Čas se vname in izgine, himne slišim,

ko te gledam. Strog si in zahteven, stvaren. In ne
morem govoriti. Vem, da hrepenim po tebi, trdo sivo
jeklo. Za en tvoj dotik dam vse. Glej, pozno sonce

buta ob stene dvorišča v Urbinu. Umrl sem zate.
Čutim te in te rabim. Mučiš. Ruješ me in izžigaš,
vedno. In v prostore, ki si jih uničil, teče raj.

Folk Song

Every true poet is a monster.
 He destroys people and their speech.
 His singing elevates a technique that wipes out
 the earth so we are not eaten by worms.
 The drunk sells his coat.
 The thief sells his mother.
 Only the poet sells his soul to separate it
 from the body that he loves.

Charles Simic

To Read: To Love

As I read you, I swim. Like a bear—bear with paws,
 you push me into bliss. You lie on top of me, who
 tore me apart. You I fell in love with unto death, first
 among the born. It took but a moment and I was your bonfire.

I am safe as never before. You are the final
 feeling of fulfillment; to know where longing comes from.
 I'm in a soft grave whenever inside you. You cut, you illuminate,
 every layer. Time bursts into flame and disappears. I hear hymns

when I watch you. You are strict and demanding, concrete. And I
 cannot speak. I know I long for you, hard grey steel. For one of
 your touches, I give up everything. Look, the late afternoon sun

is dashing against the walls of the courtyard in Urbino. I have died
 for you. I feel you, I use you. Torturer. You uproot and you torch me,
 always,

And into the places you have destroyed paradise flows.

Tom Ložar

Beseda

Beseda je edini temelj sveta.
Jaz sem njen služabnik in gospodar.
In čeprav duh pošilja atome, da
vohajo, tipajo, čutijo, smo zares

v polju, kjer smo z bogovi enaki.
Jezik se ne dotika ničesar, kar
bi bilo novo. Ni poslednje sodbe,
ni višjega. Vnebovzetje je

v koncentričnem, kjer je vse, kar
vidimo in ne vidimo, več kot zrno
peska. Zazrtost stvari se zdi bližja,
a to ni kriterij. Ponavljam: stvari

niso kriterij. Kriterij je v nas
samih kot dokončna razpustitev.
Smrt je samo napaka v imenovanju
tistih, ki jim je bila zakrita luč.

The Word

The word is the sole basis of the world.

I am its servant and master.

And though the spirit sends atoms to
smell, touch, hear, we are in fact

in a field where we are equal with the gods.

The tongue touches nothing that
would be new. There is no Doomsday,
no higher being. The Assumption is

in a concentric thing where everything is,
the visible and the invisible, more than a grain
of sand. The perception of things seems nearer,
but that's no criterion. I repeat: things

are no criterion. The criterion is in us
ourselves like a final dissolution.

Death is only a mistake in naming
those whose light has been concealed.

Henry R. Cooper, Jr.