

# PAVOL JANIK | A DICTIONARY OF FOREIGN DREAMS

## PAVOL JANIK | VIRTUOSO OF SLOVAK LITERATURE

Mgr. art. Pavol Janik, PhD., (magister artis et philosophiae doctor) was born in 1956 in Bratislava, where he also studied film and television dramaturgy and scriptwriting at the Drama Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts (VSMU). He has worked at the Ministry of Culture (1983–1987), in the media and in advertising. President of the Slovak Writers' Society (2003–2007), Secretary-General of the SWS (1998–2003, 2007–2013), Editor-in-Chief of the literary weekly of the SWS Literarny tyzdennik (2010–2013). Honorary Member of the Union of Czech Writers (from 2000), Member of the Editorial Board of the weekly of the UCW Obrys-Kmen (2004–2014), Member of the Editorial Board of the weekly of the UCW Literatura – Umeni – Kultura (from 2014). Member of the Writers Club International (from 2004). Member of the Poetas del Mundo (from 2015). Member of the World Poets Society (from 2016). Director of the Writers Capital International Foundation for Slovakia and the Czech Republic (2016–2017). Chief Representative of the World Nation Writers' Union in Slovakia (from 2016). He has received a number of awards for his literary and advertising work both in his own country and abroad.

This virtuoso of Slovak literature, Pavol Janik, is a poet, dramatist, prose writer, translator, publicist and copywriter. His literary activities focus mainly on poetry. Even his first book of poems *Unconfirmed Reports* (1981) attracted the attention of the leading authorities in Slovak literary circles. He presented himself as a plain-spoken poet with a spontaneous manner of poetic expression and an inclination for irony directed not only at others, but also at himself. This style has become typical of all his work, which in spite of its critical character has also acquired a humorous, even bizarre dimension. His manner of expression is becoming terse to the point of being aphoristic. It is thus perfectly natural that Pavol Janik's literary interests should come to embrace aphorisms founded on a shift of meaning in the form of puns. In his work he is gradually raising some very disturbing questions and pointing to serious problems concerning the further development of humankind, while all the time widening his range of themes and styles. Literary experts liken Janik's poetic virtuosity to that in the work of Miroslav Valek, while in the opinion of the Russian poet, translator and literary critic, Natalia Shvedova, Valek is more profound and Janik more inventive. He has translated in poetic form several collections of poetry and written works of drama with elements of the style of the Theatre of the Absurd.

Pavol Janik's literary works have been published not only in Slovakia, but also in Albania, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Croatia, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, India, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Kosovo, Macedonia, Nepal, the Republic of China (Taiwan), Poland, Romania, the Russian Federation, Serbia, South Korea, Spain, Syria, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, the United States of America and Venezuela.

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## **I AM CRYING YOU, MORNING**

Behind the horizon the light is spraying.  
The sky tremble's like a tear.  
The winged summer wilts.  
Through the algae's a lonesome dew slides.

Trees hold empty nests in their hands.  
I quietly sing birds psalms.  
In the empty night, empty star is falling.  
Empty gaze of water is still cloudy.

I read an exclamation of silence  
and drink the morning blood stream aloud.  
The morning is taking deep breaths.

With its soft palms of the hands,  
the haze crumbles poems.  
Heart's beating is not quieter.  
Unbelievable sobs, like as if it was dead.

(1975)

## **THE CONCERT**

Do not be afraid of sudden outcries of the orchestra!  
That does not mean the conductor  
has seen my hand on your knee.  
Allow a kiss.

Know, that your sex outrages you only as much,  
as the music is anxious about the applause.

(1981)

## **ON THE LINE MAN – WOMAN AND BACK**

You escape from me  
like gas.  
With astonishment I watch  
how with a single scrawl of your legs

you ignite your silk dress.

With such blinding nakedness you pre-empt sky-blue flame.

Blazingly ablaze and perhaps wholly otherwise  
I address a fire  
which you will no longer damp down.

That time I wanted to declare at least what was essential  
to all chance passers-by,  
to all chance passing aircraft.

So under such circumstances who wouldn't have spoiled it?

(1981)

## **NIGHT BUS**

I admire the smiles  
of the wax figures  
and the drunks.

Their faith.  
Their humility.  
Their precision.  
Their infallible wisdom  
determined by the office of normalization.

I admire  
their wallpapered souls  
full of light and brocade.  
Their responsibility and legality  
surpassing  
the price of taxis and wine.

I'm terrified by the indifference  
with which they listen  
to the heavy breathing of the last trolley buses.

(1981)

## **SUMMER**

The sun smashes our windows.  
An urgent song reaches us from the street.

On the cellophane sky  
steam condenses.  
Unconfirmed reports are reproduced  
about the wind.

The trees are the first to begin to talk  
about the two of us.

(1981)

### **THE MOMENT BEFORE TOUCH**

The air grows still.  
As in an illustrated weekly  
I leaf through your eyes.

To hear silence  
as it walks in new shoes  
and lulls the buzzing bees.  
Somebody furiously addresses us with wings.

It's said that you've seen  
burning birds tumble from the sky!

It's just at the base of your breasts  
there's something making a ceaseless hullabaloo.

(1981)

### **TO YOU**

You come from a scent.  
A crumpled flower.  
I inhale you tangled like smoke.

You inhabit the starry sky  
and dials of digital watches.

You stupefy me dependably  
and faster than light.

My head aches from you  
and to this moment I mistake you for music.

(1981)

## **VIVACE MA NON SOLTANTO COSI**

Barefoot  
you leap from star to star.  
And each time there's a chime  
like the kiss of crystal glasses.

Thousands of your faces  
skate with perseverance  
on frozen ponds.

I open you with a violin's clef  
and seek the bow  
whose elasticity can equal you.

Deep in you  
instead of strings  
I've touched tears.

(1981)

## **PIANO**

The moment we each have our own key  
To the same flat  
I'll shift a piece of the garden  
To the second floor.

Sometimes I'll come personally.  
Clean  
And carefully shaved  
To listen to home concerts.

I'll come for sure

Clumsily like a piano,  
And always well-tempered.

(1981)

## **FAMILY STUDY**

Always when I think of you  
dawn breaks above Buenos Aires  
and the Atlantic has the inexplicable color of your eyes.

Exotic birds  
nest on out TV aerial  
until the announcer  
has a pearly hairdo  
and complete blonde smile.  
She claims that eternity has already lasted a whole year.  
The weather forecast  
announces in her place  
a rainbow parrot.

For our wedding route  
it wishes us little cloudiness  
and success at least as large as the discovery of America  
or the record flight of the ostrich from Australia  
to the zoological gardens of Europe.

Always when I think of you  
dawn breaks above Buenos Aires  
and the wind whirls the pamphlets  
of all the airlines in the world.

The Atlantic does not admit any other continent.  
It's clear as a stone of precious clarity.

Despite its twinkling depth it resembles a question  
which posed passionately by your body.

Children search tirelessly for an answer  
till now unwritten in books  
and cut out colorful pictures from it.

It happens at home  
behind whose windows fireworks blaze every evening.

Always when I think of you  
dawn breaks above Buenos Aires.  
And today, too, the Atlantic is completely upset.  
It's completely bashful  
as its accustomed only to invisible phenomena.

(1981)

## **ASTONISHMENT**

I stretch out the water  
in which you are reflected.

With a shout to stop  
all possible outflows.

I address you by breath  
such release of speech.  
Until you are glassy with ice before me  
as before a draught.

Tirelessly you quiver under the numb surface  
and on the bottom for a moment gleam  
so that I glimpse the day,  
which will only light up in you.

(1981)

## **NAME**

By just a point  
you surpass successful fortune.

By just a drop  
you outdo sparkle.

By sobbing  
you surmount aquarelle.

You spread pollen.

We put our faces to yours

as to a flower's corolla  
weary of so much circumstance.

You'll gain a name from us,  
which you'll consider as your own.

(1981)

## **EX OFFO**

Every day I pick up a pen up  
afraid that it's completely in vain.  
Above the paperwork clouds of office work loom  
like heavy opaque curtains.

It becomes complete  
with neon illuminating  
the office darkness.  
There's nothing visible from life  
apart from cheap state furniture,  
the various moods of colleagues' faces  
and always the same roof of a neighbouring house.  
and to all this, it has to be said,  
a bit of sky,  
a personal pot plant  
and a telephone, which should connect us with the world.  
But we know very well  
that it connects only with other offices.  
It should be mentioned, too,  
that this is only when it isn't broken.  
This hasn't happened for a long time indeed.

We see nothing  
and we know nothing.  
We know nothing of what  
in the light of day  
new springs doggedly push to the surface,  
from all the openings in the earth  
mysterious water sprays out.  
Pure and just  
measuring the time  
and other limits of our lives,  
urgently seeking paths to a return to earth.

From the sky birds,  
planes, comets and other heavenly things gather.

In the galleries pictures fall from the walls  
and statues from their plinths.  
Something is happening.  
Something is going on.

With blue ink  
I register my pulse,  
the number of the dead, the amount of damage caused,  
trunk calls and interruptions to working hours.

I know that I'll get compensation for this poem,  
or I'll work at it over the weekend  
after coming to an agreement with my employer.

(1985)

### **AN URGENT POEM**

Ceaselessly you enter my mind  
like an urgent poem  
to dispute fixed views on life  
and change accepted images of the word.

Unstoppably you come  
to electrify  
the unshakeable conviction  
that a man is a self-sufficient being.  
Thus we always live unthinkingly together,  
and far from one another  
in our two-in-one dream.  
Always you enter my mind  
when I'm woken from sleep by air raids  
of themes, images and pictures of poetry.  
And thus I know that everything belongs indivisibly to ourselves  
just as we do to each other.

This is the urgent poem,  
whose point you force me to keep silent  
like a secret,  
where there's no place for another  
and which can exist completely without words  
and other witnesses.

(1985)

## **BAD HABIT**

Every day  
I go to work  
for my wife, Olga,  
so she has enough for shopping.

I must make an effort.  
The weekend approaches  
and the children would like to eat on Sunday.  
We still have not succeeded  
in breaking this bad habit.

(1985)

## **INTO THE BLUE**

From morning we tirelessly squander ourselves into the blue,  
which falls short of the border between water and sky.  
Into the blue in which the swimming routes of fish cross  
with the flight lines of birds.  
Into the blue in which the slow movement of ships  
cross the glittering fuselages of aeroplanes.  
Into the blue  
which though the power of its will  
casts us back on to a sandy beach  
together with other things over and above,  
together with the dead bodies of fish, crabs and medusas,  
together with fragments of seaweed,  
tiny pebbles,  
tops of Coca-Cola bottles,  
together with scraps of paper  
closed in bottles of sweet drinks.

We always read from the beginning  
and on each side  
these letters without lettering  
completely whitened by the life-giving sun,  
which knows very well whom to give a chance to and whom to not.

We read letters without lettering  
and understand them frozenly.  
We read letters without lettering

wept over by foaming waves  
from which life comes,  
sound, color and the divine.

The descendants of goddesses today dwell  
in the endless rivieras of the whole world.  
they declare nakedness  
and godlike motor boats, cars, beaches, apartments,  
music, films  
and above all godlike men.

At an ice-cream kiosk  
I fell head over heels with one for the hundredth time.

It's of no account  
but it was her  
with whom I shared a few experiences, memories,  
children.  
I fell in love with her completely  
without reservation.

From the ice-cream stands  
naked poster girls smiled at us  
and the portrait of a statesman  
wearing a admiral's white uniform  
in the blue background,  
which could represent water as well as sky  
and in which could move  
atomic submarines as well as jet planes  
and neon fish as well as rainbow birds.

(1985)

## **MOLTO ADAGIO**

The old move in.  
Slowly and clumsily,  
not of their own volition  
and without somebody else's help.  
Tiresomely they move their old-fashioned furniture,  
their antediluvian opinions  
and dogged pains in their joints.

With shaking limbs  
they look in vain for switches  
on the unfamiliar walls

of their new living space.  
They can't manage to switch on the light  
in a twilight of loneliness and unknowing.

Pointlessly they utter all the words,  
which they now remember with difficulty.  
Their own words  
no longer mean anything to them.  
They don't understand them.  
They've forgotten what they were for.  
They remind them of nothing.

For them. For honoured and precious persons,  
to whom respect and gratitude are due.

The old move in.  
Tediously and maladroitly,  
unintentionally  
and completely alone.  
Sluggishly they move their old-fashioned furniture,  
out-of-date opinions  
and importunate pains in their joints.

Persistently and unpleasantly  
they touch us  
with their trembling extremities.  
Dejectedly they catch us by the throat.

The old move in  
on us.  
Little by little and inexpertly,  
willy-nilly  
and under their own steam.  
Strenuously we move our obsolete furniture,  
used-up opinions  
and painful joints.  
And other things  
which have already served their purpose.

Inconspicuously and unavoidably  
we become honoured and precious persons  
to whom respect and gratitude are due.

Tenaciously and depressingly  
we continue in the persistence of our actions,  
fluently sliding into the punch lines of stories  
of course like the hands of a clock.

With our head we direct  
all the way down

ready to strike the precise time.

And above us  
a blue sky  
yawns incomprehensibly  
into which the wind flings the glittering mirrors of memory.

(1985)

### **PEDESTRIAN WITH ABSOLUTE RIGHT OF WAY**

Live life  
without a car.  
Be slower than a trolley bus.  
Be tired.  
Be late.  
Be unable to get out of the city.  
Be unable to arrive at yourself.  
Be a pedestrian.  
Entire and without impediments.

To subvert the rules  
regardless of anything.

(1985)

### **I'M WITH YOU**

It's completely me –  
height 180 centimetres,  
measurements 108 by 83 by 107,  
weight 73 kilos,  
five military qualifications  
and even more civilian,  
brown hair, green eyes,  
born on the occasion  
of the Hungarian Uprising,  
bashful and christened,  
married with three children.  
I don't beat out a rhythm in English,  
but I'm of the world.

Send me fan mail,  
postcards and gifts,  
books and pictures,  
busts and bacon,  
booze and flowers.  
Support your poet  
who, instead of you, behaves  
like an idiot.  
Write to my European address –  
Slovakia.

Call me,  
all of you, who love me,  
who can't live without me,  
or least die.  
Call the number 314 212,  
my automatic telephone  
will pick up 24 hours a day.  
Don't be ashamed of your feelings.  
God is watching you –  
at last do something stupid.  
Send some dosh to my account  
SSS 3478228.  
Remit to my pristine account  
your dirty money,  
I'll launder it day and night.  
You can rely on me  
to spend it all on myself  
as opposed to other  
charitable institutions,  
christmas clubs and other swindles.

I'm waiting for your letters,  
spiritual outpourings  
and filthy lucre.  
I know  
that all  
the better sort of people are shocked  
that the worse have not improved.  
They can go  
and get stuffed.

(1991)

**ODE TO JOY**

Where are those old poems?  
What were they actually about?  
And who gave a tinker's about them.

Somewhere in us  
something from them has remained,  
a charge timed in Nuremburg,  
a Frankfurt porn cinema,  
a coca-cola opposite the Moulin Rouge,  
Lenin inside a Marseille shop window,  
a faded postcard of the Cote d'Azur,  
documents stolen in Rome,  
undeveloped photos  
of the leaning tower of Pisa,  
a night in Florence,  
Bolognese poofs,  
pigeons at six in the morning  
on Saint Mark's Square,  
an over made-up customs girl  
on the train from Vienna  
to Devinska Nova Ves.

Where are those old poems?  
Now nobody will write them any more.  
They never made sense to anybody.

They've suddenly switched off the power in Europe.  
A darkness has started, that which  
existed before the invention of light.  
We walk on the ceiling of our flat  
from memory.  
Children laugh at us in their sleep.

At the entrance to nowhere  
they'll return us the entrance fee  
to life,  
which was worth it  
even though not so much.

Only for death you don't pay.

(1991)

## **UNSENT TELEGRAM**

Inside me a little bit of

a blue Christmas begins.  
In the hotel room it's snowing  
a misty scent – of your  
endlessly distant perfume.  
We're declining bodily  
while in us the price  
of night calls rises,  
waves of private earth tremors  
and the limits of an ocean of blood  
on the curve of a lonely coast.

(1991)

## **PROLONGING MY UNDERSTANDING**

For a while I hesitated,  
at the place where one enters.  
And then so many mirrors  
as if after death or during it.  
And so many unreal girls  
in the shallow depths of the glass.

There, where I entered for the last time  
still as a boy with portraits  
of Pierre Brice and Lex Barker in a pocket,  
was the window of a small wine tavern.  
And above it the warning signals  
of red pelargonium  
had permanently remained.  
These inexorable semaphores  
which didn't permit me  
to speak in the direction of the wind  
and turn aside as the wall approached.

I grew up  
to the level of salaries,  
the length of debts,  
to measurable historical latitudes  
and to a size  
where the era of dieting begins.

Now only my hair grows  
slowly and completely pointlessly.  
and thus I come  
to prolonging my understanding  
and ridding myself of the purchasing power

of a powerless Samson.

(1991)

### **AT THE TABLE**

An infirmary of flowers of the field  
in a vase.  
So many of the white  
that the blood inside our veins stiffens.

Thus we wither together  
torn away from  
life.

(1991)

### **NOCTURNE FOR DIABETES**

Diacritical signs  
of immortal Dio  
appear in the sky.  
Dialogues of the diabolic  
intersect within us.

Oh divine Diana  
preserve our diagnosis,  
sugar-beet campaigns and oil fields.

Save within us the diapositive  
and make us diametrical.  
Diagrams of sorrow  
and diamond diadems  
we place at your diagonals.  
Oh dialectics of dia-marmalades.  
Into our diaries we write  
our last hour  
and the deadline of our posthumous diasporas.  
Just so that we don't forget to die  
and for the last time decorously deny ourselves nothing.

(1991)

### **CHRYSANTHEMATIKA**

Inside the typewriter  
and on the printer's block  
poems have died  
in which spurs have clinked  
of the disobedience and the pride  
of the blue blood  
of the noble ink.

(1991)

### **A DREAM FROM THE GLASS**

In the fading lustre  
of the hotel Alcron, Prague  
I watch  
as you sleep at the bottom of a mirror.  
a jasmine breeze  
disseminates your visions,  
it hums your mute desires.

All the radio stations  
broadcast the beating of your heart.  
In the receiver  
of every telephone  
your breath is heard.  
On every television channel  
they show  
your sleeping face  
live in the mirror of the hotel Alcron.

I am the television camera  
of your glass sleep.  
Your crystal dreams are dreamt by me.

Sparkling you drizzle on me.  
Your naked ness is veiled  
in a mist of hotel curtains  
which in vain I try to blow away  
with my last breath before I sleep.

It's late.

Flying lovers  
gently switch off  
the great night city.  
A dancing couple  
of violet neon  
twinkles drowsily  
in the dark blue sky.

Diplomats  
tailored in satin  
and surfeited with soap bubbles  
leave opera performances,  
concert halls and receptions  
and in limousines  
constructed of air,  
darkness and glittering stars  
fly away like comets  
to their state beds  
in a twilight of ambassadors.

Garden parties finish.  
The blossoming trees  
drink from fountains.

In the squares  
without shame or movement  
statues from different eras,  
genres and sizes  
make love.

Tireless taxis, ambulances  
and police vehicles  
quietly sink to the river bed  
while the frightened fish  
turn on their alarm sirens  
and switch on coloured beacons  
of anxiety.

In the empty streets  
delayed pleasure boats fly  
full of trembling lights  
and moor themselves  
in the last empty shop windows.

It's late.

From the highest floors of the heavens

leisurely and at length  
flashing lanterns fall.  
Phosphorescence shines  
on the wings of night butterflies.  
It sounds  
as if a thousand solitary towers  
breathed  
the brassy midnight air.

So much would I like  
to dream you, too.

(1991)

### **THE LAST FOUR BARS OF SILENCE**

It's getting dark in the revues,  
in the carmined eyes of the dancers,  
in the centre of the cleavage  
of a monumental bosom  
and in the snowfall of ostrich feathers.  
It's getting brighter deep within wood,  
in flower pots  
and botanical gardens.

The lights go off in the last windows  
of ministerial offices  
made of cardboard, telephone lines  
and salary cheques.  
The wind delivers  
autumn leaves  
of strictly secret material  
into the unvetted hands  
of nightwalkers.  
Sensitive lovers  
are on guard in the parks  
armed to their teeth  
with rapid firing sentiments -  
calibre forty-five.

And it always dawns.  
Over the pages of newspapers  
the moulds of white hot dreams hiss  
on contact with the icy air.  
Mutes enthusiastically play  
their leading role

and the powerless director  
with his head in his hands  
and bust fuses in his head  
repeats to the point of madness  
the last four bars of silence.

(1991)

### **AN EMERGENCY LANDING IN YOUR HAIR**

Planes got it into their heads  
that they were better than ships,  
but pride comes before a fall.

The sadness of victory  
is unbearable.

In the darkness of your hair  
glitter the tiny wrecks  
of airships  
and to the bottom of your eyes  
sink sparkling mysteries.

Speechlessly  
- like the smile on your lips  
I'm awaiting my opportunity.

(1991)

### **MIRRORS AFTER NIGHTFALL**

Somewhere it's lit up  
as if a misty memory  
lights up in me  
about the origin of the cosmos.  
You smell of the flowers  
whose petals  
snowed our bodies  
to annoy every kind  
of communal service.  
Your eyes in spite of directives  
shine irresponsibly in the dark

as if they reflected the dim light  
of insignificant explosions in the sky.  
Intoxicating you made me lose my mind  
and clear conscience  
at variance with the law  
on the struggle against alcoholism  
and toximania.

For you  
I'm illegally drunk forever.  
Until today you've stopped my breathing with desire  
at the most inappropriate moments.  
You explode within me  
like an export explosive  
freeing the energy  
of fruit pips.  
You pulse in my veins  
persistent as piercing light.

Through the permanent breaking  
of traffic laws  
we will be convicted forever  
by an unextinguishable fire in my blood  
in the back window  
of your eyes.

(1991)

## **WHY THERE ARE WIVES FOR US**

So they can keep up the fire  
in the most interior of fridges,  
so they can extinguish our hot heads,  
so we can get burnt  
by their flaming gaze,  
so they can give us sense  
by holding our beastly Golem in us,  
so they can earth  
the lightning of our pride  
in collective destruction.

For this they are needed  
- closer than a shirt,  
buttoned by children with us  
together, one in one,  
on whom we are dependent

irresistibly so.

(1991)

from **HURRAH, IT BURNS!**

*(fragments)*

2.

Seasonal poets, occasional critics  
and café day labourers  
dissolve their cheques books  
and shirts in their morning coffee  
in the hope  
of more rational sugars.

Together with working hours  
and other assets of the state bank  
we flow reliably nowhere  
only interrupted by the occasional capture  
of a Slovak poet  
for an overseas zoo.

3.

Re-educational concerts  
seemed a little effective  
in suppressing rising  
prices, debts and children.

We don't agree with the coca-  
collaboration pepsi-collage.

Pull down the rock n' roll-up blinds.  
Let the music grow dark inside us,  
this nth power of light  
which only knows  
about the human body.

4.

After the angel's fall  
from the twelfth floor  
free fall  
has become an Olympic discipline.

The development of rocket planes moves  
to the principle of an angel  
like helicopters.  
The angel whirlybird  
of airy propulsion  
starts from the territory of the dandelion.

The developments and destructions  
of peace culminate.  
Let's hurry away from here,  
in this place  
there's no time to change the world.

In a moment we'll be awarded  
a Nobel for war  
and our poetic guts  
will in preference be used for sausages.

5.

Words refuse to obey.

The poem splits  
and from it emerges  
a video-clip scenario...

Poetry avoids words.  
It abhors them.

A revolt against death  
will occur in the afternoon  
on the coast,  
in the event of bad weather  
it'll take place at the pensioners' club.

Take Baudelaire  
dead or alive.

9.

Woman times man is almost three.  
The most domestic animal  
is a row-ptile.  
Poetic fabrics are getting cheaper.

We rationalize the ascent  
of concert wings.

We vote for Giggleswhite  
and her seven little smirks.

Even the leaves have yet to fall  
from the boulevard trees  
and we've already fallen for the snow.  
Grieved as a black man in winter  
I listen to the momentary heavy mental,  
monumental menthol,  
amen Ementhal.

15.

Distorted humour  
enters the bay leaves  
on the poet's head  
who wakes alert  
in the laurels.  
The legs of clocks  
and hands of insects  
arouse the snow in us.

This is the damage of normalization.  
There are these houses in the windows,  
trees on the branches  
and birds in feathers,  
everything about nothing  
and nothing about everything.

17.

Torpedoes explode  
in frozen blood.  
Under their surface we detect  
a conspiracy against love.  
In the spring gusts  
we set traps for ourselves.

Loves strikes us  
at the first contact  
at the speed of the bullet  
earth-air-water-fire.  
Weary of espionage  
in loosened hair  
we vanish silently  
like a shadow in rubber soles.

And you in the form of music  
drizzle into the darkness.

Mysterious as a sacred cravat  
on the neck of a hanged man

you demonstrate where I pointlessly  
direct my gaze.

Incomprehensible  
as a thirteenth chamber  
in a two-room state apartment  
you'll explain everything once  
and also blame me.

The little flame in the dusk of loneliness  
gets stronger.  
Hurrah, it burns!  
A person  
on the border  
of his opportunities.  
Hurrah.  
It burns.

(1991)

## **THE THEATER OF LIFE**

Life which means only the theater –  
such life we always wish to play.  
If just now you've got a funny thought  
change into your clown's suit.

Life sways with us like a pendulum –  
it runs from mud into a puddle.  
It never is as it used to be  
is a truth well-tried from age to age.

Time is like a glass filled to the brim  
again and again it runs over.  
It ourselves that step on our heels  
and we wish to find the person inside us.

There are patches on curtain and the soul...  
At the end death gives checkmate.  
Yet it's still worth playing the game,  
you should be glad that at least you've existed.

Life has found a mirror on the stage –  
it comes alive in it every night.  
If something has lured into the theater  
let's move into ancient times.

Settle into your empty seat,  
learn life by heart.  
If you yawn during life  
then ask for your entrance fee back.

(1998)

## **WISER FOR YOUR DEATH**

*(for Miroslav Valek)*

Roots grow into the earth like coffins,  
Opera singers  
sound-painterly gargle on the stage,  
a storm drives waves to the shores of a puddle.

All at the first moment  
of the forgetting of the discovery of America.

At the bottom of their souls  
everybody repairs their own Titanic.

The night sky spills itself on the ground  
like sparkling snow.

And the dead remain with us  
dumb as reproaches.

(1998)

## **A BIG CLEAR OUT**

Towels are the things  
which will survive us.

Shirts will remind us.

Suits and coats  
will remain after us.

So many things,

to which will be added  
just the dust  
into which we change.

(1998)

### **FAMILY STILL LIFE**

I say in vain  
to my wife  
that she can't nag  
genius.  
So I've recorded this  
in written form  
for future generations  
as advice for death and life, too.

(1998)

### **A DICTIONARY OF FOREIGN DREAMS**

At the beginning it was like a dream.  
She said:  
"Have at least one dream with me.  
You'll see – it'll be a dream  
which you've never dreamt about before."

Descend deeper with me,  
dream from the back,  
dream retrospectively  
in a labyrinth of mirrors  
which leads nowhere.

The moment you come to the beginning of nothing  
you'll dream an exciting dream.

Frame it  
and hang it in your bedroom.

So it will always be before your eyes  
because a dream which is removed from the eye  
is removed from the mind

in the sense  
of the ancient laws  
of human forgetfulness.

Dream your own.

Dream your dream  
which is reflected on the surface  
of a frozen lake.  
A dream smooth and freezing:

Grieving keys,  
a downcast forest,  
curved glass.  
The tributes of mirrors.

The rising of the moon  
in a dream of water.

Recoil from the bottom  
of the mirror's dream.

In the gallery of dreams  
then you'll see  
a live broadcast from childhood  
fragments of long-forgotten stories.

Because our obsolete dreams  
remain with us.

Don't be in a hurry, dream slowly, completely  
until you see the crystalline construction  
of your soul  
in which dreams glitter.  
- intentionally and comprehensibly like flame.

Perhaps you've already noticed  
that new dreams always decrease.  
They wane.

Soon we'll light up  
in the magical dusk  
of the last dream  
the despairing cry  
of a starry night.

Pay a toll to the dream's  
deliverance from sense.

You repeat aloud

the intimacies of secret dreams,  
with the dull gleam  
of your persistent night eyes  
you explicate a mysterious speech of darkness.

You dream, therefore you exist!

(1998)

## **YOU CAN TELL AN ANGEL FROM HIS FEATHERS**

*(For my parents who are not yet - departed-)*

In my innermost display cases  
all my glassy memories tremble.

At the end of silence to hear last year's rain  
how it dictates whispering  
its incomprehensible telegram  
A pack of sad angels  
howl in the light of the moon

The river falls from weariness,  
the mortal spirit of water  
in it falls with ease  
to the bottom

I feel mercury in my veins  
after the explosion of blood  
- it's in my guts  
supersonic angels  
rise from the dead.

Their deafening engines  
start up in my head.

When they take off  
the deepest silence begins  
in which perhaps I'll hear  
distant pearls  
how they pour on the parquets.

A morning confession of frozen tears  
freezes me  
in my yet more Autumn eyes.

(1998)

## **SOMEONE LIKE A GOD**

I,  
You,  
He  
And someone else ...

- the fourth like a dimension,  
the fifth a season in the year,  
the sixth like a sense,  
the seventh like a continent.

the eighth like a day of the week,  
the ninth like a point of an octagon,  
the tenth like Beethoven's Ninth Symphony,  
the eleventh like a commandment,

the twelfth like a football player,  
the thirteenth like an apostle,  
the fourteenth like Friday the Thirteenth,  
the fifteenth like Louis Quatorze,  
the sixteenth like the fifteen,  
the seventeenth like a sixteenth,  
the eighteenth like the seventeenth century,

the twenty-second like an eye,  
the thirty first like a thirty percent fall in bonds,

the thirty third like a tooth,  
the thirty fourth like Christ's year,

- the unending like a god  
and so just sexless,

the powerless  
like one who makes love,

painless and therefore senseless,

unrivalled like a god  
in the world who has no other gods,  
ungodly like a god  
who has neither a god beside him  
or over him,

bottomless like a sky,  
unrestrained like the wind,  
boundless like thought,  
immaterial like a ghost,

nameless bearer of an unknown name,

hopelessly faultless,

aimless like a perpetual runner,

childless like the father  
of a crucified son,

unreasonable like death  
and so just remorseless,

nationless like a god  
of all people  
and beings similar to them,

sightless and faceless,  
legless, handless and wingless,  
hairless and toothless,

safe as a harbour  
for immortal wanderers,

without charge like a promise,

unparalleled in perfection,  
derived in its own home,  
unmediated like touch,  
helpless like a deed,  
dreamless like a night,  
careless like a bird,

inconsolable like truth,  
ungoverned as the oldest citizen in the world,

implicit as love,  
without consequence like justice,

a creature without colour,  
taste  
and smell.

He wanders in space as if without soul,  
a creator without parents,

a being without dwelling place,  
a vagabond without address,

from beyond memory without work,  
from time immemorial without bread,  
forever he proceeds without footprints,

always thinks without considering  
and always the same,

he breeds without hesitation,  
gives birth without reason,  
regardless of anything or anyone,

kills without dispensation  
- everything and everyone,  
since the beginning of the age of ages,

he abandons us without regard  
for race, religion or conviction,

he always triumphs without battle,  
judges without mercy,  
punishes continuously  
and then weeps without sorrow  
over the spilt mother's milk  
of the immaculate virgin,  
who bore him a son  
so he could give him  
deviously and thoroughly to be crucified  
at the hands of his chosen people,

so he rules the world without check,  
an uncriticised despot,

he acts unceasingly without rest  
and knows everything without consciousness,

he prays to himself without words,  
he accepts himself without reserve,

he grants himself adoration without consideration,  
he is blessedly silent about himself,

so continuously decides without witnesses,  
without rhyme or reason,  
with no way out,

wholly without himself,  
headless,

heelless,  
heartless,  
with not a drop of blood,

without anything.

Redeem him  
while there's time.

Perhaps his fate  
awaits us, too –  
cruel  
towards all creatures  
who have been surpassed by their own works.

(1998)

## **KOSOVO**

*(for Jan Tuzinsky)*

A burning  
paper Goethe  
prays  
in Serb  
for four hundred dead children

In Schiller's stone eye  
gleams a tear of mercury

There's a Gypsy weeping  
for a little Romany fairy  
at the bottom of the Adriatic

Blood  
has an irresistible color  
of the bluish dusk of the sky  
from which falls  
light and glitterings  
like a gust of May rain  
to fertilize the wounded earth.

(2002)

## NEW YORK (British English)

In a horizontal mirror  
of the straightened bay  
the points of an angular city  
stabbing directly into the starry sky.

In the glittering sea of lamps  
flirtatious flitting boats  
tremble marvelously  
on your agitated legs  
swimming in the lower deck  
of a brocade evening dress.

Suddenly we are missing persons  
like needles in a labyrinth of tinfoil.

Some things we take personally –  
stretch limousines,  
moulting squirrels in Central Park  
and the metal body of dead freedom.

In New York most of all it's getting dark.

The glittering darkness lights up.

The thousand-armed luster of the mega city  
writes Einstein's message about the speed of light  
every evening on the gleaming surface of the water.

And again before the dusk the silver screen  
of the New York sky floods  
with hectoliters of Hollywood blood.

Where does the empire of glass and marble reach?  
Where do the slim rackets of the skyscrapers aim?

God buys a hot dog  
at the bottom of a sixty-storey street.

God is a black  
and loves the grey color of concrete.

His son was born from himself  
in a paper box  
from the newest sort of slave.

(2002)

## **NEW YORK (Canadian English)**

In a horizontal mirror  
of the spreading bay  
the points of the angular city  
are piercing the starry sky.

In the glittering sea of lamps  
flirtatious sequenced boats  
capsize marvelously  
at your attractive legs  
as they swim in the lower deck  
of a brocade evening dress.

Suddenly we are lost  
like needles in a labyrinth of a tinfoil.

Some things we take personally –  
stretched limousines,  
molting squirrels in the central Park  
and the metal body of a dead freedom.

It's getting dark In New York.

The glittering darkness lights up.

The thousand-armed chandelier of the mega city  
writes Einstein's message about the speed of light  
every evening on the gleaming surface of the water.

Just before dusk the silver screen  
of New York sky is flooded  
with hectoliters of Hollywood blood.

Where does the empire of glass and marble strive?  
Where do the slim rockets of the skyscrapers aim?

God is buying a hot dog  
at the bottom of a sixty-story street.

God is black  
and loves the grey color of concrete.

Son was born from himself  
in a paper box  
from the newest sort of a slave.

(2002)

## **THE REPORT FROM THE END OF THE COLD WAR**

How much is the Czechoslovak crown worth here  
in the capital of the ugliest women in the world  
where the only chance for survivor  
is your photograph?

An English poet,  
who thinks that Bratislava is in Yugoslavia,  
but knows that Dubcek lives there,  
is only interested if Havel is free.

His rhymes, inspired by London  
and by other such European cities  
written about the size and dimensions of his desk  
could as well stayed on his noble table.

I am out of my mind  
from circus artistry of street saviours  
yelling into the microphones  
misunderstandings of their own and other fools,  
being sad because of simply being.

Before midnight, in the hotel  
occupied by scrawny poets  
and muscular owners of private firearms,  
mixture of alcohol, adrenalin and hormones  
erupted into never ending yell accompanied by accordion.

Tall, Wide and Sharp-eyed Russian soul  
blurred by forty degrees heat of Moscow vodka  
blaring something close to Vysotsky.  
We don't serve to folks from socialist countries here.  
Proletarians of all countries, UNTIE!

(1989)

## **A SHOT**

The moment air stops  
close in front of your face  
and checks the size of your lungs,

the moment the sun addresses you  
with the agreed secret word,  
then it'll be clear to you.

The horizon could be crossed  
and other matters considered.

The heights furiously disclose  
the concrete constructions of their peaks.  
In the crowns of trees the telephone switchboards rattle.

You ripen an octave higher.

(1981)

## **DAYBREAK**

You emerge from beyond the horizon,  
heedlessly towards darkness  
and inattentive towards smothering dreams.

You lend an ear to silence  
moderately  
like the most distant thunder.  
It has already been heard how you sound in the motionless bells.

You always dawn astonishingly the same.

Mists, lost within themselves, hesitate,  
trust neither earth nor heaven.

All creation loses speech, dumbly move its lips,  
startled so that the words flow back  
within,  
to make blood brighter,  
to make pain,  
to make them wholly incomprehensible,  
neither outcry nor buzzing.

Thus nature copies you  
Always from the outset  
indirectly, insufficiently,  
fervent about you  
disappointed in itself,  
It imitates current and circulation.

Softly you reproduce your portraits

- one after the other.  
With a regular motion  
you manage time.

(1984)

## **CIRCLING**

Evenly and fast  
always going round  
it dreams about itself.  
The old unbearable fan.

Its head makes the circles  
of a drunkard's breath.  
It imagines it is a propeller.  
It circles.  
It observes.  
It sees and hears.  
It knows more than the others.

Through its racket  
regardless it takes the words  
of the speeches of the café tribunes.

For so long it has belonged to the technical museum,  
but not till now has it entered literature.

(1984)

## **NEWS UPDATE**

Even poets  
submit patent proposals.

They are mainly concerned with the utilization of  
twinkling of the stars,  
movements of eyelashes and butterflies,  
sparking of lovers,  
and pull force of the muses.

Beyond that, I propose  
a household innovation.

In your modern kitchen,  
replace gas with  
neuromuscular gas.

It will lighten your work  
and take away all your worries.

(1985)

## **THE TOUCH**

Landscape of a country of miracles.  
Beds of the bankless rivers of salty water.  
Under them flows a boiling metal.  
A female trunk is smouldering in my arms.

(1981)

## **IT IS BEHIND THE DOORS**

All internal voices squeak  
and complain about a chilly night.

Armless and wingless,  
endlessly simplified moon  
descended  
from the sky  
and spread itself  
right in our garden.

It is already making his first acquaintances.

(1981)

## **DRIZZLE**

It dawns in your eyes  
just like at the fish farm.  
Your kiss is cold  
on my absent face.  
You look at me

through the morning windows just before waking.

Nevertheless  
I will go unnoticed  
around your sadness.

(1981)

## **WISDOM**

Do you want to make a hole in the world?  
Too bad.  
The world is full of holes.  
And yet nothing goes through it.

Only you became smaller.  
Decreased.  
Do you hear that noise?  
It lasts and sometimes  
pretends it is a speech.

You answer  
the questions  
that you asked.

As many questions  
that many answers.

That is that wisdom.  
With it you like to make a hole in the world.  
Too bad.

You suffer only because of  
what you know.

(1981)

## **PAX MILITARIS**

Peace is not female emotionalism.  
Peace is a battle.

Peace doesn't dwell in words.  
Peace is waiting for its opportunity

hidden in rockets heads.  
Fastest peace.  
Spreading at supersonic speed.

Do you want peace?  
Have it.  
It will come to you  
in a few seconds.

Permanent and strongest peace-  
-weighs 350 000 trinitrotoluens.

(1985)

## **TRIBUTE**

With a move of arm  
you break the sky.

Your admirers, to death to you devoted,  
are in extasy.  
There is so many of them,  
only archive can know them  
by the name.

And how many more will you charm?!

You want some more glory  
to add to your tribute,  
at least a poem,  
the deflection of loud defile.  
I am honored, my  
noble army.

(1981)

## **WE ARE PROFESSIONALS**

For us is enough to insert moon into twilight,  
not routinely, like a coin into the slot machine,  
and conosours of beauty are trembling in admiration  
while choirs recite praises.

We are closer to Zenith

of course light as balloons.  
We sing about its monumental emptiness.

We already envy our own past.

(1981)

### **IT IS SNOWING**

Ice angels are falling from the sky.  
In their mouths are snowy fountains.  
The imagined curves of snowdrifts are mature.  
I'm just watching, hands are not moving.

The cold breath of the frozen flute  
is waking me up.

(1981)

### **CHATTER ABOVE THE GRAVE**

Clumsy are hitting lamps  
like night moths.

Matured drunks are falling down.  
In the amusement park, wierd generals  
in a little green skirts are making grimaces.  
In the middle of a metropolis, the forest burns.

In the shell of whispering lips  
you swim in a part of the story.

My heart is beating the rest.

(1998)