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PAVOL JANIK

(Slovakia)



Mgr. art. **Pavol Janik**, PhD., 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, from 2007) and Editor-in-chief of the literary weekly of the SWS Literarny tyzdennik (from 2010). 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, which appeared a quarter of a century ago, 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, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, the

Czech Republic, Hungary, India, Macedonia, Romania, the Russian Federation, Serbia, South Korea, Ukraine, United Kingdom and the United States of America.

Translated into English by **James Sutherland-Smith**

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 white 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 spoilt 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 pelargonia
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 diapostive
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

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

(2002)

Translated into English by **James Sutherland-Smith**