

**Gintaras Grajauskas**

POEMS

*The Possessed*

he was overcome. Without any warning,  
abruptly, brutally. And had no idea  
what he should do.

foaming and thrashing,  
if only to get  
back here.

he would yell, arms raised, in the dark:  
tell me, am I worth all this,  
because I will take my revenge on you

for all the many times you have seen  
me celebrating victories  
even when dead in defeat already

it's the end of me, now

down to weeping, wailing is all  
was how he cried

then quieted down, merely asking,  
is it all over now. No,  
not all.

what more do I have to do? nothing.  
Then what for. Why do you need to know.  
What for.

*Translated from the Lithuanian by Vyt Bakaitis*

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*A Quaint Complaint in the Land of Hyperboreans*

the land, to tell the truth, is bleak and depleted,  
the peaks all leveled, everything evenly bottomed out,  
the pediments hold no heroes. Yet it's not easy to die  
even here, while dexterity alone is sufficient  
to evade a misfit's switchblade, you' ll manage to stay alive,  
just as the oddballs survive with no legs, no hands,  
no heads... even their gods are different, prone to ambush

and barge in, with the mightiest of them maybe a little  
like the grimy blacksmith Hephaistos, though this one is  
much angrier. They celebrate in their own fashion too,  
drinking and crying without much knowing what for,  
they'll say it's sad and that's it, weird customs,  
but what, really, is there would you want to do, in a land where  
(it's a shame to be saying this) all the women are bitches,  
and the men pickpockets, and there you are. But it's not  
easy to die, even here.

*Translated by Vyt Bakaitis*

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### *Histories*

when you think of it, there have been  
all sort of histories, and for all that  
hasn't it been worth it  
  
let's say the one in which a long time  
is spent looking at the wall in an empty  
room  
  
or the one where groggy eyes  
slowly come to close oh no, that still is  
the same story

or the one where there's laughter and  
carrying on, raising hell and spoofing  
in the fall of '89

when you felt out of it, less than pretty  
and so you were, isn't it a pretty  
history though

even that one unclear, when it rained without stopping  
it seems, for three whole days and nights, and the fish  
swam in by the windows

and one that's the craziest of all,  
with the woman you were in love with,  
pretty beyond all hope

and of course the one that's the simplest,  
one you just now  
didn't get to write down in time

wasn't it really worth it

*Translated by Vyt Bakaitis*

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*Temptations of St. Anthony*

soft whisperings under the skin, the intimate

talk of the wind, allurings and

caresses, distant, barely audible

promises

shouts of surprise and

pleasure, touches, intimations

of perfect form the limpidness

of fingers in the sun

teasing, licking of lips

going dry, red spots, brown spots,

birth marks, a proud bow of the brow,

cool apples of the eyes

stretching bodies, indecent

suggestions, indecent scents,

the true and deceptive

virginity

glances like a net

thrown secretly on, tears,

hot breath

nestling close

a glorious mirage of love,

in the wasteland, without water and food,

on the 39th day.

*Translated by Antanas Danielius*

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### *The Second Coming*

it was really him authentic and raising no doubts,

needing no certifying. He came in a golden coach

harnessed by four white horses,

got by the organizational committee out of a convert

a millionaire. The authentic one, smiling and

somehow confused and glancing through the window

of the coach to everybody and nobody. The mob followed him

and stood on the sidewalks and staircases,

urchins were falling from trees

on the asphalt, and they couldn't believe

that it doesn't hurt and maybe will never hurt

any more. Soldiers fired a salute of 70 salves

from the guns, they needed no more, and ministers

came to the last solemn meeting. They enjoyed

the laughter and the rejoicing was over,

like the everyday, last day cries

and only after the insight of some insignificant movements

and short and strange exchanges of glances,

was it possible to feel what the mob is perceiving

they are simply fainting from fear and from hate.

*Translated by Antanas Danielius*

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I build a barricade

around myself

push the wardrobe and the bed together,

bring down the refrigerator

they send a negotiator

a pizza seller

resistance is senseless, he says

resistance is senseless, I agree

he leaves as the victor

leaving pizza with crabs

a postman comes: here is

a registered letter for you, sign please

I sign, both of us are smiling

resistance is senseless the letter says

I don't argue, agree politely

the situation is beyond hope



then a Mormon comes do you know

the divine plan, the Mormon asks

I do, resistance is senseless,

I say, the Mormon murmurs down the stairs

I improve my barricade, stuffing up the gaps

with old newspapers and chewing gum

the doorbell rings, and there's again

the pizza seller behind the door,

the Mormon and the postman

what else, I ask

you were right, they say, resistance

is senseless, the situation is beyond hope

so we are on the same

side of barricade

*Translation: Antanas Danielius*

*MP3 file*

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*The Golden Horde*

& and we carried heavy flags raised  
high, and they fluttered in the wind,  
and the golden dust settled  
on our shoulders, and our chief's face  
shined, the eyes of the blood lappers  
gleamed like steel, and thieves  
fought, not dividing their plunder,  
while buzzards divided up their intestines

what a time it was! everything was clear.

The skies were clear,  
the steppes wide, backs strong,  
and women when we looked at them  
fell over backwards. And our narrow-eyed horde  
multiplied, like a deck of cards  
in a fakir's hands. What a time it was.

We were the arrow, you the bow

you were the swamp and we the mountain  
and we carried your impaled heads

so you would see the world from up higher  
like a trick, like a game, like a deception,  
like a woman, like a flag, like food,  
we were a mountain and you a swamp,  
you were a trap and we animals,  
we were powerful. The trap closed.

---

*Some Kind of Kafka*

I live in a former hotel's former breakfast room  
(first floor, white veranda)  
and have a multitude  
of neighbors  
  
on four steel concrete floors  
they eat on me  
  
on four steel concrete floors  
they lie down on me  
  
on four steel concrete floors

they push around furniture

alongside is a small forest, there

it's even more horrible: a jackdaw colony

eats, sleeps, hatches children, shits

on everyone, tugs on intestine ends

stolen from the butcher's what

celebration, what a happening, how much

noise, croaking and jumping

you see and there a jackdaw

poet: sarcastically opening

his beak totally insincere

the shame of the jackdaw colony

scoffer, insurgent, tied

by the leg to a tree branch head

down he'd not be a bad

friend: too bad he' s dead.

---

*Carnival*

Robinson with a Parrot on his Shoulder

A Mountain Rifleman with a Rifle on his Shoulder

A Monument with a Copper Child on his Shoulder

A Villager with a Rake on his Shoulder

Nabokov with a Squirrel on his Shoulder

Jesus with an Olive Branch on his Shoulder

and also:

Jesus with a Parrot on his Shoulder

Nabokov with a Copper Child on his Shoulder

A Villager with a Rifle on his Shoulder

A Monument with a Squirrel on his Shoulder

A Mountain Rifleman with an Olive Branch on his Shoulder

Robinson with a Rake on his Shoulder

And Everything is Watched by Three Cretins

Cretin Father, Cretin Son

And Cretin Holy Ghost

With Heads on Shoulders

Squinting, showing their Teeth

Happy

.

-----MP3 file

*The Fall of the Empire*

the Empire had never seen such legions: old men, armed  
with bayonets from the time of the plague, town-dwellers, farmers, Byronic  
black-hairs, reserve lieutenants, an Armenian, having run in from  
the melons, Eastern *war* specialists with ninja swords and bandages, fight

with veins filled with adrenalin, pale, untalkative new  
barbarians, *z̄mudy*, Sarmatians, birdspeached *labusy*\*  
most still children, pressing in their handkerchief-wrapped  
hands, to hold them better, framing rods

boasted, grew bold, always saying at least  
they' d nail some Russian *paras*, and then whatever. One of them,  
covered with scars, sat in a corner with that crazy  
*framework* bludgeon, only doubled, smoked into his cupped hand

even though it was strictly forbidden, all around gasoline,  
Molotovs, smoked, with one ear listening to that  
*war* talk, smiled, white metal teeth  
shining like a new unknown weapon, blades

filled with rage, cloaked in poisonous fog, in

another time that sort of smile would be deadly,  
the kids seeing it quieted down, and he kept  
smoking into his hand, smiled, waited

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\* *z muddy* Russian word for Samogitians, North Western dialect of Lithuanians; *labusy* Russian army slang word for Lithuanians.

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*The End, Which In All Likelihood Is Not*

To watch the clock and live. To appear  
better than you should. remains for us. To appear. To be discreet.  
To see as if not having noticed.

The untouchable reserves have been spent.  
Only a single season remains for the entire year.  
Irony offers no help. That is completely  
ironic. Humanness is not funny.

Humanness would be good. how good innocence would be. Or  
knowing how to shoot accurately, and some

old doll carriage. For practice.

Everything is more or less quiet. You can't even get angry.

No one says: be cool, my friend.

No stopping. No acceleration gathering momentum.

Those who need a change buy hats of different colors.

Something ended. Nothing begins.

Each morning beginning at nine, athletic training.

We learn not to live. The teacher has

a black belt. An absolute corpse.

We fly in airplanes. Go out for walks.

We meet someone like us. Sluggishly multiply ourselves.

Ask: who's there? it's me, your beloved.

Who, who? no one's there already, my dear.

They ignore us. They photograph us clean through.

Mirrors refuse to accept our faces.

We page through empty albums, because that's all that's left.

We look ahead of ourselves, as if we had not noticed.

---



*A Poem Alone*

here's a poet who hears

voices, and it's enough for

here's a poet who tried to vomit out

his soul because he doesn't need it

here's a poet pretending to be young, hands

in his pockets, hopelessly aged jargon

here's a poet who wants to be a pilot

but he'll be a poet because he reads while eating

here's a poet werewolf, a poet only

by night, during the day a bookkeeper

here's a poet who is clever because he knows

what to publish and what to discard

here's an endlessly serious poet who does

the same thing and still constantly says: I don't write much,

I carry lines around in my head a long time, and here's  
a poet who takes nothing to his heart?

here's a poet romantic, who dedicates  
his lines to waitresses and is easily moved to tears

here's another poet, who washes his hands  
and whistles softly as the closet bagpipe buzzes

here's a poet glorifying nature as if  
it needed his glorification

here's a poet who hasn't written a single  
good line, but that doesn't matter

here's a fashionable poet with his retinue  
secretly daydreaming about a scholarly career

here's a poet intellectual, who all the while wanted  
to be fashionable but did not succeed

here's a poet naïf, who looks at what  
he's written and thanks 'The Almighty'?

Here's a poet at his very best, two or three

days before he goes crazy

here's a poet mystic, wringing

his neck in the cabala

here's a poet in whose bathtub

is a poster of naked Marilyn Monroe

here's a poet who doesn't have Monroe or

a tub and washes in a bowl

here's a poet driven into a corner, left

by a woman, left and afraid

here's a poet, sacrificing his poem to metaphors

and here's another, sacrificing metaphors to his poem

and here's a poem, having sacrificed the poet, curly-haired

lamb, well in fact a whole sheep

a poem all alone:

the kind that's enough for everyone.

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*Kinescope*

that thing we are watching

is called a kinescope

it only seems to be flat

but in reality it is like a bag

filled with tiny dots

jumping around like

shining Christmas

fleas

when those dots get their orders

they obediently stand in their places

and arrange themselves into tree, skyscraper

the Balkan crisis or L. Di Caprio

(just take a look at how his white

shirt shines it's all because of those dots)

so if you see something

horrible don't be afraid, don't show

you can be deceived

there are no jungles there nor floods

no zombies with chainsaws

but I'm not saying that there is nothing there

(the way the obscurantist say)

there is a great multitude

of dots

*Translated by Jonas Zdanys*

*MP3 file*

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Bud tojas  
*The Night Watch Man*

in a room warmed

by sleeping breath

the night watch man leans

shoulders against the wall.

he watches the dark, his head

cocked, so he could see better,

winds a thread, torn

from his jacket, about his finger.

he smokes: the flame at the tip  
of his cigarette crackles. someone turns over.  
someone talks in his sleep.

Don' t answer, watch man. as long  
as they dream, you needn' t worry. time,  
like an eighteen-wheeler, doesn't chase  
after you in their dreams.

and when the wall clock strikes  
four, don't jump, watch man.  
hold onto the edge with your nails,  
crumbling bones, cracked teeth.

it is yours: the dreamers,  
the name in the dark. dream that I 'll never enter,  
watch man, poor night watch man.

---

Nuostabi istorija  
*An amazing story*

as it turns out, he's a restorer. he drives out  
to all sorts of remote places, churches,  
monasteries, offering  
his services. but no one needs them.

there's nothing left to restore. everything  
has been taken abroad or burned during the war.  
That's why he can sit here with me, trying  
to involve me in a drunken friendship.

sensing that I'm bored, he starts telling  
stories. tries to catch my interest. insistent.  
he says that he's discovered the secret  
of the portrait of Mary that shed tears of blood.

Fe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> he explains offhandedly, iron  
oxide. the paint simply dripped from the irises  
because of dampness and age.  
after that it's simple condensation.

however, the conversation doesn't click.

I get up to say good-bye. growing drunker quickly. to stop by sometime when I' m driving past.

already at the bar, paying up, I freeze:

nothing impressive, he mutters under his breath,

yes, and that's how it should be,

otherwise what would we do.

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Revoliucija  
*Revolution*

the plan we knew by heart:

government buildings

bridges radio towers

train stations

some of us

had buddies in the barracks



it began

at exactly six am

while you were still asleep

at half past we were

already reading the communiqué

at eight the white

minister of justice

was puking on the green rug

the crowds were celebrating

barrels rolled in the streets

the prostitutes strutted their stuff

raising the standard of revolt

five minutes past noon

we declared amnesty for all prisoners

and that was all

that we could do

(I'll say it again: that we could do)

at half past twelve Gabriel  
the archangel  
sounded the trumpets of Armageddon

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Toksai komiksas  
*A comic strip*

my life would make  
a strange comic strip

all the boxes would show  
a long trip taken on a dusty road,  
lazy eye movements,  
thin weeds bending along the roadsides

in all the pictures  
the reins would be between my knees,  
and above my head in a white balloon  
the text would read: halala humm and there d be polite,

yet proud, nods to anyone  
standing alongside the road

in all of the pictures there would be  
a whip lying beside my boots,  
my drooping eye lids, the corners of my mouth  
hanging down, and the horse's massive rump

you drive and you drive, and drive,  
just like that, I would drive

from one box  
to the next

---

*Kaimo ba~ny is pal p s*  
The Attics of Rural Churches

broken pews, a bundle of candles,  
old surplices, chasubles, and  
all sorts of strange clothing

darkness and dust, and, just look,  
at least a few rays of sunshine  
falling from the roof down to the floor

holy statues  
once upon a time diligently gilded,  
wearing aquamarine tunics,

the paint is peeled, some  
are missing arms, noses

there are spider webs  
in the folds

some stand in corners, others  
are laid to rest softly, nameless now,  
as though they were all saints

white faces, until now red  
was the paint of blood,  
the virgin Mary has lost her infant  
Jesus where is he,

where is he now, maybe crawling

in the chaff, entangled in spider webs

down below the carpenters but only one

is a carpenter, the other is still a boy,

a carpenter's assistant are repairing the organ

(this old organ cannot play a trumpet; there are sparrow bones in the pipes)

it took until very late

the boy watched the bats,

flying above the altar (everything trembles!)

occasionally listening, how up there, up above,

something went thump, but he wasn't startled,

not really

he's explored everything up there already,

secretly, holding up a match stick for light

so that there's nothing,

absolutely nothing, to be afraid of

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Up  
*The River*

just above the water

just below the slope

in the sunshine

a suppliant

just below the suppliant

gnats, warm silt

perfect for a bare foot

water and bottom plants

so green they're black

dragonflies flit above the water,

like mad, momentarily hanging still

mid-air, as though they 'd remembered something,

their eyes bigger than their heads

absolutely stunned

by the beauty of this world.

---

Sekmadienis kaime  
*Sunday in the village*

A mottled dog trots along the dirt road. His coat is dusty.

It hasn't rained for a while. We really need it.

You know, it was stupid of me to expect something.

Half past two. How slow everything is today.

That's it and nothing more. smiles for the heck of it. Good, you say, no reason to get involved.

Heavens! But after all, it's your own fault.

Where's your dog gone to?

He's rolling in a field of dandelion fluff.

So then, hasn't rained for some time. The wind is  
directionless, weak.

*Translated by Laima Sruginis*

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