

**Aušra KAZILIŪNAITĒ****Poems****stuffed**

one day, by the dumpster, i saw an abandoned stuffed bird  
i saw it and forgot, but it didn't forget me, it even began to stalk me –  
wherever and whenever i would go, whomever i would meet, i saw the ragged bird

at first, i pretended not to see it  
let it show itself, what do i care – it neither chirps nor pecks at me

but eventually, it grew rude – appearing not only in public places –  
among students, listeners, pedestrians –  
but showing up among friends, perching even on my loved ones' heads

so i tried to make nice, asking – what are you doing here and what do you want?  
but the stuffed thing just squatted there – silent  
and my father, on whose head it eventually perched, only looked at me inquiringly  
dad – i whispered – there's a bird on your head!  
but he just waived his hand, you know – big deal

from that time on, i began to see the stuffed creature in my dreams –  
no escape – i hardly slept, i barely ate, i barely was –  
and i would keep seeing it – always frozen in the same pose, mute, frayed,  
though it began to seem to me that it was smiling – the stuffed bird was mocking me  
so i finally snatched it up and threw it with all my strength at the wall, only, it turned out,  
that wasn't the wall, but a mirror.

that was the first time i saw a bird fly  
in a mirror

**holy**

pedestrian smiles, a cold spring, books, films  
shoes in the wrong spot, sex, monday's sirens  
a pigeon flies into church –  
none of it appears to mean anything

and that's the only reason  
it appears

**holiday make-up**

i saw angels with automatic rifles in their hands  
staring sadly at the floor in airports and stations

waiting

i saw eight-year-olds sent by their parents  
running up to human rights activists  
shouting – give us back the rainbow –

giggling

i saw men who thought they were real men  
and women who thought they were real women  
saying in greeting, instead of a name –  
i am so and so's woman –

i saw emptied villages, forests felled  
dammed rivers and steeples of small towns

in the mirror

**alien planet**

the computer says – we've arrived  
it's generally not very talkative, but has been jabbering  
for hours now about the pruning of fruit trees  
it says – we have reached our journey's goal

my toes are numb  
i climb out of the spaceship  
and look around, gathering samples for scientists –  
i walk about a room identical to my own  
nothing lives for light years all around  
there are no curtains  
it's quietly snowing outside  
garlands glitter in windows across the street  
children push and shove on the sidewalk

nothing but cosmic loneliness and stone

**the blooming bush**

i don't remember much of childhood –  
often getting sick, i had nightmares, i feared the dark  
i had no friends, sometimes, i was afraid of vanishing,  
of just disintegrating like a cloud –  
there's almost nothing more  
and when i try to remember  
it seems that i always had a fever  
that when i broke my leg, i had to learn to walk again

another thing – my mother got especially angry once  
and broke off a branch of this yellow blooming bush in spring  
and i didn't care at all  
but pretended to cry

after that, i went to school, finished school, had boyfriends  
and girlfriends, matriculated in a BA program, graduated  
matriculated in a MA program, graduated, matriculated in a PhD program  
and always tried to be very excited about all of this  
because i was trying to the last to hide from myself the fact  
that it didn't really matter to me

and now, slowly, i begin to understand  
that this dripping from the tap  
the dead cats lolling on my lap  
the fog slinking over the land  
all of the words of the people i once met  
and all of the yellow blooming bushes of spring

recognized me

before i was born

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wildflowers  
at city cafés  
steeped in soda bottles

that's us

**omelet**

i was planning to cook an omelet  
i broke one egg  
then another  
and in the third i found a grimy boy

sitting there, parentless, alone  
in a shopping mall  
with a small box at his side

i looked around to see if anyone saw  
then continued to prepare  
breakfast

**plants**

i arranged myself  
on the shelves  
of grocery stores

poured myself into the gas tanks of buses  
where it's dark and tight  
but at least there's a direction – maybe a meaning

i wrote my name at bus stops  
but nobody gets on there

i checked myself out  
of all the municipal libraries  
and forgot to return myself

i feel the weather changing  
i feel the debt growing

and that spring is coming  
spring is coming  
spring is coming

with me

**all flowers wilt**

i hear a knock, i open the door:  
my neighbor from the other side of the wall

i used to hear her, in the evenings, washing up  
i've seen her out of the corner of my eye a few times –  
the first time was in childhood  
when our dog Lord didn't come home  
and again  
when grandmother didn't come

i always tried to do what was intimate quietly – so she wouldn't hear  
in truth, the most ordinary things became intimate because of her

holding my breath, my heart quivering, at one in the morning  
i would slowly and quietly stir honey into my chamomile tea  
so that she wouldn't hear, so that she wouldn't understand

and here she is standing in front of me with a giant, red bouquet of blossoms

their heads bob with satisfaction in my trembling hands

stunned, like some fool, i ask

what should i do with them?

she smiles so beautifully, beautifully

just love them

**rain in Vilnius**

gravediggers  
dig out the city little by little  
lower us into it nailing it up  
then scatter rain on top

at first –  
by the handful  
later –  
with shovels

later yet –  
they cover us with silence

**the moon is a pill**

the moon is a pill  
with a groove  
down the middle

anger is a pill  
with a groove  
down the middle

Mindaugas Bridge is a pill  
with a groove  
down the middle

summer is a pill  
with a groove  
down the middle

drought in Africa  
that wipes away  
the lives of 500 thousand children  
is a pill  
with a groove  
down the middle

a beloved woman is a pill  
with a groove  
down the middle

a cop striking the protestors' dog  
is a pill  
with a groove  
down the middle

to give up one's seat on the bus  
is a pill  
with a groove  
down the middle

to sing from joy  
having buried one's self  
is a pill  
with a groove  
down the middle

silence is a pill  
with a groove  
down the middle

drunken time lies

in the groove  
and babbles

never ask  
who cut this groove  
who dug this day for us  
who nailed a twitching bird  
to its teeth  
BREAK IT

swallow one half  
and the other –  
opening the bird's lid with both hands  
insert the pill and close

then you will finally  
see –

drops of blood  
streaking  
over the day's teeth

### **you have to live somehow**

every night i hear the herons leaving  
every morning i see the falling leaves  
every day a winter comes somewhere  
without end  
every evening i am buried by a man  
wearing denim overalls

he doesn't earn enough for this  
but you have to live somehow  
pay your mortgage  
child support too

he grins

**i haven't read a poem**

i haven't read a poem in a long time:  
surrounded by the impassable bogs  
of philosophy, the impenetrable  
forests of novels in translation –

i dreamed a creature there

not a serious beast  
sort of yellow  
brooding

maybe a jay

only a hundred-page jay  
but already a beast

i haven't read a poem in a long time  
because it doesn't fit  
into three hundred pages  
the jay doesn't fit  
either

it takes more time  
it takes all time

i haven't read a poem in a long time  
because it doesn't fit  
because it takes

i haven't read this poem



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if i lose my hands while walking  
don't pick them up and don't  
run up to me to give them back  
they were simply too heavy  
they were too heavy  
and that's that

you can take them home  
to decorate a Christmas tree  
homeless cats won't touch them  
they were too heavy  
just too heavy

if i lose my head while walking  
don't say  
you're so unlike yourself today  
so not like yourself –  
there were creatures inside, creatures  
who were hunting me

if i lose my words while walking  
don't pick them up from the soggy ground  
let them lie there in the dirt  
they'll sprout when spring arrives

the meadow will rustle where teenagers gingerly touch

if i lose the rain while walking  
go outside  
it's me, it's me  
caressing you, without hands

### **spring**

sitting next to you i can smell  
the wounds under your clothes

magnolia blossoms  
pushing through your skin

**no, thank you!**

you're walking the narrow streets of the medina-quarter  
you turn the corner  
and there's no one there, no vendors, no pedestrians  
just charcoal shadows and soured pigeon shit

eventually, at one corner after another, you find volunteers to show you the way  
they follow you, insinuating that if you run from them you'll lose your way

a small boy runs after, mocking you: no, thank you! no, thank you!

and then – a square, a tree, a person  
wrapped in cloth, he could be one of Jesus's friends

“so go, go, and don't stop, and don't listen to what they say  
you're like those donkeys who go without stopping, go until they die”

and i go on, i go listening to how the old man under the tree rages  
i turn in circles, always meeting those who want to show me the way  
thinking, maybe i really need to stop, let them lead me astray, rob me

maybe when you're led astray you're less lost than when you lose yourself

**storm**

on your body – tattooed rain  
falling leaves splashing  
cars in the old town  
and i –

my wet tattooed  
clothes, torn shoes  
and soaked hair

but there is no  
umbrella  
here

and no  
you  
on your body

**signal lights**

lying in the heads of dream people  
in the entrails of forgetting and remembering  
thoroughly digested and digesting  
you suddenly turn over to the other side  
so that you could wake up  
in the already dreamt dreams of dream people  
and when the town executioner cuts off the head of dawn  
you arm yourself with the sharpened blades of unease

you skip along like a summer breeze  
like freedom that knows no will  
like a desert jackal scenting the carrion of victory  
separating you from the executioner's neck

another split-second  
AND

it's cold,  
a red light  
blinks in the distance –  
an alarm sounds  
in the neighboring house's lot

lifting your eyes  
you see the entire sky  
is full of similar lights and unease –  
stars that don't blink, but burn

that  
is the alarm  
sounding above  
from a long time ago

a longer time than we have been  
a longer time than the word has been  
proclaiming that someone  
is stealing –  
that someone stole the sky

**and so what if god is a seagull**

*all our history of trying to see, craves not to see*

for so long we looked for confirmation  
that this time it's for good, that now everything is really real  
that to the very grave, etc., etc.

time and time again, we wanted clear and tangible evidence  
something concrete and visible  
but so what if it's there, and so what if god exists

and so what if god is a seagull, turning his head to all sides in disdain  
swallowing fishes live, and shitting on a Belarusian writer

and so what if god is orange juice  
whose expiration date is missing and which  
some uncle Stan bought for breakfast some six years ago

and so what if god is that athletic young man  
with brown eyes, showing the exact measure of his penis  
on a gay website

and so what, if god is –  
only we don't notice him

**wardrobe**

i saw another person's dream  
trying you on for size

it washed and ironed you  
hung you in the closet  
then threw you away  
– you were just too big –

occasionally i meet  
the homeless man  
who wears you now

finally, there is light in his eyes

**coltsfoot will grow along the fence**

someday, all my friends will die  
my relatives and loved ones too  
my enemies will die and all my neighbors  
the passers-by whom i once met on the street  
will vanish from the surface of the earth

my classmates and colleagues  
teachers professors co-workers  
will die

all the people will breathe their last  
with whom i wore  
for reasons unknown  
the same uniform of time  
though i never fought  
in any of its battles

birds who once flew  
above my head held high  
will die and the dogs i used to hear howl  
on spine-chilling nights outside the city  
will grow silent for all eternity

coltsfoot will still grow along the fence  
tired grapes will rest on arbors  
but no one will call me by name  
and i myself will not be

but then  
carefully  
head slightly cocked  
i'll watch the strange dogs  
grapes and coltsfoot

and then  
for the first time  
i'll really see the flight of birds

and the couple hurrying by  
will scroll  
their eyes  
along the bench  
on which i sit

and they will know  
that i see  
the flight of birds  
differently

and that  
i am  
those things i don't know  
the dogs the grapes  
and the coltsfoot

### **fortune**

in a flash, i am all those people on whom fortune smiled  
but they are afraid to smile back  
so they look down at their feet and blush

they just look down and blush

even though no one has smiled for some time

in a flash, i am all those people who feel superior to others  
and all those people who feel inferior to others  
and i am  
a snail  
a live snail in a North African bazaar

i find myself  
in a coiled basket with other snails

slowly unfurling my antennae

tourists pass  
taking pictures

**second storey**

from my windows i can see  
the trolley bus wires  
take people away

electricity sparks and  
dies

pupils narrow  
and expand

blood flows to my temples

and a buck restlessly raises  
his head

to listen for the unheard murmur  
of the night he just drank

**idyll**

i'm sitting on the bed  
and hear the birds outside the window  
i smell potatoes frying  
and see myself among them  
in the uncertainty of fortuitous lumps

this one has my grinning lips  
rolling greasy on the ground

so i say to myself:  
now everything is really all right  
now everything will finally be real

the bed, birds, window and potatoes  
all assent:  
now everything will finally be real

*Translated from the Lithuanian by Rimas Užgiris*