

THE WIND FOUNDATIONS

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Translation from Albanian Ukë ZENEL BUÇPAPAJ

Poetic Credo

I have always known where I come from, and I have always wanted the path on which I must go. I am not talking about visible paths, on which we travel every day, but those paths where the winds rattle and go crazy. I want to apprehend the language of those winds, their unknown tongues. Then, when I lie to myself that I have translated something from them, even a little bit of that rattle, I sit and throw it down on paper. There are other kinds of visible winds, the tangible and inglorious ones, though these cannot be compared to my original inspirations. They are faint but revolutionary; they incorporate the air of the cities and my breath. In them, they translate me and throw me down on paper as poetry. Yes, oh yes, I am their poetry. But as inglorious as they are themselves...

THE WIND FOUNDATIONS

The wind foundations
Are to be found in Odysseus' migrations.

The unwoven cloth
Is the building...

OBLIVION AT DUSK

I fear the oblivion of a stone
At the dusk of a nameless city

My grandmother had told me that the stone
Has breathed sadness since immemorial times
For it carries the city in its bone...

A PRAYER

My Lord, set the winds free from hands
And let them swell
In hearth fires...

My Lord, their flames waver like flags of light
Crossing no man's borders...

They are children fearing
The Army of Shadows...

SUCH IS THE SNAKE

Touchable marble
Fenced in among roses,

Such is the snake,
The hovering creature
Hovering in the cold hover.

BEING

I am a being...
 You are a being...
 He or she is a being
Even though we have never met him or her...

Stones standing upon stones
Are
Beings as well...

VIEW

They cut the citrus branches
Early in the morning.

They blocked the old man's view
From his villa windows,
And so he cut them one by one
With a handsaw.

Passing by the suns fallen on the ground,
I recollected that sunset in Glyfada
When the evening eve cut off a beloved silhouette from me,

Even though I have never ever blocked Aphrodite's sight...

A SYMPHONY

I don't want to lose you
On the this evening's eve
When shadows tangle with trees
As if they were silhouettes of sadness.

It is a cold winter night
Wearing gloomy skies,
Wearing gloomy seas
And shells bring symphonies of departures
To my ears.

I don't want to lose you
In this freezing December
When our white bed sheets
Have become sailing ships.

I don't want to lose you.
I have lost so much
That symphonies of waves
Keep surrounding me from all sides...

THE SQUARE

Taking shape after shape,
Matter translates into different selves
At the speed of light.

Paralysis shines in human eyes.

A MIRAGE

Shadow ravens
Preach by the river
Of the white lilies

THE CHILD, THE CROWD AND THE PEACOCK

Etude 1

On the Carnival Day,
People walk through the city
In the company of a Peacock.

Beings of various kinds,
Their minds blissful,
Their faces cheerful
With Peacock Colours.

Etude 2

Stepping on the Peacock Tail,
The Child becomes a little Gipsy.

Drums and trinkets
Are His world.

Etude 3

Three Peacock Tails
Scattered on the wind.

The Child, the Crowd and the Peacock
Change into a single Man.

BETHLEHEM

I had never set foot
On that land
Yet my memory fled there
Following a star
And began to shine

A RING

A ring with a black ribbon
Running through it
Flies in the air
As if it were a flag at half mast

No cherub
Is raising toasts at the wedding party...

ASCETIC

One hundred years old, and at my final dusk,
I walk lost in thought by these seashores,
I am a crazy Don Juan in love,
My lust melting into the foam of waves.

Banished from the gates of my paradise,
That beloved wines that warms you from within,
I walk by these seashores at sunset
When they ablaze as if struck by thunderbolts.

Once, in my youth, drinking would warm my blood,
Filling the city space with my blooming freedom.
Now, one hundred years old, and at my final dusk,
I walk by the seashore, envying infinity.

THERE IS A LIMIT

There is a limit
Beyond shadows and pine trees
Where only you refresh my thoughts
There, love and hatred thrive
As if they were tree fruits in spring
Hatred is endless
Endless is love
The dreams come wearing blue and dark colours
Like loves do under the shade of the ballad tree

Containing all the boundaries of the oceans
You wither in the smoke of oblivion
And I feel happy because of your withering

There is a limit devoid of all limits
With no room for reasoning or contemplating or preaching
Then I feel horrified to tell myself
That I have lost you for ever

There is a limitless limit
Evaporating like clouds...

WRITTEN ON GLASS

I never fear dusks,
For I know I can invent rains and sounds.

I devour your fleshy lips
Whenever you kiss mine
Smelling Scotch Whisky.

I am my consciousness written on glass.

TO YOU

Your hair
Covering your brow in shadows.

So many times
I did wrinkle your sleeping thoughts.

VAPOROUS AFTERNOONS

Your missing presence
Is a perfume of jasmine vapours.

My tea afternoons
Evaporate amidst Oriental Sounds
My gullet tosses off
With lust dazzling me beyond thirst.

Darkness melts into violin sobs
Falling on the wood that creates the BEING
Inside and outside me.

THE SUN'S SHORES

"What terrifies you most in purity?" I asked.

"Haste," William answered.

An excerpt from Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*

From now on I am your unreachable present
You are my already abandoned past
Over there on the shores of the shadows
On the sun's left

Every morning on the sun's right cactuses bloom flowers
Enduring no more than your haste can handle
Then, with purity, they embrace sunsets
To greet light again at dawns

You are my already abandoned yesterday
Between you and me, two eyes of a distant eagle
From the hardly visible mountain on the sun's shores

THERE WAS A TIME

There was a time
Called the time of leaves
When you and I
When both of us
Discovered the Moon
In an unknown remote forest

You had found greenery
Buried in darkness
I had encountered you
Travelling towards light

Then we learned to find
Trees and leaves with ease
In the thicket of darkness
In the thicket of light

You love me and the moon

There came a time
Again they called it the time of leaves
But the lost forest could not be found
And the moon suddenly hid
From you

You loved me no more
You no more knew what or whom you loved...

SWANS OF NIGHTMARES

Farewell
My sad hero
Farewell

Swans of nightmares
Will always leave
My lake of love legacies
Of troubled symphonies

Even if another love
Comes in
Even if it
Is greater than pain

Farewell
To you fleeing as fast as wind
Farewell

You always failed
To tell the white from the blue
And so you pawned me
This sadness of colours
Carrying a soul I cannot read
Whenever dusks fall
Whenever swans
Call on their songs...

I SIMPLY...

I simply loved you
As much as breezes love lime trees
I loved you as much as waves love shores
I simply loved you
Without knowing the 'Whys'

You loved me too
You loved me deeply, thoroughly
Then you asked yourself
Why breezes acquire meaning from lime trees
Why waves would be no more waves
If there were no shores

Failing to answer those questions lead you astray
And you remained a stupid winter wind flying through sad skies
I never abandoned shores or lime trees
And I sought to find out the reasons behind the 'Whys'
Only when the owl screamed...

EMIGRATION

To emigrate from yourself in a season of oblivion is to become less worth than a dry leaf.
The singers participating in the Festival of Twitters wink at me heartily.
Their cyclic cycle starts and ends with Them themselves.

FAREWELL TO A LEAF

I am leaving you in the company of trees
And firs, whose only season
Is greenery.

I am leaving under an open sky, open
With the idea that the season was not a utopia.

I am leaving you in the house of blooming...

CROSS OR SWORD

Near Crucified Christ,
A candle flickers
On the table.

A sword sparkles
In a corner of the room.

Those freaked
By the moon fireflies
Worship shapes.

Beyond the fence,
A breath fades away...

And the candle lights
Through the entire house...

A TEARFUL WILLOW

It is so sad
To be looking at the ground
When you have the immense sky over your shoulders.

Yesterday, standing under an apex
(Where migrating birds set up their nests),
The last traveler,
Repeated the song: "O Roof, My Roof".

MY LOVE IS SO IGNORANT

My love drinks water from plastic cups.
Leaning its elbows against the wooden table,
Lost in thought, it watches the river going through the city.

My love is so thoughtful and thirsty
That it fails to feel the touch of rain wetting its hands.

Not knowing that the SOURCE is behind the mountain,
My love still seeks water in plastic cups.

My love is so ignorant and thirsty...

WINTER

This bird, conceived
In mist and longingness,
Is grey, entirely grey.

SEPTEMBER

I loved you infinitely
Amidst sea waves and fragrant pine trees.
You spoke and spoke and spoke of pearls...

INSTEAD OF A FAREWELL

You have lost the rainbow colors forever
And now I see you looking for a woman's icon
In waters

At nights
As you turn your back to the strange light
Sadness often conquers you –
The lighthouse shines to help other voyagers...

WINDS ARE BLOWING

Winds are blowing
Crazy winds are blowing
On Mediterranean shores
Chips of waves, chips of words
Get stuck in my throat
One day I would be your sunset
One day you would write
The first line of dusk symphonies
There, in our island of lilies
A life far from storms and Tramuntana winds
Winds are blowing
Crazy winds are blowing
On love shores
My thoughts of you
Piercing my soul through...

SILENT TWINKLES

The stars shone...

Silent twinkles
Of distant lights
Dancing on the water surface...

Unreal
Is the troubled sea
In the ruby darkness...

The city on the rock
Starts its nightly ritual...

THE MAN'S FLOOD

That day was another threshold
A stranger stole from him his mother's lap and his sister's affectionate eyes
Blind with sadness he stood as before a lifeless thing
When at midnight his love's shelter appeared in front of him
He was in the grip of the man's flood...

SHADOWS

Erratic shadows
Populate our nights,
Sad shadows
That never recognized shame,
Bringing Beings into existence
Only in fairytales.

KINDNESS

For my brother, Egon

Birds have freedom inherent in their blood
All they need is to see a small piece of sky

My brother, you are a Phoenix reborn due to our toilsome efforts
Yet only once in a blue moon we can become your sky

The journey towards the truth
Is long, very long
So thoughts must bear
Patience

Depths

Peace

With the eagle's eyes
Feeding on clear light
With the sharp sword
Always pointed to itself...

BIRDS

It is the Child that numbs even the Sun with his or her eyes.
The pencil moves slowly on the paper, drawing birds instead of leaves.
Like the Sun, the branches greet angels and freedom.

A BIRD'S CREAM

Doves are no more doves
In prison yards

Juveniles –
Birds screaming
For Daedalus!

I MISS...

I miss the time when I loved you so much
When you were the only cause of my waking up
No matter whether I was near or far from the sea
No infinity could fill me
As much as my love for you

I miss remembering what love was like
What its form and its content were like
What eyes it wore at evenings and in mornings
Which of its leaves whispered with breath

I miss loving like I did once
I miss loving like I loved you
With a song I had woven into tens of refrains

Watching you distanced, migrated from your own self
Colder than all winter winds
I miss loving you
I miss love, too...

ENDLESSNESS

My endlessness
Much more sacred than purity itself
Come back to the dawn of sailing ships
For the boat
Of the fisherman will come
And the winds will disappear from the shores...

IT WAS PREDESTINED THAT...

It was predestined that it would take place
After the construction of the Gardens of Babylon
The predestined occurrence
Went with the wind
To whisper the truth
At a skylark's ears one morning

MEPHISTOPHELEAN

I am the Oracle of Delphi.

I disorient all people
With my ambiguous words.

In the morning, I told them
That the sky is both clear and cloudy,
And they reckoned their brains day after day
To find the mystery.

One evening when I encountered one of them
Standing alone by Lethe River,
I told him that I adore small-mindedness.

Alisa Velaj was born in the southern port town of Vlora, Albania in 1982. She has been shortlisted for the annual international Erbacce-Press Poetry Award in UK in June 2014. Her works have appeared in more than seventy print and online international magazines, including: FourW twenty-five Anthology (Australia), The Journal (UK), The Dallas Review (USA), The Linnet's Wings (UK) The Seventh Quarry (UK), Envoi Magazine (UK) etc etc. Her poems are also translated in Hebrew, Swedish, Romanian, French and Portuguese. Velaj's poetry book "With No Sweat At All" (trans by Ukë Zenel Buçpapaj) will be published by Cervena Barva Press in 2019.

Ukë Zenel Buçpapaj is an Albanian writer who has published books of poetry and prose at home and abroad. His translation work has appeared in Denver Quarterly (USA, 1994); Seneca Review (USA, 1995); Modern Poetry in Translation (UK, 1996); Visions International (USA, 1996 and 1997); The Year Book of American Poetry (USA, 1997); Grand Street (USA, 998); Fence (USA, 1999) etc. etc. He holds the following titles: 'International Visitor' (USA , 1992); 'Honorary Fellow in Creative Writing' (University of Iowa, USA, 1992) and 'Fulbright Scholar' (University of Iowa, USA, 1992). A Professor Doctor, he is currently teaching Comparative Literature, Literary Translation, Contrastive Linguistics and Study Skills at the University of Tirana.