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EUROPEAN ATLAS OF LYRICS AWARD

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**EUROPEAN ATLAS OF
LYRICS AWARD FOR
THE YEAR 2014**

Tanja Kragujević
First “European Atlas of Lyrics Award”
Translated by Zoran Jungić

On 20 August 2014, the Award Jury – comprised of the following members: Ms Aleksandra Čvorović, poet, story writer, literary critic, and professor of literature; Mr Jovica Aćin, prose writer, essayist, and translator of literature; Mr Milenko Stojičić, poet, prose writer, and literary critic; Mr Zdravko Kecman, poet, prose writer, literary critic, and translator; and the Jury president Tanja Kragujević, poet and essayist – unanimously decided that the “European Atlas of Lyrics Award”, established by the Association of Writers and Translators and publisher “House of Poetry” in Banja Luka, should be given to Ms Ewa Lipska, from Poland, for her entire literary output.

Ewa Lipska, Poet Of The Present And Future Memory

By naming Ewa Lipska as the first recipient of the newly established “European Atlas of Lyrics Award”, which

becomes official with this announcement, we could not stress more the Award's authentic literary profile and a sense of its own worth in the future. Right at the start, we could say that Ewa Lipska is a mature poet, and that, at the same time, she is fully dedicated to creative openness, courage, and intervention in the reading and poetic interpretation of our modern world.

In some thirty books of poetry, starting in 1967, Ewa Lipska has creatively investigated, through almost painfully outstanding integrity and virtuous, humorous, and deadly ironic poetic idiom, the fragility of a lyrical word and difficult poetic understanding of constantly renewed turbulent paths into the new millennium. Strengthening the basis of her delicate philosophical concepts, and visible intellectual meanings in her writings, she has poetically united traumatic and almost dreamlike scenes of inheritance of the past, be it her own or of the modern world; the puzzling magic of life, always interrupting one's breath, but also involving continuity and monstrous evil, one's childhood torn by war, or an ideological strait-jacket of lasting memories of everything that existed previously, before this troubled peace in a post-industrial epoch had arrived, with its brand new electronic culture.

The persuasiveness of scepticism permeating throughout this poet's spiritual landscape, of her apostrophes of caution and special picturesqueness of detail, depends on a constant, double poetic grapheme of the visible, of swift reflection in consciousness, and in the impulses of complex, but at the same time unpretentious creative response follows, in every poetry collection by Ewa Lipska, new creative dimensions and reflections in multiple kaleidoscopes of never-ending experience and

events, which would fully explain her lack of faith in academic premises of creative orienteers, of great themes and inspirations, immortalized symbols, and forever established aesthetic ideals, thus giving, instead, priority to the living text, a knitting ball, resulting in possible creation of a completely new world, or at least, a world consisting of multiple meanings.

According to Petar Vujičić, Ewa Lipska is a synonym for change, introduced into Polish literature by a triumvirate of the greatst, that is, Rozewicz, Herbert, and Szymborska, who, as outstanding writers, conquered Europe with their lyrics, but also became a paradigm for modern European poetry. In the 1970s and 1980s, Ewa Lipska belonged to the new wave, characterized by strong impulses in the new social and political climate, directing the criticism and creative openness towards new reality, and, at the same time, forcefully defining her unique creative voice.

Looking from sidelines with sharpened perception, taking sides in “small” dramas of everyday life, understanding the existentialist sequences of Szymborska, and following the path of loneliness, like Rozewicz did in the twentieth century, Ewa Lipska has also become a traveller lost in “anarchy on Earth”, whose magic experiences and paroxysms, like heretic confessions and certain difficult realizations, “heavy verse in her heart”, could have been avoided. Even when she dresses her poems in brilliant, sometimes surrealist, decor, using parts of today’s electronic speech and the all-present packaged phraseology of the newspapers and other media, we will find nothing underneath but bare epigrammatic, traumatized particles of confused existence, a disturbed order

of values and mostly ignored, undervalued plainness. These fragments of reality, diffused by everyday life, usually used up, and so different that nothing can bind them together but the life itself, become at once particles caught in the eye of Lipska's poem. She uses supreme free will to keep them there, so that they alone could reveal micro-fragments of the invisible reality possessing us, and the separate, but also universal, drama steeped in time, savouring it as a single isolated experience, in order to make it truly present, visible, flickering, and alive inside the undisturbed lyrical feeling. Lipska leads us directly there with lightening force of her poetic thought and talent, acknowledging the fast-moving formulas of our times, and also, more often, hunting for the precious valuables pushed aside, ruined by time, and left behind in disarray, along the timely interrupted paths.

As a witness / of total loss of sight / I am worried / for this world. But
the world / detonates with colours / carefree like comics / acting
crazy in exhibition parks. Wormed up muscles of continents/
explode. / Icebergs are on fire. / And yet – poetry. A particle of
poetry / has managed to escape. / What will happen to it next?

Dread

This poetic note, an almost lyrical obsession, a gentleness and fear varied many times, presents Lipska's full lyrical insight of being "engaged" in poetic creation. There is nothing else but love for our "great-small realm of existence", which, like our inherited "gondola of language", has only us: "Earth / An orphan. Badly looked upon/ in cosmic children's centre / because of vague family roots". This is the reason we must really "fear bravely".

From the very beginning, Ewa Lipska has established brave diagonals in “multi volume time”, which, with renewed energy and insight, reveal the atlas of our times, “a plate always empty”, and “new solid ground”. The brilliance of a new millennium is presented to humankind as Gordian’s knot, a sophisticated form of modern loneliness, an insensitive temple of a shopping mall, a fate of bank machines, relaxation and indifference in “transient rooms” of Europe, holiday silence of empty streets and “landscapes without reciprocity”, where contemporary Noah once more has to go through experience of an unsolved ancient drama, “antique tragedy” running through the river veins, “expelled air”, tragedy of renewed forgetting of being excommunicated, and always rejuvenated possibility of loneliness of being a victim, to whom “the history, as always / will give publicity / to drown out someone’s / call for help”.

Constant poetic preoccupation of Ewa Lipska is a triad which makes us what we are: life, old age, death, the passing night, and the “peacock’s scream”. But, at the same time it is the historic tragedy, a “damage of continuity”, addressed by the poet’s swift poetic paradox, in whispering voices in times of disappearance, or in memory of the erased. In her early books, leading to her later collections of poetry *1999* (1999), *Zoo Shop* (2001), *I* (2004), or *Newton’s Orange* (2008), there appears, with poetic variety, a separate echo of life and death in a repeated refrain of historical constants: “They already existed. / We exist now. / You will yet exist”. The past is deeply imbedded in Lipska’s writing, and philosophical dialogue with Walter Benjamin, Adorno, Habermas, or Hannah Arendt is strongly present as a conviction that every

pogrom will be finally set to rest when it becomes expunged from the collective memory. In her first novel *Sefer* (2012), Lipska uses a voice of resistance, as an active, engaging component of her work: "We all search for the past, regardless of our own historic situation. That's what we question, with our psychotherapists and history writers – today's detectives, over and over again". In many of her verses, a diagrammatic movement is added to the atlas of discovery, making every poem a time capsule, or a laboratory, which leads to production of medicine for dark places, blind spots of time, with "deeply damaged clock".

Lipska's intuitiveness in poetry is quiet disturbing, and her wisdom and farsightedness carry deep understanding of Evil's ability to multiply, starting with forgetting, and ending with helplessness, when "In military barracks of new crimes / Choruses of angels were silenced in despair", and God admits that he is only a man.

Her poetic warning is presented in a form of an absolutely valuable advantage of "a chip", of an empirical "splinter", which, being lodged deeply inside us, cannot ever be forgotten.

In order to speak from the deepest and blameless experienced abstracts, one has to be part of man's experience right now, always, and also remain in the future of memory.

In this case the splinter is a time module, transferring, through poetry, the poet's lyrical enthusiasm for not giving up, and in return, in a poetic paradox, it searches for exact doses of honesty and truthfulness precisely in the language – which by itself, after all, is "like all living specimens / ready for the cruelty of betrayal". Overrated

currents of fate keep running through the world “devoid of reason”, freeing us in advance of any responsibility of thought, or “deadly logical history textbooks”, which symbolize eternal spoken truths. However, by using the structure of quick rebus like poems, and without accepting the abstract, nor dialogic consequences, Ms. Lipska offers us her poetic anti-text instead, consisting of spontaneously impaired sense of banal continuity. She formulates a quick fix and poetic relief with a frenzy of someone skidding on ice; by “being an accident-prone” it’s her way of coming in touch with an unpredictable straightforward set of circumstances as closely as possible. A black box keeps decoding with its forever running tape, without ever perceiving nor determining a final solution. The poet asks: “What does machine know/about poetic mystery/ which has been decoding me/for sixty years already”.

Micro stories of Lipska’s poems, under the brand name of a paradox of wonder and fear, and short life histories through which we pass like “tourists of words” are closest to Herbert’s “travelogue of wonder”, whose travel writer equally wraps the story around a weak branch of life, afraid not to have enough words to say: world. That is why her poem always presents a different exhibition of the micro world, equal to life circumstances, and to a constantly renewed moment which did not exist until now, and in its fragile continuity it is a compulsory existence of something that will yet appear or to be, “Wreckage looking for its heir”.

Lipska’s lyrical structure is sparsely worded, and constantly metamorphosing, as in “Luxury is / to brake new word records / when only dark ultimatum could be

found around". Anagrammatic micro creation, rebus, riddle with no solution, where each of us gets involved, we carry "a virus of transience", and equally in unforeseen results of playing "historical roulette". That is why Lipska's poetry is always in a process of rebirth and continuity in a metaphysical dialogue between space and time, existing always and everywhere, held like a landscape in one's fist and inhaled like a gentle exchange of sequences of dual language experiences of her heroes, and of endless expanse of experience and transparency, of what is already lived, spoken, and understood, like in her *Dear Mrs. Schubert* (2012), exactly because the poetry does exist.

Worried over the fate of the writing itself, poems by Ewa Lipska become, through each phase, steeped in vanguard. This happens in times when words are sentenced to death, and there is total lack of fear for survival, when the lights of the world are dimmed by false consolations, games of chance, and comfort in nothingness, silenced by the impossible, which was "named as an ideal place to live", under great monuments of world best-sellers; that is, stupidity. The poet sees the ending is near, and through the eternal apocalypse she glimpses dying words, as the last boundary in death. Because, after us, and after our words, according to Herbert, there will be nothing left but scattered vowels: "Accents above nothingness and dust".

Every poem by Ewa Lipska is futuristic, because it is completely illuminated by painful awareness of partial surrender, and a burning need for our active participation in the future, in our representation and witnessing under the auspices of some already born moment: "At the Earth dance party / our steps are beating. / Curious Day after

tomorrow / covers us in glances". The poet is offering us words of modern predictions, lyrical warnings, and artistic faith. It is pure vanguard imbedded in the core of her poetic being, whose living motto is marked by change, and the fate by flight above the atlases of the world, whose unwritten fragments will appear only in future, under the experienced apocalypses, and in embers from a book page persistently refusing to be the last.

Exclusive and unusual metaphor of this poet makes us believe that poetry is an insatiable living word, with an equal amount of absenteeism, mystery, importance, and responsibility; that is, as much as Life itself can absorb. In every moment, the poet is "a Question to which we are the answer". It is a mystic bird from one of her poems, that would teach us how to fly, and "to read the movement. School texts of existence".

Poetry by Ewa Lipska is one of the most provocative legacies of modern poetry in Poland today, but it is also presents intriguing truth hidden under the atlas of the world, under the thin surface of her writing. That is why her poems are at the centre of contemporary world literature, already treasured in the vaults of the anthologies of time.

Ewa Lipska is one of the most striking creative and intellectual forces in European writing today. We must remember that she took active part during social and political changes in Poland in the past decades. She was also editor of the magazine *Letter*, poetry editor in a literary publishing house in Cracow, and sat on the editorial boards of various cultural magazines. In 1978 she became a member of the PEN Poland, and in 1989 she was one of founders of the Association of Polish

Writers. She is also a member of the Polish Academy of Culture in Cracow, and has directed the Polish Cultural Centre in Vienna for a decade. She has been also a cultural attaché at the Polish Embassy.

Today, she is a welcome guest in many countries and poetry festivals, translated into some 30 languages, awarded the most prestigious literary prizes in Poland and abroad, and a candidate for the Nobel Prize for literature.

In Ewa Lipska our readers see a dear guest and a friend. For years already, we have been privileged to follow her poetic work, first in the anthology *Contemporary Polish Poetry*, edited and translated by Petar Vučić (1985). Special credit must be given here to Biserka Rajačić for her great effort in translating Lipska's poetry for the past several years, and for completing this latest translation in the shortest time possible.

Ewa Lipska, the first recipient of the "European Atlas of Lyrics Award", is close to our own understanding of contemporary poetry and the world as a whole, and will always remain as a new and powerful reading challenge.

Ewa Lipska's Speech At The "European Atlas of Lyrics Award" Ceremony 2014

Translated from Serbian by Nina Kecman

Dear Friends,

First of all I would like to most sincerely thank you for the award "Evropski atlas lirike" ("European Atlas of Lyrics"), which you have awarded to me.

It is lovely that poetry in these hard times of "cultural industry", when high culture is pushed to the margins, is travelling around the world and meeting new readers.

We poets, poets-readers, poets-translators, lovers of all fine arts, are creating one big family. Even here today, in Banja Luka, we are meeting in the beautiful world of poetry. Allow me, dear friends, to end this by reading a poem from my favourite poet Vasko Popa, 'Sopoćani', translated into Polish by another poet I love, Taduś Ružević:



Rosy tranquillity of strength
Green tranquillity of greatness

From golden birds underground
To tiny fruit in the sky
Everything is close to hand

Forms have taken a knee beautifully
In the eye of a master builder

(the times were biting)

Young loveliness of pride
Confidence of a sleepwalker

And the gates of eternal springtime
And illustrious weapons of joy
It's all waiting for the signal

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In the master builder's right hand
Heartbeats of the world pound

(The times were biting
with the teeth breaking)

Translated from Serbian by Zoran Jungić

Ewa Lipska

The Holy Order Of Tourists

Translated by Ryszard J. Reisner

Landscapes in advance doomed for success.
Devotional coastlines.
Crowd of practising believers.

For those
who swarm
into the church of Maria della Salute
to marvel at the paintings of Titian and Tintoretto
solemn vows: *vota sollemnia*.

For others
the strict observance of heat-baked sin.
The swooning body of desert
peopled with a crowd of faithful.

Startled animals flee
the monastic jungle. Boiling point
hits vertical space
in the holy order of tourists.

December 31 1999

Translated by Ryszard J. Reisner

About this all poets will write.
Even the illiterate.
The word will be that it's the last.
That later nothing but fear padded in metal.
Compass sketching square.

This won't be though an heirless night.
Catching out suicidal sceptics
and credulous high priests
the new year infant
will cry at midnight.

The hawk wind will rip
that bends the willow.
Magnetic compass will indicate
that it has no other choice.
As usual a parade drill of hours.

Your birthday. Despite everything.
Compass sketching square.

We 1998

Translated by Ryszard J. Reisner

Distracted time now has passed
when we played with fire
while the town was ablaze

We cut journeys short
reading books.
Moving pictures out the window
kept to the theme of life.

Those that preferred power belong to the masses
now set up shops with devotionalia.
Places for biding trysts of fearful chameleons.

Start Of The Week

Translated by Ryszard J. Reisner

Monday is not
an obligatory day
but aerobics though
hangs our bodies out
for a rhythmic view.

We sneak
through registry offices
where we confirm
our theoretical presence.

Demons serve our table
a selected inscription.
It's afternoon. Appetite for hunger.

Albatross And Engraver

Translated by Ryszard J. Reisner

The hand of engraver grown onto the wing.
Victim of a work of art grown cold
with a sentence jammed in the throat
beginning to dry suddenly like plaster.
In the bricked-up coloratura of breath
bel canto final gasp drawn.

For all great masters
it works the same.
The cause of accident
is the bravado of creation.
Supreme audacity of talent.
Lack of caution with the knife
when the world's negative
incises in half.