

What the Things Sang

By the same author:

Objects on Hills

Littoral

Overlay

A Spy in the House of Years

Capital

**WHAT THE THINGS
SANG**

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What the Things Sang

Mojoj dragoj Zori

I am not yet so lost in lexicography, as to forget that words are the daughters of earth, and that things are the sons of heaven.

Dr. Johnson

The map to the finger:
the journey to here starts everywhere.

The phone to the ear:
his name changes radically over the next few minutes.

The spoon to the mouth:
forces we have no contact with determine breakfast.

The glasses to the page:
no one can see the eye evolving.

The window to the curtains:
snowflakes flail down.

The dictionary to the language:
who can number the senses of the word in which I list.

The glove to the key:
my hands are full of blood.

The keyboard to the CPU:
language should be structured like dream.

The glass to the water:
only sand withstands the sea.

The grass to the goat:
you set my panicles trembling.

The tree to the river:
we have rain on our hands.

The river to the fish:
there should be a single planet just for the trees.

The fish to the stone:
a shadow makes itself felt.

The deceased to the boat:
we embarked in careers for the land of the dead.

The water to the cup:
we go so far into a thing and find it has nothing inside but itself.

The eyes to the yes:
the oblivious obvious like the sun we cannot look at.

The pen to the scissors:
reduce poem to newsprint.

The wheel to the road:
he uses his car to sketch an accurate map of the route to work.

The TV to the viewer:
what we have in common with the victim is death.

The viewer to the sofa:
we can use our TV sets to contact the dead.

The corpse to the coffin:
I am a scissors cutting corners across a road-map.

if this—not that
if if is is—then then
if if was is if—now now
if flesh is grass—it sings the wind in the dog-torn field
if the things sing—we would hear rattling inside them
if birds could talk—they would not sing
if the language breaks—there is a word that means both
if objects have thoughts—we would be them
if the trees grit their roots—the peachstone earths you
if you want animals to suffer—teach them to understand
if a shadow never sees the sun—the poem names the shadow
if sentences cannot be finished—we line up our thinking objects
if language is free from its users—it is a god apart from world
if something belongs to your past—it is not yours
if the storming of the winter palace—then the thawing of the spring
if language could explain everything—we would not understand it
if we could understand bird-language—it would no longer be song
if the knife that is each river were to lift—a blade shines in the sun
if time is the rain at the end of the rainbow—it's the wind in the hair

the words are deciding the next
there's nothing less real than its word
nothing changes things like light
a change is a chance gone solid
a tissue of chances makes a person
a person is a mixture of rain
last night's dream is today's rain
we join an association of dreams
shape is the association of memory
mist is the shape of language
mist tries to break through
each word is a potential break
words rust on history's sword
history starts with the full-stop
a full-stop is longer than a sentence
no sentence should be thought
thought is as bodily as taking a shit
a mind is a body of language
the machine in my mouth runs language
a machine sleeps in a closed book
the alarm clock cries itself to sleep
folk-songs are cries of dead labourers
dead objects outnumber the living
flowers believe themselves into life
time flowers on wallpaper
the root of the poem is time
the longest poem is is
nowhere is the capital of nothing
nothing adheres like a road
roads carry blood into the city
a city is as old as its name

desire is a name for forgetfulness
birds convert desire to sound
a bird lands on its shadow
people are shadows that places cast
I do not accept that that
I'll be ready for the end of the sentence
before the sentence language is endless
language connects like a fist
I can connect shadow with shadow
someone keeps watering the shadow
water is superfluous dream
that dream is incorrect
corrections are listed in the hedgerow
the moon shows me a list of the moon
streetlights show through my skin
skin is a readjustment of dust
dust is the secretion of time
time has too many syllables
each syllable says it is a word
words run a ring around trees
a mind rushes like a tree in a breeze
a frame of mind has no window
a window believes in ghosts
there is a belief in the air in the air
at night stars believe in themselves
the night cracks under the door
the door opens under its word
to pass through a door you open a tree
the trees dream shape
a speech shapes the mouth
mouth suggests the sound you make when you make sense
dreams tear on waking at a sound you make
a sense awakens from a dictionary
mountains build into sense without the element of time
a mountain penetrates her eye
the eyes have been to see
a sky questions everything it sees

the dancers' feet are pinned to the sky
leaves dance in the dust of time
the work of the rose fills your limbs with dust
the roses never wake
I am fully awake in the sense mud can be wiped fully clean
you live in the sense
on the skin only bruises are alive
sky is the bruise on the pond's skin
the cloud is making the pond
the moon's wrecking-ball fails to demolish the clouds
the moon bursts on your finger
inside my finger a crowd panics
molecules idle inside a leaf
a leaf comes under a definition
a word struggles to fit its definition
each word you make separates you
sun spreads its syllable through the passages of each city
no plant grows until it is named in sunlight
the plants don't see how loose the stars have been
there are still many stars to flatten into the head
heads are the apples that should not be harvested
the clock tolls in the apple
twice a day the face of a clock shows fear
I write the smile off your face
the best poet writes the worst poems
the poem awaits its driver
harms are waiting in the cloud
a cloud makes itself scarce
judgment keeps repeating itself
the judge is delighted by morning
the morning thinks us out of our sheets
language unites inside one sheet of skin
silence collides with void to form language
shops are empires of void
sand's empire lasts longest
the sand looks past the stars
a sexual object walks past

objects are dissimilar to themselves
a picture destroys itself
you suck in language and exhale pictures
language is the capital of the head
the sky bleeds until there is no capital left
the blood rushes home to be in time for sleep
sometimes things rhyme with their opposites
thought holds no rhyme with word
in your child you hold the limbs of your parents
language's limb climbs across matter
god climbs the wall in the fashion of a flower
the sunset is a flower flowing or a river flowering
at sunset there is fire on the ice
you have been born to be
matter takes form as you
a poem forms the kind of pattern historians dream
we slow down history just so you can listen
I listen to my skin and hear distant birds
a bird lifts the sky with it or from the river
a river seems sincere
a shark seems a shadow
the shadows of god kick among the leaves
god strays between sentences like pollen
a sentence is an insult to name
we are guilty as parents for all they cannot name
the car that contains your parents drives away
beetles mate like crashes depicted by children with toy cars
the child steps into the mirror again
the world of the dead is without mirrors
you commune with souls from the world of the living
death takes souls literally
a cloud takes place
places are shadows that people cast
the daylight casts doubts
you doubt the river in your arms
in the armchair of the cranium sits your fear
my pieces sit together perhaps writing a poem

an artwork sends a piece of mind
through long conduits suffering drains into art
language asks all sufferers to record their impressions
your children are recording you
each child has an inner adult
the sea of the inner eye has no salt
the genital clam of the seabed opens
your wounds open onto the chambers of the dead
the poem shows through in the wound
god does not allow a flawless poem or an unmarked sky
all remarks lead to the sun
when the sun speaks it speaks through us
the kettle speaks its one long word
a word is as long as a line
the regular linebreaks reinforce this reading
a book opens as you read it
each book prints the sorrow of that act
a laugh the shape of a valley imprints on the skull
an apple takes shape and holds
trees take up troublesome positions in the dictionary
poems bleed from dictionaries
the insects write nature poems
the nature of the television washes
each evening we watch the television set
the room pales before the evening
a story is happening in the next room
a story works itself out of some words
the journalist works to fit events into columns
in the event words are broken
a broken moth clings to a belief in light
the moth sleeps inside the mother
Mother Tongue and Father Time blame the children
time grows a beard all over me
the grown man is pulled from you
the man at the end of the scream is hurt
from now your language is scream
as the cymbal sizzles the language is sick

a poem traces a sick god through expression
on waking there is no trace of the war
war extends language by other means
in an ideal language questions would not be possible
a possible god unstiffens in the statue
the statue inside you is stretching
inside the kitten the fire crackles
fire is a word that runs out
these are the words for a song
a song falls into the wrong mouth
mouths are holes in space
the worm finds its hole in you
the train dreams its way through nights to find you
at a station a train stops like history pausing
history starts with the full-stop
there is a full-stop in each eye
the words ache before the eyes
we carry before the axe the splinter
the splinter carries the word
the words are deciding.