

These Are the Islands

These are the islands of Vis and Hvar!
Two lullabies above the complexion of black golden
Saturns. Hills, charred long ago during
the bleating of sheep and lambs,
during the elliptical carriers of fire
and rain forcing its way between
branches, without noticing the leaves, without
drinking them.
For years I felt that orange shovel.
I know what I say,
lynx, I had you followed by my
officers equipped with binoculars.
Listen: you should only care for your
outer appearance, for your black lacquered
boots and the precise straight movements of your
dealings. Everything else
will be brought to you on a platter,
given. When the arc is black—
thunder—when it is clearest and smoothest like
cobalt, when the sky is a stitched up
blanket of enamel tiles,
how will I know!
It was already the sixteenth day of my sailing
with muscles, with my almost crushed
ebony and rusty sunsets
so the crew tottered already up to the crest,
on their backs. The illegals had gone.
They fled with their tailored objects.
The sea was so warm that it sizzled like
the lamentations of those surrounded and
crammed into a bag. Who (I knew it)
could endure without towers—

constructions ordained
by ancestors. Does not the mast
crack when no more grease remains
disarmed in the boiling mouth of the sun?
How then did I get to the millet, I, a horse?
Wow!
Beams were scorched, god himself could not
tell apart the bleating from the victims.
But then again he might,
that is why I go on with my story.
The shattered had quickly sifted
the wheat from the chaff and to the sound of a whistle.
Watch out! I still insist on formalities!
It caught fire by itself.
The sea, which had for centuries floated as though
inside a dark wine bottle, took on
the charm. And now it no longer matters: the squeaking of
the winch, hydrofoil, the Lehman collection,
dew on an avocado, a fruit that presently
withstands the gravel of the Alps,
jokes that all people know,
but among the animals only the religious beasts,
the only true mathematicians of nobility.
Where then could it be
moored, my triple-masted boat?

Translated from the Slovenian by Peter Richards and Ana Jeltnikar