

jure detela  
**moss & silver**

TRANSLATED FROM THE SLOVENE BY  
**RAYMOND MILLER WITH TATJANA JAMNIK**

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY **IZTOK OSOJNIK**

UGLY DUCKLING PRESSE, 2018

## introduction

After all these years, it is difficult to remember which of Jure Detela's poems I read first. Or, rather, heard: Detela was an excellent performer of his own verse, and he loved to recite from early on.<sup>1</sup> It had to be some time in the early seventies, perhaps at an obscure public reading in an old prewar suburban theater; or in the privacy of his unforgettable room crammed with books, old cameras, and cigarette smoke; or maybe at one of the private parties of the older generation where we both for the first time met the Šalamun brothers and other luminaries of the day. In any event, my guess is that the first of his poems I heard was probably "Poem for the Harts." From its very first public presentation this work became legendary, and nothing better exemplified the principle that guided him as a thinker and as an artist: all living creatures have the right simply to live. Some time before, at the Lipizzaner stud farm in the village Lipica, not far from Trieste, I got the chance to get close to the stallions. I had known horses from before, but this was the first time I ever got to look a stallion in the eyes and touch his snout. How soft it was! And how innocent, clear, and trusting his gaze. When I heard "Poem for the Harts," I immediately recognized the same innocence, openness, and directness in the deer that Detela addresses.

In the seventies, there was a bar in Ljubljana, Šumi, where all the young artists and writers used to gather. Whoever wanted to join the club and meet interesting people went there, and that was how most of us then-anonymous future authors came

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1 He performed his poetry from memory, and could also recite by heart the verses of many other poets, including the work of non-Slovene poets in their original languages. Sadly, only some of his legendary, hours-long literary performances were recorded (a few are available on Youtube), and in them we can still hear his powerful, melodious voice, which is unique even for Slovenian ears.

together. So I probably first met Jure Detela there. He was certainly easy to spot—slender, long hair, with dark, sparkling eyes and a memorably unique vocal style: melodious, elongated, longitudinal chords with a very particular accentuation that sounded like singing, if not the undulating of waves. There was, straight away, a unique chemistry between us and we immediately became friends, although we came from very different backgrounds: Jure was from the exceptionally well-educated urban elite, which could be considered an older-generation upper-middle class, while I belonged to a somewhat younger lower-class hippie group from the suburbs. (Actually, the two of us bridged the gap between the hippie and the upper-middle-class bourgeois worlds.) We engaged in endless discussions about philosophy and the arts, especially poetry, and it wasn't long before we started organizing now-legendary but then-scandalous cultural happenings.

Jure Detela was born in 1951, only six years after the end of World War II, in which Yugoslavia had suffered immensely. More than a sixth of its population had perished, most of the country was heavily damaged, and nearly all infrastructure was destroyed. After the split with the Soviet Bloc in 1948, Yugoslavia, although a country that had fought against the Axis Powers and won, was isolated from its former Western allies because of its new Communist rule under Josip Broz Tito, and from the Eastern Bloc because of Tito's split with Stalin. Life's necessities were sparse, and the regime was paranoid and cruel: right after the war, local troops that had collaborated with the Italian Fascist or Nazi occupiers were executed, and anybody considered to be a political threat to the existing system (much less part of a formal political opposition) was either sent to a political prison or executed. People were frightened, yet also proud and optimistic. On the one hand, they were persecuted by the workings of the secret police, yet on the other, they were still driven by a heroic spirit as victors over the Nazis, and buoyed by a Communist ideology that promised not only equality, friendship, and solidarity, but also explosive productivity and modernization.

2.

Na levi je spanje,  
slepota,  
na desni me vleče  
navzgor.

2.

On the left there is sleep,  
there is blindness,  
on the right it draws me  
on high.

3.

S temnokarminskega  
stožca v možganih,  
ki sije  
s svojo notranjo svetlobo,  
padajo zvezde skozi prsi  
in tonejo  
v brezoblično,  
mračno globino.

3.

From the dark scarlet cone  
in the brain,  
shining with an  
inner light all its own,  
stars fall  
through the breast  
sinking into murky depths  
without faces.

**Poizkus dešifriranja pojava, ki ga imenujemo čarovnija**

Čarovniki vejo o telesu tistega, ki ga hočejo začarati, nekaj, česar on sam ne ve. To misel investirajo svoji žrtvi tako, da jo žrtev občuti fizično, ne pa refleksivno. Ker je najbolj pogostna reakcija na fizičen občutek telesna, dobijo telo v oblast; in ker je duša odvisna od tega, kar počne telo, dobijo v oblast tudi dušo. Ta reakcija je verižna. Čarovniki pogosto čarajo zato, ker jim nekaj manjka pri njihovem lastnem kontaktu med dušo in telesom. Ta primanjkljaj hočejo nadomestiti s tujim telesom, a ker čarovniki nekaj vzamejo od kontakta med dušo in telesom tistega, ki je začaran, hoče tudi začarani postati čarovnik. Tako nastajajo ogromni kompleksi agresije, ki se velikokrat ne zaveda zaslužjenosti svojega izvora. Ljudje, ki sodelujejo v čarovniji, se nikoli ne spominjajo intimnih vzrokov za individualno dovzetnost do manipulacije nad tujimi dušami in telesi. Imuniteta pred čarovnijo raste iz spoznavanja teh vzrokov in iz gnusa pred njimi, ne iz sovraštva do čarovnikov in iz nasilja nad njimi. Se spomniš verza: kar zgrabijo čarovniki in peljejo v pošasti? Tudi telesa so zmožna transformacij, ne samo duše. Vsako utelešeno bitje neprenehoma



4.

### **An Attempt to Decipher the Phenomenon We Call Sorcery**

Sorcerers know something about the body of the one they want to bewitch that he does not know himself. They instill this idea in their victim in such a way that the victim feels it physically, but not reflexively. Because the most frequent reaction to a physical sensation is a bodily one, they take control of the body; and because the soul depends on what the body does they take control of the soul, too. This is a chain reaction. Sorcerers often cast spells because something is missing in the connection between their own soul and body. They want to make up this deficiency with someone else's body, and because sorcerers take something from the connection between the soul and body of the one bewitched, the bewitched one wants to become a sorcerer, too. Thus arise huge complexes of aggression, aggression that many times does not realize its own origin is enslaved. People who take part in sorcery never remember the intimate reasons for their personal propensity to manipulate other people's souls and bodies. Immunity to sorcery comes from recognizing these reasons and feeling disgust before them, not from hating sorcerers and doing them violence. Do you recall the verse: What sorcerers seize and take to the monsters? Bodies are also able to transform, not just souls. Every embodied being constantly builds and changes the image of its body. These changes lead either to fetters or to freedom: there is no being that could not

gradi in spreminja podobo svojega  
telesa. Te spremembe peljejo v vklenjenost  
ali v svobodo: ni bitja, ki ne bi imelo  
možnosti, da se odreši čarovnije. Noben  
pekel ni večn.