



KATJA PERAT

selected poems

(translated by: Katie Harrison, Olivia Hellewell, Matej Klemen, Christopher Lycett, Benjamin Lowe, Christopher O'Rourke, Jonathan Rowson, Magdalena Wiercioch

(

In delam umetnost	6
And I Make Art	7
Engels	10
Engels	11
Rudarji	14
Miners	15
Dekonstruiraj me	16
Deconstruct Me	17
Ponesrečene identitete	20
Failed Identities	21
Smrt ljudi brez ljubezni	22
The Death of People without Love	23
Kaj je dialektika	24
What are Dialectics	25
Temelji razočaranja	26
The Foundations of Disappointment	27

(

Katja Perat, born 1988, is a Slovene poet and literary critic. Her first collection of poetry, *Najboljši so padli* (The Best Have Fallen) was warmly received by readers and critically acclaimed, receiving several awards, among them the award for the best debut of 2011. Perat's poems are not lyrics to caress the ear and the soul; sharp, ironic, cynical and to the point, they dissect the cultural and literary establishment and the backstage of the everyday.

In delam umetnost

Govori se, da si ljudje po tihem
prizadevamo za smrt, ker vse organsko
teži k temu, da bi spet postalo anorgansko
in vsako gibanje teži k temu,
da ne bi bilo več gibanje.
Stvari razpadejo, ker si želijo,
da bi se jih pustilo pri miru.

Žalostni ljudje se predajajo,
kot se predaja srednjeveška mesta.
Po dolgih obleganjih. Stežka.
Samo pod lastnimi pogoji.
Ne zdržijo bremena. Krivda in žalost
se pravično razdelita
med vse, ki so zraven.

Da odklanjaš, ne pomaga,
če si brez srca, je koristno,
čeprav psihoanalitiki pravijo, da vnaprej umre,
kdor se odreče želji. Težko se srečujem
v ogledalih, ki me silijo v soočenje
in neusmiljeno sovraštvo do svojega obraza.
To me loči od lepih ljudi, ki si lahko privoščijo
objestnost in togoto, ne da bi s tem kaj
izgubili; zavarovani in ljubljene vnaprej.

So resnicoljubni ljudje, ki zmorejo jasnost,
ne da bi se nenehno opominjali,
da še nobena neresnična reč ni bila lepa.
Ne izogibajo se svoji žalosti in v soočenjih
s svojimi porazi z določeno mirnostjo rečejo:
Zavedam se, da sem bil zapuščen. Zunaj
mojega dosega si. Nobenega smisla ni v
prepričevanju. Nihče ne ljubi, kadar se od njega zahteva.

And I Make Art

It is said that people are quietly
aiming for death as everything organic
strives to become inorganic again
and every movement strives
not to move anymore.
Things decompose because they long
to be left alone.

Sad people surrender themselves
just like medieval towns are surrendered.
After long sieges. Arduously.
Only under their own terms.
They can't bear the burden. Guilt and sadness
justly divide themselves
amongst all who are close by.

That you decline is not helpful,
if you are heartless it is useful,
even though psychoanalysts say that
he who relinquishes desire has already died. I find it hard to meet myself
in mirrors which force me into confrontation
and merciless hatred towards my own face.
This separates me from beautiful people who can afford themselves
arrogance and rage without
losing anything; already protected and loved.

There are truth-loving people who are capable of clarity
without constantly reminding themselves
that nothing imaginary has been beautiful.
They do not avoid their sadness and in confrontations
with their own defeats they say with a certain calmness:
I'm aware I've been abandoned. You are outside
of my reach. There is no sense in
persuasion. Nobody loves when it is demanded of them.

Toda ti ljudje so se naučili stvari,
ki jih ne zmorem. Od njih me ločuje
nemoč, zakrinkana v občutek za čast,
ki vse, česar se dotakne, predela v teorijo.
In kadar zares postane neznosno, je vse, kar lahko,
da v pretirano rahločutni maniri čakam na
dež, ki bi uskladil vreme z mojim razpoloženjem.

Določena milost je v tem, da se rešiš
v umetnost. Milost, v kateri govoriš
razrešen prisile enega samega pogleda,
ki onemogoča govor in opozarja na nesposobnost,
ki se ji nikdar zares ne izogneš,
nepripravljen preživeti izpostavljanje,
ki ga zahteva to, da si človek.

Milina in naklonjenost terjata napor
in res je, da zame ni nič nikdar zlahka.
Nepomembno je,
je rekel nekdo, ki ga poznam.
Tvoje pesmi so nepomembne.
Umetnost potrebuje druge stvari.
Umetnost ne potrebuje ničesar.
V tem bi ji bila rada podobna.

But these people have learned things
that I'm not capable of. I'm separated from them by
weakness, disguised as a feeling for honour,
which transforms everything it touches into theory.
And whenever it becomes truly unbearable, all I can do
is to wait, in an excessively sensitive manner, for
the rain which would bring the weather in line with my mood.

There is a certain grace in saving yourself
in art. The grace, where you speak
released from the constraint of one single view
which restricts speech and warns of incompetence,
which you can never truly avoid,
unprepared to survive the exposure,
demanded by the very fact that you are human.

Grace and affection demand hard work
and it is true that for me it never comes easily.
It's not important,
said someone I know.
Your poems are unimportant.
Art needs other things.
Art doesn't need anything.
In that way I would like to be similar.

translated by Olivia Hellewell and Matej Klemen

Engels

Z gotovostjo lahko rečem,
Da je edini možki, ki bi me lahko ljubil, ne da bi se silil s tem,
Friedrich Engels.

Med drugouvrščenimi obstaja tihi dogovor,
Da lahko drug drugemu ob vseh trenutkih dneva
Brez obveze
In brez fotografa, ki bi trenutek tlačil v večnost,
Položijo glavo v naročje
In zahtevajo toplino.

Na stranišče grem,
Da bi si popravila frizuro in razmazano maskaro.
Zaletim se v trop pobeglih iz zgodovinskih učbenikov.
V dolgi vrsti jih nese po ozkem hodniku.
Drenjajo se drug mimo drugega,
Kot bi jih na koncu čakalo razodetje ali vsaj borovničeva
pita.
Neprijetno mi je,
Ko me Robespierre prime za ovratnik in me dvigne ob
steni,
Da z nogami bingljam deset centimetrov nad tlemi.
Jezan fant.
Toliko krvi za svobodo govora, in zdaj smo vsi tiho.
Nihče se ne čuti poklicanega.
Po kotih se mečkamo z drugimi zgubami.
Nihče ne bi predlagal svojega načrta za boljši jutri.
Nobenega nadčloveka ni nikjer,
Ki bi se iznenada pojavil in rešil stvar.

Žal mi je za Robespiera.
Tisti njegov spis proti smrtni kazni je bil dober.
Z robom dlani grem ob njegovem obrazu.
Ni lep in velikokrat se je zmotil.

Engels

I can say with certainty
That the only man who could have loved me without forcing himself was
Friedrich Engels.

Among runners-up there is an unspoken agreement
That at any moment of the day they can
With no obligation
And no photographer to stuff the moment into eternity,
Lay their heads in each others' laps
And demand warmth.

I go to the bathroom
To fix my hair and smudged mascara.
I bump into a flock of runaways from history textbooks.
In a long line they wonder along the narrow corridor.
They jostle past one another
As if at the end revelation awaits them, or at least a blueberry
pie.

I'm uncomfortable
When Robespierre takes me by the collar and puts me up against the
wall

with my legs dangling ten centimeters above the floor.

Angry boy.

So much blood for the freedom of speech, and now we are all quiet.

Nobody has a calling.

Everyone is snogging in the corners with other losers.

No one would suggest their own plan for a better tomorrow.

There's no overman to be found

Who would suddenly appear and save the day.

I feel sorry for Robespierre.

That essay of his against the death penalty was good.

With the edge of my palms I stroke his face.

He isn't beautiful and he was often mistaken.

Vendar sem polna sočutja, ko tako razburjen stoji pred mano.
Pred zakonom sva enaka,
A treba mu bo razložiti,
Da ima enakost, kot vse na svetu,
Nekje svojo mejo, ki je tenka in komaj vidna.
Ne more me vzeti s sabo.
Vračam k Friedrichu –
Nič velikega ni na njem.
Zatekam se k njegovi dobrotljivi drugorazrednosti,
Kot se pravoverni Judje zatekajo v senco Njegovih peruti.

But I'm full of compassion when he stands before me so agitated.
We are equals in the eyes of the law,
But someone will have to explain to him
That equality, just like everything else in the world,
Has its own limit which is thin and barely visible.
He can't take me with him.
I return to Friedrich –
There's nothing great about him.
I take refuge in his benevolent inferiority
Just like Orthodox Jews take refuge in the shadow of His wings.

translated by Olivia Hellewell and Matej Klemen

Rudarji

Blagor rudarjem.

Njim ni treba pisat pesmi.

Miners

Blessed are the miners.
They don't need to write poems.

translated in the group translation workshop

Dekonstruiraj me

Jaz

(s svojim svobodomiselnim odnosom do resničnosti)

Sem neka popolnost.

Zlate sanje avantgardistov,
Razstavljena identiteta,
Zmagoslavje nekoristne komplikacije,
Dekle, ki se je spremenilo v pralni stroj,
Razkosano telo,
Raztreseno po puščavi –

Za to smo se borili,
To je kraljestvo,
Ki je obračunalo s fašizmom,
Jaz sem vaša zmaga.
Hvala.

Ne potrebujem pozornosti,
Ne zahtevam ljubezni,
Z vesoljem sva poravnala račune,
Nobenih uslug mi ne dolguje.

Sem izmišljena popolnost,
Sem neskončno izmišljenih popolnosti,
Ki zahtevajo neskončno vzdrževanje,
Sem, kar sem,
Sem, kar znam,
Sem, kar sem si izborila,
Sem, od česar se obračam,
Sem, proti čemur sem obrnjena,
Sem, kar mi pripisujete,
Sem, kar neopaženo zdrsne mimo.

Deconstruct Me

I
(with my freethinking attitude to reality)
Am some kind of perfection.

The golden dreams of the avant-garde,
Dismantled identity,
The triumph of a useless complication,
The girl who turned into a washing machine,
Dismembered body,
Scattered throughout the desert –

We fought for this,
This is the kingdom,
Which overcame fascism.
I am your victory.
Thank you.

I don't need attention,
I'm not asking for love,
The universe and I settled our bills.
It doesn't owe me any favours.

I am invented perfection,
I am endless invented perfections,
Which demand endless maintenance,
I am what I am,
I am what I know,
I am what I fought for,
I am that from which I turn away,
I am that which I turn towards,
I am what you attach to me,
I am that which slips by unnoticed.

Dekonstruiraj me,
To je edina intimna zahteva, ki jo lahko postavim,
Dekonstruiraj me,
Vzemi me iz literature
In me pripravi za ljubezen.

Deconstruct me,
That is the single intimate demand that I can make,
Deconstruct me,
Take me from literature
And prepare me for love.

translated in the group translation workshop

Ponesrečene identitete

Ljudje sedijo doma
In gledajo v računalnike.
Lepo se oblečejo,
Stojijo pred ogledalom,
Pustijo avto doma,
Ker bi radi bili pijani,
Kličejo prijatelje,
Vlagajo trud
In včasih jokajo,
Da bi se počutili bolj upravičene do svojih pesmi.
Potem prirejajo literarne večere,
Na katere nihče ne pride,
In včasih kdo pride,
Ampak jim ne verjame.
To so žalostni intelektualci,
Ne zamerite jim,
Ko tiho stokajo, medtem ko se molče vračate z dela,
In po nepotrebem mislijo na smrt.
Za njimi so leta samoprevar,
Ki jim nekateri znanstveniki,
Ki ničesar ne razumejo,
Rečejo prihajanje k jeziku –
Ustvarjanje šuma med dvema besedama,
Da luknja, ki ju ločuje,
Ne bi prišla preveč do izraza.
Zaobljubljanje besedi,
Naučeni, da izmakne stvari,
Ki zabrisana stoji nekje v ozadju
In opominja na nepriljubljenost in slabištvo
Žalostnih intelektualcev.
Mogoče ne veste, o čem govorim,
Vendar bi razumeli, če bi hodili na literarne večere.

Failed Identities

People sit at home
And stare at computers.
They dress up nicely,
They stand in front of the mirror,
They leave the car at home,
Because they want to get drunk,
They call their friends,
They put the effort in
And sometimes they cry,
In order to feel more entitled to their own poems.
Then they host literary evenings
To which nobody comes,
And sometimes somebody does come
But doesn't believe them.
These are sad intellectuals.
Don't mind them,
When they quietly moan, whilst you return from work in silence,
And they needlessly think about death.
Years of self-deception behind them,
Which some scientists
Who don't understand anything
Call coming to language –
Creating a noise between two words,
So that the hole which separates them
Doesn't become too evident.
Devoting themselves to words,
Learned to evade the thing
Which stands blurred somewhere in the background
And reminds of the unpopularity and weakness
Of the sad intellectuals.
Perhaps you don't know what I'm talking about
But you'd understand if you went to literary evenings.

translated in the group translation workshop

Smrt ljudi brez ljubezni

Kdor ima čas in zna opazovati,
Lahko v romantičnih februarskih večerih gleda,
Kako prazna telesa padajo ob tlakovce,
Kako slovanska duša
S pregovorno partijsko odločnostjo
Zavrže vse, čemur se je odrekla ljubezen,
Tudi povsem koristna, zdrava telesa,
Ki jih mogoče kdo pobira, ko odslužijo,
In jih nalaga enega na drugi v kleti,
Če bo kdaj nuja.
Ne bi verjeli, kako hitro padejo ljudje,
Kadar ne vejo, na čem naj bi se utemeljevali.

The Death of People without Love

Those who have time and can observe
Can on romantic February evenings watch
How empty bodies fall on paving stones,
How the Slavic soul
With proverbial Party determination
Dismisses all that love has renounced
Even entirely useful, healthy bodies,
Which someone might collect, when they have served their purpose,
And pile one on top of another in the basement,
Just in case.
You wouldn't believe how quickly people fall,
When they don't know on what they should base themselves.

translated in the group translation workshop

Kaj je dialektika

Vsakič, ko nekdo reče

Pička,

Si želim, da bi šla na kavč v kotu pod deko brat

Fenomenologijo duha.

Vsakič, ko nekdo reče

Fenomenologija duha,

Si želim, da bi ga prijela za roko in se šla z njim poljubljat

na požarne stopnice.

What are Dialectics

Every time someone says

Pussy

I want to get under the blanket on the sofa in the corner to read
the Phenomenology of Spirit.

Every time someone says

Phenomenology of Spirit,

I want to take them by the hand and go with them to kiss
on the fire escape.

Temelji razočaranja

Prisežem,
Jaz sem obupala dosti prezgodaj,
Glej jih, spomenike po naključnih mestih bivše Sovjetske
zveze,
Še vedno se zdi, kot da imajo polno vetra v oblačilih in
zastavah,
Kot mladi ameriški nihilisti,
Glej jih, kako se še kar borijo s tistim, kar je ostalo od
boga,
Glej, v kakšni prednosti smo.
Odprite vsa okna, ko bomo že na avtocesti,
Imejmo uro in pol čistega zmagoslavja,
Glej, kako je, kadar so mladi evropski posteksistencialisti
na poti na morje,
Odprite okna,
Vsi skupaj smo obupali dosti prezgodaj,
Da ne bi imeli od tega vsaj varljivega občutka, da smo v
Nekakšni prednosti.

The Foundations of Disappointment

I swear,
I gave up far too early,
Look at them, monuments around random cities of the former Soviet
Union,
It still seems as though they have a full wind in their clothes and
flags,
Like young American nihilists,
Look at them, how they are still fighting with the remnants of
god,
Look, what an advantage we're at.
Open all the windows, when we are on the highway,
Let's have an hour and a half of pure triumph,
Look how it is, when the young European post-existentialists are
on the way to the sea,
Open the windows,
Together, we all gave up far too early,
So that this wouldn't give us, at least, the deceptive sense that we are at
Some kind of advantage.

translated by Katie Harrison, Christopher O'Rourke, Jonathan Rowson

The poems are taken from
Katja Perat: *Najboljši so padli*
published by Beletrina Academic Press (Študentska založba)
in Ljubljana in 2011

If not stated otherwise, the translations are a result of a translation workshop which included translators:

Katie Harrison, Olivia Hellewell, Matej Klemen, Christopher Lycett, Benjamin Lowe, Christopher O'Rourke, Jonathan Rowson, Magdalena Wiercioch

Editors:

Matej Klemen, Polly McMichael

Layout:

Matej Klemen

All rights reserved.

Najboljši so padli © Študentska založba, 2011

Translations © translators, 2014

This booklet and the literary evenings in Nottingham and Oxford were made possible by the generous support of:

the Centre for Slovene as a Second/Foreign Language at the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana,

the Department of Russian and Slavonic Studies, School of Cultures, Languages and Area Studies, University of Nottingham,

Beletrina Academic Press,

the Slovenian Book Agency,

the Embassy of Slovenia in London, and

The British-Slovene Society.



CENTER ZA SLOVENŠČINO
KOT DRUGI/TUJI JEZIK



Univerza v Ljubljani
FILOZOFSKA
FAKULTETA

J A K

Beletrina



The British
Slovene Society



The University of
Nottingham

UNITED KINGDOM · CHINA · MALAYSIA



REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
EMBASSY OF SLOVENIA IN LONDON



Nottingham
February 2014

**So much blood for the freedom of speech
and now we're all quiet.**

