

# V PRVI OSEBI EDNINE

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*Avtor v tem kratkem eseju razmišlja o svoji poetiki: o idejah, načelih in namelih ter stvarnem procesu ustvarjanja, o rabi jezika in njegovih registrov, verzu in ritmu, izbiranju tematike in leksike, predvsem pa o razmerju med biografskim in pesniškim jazom, ki se skriva v prvi osebi ednine lirskega diskurza. Avtor svoje pesnjenje razlaga kot ornament.*

Ključne besede: poezija in poetika, lirski subjekt, prva oseba, ornament, Milan Jesih

Tema tega razmišljanja naj bi bila balansiranje med intencionalno poetiko in stvarno prakso nekega avtorja nekaj knjig pesmi. Produciral se bom v prvi osebi ednine, in gre za individualne, nujno parcialne poglede podpisanege – majestetična ednina –, ki jih ni ne mogoče ne prav ne smiselno posploševati.

Kaj torej, ob vsem, česar o tem ne vem, vnaprej vem o pravilih, ki me ravnaajo pri pesnjenju? Marsikaj se je z leti nakopičilo samo, za kakšno pravilo pa sem se nekoliko tudi odločil, mogoče kdaj tudi po premisleku, vendarle bolj ali manj *via facti*.

Še prej je seveda veliko vprašanje, za katero naj kar takoj povem, da nanj nimam odgovora, namreč veliki *zakaj*. O tem, *zakaj* piše pesmi človeštvo, se mi nekaj zdi, pa ne bi znal lepo sklenjeno povedati, zase pa pravzaprav ne vem. Če se je mlad fant pred desetletji hotel preskusiti na področju, ki ga je cenil in izbral, in se dokazati, zanj razumem, a za sebe današnjega mi je manj jasno. Je samo inercija? Zatajevana nečimrnost? Mala pustolovska strast? Ali bi na ravni mogoče ne družbenega, prej ožje medčloveškega, mogoče rad pokazal še en partikularen pogled na splošno sveta? Ali vsaj na poezijo? Mogoče da, saj je, verjamem, začudenje roditelj mišljenja. Toliko o vprašanju *zakaj* ali čemu: ne vem. Da se ne bi pozneje kje spotaknili obenj.

Do sem in komaj kaj dlje pa tudi seže realna prva oseba. Potem, ko se začne gradnja besed, pa sem že nekdo, ki igra dinamično dvojno (ali razdvojeno?) vlogo nekoga, ki piše pesem. Sem vloga pesnitelja in hkrati sem vloga njegovega delovnega nadzornika. O tem dvojnem nejazu torej govorim v prvi osebi.

Pri pesmih imam ponavadi najprej začetek: to je prvi verz ali manj, ki se pojavi najrajši, ko čisto sproščen ne mislim ne na pesnjenje ne na nič, na sprehodu, na vožnji, se pravi, bolj ko ne naključno; ko da sem nekaj ritmiziranih besed snel iz etra. Nadaljevanje je hoja po poteh, ki se nenehoma cepijo: koliko besed je treba vsakikrat zavreči, ko izberem eno. To izbiranje besed, ki so gradniki pesmi, je pravzaprav pesnjenje. *A propos*, tudi recimo Hugo Friedrich v *Strukturi moderne lirike* navaja anekdoto, ko Mallarmé reče Degasu, češ pesem se ne dela z idejami, marveč z besedami. Isto misel ima o pesnjenju, kot stališče romaneskne osebe, André Gide v *Ponarejevalcih denarja*: »Potem mi je dejal, da je moja napaka v tem, ker izhajam iz ideje, ne da bi se mirno pustil voditi besedam.« Ali: ko medved Pu zloži pesem v Sivčkovo čast, reče zanjo: »No, pa je tukaj. Nastala je drugačna, kot sem mislil, da bo, nastala je pa le.«

Pesem da je niz besed: takšna definicija je seveda po svoje tавтоloška: kot bi rekli, da je *David* kamnit; po drugi strani pa izreka tudi obup ob prizadevanju, da bi mogel lastno početje označiti kot stabilno ontološko kategorijo. Pa saj strojevodji, zato da vlak pelje, ni treba vedeti Ludolfovega števila prav do zadnje decimalke. Naj na tem mestu dodam še izjavo, da me bralstvo pri delu ne zanima. Saj je tudi koncert za orkester: ni *koncert za publiko*.

Seveda ne gre za poljubno nizanje. Tukaj slutim nekaj mistike: nekako mislim (verujem?), da nekateri začetki kratko malo zahtevajo nadaljevanje, da se s koncem zaokrožijo, da so niti v nekakšni kaotični klobki, ki hočejo priti na luč dneva in biti. *Iščemo pesmi, kje so* je bil naslov Hanžkove knjige v zgodnjih sedemdesetih.

Družbeno idejno, če ni oznaka premočna, torej preden spregovorim o stvareh »okus«, si pravzaprav dovoljujem vse, razen pozivanja k zlu, recimo veličanja vojne, ubijanja, zatiranja. To bolj zaradi higiene kot vere, da pesem neposredno vpliva na svet ali ga spreminja. Ali pa zaradi vražjeverja?

Obsežnejši sklop ideologij pa me, hočem nočem, vodi na področju ožje vzeto pesniškega; s tem mislim nekaj tematskih in več formalnih omejitev.

Svoj pesniteljski namen bi mogoče najrajši izrekel z nekakšno metaforo: jaz vam to plešem neki ornament. Ornamentist lahko uporablja šablono, zakaj ne; sam rajši mislim, da rišem obrise prostoročno, predvsem pa se hočem znotraj svojih ornamentnih plahit igrati z barvami.

Tematsko. – Rado se začne s precej prazno, vsakdanjo ugotovitvijo, ki se nevarno velikokrat dotika vremena ali ure dneva ali letnega časa. Začetek nekako ustvari svojo sfero, ki jo redko dramatično prebijem. Rad imam majhne zasuke in nespotikajoče zavihe. Motivi so stari in v stoletjih preskušeni. (Resno pa ne bi mogel evocirati recimo domoljubnih tem; parodično že, a to je »druga pesem«.)

Formalno. Že skoraj dve desetletji sem bolj suženj kot vernik urejene verzne forme, konkretno jambov. Ta čas sem se lahko izuril v številnih retoričnih in verznihih prijemih: od ravnoteženja verza po drznejšem enžambaju, ki ga lahko, recimo, izpeljem ali s frazo ali s poudarkom na neiktičnem mestu ali drugače, kar bi lažje prikazal s stvarnimi primeri kot z opisovanjem. Rad bi tudi, pred seboj, veljal za dobrega rimača; ne morem si zamisliti, da bi rimal tvoj in moj; samo izjemoma rimam iste besedne vrste; prekleto pazim, da ni kakšnih praznih mašil.

Leksikalno. Kakor pri tematskem in formalnem tudi pri leksikalnem ni kakšne posebno napete pozornosti, ta bi, nasprotno, delo zavirala: delo se zdi, da teče nekako samo od sebe. Če sem, *relata refero*, znan po uspešnem skakanju iz nizkega v visok jezik, od precioznih tujk v pocesten žargon, to ni hoteno izdelano, marveč hoteno sprejeto. To je zato, ker imam tako nehierarhizirano anarhijo v glavi. Tu se najde tudi kakšen čisto navaden predsodek: kakšnih treh ducatov besed ne rabim.

Kako ta poetika deluje? Mislim, da tako, kot pač deluje človek pri večini tako imenovanih ustvarjalnih dejavnosti: desno zgoraj sprosti domišljijo, ki mu, bolj ali manj hlastna, meče pred noge na izbiri vsakršne zamisli in nesmisle, včasih škart, včasih prefabrikate, včasih elegantne, že izpeljane rešitve: in človek si je tam v službi kot cenzor, kot filtrator, kot selektor. Selekcija: izbira. Zmeraj se mi zdi po svoje strašno: koliko besed zavrzem, ko izberem eno.

Saj bi lažje pripovedoval o tem, česa ne, kot o tem, kaj ja; razumljivo, saj je teritorij nesprejemljivega neprimerno obsežnejši, vselej je to kaos vsega nasproti izbranemu singularnemu.

Pri tem delu se vselej znova bojujem s prvo osebo. Ponavljam: nikoli nisem jaz pisal pesmi; pisal sem pesem, ki jo nekje nekdo piše. Upesnjeni prvi osebi, tako imenovanemu lirskemu subjektu, svojo zasebnost sicer posojam v neomejeno rabo, vendar vselej brez občutka, da govorim o sebi. Ornamentistove barve prinašajo s seboj, kot rečeno, marsikaj osebnege, vendar je to samo material; moja skušnja je tako samo priložena v fundus; če berem ali slišim kakšno zgodbo, se tudi tisto naloži v isto globoko klet. Kot ko spravim tja noter kakšno novo besedo. In ne vidim razloga, da bi si fundus razpoložljivih sredstev vnaprej omejeval.

Vendar je tu meja med sredstvi in zasebnim. Nikakor ne bi maral, da bi bile pesmi kot nekakšen moj ljubi dnevnik.

Nekoč se mi je, že zrelemu, napisala pesem, v kateri se je znašla moja človeška mati s pravim krstnim imenom. Brez imena mi pesem ni stala, druga, lažna imena so mi jo podirala; pesem mi je bila draga, mogoče celo zaradi pravega imena še dražja, in mi je še, ampak ampak. Uvrstil sem jo v knjigo *Soneti*, ampak še zdaj ne vem, če sem ravnal prav.

Dobro vem, da ravno iz zelo realne posameznikove – avtorjeve – skušnje nastajajo izvrstne pesmi, dosti boljše kot moje, pesmi bolečine in pesmi radosti, pesmi, ki prevzamejo in pretresejo, vendar sem zase izbral drugo pot. (Tudi vem, da je ta izbira plod najgloblje prve osebe, najsi se ji tudi odreka; če nam je kakšna možnost izbiranja sploh dana.) In za to navsezadnje pri poetiki gre: avtor izkazuje svojo predstavo o tem, kaj pesem je.

In ali ni vprašanje, če ne govorimo ves čas vsi – v pesmih in vsakršnem diskurzu in kadar molčimo – v prvi osebi, pa naj bo ta prva oseba tehnični element našega metjeja ali civilni jaz – ali mogoče vendarle ena, neločljiva entiteta, kakor je navsezadnje tudi naš svet en sam, čeravno tako mnogoteren.

# IN THE FIRST PERSON SINGULAR

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*In this brief essay the author contemplates his poetics: his ideas, principles, intentions and the real process of creation; his use of language and its registers, verse and rhythm, the choice of topic and vocabulary; and especially the relationship between the biographical and poetic ego that is concealed in the first person singular of lyrical discourse. The author explains his poetic creation as an ornament.*

Keywords: poetry and poetics, lyrical subject, first person, ornament, Milan Jesih

The topic of this contemplation is supposed to be the balance between intentional poetics and the real working process of an author that has published several collections of poems. I will produce myself in the first person singular, and so these thoughts are inevitably individual and thus partial views of the undersigned – of the majestic first person – and it is neither possible nor justified or sensible to generalize them.

What prior knowledge do I have then, apart from everything I do not know, about the rules that guide my writing? Quite a number of them have accumulated spontaneously through the years; some have sprung from my decisions, sometimes after consideration, yet mainly more-or-less *via facti*.

However, first comes the big question, which – I will admit straight away – I cannot answer: namely, the big *why*. I could, I think, explain quite coherently why humanity is producing poetry, but I cannot say why I personally need to write. If I understand the boy that, decades ago, wished to prove himself in the field he valued and chose for himself, I am less certain why the present me. Is it simply inertia? Suppressed vanity? Little lust for adventure? Would I like to – probably in the narrower sphere of interpersonal relations rather than really in the area of the social – present another particular view on the world in general? Or at least – on poetry? Possibly, because I believe poetry is born out of marveling. So much about

the question why or to what end: I do not know. Just in case we stumble upon it later on.

The real first person singular reaches up to this point and barely beyond. When the process of word construction begins, I assume the dynamic dual (or is it split?) role of someone writing a poem. I am both the versifier and his supervisor. I am thus telling you about this double non-ego in the first person.

Poems usually start with one verse or less, which arises when I am completely relaxed – thinking neither of poetry nor of anything else; walking, driving – as if accidentally, as if I snatched this rhythmic string of words out of the ether. To continue means walking down the eternally divergent paths: so many words must be abandoned in order to choose one. Selecting words from which poems are built is, after all, writing poetry.

A propos – Hugo Fridrich in *Die Struktur der modernen Lyrik* cites the anecdote in which Mallarmé tells Degas that poems are not made of ideas but of words. The same thought about poetry, as the viewpoint of the novel's character, appears in Gide's *Les Faux-Monnayeurs*: "And then he told me my mistake is to start from the idea instead of letting myself simply be led by words." Or, as Winnie the Pooh composes a song in Eeyore's honor, he declares: "So there it is, ... It's come different from what I thought it would, but it's come."

A poem as a string of words – such a definition is somewhat tautological, as if we said David was made of stone. On the other hand, it expresses the anguish of the attempt to define my own pursuit as a stable ontological category. After all, the engine driver needn't know Ludolf's number down to the last decimal place in order to drive the train. Let me add another statement here: the readers are the least of my concern when writing. A concert, too, is meant for the orchestra: it is *not a concert for the audience*.

Naturally, combining words does not imply arbitrary combinations. Here, I feel a trace of the mystical: somehow I think (or do I believe?) that some beginnings naturally demand continuation, so that they round off with the end, as if they were strings in some chaotic knot that want to come into the light and existence. *We Look for Poems Where They Are* was the translation of the title of Matjaž Hanžek's book in the early seventies.

Before we address the topic of taste, I should mention that in terms of social ideology – if the term is not too rough – within my work, I set myself virtually no boundaries, except appeals to evil, such as glorifying war, killing, and repression. The reason behind this is mostly hygienic, less the belief that a poem directly influences the world and changes it. Or is it superstition?

I am nonetheless, willingly or not, committed to a wider network of ideologies in the area of the strictly poetical, which I perceive in terms of some thematic and numerous formal limitations.

It would perhaps suit me best to proclaim my poetic intention with a metaphor: I dance you an ornament. An ornamentalist can use a stencil, why not? I prefer to think that I draw the contours freehand, and above all I wish to play with colors within my ornamental canvas.

In terms of themes, it tends to start with a rather empty, regular statement that is frequently dangerously close to the weather or the time of day or the season. In some way, the beginning creates its own sphere, which I rarely break dramatically. I like small turns and stable shifts. The motifs are old, tried and tested through centuries. I could not, though, sincerely praise patriotic themes, except in the parodic vein, which is a completely different story.

As regards form, for over two decades I have been a slave more than a devotee of a regular verse form: namely, iambs. In this period I have been able to train myself in numerous rhetorical and verse approaches: from balancing the verse on a more daring enjambment – which I can, for instance, perform with a phrase or with an accent on the non-ictic position – or in various other ways. These could be illustrated, if I prepared examples, with a five-hour-long lecture. I would also like to be regarded, by myself, as a good rhymester: I cannot imagine rhyming *my* and *thy*; only exceptionally do I rhyme words of the same part of speech; I take damn good care not to use empty filler words.

Lexically: as with the thematic and the formal dimension, the lexical does not demand any special attention. Quite the opposite, such consideration would block the work that seems to be operating by itself. If, *relata refero*, I am known for my successful jumps from low into high language – from affected foreign words into street slang – it is not a matter of a deliberate plan, but deliberate acceptance. It is a consequence of the non-hierarchical anarchy inside my head, where there is also enough space for some very common prejudices; I refuse to use about three dozen words.

How does such poetics work? I think it doesn't differ considerably from the majority of "creative" activities: in the upper right corner it releases the imagination that, more or less hastily, keeps throwing at one's feet all kinds of ideas and nonsense, at times rejects, at times prefabricated expressions, at times elegant, already achieved solutions: and one is employed there as a censor, as a filter, as a selector. Selection: choice. It always seems somewhat horrendous: how many words I reject each time I choose one.

Overall, I would find it easier to tell you about what I don't than about what I do; the territories of the unacceptable are considerably larger and it is always the chaos of everything versus the chosen singular.

This work is a constant struggle with the first person singular. I repeat: it was never me that wrote poems; I was writing a poem that somebody somewhere was writing. Although I lend my privacy into unlimited use to the first person of the poem, the "lyrical subject," I never feel that I speak about myself. As already stated, the ornamentalist's colors bring with them a fair amount of the personal, but this is only the material: my experience is thus merely enclosed in the basement; having read or heard a story, it is likewise stored there. The same applies to yet unheard words – and I cannot see any reason why I should limit the stock of the available material in advance.

However, there is a limit between the material and the private. In no circumstances would I wish my poems to become my dear diary.

Once, when already I was a mature man, a poem occurred to me, featuring my mother, with her actual Christian name. The poem wouldn't sound right without her name; other, fake names made it fall apart and the poem was dear to me, maybe even dearer due to the real name, and it still is, but, but. I placed it into the collection *Sonnets* and I am not sure, up to the present day, whether I did the right thing.

I know very well that it is this tangible experience of the individual – the author – that provokes poems, far better than mine, poems of pain and joy, poems that overwhelm and move, but I have chosen another path. (I also know that this choice is the result of the deepest first person, even if it renounces it; if we are given any choice at all). This is what poetics is all about: the author demonstrates his notion about what a poem is.

Ultimately, aren't we all incessantly – in poems and in any discourse and when quiet – talking in first person singular, be this person a technical element of our *métier* or the civil I or maybe eventually one, inseparable entity, as is the world we inhabit – a single one, no matter how diverse?

Translated by Barbara Zorman