

**‘In thousands of poems
you seek a worldwide
retrospective of crime
and death’: Ethical,
Activist and Intellectual
Rigour in Jure Detela**

»U hiljadu pesama tražiš
svetsku retrospektivu zločina
i smrti«: etička, aktivistička
i misaona oštrina Jureta Detele

The article presents the transformative potentials of Jure Detela's political thought on the basis of the texts that emerged from his social activism. In the period of the student movement, Detela established himself on the political left; his initial works are marked by a socialist political perspective, and later he became receptive to the political ideas of anarchism. In the 1980s, Detela was the first in the Slovenian public sphere to criticise imprisonment as the predominant mode of punishment and to demand the abolition of the death penalty. He developed arguments against the death penalty on the basis of an understanding of the interrelatedness of personal and structural violence. In the complex context of the disintegration of the Yugoslav socialist system and the accompanying socio-political changes, Detela began to conceive the Pacifist Alliance social movement. His concept of pacifism is very close to A. J. Muste's concept of revolutionary pacifism; in both cases, pacifism is intertwined with justice—Detela disdained the search for peace without it.

JURE DETELA, ACTIVISM, SOCIALISM,
ANARCHISM, PACIFISM

U radu su, na osnovi Detelinih tekstova baziranih na društvenom aktivizmu, prikazani transformativni potencijali njegove političke misli. U periodu studentskog pokreta Jure Detela profilisao se u političkoj levici; početke njegovog delovanja karakteriše socijalistička politička perspektiva, dok je kasnije postao odan političkoj ideji anarhizma. Osamdesetih godina 20. veka je na prostoru Slovenije plasirao kritiku zatvorskog sistema kao prevladavajućeg načina kažnjavanja i povezoao je s ciljevima za ukidanje smrtne kazne. Argumente protiv smrtne kazne predstavlja bazirajući se na razumevanju međusobne povezanosti ličnog i strukturnog nasilja i njihovog zajedničkog uticaja. U kompleksnom kontekstu raslojavanja jugoslovenskog socijalističkog sistema počeo je s osnivanjem pokreta Pacifistički savez. Detelin koncept pacifizma je vrlo blizak Mustijevom konceptu revolucionarnog pacifizma: i kod Detele je koncept pacifizma prepleten s pravdom – težnja ka odsustvu nasilja bez ultimativnog zahtevanja za pravdom za njega nije bila prihvatljiva.

JURE DETELA, AKTIVIZAM,
SOCIJALIZAM, ANARHIZAM, PACIFIZAM

1

This article was written at the University of Maribor in the framework of the research programme 'Slovene Language—Basic, Contrastive, and Applied Studies' (P6-0215), which was funded by the Slovenian Research Agency.

1

In this paper,¹ I will try to present the transformative potentials of Jure Detela's political thought on the basis of the texts that emerged from his social activism. 'In the context of events in Slovenian art in Detela's time,' Miklavž Komelj writes, 'his position was consistently singular, prominent, solitary—yet the spiritual shifts of the time were inscribed in it with seismographic precision' (Komelj 2011: 455). The complexity and differentiation of the levels of meaning of Detela's thought are established in such a way throughout his poems, essays, theoretical texts and fragmentary writings that all of these texts somehow correspond to each other. For Detela, poetry was not a 'manifestation of the external signs of poetry' embedded in a mystical, transcendental sphere, but a practice that abolishes 'segregation between the language of poets and other incoding practices' and enables the 'evocation of a consciousness of presence' (Detela 2011: 193). With ethical, activist and intellectual rigour, Detela continually critically reflected on his own poetic practices and evaluated the transformative potential of his poems, guided by a critical understanding of language and its representational powers. He understood 'the necessity of poetry as a critique of an existing language' as well as 'the necessity of criticism of existing poetry' (Komelj 2010: 6). Detela's commitment to nonviolence is associated with the recognition of a radically non-violent position where one does not defy violence but instead allows it to be confronted (see Komelj 2018b: 1710–11). It was only through the endurance of a consciousness of violence that, 'in thousands of poems [...] a worldly retrospective of crime and death' was revealed to him, as he wrote in *Pesem za Jureta Detelo* (A Poem for Jure Detela [Detela 2018: 177]).

Detela's social activism did not occur in isolation from his poetry; he expressed this deep connection when he described his poems as 'the clearest lines' of his life (Komelj 2005: 121). The point of connection is what he termed 'total confrontation' in his essay 'Kulturniški fevdalizem' (Cultural Feudalism [Detela 2005b: 10]). This initial inseparability, of course, does not imply that 'his poetic position could a priori serve him as an alibi for masking weak intellectual moves or vice versa' (Komelj 2005: 121). Detela rejected the illusion that social issues could be solved at the literary level; but because he understood literature as an integral part of the structure of society, a part which is directly linked to and intertwined with the real world, he dismissed as an illusion the idea that real social change is possible without a change in the symbolic system.²

2

Detela's activism spans the period of the student movement through to the dismantling of Yugoslavia, 'when it seemed that all the ideals of nonviolence that he dedicated his life to have collapsed' (Komelj 2011: 487). In order to trace Detela's social activism, I have examined his essays, letters, leaflets, programme guidelines and unpublished notes.³ I have also included the autobiographical text *Pod strašnimi očmi pontonskih mostov* (Under the Terrible Eyes of the Pontoon Bridges), which Detela wrote in 1984 and 1985.

Detela's entry into activism is thus marked by the period of the student movement, a time when he politically established himself on the left. At the time, he collaborated with the Trotskyist group of the New Left which was also associated with Jaša Zlobec, Mladen Dolar, Branko Gradišnik, Marko Uršič and others. In Detela's legacy, a number

2

In a theoretical reflection on his own poetry Detela even made a demand to deal with 'the violence inherent to the marking process as such' (Komelj 2018b: 1692).

3

Detela's legacy is archived in the manuscript department of the National and University Library (NUK) in Ljubljana under inventory number 14/2009. Comprising twenty-two folders, this legacy was edited by Miklavž Komelj, according to whom it shows Detela's 'way of creating as a wild eruption in which writing to him was following the most elementary inner desire' (Komelj 2018a: 10).

4 Narodna in univerzitetna knjižnica Ljubljana, Zbirka rokopisov, redkih in starih tiskov. Zapuščina Jureta Detele 14/2009. Folder 11.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

of manuscripts from the early 1970s refer to this period,⁴ including a draft of the call to socialist-oriented student organisations and to the youth in capitalist countries. In these texts, which have a Marxist theoretical basis, Detela expresses an understanding of the importance and necessity of the student movement in Slovenia (and more broadly in Yugoslavia) on two axes.

On the first axis, he describes the student movement as a critique of the liberalisation of the economic system through the market reform of 1965, which, after the most stable and successful period of Yugoslav economic history, marked by self-managed socialism, saw the beginning of a structural turn in economic and social development. Detela points out, in particular, the rise in social inequality that originated from liberal market tendencies, and mentions the following anti-socialist effects of the reform: the lack of scholarships; material hardship of students resulting from higher costs of rent, transportation and food (Detela also notes that food in faculty restaurants was becoming both scarce and falling in quality); more difficult conditions for enrolment into university and consequently a decline in students of working class and rural background; high levels of graduate unemployment and economic emigration. 'In the name of adapting economic reforms,' he writes, 'many of the social benefits we have once enjoyed are at stake.'⁵

On the second axis, Detela shows an understanding of the need for a global anti-capitalist movement. In several manuscripts, he expresses his commitment to building a Revolutionary Youth International, a collective guided by solidarity between the socialist-oriented youth of both capitalist and socialist countries on the basis of an anti-imperialist internationalism devoted to the struggle 'for the united socialist states of Europe'.⁶ These ideas were based on the Marxist assumption

of the necessity of organising the political power of the working class. Detela metaphorically calls the youth 'the flame of revolution'; however, 'youth is not the star guide of the revolution', as he writes, and needs to connect with the working class. Individual pages bear the following slogans: '*Down with imperialism, down with bureaucracy!*'; '*Viva the world socialist revolution!*'; '*Viva the world unity of the proletariat and the youth!*'⁷

7
Ibid.

8
Ibid.

9
Zakaj ne bom
sodeloval pri zasedbi
Aškerčeve. Narodna
in univerzitetna
knjižnica Ljubljana,
Zbirka rokopisov,
redkih in starih tiskov.
Zapuščina Jureta De-
tele 14/2009. Folder 11.

In the context of the student movement, it is also interesting to note that Detela did not participate in the occupation of Aškerčeva Street in 1971, which demanded an end to the problem of traffic noise on the street, particularly the section by the building of the Faculty of Arts at the University of Ljubljana. He did, however, produce the leaflet entitled *Zakaj ne bom sodeloval pri zasedbi Aškerčeve* (Why I Will Not Participate in the Occupation of Aškerčeva),⁸ in which he conveyed the message that he did not support student initiatives with partial, apolitical goals. He did not regard the occupation of Aškerčeva as an integral part of the student movement, as he argued that the nature of student campaigns should be confined to issues that directly affect students, that is, study conditions and the possibility of meeting student needs within the existing social framework. His assessment of the action was that, 'despite the protests, the students essentially agreed to the status quo'.⁹

The 1970s and 1980s brought changes in the socio-economic situation in Yugoslavia triggered by the geo-strategic and neo-imperialist interests of the Western powers in the Balkans. Due to the economic reforms sponsored by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, accompanied by debt restructuring agreements with the United States and other international creditors, Yugoslavia descended into an economic crisis that threatened its political stability. So-called structural reforms were accompanied by the piecemeal dismantling of the

Yugoslav welfare state with all the predictable social consequences (see Chossudovsky: 257–77) At that time, Detela no longer recognised the concept of socialism as an emancipatory force, as he had in the early 1970s, and in his post-student movement texts, there are very few mentions of socialism. However, it should also be noted that he never renounced his early period. In 1982, for example, he published an open letter in the journal *Nova revija* in which he wrote the following about the New Left: ‘Assuming that the term denotes, inter alia, the texts published in *Tribuna* from 1970 to 1972, and those protests in Paris and Belgrade that reached a peak in spring 1968, I must say that I still fully agree with 95 percent of these texts and the vast majority of demands made by the protesters.’ (Detela 1982: 467)

3

In the eyes of the authorities, Detela was perceived as a far-left sympathiser with terrorism who attacks the foundations of socialist society. As he notes in his autobiography, in which he describes his confrontations with the police between 1974 and 1982, this was partly due to his fondness for anarchism and individual actions such as his commemoration of the killed members of the Red Army Faction, which he organised in 1977 at the Zvezda park in Ljubljana. In the same year, Detela (2018: 683) referred to their killing, which took place in the German prison of Stannheim, in following lines: ‘Tragika ni več izum. / Svet je definiran / s simboli smrti.’ (‘The tragic is no longer an invention. / The world is defined / by the symbols of death.’) It was the very political nature of Detela’s demand for non-violence that allowed him to recognise the actions of the Red Army Faction as a direct product of West German violence, leaving no room for moralising about

individual acts of violence without reflecting on the violence of state structures. In the closing pages of his autobiography, he commented on his actions as follows:

Even when I held the commemoration, it was quite clear to me that I would never use the terrorist methods used by certain German anarchist factions; needless to say, the accusations with which the authorities, judges and numerous journalists reject terrorist anarchists are completely wrong because they despise anarchist social criticism and ignore the violence of the authorities against anarchists; they ignore the social situation in which urban guerrillas are produced.
(Detela 1988: 47)

In the title of this autobiography, *Pod strašnimi očmi pontonskih mostov*, Detela makes an intertextual link to Rimbaud's poem *The Drunken Boat* (*Le Bateau Ivre*) and its final verse: 'Nor swim past prison hulks' hateful eyes' ('Ni nager sous les yeux horribles des pontons' [Rimbaud: 102, 103]). This, as Miklavž Komelj points out (2011: 476), is extremely important as it protects Detela's text from possible ideological manipulations that would render it a banal accusation of the so-called totalitarianism of Yugoslav socialism. Although the work presents a critique of institutionalised coercive systems, this is not a critique that would stem from an anti-socialist position. When Detela writes that it is 'pointless to fight against people as individuals; it only makes sense to combat the evil we recognise in global dimensions' (Detela 1988: 3), he removes the critique of violence from a localised context. At the same time, he introduces a distinction between two levels of violence, the personal and the structural (for which see Galtung), in order to confront the reader with the conditions in which violence functions as a norm. A quote from

10

Among other things, Detela participated in the short-term occupation of a house on Erjavčeva Street in Ljubljana, which can be considered as the first squat in Ljubljana (see Komelj 2005: 125). Detela also participated in a literary evening in the squat.

11

The opening of the cages at the zoo was interpreted by Detela in the text *Sporočilo* (Message), published in the journal *Tribuna* in 1975, as a 'complete metaphor': 'This act made the text written on the day I decided to act meaningful. In this text, I consider the opening of animal cages as a complete metaphor, a complete symbol that applies to the here and to those outside, which we usually attribute to animals and which I consider unjust. If the complete metaphor is seen from both sides, even from the side of the animals, then the position outside for the animals is deleted.' (Detela 1975a: 8) With this act, Detela realised a metaphor used by Kazimir Malevich in 1915 (see Komelj 2018b: 1684).

The Drunken Boat indicates that Detela in part intentionally incited confrontation with the police in order to provoke mechanisms of violence.

In *Pod strašnimi očmi pontonskih mostov*, anarchist ideas related to the practices of revolutionary daily life, such as squatting,¹⁰ activist interventions, passive resistance and civil disobedience, are also expressed. This is how Detela describes part of a conversation with a police officer: 'The policeman also asked me if I would be willing to break the law if I thought that the law was cruel and unjust. I replied that ultimately I would be prepared to do that and that I once broke into the Ljubljana Zoo and opened a few cages to allow captured animals to escape.' (Detela 1988: 20)¹¹

4

Detela was the first in the Slovenian public sphere to criticise imprisonment as the predominant mode of punishment and to demand the abolition of the death penalty.¹² He regarded prison as a measure which, by perpetuating the idea of punishment, merely maintains the cycle of violence. For example, he publicly opposed the imprisonment of Yugoslav writers for their nationalism; he rejected the assumption that prison could solve social problems, such as the problem of nationalism, and considered prison as a form of punishment that violated the fundamental principles of human rights. In the autumn of 1983, he even resigned from the Slovenian Writers' Association because its representatives refused to express solidarity with incarcerated writers. In a letter to the board of directors of the Slovene Writers' Association, which he also published in the journal *Nova revija*, he stated that it is 'anachronistic if a writer denies solidarity with anyone incarcerated; prisons should be abolished, the same as the death penalty'; moreover, '[t]hose who deny solidarity

with those incarcerated for nationalism because they are afraid of being considered a nationalist are cowards' (Detela 1983: 2204). In the same year, he was the first signatory of the initiative to the delegates of the Federal Assembly to abolish the death penalty (other initial signatories included Alenka Puhar, Božidar Slapšak, Marko Uršič and Jaša Zlobec).¹³

This marked the beginning of an all-Yugoslav movement against the death penalty, in which Detela was extremely active over the next few years. He published the first text against the death penalty in 1975 in *Tribuna*, entitled 'Teze o temeljih preventivne učinkovitosti smrtno kazni' (Theses on the Foundations of the Preventive Effectiveness of the Death Penalty), where he critically reflected on two of its social functions: deterrent and retribution. He articulated seven theses, of which the thesis that '[t]he assertion about the necessity of the death penalty [...] is an assertion of the need for the fear of death' should be singled out (Detela 1975b: 2). He regarded the movement for the abolition of the death penalty as 'an inevitable contribution to a more responsible logic that must undo the logic of fear' (Detela 1984a: 61). He published several essays on the death penalty between 1984 and 1985 in *Problemi* (see Detela 1984a, 1984b, 1984c, 1985) and *Nova revija* (see Detela 1984d).

It is in these texts that Detela's concept of violence is perhaps most clearly articulated.¹⁴ He developed arguments against the death penalty¹⁵ on the basis

12 This link has recently been recognised as still relevant, especially in the American abolitionist movement; the discourse on the death penalty in the American context is necessarily linked with confronting the realities of the prison system and (racial) oppression. More recently, many researchers in various scientific disciplines have examined the interconnected relationship between the prison-industrial complex and the practice of the death penalty (see, e.g., Adelsberg et al. and Davis).

13 Peticija proti smrtni kazni. Narodna in univerzitetna knjižnica Ljubljana, Zbirka rokopisov, redkih in starih tiskov. Zapuščina Jureta Detele 14/2009. Folder 11.

14 In this article, I do not address Detela's reflection of symbolic violence, which, at the level of poetry, is reflected in his critique of metaphor and has already been examined by several commentators (see, e.g., Jovanovski, Komelj 2005, Komelj 2011, Komelj 2018b, Komelj 2020 and Vičar).

15 Fifteen years after Detela presented his arguments against the death penalty in the then-Yugoslav space, Jacques Derrida began to conduct a two-year seminar on the death penalty (1999–2001) in Paris as part of the Questions de responsabilité (Questions of Responsibility) research programme. Derrida's discourse on the death penalty is abolitionist like Detela's, but Derrida's starting point was the critique of sovereign state power. By deconstructing the theologico-political logic of sovereignty, Derrida interrogated the authority that the state holds over life and death (see Derrida). In a dialogue with Elisabeth Roudinesco, Derrida critically reflected on the philosophical discourse on the death penalty and claimed that in the Western philosophical tradition no one has elaborated a consistent discourse against the death penalty (see Derrida and Roudinesco: 146).

16
 Peticija proti smrtni
 kazni. Narodna in uni-
 verzitetna knjižnica
 Ljubljana, Zbirka
 rokopisov, redkih
 in starih tiskov. Za-
 puščina Jureta Detele
 14/2009. Folder 11.

of an understanding of the interrelatedness between personal and structural violence. He not only associated violent acts on the part of the individual with their deliberation, but also argued that the responsibility for violence is shared. '[I]f a person stabs another person with a knife,' he writes in an essay entitled 'O smrtni kazni' (On the Death Penalty), 'we are inclined to mistakenly believe that the only cause of this act is concentrated solely in the killer, whom death penalty advocates naturally see as being completely separated from the world' (Detela 1984a: 60). Detela was convinced that directing attention at the individual perpetrator of violence, which he viewed as one of the social functions of the death penalty, allows structural violence to remain unnoticed; it remains unrecognisable as violence and consequently escapes condemnation. Detela expressed the recognition of the two levels of violence not on the terminological level but rather on the conceptual level, in terms of understanding the continuity between them. He clearly defined structural violence when he stated that it is 'ingrained into many social and productive structures' (Detela 2005a: 19), and he recognised the mechanisms of structural violence in the death penalty itself. The convict, according to Detela, did not harm any of the people involved in his execution, from the prosecutor to the executor—the basis of their actions are the structural expectations that they fulfil according to their social roles (Detela 1984a: 60).

In his activist efforts to abolish the death penalty in Yugoslavia, Detela shared the conviction that 'the death penalty is in complete contradiction with the humanistic vision of a socialist society',¹⁶ but the abolition of the death penalty in Yugoslavia was for him just a springboard to the understanding that the global abolition of the death penalty cannot be considered without simultaneously

addressing the dynamics of the capitalist world-economy. He regarded the global abolition of the death penalty as an integral part of the abolition of 'reciprocal execution and oppression on a global scale' (Detela 1984a: 62); within this context, he also considered the consequences of capitalist exploitation in countries that the West transforms into so many members of the third world. In terms of understanding 'structural violence as *social injustice*' (Galtung: 171), Detela argues that 'virtually every European is [...] entangled in a wide variety of oppressive mechanisms' (Detela 1984a: 61). Detela's understanding of the link between personal and structural violence is based on the identification of the structural elements within personal violence and the personal elements within structural violence, and his belief that 'the death penalty prevents us from finding our share of causes of world violence within ourselves' (Detela 1984a: 61) also derives from this understanding. Detela radically confronted the violence within himself when, in the poem *Pesem za Jureta Detelo*, he called himself a murderer: 'Morilec!' (Detela 2018: 176). According to Detela, the dividing line between 'the awareness of the sanctity of life and the murderous nature' does not occur between the perpetrators of the crime and the innocent, but within every individual (Detela 1984a: 61).

Therefore, for Detela there was no a priori non-violent position; such a position is only possible through enduring the awareness of violence within oneself. This is why Detela saw the possibility of addressing levels of violence in society in a 'total confrontation' (Detela 2005b: 10). When he announced that he would give birth to a 'new, terrible beauty', this beauty is not only '[w]ithout aggression' and '[w]ithout murders', but also '[w]ithout illusions of innocence' (Detela 2018: 749).

17

Detela's co-signatories of the proposition were Franjo Francič, Ignac Kalin, Jani Osojnik and Janez Tomaž Marolt.

5

In the complex context of the disintegration of the Yugoslav socialist system and the accompanying socio-political changes, Detela began to conceive the Pacifist Alliance. This was the period when the programme of economic collapse, which began in 1989, put the final nail in the coffin of the federal financial system and federal political institutions; policies of the International Monetary Fund had paralysed the ability of the government to finance its own economic and social programmes. The so-called structural adjustment programmes, which were part of the Western financial community's policies, had a significant political motivation: the purpose of these adjustment reforms was to dismantle the socialist system and move the national economic system in a neoliberal direction (see Chossudovsky: 259–61 and Gibbs: 16–60). However, the establishment of the Pacifist Alliance was not a direct response to the neoliberal order that was being put forward; nor do we have any data that would imply that Detela knew the broader international context of economic policy and the collective strategic interests of the US and other Western powers in the Balkans. In the programme guidelines of the Pacifist Alliance, published in *Nova revija* in 1990 under the title 'Predlog za delovno usmeritev pacifističnih zaveznikov' (The Proposal for the Working Orientation of the Pacifist Alliance),¹⁷ Detela (1990a) did not produce any new political guidelines, but connected a number of political starting points that he had already articulated several times. The programme consists of thirty-four points; as an overview, the Pacifist Alliance was conceived as an anti-imperialist, anti-racist, anti-nationalist, anti-speciesist, anti-militaristic, pacifist movement. It should be emphasised that Detela's concept of pacifism is not apolitical—it does not detract from thinking the

modern world-system—but is very close to what the pacifist thinker and social activist A. J. Muste discussed as revolutionary pacifism (see Muste). For Detela, too, pacifism and justice were intertwined concepts; he disdained the search for peace without justice. '[T]he field for my revolution' (Detela 2011: 113) was the field from which his pacifism grew. He was aware that, because of their radical nature, the guidelines of the Pacific Alliance could not become ethically or politically binding for the majority of the Slovenian population, so he initially foresaw connections at the international level, specifically with 'other political and ecological groups' (Detela 1990b: 1371) organised around egalitarian principles.¹⁸ Along with the programme guidelines, Detela published the text 'Nekaj misli ob predlogu za delovno usmeritev pacifističnih zaveznikov' (A Few Thoughts on the Proposal for the Working Orientation of the Pacific Alliance), in which he justified the need for a 'radical minority' for structuring the political and ecological consciousness of the majority (Detela 1990b). If I try to think of both texts and draw out the starting points that underpin this new emancipatory orientation, which is still highly relevant today, three elements stand out.

First, Detela spoke of a need to create a new ecological consciousness that marks a shift from the conception of the so-called balance of nature to the rights of every living being to life and freedom of movement, based on the connection between a critique of colonialism, imperialism and anthropocentrism. As Komelj states (2011: 465), in a 1981 notebook, Detela drew a dividing line between the left and the right in ecology: '[T]he right presupposes the a priori harmony of nature. The left sets out the harmony between living beings as a goal that all beings aspire to but has never been realised.' For Detela, the critique of the a priori natural balance was the basis for a harmonious relationship between beings, as he was convinced that this notion 'does not allow for a turn

18

He specifically referred to the animal liberation movements such as the Lega per i diritti degli animali and the anarchist Animal Liberation Front, which was known primarily for its methods of direct action (see Detela 1990a: 1367).

19
Narodna in univerzitetna knjižnica Ljubljana, Zbirka rokopisov, redkih in starih tiskov. Zapuščina Jureta Detela 14/2009. Folder 11.

20
Ibid.

21
In 1989, Detela sent a letter to the Green League of Italy, expressing solidarity with their demands for a ban on hunting, the abolition of zoos and a ban on animal testing, and called for a more complex commitment to ending animal oppression, the criticism of the animal-industrial complex, in particular. In the same letter, he called Yugoslav animal farms and animal transport a 'cosmic shame'. (Pismo Zeleni ligi Italije. Narodna in univerzitetna knjižnica Ljubljana, Zbirka rokopisov, redkih in starih tiskov. Zapuščina Jureta Detela 14/2009. Folder 11.)

in the cultural and production relations that would be able to solve what ecologists refer to with the problematic word “nature”.¹⁹ Commitment to values proclaimed by dominant ecological movements—that is, concern for the quality of human life and health, reduction of air pollution, protection of natural resources, and so on—was for Detela insufficient, as these are the values that are at least seemingly recognised by the governing establishment.²⁰ Detela (1990b: 1369–70) called on ecologists to establish a new value system in which the rights of the individual beings that constitute nature would find their place.

Second, Detela fought for the extension of the concept of non-violence to all conscious beings, as resistance to violence against humans and resistance to violence against animals belong to the same endeavour. Even before he wrote the programme guidelines for the Pacifist Alliance, Detela had attempted to destabilise the speciesist basis of the moral distinction between violence against humans and violence against animals several times, for example in the following statement: ‘I do not understand why we cannot look at violence against humans and violence against animals from the same perspective.’ (Detela 2011: 203) Detela advocated for a radical transformation of the human relationship towards animals and was the first in the Slovenian and wider Yugoslav public space to introduce an awareness of violence against animals as a political problem. In one of his essays on poetry, he wrote: ‘[T]hose who do not see the problem of deer as a political problem have no idea what ecological movements are all about—are they about an environment conceived as possession, or are they about the welfare of every animal?’ (Detela 2005a: 19–20) In ‘Predlog za delovno usmeritev pacifističnih zaveznikov’ several points relate to examples of structural violence against animals (eating meat, wearing fur, hunting, zoos, circuses, animal experiments),²¹ while

point eighteen contains the explicit requirement for a legal animal right to life, freedom of movement and unspoiled habitat (see Detela 1990a: 1366–67).

Finally, Detela wanted to spread awareness of the necessity of the existence of a radical minority committed to the ethics of non-violence. Detela was convinced that only a radical minority engaging in positions of nonviolence in the general public can form an awareness of the values which enable the formation of truly consistent and ethically responsible pacifist and ecological programmes. According to Detela, a radical minority also enables a sharpening of the ethical and ecological awareness of individuals and encourages them to challenge existing social and ecological policies, as well as structuring the 'broad and complex awareness' of the ways of addressing structural violence. The existence of a radical minority is also necessary if one wishes to distinguish between political and apolitical ecological movements; and it also provides a critique of the biodiversity programmes that grant genetic capital priority over the protection of individual beings. (See Detela 1990b: 1369–71) Detela also vociferously rejected compromises; he was convinced that the radical minority must remain a minority in order not to compromise its own work and values. Detela (2018: 146) expressed the uncompromising nature of his anti-speciesist position, for example, in the poem *Nekemu hermetistu, za eksperiment z zajci* (To a Hermetist, for the Experiment with Rabbits): 'Nobenih pogodb za zajce' ('No contracts for rabbits').

6

In conclusion I want to stress the difficulty of positioning Detela politically. At the beginning of his activism, he established himself on the

political left; this initial period was marked by a socialist political perspective, although he later became receptive to the political ideas of anarchism. But despite his notebook entry from 1990 according to which ‘the sense of the universality of rights is fundamentally anarchist’ (quoted in Komelj 2011: 487) it seems that the notion of anarchism is both too narrow and too loose to grasp the whole expanse of Detela’s thought. Detela himself, too, constantly avoided labelling. He expressed his non-acceptance of signifiers in a somewhat humorous way when he wrote the following in his notebook from 1982 to describe himself: ‘psycholamarkist-orphic internationalist-anarcho-communist nirvanist’ (Detela 2018: 948). The signifier that best captures his position is most likely—*singular*. ♡

References

- ADELSBERG, GEOFFREY, LISA GUENTHER and SCOTT ZEMAN (eds.), 2015: *Death and Other Penalties: Philosophy in a Time of Mass Incarceration*. New York: Fordham University Press.
- CHOSSUDOVSKY, MICHEL, 2003: *The Globalization of Poverty and the New World Order*. Quebec: Global Research Publishers.
- DAVIS, ANGELA Y., 2003: *Are Prisons Obsolete?* New York: Seven Stories Press.
- DERRIDA, JACQUES, 2014: *The Death Penalty*. 1. Trans. Peggy Kamuf. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- DERRIDA, JACQUES, and ELISABETH ROUDINESCO, 2004: *For What Tomorrow... A Dialogue*. Trans. Jeff Fort. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- DETELA, JURE, 1975a: Sporočilo. *Tribuna* 25, no. 2. 8.
- , 1975b: Teze o temeljnih preventivne učinkovitosti smrtne kazni. *Tribuna* 25, no. 5–6. 2.
- , 1982: Odprto pismo uredništvu Nove revije. *Nova revija*, no. 3–4. 467.
- , 1983: Obrazložitev izstopa Jurija Detele iz Društva slovenskih pisateljev. *Nova revija*, no. 19–20. 2203–2205.
- , 1984a: O smrtni kazni. *Problemi* 22, no. 5. 60–63.
- , 1984b: Odgovor Branku Gradišniku. *Problemi* 22, no. 8. 104–106.
- , 1984c: Kako zakopati sekiro? *Problemi* 22, no. 9–11. 70–76.
- , 1984d: O pedagoški funkciji smrtne kazni. *Nova revija*, no. 46–47. 3512–15.
- , 1985: Pismo o ritualnih umorih. *Problemi* 23, no. 6. 67–72.
- , 1988: *Pod strašnimi očmi pontonskih mostov*. Koper: Lipa.

- , 1990a: Predlog za delovno usmeritev pacifističnih zaveznikov. *Nova revija*, no. 101–102. 1366–68.
- , 1990b: Nekaj misli ob predlogu za delovno usmeritev pacifističnih zaveznikov. *Nova revija*, no. 101–102. 1369–71.
- , 2005a: V svojih pesmih. *Zapisi o umetnosti: eseji*, by Jure Detela. Ed. Miklavž Komelj. Koper: Hyperion. 17–24.
- , 2005b: Kulturniški fevdalizem. *Zapisi o umetnosti: eseji*, by Jure Detela. Ed. Miklavž Komelj. Koper: Hyperion. 5–13.
- , 2011: *Orfični dokumenti: teksti in fragmenti iz zapuščine I and II*. Ed. Miklavž Komelj. Koper: Hyperion.
- , 2018: *Zbrane pesmi I and II*. Ed. Miklavž Komelj. Ljubljana: Beletrina.
- GALTUNG, JOHAN, 1969: Violence, Peace, and Peace Research. *Journal of Peace Research* 6, no. 3. 167–91.
- GIBBS, DAVID N., 2009: *First Do No Harm: Humanitarian Intervention and the Destruction of Yugoslavia*. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press.
- JOVANOVSKI, ALENKA, 2020: *Zoè, bios in forma-di-vita pri Agambenu. Pojmovanja živalskih smrti: antropocentrizem in (ne)možne subjektivitete*. Ed. Branislava Vičar. Koper: Annales ZRS. (In print.)
- KOMELJ, MIKLAVŽ, 2005: 'Sublimna ksenofilija' Jureta Detele. *Zapisi o umetnosti: eseji*, by Jure Detela. Ed. Miklavž Komelj. Koper: Hyperion. 115–67.
- , 2010: Predgovor. *Nujnost poezije: eseji*, by Miklavž Komelj. Koper: Hyperion. 5–11.
- , 2011: Post scriptum. *Orfični dokumenti: teksti in fragmenti iz zapuščine II*, by Jure Detela. Ed. Miklavž Komelj. Koper: Hyperion. 451–96.

- , 2018a: O knjigi. *Zbrane pesmi. 1*, by Jure Detela. Ed. Miklavž Komelj. Ljubljana: Beletrina. 6–26.
- , 2018b: Pesmi za bitja iz tujih svetov. *Zbrane pesmi. 2*, by Jure Detela. Ed. Miklavž Komelj. Ljubljana: Beletrina. 1675–713.
- , 2020: Smrt živali in metafora. *Pojmovanja živalskih smrti: antropocentrizem in (ne)možne subjektivitete*. Ed. Branislava Vičar. Koper: Annales ZRS. (In print.)
- MUSTE, A. J., 1967: Pacifism and Class War. *The Essays of A. J. Muste*, by A. J. Muste. Ed. Nat Hentoff. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co. 179–85.
- RIMBAUD, ARTHUR, 1961: Le Bateau Ivre / The Drunken Boat. *A Season in Hell and The Drunken Boat*, by Arthur Rimbaud. Trans. Louise Varèse. New York: New Directions Books. 92–103.
- VIČAR, BRANISLAVA, 2013: 'Si kdaj videl svobodnega konja?' Filozofski kontekst animalistične etike v poeziji Jureta Detele in Miklavža Komelja. *Etika v slovenskem jeziku, literaturi in kulturi. Zbornik 49. SSJLK*. Ed. Aleksander Bjelčevič. Ljubljana: Znanstvena založba Filozofske fakultete Univerze v Ljubljani. 35–45.

Povzetek

Članek skuša na osnovi tekstov Jureta Detele, ki izhajajo iz polja družbenega aktivizma, prikazati transformativne potenciale njegove politične misli. Detelov vstop v aktivizem označuje obdobje študentskega gibanja, ko se je povezal s trockistično skupino nove levice. V besedilih iz zapuščine, ki se nanašajo na to obdobje, Detela izraža razumevanje pomena in nujnosti študentskega gibanja v Sloveniji (in tudi širše v Jugoslaviji) na dveh oseh: na prvi osi študentsko gibanje pojmuje kot kritiko liberalizacije ekonomskega sistema z vpeljavo tržne reforme v letu 1965; na drugi osi kaže razumevanje potrebe po globalnem protikapitalističnem gibanju.

V sedemdesetih letih 20. stoletja je postal Detela dovzeten za politične ideje anarhizma. V tekstu *Pod strašnimi očmi pontonskih mostov* (1988), v katerem opisuje svoja soočanja s policijo, je izpričal tudi pojavnosti anarhističnih idej, vezanih na prakse revolucionarnega vsakdanjega življenja, kot so skvotanje, aktivistične intervencije, pasivni odpor in civilna nepokorščina. V tem avtobiografskem tekstu lahko prepoznavamo kritiko institucionaliziranih sistemov prisile, a velja poudariti, da to ni kritika, ki bi bila izrečena s protisocialistične pozicije, saj jo Detela izvzema iz lokaliziranega konteksta.

Detela je v slovenski prostor vpeljal kritiko obstoja zaporskega sistema kot prevladujočega načina kaznovanja in jo povezal s cilji za odpravo smrtnih kazni. Argumente proti smrtni kazni je razvijal na podlagi razumevanja medsebojne povezanosti med osebnim in strukturnim nasiljem ter njenega součinkovanja. Detela je bil prepričan, da usmerjanje pozornosti na posameznega izvajalca, izvajalko nasilja dopušča, da strukturno nasilje ostaja neopaženo ali komaj zaznavno: neprepoznano kot nasilje in kot takšno brez obsodbe. Mehanizme strukturnega nasilja pa je prepoznal prav v smrtni kazni.

V kompleksnem kontekstu razgradnje jugoslovanskega socialističnega sistema in spremljajočih družbeno-političnih sprememb je Detela začel snovati družbeno gibanje Pacifistična zaveza. Njegov koncept pacifizma je zelo blizu Mustejevemu konceptu revolucionarnega pacifizma: tudi pri Deteli je pacifizem prepleten s pravičnostjo – prizadevanje za nenasilje brez ultimativne pravičnostne zahteve zanj ni bilo sprejemljivo. Če skušamo izpostaviti izhodišča programskih smernic, ki kažejo novo emancipatorno usmeritev, ki bi lahko bila relevantna tudi danes, velja izpostaviti troje: 1) vzpostavitev nove ekološke zavesti, ki doseže premik od pojmovanja t. i. naravnega ravnovesja k pravicam vsakega živega bitja do življenja ter je utemeljena na povezavi kritike kolonializma, imperializma in antropocentrizma; 2) razširitev koncepta nenasilja na vsa zavedajoča se bitja; 3) vzpostavitev zavesti o nujnosti obstoja radikalne manjšine, ki je zavezana etiki nenasilja.

Branislava Vičar

Branislava Vičar is Associate Professor of Slovenian language and Head of the Department of Slavic Languages at the University of Maribor. Her research interests include critical discourse analysis, critical animal studies, sociolinguistics, language and gender, and multimodality. She is the author of Parenteza v novinarskem in parlamentarnem diskurzu (Parenthesis in Journalistic and Parliamentary Discourse [Filozofska fakulteta, 2011]) and the editor of Pojmovanja živalskih smrti: antropocentrizem in (ne)možne subjektivitete (Conceptualisations of Animal Deaths: Anthropocentrism and [Im]possible Subjectivities [Annales ZRS, 2020]). Her recent publications include articles on recontextualisation, the nationalist discourse, anthropocentrism and animal subjectivities. Vičar is also an animal rights activist.