



**HALMA**  
**THE EUROPEAN**  
**NETWORK OF LITERARY**  
**CENTRES**

Donatas Petrošius

**Poems**

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Vilnius: Lithuanian Writers' Union Publishers

## Calendrical Fists

My father taught me to count out in fists:

the knuckle of the left forefinger is january

in between – february

the knuckle of the left middle finger is march

in between april

the knuckle of the left ring finger is may

in between – june

the knuckle of the left little finger is july

the knuckle of the right forefinger is august

in between – september

the knuckle of the right middle finger is october

in between – november

the knuckle of the right ring finger is december

and two positions remain so that I remember

that every year more time ends than can fit

in a year: in all calendars are

dates without numbers that celebrate me completely



### **Back to the Front. In Linear Order**

Today I was visited by a reseller of images –  
nonbelievers have nothing to stare at – he says  
unwinding the linen cloths of Start and Exit.

I say that I am already Ending and will Go nowhere, and he  
keeps pulling a belt out of his hole-pocked knapsack,  
with which I tie myself down when gravity doesn't work,

when you eat nettle soup bent over  
toward the front in your thoughts you sail back for two weeks:  
it seems yesterday when I threw my backpack into the corner,  
and today already everything is white, gone to mold.

All my life in this place it rains and thunders  
and I still lack fluid and your shattering dishes.

To die one to the other at the same time is only one of two  
ways out – we usually die one to the other in linear order

### **I Step back into a Dream into Beograd**

I meditated with sewed-shut pockets.  
I run in my thoughts across a contour map,  
abandoning all cities and their names  
in which all there is is mid-20th century  
watercolor tourism



with unused watch towers,  
 locked postal boxes filled with  
 empty notepapers.

I see as I don't believe –  
 the clocks are set against me.  
 Passers-by walk faster than fast, as if  
 radiating something other than themselves.

### **Correction of Discovered Errors**

The most gentle creature lives on Styx Mountain, on the other side of the city.  
 Every moment I spend next to her bewitches me.  
 I love her, the princess – that is my ars poetica.

When she travels to the Alps or Asia Minor, she leaves me  
 the cats, the parrots and the disquiet of three rooms. When she goes,  
 all of her innocent spells begin to work.

I don't know what they mean, so I start to lose my mind and,  
 so that time will pass more quickly, register myself at the polyclinic,  
 have an electrocardiogram done, give up my interest

in what's happening in the world of photography. At night I reconstruct  
 all of our wordless conversations, their style and  
 syntax. Rewrite each word a hundred



times, trying to become the reflection of its perfection,  
 though I clearly understand that I won't find a single  
 equivalent in language, and that all my writing will be only

an unending correction of discovered errors

### **God Relishes My Good Appetite**

When I understood that I was discharged from Heaven

I started picking and eating unripe apples.

I plucked what I could reach. Lord, if it is given to me

protect me from visions: restrain me, so that in my inexperience

I don't take note of what awaits me tomorrow.

I fear seeing too much just as I do becoming blind

because, Lord, what is the sum of the real world's

sweet repayment options – dried fruits and wine

if my blood stays sour as it was anyway?

What worth do these documents of faith and property have

if I renounce everything beforehand – out of fear that I'll take

something which doesn't belong to me, leave fingerprints

on the computer keyboard? Here, on Sodu Street, where every morning

the Mozart Requiem can be heard at four- and the trolleybuses sweep

along wires like a rag sweeping dust off glass - I recognise



my order of things is just unfinished lines  
 throwing themselves, like pips from half-eaten apples,  
 among the roomful of papers wilting on my table,

where Mozart watches in profile from a one-Euro coin  
 that I didn't manage to exchange or throw from the bridge  
 this summer: I didn't utter a single wish – even by the sea

*which throws me – like some splinter – towards the shore*  
 as if I've no weight, no drowning value whatsoever, just  
 a passion to pack things for long journeys – gazing sleepy-eyed

through trolleybus windows, reading the Requiem's score –  
 to the outskirts, to gardens at the end of Heaven  
 where I climb over the fence and beg: Lord, bend yet another branch,

forgive me, I am sinning because I've nothing to grasp.

### **Days like no other**

I was already of the belief, that there was no inkling of Buddha  
 neither in me, nor in the small dog borrowed from my cousin's kids, nor  
 in the bullfinch dancing under the hewn buckthorn, but it looks around, that  
 there are more and more lonely people on the outside, afterwards one day you  
 understand, that another sits inside like you, an emergency person, which gets drunk  
 with everyone that you ever remember, roams around strangers' demolished hovels  
 with highway-wide pants, clean their karma with my nights of insomnia make noise  
 in their own way



I had already taken down all of Christianity from the walls, but  
 I looked around – the dead were still lying where I left them; and with each eternal  
 return got into their role more and more, you walk after them day and night  
 with opened eyes, you leave white stains in empty letters, explain the newest  
 in technology to them or read aloud the latest in sports – do as much  
 as you can – anyway everything will remain as it has been left

I had already fastened together a wormwood broom to drive out all of paganism  
 with  
 the earths of forefathers laying dormant, with gravel penetrating the spaces  
 between the floorboards, but again – the new year passed like white shadows,  
 months – like the empty gulps of air  
 days like no other

### **Correction of mistakes I notice**

The gentlest of beings lives on Glass hill, on the other side of town.  
 Each moment near her amazes me.  
 I love her, my princess – such is my *ars poetica*.

When she leaves for the Alps or Asia Minor, she leaves me  
 her cats, parrots and three rooms of anxiety. Having said goodbye  
 all of her innocent spells begin to take effect.

I don't know what they mean, so I go crazy and,  
 so time would pass by faster, I get registered at a polyclinic,  
 where I get a cardiogram done, besides that I stop being interested  
 in what's going on in the world of photography. At night I recreate



all of our unspoken conversations, their style and  
syntax. I rewrite each a hundred times

attempting to become a reflection of its perfection,  
though I understand perfectly well, that I won't find even one  
equivalent in language, and all of my writing will be just

a never-ending correction of mistakes I notice

### **Abstinence from problems [or No Problem]**

In this photo - I'm three.

On the table - an entire zoo of plastic.

Though I'm blindfolded with a towel -

I recognize all the beasts in my hands. A woman  
with a white coat and notebook writing something down  
a zebra, and me - soon to cry.

And here - I'm already seven. Blindfolded  
with the same towel - indifferently, but at the same  
time - victoriously, smiling - I finger

that same zebra. An elephant, wolf,  
and the whole zoo greet me and cheer me on.

The same woman - who hasn't changed one bit  
during years of meditation and asceticism -

suddenly stops writing, grabs me

by the shoulders and shakes me, shouting:

*What's that!? What's that!?*



**After**

After a hot rain, after a year, afterwards, when it starts,  
afterwards, when this story ends

Scales of silver on your bronze skin.

An alder above alders. At night it rains not from the clouds.

After a hot rain You return and dry  
your hair – which is how this story begins.

**I'm sending you two letters,  
to be more precise, the two halves of a letter**

I think of you, when you aren't thinking of anything.

I am here – in night drills, getting prepared  
for battles that never take place for wars  
that never start. A holder of orders and titles

that don't exist, the repeater of your name –  
invincible, because eternal, until You allow  
me to be so. I have been called up to all of  
the invisible front lines – the licker of postage stamps.

P.S. in another life

you get good interest  
for calligraphy like that



## **The Intentionality of Sleep**

Mirrors full of unexpected and uninvited guests  
until I dream them sleep takes hold and I nod off  
while dozing they scramble down below  
breaking and dividing up the glass

I saw that someone was breaking through  
the glass of the mirror then I nodded off  
having not yet made it near the oil color quills  
from my beloved's cloth in the studio

dipping the painbrushes you asked me to wake you  
when and how can that be done if you sleep  
while I'm dozing and having woken up  
the glass of the mirror is soothingly warm

This sample translation was done during the **HALMA grant** of the author **Donatas Petrošius** at the **Culture Port Cetate** in the month of April 2010.

The HALMA grant for Donatas Petrošius was made possible by funding of the European Commission.

The original poems were translated by **Jonas Zdanys** and **Jayde Will**.

