Peter Šulej

Translated by John Minahane

Ratatouille Before

before we ate ratatouille

we made love

in fact we rutted quite wildly

love got lost somewhere along the way

but even so it was fine

before I cooked ratatouille

we were talking about archetypal summer

you were listless bored and you needed sex

I replied with a bottle of red in the fridge

and apart from that I could prepare ratatouille

before I learned to prepare ratatouille

from a woman friend

I never knew you

but already I was seeking your elongated curves

on the streets in the bars

along the Danube waterfront

before my woman friend ate ratatouille

somewhere in France and wanted the recipe

I suppose I had made love to someone else

before somebody mixed

aubergines pumpkins and courgettes

with tomatoes peppers and garlic

all smothered in onion-frothed olive oil

till it was so-soft and called it ratatouille

I didn't exist

coda

        i have beginnings and sometimes i know the endings

        (if you were here you'd see

        how your fame is growing)

        whither go all the threads of the road

        of the ends of ethereal roots

in webs wove by spider feelers…

 to the last mighty leap to

        the first alluvial

the beginning of the weave

where the wanderer unties the nodes

to /

…

i.

(prologue)

nodes
　　this is what nodes are
　　sets of paratexts　　　　　　　nodes
　　stories immersed in stories
　　rules for rescue teams

　　segments of composed realities
　　nodes from behind every pavis
　　bunches of coloured banners in the wind
　　in a land that isn't good at connections
　　(let harsányi's thoughts be sacred)
　　an invisible land where even big-shots vanish
　　zamkovsky and his wife ludmila built a cottage　　　　　　1475
m.a..s.l.
　　little precious little information about the system
　　even if we need not go to the skies
　　monuments pantheons mausoleums temples

in order to understand fully

how invisible merely designated things

(tannins almond-essences acidities)

are to be grasped

(ambrose lost the hastings sword at the petynka pool

so much weeping so much grief

i told him he was enchanting and he vanished)

at some time then he must appear /

(he smiled)

  /   in forty four almost a thousand years had gone

when they landed there whence they had embarked

during history's longest day

in full strength once again

they drew *caledfwlch* from the trunk of fate

with a sustained bombardment they woke up rollo

guillaume to montgomery

time and time for the legends

of the west

thus we were formed on its margin

by leavening to a statistical average

from linguistic chaos

one day like a supernova

we will gush forth

Peter Šulej (1967, Banská Bystrica). Beginning in the 1990s with cyberpunk and graphic experiments, Šulej has developed a modern poetry of intellectual range. *Nodes* (2014) sees

things from countless angles, but always somehow addressing Slovakia's past and present. Also a novelist, sci-fi writer, publisher, editor, and literary organiser.