

**CHILDHOOD IN THE WORKS OF IVAN TAVČAR:
A COMPARISON OF THE EARLY WORKS AND THE NOVEL
*VISOŠKA KRONIKA***

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Many of Tavčar's works that are set in his native Poljane valley, west of Škofja Loka, contain brief passages about childhood. Branko Berčič (1975: 199) has placed approximately forty, mostly short works into this category, and based parts of his description of Tavčar's own childhood on these works. Berčič's biographical research does not, however, provide an explanation of the meaning of childhood in Tavčar's fiction. Similarly, Marija Boršnik (1973: 53) uses references to youth in Tavčar's works as sources of biographical information in her study of his early poetry, and concludes that the Poljane area remained an inspiration to the writer throughout his career. The theme of childhood in Tavčar's fiction deserves attention, if only because it has such a prominent place in the writer's last and arguably most important work, the novel *Visoška kronika* of 1919. The purpose of my article is to define the meaning of childhood as it first appears in Tavčar's early works and to relate it to the novel *Visoška kronika* — which contains his most lengthy treatment of the theme — in order to shed light on the psychology of the main character and narrator, Izidor Khallan. Although they are not artistically representative, I refer to the early works because the treatment of childhood is already consistent in them, and because they are by and large confessional narratives like *Visoška kronika*.

The early works I refer to are from Tavčar's first and second periods, in which the themes of tragic love and homeland are, respectively, most and secondmost prominent.¹ These works date to the period from when Tavčar began to publish to approximately 1880, when his first sketches of life in the Škofja Loka highlands had appeared. In these early works Tavčar does not portray a child's point of view, or contrast child and adult worlds. He equates childhood with the place where one grows up, rather than with a time of life; therefore, his characters find access to their past in physical return instead of in reminiscence: return is a precondition to the recollection of early years. The theme of childhood in the early works is defined by family relations (especially with parents), places (native region, village and home) and nature, in particular ties to the mother figure and love. Tavčar generally presents a fond image of childhood, although negative portrayals also exist.

Tavčar's first story, "Gospa Amalija" (1875)² — with its earlier variants "Avrelija" and "Madama Avrelija" — illustrates the role of parental figures in the narrator's image of his childhood. The story briefly recollects the narrator's youthful infatuation with a local noblewoman, and already contains the tragic, social and spiritual elements of the love theme that occur throughout Tavčar's *oeuvre* (Bernik 1974). The mother appears twice in the story, once to express her worry at her son's interest in the local castle, and later when she voices her approval of the noblewoman who is the narrator's romantic object. The mother's function is thus to approve the transfer of her son's love from romantic dreams represented by the castle to the figure of Amalija that it foreshadows. The mother herself is linked to the rustic element of the narrator's native landscape: "Še vedno sem ga [grad] ljubil in ni preteklo leto dni, da bi se ne bil vozil po ozki dolini, v kateri je stanovala moja mati, v kateri je stala domača vas in ono pusto zidovje." [I: 58-59]³ Any potential conflict between mother/village and Amalija/castle is eliminated by Amalija's death (the mother is not mentioned again), after which the narrator revisits the castle on trips home, where

he experiences once again his immature emotional state.

The father—who is absent from “Gospa Amalija”—is the narrator’s adversary in the first variant of this story. He enrolls his eight-year-old son in school, thus separating him physically from the castle; and when the narrator asks about it during his father’s visits to the school, the latter becomes angry: “Alj resen mož me je karal zbog moje otročarije, pa ljubezni po starem zidovji ni mogel vkrotiti s svojo jezo” [I: 371]. Moreover, the father opposes the mother’s fondness for her son: “tergal [sem] cvetke in jih prinesel materi, ktera me je serčno ljubila, bil sem njen ljubček, kar mi je dostikrat povedala, se veda oče ni smel slišati teh njenih besedi!” [I: 371]. The father’s sole function is to disrupt the narrator’s contact with his mother and home and with the castle (Amalija). At the same time, the mother in this variant of the story is even more tenderly portrayed than in “Gospa Amalija.” The second variant does not mention the father but instead locates the disapproval for childish infatuation with the narrator himself: “. . . starega zidovja vendar se nisem pozabil, tako, da sem čestokrat sam smijal svojej otročariji” [I: 379]. For the male narrator in this story the security and maternal affection of childhood are reconciled with first love by virtue of their proximate setting and the mother’s approval.

Boršnik interprets “Gospa Amalija” as the sixteen-year-old Tavčar’s attempt to remedy his disappointment at his beloved Emilja Terpinč’s marriage by seeking refuge in his mother’s love, yet the critic remains perplexed at the portrayal of “Tavčar”’s father in the first version, for which there is no apparent biographical explanation (1973: 147). Berčič gives a positive description of Tavčar’s father, whose only fault, he suggests, may have been an excess of practicality. Yet Berčič also alludes to disharmony in the Tavčar family: “Perhaps at first he was not exactly most loving towards his wife and his first child; nevertheless harmony reigned in the family and if she said it would be this way, he certainly did not disagree,” (1974: 40). Assuming an autobiographical influence in these early works, the explanation for negative portrayals of the father may simply be the male writer’s need, so common in Western literature, to overcome the paternal figure in his fiction (Coe 1985: 111). And yet the mother-father-eldest son relationship continues to be a central theme in *Visoška kronika*, five decades later.

The violent marital relationship in *Visoška kronika* is prefigured in another early work, the story “Mlada leta” (1875), which opens with the protagonist receiving an unfriendly welcome from his father upon his return home after a fifteen-year absence. Lengthy praise of his native land, where his father is a caretaker on an estate, is the prelude to a laconic recollection of childhood unhappiness that had been caused by his father’s cruelty: “Iz otroških let ostalo mi je prav malo u spominu. Pestovala me je bleđa, bolna žena, moja—mati. Oče vedel se je kruto z njo in neljubeznivo z menoj. Čas je pretekkel; a še zdaj se mi bridko stori pri tistih spominih” [I: 71-72]. As in *Visoška kronika*, the father has concealed the fact of his wife’s death from the narrator until his return home. The revelation that the young lady who lives on the estate is the narrator’s half-sister is another example of the curious linkage between Tavčar’s characters, a linkage already found in “Gospa Amalija.” The meaning of the ties between mother, sister and beloved is beyond the scope of this article, but shows the complex manner in which the male protagonist maintains or restores a child’s emotional state by such associations.

A different parent-son relationship is found in the story “Ivan Slavelj” (1876), the story “Povest v kleti” (1872), and the fragment “Primola” (1868). In all three, the protagonist’s return is spoiled by both parents’ disapproval of their son’s decision to pursue a secular education. “Ivan Slavelj” exemplifies Tavčar’s handling of the childhood theme in this period. Instead of employing a child’s point of view, the narrator caricatures the most

ta. It is Izidor's misfortune not to realize that the man he holds so dear actually prevents him from unselfishly and maturely experiencing love. Thus Izidor never protests, never recalls his exile or his mother's death, Polikarp's dealings with the Wulffings, or his mangled hand. Izidor is not even aware of his losses.

Other family members are of importance as they play a role in the narrator's childhood and maturation. The uncle figure, Lukež, defends Izidor from further harm at the hands of his father in Chapter 1, supplies the dubious salve to heal him, and then guides him on his first courtship journey. Lukež's one-third share of the war booty becomes in effect the orphaned Agata's dowry. He provides the model of a just soldier and gentle man that Izidor claims to follow in his military career. Lukež, who is actually a distant relation of the Khallans, resorts to violence only in self-defence, in contrast to Polikarp, who is guilty of beatings, wife abuse, and murder—all outside of war. Lukež represents the archetypal uncle-guide in Western literature about childhood.

Izidor's brother Jurij serves as a foil in the second part of the novel. The brothers' boyhoods are implicitly contrasted in Izidor's description of the Jesuit students' lusty appearances in Škofja Loka, where he himself is laboring in a farriery and at writing lessons: "Doživel sem tudi prijetne dnove. Posebni prijetni so bili sejmi na trgu, h katerim se je prikratilo dosti ljudstva. . . . Meni so napravljali največje veselje . . . študentje očetov jezuitov iz Ljubljane" [VI: 110]. Jurij plays the role of noble warrior, as his name suggests, and is therefore the one to rescue Agata. He gains an advantage over Izidor in social skills and wordly knowledge during his four years with the Jesuits in Ljubljana and then by helping Polikarp in the wine trade. Upon Agata's arrival at Visoko and for a long time afterwards Izidor remains blind to his brother's amorous relations with her. However he never verbally concedes his brother's victory in this contest, whereas he verbalizes his new-found spiritual consciousness. Instead, at the moment his spiritual realization takes place (at the end of Chapter 13), he takes the symbolic action of relinquishing to Jurij his place in the saddle beside Agata and leading the horse on foot, much like the leader (*mendirar*) in a traditional Slovene wedding procession. This is the third major point in the novel where Izidor travels with Agata on horseback and thus ought to represent the culmination of their relationship. The crucial difference between the two brothers is that Izidor tries to substitute faith in patriarchal authority for genuine maturation, and therefore repeatedly fails to assert himself, whereas the unconventional Jurij affirms his individuality and thus his maturity through childlike spontaneity. This point is emphasized by Izidor's disparaging remarks about his brother, whom he refers to as *fantalin* [VI: 119] and *ničemurno fante* [VI: 215].

The romantic theme is, of course, central to *Visoška kronika*. Izidor encounters four potential matches. Besides Margareta and Agata there are possibilities of marriage to Eva Magdalena and to Ana Renata, whose only similarity is that they are both the nieces of bishops. Interestingly, Agata may be placed in this company because of the bishop's unique solicitude toward her. Izidor treats all three women with the same formality that he reserves for the clergy. Ana Renata and Agata, who are unique because they are the only females in the valley to ride horseback, have the superior aura about them of the equestrian noblewoman in "Madama Amalija." It is Margareta who is most closely associated with the romantic motif of nature in the early works, and indeed recalls the young countrywoman in the story "Margareta" (1875).¹² This is clearly seen when Izidor first meets her at her home in Davča, standing beside a channel with water flowing through it, one of Tavčar's key symbols of vital love. Natural description and the the meeting with the gypsy hunter leading up to Izidor's arrival at Davča prepare this scene; the encounter

the importance of the psychological portrait developed in the first two chapters can certainly be argued on the basis of literary archetypes and Tavčar's early works.

As one may assume from the novel's bipartite structure, Izidor's development is not presented in linear fashion. A cycle of courtship occurs in both halves, and serves to contrast the immature with the supposedly mature Izidor. The logical conclusion to the first half of the novel should be Izidor's sexual maturity, which Tavčar equates with an understanding of love and the act of marriage. The first attempt at marriage is thwarted by Izidor's excessive respect for parental choice, resulting in the cancellation of the contract with Margareta, Izidor's maternal cousin; in his second attempt, Izidor forsakes Agata by obeying his father's injunction to protect the estate. However, because of the centrality of Visoko, it would be a mistake to view Polikarp's negative influence as the sole motivating factor in Izidor's behavior toward Margareta and Agata. Izidor is after all equally concerned with preserving the place of his birth and childhood. Home is as important as parent-child relationships, particularly in the light of the father's hostility. It may be recalled, for example, that even when Izidor renounces Visoko in favor of his brother, he reserves a room in the house for the eventuality of his return, and this room seems to be the same space that belonged to his mother and was later given to Agata.

In describing the process of coming of age, the father figure must be dealt with decisively. In Western literatures this usually means one of two extremes: either a hapless figure, or a tyrannical one. Izidor supplies the negative portrait, but without expunging his admiration and love, and this paradoxically leads the reader to view Polikarp in a positive light (Mitrović 1987: 268-69). The chronology of Izidor's life is devised so as to cause him to re-enact many parts of his father's life. This is explicit, for example, in his very name: *Izidor* derives from the names of two saints, the feastdays of both of which fall on 15 May, namely Isidore of Chios, a warrior (d. 251), and Isidore the Husbandman (d. 636). This dual derivation suggests the dual calling of soldier and farmer. The choice of such a name was probably a deliberate signal on Tavčar's part, since the two saints also co-occur in the popular imagination, as the Gorenjska folksong "Izidor ovčice pasu" attests (Kunaver 1987: 243).⁹ The primary namesake, however, must be Isidore the Husbandman, judging from his popularity in Slovenia long before he was canonized in 1622 (Miklavčič & Dolenc 1970: 381-82).¹⁰ To cite other instances of chronological parallelism in the lives of father and son: both are forced from home at the age of twelve; when aged 27, both visit the area where Jošt Schwarzkobler lived and died; both marry at age 43, twelve years after finalizing the deed to Visoko.¹¹

Beginning with the scene in which Polikarp cuts off Izidor's finger, the theme of castration recurs throughout the novel. Izidor usually couches it in natural imagery, as in his opening self-portrayal: ". . . sem bil kakor drevo v zimi brez listja in soka" [VI: 99]. When Margareta tries to renew their courtship, Izidor responds: "Pod mano je zlomila veja, in sedaj nisem več gospodar svojega življenja" [VI: 222]. In contrast, Polikarp's life is associated with the sword. For instance, he describes his aging to Izidor by using the image of a dull backsword: "Če se je palaš skrhal, sem ga nabrusil, in sekalo se je z njim, kot bi se ne bil nikdar skrhal. Kako da se življenje ne more nabrusiti. . ." [VI: 121]. And, of course, Polikarp gained his wealth by wielding a knife against Jošt Schwarzkobler. (The novel is replete with unexplored motifs of stabbing and cutting, such as the repeated references to Wallenstein's murder, the inserted story of Fink von Finkenstein being quartered, and—most painful for Izidor—Schwaiffstrigkh's tale of how the bishop's murderers had their hands cut off.) Like the father in the first variant of "Gospa Amalija," Polikarp opposes Izidor's affection for both his mother Barbara and his betrothed, Margare-

This brief overview of the treatment of childhood in Tavčar's early works suggests a new interpretation of *Visoška kronika* based on the parallel motifs in the novel of family, place, and nature: the narrator, Izidor Khallan, never attains maturity, despite rhetorical assertions to the contrary, because he is motivated by a desire to recoup a childhood that was denied him on account of parental relations and of exile. In effect, he fails to meet the moral challenge analyzed by the novel's authoritative commentator, Marian Kramberger (1964, 1975). Izidor's rebirth (*prerod*) that Kramberger speaks of, which is closely followed by his relinquishing the Visoko estate, results from Izidor's rationalization of his past mistakes. The structure and imagery in the novel, in particular those associated with childhood, point to another meaning of Izidor's life.⁶

Visoška kronika is essentially a Bildungsroman with a two-chapter prelude on childhood.⁷ The text is divided in such a way as to highlight the problem of maturation. The first seven chapters cover the narrator Izidor's boyhood and adolescence, and conclude with his father Polikarp's death. The second half of the novel begins with the arrival at Visoko of Agata, and ends with Izidor's marriage after his long absence in the military. This bipartition of the novel juxtaposes Izidor's childhood, adolescence and life with his father on the one hand with his supposedly mature period on the other.⁸

Furthermore, Tavčar uses a symmetrical design based on setting and characters even within each of the halves. Chapters 1 - 3 are set at Visoko and include the description (Chapter 2) of Izidor's apprenticeship at Škofja Loka. Chapters 4 - 6 move from events in Davča back to Visoko. Three more chapters (8 - 10) focus on Visoko; and three (11 - 13) recount the time of Agata's trial in Škofja Loka. Chapters 7 and 14 are thus neatly counterposed: the former contains Polikarp's life story and the latter Izidor's parallel military experiences. The chapters thus follow a 3-3-1 + 3-3-1 sequence, which is reinforced by temporal segmentation: chapters 4 - 6 narrate only one week's events; 8 - 10 narrate a period of about one year following Agata's arrival; and 11 - 13 cover several consecutive months. As this analysis indicates, the two-hundred-page *Visoška kronika* is more compact than the reader may at first realize, and one function of its compactness and symmetry is to highlight aspects of characterization and description in a symbolic way.

Within *Visoška kronika*'s symmetrical structure the first two chapters stand apart because of their vividness of description and emotional intensity. Unlike the rest of the novel, they are almost completely free of the narrator's retrospective intrusions into the epic unfolding of his story. They also contain little of the irony which is directed at him by the author elsewhere in the novel. The narrator indicates the importance of childhood in Chapters 1 and 2 by concluding them with a commentary on his education and the physical difficulty he has writing his manuscript in his old age [VI: 116-18]. The placement of these reflections on writing suggest that his childhood experiences motivate his confession, more so than even his later trials and putative rebirth. Learning to read and write is the final stage of his becoming aware of the world and only these skills make him superior to his father (and his brother). Yet his writing also distinguishes him from his father in a negative way, since it recalls his greatest flaw: the predisposition to play the role of passive observer.

Izidor's passive character is formed in boyhood before the age of twelve by negative factors that are identical to those that define childhood in Tavčar's early works. Kramberger has speculated on the key role of Chapter 1 in his discussion of the theme of determinism and its possible psychological—as opposed to ideological (social and religious)—basis, but without extrapolating his idea to the novel's outcome (1967: 181-87). While a psychoanalytic consideration of the problem is beyond the scope of this article,

important figures in his young life—father, mother, teacher, local artist, and others. The central motif is parental rejection and loss of home. In the story that is conceived as Ivan Slavelj's life from before his birth, descriptions of people and places overshadow events and the child's perceptions. For example, Chapter 6, entitled "Za našo povest znamenito poglavlje," relates the scene in which Slavelj's parents and the teacher Stefan Deska agree to enroll the boy in school, but the narrator's point of view of Deska only becomes clear towards the end of the story. Parents may react to their son's ambitions, amorous and intellectual, in these early works, but their particular traits are meagerly developed, existing only as appendages to the main character's life.

The motif of return to the home noted in all of the stories discussed here is, of course, bound up with that of exile, exemplified by going away to school.⁴ The reasons given for the protagonist's return are to regain his health and reclaim his inheritance, which is represented by the paternal home.⁵ In "Povest v kleti," "Bolna ljubezen" and "Mlada leta" the main character's return home is impossible or is unsuccessful. In the other works, however, the young protagonist is able to re-establish himself in his native village: his return is a necessary prelude to the actual retelling of his story—whether, as in "Gospa Amalija," the native setting affords him the peace to remember his love, or, as in "Ivan Slavelj," he eventually returns happily married.

The third composite childhood motif, nature, is the object of passive contemplation. There is a recurring scene in Tavčar's works, already present in his early period, that describes the narrator reclining in a field admiring the beauty of his native land. The lyrical description may be addressed to the reader, as in "Ivan Slavelj:"

"Ali si, dragi bralec, sedel že kdaj na holmu nad domačo vasjo in zrl dol v tiho kmečko življenje? Gotovo si že. In tedaj je sijala pomlad okoli tebe in cvetje je hitelo iz zemlje, soncu nasproti . . . Ti pa si raztegnil ude, položil si glavo na mehko rušo in gledal si kvišku v modro nebo" [II: 97].

Similar descriptions are found in "Povest v kleti" [I: 19], "Bolna ljubezen" [I: 30], "Gospa Amalija" [I: 69], and "In vendar!" [I: 119]. The main character's passivity in these scenes contrasts with motifs of movement in nature in Tavčar's works, in particular the motifs of rushing water and wind which suggest the vitality of life and love. In writing about the novel *Cvetje v jeseni* (1915), Jože Pogačnik explains these motifs as an expression of the power of nature, the experience of which is an opportunity for the irrational commitment that alone allows the individual to realize his human potential (1970: 242). Nature fulfills a dual function in the early works: as the background setting reminiscent of childhood, and as a metaphor for love, sometimes metaphorically linking one of its elements with a person, as Amalija is linked to flowers. Tavčar's practice of setting romantic stories in the environs of (his) childhood underlines the close connection between love of one's native land and romantic love. But the young protagonist of the early works is hesitant to approach the female he associates with nature; he is inclined toward a passive, observing role. Gone is the time when he hunted and played in the forest with male and in particular female friends. This transformation, from active communion with nature as a child to the role of passive observer, is most apparent in "Margarita," "Gospa Amalija" and "Povest v kleti." Communion with nature is equivalent to the primal emotional state the male protagonist aspires to regain, but inhibitions caused by maturation lead him to sublimate his desires in the contemplation of nature. In this passive state he distances himself from emotional involvement with people, while seeking oneness with the scenery of his childhood.

with the stag crashing through the forest (*šuma*, the only place in the novel where this word is used rather than *gozd(ovi)*) on the return trip confirms Izidor's love. In the end Izidor, appropriately, marries his maternal cousin Margareta and loses his adopted paternal cousin, Agata, to his brother. In so doing he leaves his father's dying wish unfulfilled and thus finally violates his authority, thereby symbolically re-establishing the connection with his mother.

The single realistic motivation related to childhood—one belonging to the child's point of view—that Tavčar introduces in *Visoška kronika* is acquisitiveness; and, like his father, Izidor is at pains to outgrow it.¹³ After Agata chooses his brother he is essentially forced to renounce his wealth and thus the genuineness of his reform must again be questioned. It is revealing to consider how Izidor's failure to marry Agata is linked to the motif of gold and the evil of covetousness in general. Greed, of course, underlies the action of the novel because of its effect on Polikarp, who recounts the winning of his first ransom: "Od tedaj se pričinja moja nesreča! V ta rumeni denar sem se zagledal in polastila se me je lakomnost" [VI: 183]. But Izidor's desire for a pistol and his consequent attempt to steal a gold ducat from his father is quite independent of his father's past, with which it is associated in retrospect. During this episode Izidor's fascination with the color gold is described in detail. He later uses it to condemn his own pride: ". . . prvo, kar je imelo pri meni najvišjo ceno, je bilo ime visoškega gospodarja. To ime sem obdajal z okvirom svojega samoljubja, kakor se obda lepa podoba z zlatim okvirom ter se obesi na prvo mesto v hiši. Kakor Mojzesovo zlato tele. . ." [VI: 225]. *Gold* and *yellow* are also two of the chief adjectives used to describe Agata: "rumeni lasje" [VI: 211], "s svojimi rumenimi kitami" [VI: 226], and "duša svetla kakor zlato" [VI: 270] are some examples of its application that imply Izidor's desire to possess her. The theme of acquisitiveness differs from the social ambition and romantic love of the early works. It contradicts my thesis that Izidor clings to, or seeks to regain, his childhood, because in fact he does appear to abandon his materialism. This contradiction is perhaps rooted in the tension between epic narration, wherein greed is a natural motivation, and reminiscing, which draws together the various occurrences of the gold motif that runs through the thread of boyhood desires, romantic love, and materialism. However, Izidor forfeits his wealth not in order to rise to maturity, but to revert to a dependent state. Here he rejects Polikarp's model of aggrandizement that underlies the epic unfolding of the novel and accepts his mother's example of submissiveness.

In contrast to Polikarp's prominence in the first half of the novel, Izidor's mother Barbara appears only in the first chapter. But here, like the mother in certain of the early works, she is surrounded by the same aureole as Cankar's mother figure (Slodnjak 1975: 178). Following the same cruel scenario that is depicted in "Mlada leta," she dies while her son is away for three years in Škofja Loka, and although the cause of her death is not stated, the reader assumes that the hard life and abuse that she endured in Polikarp's house led to her early demise. Her absence thereafter plays a symbolic role, in that she represents the love that Izidor refuses as a child (when he calls for his father on his sickbed) and comes to accept from Margareta only at the end of his life.

Exile and orphanhood echo the setting of home in the early works, and its association with parents, especially the narrator's mother Barbara. Chapter 2, in which she dies, is immediately followed by the courtship of Margareta in Chapter 3, and this looks sequentially like an attempt by the narrator to quickly replace his mother in the story. In addition, Margareta is Barbara's niece. His disapproving father, however, hampers Izidor in several ways. First he send him from home, permanently depriving him of his mother; then he

provides a distorted example of spousal relations; and then he traumatizes him by cutting off his finger, relegating him to life-long passivity. Izidor's separation from his mother as a result of his exile from Visoko, which occurs when he is twelve, is a form of punishment to which he subjects himself again in Chapter 14, in order to atone for his covetousness for Visoko and for Agata.

Orphanhood is also a point of comparison and contrast between father and son, with consequences for Izidor's relations with women. It will be remembered that both Polikarp and Izidor experience the death of their mothers; but Polikarp never alludes to his father. No doubt this difference is a factor in their reactions to becoming orphaned: Izidor lacks the aggressiveness that permits his father to make his way in society like a typical roguish orphan of the modern Western novel (Auerbach 1985: 57-58). Instead, Izidor directs the experience of loss and separation inward; this explains his passive posture vis-à-vis key female characters, which is shown in how their physical presence is conveyed to him at decisive moments. In Chapter 1, for example, his mother's face vividly impresses itself on his memory as he regains consciousness lying on her bed [VI: 106]. Similarly, in the final chapter, he wakes up on the hillside overlooking Visoko to see Margareta looking down at him: "Nekega dne sem zaspal pod gozdom in sem se spet prebudil. Helas! Kako je pričela hiteti ura sredi mojih pljuč! Tik mene je sedela – Margareta Wulffingova in pogleda ni odmaknila od mojega obraza" [VI: 286].¹⁴ In both cases he refuses care, and thus inflicts pain on the females, who are quite ready to accept it. His mother's chief trait is her willingness to suffer: "Koliko je prejkala ta mučena ženska, ve samo Mati božja, ki je stela v nočeh solze ponižne i v trdo usodo vdane moje matere" [VI: 100]. No longer able to carry on his original courtship of Margareta, Izidor accepts her as a replacement nurse for his mother. Thus her long wait for Izidor is finally rewarded by virtue of her longsuffering.

The prelude to meeting Margareta on the hillside in Chapter 14 is a scene of passive contemplation of nature like those found in the early works. It expresses organic union with the land in rich feminine imagery:

"... zemlja, na kateri si se rodil. To je naša edina neskajljena prijateljica, vedno ti kaže en in isti obraz in zvesta ti ostane, če jo se tolikrat zatajiš! Ko tako ležim, mi sili iz ruše nova moč v onemogle ude, in prav vsaka koreninica pod mano poganja tudi v moje telo, da se čutim eno z zemljo, na kateri ležim. . . te sprejme domača zemlja z istim obrazom, kot te je prejela nekdanj, ko so te se v zibel polagali . . . sem zopet na svoji domači zemlji, ko me objema kakor mati svojega otroka ali kakor objema nevesta svojega ženina!" [VI: 285-86]

This often-quoted passage unites mother, lover and homeland precisely as is done in the early works such as "Gospa Amalija." The narrator cannot retrieve the excitement with the accompanying natural imagery found in the description of his first meeting with Margareta in Davča. Rather, he assumes a passive posture of dependence. The conclusion of *Visoška kronika* returns Izidor, happily married on his former estate, to a childhood ideal alluded to in the early works but omitted from the novel. By asserting the childhood ideal associated with home, parents, and nature, Tavčar reverts to a subjective reality which circumvents the moral problem of Izidor's failure to realize a mature love, a failure which is central to his epic narration.

In comparing *Visoška kronika* to Western accounts of childhood (and maturation), both autobiographical and fictional, Izidor's failure is the work's distinguishing characteristic. According to Richard Coe's definition, the subject of an account of childhood must be

brought to maturation by the conclusion of the work.¹⁵ The first two elements in the pattern for such novels—initial serenity, experiment and discovery of self, and return to haven (Coe 1984: 24)—are missing, although certain character types, as tyrannical father, helpless mother and avuncular guide, are present. The modelling of Izidor's life story upon his father's, and the absence of a serene childhood, ought to preclude a happy return. But, paradoxically, Izidor's flaws of passivity and an inability to grow into mature love are precisely what allow him to return to an idealized Visoko.

The postscript to the novel describes a matriarchy at Visoko after the deaths of Izidor and Jurij, and Izidor's son's commitment to the priesthood. If Izidor's promise to his father to keep Visoko in the family has been abrogated, still Izidor has by his inaction constituted the harmony which was absent at Visoko under Polikarp. Thus Tavčar manages to produce an ideal home in his final novel that is consistent with the return to childhood in his early works. By virtue of his return, Izidor's negative traits are transformed into a positive bequest.

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NOTES

1. Boršnik (1973) and Slodnjak (1975: 172) define these as the two major themes of Tavčar's early career. These themes are important here because they relate to childhood rather than to Tavčar's maturation or to his career in Slovene literature.
2. Many of Tavčar's works cited here were conceived or written years before their actual publication, and thus properly belong to his pre-1876 period. For instance, he probably sent "Mlada leta" to Josip Stritar's *Zvon* in 1870, although it appeared in *Zora* only in 1875 (Boršnik 1956-66 VI: 476).
3. All quotations are from Tavčar's *Zbrano delo*, Boršnik 1956-66; volume and page numbers are indicated in square brackets.
4. Boršnik (1973: 32) has analyzed this motif, which she terms "selitev iz doma," in Tavčar's early poems of an autobiographical nature; it is also present in the early works so far named, as well as the stories "Čez osem let" (1880), "In vendar!" (1878), "Bolna ljubezen" (1874) and "Margareta" (1875).
5. The function of the motif of home in Tavčar's works resembles that of popular nineteenth-century Slovene literature with rural settings (*kmečka povest*), see Hladnik 1987: 117-22. Significantly, the only place where the word *dom* "home" is used in *Visoška kronika* is when Izidor and his mother are returning to Visoko from Škofja Loka: "Popoldne sva prišla z materjo iz Loke. Že na brvi pod visoškim domom sva čula vpitje jeznega očeta" [VI: 102]. The narrator's mother dies soon afterwards, and the word *dom* does not re-occur.
6. Marija Mitrović, also, argues against Izidor's reform, based on evidence in the postscript to the novel and on Izidor's own recounting of his military service (1987: 269-74).
7. Kramberger (1964: 339-43) uses the term *razvojni roman* to describe the novel.
8. Jože Mahnič, also, has suggested a bipartite structure, the first half being Polikarp's story and the second Izidor's; he thinks, however, that Chapter 8 adheres more closely to the first half, despite the fact that it follows Polikarp's death (1974: 77).
9. The words to the song are: "1. Izidor ovčice pasu / lepo žvižgav, lepo pev. / 2. Ko ovčice je napasu / stopiv je v vojaški stan. / 3. Ko vojašno je odslužu, / stopiv je u samostan. / 4. Lepo je vojake služu, / se zvestejše je Bogu." Kunaver comments, "the song derives from two legends of saints of the same name, viz., St. Izidor the farmer and St. Izidor the warrior." It may be forcing the parallel to see in this a suggestion of Izidor's son's clerical calling.
10. I am grateful to Father Vendelin Spendov for helping me understand the relationship between the various St. Isidores.
11. The structural outline presented in Diagram I is based both on the text of *Visoška kronika* and on Boršnik's notes in Tavčar's *Zbrano delo* (Boršnik 1956-66 VI: 387-96). Note a major inconsistency, not uncovered by Boršnik, contained in Polikarp's story in Chapter 7. The dates given in earlier chapters suggest that Polikarp was born about 1620, and this is accepted by

Boršnik (1956-66 VI: 388). By Polikarp's own account in Chapter 7, however, he was 20 when his mother died, after which he went to war, participating in his first engagement at the Battle of Lutzen in 1631 (actually, this was in 1632); which would mean that he would have had to have been born in 1611. Unless Polikarp was mistaken about his age at this battle, and entered the army at the age of 12 or 13, it seems that Tavčar (and also Boršnik) simply overlooked the error, and that the chronology of Chapter 7 should be disregarded. There were, of course, other instances of age discrepancies, which were partly remedied by Ivan Prijatelj in his 1921 edition (see Boršnik 1956-66 VI: 395).

12. Prijatelj identifies the model for the girl in "Margareta" with that for Meta in *Cvetje v jeseni* (Boršnik 1956-66 VI: 479).
13. The biographical element, in particular the theme of ambition that is found in Tavčar's early works, is evident here in connection with the Visoko estate (Kramberger 1964: 246-47).
14. This scene stands in direct opposition to the scene in Chapter 3, when Polikarp takes Izidor to what is apparently the same location to inform him that he will be the heir to Visoko.
15. Coe (1984: 8-9) defines the *Childhood* genre as "an extended piece of writing, a conscious, deliberately executed literary artifact, usually in prose (and thus intimately related to the novel) but not excluding occasional experiments in verse, in which the most substantial portion of the material is directly autobiographical, and whose structure reflects step by step the development of the writer's self; beginning often, but not invariably, with the first light of consciousness, and concluding quite specifically with the attainment of a precise degree of maturity." Obviously, only the first several chapters of *Visoška kronika* fit this definition; the remainder of the novel resembles a Bildungsroman, with its aim of describing integration into society. Furthermore, a possible autobiographical inspiration for *Visoška kronika* has not been fully explored. Nevertheless, Coe's description of the genre and its development in the West aids in interpreting the theme of childhood in Tavčar's works.

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DIAGRAM I: THE STRUCTURE OF *VISOŠKA KRONIKA*

Chap.	Year	Izidor's Age	Events
	1620*		Polikarp born
	1632**		Polikarp moves to Nuremburg
	1632		Battle of Lutzen
	1648		Battle of Dachau; Schwarzkobler murdered
	1651		Polikarp obtains deed to Visoko from Bishop Adam (d. 1651)
	1663		Polikarp marries
1	1664	1	May: Izidor born
	1669	6	Jurij born; Izidor attains age of reason; Polikarp 50; Margareta born.
	1674?		Agata born
2	1676	12	The theft; Izidor goes to Škofja Loka; mother dies.
	1679	15	Izidor returns home after 3-year absence
	1680		Jurij returns from Ljubljana after 4 years at school
3	1684	20	Four more years pass; Polikarp begins drinking heavily.
	1690	26	Izidor's talk with Polikarp and journey to Davča
4			Events at Davča
5			The raid on Visoko; Lukež's death; Pasaverica's last night
6			The disgrace suffered at Škofja Loka; Trubar visits Visoko.
7	1690		Nov.: Polikarp's story
	1690		Dec.: Polikarp's will
	1691		Feb.: Polikarp's death
8	1691	27	May: Izidor's journey to Germany. Agata 17.
9			New life at Visoko
	1693	29	June.: Dance at St. John the Baptist's
			Dec.: Proposal from Eva Magdalena
10	1694		Apr.: Marks comes to Visoko
		30	May: Margareta's visit
	1695		Feb.: Fights at Debelak's
			Agata's arrest
11			Visit to Škofja Loka
12-13	1695		Trial at Škofja Loka
14	1696	31	Izidor departs for military service
	1707	42	Izidor returns to Visoko; Margareta now 37
	1707	43	August 29: Izidor's marriage to Margareta
	1710	46	Izidor's death

SUMMARY:

Chapters 1 - 7: life with father at Visoko (98 pp.)

Chapters 8 - 10: life with Agata (35 pp.)

Chapters 11-13: Agata's tribulations (44 pp.)

Chapter 14: Izidor's last 14 years (13 pp.)

NOTE: According to Chapter 7: * 1611 or 1612; ** 1623.

POVZETEK**DETINSTVO V DELIH IVANA TAVČARJA:
PRIMERJAVA MED NJEGOVIMI ZGODNIMI PRIPOVEDMI IN
ROMANOM VIŠOŠKA KRONIKA**

Začetna poglavja Višoške kronike, v katerih pripovedovalec, Izidor Khallan, obuja spomine na svoja otroška leta, so bistvena za razumevanje razpleta romana: Izidorju ne uspe, da bi dozorel, in se končno vrne v zavetje na Visoko. Tako razlago sugerira uporaba iste teme otroštva v nekaterih drugih zgodnejših Tavčarjevih delih. Otroštvo velja Tavčarju za prostorsko doživetje, ki ga določajo: družina, domače okolje in narava. Metaforika in zgradba Višoške kronike tudi podpirata tezo, da roman v samem svojem bistvu predstavlja retrospektivno utelešenje psihološke nedozorelosti pripovedovalca in morda celo samega pisatelja.