

IVAN CANKAR AND MORLEY CALLAGHAN:

A STUDY IN CONTRASTIVE PARALLELISM

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Technological progress has condensed our planet into a tiny ball where distances have become insignificant. Jets zoom across oceans and continents, scientists communicate through outer space, and people all over the world hold their breath, afraid of the same, one and only, final catastrophe.

Thus, it is not a coincidence that in literary criticism as well a new awareness of the common human condition has given both impetus and a new direction to "comparative literature," which has been defined by Wellek and Warren as follows:

Literary history as a synthesis, literary history on a supernational scale, will have to be written again. The study of comparative literature in this sense will make high demands on the linguistic proficiencies of our scholars. It asks for a widening of perspectives, a suppression of local and provincial sentiments, not easy to achieve. Yet literature is one, as art and humanity are one; and in this conception lies the future of historical literary studies.<sup>1</sup>

From such a widened perspective I have attempted to perceive and analyze parallels between Ivan Cankar and Morley Callaghan, two writers who belong to two vastly different socio-economic, national, geographical and historical backgrounds. In the analysis of the two authors' human experience, their philosophical and artistic beliefs, but most of all in the detailed scrutiny of the characters in their fiction, the view that "literature is one as art and humanity are one" comes into sharp focus.

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## A. Biographical Parallels

Morley Callaghan, a contemporary Canadian novelist, short-story writer and essayist, was born in 1903 in Toronto, "an ocean away"<sup>2</sup> from Ivan Cankar, a Slovene writer who died ten years before Callaghan published his first book in 1928. Callaghan's father was an employee of the Canadian National Railroad. He lived at home, quite comfortably, until he graduated from the Law School of Toronto University and got married to an educated middle-class girl. She became his wife, his secretary, and his consultant. In 1929 they spent a few months in Paris, but their permanent home has been in Toronto ever since. They have two sons. Callaghan has never practiced law. He has lived exclusively on his writing. Although he has not made a fortune, the Callaghans have lived comfortably. To supplement his income during the war, he worked on panel shows for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and later for television. In the 1960s he received several awards, and his financial position has become quite stable.

Ivan Cankar was born in 1876, into a family of an impoverished tailor. There were twelve children in the family, but six of them died before the age of ten, in spite of their mother's incessant hard work and efforts to provide daily bread. At the age of twelve, Cankar left his humble home, and he never had another home after that. During his high school years he lived in great poverty in Ljubljana, suffering abuse, hunger and sickness. Although an excellent student at first, he became quite disinterested and cynical towards the end of high school and he failed his final exams twice. After that, he went to Vienna to study engineering, but he soon dropped his studies to dedicate his life and talent exclusively to writing. But in spite of continuous writing, his income never matched his needs. In Vienna, he was so poor, hungry and sickly that he was often on the verge of suicide. He was saved by a working class family, the Löfflers, who looked after him for over 10 years. He became engaged to their daughter, Steffi, but never married. After 10 years he returned to Ljubljana and lived as a boarder with

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some friendly innkeepers on top of Rožnik, a little hill above Ljubljana, almost until his death. He died at the age of 42, looking and feeling like an old man.

At first glance, Morley Callaghan's and Ivan Cankar's social background and lifestyles differ so much that no comparison of their biographies would be possible. Yet, a closer scrutiny of the facts, experiences and influences which shaped their lives reveals a number of similarities:

1. Both authors were born into poor families.

In spite of the fact that the poverty experienced by the Callaghans was not as bleak as the poverty in which an impoverished Slovene tailor tried to raise his twelve children, the Callaghans were by no means well-off. In a country to which immigrants kept coming in search of Eldorado, and in which--they insisted--anyone willing to work could make a fortune, they occupied a very humble position. They did not belong to the conquerors. They quietly dug themselves a niche in working-class Toronto and kept the disappointment to themselves. All their hopes were invested in their son whom they sent to college--just as Cankar's parents, brothers and sisters expected salvation from their educated son and brother.

Both families hid their poverty, although the Cankars less successfully because it was more intensive. Cankar's mother often had to sacrifice her pride on her begging trips to local grocers and "do-gooders," but his father never admitted that he was a very poor, defeated man. He retained fierce pride throughout his misfortune. A researcher on Cankar's family background writes:

Jožef Cankar accepted his bankruptcy with difficulty. More than an average man he felt the urge to succeed again. It is significant that none of his Vrhnike acquaintances . . . remember him as a neglected drunk or a worthless man. They describe him as a sensitive man, who--in spite of his misfortune--managed to remain a pleasant companion, who kept

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up appearances and who--in spite of his poverty--dressed with taste, combed his hair carefully and wore a tie in the days when people of his social class were not used to wearing one. He hid his bankruptcy instead of displaying it.<sup>3</sup>

2. In both authors' homes, education, books and spiritual matters were of the greatest importance. Callaghan's parents enjoyed poetry and philosophy. They read, recited and discussed it in their home regularly. Thomas Callaghan subscribed and contributed to magazines.

Although Cankar's parents could not afford subscriptions to magazines, they, too, read a great deal and discussed their reading with each other and with their children.

Cankar's mother, who was illiterate when she married Jožef Cankar, taught herself to read and write from her children's school spellers. She would sit for hours--mending clothes by the light of an oil lamp--beside her husband who would read to her from German magazines and books he borrowed from prominent Vrhnika families. Thus, she learned German also.

Cankar's mother, to whom any kind of education had been denied, treasured it more than anyone else in the family. When as a young student Ivan once escaped from Ljubljana and came home crying, it was his mother who took him back, heartbroken but determined. Until her last hour, ill and dying, she wanted Ivan to read to her from his books.

Cankar's impractical father, too, after having unloaded the responsibility for family support onto his wife's shoulders, constantly buried himself in books, which helped him forget his everyday life. His eyes were red-brimmed because of his voracious reading.

3. In their early university years, both authors decided to choose literature as their means of support, their only vocation, which they would pursue

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for the rest of their lives to the exclusion of any other career, however poor that made them.

This decision was equally courageous in both cases. Canadian Toronto was not a place in which an author who refused to amuse his audience or pipe the tune of nationalism would be appreciated; his reading public was very small.

Cankar's audience was small, too: there were only a million Slovenes all together; among them were many avid readers, it is true, but not readers who would like to hear Cankar's message.

In spite of his decision to live on the proceeds of his writing, Morley Callaghan did finish his studies. The utterly unpractical Slovene, however, neglected his studies and gradually dropped them completely. The bleak poverty with which he fought continuously in those years played a part, of course, in this decision.

4. Neither Morley Callaghan nor Ivan Cankar ever held a regular desk job. They both worked as part-time reporters when they were young, but only sporadically. Lack of personal experience and disinclination to be bound by a regular job are perhaps the reasons why Callaghan never portrays "nine-to-fivers" in spite of the fact that they form an essential part of the modern urban pattern, and why Cankar repeatedly portrays them with utter contempt.

5. Although Callaghan settled down into a family life quite young and while Cankar never married and never had a home of his own, both authors were essentially lone wolves in the sense that they inhabited, by deliberate choice, an emotional and intellectual world which shut out women. This is true in spite of the fact that Callaghan created a whole gallery of women in his stories and that Cankar's poems, short stories and correspondence include many allusions to real women, women who had excited the author emotionally and sexually. Cankar's and Callaghan's life stories as well as their fiction reveal that neither of the two authors was either emotionally or physically fulfilled

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in his encounters with women.

6. Morley Callaghan is one generation younger than Ivan Cankar. Callaghan's literary career has gone on for fifty years, while Cankar's lasted only about twenty.

Callaghan has produced ten novels, three collections of short stories, two plays, and four other books so far.

Cankar wrote twenty-three novels and longer stories (*povesti*), eleven collections of short stories, one collection of poems and seven plays.

Both authors have written polemic articles on literature, current issues and events, and politics, as well as a number of short stories for newspapers and magazines which have not been collected into books.

When young, both authors identified themselves with certain literary groups, but they both very early realized that they differed from their contemporaries, and they created their own philosophical and literary views. They remained faithful to these beliefs throughout their careers, and most of the time remained "loners" in art and life. Few people read them, even fewer understood them, only a handful of readers agreed with them. And when they entered the literary hall of fame, everybody pretended to know them well.

## B. Parallels in Outlook

According to the labels which Morley Callaghan and Ivan Cankar despised so much, the two authors belong to diametrically opposed literary schools: Callaghan is a realist, Cankar a symbolist. If we compare their styles and language, the superficial differences are enormous: Callaghan's expression is the "pedestrian" speech of every day; Cankar's--*beseda praznika in petja* (the word of feast and song).

But no matter how distinct and definite these

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differences may be, Callaghan's and Cankar's artistic creeds and literary careers can be compared in many ways.

1. Both authors formed their artistic beliefs at about the age of twenty-five. With minor changes, they remained faithful to these beliefs throughout their creative periods, disregarding the labels with which literary critics defined their writings at different times.
2. At the beginning of their careers both authors thought that they had ideological supporters among their literary and personal friends. Very soon, however, both realized that they were quite alone as artists and thinkers.
3. Their books were read by a literary elite while the reading public at large either never read their stories or misunderstood them. Very often leaders of social or political groups as well as some individuals thought they recognized themselves in the stories that dealt mercilessly with corruption. The authors were not liked by the pillars of society.
4. The critics nearly always praised their style but dismissed the contents and heroes of their fiction. The messages of the story were either overlooked, misunderstood, or rejected.
5. Both authors were masters of the short story. Their stories do not intrigue or entertain. They are exposures of tiny events and little everyday tragedies--events that hurt and destroy lives step by step. They are not dramatic, but lyrical. Many of them force the reader into soul-searching, following the example of the hero or the author himself, and leave him wiser and purer. The short stories of both authors are very brief--many just two or three pages long.
6. Callaghan's and Cankar's novels are also short. The plot is usually multi-faceted and quite vague since the authors' interest is in ideas and

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emotions and not in drama and suspense. Although they both worked on large texts with perseverance, it seems that their real medium was short fiction.

7. They each wrote two texts in which they defined their literary beliefs and their attitudes to their critics: Callaghan wrote *That Summer in Paris* and *A Fine and Private Place* while Cankar discussed the same concepts in *Krpanova kobila* and *Bela krizantema*. All four texts are a combination of fiction, polemic and satire, written simply and sincerely, with humor and sometimes irony, but never with arrogance.

8. Although the styles resulting from their literary apprenticeship and influences are very different, they show that the two authors adopted the same features from the literary schools they passed through:

a. Their first teachers were realists. In all their fiction Callaghan and Cankar remained faithful to reality; no matter in which direction and into what proportions their stories grew, they basically always dealt with the real life around them.

b. They both knew and adopted certain ideas of determinism and certain devices of naturalism, the literary school based on this philosophy. But while Callaghan emphasized more the hereditary factor in human activity, Cankar stressed the influence of milieu on characters and fates of his heroes. Most of all, they embraced the naturalists' choice of subject: the lowest social classes oppressed by a corrupt social system. They both adopted the naturalistic method of descriptive detail, although each of them chose different details and exploited them in his very own manner.

c. The brief decadent period in which Cankar portrayed the sensual, perverse, or at least "sinful" pleasures of sex, could be compared with Callaghan's excursions into such entangled relationships as homosexuality (*No Man's Meat*, "Now That April is Here") or adultery (*A Broken Journey*) in his early stories. Although in their "decadent" stories both authors produced scintillating images and powerful descriptions of passion



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and tense situations, neither of them felt comfortable in those murky waters, and they both left the unfamiliar pose of such situations after just a brief trial.

d. According to literary historians, Cankar was a symbolist. His characters, settings and even events are symbolic. Yet, the descriptions of these characters, places and events are taken from real life, are--in details--realistic.

Callaghan is listed among the Canadian post-war realists. But his simple, honest, down-to-earth characters and stories sometimes transcend their human frame and are transformed into symbols--even if without the author's conscious endeavor to give them such dimensions. Thus, the labels "realist" and "symbolist" are only general designations. The symbolist uses realistic tools, and the realist's objects often turn into symbols.

9. Both authors--Christians in their own interpretation of the word--often use the style, expressions and parables of the Bible. Cankar intermingles biblical motifs, personalities and diction throughout his stories, while Callaghan--never using these directly--often makes quotations from the Bible into titles for his stories (*Such Is My Beloved, They Shall Inherit the Earth, More Joy in Heaven*). Many critics see some of Callaghan's stories as elaborations of biblical parables. But the author does not agree with such interpretations or at least says that he did not create any "religious" books consciously.

10. Although Callaghan's and Cankar's styles developed in opposite directions (from the same roots), they both emphatically condemned literary affectations and lies; they attempted in their work to tell nothing but the truth, no matter how unpleasant or ugly it might be. Callaghan has stated this truth in unadorned, everyday North American speech, full of simple expressions and "pedestrian" dialogue. His language is so simple that its very simplicity makes it solemn. Cankar's style is a sparkling, festive celebration of the Slovene language, manipulated by a master who can turn every utterance into a song.

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11. Both authors used their tools to achieve the same aim: expose human suffering, arouse compassion and love for their fellow man, and force society to think about the remedies for social evils and injustices. In this way, the two authors surpassed not only the narrow circle of their personal experience, but also their national boundaries. Their stories--although taken from their respective national environments--can deliver the same message to any people around the globe.

Morley Callaghan and Ivan Cankar were primarily artists, writers. They devoted their entire lives to their vocation, regardless of the fact that neither Canada nor Slovenia offered a place of honor or financial rewards to men of such an occupation. Yet, on the other hand, neither of the writers shut himself into the ivory tower of his own world of ideas, dreams and fantasy. They both vividly participated in the cultural and--directly or indirectly--even the political life of their nations. Their ideas on a variety of topics of current interest were not only reflected in their fiction, but expressed also in their polemical writings and public speeches. Among the attitudes of the two writers--citizens and philosophers--towards different aspects of human existence and coexistence, their views on nationalism, socialism, and religion show remarkable similarities. These views are responsible for the themes and the interpretation of the heroes in their fiction much more than the literary schools and authors who influenced the two writers.

*Nationalism:* Both Morley Callaghan and Ivan Cankar have been accused of not loving their homeland, of not being "national" artists. Both, however, are national in a much more refined sense than their impatient, often narrow-minded countrymen can perceive. They both have created their masterpieces, which grew out of their native roots, in such a language, that suffering humanity of any race could understand and accept them. Their work is one of the cornerstones in their countries' literatures and cultures, and it is--at the same time--a brilliant pebble in the mosaic of

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the cultural heritage of the world.

*Socialism:* Both Callaghan and Cankar have fiercely exposed the injustices of capitalist society and they have both studied and accepted certain aspects of Marxist doctrine. But neither of them has accepted the Marxist demand that an individual or a nation should be sacrificed to the collective, either of men or of nations. Human dignity, personal justice and the right of an individual nation to seek its identity and preserve it, are of paramount importance to both authors.

*Religion:* Both writers were born and raised in religious Catholic families, and they both rejected certain aspects of the Catholic doctrine, freed themselves of its organizational demands, and arrived at a very personal formulation of a very personal religion. Cankar's fight against organized religion and for a new, deeply personal one, was much fiercer than Callaghan's. This was because Cankar's fight for social and eternal justice grew out of his very real daily struggle for survival, while Callaghan's preoccupation with philosophical questions did not affect his own daily existence.

Yet, in the final stage, the two authors stand on the same platform, embracing the same convictions, preaching the same gospel: love thy neighbor from an immaculately pure heart--and leave the dogmas to those who need crutches on their way to salvation.

### C. Specific Literary Parallels

While all of the above parallels offer many insights into the two authors' artistic workshop, they are, however, less striking and less dramatic than the parallels between the characters in Cankar's and Callaghan's stories. These characters form an extremely similar gallery of social misfits. Although it would be incorrect to state that all the characters in Cankar's and Callaghan's fiction are identical, that every misfit created by Cankar is also found in Callaghan's stories or vice versa, it is nevertheless true that

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the most typical heroes are common to both authors. The ten most outstanding among them are:

1. *Fathers*--weaklings, they are victims of their own inability to make practical decisions as well as of the economic situations in which they find themselves. They are often embittered, unpleasant men, although their core is soft and vulnerable. Rather than fight the battle for the economic and social improvement of their own situation as well as that of their families, they retreat into the background, leaving the everyday worries about the support of their families to their wives and young children. These men know they are failures; therefore, they sometimes try to escape from reality by daydreaming, by alcohol, or--by death.

2. *Mothers*--contrary to fathers, they are brave women, fighting the whole world to keep their brood fed, housed and reasonably secure. They are generally poorly educated women who have to work night and day to accomplish the gigantic task of supporting their children and often their husbands, who are either unemployed, or impractical, or sick, or alcoholic.

These mothers have very little time to analyze their own feelings. Only in sleepless, worry-filled nights do they give vent to their misery in bitter tears; in the daytime their only preoccupation is welfare of their families.

The fight for survival and the feverish strife to protect their children from the fate they are experiencing themselves sometimes make them tense and harsh with their children.

Mothers usually die young, exhausted by their life which has been nothing but prolonged suffering.

3. One of the most tragic misfits in Callaghan's and Cankar's fiction is the *Venus*, an unfulfilled woman who was created for love, passion and motherhood.

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A Venus's passion and zest for life can either make her lover enormously happy, or scare him away, intimidated. The great majority of Callaghan's and Cankar's Venuses do not find partners who appreciate their natural abundance of vitality, their beauty, loyalty, simplicity, sincerity, and who enable them to complete the cycle: love--sex/passion--motherhood.

Their lovers prove to be either cowards, pharisees or simply exploiters. None of them shares the Venus's complete integration of three different urges: the urge to encounter love and beauty, the urge to give oneself totally in a riot of passion and self-abandon, and the urge for procreation.

These tragic Venuses, then, choose one of the following paths: they either give in to the pressures of social conventions and wither away in the infrequent embraces of their anemic lovers/husbands, or they abandon their dreams and turn into cynical whores. They all see death as salvation.

4. *Prostitutes* are the product and the victims of a pharisaic society. This society creates whores and then crucifies them. It creates them because it needs them for the enjoyment of "sin." It crucifies them because they are a concrete reminder that society is corrupt. But--turning the tables--this society shifts its own corruption onto the shoulders of these despised women and persecutes them. The prostitutes in the two authors' stories can be disappointed Venuses and--sometimes--desperate, seduced maidens. Generally, however, the profession of a prostitute has nothing to do with the woman's feelings. Both authors see prostitutes as a product of the economic situation in which these women are caught: coming from poor, usually large families, they start earning a meager living in some kind of underpaid "decent" job, as seamstresses, factory hands, salesgirls, when still very young. Sometimes abandoned by their first lover, sometimes corrupted by old men, sometimes simply becoming tired of poverty, they decide to make an "easier" living.

Prostitutes usually despise their job--or simply

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do not think about it. If they do, they churn up hatred and disgust for the society which exploits and despises them.

Nearly all the prostitutes in Callaghan's and Cankar's fiction are the product of big cities; Callaghan's ply their trade in Toronto, Montreal, Paris and Rome, and Cankar's mostly in Vienna. They are all drawn from direct observation.

5. *The nun*--a woman who is the extreme opposite of the prostitute and who is revered by society (but also feared and avoided because she represents the epitome of moral values); she is also portrayed as an unhappy misfit in the two authors' stories.

Each author portrayed her only once--but she deserves mentioning because she represents such a contrast to the previous women characters.

Neither author discusses the nun's past, her youth, her reasons for giving up the "vanity fair" of life. Both nuns seem to be well adjusted; they provide warmth and security for the patients in the hospitals where they work; they are efficient, cheerful, charitable. Yet, here and there, this immaculate façade cracks. This happens when they are reminded of their womanhood: a young girl is all confused about her first menstruation; a young, unmarried mother leaves her baby in the hospital and walks away with her lover. The nuns' emotions overflow their starched habits: Cankar's Sister Cecilija remembers her girlhood, and Callaghan's Sister Bernadette presses the baby to her chest. The nuns suddenly appear as vulnerable, unfulfilled women whose pain of denied motherhood will never leave them.

6. *Homosexuals* were rarely openly mentioned in discussion or in books in Cankar's and Callaghan's time. Therefore, Cankar was severely reprimanded for his "wading through stinky swamps" in his book *Hiša Marije Pomodnice* in which a lesbian scene was described quite explicitly. Callaghan cautiously published his novella on a lesbian relationship, *No Man's Meat*, in Paris, in a limited, signed edition.

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The authors consider homosexuality an unfortunate, disturbing idiosyncrasy which makes people suffer. The suffering, this time, is not caused by a social injustice. It derives from the pain that the lovers cause each other either by insensitivity, disloyalty or by being out of reach.

Cankar's and Callaghan's studies of these misfits represent a sincere effort to penetrate into an area of human existence which was foreign to the authors but which they researched with their usual compassion for suffering human beings and with their usual respect for human dignity.

7. Another misfit tortured by his sexual frustration in a different way and for different reasons is the *priest*. The priests in the stories of both authors are divided into two camps: the representatives of the "Church of this world" and the humble, usually young and idealistic priests trying to reconcile their idea of the gospel of love to the obedience to their superiors who belong to the other camp.

Callaghan mostly deals with young priests--idealists, and Cankar concentrates on lordly, authoritarian, "political" priests. Both authors, however, try to penetrate below the outer appearance and unmask the very soul of these men, to find reasons and justification for their behavior.

Although Callaghan's portraits of priests are usually moving, and Cankar's drawings of priests-dictators harsh and repulsive, they all lead to the same common denominator: the vow of celibacy plays havoc with these men, and the loneliness of their profession is oppressive. Some young priests, idealistic and eager, work feverishly, spreading and living the gospel they believe in, drowning the urges of their masculinity in ardent prayers. Older priests have replaced their human yearning for love and the ecstasy of passion, and for the warmth of human company with political and business activities. They rule their flocks with iron fists. They have put aside their gospel and prefer to associate with influential "pillars of society," closing their

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eyes to the fact that most of these people are unethical, corrupt or downright criminal. These political priests are not happy, however. Deep down, their conscience is alive, and they know they have sacrificed their life for nothing because they have even betrayed their vocation by betraying the gospel which they once promised to preach.

8. The fact that both authors were moved by the plight of *emigrants*, men torn between two loyalties and belonging neither to their old nor to their new homes, shows great spiritual kinship between them. But their angle of observation differs, which is not surprising. Cankar was born in a tiny, poor country, bled by emigration, while Callaghan lives in a promised land to which many have come in search of a better life. Thus, Callaghan looks at emigrants/immigrants as an observer, often bemused and puzzled by the idiosyncrasies of the strangers in Canada. No matter how compassionate and charitable he feels toward immigrants, he is always able to retain his distance. Cankar, on the other hand, writes his emigrant stories with great involvement, regardless of whether they deal with Slovene emigrants to the United States and Western Europe, or with Czechs in Vienna. Many paragraphs in his short stories about these misfits are written in the first person, thus giving the narrative a strong sense of authenticity.

Depicting emigrants, both authors chose only those who found neither luck nor happiness in their new country. Callaghan's two Englishmen, in the short story "Last Spring They Came Over," two gentle, if slightly stupid and very gullible men, could keep no jobs, became sick and one died while the other wandered away, poor and vulnerable. Other immigrants, "kikes," "wops," "chinks," etc., glimpsed at in his longer stories, remain on the outskirts of life, even in the working-class district of Toronto. Cankar's emigrants to America fell into the midst of an economic crisis and roamed New York streets and flophouses with other unemployed laborers--until they returned home as failures. Those who worked in German mines and factories returned home sick, exhausted and poor--only to die and be buried in their native soil. Czech immigrants in Vienna became part of



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the Ottakring outcasts--unemployed, poor, sick, despised, their children prematurely grown, never accepted by the native gangs.

9. The *seeker of justice* is a man who has been wronged by society, doomed by organized justice, but who does not condemn the social order as such, believing that justice exists and that one day he will surely find it and then he will be compensated for his suffering. Both authors dedicated one complete book to the definition of social justice and to the thorny path a wronged man has to follow in search of this justice.

Callaghan's novel, *The Many Coloured Coat*, and Cankar's *Hlapec Jernej in njegova pravica*, are serious philosophical treatises in spite of their simple form: Callaghan's in the form of a chronicle of intrigues in a big city, Cankar's in the form of a biblical parable, moving and mighty in its simplicity.

Both authors reached the same conclusions about social justice and proclaimed them through the fates of their heroes:

- a. In the existing society a man can never find personal justice; the legal code only serves to preserve the social pattern, to which an individual is often sacrificed unscrupulously.
- b. The search for justice within social institutions is, therefore, useless; the only justice a man can ever find is within himself: if he is at peace with his own conscience, the outside confirmation of his honesty, integrity, etc., is irrelevant.
- c. No social system--be it capitalist or socialist-communist--is interested in the fate and rights of an individual. No matter how economic and political structures change, a man will always have to rely on his own, personal justice, based on his peace of mind.
- d. Divine justice--as opposed to human justice--is neither represented nor exercised by the Church. The Church--as an organization--needs the acceptance and the financial support of society. Therefore, a seeker

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after justice will seek the support of the Church in vain. He will be dismissed with sophisms and reminded of his sinfulness.

The stories portraying tragic seekers of justice contain the two authors' most explicit philosophical ideas, their most private and profound beliefs. Seekers of justice are drawn with great sympathy and are among the most moving and monumental characters in their fiction.

10. The term *criminal-saint* could be applied to practically every hero, every misfit in Morley Callaghan's and Ivan Cankar's stories. A criminal-saint is a person who breaks either the legal code or social conventions and gets punished mercilessly by a society which is ethically beneath the man it persecutes.

Nearly every hero in the two authors' stories breaks some kind of law--his very existence is sometimes a "crime": a college-educated girl who works as an ordinary factory worker and associates with Negroes, a poet who roams the roads in pursuit of his dream instead of doing something "useful," an illegitimate child.

But both authors also portray "real" criminals, i.e., men entangled with law-courts, handled by the police, sentenced to jail. These characters emphasize the authors' philosophy of "tables turned": the man condemned by the society and law is ethically superior to his judges, and his judges are the real criminals who hide their crimes under the mantle of authority, power and paper laws. In the stories about criminals, convicts and penitents the authors emphasize the following points:

a. A man who has been jailed is condemned forever; nobody believes either in his good nature or in his rehabilitation: in spite of the sanctimonious acceptance of a "prodigal son" back into society, the man remains an outcast, no matter how sincerely he wants to be just a man like everybody else.

This point is amply illustrated in Cankar's novel-*la*, *Hudodelec Janez* (The Criminal Janez), where a fist-fight in a tavern causes a nice, hot-blooded village

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boy to be arrested; his sentence then snowballs into twenty-five years in jail. Callaghan's novel, *More Joy in Heaven*, tragically confirms that society does not believe in the rehabilitation of a criminal.

b. Capital punishment is legal murder. It is an act of revenge, not of justice, and it is not executed for the protection of society. Callaghan's hero, Fred Thompson, in *It's Never Over*, another hot-blooded young man, also provoked by a policeman, kills the latter by accident. He is hanged for it. He is no danger to society. Kip Caley, a rehabilitated bank-robber, is prevented from blending into society. Not believing in his rehabilitation, the crowd, thirsty for blood and sensation, provokes him until he is caught in a trap. Then they happily gun him down.

Capital punishment also destroys the innocent: Fred's mother and sister as well as his friends are tragically affected by his death, Kip's girlfriend is shot with her unfortunate lover.

c. Men murdered or persecuted by organized justice achieve martyrdom through their suffering. They become saints. Their judges, on the other hand, become criminals. Thus, the tables are turned.

Criminal-saints vary in scope and character, yet they all proclaim the same view of organized justice. They figure prominently in the processions of misfits which, with striking similarity, both Cankar and Callaghan visualized in their works. Here is Callaghan's vision of such a procession above the Toronto skyline in the depth of the night:

. . . Down in the dark alleys, on their stilts  
40 feet high, came all . . . great clowns,  
walking stiffly, clumsily, their heads in the  
light, but their stilts knocking aside the  
little gray men in the shadowed streets . . .  
men with offices richly clean, their knives  
and guns registered with their cops, their  
words registered too . . .

*A Fine and Private Place*

## Ožbalt: Cankar and Callaghan

And here are Cankar's marchers:

Šli so in dolga je bila procesija,  
Vila se je iz hriba v hrib, iz doline v  
dolino . . . Šel je pred njimi, visok in lep,  
v dolgi rdeči halji, in vsi so šli za njim,  
vsi ponižani in razžaljeni, vsi zaslužnjeni  
in obremenjeni. Šli so v svetel dan, ko se je  
zgrnila globoko za njimi nad Sodomo strašna  
noč; sodbe noč in obsodbe.

*Za križem*

(They marched and their procession was long,  
it wound over the hills and through the  
valley . . . He walked at the head of the  
procession, tall and beautiful, in his  
long red robe, and they all followed him,  
all the humiliated and offended, all the  
enslaved and oppressed. They walked into a  
bright day, while the Sodom behind them was  
enveloped in a frightful night; the night of  
judgment and doom.

## Following the Cross)

Wellek and Warren reject the conception of comparative literature as a study of "sources" and "influences," and propose instead a study of universal "world," "general," "international" literature in terms of contrast and comparison. They suggest this method especially for the studies of the Western literary tradition, believing that "without minimizing the importance of Oriental influences, especially that of the Bible, one must recognize a close unity which includes all Europe, Russia, the United States, and the South American literatures."<sup>4</sup>

In pondering the possible "causes" or "reasons" for similarities between Morley Callaghan and Ivan Cankar, one is forced to consider their roots in a common European heritage, since on the surface their background could not differ more: Callaghan comes from a vast North American country extending from the Atlantic to the Pacific, Cankar from a tiny land in Central

## Ožbalt: Cankar and Callaghan

Europe; Callaghan's forefathers came from Ireland and England to become the masters of a rich continent, while Cankar's ancestors, the westernmost Slavs, lost their independence as soon as they squeezed into a few East Alpine valleys. Yet, in the twentieth century, both Canada and Slovenia experienced--on a different scale and in different forms--the same socio-economic phenomena: the progress of technology triggering the growth of material culture and, at the same time, widening the gap between the rich and the poor; periods of economic depression and social unrest; world wars. Some similarities can even be traced between the Slovene and the Canadian socio-cultural portraits: it seems that in spite of geographical and historical differences, both countries have been trying to establish and to retain their political and cultural identity in constant danger of being submerged by their mightier neighbors. Thus, an artist in both Canada and Slovenia has always been expected to undertake the additional "role" of a fighter for the political and cultural independence of his country. Because of their mighty relatives--the Americans and the British for Canada and the large Slavic nations for Slovenia--literary achievements in both countries have been presented to the outside world with timidity bordering on an inferiority complex.

Such common tradition, however, could have produced two authors with very different human and artistic physiognomies. Callaghan's and Cankar's nearly identical view of life, their attitude towards the characters in their fiction as well as towards people who surrounded them in real life, their religious beliefs, their writing creed, their interpretation of citizenship, and especially their gallery of social misfits, are to a large extent due also to their similar lifestyles and temperaments. In two different parts of the western world two men were born who had the same tastes, ideas, inclinations, ambitions, dreams, and the same ferocious, nearly physical disgust for social lies and injustices, the same sharp eye and compassion for the "small" man, two extremely sensitive men, attuned to everyday tragedies which erode human life quietly, insistently and unnoticeably--be it in the working-class districts of Toronto, a Slovene village, or a Viennese slum.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>René Wellek and Austin Warren, *Theory of Literature* (Newport: Harcourt, Brace, 1949), p. 41.

<sup>2</sup>Morley Callaghan, "An Ocean Away," *Times Literary Supplement*, no. 3, 249 (June 4, 1964), p. 493.

<sup>3</sup>Fran Petrè, *Rod in mladost Ivana Cankarja* (Ljubljana: Slovenski knjižni zavod, 1947) (=Pogledi, No. 11-14), p. 97.

<sup>4</sup>Wellek and Warren, *ibid.*