

THE WASTE LAND IN A STATE OF SIEGE:  
 COMMENTS ON THE CONTEMPORARY SLOVENE NOVEL\*

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So much has been written on the contemporary novel that the very sky threatens to be darkened by the proliferation of criticism, theories and chic descriptive phrases surrounding it. Even nonspecialists must be tired of hearing about the death of the novel and of its attendant reincarnations into the anti-novel, the self-reflexive novel, the self-destructive novel, into surfiction, into literature of exhaustion. Fascinating as many contemporary novels are, I think they are fascinating increasingly and almost exclusively to academics. Few are readable or enjoyable or meaningful. They are essentially enclosed games of various degrees of sophistication: some more like a good old-fashioned game of hide and seek, others more like prohibitively complex chess games with no discernible rules. One tends to agree eagerly with Burroughs' summary of some of his own prose: "I've done writing that I thought was interesting, experimentally, but simply not readable."<sup>1</sup> Or with Czeslaw Milosz's general reservations: "... I have to force myself to read a [contemporary] novel as if warned in advance by the boredom emanating from the devices one knows so well."<sup>2</sup>

I use these admittedly commonplace observations on the contemporary novel as a thesis against which to comment on the contemporary Slovene novel. On the whole, the Slovene novel seems to me much less self-indulgent than the work of such preeminent figures as Beckett or Barth. While not reactionary or outmoded in structure or style, the Slovene novel nonetheless has provocative and current and human

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concerns. It does not lose sight of meaning or--to use a rather maligned term--of theme.

For many writers, even for those born during or after the war, the fact of the Second World War remains a haunting horror. Central to their work is the fear of another war, of an invasion, of an intensification or a rise of an internal military siege. And they share a vision of contemporary life as a Waste Land, and by this I mean the Waste Land in the more narrow sense of T. S. Eliot's great and very influential poem. The two themes, war and the ensuing Waste Land, collide into a fearful question: Is the result of all that past devastation this present sterility, this tedium or--worse--this threat of an even more catastrophic doom? The mood is reminiscent of much post World War I literature, of these lines from Pound's Hugh Selwyn Mauberley, for instance:

Died some, pro patria,  
                                   non "dulce" non "et decor" ...  
 walked eye-deep in hell  
 believing in old men's lies, then unbelieving  
 came home, home to a lie,  
 home to many deceptions,  
 home to old lies and new infamy;  
 .....  
 and liars in public places.  
 .....  
 There died a myriad,  
 And of the best, among them,  
 For an old bitch gone in the teeth,  
 For a botched civilization....<sup>3</sup>

In this shattered world where the center is obviously not holding, in a menacing world, the ineffectual hero pursues an ineffectual quest for something redemptive. But his fate is that of a drowning man: his every struggle brings him closer to a figurative or actual death.

These general remarks could be supported by an analysis of a number of current novels.<sup>4</sup> For the purposes of this introductory paper, I have decided to focus on Andrej Hieng's Orfeum, Miha Remec's Sončni obrat, Rudi Seligo's Triptih Agate Schwarzkobler and Dimitrij Rupel's Čaj in puške ob štirih. It is my hope that these four works

will not only indicate the variety of technical devices employed by Slovene novelists but also elucidate my thesis that the majority see their world as a Waste Land in a state of siege.

Hieng's Orfeum shifts between Mila Micek, dying of cancer in Ljubljana, and her stepson Edi, deteriorating of a cancer of confusion and cowardice in the city of M.<sup>5</sup> Edi is a plasterer, restoring moldings in the Orfeum Theater. In the summer of his work there, he becomes entangled with an odd company of nihilists, whose only aim is destruction. During Edi's formal initiation into their midst--the rite of passage is a parody of baptism with vodka substituted for water--Edi promises to join them in their destructive goals: Edi asks, "If I understood you correctly, the world is no good, the past war did not improve it. What do you suggest?" Pit answers, "What do I suggest? A thorough new war" (132)! A moment later Pit exclaims, "Bulldozers over the little gardens!" "But don't you think that the little gardens are the beginning of our civilization, Pit?" Edi asks. "We'll finish it off!" Pit shouts (132). And later Pit says, "We shall love and respect the bomb! The bomb is a beautiful invention! The bomb will purify the world" (140)!

All that this wild rhetoric finally leads to is a comic attempt to stage a play written by Ludvik, the anarchists' leader. The play is meant to somehow liberate humanity by mocking oppressive conventions and models, but it keeps degenerating into mere silliness. Perhaps one can get the flavor of the bizarre proceedings from this concluding paragraph of chapter 17: "The rehearsal lasted until midnight. At eleven Ludvik rushed in. Just then the lights went out for the third time, and from a catwalk came the pounding of a hammer in rapid, sharp beats. Ludvik flew towards the backstage--he perhaps intended to climb up the ladder--but on his way he stumbled against some drum, fell into it and tore his pants" (328).

Silly and repellent as these Dostoevskian Devils are, Edi's reaction to them is morally even more reprehensible. Too weak to resist his conscription into their club, he determines to betray them should any danger arise. Indeed, the theme of betrayal is important in the novel. Background information interspersed through the novel tells us that Mila's father, a school teacher, informed on the

socialist position of his colleagues. Dr. Kobal, imprisoned by Italians during the war, refused to answer Mila's tapping code (she was in the cell next to his), because he feared throwing suspicion on himself. The director of the theater feels guilty--whether justifiably or not is unclear--that the woman he loved, the fine actress Melanija Burnik, was burned in a Nazi gas chamber while he survived. Melanija's son transfers his own guilt to his sister Laura and keeps her a virtual prisoner, insisting that she is mad, as punishment for telling the Gestapo what she knew of her mother's activities and of her friends. Edi's whole life is a sad series of betrayals, excuses, rationalizations. Already as a schoolboy he showed a tendency towards cowardly cruelty: he urged his sister Lidiija to kill a puppy; he was caught beating a little girl; he blamed Lidiija for a sexual prank the two engaged in. Kobal was perhaps perfectly right in concluding that Edi would be a traitor in another war.

Given Edi's general attitude that all occasions conspire against him, it is quite logical for him to think that the city of M. is under siege. Words he hears and scenes he witnesses direct his childishly literal mind to thoughts of war. The director, for instance, laughs at Edi's observation that this is a time of peace and asks whether a war cannot exist without cannons. Later the director talks about a world-wide, universal conspiracy: "Something is in the air! It won't be long before it starts" (47). Edi reads puzzling accounts of military maneuvers in the newspapers, and he sees soldiers in a military camp practicing war games. He feels watched. The city strikes him as strangely deserted. At the railroad station people behave furtively, and the snatches of conversations he overhears point to war.

One must, of course, note that much of this information is narrated by Edi and that his reliability as narrator is questionable. And one must admit that his is essentially a paranoid nature. Still, the atmosphere that emerges is one of menace, despair, physical and mental illness, sexual sterility and vulgarity. Mila's world, described from the traditional third-person point of view, is no more promising than Edi's, filtered through his own point of view. They both inhabit a Waste Land.

The comedy and the sobriety of Orfeum are underlined by its epic or mock-epic echoes. The novel's structure, periodically elevated tone, theme of apparent historical significance, learned allusions to such mythical figures as the three fates, descent into an underground that recalls a descent into hell--all these point to an epic scope. But the epic note is sounded most clearly by several references to the Hector-Andromache-Astyanax trio. These three figures, or figures that evoke them, are painted on the left-hand corner of the Orfeum curtain. As described by Edi, the painting, a creation of one Professor Wandwischer (from the German for paintbrush), seems to be a pompous travesty of art. But that is Hieng's point: in our world the great and the tragic have been trivialized. The brave have, like Hector and Andromache and Astyanax, died ages ago. They have perished, like Melanija Burnik, in the last war, or they are, like Mila Micek, dying now. There seems to be something shameful in surviving a war; perhaps that is why the survivors and the young play with the idea of it, imagine it, in a sense long for it. Yet measured against a Hector, Pit or Ludvik are blustering fools. Measured against a Macbeth, who is also alluded to in several instances, Burnik, Melanija's son, is a pale parody. He attempts to bring Shakespeare and other lofty dramatists to the people, onto a village stage. He claims success, claims to have loyal fans, but his sister gives a different version of this foolishness. The villages, she says, are poverty-stricken, people have no food, the old ones have no one to care for them. And her brother struts upon a tiny stage declaiming, "Is this a dagger that I see before me" (412)?

Laura's moving portrayal of village life is beautifully dramatized in the old man whom Mila sees during one of her excursions into the countryside. What must once have been a prosperous little farm is now in ruins. The house itself seems totally deserted, and Mila pauses by a window only because she hears the old man praying. Like his property, like the disparate objects that surround him--a dusty bottle, a mousetrap, an alarm clock without hands, a pot, a shoe--the man is a pathetic ruin. And the reader inevitably asks, Is such a man supposed to come and watch Burnik as Macbeth, is such a man going to feel liberated if he sees Ludvik's theatrical buffoonery? The man is a latter-day Priam, whose lament for Hector is appropriate to his own fate:

Ah me, for my evil destiny. I have had the  
 noblest  
 of sons in Troy, but I say not one of them is  
 left to me,  
 .....  
 ... and all that are left me are the disgraces,  
 the liars and the dancers, champions of the  
 chorus, the plunderers  
 of their own people....<sup>6</sup>

As Taras Kermauner argues, Orfeum is an "exceptionally mocking" book.<sup>7</sup> Hieng's dialectic is essentially self-destructive: here the thesis and the anti-thesis do not synthesize but negate each other. Hieng's vision offers no hope. The answer to the human tragedy is not war (what did the death of Hector accomplish but Priam's desolation, what did the death of Melanija Burnik lead to but her children's misguided lives?), still less some vulgar parody of war. The answer lies in neither great Art nor in Ludvik's disdain of it, neither in tradition nor in revolution.

Towards the end of the novel, the policeman who is investigating the goings on at the Orfeum, delivers a powerful speech summarizing the pointless posturing of the nihilists in the face of genuine human suffering:

I have been a policeman for fifteen years, I have seen the devil himself ..., but I have never yet seen, listen to me carefully, I have never yet seen a collection of such complete lunatics in one spot! ... Where do you live? With fantasies? In the air? What's cooking in your brains? Newspaper articles? Books? Are you convinced that this is the navel of the world? That this old, stinking hole is a sacred spot? A tribunal? That something important is going on here? That this play and this scenery have some meaning? That things will be different in Viet Nam if you play out your jokes? That someone in Bengal will not go hungry because of your phrases? (456)

And he proceeds to give examples of tragedies he knows firsthand: his father has locked himself in a house that is falling apart; his son plans to go to Sweden to find work; the

county of Rudo has thirty old people who are alone and do not die; a drunk woman has killed her sister; parents tie their child to a table every morning because there is no one to watch him. The policeman sees that neither war nor art will help. His realistic and sane voice is the only one that is not contradicted or mocked in the novel, but the point is that his sanity will also not help.

Sončni obrat by Remec is in many respects very different from Orfeum.<sup>8</sup> It does not have Hieng's polemicism, his sophisticated dialectic, his elegant mockery, his ironic black humor, the epic scope or the Kafkaesque reality of Edi's world. It is an altogether less ambitious novel. But it shares with Hieng's great work a vision of futility, a sense of something menacing in the air.

The novel begins with the hero Matija Rob's death in a car crash. The rest of the novel is an account of three days preceding his death: from a compellingly grotesque nightmare (Night 1) to a disturbingly obscene party on Midsummer Night (Night 3). The opening nightmare is a symbolic summary of Mat's life. Mat is trying to find his car in an enormous parking lot with endless lines of foreign cars. He is running among the cars, his legs growing heavier and heavier so that he can barely move. There are no people, only cars, all sorts of cars except his own. Suddenly he has a feeling of greater panic--something dreadful is about to happen. He notices a man in a locked car--he turns out to be the director of Mat's office--who looks at him with horror but quickly begins to enjoy his dilemma. Other faces in other cars materialize, though none of the people wishes to help him. Then he sees the auburn hair of his wife and feels that salvation is at hand. Majda is in a large van, but she does not notice him: she is in a wild transport of sexual passion with some stranger. Mat feels paralyzed; he can neither move nor close his eyes. To his growing horror he now sees a stain of blood spreading over the sheet that covers Majda and her lover. From below the sheet some sort of globe begins to rise. It is the hairless head of his wife! The skin is wrinkled and ashen, the lips burned away, the eyes glassy. The dry skin is now peeling off the forehead, revealing the white skull. It peels off further, down over

the eyes, cheeks, teeth. And the head keeps nodding and nodding. Backing away, he falls into an open car, into the arms of a woman who comforts him. For a moment he thinks she is his beloved Ana but realizes that she is his friend Vera and that she cannot save him. Fleeing in his terror, he comes to the edge of the parking lot, into a desert of burning green sand. His scream returns like an explosion of a thousand bombs, like the splitting and crumbling of the earth itself, like a shout of the whole universe. And finally a huge mass rises from the horizon, engulfing everything. Darkness, nothingness, an endless horror. His mother's voice, urging him to make the sign of the cross when he has bad dreams, wakes him.

I have summarized this nightmare in some detail because its vivid images typify Mat's existence. A trained architect, a former partisan, he is now reduced to designing doorknobs and windows for structures that will never be built. And even this pointless occupation is not secure, and the director clearly enjoys the anxiety of workers he is about to dismiss. Mat finds refuge nowhere, not at work, not at home, not among friends, not in church. Material comforts--appliances, gadgets, machines, the proper use and care of contraptions--dominate Mat's life. Discussions between him and Majda focus on getting oil for the car. A simple enough errand, though one that Mat is incapable of performing. The car as the cause of quibbling between him and his wife, the car so central in his nightmare, the car as the instrument of his death begins to assume the stature of an actual character, of his major antagonist.

Yet the people in his life are hardly more spiritual than the overwhelming objects. Their bawdy conversations, their trivial and sleazy sexual adventures, their rejection of their own culture (for instance, they play records by Sarah Vaughan, the Rolling Stones, the Beatles; they drink gin and scotch; one of the women calls herself Palčica after the model Twiggy) all point to their thorough alienation.

His life an urban desperation, Mat lives more and more in his memories. He is haunted by the gentleness of his mother and by her repeated injunction that one should never strike a drunkard, that a drunkard is God's own creature. (He is killed because he swerves to avoid an



apparent drunkard in the road.) He is haunted even more longingly by memories of Ana whom he once loved, Ana who lives by the sea, far away from the desert that surrounds him. He is haunted, finally, by images from the war, specifically by the image of a soldier whose head was blown off and who, though headless, kept running to attack the enemy. "Why," he asks at the end of this recollection, "why did they die when it is now all so damn the same?" (46)

As in *Orfeum*, some people wish for another war, others believe that the war rages still. Mat's mother-in-law, for example, remembers sheltering partisans: "After the war everything will be different--so they comforted me and said how people would understand each other and be equal. But all I have left are pots and pans, and no one talks to me, and no one takes me anywhere. Is it any wonder that I want another war?" (149) And the caretaker of Mat's apartment building believes that the war is continuing: "There are many traitors. Every night we shoot them, but there are always more. ... Friend, the war is not over, the war is still on!" (192) Demented though the caretaker is, Mat sees that he is also right: "Everywhere something preys on you, everywhere an ambush. The caretaker is quite right, am ambush" (207).

Truly no hope exists in this prose *Waste Land*. Here people are caged animals: Mat's neighbor paces ceaselessly through his apartment every evening, reminding Mat of a tiger. They are drowned: just before he decides to leave in search of Ana, Mat embraces his friend Vera and thinks, "Embraced. Like a drowned couple. Tightly, painfully, pointlessly" (229).<sup>9</sup>

If objects assume an extraordinary importance in the world of Remec, Mat is at least not presented as one of them. But in Rudi Šeligo's *Triptih Agate Schwarzkobler*, the human spirit tends to be subsumed into matter.<sup>10</sup>

This short novel is a narrative tour de force in the manner of Robbe-Grillet. It contains no direct dialogue, no internalized thought. Covering twenty-four hours in Agata's life, the novel is pure, objective reportage, unfolding like a silent film. The reader has a very clear

picture of Agata's activities: her day at work, her date with Jurij to see "Last Year at Marienbad," his sexual advances, her flight from the theater, her sexual surrender to a stranger who picks her up, her wanderings through an unfinished structure, an attack that resembles an epileptic seizure, and her return to work in the morning. But despite the careful accumulation of detail, one has no sense of her personality. She is presented as if she had no core of being, as if she consisted only of her Diemme shoes, her well-arranged coiffure, her white muslin dress.

Since the novel has no moral perspective within it, it is obviously possible to read it in a variety of ways. Agata can, for instance, be seen as yet another inhabitant of a futile world, a female counterpart of Mat Rob. Certainly she and all the other characters seem to be nothing more than automatons: the women all empty chatter, the men all sexual molestation. Is the seizure she suffers, then, a physical one, meant to indicate the general sickness of her life? Is it suicidal, brought on purposely by the pills she takes? Or is it symbolic of a Sartrean nausea? Does she, in other words, have enough of a moral awareness to judge and condemn her life?

Šeligo's meditation on the function of the tower could be the basis of a different interpretation. Šeligo praises the medieval tower as an unassailable fortress. Within its walls people could survive, go on with their daily lives, even if the tower were surrounded by the enemy, even if the enemy were waiting for an opportune moment to attack. One could argue, then, that when Agata escapes into this modern version of a tower, she is escaping into a stronghold of ages past. From the heights of the tower, Šeligo points out, "the enemy was much less significant" (52). The other characters, particularly Jurij and the stranger, then become the enemy whose siege she tries to forestall.

Could one argue further that she herself is a tower, a Tower of Ivory (from the Litany to Mary)? Surely the emphasis on her lovely white dress is susceptible to such an interpretation. Are we to see her as essentially pure and virginal, an embodiment of virtue assailed always by vice? Or are we--in complete contradistinction--to view her as the enemy who scales the tower to desecrate it?

When she returns to work in the morning, one tends to feel that she has had no rejuvenating moral epiphany, that she is rather like the Eliot character who, after a tawdry sexual encounter, "smoothes her hair with automatic hand,/ And puts a record on the gramophone."<sup>11</sup>

This is an "empty" text, and, as Kermauner correctly notes, it is in fact impossible to interpret it.<sup>12</sup> As soon as one attempts to confine it within the limits of an interpretation, it moves away a bit, becoming a different text. Perhaps the only legitimate way to read it is to see it as a metaphor for the emptiness of life it is portraying.

At the opposite pole of Šeligo's dispassionate seriousness is Dimitrij Rupel's high hilarity. The most boldly experimental of Slovene novelists, he brings to Slovene fiction a wonderfully comic spirit of playfulness, a ludic imagination.<sup>13</sup>

His Čaj in puške ob Štirih is a Chinese box of parodies.<sup>14</sup> Its structural frame is that of the picaresque novel, complete with a précis of each of the ten chapters à la Cervantes or Fielding. Its immediate social frame is the student unrest of 1970-1971. Rupel mocks not only these but just about everything else: politics and politicians of all shadings, law, death, hospitals, fortune telling, the economy, the modern apartment building, corruption in industry, schools, even holy shrines in Bosnia and Romania.<sup>15</sup>

As in many contemporary novels, everything here is indeterminate, and the reader is never quite sure whether he is reading about actual events as perceived by a muddled narrator or about imaginary events as told by a naively trusting narrator. The three heroes--Sandro Savica, a reporter; Praprotnik, an official in a governmental finance department; and Žargi, a liberal politician--are quixotic heroes, even more comic and ineffectual than their prototype. Sandro defends the honor of his wife, his Dulcinea, when a Bosnian seasonal worker makes a pass at her. The ensuing brawl lands him in a hospital. Praprotnik dreams of a bucolic life as a beekeeper, but he can find only one bee. He, too, gets involved in a fist-fight over

a woman and joins Sandro in the hospital. Žargi loses his job, is injured in an automobile accident and--yes!--is also hospitalized.

Other scenes of violence abound: drownings, shootings, killings, rapes, child abuse, terrorism. Throughout the novel there is talk of catastrophe: of train collisions, conflagrations in which whole islands are destroyed, storms, of political repression and military reprisal: "The Russians can come and save us from our capitalism at any moment" (29)! "Soldiers are coming, there will be a new government--or it may seem to be the same one ..." (87). "... one has the impression that there's a war ..." (107). "Some are saying that the country has been occupied by the Russians ... an American ... said that he heard something about a coup on the radio ..." (108). And so on.

The murky and fantastic events are, then, leading to some climactic encounter. But whatever happens, it is clear that nothing will ever change. Rupel, like Hieng and Remec and--to a lesser degree--Šeligo, sees history as a cycle, where revolutions are nothing more than full turns of a circle: "Good people were all killed in the war. The world is always the same, the same. A joke: Communists, Fascists, the same" (51)! (In the original the observation has a nice chanting quality: "Isti. Komunisti, fašisti, isti!") And there are many other pessimistic passages on the value of revolution: "Suddenly we found ourselves faced with the paradox that people who did the most for the revolution now don't have any food" (69). "Nothing new happens, everything that happens has happened already. ... Sometimes it seems to me that I have already done all this, seen all this--like seeing the same film twice" (99). "It is as it was years ago, you don't know who's the enemy, who the friend" (108). And finally an echo of Djilas's thesis in The New Class: the Maoist student revolutionary warns Praprotnik, "I do understand that in the first phase one must make a pact with the bourgeoisie, but afterwards we'll grind you up...." Praprotnik answers, "... and in the second phase you'll be the bourgeoisie" (142)!

The picaresque quest for some unspecified utopia is, then, doomed from the start. It is as hopeless as Sandro's search for his possibly imaginary friend, the violinist Ogrizek. When Sandro finds him, or imagines that

he has found him, the violinist dies, and there are rumors that he was no martyr-saint, as Sandro thought, but a scoundrel.

Nothing matters. As the title itself suggests, battling with guns or taking tea have roughly the same results.

I spoke earlier of Rupel's playful spirit, of his ludic imagination. And indeed the novel is written in the voice of a court jester.<sup>16</sup> But the court jester can, almost despite himself, become the prophetic Fool of Shakespeare's Lear. Like Voltaire's Candide (quite certainly one of Rupel's literary sources), Čaj in puške ob štirih can invite us to laugh at the hypocrisy and cruelty of man, but the laughter can turn into a somber silence. Like Vonnegut, a writer whom I suspect Rupel knows and admires, Rupel can show us that we are "unstuck in time" and in everything else, he can dismiss all sorts of disaster with something akin to the refrain from Slaughterhouse-5, "So it goes," but the apathetic shrug can become a painful spasm. Rupel's satire is muted, his novel is a merry game, but its warning is not stifled.

In 1945, soon after joining the French Communist party, Picasso said, "No, painting is not done to decorate apartments. It is an instrument of war...."<sup>17</sup> That duty of art is something that Slovene writers still understand.

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#### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Quoted in Alvin J. Seltzer, Chaos in the Novel, the Novel in Chaos (New York: Schocken Books, 1974), 389.

<sup>2</sup>"The Novel in Poland" in Fiction in Several Languages (ed., Henri Peyre) (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1968), 105.

<sup>3</sup>American Poetry (eds., Gay Wilson Allen, Walter B. Rideout and James K. Robinson) (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 768.

<sup>4</sup>See for instance Peter Božič, Jaz sem ubil Anito (Ljubljana: Cankarjeva Založba, 1972); Mate Dolenc, Aleluja Katmandu (Ljubljana: Mladinska Knjiga, 1973); Drago Jančar, 35° (Maribor: Založba Obzorja Maribor, 1974); Lojze Kovačič, Deček in smrt (Ljubljana: Državna založba Slovenije, 1968); Miha Remec, Votlina (Maribor: Založba Obzorja Maribor, 1977); Dimitrij Rupel, Čas v njej rabelj hudi (Maribor: Založba Obzorja, 1974); Dimitrij Rupel, Na pol poti do obzorja (Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 1968); Rudi Šeligo, Stolp (Ljubljana: Državna založba Slovenije, 1966); Marko Švabič, Sonce, sonce, sonce (Maribor: Založba Obzorja, 1972); Vitomil Zupan, Potovanje na konec pomladi (Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 1972).

Although these novels could be analyzed to yield the same or similar thematic conclusions that I reached about the four discussed here, I hasten to point out that they offer an enormous range of form and style: from Hieng's philosophical and polemical prose, full of a sort of internationalized vocabulary, to Zupan's dream-like, lyrical meditation; from Remec's poetic rhythms to Jančar's conscious cacophony; from Kovačič's intensely emotional dramatic monologue to Šeligo's dry reportage; from Švabič's relentless seriousness to Rupel's comic games; from the traditionally plotted and linear story of Remec or Dolenc to the dislocated forms of Rupel or Božič. They are all deserving of close critical study and of translation.

<sup>5</sup>(Maribor: Založba Obzorja, 1972). All references are given in the text.

<sup>6</sup>The Iliad of Homer (trans. Richmond Lattimore) (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1962), 482.

<sup>7</sup>"Groteska o stilu in anarhiji" in Zgodba o živi zdajšnjosti (Maribor: Založba Obzorja, 1975), 97.

<sup>8</sup>(Maribor: Založba Obzorja, 1969). All references are given in the text.

<sup>9</sup>The same despair pervades Remec's 1977 novel Votlina. Here Remec explores the tragedy of human isolation not only in the present, specifically between Rok and Dana, but also in the prehistoric past, between Ro and Aa and in the distant future, between the humanoids Arok and Anada. Through an endless series of reincarnations, the same people are doomed to repeat and relive their tragedies.

<sup>10</sup>(Maribor: Založba Obzorja, 1968). All references are given in the text. Aleksandar Flaker points out that the name of the heroine links her to Ivan Tavčar's Visoška kronika. See Stilske formacije (Zagreb: Liber, 1976), 324. Tavčar's Agata is found guilty of being a witch and ordered to a death by drowning by the Inquisition.

<sup>11</sup>The Waste Land, Collected Poems 1909-1962 (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1963), 62.

<sup>12</sup>"Dvojne branje," Zgodba, op. cit., 185.

<sup>13</sup>For an interesting discussion of the ludic spirit see Taras Kermauner, "Na pohodu je ludizem," Zgodba, op. cit., 190-194.

<sup>14</sup>(Maribor: Založba Obzorja, 1972). All references are given in the text.

<sup>15</sup>See T. Kermauner, "Menuet s strelivom in igračke," Zgodba, 213.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 214.

<sup>17</sup>Quoted in George Steiner, "Reflections: The Cleric of Treason," The New Yorker, Dec. 8, 1980, p. 158.