

OTON ŽUPANČIČ AND SLOVENE MODERNISM*

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Literary modernism within any given culture, and modernism more broadly viewed as a multidisciplinary international movement of the first half of the twentieth century, contain within themselves an almost bewildering variety of trends, doctrines, styles, insights and contradictions concerning artistry in general. From our post-modern, indeed even post-post-modern point of view here at the end of the century we are only now coming fully to appreciate the rich and important legacy modernism has bequeathed us. Though many contemporary artists would not admit it, the achievements of modernism are still a standard—not necessarily *the* standard but at least one of several—against which our own endeavors are measured. Perhaps even more important, however, the artistic triumphs of modernism are now sufficiently distant from us in time that they have managed to enter the popular consciousness (through mass education and mass media), a slower process to be sure than that which occurs at the top of the art-producing and art-consuming world, but one which has profound implications for human civilization as a whole. Thus while we style ourselves these days as post-modern or post-post-modern, we are all of us together only now becoming "thoroughly modern."

It seems particularly appropriate here at the "fin de millénaire" to examine and evaluate once again the "fin de siècle." There are one-hundredth anniversaries to celebrate for terms like "symbolism," "impressionism," "decadence," and "Moderne" itself. Or, as Walt Whitman, the seminal figure for all modernist movements, put it, it is time to cast "a backward glance o'er travel'd roads."¹ Modernism itself we might define as Boyd Carter does:

"[A]rt and literature which broke from the dominant 19th-c. modes of romanticism and realism and which, in the case of literature, experimented with language and form, found new subject matter, was antimimetic, and frequently self-consciously delved into the inner states of the writer."²

Such a definition is fine as far as it goes, but it fails to mention the radical and fundamental shift of perspective that modernism caused. For the noted Slovene literary critic Boris Paternu, for example, in his speech before the Swedish Academy during the 1985 Nobel Symposium on Slavic Literatures, modernism, particularly its constituent element symbolism,

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1 Henry R. Cooper, Jr., "Župančič and Whitman," *Southeastern Europe* 9/1-2 (1982) 147-59; and Henry R. Cooper, Jr., "Influence and Affinity: Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* and the Early Poetry of Oton Župančič," 267-76 in Franc Zdravec, Franc Jakopin & France Bernik, eds., *Obdobja* 4/1 (= *Obdobje simbolizma v slovenskem jeziku, književnosti in kulturi*, pt. 1), Ljubljana: Univerza v Ljubljani, 1983.

2 Boyd G. Carter, s.v. "Modernism," in: L.S. Klein, General Ed., *The Encyclopedia of World Literature in the Twentieth Century*, vol. 3: L to Q (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1983) 293.

marks the great divide between two epochs of literary history. In modernism, literature becomes subjective, open, ambivalent, all things are possible except stasis, metaphors gravitate toward the absolute (i.e. toward becoming symbols).³ The Polish scholar Maria Bobrownicka divides modernism in half, somewhat along Paternu's lines: in the first half she groups Decadence, impressionism and neo-romanticism, on the grounds that all three were sensualist, unphilosophical, mimetic, eager to receive influences from the outside, and prone to a belief in determinism. In the other half she puts symbolism, vitalism and expressionism. These are activist, she claims, for they seek the intellectual conquest of the world, promote ethical evaluation, and favor an active interest in life rather than a subjective contemplation of it.⁴ In their very variety and contradictoriness all these trends are modernist. Bobrownicka says the period was polymorphic. I would like to suggest polyphonic might be more appropriate: all these differing trends were like so many strings on an instrument. An artist might choose one string to sound his basic chords, but in creating his total artistic work he would not fail to pluck all the others.

Modernism was, like the major literary movements that preceded it, an international phenomenon, but unlike them its initial appearance in France was followed by appearances throughout the world almost immediately. Perhaps new communications technologies contributed to this phenomenon: more than one modernist sang of the telegraph wire and pole (Župančič himself called the latter "nepremičen kurir"—the immovable courier). Steamships and railways (another Župančič poem is called "Z vlakom"—by train) speeded mass-produced journals across oceans and continents, so that both Latin America and Russia were able to participate actively in and occasionally even direct European literary developments. North America weighed in for the first time: Whitman deplored the situation wherein

"the States continue to absorb and be dominated by the poetry of the Old World, and remain unsupplied with autochthonous song, to express, vitalize and give color to and define their material and political success, and minister to them distinctively."⁵

But he did not call for isolation from Europe, rather he spoke in behalf of "Comradeship as for all lands..."⁶ and the contribution of American letters to European literatures. Within Europe French and Belgian modernism stimulated German and Austrian responses, which in turn affected Warsaw, Prague and Budapest. Nor was Southeastern Europe immune.

In a thoughtful article with a provocative title, Predrag Palavestra writes of "Symbolism and the Moderna among Balkan Slavic Nations."⁷ While stressing the uniqueness of each South Slavic culture, he seeks to forge

3 Boris Paternu, "Slovenski modernizem (Župančič-Kosovel-Kocbek)," *Sodobnost* 33/11 (1985) 1015-16.

4 Maria Bobrownicka, "Slovenska moderna in kategorije književnih tokov," *Obdobja* 4 /1: 164-5.

5 Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*, eds. Sculley Bradley and Harold W. Blodgett (New York: W.W. Norton, 1973) 574.

6 Whitman, 570.

7 Predrag Palavestra, "Simbolizam i moderna medju balkanskim slovenskim narodima," *Obdobja* 4 /1: 91-9.

typological links among Serbian, Croatian and Slovene literatures. Poetic symbolism, impressionistic landscapes, the subjectivity of metaphor and a broadened function for the symbol, a sense for realistic, solid forms, lyric descriptiveness, musical expressiveness: these coupled with the fact that in the first two decades of the twentieth century Serbian, Croatian and Slovene writers ceased to lag behind their Central and West European counterparts, characterize and distinguish modernism in Yugoslav lands. I will leave it to others to focus on the Serbian and Croatian participation in modernism. For the remainder of this paper I would like to concentrate on the Slovene Moderna, with special attention to its chief exemplar, Oton Župančič, as we ponder together what Prof. Palavestra calls in his article "diferencijalno jedinstvo kulturne zone Balkana."⁸

Fortunately the language of literary history is not as precise as that of analytic geometry, so I do not hesitate for a moment to claim that the Slovene Moderna both was and was not congruent with international modernism. That is to say, the Moderna in Slovenia performed many of the same tasks in Slovene literature (and I will restrict myself only to literature here, though it should be noted that Slovene modernism also involved music, art, graphics, literary criticism, architecture and other fields) as modernism performed in other literatures. The Slovene Moderna, however, contracted in time (specifically 1899-1918; the dates are quite firmly established in Slovene criticism), was constrained to perform these tasks simultaneously, while, as France Bernik points out, French and other literatures were able to engage them consecutively.⁹ The sources of Slovene modernist impulses were French, German and Russian, filtered, however, through the smoke of Viennese cafés (specifically the Eder and the appropriately named Fin de siècle¹⁰) and the dust of Viennese public reading rooms. The very term Moderna was mediated to the Slovenes by the Austrian critic Hermann Bahr, who borrowed it from Berlin modernists. In 1890 he published *Zur Kritik der Moderne* and began to issue a "Monatsschrift für Literatur und Kritik" entitled *Die Moderne*.¹¹ His work was well known by Slovene intellectuals, all of whom were of course literate in German and most of whom took their higher education in Vienna. Yet the Slovene Moderna was no mere clone of its Austrian parent. As Paternu notes, when Slovene literature was exposed to modernism, at first it resisted, then it made of modernism its own synthesis.¹² In this respect, Paternu continues, the incorporation of modernism at the end of the nineteenth century resembled the adoption of romanticism into Slovene letters by Francè Prešeren in the 1820s and 1830s. While maintaining an "existential vertical" (*eksistencijalna vertikalna*) containing the essentials for keeping Slovene literature Slovene, Prešeren (and the Moderna writers later)

8 Palavestra, 92. The provocativeness of Prof. Palavestra's article lies, of course, in his designation of Croatia and Slovenia as parts of a "Balkan cultural zone." Such terminology is routinely rejected by scholars (and residents) of both nations.

9 France Bernik, "Moderna in njeno mesto v slovenski literaturi," *Obdobja* 4/1: 80.

10 Rudolf Neuhäuser, "Nekaj pripomb k evoluciji mladega Župančiča med leti 1895 in 1899," in: France Bernik, ed., *Oton Župančič: Simpozij 1978* (Ljubljana: Slovenska matica, 1979) 350.

11 Bernik, "Moderna," 88, note 5.

12 Paternu, 1016.

created a "signifying dynamic of language" (*označalna dinamika jezika*) which allowed the vertical to be expressed in ways operative in other European literatures. By the end of the century, moreover, Paternu argues, Slovene literature had matured to the point where it was confident of its own ability to be expressive (none of the Moderna writers, for example, felt at all inclined to write poetry in German, as had Prešeren). Paternu's points are well taken: the Moderna marks a period of Slovene literary creativeness rivaled only by Slovene romanticism. In fact in many ways Slovene modernism is a continuation and further development of the earlier period, truly a new romanticism, based primarily on concerns for Slovene national identity and existence.

Standard histories of the Slovene Moderna—I recommend Joža Mahnič,¹³ Franc Zadavec,¹⁴ and in German Anton Slodnjak¹⁵—concentrate their attention on four authors, though in point of fact the movement was very popular in Slovenia and there was a host of modernist practitioners. But enduring contributions to the literary culture were indeed made by the four major writers of the time: Kette, Murn, Cankar and Župančič.

Dragotin Kette was born in January 1876 and died in poverty and great pain in a former sugar warehouse in Ljubljana in April 1899. He lost his parents at an early age, suffered through unsatisfying and ultimately uncompleted schooling, served in the Austrian army briefly until he contracted tuberculosis, then came to die in the room of his friend and fellow modernist Murn at the age of twenty-three. His poetry, which he had begun to write only in 1896, was collected by Anton Aškerc (by this time a classical figure in Slovene poetry) and published posthumously in 1900 under the title *Poezije* (the standard designation for Slovene poetic collections from the time of Prešeren on). It is of course impossible to know how Kette would have developed had he lived a normal lifespan. What we have of him shows him to be an unreconstructed romantic, immune to the decadent interests of his time, more or less indifferent to the bourgeois society around him but deeply committed to lyric expressiveness. He is pious, sensitive, even sentimental; love, sweetness, longing, happiness are much more to his taste than thought. For example, an excerpt from his poem "Misel moja":

Misel moja, pusti me,	Thought of mine, leave me now,
jaz ti dam slovó,	I bid thee farewell,
bilo je življenje s tabo	My life with thee was
pusto in bridkó.	Empty and bitter.

13 Joža Mahnič, *Obdobja Moderne*, in: Lino Legiša, ed., *Zgodovina slovenskega slovstva*, vol. 5 (Ljubljana: Državna Založba Slovenije, 1964).

14 Franc Zadavec, *Zgodovina slovenskega slovstva*, vol. 5, *Nova romantika in mejni obliki realizma* (Maribor: Založba Obzorja, 1970).

15 Anton Slodnjak, *Geschichte der slowenischen Literatur* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1958) 244-324. I am less enthusiastic about Antun Barac, *A History of Yugoslav Literature* (Ann Arbor, MI: Michigan Slavic Publications, n.d.) 225-35, even though it is one of the few things available in English on the subject. The treatment is perfunctory and superficial.

Or the sonnet lament on his father's grave:

Povedi, mračni me grobar, s seboj	Take me with you, sullen
na zéleni, na senčni grob njegov,	grave-digger
kjer križ železen, kamenit je krov,	To his green, overshadowed
pod njim uživa otec svet pokoj.	grave,
	Where the cross is iron, the
	cover stone,
	And beneath father partakes of
	holy rest.

Josip Murn, the second major Slovene modernist, surnamed himself Aleksandrov in admiration of Russian literature and culture. He was born the illegitimate son of a servant girl in March 1879, and died in June 1901 of the same disease, in the same room, indeed in the same bed, as Kette in the former sugar warehouse in Ljubljana (which at the time was being used to house impoverished refugees from a recent earthquake). He published from 1896 on but his one and only collection of poetry, entitled *Pesmi in romance*, was issued only after his death, in 1903. Murn is a poet of far darker hues than Kette: he was close in many ways to Decadence and symbolism, and sang of alienation, loneliness, illness and death. On the other hand he resembled his friend in his fondness for short forms and intensive musicality; in the opinion of some he wrote the purest lyric poetry the Slovene language has ever known.¹⁶ Here in its entirety is the brief "Jesenska pesem" (Autumnal song):

Kaplje, drobne dežne kaplje	Droplets, minute misty droplets
padajo izpod neba,	Falling from beneath the sky,
kot kropila siva megla	Though a grayish fog were wat'ring
zemljo bi zdaj - mrtveca.	Earth now—lying like a corpse.
Brez zelenja in življenja	Without green and without life
se razteza širna plan,	Broad and wide the plain extends,
le nad golim, pustim poljem	Only o'er the bare, lone field
kraka smrtno pesem vran.	Caws a raven the song of death.
Motna kot mogočni vali	Murky as its mighty waves
Silna reka proč drvi	The powerful river rushes off
in nekje tam daleč, daleč	And somewhere away away
zvon na zadnjo pot zvoní...	Sounds the final call to rest...

It is difficult to compress the life and work of the third of the Slovene modernists into a paragraph or two, and no excerpt will serve as a representative sampling of his artistry, for Ivan Cankar is perhaps the

¹⁶ So Janko Kos and Ksenija Dolinar, eds., *Slovenska književnost* (Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 1982) 240 (= Leksikoni Cankarjeve založbe, Književnost 1), s.v. Murn.

greatest of all Slovene writers.¹⁷ Born the same year as Kette (1876), he died late in 1918, in fact just ten days after the proclamation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, an event he had hoped for, though not without reservation. Cankar is most noted for his prose: *Hiša Marije Pomočnice* (1904) and *Hlapec Jernej in njegova pravica* (1907) have even been translated into English. Their heavily allegorical style reminds readers of Zola or Gorky. His plays, still to be seen on the Slovene stage, recall Ibsen for their ringing denunciations of the hypocrisies of the Slovene and Austrian moneyed classes and the clergy. If Murn's hues are dark, Cankar's are darker: dying children, utter corruption, provincial decay, artistic hopelessness, the bleakness of the Vienna slums, the economic and moral depression of the Slovene countryside. Very few lights brighten this gloomy picture. Though he often found it impossible to live among them, Cankar was deeply concerned for the Slovenes: he detested their false patriotism (usually a cloak for narrow-mindedness) and despaired of their future. He and Župančič disagreed most profoundly over the issue of cosmopolitanism,¹⁸ which Cankar favored and Župančič seemed to fear.

It was Cankar, who knew French better than the other three modernists, who introduced them to Baudelaire, Verlaine, Maeterlinck, and it is Cankar's one and only volume of poetry, provocatively (and unusually for Slovene literature) entitled *Erotika* (1899), which reveals the French influence most clearly. Cankar's verse was the most decadent of the Slovene Moderna, and it was not for nothing that the good bishop of Ljubljana, Jeglič, bought up as many copies of the book as he could find and had them burned in the stove of his episcopal palace. Sensualist, hedonistic, full of disgust with life and excessively 'nervous,' Cankar's poetry survived the church's fire but could not withstand the poet's own rejection. By 1900 Cankar was denouncing such writing as too self-centered and irrelevant; from then on he would turn toward social concerns expressed in prose and drama, and eventually transform himself into the spokesman of the nation.

Kette died in 1899, Cankar bolted poetry no later than 1900, and Murn died in 1901: only Oton Župančič was left of the four to carry on the poetic practices the four had discussed so assiduously as schoolboys in Ljubljana during the early 1890s. Župančič, the second youngest of the group, was born on 23 January 1878, in Bela krajina, a southern Slovene area with a heavy Croatian admixture; he outlived all of his companions by a wide margin, dying in Ljubljana on 11 June 1949.¹⁹ Župančič's parents were of mixed Slovene-Croatian ancestry, with roots traceable to Bosnia. Though the Župančič family spoke Slovene at home, it was a dialect so heavily tinged with Croatianisms that young Oton's schoolmates in Novo mesto (in

17 For information on him in English, see: Henry R. Cooper, Jr., "Cankar, Ivan," in: Leonard S. Klein, General Ed., *Encyclopedia of World Literature in the Twentieth Century*, vol. 1: A to D (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1981) 400-1.

18 Dimitrij Rupel, "Problem domoljubja pri Otonu Župančiču," in: Bernik, *Oton Župančič: Simpozij 1978*, 297.

19 For details in English, see Henry R. Cooper, Jr., "Župančič, Oton," in Leonard S. Klein, General Ed., *Encyclopedia of World Literature in the Twentieth Century*, vol 4: R to Z (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1984) 720-1.

Dolenjsko north of Bela krajina, a more purely Slovene area) thought he was Croatian.²⁰ From early on Župančič was confronted with the principal Slovene social problem of the day: emigration. Over a tenth of the population of the Slovene lands had left for either Germany or America before 1900; the issue of the *nemškarji*, as they were called, was uppermost in the minds of all thinking Slovenes.²¹ The problem existed even within his own close-knit family. His five maternal aunts had left Slovenia for the United States, and in the face of his father's severe business reverses his mother had wanted the family to follow them. Apparently only chance kept them in Slovenia; some attribute Župančič's later warm reception and understanding of the Slovene-American Louis Adamic as the poet's realization that he too might have been in Adamic's shoes, writing in a language not his own, had fate been only slightly different.²² As the result of a bankruptcy caused by Župančič's maternal grandfather, the family moved from Novo mesto, this time to Ljubljana, where the ten-year old was for the first time exposed to the intellectual life of a (for the time and place) relatively large city. Happily in Ljubljana Župančič's school career was more encouraging, and he, together with his classmates Kette, Cankar and Murn, quickly and avidly involved themselves with free-thinking student groups, pan-Slavism and literary experimentation under the beneficent influence of the Christian socialist Janez Evangelist Krek (1865-1917). Their particular group was called "Zádruga," with an acute accent written over the "a" since this is not a Slovene word, but one which nicely summed up their collectivist and South Slavist bent. Župančič began his publication career very early: his first pieces appeared in Catholic journals in 1894, others in the well-known *Ljubljanski zvon* in 1896, and a novella (all written under pseudonyms) was published in the prestigious journal *Dom in svet* in 1898. With Cankar Župančič left Ljubljana in 1896 to pursue a higher education at the University of Vienna, where they were both indifferent students (neither finished the degree). On his frequent returns to Ljubljana to visit his family, Župančič would often stay with Kette at the sugar warehouse (particularly if they had partied late into the night); he was in close contact with Kette and Murn until their untimely deaths, which affected Župančič deeply.

Vienna, one of the great European capitals at the time and a hotbed of artistic, intellectual and political creativity, very quickly separated Cankar and Župančič. Though they frequented the same cafés, read the same literary journals, admired the same Austrian, German, Russian and French authors, and even published their only volumes of decadent and erotic verse in the same year (1899, Župančič's was called *Čaša opojnosti*), their lives differed dramatically. Cankar led 'la vie bohème,' with poverty, depression, sexual irregularity and ever-increasing pessimism; Župančič, 'le bon bourgeois,'

20 Jož a Mahnič, "Župančičev esej o slovenstvu in njega odmevi," *Slavistična revija* 32/4 (1984) 306, note 9.

21 Zadavec, 11.

22 Joza Mahnič, "Župančičev esej," 305.

was moderate both in his enthusiasms and his excesses, and despite somewhat straitened circumstances he was able to travel and enjoy himself throughout the first decade of the new century. Of great importance to his later work would be his visit to Paris in 1905, where he perfected his French and read the works of Henri Bergson, Emil Verhaeren and—in English—Walt Whitman. He also spent a couple of years as a private tutor in Germany, but by 1910 he was eager to return home. He quickly established himself in Ljubljana both personally and professionally (he married quite happily in 1913), gaining fame as a poet, dramatist, journal editor and translator (his translations of Shakespeare into Slovene are still definitive) and eventually rising in the 1920s to the position of Director of the Slovene National Theater. For the sake of time I will skip the details of Župančič's career in the 1920s, '30s and '40s, except to say he became quite sensitive to criticism of his work, and fell into long periods of silence after the lukewarm reception of his play "Veronika Deseniška" (1924) and the controversy surrounding his essay "Adamič in slovenstvo" (1932). Too old and ill to take an active part in the resistance during the Second World War (though his children were involved on the partisan side and he contributed poems to that cause), he became a spokesman (some would even say an apologist) for the Communist régime after the war. In a recent anthology of Slovene encomiastic poetry, *Slovenska muza pred prestolom*, Župančič—not unlike many other Slovene writers who had the misfortune to live under wildly differing governments—is cited for his verse in praise of such diverse leaders as Aleksandar Karadjordjević, Edvard Kardelj and Josip Broz Tito.²³ He died peacefully at home in 1949, in the midst of Yugoslavia's epochal break with Stalin. It is safe to say he was revered and mourned then, and that his verse continues to be considered the most important Slovene poetry of the twentieth century.

In order to examine Župančič's poetry more closely, we might make use of Marija Boršnik's neat (indeed almost too neat) chronology of the poet's artistic career.²⁴ First off she divides the sixty years of his productivity in half: 1888-1918 and 1919-1949. Like me she then concentrates on the first period (which for our purposes today is most appropriate, since this first period corresponds to the Slovene Moderna). This she subdivides into six five-year periods: 1888-1893, during which Župančič grew to love his Bela krajina roots and practice on his own his Roman Catholicism; 1893-1898, when he began to publish pseudonymously, fell under the influence of free-thinkers such as Cankar and away from the institutional church, and moved out of the family home to Vienna; 1898-1903, during which his first collection, *Čaša opojnosti* (1899) appeared under his own name, and he wrote most of the poems for his next collection, *Čez plan* (1904). The fourth of Župančič's six five-year periods, 1903-1908, was devoted to compiling perhaps his greatest collection,

23 Marjan Dolgan, *Slovenska muza pred prestolom: Antologija slovenske slavnostne državne poezije* (Ljubljana: Knjižna zbirka Krt, 1988) 250-1.

24 Marija Boršnik, "Sredi vsega," in Bernik, *Oton Župančič: Simpozij 1978*, 19-43.

Samogovori (1908); this was also the period in which he visited Paris and came into direct contact with English and French poetry. From 1908 to 1913 (the fifth period) Župančič settled down, most of his quests fulfilled (wife, career, family). Finally 1913-1918, concurrent with the Great War, he reworked his earlier poems (*Mlada pota* [1920]) and produced the last great modernist poetic collection, *V zarje Vidove* (1920). As noted earlier, the Slovene Moderna traditionally ends in 1918, with the death of Cankar, the founding of Yugoslavia and Župančič's turning away from poetry for the theater. For the sake of completeness I should also mention that throughout this period Župančič wrote poetry for children, and that he compiled two more poetic collections, *Med ostrnicami* and *Zimzelen pod snegom* (1945), only the latter of which, containing his wartime poetry, was published in the poet's lifetime. The first volume of Župančič's complete works, in a scholarly edition under the editorship of Josip Vidmar and others, was issued in 1956, and volumes continue to appear from time to time.²⁵

It is curious to note, but reflective perhaps of a certain trinitarian inclination in Župančič himself (who, though he abandoned the institutional church, never abjured religious imagery, biblical phrasing and a certain kind of personal piety), that many critics have sought to subsume his poetry's major themes under three general headings. Vidmar, the 'grand old man' of Slovene criticism, Župančič's opponent on social issues and the editor of his collected works, claims for example that in the over one-thousand items in Župančič's artistic bibliography there are only three components: "radost, smrt, smiselnost."²⁶ Franc Zadravec sees rather "ženska, resnica biti, domovina."²⁷ Finally Boris Paternu speaks of three cohesive forces in Župančič's lyric subject: "first off the subjectivist, attached to the isolated power of the ego, then the religious metaphysical and finally the social or national, which was the most tenacious."²⁸ Using a device suggested by Slovene grammar itself, I would like to speak of what I consider to be three principal interests, or perhaps orientations, of Župančič's poetry: the artist, or poetry of the first person singular; love, or poetry of the first person dual; the nation, or poetry of the first person plural. These three in all probability do not exhaust the possibilities, but I believe they touch on most of Župančič's best poetry (in *Čaša opojnosti*, *Čez plan*, *Samogovori* and *V zarje Vidove*).

More than one critic has called Župančič a 'spiritual aristocrat,'²⁹ given to avian images closer to Nietzsche's eagle or Gorky's stormy petrel than to nightingales or doves, let alone any bird that might flock. Župančič dwells in his poetry on eagles, condors, hawks, lonesome swans and the *ptič samoživ* (which I take to be a phoenix). It is this last that is most revealing, I believe, of Župančič's view of the artist. Consider the last two stanzas of

25 Oton Župančič, *Zbrano delo*, vol. 1- , ed. by Josip Vidmar et al. (Ljubljana: Državna Založba Slovenije, 1956-) [henceforward ZD].

26 Josip Vidmar, "Jubilejni govor," in: Bernik, *Oton Župančič: Simpozij 1978*, 11.

27 Zadravec, 275.

28 Paternu, 1019.

29 Zadravec, 275.

the poem entitled "Ptič Samoživ," which is the next to the last poem of *Čez plan*:

In takrat je videl svojo perot in moč, v samoti zbrano, in hotel je najti brate in rod: "Živite, bratje, z mano!" Nikdar, ptič Samoživ, nikdar! prevelika je tvoja perot, presvetel očesa je tvojega žar, in premajhen, preslab poskril se ti rod... ³⁰	And then he (the bird) saw his wing And his might, joined in isolation And he wanted to find brethren and kin: "Come, brethren, live with me!" Never, never, Phoenix! Too great is your wing, Too bright the light of your eye, And too small, too weak, your kin have hid from you...
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A poem dated 1 September 1898 and included in Župančič's first collection, "Moje barke", also speaks of an isolated, arrogant poet-creator:

Moje barke so razpele jadra, zapustile varne so pristane, moje barke plavajo v brezbrežnost....	My ships have unfurled their sails, Left their safe harbors, My ships sail into shorelessness...
Ah vi cilji, moji zlati cilji, kak bleščite v daljni se samoti! K vam ne vodi cesta uglajena, k vam ne hodi romarjev krdelo... ³¹	Oh you goals, my golden goals How you shine in distant isolation! No smooth roadway leads to you, No herd of pilgrims makes its way to you...

And so on (this too is just an excerpt). And finally, from *Samogovori*, the last stanza of "Sebi" (to myself), written in 1905:

Stoj, ko drevo brez zavetja! višji si, bolj te pretresa vihar, višji si, bližji nebeški ti žar, dalj gre oko... ³²	Stand like a tree without refuge! The higher you are the more the storm shakes you, The higher you are the closer is heaven's fire, The farther your eye sees...
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It is interesting to contrast Župančič's Olympian stance with the romantics (particularly of course Prešeren). As Vidmar once said, "Prešeren stoji na zemlji, Župančič plava nad njo."³³ Prešeren stressed the artist's pain, the cost to himself of being a poet. Župančič on the other hand exults in the power and freedom that artistic creativity can bring. Or we might juxtapose Župančič to another great poet of the first person singular, Walt Whitman.

30 ZD 1: 207. [The translation is mine.]

31 ZD 1: 54.

32 ZD 2: 62.

33 As cited by Mahnič, *Zgodovina*, 198.

Whitman's "I" was inclusive, almost mythic in its dimensions and proportions. Župančič's is exclusive with a passion. Whitman was at one with the people, Župančič speaks for them. Whitman's "I" was in some ways an expression of primordial character, raw, seething, lusty. While Župančič too partakes of some of these qualities, his artistic self is nevertheless far more prim and reserved. Janko Kos maintains, and I agree, that Župančič was fundamentally a poet of 'renewed romanticism' rather than a neo-romantic, in that there was no radicalization of either romantic subjectivity or poetics in his work.³⁴ This in turn has implications for the Slovene Moderna as a whole. Perhaps Kette and Murn, had they lived, would have contributed to a 'democratization' of the image of the poet. All we have, however, is Župančič, the 'spiritual aristocrat,' whose poetic depiction of the artist likens him far more to God than to any mere mortal. And the Moderna works out to be the continued development of semi-developed romantic tendencies in Slovene literature, rather than a full-fledged modernist movement of the sort occurring in the rest of Europe.

What of Župančič's poetry of the first person dual, his love poetry? All the critics agree Župančič was no decadent. Even at his closest approach to a Baudelairean style, in *Čaša opojnosti*, there is a reserve and a sensibleness that Slovene critics in particular like to identify with the national character. Take for example the opening poem of the subsection of *Čaša* entitled "Bolne rože" [the translation is by D. Weissbord]:

To so tiste lepe rože,
ki takrat vzcvetele so,
ko me tvoje bele roke
na srce prižele so.

These lovely roses
opened
when your fair white arms
closed about me.

To so tiste čiste želje,
ki takrat vzcvetele so,
ko oči mi tvoje črne
v dušo zažarele so.

These chaste desires
flowered
when your fiery dark eyes
burnt into my soul

To so tiste tihe boli
ki takrat vzcvetele so,
ko molče me tvoje sladke
ustnice preklele so.³⁵

These dumb agonies
blossomed
when your impassioned lips
cursed me silently.³⁶

A bit bolder (and also the product of a more mature poet) is for example "Vihar" written in 1902 or 1903 and included in *Čez plan*. It is the impassioned conversation of a male and a female during a storm, first as they

³⁴ Janko Kos, "Oton Župančič v luči primerjalne književnosti," in France Bernik, *Oton Župančič: Simpozij 1978*, 338-9, 344, note 14.

³⁵ ZD 1: 69.

³⁶ Oton Župančič, *A Selection of Poems* (ed. with introduction by Janko Lavrin) (Ljubljana: Državna Založba Slovenije, 1967) 42.

watch columns outside resisting the storm's force, then as they embrace, two bodies becoming as one statue themselves. The fifth stanza of this short seven-stanza poem is as follows (the acoustical effects are particularly noteworthy):

O, vidiš, o, čutiš ta divji upor,	Do you see, oh, do you feel
kipeč navzgor?	that wild uproar,
O, devojka—zdaj,	Roiling above us?
zdaj veš, zakaj	Oh, girl now,
živ ogenj so moje oči! ³⁷	Now you know why
	My eyes are a living fire!

Still later (written in 1910) is "Telesa naša." Its concerns are so domestic (we should remember, of course, that Župančič would be marrying very shortly). I cite here Janko Lavrin's expert translation only:

Our bodies are like vessels made of gold,
containing all our ancient heritage;
in us their sap keeps throbbing as of old—
the passions, joys and pains of every age.

In our blood countless lives unborn pulsate,
the coming lives of our entire race;
each germ, each cell fights for its destined state,
and this is how the future moulds its face.

Its will is stronger than the will of man;
it lashes us together: husband—wife.
Accursed be he who puts on it a ban—
he banishes himself from world and life.³⁸

Perhaps Župančič's most important statement on this issue, however, comes in a poem included in *Samogovori* (which contains Župančič's best and most important poetry in general). The piece, entitled "Umetnik in ženska," is again a conversation between two lovers. The male asks why his beloved is so frightened this night, why her hands tremble so; she replies:

Ker se boje	For they fear
da ne dosežejo tvojih daljin,	That they will never reach your depths,
tvojih višin nikdar.	Your heights.
Ti si kot daljnih carstev sin,	You are like the son of distant
	empires,
tuj in teman... ³⁹	Alien and dark...

37 ZD 1: 165-6.

38 Lavrin, 34.

39 ZD 2: 16-17.

His response, which is basically to ask for a kiss, does nothing to address her profound concern, and for us too it begs the question. Throughout his career the poet thought of himself, depicted himself, in loving relationships and (less frequently) erotic situations. Yet love, whenever it occurred, was a momentary preoccupation, never an obsession or a major distraction from his primary occupation, poetry, or his primary interest. Of that primary interest I would now like to speak in concluding this paper.

From my non-Slovene, outsider's point of view, Župančič's poetry of the first person plural, his poetry on national concerns, is his most appealing. Perhaps that sounds strange: surely his work addressing more generally human matters (love, life, creativity and so on) should speak most readily to a foreigner. But of course his poems on those topics must compete in an international poetic marketplace already overfull of riches (including those more accessible and familiar to me in my own native language). But Župančič's love and concern for *slovenstvo* (Slovenes, Slovenia, Sloveneness with all that entails of language, literature, culture and the like) is a unique product, with equivalents in other nations but of course no duplicates. Let me explain.

In an article on patriotism in Župančič's work, Dimitrij Rupel—these days more of a politician than a critic—contends that Americans manage their social problems by using sociology, while Slovenes resolve theirs by writing poetry.⁴⁰ I am not certain Rupel has much of an insight into the American situation, but he is certainly correct as far as Župančič is concerned. Župančič often expressed his feelings poetically about *slovenstvo* (the term defies easy translation, so I will use it as is), but most prominently in two poems in *Samogovori*, "Z vlakom" (1903) and "Duma" (a Ukrainian word referring both to a literary genre and to 'meditation' or 'reflection' in general; written over a period, perhaps from 1903 to 1907⁴¹), and in several poems in *V zarje Vidove* (including "Dies irae," written in 1914 on the eve of the first world war, "Žebljarska" (1912), "Zemljevid" (1908, during the Bosnian annexation crisis), "Naše pismo" (1917, on machinations in the Austrian parliament), "Naša beseda" (1918, on the opening of the Slovene National Theater in Ljubljana), and others. Moreover, though this is outside our purview both generically and chronologically, he authored a very important essay entitled "Adamič in slovenstvo" (Adamič and Sloveneness) in 1932, as a rebuttal to Josip Vidmar's piece entitled "Kulturni problem slovenstva" (the cultural problem of Sloveneness) published in the same year.

It is important to understand that Župančič's relationship to his nation was very complex. Not only was he not a chauvinist, but some of his fellow countrymen questioned whether he was even a patriot, particularly during the 1920s, when he refused to champion a separate Slovene cultural identity and role in the new Yugoslavia—despite all expectations to the

40 Rupel, 293.

41 See Henry R. Cooper, Jr., "Oton Župančič: 'Duma'," *Slovene Studies* 8/2 (1986) 87-94.

contrary—and in the early 1930s, when he defended Louis Adamic's right to publish in English, on the grounds that *slovenstvo* had far less to do with language or culture than with some inherent quality Slovenes carry within themselves wherever they go and whatever they speak. Many saw Župančič as the spokesman for *jugoslovanstvo* (pan-Yugoslavism) and *svetovljanstvo* (cosmopolitanism) rather than *slovenstvo*; Župančič himself was very defensive about his beliefs on these subjects, and apologists for him have tried to explain away the apparent lukewarmness of his Slovene feelings by reminding us of his Bela krajina (hence peripheral) birth and the non-Slovene (Croatian) roots of his family.⁴² The problem of course lies in the fact that Župančič's later public positions contradict what he seemed to many to be saying in his poetry. Let us consider "Z vlakom," for example. The poem itself is too long to adduce here in more than a few fragments. It is composed of sixteen stanzas, ranging in length from a single line to sixteen lines. The rhyme scheme (where rhyme is present) varies from stanza to stanza and even within stanzas; likewise the rhythm. There is a refrain (a typical feature of Župančič's poetry), stanzas 3, 5, 12 and 16 (though the last refrain is altered):

Pošastno sopihajoč	Puffing monstrously
kot demon vlak gre v noč. ⁴³	The train like a demon goes into the night.

The last stanza reads:

Pošastno sopihajoč	Puffing monstrously
kot demon vlak z menoj gre	The train like a demon goes
v noč—	with me into the night—
in še danes v tuji slavi	And even now in the alien glory
neznanca me tuja zarja	Of a stranger an alien dawn
pozdravi...	greet me.

Speaking to his homeland the poet says in the longest stanza of the poem (7):

Do zdaj nisem vedel, kako sem	Till now I didn't know how
tvoj sin,	much I am your son,
kako te ljubim globoko...	How I love you deeply...
Domovina, daj mi roko,	Homeland, give me your
	hand,
ne beži, ostani pri meni,	Don't flee, stay with me,
tesno, tesno me okleni	Tightly tightly hold me
in pel ti bom pesem visoko...	And I will sing you a
	towering song...

42 Mahnič, "Župančičev esej," 312-3.

43 ZD 2: 75-8.

The homeland flees from him nonetheless. After a striking evocation of the mountains ("okameneli zanos domovine"—'the ecstasy in stone of the homeland'), however, the poet says:

Razširi, raztegni se, króg domovine,	Broaden, stretch yourself, o
razlij se kot morje	circuit of the homeland,
v brezkončno obzorje,	Spill like the sea
dom moj!	Into the infinite horizon,
Kamor stopi mi noga—na tvojih	My home!
sem tleh,	Where'er my foot goes I am
kamor nese me jadro—na tvojih	on your ground,
valeh,	Where'er my sail carries me, I
kamor hoče srce—pri svojih ljudeh...	am on your waves,
	Where'er my heart desires, I
	am with my own people...

And this is the crux of the poem: Župančič anticipated his essay on Adamic by nearly thirty years. *Slovenstvo* is within the rider on that train; he carries it with him wherever he goes. Deracination under such circumstances would not seem possible.

Cosmopolitanism is also a concern in "Duma." The poem begins, as I have argued elsewhere, with a wonderful evocation of Walt Whitman's "Salut au monde," a most exuberant expression of worldwide comradeship. But its tone grows more somber as its technique becomes more traditional, ending finally in six quatrains, the second of which will seem familiar:

Hotel nekđaj sem, da bi se razširila	Once I wanted for you to grow
da bi razpela svoj krog čez zemljo –	broad,
glej, in zdaj vidim: silna, brezmejna	For you to spread your circuit
si,	over the world—
v daljo kot seme razsipaš svoj plod.	Look, and now I see: you are
	powerful, boundless,
	You scatter your offspring
	like seed far and wide.

And then the final refrain:

Kje, domovina si? Ali na poljih teh?	Where are you homeland? On
še pod Triglavom, okrog Karavank?	these fields?
Ali po plavžih si, ali po rudnikih?	At the foot of Triglav, at the
Tu? Preko mórja? In ni ti mejâ?	Slovene Alps?
	Are you in the forges or in
	the mines?
	Here? Across the sea? And
	have you no bounds?

"Duma" follows "Z vlakom" immediately in *Samogovori*. The repetition of the verbal prefix "raz-", the notion of a 'circuit of the homeland', of borderlessness (keep in mind that in "Moje barke" Župančič's ships sailed off into *brezbrežnost*, a similar concept), a sense of growth in both poems from a love of homeland that depends on continuing contact towards a patriotism which is so deeply planted that it can live on its own and never need fear extirpation: all these things appear in both poems to signal Župančič's own view of love of country. His was a radical proposition: throw open the borders, scatter the people abroad, learn foreign languages and foreign ways. It will not matter; *slovenstvo*, which is more than language or contact, will survive. His was a radical challenge to Slovene provincialism, narrowmindedness, "l'esprit du clocher" that the *budni stražarji slovenstva* ('the vigilant guardians of Sloveneness'), as he sarcastically called them, had for so long nurtured in the people.

If there is thematic modernism in the Slovene Moderna at all, then I would suggest in conclusion that it lies precisely here, in Župančič's poetry on the national theme. Župančič's promotion of himself as a spiritual aristocrat in his poems on artistry now seems dated arrogance. His love poetry is fine but perhaps only marginally a reason to learn Slovene. But his powerful treatment of the theme of homeland, of human beings in a world growing smaller, of patriotism as a source of tolerance and understanding for other cultures and not a rejection of them, as a source of personal strength and not a cause for ethnic hatred: all this meant to cause a revolution in Slovene self-perception, a radical reevaluation of long-standing beliefs, a clearing away of old debris so as to greet the new century ready and able. Of course it has not been universally successful, either in Župančič's time or today, but as I noted at the beginning of this overlong paper, the insights of modernism are just now making their way into mass consciousness, so that I remain hopeful for the future.

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POVZETEK

OTON ŽUPANČIČ IN SLOVENSKI MODERNIZEM

Čeprav razvojno slovenska Moderna spada na prelom stoletja, je književni modernizem v slovenskem življenju doma in med nami še vedno živ vrec pesniškega in domovinskega navdiha, še posebej v poeziji Otona Župančiča, morda največjega slovenskega modernista in sodobnega ustvarjalca, v poeziji, v kateri se njegovi odgovori na vprašanja in probleme narodne pripadnosti in zavesti, nacionalizma, eksklusivnosti, provincializma in ozkosrčnosti nakužejo s pesnikovim klicem po ljubezni do domovine, tako globoki in prirojeni, da lahko preživi izseljenstvo in celo izgubo maternega jezika. Kakor Walt Whitman pred njim, je Župančič slavil ljubezen do doma in domovine kot vir strpnosti in razumevanja - daleč proč od sovraštva med narodi. Njegove pesmi bi ne mogle biti sodobnejše kot so.