



# From the Marginal to the Exemplary

Od marginalnog  
do egzemplarnog

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One way to connect the events of 1968 to those of 1989 is by rereading those who have theorised the artistic significance of the events in their immediate present: Aleksandar Flaker around 1968, and Aleš Erjavec and Marina Gržinić around 1989. These thinkers created models which, used together, can help us grasp the causality that connects 1968 to 1989. Three hypotheses will be proposed: first, there is a development leading directly from the anti-protestant ethics of pleasure of the 1960s to the commodified desire of the 1980s to migrate from socialism to the shopping mall; second, there is a link between the upcoming literary generation's struggle against canonical national literature in the 1960s and the nationalist programme championed by the same writers in the 1980s; third, whereas Slovenian literature produced only marginal cases of the 1968 model, its so-called alternative culture of the 1980s was an exemplary case of the European East as such.

JEANS PROSE, SLOVENIAN  
ALTERNATIVE CULTURE, 1989, ETHICS  
OF PLEASURE, COMMODIFIED DESIRE

Uspostavljanje veze između 1968. godine i 1989. godine može započeti novim čitanjem autora koji su svojevremeno teorijski artikulirali umetnički značaj ovih prelomnih godina: Aleksandar Flaker za 1968. i Aleš Erjavec s Marinom Gržinić za 1989. godinu. Ovi teoretičari su stvorili interpretativne modele koji se mogu upotrebiti za istraživanje uzročno-posledičnih veza koje se uspostavljaju između 1968. i 1989. godine. Istražićemo tri hipoteze: 1) postoji neposredna veza između etike užitka, koja se tokom šezdesetih godina suprotstavlja protestantskoj etici, i komodifikacije želje iz osamdesetih godina, koja je omogućila prelazak iz socijalizma u tržišni centar; 2) postoji veza između borbe mlade književne generacije protiv kanona nacionalne književnosti u šezdesetim godinama i njihovog javljanja u ulozu protagonista nacionalnog programa dvadeset godina kasnije; 3) premda je slovenačka književnost stvorila marginalne slučajeve koji se mogu podvesti pod model 1968, takozvana alternativna kultura u Sloveniji osamdesetih godina bila je, zapravo, egzemplarni slučaj za ceo region.

PROZA U TRAPERICAMA, SLOVENAČKA  
ALTERNATIVNA KULTURA, 1989, ETIKA  
UŽIVANJA, KOMODIFIKACIJA ŽELJE

One way to discover what connects 1968 and 1989—the year of the student revolt and the year of the fall of the Berlin wall from its Eastern side—is by revisiting the work of those who analysed these events as they were unfolding. Traditional humanities and social sciences prohibited this kind of approach with the caveat that rigorous research can consider only that which lies at least fifty years in the past. This used to be one of the tenets of pure objectivity, and objectivity is still held as a crucial characteristic of science, in opposition to social critique and journalism. But that caveat and the accompanying tenet were exactly what was attacked by the student revolt of 1968, during which the academia was accused of impotence and ideological capitulation to the existing regimes of power. From the 1980s on, this scholarly revolt gradually occupied the academia and installed itself as the victorious approach to the humanities and social sciences. It has a name as well, namely the postmodern. Historical victories are always somewhat ironical, as are those comparisons of 1968 and 1989 which attempt to produce so-called objective reports on events from fifty and thirty years ago respectively without taking into account the historicity of their own time. The following report will take the form of a rereading or *rileggendo*, as Benedetto Croce called it in the context of aesthetics (see Croce), a return to a pair of immediate responses to 1968 and 1989 respectively which, read sinoptically, can tell us much of what we need to know about the connection between the two dates; rereading Aleksandar Flaker's response to 1968 and Aleš Erjavec and Marina Gržinić's response to 1989, this attempt to compare 1968 and 1989 will try to avoid the act of forgetting its own time, as it will connect 1968 and 1989 with the aim of contributing to a reflection on the potential of contemporary revolts and on the destructiveness of contemporary walls. And if it is not very objective to approach research with such affective interest, then we are perhaps better off without research.

## 1. 1968

In 1968, Eastern Europe had a different agenda than the West, which enjoyed its student revolt and its beginnings in the movement against the Vietnam War. In Eastern Europe, the agenda was that of the Prague Spring and its violent end in the August 1968 occupation of Czechoslovakia by the armies of the Warsaw Pact under the leadership of Soviet Union. In Yugoslavia, which was free of Soviet patronage, these events were interpreted as a confirmation of Yugoslav independent self-management orientation, and as an actualisation of Soviet military threat. This threat was used to legitimise a turn away from a liberal party management of Yugoslavia, a turn that would include interventions against the 1968 student movement in Belgrade, the subsequent student movement in Ljubljana and the student and nationalist movement in Croatia. That Eastern Europe belonged to the same formation as Yugoslavia, and that the countries shared a cultural attitude to the West that was different from that of the Soviet Union, was expressed in a particular kind of literature that peaked around 1968 and was analysed at the time by Croatian scholar Aleksandar Flaker under the telling name of jeans prose (see Flaker).

This unstable literary formation narrates young protagonists troubled by their uncertain identities who struggle against the world of adults, admiring pleasures which are slowly becoming culturally acceptable. As a kind of unsatisfactory *Bildungsroman*, jeans prose builds on J. W. Goethe's *Young Werther* (*Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*) as well as J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*. An American orientation defines here something more than just the generational split of the 1960s and its demand to distrust anybody over thirty. Its components are jeans promoted into an Eastern fetish with a political and social meaning.

Social because jeans were an expression of democracy and equality much like Warhol's Coca-Cola, and politically subversive because they represented the American way of life together with the American myth as the youth's alternative to socialist mythology. The struggle between the young and the old steps in to replace the opposition between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. This negation of the world of elders is felt as a subversion in the world of socialism as well, but not an oppositional or dissident subversion. What is under attack is the establishment with its rules and demands, which are put in place before the new generation can even express its own will. The hero of jeans prose does not know his or her will and is in search of authenticity, but insofar as this aim is not met jeans prose is an incomplete *Bildungsroman*: the search of authenticity ends neither in a stable adult existence nor in disaster and suicide, thus deconstructing the typical narrative structure of the novel. Where does it stop then? In a typical Eastern European manner, Flaker summarises as follows:

*The character whose function in contemporary prose was to destroy forms and to question, with his or her approach to narration, the traditions of European prose and of social, ethical, moral and psychological structures of the world of adults becomes in Šoljan's novels one of the characters, placed at the margin of the social structure and yet complementary to it and therefore unavoidable within the novel produced by Šoljan. From the subject of narration this character evolved into the object of the author's narration and was thus questioned—and not only for his or her betrayal—together with the civilisation that has shaped him or her. We should not forget that the group with which the girl in jeans heads for Dubrovnik in 1974 drives a 'fičo' and that the members speak not only about discos and cafés but even about Harley-Davidsons*

*and Yamahas—all machines of contemporary civilisation which characterise them as so many representatives of new, consumerist social tendencies in socialist society, a society which neither they nor the other boys and girls in jeans question, even if they abstain from verbally or schematically expressing its ideals. (Flaker: 248)*

A youth revolt in search of new authenticity arrives at consumerist escapism: that is the revolt's contradictory character, or perhaps the consequence of its failure to find authenticity. And if there is no authenticity to embrace, ordinary everyday pleasure can well replace socialist slogans. Immanuel Kant's dilemma of having to choose between happiness and culture becomes impossible once post-Fordist consumerism elevates happiness, this elusive and vague idea, into the culture of pleasure which stands in place of true or authentic happiness. In 1968, it was of utmost importance to be rather than have. But to have is the most pleasurable way of being, is it not? At least the only way available—as long as one is not under socialism where there is no way at all. This is what 1968 has in common with 1989. At first, it was all about human rights and free public space, but then it quickly went on to pave the way to another place, the shopping mall with its freedom for commodities rather than persons—at least until persons became commodities as well, as they were placed on the market as freely as this is possible in the realm of commodities and their free exchange with other commodities.

The only Slovenian representative of jeans prose is Rudi Šeligo, according to Flaker's book, where Šeligo's prose is read as a marginal example of jeans prose (see Flaker: 128). Šeligo's 1971 short story 'Šarada' (Charade) introduces a girl who, according to the language she uses, comes from the same source as jeans prose, but the formation

**1**  
*Perspektive* (Perspectives) was a journal launched in 1960 by young critical artists, social scientists and other intellectuals, and banned in 1964 by political authorities. Reism and ludism, two artistic attitudes resulting from it, either insist on the total reification of the world which the artwork is concerned with (reism) or take the world and its matters as a reason for playfulness without reason, on the other side of Schiller's project (ludism). The notion of a world without an exit belongs to both artistic attitudes.

itself as the expression of youth revolt is treated in a radically empiricist way and with an anxiety which proves that the world of youth evasion from the uncanny world of adults necessarily falls apart (see Šeligo 1995: 137–57). As it is, the struggle against the old has no perspective.<sup>1</sup> Returning to Šeligo to comment on his 'Okus po jodu' (The Taste of Iodide), another short story from 1971 (see Šeligo 1995: 159–76), Flaker detects complete reification represented by a group of young characters who visit the Slovenian coast to display their shallow fascination with boats, motorcycles and radio transistors (see Flaker: 161). It seems that here Šeligo is already dismissive of the consumerist pleasure principle which is to come out as a result of the logic of jeans prose.

But this is not how Slovenian literary criticism and literary history understood Šeligo's emergence and later work. Aleksander Zorn (268, 270) finds Šeligo's insistence on the absence of the author from the story revealing and draws on a conclusion reached by Taras Kermauner in his commentary of Šeligo's 1968 novel *Kamen* (Stone), namely that Šeligo did not participate in his generation's involvement with the end of humanism and the dissatisfaction with the world. Šeligo's reism is seen as a decision not to include the empirical author's feelings and beliefs in literature, on the one hand, and, on the other, as a mode of writing which insists on depicting things as they are, without any plea for transcendence or utopia. From this point of view, Šeligo's prose is not a marginal Slovenian example of jeans prose. It is a conscious negation of jeans prose's narrator and optimal projection, if one may use Flaker's own concept to describe that which amounts to the absence of a final perspective in Šeligo's writing—the absence due to which Šeligo's narratives simply end at some point without conveying and message, following the literary structures of *nouveau roman* rather than *The Catcher in the Rye*.

At another point, Flaker reads Šeligo's major work *Triptih Agate Schwarzkobler* (The Triptych of Agata Schwarzkobler) as a kind of detached partner of jeans prose (see Flaker: 176). This short novel enters in a mysterious intertextual relation with *Visoška kronika* (The Chronicle of Visoko), a canonical Slovenian novel written by Ivan Tavčar in 1919; according to Flaker, the basis of this relation is the criticism of social value systems shared by the two novels. In Tavčar's case, this takes the form of a confrontation between liberalism and clericalism; in Šeligo's case, the confrontation is between the youth and the establishment—but the encounter fails to bring expected results. In conclusion, Flaker (238) looks at yet another example of what he sees as Šeligo's marginal position within jeans prose, namely 'Odgovori in baterije' (Answers and Batteries), a short story consisting of thirteen questions addressed to the character of Milena, who answers only by moving her body parts while the first-person narrator disappears into the questionnaire. The final question, however, remains unanswered, namely: 'For which of the things I am about to name would you be willing to die the most?' (Šeligo 1973: 191)

Flaker's unusual focus on Šeligo's prose can be explained in terms of both literary theory and literary history, that is, by looking at the model's instability in space as well as in time. In spatial terms, this Eastern European model includes Slovenia as the most Western part of the East, the part which despite its Western perspectives, even despite using the techniques of *nouveau roman*, cannot escape its Eastern socialist destiny. In temporal terms, the Slovenian marginal example of Flaker's model exemplifies the ultimate consequences of the possibilities of jeans prose, namely the reified pleasure of commodities and/or the anxiety of an establishment without an exit.

In Eastern European jeans prose, as well as in a few other genres from around 1968, we find more than just criticism articulated from the positions of traditional literary humanism and nationalism, where socialism is denounced together with the socialist states' subaltern position in relation to the Soviet Union. Quite the contrary, in jeans prose, the criticism is articulated in the name of the young generation and its struggle against the ideologies of traditional humanism, nationalism and socialism; the criticism is voiced from the positions of a generation which demanded authentic revolution rather than its bureaucratized caricature, expecting authenticity to mean joy, pleasure and happiness rather than ascetic sacrifice in the name of a brighter future for the nation and for socialism. Real socialism emerged as an answer to the 1968 illusion and utopia, declaring that it is not possible to live in socialism and have fun at the same time. The 1980s, with their culmination in the fall of the Berlin Wall, brought about a novelty: a grip of art over an ideologically presented reality, revealing that the system is unable to deliver what it promises. However, the art revealed what the system truly wanted—and the system did not want to hear about it, as if it were afraid of its own desire.

## 2. 1989

Let us now try to compare jeans prose to subversive literature from the socialist countries written in the 1980s. In Yugoslav literature, the first writer to touch the nerve of the dominant ideology was most likely Dobrica Ćosić with his 1972–1976 tetralogy *Vreme smrti* (translated as *A Time of Death*). A saga of a Serbian family and its social and political environment in the course of the twentieth century expressed strong nationalist emotions and ideas which just a few years later turned into

a militant political programme. Moreover, during the post-Yugoslav wars, Dobrica Ćosić would himself become a political representative of this programme as the President of the Republic of Serbia under the President of the Serbian government and the leader of the Communist Party, Slobodan Milošević. Another literary work of a nationalist kind, more scandalous even than Ćosić's, was Jovan Radulović's *Golubnjača* (The Pigeon Cave), a depiction of the genocide against the Serbs perpetrated by the Quisling authorities of the Independent State of Croatia during the Second World War. *Golubnjača* appeared in 1980 as a short story, and when Radulović adapted it for theatre it was banned by the authorities, a decision which only helped boost the popularity of its literary source. Around the same time, writings about Goli otok were developed into a genre called the Barren Island literature. Goli otok (literally The Barren Island) is an island in the Adriatic which was used as a concentration camp for alleged supporters of Stalin after the Yugoslav break with the Soviet Union in 1948; on Goli otok, the so-called re-education of misled members of the Communist Party was characterised precisely by the kind of atrocities that were typical for Stalinist regimes. This category of prose includes such popular novels as Branko Hofman's *Noć do jutra* (Night Until Morning) from 1981, Antonije Isaković's *Tren 2: Kazivanja Čeperku* (Moment 2: Telling It to Čeperku) from 1982 and Igor Torkar's *Umiranje na obroke* (Dying by Installments) from 1984.

These are just two kinds of subversive literature which openly addressed something that had been only whispered about. During the same period and especially in Slovenia, another kind of culture developed from the youth subculture as punk became the predecessor of the so-called alternative culture. Instead of following dissident tactics, this new culture refrained from criticising the system directly and instead

chose to affirm its weakest points in embarrassingly exaggerated ways which succeeded in denouncing the system without exposing themselves to criticism. And although critical literature which revealed past crimes of the socialist regime was criticised, it was allowed to appear, which may have been a sign of the regime's crisis as well as a signature of the new generation of Party leadership. But how can the affirmation of nationalism in traditional high culture, on the one hand, and the critique of the dominant ideology in styles characteristic of popular culture, on the other, be contextualised within the relationship between 1968 and 1989?

In 1991, two years after the fall of the Berlin Wall and amidst the efforts of Slovenia to gain independence from Yugoslavia, a time when the 1980s enjoyed an afterlife in the living forms of art and politics, Aleš Erjavec and Marina Gržinić published *Ljubljana, Ljubljana: 1980s in Art and Culture*, a book about Slovenian radical and avant-garde art of the 1980s or, as this art was called at the time, alternative culture. According to Erjavec and Gržinić, the alternative presented around 1968 fought either with or against the state, whereas the alternative culture from around 1989 was a fight for the state; this alternative culture was, however, itself split between the Slovenian punk of the early 1980s and a certain band from the late 80s, namely *Agropop*, a popular turbo-folk group whose branding drew on exaggerated Slovenian folk simplicity (see Erjavec and Gržinić: 60). Towards the end of the book, Erjavec and Gržinić add another comparison between the beginning and the end of the 80s: in 1983, Matjaž Vipotnik's poster with Karl Marx sporting an 80s racing bicycle and a red scarf asks, in French, if the future has already come (*Est ce que l'Avenir est déjà venu?*). The answer came in 1988: it was offered by the campaign entitled *Slovenija — moja dežela* (Slovenia — My Country), which seemingly targeted potential

foreign tourists but in effect addressed Slovenians as proud members of a newly independent nation from the 'sunny side of the Alps' (see Erjavec and Gržinić: 156).

The conjunctures of 1968 and 1989 faced the same problem: they both needed to solve problem of exercising opposition and critique under totalitarian or at least authoritarian conditions. For our purposes, the tactics that come to mind can be simplified with the help of Hans Christian Andersen's tale about the emperor's new clothes. The main characters of the tale are: two weavers who promise to produce a perfect ideological effect and tell the clever from the stupid by dressing the emperor in clothes that only the clever can see; the king himself who cares more about the ideological effect on his people than about the material reality of his clothes; people turned into a general public for the emperor's ideological performance; and a kid who has to tell the truth because he happens to escape the allure of the ideological effect.

Putting aside a somewhat less belligerent critical manner of the Aesopian hidden truth, the conjuncture of 1968 was characterised by two approaches, one traditional and one new. The traditional approach functioned like the one in Andersen: the kid of literature keeps repeating that the king is naked and is unable to understand that the others fail to see the naked truth. The new approach was offered by jeans prose: there, the kid does not care much whether the king is naked or properly clothed, but instead insists that the king is just a product of the people's belief in his kingship. The problem of this second approach is that the kid, unable to overthrow the ideological illusion, eventually concludes that nothing can be done because people are the source rather than the solution of the problem. Therefore, the kid enjoys his own privilege of seeing through appearances while the people are left to enjoy their society of the spectacle.

In 1989, another approach developed. The old king, the founding hero of nakedness, has died, and ideology had to be restructured *ad usum delphini*. The new king has gone mad believing that he is destined by nature to be a king and at the same time feeling unable to step into his father's shoes. As a result, he uses ideological clothes together with threats and applied violence to make people accept that which he himself is unsure of. The weavers suspect that this can go terribly wrong, but they keep on making illusory fabric because this is all they know. People start to think that something is wrong, but demand that illusory clothes reinstall themselves and start functioning properly; they want the spectacular cult to be continued. In his imaginary narrative, the kid makes signs of king's grandeur bigger and stronger, contrary to the king's appearance in reality. At first glance, this should allow all the partners in the story to enjoy in that which reality does not provide any more: the weavers should be able to see that their work still has its effect; the king should be able to recollect himself and start functioning properly; and the people should be able to calm down and enjoy once more the spectacle of power. Due to the kid's exaggerated use of images and symbols, an exaggeration of the weavers' conventional ideological product, all the partners in this ideological production become engulfed with a somewhat uncanny, unreal and threatening feeling; an estrangement effect of sorts.

As a result, art became an efficient weapon only when communism's executors themselves lost their ideological faith in the legitimacy of their mission and vision. Their activities proved that their ideological belief was false: instead of following a utopian mission, they started to worship that which really existed: this socialism is not what we dreamed of, they argued, but it is at least what we really have. Two allegories of post-socialist postmodernism illustrate this perfectly.

The first one is the iconography of hammer and sickle as it functions in post-socialist cultures; the second one is the Day of Youth, an annual celebration of Yugoslav youth designed to show how politically effective and powerful art can be.

As mentioned above, jeans prose built on Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*. Post-socialist postmodern art, on the other hand, drew its inspiration from Andy Warhol's merger of pop-art and soc-art for his *Hammer and Sickle* series. Putting this communist sign in continuum with the Campbell soup and Marilyn Monroe, Warhol identified ideological signs and symbols with commodities while also, on the other hand, identifying commodity fetishism with ideological signs and symbols. Post-socialist postmodern art intensified this kind of identification so as to be able to produce what was expected from art in the name of socialist realism at a moment when faith in socialism was already faltering and disappearing. In this context, it was up to the audiences to decide whether this kind of artistic effect is to be perceived as an act ironic exaggeration of a faltering and disappearing socialist enthusiasm or as an expression of an unlikely late surge of socialist belief. This was a time when Eastern Europe experienced its visual turn. This had two consequences: the national culture as the main ideological field of nation-building turned away from its literary canon and embraced visual means of expression, initiating a methodological turn in political and social criticism as well. The main reference point of this new artistic treatment was the Leninist doctrine of revolution in non-modernised countries like Russia, where only a coalition between the peasant majority and the minority class of industrial workers under the leadership of the latter could initiate both modernisation and a communist revolution. The hammer and the sickle are the symbols of this union; but in Eastern Europe, they are also symbols of a lost national

independence. As such, the hammer and the sickle appear in Eastern European (but also Cuban) art of the 1970s and 80s as symbols of a power which is losing its hegemony over people and nations (see Erjavec). Hence, comparing 1968 to 1989, one should begin by noting that, by 1989, the central place occupied by literature until 1968 was taken over by the visual arts.

The Day of Youth was a celebration held each year on 25 May, Tito's supposed birthday, at the Yugoslav People's Army Stadium in Belgrade. This ideological ritual represented the rejuvenation of the leader with young blood as well as the initiation of youth into a life of following in Tito's footsteps on the path to eternity. After Tito's death in 1980, the ritual was expected to stop. However, the necrophiliac slogan *I posljiže Tita—Tito!* (After Tito—Tito!) allowed the spectacle to survive and become a topic of conflict between the leadership and the representatives of alternative politics and culture. When it was the Slovenians' turn to provide the poster for the Day of Youth, the call was won by *Novi konstruktivizem* (New Constructivism), the design section of *Neue Slowenische Kunst* (which is German for New Slovenian Art). The proposal was accepted by a Slovenian jury according to which it represented the best visualisation of the alternative and independent politics of the Socialist Youth League. The poster was then accepted also by the organising committee in Belgrade, in this case because it supposedly offered a powerful image of the youth following the ideological hegemony of Titoism. Soon, however, it was discovered that the poster was a re- and post-production of a Nazi poster, with socialist symbols replacing those of Nazism. The authors were accused of Nazism and unauthorised copying, to which they replied that they did only what Tito himself represented: the work of denazification and of the construction of socialism. In this case, the visualisation of the

hegemonic ideology was such that it could be enjoyed both by the young representatives of political opposition and the old bearers of authoritarianism. Producing no strict ideological meaning, the visualisation was able to meet the ideological desires of both sides of the conflict. As such, this artwork exposed the fact that, from the perspective of art, the choice between conflicting ideological camps is no choice at all: they both want their desire to be satisfied by the artwork. In the end, while the image was not used as a poster, its distribution became even more successful due to the scandal it had caused. In this way, it satisfied the desire of Neue Slowenische Kunst as well.

### 3. CONCLUSION

There seem to be three possible historical narratives which can trace the events from 1989 back to those from 1968.

The first one is a narrative about the ethics of pleasure and its development from the 1960s, when it stood up against the protestant ethics, to the 80s, when it was transformed into a commodified desire to leave socialism for the shopping mall. This narrative seems hardly convincing if we are aware of the extent to which May '68 was characterised by anti-consumerism and an obsession with authenticity. But one ought to be aware of the weaknesses of the idea of personal authenticity, including such naive positions as the one presented by Erich Fromm in his most popular book: in his 1956 bestseller *The Art of Loving*, Fromm argued that those who, unlike both proletarians and capitalists, have independent positions—so, lawyers, artists, professors, etc.—can exercise real authentic love even under capitalist conditions of marriage. Authenticity means here that people can be free from consumerist alienation because they can freely choose between

**2** A humorous attack on the canonical status of literature combined with a portrait of the new avant-garde of the 1960s is provided in the 1972 novel by Dimitrij Rupel and Mate Dolenc entitled *Peto nadstropje trinadstropne hiše* (The Fifth Floor of a Three-Floor House). The most important moment for anti-nationalism was offered by the polemics between Dušan Pirjevec—Ahač and Dobrica Ćosić. When Ćosić proposed his notion of a unitarist Yugoslav nation, Pirjevec replied, somewhat unexpectedly given the norms of the public space at the time, by arguing that Yugoslavia already solved the national question when it acknowledged its constituent national cultures and its federal constitution. Pirjevec defended this solution with the argument that it allowed the new generation to devote its cultural and political engagement to the more important problems of humanity as such. Pirjevec's approach was to negate aesthetic and any other kind of humanism by following Heidegger and declaring the end of humanism.

**3** During the Second World War, Edvard Kocbek was a Christian socialist leader of the Liberation Front. After the break-up with the Soviet Union in 1948, →

commodities without becoming victims of consumerism. Under socialist conditions, this goes further. Even in Yugoslavia, an open country with a half-developed market economy, socialist conditions meant that one could not choose freely because the choice was made by the state or Party. This deprivation of the pleasures of the capitalist paradise is taken as alienation, and the metamorphosis of the socialist market into the capitalist shopping mall is accepted as a source of authentic joy and existential freedom to choose one's way of life.

The second possible narrative revolves around the national ideology of literature. In the 60s, the struggle of the young literary generation against the traditional canon of national literature included the negation of literary nationalism and even of any need to follow the nationalist programme.<sup>2</sup> In the 80s, this same group first adopted the Heideggerianism of Dušan Pirjevec and then embraced a postmodernist ideology; one of the results was a new journal entitled *Nova revija* (New Journal). Soon, however, their search for tradition led them to the legacy of Edvard Kocbek.<sup>3</sup> To broaden the horizons of this new direction and to share their incompatible political programmes, a meeting between Serbian nationalists of Dobrica Ćosić's kind and a Slovenian literary delegation was organised in Ljubljana in the second half of the 80s. Even before that, both old and young Slovenian nationalist writers as well as many other intellectuals were engaged in the fight against the so-called common nuclei proposed by Yugoslav centralists as obligatory contents of all elementary and secondary schools with the aim of promoting a kind of common Yugoslav ideology. The nationalists won this battle against Yugoslav unity. Later on, in 1987, issue 57 of *Nova revija* started a discussion about the historical possibilities of the Slovenian nation in a time when it was obvious that the national programmes of the Communist parties of the individual Yugoslav

republics contained vastly different futures. Finally, in 1988, the Slovenian Writers' Association produced the first draft of the Constitution of a future Republic of Slovenia. After the first elections of the newly implemented multi-party system took place in 1990, many writers and intellectuals became Members of Parliament or took other important functions in politics. Most of these intellectuals entered public life around 1968, including Rudi Šeligo and Dimitrij Rupel, but also such legendary leaders of the 1970–1971 student movement as Jaša Zlobec as well as representatives of an older generation who had entered the national literary canon before the 60s, such as Tone Pavček and Ciril Zlobec. In the 80s, the '60 generation produced a nationalist programme by amalgamating a postmodernist literary ideology with a modernist final historical end. It was a move of great importance but short career: by the end of the 90s, both traditional national culture and the postmodernist national culture from the 80s lost their political and cultural weight. Symbolically, the most important reason for the existence of the Ministry of Culture was not its role in the cultural fields of literature, theatre or the visual arts, but its involvement in media legislation and regulation. The victory of the visual over the literary and of the popular over the elitist was complete, which also realised the intention of May '68 to promote popular culture into a kind of high culture. In order to be marginal in art and culture after 1989 it was not enough to belong to the artistic avant-garde. The real scandal was to be anti-nationalist or at least too cosmopolitan, like, for instance, Neue Slowenische Kunst or Dragan Živadinov, the artist who introduced a state in time and a cosmist project of the artistic cultivation of outer space.

The third possible link between 1968 and 1989 presents itself in the form of the opposition between the status of Slovenian art and culture

→ he opted for a radical liberalisation of the Yugoslav political system, which cost him all his political functions. At the same time, his ethical criticism of post-war mass shootings of the defeated opponents resulted in the ban of his major prose work, the 1951 book *Strah in pogum* (Fear and Courage). He was isolated from the public space, put under permanent surveillance and sporadically persecuted. As his intellectual and artistic position was Christian, liberal democratic and socialist, he was embraced by the Catholic Church as a victim of communism but never as a source of intellectual grandeur or political wisdom.

in 1968 and 1989. In 1968, Slovenian literature was a case of a nation-building literature of a nation without state, to use Montserrat Guibernau's concept, and new generations of writers fitted the model of late modernism or pre-postmodernism with their hermetic and ludist poetics practiced in opposition to the popular. In the context of Eastern European literature, the Slovenian case was a marginal moment of this '68 model; in the international context, the Slovenian case was fairly responsive to Western European high and late modernism due to Yugoslavia's openness towards Western art and philosophy, and this latecomer's receptiveness resulted in a new chapter of the belatedness of Slovenian culture. In the 80s, Slovenia alternative culture took part in a greater stream of alternative social movements which prepared and conditioned the transition from post-socialism to capitalism and democracy, the transition which included a break from the (con)federal Yugoslavia and an establishment of an independent and sovereign nation-state. Slovenian alternative culture is an exemplary case of this new model of post-socialist postmodern alternative and is as such irreducible to a belated reception of Western postmodernism. But at the same time, 1989 represents the return of the Easterners of Europe to the position of latecomers. ♡

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## Povzetek

Če hočemo vzpostaviti zvezo med pomenljivima letnicama 1968 in 1989, lahko to opravimo na različne raziskovalne načine. Ker pa so se že sodobniki zavedali pomena obeh dogodkov, namreč študentskega revolta in padca berlinskega zidu, z njima pa tudi vloge literature posebej in umetnosti nasploh, se lahko problema lotimo tudi tako, da vzamemo v roke sočasne analize. Ker govorimo o Vzhodni Evropi, geopolitičnem pojmu, ki je do leta 1989 trdno označeval drugi, socialistični blok bipolarnega sveta, je za leto 1968 pri roki študija Aleksandra Flakerja o prozi v kavbojkah, za leto 1989 pa knjiga Aleša Erjavca in Marine Gržinič o osemdesetih letih v slovenski umetnosti in kulturi. Obe knjigi sta usmerjeni k izdelavi modela literature oziroma umetnosti svojega obdobja, pri čemer Flakerjev pristop povezuje literature celotne Vzhodne Evrope, slovensko literaturo pa predstavi kot robni pojav svojega modela, medtem ko je druga knjiga namenjena zgolj slovenski alternativni kulturi osemdesetih let. Erjavec je kasneje spodbujal raziskovanje modela osemdesetih let tudi v drugih socialističnih deželah.

S primerjavo teh modelov je mogoče raziskati možne povezave med letoma 1968 in 1989. Ob tem se ponujajo tri hipoteze. Prvič, obstaja neposredni razvoj od etike ugodja, ki se je leta 1968 postavila po robu protestantski etiki, in oblagovljenim poželenjem po selitvi iz socializma v nakupovalno središče v osemdesetih letih; drugič, obstaja podobna povezava med spopadom mlade književne generacije s kanonom nacionalne književnosti in nastopom te generacije dvajset let kasneje v vlogi zastopnika programa narodogradnje, vključno z izdelavo prvega predloga ustave republike Slovenije; in tretjič, medtem ko je slovenska književnost, kot trdi Flaker, za model 1968 izdelala zgolj robne primere, je v osemdesetih letih t. i. slovenska alternativna kultura, ki je že pretežno vizualna, zgleden primer za celotno vzhodnoevropsko regijo.

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