

*Modernist World Literature  
in Slovene (National) Cultural Space*

The article addresses the question of relations between world literature and national literatures. It represents Franco Moretti's concept of world literature and confronts it with Erich Auerbach's rejection of the two versions of universalization of world literature. The article proceeds with a short confrontation of realist and modernist poetics through references to György Lukács' and Theodor Adorno's opinions on Realism and to some contemporary ICLA's opinions on Modernism that were articulated in ICLA's collection *A Comparative History of Literatures in European Languages* (2007). This confrontation of realist and modernist poetics serves as a short description of Slovene modernist literature and its cultural specialities in the context of modernist world literature. In this respect, Slovene national literature, especially its modernist period, confirms Moretti's concept of world literature as »one, and unequal«. However, the article tends towards the interpretation of Moretti's concept in a more special way that, accepting Moretti's stress on literary forms as »the abstracts of social relationships«, turns attention to national literature in the context of a (national) cultural space.

I. World and National Literature: Post-modern Re-employment of the Theory of Evolution

The attempt to unify literatures of the world was ascribed already to J. W. Goethe's concept of world literature. (See Virk 2007: 173–196) One of the most influent revolts against this modern paradox of unifying the differences developed in the process of modernisation came from the post-colonial literary criticism that at its very beginnings first stressed the value of difference, turning attention to the process of modernisation as diachronically and synchronically processed differentiation. In the course of the 20th century, different colonized communities stressed the role of language and literary, i.e., linguistic artistic creativity either by appropriation of the modern concept of nation or by the intensive strengthening of the consciousness of an already developed national identity. Thus, many different national cultural communities gained a "status of

relevance” in creating world literature in the history of world literature, i.e., in comparative literary studies.

This “post-colonial turn” also implies multiplications of the literary centres, as well as the points of view by which the history of world literature shall be investigated. This dissemination is in principle accepted by contemporary history of literatures. However, comparative literary studies as a scientific discipline still demand regulating principles that shall be acceptable for different points of view. What set of regulating principles shall also be confirmed for comparative history of world literature that tries to keep the value of diversity gained in the modern process of diachronic and synchronic diversifications, i.e., forming of different (national) literatures that recognize the value of “otherness” to each other?

One of the contemporary proposals suggested by Franco Moretti shall be the form, i.e., literary forms. Moretti refers to the theory of evolution developed by C. Darwin in his monograph *On the Origin of Species* from 1859. Darwin’s theory basically contributed to the worldview expressed by modernist literature too.<sup>1</sup> In Moretti’s transposition of Darwin’s diagram of dispersing properties to the field of comparative history of world literature: »[...] evolutionary trees constitute *morphological* diagrams, where history is systematically correlated with form.” For, “[w]hether as a result of historical accidents, then, or under the action of a specific ‘principle’, the reality of divergence pervades the history of life [and possibly also literature; note by V.M.], defining its morphospace – its space-of-forms [...] as an intrinsically expanding one.” (Moretti 2005: 69, 69–70) In this opinion, Moretti takes into account modern recognition of the historical and spatial diversifications of literary phenomena and thus renovates the concept of world literature, as well as the methodology of comparative history of world literature in a post-modern way: “[t]his is what comparative literature could be, if it took itself seriously as *world literature*, on the one hand, and as *comparative morphology*, on the other. Take a form, follow it from space to space, and study the reasons of its transformations ...”. In studying the »reasons of its transformations«, one can stress also the factor of cultural contexts of national literatures, “[...] because it is only in such a wide, non-homogeneous geography that some fundamental principles of cultural history become manifest.” (Moretti 2005: 90) Forms “as the most profoundly social

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<sup>1</sup> »Darwin’s argument that sex and natural selection were at the root of human development suggested a different kind of species from the previous belief in one unchanging humanity modelled in God’s image. [...] This suggested different narratives of human history: not one of a single progression towards a final judgement day; but a cyclical movement within nature [...]« (Childs 2001: 36)

aspect of literature” (92) imply that their transformations, as well as the limitations of their movings through different cultural spaces shall depend on the specialities of a cultural space. Including, of course, the specialities of a cultural space that defines itself as national cultural space. Especially this one, which grants a privilege to (a national) literature in constructing a national identity.

In order to see the relevance of Moretti’s concept of world literature in addressing the question of relations between world literature and national literature(s), let us summarize the key subjects of Moretti’s proposal of world literature.

## II. Moretti’s World Literature as »One, and Unequal« System in Respect of National Literatures

Moretti’s concept of the history of world literature associates Darwin’s substitution of the teleologically conceptualized progression of history with a concept of cyclical movements (see note 1) with Fernand Braudel’s innovative concept of the *long durée* which serves as an alternative to the “event”, as well as any kind of teleologically “totalisation” of the past. Although Moretti does not refuse either the meaning of event or the meaning of *long durée* in the history of literature, he grants a privilege to the category of a cycle: “[...] cycles constitute *temporary structures within the historical flow*. That is, after all, the hidden logic behind Braudel’s tripartition: the short span is all flow and no structure, the *long durée* all structure and no flow, and cycles are the – unstable – border country between them. Structures, because they introduce repetition in history, and hence regularity, order, pattern; and temporary, because they’re short (ten, twenty, fifty years, this depends on the theory).” (Moretti 2005: 14) Instead of a text and other kinds of »events« and instead of either teleological “totalisations” of national literary history or world literary history Moretti also grants a privilege to the category of a cycle as “temporary structure” (14) that implies the question of movements and transformations of forms: “[t]he very small and the very large; these are forces that shape literary history. Devices and genres; not texts” (Moretti 2005: 76), in short, forms as “morphological arrangements”. (14) As cycles of the movements and transformations of different forms in different cultural spaces reveal the cultural-historical diversifications of world literature: “[s]patial discontinuity boosting morphological divergence.” (90) Considering the forms »as the most

profoundly social aspect of literature« leads to suggestion that “morphospace” implies cultural divergence.

Moretti’s accessing to world literature refers to Wallerstein’s historical-economic theory of the international capitalism too. In this respect, a morphospace is characterized by specialities of a literary market that makes temporal (cyclic) selections of forms and devices,<sup>2</sup> i.e., “the pressure of cultural selection”. In this opinion, Moretti refers to V. Shklovsky: “[t]he new form makes its appearance to replace an old form that has outlived its artistic usefulness [...]” (Moretti 2005: 14) In doing so, Moretti transposes the stress from the aspect of time to the cultural-historical aspect that implies the specialities of a cultural space: “[t]his journey ‘down the inevitable road from birth to death’ can however also be explained by focusing, not so much on the relationship between the ‘young’ and the ‘old’ version of the same form, but rather on that between the form and its historical context: a genre exhausts its potentialities – and the time comes to give a competitor a chance – when its inner form is no longer capable of representing the most significant aspects of contemporary reality.” (Moretti 2005:17, note 7). This transposition from time to time-in-a-space becomes quite clear at the end of Moretti’s discussion on world literature: “[a]s, here, the dependence of morphological novelty on spatial discontinuity: ‘allopatric speciation’ [...]: a new species (or at any rate a new formal arrangement), arising when a population migrates into a new homeland, and must quickly change in order to survive.” (Moretti 2005: 90) Transposing this biological explanation to the field of cultural history means that a “change” implies accommodation to the new (different, specific) cultural context or »literary market« that leads to the new variant(s) of a form<sup>3</sup> and is at the same time also renewal of a literary field of this context. Actually, it also means re-configuration of a literary tradition in its cultural context.

However, some literary markets seem to be more effective in production, promotion and distribution of literary innovations than others. As already said,

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<sup>2</sup> »It is a good illustration of what the literary market is like: ruthless competition – hinging on form. Readers discover that they like a certain device, and if a story doesn't seem to include it, they simply don't read it (and the story becomes extinct).« (Moretti 2005: 72)

<sup>3</sup> Moretti, for example, observes the changes of »great narrative device known as 'free indirect style'« (81) developed during its movements through space and time: »[p]laced as it is halfway between social *doxa* and the individual voice, free indirect style is a good indicator of their changing balance of forces [...]« (Moretti 2005: 81, 82). Used in realist poetics, it turns to the predominance of collective »voice«. Used in modernist poetics, it turns to the predominance of singularity and then divides itself into two directions, namely to Dostoyevsky's dialogism and Joyce's (etc.) stream of consciousness. (See Moretti 2005: 88–89)

Moretti's limitation of the researching field of morphospace to a literary market is supported by historical-economic theory of the international capitalism. This theoretic support leads to a special character of Moretti's concept of world literature<sup>4</sup> as "one, and unequal", especially when Moretti associates it with Itamar Even-Zohar's poly-system theory (1990): "[i]nterference [is] a relationship between literatures, whereby a [...] source literature may become a source of direct or indirect loans – a source of loans for [...] a target literature[...]. *There is no symmetry in literary interference. A target literature is, more often than not, interfered with by a source literature which completely ignores it.*" (quoted by Moretti 2004: 150)

Moretti's accommodation of Even-Zohar's theory, i.e., Moretti's identification of material and intellectual hegemony in the essay "Conjectures on World Literature" led to a series of objections especially from the domain of post-colonial literary criticism that does not agree with the idea of locating literary (or intellectual) centres exclusively in the West. These objections can be "translated" to the domains of national literary studies, i.e., studies of literatures produced in (national) languages spoken by smaller number of speakers. Later Moretti in his essay "More Conjectures" adds new arguments to his description of literary market and one-way interference, taking into account the semi-peripheries (like France, i.e., French literature): he realizes the discordance between the economic and literary hegemony. This discordance is more obvious in the case of an innovation that does not need a strong apparatus of production and distribution and less strong or even non-existent in the case of diffusion that has a need of such an apparatus. However, even the innovations which are produced in the semi-periphery are sent to diffusion by the centre of the centre. (See Moretti 2003)

### III. Auerbach's Rejection of the Two "Standardizations" of World Literature in Respect of National Literatures of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century in Europe

In Moretti's stress on semi-peripheral literatures, all other literatures which are not close to the centre find themselves in less relevant position for being

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<sup>4</sup> Moretti also refers to »the world-system school of economic history, for which international capitalism is a system that is simultaneously *one*, and *unequal*: with a core, and a periphery (and a semi-periphery) that are bound together in a relationship of growing inequality. One, and unequal: *one* literature (Weltliteratur [...]), or, perhaps better, one world literary system (of inter-related literatures); but a system which is [...] profoundly *unequal*.« (Moretti 2004: 149–150)

regarded as a part of world literature. These are also peripheral literatures. In frame of European literary space, these are actually all European national literatures produced in national languages with a smaller number of speakers. In Even-Zohar's opinion from his essay "Polysystem Theory" (1990), quoted in Moretti's essay "More Conjectures", they were formed from the models of "external" literatures, namely of those literatures that represent literary centres. In order to reject this simplification, one can refer to Erich Auerbach's rejection of the two »standardisations« of world literature that were recognized in the 1950s in Auerbach's essay *Philologie der Weltliteratur* (1952). Although Auerbach refuses the model of national literary-historical synthesis and substitutes it with the trans-national model, he keeps distance to a model of "standardization" of either "euro-american" or "russian-bolshevist" kind that would lead to the abolition of all national literary specialities. Such an imposed unification would form and simultaneously abolish the term *Weltliteratur*. (See Auerbach 1967: 306, 307, and Virk 2007: 180)

Despite this presupposition, Moretti's category of literary form as a »compromise« between the imported foreign factors and the local ones seems to allow the strengthening of the role of the local factors, i.e., the local literary and cultural context. This is more clearly recognized in the cultural space of national literature which is located on the crossway between two or more literary centres that create their literary markets by strong economic and political-ideological support. Totalitarian political ideologies, such as Communism, Fascism and National Socialism which in the course of the 20th century tried to form an intellectual and economic hegemony over the territories of Europe are historical examples of re-establishing literary markets too. After 1945, the literary market re-established by the political-ideological support of the Soviet Communism seems to construct Auerbach's "russian-bolshevist" version of standardization of world literature. The rival version was the "euro-american" one. The "russian-bolshevist" version of the unification of world literature prefers the poetics of Realism. On the contrary, the "euro-american" version of this unification in the 20th century prefers poetics of Modernism.

One of those European national literatures which found themselves "located" on the crossway of the two standardizations, i.e., unifications of world literature was also Slovene literature of the 20th century. This crossway location characterizes Slovene modernist literature in its special way: it can explain the reasons, i.e., Moretti's *pressure of cultural selection* that »makes decisions« about changes and transformations of modernist literary

innovations, i.e., modernist “genres and devices” accommodated by Slovene modernist literature.

#### IV. Modernism versus Realism

With some exceptions of the historical avant-garde movements in literature, modernist literature seems to develop the distance between its autonomous literary creation and the extra-literary, cultural, or political-ideological re-employments of literature. Moreover, modernist poetics seems to produce the forms, i.e., Moretti's *morphological structures* that articulate the predominance of singularity and in this respect do not enable any kind of political-ideological re-employments of literature. Political-ideological re-employments of literature namely *per definitionem* imply the predominance of collective *doxa*. However, political-ideological re-employments of literature are extremely intensified precisely in the literary-historical period, during which the modernist poetics seems to predominate the other literary poetics of the time. For the purpose of promoting different political-ideological versions of modernization, the centres of political-ideological regimes in this period try to reorganize the former positions of literary centres and peripheries in creating their own reductive versions of the world literary system, supported by their (political-ideologically) different and rival international literary markets. Again, according to Auerbach's observation, two of the most extensive international literary markets of the 20th century (in Europe) should be the “euro-american” and the “russian-bolshevist” ones. From the political-ideological point of view, modernist tension to pure creative autonomy promoted by the “euro-american” universalization of literature actually plays the role of the ideological opponent of the “russian-bolshevist's” universalization of the world literature (and *vice versa*) that grants a privilege to realist poetics.

Modernist literature also seems to articulate the principal of literary autonomy; realist literature, on the other hand, seems to articulate the political-ideological function of literature in the socially-critical service of the teleological idea of history.

This contrastive juxtaposing of the two poetics is not as artificial as it could seem. First, it was influentially discussed at the first congress of Soviet Writers in Moscow in 1934 in the context of the programmatic formation of the very new poetics as a variant of Realism, i.e., the Socialist Realism. This new poetics is even less important for our investigation. The more important fact about the Moscow congress is György Lukács' annihilation of modernist literature as the

»escapist« one: in his *History and Class-Consciousness* Lukács “[...] stressed that the individual should identify with a more encompassing subject or class position, that he should take a standpoint within the whole«. (Realist) literature shall also represent the dehumanised capitalist system in a frame of representing the individual in a »larger social constellation” (summarized by Bru 2007: 109, 110). In this respect, Lukács already in 1934 refuses the expressionist part of modernist literature. The later and more general Lukács’ interpretation of the history of literature developed in his *Studies on European Realism* (1950) proceeds and expands this distinguished observation according to which modernist literature tries to ignore or avoid the basic socio-historical truth of the historical class-struggle that shall characterize the reality of every human being, i.e., the mankind as a whole. In this Marxist respect, modernist literature fails the very characteristic of literature, namely its realist, i.e., »exclusively« mimetic dimension.

In fact, the poetics of modernist prose fiction is characterized by considering literary mimesis in the other way: “The very recognition of a mimetic obligation towards modern reality similar to the motivation of realism leads to a denouncement of realist narrative as a conventional form that does not transmit reality but stereotypes.” Moreover, “[i]n prose fiction modernism may be characterized as some kind of reaction against the conventions of realist narrative.” (Gemzøe 2007: 125) Therefore, in Lukács’ opinion modernist literature can serve just as a negative example of literature considered in the Marxist, or historical-materialistic world view.

In context of the late modernity of the first half of the 20th century Modernism and the renewed poetics of Realism seem to be the poetics that articulate the two basically different and rival worldviews, successively building the two general and basically different world literary canons.

Theodor Adorno’s correction of Lukács’ opinion tries to exceed this division which is in fact ideological one. Thus he tries to re-valuate the historical-materialistic negative value of modernist literature by considering its »escapism« as a meaningful sign of the increasing social alienation of an individual caused by capitalism. In comparison to Lukács, who regarded public as belonging to inter-subjective classes, Adorno, referring to the logic of modernity from the other point of view, “tended to focus on singular individuals” (Bru 2007: 107). In his (and Horkheimer’s) *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944), Adorno therefore replaced Lukács’s “stress on the humanist idea of equality with a stress on difference.” Difference, or individual experience of society, or Lukács’s criticized “limited perspective” is articulated, according to

Adorno, by early modernist, i.e., expressionist strategies of representation which destroy “the illusion of organic beauty”, express »the breakdown of communicability« and bear “witness to the disintegration of the subject in modernity” in the works of Kafka, Georg Heym, Georg Trakl etc. (Bru 2007: 111).

However, Adorno’s opinion was certainly not (widely) influential on the literary market generated by (in Auerbach’s term) the “russian-bolshevist’s” universalization, i.e., reduction of world literature in the period of Modernism.

On the “Russian-bolshevist’s” *official* literary market, modernist literature kept the cultural status of political-ideological opponent.<sup>5</sup> And it was this very cultural status which produced some meaningful cultural-spatial transformations of modernist poetics in cultural spaces located on the crossway of Auerbach’s both kinds of the universalization of world literature. For example, in the case of Slovene modernist literature, too.

As mentioned above, modernist literature shall grant the privilege to the forms of singularity and literary autonomy, moreover: it grants the privilege to the very form. “Modernism is said to be focused on the problem of mastering a chaotic modernity by means of formal techniques.” (Alphen 2007: 339). The same is the opinion of Slovene comparatist Janko Kos: the key quality of modernist writing, rising from its dynamic and fluid subjectivity, shall be the “curious ability of dynamic production of the incessantly new forms that are not ‘beauty’ in traditional sense of the word,” but the signs of the “consciousness that is able to form all psychical contents, experiences and elements which incessantly fulfil its motion and present its sole reality.” In this endless process, the perception of chaotic and amorphous world as the result of metaphysical nihilist world view arranges itself to almost “total reality of forms that are pure structures of a groundless consciousness.” (Kos 2001: 60–61).

The most characteristic formal techniques of modernist poetics shall be “ironic detachment, highly mediated and multi-perspectival narration, self-referentiality, stylistic ostentation, use of large-scaled symbolic forms, and the dramatization of states of consciousness ...” (summarized by Alphen 2007: 339). These formal techniques seem to be associated with two key concepts of modernist poetics, which are, according to Dirk Van Hulle, consciousness and time. Both of them »are presented as a ‘stream’ or ‘flux’, expressing the idea of a

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<sup>5</sup> »Peter Zima [...] affirms that Modernism is essentially a sort of ‘metamodernity’, an expression of modernity reflecting upon itself and its limits. In this sense, Modernism belongs to late modernity [...] – the moment at which western culture had to face the limits and failures of the project of modernity.« (Colombi 2009: 147)

flow.« The only chance of identity is therefore the proustean concept of identity which appears only as processual variations of itself. (Van Hulle 2007: 320) The subjective character of modernist conception of consciousness is explained by James Joyce's principle of parallax that in this context means representations of "differences in perspective and fathom the consciousness of the observers." Thus, different observations of the same object lead to two »completely different streams of consciousness«, "shaped by personal memories". This principle of parallax articulates the gnoseological uncertainty, formed as perspectivism. It is explained as "one of the attempts made by many modernists to find new forms of expressing not so much reality but the way they experienced it." (Van Hulle 2007: 324) The way of experience, or, according to the principle of parallax, of confirming the gnoseological value of the subjective point of view, shall also be the "phenomenological apperception" (Gemzøe 2007: 125), characterized by its simultaneity. Anker Gemzøe summarizes principles of the modernist prose fiction, which can more or less serve as characterization of modernist poetry too, as follows: "There is no (strong) plot line and the world is dissolved into cuts between points of view, fragmented sensations and an unseizable manifold of unfinished utterances." (125)

These characteristics of modernist literature are explained by referring to the literary texts of V. Woolf, M. Proust, J. Joyce, Th. Mann, S. Beckett. This series of modernist inventions often includes the polyphonic structure of F. M. Dostoevsky's novels, recognized by M. Bakhtin. "In Dostoevsky's polyphonic novel, no single voice, not even the author's, is the privileged bearer of the authoritative message of the work. And no unitary vision is presented in the form of a neatly rounded plot." (Gemzøe 2007: 129) – *No unitary vision is presented in the form*, i.e., forms developed by modernist poetics: one does not need to stress the culture-political significance of these forms in cultural contexts that are generated by the authoritarian and totalitarian political ideologies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Political ideologies of this kind obviously appear as the most significant factor of Moretti's "pressure of cultural selection" in the *official* literary markets that are surveyed by them.

Literary works of V. Woolf, M. Proust, T. Mann, J. Joyce, S. Beckett, etc., obviously form the centre that radiates, i.e., exports the general characteristics and formal inventions of the modernist world literature to the peripheries. Modernist "centre" obviously represents one variant of the world literature's universalization of time, namely the variant that belongs to Auerbach's "euro-american" variant of transnational literary synthesis. Indeed, the modernist

annihilation of any gnoseological conditions for accessing any kind of the “objective” *Truth* could hardly represent a human being considered as to be determined by his/her inter-subjective class position in historical-materialistic point of view. Moreover, modernist poetics formed by the imagined centre that was drawn in the upper lines could hardly articulate any supra-subjective truths suggested by any political ideology. At least, it seems that Bakhtin’s concept of dialogism was more extensively distributed by Western literary criticism of the time, i.e., by those literary markets that were characterized by literary values radiating from the “centre” of the “euro-american” variant of world literature. (In this respect, Dostoevsky’s work perfectly represents Damrosch’s criteria<sup>6</sup> of literature that produces world literature.)

## V. Modernist Poetics and its Accommodations in Slovene Cultural Space of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

Slovene literary period of *die Moderne* (1899–1918) cannot be identified with the period of Modernism in the strict sense of this term. Literary innovations accommodated in Slovene literature of this period are mostly imported from the literary centre located in Vienna.<sup>7</sup>

On the other hand, “the idea of progress as a social and political project” which was implied in Slovene literature of *die Moderne* (see note 8) can explain why the most distinctive literary texts of early Slovene accommodations of modernist poetics, namely Kosovel’s *conses*, creatively accommodated literary innovations developed by Russian Constructivism.<sup>8</sup>

Slovene history of Slovene national literature locates the first Slovene modernist literary attempts in the 1920s when international movements of the historical avant-gardes motivated a selective reception of their inventions, especially of those that were promoted by Italian Futurism, Croatian Zenitism,

<sup>6</sup> »A work enters into world literature by a double process, first, by being read *as* literature; second, by circulating out into a broader world beyond its linguistic and cultural point of origin.« (Damrosch 2003: 6)

<sup>7</sup> In Jola Škulj’s opinion, »[...] the scheme of Berlin and Vienna moderns still retains the bourgeois sense of modernity, inscribing in itself the idea of progress as a social and political project [...] and therefore] does not realize the move into the Baudelairean aesthetic understanding of modernity.« (Škulj 2009: 106)

<sup>8</sup> »Among other things, the Tatlin-Kosovel relationship can be discerned from [Kosovel’s ... ] manifesto *Mehanikom* (To the Mechanics)« and Kosovel’s use of the term *cons*. *Cons* »[...] denotes a ‘thing’ (veshch’) in transition from composition to construction, or from a poem to cons. [...] Kosovel also perceives the difference between Marinetti’s ‘mechanical human being’ and Tatlin’s ideologically manipulated ‘human machine’, as understood by the Berlin Dadaists.« (Vrečko 2009: 85)

German Expressionism, and Russian (Tatlin's) Constructivism. Some accommodations of F. T. Marinetti's *Technical manifest* appeared in the poems of Anton Podbevšek. In the field of performance art, futurist *soiree* motivated some rather shocking echoes in Slovene culture. Structural principles of modern drama were perfectly accommodated by Slavko Grum's *Dogodek v mestu Gogi* (*An Event in the Town of Goga*) in 1927.

However, the most influential innovations in the process of modernisation of Slovene (national) literature were developed in Srečko Kosovel's lyrical *conses*: "[t]he use of engineering sketches, geometric material, and spatial definitions of conses effectively combined the content and form into a new organic unit, as applied in the work of Lisicki, Tatlin, and Chicherin, and in Zelinski's constructivism. Letters grew into space; there was no more painting and poetry, but only architecture and constructiveness with 'discipline and organization of the spirit.'" "Among other things, the Tatlin-Kosovel relationship can be discerned from [Kosovel's ... ] manifesto *Mehanikom* (To the Mechanics)" and Kosovel's use of the term *cons*. *Cons* "[...] denotes a 'thing' (veshch') in transition from composition to construction, or from a poem to cons. [...] Kosovel also perceives the difference between Marinetti's 'mechanical human being' and Tatlin's ideologically manipulated 'human machine', as understood by the Berlin Dadaists." (Vrečko 2009: 85)

None of these avant-gardist creations attracted any serious attention in Slovene cultural space in the 1920s. Moreover, the main body of Kosovel's constructivist literary production remained unpublished and even hidden until 1967 (!). The argument for this oppression was the aesthetic one. However, the fact that constructivist literary experiments could hardly be accommodated either by the literary "duty" of representing Slovene national identity or by the literary "service" for promoting and rejecting the growing impact of different political ideologies in Slovene cultural space between 1925 and 1941 seems to be more reliable. Literary significance of these two factors of selective literary import, i.e., Moretti's »pressure of cultural selection« was strengthened after 1945, when the dominant – and the only official – political ideology (generated by the state-political regime of Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia that included Slovene cultural space too) was the communist one. Between 1945 and 1948, Slovene literary market was undoubtedly re-established as a part of the international literary market which promoted (in Auerbach's term) the "russian-bolshevist" "standardization" of world literature from the centre located in the Soviet Union. This centre exported realist poetics, i.e., especially the poetics of Socialist Realism as a political-ideological derivation of Realism.

After 1948, i.e., the year of Yugoslav conflict and schism with the Soviet Union, Slovene literary market was not under the pressure of the socialist-realist artistic principles any more. However, the historical-materialistic worldview generated by the officially dominant political ideology and its cultural policy (see Gabrič 1995) in Slovene cultural space between 1949 and 1962 still demanded Realism and rejected the import of modernist and existentialist literary innovations in the name of political-ideological adequacy. During the 1960s, 1970s and even at the beginning of the 1980s, the state-political regime from time to time still rigorously reacted on the literary production that was recognized as “a danger spot” for the regime, however, these reactions were not associated with (un)loyalty to realist poetics any more.<sup>9</sup> Cultural significance of modernist world literature and Slovene modernist literature was determined by these culture-political conditions. What does this mean for Slovene creative accommodations of modernist poetics in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century?

According to literary documents and Slovene history of national literature Slovene modernist literature also appeared already around 1920, however, its reception was rather reduced. Between 1941 and 1945, modernist literary production was interrupted by World War II. Between 1945 and 1962 the political-ideologically generated cultural politics unsuccessfully tried to “prevent” Slovene culture and literature against the impact of Modernism. Therefore Slovene literature after 1950 accommodated the principles of modernist poetics in a very special way: Slovene accommodations of Modernism were “surveyed” by the subjects of existentialist philosophy that “prevented” creative subjectivity against losing itself in a totally free stream of consciousness. “Existentialist” variant of Modernism thus represented a way of defending the individual and his/her free will, choice, and personal responsibility. Existentialist literature that cannot support historical-materialistic worldview was of course the subject of rigorous political-ideological criticism. (See Gabrič 1995)

Modernist innovations were also imported from “euro-american” literary market (including French centre of existentialist philosophy and literature). The first Slovene creative accommodations of modernist poetics after 1950 thus appeared in the texts that more or less refer to the themes of

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<sup>9</sup> Typical victims of these reactions were journals (and some members of their editorial boards) and theatre plays. After publishing one of Lojze Kovačič's short stories in 1956, journal *Beseda* (Word) disappeared from Slovene cultural scene. It shared the same fate with the journal *Revija 57* (Review 57) which disappeared in 1958 and the journal *Perspektive* (Perspectives) which disappeared in 1964. Police forces interrupted the performance of Marjan Rožanc's theatre play *Topla greda* in 1964.

existentialist philosophy and literature. These literary texts include Dane Zajc's neo-expressionist lyric collection *Požgana trava* from 1958 (published by the author), Veno Taufer's existentialistically oriented lyric collection *Svinčene zvezde* (Lead Stars (!)) from 1958 (published by the author), Dominik Smole's existentialist novel with some modernist narrative strategies *Črni dnevi in beli dan* from 1958 and Lojze Kovačič's beginnings of prose fiction writing *Deček in smrt* from 1960, later (in 1968) published as a novel. Some elements of the absurd drama also appeared in the texts that accommodated existentialist model of drama already in 1957 and 1958, etc. Zajc, Taufer and Smole belong to the so called "Critical Generation". This group of literary authors and intellectuals in different ways articulated their disagreement with the political regime especially in the 1970s, i.e., the period which is sometimes metaphorically denoted as the "Years of Lead". (See Troha 2008) In respect of these (political-)cultural attitude Slovene modernist literary authors co-operated in constructing political-ideological opposition. This culture-political context of their literary creativeness undoubtedly provoked some special cultural connotations (in sense of Roland Barthes' term) of Slovene modernist literary works.

Modernist literature seems to predominate over the other literary currents in Slovene cultural space in the decades that follow, i.e., Slovene literary Modernism is focused to the period from the 1960s to the 1980s. Poetry of this period tends toward either post-symbolist and surrealist variants of modernism or toward parodies, concrete poetry and games of associations led by language. In the domain of prose fiction, poetics of the *nouveau roman* and "proustean concept of identity which appears only as processual variations of itself" (Van Hulle), i.e., modernist narrative strategies of the formal mastering of the fluid consciousness and the time were imported and creatively accommodated during the 1960s. These creative accommodations of modernist poetics reveal clear differentiations and in this way confirm Moretti's concept of *cyclus*, i.e., accommodations of forms that are developed under the "pressure of cultural selection". This pressure refers especially to the genres of absurdist drama and poetic drama: both of them often suggested critical attitude towards the ideological strategies of the regime.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, more "neutral"

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<sup>10</sup> Ironic strategy which characterizes the genre of absurdist drama in Slovene late Modernism sometimes directly refers to repressive practice of the political system and reveals its absurdity: in Dušan Jovanovič's theatre play *Norci* (The Madmen, written in 1964) protagonists escape from the clinic and conquer the parliament. After neutralizing them, the government re-organizes social reality

accommodations of modernist poetics tended to articulate the principal of literary autonomy. In political-ideological context of Slovene literature between 1960 and 1980 this tension can be considered as “political” gesture.

A short description of Slovene Modernism refers to Janko Kos’ comparative history of Slovene literature. (See Kos 2001) Since the pre-war years, translator and poet Jože Udovič developed his symbolist and even surrealist version of modernist poetics under the influence of modernist authors like Garcia Lorca, D. Thomas, Saint-John Perse, etc., whose works he translated. Peculiar accommodations or creative re-employment of modernist poetics like structural strategy of creating an alternative, i.e., poetic world generated by mythical or symbolic paradigm appeared in Gregor Strniša’s lyric collection *Odisej* published in 1963 and form a special variant of modernist poetry. Another kind of poetic strategy characterizes the poetics of Dane Zajc whose free lines recall rhythmical form of old rituals. Veno Taufer who translated many modernist poets from “euro-american” literary market (T.S. Eliot, etc.) gradually dissolved the poem to the flow of associations. Surrealist strategy of metaphorical associations (poetically surveyed by existentialist themes) appeared in Edvard Kocbek’s lyric collection *Groza* (1964) and in his later work. The genre of absurd drama appears in Peter Božič’s early work (written in 1962) and in Dominik Smole’s theatre plays of the 1960s. Both of them creatively adopted Beckett’s and Ionesco’s formal strategies of the absurdist drama. The heirs of absurdist drama were Dušan Jovanović’s ultramodernist plays of the 1970s. They represent the “indifferent game” (Kos 2001: 369) or pure game of language and images.

The second half of the 1960s is characterized by some shocks and scandals caused by literary and intermedial production of Slovene neo-avant-garde group OHO (par onomastic abbreviation for »eye and ear«) and its collaborator Tomaž Šalamun with his lyric collection *Poker* published in 1966, as well as theatre performance *Pupilija papa Pupilo pa Pupilčki* produced by the group named Theatre of Pupilija Ferkeverk. (During this performance, a hen was slain on the stage). Neo-avant-garde production often systematically, i.e., parodically attacked the audience’s horizon of expectation, including Slovene cultural function of literature, i.e., its affirming the value of national identity or tradition. Šalamun’s poetics later gave up its parodic implication and strengthened the leading principle of absolutely free and spontaneous stream of

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in a structure of prison, where all men are – equal, i.e., they all are arrested madmen under surveillance, including, of course, all members of the government. (See Troha 2008: 8)

associations that presents a pure auto-referential consciousness in movements of its coincidental contents. Poets like Milan Dekleva and Milan Jesih who grew from this neo-avant-garde context later try to overcome the nihilist stand-point either by importing pre-Socratic and Eastern philosophies in poetry (Dekleva) or by ironically ambiguous re-employments of Slovene poetic canon (Jesih). On the other hand, Svetlana Makarovič's poetry, similar to poetics of Strniša and Zajc, articulates feelings of archetypal evil by re-employments of folklore motifs, images and rhythmical forms of Slavic folk poetry. Niko Grafenauer's poetic series of associations in lyric collections *Štukature* (1975) and *Palimpsesti* (1984) re-created symbolist and post-symbolist tradition of S Mallarmé and R. M. von Rilke. Boris A. Novak's poetry re-creates many old troubadour forms in order to gain the mastery over chaotic reality by perfect fusion of linguistic sound and meaning. In words of literary historian Matevž Kos, these re-employments of literary tradition, especially the form of a sonnet, serve as »a form of getting over the modernity«. (See Kos 1996: 15–32)

During the 1960s, two central directions of modernist prose fiction were imported from the "euro-american" literary market (including French "semi-peripheral" centre of innovations). The first one forms the genre of *nouveau roman* as a turn against psychologism that characterized the early modernist narrative. In Slovene literature, it was accommodated to Slovene literary tradition by Rudi Šeligo's novel *Triptih Agate Schwarzkobler* (1968) that refers to another novel (from 1919) by borrowing the protagonist as a powerless individual who is presented in a repressive and violent social situation. The second direction of modernist prose fiction in Slovene literature is adopted by Lojze Kovačič's extensive novels that have formed the great Slovene modernist author's works of prose since 1968 (*Deček in smrt*). In its (re-)creating of the subjective reality, this series of novels represents the key characteristics of modernist poetics, as summarized by Gemzøe (and quoted already above): "There is no (strong) plot line and the world is dissolved into cuts between points of view, fragmented sensations and an unseizable manifold of unfinished utterances." Time and space are transformed into the pure subjective experiences that appear as the contents of always renewed memory or fluid consciousness and in this way construct subjective, i.e., auto-referential reality through constantly new variants as expressions of gnoseological uncertainty. The "feminine pendant" to Kovačič's poetics are novels of Nedeljka Pirjevec, only published around 2000. During the 1990s and later, modernist narrative strategies were creatively re-adopted for another purpose too, and that is to represent an individual repressed by historical social conditions. In this way,

the accommodation of modernist narrative strategies (especially in the novels and short stories of Drago Jančar and Rudi Šeligo) re-questioned images of the past produced by Slovene modern historiography between 1945 and 1990. (See Matajc 2011: 264–265)

## VI. Conclusion

This short description of Slovene modernist literary period tried to represent the series of accommodations of modernist literary inventions in Slovene literature. However, the key question remains the question of selective reception and specifics of accommodations of modernist world literature in Slovene cultural space. It cannot be a matter of coincidence that the first traces of modernist poetics appear in Slovene literature during the period of the upraising totalitarian and authoritarian political ideologies that try to radically re-settle social-historical conditions in different rival ways. Selective import of these political ideologies to Slovene cultural space certainly co-operates in importing the selection of avant-garde movements that, according to Slovene political situation, creatively accommodate humanist direction of German Expressionism and Tatlin's Russian Constructivism in growing tension for the renewal of a human being either in inter-human relations of "brotherhood" or class-less community and by supporting the new aesthetics that shall occupy every aspect of everyday life. On the other hand, Slovene selective accommodation of avant-garde innovations gradually kept distance from Italian Futurism that was soon associated with Fascism. For the Italian Fascist regime occupied a great part of Slovene territory and in this aspect represented a serious threat to the identity of Slovene national cultural space.

Slovene modernist literature after 1960 undoubtedly articulates the characteristics which were ascribed to modernist world literature too. However, the ICLA's criteria of modernist world literature in European languages cannot explain all characteristics of Slovene literary Modernism. Slovene national literature of the 20th century found itself »located« on the crossway of the two standardizations, i.e., two (or more) centres of world literature. This crossway literary location under the impact of realist and modernist poetics can be explained by Moretti's *pressure of cultural selection* in Slovene (modernist) literature. Its key-factor seems to be the political-ideological context of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that motivated the ways of changes and transformations of modernist literary innovations, i.e., modernist "genres and devices« accommodated by Slovene literature. In this respect, modernist

characteristics of Slovene national literature undoubtedly confirm Moretti's concept of literary forms as »the abstract of social relationships«. In case of Slovene literature this concept shall refer to the »abstract« of political-ideological and national, i.e., cultural relationships. In this respect, world literature *on the crossways*<sup>11</sup> of different literary markets certainly forms Moretti's world literary system as »one, and unequal«.

“All important formal innovations of Modernism such as stream of consciousness and interior monologue, hybridization of genres, and linguistic and multimedia experiments are simply ways to react to modernity and its way of representing reality. First of all, these new formal techniques are an attempt to better represent the world [...]. Second, they aim to influence the way people perceive reality, in order to make it better.” (Colombi 2009: 147, 148) The first way seems to suggest the autonomy of literature as a pure form. This is how Modernism was explained in ICLA's *Modernism*. The second way tends to different re-employments of modernist forms, i.e., Moretti's “genres” and “devices” in the context of political, national, etc., ideologies “in order to make [... the world] better.” The second way of modernist diversification seems to characterize many modernisms of Central- and East-European national literatures. This diversification of modernist poetics shall be taken into account in addressing the question on Modernism. In this respect, (modernist) world literature can include the specifics of national literatures and transcend them by Damrosch's flexible concept of world literature explained as “the way of reading”. (Damrosch 2003: 6)

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<sup>11</sup> »A spatial paradigm [...] highlights the way in which global relations are reflected in local formations of modernity. [...]s a constantly hybridized phenomenon, modernism travels, translates, transplants, and indigenizes – globally, and not from a single point of origin. It emerges from different centres, different experiences of modernity that are not segregated from each other but are rather reciprocally relating to each other [...]«. (Stanford Friedman: 51)

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