Peripheral Modernism and the World-System: Slovenian Literature and Theory of the Nineteen-Sixties

Periferni modernizem in svetovni sistem: slovenska književnost in teorija šestdesetih let 20. stoletja

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In response to recent pluralization of modernism, the author adopts Jameson's singular modernity to argue that, in the capitalist world-system divided between hegemonic and dependent literary fields, modernism exists only through its particular manifestations. During the 1968 student revolt, Slovenian late modernism – in-between peripheral phenomenon caught in the Cold War antagonism – displays a universal feature of the period: its transformative impulse resulting from "the imaginative proximity of social revolution" (Anderson). Embedded in the global insurgency, Slovenian innovative trends of the 1960s synchronized with western centers of modernity. It brought together critical theory and experimental artistic practice to reshape writing, literary institution, the subject, and society at large.

V odzivu na nedavne poskuse decentralizacije in pluralizacije modernizma članek povzema Jamesonovo koncepcijo »edinstvene modernosti« kot izhodišče za tezo, da v kapitalističnem svetovnem sistemu, razdeljenem med hegemonistična in odvisna literarna polja, modernizem obstaja le prek svojih posebnih manifestacij. Med študentskim uporom leta 1968 je slovenski pozni modernizem – kot pojav vmesne periferije, ujete v antagonizem hladne vojne – znova prikazal univerzalno značilnost modernizma: njegov transformativni impulz, ki izhaja iz »predstavne bližine socialne revolucije« (Anderson). Slovenski modernizem šestdesetih let, vključen v svetovno uporništvo, se je sinhroniziral z zahodnimi središči modernosti, revitaliziranimi z energijo istega svetovnega dogodka. Združil je kritično teorijo in eksperimentalno umetniško prakso, da bi preoblikoval pisanje, literarno institucijo, subjekt in družbo.

MODERNISM, CENTER VS. PERIPHERY, SLOVENIAN LITERATURE, STUDENT MOVEMENT, REVOLUTION, NEO-AVANT-GARDE, WORLD-SYSTEM

MODERNIZEM, CENTER VS. PERIFERIJA, SLOVENSKA KNJIŽEVNOST, ŠTUDENTSKO GIBANJE, REVOLUCIJA, NEOAVANTGARDA, SVETOVNI SISTEM

In the current configuration of the world systems of language, economy, and literature, Slovenia and its national literary field – with texts written in a minor language for a slim readership of a small country – structurally occupy one of the many peripheral positions.[1] Specifically, Slovenian literature is located in the "in-between peripherality" (cf. Tötösy de Zepetnek) of a space containing regions that have been geopolitically labeled as Central Europe, Eastern Europe, East-Central Europe, South-Eastern Europe, or Western Balkans. The fortune of this zone relied on the Habsburg, the Ottoman, and Russian empires in the modern age, whereas in the second half of the twentieth century it depended on the relations between the center of the world capitalism in the West and its ideological-political counterpart in the communist East. Located in this in-between peripherality, which the Conference of Yalta had split on the so-called First and Second Worlds, the Republic of Slovenia – as a constitutive part of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia – formed a second-degree in-between geopolitical unit in the second half of the twentieth century. It was a buffer state between the socialist and capitalist empires ever since the Cominform Resolution of 1948 until the nineties, when the South Slavic federation ended up in a bloody civil war that followed the fall of the Berlin wall and the decay of the Soviet bloc. Yugoslavia played the buffer role with its system of a socialist self-management, a leading role in the Non-alignment movement, and its openness towards the West.

Given that Slovenia is but one of the peripheries of the world literary system, the question arises whether the analysis of its literary modernism might tell anything relevant about the universality of modernism as a global phenomenon or such an analysis merely complements the record of modernism's particular manifestations. Susan S. Friedman and Fredric Jameson take different sides in their

response to the challenge recently posed by modernist studies that adopted a de-centered notion of alternative or multiple modernisms. Astradur Eysteinsson and Vivian Liska (2007b: 1–3) remind us that as early as 1968, i.e., in the era of "old" modernist studies, Frank Kermode discussed "modernisms" in the plural, what foreshadows the "new" modernist studies' stress on the poetic, spatial, and temporal heterogeneity of modernism. Inspired by theories of globalization, cosmopolitanism, and transnationalism, literary studies have recently put forth the notion of "alternative modernities" in order to overcome western-centric characterization and periodization of global modernism (cf. Doyle & Winkiel 2005b; Ramalho Santos & Sousa Ribeiro 2008b; Friedman 2008; Wollaeger 2012; Goldwyn & Silverman 2016b).

Common to different strands of new modernism studies is their rejection of a general concept of modernism derived from descriptions of a narrow canon of exemplary texts, mostly of French and Anglo-American metropolitan origin. The authors of these texts mostly did not call themselves "modernists" but were designated as such only retrospectively, in the nineteen-sixties, when literary critics recognized them as models grounding the general historical term of international modernism (cf. Škulj 1991). Such a reductive determination of modernist prototypes implied Eurochronology through which global supremacy of the West masked itself as a neutral instrument of world-historical calibration (cf. Friedman 2015: 85–92). Seen from this perspective, the origins of modernism as "international style" are supposed to be in Apollinaire, Proust, Joyce, Woolf, Eliot, and other western celebrities of the period between 1880 and 1930. Accordingly, the explanation of the world-wide dissemination of their innovative breakthroughs resides in the diffusionist model of waves emanating from metropolises (Paris, London, New York, Berlin)

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From this, it follows that it is not appropriate to periodize global modernism in terms of "the Greenwich meridian of literature" (Casanova: 127–130). Paris, London, or New York cannot figure as absolute measures of modernity or belatedness. In the perspective of parataxis, modernism escapes linear temporality and its focus on the first three decades of the western twentieth century.

to peripheral zones where they become subject to belated imitation and appropriation.

Faced with extensive multilingual resources of the present-day literary history and critiques of colonial or imperial mindset, the advocates of multiple, alternative modernisms argue that diffusionism is, epistemologically, a dead end. As an antidote, Susan Stanford Friedman introduces modernism from a transnational and postcolonial point of view. Following Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogism and Edward Soja's human geography, she describes modernism as "cultural parataxis," that is, a polycentric, multilingual, and nonhierarchical structure of cultural flows (Friedman 2007: 37–38). To be sure, even though peripheral and border zones can hardly avoid metropolitan influence they have several global centers at their disposal; moreover, peripheries may also exchange their cultural goods directly with other marginal zones, establish unmediated contacts with other civilizations, and struggle against global or regional hegemons (35–36). The paratactic approach also recognizes bidirectional interaction between centers and peripheries through which weaker literary fields, too, develop singular literary discourses that because of locally specific developments variously respond to global modernity.[2] Heterogeneous semiotic material flowing into peripheries through cultural transfer interferes in homegrown literary repertoires. The import grafted into the layers of indigenous traditions becomes instrumental in reactivating the forgotten potentials of past artistic codes and responding to locally particular constellation of discourse. Phenomena of modernism produced at the edge thus necessarily depart from the standard dictated by a single center.

They also respond to different historical conjectures what changes the significance of forms that mimic earlier metropolitan patterns.

Dionýz Ďurišin, who was the first to theorize world literature as a mega-system of individual and regional literary systems, would characterize the temporality of peripheral modernisms in terms of irregular or accelerated development.[3] In the light of his concept, literary movements and styles do not follow one another along the standard "Greenwich" timeline represented by the evolution of global centers but may coincide or they evolve at higher speed and skip evolutionary states deemed regular (cf. Ďurišin: 43–48, 159–160, 170–183).

Admittedly, the alternative views outlined above expanded modernism's spatial and temporal scope, thereby diversifying the record of its properties as a global phenomenon. By recognizing modernist intellectual and stylistic structures in phenomena that depart from western-centric standards and prototypes, ingenious deconstructions of the idea of the norm-giving core impressively promoted the politically correct principle of equality. However, they denied global hegemony of western modernity and its background of the economic, military, and political supremacy. Deconstructive de-centering only masked the real-existing power relations with an invented literary-historical narrative about the aesthetic equivalence of plural modernisms. In other words, even though recent modernism studies are aware of and frustrated by the world-systemic inequality, their surrogate narrative secludes the aesthetic realm from the capitalist mode of production and refrains from interpreting plural modernist forms as local sediments of the global symbolic struggle with (post)colonial and (post)imperial dependence.

Moreover, if considered from purely intra-disciplinary point-of-view of literary history, recent piling up of heterogeneous phenomena under the umbrella term of modernism risks the inflation of the notion. As a historical concept, modernism in the plural is on the verge

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The term of accelerated development of literature was proposed by Georgi Gachev in his 1964 monograph on the Bulgarian literature of the first half of the nineteenth century when Bulgaria was subjected to the Ottoman Empire. As so-called young literature at the margins of Europe, Bulgarian literature was supposed to catch up with the European center and go through the entire evolution of European literature in just a few decades. This condensation resulted in syncretic co-presence of different period styles.

of becoming meaningless inasmuch it tends to ignore the role of *rapports de fait*, that is, the structural dominance of distinctive representations that respond to a historically specific conjecture and intensively circulate across individual literary fields and languages within a delimited segment of time. In her monumental *Planetary Modernisms*, Susan S. Friedman expands the notion of modernism temporally and spatially to an extent where it loses historical value. It mutates into a transhistorical type of literature that recurs all along from the antiquity to the present, from the Far East to the West, and from the North to the South.

It follows that neither decentering pluralization nor transhistorical reinterpretation of the concept of modernism present valid alternatives to western-centrism. What is needed is instead a historical analysis of the conditions in which the metropolitan idea of modernity emerged and gained global currency. As Anthony Giddens (1990: 1, 174–178), Fredric Jameson (2002: 17–95), and even Friedman (2015: 121) point out, it was in the West that the self-awareness of breaking with tradition, radical change, and accelerated current of innovations arrived at its concept. The process started in the late seventeenth century with the famous *Querelle des anciens et des modernes* and culminated in the aftermath of the industrial revolution. Ambivalent experiences of contemporaneity accompanied it; the unpredictability of the dynamic, open-ended present awoke both optimistic progressivism and the trauma of permanent crisis and instability. As it is known, the origin of the term of modernism is European as well (cf. Škulj 2009). Introduced in German-speaking countries as a contemporaneous designation of the fin-de-siècle art, it came to denote more experimental Anglo-American and French artworks between roughly 1880 and 1930 that – as purely aesthetic expressions of individuals – refashioned

politically more resonating collective techniques, principles, and forms promoted by European avant-garde artistic groups from Symbolists to Surrealists. This concept of modernism appeared in literary criticism only in historical retrospection, in the nineteen-sixties. After all, it is no doubt that the West coined the notion of modernity to narrate and ideologically legitimize its hegemony within the capitalist world-system. Correspondingly, the idea (i.e., theory or ideology) of modernism along with practices informed by this idea were able to gain universal validity through a multitude of particular articulations (central and peripheral alike) only due to the global supremacy of core states in the realms of economy, politics, military, and culture.

As it has been mentioned above, two recent theories of modernism – antithetically responding to the pluralization of the concept – establish the framework in which particular insights in the universality of modernism become relevant. Jameson analyzes plural manifestations of modernism within "singular modernity" of the capitalist world-system whose centers produced a correspondent ideology of modernism. Contrariwise, Friedman (2008, 2015) interprets plurality of modernisms in terms of intellectual typology. In her view, the multiplicity of modernisms is but a twentieth-century actualization of a transhistorical pattern. Together with its aesthetic and symbolic articulation in modernism, the recurring modernity transcends the post-Renaissance West. Europe and the US no longer figure as the sole sources of modernity/modernism. The type of socio-historical constellation Friedman understands as modernity extends far deeper into the past and stretches to more extensive areas, for example, the Tang Dynasty or Mongolian Empire.

Even though Friedman commits a logical error in universalizing a particular historical content of modernity/modernism,[4] her utterly

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In the final analysis, her generalization of western categories intellectually colonizes the rest of the world in spite of her original aim to protect the rest from the colonial dominance of the West by "democratizing" modernism as an all-around and recurrent typological constellation.

self-reflective challenge to mainstream modernist studies seems productive. Above all, Friedman's consistent pairing of modernity and modernism with the rule, expansion, transformation, and fall of empires is essential. In her view, empires generate accelerated dynamics of change because their authorities have to provide conditions for the ongoing exchange of goods, capital, and labor within vast and heterogeneous territories (multilingual and multi-ethnic), as well as establish the timely spread of information from centers to peripheries. Traffic routes, speedy transportation, versatile administration, and innovative means of communication enable control over the empire. Considering that Friedman discusses historical phenomena of western modernity and modernism along with their impact on the Third World in the imperial context, the study of Slovenian experimental literature of the nineteen-sixties may shed light on the modernity characterizing the buffer zone between the First and the Second Worlds during the Cold War.

The second concept that frames the study of peripheral modernism as relevant is Jameson's dialectic of the particular and the universal. In a similar fashion as Friedman, Jameson criticizes the assumption that there exists "a norm for the development of modernism and its aesthetics" or "some master evolutionary line from which each of these national developments can be grasped as a kind of deviation" (Jameson: 182). He recalls Marx's description of capitalism "for which each national trajectory – including the central illustration, and the oldest one, of British capitalism as such – is uniquely overdetermined by the empirical specificities of the national cultural and historical situation as such" (ibid.). Thus, "there is no 'basic' historical paradigm, all the paths of capitalist development are unique and unrepeatable" (ibid.). From the perspective of Marxian dialectics, the very universality

of modernism, too, lacks empirical actualization that would paradigmatically represent this universality; what is universal is enacted only through its particulars, all of them "specific and historically unique" (183). To put it differently: the universality of modernism articulates through a processual structure of contradictions that, within the singularity of a historical period, determines the production and consumption of artifacts in a transnational space systemically divided between cores and peripheries.

Resulting from the industrial revolution and reaching the stage of imperialism, the concentration of capital in core states of the world boosted their economic expansion, accelerated development, and innovative breakthroughs in all fields. At the level of cultural production, this gave rise to metropolitan areas, the hubs of global intellectual traffic and social networking. Metropolises disseminate worldwide both the art forms they import or remake and cultural goods they produce from abundant domestic resources. Global cities attract cultural producers from peripheral regions and employ their artifacts as raw material for the production of the aesthetic surplus value through cultural branding (e.g., claiming priority in inventing an influential trend). However, growing commodification of cultural production in the twentieth century jeopardized literary producers – who struggled for the aesthetic autonomy of literature ever since Romanticism – with the needs of the mass consumption. Metropolitan modernisms in France, the UK, and the US attempted to respond to this challenge with more radical aesthetic experimentation focused on languages of the arts. According to Jameson, this autotelic and self-referential gesture sought for conceptual legitimization and, finally, elaborated it in the form of the ideology of modernism; invented in the second half of the twentieth century, the ideology of modernism underpinned

contemporary art practices in their endeavor to separate from the mass culture (Jameson: 171–180). In addition to experimental formalism, modernist response to commodification also encompassed representations of resentment caused by instability of the author role such as the dissociation of the subject, alienation, dehumanization, dystopia, absurd, and negative emotions.

With their markets, raw materials, and low-cost labor force, peripheries, by definition, depend on the core and tend to embrace nationalism in their struggle for cultural autonomy or political independence. Just like their metropolitan counterparts, modernists in European peripheries had to cope with the commodification of artistic production and the rise of mass culture. However, they found themselves in ambivalent position: on the one hand, they had to place themselves vis-à-vis a particular tradition of nationalism in their dominated country and hereby risk to succumb to its retrograde, anti-cosmopolitan tendencies; on the other hand, they interacted with contemporaneous patterns of cosmopolitan modernism which, under the guise of universality, emanated from hegemonic centers.

General laws of transnational literary evolution postulated by Franco Moretti (2000: 3) also apply to peripheral modernisms: a periphery makes a hybrid "compromise" between the form imported from the center (for example, stream of consciousness, collage, or dehumanization) and local material or narrative voice. Through cultural import and indigenization of metropolitan forms, peripheral modernisms establish symbolic equivalence with central modernity or, in other words, they synchronize with the temporality of the center. The effort to synchronize with contemporaneity – in its openness and accelerated becoming – is the universal imperative of modernism. At the same time, however, the appropriation and transformation of metropolitan

modernist samples testify to a conscious or spontaneous cosmopolitan solidarity of globally unrecognized marginal authors with world-famous core modernists in their international opposition to bourgeoisie and commodification of art.

Commenting on Marx and Marshall Berman, Perry Anderson pointed out that capitalist modernity, with its decomposition of rigid social order endemic to the *ancien regime*, aroused "a profound disorientation and insecurity, frustration and despair, concomitant with, indeed inseparable from the sense of enlargement and exhilaration, the new capacities and feelings, liberated at the same time" (Anderson: 98). To Anderson, the twentieth-century term modernism "signals the arrival of a coherent vocabulary for an experience of modernity that preceded it" (102). He interprets modernism as historical conjuncture in the field of cultural production triangulated by the relations to three factors: first, the institutionalized bourgeois high culture and its post-aristocratic academicism; second, technologies of the second industrial revolution and the ensuing mass consumption; and third, the imaginative proximity of social revolution (104). Within this "cultural field of force," the artistic discourses, driven by contradictory experiences of modernity (split between the sense freedom and alienation), variously reacted to uncertainties resulting from the accelerated socio-economic dynamics. According to Anderson, typical of different modernisms are the historical conjuncture from which they arose and the traits of their ambivalent response to it, ranging from celebration to rejection. Even though modernist writers strongly opposed academicism, they resorted to the classical repertoire of high literature to ground their quasi-aristocratic position vis-à-vis contemporary mass society, rapid social transformation, and the emergent labor movement. As Anderson puts it:

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Anderson remarks
that England did not
produce a transna-
tional modernist
movement whose im-
portance could match
Dadaism, Futurism,
Surrealism, or Ex-
pressionism (102).

> [T]he persistence of the 'anciens regimes,' and the academicism concom-
> itant with them, provided a critical range of cultural values against
> which insurgent forms of art could measure themselves, but also
> in terms of which they could partly articulate themselves… the old or-
> der, precisely in its still partially aristocratic colouration, afforded a set
> of available codes and resources from which the ravages of the market
> as an organizing principle of culture and society – uniformly detested
> by every species of modernism – could also be resisted. (Anderson: 105)

Parallel to Jameson and Moretti, Anderson maintains that the singular
modernist "socio-political conjuncture," which was geographically
unevenly distributed even across the West,[5] passed away after WWII
when modernist art, cut off from the triangle of social forces, lost its
vitality and – in the conditions of mass consumption and victorious
institutionalization of bourgeois economic and political order – contin-
ued to evolve in the framework of much more limited neo-avant-garde
movements and the gallery system's demands for ever new seasonal
trends (Anderson: 106–108). While "the image or hope for revolution
faded away in the West," the "Sovietization of Eastern Europe canceled
any realistic prospect of a socialist overthrow of advanced capitalism,
for a whole historical period" (107). Anderson concedes that the post-
WWII Third World knows "a kind of shadow configuration of what once
prevailed in the First World" and thus continues to produce its particu-
lar versions of modernism; however, this cannot rejuvenate modernism
and restore its singular energy stemming from the historical conjunc-
ture of the first decades of the twentieth century (109). It is during
this waning of modernist art in the First and the Second World "that
the ideology and cult of modernism was born. The conception itself
is scarcely older than the 1950s, as a widespread currency" (108). Just

like Jameson, Anderson links the introduction of the term "modernism" as a universal designation with the ideology of modernism, which reacted to diminished importance of high art forms in the post-WWII consumer societies.

In addition to Jameson and Friedman, contributors to collective volumes *Geomodernisms*, *Translocal Modernisms*, *Global Modernisms* and *Mediterranean Modernism* stress multitude of modernisms, which hybridize global formal patterns with local perspectives and material, in particular in the postcolonial context. Pluralization and decentralization of modernism have undoubtedly contributed to a better understanding of its peripheral varieties, albeit primarily those from the postcolonial world. The recent world literature studies witness the affirmation of major non-European and postcolonial literatures at the cost of further marginalization of small and (semi-)peripheral European literatures (cf. D'Haen). In a similar vein, the new modernist studies, albeit open to the overlooked achievements of the Third World, rarely consider minor literatures of the First World and even more rarely those from the Second World. The neglected in-between area includes various Balkan modernisms (Bahun: 28–30) and modernisms of smaller literatures of Central Europe. The reasons for the disinterest of modernist studies in the former socialist world might be the ideological barrier between the western and eastern blocs and the assumption that socialist modernism hardly existed because it was at odds with the official aesthetic doctrines. Moreover, modernisms in the former socialist world remained at the margin of interest because of a more general attitude of western metropolises. In their eyes, peripheral modernisms seem unattractive because they supposedly cannot evoke radical otherness whose "exoticism" might reanimate their petrified repertoires (e.g., African art in Picasso's Cubism; cf. Friedman 2015: 66).

Always hungry for innovation, metropolitan modernism expects from its east-central European counterparts but pale copies of its inventions.

In my opinion, what Moretti's formula of compromise needs today is neither its denial nor reinterpretation of the idea of compromise but rather an inversion of hierarchy implied in the priority of metropolitan form over local material and perspective. Local perspectives and materials deserve a more thorough examination. Through these particulars, we may gain access to critical world-systemic aspects of modernism. Not only introspection of local problematics through the lens of imported aesthetic forms belongs to the local perspective, but also extrospection, that is, how peripheral authors envision their position in the local and global contexts. Local perspective is the site where peripheral literary producers have to come to terms with their subjugation to the adopted foreign form as the aesthetic medium of economic-political dominance. Consequently, the authorial ambivalence arises from the tensions between the particularity of a dependent literary field and the universality of capitalism, with modernism as its inherent aesthetic representation and critique.

To my knowledge, a comparative synthesis of the developments and varieties of literary modernisms in East-Central Europe is still pending. However, the introductory surveys framing case studies included in the first volume of *History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe* allow for sketching transnational coordinates of Slovenian and other peripheral modernisms of the area. After WWII, the countries in this region were ruled by Communist parties mostly dependent on the Russian-Soviet center or inspired by its methods, as in the case of Yugoslavia after its 1948 break with Stalin. Based on the sociological argument that totalitarian or authoritarian political systems shaped their literary cultures, Marcel Cornis-Pope and John Neubauer term the period from

1945 to 1989 as an epoch of "communism." In their literary-historical scheme, the so-called communist literary period follows the epochs of the nineteenth-century "nationalism" and "modernism"; the latter term designates literatures of the first half of the twentieth century (Cornis-Pope & Neubauer 2004b: 7–12; Neubauer 2004: 321–322). In the *History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe*, the period of modernism defined as aesthetic category finds itself between the two periods whose dominant lies outside literature and aesthetics, in the sphere of politics: the nineteenth-century nationalism and communism of the second half of the twentieth century. However, this does not mean that modernism vanished after 1945. Similar to the First and the Third Worlds, where modernist phenomena and currents prospered in the decades following the conventional western-centric periodization limit (Modernist Studies Association places modernism between the years of 1880 and 1940; cf. Friedman 2015: 89–92), the post-WWII modernism of the socialist world entered its late phase and finally mutated into postmodernism. Cornis-Pope's and Neubauer's periodization, if read through Moretti's formula of compromise, implies that the *aesthetic* models imported from Western centers of modernism to East-Central European peripheries made the compromise with local materials and perspectives determined by the *political* context of communism.

It would be misleading to interpret the hegemony of the Communist party in terms of totalitarian control over the intellectual and artistic production. Cornis-Pope (2004: 40) points out that in the literary cultures of East-Central Europe – not only in non-aligned Yugoslavia – critical and artistic resistance to official ideology was possible, albeit it risked repressive measures. Recent analysis has shown that communism in the Soviet empire was not monolithic and could not control the entire ideological sphere; the rivalry between Soviet countries

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On the one hand, modernist phenomena in the East-Central European in-between periphery were heir to pre-war domestic and foreign modernist currents that had been violently interrupted by the change of the social system; on the other hand, they came under the influence of Western post-war modernist trends, such as existentialism, the drama of the absurd, nouveau roman, and others.

diversified communism, whereas their intellectual production was too big to be mastered by the authorities (Cornis-Pope, l. c.). Thus, the post-war history of many second-world literary cultures includes an unpredictable rhythm of changes between phases of harsh repression and shorter periods of relative artistic-intellectual liberty, as well as relocations of the foci of repression. For example, at the time the oppression was worst in Hungary, Poland enjoyed a temporary thaw (cf. Cornis-Pope & Neubauer 2004b: 36–37). Furthermore, the Iron Curtain was permeable, so that the bourgeois West could gradually trickle into the East through the controlled media, restricted trade, limited scientific and cultural exchange, and tourism. From the sixties onwards, porous boundaries made possible the import not only of urban mass culture (for example, jeans, TV, pop and rock, consumerism) but also of literature.

The extent of western cultural transfer varied from country to country. While circulating on clandestine ways among dissidents, individual segments of cultural import also succeeded to reach public media. In general, modernist ideas and literary techniques started to gain prominence in East-Central Europe after 1956, after a period of socialist realist orthodoxy to which modernism represented petty-bourgeois decadence (Neubauer &Cornis-Pope: 90–94).[6] As in-between periphery, East-Central Europe in the epoch of "communism" not only confronted western modernism with the official ideology emanating from the Soviet center but also embraced them in the horizon of the suppressed pre-war modernist legacies of the region.

Even though Slovenian communists never really applauded to literary modernism (while they were quite open to modernist architecture and visual art) they tolerated it provided it remained hermetic, introspective, formalist or abstract, limited to the intellectual elite,

and without explicit critical references to official ideology and social reality.[7] In spite of sporadic dramatic conflicts with the authorities, Slovenian literary modernism by the late nineteen-sixties succeeded to address its educated audience not only through non-institutional media or self-publishing but also through state-owned and party-controlled printing, radio, and theater. Compared to the majority of east European communist regimes, modernization of culture according to western models was accepted with more tolerance in Slovenia, but only in the decades following Yugoslav 1948 break with the Soviet Union and the political campaign against "Stalinists" and "dogmatists." So-called Party liberals and reformists even encouraged cultural modernization, albeit in the frame of their political agenda. By allowing modernist trends to appear in journals, books, and theaters, Slovenian authorities demonstrated to eastern ideologues and western economic partners how progressive and democratic Yugoslav self-management was in comparison to the Soviet model. Nevertheless, such a tolerant attitude was unstable and unpredictable. As soon as the ruling party, involved in fraction struggles and rivalries with sister parties in other Yugoslav republics, got the feeling that critical intellectuals and writers might have endangered its monopoly it began to persecute them as intolerable "cultural opposition." Such an attitude entailed demonstrative acts of police repression, short-term imprisonments, hate campaigns in the media, bans of modernist journals and stages, and communist pressures upon printing houses, editorial boards, and so on (cf. Gabrič: 1024–1035; Kos: 155–159; Vodopivec: 422–463).

In the late nineteen-fifties and the sixties, the trend of so-called dark modernism emerged in Slovenia to combine existentialist feelings of horror, loneliness, and absurd – they were felt like an indirect refusal of the official collective belief in building a perfect communist society

[7] Rather than modernism, the existentialism with its political engagement, the émigré literature, and critical neorealist depiction of the socialist everyday troubled the communist ideologues, the Yugoslav and Slovenian included (cf. Gabrič 945–947; Neubauer & Cornis-Pope 100–101).

– with mostly Surrealist or metaphors and post-Expressionist deformation. As mentioned above, Anderson claims that western modernism established its profile through ambivalent relations to aristocratic and bourgeois traditionalism. In its struggle against worn-out academicism, modernism leaned on aesthetic elitism in the effort to find its way to sophisticated audiences during the expansion of mass culture (Anderson: 105). In the circumstances of one-party communist rule, Slovenian poetry of dark modernism applied the pattern described by Anderson to the struggle with academicism of a different kind. Through satirical allusions, allegorical coding, and "nihilist" affects, dark modernism undermined collectivist progressivism characteristic of communist modernity. In the same vein, it attacked residual ideologemes of nineteenth-century nationalism and emptied Roman Catholic symbols that profoundly influenced Slovenian intellectual history since the Middle Ages. Through tacit allusions to dissident political perspectives on society and tradition, dark modernism exposed the poetic self to the unconscious and the dread of nothingness (cf. Juvan 2000: 237–269).

Following the heterogeneity of pre-WWII modernism in Euro-American metropolises,[8] the poetics of dark modernism took various shapes. To begin with, Dane Zajc (1929–2005) wrote grotesque phantasmagorias expressed in a mythopoetic, post-expressionist, or surrealist manner. Poetic cycles by Gregor Strniša (1930–1987) are fractal compositions in which modern relativism and phenomenologically pure images borrowed from folklore, medieval art, and astronomy suggest a delirious horror of nothingness. Finally, Veno Taufer (*1933) and Saša Vegri (1934–2010) opted for imagist montage of reality fragments or quotations from diverse cultural traditions, with which they ironically and critically tackled the aberrations of contemporary Slovenia

– its consumerism, mass culture, and the ideological limitations of the communist rule.

Liberal reformists took power in Slovenian communist politics around 1968 (what coincided with Dubček's Prague Spring) and, in their efforts at social modernization, cautiously adopted elements of western market economy and loosened ideological restraints. It was this unique historical conjecture in which modernization of the capitalist West hybridized with modernization of the socialist East that established the context in which Anderson's imaginative proximity to social revolution revolutionized modernism itself (cf. Neubauer & Cornis-Pope: 94–103; Čepič: 1054–1066, Gabrič: 1066–1069; Vodopivec: 388–407). During the 1968 student revolt, Slovenian late modernism – in-between peripheral phenomenon caught in the Cold War antagonism – came to articulate a universal feature of modernism: its transformative impulse resulting from the close vicinity of the transnational revolutionary movement. During the world-wide insurgency of students and workers, Slovenian modernism of the 1960s synchronized with western centers of modernity agitated by the same global event. It brought together critical theory and experimental artistic practice with the hope to be able to re-shape writing, literary institution, the subject, and society at large.

Liberal reforms in Slovenia accompanied by the ideological thaw made it possible to more openly articulate and express the growing dissatisfaction with social problems such as unemployment, the divide between relatively wealthy communist elites and the working class, unequal access to higher education, inefficient political leadership, and others. The problems were most acutely felt by the young generation who, irritated by the cleft between the proclaimed ideals of a socialist revolution and the inert, decadent rule of post-revolutionary elites, sought its place in the society (cf. Klasić).

In circumstances in which party "liberalism" let western capitalism, consumerism, elite and mass culture flow into the system of the Communist-led self-management, youngsters in Slovenia, Serbia, and Croatia found inspiration in the transnational student movement that broke out in western metropoles around 1968. Yugoslav students – supported by several professors and public intellectuals who criticized the deficiencies of Yugoslav society from neo-Marxist and existentialist perspectives – joined the anti-imperialist, pacifist, and anti-capitalist revolutionary movement of their western comrades who allied with working-class protesters. Students of the universities of Ljubljana, Zagreb, and Belgrade mostly adopted practices of the 1968–1972 international insurgency such as mass demonstrations, strikes, teach-ins, and occupations of universities, adjusting the forms of a self-organized combative multitude to challenges of Yugoslav socialism. In general terms, they criticized socio-economic inequality, rigid organization and worn-out curriculum of the university, unprincipled Yugoslav foreign policy, consumerism, and anti-modern moralism as facets of what they understood as a large-scale betrayal of the original ideals of the WW2 Partisan revolution.

In France, Germany, Italy, and elsewhere, the cross-national revolutionary revolt of students and workers of the "long 1968" intertwined – or, was at least co-extensive with – with the outburst of radical modernist theories, critical philosophy, as well as neo-avant-garde and experimental art practices that opposed commodification or academization of the art; these radically modernist trends also gained ground in Yugoslavia. Western neo-avant-gardes (for example, Guy Debord's Situationism) corresponded to the political activism of the radical Left ranging from anarchism through Trotskyism to Maoism. Mostly outside political parties of the traditional Left, the

various factions of the New Left fought against the hegemony of the capitalist world-system and experimented with grassroots forms of socio-political organization. At that period, the Frankfurt school, Sartre's existentialist and Althusserian structuralist Marxism, Mao-ism, Lacanian psychoanalysis, Tel Quel circle with nouveau roman, experimental stages, conceptualism, and transnational neo-avant-garde groups (Fluxus, COBRA, Situationist International) were part of what appeared a massive revolutionary transformation at all levels of the existing order. They went hand in hand with non-conformist lifestyles and counter-cultural phenomena such as sexual revolution, hippie communities, rock, and the underground.

Inspired by counter-culture as well as radical modernist theories and art practices emanating from western metropolises, innovative currents of international relevance surfaced in the ranks of Slovenian postwar generation. For example, structuralist semiotics and the Ljubljana Lacanian circle (with Slavoj Žižek, Zoja Skušek, and Rastko Močnik), conceptualism and land art of the intermedial group OHO (it propagated anti-anthropocentric brand of modernism termed "re-ism"), concrete poetry, experimental theater, nouveau roman, and a modernist literary trend called "ludism" whose initiator was the poet Tomaž Šalamun (1941–2014). Ludist poetry, narrative, and theater based its transgressive play with all kinds of conventions (linguistic, social, literary, ideological, and literary) on Barthes's and Derrida's notions of writing as a free play of signifiers (cf. Juvan 2000: 270–293).

It is no exaggeration to claim that it was in the nineteen-sixties and the early seventies when Ljubljana – albeit a small capital town of a peripheral socialist country – succeeded in synchronizing with radical neo-modernism of Paris and New York and joined what one is tempted to call, paraphrasing Moretti (2005: 209), "the last season

of European modernism." In Slovenia, too, neo-modernist theories and art practices became entangled in a historical conjuncture (no less energetic as the one Anderson describes), in which masses of young people felt the imaginative proximity of global, multilayered revolution – individual, social, cultural, environmental, artistic, and sexual. With no lagging behind, Slovenian writers, theorists, and artists thus participated in the last ecstasy of modernist thinking, succeeded by the victory of the conservative counter-revolution and postmodernism in the First World and the increased ideological repression, crisis, and collapse of the Second World.

As it was the case with neo-avant-garde ludism of the sixties, interdiscursive relations with structuralist theory fashioned another Slovenian modernist current called "linguism." Beginning in the sixties and extending well into postmodernism of the eighties, linguism drew on the metropolitan theory of text and writing advocated by Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, Julia Kristeva, and Philippe Sollers. In the in-between socialist periphery, Slovenian linguism transposed topical metropolitan conceptions into its specific poetic idiom which concurrently drew on older models of the symbolist *poésie pure* and recent interpretations of modern poetry as dehumanization (cf. Friedrich). Just like French theory, which at the time was going global, Slovenian linguism regarded the text as an open, inconclusive, and intertextual structure disseminating meaning across the chains of signifiers. In contradistinction to ludism, which used the play of signifiers to parody the post-romantic tradition and subvert dominant ideologies of the present, the tendency of linguism relinquished socio-political reference. Its self-reflective gaze instead focused on writing and searched for the presumed essence of lyrical discourse. The irony, destruction, carnivalization, provocative

grotesquery, moral transgression, desperate rage, ugly feelings, and other semiotic traces of repressed drives almost disappeared from the scene of writing in the seventies. The toning down of revolting affects is a symptom of the end of Slovenian modernism and its mutation into postmodernism. The aestheticized seclusion of the literary out of transformative politics entailed what could be termed – following Esposito (45–77) and Campbell (x–xi) – the "immunization of modernism." The immunization reflected socio-political changes in the wake of the apparent defeat of the 1968 revolutionary utopia: the trauma caused by the last repressive convulsion of the communist power led to a lethal crisis of Yugoslav economic and political system that took place in the context of the world-historical defeat of the socialist alternative to capitalist world-system.

Even though student movement in Yugoslavia did not intend to overthrow the Communist party, it alarmed the authorities because it demonstrated self-organized and uncontrollable power of multitude (in many cases, workers joined student protests). Moreover, the critical discourse of radical theory and literature exposed the official ideology and called for a reinvention of revolutionary utopia. Pretending to speak in the name of the working class, the *nomenklatura* had long lost its emancipatory role. Against the background of the adoption of western mass culture, hedonism, and consumerism in the daily life of masses, especially among youngsters, the Party increasingly regarded avant-garde and modernist movements as possible threats to the very fundaments of the post-WWII regime (cf. Gabrič: 1139–1143). With their moral transgression, provocative carnivalization of nationalist and socialist icons, anti-realism, and anti-traditionalism, the literary and artistic currents allied to student movement clashed with the Party's cultural ideal of "socialist humanism" and realism.

Communist conservatives and the Yugoslav leader Josip Broz Tito thus purged the Party of liberals and began to react to modernist intellectuals in a repressive manner. From 1972 onwards, the literary field again suffered from harsher control and restrictions. The conservative faction that seized the power returned to worn-out slogans of "the achievements of the revolution," "the people," "the culture for workers," and promoted Tito's cult of personality. The period that followed the liberal interlude of the sixties (with its ecstatic individualism and progressive modernism) is dubbed the "leaden seventies" (cf. Čepič: 1069–1073, 1117–1125; Gabrič: 1125–1127; Vodopivec: 408–421; Troha). To be true, Yugoslav communists did not even try to suppress all modernism, although they forced its immunization. The decorative variant of "socialist modernism" emptied of its provocative subtext was used to represent pseudo-cosmopolitan progressiveness of the state (cf. Šuvaković: 22–26). Moreover, albeit ghettoized in the student press (which took risk to be banned by the Party), counter-culture, ludism along with other neo-modernist trends, neo-avant-garde experimentation, as well as leftist critique of society continued to thrive well into the eighties when they became overdetermined by a new global discourse of human rights, identity politics, and political pluralism.

Soon after the global revolt had waned, many French, US-American, or German protagonists of the '68 revolution repented of their leftist radicalism and converted to US-American-sponsored neo-liberalism or the propagation of human rights and multicultural identities as antidotes for so-called totalitarianism. Similarly, faction of Slovenian ex-student rebels came under the spell of east-central European dissidents who, advocating multi-party democracy, freedom of speech and other human rights, sought to demolish the Soviet bloc as well as non-aligned socialist Yugoslavia. In their view, a kind of velvet revolution

would have to replace the two communist prison houses with the sovereign, liberal nation-states spiritually united under a vague idea of Central Europe. The latter proved to be but a temporary ideological station on the way of the newly founded nation-states to the capitalist world-system. As we know, velvet became soaked with blood, at least in the case of Yugoslav wars.

To conclude, around 1968, Slovenia – a peripheral country in a socialist buffer state – succeeded to synchronize with the last season of western modernism by producing a transformative intertext of literature and theory, early modernist traditions and *dernier cri* Parisian experiments. This process testifies to irregular and accelerated evolution and innovative syncretism that characterize peripheral modernisms. In Slovenian socialist in-between peripherality, the aesthetic transition from late modernism to postmodernism was itself a symptom of the epochal socio-economic and political transformation conditioned by the downfall of the Soviet empire and the co-option of the former Second World to the one and only (late) modernity of the global capitalist empire. ❦

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