

# The Private Library of Lojze Kovačič and World Literature

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*The essay writing and private library of Lojze Kovačič, who is considered one of the most important Slovenian writers of the second half of the twentieth century, are important sources for understanding his attitude towards world literature, the circulation of modern literature in Slovenia, and its connections to global processes and systems. This article addresses Kovačič's aesthetic self-reflection and focuses on his private library as a historically contextualized material object of cultural transfer and an intellectual milieu in which "materials are becoming signs."*

Keywords: Slovene writers / Kovačič, Lojze / private libraries / literary aesthetics / cultural space / cultural transfer / modernism

The private library of the writer Lojze Kovačič may arouse the interest of an inquiring modern Slovenian literature researcher for several reasons, one of which is, paradoxically, a traditional one. Slovenian literary scholars have already expressed a marked interest in the private libraries of important figures in Slovenian literary and cultural history (see Žigon; Kidrič; Ocvirk; Kos; Smolej). They viewed libraries as an important "source" for understanding the cognitive horizons and aesthetic tastes of their owners and collectors. In this vein, the libraries and book collections of notables such as Žiga Zois, Jernej Kopitar, Matija Čop, and France Prešeren<sup>1</sup> were inventoried and researched. In this contribution, however, I have primarily been led by two purposes or viewpoints. One is the question of how much and to what extent Kovačič's library furnished the author with a world literature horizon, and the second is the question of his own reflection on world literature and the aesthetic horizon and transfer of ideas that dictated his choice of works. Each question individually, and both together, may contribute to an explanation of why he created the literature that he did. At the same time, during my examination I was also interested in the library as a material "object" of cultural transfer and an intellectual milieu, a place of reading and creation, which entailed approaching the library in its historical context. In this I have based my work on the ideas succinctly presented by Bruno Latour in his short "meditation" on in-

formation as a relationship not between texts, signs and interpreters, but above all between entries and phenomena in which the library (as well as collections and laboratories) forms—metaphorically speaking—a kind of “knot of vast space for the circulation of neither materials nor signs, but materials that are becoming signs.” The library is hardly isolated from its environment and reality, which would merely serve to frame it; quite the opposite, the library “bends space and time around itself and serves as a provisory concourse, a *dispatcher*, a transformer and switchman of the very concrete currents that it constantly mixes” (Latour 23).

The choice to address precisely this private library and the cultural practices it reflects is not coincidental because Kovačič is considered to be an exceptional contributor to Slovenian modern narrative and is among the canonized authors of the second half of the twentieth century.<sup>2</sup> An examination of his library may thus open the way to a deeper comprehension of the circulation of modern literature in Slovenia and its connection with global processes and systems.

Kovačič and his literature in the postwar period developed as an extension of social realism. However, in his mature phase he found inspiration in the masterpieces of modern (i.e., modernist and postmodernist) world literature, adapting them to his receptive horizon. An important finding for this article is the fact that Kovačič—despite a high level of poetic self-reflection, arguably linked to the literary workshops he held in his youth—did not explicitly bring up world literature as a theme in any of his numerous essays and interviews. This obviously does not mean that in his literary reflections he did not touch upon the conceptual and value backgrounds and contexts of world literature: he addressed these issues from a specifically individual, individualistic, and cosmopolitan standpoint as well as a local perspective from the edge of the Balkans during a time of totalitarianism and immediately after its end. In this he always took a stand for artistic autonomy and the highest aesthetic standards; that is, for elite literature as the literature of aesthetically demanding readers or of the (bourgeois) intelligentsia (see also Kovačič, “Po dvajsetih” 12–17).

Kovačič found chauvinistic patriotism and cultural nationalism extremely odious; he left no doubts as to his opinion of the secularly sacrosanct status they attributed to literature. As early as the first edition of *Delavnica* (Workshop, 1974) he wrote:

The tendencies of national awakening and the defense of the nation—which I view as a citizen—always bothered me terribly when I encountered them in one of most liberating human activities—literature. Patriotism—that blinding delusion for every sensitive man—is the greatest glass dome in the world designed to

hermetically seal off free human development. But it is behind this thick glass that almost all of our literature was produced. (Kovačič, *Delavnica* 160)

In the foreword to the second edition of *Delavnica*, devoted to the inadequate teaching of literature in Slovenia as a consequence of the special meaning of literature for Slovenians, he noted:

[W]ith us ... literature stands as a kind of untouchable institution, which created (sic!) and formed (sic!) the nation. First with language, no doubt the greatest spiritual creation of the nation, second with the fable and idea of literature telling stories of the nation's fate and existence. We obtained a dynasty whose princes were linguists, poets, storytellers, preachers, translators, etc. This aristocracy of language and literary testimony—a sort of double of Germany's *Briefadel*—still today casts its fascination even upon modern writers, however many and varied they are, much as parental love falls on all the family members equally, whether they deserve it or not. (Kovačič, "Po dvajsetih" 12–13)

According to Kovačič, the function of nation-building, which subjects literature to ideological, religious, patriotic, and other appropriations, but also "beatifies" literary producers as members of a higher, special social class or even caste, limits and thus destroys artistic freedom. He himself was sworn to this freedom as the highest value. In another section of *Delavnica*, and in a somewhat different context, he cites Victor Shklovsky, saying "that the flag of art has no color, save the color of art" (Kovačič, *Delavnica* 154).

Whence this resistance to the ideological appropriation of literature and faith in literary autonomy? Kovačič's resistance was not sapped by the totalitarian ideological pressure of the Yugoslav Communist Party, to which not only the writer himself but also his circle of associates fell victim in the 1950s, as did whole generations of his peers and friends in the following decades; nor did it diminish later, when the pressure let up and numerous authors became politically engaged in the ranks of the new political elite. The ideology of modernism and cosmopolitanism that suffuses Kovačič's thought cannot be grasped without considering his personal trajectory and the political and economic reality of his time; in a time of general totalitarian repression Kovačič saw in literature a "reservation of freedom" (he used this syntagm often) and, somewhat later, compensation for the subjugation of literature to the mechanisms of the book market that took Slovenian authors by storm during the transition period and after the fall of the Eastern Bloc, along with all the other benefits of democracy. Moreover, Kovačič was well aware of the local, "provincial" space of (the small and marginal) Slovenian literature,<sup>3</sup> although he probably linked nation-building literature and its cultural nationalist framework primarily to

small nations. At the same time, he also saw himself as a worldly author in a wider European and global context. This context was attainable to him through an idiosyncratically conceived model of the universality of literature, which indivisibly unites the universal tragedy of human life with one's individual destiny (Kovačič, *Delavnica* 158). Precisely this literary model, for which he demanded the highest aesthetic standards—his *credo*, which he tried to imbue in the participants of his literary workshops, was clear: “[N]ever write something that would not meet the criteria you have chosen for yourself or beneath the level of your interesting human nature” (Kovačič, “Po dvajsetih” 16)—this model was his point of departure in approaching the influence of foreign authors and the canon of Slovenian literature, in dialogue with which he charted his radical difference as a writer (Kovačič, *Delavnica* 155–65). Difference is never an easy task for a creator, for *tout est dit*, or, as the author says in his colorful style:

I am convinced that everything that has been written or thought so far had already been written or at least told in a similar manner, and that there is nothing we can say, neither by day or night, before a large gathering of people or at home in our kitchens, that has not already been said in some cave, some wilderness, some skyscraper—from the times of the caveman to this moment. We are not so different and we cannot escape so easily from beneath this common blanket, which is called the human skin. (156–57)

However, performatively shaping and building one's artistic uniqueness is nevertheless possible. As he put it, “It must be so that first you must go down the known path, later on you discover your own path, and finally you become the path yourself” (157).

Taking into account these thoughts and the fact that Kovačič is not nearly as well researched from a comparative perspective as Prešeren or Čop, for example, one must be attentive to many things during the attempt to reconstruct the writer's literary and cognitive horizon from the perspective of world literature. These include the writer's reading habits, letters, literary discussions, material for a reconstruction of his reading, statements about his literary tastes by his contemporaries and family members, and his explicit mention of concrete exemplars. As for the “infrastructure” he used to form his consciousness of world literature, the library Lojze Kovačič collected in his apartment on Vojko Street in Ljubljana, where he resided with his longtime partner Beba Kogovšek, plays a central role. Nevertheless, before approaching this central topic, it is useful to touch upon several general questions at least in passing.

What is a library, actually? Suitable sources suggest that it is not only an ordered collection of books and other library materials, but also the

space or building where these materials are kept. This is what we call an institution that systematically collects, keeps, and loans library materials and mediates information about them. In Slovenian the name (*knjižnica*) is derived from the word for book (*knjiga*), but the loanword from Greek *biblioteka* is also in use, as in many other languages. The term “library” (*knjižnica* or *biblioteka*) may also refer to a collection of books or a “collection” of authors, which may be connected through a given topic (see also Berčič 95; Manguel; Chartier 61–69). Finally, a *bibliothèque* (at least in French) may also be a chronologically or alphabetically ordered bibliography or catalogue: an inventory of books (Chartier 69–71); however, this use is perhaps somewhat dated today.<sup>4</sup> A private library is the property of an individual and differs from a public library primarily in terms of accessibility. Private libraries were long the privilege of various social and cultural elites (see note 1); however, with the appearance of paperbacks they spread to a broader social class.

Kovačič’s physical library was actually his work and study room, and his collection of books there was not excessively well-organized, being neither catalogued nor shelved. Rather, it seemed to be arranged in no particular order on several shelves above the bed and by the writing desk set up next to the window.<sup>5</sup> Paperbacks were sometimes open, sometimes inserted among the pages of other books, some of which were missing covers, and so on.<sup>6</sup> Noting all this, it is possibly surprising that there are almost no marginal notes in the books. Mixed in among his books were also several belonging to Beba Kogovšek and her daughter Tina, such as abridged readers of English classics or picture books, which I excluded from my inventory of Kovačič’s books. I also excluded most of the author’s own works in Slovenian (though I must mention that not all of them were even present); however, I did not exclude the translations of his works into other languages<sup>7</sup> or multiple copies of certain individual works by other authors. Nevertheless, the library encompasses 654 units, which is not a particularly large number, although what particularly surprised me was that among these units were no continuous series of the journals Kovačič worked for and published in (e.g., *Nova revija* [New Review], *Sodobnost* [Contemporaneity], *Perspektive* [Perspectives], *Beseda* [Word], and *Revija 57* [Review 57]). There are, however, several individual volumes of three years of *Modra ptica* (Blue Bird) and the journal *Knjiga* (Book).

These and other similar gaps may be connected to Kovačič’s origins and his moves from apartment to apartment around Ljubljana, but they also show that he never had an archivist’s or collector’s attitude to his library. He simply was not a bibliophile or collector of rare texts, but rather a creator that mostly used books in his writing and studies. We must also

take into account that it is very likely that he never actually read all the books he kept on his shelves, that some may have been lost, and that the author also visited other libraries in order to borrow reading material, not to mention that he probably borrowed a lot of books from other people (friends and acquaintances). Nevertheless, in its own way the collected literary material reflects its owner, his habits and interests, and the knowledge he sought, as well as the time during which the collection developed, and so it is also a specific source for a history of the cultural life of educated individuals in Ljubljana in the second half of the twentieth century. For example, the library contains by far the most books from the years 1970 to 1980 (25%), 1980 to 1990 (29%) and 1990 to 2000 (20%). Books published between 1960 and 1970 form only 15% of the library, whereas only 4% were published after 2000, of which many were most likely given to him as gifts. There were surprisingly few books from 1950 to 1960 (4%) and only 1% from the decades 1930 to 1940 and 1940 to 1950. From the year of publication (or copyright) we cannot, of course, know when they passed into the writer's hands or use this information to make assumptions about changes in his reading habits; however, what is at least discernible is that the majority of books he kept were published between 1970 and 2000. There are far fewer older or newer works. Thus it is somewhat safe to assume that he acquired most of his library in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, during the time when he lived a comparatively settled life compared to his earlier existence, when he wrote his largest works—leaving aside his novel *Deček in smrt* (The Boy and Death)—and when he also systematically collected books, judging by the authors and titles. However, in addition to this biographical explanation of the ultimate structure of the publications kept in his library, the wider book retail context must also be taken into account. Slovenia's cumulative bibliography shows that from 1970 to 2000 the number of works available on the book market increased significantly: the publication of both local and translated titles increased, but at the same time the print runs became smaller, while trends regarding the import of foreign literature also changed. Before this period, foreign publications were only rarely available on the market, but even in the 1970s and early 1980s bookstores, individuals, and public libraries were still not able to freely import or buy foreign-language (non-Yugoslav) literature. The free flow of books, magazines, and newspapers simply did not exist in communist times, and so to purchase foreign books one had to go abroad. Even then the purchased books were ideologically inspected and censored by customs officers. Truly free imports of foreign literature only began after Slovenia became an independent and democratic republic after 1990. This free import of foreign literature also

coincided with a decline in Serbo-Croatian original and translated works on the Slovenian book market.

Category	Slovenian		Foreign		Total	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Originals	206	31.5	86	13.1	292	44.6
Translations	145	22.2	217	33.2	362	55.4
Total	351	53.7	303	46.3	654	100.0

Table 1. Original and translated books in Kovačič's library

The next point of interest in the library is the relationship between translated works and originals: only 44.6% of the units are in their original language, whereas the translated works amount to nearly 55.4% (see Table 1). Of course, these numbers must also allow for the possibility that the author did not read all the books he received, whether Slovenian or foreign; however, the ratio is still meaningful. It indicates that translated literature was exceptionally important for Kovačič's acquaintance with world literature. As is to be expected with an educated person's library, in addition to numerous *belles-lettres*, he also owned several bilingual dictionaries, several guides to European and Slovenian cities (e.g., Basel, Budapest, Celje) and other multilingual publications, which brings the total to 100%.

By comparing the languages of publication and the originals, it is also clear that the author did not depend solely on Slovenian translations of foreign authors; quite the opposite. Very often he also sought out Serbo-Croatian<sup>8</sup> translations and German books. For example, his library contains 351 books (53.7%) in Slovenian, as well as a total of 116 (17.7%) books in Serbo-Croatian, of which only 22 (19%) are original Serbo-Croatian works, whereas the rest (93 units, or 81% of a total of 116 books), are translations from various languages. Of the Slovenian books, only 206 of a total of 351 units are original Slovenian works (58.7%), whereas 145 books (41.3%) are translations. The number of German books is even more noticeable and there the ratio is very different from the Serbo-Croatian works. Of 149 works (22.8% of the entire library; i.e., of a total of 654 units) more than half, or 92 books (61.7%), are originals and not translations. Nevertheless, 58 German books (38.3% of a total of 149 books) are translations from other languages. In short, it is evident that Lojze Kovačič kept, in addition to Slovenian works, a significant number of German and Serbo-Croatian works in his library, of which the German works were more often German-language originals. Thus it can be assumed that he purchased and kept primarily those Serbo-Croatian



books that were unavailable in Slovenian translations and whose content was of particular interest to him, and a similar purchasing policy may also be noted among his German books. It can safely be assumed that most of the foreign language works in the library represent texts that were unavailable in Slovenian, many of which remain so today. Some were only translated later, but the author wished to read them earlier (in principle it must be assumed that this was at the time of purchase) because they aroused his interest in one way or another. In this way we find the Serbo-Croatian translation of the book *Kako spasiti vlastiti život* (translated from the English original *How to Save Your Own Life*, 1977) by Erica Jong from 1978, a very famous and even notorious American Jewish author popular in the 1970s and 1980s. The same book was only translated into Slovenian two years later (*Kako rešiš svoje življenje*, 1980). Likewise his library contained a Serbo-Croatian translation of the same author's perhaps most famous work, *Strah od letenja* (1978, originally *Fear of Flying*, 1973), but not a Slovenian one, even though it was translated into Slovenian in the same year (*Strah pred letenjem*, 1978). Perhaps the Slovenian translation arrived in bookshops later than the Serbo-Croatian one, although it is also possible that the author simply purchased the Serbo-Croatian translation because it was cheaper; Slovenian books were (and apparently still are) comparatively expensive.

Kovačič obviously was not prone to collecting literary classics in original languages that he had otherwise mastered (Slovenian, German, and Serbo-Croatian). Much like everyone else he obviously utilized public libraries (proof of which can be found in several forgotten, "overdue" library books that I found in his library), while he purchased literature for his collection that he thought would help him with his creative work, as well as literature that one would simply read for pleasure. In general, one could say he had a very pragmatic attitude to books; thus he would, as a rule, buy paperbacks rather than more imposing hardcover editions. He obviously found popular genres and modern translated literature more interesting than the classics. Numerous books with dedications—primarily from Gregor Strniša, Dane Zajc, Veno Taufer, Vital Klabus, Sašo Vuga, Tine and Spomenka Hribar, and Aleš Berger—speak of a large number of gifts from the author's circle of intellectuals and friends.

Moving from a more external and quantitative analysis to an analysis of content shows that Kovačič simply cannot be considered as diverse a reader as was, for example, Hans Carl Artmann (see also Atze and Böhm); between the two opposing tendencies in a library, the desire for universality and the realization of the need for selection (Jacob 12), the concept of selection dominates in Kovačič's library. In his library there is a prepon-



derance of fiction books: most are narrative, whereas there is much less poetry and only a small sample of plays. In addition to fiction there are also a lot of memorial literature, autobiographies, diaries, biographies, testimonies, and erotic literature ranging from the Marquis de Sade to Anaïs Nin; not even the *Kama Sutra* is missing, nor the erotic manual *Senzualan muškarac* (The Sensual Man) from 1972. Besides these three groups (fiction, memorial, and erotic literature), there is a long list of philosophical works, the central author being Tine Hribar, with seven books from the period from the end of the 1980s to the early 1990s, which almost all include personal dedications to Kovačič—at this time they were in comparatively close contact—whereas hardly any sociological, psychological, or historical works are present. Among the philosophers the oldest are Arthur Schopenhauer and Søren Kierkegaard; that is, if St. Augustine is left out. Kovačič was not particularly interested in ancient philosophy. Non-European philosophies (particularly Asian ones) are, much like all non-European literature, present merely as a rare, exotic spice, which leads to the conclusion that the author's interest in world literature remained very Eurocentric. If North American authors are included in this Eurocentricity, because they make up 10.7% of the library, the conclusion can be reached that a Western canon predominates in his library. The library also includes several manuals and textbooks, such as *Mali katekižem* (The Little Catechism), an overview of world and Slovenian literature by Janko Kos, and Helena Stupan's overview of German literature and a German reader, a normative guide and *Slovnica* (Grammar) by Jože Toporišič, and works of literary history, theory, and essays (Viktor Šklovski in Serbo-Croatian, Alain Robbe-Grillet in German, Pogačnik's overview of Slovenian literature in the twentieth century in English, etc.).

The proportion of books by British authors amounts to a little more than 7% of the total number of collected volumes, and there is also a preponderance of twentieth-century authors, with few older works and a notable number of bestsellers by the likes of Victoria Holt and Agatha Christie. Of the Anglophone authors, British and American, practically all translated, the most prominent are (I will not enumerate them all) James Baldwin, Samuel Beckett (who admittedly wrote part of his opus in French), William S. Burroughs, Charles Bukowski, Charles Dickens, Edgar L. Doctorow, John Dos Passos, William Faulkner, Ian Fleming, Graham Green, Joseph Heller, Ernest Hemingway, Patricia Highsmith, Erica Jong, James Joyce, Jack Kerouac, Stephen King, Arthur Koestler (of Hungarian-Jewish descent), Robert Ludlum, Ian McEwan, Vladimir Nabokov (of Russian descent, with several works in Russian), Anaïs Nin, Philip Roth, Jerome D. Salinger, Laurence Sterne, Gertrude Stein,

Kurt Vonnegut Jr., Patrick White, Oscar Wilde, and Thornton Wilder. Originally francophone works account for 14% of the library, including such authors as: Guillaume Apollinaire, Georges Bataille, Charles Baudelaire, André Breton, Michel Butor, Albert Camus, Louis-Ferdinand Céline, François-René de Chateaubriand, Jacques Cocteau, the Marquis de Sade, Marguerite Duras, Romain Gary, Jean Genet, Eugène Ionesco, Alfred Jarry, André Malraux, Marcel Proust, Raymond Queneau, Alain Robbe-Grillet, Henri-Pierre Roché, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, Jean-Paul Sartre, Georges Simenon, and Claude Simon. There are somewhat more German books, accounting for 14.7% of the works, by the following noteworthy authors: Ingeborg Bachmann, Gottfried Benn, Thomas Bernhard, Elias Canetti, Esther Dischereit, Theodor Fontane, Max Frisch, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Peter Handke, Else Lasker-Schüler, Robert Musil, Erica Pedretti, Rainer Maria Rilke, Christoph Ransmayr, Arno Schmidt, and Robert Walser. Polish authors represented in the collection include Kazimierz Brandys, Witold Gombrowicz, Czesław Miłosz, Bruno Schulz, Henryk Sienkiewicz, Andrzej Szczypiorski, and Adam Zagajewski. The number of Russian authors is larger, accounting for another 7% of all works: Isaak Babel, Aleksandr Bek, Joseph Brodsky, Mikhail Bulgakov, Ivan Bunin, Marina Tsvetaeva, Ilya Ehrenburg, Konstantin Fedin, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Ivan Goncharov, Alexander Grin, Daniil Harms, Leonid Leonov, Mikhail Lermontov, Nikolai Leskov, Eduard Limonov, Yuriy Lyubimov, Anatoly Marchenko, Boris Pilnyak, Andrei Platonov, Aleksey Remizov, Vasily Rozanov, and Yevgeny Zamyatin. Of the Serbian or Croatian authors, the most notable for the number of works kept is Miloš Crnjanski.

On the basis of this data, one's picture of Kovačič's literary horizons is unfortunately probably significantly lacking due to a number of contingencies noted in the creation and maintenance of this library. Nevertheless, on the basis of the world literature present in his library several provisory conclusions about the writer's interests can be drawn, which are also backed up by Kovačič's essays and interviews. The almost complete absence of Ancient, Medieval, Renaissance, and Enlightenment writers is not surprising and agrees with his statements in these documents. We can count the foreign authors from before the Romantic period (that is, before the nineteenth century) on the fingers of one hand, and the Romantics themselves, with the exception of Chateaubriand, Byron, and Lermontov, are practically absent. Of the realists, in line with the globalized Slovenian canon formed by the available translations, the Russian authors are best represented, but Dickens, Fontane, and Sienkiewicz are also present. Far more numerous than the representatives of the early avant-garde (e.g., Breton, Jarry, Cocteau, Apollinaire, Kosovel, and Harms) and the expres-

sionists (e.g., Benn, Lasker-Schüler, and Schulz) are the modernists of various nations (Joyce, Proust, Kafka, Beckett, Musil, Frisch, Dos Passos, Rilke, Céline, Bulgakov, Remizov, Pilnyak, Babel, Cvetaeva, etc.), where once again the noticeable percentage of autobiographical, documentary, memorial, and diary writings by these authors, which the writer obviously collected, must be emphasized. The existentialists (Camus, Sartre, Malraux) are also solidly represented, although even better represented are the exemplars of the modern novel from the second half of the twentieth century (e.g., Bernhard, Handke, Burroughs, Bukowski, Capote, Döblin, Miller, Doctorow, Faulkner, Genet, Kerouac, Koestler, Heller, Green, Kundera, Limonov, Gombrowicz, Malamud, Robbe-Grillet, Philip Roth, Sollers, Simon, and Walser); of course, the postmodernists are also present in Kovačič's library (e.g., Vonnegut, Kiš, Ransmayr, and Borges). On the basis of the data given here and the names listed, it is clear that the majority and the core of this corpus of books consists of modern, twentieth-century world literature, which remained at the heart of the author's interests in both original and translated editions.

Translated by Luka Rejec

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Librarians and cultural historians have also expanded their research to monastic, aristocratic, and later bourgeois public and private libraries in Slovenian-speaking areas (see also Berčič; Kolenc; Dular, "Valvasorjeva"; Dular, "Knjižnica"; Lukan; Bahor; Svobljšek). These were obviously not isolated phenomena. Even in the wider region, including not just Slovenia but also Croatia, Hungary, and Slovakia, from the seventeenth century onwards when reading became a component part of everyday life, aristocratic families of different nationalities, such as the Zrinski, Frankopan, Bánffy, Batthyány, and Esterházy families and others, as well as institutions, churches, schools, publishers, and booksellers began to cooperate and network, which led to the establishment of important older private libraries (see also *Plava kri*).

<sup>2</sup> Lojze Kovačič wrote novels, short stories, essays, and books for children. Most of his writing is autobiographical and influenced by the great modern twentieth-century novels of James Joyce, Thomas Wolfe, John Dos Passos, Henry Miller, Leo Tolstoy (*Childhood*) and others, often blurring the boundary between the autobiographical and the novelistic in his longer works. It also does not avoid politically dangerous subjects and "taboo" themes of totalitarian postwar communism. His works include *Ljubljanske razglednice* (Ljubljana Postcards, 1954), a series of short stories comparable to Joyce's *Dubliners*; *Ključ mesta* (Keys of the Town, 1964), a collection of short stories; *Deček in smrt* (The Boy and Death, 1964), an autobiographical novel about his youthful confrontation with his father's death; *Sporočila v spanju – Resničnost* (Messages in Sleep—Reality, 1972), a series of dream descriptions followed by a short autobiographical novel about his military service; *Pet fragmentov* (Five Fragments, 1981), another autobiographical novel covering his mature years; *Kristalni čas* (Crystal Time, 1990) a mosaic-like autobiographical novel comprising extended essayistic

sections, anecdotes, and critical portraits of contemporaries; *Zgodbe s panjskih končnic* (Stories from Beehive Paintings, 1993), a collection of highly grotesque and ironic short stories; *Vzemljohod* (Redescent, 1993), an assemblage of personal recollections, fragments, anecdotes, portraits of contemporaries, and rewritings of his previous texts; and his last book *Otroške stvari* (Children's Things, 2003), which could be classified both as an autobiographical novel and as a collection of stories. *Zrele reči* (Mature Things, 2009) was published posthumously. Kovačič received several awards for his literary work. He died on 1 May 2004.

<sup>3</sup> For example, in one of the notes to his foreword to *Delavnica* Kovačič cites the following "Scheme for Characterizing Small Literatures" from Franz Kafka's diary entries dated 27 December 1912:

"In every example the effect, here as there (i.e., in large literatures [comment by Lojze Kovačič]). Here, in the individual, effects are even greater.

1. Liveliness  
a conflicts, b) schools, c) magazines
2. Disencumberance  
a. lack of principles, b) small themes, c) prone to symbolizing, d) garbage dump for the incompetent
3. Popularity  
a connection with politics, b) w. literary history, c) belief in literature, its legality is left to literature itself.

Whoever has once in his veins felt this serene, useful life, he shall find it hard to renounce these advantages." (Kovačič, "Po dvajsetih" 20)

<sup>4</sup> It is interesting that even the Discalced Augustinian Marko Pohlin titled his annotated inventory of books connected to the Slovenian lands *Bibliotheca Carnioliae* (Germ. *Bibliothek Kranjske* 'Library of Carniola').

<sup>5</sup> Kovačič describes his workspace, and the difficulties of creating in it, in several of his works.

<sup>6</sup> A reconstruction of the original ordering of the books was not possible. The room was cleaned approximately a year after the writer's death and at that time many books were moved and placed on the shelves differently than they had been upon the author's death.

<sup>7</sup> In his library the author kept a significant number of translations of his works into foreign languages from different periods (from the 1960s to the last years before his death), from which we may conclude that he was not indifferent to his entry into other (i.e., foreign and international) literary settings. The writer appears to have followed the critical reception of his creative work and was perhaps inspired by it, responding to it in various dialogical ways.

<sup>8</sup> I use this term here because most of these books were published during a period when the language was officially recognized as Serbo-Croatian.

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## Zasebna knjižnica Lojzeta Kovačiča in svetovna književnost

Ključne besede: slovenski pisatelji / Kovačič, Lojze / zasebne knjižnice / literarna estetika / kulturni prostor / kulturni transfer / modernizem

Slovenski literarni znanstveniki so doslej pokazali velik interes za zasebne knjižnice vidnih osebnosti iz slovenske literarne in kulturne preteklosti, manj raziskane pa so knjižnice modernih avtorjev. V tem članku se sprva posvečam vprašanju samorefleksije svetovne književnosti v esejistiki Lojzeta Kovačiča, enega najpomembnejših slovenskih pisateljev druge polovice 20. stoletja, v drugem delu pa se osredotočam na njegovo zasebno knjižnico, pojmovano kot historično kontekstualiziran materialni predmet

kulturnega transferja in kot intelektualni milje, ki tvori nekakšen »vozel širokega področja, kjer ne krožijo niti znaki niti snovi, temveč snovi, ki postajajo znaki« (Latour). Vpogled v Kovačičevo knjižnico odpira tudi pot do širših spoznanj o obtoku moderne literature pri nas in o vpetosti te literature in samega Kovačiča v svetovne procese in sisteme.

Kovačič svetovne literature ni eksplicitno tematiziral, toda s svojega izrazito individualističnega in svetovljanskega stališča se je posredno vendarle dotikal njenega pojmovnega in vrednostnega ozadja in konteksta. Pri tem se je zavzemal za svobodo in univerzalnost umetnosti, za umetnostno avtonomijo in najvišje estetske standarde, za elitno literaturo estetsko zahtevnih bralcev oziroma (meščanskih) izobražencev. Njegova knjižnica obsega 654 enot, od katerih je večina izdana v sedemdesetih, osemdesetih in devetdesetih letih prejšnjega stoletja, mnogo manj pa je ostalih. Največ je slovenskih, nemških in srbohrvaških knjig zahodnega kanona. Posebnost knjižnice je razmerje med izvirnimi spisi (v slovenskem in drugih jezikih), ki jih je v knjižnici 292 (44, 6%), in številnejšimi prevodi (prav tako v slovenskem in tujih jezikih), ki jih je 362 (55,4%). Prevladujejo leposlovne knjige; največ je pripovednih, manj je poezije in še manj dramatike. Veliko je najrazličnejše spominske, dokumentarne in avtobiografske ter erotične literature, opazen pa je tudi delež popularne književnosti. Od neliterarnih knjig prevladujejo filozofske, literarnovedne in esejistične. Poznavalcev Kovačičevega opusa ne bo presenetila skoraj popolna odsotnost avtorjev iz zgodnejših obdobij svetovne literature, malo je tudi romantikov in le nekaj več (predvsem ruskih) realistov. Glavnino fonda pa vsekakor tvori moderna literatura 20. stoletja, ki je v izvirnikih in prevodih vseskozi ostajala v žarišču avtorjevega zanimanja.

April 2012