

## RESPONSES TO THE WORKS OF JOHN UPDIKE IN SLOVENIA

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### Abstract

Since the beginning of his writing career, John Updike has been considered by many as one of the most prominent American authors of our time and his language and subject matter have attracted many readers world wide. Notwithstanding, it appears that the Slovenes have failed to notice his literary merits as there has never been a real critical response to him or his work and as only a few works have been rendered into Slovene. One of the reasons which could account for the scarcity of translations and critical material is Updike's employment of extratextual information which is specific to the American milieu and thus to the Slovene society. This article offers an overview of the translations and critical material on Updike in Slovenia and highlights Updike's references to the USA on the examples taken from the translations of *Rabbit*, *Run* and *Rabbit Redux*.

The writer, poet, essayist, journalist, editor, reviewer, and an occasional writer of children's literature John Hoyer Updike was born in 1932 in Reading, Pennsylvania, which has often served as a model of his fictional Brewer in his novels. He started his literary career fairly early, a year after graduating *summa cum laude* in English Literature from Harvard University in 1953. His first work, the short story "Friends from Philadelphia" (1954) appeared in *The New Yorker*. Four years later, he published his first collection of poems *The Carpentered Hen*, followed by his first novel *The Poorhouse Fair* in 1959.

American critics responded mostly positively to his work and soon Updike became one of the most acclaimed contemporary American writers. Nowadays, he is often referred to as a very accurate observer of American life, one who does not hesitate to tackle many a burning issue of contemporary America. He writes in detail about family life, marriage, religion, love, sex, ageing and death, man's shallowness and his alienation in the urbanised world but he also ventures into witchcraft, golf, the writing life and other, more trivial, subjects. His main character is usually a middle class white male a WASP whose life is presented through commonplace events.

Updike is an extremely prolific and versatile writer who is gifted with an extraordinary feeling for the language. Not surprisingly, he has received a number of literary awards. The most renowned are certainly the two Pulitzer Prizes for Fiction he received for his novels *Rabbit is Rich* in 1982 and *Rabbit at Rest* in 1991. What is more, he has been awarded many honorary Litt.D. degrees from various American

colleges and Harvard University and his short stories have often been included in *The Best American Short Stories* series.

Taking into consideration especially Updike's success as a novelist and short story writer and the fact that he is considered by many critics as one of "the major writers of our time" (Markle 1973: 1) and sometimes compared even to Ernest Hemingway's and William Faulkner's grandeur (Hayman 1967: 667) one cannot but wonder why only six of his novels and fourteen short stories (with various reprints) have been translated into Slovene. Moreover, it is also to be noticed that the Slovenes were rather slow to respond to Updike's success since the first translation appeared in Slovene as late as in 1965 in one of the country's northern regional dailies, *Večer*. Symbolically, the first translated work was Updike's very first short story "Friends from Philadelphia" ("Prijatelji iz Philadelphie"), which later on witnessed four more reprints in various newspapers and general interest magazines. Interestingly enough, all the fourteen translated short stories (and even two novels) appeared in a somewhat scattered fashion in Slovene periodicals and the press. Most of them date back to the first two decades of his writing career. In fact, fourteen translated works appeared in the sixties, followed by ten a decade later. The eighties already showed a sharp decline in interest in Updike as only four short stories were published in Slovene, while the nineties brought the translation of his works to an abrupt end as only one short story and one novel appeared. One could argue that the translating activity was in inverse proportion to Updike's success; namely, the more internationally acclaimed and successful the writer was, the fewer works were translated into Slovene.

As a result of this inverse proportion the Slovene readers became acquainted with only a minor part of Updike's oeuvre. Most of the translated works are short stories belonging to the collection *Pigeon Feathers* (1962), where "Flight" ("Ptičji let"), "Wife-Wooing" (translated four times as "Snubljenje", "Snubljenje žene", "Dvorjenje v zakonu", and "Zapeljujem svojo ženo"), "Should Wizard Hit Mummy?" ("Bi čarovnik moral mamico udariti"), "A&P", ("Samopostrežna trgovina") and "Dear Alexandros" ("Dragi Aleksandros") were translated. The collection *The Same Door* (1959) was the source of three other translated short stories, namely the previously mentioned "Friends from Philadelphia", "Ace in the Hole" ("Ace v škripcih"), and "Alligators" ("Aligatorji"). Only "The Stare" ("Pogled") and "Four Sides of the same story" ("Štiri strani zgodbe") were taken from the collection *The Music School* (1966). Likewise, only two stories were translated from the collection *Your Lover Just Called* (1979) – "The Taste of Metal" ("Okus kovine") and "Twin Beds in Rome" ("Dve postelji v Rimu"). Less interesting seemed to be *Trust Me* (1987) and *Problems and Other stories* (1979) as only one short story was translated from each collection respectively – "Trust Me" ("Zaupaj mi") from the former and "Problems" ("Problemi") from the latter.

Updike's first novel translated into Slovene appeared in a newspaper as well. Jože Stabej translated *Rabbit, Run* (1959) as *Teci, Zajček*, which was published in Slovenia's national daily *Delo*. The novel appeared in instalments from 6 October 1965 to 5 January 1966. Two years later, Alenka Moder rendered *The Poorhouse Fair* into *Semenj v hiralnici*. She also translated *The Witches of Eastwick* (1984) into *Čarovnice iz Eastwicka*, which was the last of Updike's novels published in the Slovene

language. In 1972, Mira Mihelič translated Updike's highly praised and at the time slightly scandalous novel *Couples* (1968) into *Zakonski pari* while three years later Dimitrij Rupel translated a likewise slightly scandalous *Rabbit, Redux* (1971) (*Rabbit se vrača*), which was to be the second novel of what was to become the Rabbit tetralogy. The last novel which can be read in Slovene is *Marry Me* (1976), translated by an anonymous author as *Vzemi Me* and published in instalments from 20 September 1986 to 27 January 1987 in *Večer*.

The briefest overview of the translations reveals a lack of uniformity in the choice of the works which were translated and in the style of translation<sup>1</sup>. The reasons why Updike's work is not presented uniformly in Slovenia are at least three. First, as already mentioned, the translated short stories appeared randomly in various newspapers and magazines with no reference indicating which collections the stories belong to. Secondly, the works were rendered into Slovene by various translators who each added their personal note to the short story or novel. A collective case in point is found in "Friends from Philadelphia", "Wife-Wooing" and "Should Wizard Hit Mummy?" where each reprint reads differently owing to different translators and hence different approaches. Lastly, there has never been a real critical response to either Updike's work or to the translations of his work into Slovene which could have helped the translators evaluate their efforts/attempts in capturing Updike's superb style and retaining his numerous references and allusions to the American milieu he so meticulously describes.

The altogether sixteen articles on Updike and/or his work which started appearing in the Slovene newspapers and magazines in 1967 hardly deserve the term criticism. Most of them are mere translations or simplified summaries of, or short reports on, the novels translated into Slovene. The underlying common feature of these articles is their content itself, which primarily discloses that the articles were meant for a rather general reading public. In fact, their authors<sup>2</sup> briefly present the writer's work using very general terminology; sometimes they touch upon Updike's language skills and praise his style, and finally, they offer basic information about the translator, illustrator and publisher. They rarely express their own views on either Updike or his work and if they occasionally do so, their opinions are hardly ever sustained by (consistent) arguments. It seems that the reviewers mainly rely on facts and/or borrowed ideas. Not surprisingly, the first article on Updike which appeared in Slovenia was the translation of Allan Hayman's article "John Updike". The article is well written and highlights both the shortcomings and literary qualities of Updike's work by referring to a number of his short stories and novels. However, what is important is that the clearly critical nature of the article coupled with the fact that it was published in the literary magazine *Problemi* indicated the beginning of an interest, however weak, in Updike from the reader's point of view. In this respect, the only truly critically coloured and professionally written Slovene article on John Updike appeared only in 1991. Jerneja Petrič's "Ponovno John Updike: Harry Angstrom – Rabbit je obsojen, da vse življenje pred nečim beži" ("John Updike Redux: Harry Angstrom–Rabbit is forever doomed to run

<sup>1</sup> Analysing the artistic value of the translated texts is beyond the scope of this article and will not be discussed.

<sup>2</sup> Ten out of 16 articles were written by anonymous authors.

away in life”) was published in the cultural pages of *Delo*. It is a fairly long article written on the occasion of Updike’s publication of his fourth Rabbit novel *Rabbit at Rest*. Petrič offers a detailed insight into the four Rabbit novels, focusing on the Pulitzer Prize winning *Rabbit at Rest*. What is more, she does not only advance an interpretation of the four stories and its protagonist but she also points to the parallelisms between the fictional Rabbit and real life events in the USA, underscoring the role of America in Updike’s works at the same time. Her review served also as the basis for her essay “Štirje romani o Rabbitu ameriškega pisatelja Johna Updika” (“John Updike’s Four Novels on Rabbit”) published in the *Ameriška proza: od realizma do postmodernizma* (2001), which remains the only study on Updike in Slovenia.

Petrič’s noteworthy contribution aside, the Slovene critics’ lukewarm response<sup>3</sup> which almost borders on complete disinterest in Updike is not understandable especially if one takes into account the fact that Updike actually visited Slovenia in October 1978 after attending an international writers’ meeting in Belgrade. Only two articles resulted from his visit. The first one, “Američan kot pisatelj” (“An American as a writer”) is a report on the interview *Delo*’s journalist Bogdan Pogačnik had with the writer. On a global scale, its value is negligible as it discloses nothing dramatically new on either Updike or his work, yet it is the first of this kind in Slovenia and as such it deserves to be mentioned. After a long introduction explaining the background of the writer’s visit to Slovenia Pogačnik somewhat haphazardly summarises Updike’s reflections on his private and public life, his role of a lecturer and writer on his travels, his own literary style and lastly his thoughts on sex in his works as opposed to pornography.

Similar topics were brought up in the interview “Pogovor z Johnom Updikeom” (“Talking with John Updike”) by Dimitrij Rupel and published in the daily *Dnevnik*. There, Updike claims that he is not a widely read author as he is not market driven as many American writers indeed are. Furthermore, he believes that as an American writer he could never hold the eminent position, or enjoy the privileges of, his European counterparts because of the difference in the reading publics of the respective continents. In other words, American readers, Updike remarks, expect the writer to constantly produce sensational works while the Europeans have no such expectations. Updike addresses the same issue in two other interviews he originally gave to the German newspaper *Die Zeit* and magazine *Spiegel* but which were translated and arranged into Slovene by Janez Cundrič for *Večer* in 2002. In those interviews Updike reiterates that American readers are very demanding but not supportive as they do not promote writers’ creativity. Furthermore, he even notices that Americans are growing less and less interested in reading (fiction) and he looks for the reasons of such behaviour in the writers themselves who sometimes fail to win the readers’ support by not working hard enough.

The ‘German’ interviews overlap with Rupel’s and partly Pogačnik’s contributions in another subject. In all of them Updike is asked to define his attitude towards the USA especially in relation to his work. He mentions women’s role in society in

<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, Updike won some recognition in Slovenia as the National Television broadcast a series on Contemporary American writers where five key figures from the American literary world were presented. Updike was among them.

Pogačnik's report, the oil crisis and its reverberations in Rupel's interview, and he speaks about religion, past and contemporary American politics, the middle class, and wars for *Die Zeit* and *Spiegel*. Once again one is reminded that Updike's fiction is very close to reality. Furthermore, in Rupel's interview, Updike confesses that when working on a new story he writes solely with the American reader in mind – hence, it is implied, his numerous references to the US – deliberately leaving the problem of a possible future translation aside. At the same time, he relies on the belief that people are intrinsically the same all over the world and that a well-written book is thus well accepted everywhere.

The writer's belief notwithstanding, in my opinion Updike's specific concern with the USA may sometimes hinder the process of assimilation in a non American reader. That is to say, I believe that a non American reader may fail to understand all the connotations implied by extratextual information owing to different cultural environments. To illustrate this point, one should examine the translations of the first two Rabbit novels. Specific in reference to the American milieu and yet universal in themes, the two translations compared to the originals epitomise the differences between the American and Slovene cultures. Yet, the question that arises at this point, and which I will try to provide an answer to, is the extent to which extratextual information in *Rabbit*, *Run* and *Rabbit Redux* influences the Slovene reader's understanding of the stories and the main character and to what extent he/she manages to assimilate Rabbit and his world.

As frequently pointed out in this article, John Updike is regarded as one of the most accurate social commentators of contemporary America. Indeed, looking closely at the Rabbit stories, which are probably his best-known and most illustrative work, one is directly confronted with a typically American environment. The stories, centring around their main character Harry Angstrom-Rabbit and written at roughly ten year intervals, chronicle American history from the late fifties to the beginning of the new millennium. Yet what is most important is how Rabbit exists as a result of this American background. In fact, reading the stories attentively, one notices that the life of Harry Angstrom, an ex high school basketball hero, coincides with the milestones of American political, cultural and social life.

In the first novel, *Rabbit, Run*, the protagonist seems to be trapped in the world of the moral ideas and dilemmas of the Eisenhower fifties, but he desperately longs to escape. Rabbit's life is very similar to what he witnesses daily on TV in *Rabbit Redux*: the Vietnam war, the moon landing, the counterculture movement, and the riots. Each and every event in his life is a reflection of what is going on in 1960's America. In the third novel, *Rabbit is Rich* (1981), as the title itself suggests, Rabbit has come into a fortune and enjoys the benefits wealth can bring despite the oil shortage and the overwhelming economic crisis of the seventies. The novel is set during what President Jimmy Carter termed America's years of 'malaise' and once more, Rabbit and his family reflect these events. The last novel, *Rabbit at Rest*, is filled with images of death both from 'real' life and the novel itself. Anxiety about international terrorism magnifies a sense of uselessness and loss. Updike shows the USA to be psychologically unprepared to cope with global terrorism as its economy is growing weaker and weaker, and America's privileged position and its strength are diminishing. So are

Rabbit's in his microcosms: he is no longer the chief manager of Springer Motors, he is retired and he is awaiting death.

Clearly, understanding the Rabbit stories requires in-depth knowledge of America's contemporary history, without which it is virtually impossible for a non-American reader to fully comprehend Rabbit. Furthermore, Updike's stories bristle with descriptions of American daily life ranging from various products, food, songs, to TV shows. These inclusions are so frequent that they are an intrinsic part of the stories and impossible to neglect. Moreover, they determine Rabbit's lifestyle. However, these points are sometimes easily lost in translation and undoubtedly translating the Rabbit novels proved to be a difficult task. The translators Jože Stabej and Dimitrij Rupel utilised a variety of techniques to tackle a variety of unknowns, that is, references utterly foreign to the Slovene reader. The result are two translations which try to reproduce the political and historical backgrounds of *Rabbit*, *Run* and *Rabbit Redux*, but which sometimes fail to highlight the small details captured in the unknowns. This is understandable since the Slovenian reading public of the sixties and the seventies was not (entirely) familiar with the consumerism and lifestyles of the American world. Therefore, it was impossible even for the translators themselves to follow faithfully the original text since the Slovenian environment did not know or use such items as Kleenex, Macdonald's hamburgers, Electrolux's appliances, etc. They could not possibly understand the connotations of these unknowns<sup>4</sup>. In order to bridge this cultural/consumer gap Stabej and Rupel tried to provide adequate translations in Slovene as exemplified below:

[H]e instead drives to the *drugstore* in the centre of town [...] and orders a *vanilla ice-cream soda* with a scoop of *maple-walnut ice cream*, and drinks *Coca-Cola glasses* full of miraculous clear water before it comes. (my emphasis, Updike 1961: 172)

Zavije v lokal sredi mesta. [...] naroči si *ledeno kavo* s porcijo *kostanjevega sladoleda*, preden jo dobi, pa popije dva polna *kozarca* čudodelne čiste vode. (my emphasis, Stabej 23/11/1965: 5)

Upstairs in the room with the one-eyed teddy-bear Harry reads the boy a *Little Golden Book* about a little choo-choo who was afraid of tunnels. (my emphasis, 287)

Zgoraj v sobi z enookim medvedom prebere Harry otroku *zgodbico* o majhni lokomotivi, ki se je bala predorov. (my emphasis, 26/12/1965: 6)

"Besides," Janice is going on, edging herself on tiptoes up and down like a child gently chanting to *Banbury Cross*, "the movie isn't just for Nelson, it's for *me*, for working so hard all week." (my emphasis, Updike 1971: 34)

"Poleg tega," nadaljuje Janice in se še kar naprej zvija na prstih kot otrok, ki predvaja svojo *pesmico*, "kino ni samo za Nelsona, ampak tudi zame, ker sem cel teden tako garala." (my emphasis, Rupel 1975: 41)

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<sup>4</sup> There are more than 130 unknowns in *Rabbit*, *Run* and more than 240 in *Rabbit Redux*.

That family has been out to buy the country since those *Brahmins* up in Boston snubbed old Joe. (my emphasis, 81)

Ti ljudje so kupovali zemljo, odkar so tisti *snobovski krogi* v Bostonu zapeljali starega Joeja. (my emphasis, 92)

It should be noticed that even though generally speaking, the translators' solutions were very similar, there are some conspicuous differences in their approach towards the unknowns. The differences stem from different external circumstances in which the translated texts appeared. Firstly, Rupel enjoyed the benefits of a personal experience of the USA as he had lived there between 1971 and 1972, while Stabej could only rely on scarce sources, his own knowledge of the States and on the information given to him by people who had already been in America (Klanjšček 2002, 2003, interviews). Secondly, the socio-cultural background of the 1965's Slovenia was unquestionably different from that 1974. In the seventies, the then 'behind-the-Iron-Curtain' Yugoslavia started to open its door to the influences of the western world. As a consequence, the Slovenes could purchase foreign articles in their shops, they learnt about the western lifestyle through the media and through slowly increasing travel to western countries. Thus, one can assume that the 1974 reading public was already acquainted with many of the unknowns in *Rabbit Radux*, which is confirmed by the fact that unlike Stabej, Rupel leaves many of these items in English. Examples containing words describing American fast food illustrate the above mentioned differences:

Wanting to see Ruth again was some of it but it was clear after he went around to her address in the morning that she wasn't there [...] going in and out of department stores with music piping from the walls and eating a *hot dog* at the five and ten and hesitating outside a movie house [...]. (my emphasis, Updike 1961: 271)

Del tega je bila želja, da bi spet videl Ruth, vendar je šel zjutraj spet tja in ko tudi tokrat ni dobil nobenega odgovora, mu je bilo jasno, da je ni doma [...], vendar pa je še vedno hodil po Brewerju, iz ene veleblagovnice v drugo, pojedel *klobaso*, potem pa se je obotavljal pred kinom, [...]. (my emphasis, Stabej 22/12/1965: 5)

He takes a map from the rack by the door and while eating three *hamburgers* at the counter studies his position. (my emphasis, 29)  
S police pri vratih vzame zemljevid in medtem ko pri pultu poje *zrezke*, preštudira svoj položaj. (my emphasis, 14/10/1965: 5)

He stops [...] for a *Lunar Special* (double *cheeseburger* with an American flag stuck into the bun) and a vanilla *milkshake*, that tastes toward the bottom of chemical sludge. (my emphasis, Updike 1971: 113)  
[P]oje poseben *hamburger* – *Lunar Special* (dvojni *cheeseburger* z ameriško zastavico na vrhu) in popije vaniljev *milkshake*, ki ima na dnu okus po kemikalijah. (my emphasis, Rupel 1975: 129)

Stabej utilises equivalents known to the Slovenes and instead of 'hot dogs' and 'hamburgers' he speaks of 'sausages' and 'steaks', while Rupel retains the original

words. However, Rupel's retaining of the original words is sometimes questionable especially because there are suitable words in Slovene (which I offer in brackets) that bear the same connotations as their English counterparts:

Don't get heavy on *me*, I told her I just wanted *blue jeans*. (my emphasis, 203)

Ne jezi se *name*, rekel sem ji, da hočem samo *blue jeans*. (my emphasis, 228) /kavbojke/

"Yeah, O.K., great. Maybe I'll get down sometime. If I can get a *babysitter*." (my emphasis, 219)

"Aha, O.K., krasno. Mogoče se kaj oglasim. Če dobim *babysitterja*." (my emphasis, 245) /varuško/

"Whisky sour," he says. Summer is over, the *air-conditioning* in the Phoenix has been turned off. (my emphasis, 235)

"Whisky sour," reče on. Poletje je mimo, *air condition* v Phonixu so izključili. (my emphasis, 264) /hlajenje/ or /klimo/

[O]ne of the partner's sons came back from *business school* somewhere full of beans and crap. (my emphasis, 342)

Eden od družabnikovih sinov se je vrnil iz *business school* poln samih novotarij in podobnega sranja. (my emphasis, 379) /poslovne šole/

In the end, regardless of what approach the translators adopted, the result is uniformly twofold: on the one hand, they managed to partly assimilate Rabbit and his world, and thus make them more familiar to the Slovene reader; but on the other hand, they unavoidably altered Rabbit's personality and lifestyle.

Rabbit's personality is especially distorted in *Teci, Zajček* as the text underwent censorship. Whole passages describing love making, contraceptive methods, the characters' sexual lives, nakedness, birth, and Rabbit's erotic dreams had been left out. Their omission drastically minimises Rabbit's sexuality, which is one of his most distinguished characteristics in the original novel as Rabbit is a man of sensations and instincts. Additionally, Rabbit's character is also slightly altered on the account of foul language which is not so overwhelming and obvious in the translation as it is in the original. Many swear words are simply omitted or replaced by euphemistic expressions. Finally, an attentive reader might get the wrong impression that Rabbit has been involved in some sort of a scholastic scandal on the account of a little mistake that appears in the translation:

His old basketball coach, Marthy Tothero, who *before scandal had ousted him from the high school* had a certain grip on local affairs, lived in this building supposedly and still, they said, manipulated. (my emphasis, Updike 1961: 17)

Njegov košarkarski trener Marthy Tothero, *ki ga je pred škandalom vrgel iz šole*, je imel nekaj vpliva v lokalnih zadevah in baje je živel v tej stavbi, vendar pa je tudi rovaril. (my emphasis, Stabej 10/10/1965: 6)



In the Slovene translation we understand that it was Rabbit and not Tothero, who had to leave the school because of a scandal. It is true the old coach and Rabbit are very similar, however it is important to underscore that Rabbit's image remained immaculate in his high school days, when he was a true sports hero – loved and idolised by everybody. In this respect inadequate translation regarding the American schooling system should also be observed:

With luck he'll become in time a crack athlete in the *high school*; Rabbit knows the way. (my emphasis, 5)

Če bo imel srečo, bo sčasoma postal odličen atlet na *univerzi*; Zajček ve, kako gre to. (my emphasis, 6/10/1965: 5)

Yet in his time Rabbit was famous through the county; in basketball in his *junior year* he set a B-league scoring record that in his *senior year* he broke with a record that was not broken until four years later, that is, four years ago. (my emphasis, 5)

Toda svoj čas je bil Zajček slaven v vsem okraju; kot *mladinec* je v drugi ligi dosegel rekordno število košev, potem pa je kot *član* izboljšal svoj rekord z novim, ki je bil potolčen šele čez štiri leta, to se pravi pred štirimi leti. (my emphasis, 6/10/1965: 5)

A keystone marker in the headlights says 23. A good number. The first *varsity game* he played in he made 23 points. A *sophomore* and a virgin. (my emphasis, 26)

Številka 23 na kašipotu v luči žarometov. Dobra številka. V svoji prvi tekmi v *reprezentanci* je dosegel 23 točk. *Študent v drugem letniku* in nedolžen. (my emphasis, 12/10/1965: 5)

When I came out in my *freshman year* I didn't know my head from my elbow. (my emphasis, 58)

Ko sem bil *bruc*, nisem ločil glave od komolca. (my emphasis, 23/10/1965: 5)

Stabej's inconsistency with the school system terminology induces the Slovene reader to believe that Rabbit has gone to college or university. However, part of Rabbit's problems derive from the very fact that he has no college or university education, which would help him escape from the mediocrity of the American lower middle class once the high school days are over.

Mistakes are found in Rupel's translation as well but they do not directly interfere with the reader's perception of the main character:

[H]e is standing at the top of a stairway of the uncountable other baths he has heard her take or seen her have in the *thirteen years* of their marriage. (my emphasis, Updike 1971: 32)

[Z]daj stoji na vrhu stopnišča, ki ga sestavljajo ta večna kopanja, ki jih je poslušal in gledal v teh *štirinajstih letih* njunega zakona. (my emphasis, Rupel 1974: 38)

In this example Rupel ascribes to Rabbit and Janice fourteen years of marriage instead of thirteen. As a matter of fact, Rabbit proposed to Janice - thus sealing his fate for ever - when she was already in her third month of pregnancy.

With these riots everywhere, and this poor Polish girl, she comes from up near *Williamsport*, abused and drowned when the future President takes his pleasure. (my emphasis, 82)

Te večne demonstracije pa ta uboga poljska deklica, prišla je od nekod iz *Williamsburga*, pa jo takole zlorabijo, utopijo, bodoči predsednik pa si privošči malo zabave. (my emphasis, 94)

The second instance contains a mistake which reduces Updike's credibility in reproducing the American environment with accuracy. The scandal mentioned in the novel was about senator Edward Kennedy's car accident in which Mary Jo Kopechke, a girl of Polish origins from Williamsport, Pennsylvania - not Williamsburg as Rupel erroneously wrote - died. On the one hand, the Slovene reader very likely does not care whether the drowned girl came from Williamsport or Williamsburg, because the event and environment described do not suggest any connotations in them. On the other hand, one could claim that an attentive American reader (who understood Slovene) might be bothered by such misleading information.

One Saturday in *August Buchanan* approaches Rabbit during the coffee break. (my emphasis, 101)

Neko soboto se med malico Rabbitu približa *August Buchanan*. (my emphasis, 115)

The last mistakes influence two aspects of the novel. Firstly, Rabbit's co-worker is given a new identity as Buchanan's first name is not August but Lester. Secondly, Rupel unintentionally ruins Updike's precise 'timetable' of the novel. In fact, it is a peculiarity of the Rabbit novels to be extremely well defined in terms of time: there is always a month, day or even an hour given. Furthermore, O'Connell (1996:16-19) sees a symbolic link between nature and Rabbit's life in these time co-ordinates. She claims that almost each and every event in the Rabbit stories is in harmony with the celestial bodies and with the changing of seasons. She builds her theory especially on the metaphors of solstice and equinox, which coincide with the ups and downs of Rabbit's life. Unfortunately, due to Rupel's lapse of the pen, this is not so obvious in *Rabbit se vrača*.

The discrepancies between the original and the translated texts hinted at in this article would not be so obvious if they were translated from today's perspective and understanding of the USA. The media, tourism, an open market policy, and globalisation make it possible for the Slovenes to 'be' part of the world recorded by Updike in the Rabbit stories. Of course, the aesthetic field (e.g. the time distance and the cultural background) is different, but still, closer to us than ever. In fact, even the translators themselves admitted that if they had the chance to translate the novels again, they would almost certainly produce better translations due to their present knowledge on the USA (Klanjšček 2002, 2003, interviews). It is also my present belief that any likely or unlikely future translations of the Rabbit novels should contain a foreword by

the translator, who ought to highlight Updike's peculiar inclusion of extratextual information which is so specific to the American environment. Alternatively, for more scholarly purposes, the translated text could be enhanced by the addition of notes explaining the unknowns. Additionally, the choice of the unknowns which could be explained in the notes should be made by the translator in collaboration with an American expert in order to bring Rabbit and his world as close as possible to the Slovene reader. Such an approach would trigger some reaction in the critics and reviewers and consequently a renewed interest in John Updike.

Vipolže, Slovenia

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