

# CRIPPLED IDENTITY, SUPPRESSED CULTURAL MEMORY

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**Abstract:** This paper analyses *Engel des Vergessens* by Maja Haderlap, an autobiographical narrative on formation in a traumatized Slovene family in Carinthia. In the family narrative spanning over three generations the political and national conflicts are presented on intimate and emotional level to reveal the suppressed cultural memory of the Slovene minority, particularly its original trauma, the resistance to Nazism, by which the sliding into social and cultural second-class status and extinction began. By means of exceptional sensitivity, palpability, and poetic language, a sign of faithfulness and pride of the oppressed ones, the author has succeeded to present the peripheral Slovene culture as central to contemporary intercultural dialogue between the co-existing nations.

**Keywords:** cultural memory, Slovene minority in Austria, autobiographic novel, family narrative, crippled identity, Maja Haderlap

The Slovene poetess, translator, editor and stage director in Klagenfurt Stadttheater Maja Haderlap (born in 1961) from Austrian Carinthia published in 2011 her first novel *Engel des Vergessens* (*Angel of Oblivion*, Slovene translation *Angel pozabe*) which will be the main focus of my interest in this memory and identity research.

The novel displays a hybrid genre structure, fusing elements of autobiographical narrative about individual formation in a traumatized family, and of historical novel comprising regional, or rather village microhistory, recovering events in which

members of Slovene minority participated as active resistants against German Nazi regime. As a novel of individual's identity search through scraps of collective memory that has retained painful experiences of the Second World War and decades after it, it can be affiliated with other remarkable, recently published Slovene narratives where the use of infant and adolescent perspective or of multitude perspectives enables the narrator to reach beyond ideological and political conflicts, refrain from judging the past in order to expose the frail humanity and to appeal for apprehension of war victims.<sup>1</sup> Their main characters (and authors) are often girls and women.

*Engel des Vergessens* as family narrative in fragments spans over three generations and reveals the suppressed cultural memory of the Slovene minority, in particular its original war trauma that has caused its sliding into social and cultural second-class status and the extinction/assimilation. But all political and national conflicts are presented on personal, intimate and emotional level. By means of child perspective the author catches her grandmother's experience of female concentration camp, her father's youth experience of partisan combatant, and the memory of the whole community on exiled and murdered families and forsaken rural homes in south Carinthian valleys.

The girl's growing up and forming of her identity is narrated as succession of habitual and fatal events

in life of a peasant family, living on a solitary farm on a sunny plane between narrow ravines in hilly, forest landscape. The inhabitants of Lepena neighbourhood<sup>2</sup> belong to rural culture, saturated with strong tradition of Catholic church, Slovene mother tongue and oral folk creativity. For generations the family estate has been a well-known place of social meetings, where recounting tales, singing, dancing, playing music, writing and reciting poems,<sup>3</sup> performing dramatized sketches, vigils and pagan rituals of conjuration take place. An important part of material culture is work connected with farming (agriculture, pig-, cattle- and chicken breeding, bee-keeping, spinning, knitting, doing embroidery), clothing (woollen socks, clogs, boots, aprons, kerchiefs, plaited hair etc.) and cookery. This nonurban, peasant community is dispersed in space, yet tied by strong social bond of relatives and neighbours, manifesting a high degree of solidarity and unity, especially when accidents, misfortunes and deaths occur. People are adapted to live in nature, on fields, pastures and forests, as foresters, woodcutters and hunters. In retrospective of other people's memories which gradually prevail over the autobiographical narrative, natural environment becomes moreover a shelter, the place of survival for those who had to flee into forests and caves for the sake of mere survival.

The narrator's family consists of three key persons. The most responsible for girl's moulding in early years is her grandmother who bears family pride, national identity, family traditions and habits. She not only stands in the "centre of the entire picture that she epitomizes and concentrates" (Halbwachs, 2001 : 71), but enables her granddaughter to reach into distant past: horrific recollections from war time (which she herself qualifies as "strange"). Her father is a toilworn forester and farmer, silent

and emotionally inhibited due to shocking experience in his childhood, when he witnessed how his mother was violently seized and sent to concentration camp, was himself badly beaten and hung on a tree, became the youngest partisan, often hungry and running for life. The narrator's mother is presented as bigoted, unappreciated in her husband's home (because of poor origin and no experience of the suffering), disappointed, emotionally reserved, never showing affection towards children, jealous of her daughter's attachment to the father. In this constellation there is no mention of other four siblings, with the exception of brother, who lives through the same uneasiness at their father's ravages and self-destructive assaults. It is only at the later stage that father's dejection, headaches, hard smoking and drinking are understood as consequence of traumatic memory in which the present is conquered by the haunting past. The narrator neither as a child nor as a grown up and educated person finds words which could console and save her father from the abyss of memory. The symbolic »angel of oblivion« thus suggests the wish to forget and liberate oneself from the past, but applied to the post-war generation it refers to liberation through writing that would articulate the crippled identity of the person who has been marked, since early childhood, by shadows of death.

Although the war finished several decades ago, and the narrator has not herself witnessed atrocities endured by preceding two generations, she tries to liberate herself from the cocoon of death and dismay that invaded her own memory when she was exposed to reminiscences of her relatives, neighbours and acquaintances. Their deeply engraved memories are triggered off at family meetings, funerals or at certain places, especially on spots where fatal events had occurred, where life and cul-

ture had been destroyed, leaving ruined farms and overgrown cultivated land. The autobiographical chronology, oriented from the past to the present, is constantly intercepted by: "time before my time, time that stretched its hands after me that I was beginning to yield to, as from horror and fascination." (Haderlap, 2011 : 109) <sup>4</sup>

The young girl absorbs the experience of elders, extending her immediate perceptions with historical dimension and developing empathy for their suffering and sorrows: humiliation, threat and death in concentration camps, hunger, cold, betrayal of conspiracy during resistance, witnessing of shooting, beating, hanging, murdering cattle, burning of houses and stables, robbing food supplies to prevent helping Partisans, prohibiting to bury the murdered etc. Thus the narration of one's own life is expanded by the stories of others. In recurrent confrontation with the death of others the process of emotional growth and intimate understanding of other persons' feelings and thoughts develop,<sup>5</sup> until the narrator is fully conscious that one's own present is inseparable from the past and sets out on a painful path of "working through" traumatic memory.<sup>6</sup>

Her identity shares properties of collective mentality, except that she is aware of the effects of history and strives to master its inhibiting and destructing force. She is willing to appropriate the local tradition and history preserved in oral memory, in individual stories handed over to the youth, either spontaneously or deliberately. "It is our, the elders' duty to transfer our knowledge onto youth, so that it won't be left without any memory of its families." (ibid. : 160)<sup>7</sup> are the words of a simple county woman, the grand-aunt Leni. The substance to be transferred is a system of values: perseverance in spite of suffering and pride in spite of humiliation.

In search of personal identity through appropriation of collective memory, conceived both as cultural and historical memory, the novel constitutes two patterns of time-in-space. First, the life of people, who in the past cultivated their environment, made it inhabitable, is inscribed in the landscape itself. If people are deracinated, exiled from their homes, the landscape turns back to wilderness. Second, in the process of growing up the autobiographical subject's living place extends: her initial experience is limited to the house (main room, black kitchen and cellar), the estate (stable, barn, beehive, pasture, forest), then broadens up to Leppen (Lepena) ravines and Eisenkappel (Železna kapla) commune with neighbours, shops, pubs and school, later to Carinthia and Klagenfurt as administration and education centre where she attends secondary school, to Slovenia (border crossing with grandmother, illegally with father, cultural contacts of the poet and editor), finally to wider Austria and capital Vienna where she studies theatre, and to Europe (visiting Ravensbrück and Berlin). Her identity is thus organized in concentric circles, her perspective ever widening, until she is finally capable of distancing herself from family inhibitions and restraints.

While the main part of the novel is lyrical, self-revealing, abundant in concrete perceptions and presented as if performed on stage (written in "historical" present tense), the final part is synthetic and reflexive, as it presents attempts to understand historical causes for specific mentality, linked with the subordinate and inferior culture: the undeveloped land with frequent suicides and emigrations, the population whose discourse is inaudible and whose regional idiom is limited to intimate communication. After graduation the protagonist sets out to explore local history through fragmented stories of the lonely and the humble ones, who have never been

in position to testify in public, because they did not want to disturb the German majority in Austria and awaken the old hatred.

“After the end of Nazism they still have known about one another, have recounted their experiences, have recognized themselves in the suffering of others. But then the fear has come that their stories no more belonged to, were foreign in the country that wanted to hear other stories and held theirs as unimportant. They know that their past does not figure in Austrian history books, even less in Carinthian history books. [...] This is what the narrators know and have learned to remain silent.” (Haderlap, 2011 : 236)<sup>8</sup>

She sets out to collect scattered oral testimonies and written traces: her grandmother’s war diary written in dialect and with grammatical mistakes, then letters of her concentration camp mates, her old aunt’s poems from Ravensbrück,<sup>9</sup> she stimulates her relatives to tell and write their memoirs.<sup>10</sup> She tries to understand the wider political context and to construct coherent picture of the past in her homeland. Carinthian war memory has hitherto been pushed into the cellar of Austrian palace of historiography, so that it remained unknown to the majority of population.

“Hesitant, prudent, injured, dismayed, silenced, deranged they have become – the defeated ones, the politics that unleashed the war declines pity for them. Repeatedly handicapped they remain on the bottom. The new state is suspicious towards its citizens who fought against National socialism, distrustful because it does not want to disquiet the majority – followers of Nazism and German nationalists. [...] For all that, Aus-

tria has nothing to do with Nazis, she herself was a victim, she understands nothing, was not involved, did not take part in those hard times.” (ibid. : 2011 : )<sup>11</sup>

The Slovene Carinthians as Antinazi resisters and victims at the same time make such light alibi impossible, as their sole existence is a mirror for the collaborators who did not rise against German Reich but supported liquidation of rebels.<sup>12</sup> Worse still, the Nazis have not fought against Partisan movement overtly, but punished civilians who supplied them with food, clothing and took care of the wounded:

“The enemies here wear aprons and skirts and schoolbags. Without knowing it they have become fighters, their hair quietly combed in braids, they have never had a gun in their hands, yet *they have become helpers of those terrorist bandits [...] They have supported the enemies of Reich and will be punished by death.*”<sup>13</sup>

The consequence of unheard voices, of silenced memory, is crippled mentality: threatened, deeply frightened, humiliated, defeated. Such linguistic and cultural minority was ready for advanced Germanization.<sup>14</sup> Inculpated for arousing bad conscience and feeling of guilt in German speaking Austrians, the Slovene Carinthians have been denied the right to inscribe their own denomination of villages where they have been living for centuries.<sup>15</sup>

The novel as regional microhistory makes use of facts illuminated by personal memory: it not only states events, dates and places, but includes tens of family and personal names and local denominations of estates. Carinthian patrimony, its cultural memory is reproduced in rich local topography (with micro-toponymical names) in use by the natives, thus

proving that language is the deepest foundation of ethnic and personal identity. Besides, the writing style in this novel imitates spoken language inserting many colloquial or dialect words for items of material culture, characteristic of the region. The words and names themselves function as foreign, as sign of otherness. The other in this case are those who have lived in the past and finally have right to be remembered with reverence. Together with dominant present tense narration which enables the reader to feel as if on the spot with the narrator, and with rich inventory of metaphors for description of emotions and dreams, *Engel des Vergessens* forms a peculiar texture<sup>16</sup> appropriate to disclose and poeticize the disavowed topic.

Carinthian memory of anti-Nazi resistance has been object of manipulation and revisions in Yugoslavia and Slovenia as well. Some participants remember how the Partisan movement was used as instrument in post-war negotiations about borders. Slovene anti-Nazis in Carinthia were decisive in acknowledging Austria the status of defending victim and therefore entitled to preserve its pre-war territory, in contest to Tito's claims. In contrast to Slovenia where communists came into power, legitimizing themselves as war victors and suppressing their own atrocities, the Slovene Carinthians fought for mere survival, retained their religion, and had no pretention to participate in politics.

When the adult narrator visits Slovene writers and friends on the other side of the border, she is astonished and sceptical at the fact that striving for Slovene independence is mixed with anti-communism and that the once mythical people's liberation war is deposed. This potentially jeopardizes her family's and her community's contributions. To deny all that she has learned from her most beloved

relatives since early childhood on, would mean to lose orientation in life, to renounce her identity and to admit that all past suffering and deaths were in vain, senseless and insane.

To dig out the unacknowledged memory, suppressed into intimate sphere, means emancipation, although its articulation, writing and sharing it with others, does not happen in her mother tongue, the language of her homeland, family, primary socialisation, but in the language learned from books, at school, in the university. The narrative subject admits that she has been progressively losing and lost her language due to the innermost split, while she was hiding fear from others and masking her own self, and due to her conscious withdrawal from domestic traumas and discord among parents.<sup>17</sup>

Losing competence in mother tongue and gaining it in language of education could be interpreted as having surrendered to constraints of social environment, as a sign of becoming assimilated. Such is the polemic stance of the renowned Slovene Carinthian writer Florjan Lipuš in his short biographical novel *Poizvedovanje za imenom (Inquiring after the Name, 2013)*.<sup>18</sup> In a peculiar, highly artistic style the author narrates an even more unfortunate childhood of a boy whose mother was cremated in Ravensbrück concentration camp, leaving him bereft of warmth, tenderness and security for his whole life. By means of grotesque depiction of the subordinative mentality he pleads for pride and self-esteem, irrespective of tragic history and contempt which resulted from it. But German for him remains the language of gendarmes, persecutors, state and church authorities, the language of power that made the feeble ones to obey and bend down, the language of the upper part of road signs: "The members of upper inscription have erected the tombstones to the members of

lower inscription." (Lipuš, 2013 : 53) Therefore celebration of any book in German that speaks of their suffering is unacceptable, if not a shameful act.

On the other hand, the sovereign German literary discourse of Maja Haderlap may be seen as the very mastering of inferiority complexes, as manifestation of superiority, of attaining capacity to communicate with German speaking intellectual elites in Austria. The novel on Slovenes in German language addresses the readers of both co-existing nationalities, defending respect, acceptance, understanding and dialogue, despite social, economic, linguistic and cultural differences. By means of exceptional sensitivity, palpability, and poetic language this novel surpasses the prevailing political and cultural stereotypes without betraying personal identity or memory. This could be realized in full only when the narrator could take a distance from the most painful experiences, by expressing them in the foreign language.

In the meantime the novel has become Austrian and Slovene bestseller and received important literary awards (Ingeborg Bachmann, Ravensburger Verlag Fund, Bruno Kreisky, Rauriser, Vincenz Rizzi), the author has become honorary citizen of Eisenkappel and received honorary doctorate from the university in Klagenfurt. Maja Haderlap has succeeded to set up the peripheral Slovene culture as central to contemporary intercultural dialogue. Her *Engel des Vergessens* is in fact a felicitous continuation of the distinguished literature by the above mentioned Florijan Lipuš, and also in line with similar aspirations to present national history in terms of family privacy, stories in which an individual (narrator) finds himself a stranger and an outlaw.

Thus Marko Sosič (born 1958) from Italy in the novel *Tito, amor mijo* (2005) depicts the everyday

life of a working class Slovene family in post-war Italy (in a village on the outskirts of Trieste) by means of 10-year old boy's perspective. The boy's adult relatives feel mentally and/or physically marked by the past fascist violence, collaborators' perversity and by heroic resistance, whereas children are subjected to forceful methods of learning the language of majority and are exposed to insults from schoolmates. Their parents therefore forbid them to mix with children of the new Italian expatriates from Yugoslavia settled in Slovene villages. Worst still, the Slovenes in Slavia Veneta (Slovenska Benečija) dare only whisper Slovene name of Natisone river (Nadiža), they have no other choice but to abandon their rural homes and seek work abroad. Like Haderlap Marko Sosič derives textual persuasiveness from the fact that a child perceives events in isolation without understanding their meaning. His reactions are emotional, in conflict situations he substitutes reality for imagination driven by desire. The literary procedure of staging by which all things occur in ever moving present moment (the whole novel is written in present tense) goes even further than Haderlap's, as it covers a relatively short time span, from May to September in one year.

And finally, the family narrative *O znosnosti* (*On endurance*, 2011) by Aleš Čar (born 1971), the writer from central Slovenia, presents life stories of small people in a little mining town not far from Italian border. Here too the action is set in the framework of identity search by the youngest generation that cannot participate in great historical upheavals, yet has to account for memory, rethink and revalue the past of the elders, understand it within historical circumstances and finally invent its own patterns of existence.<sup>19</sup> The narrator develops while discovering family secrets from the time before his birth (the al-

leged incestuous relationship between the Grandfather and his firstborn daughter, the narrator's aunt; the secretly murdered father's father) and from the space abroad (his aunt's life in Belgium). He progressively reconstructs past stories together with decisive historical context that shaped everyone's existence. His predecessors have witnessed the downfall of Austrian empire, establishment of the new state of south Slaves, Italian annexation, seizure of power by the fascists, Second World War when Slovene men fought as Italian soldiers, Yugoslav communist regime, post-communist transition. The novel develops into reflexive apprehension and reception of individualized evil without explicitly condemning the persons who have committed shameful acts and caused misfortune to their closest relatives. All main characters suffer because they have made wrong decisions that prove to be the consequence of emotional deficiency. This is the legacy of the historically deprived grandparents (orphans, illegitimate children) who have struggled to survive, and parents (sons without respectable father figure, misused and neglected daughters) who have chased the phantasm of happiness. They punish themselves (suicide) or are punished by being rejected by the closest persons, by decaying (First aunt) or dying (Grandfather). Family here is a façade, a mask that hides banal filthiness, passionate desires, greed, egoism and manipulation. The relations of power and domination are projected from the social level to the intimate one and to intersexual relationships so that no one attains happiness. The adult narrator's recovering of the past demands personal involvement, effort and research (traveling to Belgium for testimonies of his cousins), yet it does not lead to catharsis. It

leads only to the knowledge of destructive phantasm of happiness that suffocates the other. This phantasm should be substituted for open space of dialogue, intersection between two beings, two minds and two actions. The final memento derived from family memory is that on our fathers' graves we reap weakness<sup>20</sup> – but, we as readers may add, also strength to articulate our difference.

In all analysed novels memory is presented in fragments, the essential remains of past experiences, handed over as precious family tradition or painfully discovered secret. In either case historical and cultural heritage becomes an ineradicable layer of individual's identity. Memory is a burden for which the generation of (grand)children cannot be held responsible, but it is also a means to transcend the limits of their own existence. As a rule, memories of ancestors are tragic, often concealed from public. Their haunting nature calls for liberation by telling, and for reevaluation, revision from the present point of view. The implicit empathy for the suffering in the past leads to forgiving without forgetting and understanding without blaming. Conscious recalling is carried out as progressive appropriation – irrespective of social values attached to one's family, community, nationality, culture. It is a means of emplotment that functions also as character's/narrator's personal development. Small community, family framework and child perspective are characteristic of minority writers and of those in the national centre. The focus on personal, private, intimate, familial might be accounted for as part of the contemporary literary tendency called new intimism or new emotionalism that substitute small individual stories for great universal narratives.

ENDNOTES

- [1] Nedeljka Pirjevec: *Saga o kovčku* /Saga about a suitcase (2003), Drago Jančar: *To noč sem jo videl* /That night I saw her (2010), Maruša Krese: *Da me je strah?* /That I am afraid? (2012). Alojzija Zupan Sosič has recently analysed these novels from the point of view of Partisan ethical values, connected with socialism or communism, i.e. comradeship, solidarity, altruistic help, equality and freedom. These are dealt with in the most condensed and qualitative, narrative way by Maruša Krese and Nedeljka Pirjevec, who take into account the ethical union between the story and narrative level (Zupan Sosič, 2013: 46-53).
- [2] According to administrative partition this part of Carithia belongs to rural district Völkermarkt (Velikovec); the closest market town is Esenkappel (Železna kapla).
- [3] Cf. Kmecl, 1976. His introduction to Maja Haderlap's collection of poems *Bajalice/Dowsing-rods* mentions literary activity of Anton, Lipej, Alojzij and Tonči Haderlap, beside Katarina Miklav.
- [4] [...] die Zeit vor meiner Zeit, die nach mir greift, der ich nachzugeben beginne, aus Faszination und aus Schrecken. (All translattinos from German into English are by Irena Novak Popov).
- [5] The narrator's reaction to her father recounting is: "Seine Erzählung ist zu meiner geworden [...] ich nur das Gefühl habe, dass er mir einen Teil meiner eignen Geschichte erzählt hat." (Haderlap, 2011 : 155) / His narrative has become mine [...] I only have the feeling that he has told me a part of my own story."
- [6] Paul Ricoeur (2004, 69-80) compares going through traumatic memories with Freud's concept of the work of mourning for the lost object of love.
- [7] Da werde ihr bewusst, dass sie, die Älteren, die Verpflichtung hätten, ihr Wissen and die Jugend weiterzugeben, damit sie nicht eines Tages ohne Erinnerungen an ihre Familien zurückbleiben. (Haderlap, 2011 : 160)
- [8] Nach dem Ende des Nazismus haben sie noch voneinander gewusst, haben sich ihre Erlebnisse erzählt, haben sich im Leid des anderen wiedererkannt. Dann aber kam die Angst, mit diesen Geschichten nicht mehr dazugehören, fremd zu sein in einem Land, das andere Erzählungen hören wollte in ihre für unwichtig hielt. Sie wissen, dass ihre Vergangenheit in den österreichischen Geschichtsbücher nicht vorkommt, noch weinger in den Kärntner Geschichtsbüchern [...] Das wissen die Erzähler und haben gelernt zu schweigen. " (Haderlap, 2011 : 236)
- [9] Katarina Miklav's poems written in CC Ravensbrück were preserved by chance, later published and nowadays anthologized in *Slovensko pesništvo upora 1941-1945*, 4. knjiga / Slovene poems of resistance 1941-1945, vol. 4.
- [10] Father Zdravko's testimony, included in the novel (pp. 153-155), reference to Anton Haderlap's book *Graparji*. So haben wir gelebt (Klagenfurt: Drava 2007) and other information on local families' history can be found on internet site A-Zone, presenting home estate of Vinkel family, now run by Zdravko Haderlap jr, the author's brother.
- [11] Die Zögerlichen, Umsichtigen, Verletzten, die Entsetzten, die Stillen, die Verstörten werden die Unterlegenen sein, die Politik, die den Krieg hervorgebracht hat, wird ihnen das Mitgefühl ersagen. Die vielfach Versehrten werde zurückbleiben. Der neue Staat wird seinen Staatsbürgern , die gegen den Nationalsozialismus gekämpft haben, misstrauen, weil er die Mehrheit der nazistischen Mitläufer und die Deutschnationalen nicht provozieren will. [...] Dabei habe Österreich nichts mit den Nazis zu tun, es sei selber Opfer, es verstehe nicht, es war nicht dabei, nicht da gewesen in schwerer Zeit.« (Haderlap, 2011 : 247-8)
- [12] The ex-partisans muse that it has been the worst when they had been betrayed by the Slovene countrymen.
- [13] Hier tragen die Feinde Schürzen und Röcke und Schulranzen. Ohne zu wissen, dass sie Kämpfer geworden sind, tragen sie ihre Haare friedlich zu Zöpfen geflochten, haben noch nie ein Gewehr in der Hand gehabt, sind aber Helfershelfer dieser terroristischen Banditen geworden [...] Sie haben die Feinde des Reiches bewünstigt und werden deshalb mit dem Tod bestraft."(Haderlap, 2011 : 239) The part in italics is a quotation from Himmler's order.

- [14] It was supported by radical right-wing political organisation Kärntner Heimatdienst (Carinthian Home guard) which argued for ethnically clean Carinthia. Its members have appealed to fear of annexation by Yugoslavia, exhibited inferiority complex turned to presumptuousness, contested the results of official censuses from 1951 to 1991 that anyhow recorded a drastic decline of Slovenes in Carinthia (from 42.095 to 14.580).
- [15] In 1972 there were violent removals of road signs in two languages, conceded by the Austrian State Treaty, 1955: Article 7 Rights of the Slovene and Croat minorities, paragraph 3: »In the administrative and judicial districts of Carinthia, Burgenland and Styria, where there are Slovene, Croat or mixed populations, the Slovene or Croat language shall be accepted as an official language in addition to German. In such districts topographical terminology and inscriptions shall be in the Slovene or Croat language as well as in German.« (United nations, Treaty series, Volume 217, 1955, IV, p. 231). Nowadays bilingual signs are set in 164 settlements that have more than 17,5% of Slovene speaking inhabitants.
- [16] The heritage of literary modernism can be detected on the level of language: the complex novel reads almost as a long prose poem.
- [17] Having read the novel in Slovene translation the author has admitted that she could not have written it in Slovene.
- [18] The leading motive is search for the inscription of mother's name on a tombstone which would prove that she has really existed. By naming his character Tjaž the author is alluding to his earlier, most famous novel *Zmote dijaka Tjaža/Errors of schoolboy Tjaž* (1972). The main difference is that the later text exhibits more autobiographical traits.
- [19] The narrator's cousins fail in building up their selves, they end up in transgressions, delinquency, drugs and suicide.
- [20] The epilogue depicts the narrator's father who carefully cultivates his plot, a former dump in which his murdered father has been deposited.

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