

CENTENNIAL REFLECTIONS ON STEINBECK'S REPUTATION IN SLOVENIA

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Abstract

Since the late 1920s and his first novel, *Cup of Gold* (1929), there has been little consensus about John Steinbeck's work, and he has often been praised or dismissed for the wrong reasons. In the wake of the novels with the sweeping reach and social consciousness of *In Dubious Battle* (1936), *Of Mice and Men* (1937), and *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), and despite the prodigious and startlingly diverse output of his career, Steinbeck was generally regarded as one of America's foremost engaged artists. However, the truth is that he was as much a postmodernist and a modernist, as a traditional proletarian writer. And though he made a significant contribution to the perception of the problems of his time by writing with empathy, clarity and a strong sense of justice about the downtrodden, the exploited, and the defenseless, which contributed to his immense public success, Steinbeck's novels lose none of their richness and power when removed from their historical context. With the human dilemmas on many levels of personal, philosophical, and socio-economic existence, and their deep humanistic, philosophical and ecological message, conveyed through numerous Biblical, Arthurian, and literary allusions, his works are as relevant today as they were when they were written.

Appropriate enough, and given that this year marks the centennial of John Steinbeck's birth, celebrated with a year-long series of events taking place throughout the United States and paying tribute to the winner of the O. Henry Short Story Prize, the Pulitzer Prize, and the Nobel Prize for Literature by examining his legacy in American literature, film, theatre and journalism, and providing new information about the enduring value of his writing, this paper aims to capture the writer's reputation in Slovenia. The plan is to briefly analyse the most illustrative examples of Steinbeck criticism accompanying Slovene publications of his works; then to loosen the hold of deeply entrenched positions of Slovene reviewers, and to highlight the importance of considering Steinbeck's texts from new, insightful and politically unbiased perspectives of contemporary critical engagement. And last but not least, this discussion might hopefully induce Slovene publishers to new printings and translations of Steinbeck's works.

In the 1958 issue of *Naša žena*, a popular read for many Slovenes interested in social and cultural issues, there appears this revealing passage:

It was not long ago when each book reaching Slovenia from across the Atlantic was a great sensation. Today, we can safely claim that American literature is far from being unknown to Slovenes, and John Steinbeck in

particular has become our dearest acquaintance. We have read his novels *The Grapes of Wrath*, *Of Mice and Men*, *In Dubious Battle* and been amused by his *Tortilla Flat*. No wonder we reach for his latest novel, *East of Eden*, in the most genuine expectation of meeting a friend with a lot to give. And Steinbeck will most certainly not let us down! (322)

So wrote Rapa Šuklje, one of the most active voices of what may be called the first generation of Steinbeck critics in Slovenia, following the first Slovene-language edition of Steinbeck's novel *East of Eden* (*Vzhodno od raja*), published by Cankarjeva založba in 1958. At the very outset it should be pointed out that such friendly and warm-hearted critical views as cited above had accompanied almost every Slovene translation of Steinbeck's novels since the writer first received the attention of the Slovene reading public in the early 1940s, and that it was not until Steinbeck's involvement in the Vietnam War that his popularity started to fade a little. There is no doubt that interest in American literature in Slovenia increased widely when Steinbeck began to produce his penetrating working-class novels, which burst on to the American scene from 1936 through 1939. It is also important to note that past social and political circumstances in Slovenia accounted for the general acceptance and appreciation of Steinbeck's work, especially of *The Grapes of Wrath*, which was crucial to Slovene understanding of the working-class experience in America, and made Steinbeck a household name.

To attribute the writer's appeal in Slovenia to the seeming simplicity of his writing and to the daring sincerity of its content that stemmed from the intensity of his involvement in the contemporary agriculture labour situation is only half the story. We need not look closely to find that Steinbeck's texts about the downtrodden and the have-nots of society enabled Slovene readers to draw many parallels between the workers' economic and social conditions in the two countries prior to the wartime socialist revolution. And more than that; politically committed activists exploited the author's anger and his sensitivity to human problems for propagandistic purposes. Other reasons accounted for the fact that Steinbeck was considered a sympathetic spokesman for the workers' cause, and held up as a model of social realism in Slovene literature; for example, his socially enlightened views and the evocative power of his art, to say the least. Steinbeck's influence is noticeable in the work of the outstanding Slovene representative of this genre, Lovro Kuhar-Prežihov Voranc; he also had a considerably great impact on the prominent Slovene realist writer, Ciril Kosmač.¹ However, this is not to deny the fact that Steinbeck did not entirely satisfy some dogmatic left-wing critics, who believed that his work lacked a more distinctive political synthesis; nor is it to diminish the significance of their attempt to present him as a "class traitor" and an "opportunist", as he was referred to in an anonymous article "Književnost v ZDA" (Literature in the USA), printed in the 31 March 1949 issue of *Slovenski poročevalec*, as this discussion will have indicated, when the writer abandoned the Depression era as a subject (10). From what has been said, and judging from both the sheer number of Slovene translations and the prevailing enthusiasm behind the critical voice of Slovene

¹ Steinbeck's influence is seen particularly in the novel *Jamnica* (1945), written by Lovro Kuhar-Prežihov Voranc, and in Ciril Kosmač's collection of novelettes *Sreča in kruh* (1946).

reviewers discussing Steinbeck's fiction, it is understandable that in past decades, and in the 1950s and 1960s in particular, Steinbeck was arguably one of the most popular American writers in Slovenia.

However, and in spite of a string of Slovene editions of Steinbeck's novels up to the latest third printing of his *Tortilla Flat* (translated by Ciril Kosmač as *Polentarska polica* and published by Mladinska knjiga in 1995), it is surprising that the writer has elicited a rather poor response from Slovene literary critics. That is, with the exception of a handful of more in-depth forewords to some Slovene editions of Steinbeck's novels, his art was predominantly assessed in periodical and newspaper articles whose authors, in great part book reviewers and journalists, only exceptionally managed to go beyond a cursory description of his fables. It is hard to believe, but there has not yet appeared a full-length study in book form of Steinbeck's work, and only a few broader, well-researched studies on this topic have until very recently seen the light of day. This is even more curious given that the first news about Steinbeck reached Slovenia as early as 1938, and that the Slovene version of his major novel, *The Grapes of Wrath*, entitled in its first translation by Rudolf Kresal as *Sadovi jeze* (Ljubljana: Založba Plug, 1943), was published only four years after being issued in the United States.²

Another paradox is that, regardless of the numerous proofs that Steinbeck's later fiction clearly shows the writer's departure from proletarian themes and his move to more sophisticated views on human existence, his literary reputation in Slovenia still to a very large degree rests on his socially-conscious novels of the 1930s, and most of Steinbeck's mid- and post-war works until very recently remained undeservedly marginalized. Instead of accepting aesthetic criteria as the only standard of a book's value, Slovene critics were primarily preoccupied with the demands laid down by social realism, which became the reigning literary theory in Slovenia after 1930, and viewed Steinbeck's literary achievements mainly from this perspective. Not surprisingly, then, they did not manage to perceive the ironic undertones in the writer's wording, let alone to unravel the complexity of mythical and literary allusions that add multiple layers of meaning to his seemingly simple and very readable stories. Similarly, most Slovene reviewers paid scant regard to Steinbeck's bent for ceaseless technical and stylistic experimentation, and uncritically equated the writer's exploration of new experience in his later years of writing with a decline in his artistic power.

To further illustrate this point, it should also be noted that the emergence of a whole new generation of fiction scholars worldwide, attracted to Steinbeck and exploring his writing, has so far only to some extent sparked a revival of interest in Steinbeck in Slovenia. Perhaps more than the fact that the translating of studies on Steinbeck criticism has so far been altogether ignored in Slovenia, the readers of this paper will be intrigued by the statistic that none of Steinbeck's works from his early and mid-war years of writing, including the novels *Cup of Gold*, *The Pastures of Heaven*, *To a God Unknown* and *The Moon Is Down*, is available to the non-English speaking population of Slovenia. The same holds true for his novels *The Long Valley*, *The Wayward Bus*, *Burning Bright*, and *The Short Reign of Pippin IV*, and for most of Steinbeck's

² Most of the Slovene translations of Steinbeck's novels were printed after a considerable lapse of time, for example, *Sweet Thursday* appeared as late as 1979.

non-fiction work, as evident from the list of Slovene publications of Steinbeck's works in the Appendix. If further proof is needed, and I think it is not, that there are huge gaps to be bridged in the field of Steinbeck studies in Slovenia, it should also be remembered that the only Slovene editions of the novels *Of Mice and Men* and *In Dubious Battle* date from as early as 1951 and 1952 respectively, and thus "hardly deserve to be found anywhere else than on the most remote and the dustiest shelves of some Slovene libraries", as they do, and as I regretfully indicated in "Kritiška presoja Steinbeckovega pripovedništva na Slovenskem" (Slovene Criticism on Steinbeck's Fiction) in the 2000 issue of the literary journal *Dialogi* 9-10 (98).

There are many explanations for the one-sided approach to Steinbeck's fiction and for the lack of both Slovene critical judgement and translations of the writer's work. However, it is not within the scope of this paper to dwell much longer on this issue, but to present the prevailing image of the writer as conceived by the Slovene general public and literary critics over a period of six decades of Steinbeck's presence in Slovenia, encompassing both the most illustrative critical material and a brief overview of Slovene translations. Let us now turn to details.

The first three critical articles on Steinbeck appeared in *Jutro*, a liberal daily newspaper. In its 2 February 1938 issue, Griša Koritnik discusses the writer in the context of broader reflections on American literature and familiarizes Slovene readers with the publication of Steinbeck's novel, *Of Mice and Men*. Also merely informative and dealing with contemporary American literature, are Janko Debeljak's review for the following year's issue, and the anonymous "Zapiski" (Notes), published on 6 June 1940. The 29 July 1943 news in the *Slovenec* newspaper, that a Slovene publishing company, Plug, was about to bring out a translation of Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, "one of the strongest indictment of social ills", must have struck both the general and academic readership in occupied Slovenia, for it was a marked deviation from the tendencies and trends in the Slovene publishing business (12). Given the controversy surrounding Steinbeck's best-known novel and its divergence from the preconceptions relating to the themes and ideology of the books published in Slovenia during the occupation, this is not hard to comprehend. As for the publisher's decision, it might simply have been that they saw Slovenia as an eager market for a novel that had been banned for its rebellious topic. As expected, the book sold prodigiously, but the event hardly elicited any critical discussion of it. With regard to the assertions made in connection with Slovene orthodox critics, it is interesting to note the anonymous position advocated in "John Steinbeck: 'Grozdi jeze'" (John Steinbeck: *The Grapes of Wrath*), in the 25 August 1944 issue of *Slovenec*, namely that "a work which arouses in its readers a desire to fight against existing social injustice should also show the way to attain this change" (8).

Some other antagonistic voices were heard on Steinbeck's fiction from 1947 onwards. Firstly, the literary periodical *Novi svet* (1947) published Mile Klopčič's translation of a study by the Russian critic, A. Starcev, whose position regarding communal trends in the development of social realism in the United States and the progress of Steinbeck's literary career in particular is characteristic of the prevailing Slovene reception of Steinbeck's fiction. In his "O socialnem realizmu v ZDA" (Social Realism in the United States), Starcev asserts that Steinbeck, the author of *The Grapes of Wrath*,

certainly was a daring social critic of his country, while, on the other hand, his novels, *The Moon Is Down* and *Cannery Row*, show him as a “skeptical individualist whose art does not go beyond the sheer preoccupation with itself” (133). Equally unfavourable ideas were repeated two years later in the already mentioned *Slovenski poročevalec* essay, “Književnost v ZDA” (American Literature), where an anonymous author depicts Steinbeck as “an ardent supporter of the system he had previously attacked” (10).

A significant contribution to the Slovene reception of Steinbeck is undoubtedly that of Janez Gradišnik, the author of periodical overviews of contemporary American literature in the literary periodicals, *Novi svet* and *Nova obzorja*. In his 1950 *Novi svet* essay, “Pogledi na ameriško književnost v letu 1951” (Views on American Literature in 1951), for example, he gives information about the heated disputes among American critics over the artistry of Steinbeck’s post-war fiction, and briefly mentions their lukewarm if not unfavourable opinion of the novel *Burning Bright*. An equally illustrative example of how rapid was the flow of information tracing Steinbeck’s artistic career is a short anonymous review of *The Wayward Bus*, “Najnovější Steinbeckov roman” (The Latest Novel by John Steinbeck) in *Ljudski tednik*, as early as 17 July 1947, worth noting here solely for this reason.

Given the up-to-date reporting of the Slovene press, either about the writer’s growing popularity in the United States, or about the change in his thematic orientation and the subsequent discussions surrounding the quality of his writing, some comment must be made about the field of translation, where the situation was considerably different. It was not until 1951 that a veritable outburst of Slovene translations of Steinbeck’s novels began. In the 1950s, for example, Slovene bookstores were stocked with Slovene-language versions of *Of Mice and Men* (1951), *The Pearl* (1952), *In Dubious Battle* (1952) and *East of Eden* (1958). Considered together, the views accompanying these publications show that the novels were affirmatively accepted both by popular readers and by literary critics. However, most of these critical evaluations concerned themselves merely with factual information about Steinbeck and his work, rather than providing more comprehensive, analytical insights. Somewhat different, but still relatively limited in scope, was a study dealing with *Of Mice and Men*, “John Steinbeck: ‘Ljudje in miši,’” by Ivan Skušek in the 8 March 1952 issue of *Ljudska pravica*. Skušek’s response to his own question about the reason for the unprecedented success of this novel is that this may be found in Steinbeck’s “caring and compassionate portrayal of the common people” (18).

Another article worth mentioning in this paper mainly because of its effect on subsequent criticism, is Rapa Šuklje’s critical evaluation of *In Dubious Battle*, in the August 1954 issue of *Naša žena*. She advances a very positive view of the novel, founding her judgement on her belief that the novel “announces a bright future with justice, equality and humanity” (173). Her impassioned reflections culminate in her assumption that “Steinbeck and his heroes make you believe that such a future can not be far ahead” (174). Although her idealistic and limited views are a denial of the complexity of the novel, we can speculate that they, nevertheless, significantly contributed to the popularity of Steinbeck in Slovenia. Viewed from this angle, it is even more surprising that the 1952 edition of Aljoša Furlan’s and Rado Bordon’s translation of *In Dubious Battle*, printed by *Slovenski poročevalec*, has not been reprinted.

Several Slovene reviewers commented on *Tortilla Flat*, published in Slovene translation as late as 1953, all of them positively. Dušan Mevlja is a good example. In his 23 November 1953 review for *Večer*, Mevlja points out Steinbeck's "genuine humanity", which he posits as the most acceptable explanation for the book's success in Slovenia (17). In his opinion, the novel is "a hymn to chivalric ideals such as friendship, loyalty, simplicity, and bohemianism" as opposed to the distorted values of the materialistic bourgeoisie (17). My purpose is not to argue the point, but beneath the reviewer's passionate judgement one cannot overlook his rigidly sociological position towards the novel, which undoubtedly contributes its own illumination to the story. Janez Menart, on the other hand, seems to have been fully aware that many readers are unlikely to grasp what Steinbeck intended to say in *Tortilla Flat*. His view in the 1953 issue of *Knjiga* suggests that the writer is conveying a great and simple truth to a worldwide audience, namely, "what makes people happy and gives meaning to their existence is a generous heart, not material gain" (296).

Also, observations made on the occasion of the first Slovene publication of *East of Eden* in 1958, indicate the reviewers' friendly and appreciative position toward the writer - as pointed out at the very beginning of this paper. In a four-page-long afterword, "Steinbeck in njegov raj" (Steinbeck and His Eden), Jože Turk, for example, describes the book as "one of the most beautiful literary gifts ever available to Slovene readers" (541). Taking into account his initial assertion, that "in times of international crises Steinbeck, who is a writer of high repute, always attentively listened to President Tito's opinion" (540), one sees that political views underlay the critical evaluation of this book, too.

However, the comments after Steinbeck received the Nobel Prize for literature reveal passions at both ends of the spectrum: the majority of Slovene reviewers overtly supported the writer, each with his or her own explanation of why Steinbeck had deserved the award. For example, in *Tedenska tribuna* of 30 October 1962, Rapa Šuklje began her "Nobelovec Steinbeck" (Steinbeck Awarded the Nobel Prize) by emphasizing the writer's overall importance, namely his influence on European literature and his contribution to the European perception of American society and culture. She broadened the topic by suggesting that Steinbeck should have received the prize already after writing *The Grapes of Wrath*, which she saw as the "cream of American literature" (7). Very similar ideas are also expressed in her 1963 *John Steinbeck: Nobelov nagrajenec* (John Steinbeck: Nobel Prize Winner), a thin volume, containing only fifteen pages of quotes arranged as a compilation from Steinbeck's novels and accompanied by a few lines of her commentary. On the other hand, Stane Ivanc signalled his out-right disapproval already in the pejorative title of his 4 December 1962 *Tedenska tribuna* article, "Steinbeck - 80 let prepozno" (Steinbeck - 80 Years Too Late), and supported his unappreciative position by referring to "outraged French critics" who had - according to Ivanc - denounced Steinbeck for his false portrayal of communism and denied his reputation as a social-realist writer. Ivanc ironically concluded that Steinbeck must have won the Nobel Prize for his "belated realism" (7).

Such mutually exclusive positions did not influence subsequent criticism, nor did they prevent Slovene publishers from further printing Slovene versions of Steinbeck's novels. On the contrary, from 1963 through 1965, there was a real explo-

sion of his books, including *Travels with Charley* (1963), *East of Eden* (1964), *The Red Pony* (1964), *Cannery Row* (1965), and *The Winter of Our Discontent* (1965), and they seemed to have lost none of their fascination for Slovene readers. Similarly productive activity can be noticed in the field of criticism. I do not intend to present a complete survey of critical material on these novels; however, a good starting point is Marija Cvetko's evaluation of *Travels With Charley* on 24 March 1964 in *Tedenska tribuna*. Although taking pains to show the lack of intensity of Steinbeck's critical insight and his sentimentality, Marija Cvetko believes that the book is a unique piece of travel writing. In her words, not so much for its artistic quality as for its "sparkling wittiness" and "genuine reflections, which cannot hide the writer's caring and painful engagement with the issues discussed" (7). Around the same time, Slavko Rupel praises this novel's topical theme and its interesting, straightforward technique in *Primorski dnevnik*. What he particularly admires in *Travels with Charley* is Steinbeck's sincere and progressive stand towards life, either when discussing American foreign policy or such topics as racism, urbanization, consumerism, and so forth. Rupel concurred, two years later, when evaluating *The Winter of Our Discontent*. In his review for *Primorski dnevnik* of 12 March 1966, he describes the novel as "the most powerful social protest after *The Grapes of Wrath*", which, on the other hand, retained "very little of the old traditional novel" (22). As an example, Rupel draws attention to its "fragmented narrative", which demands extremely "attentive reading" (22).

A far from exhaustive, but considerably more complex presentation of Steinbeck's career was provided in Rapa Šuklje's introductory study, "John Steinbeck," to the Cankarjeva založba reprint of *East of Eden*, in 1964. After giving a short account of Steinbeck's life, she surveys all Steinbeck's works, examining them for content and form. Although she does not hesitate to point out some apparent flaws, such as sentimentality and one-dimensional characterization, her sympathies are undoubtedly always on the writer's side. When discussing *East of Eden*, she agrees, that "judged by purely artistic standards, the book is not among Steinbeck's best achievements, but it is much liked by the readers, and this counts, too" (39). One may be surprised to know, that the Cankarjeva založba publishing company printed Šuklje's study again in its third and fourth editions of *East of Eden*, in 1977 and 1987 respectively, without any revisions or up-dated information.

It was not until over two decades later, when Steinbeck already lost some of his appeal for Slovene readers, that Janko Moder provided what was until very recently the most elaborate critical study on Steinbeck in Slovenia. His concise thirty-three pages, "Spremna beseda o avtorju" (About the Author) in the 1983 second printing of *The Grapes of Wrath*, this time by Cankarjeva založba and under a different title, *Grozdi jeze*, can be accounted among the most extensive presentation to date.³ With his susceptibility to such peculiarities of Steinbeck's fiction as its allegorical dimensions, symbolic, connotative values, and biological perspective, and his appreciation of the experimental elements he encountered in the writer's books, Moder gets at the essential Steinbeck, beyond the realist and reporter. By focusing our attention on Steinbeck's allusive statements, and his accomplished and varied diction and style, this study

³ Moder's title is a word-for-word translation, while the title *Sadovi jeze*, provided by the first translator of this novel, Rudolf Kresal, bears the meaning of 'fruits, results, consequences'.

certainly challenges us with fresh insights into Steinbeck's creative process. However, and although Moder did not explicitly take the side of those who were in pursuit of the social aspects of Steinbeck's art, he saw *Of Mice and Men* primarily as a "remarkable social protest against the existing agricultural labour situation in California" (593).

The considerable lapse of time between the two critical publications was not due to some inexplicable coincidence. Rather, it was conditioned by Steinbeck's political engagement in Vietnam. It should be borne in mind that the year 1967 was an important milestone in the stature of Steinbeck's reputation in Slovenia, and that his political activity resulted not only in an uncompromising critical response in the late 1960s, but also in the subsequent lack of serious critical interest in Steinbeck's work. The sharpest attacks on the writer came from Blaga Dimitrova's "Odperto pismo gospodu Steinbecku" (A Public Letter to Mr. Steinbeck)⁴ in the March 1967 issue of *Naša žena*, accompanied by two anonymous accusations in the first and the fourth issue of *Naši razgledi* (1967), "Steinbeck v Vietnamu" (Steinbeck in Vietnam) and "Resnica Johna Steinbecka" (The Truth About John Steinbeck), taking a direct cue from the criticism levelled against Steinbeck in the United States.⁵ Excluding brief notices following the writer's death and the Slovene publication of *Sweet Thursday* (1979), it was not before 22 March 1993, that the *Delo* newspaper published an anonymous informational overview of Steinbeck's career, "John Steinbeck je spet v modi" (John Steinbeck Is In Again), written from a moderately balanced point of view, rather than showing disapproval and reservation.

This brings us to the most recent studies, written by myself. To begin with, "The Function of Female Characters in Steinbeck's Fiction," in *Acta Neophilologica* 1-2 (2000: 85-91), is concerned with gender roles in Steinbeck's fiction, and provides a new insight into a supposedly minor character in the novel *Of Mice and Men*. New viewpoints are reflected also in my unpublished doctoral dissertation "Družbenokritična funkcija slogovnih figur v prozi Johna Steinbecka" (Stylistic Figures in John Steinbeck's Fiction in the Function of Social Criticism) (Ljubljana University, 2001), an investigation into Steinbeck's personal and literary life. In addition to providing a much more meticulous presentation of the reception of the writer in Slovenia than I am doing here, and than I have done in "Steinbeck in Slovenci" (Steinbeck and the Slovenes), published in the academic literary journal, *Slavistična revija* 4 (2000: 459-472), the latter gives a concise account of past and contemporary criticism on Steinbeck's work in the United States, and traces the writer's influence in the works of the Slovene realist writers. And most importantly, by delving beneath the guise of simple fables and unravelling a veritable orchestra of characters, themes, symbols, subtexts and allusions in Steinbeck's novels, the dissertation aims to create a new awareness of the books' value and serve as a reminder that they are an enduring source of inspiration well worth discovering. To this end, in other words, as a reminder that many issues discussed in Steinbeck's novels are still unresolved, and continue to engage us in the 21st century, my 27 May 2002 article, published in the newspaper *Delo*, about the

⁴ Blaga Dimitrova, a Bulgarian writer, first published her article in the Bulgarian periodical, *Literarna fronta*. It was translated into Slovene by Katja Špurova.

⁵ The articles in *Naši razgledi* refer to *The New York Herald Tribune*, without providing any other information regarding the source.

lasting quality of *The Grapes of Wrath*, and honoring the Steinbeck centennial, was headlined “In zloma ne bo, dokler se bo strah spreminjal v jezo” (The break would never come as long as fear could turn to wrath), quoting from the book’s twenty-ninth chapter (592).

From what has already been said, it would not be unreasonable to expect that the winds have also changed in the Slovene publishing. However, it fruitfully continued until the mid 1990s, with three editions in the 70s, five in the 80s, and one in the mid 90s. Interestingly, twelve of Steinbeck’s novels have been translated into Slovene; and yet, if one were to ask the average Slovene reader to think of Steinbeck, they would invariably think of his novel *East of Eden*. One may also be surprised to learn that, since its first publication in 1958, there have been five Slovene editions of this book – published either by Cankarjeva založba or Mladinska knjiga – compared to other Steinbeck’s novels, which have been reprinted twice at most.

It would be interesting to discuss how Steinbeck’s stories have been dealt with by Slovene translators. However, this is not the place to fully develop a comparison between the Slovene versions and Steinbeck’s originals. For the purposes of this discussion, the most significant fact is that some of the translations – especially *Of Mice and Men* and *In Dubious Battle* – are not only inaccurate and tailored to the needs and expectations of their publishers, but they do not immerse the readers in their stories half as much as the authentic texts. Putting aside numerous discrepancies in the meaning of certain words, only a few translators have managed to preserve the meanings of Steinbeck’s allusive statements, symbols and metaphors, and to produce the heterogeneous combinations of styles characteristic of the originals. Another insurmountable obstacle for many translators is Steinbeck’s language. Instead of dialect and slang, Slovene translators far too often employ literary language, or simply delete the parts deemed too “vulgar” (as Meta Gosak did in *Of Mice and Men*).

To conclude, this brief overview suggests that, with few exceptions, Slovene critics primarily focused on Steinbeck’s social activism as demonstrated in *The Grapes of Wrath*, while readers loved him for his sincere and profound concern for the common people, for his optimism and celebration of life. And it also suggests that Steinbeck’s works do deserve new readings and new critical approaches. Not only because of the spiritually limited horizons of those who reflected upon the issues discussed in these works, and showed no interest in the endless variety and subtlety of Steinbeck’s writing, but also because they undoubtedly communicate to a worldwide audience, and even decades after their inception, show us a way of viewing the world, others, and ourselves.

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- _____. *John Steinbeck: Nobelov nagajenec*. Ljubljana: Prosvetni servis, 1963.
- _____. Introduction. *Vzhodno od raja*. By John Steinbeck. Trans. Jože Turk. Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 1964.
- Turk, Jože. After-word. *Vzhodno od raja*. By John Steinbeck. Trans. Jože Turk. Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 1958. 540-543.

APPENDIX

Slovene editions of Steinbeck's works (Listed in chronological order):

- Steinbeck, John. *Sadovi jeze* (*The Grapes of Wrath*). Trans. Rudolf Kresal. Ljubljana: Založba Plug, 1943.
- _____. *Ljudje in miši* (*Of Mice and Men*). Trans. Meta Gosak. Ljubljana: Slovenski knjižni zavod, 1951.
- _____. *Biser* (*The Pearl*). Trans. Jože Župančič. Ljubljanski dnevnik, 1952.
- _____. *Negotova bitka* (*In Dubious Battle*). Trans. Aljoša Furlan and Rado Bordon. Ljubljana: Slovenski poročevalec, 1952.
- _____. *Polentarska polica* (*Tortilla Flat*). Trans. Ciril Kosmač. Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 1953.
- _____. *Vzhodno od raja* (*East of Eden*). Trans. Jože Turk. Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 1958. (Introduction by Jože Turk.)

- _____. *Potovanje s Charleyem (Travels With Charley)*. Trans. Meta Gosak. Ljubljana: Državna založba Slovenije, 1963.
- _____. *Vzhodno od raja (East of Eden)*. Trans. Jože Turk. Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 1964. (Introduction by Rapa Šuklje.)
- _____. *Rdeči konjiček (The Red Pony)*. Trans. Alenka Moder. Maribor: Založba Obzorja, 1964.
- _____. *Ulica ribjih konzerv (Cannery Row)*. Trans. Jaro Komac. Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 1965. (Introduction by Božidar Borko.)
- _____. *Zima naše nezadovoljnosti (The Winter of Our Discontent)*. Trans. Janko Moder. Maribor: Založba Obzorja, 1965.
- _____. *Polentarska polica (Tortilla Flat), Ulica ribjih konzerv (Cannery Row)*. Trans. Ciril Kosmač and Jaro Komac. Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 1974. (Introduction by Iztok Ilich.)
- _____. *Vzhodno od raja (East of Eden)*. Trans. Jože Turk. Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 1977. (Introduction by Rapa Šuklje.)
- _____. *Sladki četrtek (Sweet Thursday)*. Trans. Valentina Duša. Ljubljana: Prešernova družba, 1979.
- _____. *Vzhodno od raja (East of Eden)*. Trans. Juš Turk. Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 1980.
- _____. *Vzhodno od raja (East of Eden)*. Trans. Juš Turk. Mladinska knjiga, 1982.
- _____. *Grozdi jeze (The Grapes of Wrath)*. Trans. Janko Moder. Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 1983. (Introduction by Janko Moder.)
- _____. *Vzhodno od raja (East of Eden)*. Trans. Juš Turk. Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 1987. (Introduction by Rapa Šuklje.)
- _____. *Sladki četrtek (Sweet Thursday)*. Trans. Valentin Duša. Ljubljana: Prešernova družba, 1989.
- _____. *Polentarska polica (Tortilla Flat)*. Trans. Ciril Kosmač. Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 1995.