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DOSSIER: ANTUN ŠOLJAN

He was a man with an incredible feeling for the fellowship among writers and the continuity of literature, creating a space around him in which the business of literature began to look more important and necessary than you would have thought.

Hrvoje Pejaković

Chronology



1932

Antun Šoljan was born on December 1, in Belgrade. His father was a lawyer and his mother a schoolteacher. His family lived in Pančevo until the beginning of World War II.

1941

The family moved to Slavonki Brod. Reminiscences of that period are vividly rendered in his story *Bombardiranje* («The Bombings») included in his first collection of stories *Specijalni izaslanici* (Special Envoys).

1945

The family moved to Zagreb. Šoljan enrolled in the IX Co-educational High School in Savska cesta. In one of his texts Šoljan made a note about the strong impact that Pere Ljubić, a poet writing in the *tchakavian* dialect, had on him, teaching Croatian literature in uncoventional lectures. Perhaps the impact was due to Ljubić's poetry written in the *Tchakavian* dialect of Hvar, up to a point Šoljan's native dialect (his father was from Hvar and mother from Zadar), although Šoljan as an author has never shown any affinity for such linguistic flings.

1948

Šoljan started publishing his works. He contributed to the *Izvor* (The Source), a literary periodical oriented to young writers. He began his studies of English and German at the Faculty of Philosophy of the Zagreb University.

1952

Američka lirika (American Lyric Poetry) published by Mala biblioteka Zora, edited and translated by Antun Šoljan and Ivan Slamnig.

1953

Antun Šoljan, Ivan Slamnig and Zlatko Tomičić started

the *Međutim* (However) magazine, which had only two issues.

1955-1957

Šoljan was co-editor (with Josip Pupačić) of the new series of the *Krugovi* (Circles) literary magazine.

1956

Šoljan's first book *Na rubu svijeta* (At the Edge of the World) published by Matica hrvatska (Matrix Croatica) in an edition dedicated to contemporary poets.

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1957

The collection of stories *Special Envoys* published by the Croatian Writers Association. In the same year, Šoljan's second collection of poems *Izvan fokusa* (Out of Focus) was published by Lykos. In co-operation with Ivan Slamnig, Šoljan translated poems by A. A. Blokh. The book was published by Zora. Šoljan began to work intensively as a translator. The first book was *Novele* (Stories) by Ernest Hemingway. Over the years, Šoljan's translating opus included Nelson Algren's *Man With the Golden Hand* (*Čovjek sa zlatnom rukom*), Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer* (*Rakova obratnica*), Norman Mailer's *American Dream* (*Američki san*), Joseph Heller's *Something Happened* (*Nešto se dogodilo*), Francis Scott-Fitzgerald's *Tender is the Night* (*Blaga je noć*), George Orwell's 1984, Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (*Alica u zemlji čuda*) and *Through the Looking Glass* (*Iza zrcala*).

1959-1961

Šoljan was co-editor (with Slobodan Novak) of *Književnik* (The Writer).

1961

Izdajice (Traitors), a novel that gained cult status and has seen four printings.

1962

The first edition of *100 najvećih djela svjetske književnosti* (100 Greatest Works of World Literature); many editions followed.

1963

Šoljan published his first play *Lice* (The Face), staged in Mala scena HNK (the Small Stage of the Croatian National Theater) in 1965.

1964

On March 17, at the grave of Antun Gustav Matoš, Šoljan held a speech commemorating 40 years since the death of the great Croatian writer. When he compared Matoš's age with his own, Šoljan was very critical of the latter. A quiet commemoration turned into a political scandal and Šoljan presented himself as a responsible and conscious writer.

1965

Kratki izlet (The Short Outing), a novel. *Naprijed*, a publishing house from Zagreb published *Trogodišnja kronika poezije hrvatske i srpske 1962-1964* (The Triennial Chronicle of Croatian and Serbian Poetry). It was a collection of Šoljan's reviews published in every issue of the Telegram, a Zagreb weekly, causing a lot of attention because of its uncompromising attitude and a lot of dissatisfaction by writers whose talent was denied in the reviews.

A book of selected poems by Šoljan entitled *Gartlic za čas kratiti* (A Gartlic to pass the time away) was published in Kragujevac.

1966

A play *Galilejevo uzašašće* (Galileo's Assumption) published in Kolo, staged in Teatar ITD. (The Etc. Theater) the following year and directed by Vladimir Gerić.

In Novi Sad, Matica srpska published a collection of stories *Deset krvavih priča za moju generaciju* (Ten Bloody Stories For My Generation). *Antologija hrvatske poezije* (The Anthology of Croatian Poetry) prepared by Nikola Miličević and Antun Šoljan. Šoljan also published *Antologija hrvatske poezije XX stoljeća* (the Anthology of Croatian Poetry of the 20th Century) prepared in co-operation with Slavko Mihalić and Josip Pupačić.

1967

Ezra Pound's Poetry (*Poezija*)

1968

The Belgrade Television production of Šoljan's play *Ledeno ljeto* (The Icy Summer)

1969

Radio Zagreb production of a play *Klopka* (The Trap) and Belgrade television production of *Potop* (The Flood).

The play *Dioklecijanova palača* (Diocletian's Palace) directed by Vladimir Gerić in Teatar ITD.

1970

The book *Devet drama* (Nine Plays) published by the Matrix Croatica's Publishing Institute.

Šoljan translated Timon of Athens (*Timon Atenjanin*). He returned to translating Shakespeare several times (All's Well that Ends Well (*Sve je dobro što se dobro svrši*, 1977), *The Tempest* (*Oluja*, 1979), Antony and Cleopatra (*Antonije i Kleopatra*, 1986))

1970-1973

Šoljan was president of the Croatian Centre of the PEN Club. He had an honourable role in defending Croatian writers who were incarcerated at the time, but since the authorities obstructed his actions taken in accordance with the Pen rules, he resigned.

1972

Zanovijetanje iz zamke (Nagging from a Trap), a book of selected feuilletons. The Forum magazine published the play *Starci* (Old People) performed in Teatar ITD in 1974, under the title *Mototor*, directed by Vladimir Gerić.

1974

The production of *Tarampesta* (together with Mototor). The novel *Luka* (The Port) provoked many writers loyal to dogmatism to show once again that the past in Croatia was still alive, intense and powerful.

First edition of *Antologija moderne poezije zapadnog kruga* (The Anthology of Modern Poetry of the Western Circle). A second revised edition was published in 1980.

1975

Ovo i druga mora (This and Other Seas), a book of stories for children published by the Školska knjiga. *Naprijed* of Zagreb published a collection of stories *Obiteljska večera i druge priče* (A Family Dinner and Other Stories).

1976

Izabrane pjesme 1950-1975 (Selected Poems), Matica srpska, Novi Sad. *Čitanje Ovidijevih Metamorfoza* (A Reading of Ovid's Metamorphoses), poems.

1977

Tomislav Radić directed *Romanca o tri ljubavi* (A Romance of Three Loves) in Teatar ITD.

1978

The HIT edition publishes *Drugi ljudi na mjesecu* (The Second People on the Moon), a novel.

1983

Čovjek koji je spasio Nizozemsku (The Man Who Saved the Netherlands), a radio play produced by Radio Zagreb proved a great success in Europe and received some distinguished international awards.

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