

ON JANČAR'S WORK

"Jančar writes powerful, complex stories with an unostentatious assurance, and has a gravity which makes the tricks of more self-consciously modern writers look cheap [...] Whether they are psychological studies or parables, Jančar reports these episodes with a fine structural balance and, though at times clearly conversing with his literary antecedents, he wears his reading lightly [...] Throughout his stories, Jančar examines the nature of witness, personal, historical and authorial."

Micha Lazarus, Times Literary Supplement, London

"His powerful and arresting narratives leave the reader in no doubt as to the fragility of the human condition when placed under the stress of political, historical and ethnic conflict."

Clover Stroud, Sunday Telegraph

"These elegant, elliptical stories indicate that we are condemned to repeat violent events from history, while hinting that telling and retelling them is the only way to comprehend and move beyond them."

Matthew Casey, FT Magazine

"Indeed, more than enthusiasm, it is love at first sight [...] No verbose or florid passages, nor any affected and virtuoso attempts; Jančar hones his style, rids it of anything superfluous, making it into an efficient weapon for defying reality. [...] I was captivated by the out-of-breath rhythm of this Slovenian writer."

Michel Polac, Charlie Hebdo, Paris

"*To noč sem jo videl* (That Night I Saw Her) is Jančar's ninth novel, relatively short, yet it affords one of the finest literary texts about Slovenians entangled in World War II and in interactions among themselves."

Igor Bratož, Delo

"Despite its thematic topicality, this literature never lapses into overt interpretation or agitation. There is art: complex, full of psychological depth and refinement of form."

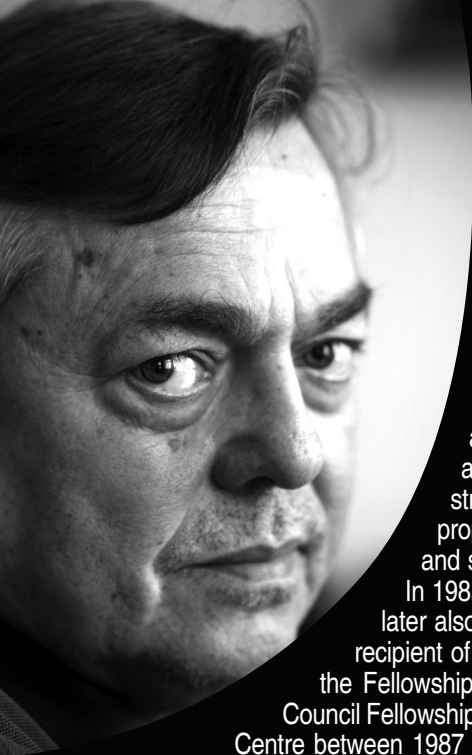
Založba Modrijan, www.modrijan.si

photo by Jože Suračičnik



DRAGO JANČAR

design Studio Ušnek d.o.o.



DRAGO JANČAR

was born in 1948 in Maribor, Slovenia. He is considered the best-known Slovenian writer, playwright, and essayist both at home and abroad and one of the most translated Slovenian authors. He obtained a law degree at the former College of Law at the University of Maribor, and later worked as a journalist, free-lance writer, and movie script editor and writer. In 1975, he was sentenced to a one-year strict prison sentence for allegedly “spreading enemy propaganda”. In 1981, he was appointed editor-in chief and secretary of the Slovenska matica publishing house.

In 1985, he visited the USA on a Fulbright Fellowship, and later also resided in Germany, Austria, and in the UK as the recipient of the Literary fellowship of the Free State of Bavaria, the Fellowship of the Austrian Literature Society, and the British Council Fellowship respectively. As a President of the Slovenian P.E.N. Centre between 1987 and 1991 he was engaged in rise of democracy in Slovenia and Yugoslavia. He lives and works in Ljubljana.

His novels and short stories have been translated into many European languages and in U.S.A., his plays have also seen a number of foreign productions.

His numerous works include several novels, plays, short stories, essays and original scripts for feature films.

His accolades include the Prešeren Award for lifetime achievement (1993), the European Short Story Award of the City of Arnsberg, Germany (1994), the Kresnik Award for the best Slovenian novel of the year (1999, 2001, 2011), the Herder Award for literature (2003), the Jean-Arméry-Award for essays (2007), the Premio Hemingway Award (2009), and the Premio Mediterraneo Award (2009). His novel *To noč sem jo videl* (That Night I Saw Her) was awarded the Kresnik Award in 2011.

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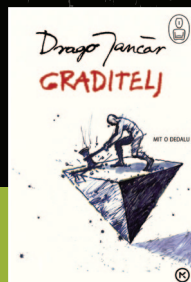
The Jacob's Ladder



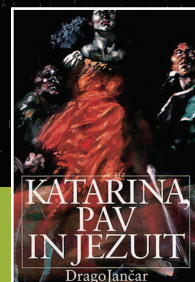
The Nameless Tree



The Builder



Katarina, the Peacock and the Jesuit



THAT NIGHT I SAW HER

Excerpt was translated by Timothy Pogačar

That night I saw her as if she were alive. She was passing through the walkway in the middle of the barracks, between the bunks where my comrades peacefully breathed in their sleep. She stopped by my bed, looked at me pensively, somehow detached, for a while, as she always did when she could not sleep and wandered our Maribor house; she stopped by the window, sat down on the bed, and again stepped to the window. What is it, Stevey? she said. You can't sleep either?

Her voice was quiet, deep, almost manly, and somehow blurry, detached, like her look. I was surprised that I recognized it, it was so clearly hers, that voice, which with the years had been lost somewhere in the distance. I could at any time summon her image before my mind's eye, her eyes, hair, lips, yes, her body, too, which had so many times rested, spent by my side, but I couldn't hear her voice; the voice—its sound, color, and force—is the first part of a person to disappear. I didn't see her for a very long time. How long? I thought. At least seven years. I felt a chill. Although outside it was the last night of May, and spring was coming to an end, the spring of the terrible year 1945, and although everything pointed to summer and it was warm outside, and in the barracks almost oppressive from the warmth of the breathing and perspiring male bodies, I felt a chill at that thought. Seven years. In seven long years, my Veronika once sang, In seven long years we'll see each other again, she sang the Slovene folk song she especially liked when she was sad and had that detached expression with which she was again, now looking, God only knows when seven years will pass. I wanted to tell her it's nice of you to come, even if finally after seven years. Raven is still with me, if you'd like to see him, I was going to say, there behind the fence with the other officers' horses, he's doing fine, he can run in the meadow, he doesn't have to stay in the barn, he's in good company, although he, too, misses your touch ... as I miss it, I was going to say, but my voice stuck in my throat, something gurgling and muffled came from my lips instead of the words I wanted to say. I thought that you're living in a manor house beneath the Slovene mountains, I was going to say, and you're riding some there? I stretched out my hand to touch her hair, but she retreated, I'm going now, she said, you know, Stevey, that I can't stay.

I knew that should could not stay like she could not stay seven years ago, when she left forever, left our Maribor house; if she could not live there, how could she live here, in a prison camp barracks, with the sleeping officers of the royal army, over which watches, hung on the barracks wall there by the door, a photograph of the young king in a lieutenant of the guards uniform, his hand on his saber, a photograph of a king who has lost his kingdom, among those loyal to him, who have lost their homeland. At that moment a horse loudly whinnied, I could swear it was Raven, maybe she had also visited him before leaving forever, maybe he whinnied in joy when he felt her close, when, perhaps, as once she always did, she put her hand on his muzzle and said, Raven, now I'm going to saddle you.



That Night I Saw Her