Qeios

Peer Review

Review of: "The Politics of Literary Play: The Luddite in Ludism"

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Dear Marko,

My reading of your article *The Politics of Literary Play: The Luddite in Ludism*, preprinted on the Qeios platform in January 2026, confirms the originality and conceptual acuity of your central thesis. The attempt to draw a genealogical connection between the historical, politically motivated Luddite movement in England and the much later, aesthetically oriented Slovenian neo-avant-garde formation known as Ludism is both provocative and scholarly productive. As you rightly note, the resemblance between the Slovenian *ludizem* and its English homonym is not merely accidental or morphological. Rather, the two phenomena share a structural affinity: each constitutes a form of resistance to the normative logic of established reality. The English Luddites enacted this resistance through direct, at times violent, intervention, whereas the Slovenian Ludists articulated their dissent through linguistic play and artistic derision. Yet the socialist state responded to this aesthetic subversion with a severity—imprisonment included—that echoes earlier reactions to the English movement. A system that posits itself as absolute, as Yugoslav socialism did, is particularly susceptible to the destabilizing force of ridicule; and Slovenian Ludism, as Taras Kermauner termed it, was saturated with precisely such derisive energies, even if Kermauner himself never offered a fully rigorous definition of the concept.

Your argument is cogent, and its development methodical and internally consistent.

One point, however, invites further consideration: your acceptance—presumably following Kermauner's 1975 formulation—of 1966 and the publication of Šalamun's *Poker* as the inaugural moment of Ludism in Slovenia. While I would not wish to diminish Šalamun's decisive role in originating the movement, two observations may warrant a modest recalibration of this chronology.

First, given Kermauner's background as a theatrologist, it is worth recalling the earlier emergence of the Experimental Theatre (*Eksperimentalno gledališče*) of Balbina Battelino Baranović, founded in Ljubljana in

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1955. This institution introduced the French innovation of “theatre in the circle” to the Slovenian cultural space. Although its productions were not yet characterised by the irony and mockery that would later define the Pupilija Ferkeverk Theatre (*Gledališče Pupilije Ferkeverk*), the Experimental Theatre nonetheless represented a significant formal rupture—an early gesture of aesthetic “disobedience” that began to unsettle inherited theatrical conventions. In this sense, it may be understood as a proto-Ludist intervention.

Second, with regard to Šalamun himself, it is arguable that his Ludist orientation predates the 1966 publication of *Poker*. The cycle “Mrk,” later incorporated into *Poker*, appeared as early as 1963 in issue 35 of volume 4 of *Perspektive* (1963/64). As Boris Paternu notes in his *Delo* article of 22 April 2015 (“Tomaž Šalamun did not really tire of his tribe and did not emigrate”), Šalamun’s first published line—“I got tired of the image of my tribe”—already performs a pointedly ironic critique of what you describe as Slovenian “cultural nationalism” (p. 2). His equally subversive *Duma 1964* was intended for publication the following year, but the confiscation and subsequent liquidation of *Perspektive* prevented its appearance. These early works suggest that the Ludist impulse was operative in Šalamun’s writing from the outset.

In light of these considerations, it may be worth revisiting the proposed dating of Ludism’s emergence in Slovenia.

Declarations

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.