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Alojzija Zupan Sosič

Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana

THE SLOVENE NOVEL IN LITERARY STUDIES SINCE 2000

The number of novels and critical publications about them rose dramatically in Slovenia after 2000. For the sake of completeness, I have taken into account the place of publication—that is, leading Slovene and foreign scholarly journals, monographs, and collections—and, in close analysis of individual publications, the criterion of scholarly insight, which in addition to standard scholarly measures comprises synthesis, systematicness, complexity, and creativity or innovativeness. From a quite long bibliographic list of critical analyses of the novel I selected and comparatively analyzed a narrower, group of eleven, including the collections *Slovenski roman* (The Slovene novel) and *Sodobna slovenska književnost 1980–2010* (Contemporary Slovene literature 1980–2010), Alojzija Zupan Sosič's books *Zavetje zgodbe: Sodobni slovenski roman ob koncu stoletja* (The harbor of story: The contemporary Slovene novel at the end of the century), *Robovi mreže, robovi jaza: Sodobni slovenski roman* (Social margins, margins of self: The contemporary Slovene novel), *Na pomolu sodobnosti ali o slovenski književnosti in romanu* (On the quay of contemporaneity, or Slovene literature and the novel), Silvija Borovnik's *Književne študije: O vlogi ženske v slovenski književnosti, o sodobni prozi in o slovenski književnosti v Avstriji* (Literary studies: On the role of women in Slovene literature, on contemporary prose and Slovene literature in Austria), Miran Hladnik's *Slovenski zgodovinski roman* (The Slovene historical novel), and four articles that appeared in leading scholarly journals.

Key words: Slovene literary history, Slovene novel, twenty-first century, Slovene scholarly journals, monographs, collections

There has been a good deal written about literature's altered status, media influence, and a different reader role, as well as about the novel's unbelievable elasticity as it successfully adapted to new conditions at the turn of the century. There are many reasons for the novel's blossoming in Slovene literature. Consider but Mikhail BAKHTIN's general explanation:

The novel is the only developing genre and therefore it reflects more deeply, more essentially, more sensitively and rapidly, reality itself in the process of its unfolding. Only that which is itself developing can comprehend development as a process. The novel has become the leading hero in the drama of literary development in our time precisely because it best of all reflects the tendencies of a new world still in the making; it is, after all, the only genre born of this new world and in total affinity with it. (BAKHTIN 1982:12)¹

In Slovenia, we can also add to this the concrete blanket fact that since 1991 the Kersnik prize has successfully promoted the Slovene novel in the media, and the

¹ Quoted from Mikhail Bakhtin, "Epic and the Novel." In *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Ed. Michael Holquist. Trans. Carol Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1981.

novel remains the favored form of reading material today, a time desirous of storytelling, as is clearly seen in the growth in novel production—in 2011, for example, 112 novels were published.

The number of critical publications on Slovene novels in the leading scholarly journals, collections, and monographs in Slovenia and abroad grew in direct proportion to novel output. The metaliterature on the novel begs for systematization—there not having been such an overview in the twentieth century. Even the monograph *Slovenska književnost III (Slovene literature III, 2001)*, which contained a separate chapter on literary studies and criticism, lacked a chapter devoted to the analysis of scholarly studies of the novel. This article cannot make up for that omission but it will attempt to fill certain lacunae. Due to space limitations, I was not able to do justice to all of the studies of the novel, even in the bibliography. Although that was my original intention, I considered only the main scholarly journals, collections, and monographs in Slovenia and abroad. In doing so, I relied on a section of a bibliography from SICRIS,² an information system for research activities in Slovenia.

I considered only those monographs³ that are mainly devoted to the Slovene novel. I also identified and initially planned to include a carefully compiled list of baccalaureate, M.A., and doctoral theses.⁴ The lengthy (though thinned) bibliography at the end of this article suggests the impossibility of an exact analysis of all the publications listed, and posits a practical solution: I included only those publications that comprehensively, synthetically, and creatively discuss particular aspects of the novel. To the prior criterion of place of publication I attached the criterion of scholarly insight, which besides standard academic measures comprise synthesis, systematicness, complexity, and creativity or innovativeness. Using them, I formed a narrower comparative context of eleven publications: the collections *Slovenski roman* (The Slovene novel) and *Sodobna slovenska književnost 1980–2010* (Contemporary Slovene literature 1980–2010), Alojzija Zupan Sosič's monographs (2003, 2006, 2011), Silviya Borovnik (2012), Miran Hladnik (2009), and four articles in leading scholarly journals: by Nadezhda Starikova (2000), Alenka Koron (2007), Aljoša Harlamov (2010), and Branka Vičar (2010).

² It is very difficult to establish a divide between scholarly and academic publications. I took into account the place of publication as an objective measure, which SICRIS also recognizes. Neither did I include in the bibliography, for example, two books that were collections of previously published reviews in newspapers and magazines—Vanesa Matajč's *Osvetljave* (Illumination 2000) and Matevž Kos's, *Kritike in refleksije* (Reviews and reflections, 2000)—because I was only interested in academic treatments of the novel, not reviews that were first published in periodicals.

³ For instance, Irena Popova Novak's book *Izkušnja in pripoved* (Experiences and narration, 2008), which has only two chapters on the Slovene novel, and Tomo Virk's book *Strah pred naivnostjo: Poetika postmodernistične proze* (Fear of naïveté: The poetics of postmodern prose, 2000), which has only one chapter, did not fit the narrower comparative context of my study.

⁴ The list of baccalaureate, M.A., and doctoral theses at the Filozofska fakulteta in Ljubljana indicates exceptional interest in the Slovene novel; for example, there are more than sixty theses devoted to it in Slovene studies. A review of mentors and topics reveals an instructive fact: all of the literature professors in the Department of Slovene and the Department of Comparative Literature and Literary Theory had been mentors of works about the novel. In the Department of Comparative Literature and Literary Theory are even mentors of works exclusively on the Slovene novel, without treatment of a comparative context.

Slovenski roman, a collection from the international symposium *Obdobja 21* (2003), appears to be the most important. Miran Hladnik and Gregor Kocijan at the Department of Slovene, Filozofska fakulteta in Ljubljana, edited it. Seventy-six contributors of different generations and methodological persuasions took part—almost all of them accomplished scholars on the novel in Slovenia and abroad. It was the first such systematic exploration of the Slovene novel. The variety of sub-disciplines is evident from the names of the thematic divisions: “The Nineteenth-Century Slovene Novel,” “Ivan Cankar and His Contemporaries,” “The Woman Question and Zofka Kveder,” “Genres,” “The Contemporary Novel,” “Theory,” “Language,” “Slovene and European Novels,” “Slovene and South-Slav Novels,” “The Slovene Novel and English Language,”⁵ “Readers of the Novel,” and others. Interest in the historical dimension of the literary system dominates, and among novelistic genres in the historical novel. The most discussed genres are the autobiographic and biographic novel and the crime novel. As befits an international collection, a notable quality of *Obdobja 21* is the almost one-third portion of foreign scholars, who bring an outside perspective and international scholarly references to Slovene literary studies. Certain studies furnished innovative findings in a new, including methodologically creative fashion: Alenka Koron’s “Roman kot biografija” (The novel as biography), Marko Juvan’s “Fikcija in zakoni” (Fiction and the law), Irena Novak Popov’s “Lirizacija romana” (Lyricization of the novel), Jola Škulj’s “Forma romana in slovenski modernizem” (The form of the novel and Slovene modernism), and Marija Mitrovič’s “Roman Vladimirija Bartola in Otto Weininger” (Vladimir Bartol’s novels and Otto Weininger).

The collection from the international symposium *Obdobja 29* (2010) edited by Alojzija Zupan Sosič and entitled *Sodobna slovenska književnost (1980–2010)* (Contemporary Slovene literature, 1980–2010) features an exhaustive review of research into the novel between 1980 and 2010. Although the symposium dealt with many areas, as might be expected, more than one-third—to be exact, twenty of fifty-nine—of the contributions had to do with the contemporary Slovene novel. Here again researchers devoted themselves to genres, the place of the Slovene novel in the context of world literature, and various thematic sub-disciplines in the framework of analyzing individual novels. In comparison with *Slovenski roman*, in this collection we observe a number of less thorough studies of the novel, which is partly a result of the mandated briefer article length (six pages) and absence of some methods and approaches—for instance, comparative analyses, consideration of historical trends, interpretive analyses, axiological analyses, and semantic methods. Again I would note the share of foreign scholars, who introduce into Slovene literary studies a different perspective and new discoveries, both analytical and methodological, and in particular Andrej Leben’s “O ‘zrelh rečeh’ in drugih stvareh Lojzeta Kovačiča” (On “ripe things” and other matters in Lojze Kovačič), Vanesa Matajč’s “Dominanta časa in dominantna prostora v sodobnem slovenskem romanu” (The temporal dominant and the dominant of space in the contemporary Slovene novel), Katja Mihurko Poniž’s “Mesto kot literarni lik v treh sodobnih

⁵ A challenge in naming is noticeable in this section. One of the articles thematically belongs in the section on Slovene and European novels, and the others could have been assigned to other sections as well.

slovenskih romanih” (The city as a literary figure in three contemporary Slovene novels), Božena Tokarz’s “V mreži domišljije, asociacij in spominov ali o prozi Vlada Žabota” (In a web of fantasy, associations, and recollections, or the prose of Vlado Žabot).

Five monographs appeared after 2000 dedicated exclusively to research on the Slovene novel: Franc Zadavec published two, and Alojzija Zupan Sosič⁶ three. The latter are similar in subject, scholarly apparatus, and methodological pluralism. They are devoted to contemporary, post-1990 Slovene novels that were selected from the considerable output⁷ on the criteria of literary quality,⁸ literary trend, generational, and genre uniqueness. The scholarly apparatus rests on methodological pluralism that combines various methods, approaches, and understandings: literary historical, theoretical, interpretive analysis, axiological analysis, semantic, comparative, comprehensive genre analysis, reception, sociological, and culturological. The different approaches, understandings, and methods are modulated by directions in postclassical narratology—for instance, cultural, cognitive, and post-feminist narratology and the narratology of gender identity, which also have to do with the environment and results of different readings; they differ from classical narratological directions by their emphases on context, text, and reader or critic.

The first monograph, *Zavetje zgodbe: Sodobni slovenski roman ob koncu stoletja* (2003), is dedicated to the Slovene novel of the 1990s and divided into genre and thematic parts. It is split into two halves: the theoretical one discusses relations between the novel and story, genre identity, and the novel in Slovene literary studies; the analytical half discusses individual novels in sections on the modified traditional novel of the 1990s, fantasy and the contemporary Slovene novel, regional fantasy; the fairytale, anti-utopian, historical, crime, travel, and love novel and roman à clef; and the topic of marginalized, odd, and everyday people. The fundamental findings in the first monograph appear in expanded variants in the next two, *Robovi mreže, robovi jaza: Sodobni slovenski roman* (2006) and *Na pomolu sodobnosti ali o slovenski književnosti in romanu* (2011). Thus, for example, the term modified traditional novel, which describes the prevailing narrative model of the most recent Slovene novels, is defined in all three monographs as a model that takes from the traditional novel but is reshaped by three sources: genre syncretism, the narrator’s renewed role, and a greater proportion of speech. Three “new” terms are added: literary eclecticism, new emotionalism, and transrealism. If the first is a name for the integration of different phenomena and influences, the second is linked to the narrative subject’s

⁶ I will be forced to cite my name several times in what follows; I have written the most studies on the Slovene novel after 2000. On the other hand, if necessary to write cogently about reflection on the novel, it is burdensome and awkward, since I am a scholar on the novel and was invited to contribute to this study. In the interests of objectivity, I will not evaluate my publications but will limit myself to citing reviewers.

⁷ A fact about the high volume of novel writing points this up: between 1980 and 1990, 160 novels appeared, or sixteen per year; from 1990 to 2000, 367 novels appeared, or thirty-seven per year. In other words, there were twice as many. After 2000, the number of novels published almost tripled, hovering around 100 per year.

⁸ I determined literary quality on the basis of literariness, which I have described in numerous places (e.g., Zupan Sosič 2011, 17–44). I understand it as a flexible category composed of intratextual and extratextual literariness.

identity, which is closely bound up with a new type of sensibility. It is the sensibility of a peculiar postmodern spleen inserted into a personal or intimate theme, sexual roles, stereotypes, (in)flexible identities, amorous difficulties, new age hedonism—all informed by humor, irony, and parody.

The third term, transrealism, names new directions in the contemporary Slovene novel and is the fruit of the last monograph, though the first two predicted the possibility of a new direction following the fall of postmodernism in Slovenia. The last monograph differs from the preceding ones by the size of the theoretical and analytical part, with five chapters on the general topics of literariness, popular literature, and bestsellers, all of which is closely tied to the novel. Harlamov (2012: 18–19) emphasizes the logical connection of the monographs and observes that the third one is the precursor of the first two, given their composition and theoretical cohesion. In this book the reviewer values the scholarly currency, unity, utility, breadth, in-depth research into contemporary literature and how it is related to history, the lucidity of interpretations of literary narratives, how it places texts on a genre background, and respect for literary quality. Among Alojzija Zupan Sosič's studies cited in the bibliography, of note is the one of "Spolna identiteta in sodobni slovenski roman" (Gender identity and the contemporary Slovene novel, 2005, 2006), the first example of a work on gender identity in Slovene literary studies. It is innovative the research and methodological sense that it not only supplies post/feminist theses and approaches (typical for similar studies) but follows the post-feminist direction of understandings of gender identity, narratology of gender identity, the anthropology and sociology of culture, and psychology; taking into account biological, social, and psychological sexual orientation, it for the first time presents an original count of the sexes—five and/or ten.

Among the monographs not exclusively but in the main dedicated to scholarly treatment of the Slovene novel, the two by Helga Glušič (2002) and Silvija Borovnik (2012) are important. I will not analyze and evaluate the first because the studies of select authors' novels are so closely interwoven with analyses of their unified (narrative) creation that it is difficult to separate them, not to mention the dense biographical and bibliographical data, and information on storylines, concerning thirty-two writers. Silvija Borovnik surveyed the contemporary Slovene novel very intensively and from a special perspective. The ten chapters of her monograph *Književne študije* are exclusively devoted to the novel. Although she assembled a variety of previously published articles in one book covering all areas of interest, the diversity of topics does not diffuse the analytical synthesis. Most of the writers discussed are female, as indicated by the governing rule posited in Borovnik's previous books: the analysis of unknown, inadequately considered, and recognized texts by Slovene female novelists.

In her approaches—for instance, literary historical, interpretive analyses, and reception—the most marked is the researcher's a unique perspective, a view through female writing, female forms, and stereotypes of women that might be tied to feminist methodology. She significantly contributed to canonization in Slovene literature by reevaluating classical and contemporary novels. From the start of her scholarly career, Borovnik has focused on overlooked works by female writers and thereby on

sexist⁹ canonization—in her most recent monograph, for example, to Zofka Kveder's novel *Njeno življenje* (Her life). While feminist methodology is creative in opening new areas of research, it can also fall into traps it itself sets. This occurred in some of the analyses in the monograph (e.g., Novels of certain contemporary Slovene female writers), when the attention to female writers inconspicuous and dead-end situations overtakes the analysis of the novels' overarching significance—for example, the originality of narration and its relevance in the context of similar novels, genre qualities, narrative distancing, symbolism and layering of images, ambiguousness in stories, and the narrator's identity.

The most significant publication in genre studies of the novel is Miran Hladnik's monograph *Slovenski zgodovinski roman* (2009), the only example of an empirical study of the novel genre in Slovenia. The book is differently structured than its antecedent, *Slovenska kmečka povest* (The Slovene rural tale 1990), for the historical novel itself is not based on a firm deep structure. Hladnik (2009: 354) defines¹⁰ it as a work about historical facts and having other genre markers—for instance, events cannot occur in the author's lifetime and the work must be over ten thousand words long. In the introduction (1009: 7), he offers for critical consideration the fact that the book is based upon an Internet database¹¹ and as such is a “translation” into literary discourse, as well as the fact that he organizes the materials on a unified principle; however, he acknowledges its arbitrariness and it thus does not cause him great difficulties. The general part of the book comprises the chapters “Kaj izvemo o zgodovinskem romanu od drugih” (What can we know about the historical novel from others), “Kaj so pisali o zgodovinskem romanu doma” (What has been written about the historical novel in Slovenia), “Nemški zgodovinski roman” (The German historical novel), and “V katerih časih se dogaja slovenski zgodovinski roman” (Times in

⁹ In this monograph, she noted sexism in compiling anthologies in the chapter “Novosti v prozi sodobnih slovenskih pisateljic” (Innovation in contemporary Slovene female writers' prose). Even though in recent decades women writers produced quality narratives, compilers of anthologies (Aleš Berger, *Slovenski kratki erotični prozi* [Short Slovene erotic prose] 2002 and Mitja Čander, *O čem govorimo* [What we talk about] 2004) do not grant them literary equality and include them in the collections. I noticed a similar situation myself. In surveying citations and quotations, I concluded that researchers do not cite or refer to the findings, analyses, or texts of their female colleagues who intensively deal with the Slovene novel and may even publish more. Some researchers on the Slovene novel (e.g., Igor Grdina, Matevž Kos, Tomo Virk, and Franc Zadavec) almost as a rule do not cite female researchers (e.g., Silvija Borovnik, Helga Glušič, Alenka Koron, Irena Novak Popov, Katja Mihurko Poniž, Jola Škulj, Vanesa Matajč, Alojzija Zupan Sosič), which they ought to do even if they disagree with their research results. If they did, they might at least show the complexity knowledge in this area of research. In contrast, female researchers consistently note their male colleagues in bibliographies, even if their publications were of minor relevance in a given study.

¹⁰ A distilled, essential definition of the historical novel is not found in the book. While on the one hand I understand the reasons that are given for it being difficult to define, on the other hand I would expect an attempt given the numerous methodological and genre challenges and on account of the genre's popularity and reach in Slovenia. (All things considered, definitions become relative, but this does not force scholars to abandon them.) Given the refusal to define the historical novel, the opening of the chapter “Žanrske lastnosti” (Characteristics of the genre, 2009: 185) is incomprehensible: despite skepticism, genre markers are enumerated (inclusion of historical facts, historical atmosphere, narrative moves, motifs that literary historians attribute to a romanticized past, significance in the framework of national and social emancipation), and so the question arises as to whether the genre markers are not themselves a definition.

¹¹ He published the database and his studies of the historical novel on the Internet.

which the Slovene historical novel is set). Hladnik takes up the analyses of novels differently than is customary—not by author or text, but according to a classification based on temporal setting, genre type, and Slovene-foreign relations. Therefore, information on a single author or novel is spread over many chapters, as are the storylines from the novels and tales discussed. The remaining chapters are entitled “Žanrski tipi” (Genre types), “Žanrske lastnosti” (Genre characteristics), “Production” (Origins), “Predhodniki in sorodniki” (Predecessors and related works), “Modeli soočanja s tujim in strategije nacionalnega preživetja” (Models of confronting the foreign and strategies for national survival), “Bibliografije” (Bibliographies) and “Povzetki pripovedi” (Summaries of the narratives).

Of all the novels he considers, Hladnik goes most in depth into Bartol’s *Alamut*, foremost including exact data on the work’s origins and creation of the author’s characters, reception at the time and today, leading literary opinion at the time the novel appeared, the meaning and role of national identity, and the means of national coming to consciousness. That which is missing for the most part in other analyses—literary evaluation—is clearly present in the synthetic conclusion about *Alamut*. Hladnik does not criticize the reception of *Alamut* abroad as popular, lowbrow reading, but he is skeptical about exaggerating the cultural significance that the Slovene public derives from the novel’s worldwide reputation, being as it is acutely aware of critical opinion abroad. Thoroughgoing empirical description is a feature of this novel’s treatment and of the other analyses and chapters. It follows the German project Historischer Roman and underlines the author’s dedication to empirical literary studies and the quantitative analysis of the Slovene literary system, employed in this monograph for interpreting novels’ social functions as well.

Contemporary literary studies recognize an array of genre definitions and classifications for historical prose, the bases of which are various features of form and content. The diversity of genre specifications produce various approaches to the question of genre. Slovene literary studies have devoted great attention to this genre in particular. Among those who have written about it are Matjaž Kmecl, Vanesa Matajč, and Igor Grdina. The Russian Slovenist Nadezhda Starikova’s publications have been a welcome addition to the variety of scholarly works on the historical novel, which she has written on in many places. In the article “K vprašanju tipologije zgodovinskega romana” (On the typology of the historical novel, 2000), she presented a possible typological classification of the historical novel, based on the specificity of conflict as the structural basis of a literary work. According to M. Khrapchenko, the specifics of a historical conflict to a great extent determine characters’ qualities and their arrangement in the course of a narrative. The kind of conflict and ways of depicting it are used as the basis for defining particular types of historical novels. Khrapchenko (Starikova 2000: 30) believes that historical narratives can be divided into historico-biographical, historico-philosophical, and socio-historical novels. In defining the genre type of individual works, it is thus basically necessary to start with the predominant genre features—the nature of the historical and artistic conflict—and in view of the growing intrusiveness of documentation in artistic structures, probably to add the historico-documentary novel, in which documents as subjects of interpretation assume an important place. In this article, besides the “new” typol-

ogy, the thesis about modifications to the genre of the contemporary historical novel is significant. The most valuable thing is situating the historical novel in the world literary system (mainly the Russian) and in this sense the view of “the other”¹²—that is, a scholar from another academic sphere.

Combinations of the most recent academic methods, approaches, and concepts are stimulating. This is what Alenka Koron’s “Razvoj naratologije družbenih spolov: Spolnoidentitetno ozaveščeni romani v novejši slovenski literaturi” (Developing a narratology of gender identity orientations: Novelistic awareness of gender identity in recent Slovene literature, 2007). The author traces trends in narratology in Slovenia and abroad. The sexual identity approach, which Alojzija Zupan Sosič had introduced in her analyses, was bound to the development of feminist narratology and the narratology of other gender orientations around the world. After surveying the most recent advances in the field, she introduced a combination narrative postulates from feminist, queer, and sexual identity tendencies, on the basis of which sexual identity in narrative texts is constructed by textual keys, cultural codes, knowledge of the author’s sex, his or her published works, and the reader’s educational level. She reviewed the mutual influence of narrative strategies, sexual categories, and gender and sexuality by examining the narrative stance, focalization, and other theoretical narrative categories in novels by Suzana Tratnik, Brane Mozetič and Andrej Morovič. Of particular interest are the conclusions about the characters in Tratnik and Morovič’s novels (Koron 2007: 61). The characters are defined by the descriptive, acutely felt boundaries of their gender, gender identity, and sexuality. The critical self-reflection and the concluding synthesis lend special weight to this study. It upends the logic of introducing narratological categories into the analysis of narrative texts: the array of narrative stances appears overly unwieldy for strained narrative innovations in many texts.

Koron also attempts to root her conclusions in concepts of literary theory, such as the female narrator, implicit female author, and female addressee. Research into the elements of narration is the area that in Slovenia is least employed in analyses of novels. Aljoša Harlamov successfully filled this lacuna with his study, “Nezanesljivi pripovedovalec v sodobnem slovenskem romanu” (The unreliable narrator in contemporary Slovene novels, 2010). The unreliable narrator is a narrative element that is frequently used in analyzing contemporary novels, but it has not been exploited in Slovene literary studies.¹³ Harlamov defines it by combining two typologies of the unreliable narrator that can be cross-connected. The basis of the first is the psychological origins of unreliability (limited knowledge, personal involvement or suffering, questionable value system); the second is defined as unreliable accord-

¹² Similarly, Julija Sozina’s “Avtor in glavna literarna oseba v slovenskih avtobiografskih romanih” (The author and main character in Slovene autobiographical novels) has been valuable to Slovene literary scholars. It was published in *Slavistična revija* in 2002. The division of main literary characters as related to the character of the author, as per Aleksei Checherin’s definition, takes into account the biographical author, creative-ideological author, and the author’s character, which resembles other literary characters.

¹³ Wayne Booth introduced the term “unreliable narrator” in the 1960s; Alojzija Zupan Sosič introduced it in Slovene literary studies (2003). Janko Kos (1998) does not mention it, but he introduces a new type, the virtual narrator, which is of less value in Slovene literary studies because it is linked only with postmodern texts.

ing to the type of speech act in which he engages (reporting, interpreting or explaining, and evaluating or judging). There are three types of unreliable narrators: the unreliable interpreter, the unreliable reporter, and the unreliable judge—and, of course, combinations of the three. In making the typology, Harlamov follows the ideas of Rimmon Kenan, Herman, Jahn, and Ryan, as well as Nünning's thesis of the implicit author, and Zerweck's postulate of the reader as a historical and cultural determinant. All three are prominent concepts in narrative theory. The author's development of the typology is innovative as well as utilitarian, which is especially valuable because it permits us to apply¹⁴ theoretical discourse to literary material. Thus the first narrator is identified in Zoran Hočevar's novel *Porkasvet*, the second in Marka Sosič's *Balerina*, *Balerina*, and the third in Vinko Möderndorfer's *Opoldne nekega dne* (One day in the afternoon). The study rectifies a shortcoming of traditional research in Slovene literary studies into narrative elements, one of them being the narrator.

In "Koncept narave v *Jamnici*: Ekokritični diskurzivni pristop" (The idea of nature in *Jamnica*: An eco-critical discursive approach, 2010), Branislava Vičar takes up the "modern" subject of eco-criticism. Vičar justified the decision to use eco-critical discourse analysis to reveal Prežihov-Voranc's concept of nature by citing the author's primary orientation to ecologically destructive political and economic ideologies and interrogation of power and domination in human's relations with nature. She relied on criticism and theories of recognized scholars, such as Georg Marko and Norman Fairclough, and she made use of the lexical model of the transfer of systematic functional vocabulary (Michael Halliday), which Andrew Goatly successfully tested. The eco-critical analysis showed that *Jamnica* is an example of discourse that assumes a despotic understanding and exploitation of nature, which in the context of the time it was published was not very negative at all. More than human primacy over nature (which eco-criticism condemns), Prežihov-Voranc highlights a human-nature dichotomy in which nature is an enemy for having destroyed an already meager yield and forced people into poverty. I understand the sense of such an analysis of novels from a new perspective—a synthesis of eco-criticism and linguistic approaches applied to literary material—but I miss an advancement of knowledge. The conclusions that the synthesis yields, I mean to say, do not supplant prior analyses of *Jamnica* already available in Slovene literary studies: a small person must strive to reach his goals or ideals (in the context of *Jamnica*, acquiring food by working the land) and battle with an adversary.

At the end of this survey of scholarly reflection on the novel, I would like to pose a question that applies not only to the latter article: Is the aim of new methods, approaches, understandings, and perspectives only to confirm by other methodological means already recognized literary historical facts?

¹⁴ To the detailed analysis of all three narrators as a theoretical explanatory tool we might add only that the mixing of all three should be emphasized and explicitly shown in the analysis of the novel *Balerina*, *Balerina*.

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V ang. prevedel Timothy Pogačar.

