



---

## SPACE IN LITERATURE AND LITERATURE IN SPACE

This thematic issue of *Slavistična revija* is dedicated to the aim of centering interest on questions related to the development of mutual influences between (socio-) geographical space and Slovene literature, or literary culture. The majority of the articles in the issue were generated by the project The Space of Slovene Literary Culture: Literary History and Spatial Analysis using the Geographic Information System: A Fundamental Research Project (J6-4245 [A]).<sup>1</sup> The articles examine literature based on empirical and systemic methodological models, which means that, in addition to a corpus of literary texts, they consider literary production, distribution, reception and processing that interact directly with the texts, as well as the institutions and media that have been conduits for the literature and its reception and that gradually made possible the full development of the literary field. This approach will be evident in individual articles, which contribute to realizing the stated goals. It is necessary to reach a basic consensus in our discussion of literature and space. The latter has long been of interest to various disciplines (from mathematics, physics, and philosophy to the contemporary social sciences and humanities), and it cannot be encompassed by a single definition. In the present context, which links literature and geography in an interdisciplinary research, space will be understood primarily as a complex of natural, physical, economic, political, administrative, and demographic structures. This does not imply that we are dealing with a deterministic and narrow understanding of geographic space, although we assume that space is one of chief factors in literary culture's distribution and dynamics. When considering the relation between space and literature, it is likewise impossible to overlook the reverse influences that affect the role of literature's discursive practices and its influence on (social) geographic space, which can be summed up with the question of how literature has—through texts, symbolic representations, imaging, and practices—influenced the apprehension, experience, study, and modeling (of regions, landscapes, peripheries, and centers) of the ethnically Slovene space.

We are deliberately avoiding the term *literary geography*, despite the fact that in the closest, German- and English-language literary scholarship, the terms *Literaturgeographie* and *literary geography* have been in use from the beginnings of literary mapping at the turn of the twentieth century.<sup>2</sup> This disciplinary nomenclature presents problems because it can refer to certain schools of scholarly thought that focus on spatial models of literature—that is, are properly literary scholarship—or to the discipline of geography when as its main research material it takes literary texts. On the other hand, the difficulties are not major and it is only prudent to recognize the pioneering achievements from the time when the concept began to take hold. The first research area was birthplaces and residences of the most prominent creators of

---

<sup>1</sup> Marko Juvan, the project leader, and Urška Perenič first presented the framework and goals of the project to a wide scholarly audience in November 2011.

<sup>2</sup> The pioneers and more recent names in this field, from the beginning of the twentieth century, include R. Nagel (1907) and J. Nadler (1912–), the ideological aspects of whose works are not without problems, J.G. Bartholomew, W. Sharp, M. Hardwick, D. Daiches, J. Flowers, H. D. Schlosser, M. Bradbury, F. Moretti, and several others.

national literary cultures, which can be connected to the prevalence of a positivist paradigm, while research into space on the level of text is somewhat more recent. In this sense, the title *Space in literature and literature in space* unites both tendencies of spatially-oriented literary scholarship and refers to both kinds of contributions to this issue. As to the term *literary cartography*, it is probably in fact too narrow, although it implies one of the main goals of the project, testing the usefulness of maps and their analytic and investigative value in explaining the spatial development of literary culture.

The consideration of space in Slovene literary scholarship is not completely new if we take into account biographical work in the context of a positivist tendency and interest in spatial facts in authors' biographies as they are linked to literary spaces in their works. Spatial setting is—in addition to temporal setting, narrator, literary characters, and literary events—a fundamental component of narration and therefore has always been a subject of narratological studies (e.g., by Marjan Dolgan, 1983, in Slovenia). However, it is also true that literary space has until now not been specifically and comprehensively problematized to this degree. Miran Hladnik's article, which opens the issue, reminds the reader of literary scholarship's persistent interest in literature's spatial dimension. Hladnik has treated space in his research on the rural tale and historical novel, but in this article he reaches further back, to what is probably the most all-encompassing, post-WW II project of Slovene literary scholarship, the *Collected Works of Slovene Poets and Prose Writers* («Zbrana dela slovenskih pesnikov in pisateljev»). The critical notes in the collections' individual volumes contain numerous facts of literary space in the works of the Slovene classics. Hladnik devotes particular attention to Marja Boršnik, a literary historian who edited Anton Aškerc and Ivan Tavčar's works. In the context of the project, a parallel goal of which is to analyze the mutual influences of physical geographical space and literarily constructed spaces, the author also touches on the relations between attested spaces and places authors lived and their literary representations. Hladnik posits that this is a sensible way of treating texts and authors that themselves highlight spatial aspects, and that—as Boršnik affirmed—it is necessary to be cautious in drawing connections between geographic *realia* and literarily depicted spaces, because there is a good deal of space between them for creative imagining.

Jerneja Fridl and Hladnik's article on space in the Slovene historical novel, with special emphasis on its potential for geographic representation, in ways continues this line of inquiry. In the introduction, the authors review the settings of Slovene rural tales, for which Gorenjska led in regard to both authorial birthplace and literary setting, followed by Primorska. Unlike in regional rural tales, actual places are for the most part identifiable in the historical tale and novel, in which the sub-genre of the local historical tale stands out. The article then presents select excerpts from texts to show kinds of spatial cartography: polygons designate wide or difficult to determine areas; lineal signs for tracing literary characters' movements; and point markers. The latter is simplest because it is a matter of the relative distribution of fictional settings and places and towns that actually exist. Despite this, methodological challenges arise with contemporary GIS programs if the places were renamed or the records entered for them differ.



Mimi Urbanc and Marko Juvan's article resides at the juncture of literature, literary criticism, and geography. The authors attempt to bridge the reigning view of the distance between the two disciplines, which have enjoyed bilateral exchanges for some time already, both on the conceptual—we have only to mention the concepts of intertextuality and discourse from literary theory—and methodological levels. From the standpoint of literary criticism, it is encouraging that besides archival, statistical, and other sources, literature has become a serious object of geographic inquiry, if only in interdisciplinary collaboration that respects, it goes without saying, differing scholarly interpretations. In the case of (humanistic) geography's assimilating the concept of landscapes as texts, it is becoming ever clearer how in explaining the relation between humans and the living environment, landscape, and populations the emphasis has shifted to perceptions and subjective experience of the landscape. The disciplines of geography and literary studies best connect in treating literary works devoted to Slovene Istria because the works are analyzed using terms central to humanistic geography, such as sense of place, topophilia, the I-others identity difference, and placelessness.

In order to test the hypotheses about literature and space mutually influencing one another, the project posed as one of its main goals the mapping the pre-1940 biographical data of literary historical relevance on the most important Slovene writers' lives. The actors of Slovene literary culture are writers, translators, book critics, editors, publishers, printers, librarians, and literary scholars who published the core part of their opuses and achieved prominence in the literary field before 1940.<sup>3</sup> The points of their lives relate to the most varied locations, from birthplace to place of death, middle and high school or higher education, workplace, publication of literary works (the spatial distribution of periodicals), and book publications (publishing houses). Non-literary ties—writers' personal connections—and memorial events (memorial days, holidays, memorial pilgrimages, literary societies, and literary prizes) are also part of spatial biographical data, because they constitute writers' spatial networking. What is more, material memorials are reserved a completely independent and precisely detailed entry mask. Biographical and memorials' data collection, which took place under Urška Perenič's mentorship in the course Introduction to the study of Slovene Literature at Ljubljana University's Filozofska fakulteta in 2011–2012, and which, since summer 2012, a smaller group of dedicated students<sup>4</sup> has continued, has already yielded partial results. These results, which can be verified after all 330 planned biographies are covered, were presented at the tenth Vilenica colloquium (Lipica 2012), in which many researchers from the project group took part. For the first time, Urška Perenič and Marijan Dovič presented the thematic maps of Slovene literature produced at the Anton Melik Institute of Geography (prepared by Jerneja Fridl). The maps covered approximately one-tenth

<sup>3</sup> This is a unique feature of the Slovene project. Comparable and older attempts at literary mapping focus almost exclusively on the production of literary communication—that is, on authors' persons—while approximately two-thirds of the authors in the Slovene project are literati and one-third, it is estimated, are the other types of actors, who provided for the publication, printing, distribution, evaluation, preservation, and processing of literature.

<sup>4</sup> Research group members edit the entries.



of the biographies.<sup>5</sup> This issue contains an article by Marijan Dovič on memorials of Slovene literary culture and their role in shaping and acquiring the cultural or national space. After introducing factors related to the appearance of the network of memorial landmarks, the author remarks critically on the partial results of their mapping. He notes that when examining memorial landmarks it is imprudent simply to observe their geographic distribution; it is necessary to take into account the temporal aspect of their appearance. In his opinion, a more unified insight into literary culture's process of memorial landmark network formation can only be achieved by including both canonical and less known actors in literary culture.

Urška Perenič attempts to address the question of the development of mutual influences between socio-geographic factors and Slovene literary culture using the example of the reading society movement and focusing on the 1860s. The project include a database mask for media infrastructure and institutions in addition to the biographical mask. While data collection has not yet begun, the author had available fundamental facts on politico-cultural societies from her previous research. In the framework of the project, she is interested in how, aside from ethnic political motivators, other factors influenced the development of a network of reading centers and their spatial distribution. Among the factors she posits and relates to one another are demographic structure, for which she relies on the first comprehensive Austro-Hungarian census (1869), political and judicial organization, the administrative divisions of communes with reading centers, and the development of the educational infrastructure.

Cultural and literary institutions and the print media played a large role as well in the formation of a literary capital and centers, as Marjan Dolgan writes. He introduces a terminological differentiation between the chief city, the capital, and the literary center, which he substantiates with examples from Slovene literature. He begins with texts from the initial phase of literature, which arose in small population centers, posing questions like what would have happened had Celje under the Celje dukes become the cultural center, and how would that have impacted Ljubljana's prominence. Among the cities important to the development of Slovene literature was Vienna, which was for Slovenes the capital until 1918. Ljubljana gradually gained prominence as it acquired secular and ecclesiastic functions starting in the thirteenth century. It became the literary capital with the publication of almanac *Pisanice* (1779–1881), though, once again, we cannot ignore the fact that Viennese almanacs were models. In addition to Ljubljana-Vienna relations, which persisted into the twentieth century, Celovec (Klagenfurt) was an important literary center—let us but recall the Mohorjeva družba publishing phenomenon. Josip Stritar's journal *Zvon* was published in Vienna, from where Ivan Cankar as well observed the Carniolan capital, Ljubljana. At the turn of the twentieth century Trst (Trieste) was becoming one of the Slovene centers. For all of these reasons the author places Ljubljana among the national centers of well and less developed countries. In reviewing relations between individual

<sup>5</sup> In presented the GIS mapping of the Slovene writers' lives from birthplace to place of death, Perenič commented on the significance of Slovene writers mobility and indicated the centripetal force in Slovene literary culture, given that many of the authors (treated) returned to the center of the ethnic space at the ends of their lives.



literary centers, such as between Buenos Aires and the Slovene literary capital, which were not harmonious, the author holds that the literary capital's political system, which he critically and persistently describes as a communist dictatorship, hindered the literary life of the anti-communist, Home Guard centers in diaspora, to which he even ascribes superior artistic accomplishments.

Following the Hladnik and Fridl's article on space in the historical novel, Matija Ogrin returns us to the literary text. She describes how Slovene geographic and cultural space figured in Anton Slomšek's works. Among her sources are Slomšek's (semi-)literary works and letters, which reflect his apprehension of the space and evidence the breadth of his activities, since he was in contact with many cultural activists (e.g., Matija Čop, Franc Metelko, and Janez Bleiweis). She devotes attention to Slomšek's travels, during which he learned directly about the people and church institutions. Among the events that were key from the standpoint of ethnic and national space are his »negotiations« on the Lavantinska (Maribor) diocese's borders. In reviewing Anton Slomšek's literary works, Ogrin highlights the topos of Slovene rivers, which symbolize the national rapprochement of the different Slovene lands.

Marjeta Pisk's article extends the research arc of this issue. Pisk joined the research group in spring 2012 and here reflects on the role of Slovene folksong in Goriška brda in the forming of the nation. Aside from the different forms of spiritual folk culture, factors that influenced traditions in this area were its border location, which led to a special dynamic in nationalization processes, and certain socio-political strategies. Colleagues from the Institute of Ethnomusicology, the Institute of Slovene Ethnology, and the Slovene Migration Institute provide the concluding articles. Although not project members, their current research into spatial themes has employed literary texts and GIS applications. Jerneja Vrabič, for whom this is the first such article, is involved with the collection *Slovenske narodne pesmi* [*Slovene Folksongs, 1895–1923*], which was compiled at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. Slovene space interests her in two regards—as a creative space and as a setting in the texts she is describing. The article contains maps that show places where the songs or their variants were recorded. Nataša Rogelja and Špela Ledinek Lozej's article draws on research on labor migrations in Istria and literary texts to describe how the image of the Šavrinija took hold in the north Istrian countryside. They show how the actual egg pedlars and their (literary) representations are related. These women contributed to the formation of a north Istria identity, yet contrary to generally accepted opinion, we read that their exceptional mobility and meetings with buyers in central Istria contributed more than literature to shaping the Šavrinka image.

The second part of the issue contains three book (collection) reviews by Alenka Koron, Marjeta Pisk, Andraž Jež, and Urška Perenič, who also wrote the report on the international workshop on mapping spatial relations (Erfurt 2012). The reviews are important to the Slovene project from the standpoints of theory and spatially oriented methodologies for literary studies, as well as kinds of literary mapping. They also give the reader insights into spatial treatments of literature outside the Slovene context. This bilingual issue on Slovene literature and space was facilitated



by the translating support of colleagues in Bowling Green State University's (U.S.) Language Services Group.

The Slovene project, which for the first time in Slovenia joins literary studies, geography, and cartography, and which is one-third of the way towards completion, is now entering into broader international scholarly contexts. We can only hope that the project provokes interests in cousin or even more distant disciplines.

Vienna, October 2012

*Urška Perenič*