SLOVENE LITERARY STUDIES TODAY

This thematic issue of *Slavistična revija*, entitled *Slovene Literary Studies Today*, supplements information on the state of contemporary Slovene language and literary studies seven years after the question was put in a quite ambitious 2006 thematic issue on the current state of Slovene linguistics. The editor, Ada Vidovič Muha, has the distinction of having had initiated the linguistics issue and inspired the literary half of the project. The survey was to have included the most dynamic fields of Slovene literary studies in recent decades, from the moment such consideration was last given: in some areas this meant five years, in other quite a bit more, but the "today" in the title should be understood in the sense of approximately a decade or two. We invited teachers and researchers in academia to contribute—those whose publications had gained them a reputation in a given area of literary studies, either as experts in the subject matter of a certain field or in the methodological sense. The first choices were colleagues in the Slovene program at Ljubljana University, which is the oldest of its kind and, after a change in generations fifteen years ago, very well established (thus half of the contributors are from the Faculty of Arts at the University of Ljubljana). Where there were more scholars to choose from, preference went to those who seemed to be most engaged. Contributors from other institutions attest to the institutional differentiation of Slovene literary studies. These include the Faculty of Arts at Maribor University, the Slovene studies program at Nova Gorica, and the Faculty of Education in Ljubljana.

If a similar project were to have been undertaken decades ago, then the selection of disciplines would certainly have been different. Someone would probably have been invited to present analyses of studies of narration and meter and prosody, and interpretive approaches to Slovene literature. It probably would have seemed logical to present Prešeren and Cankar (if not even Pregelj) studies separately; however, there would not have been the need for the sections that today we feel are essential to literary studies. The connecting thread in this issue of *Slavistična revija* is the authors' awareness (in some fields more pronounced, in others less) of the paradigmatic changes in literary studies, which just some years ago were not so obvious. Cognizant of these changes, and after, of course, consulting Cobiss, which lists all major publications in Slovene literary studies, we formed a list of fields that determine academic curricula and bestow recognition on literary historians, and thus had to be considered. The following fields (and contributors), ordered according to the amount written and their social resonance, are: genres of novel writing (Alozija Zupan Sosič), short prose (Alenka Žbogar), poetry (Irena Novak Popov), and drama and theater (Mateja Pezdirc Bartol and Tomaž Toporišič). Before this genre approach, a chronological principle of arranging materials prevailed—from the origins of writing and Protestant literature to modernism and postmodernism in contemporary literature (hence, for example, the series title Obdobja 'periods'). Such a principle is still suitable for pre-modern literature (Aleksander Bjelčevič).

Though only recently acknowledged, the organization of our discipline with regard to the current state of literary studies worldwide and in Slovenia is to a large degree antiquated. The attention of literary studies has shifted from a focus on tex-

tual features, which was modern in the 1970s, to the phenomenon of reception and examination of social context. That is why in this issue there are represented fields such as literary didactics (Boža Krakar Vogel), children's literature (Igor Saksida and Dragica Haramija), women's studies (Katja Mihurko Poniž), critical editions (Igor Kramberger), and literary criticism (Miran Štuhec), which are attracting an ever growing number of researchers and producing a considerable quantity of publications.

What is powering the paradigmatic changes in literary studies? The first factor is the exponential growth of data. The digitalization of periodicals and book publications places the person interested in literary studies in a different situation than before, when it was customary to rely on prior critical identification of texts. Corpora of texts are appearing that were not previously recorded in bibliographies. A multitude of texts accessible at a click are available for reevaluation after having disappeared from view. The question arises as to why they once sank into oblivion and whether today we can more accurately understand their former roles. The growth of data also applies to contemporary literary production, which has exploded and is not longer manageable with traditional methods.

Another change is the contextualization of literary facts. The illusion of autonomous literature that was reproduced in the illusion of autonomous literary scholarship (both were only possible by reducing the interests of literary studies to one component, the text, and one function of the text, its aesthetic function) has receded, given the need for a more complex understanding of literature. While social concerns in literature are nothing new for Slovene literary studies, the conviction that the concept of Slovene literature ought not be limited to so-called original literature or even to Slovene-language literature (i.e., to include translations) is fresh. From reader's point of view, literature in other languages is important as well, being part of literary consumption in Slovenia and even originating there. The logical result of acknowledging this would be an invitation to representatives of other branches of philology in Slovenia—views of research on German-, Latin-, English-, and other-language literatures—to cooperate on this thematic issue. However, this ambitious plan was limited to symbolic representation in the form of a survey of comparative and German literary studies in Slovenia, an essential specificity of which is consideration of the Slovene literary context, yet in the end it was necessary to omit these articles, too. The plan to expand the subject matter field in the thematic issue would have been difficult to carry out, and even though on a popular level the appropriation of non-Slovene writers like Louis Adamič, Alma Karlin, Ana Wambrechtsamer, and Maja Haderlap is accepted, the plan nonetheless seemed too radical.

Democratization of scholarship has caused a third change. It implies the relativization of authoritative, expert views, and preference for empowering each interested and culturally competent individual to take part in shaping subject matter in the field. Slovene literary studies, with the exception of student projects in Wikipedia and Wikisource, has little prior experience with this. Internet reports on American academic history writing (*Writing History in the Digital Age*, edited by Jack Dougherty and Kristen Nawrotzki, 2012), however, forecast a great shift in this regard.

The thematic issue's section on methodology was to contain a survey of theo-

retical contributions in recent Slovene literary studies (that had to be left out) and a reflection on the possibility of large, collective literary historical enterprises (Miran Hladnik). Special attention has instead been devoted to the dominant functions of bibliographic descriptions (Gregor Kocijan) and empirical research (Urška Perenič), as befits the premise of a paradigmatic turn in the discipline. Consideration of their theoretical background to a certain extent compensates for the absence of a separate survey of methodologies—that is, an article on theory.

The next such opportunity will have to include a section on the infrastructure of contemporary Slovene literary studies: databases, academic research and educational institutions in Slovenia and at universities abroad, scholarly periodicals, collections, book series, research projects, digital communications, scholarly ties as evidenced by analyses of citations and references to prominent scholars, academic writing (from baccalaureate theses to dissertations), as well as a survey of the symbiotic relationships between Slovene literary studies and other disciplines (e.g., sociology, history, ethnology, linguistics, theology, medicine, law, economics, and computer science).

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Miran Hladnik
Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana