

EXISTENTIAL CONCERNS AND NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES IN THE NOVELS OF FORD MADOX FORD, VIRGINIA WOOLF AND ALDOUS HUXLEY

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Abstract

The article addresses the issue of the close relationship between the existential concern and the narrative techniques used by English writers Ford Madox Ford, Virginia Woolf and Aldous Huxley to present the general human condition. The selected authors had introduced narrative techniques that influenced the entire development of the modern novel and that are still highly relevant and widely used in the contemporary novel, including the Slovene modern novel.

The human condition and the essence of human existence have always raised the interest of philosophers as well as of creative artists. At the beginning of the 20th century the existential concerns became extremely intense, due to the tensions and despairs that had been experienced as the consequence of World War I. A strong response to the decay of social and moral values is particularly noticeable in the modernist movement in literature, and the novel became the main form of literary discourse that reflected the writers' response to the existential concerns of the period. Reasons for the response were researched by literary critics already in the 1930s and are strongly argued mainly in the critical work of Stephen Spender. Apart from the writers' search for adequate narrative techniques to present their existential experience, also their preoccupation with the aesthetic value of their experience and of their artistic creation appeared, within the general atmosphere of the age that faced the loss of traditional values in morals, religion, politics and ways of social behaviour. The intensified existential experience demanded a break with traditional approaches in narrative strategies, since the concepts that were based on the apprehension of values that existed no more were no longer acceptable. Positivist assumptions about the perfectly knowable nature of human existence could not be tolerated by creative artists in many fields of artistic creation, and an adequate response to the need for a change was raised by the modernist movement, particularly in the English literary creation. Dilemmas of artistic and of ethical nature were experienced also by other creative artists in the early thirties, mainly by the English dramatists, who wished to raise social awareness among the public and were therefore torn between their moral and their artistic duties (Jurak, 9).

The issue of the relationship between existential concerns of the English novelists from the beginning of the 20th century and the corresponding change in narrative techniques and strategies that they applied to express their experiences and concerns is a subject of great importance for further development of the modern novel. English writers who wished to convey their artistic apprehension of the human condition at the beginning of the previous century invented new approaches to the creative process of the novel and they also introduced new theoretical concepts of the literary genre, as is strongly argued by the literary critic and historian David Daiches already in the first half of the 20th century, and afterwards resumed also by Malcolm Bradbury and many other prominent literary historians. Also later literary critics like David Lodge believed that a novel should have a thematic and narrative unity that could be described. Ford Madox Ford, Virginia Woolf and Aldous Huxley are listed among the novelists who shared the existential concerns of the age and who wished to balance their views of life with adequate artistic and aesthetic expression. By complementing their views of life with their artistic beliefs and creativity in the use of new techniques of narration they contributed to the development of a new creative process of the novel and thus became integral parts of the evolutionary process that gave rise to the modern novel. All three of them were creative writers and conscious literary critics and theoreticians at the same time. Therefore, they focused their innovative approaches in artistic creation towards the main category of the narrative process, which is the role of the narrator, and brought literary discourse to the level of subjectivity. Afterwards their narrative approaches extended even farther, to the level of conscious and subconscious happening in the minds of their literary protagonists. Five of their novels that excel in the artistic complexity of the literary form and of existential thought have been chosen for analysis of their new approaches in narrative strategies, owing to their preoccupation with human condition. These are: *The Good Soldier* by Ford Madox Ford, *To the Lighthouse* and *The Waves* by Virginia Woolf, and *Antic Hay* and *Point Counter Point* by Aldous Huxley. At this point a special reference should be made to the work of James Joyce who often personifies the change and innovation in narrative techniques of the modern novel, owing to the interior monologue and the stream-of-consciousness technique. Because of the complex and voluminous nature of his work, James Joyce occupies a special and significant position among the most prominent writers of the 20th century. His work merits to be analysed individually, and in Slovenia several profound analyses of his work and life have been already carried out, the most significant ones by Aleš Pogačnik and above all by Janez Gradišnik who also translated Joyce's novel *Ulysses* – the Slovene translation of *Ulysses* appeared in 1967/68. For the sake of better understanding of the creative process of the modern novel, it should be mentioned that James Joyce was among the main innovators of the narrative techniques. To make the presentation more complete, I give some observations of the characteristics of his writing in the article.

James Augustine Aloysius Joyce (1882–1941), expatriate Irish writer and poet, is known mainly for his collection of short stories entitled *Dubliners* (1914) and for his novels *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), *Ulysses* (1922) and *Finnegans Wake* (1939). James Joyce combined several controversial features in his character, he was cosmopolitan by nature and at the same time attached to the narrow local setting of

his home town, he spent most of his life abroad, nevertheless he portrayed his native Dublin in the utmost detail. Joyce imposed exile on himself already in early manhood, after his previously well-to-do family had begun to slide into poverty; he lived in Pola, Trieste, Paris and Zurich, but it was always the Irish setting and the Irish experience that preoccupied his mind. The city of Dublin and Dublin society were the subject matter and the outer setting of his writing. *Dubliners*, a collection of short stories that was published in 1914, already points to the narrative techniques that Joyce developed later, to the use of interior monologue and to the preoccupation with psychic reality rather than with the external material world. In his novel *Ulysses*, Joyce used a variety of literary techniques to present his characters: jokes, stream of consciousness, parodies, dream associations, literary allusions. The novel was published in 1922, which was the key year of the English language literary modernism, since T.S. Eliot's poem *The Waste Land* was published in the same year. The language used in the novel is peculiar and obscure, Joyce observed no convention regarding plot and character, which he totally expelled from his writing. The main activities happen in the minds of his characters, but the author, who searches for the essence of human existence, finds the means to incorporate detailed descriptions of the city of Dublin in his narration. An immense quantity of external detail confronts numerous allusions to Greek myths, to history in general, and the author refrains from any proper introduction to the allusions. The details are not meant to help the reader to understand the novel, just the contrary, they imply the idea of chaos in narration. Yet, Joyce surpasses the presentation of a particular individual, even if he makes the reader enter the minds of the protagonists, the reader is never in a position to identify with the main characters. Joyce's characters resume a general human value and the chaotic impression of the structure of the novel reveals a cleverly premeditated internal structure, based on classical mythology.

In the selected novels which are considered in the article, the writers Ford Madox Ford (1873–1939), Virginia Woolf (1882–1941) and Aldous Huxley (1894–1963) focused rather on the presentation of the autonomous individual than on the socially conscious self. Therefore, the research has been based on the analysis of changes that they had introduced into the concept of the novel in their search for narrative strategies that would break with the literary conventions of time. They abandoned the concept of the omniscient narrator of the Edwardian novel and united the act of observing and the act of narrating which were the essential elements of the narrative system. Thus they adopted a new narrative strategy and started a creative process that gradually developed, through the changes in narrative concepts and techniques. Their contributions to the process have been analysed through the most significant features of their writing which involve, besides the introduction of a subjective and unreliable narrator, also the accompanying narrative categories of the level of narration and of the presence, or rather absence, of the social dimension of their writing. The analysis of their new approaches is based on compilation of data from literary history and from the biographical facts about their lives, and it is complemented by a presentation of critical response to the novelty of their literary creation, in the time of their creative period and in the recent past.

The selection of novels that illustrate three different innovative approaches in narrative techniques used by Ford Madox Ford, Virginia Woolf and Aldous Huxley

has been done from the point of view that the three mentioned authors belonged to the same cycle of the literary creative process that came into existence as a response to the social changes which those authors witnessed at the sunset of the 19th century. The novelties in narrative techniques that they introduced were created within a creative process of logical and chronological sequence. Each of the novelties that they introduced in their approaches to narrative techniques marked a milestone in literary creation of the time, within the process that led to the creation of the modern novel which has ceased to belong exclusively to the English literary creation and has assumed global dimensions.

Ford Madox Ford made an important innovative step in the narrative technique of the novel by merging the subjective attitude of the narrator with the object of narration. He introduced a new concept of narrator, since he abandoned the traditional apprehension of an omniscient narrator and attributed a new, subjective role to the narrator. Through the novelty of his approach the narration of his novels became unreliable and multi-faced, the pluralistic nature of the narration had been strongly emphasised also by means of the highly ironic attitude of the narrator towards the emotional, sentimental and almost tragic background of the narrated story. The introduction of a subjective and unreliable narrator is only one innovative instrument of Ford's narrative technique, which is complemented with great effectiveness by repetition and by the cyclic nature of narration. Ford introduced novelties also in the structure of the novel. While the traditional structure of the novel helps the reader to get acquainted with the subject matter of the novel and to develop a relationship with it, the approach that had been introduced by Ford prevented the reader from gaining a reliable apprehension of the plot, and thus created a new relationship between the author and the reader. Ford built his novel through a scattered pattern of different points of view and different temporal frameworks. Therefore, the main change in narrative technique was introduced at the level of relationship between the author and the reader. Ford Madox Ford followed a new narrative strategy to create a new and relaxed relationship between the author and the reader. His novel *The Good Soldier* (1915) is written as a direct, first person narrative of a modern man from the New World. To enlarge the effect of his technique Ford Madox Ford entrusted the narrator with an additional function, he turned the narrator into the main protagonist and thus abolished the omniscient and omni-potential narrator from his novels. The narrator and the main character in the novel *The Good Soldier* is John Dowell, a rich and indifferent American who gets involved with the English nobility, stricken by poverty and corruption at the turn of the century. The narration of a highly sentimental and emotional subject matter is entrusted to a narrator who is incapable of any feelings, and for that reason a special kind of situational irony arises from that approach. The narrator is an ironic conveyer of his own feelings and, besides, also a diagnostician of his own emotional reactions. Ford succeeds raising the narration to the level of an "objective correlative" of his personal experience and therefore presents to the reader a genuine existential situation. The threats of the war, the indifference of the ruling classes, and the concerns of modern man are revealed through this search for modern narrative techniques. Furthermore, the characters are presented from different angles, from different points of view and from different temporal perspectives, while their

experiences from different times of their lives - that are constantly paralleled in the narration - present another element that builds the existential picture of a modern man, through the means of an indifferent and unreliable narrator. John Dowell, the main character and the narrator, does not follow the chronological principle in his narration, his narration follows a very subjective pattern of sequence of events, with numerous temporal shifts and changes in the view points of narration. The incredibility of the narrator and of the narration conveys the existential concerns that are grounded in the decaying English society at the turn of the century into the universal sphere of a general human condition where temporal and historical backgrounds matter no more. The concept of time and the changing pattern of different temporal perspectives are important elements in Ford's narrative technique. They affect the reader by implying the sensation that the real essence of being may never be touched and understood. The carefully premeditated structure of the novel that builds the effects of uncertainty and generality of human condition is also a powerful means of Ford's narrative technique. The importance of Ford's innovative approach to the writing of a novel has been researched and strongly stated by a literary critic of today, David Trotter.

Virginia Woolf is an author who does not experience the same kind of existential concerns as Ford, nevertheless she does follow the same principle of growing subjectivity in the creative process of writing. The social dimensions of existence are not of her primary concern, she does not focus her attention on the relationship between man and society, but rather explores the changes that arise in society due to the changing nature of the human essence. Personally, she had been sorely affected by the historical and social circumstances of the time of her life, because of the premature deaths of her mother, her brother and, even though later, her father. She had suffered the effects of World War I, yet she never wrote about her experience in a direct way, she communicated her rejection of violence, her disgust with the general atmosphere of the time through the narrative technique that she used. In her writing, the narrator assumes some of the traditional omniscient character, but at the same time he is denied the capacity of a reliable reporter of objective reality. Her narration does not aim to build an image of the main character, Virginia Woolf presents the mental landscapes of her protagonists, the flows of thoughts in their minds and even the happenings in their subconscious minds. From the presentation of the objective, material world she transferred her narration into the abstract, imaginary world of her protagonists, and for that sake she created a relevant narrative technique of interior monologue that affected the entire creative process of the novel thereafter. Ford introduced the concept of the unreliable, subjective narrator, and Virginia Woolf promoted the creative process even farther in terms of the relationship between the subject and the object of narration. She merged the two of them and by this action she annulled the concept of objective reality; she found, by means of her narrative technique, a mediator between the objective reality of the world and her subjective apprehension of it. The real life, the reality has become absolutely uncertain and doubtful.

Georg Lukács, a literary critic and theoretician from the beginning of the 20th century, also recognised the need of an artist of the time to present the human being in its totality, the essence of his being through the merged aspects of his emotional, rational and physical experience, and he named the phenomenon as "the lyrical cos-

mos of pure interiority” (Lukács, 114). The poetical language that was used by Virginia Woolf and the experimental way of her writing made her literary creation a milestone in the history of the novel. Virginia Woolf developed also her own critical attitude towards the literary creation of the time, which does not often support her own method of writing. She believed - and she delivered lectures and published articles on the subject - that the women writers were to develop a socially critical novel, nevertheless she denied to women the ability to consider analytically the essence of human life. Her theoretical concepts of literary creation were known under the name of “feminist aesthetics” of the time, nevertheless, as a writer, she had the ability to forget about her own literary concepts and to rise beyond her feminist attitudes in her creative efforts. Her denial of traditional values of Edwardian society are expressed by her turning to nature, by her acceptance of the rhythm of nature and by its attribution to the ticking of everyday life. Her “sensation of living” implies profound feminine sensibility and a sharpened experience of the existential dimension of everyday life. With James Joyce, Virginia Woolf shared the belief that a creative individual was lonely in his/her world of perception and because of that doomed to choose a subjective approach in the technique of presentation, a narrative technique that conveyed the mental landscape of an individual. In transferring her existential concerns from the relationship between man and society to the relationship of an individual with his/her own body, she embarked on the road to an impersonal, immaterial presentation of pure existential matter. By means of images and thoughts that traverse the minds of her protagonists she wished to express the pure essence of human being. In her novels *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), *To the Lighthouse* (1927), *The Waves* (1931), there is no plot, nevertheless each of the novels has a leading theme and a kind of contents. Nothing or very little happens in her novels, apart from the intermingling of the flows of thoughts of her protagonists, yet, everything which matters in life, happens in her novels.

In the novel *To the Lighthouse*, Virginia Woolf presents Mrs. Ramsay, by means of the interior monologue and stream-of-consciousness technique. The personality of the main character arises from the “triangulation” of several streams of consciousness and by the means of free indirect speech. Along with the character of Mrs. Ramsay, the relationships among different family members are also revealed. The writer was trying to find a poetic language that would be as true as life itself, and in her next novel, *The Waves*, she presents, in a totally abstract manner, six personalities of six protagonists, friends from the time of their childhood. There is a leading theme of their reunion, on behalf of the seventh character who never appears, which weaves the streams of their consciousness, the thoughts of the characters, sometimes expressed in their interior monologues, into a narration which builds the characters by passing from one to another, reflecting one’s specific traits in the thoughts of the other. Only from time to time does the author link the monologues of the main characters by passages of impersonal prose that always refer to natural phenomena, to the changing of light, to the movements of water, to emphasize the eternal, essential existential repetition in a timeless frame. Through the ways in which the individual minds of her characters function, through the particular use of language, the protagonists create their own personalities, they reflect upon their identities, upon the physical limitations of their bodies and they experience their existence mainly by means of their

bonds to nature. Since their bodies are vulnerable and unreliable, their existential experience contains tension and fear and raises doubts along with a wish to search for the meaning and essence of being. The use of interior monologue or of a stream-of-consciousness technique to present the author's subjective experience of her existence touches on the use of the phenomenon of subjective time. In this respect Virginia Woolf is a predecessor of later writers who are concerned with the problem of the passing of time, analysing the existential dimension and value of existence in each separate moment of life.

Great existential concern characterises also the work of Aldous Huxley, who also addressed the social and political changes that had happened in English society at the beginning of the 20th century and gave rise to the tensions and fears of modern man after World War I. Technological achievements of the time provoked doubt instead of enthusiasm in the author, even though he had been born to a family of great intellectual tradition and respect for science. His existential concern did not focus on the effect that the loss of traditional values had for the mind and the soul of an individual, instead his interest was oriented towards the relationship between the individual and society. His view of life differed significantly from the apprehension of human existence that was shared by, for example, Virginia Woolf and James Joyce, and his strategy in conveying his experience to the readers differed accordingly from other narrative techniques that were practised by English modernists. Aldous Huxley paid great attention to the importance of literary form since he was looking for the communicative value of literature, yet he made no effort to invent a new narrative technique. His care was oriented towards the impact that a literary form, especially an epic literary form, might have on a wide reading public and he influenced the reading public of the time significantly, mainly due to the communicative value of his novels. That a novel may bear a greater communicative value than other literary genres is a generally known fact, which was recognised also by Georg Lukács. Aldous Huxley shared the wish that was common to the majority of the modernist writers in England, to present the despair because of the loss of traditional values, to change the world and the human position in the social context of the time. Nevertheless his narrative strategy did not follow the innovative techniques that were invented and implied by Joyce and Virginia Woolf, by the techniques of narration he remained traditional and preserved the established relationship of direct communication with the reader. Aldous Huxley was looking for a substitute for the missing moral values and tried to replace them by highly aesthetic values of art, of literature. His literary creation followed his wish that life itself might be changed into a work of art. The main elements of his narrative strategy are a highly ironic attitude, unreliable narrator and the use of techniques of presentation that belong to the domains of other arts than literature - to music, to the visual arts (painting, film). In his earlier novels *Chrome Yellow* (1921), *Antic Hay* (1923), *Those Barren Leaves* (1925), he reveals his disappointment over the rapid development of civilisation which had brought great technological achievements but which simultaneously oppressed man with tensions and psychological crises. Man had no reason for faith in a better and more prosperous future, he was left with a feeling that the present moment was the only possibility for fulfilling his existence, therefore, that instant had to be enjoyed and intensely experienced before it

faded away. With a lot of wit and cynicism Huxley narrates about the vanity of striving for momentary pleasures and from his narrative a deep concern for true human values arises, along with a painful search for the meaning and essence of human existence. Irony pervades his presentations of the contemporary human condition, given in a loosely knitted series of images and experiences that have no real casual bonds among them or that even contradict each other. His novel *Antic Hay* is designed as a mosaic of individual images from the lives of his protagonists, standing for their reflections over different subjects or for their discussions with other protagonists. Since Aldous Huxley wished to present the mental landscapes of his protagonists along with the dimension of social problems of the period, he did not build the characters of his heroes through the novels, but presented his characters as personified ideas. From the contrapuntal nature of different situations presented, from the juxtaposition of irrelevant events, the overall effect of universality and unity of the world comes into existence. Aldous Huxley is an author of a "novel of ideas" and a writer who brought together the elements of a novel and of an essay, by means of attributing a musical composition to a work of literature. The novel *Point Counter Point* (1928) may be considered a collection of essays on the issue of human existence, presented in a dialogic form under the frame of a novel, by characters who are almost caricatures of the ideas that they stand for.

Study of the selected novels reveals a thesis that the modernist movement as reflected in their use of new narrative techniques was apprehended by the contemporary critics of the time mainly as a break from traditions, while later criticism adopted the idea that the modernist movement is not solely an effort to emphasise discontinuity with the past tradition, but that it is only one of the responses - perhaps the most adequate and the strongest - to the existential concerns of the time. Randall Stevenson addressed the questions of advantages of contemporary literary evaluation along with role of narrative techniques in the creative process and David Trotter argued in his work *The English Novel 1895-1920* that narrative techniques, due to their actuality and expressive power became a coherent part of the novel. Also Steven Connor who did research on the English Novel in the period from 1950 to 1995, states that the novel by its very nature always addresses a problem and that therefore an uninterrupted and smooth communication between the author and the reader is improbable. For that reason the modernist narrative strategy may be defined as an open method for the presentation of existential experience which may be suppressed for a certain time but which may re-emerge in a modified appearance. Analytical approach to the ways in which the writers responded to contemporary preoccupations had been undertaken also by David Trotter in the early 1990s who strongly stated in his literary criticism that modernism as a powerful cultural event had determined the way writers wrote ever since that particular historical moment.

The thesis on the adequacy of the modernist narrative techniques for expressing existential concerns is highly relevant also for the response to the modern English novel in Slovenia, in literary criticism and in genuine literary creation. Due to the particularity of historical and social conditions in Slovenia in the first half of the 20th

century, it was only after World War II that existential experience was addressed by Slovene writers by means of modernist narrative techniques. Slovenia has always been bordering on territories with Romance as well as with German cultural traditions; in the mere fact of its geographical position among different cultures lies the main reason for its "perpetual efforts for a genuine literary creation" * (Zadravec 1974: 73). In Slovenia, in the mid-1930s, the writers, who were exploring the deepest layers of the human soul and who were striving to reach the truth by an understanding of human existence were carefully studied. The impact of the English, French, German aesthetic, literary and political reflections may be traced in the aesthetic and literary attitudes of the main critical minds in Slovenia of that time; in addition, due to the French existential philosophic and literary thinking, there was a significant trend towards the exploration of the personal inner world of an individual. Besides the English modern novel, the Russian and the Scandinavian literary creation influenced the Slovene authors at the beginning of the previous century. In the first two decades of the 20th century, some novels were written in Slovenia that recall the English modern novel due to the narrative techniques that were employed by their authors and also due to the subject matter of their narration. *Nina* (1906), a novel written as an interior monologue by Ivan Cankar, and the novel *Novo mesto* (1929) by Miran Jarc excell in narrative techniques that introduced similar approaches of close psychological observation, yet, the social and political constraints of the time were too great to be neglected by the authors.

Ivan Cankar introduced, as early as in the first decade of the 20th century, a contrapuntal way of narration, reducing the narrative to a single level of narration and using a free indirect speech. His concern for the aesthetic and linguistic aspects of the novel could not be neglected ever after, his novels are a milestone in Slovene literature creation. He portrays the mental landscapes of his protagonists but, in addition to the existential concerns of modern man, his novels reveal also strong moral and social concerns.

Even after World War I, contemporary English authors like James Joyce exercised no real impact on literary creation in Slovenia, because bad social conditions and burning national problems prevented the Slovene authors from devoting themselves to the labyrinths of the human mind. English classics were popular at that time, the English contemporaries were known to the Slovene reading audience but had no significant influence either on the critical thought or on the genuine writing. Nevertheless, the late 1930s are usually considered by Slovene literary critics as the beginning of the Slovene modern novel. Like elsewhere, some authors continued the literary tradition of the past, employing traditional narrative techniques, while others started to develop new ways of narration to express contemporary thematic concerns of the age* (Glušič-Krisper 1974: 109). At that point already, the first indications appeared - apart from the literary traditions and influences of global literary flows - that Slovene literary creation would follow two principles, reflecting two views of the world, a realistic and a subjective apprehension of the world, and that the two apprehensions would constantly be confronted in a kind of "dialectic opposition" *(Kmecl 39).

The novelists Miško Kranjec, Anton Ingolič and Ignac Koprivce are listed among those who wrote about the contemporary experience of living and used the traditional

narrative techniques. Among those who contributed to the development of the modern novel in Slovenia, the writers Ciril Kosmač, Ivan Potrč and Edvard Kocbek are most often mentioned. Their views of life differed significantly, while Ciril Kosmač and Ivan Potrč explored the emotional and instinctive parts of human nature; Edvard Kocbek, sharing existential beliefs and Christian philosophical persuasion, wrote about existential concerns and employed highly innovative narrative techniques. The subject matters of his existential concern are nevertheless so closely linked to the tensions and fears arising from clearly defined historical facts of the national liberation fight that they remain within a very special framework of the human condition and cannot be generalised as a purely existential presentation of human existence. The existential concerns of modern man gained more importance in the Slovene literary creation of the fifties, when the influence of foreign literatures - mainly of the English literature and also of the French and American literatures - became more vigorously felt in Slovene cultural space. Of special significance for the Slovene literary creation has been the influence of Sartre and of the existentialist thinking. Authors like Lojze Kovačič and Vladimir Kavčič introduced to the readers their inner worlds, while Beno Zupančič conveyed to them his apprehensions of the ethical aspects of the writer's role in society. Pavle Zidar and Vitomil Zupan are authors who were able to portray the existential tensions and human alienations of the modern man with great expressive power. It was not only the novel which adopted new approaches in the use of narrative techniques, drama and poetry also became popular means for presenting the tensions and alienation problems of modern man. With a delay of thirty or even forty years, there appeared in Slovenia modernist authors who share many similar characteristic features with English writers of the modern novel. Lojze Kovačič, Rudi Šeligo, Peter Božič, Jože Snoj are contemporary Slovene novelists who spontaneously used the same narrative strategies as English authors of the modern novel to present the mental landscape of their protagonists. It may be stated that the first significant influences of modernist narrative techniques were reflected in the Slovene literary creation of the 1950s and that it was only in the sixties and seventies that modernist techniques of writing became an established way of expressing the alienation problems and fears of modern man in the Slovene novel. The contemporary novel in Slovenia bears in many cases the traits of autobiographical narrative, irrational and emotional sides of human experience are often presented and it may be stated that the characteristic feature of the Slovene novel of the last three decades is the author's search for his self, for his identity, for the apprehension of his psychological crisis. The literary creation is in no respect a delayed wave of modernist writing as it appeared in England at the beginning of the 20th century, but a genuine literary creation that uses modernist narrative techniques as adequate means to express existential concerns of the time. In the specific national and geographical circumstances the authors frequently feel that interior monologue, free indirect speech and stream-of-consciousness technique present good strategic means of narration and that they convey their existential concerns.

Of extreme importance for the evaluation of literary creation of the time and for the genuine literary creation were the timely information on new happenings in literature and the availability of novels in Slovene translations. As an important element in the process of bridging traditional and cultural boundaries that accompany the reading

of a literary text, the role of introductory studies to the publications of novels in the Slovene language must also be stated, since as early as in the 1960s translations of the most sound modern novels started to be published in the collection "Sto romanov", always accompanied by a thorough and profound analysis of the author's work and life. Among the most prominent authors of introductory studies to the translations of English modern novelists into Slovene are Katarina Bogataj-Gradišnik. Mirko Jurak, Rapa Šuklje, Majda Stanovnik, Janko Kos, Jože Udovič. Some of them, mainly Janko Kos and Jože Udovič, are also listed among the most important Slovene literary critics and theoreticians, along with Dušan Pirjevec and Franc Zadravec.

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* Translations of quotations from Slovene authors into English are mine.

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