

Dolinar, Darko and Marko Juvan, eds. *Kako pisati literarno zgodovino danes?: Razprave*. Ljubljana: Znanstveno-raziskovalni center SAZU, 2003. 395 pp. (paper). ISBN 961-6358-82-0.

This three-part collection of papers, the first such comprehensive consideration of literary history in Slovenia, will provoke and impress readers, including those in other disciplines. First a note on the extras, not necessarily included in such collections: Martin Grum has compiled a handy bibliography of 166 pieces of literary history published in Slovenia since 1919 (345–66). The bibliography has a subject index, and the book itself has a name index (375–87). There is more than the usual information about each contributor in the end material (389–94). Abstracts are in Slovene and English; summaries in English or, for German-language articles, in Slovene. Editor Darko Dolinar's introduction (9–14) is also in English (367–73). Dolinar is chair of the Institute of Slovenian Literature, Slovene Academy of Sciences, where co-editor Marko Juvan also holds a research appointment. The two have collaborated on a truly impressive project, the published result of which is well-structured and easy to navigate.

There is much agreement among the contributors on the challenges of writing literary history, but not a little tension. Juvan considers the “fate of the ‘grand’ genre” in the opening article (“O usodi ‘velikega’ žanra,” 17–49). From his standpoint as an authority on intertextuality, Juvan points out that literature as an artistic metagenre and literary history arose simultaneously and interactively (24), something he can demonstrate in the Slovene case as well. Literary history as previously understood, however, is incompatible with today's postmodern, post historic situation (31). Doubts about the viability of unified views of the literary past have been superseded by attention to the narrative aspect of history, explains Juvan (34–35), leading him to consider the literariness of histories (36–40) and art in social context (40–42). Juvan concludes that forms of hypertext are the most promising alternatives to unified literary historical narratives. Further, “hypertext is much better able than linear narrative to capture

the palimpsest nature of temporal levels ... and the coexistence of varied semiotic spaces...”<sup>1</sup>

Other contributors complement Juvan’s overview of the challenge in original ways. Vladimir Biti seconds Juvan on the origins of synthetic literary history and sees it replaced by an encyclopedic one encompassing otherness.<sup>2</sup> The practical difficulty of writing about otherness, in this case female writers and their works, is the subject of Silvija Borovnik’s article.<sup>3</sup> Who exactly is telling or controlling the story does seem to be a crucial (and ironic?) question, one that the collection does not deal with explicitly, unless Ivan Verč’s subject can be applied to literary historian as well as creative writer.<sup>4</sup> Lado Kralj<sup>5</sup> notes, however, the gap between those who do discrete research and those who write literary history—in reference works for example—and rely on the former (64–65). Alenka Koron’s article is one of the few to focus on particular Slovene literary historians. She uses the 1930s debate between Anton Slodnjak and France Kidrič as a starting point in considering narrative in fiction and historiography. Koron concludes that it may be time to revive traditional narrative literary history (267):

je ... literarnozgodovinska pripoved še vedno izziv, ki si ga je mogoče predstavljati tudi kot most in mejo, ki definira igrišče literarnozgodovinskih tekstnih struktur. V nasprotnem primeru bo za historično človeško

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<sup>1</sup> “...je hipertekst veliko boljše od linearne pripovedi zmožen zajeti palimpsestnost časovnih ravni ... in soobstoj raznoterih semiotičnih prostorov...” (43).

<sup>2</sup> Während der Performativ der Literaturgeschichtsschreibung nämlich in ersten Falle von der eingebürgerten Erzählkonvention konditioniert wird, wird sie im zweiten Falle von der traumatisch auseinandergeratenen Wirklichkeit determiniert. Wenn die erste Form Aufgrund jener Konditionierung gewaltige Ausscheidungen in der Vielfalt des *dargestellten* Anderen zeitigt, führt die Determinierung der zweiten Form zu vergleichbaren Ausgrenzungen hinsichtlich des *angesprochenen* Anderen hin (92); “In Namen des ganz Anderen” (81–96).

<sup>3</sup> “Pogled v literarnozgodovinsko delavnico” (331–44).

<sup>4</sup> “Subjekt izjave kot predmet raziskovanja zgodovine književnosti” (213–26).

<sup>5</sup> “Literarna zgodovina: bolj fikcija kot znanost” (61–70).

izkušnjo temporalnosti, ki jo ima Ricoueur za ireduktibilno entiteto pripovedi, preostal prostor le v literaturi (269).

Dolinar briefly reviews Slovene literary history (131–36) in an article on its readership. He notes that Slovene literary historians have integrated contemporary theory into their work but alludes to the challenges in the socio-cultural and political context, not to mention the public's changing attitudes towards literature (136). If there is a readership for literary history, Dolinar reminds us, it may not be receptive to some theoretical solutions. This is probably true if we accept Marija Mitrović's<sup>6</sup> reminder that literary history, whatever the challenges, is needed by particular audiences, and it is likely to maintain a pedagogic role.

Dolinar, Koron, and others' allusions to the societal context is the central concern of Marijan Dovič's article,<sup>7</sup> which treats Siegfried J. Schmidt and Niklas Luhmann's thought, according to which literature is one of multiple interacting systems within a society. Dovič specifically suggests attention to media-literature interplay in the Slovene context. Stephen Greenblatt's approach to literature is the subject of Vladimir Papoušek's article. According to Papoušek, Greenblatt sees a work as "an intersection of period discourses that are to be reconstructed in order to restore a vanished historical horizon" (167). While wary of losing sight of a work's esthetic qualities, Papoušek feels that Greenblatt may offer a way to salvage close reading of texts in a new kind of literary history. Peter Zima's "Historische Perioden als Problematiken: sozio-linguistische Situationen, Sozioliken und Diskurse" (275–86) likewise posits competing discourses as the real object of study in the past. Miloš Zelenka's article on manuscriptology<sup>8</sup> echoes Papoušek's concern for the individual work and takes it further, accusing literary history of often eliminating the author-subject (cf. Ivan Verč) and disregarding evidence of the creative process in its drive for an authoritative

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<sup>6</sup> "Engergije zablode" (71–79).

<sup>7</sup> "Pisanje literarnih zgodovin in empirična literarna znanost" (193–209).

<sup>8</sup> "Manuskriptologija in njen pomen za literarno zgodovino v kontekstu sodobne metodologije" (175–92).

text. Finally, in trying to determine what the material of literary history is, one might read Božena Tokarz's "Literarna zgodovina in njen predmet" (109–22), which outlines the question What is literariness?

Luhmann, Greenblatt, and Schmidt are not the most widely cited theorists in this collection. The key contemporary figures are David Perkins and Hayden White,<sup>9</sup> for obvious reasons. As might be apparent by now, the collection is more valuable for its representation of theoretical interests and their possible applications than for reporting of research results. An exception is Janez Strutz's presentation of the project "Literary relations in the Alps-Adriatic Region" (287–317), though this is not an examination of the relations' past but an assertion of how the region's literature and languages would fare better in non-national literary histories. This position points up one of the many tensions within the collection, in this case with Ivo Pospíšil,<sup>10</sup> who argues that literary history must take into account findings of the social sciences and include even "marginal phenomena if they play an important role in the life of the community," but remain national.

The two most divergent views are probably those of Juvan and, in the article following his, of Janko Kos in "Stari in novi modeli literarne zgodovine." Kos advocates reliance on *Geistesgeschichte* supplemented with other methodologies, stating that literary history is only a work that "with the help of the historical method narrates an event that extends over space and time, includes many events, authors, and works in their interrelatedness, which we can understand as a flow, process, and development" (53).<sup>11</sup> Kos's seemingly absolute definition is at odds with many of the other contributors' views, but his

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<sup>9</sup> The most extensive treatment of White in the book is by Jola Škulj, "Modernistična literatura in spreminjanje paradigme literarne zgodovine" (227–43).

<sup>10</sup> "Literary history, poststructuralism, diletantism, and area studies" (141–57).

<sup>11</sup> "...tisto razpravljanje, ki s pomočjo historične metode pripoveduje o dogajanju, ki se razteza v času in prostoru, vsebuje več dogodkov, avtorjev in del, to pa medsebojnih povezavah, ki jih lahko razumemo kot potek, proces in razvoj."

point that discrete studies of aspects of literary history do not add up to a history is seconded by Lado Kralj, one of several to cite Hollier's *New History of French Literature*, in this case as a negative example. Like Kos, Kralj concludes that some one person (or small group?) must write literary history, and it will necessarily be subjective and conditioned by his or her time.

Peter Zajac and Jelka Kernev Štrajn add interesting articles on memory. Štrajn<sup>12</sup> uses feminist literary criticism and references to psychoanalysis to posit the importance of the fragment in composing literary history (cf. Tokarz). Zajac<sup>13</sup> relies on Greenblatt and Deleuze to explain the importance of literary memory. Biti, of course, pointed out earlier in the volume how the histories of national literatures tend to forget as much as they record.

Dolarin is correct when he writes in the introduction that this book's "subjects, problems and perspectives are intertwined and cross-referential, so any specific organization of these essays has only heuristic significance" (373). This quality is what makes the collection so engaging. It is also why a reviewer could not follow the three-part division of fundamental concepts, contemporary theories, and methodological approaches. Dolarin is also no doubt correct that the autumn 2002 conference and publication within a year of this resulting collection will provide an impetus for reassessing Slovene literary history. A remarkable feature of the collection to a reader from outside the country and region might be that there is only one passing remark (by Juvan) on the momentous socio-political changes of the past decade. These scholars convey an admirable sense of perspective. Their initial collective effort to redetermine the premises of literary history is good evidence of this.

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<sup>12</sup> "Spomin kot fragment, vtkan v tekst" (319–30).

<sup>13</sup> "Literaturgeschichtsschreibung als synoptische Karte" (97–107).