THE STUDY OF LITERATURE IN ITS EUROPEAN AND AMERICAN SETTINGS WITH REFERENCE TO SLOVENE FICTION

Miran Hladnik

The purpose of this paper is to point out the differing characteristics of the study of literature in America and Europe in order to predict its development; and it is an attempt to remove local barriers in the humanities. However much they may emphasize their respective individualities, European cultures are in fact more similar to each other than they are to American culture, and this permits some generalizations about scholarly practices in the two, divergent settings, making an exception for England. I shall draw my examples of the European perspective from Slovene and German literary studies, which are the two areas I am best acquainted with. My thoughts will, in this sense, highlight those points in American and European literary studies where there are incongruities or disagreements.

In many aspects these disagreements are based in the dual status of literary studies: the traditional humanistic one, maintained in America, and that of the social studies, introduced in Europe. Many in literary studies in Europe attempt to give their scholarship a status comparable to that of the social sciences, which is impossible as long as the objects of study are individual cases (e.g., texts or authors). Social scientists attribute general features to individual phenomena in order to form rules (Fokkema 243). When applied to literature, quantitative and empirical methods may situate literary scholarship in greater proximity to the social sciences. The U.S. university is, probably because of its teaching and community role, less inclined to empirical methods and relies on hard-to-quantify data and intuition. In the second part of the

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article I will present some results of the quantitative analysis of Slovene prose narratives.

We like to imagine that we live in an interconnected world—in a global village—where there is maximum access to information at all times. In fact, the world is much less interconnected than we would like it to be given existing technology; this is true in particular of the humanities, which, in comparison to their sisters, the sciences, have been confined in their national frameworks and poorly connected through international institutions since the Romantic excitement of the nineteenth century. Humanities achieve local status through their primary interest in the local language, literature and history, which are studied in situ and are hence called "area studies" or, in more modern terms, "cultural studies"—instead of the old expression "humanities," which is beginning to disappear from the encyclopedia. In this "logic of space" we find, for example, on the Internet, Slovene linguistics included among East-European studies, and under the rubric of geography. This hierarchization of disciplines seems to me strange, since at the University of Ljubljana area studies in this sense is a foreign concept. Students enroll in courses on their national language and literature together, but Slavic, Romance and Germanic linguistics are not subordinated to Slavic, Romance and Germanic studies, which also imply a knowledge of the areas' histories, economics, politics and cultures; institutionally these are rather included (for example, in research projects) under the general term linguistics. Such an organization of disciplines is the result of greater specialization of European universities; moreover, I explain it as an attempt at removing local barriers in humanities.

The self-contained nature of national humanistic disciplines has done much to contribute to terminological incompatibility. European scholars have difficulties from the start in orienting themselves in North America since fields in the profession have different names and different contexts than those familiar to them. One will search the keyword index at an American library in vain to try to find the term "literary science"; frequently used in Europe—this keyword is absent. Instead, we have to search under the keyword "literature," which combines belles lettres and scholarly works on belles lettres. There is also the modest keyword "literature, -research," but no general keyword for "literature, -theory"; literary theory is found

subordinated to the extensive field of "literature, -history and criticism." More works are found under the keywords "German-, Italian-, Slovenian literature, -history and -criticism"—that is, the viewpoint prevails that literature and literary scholarship are nationally bounded phenomena and we are primarily interested in them in the framework of a particular nation. There also exists the general (universal) keyword "criticism." Under this we find, in addition to books dealing with individual works, also items on the methodology of literary criticism and certain works of literary theory. The term literary criticism in Continental Europe means merely day-to-day criticism in periodicals and is not a part of academic literary scholarship.

The differences between the European and American traditions of writing about literature are easy to detect comparing the layout of books—German and English books, for example. German books have extensive subtitles, they are part of ambitiously planned series, they have pedantic publication data on the back of the title page, their tables of contents are incredibly long and structured in layers with nested numbering systems; they attempt to be objective, are full of acronyms, tables and footnotes; and they have an obligatory, exhaustive list of literature consulted. English books usually have hard covers, yellowish, thick, porous paper; the book begins with a picture or a dedication, the title page has a vignette, chapters begin with illuminated letters, the typeface is large and luxurious, the index is short and lucid. There are almost no footnotes, the date of publication is sometimes impossible to find; the dedication and the clever citation or anecdote in the introduction convince the reader that the book is not to be read at a table with pencil in hand, but rather invites him to sit with it in a more comfortable and enjoyable position. The German book on literature strives to be a wise, ascetically serious, and studiously read; the English book on literature tries to be light, clever, beautiful, and accessible to the general public as well.

Translators help point out to us the differences between literary systems. I myself have had experience as an editor when ordering the translations of brief abstracts and page-long summaries for the journal Slavistična revija, the Slovene "journal for linguistics and literary science," as it designates itself in its subtitle on the cover, using a calque from Slovene. What we Slovenes call literarna veda and the Germans call Literaturwissenschaft (a term that used to mean the fastidious

gathering of philological material and its publication in critical editions), is almost impossible to translate literally with the term literary science. Marc L. Greenberg has had to resort to the terms "literary studies" and "scholarship," which no longer mean the same thing when translated back into Slovene or German: "studies" is broader than the terms veda, znanost, Wissenschaft, and it includes essay writing and interpretation, but does not call for strict objectivity that is now the postulate for literary research in Europe. In the previous century the German linguist Wilhelm von Humboldt proposed an ideal of pure university science (Wissenschaft) which creatively combined free study (lernen) and teaching (lehren); "scholarship" would be the closest English translation. The humanities, which were the model for the unstable combination, are no longer the leading academic discipline; the leading field of human knowledge is now the sciences, which are also organized outside of the university, at competing academies, institutes and companies, and prominent in their designations is the term "research." The word "scholarship," referring to the combination at the university of research and teaching, thus becomes all the more associated with teaching and the rhetorical strategies connected with it—that is, with the fortification and popularization of knowledge. This places the university in the field of "education," rather than in the field of "science" (under the word "science" encyclopedias mention only the academy, not the university). In order for universities to maintain their competitiveness and standards, imposed by scientific institutes (znanstveni inštituti), and to assure themselves adequate government support, they also emphasize their research dimension—perhaps in Europe this is a motivation for the term "literary science" instead of "literary studies."

Frank Kermode makes it clear that humanistic scholarship, once an important part of our cultural heritage, has lost the battle against science (167–68). Contacts between experts and the educated public have broken down, academic humanists feel isolated and write only for one another, while scientists try to be useful to humanity. Bill Readings suggests that the specificity of the Anglo-American university historically "owes much to the fusion of church and state," by which conflict between culture and science has been avoided. Science is of greater significance to the Germans. They chose the idea of science over that of culture to represent the nation-state at the university level

(1996 73). "The object of university study is not particular knowledge but ... 'intellectual culture'" (74–75).

The Slavic Department at the University of Ljubljana often hosts guest lecturers from abroad; it is rarely the case that these are writers whose works are dealt with by students in their seminars. On the other hand, in the U.S. it is considered normal for writers to teach courses on creative writing at universities and for university professors to contribute to magazines. This popular mix in the U.S. makes it difficult to explain to people outside of the profession what it is that a literary scholar does. If he says that he writes about literature, he is usually regarded at first as a writer, which is inaccurate since the word "writer" implies the composition of belles lettres. The designation does not even fit when understood as "publicist." Articles published in professional journals and collections are read by a small circle of specialists; publicists (publicisti), on the other hand, are people who write for a wider audience and are, in Europe, critics (kritiki).

In Slovenia, university literary studies are in principle not a part of the cultural scene in the same way that literary criticism in popular periodicals is; rather, they are a part of the system of science. People of letters (*literati*) and literary historians (*literarni zgodovinarji*), whom we refer to every day as university literary scholars, do not know each other personally, or at least do not gather in the same institutions and at the same events. Of course there are sometimes misunderstandings, since some people of letters always expect that literary scholars will service their products—that is, write positive criticism, argue on juries for their financial support, mediate their debates etc.; the so-called cultured public (*kulturna publika*) has the same opinion.³

In principle I support a clear distinction between literary study, literary criticism and the practice of creating literature. In my first year course in which I introduce methodology, I convince the freshmen that

Against my own principles even I myself cross the border between academic "literary science," devoid of popular impact, and the lively world of culture, when I cannot turn down the request of a former schoolmate, who is a writer, who asks for a critical assessment of his work, or, when I go with him to speak at a literary evening. I am even so inconsistent as to list my publicistic activities at the end of my otherwise "scientific" bibliography.

their study of literature will not prepare them for their entrance into a dedicated literary circle, as they know it from libraries, newspapers, television, theaters and literary evenings, but their work will belong in the system of science, which must be distant from its object of study and free of value judgment. Identification with literature and living through it vicariously, which are essential in high school, can be part of their private reading pleasure, but they are not prerequisites for good literary analysis. It seems to me that in America literary studies at the university are more a part of the cultural scene than in Europe and thus continue the humanistic practice that prevailed until the middle of the twentieth century (Frye), in which literary criticism was a kind of service activity in the field of literature or was in the service of various ideological practices.

The traditional connection between literary criticism and literary research is the cause of difficulties for the categorization of literary studies. The empirical studies I have completed simply do not fall into a recognizable category in North America. Among the scientific disciplines, literary studies do not exist, and I am amazed to discover them in the arts. This fact reveals that the structural and functional identity of literature and writing about literature have become confused, which is akin to failing to distinguish language from linguistics. I would rather place my study of literature in the social sciences—to which part of archeology, history, linguistics, philosophy and womens studies have already seceded—in the vicinity of communication studies, informatics and library sciences. The journal *Poetics*, which is an exponent of empirical methods in the field of literary studies, is not even listed in the Arts and Humanities Citation Index (AHCI) and Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI).

A few years ago I lectured on a particular area of literary studies which in Slovene is termed trivialna literatura and in German Trivialliteratur. In the lecture, which was in English, I was forced to use the word in its original language, since the standard English translation, "popular literature," complicates things: popular literature in Europe is something different than trivialna literatura—it is only one type of trivialna literatura, the kind of writing for simple folk that is indifferent to the edification of the reader and which prefers sensational motifs.

I have also worked on the prominent genre of the Slovene rural story (kmečka povest, Germ. Dorfgeschichte), which, appropriate to its frequency, has an established genre label under which we find in libraries overseas an abundance of secondary literature. This is not the case in English: the "rural story," as I translated the title of my book, does not exist in American libraries as a keyword. When I went to look up the keyword under which my book was in fact filed, I found the term "pastoral literature," which could not be used for one of the most common genres of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Europe. Similarly, the German secondary literature is found under the labels "peasants in literature" and "farm life in literature," which indicates the instability of terminology for one of the most stable genres of European literature. On the other hand, we would have no idea how to translate the intrinsically American term "frontier novel."

Another example of translation difficulties: the term ženski roman (Germ. Frauenroman) for the bourgeois nineteenth-century genre that has a woman as the main character; Velemir Gjurin came up with the original translation "petticoat novel," since he could not find an English equivalent.

These and similar translational and classificational difficulties show that connections and influences between national literatures were not quite as strong as we would like to imagine in a unified Western civilization. Literary scholarship in the Slavic field, for example, is simply unknown—let us examine the AHCI and SSCI, which are considered to be universal bibliographic institutions, are nevertheless expressly Anglocentric: 63% of the entries are from North America, Western Europe is represented by 24%, Eastern Europe by 3% (Langendorff); and the Slavic literatures are covered by a mere seven journals. In view of the fact that even minor editorial notes of some journals are registered here, it is plain sloppy that a major part of the world remains bibliographically unknown. The only Slovene authors that are mentioned are those that are published in English or German journals and address a non-Slovene audience. Journals with articles on Slovene language and literature are not included. Thus it was a grotesque situation when a Slovene ministry placed as a condition on the amount of a Slovene journal's subvention its appearance in AHCI, even though AHCI does not distinguish between everyday publicistic literary criticism and articles belonging to professional literary scholarship. I do not know any official reasons for the discriminatory stance of AHCI; however, I surmise that in addition to the unpleasant feel and poor quality of East European printing, by and large the ideological bases of East European Slavic studies were at fault. Today much American humanistic writing is feminist, Marxist, or ideologized in one way or another, while the East no longer wishes to hear about Marxism; nevertheless, cultural ignorance, exclusivism and self-satisfaction in the humanities, to judge from the AHCI list of so-called "relevant" journals, are not much different than in the time of the Iron Curtain.

To some extent it is understandable that, because of institutional and methodological distance, literary scholars, psychologists and computer experts do not know each other, even if they are dealing with the same subject. It is more difficult to understand why humanists fail to know each other just because they speak different languages. The main reason for cultural isolation and lack of communication in the humanities is really the banal ignorance of languages and loose ties among international institutions in the humanities. In the English-speaking world the important foreign-language writers are discovered decades later—we need to think only of the fate of the Russian Formalists, Roman Ingarden, György Lukács, and Jan Mukařovský. And, to make the irony of anachronism still greater: the most popular are the ones whom their translators did not understand or whose cultural and social contexts were ignored, as in the case of the German philosopher Martin Heidegger (Fokkema).

The humanities in America do not have the status of science; in fact, they are its opposite. With respect to the rival social sciences, the humanities are in an unenviable defensive position: governments curtail their financial support and the humanities must prove every step of the way that they are not merely fulfilling their own purposes, but are socially useful and necessary. It is easiest to defend them with the application of their knowledge in the educational system, which, however, significantly narrows its range. Among the public the humanities are understood as the branches of learning having primarily a cultural character, learning or literature concerned with human culture, polite scholarship, in which are included, with equal weight, literary and artistic creativity and the study of literature and art—all with the goal of developing good taste. The humanist is thus a sort of

witty, cultural educated entertainer and writer of popular books, having little in common with science and objective discovery. From this perspective, empirical, objective studies of cultural phenomena are accused of "ensconcing themselves in ivory towers" of knowledge for knowledge's sake (Denley). The non-scientific role of the humanist is also part of the Slovene popular conscience, be he a protector and popularizer of cultural values, a cultural authority, or a judge (arbiter) of cultural matters. Nevertheless, I have the feeling (what a typically inexact humanistic formulation!) that the popular expectation of a literary scholar in Slovenia is not as strongly binding and defining of his position as it is in America. The hybrid nature of humanities or culturology in Slovenia just described is beautifully illustrated by the three ministries that financially support them: the Ministries of Education (Ministrstvo za šolstvo), Science (za znanost), and Culture (za kulturo).

Quantitative analyses of Slovene fictional prose narrative

Quantitative methods should help literary scholarship to move from the humanities to the social sciences. If the prediction of the German literary theoretician Siegfried J. Schmidt is valid, literary scholarship in the 1990s will be a part of empirical cultural studies, or it will be completely marginalized. Contemporary literary studies cannot be considered science—as a part of the national (literary) histories they are too directly attached to the national representative mechanisms. To this end it is necessary to surrender the firmly established normative concept that is a generator of unscientific value judgments about literature. As long as literary studies are a part of the traditional humanities, which are part of the national culture, they are responsible for creating a national literary canon and affirming the national specificity and identity; this limits their scope and their objectivity. Empirical literary studies do not mean the rejection of research on individual literatures and their nation-specific functions—on the contrary, they especially indicate the specific dimensions of the literary system. The distinction from the humanities is that the sense and goal of empirical literary studies is not in their active participation in the national cultural scene, but in the international scientific scene. Instead of the humanistic relationships of literary scholarship with its object, literature, the relationships between literary scholarship and other sciences are foregrounded. For now only measurable entities in

literature are ripe for empirical analysis; however, the development of cognitive science—especially artificial intelligence—and methods in the social sciences promise the possibility of analyzing non-quantitative entities in the future.

How is Slovene literature of use to empirical literary scholarship? Its advantage is in its small size, which makes it more possible to circumscribe. One of the basic features of traditional research in the humanities is the manipulation of incomplete and unsystematically collected data, since complete data, given limited institutional resources, are difficult to collect. Slovene literature has for the researcher the virtue that all the texts of a given genre corpus can be counted fully, even if one person is doing the counting by hand. Data obtained in this way are similar to the kind of data found in the natural sciences. Let us consider, for example, the description of how biologists calculate how many mice live in a given space. At night they set traps and in the morning collect their quarry; then they set the traps again. They repeat this until no more mice are caught. They then count their catch and write the results of the study. I have done something similar with the genre of the Slovene historical novel and the rural story: I went through catalogues and bibliographies, critical works, and literary histories until I ran out of works to find. Thus it was necessary only to remove from this corpus of texts the works that did not fit the criteria. This closed list can now be quantified any which way, depending upon how much time one has to do the analysis and what importance the results of the analysis promise. I think, therefore, that Slovene literature has, because of its quantitative circumscribability, a kind of laboratory value for similar studies on other, larger literatures.

Quantification in linguistics and literary scholarship is usually associated with the development of computer science, which facilitates the "crunching" of large quantities of data. The computer has indeed inspired many such studies, but, at least for the first steps in Slovene quantitative stylistics in the beginning of the 1960s, computers were not the culprits. Until the 1970s and 1980s (Scherber, Poniž) words and sentences were counted by hand (Suhadolnik and Janežič, Suhadolnik); Slovene computer scientists and linguists have been publishing jointly, since 1985, in the periodical *Computer Processing of Language Data*. Stylistic analyses have taken into consideration Slovene literary authors, but it would be impossible to call them part of literary

scholarship, as these were done mostly by linguists, from a linguistic viewpoint and largely belong in linguistics—with the exception of authorship analysis, where the analysis of language serves the literary scholar's interest in the author (Zupan).

Marketing research for the book trade has taken up an empirical approach to researching the literary system with analyses of readership and readers' interests and habits; nevertheless, all Slovene writing about literature, publicistic and academic, has been of an expressly hermeneutic nature. Primarily the sociological and psychological dimensions of the literary system are open to empirical study. Since they have the appropriate tools and methods, sociologists are in a position to analyze book production, distribution, and consumption, i.e., authors and publishing houses, the book trade, buying and reading; psychologists are in a position to analyze reading. In the framework of academic literary scholarship, both literary theory and literary history are open to quantitative studies. Once the primary goal of literary scholarship ceases to be the creation of a national canon—that is, the separation of the "eternal" from the "ephemeral," the literary scholar is no longer constrained to deal only with individual great works. Today we can quantify, categorize, and analyze large corpora of literary texts, literary criticism (which is a document of a past reading), and other elements of the literary system without being limited by any sort of aesthetic selectivity.

This is the direction in which my own work is going (Hladnik 1991, 1994). Quantification—traditionally an exceedingly banal activity in the humanities, usually accompanied by an ironic grin—occasionally destroys the synoptic, school definitions, or at least relativizes them. Let me report on some results of my quantitative studies of Slovene fictional prose narrative.

A quantitative analysis of the subtitles of Slovene fictional prose narrative and a measurement of the length of texts have helped me to specify theoretically the competing terms "story" (Slov. povest), "novel" (roman), and "novella" (novela). It turns out that the appellative habits have changed so much through time that attempts at atemporal, "gnomic," general literary-theoretical definitions make no sense and merely give rise to normative poetological constructs. Each national literature develops its own, specific nomenclature for its literary theory

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to fit its unique national literary system. Thus, for example, German literary scholarship has concerned itself with the distinction between the "novella" (Germ. Novelle) and the "story" (Erzählung), whereas Slovene scholarship is concerned with the complex relationship between the "story" and the "novel." In the nineteenth century the standard label for lengthier fictional narrative works was "story" (povest); after 1950 the standard label was "novel" (roman). In the area of shorter fictional prose narratives the term "story" (povest) competed with the terms "picture" (slika), "sketch" (črtica), "tale" (zgodba), and "novella" (novela).

A quantification of subtitles has shown that the awareness of the genre is in direct proportion to the length of the text: the longer the text, the greater the likelihood that the subtitle will include an indication of genre. A second rule: subtitles were more common in the nineteenth than in the twentieth century. The interpretation of this fact: the awareness of genre is gradually being lost. The measurement of the length of texts has allowed us to make the following assertions: 1) Published texts are becoming longer. 2) In the nineteenth century the problematic genre, the story, competes with respect to length with the novella; in the twentieth century (since its length has increased) it competes with the novel. 3) With respect to length, the best defined genre is the rarely used novella (nearly all are in the narrow range of between 20,000 and 45,000 words); the least well defined is the story, which is found in all length categories.

Without considering the entire corpus of national fictional prose it would be impossible to determine the relationship between individual genres. I compared rural and historical long narratives. Although these corpuses are in terms of their quantity very similar in the nineteenth century (forty-five texts each), there are interesting differences between them. The production of the historical novel was continually moderate, whereas the rural novel was an explosive genre. The historical novel is also moderate and more predictable in terms of length, whereas the length of the rural novel vacillates considerably over time. The methodological consequence of the measurement is the realization that the categorizational questions are relativized to the historical time and space, in such a way that they can be considered part of national literary history. Quantitative methods return literary history

to a leading place in literary scholarship, i.e., they affirm literary history as the paradigm of literary scholarship.

The production of literary works is to a great extent dependent upon political, cultural and historical circumstances. In the past the most productive areas were those in which the Slovene population was greater than that of the Germans, Italians, or Hungarians within the multinational Habsburg Monarchy. The First and Second World Wars had expressly negative effects on literary productivity. Wars influence both the message and tone of literature. Before a war the ends of stories and novels are negative warnings; during a war and after it they are programmatically optimistic and encouraging. A very common motif is the cripple in the literature of western Slovenia after 1918, just as it was one of the consequences of the World War; together with other indices, it suggests a political interpretation: western Slovenia—that is, about one-third of the Slovene ethnic territory—came under Italian control after the First World War, and thus the motif of the cripple appeared as a symbol of the "crippled" nation.

Douwe Fokkema ascribes to literature an exceptionally serious and important role in our civilization. Literature is a kind of laboratory for the search for alternative answers to life's problems. It offers a repertoire of alternative solutions that, because of their aesthetic conventions, i.e., because of their fictional nature, are not directly binding; however, they help us to make thoughtful decisions in private and public life. Slovene literature gives an abundance of arguments for this thesis. In an extensive corpus of texts I noted the motif of love between partners of different classes and discovered that the rare successful marriages between classes come only at times critical for national survival, such as during the First and Second World Wars. I interpret this fact as the need for consolidation of the national body, which can occur only when those antagonistic classes that diffuse the national energies at critical moments and decrease the potential for national survival, are united.

An amusing is that in love triangles in Slovene fiction there prevails a configuration of two men to one woman over the configuration of two women to one man. Since I also counted an equal number of instances where a man or woman chooses between two romantic offers, the difference is due to the monopoly in the rivalry that men have in a

love triangle; in other words, women fight for their partner only rarely, whereas the man does so regularly.

Conclusion

With quantitative (statistical, empirical) studies, literary scholarship is becoming methodologically similar to the social sciences, but not identical to them. Science normally searches for unequivocal answers to questions, whereas the humanities are satisfied and even find singularly appropriate if the questions merely open or, ideally, make apparent several alternative answers. Exact methods in literary scholarship are no threat to the activity of interpretation. Quantification itself, however, gives interesting results which, because of their complex nature, i.e., the relative unquantifiability of the literary system, are only a reliable basis for provocative, speculative, in short, typically humanistic interpretations.

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Translated by Marc L. Greenberg

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POVZETEK

LITERARNA VEDA V SEVERNI AMERIKI IN EVROPI

Težave, ki jih imamo pri prevajanju literarnovedne terminologije—npr. literary scholarship ali literary criticism: literarna veda, Literaturwissenschaft-, razkrivajo različen socialni položaj ameriških akademskih literarnih študij in evropske literarne vede. Ameriške so del tradicionalne humanistike, ki pokriva področje vzgoje in kulture, evropske (za zgled sta slovenska in nemška literarna veda) pa si prizadevajo za objektivno spoznanje, kar jih vodi v smer socialnih znanosti. Šibka zastopanost neameriških, zlasti slovanskih literarnih razprav v AHCI dokazuje nacionalno omejenost in samozadostnost humanističnih disciplin. —Drugi del prispevka predstavlja rezultate avtorjevih kvantifikativnih analiz slovenske daljše pripovedne proze, ki naj bi pomagale slovensko literarno vedo iztrgati iz vedno bolj marginalne humanistike in jo približati socialnim vedam. Gre za analize vrstne in žanrske pripadnosti besedil glede na njihovo dolžino in glede na oznake v podnaslovu ter za analizo socialnih vplivov (upravne ureditve, vojne, kulturnih norm) na produkcijo in motiviko literature. Zaradi relativne majhnosti ima slovenska literatura lahko laboratorijsko vrednost za analize obsežnih literatur.