

THE IDEA BEHIND THE INTEGRALS IN KOSOVEL'S POETRY

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At a certain point, Kosovel began to distance himself from the rather too reckless acceptance of new art practices and became somewhat concerned that the idea of totality behind the inter-related spheres of poetry, man and reality, might be clouded over or even lost. In line with many other avant-garde artists he believed in the organic unity of the world and man, the Earth and the Universe. His outlook had a keen anthropocentric thrust, which led him to believe that the new reality needed a new kind of human being – Man who was humane, that is to say rational (Srečko would say *logical*), sensitive, and above all ethical. The complexity of a zenitist poem with its composition process of montage reminded him of layer cakes¹ or an apple strudel.² Even though he saw in it a source of numerous possibilities, he was himself searching for a different kind of poetic expression, one that would enable him to come as close as possible to the totality of human existence. When he wrote: “I am not an aesthetic figure”, he clearly moved away from elitist art and its bent toward aesthetics. These preoccupations of Kosovel found expression in questions of both aesthetic and ethic nature related to his *konsi* (*cons poems*) and *integrali* (*integrals*). He became intensely involved in the appreciation of emerging new art, the Slovenian poetic tradition (particularly Zupančič), the fast-changing technology that was creating new behavioural patterns and modes of feeling, the receptivity pertaining to his youth only intensifying this involvement, so that Kosovel had no time for sorting out and elaborating his own poetic vision that had been forming in the months leading up to his death. His poetics was therefore still within the sphere of crystallisation. Kosovel did not just want to deal with words, which is not to say he saw no need to mould his artistic creativity according to the new perceptions formed under the influence of the iconosphere. This can easily be established from his poetry, short prose and journals. What Kosovel, having suffered the fate he did, left us with are writings of tremendous intuition, great potential, and work that is by no means finished or completed. It is precisely because of this potentiality, his poetics of contradiction and his poetic vision that this avant-garde poet became most popular in the postmodernist age, which is in itself a far cry from ordering reality into any kind of vision of wholeness. Kosovel nevertheless strove, in line with other avant-garde poets, to encapsulate the

whole, if not of the world, then of man, in spite of having doubts about the conventional connections between this topic and the means with which it is constructed. He presented texts which were close to the principle of "an open piece of work" with loose composition; he rejected the mimetic approach in art, favouring other means of lending expression to reality, such as note-taking. He was inspired by other arts and means of communication: painting, newspapers, photography. He was professing a crisis in art, and within the field of literary genre theory he promoted genre conventions. His literary and aesthetic consciousness was characterised by exceptional intuition, which among other things made apparent the limitations of language as communicative means. For this reason he went on to exploit the visual potential of words: graphic and typography³.

It is said that Kosovel's poetic expression and artistic outlook were sharpened through the settling of accounts with constructivism and by entering the domain of constructivism, more precisely, the intellectual and aesthetic space between *cons poems* and *integrals*. All interpreters of Kosovel's creativity unanimously claim that *cons poems* are the poet's expression of the constructivist aesthetics, whereas the *integrals* convey revolutionary humanism aspiring for consummate man. I would argue that the *integrals* are poetically as yet an unworked idea of man and the idea of poetry. Whereas *cons poems* can be read as poetic construction, *integrals* are an instance of poetic disintegration. Under the designation of *integrals* fall all those poems that concern themselves with human values and values of a poet as a human being. Kosovel himself envisaged them above all as the sum of all poetic consequences drawn from the surrounding reality. This idea is suggested also by the title of the unpublished collection.

Integral, which in the Slovenian language denotes totality, is a mathematical and physical concept. Kosovel found it useful when he was going through his constructivist "stage", and was incorporating into the poetic structure different information codes, including chemical and mathematical signs, so as to demonstrate the great wealth and diversity of information bearing on our perception and understanding of reality. A poetic rendering should be some kind of a resultant of these codes, creating at the same time a communication mosaic. The main idea was to penetrate the essence of reality, a reality into which man is fully inscribed, through a new, unrestricted structure of an artistic text. Because poetry for Kosovel was closely bound up with reality, we can assume that he intuitively sought access to its secret mechanism and meaning. For that he needed both senses and reason. The senses told him to include visual communication into the text and to search for a poetic correlative in consonance with the iconosphere and modes of perception deriving from it. Reason commanded a search for the key to the most objective possible ordering of experience. More than likely it was this that made Kosovel turn his attention to mathematics.

The author of *cons poems* could observe similar strivings in artists, particularly in painters and architects, who used mathematical equations for organising space. Numeric laws were a favourite with the painters constructivists. This principle, however, was commonly a source of disagree-

ment between painters and poets, since words cannot be merely counted, being carriers of meaning as well as concrete things. Not all poets were willing – and neither are they today – to acknowledge the concrete materiality of words. Julian Przyboś, for example, was not happy with the graphic design of his poetry collection *Sponad* (Beyond), which was the work of Strzemiński (the title of the first edition was written out differently: *Zponad* (Be yond). He refused to have it reprinted in this form, because he felt that the graphic make-up was detrimental to the poems. In spite of this the relations between Julian Przyboś and Strzemiński continued to be creative all-round⁴. Przyboś, like Tadeusz Peiper, felt that the ways of creating the whole in poetry are different to the ways this is achieved in painting. In the pictorial code they saw an element of the text that could not be made subordinate exclusively to the visual ordering, especially not the numerical laws. Numerical yardstick was also the reason why Peiper rejected the suggestion of the constructivist artist Strzemiński to use *fixed clusters of word, ordered into different compositions on the basis of numerical laws*⁵, which is what Strzemiński did in his unist compositions.

Like the two Polish poets, Kosovel objected to mathematical automatization of words, but for different reasons. Still, mathematics was to him a model for the objectifying potential of human reason, which is why he drew on it in his search for the essence of humanity. He strove to understand the quintessential man in much the same way that the original function is determined in the mathematical process of integration with the aid of a derived one. He was acquainted with Malevich's Suprematism and the Russian variant of Constructivism; through the literary journal *Zenit* and the Slovene painter Avgust Černigoj, he was introduced to the theory of El Lissitzky. It is impossible to believe – as the Kosovel scholar Janez Vrečko⁶ purports – that Kosovel was unfamiliar with Ilya Ehrenburg's constructivism and Vladimir Tatlin's spacial constructivism, though they did not provide him with a rationale that would integrate perception, feeling and reason, and which would have corresponded to Tadeusz Peiper's conception of metaphor and sentence. Kosovel also rejected facile transpositions from one field of art to another, even though he himself drew upon them as distinct information codes. It goes without saying that it was from the Constructivists that he adopted the idea of bringing poetry closer to reality by transforming it aesthetically. What contributed significantly to Kosovel's precipitation of this view was Russian Constructivism (the influence was not direct but possibly came through Grahor and the literary magazine *Zenit*), to which he made references with some reservations. In his letter to Fanica Obidova dated 27 June 1925, he wrote:

[...] I've decided to cross over to the Left. Out of absolute negation, nihilism. [...] pity I cannot consent to "any form of dictatorship whatsoever". Even though my sympathies have always been with the Left, I could never understand their narrow-mindedness. [...] I am on their side, though theoretically I am very far from agreeing with them.⁷

Kosovel was drawn to the Left by their ideological commitment and their striving for reality, but he was afraid of extremism. What he saw as

lacking in the Left was a wholeness (every dictatorship is a reduction), and also a coherent artistic vision both from the perspective of everyday needs and the needs of poetry. The *integrals* were to be a way of achieving this artistic vision, as yet different to all the existing variants of constructivism, since it was to be based on the antinomy of life and art, of both belonging and being autonomous. The *integrals* were conceived as the outcome of the logical, rational process of conceptualisation of things, events and our perceptions of them. The title itself points to this, appealing as it does to the organising faculties of reason.

Integral is the outcome of the process of integrating – of finding a new function with the help of a derived one, or, to put it differently, integral is a new function the derivative of which is the original function. A function can help us establish its derivative, its basic information which contains the smallest possible number of unknowns. Such derived function conveys some of the function's concrete characteristics, such as falling or rising value (slope), maximum or minimum point (limit). A derivative is also a function, but a function of a "lower" rank. It carries hidden within itself information about the original function. Thus it is possible to reconstruct the original function on the basis of the derivative one. In addition to that, a given integral can represent certain abstract mathematical and physical quantities. In order to grasp what integral is, we need to understand what function and its derivatives are, or what the more elementary forms of a complex function (the whole or a sample of the whole) are, and whether these are at the same time autonomous forms. By bringing integration into play, we are investigating what is at the same time an autonomous phenomenon (a special value) and a derivative of another more basic, fundamental phenomenon, which thereby carries within itself information about something more elementary.⁸

Kosovel strongly objected to the automatised which was the by-product of the perpetual technological development grounded in scientific findings, but he did not reject science as such; science could play a vital part in making sense of reality. Although he was never very explicit about science, his poetic ideas were clearly – and visibly – inspired by scientific thinking. He also endowed art with cognitive powers, which were, of course, to be put to man's service. The integrals were to become the core foundation of his poetic agenda, which he had already embarked upon with his articulations of reality (recording of polarities) and which was to culminate in an original poetic conception. Perhaps this is why Kosovel did not use the word integral as a designation for all the poems that were to feature in the poetry collection but limited himself to one poem and the title of the collection. Separate texts bore separate titles, since they were all partaking in the process of integration, which is to say in the process of penetrating not only the essence of things with the help of a function in the form of the original – a complex phenomenon – but also other basic items of information embedded in the derivatives. Symbolic language in poetry creates such possibilities because it at the same time denotes and connotes. Connecting poems referred to as integrals with scientific thinking underwrites the part

played by reason in the artistic ordering of existence. This is not so much commending reason as it is allowing it to take poetic decisions. Again, the very project of the collection *Integrals* – and we can surmise only on the level of its conception, since the actual content of the volume cannot be reconstructed – bears this out. Namely, integral demonstrates the logical seamless process of engendering new forms and phenomena; for autonomous forms we always seek out the elementary forms and ... more complex ones are always discovered in derivative functions. A variant of a given integral translated into poetry would thus enable the presentation of certain abstract values which bear on man's axiological system: aesthetic, ethical, philosophical, social, political, etc. Poetic intervention into reality thus becomes the seizing of reality itself. The principle of reason in verbalized form is a description of reality; if paralysed in the process of describing, it cannot work. It is therefore hard to say what direction Kosovel's poetry would have taken, but it would undoubtedly have retained strong tendencies towards encapsulating totality in a valid formula – in poetic construction. Exploiting the process of integration should not lead to leveling out the contradictions the poet observes. It is difficult, however, to predict how the reinforced logic of thinking would be squared with the objectively given phenomena of polarities, the servility, or the utilitarian function, of poetry with its specificity derived from creating a world which is an alternative to the world of reality. When Kosovel speaks of such a world, he often resorts to the figure of titanic poetry. The poet as subject puts up a struggle for mankind, for a new world, devoting to this his energy and his replenishing powers (as for example in poems *Autumn Quiet*, *Red Rocket*, *Death*, etc.). Given that Slovenian poetry has no titanic or messianic tradition, but only expressionist lyrics of affliction and revolt, we can surmise that Kosovel's poetry was a reanimation and a reworking of the idea of the poet's rebellious world. Kosovel as subject is in fact the agent of the process of integration. He is the one removing all the blinds concealing the true essence of man. In his expressionist poems such key words as *veil*, *blind*, *cobweb*, *mask*, *curtain* crop up frequently. The poetic technique of integration, on the level of semantics, correlates to the tearing of curtains, cutting out film shots, reflections and notations.

Kosovel's *cons poems* can be seen as attempts to solve integrals which elude generic categorisation. In both *cons poems* and *integrals* the poet strove for the same goal – to present the heterogeneity of the world in his own poetic experience. The *cons poems*, as well as collages, which emerged from the poet's encounter with futurism, mark an evolutionary stage in Kosovel's shaping of his conception of poetic expression. Neither are the integrals the end result or achievement of anything, but merely an expression of an artistic idea, which Kosovel did not manage to realize. In fact, his own conception of the integrals binds him more strongly to constructivism than do his *cons poems* which draw on the constructivist technique, for it was the *integrals* that were to complete the creative synthesis of sense perceptions (seeing), emotional response and rationality. Which were the poems Kosovel had in mind remains grounds for speculation. We should

not fail to notice, however, that *cons poems* – as is clear from their poetics – were conceived as a stage of development in penetrating the essence of the world, man and most probably also poetry. In this sense they were also integrals, that is to say, an analytical procedure that makes evaluation of things possible in the first place. The poetry that Kosovel was writing at the time of the integrals does not however suggest any major re-evaluations within the framework of poetic expression, it simply suggests the idea of constructing a better world with the help of poetry. In this process destruction and construction come into friction. Destruction could be said to serve construction not only on the level of idea and value but also on the level of poetic rendering.

Particularly in the *cons poems*, destruction runs its course in the name of construction, to be consummated in the spirit of the addressee, and which has its textual signals primarily in the composition (which gives the impression of arbitrariness, though in fact there is little that is arbitrary about it), and in the exploitation of diverse languages or linguistic codes.

Anton Ocvirk, the editor-in-chief of Srečko Kosovel's legacy, had included *cons poems* among the texts designated as *Integrals* on two occasions: first in 1967, when he published the collection *Integrali (Integrals)*, and then in 1974, when he set these poems apart under the joint heading in the second volume of Srečko Kosovel's *Zbrano delo (Collected Works)*. The publication of *Integrals* has in itself raised a lot of doubts and good many questions related to the artistic evolution of this avant-garde poet⁹. Janez Vrečko's contribution to the debate, particularly his book *Srečko Kosovel, slovenska zgodovinska avantgarda in zenitizem (Srečko Kosovel, the Slovenian Historical Avant-garde and Zenitism)* (1986), through the assessment of all key materials and the poet's meta-poetic statements, helps throw light on the phenomenon of Kosovel's poetry, least part of which is also defining the structure and function of *cons poems*.

In spite of the disputes that this segment of Kosovel's poetry generated among the Slovenian literary historians, if it were not for the publication of the collection *Integrals* under the editorship of Anton Ocvirk, Kosovel would not have been perceived as an extraordinary phenomenon in Slovenian poetry, and that mainly for the constructivist poems. His constructivism, however, was not as constructivist as that of the Russian poets, for example Ilya Selvinski, or in Poland of Tadeusz Peiper, whose poetry has been designated as closest to constructivism. In his letters and manifestoes, Kosovel often expressed his faith in New Man, but he also perceived the forthcoming dangers of civilization. New Man for Kosovel was the embodiment of the idea of absolute humanity and the complexity of existence.¹⁰ Kosovel did not reduce him to a social function circumscribed by technology, but was able to perceive him in a wider context.

Constructivism for Kosovel was but one stage in his search for absolute humanity in poetry, expressed in all complexity and integr(al)ity of a poem.

The complexity of *cons poems* is communicated through their thematic and stylistic diversity, which gives the impression of a multitude of voices.

But these do not engender chaos, since the text of the poem presents the reader with a carefully orchestrated selection of voices intended to first accentuate existing polarities and contradictions so as to resolve them, and thus open up a possibility of an integral image. When Kosovel is breaking down the traditional mechanisms of a closed definitive lyric text, it seems he is not providing ready-made new ones, but fully engages the reader to make connections between parallel items of information and derive a final conceptualization as regards a state or phenomenon. Ways of conceptualization, however, are most often implicated by a more or less emphasized semantic knot in the text (be it graphically and verbally, or just verbally). Drawing the reader into active participation in creating and perceiving a given text was connected with the function Slovenian artists prescribed to poetry. A poem should not only generate aesthetic experience, but also stimulate one to think and to act. Aesthetic problems should be resolved along with the fulfilling of the pragmatic function. Kosovel harboured doubts in relation to perceived reality.

Cons poems are not characterized by the integr(al)ity of a poem. On the basic level of what a poem says, they are incoherent, and the speaker of the poem seems just as disorientated as are his collected articulations of reality, even when his presence is revealed in the text. Nevertheless, there is a kind of thread connecting the apparently autonomous and disconnected items of information, the various statements and cries. This connective function is most often fulfilled through negation, which stems from the fragmented composition, the various fragments relating some fact, event, response or act, and which inhabit one linguistic space, forging inter-textual relations while at the same time directing towards extrinsic reality. These bits of information, when taken out of their context, point to fissures and shortcomings of the real world, thereby evoking feelings of resentment and negation.

The attraction of *cons poems* is in that they are – seemingly – unfinished, that there is such differentiation among the texts, and that they are internally so heterogeneous. The overriding idea of these poems is that of openness, which is apparent already on the level of construction. The underlying principle of their construction is a mosaic, which enables the inclusion of different items of information and information codes into the structure of the poem: anything from a sentence, mathematical and logical signs, chemical symbols, labels, slogans, newspaper and magazine quotes, to stylization of folk songs and the various forms of inter-textual referencing. The mosaic is constituted from entities which have already been used in another context, and from which a completed whole can never emerge; what can emerge is a dynamic whole subjected to constant changes. Its ordering function is assumed by semantics, and meaning is accessible through the semantic knot of the text or the common associative circle. Given the heterogeneity of the poems' materials and the ambivalent stance of the subject, most *cons poems* are not characterised by a mono-centric delivery typical of lyrical poetry. The "I" of the poem is neither ordering the world nor striving to verbalize its own emotional state every time anew.

Kosovel's shunning of reductionism gives the reader greater possibilities for interpreting the world.

When Kosovel rejected the primacy of technology but accepted its usefulness, he was exploiting the perception mechanisms that were engendered by the technical civilization. *Cons poems* were clearly attempts at using the various perception techniques created by his day and age. What appears to be destructive in these poems is in fact an outcome of the mosaic construction with its uses of contrast and parallelism.

Even though *cons poems* employ the poetic techniques of constructivism, futurism and expressionism, their sketchy or draft construction nevertheless sets them apart from these avant-garde poetic forms. When in his poetry Kosovel gave up homogeneity (of stance and material) on account of heterogeneity, he renounced the so-called purity of verbal art. When he saw the coming dangers of the 20th-century civilization, he internalized in poetry the most characteristic features of his age.

Integrals were therefore meant to materialize – in poetry – consummate man with his multifarious sensitivity, ethics, social and national awareness: a human being who is the central figure on Earth (*the Sun-Man*) and an element of the Universe. In part, this idea overlapped with the utopian theory of the historical avant-garde. The orientation of these poems was towards the idea of absolute humanity and their addressee was envisaged as a constructive man, understood without reductive constraints. Some poems from Ocvirk's edition of *Integrals* bear direct thematic correspondence to this idea, as for example: *Contemporary Lethargy*, *A Streetlamp*, *A Kaleidoscope*, *A Small Coat* as well as many others. The collection *Integrals* is thus characterized by a unity of content, and their formal aspect puts them on a par with other forms of the avant-garde free verse. In most cases they follow the stanza structure, lines are consistently unrhymed and rhythmically regular, and they are characterized by mono-centric enunciation which enhances the ordering function of the lyrical subject. Unlike the *cons poems*, they feature a limited scope of codes external to poetry. *Integrals* form longer entities, and on account of their closed structure, which is based on various kinds of repetition (including anti-metabola), they set forth explicitly formulated ideas:

Be a lamp, if
 you cannot be man;
 For it is hard to be man.
 Man has only two hands
 But he should help thousands.
 Therefore be a streetlamp shining
 Onto the faces of a thousand happy ones,
 Shining for the lonely, for the wandering.
 So be a lamp with only one light,
 Be man in a magic square
 Signaling with a green hand.
 Be a lamp, a lamp,
 A lamp.¹¹

It needs to be expressly stated that the term *integrals* can be used to designate all poems, with the exception of the *cons poems*, which were written in the months between spring and autumn 1925 and which are dominated by the idea of consummate man. Why there has been so much speculation and imprecision over this question is because Slovenian literary historians could not determine a definitive corpus of texts, which does not in any way alter the estimation of this segment of Kosovel's creativity. The letters and notes in his *Dnevniki (Journals)* make it clear that Kosovel was writing *cons poems* and *integrals* at the same time, and in his letter to Obidova we read of his planning a book of poems entitled *Integrals*, which was to have an introduction. Perhaps this could have been the poems' sequence in the collection: a *cons* (as a lead-in) followed by a poem. This would be in consonance with the expressive purpose of the *integral*: *integral* is an operation based on a particular mental process, through which we can access certain information, and derive the starting point. It conveys a process of investigating an autonomous phenomenon that is derived from another phenomenon. Therefore *cons poems* could have been envisaged in this role of partial functions, following the idea of appearing in combination with another poem which builds on the result of the undertaken operation. This would also enable Kosovel to read his poems at a literary reading he was planning (he wrote about the preparations leading up to this event in a letter to Obidova), with the exception of those *cons poems* whose graphic and visual components rendered them inappropriate for public reading. That these assumptions are not at all far-fetched can be seen if we read Kosovel's poetry alongside his notes and journal entries. Kosovel's notes in *Journals* are very often sketches of poems or drafts of articles and lectures, though – it seems – they were first notes of ideas, thoughts and facts, and only then became material for poetry. The impression that *cons poems* are really drafts largely stems from Kosovel's manner of note taking. We cannot establish with certainty whether *Integrals* were the end goal in Kosovel's poetic conception. Probably not, since in his letters (including to Obidova) he often wrote not only of his need to work intensely but also of having still so much to learn and a long way to go, and of wanting to travel abroad in order to find out about the latest creative achievements, artistic outlooks and solutions.

If it is true that Kosovel's end goal was the poetic formation of "integral" man and his vision, traces of this are discernible also in his *cons poems*, which were unquestionably taken to be constructivist poems. Although *cons poems* do entail elements of constructivist poetics, their structure, bent on exploding an image, strives for openness rather than a closed constructivist whole.

Cons poems are predicated on the prevailing logic of representation, that is on reality emerging as second-hand, with its replicas in the form of fragments or observations incorporated into the poem (for example: a slogan, title, label, linguistic code, etc). *Integrals* create performances, the focus and perspective of which are for the observer largely determined. Their meaning for the reader is legible, and the text does not strictly de-

mand creative participation on the part of the reader. Both *cons poems* and *integrals* refer to vaguely defined categories of literary genre, but precisely as such trans-genre terms they characterize Kosovel's poetic and philosophical consciousness. The constitutive feature of this consciousness is polarity, which applies as much to chaos as to the phenomenon of consummate existence. The latter transcends the representational possibilities of poetry. Reproduction of reality is by necessity doomed to uncertainty, which is why the author of *cons poems* chose a fragment, convinced it must be a part of some whole entity. In the same way that polarity can exist within a totality, construction is possible as part of destruction and vice versa, for the subjective is coexistent with the objective, microcosm with macrocosm. The relations between these arise out of connections perpetually generated between the subject and the object and other subjects. For Kosovel the warrant for these ever-emerging connections had always been emotion, spirit and reason, all partaking in the process of communication, which is made possible by feelings of compassion and man's ethical needs.

Translated by Ana Jelnicar

NOTES

¹ The cake referred to in the original "gibanica", layers of pastry filled with cottage cheese and poppy seeds, traditional for the east and south-eastern part of Slovenia.

² See Srečko Kosovel: *Zbrano delo* (Collected Works). Third volume (part I), ed. by Anton Ocvirk, Ljubljana: DZS, 1977, p. 688.

³ See Grzegorz Gazda: *Słownik europejskich kierunków i grup literackich XX wieku*. Warszawa: PWN, 2000, pp. 34–44.

⁴ See Seweryna Wystouch: *Literatura a sztuki wizualne*. Warszawa: PWN 194, pp. 36–61.

⁵ Tadeusz Pepier: *Rytm nowoczesny*. V: N.: d.: *Tędy. Nowe usta*. Foreword, commentary, biographical commentary: Stanisław Jaworski. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1972, p. 90.

⁶ See Janez Vrečko: *Srečko Kosovel, slovenska zgodovinska avantgarda in zenitizem*. Maribor: Obzorja, 1986, p. 147.

⁷ Srečko Kosovel: *Zbrano delo*. Vol III (Part I), p. 400.

⁸ See, *Wielka Encyklopedia Powszechna*. T. II. Warszawa: PWN 1963, pp.272–275.

⁹ See Matjaž Kmecl: »Torej še enkrat o Srečku Kosovelu«. *Jezik in slovstvo* 1971/72, no. 4: Franc Zdravec: *Srečko Kosovel*. Koper-Trst: Založba Lipa in Založništvo tržaškega tiska, 1986; Boris Paternu: »Slovenski modernizem«. *Sodobnost* 1985, no 11; Janez Vrečko: *Srečko Kosovel, slovenska zgodovinska avantgarda in zenitizem*.

¹⁰ See Janez Vrečko: »Konstruktivizem, futurizem in branje Kosovelovih konsov«. [1]. *Delo* 1988, no. 121, [supplement:] *Književni listi*, s. 4. This difference was not noted by Anton Ocvirk when he was presenting *cons poems* and *integrals* as an undivided whole – see Anton Ocvirk: »Srečko Kosovel in konstruktivizem«. In:

Srečko Kosovel: *Integrali* '26. ed. by Anton Ocvirk. Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 1967, pp. 5–112 and Srečko Kosovel: *Zbrano delo. Volume III (Part two)*...

¹¹ "A Streetlamp" tr. by Nike Kocijančič Pokorn, from *Srečko Kosovel: Integrals*, tr. by Nike Kocijančič Pokorn, Katarina Jerin, Philip Burt (Ljubljana: Slovene Writer's Association, 1998), p. 173.

■ ABSTRACT

UDK 821.163.6.09-1 Kosovel S.

Key words: Slovene poetry / Kosovel, Srečko / cons / integrals

Like many avant-garde artists, Kosovel believed in the connection between the world and humanity, the Earth and the Universe. He regarded poetry as an expression of human sensitivity, man's reason as well as his emotional and empathetic faculties. Thus, he recognised the aesthetic, as well as gnoseological value of poetry. In striving for the integral human being, he saw the need for art and literature to analyse and synthesise the phenomena of life. His efforts resulted in poems denominated as "konsi" ("cons" poems) and "integrali" (integrals) – both of which encapsulate his aesthetic quest and his Weltanschauung.

The word integral is a concept from the fields of mathematics and physics. Kosovel discovered its analytic and synthetic utility in the period of his constructivist experiments. The integral is the outcome of a process of integration, in which the primary function is determined with the aid of a derived one. The derived function enables the discovery of a primary and more elementary piece of information on the basis of the smallest possible number of unknowns. The process of integration is therefore used to study what is simultaneously an autonomous phenomenon and a derivative of some other, more elementary or fundamental phenomenon.

This yields a sense of the interconnectedness of phenomena and their continuity, which is not always immediately apparent. Kosovel's "cons" poems include elements that seem to be autonomous, but are, in fact, derivatives. The poet subjects them to a process of integration in order to reach or construct the integral human being, the essence of humanity, that is, the quintessential human being.