

O literaturi in etiki (predgovor)

Špela Virant, Irena Samide

Že Aristotel v *Poetiki* ugotavlja, da tragedija nagovarja emocionalne, kognitivne in etične sposobnosti gledalca, in sicer za dosego katarze, ki je njen cilj. Tragedija sicer izzove emocionalno reakcijo, razum in etično držo gledalca pa Aristotel preprosto predpostavlja, ko našteva tri možne zgradbe dejanj, ki ne vodijo h katarzi: če se zlobni in pokvarjeni ljudje dokopljejo do sreče, če isti padejo v nesrečo in če dobri brez tragične zmote padejo v nesrečo (1452 b 30). Sploh slednje lahko vzbudi le zgražanje, meni Aristotel, ki sploh ne dopušča možnosti, da bi se odrasli člani demokratične družbe, ki imajo izoblikovane predstave o tem, kaj je prav in kaj ne, odzvali drugače. Razmerja med literaturo in etiko so se nato v zgodovini pogosto spreminjala. Razsvetljenstvo je literaturi naložilo, naj bralca poučuje, koncept estetske avtonomije jo je osvobodil tega poslanstva, etični obrat je znova pozval k prepričevanju tega razmerja. Aktualna dogajanja, kot so nove oblike vojn, migracije, socialna stiska, skratka soočenje z zgodbami ljudi, ki so padli v nesrečo le zato, ker so se rodili v napačnem delu sveta, v telesu napačnega spola ali barve kože, ne da bi sploh imeli priložnost zagrešiti tragično napako, literarno vedo postavljajo pred nalogo, da preveri svoj instrumentarij za analizo te razsežnosti literature in svojo vlogo v tem kontekstu.

O etiki v literaturi lahko govorimo vsaj na treh ravneh, in sicer o etičnosti imaginacije, naracije in interpretacije. Literatura, ki se definira kot fikcija, se sicer lahko izmakne razpravam etičnosti vsebin, dohitijo pa jo na drugi ravni. Ker kaže, »kaj bi se lahko zgodilo«, postane privilegirano mesto utopij in distopij. Postmodernizem jih je zaradi ideološkosti zavrnil, danes pa se v literaturo vračajo v različnih oblikah in zastavljajo različna vprašanja, ki zadevajo tako bremena preteklosti kakor tudi prihodnje preživetje v zaostrenih razmerah liberalnega kapitalizma.

Literarna besedila posredujejo vrednostne sisteme, norme in etična vprašanja prek načina, kako pripovedujejo, tako s specifično rabo jezika (semantiko, sintakso, retoriko) kakor tudi z narativnimi postopki. Ti postopki so v okviru študij o narativni etiki, ki imajo že večdesletno tradicijo, precej raziskani, vendar se z novimi literarnimi praksami na eni strani in razvojem naratologije, postkolonialnih študij in študij spola ter razvojem sodobnih medijev na drugi strani odpirajo nove možnosti za razmislek.

O etičnosti interpretacije lahko govorimo tako na ravni imanentno literarnih postopkov, torej načinov, kako literatura interpretira podatke, ki so splošno sprejeti kot realni, kakor tudi na ravni literarnovedne interpretacije literature. Prav tu se odpirajo vprašanja, ki presegajo zgolj literarnovedne pristope, saj sprašujejo po odnosu literature do sveta in po umeščanju literature v svet. Ta vprašanja posegajo v samo srž človekovega razmerja do sveta, do soljudi, s tem pa tudi v srž literature ali tega, kar bi lahko bila: ne le refleksija teh razmerij, temveč njihov del.

Heinz von Foerster je članek »Das Konstruieren einer Wirklichkeit«, v katerem je med drugim razmišljal o pomenu in implikacijah teorij radikalnega konstruktivizma, sklenil z lapidarnim odgovorom na vprašanje, kako vpliva na pojmovanje estetike in etike: »Estetski imperativ: Če hočeš spoznavati, deluj. Etični imperativ: Deluj vedno tako, da odpiriš nove možnosti.« (60)¹ Članki, zbrani v tej tematsko zaokroženi izdaji *Primerjalne književnosti*, kažejo, da je danes mogoče o literaturi in etiki razmišljati na zelo različne načine, s tem pa, tako upava, odpirajo možnosti za nove razprave.

Tematsko številko odpira razprava Toma Virka, ki v poglavju »Etična literarna veda med kakofonijo in pluralnostjo« načenna temeljna vprašanja razmerja med etiko in literaturo. Zgodovina refleksije tega razmerja je, tako Virk, dolga prav toliko kot refleksija o literaturi sama, kar že samo po sebi priča o relevantnosti tematike. Razprava osvetljuje nekatere ključne pojme in pojmovne sklope etične literarne vede, zlasti razmerje med etiko in moralo, etiko in estetiko ter etiko in politiko, in se ob tem osredinja na razmislek o nekaterih pomembnejših sodobnih smereh raziskovanja te problematike od t. i. »etičnega obrata« s konca osemdesetih let prejšnjega stoletja dalje. Virk je prepričan, da je etična literarna veda v mnogih pogledih celo najpomembnejša veja literarne vede, obenem pa je zanjo značilno, da jo sestavlja množstvo raznolikih pristopov. Da ob tem ne bi zašli v postmoderno kakofonijo – pluralnost brez metodološke in teoretične avtorefleksije –, se Virk zavzema za tak pluralizem pristopov, ki ga poleg jasne osredotočenosti na raziskovanje *etičnih* vprašanj odlikujeta avtorefleksija ter *odgovorno* branje: prav to so namreč osnove *etičnega* raziskovanja.

¹ Foerster, Heinz von. »Das Konstruieren einer Wirklichkeit«. *Die erfundene Wirklichkeit. Beiträge zum Konstruktivismus*. Ur. Paul Watzlawick. München: Piper, 1981. 39–60.

Z vprašanjem kompleksnega razmerja med umetnostjo in politiko, etiko in estetiko ter etiko in literaturo se ukvarja tudi Werner Wintersteiner v članku »Od nasilne preteklosti h globalni etiki? Grozodejstva dvajsetega stoletja v izbranih romanih enaindvajsetega stoletja«. Izhajajoč iz teze, da literatura sama po sebi *ni* etična in da lahko prav zato izpolnjuje etične namene, raziskuje tri sodobne romane iz treh različnih geografskih okolij: *Burnt Shadows* (2009) pakistanske avtorice Kamile Shamsi, *L'Art français de la guerre* (2011) Francoza Alexisa Jennija, za katerega je avtor dobil Goncourjevo nagrado, ter *Dvorce iz orehovine* (2003) zelo prevajanega hrvaškega avtorja Miljenka Jergovića. Ne glede na dejstvo, da uporabljajo izbrani trije romani zelo različne estetske strategije in ponujajo različne etične »odgovore«, je vsem skupno to, da prevprašujejo grozodejstva ter razloge za vojne in nasilje na *globalni ravni*, pa naj gre pri tem za globalno etiko v smislu globalne družbe (Shamsie in Jenni), ali pa za globalnost človeške šibkosti in perfidije kot pri Jergoviću. Drža, ki jo pri tem romani izbirajo, ni nikoli moralistična ali didaktična, temveč estetsko odprta in večplastna, v prvi vrsti osredotočena na pripovedovanje zgodb, ki zadevajo vsakogar od nas.

Tematiko pripovedovanja oz. etične naratologije načenja prispevek Alenke Koron z naslovom »Kaj je ali bi lahko bila etična naratologija?« Ob upoštevanju različnih novejših teoretskih razmislekov na tem področju in zlasti postmoderne etiške teorije Alaina Badiouja se avtorica članka ukvarja z metodološkimi pristopi za raziskovanje etičnih razsežnosti besedil ter pokaže na to, kako lahko literarno besedilo s svojo formo senzibilizira bralke in bralce za etične implikacije pripovedi.

Razmerje med etiko in estetiko je v središču naslednjih dveh prispevkov tematskega sklopa: Dejan Kos v razpravi z naslovom »Etika in estetika med posvetnostjo in presežnostjo« ocrta zgodovinski razvoj razmerij med estetiko in etiko. Problematizira pojem estetske avtonomije in temeljne logocentrične evidence ter nakazuje možno razrešitev ugotovljenih protislovij v absolutizaciji načela odprtosti. Po kakovostnih kriterijih za literarna dela danes v primerjavi s časom pred uveljavitvijo koncepta estetske avtonomije sprašuje Vladimir Gvozden v prispevku z naslovom »Kaj je dobra knjiga? *Bonae literae* v enaindvajsetem stoletju«, kjer se najprej podrobneje posveti pojmu *bonae literae*, kakor ga je razumel Erazem Rotterdamski, nato pa oriše razvoj problematike do danes, ko sicer ni več enotnih, zavezujočih vrednot in kriterijev za presojo literature, pojmovanje dobre knjige pa vendarle še ohranja nastavke, ki jih je miselno zastavil Erazem. Iztok Osojnik v prispevku »Svoboda in nezavedno: nekaj opazk o etiki poiesisa« išče etiko

literature v *poesis*, ustvarjanju, v dogodju biti, in na primeru pesmi *Zaupanje* Muanisa Sinanovića iz zadnje zbirke *Dvovid* prikaže, kako poteka ta proces od znotraj navzven.

Članki v drugem delu tematske številke se bolj načrtno posvečajo etičnim vidikom in perspektivam v posameznih literarnih besedilih. Tako Daniel Graziadei v prispevku »O etiki medkulturnih nesporazumov« analizira odlomke iz treh sodobnih romanov, kjer so opisani nesporazumi, kakršni lahko nastanejo v medkulturnih komunikacijah. Etično razsežnost razkrivanja takšnih nesporazumov obravnava tako na ravni fiktivnega sveta kot tudi na ravni bralnih dejanj, na obeh ravneh pa gre za podobno revizijo postopkov osmišljanja in konstrukcije resnic. V medkulturni prostor posega tudi prispevek z naslovom »Transgresivna etika drugosti v pripovedih o izkoreninjenosti Jhumpe Lahiri in Rodice Mihalis«. V njem na temelju sodobnih teorij, ki iščejo presečišča med humanistično in poststrukturalistično etiko ter ju na ta način poskušajo preseči, Adriana Elena Stoican razvije metodološki pristop in ga aplicira na deli dveh sodobnih avtoric, ki tematizirata pomen medkulturnih srečanj.

Stevan Bradić v prispevku »Uprizarjanje etike v izrednem stanju: V pričakovanju barbarov J. M. Coetzeeja« podrobno analizira izbrane odlomke omenjenega romana, v katerih se zrcali problematičnost etike, ki ostaja znotraj imperialne logike, ter poudarja nujnost povezave med etiko in politiko. Da etičnega in političnega delovanja ne moremo povsem ločevati, pokaže tudi Yvonne Hütter v članku z naslovom »Etika in estetika v romanu *Frühling der Barbaren* Jonasa Lüscherja«. Na temelju analize omenjenega romana odpira temeljna vprašanja funkcij in dometa književnosti pri posredovanju vrednot v tradiciji razsvetljenstva in pri oblikovanju kognitivnih procesov, ki bralcu potencialno omogočajo aktivno etično in politično delovanje.

Kako doseči etične dimenzije besedila brez eksplicitno političnih izjav, etičnih imperativov in didaktičnih poant – pa tudi brez neposredne tematske navezave na prikazovanje nasilja, pobojev, vojnih grozot itd. –, proučuje Mateja Pezdirc Bartol na podlagi »ne več dramskih« besedil Simone Semenič. V prispevku z naslovom »Specifičnost dramske forme in etična vprašanja v dramatiki Simone Semenič« avtorica ugotavlja, da je predpogoj za vzpostavitev etičnega razmerja estetska izkušnja. Šele ta postavlja bralca/gledalca pred etične dileme in zahteva njegovo angažiranost, ki pa se ne kaže v politični aktivnosti, temveč v razreševanju vprašanj, idej in občutij, ki jih neko delo odpira. Na področju dramatike ostaja tudi Gašper Troha, ki se v prispevku »Etika v sodobni britanski dramatiki« sprašuje, kakšne so možnosti etične raz-

sežnosti besedil, ki temeljijo na šoku in prikazujejo svet kot radikalno distopijo – kar zagotovo velja za besedila t. i. gledališča »u fris« (primer: *Razdejana Sarah Kane* in *V Republiki sreče* Martina Crimpa). Troha zagovarja tezo, da so v svetu fluidnih vrednot in krhkih moralnih vrednot prav tovrstna besedila edina možnost obravnavanja etičnih vprašanj. Tematski sklop sklene prispevek, ki se dotika britanske književnosti, tokrat v klasični maniri: Irena Avsenik Nabergoj se v članku »Razkrivanje temnih resnic družbe in nezlomljiva moč dobrega v Dickensovem romanu *Oliver Twist*« sprašuje, s katerimi sredstvi Dickensovo narativno besedilo tematizira, problematizira ali konsolidira specifične moralne vrednote in norme in prihaja do sklepa, da je prav pripoved s svojo imaginacijo in sposobnostjo za celostno zaznavanje duševnega in duhovnega stanja junakov tista, ki uri človekov praktični moralni čut za zasledovanje etosa.

Literature and Ethics

(An Introduction)

Špela Virant, Irena Samide

Already Aristoteles in his *Poetics* observes that tragedy addresses the spectator's emotional, cognitive and ethical competences in order to achieve the catharsis for which it aims. Tragedy provokes an emotional reaction, but the ability of cogitation and the ethical stance of the spectator are simply presupposed by Aristoteles, namely, when he lists the three possible forms of plot to be avoided: A good man – without committing a tragic fault – must not be seen to be passing from happiness to misery, a bad man from misery to happiness, and an extremely bad man from happiness to misery (1452 b 30). Especially the first situation is solely odious for Aristoteles, who does not allow for the possibility that a mature member of society who knows how to tell right from wrong could react differently. The relations between literature and ethics have often changed in the course of history. In the age of enlightenment, literature had to educate the reader; the concept of aesthetic autonomy relieved literature of this obligation; the ethical turn, meanwhile, once again started to review these relations. Occurrences, such as new forms of warfare, migrations and social anguish – that is, confrontation with the stories of people who passed into misery only because they were born in the wrong part of the world, in a body with the wrong skin color or sex, without even having had the chance to commit a tragic fault – also call on literary studies to examine the tools it uses to analyze the ethical dimension and its role in this context.

It is possible to speak about ethics on at least three levels: the ethicality of imagination, the ethicality of narration, and the ethicality of interpretation. While literature, which defines itself as a fiction, may be able to remove itself from such discussions, at another level it is caught up in them. Because literature shows “what could happen,” it becomes a privileged site of utopias and dystopias. Though postmodernism rejected these two “topias” on account of their being ideological, today they are, in various forms, returning to literature and giving rise to various questions that concern the burden of the past and the survival in aggravated circumstances of liberal capitalism.

Literary texts mediate value systems, norms and ethical questions through how they tell – that is, both through the specific use of language (semantics, syntax, rhetoric) as well as through narrative approaches. These approaches have, in the context of studies on narrative ethics, which has a tradition stretching back several decades, been much studied; and yet, with new literary praxes on the one hand and the development of narratology, postcolonial studies and gender studies as well as the development of new media on the other, new questions arise.

We can speak about the ethics of interpretation at the level of immanently literary approaches – that is, the ways in which literature interprets information that is generally accepted as real – and also at the level of how literary studies interpret literature. Precisely here questions arise that go beyond merely literary approaches, since they dispute the relationship literature has to the world and the place literature holds in the world. These questions penetrate to the very essence of our relationship to the world, to our fellow humans, and by this to the core of literature or what it could be: not only a reflection of these relationships, but a part of them.

Heinz von Foerster, in his article “Das Konstruieren einer Wirklichkeit”, discusses the relevance and the implications of radical constructivism. In his conclusion he gives a terse answer to the question of how this affects the concepts of aesthetics and ethics. He formulates two imperatives. “The aesthetic imperative: If you want understanding, act. The ethical imperative: Act always in a way that opens up new possibilities.” (60)² The set of thematic articles contained in this issue of *Primerjalna književnost* demonstrates that today it is possible to write about literature and ethics in many different ways and by this they, one hopes, open up possibilities for new discussions.

The set of thematic articles begins with Tomo Virk’s contribution entitled “Ethical Literary Criticism between Cacophony and Plurality,” probing the basic relations between ethics and literature. The reflection on this topic is as old as the reflection on literature, which itself shows the general importance of ethical research. Virk’s treatise sum-

² Foerster, Heinz von. “Das Konstruieren einer Wirklichkeit.” *Die erfundene Wirklichkeit. Beiträge zum Konstruktivismus*. Ed. by Paul Watzlawick. München: Piper, 1981. 39–60.

marizes the most prominent research directions of this topic after the so-called ethical turn in literary studies that happened in the 1980s. His article focuses on some basic concepts and relations of ethical literary criticism, such as the relation between ethics and morality, ethics and aesthetics, and between ethics and politics. Virk is convinced that ethical literary criticism is in many ways the most important part of literary criticism, but he identifies the so-called cacophony of ethical approaches to literature, characterized as it is by the lack of theoretical and methodological self-reflection. He makes a case for self-reflection and ethical reading as the basis for ethical criticism.

The complexity of the relations between art and politics, ethics and aesthetics, ethics and literature is central for Werner Wintersteiner in his article “From a Violent Past towards a Global Ethics? Twentieth Century Atrocities in Selected Novels of the Twenty-First Century.” Starting from the thesis that literature itself is not ethical and that, because of this, it can serve ethical purposes, he discusses three modern novels from different regions: *Burnt Shadows* (2009) by Kamila Shamsie, *The French Art of War* (2011) by Alexis Jenni and *The Walnut Mansion* (2003) by Miljenko Jergović. Although all three novels use quite different aesthetic strategies and offer different ethical “answers,” they are all searching for the causes of violence on a global level – either they are asking about a global ethics in the sense of a global society (Shamsie and Jenni), or about the global weakness of man (Jergović). The novels are never moralistic. They are aesthetically open and complex, focused on the narration of stories that concern everybody.

The ethics of narration is the major theme of Alenka Koron’s article “What is Ethical Narratology, or What Could It Be?” By taking into account different theories, especially Alain Badiou’s postmodern ethical theory, the author of the article reflects upon the methods of ethical narratology and shows how a literary text can sensitize the reader to the ethical components of the narrative.

The relation between ethics and aesthetics is the major theme of two articles in this set: Dejan Kos, in his article “Ethics and Aesthetics between Profanity and Numinosity,” provides a short outline of the historical development of these relations. He questions the idea of aesthetic autonomy and the basic logocentric evidence. As a possible solution to the inherent contradictions he suggests absolutizing the principle of openness. Vladimir Gvozden, in his article “What Makes a Good Book? *Bonae literae* in Twenty-First Century,” focuses on the qualitative criteria for literary works today. First, he explains the concept of *bonae literae* as understood by Erasmus of Rotterdam; then he

outlines the further development. Today there are no coherent criteria for the evaluation of literature, but there still exists a small residuum of Erasmus's view. Iztok Osojnik in his article "Freedom and the Unconscious: Some Observations on the Ethics of Poiesis" tries to find the ethics of literature in *poiesis*, creating, in an event of being, and demonstrates with the poem *Zaupanje (Trust)*, written by Muanis Sinanović, how this process works out from the within to outside.

The texts that form the second part of this thematic volume focus on the ethical aspects of single literary works. Daniel Graziadei's article "Towards an Ethics of Intercultural Misunderstandings" offers an analysis of three contemporary novels that describe misunderstandings arising in intercultural communication. He discusses the ethical dimension of these misunderstandings on the level of fiction and on the level of the act of reading. On both levels he points out the revision of the different processes that lead to the construction of truth and meaning. Also located in the realm of intercultural relations is the article "A Transgressive Ethics of Alterity in Jhumpa Lahiri's and Rodica Mihalîs' Narratives of Uprooting" by Adriana Elena Stoican. On the basis of modern theories that search for an intersection between poststructuralist and humanist ethics and try to overcome them, she develops a methodological approach and applies it to the works of two contemporary novelists that deal with the importance of intercultural encounters.

In "Staging the Ethical in the State of Emergency in J. M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*," Stevan Bradić analyses selected excerpts from Coetzee's novel that show the problems of an ethics that stays within imperial logic. He stresses the necessity of a link between ethics and politics. The impossibility of separating ethics from politics is also made evident in the article "Ethics and Aesthetics in Jonas Lüscher's *Barbarian Spring*," by Yvonne Hütter. She offers a thorough analysis of that novel, while discussing fundamental questions about the function and the scope of literature in terms of the imparting of values in the tradition of the enlightenment and the forming of cognition that enable the reader to act ethically and politically.

Mateja Pezdirc Bartol's paper "The Specific Features of the Dramatic Form and Ethical Questions in Dramatic Works by Simona Semenič" deals with three "no longer dramatic" texts by the Slovenian playwright and considers the possibilities of formulating an ethical dimension without explicitly political statements, ethical imperatives, didactic points or depictions of violence. Here, the precondition is the aesthetic experience that poses ethical dilemmas and provokes the reader into actively looking for answers on his own. Gašper Troha focuses on "Ethics

in Modern British Drama.” He asks about the ethical dimensions of plays that aim to shock the spectator and depict the world as a radical dystopia. His main thesis is that in a world of fluid, instable values this is the only way to discuss ethical questions in the theatre. The concluding article – Irena Avsenik Nabergoj’s “Uncovering the Dark Truths of Society and the Unbreakable Power of the Good in Dickens’s *Oliver Twist*” – focuses on the question of how Dickens’s novel addresses the topic of moral values and points out that it is the narrative’s ability to imaginatively display the mental and spiritual states of its heroes that engages the reader’s practical moral sense.