

The Academic Novel in the Context of Contemporary Croatian Literature

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Abstract

The academic novel found its footing as a genre during the 1950's, and in the last few decades managed to affirm itself in other English speaking areas. Although the genre remains not well researched in Croatian literary studies, the translated work of British writer and theorist David Lodge enabled a passage into the British university community and thus became a representative specimen of British prose. In accordance with the genre, Marinko Košćec's *Wonderland* and Dražen Ilinčić's *Posljednji korak* paint a picture of the atmosphere in Croatian universities and make way for comparative research.

Keywords

academic novel, David Lodge, Marinko Košćec, Dražen Ilinčić

Introduction

The academic novel, also known as the university novel, the campus novel and the college novel, belongs to the genre of academic satire, and became fully affirmed in the early 1950's, first in the United States, and then in Great Britain. Its earliest genre classification is linked to American literary theorist and historian John O. Lyons who in his book *The College Novel in America* (1962) considers the academic novel to be a novel about academic life "one in which higher education is treated with seriousness and the main characters are students and professors" (Lyons, 1962, p. xvii). Lyons begins his historic overview with Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Fanshawe* (1828), and ends it with Louis Simpsons *Riverside Drive* (1962). Similar to Lyons, in his historic overview *The American College Novel: an Annotated Bibliography*, John E. Kramer presents the genesis of the academic novel from Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Fanshawe* all the way to Gordon Weber's *The Great Buffalo Hotel* (1979). Also, in his introduction, Kramer expands the term *academic novel* as „a full length work of fiction which incorporates an institution of higher learning as a crucial part of its setting and which includes among its principal characters, graduate or undergraduate students, faculty members, administrators, and/ or other academic personnel" (Kramer, 1981, p. ix). The structure of themes and motifs of the academic novel remains more or less the same, but the novelty which Kramer noticed is in regard to the range of the characters which, aside from the usual ones, consist of marginalized social groups like homosexuals, lesbians and other minorities. Also,

the experience of reading an academic novel and living an academic life is characteristic for Kramer: "And during my fifteen years as a college faculty member, I have taken a great deal of perverse delight in reading fictional accounts of people very much like my administrative overseers, my faculty colleagues, my students, and myself" (Kramer, 1982, p. x). Two purposes of the academic novel come out of all this, as recognized by contemporary critics Christian K. Anderson and John R. Thelin: "those who enjoy reading college novels for pleasure and for scholars who use college novels as a tool for understanding how higher education is perceived in American culture and as part of the serious, systematic analysis of higher education" (Anderson & Thelin, 2009, p. 106-107). Lisa Johnson's contemporary corpus *The Life of the Mind: American Academia Reflected through Contemporary Fiction* (1995) goes along with Kramer's historic overview. Aside from the overview of academic novels published between 1980 and 1994 and the genre classification of the academic novel, Johnson offers her own personal attitude towards the academic life: "What is it academia anyway? We profess to hate it, spend endless amounts of time complaining about it, and yet we in academia will do practically anything to stay. The pay may be low, job security elusive, and in the end, it's not the glamorous work we envisioned it would be. Yet, it still holds fascination and fiction, I mean novels whose main characters are professors, college students, and those about the higher education experience not readily available elsewhere. We learn about ourselves and the university community in which we work" (Johnson, 1994, p. 23). British theorist and author David Lodge has a similar opinion about the position of the academic novel in the literary system as an institution that begins with the relationship between the author and his audience: "In theory, everybody disapproves of academic novels, as being too inbred and stereotyped" but he observes that "in practice there seems to be a very big audience for them" (Moseley, 1991, p. 8). Like Lodge, in her book *Faculty Towers*, Elaine Showalter talks about the aforementioned double intent of the academic novel and concludes: "The best academic novels experiment and play with the genre of fiction itself, comment on contemporary issues, satirize professorial stereotypes and educational trends, and convey the pain of intellectuals called upon to measure themselves against each other and against their internalized expectations of brilliance" (Showalter, 2005, p. 4). The advantages of the academic novel as a didactic material are made clear in American critic William G. Tierney's conclusion: "The purpose in reading academic fiction has less to do with proving or disproving the truth of a text; instead, the novel might be thought of as a way to help academics think about how academic life has been structured, defended, and interpreted in order to create constructive change" (Tierney, 2004, p. 164). However, some theorists disagree with such a contribution. Bruce Robins

highlights the negative reception of the academic novel: "The generally unflattering treatment academics have received from the so-called academic novel," then concludes: "Over the past half-century or so, novelists who turned their attention to the university have arguably contributed more than a little to the acute lack of respect and understanding of which academics... tend to complain" (Robins, 2006, p. 249).

In light of these discussions the development of the academic novel as a genre can be classified within four types of criteria: (1) satire as a dominant literary procedure that comes out of the plot, characters and narrative procedures of the academic novel; (2) stereotype as a crossroad between low- and highbrow literature; (3) autobiography as a crossroad between reality and fiction with the (non) purpose of the didactic, and (4) the use of the literary procedure characteristic for a classical, a modern and a contemporary academic novel.

Also, we should single out a few of the best known academic novels in British and American literature: as the earliest example we have *The Groves of Academe* (1952) by Mary McCarthy, while some more contemporary examples are *Faculty Towers: The Academic Novel and Its Discontents* (2005) by Elaine Showalter and C.P. Snow's *The Masters*. Also, a few earlier published novels possess some traits of an academic novel, such as *The Professor's House* (1925) by Willa Cather, *Smith Conundrum* (1928-1931) by Régis Mesac and *Gaudy Night* (1935) by Dorothy L Sayers. We should also mention: *The Master* (1951) by C.P. Snow, *Disgrace* (1999) by J. M. Coetzee, *The Human Stain* (2000) by Phillip Roth, *Campus Trilogy* (1975-2001) by David Lodge and *Nocturne, Opus 1: Sea Foam* (2012) by Norene Moskalski.

The term "academic novel" is fairly unknown in Croatian literary studies, due to few translations of scientific literature and literary form, but also due to different geopolitical and historical circumstances heavily connected with the development of science and the academic society. Croatia became a part of the Bologna process in 2001, and has been its full participant to this very day. All academic programs were consolidated with the demands of the Bologna process in 2005, and all students who are finishing their studies in the Republic of Croatia receive ECTS points and have the right to a diploma supplement regarding their studies. Croatia actively implements other activities connected to the Bologna process, and the system of quality insurance, which was brought into Croatia in 2009, provided a high level of autonomy. Next to the direct influence of the higher education system in Croatian academic community, its indirect impact is also visible in the increasing interest of the reading audience in that type of a novel.

The above mentioned classification of the academic novel should be used in the classification of the British novel *Changing Places: The Tale of Two Campuses*

by David Lodge as a possible representative of the academic prose whose Croatian translation was twenty-six years late. Based on the features of the English campus novel *Changing Places: The Tale of Two Campuses* by David Lodge, the analysis and interpretation two Croatian novels, *Posljednji korak* by Dražen Ilinčić and *Wonderland* by Marinko Koščec, will confirm that the Croatian literary genealogy is richer for one more genre.

David Lodge between avocation and profession

Literary critic and theorist David Lodge (1935) taught English literature at the University of Birmingham until 1988 and is also known as the author of many novels about academic life: *Campus Trilogy* (1975), *Small World: An Academic Romance* (1984) and *Nice Work* (1988), *The Picturegoers* (1960), *Ginger You're Barmy* (1962), *The British Museum Is Falling Down* (1965), *Out of the Shelter* (1970), *How Far Can You Go?* (1980), *Paradise News* (1991), *Therapy* (1995), *The Man Who Wouldn't Get Up: And Other Stories* (1998), *Thinks...* (2001), *Author, Author* (2004), *Deaf Sentence* (2008), and *A Man of Parts* (2011). Croatian reception of David Lodge encompasses only three of his novels: *Nice Work* (1990), *Changing Places: A Tale of Two Campuses* (2001) and *Thinks ...* (2005). However, we should add the worthy contribution of the translator Giga Gračan who interviewed David Lodge at the University of Cambridge in 2001 and thus brought a glimmer of self-interpretation and self-criticism from the great British theorist and author to Croatian literary studies. Lodge's academic novels came out of his personal experience and a deep understanding of the academic life, something that he himself admits: "own experience has a thematic interest and unity which might be expressed through a fictional story" (Lodge, 1988, p. 72). He also reveals novels' intent: "I have always regarded myself as having a foot in both camps – the world of academic scholarship and higher education, and the world of literary culture at large, in which books are written, published, discussed and consumed for profit and pleasure in all senses of those words" (Lodge, 1990, p. 7).

Lodge's *Changing Places: The Tale of Two Campuses* came out of his personal experience as a visiting lecturer at the University of California in 1969 where he got involved in the student revolution and counterculture. Lodge confirms: "It was all very dramatic and exciting to me, coming from England where we did have our own, very civil, small student revolution. I thought of myself as a war correspondent at Berkley in 1969. Great ideas - in theory" (Lodge, 2001, p. 268). Living and working in the industrial town of Birmingham made him understand the differences between an academic life and a blue collar one. Therefore, his literary style offers "some sort of bizarre opposition between two opposite points of view, between two ideologies, cultures and professions" (Lodge, 2001, p. 282)

which can be found in the characters of two professors and their exchange of their respected work places, life circumstances, cultural and social habits and even wives: “a crossing of their paths in a peaceful point of the world that keeps spinning went unnoticed by everyone except the narrator of this duplicitous chronicle” (Lodge, 2001, p. 4). Lodge used this binary opposition in order to “study the conflict between the scientific approach to consciousness and that that he, for a lack of a better term would call a humanistic or literary or sane, intuitive approach to consciousness” (Lodge, 2001, p. 282). In other words, the goal of his novel, according to the Swedish critic Eva Lambertsson Bjork is to bridge the gap between a university and the outside world in the sense of a better understanding and mutual communication. Contrary to all this, Lodge’s statement about the usage of stylistic procedures such as parody, comedy and satire in the service of researching more serious topics is explained by the British sociologist Michael Mulkay: “When we speak humorously, we are not fully responsible for what we say. From the outside, from within the realm of serious discourse, the messages of humor are extremely difficult to oppose successfully. Yet the messages conveyed by humor may have very serious consequences” (Mulkay, 1988, p. 53). Such an interpretation should be connected with the negative reception of the academic novel as a novel which was not directly intended to better the academic activities.

With Lodge’s teaching experience, the knowledge of the contemporary literary history and theory left a noticeable mark on the novel, thus “his campus novels largely coincide and overlap with his scholarly work” (Lambertsson Björk, 1993, p. 40). He refreshes his novels with heated discussions, polemics and debates about literature, literary criticism and literary theory, but manages to keep them in a comical, satiric tone. Aside from this, the main characters are world famous theorist Morris Zapp and much less known British theorist Phillip Wallow, representatives or caricatures of university life in the 1960’s when social heat on campuses was at an all-time high. This is supported by Lodge’s names of the university towns: Chaosville and Euphoria, something which the author explains at the beginning of the novel: “Although some locations and public phenomena shown in the novel are to a certain extent similar to actual locations and phenomena, the characters are completely fictional both as individuals and as members of an institution. Chaosville and Euphoria are places on a map of a comical world similar yet not completely compatible to the one we live in, and full of imagination” (Lodge, 2001, p. 2).

Not only does he manage to lay out a very serious subject matter in a completely accessible and funny way, David Lodge combines, alongside the above mentioned binary oppositions, different prose and media forms (the epistolary novel, a newspaper report, a film screenplay, etc.) and autobiographical and

fictional elements which he does (not) bring to the ultimate purpose of the didactic. He also makes fun of and parodies the life of the academic community, which is all sprinkled with stereotypical features of soap operas like cheating, intrigue, farce, adultery, unexpected twists, etc.

Considering the fact that the rest of this text is about confirming the genre features of the academic novel, we should demonstrate their application on the example of the first novel of Lodge's trilogy *Changing Places: A Tale of Two Campuses*.

***Changing Places: A Tale of Two Campuses* by David Lodge as a paradigm of the academic novel**

In order to be what it is, the academic novel needs to satisfy some minimal demands of a realistic literary form and the form of a novel: there is no academic novel without a realistic academic frame, characters from the academic community and some sort of a plot about the academic life. Within these basic features, the academic novel can be analyzed with the four types of criteria that come out of theoretical discussions and that we have listed at the beginning. First, satire as the dominant trait of the academic novel that judges human and social flaws in a humorous and mocking way comes out of the need to bridge the gap between the university and the general reading audience in Lodge's *Changing Places*. Lodge's "binary oppositions" are catalysts that speed up and simplify – turn into stereotypes – the judgment of the British and American universities, their faculty, study programs and students.

At the very beginning, the author introduces the omniscient narrator who "from a privileged storytelling high (which is higher than any jet)" (Lodge, 2001, p. 5) makes it very clear to the reader that he understands the American and British universities, and has the right to satirize them.

One of the "binary oppositions" which the author uses to discuss the main conflict of the novel begins with the description of two universities: Euphoria State and Chaosville. The reason behind their cooperation is based upon their joint architectural basis, a replica of the leaning tower of Pisa, with considerable amount of satirical differences: "In Euphoria State they made it out of white rock and with dimensions twice as big as the original. In Chaosville they made it out of red brick with dimensions equal to the original, but in both cases they brought it back to an erect position" (Lodge, 2001, p. 10). Also, their satirical names show the real economic, cultural, social, scientific and artistic development. "In short, Euphoria State is still a magical name in teacher salons across the globe. Chaosville, on the other hand, has never been an institution which would surpass its mediocrity and its mediocre reputation (...)" (Lodge, 2001, p. 11). Besides this, according to the original contract, every visiting lecturer receives a salary in the

amount of which the home institution has set aside for a certain teaching position and tenure, but “since no American can survive longer than two- three days with the salary provided by Chaosville, Euphoria State makes up the difference to its staff members (...)” (Lodge, 2001, p. 10). In accordance to this, Euphoria State is one of the leading American universities with distinguished experts who have laboratories, libraries, research donations and “vast amounts of beautiful long legged secretaries” at their disposal (Lodge, 2001, p. 11), while the university of Chaosville fell under proletarian government, and has much less capacity and a much lower reputation.

Lodge’s scheme of the “binary oppositions” can also be used in scientific achievements of the main characters: Zapp is distinguished, Swallow is not. We should add their physical descriptions which do not stand out from the following: “From the stiff, erect body position and saying thank you too much to the stewardess serving him a glass of orange juice, it is obvious that Phillip Swallow, flying to the west is not used to flying; to Morris Zapp, who flatly threw himself into the chair headed to the east, chewing a burned out cigar (the stewardess made him put it out) and throwing murky stares at the pitiful ice portion melting in the plastic bourbon glass, the experience of longer flights is familiar to death” (Lodge, 2001, p. 5). Furthermore, the perception of universities becomes more clear, if the differences in the system of education are taken into account: the graduate level in an American university is not very demanding, so the pressure and demand of excellence are pushed back to the post-graduate level: employment is done through entrepreneurial competing; at a British university the selection is done throughout the studies, and after a lecturer- employee is hired, the employer guarantees him/her a permanent position.

Lodge’s binary oppositions come out of Claude Levi- Strauss’s structural anthropology, which he used as an analytical tool for interpreting myths and other cultural characteristics. In his works he attempted to show how obstacles from every day experience (such as raw/cooked/edible/unedible) point to deeper cultural differences and categorizations (nature/culture). Similarly, the binary oppositions in *Changing Places* also come out of a descriptive point of view of two cultures, British and American (scientific/expertly, prestigious/mediocre, left/right, rich/poor, big/small, private/public, foreign/domestic, known/unknown), but their strict division in the economic, scientific, cultural and artistic development is even more pronounced through satire.

Satire as a feature of the academic novel aside from the “binary opposition” from which it comes from, makes a schematic, simplified and a difficult to change relationship with the academic community that leads to stereotypization, no matter the circumstances. In other words, the basis of these stereotypes is a

wrong and unjustified generalization and conventional and simplified opinion, conception or belief about the academic community. Thus every collective stereotype which has an extremely emotionally negative assessment of the university, the university professors and students could be seen as prejudice. For example, a university represents a closed society of intellectuals: “the magical name in teaching salons” and the politically active rector is “a quiet lamb” or “a black panther” prone to nepotism. The secretaries are mostly mistresses, and the professors are pedophiles: “When I think about it, there has to be something incestuous in sleeping with the daughter of a guy with whom you switched working places” (Lodge, 2001, p. 160). The doormen and the cleaning ladies are collectors and spreaders of information within the collective and spineless professors are in search of glory and title: “They are a bunch of lying, capricious irresponsible creatures who bathe in relativism like hypos in mud, their noses barely pointing towards common sense. They happily tolerate opinions contradictory to their own – by God, some of them even change their opinion” (Lodge, 2001, p. 47). Some have a fondness for internal jokes: “Gordon Masters decided to support Phillip in the Euphoria exchange because he wanted to promote a considerably younger man from the Division to the position of senior lecturer and it will be much less embarrassing to do so while Phillip is away” (Lodge, 2001, p. 24), and some are greedy and voracious: “At parties they ate the man’s canapés like they had just gotten out of prison” (Lodge, 2001, p. 49). Finally, the students are prideful, amenable and corrupt: “Boon didn’t manage to qualify further, but he diligently stalked the school’s hallway a few months after, bringing the students to the conclusion he works here as a science assistant, hoping he would make the Division so uncomfortable, they will have to hire him” (Lodge, 2001, p. 37).

Stereotypical features of the academic community make the academic novel more complex in the sense of the relationship between low- and highbrow literature. The academic novel can be interpreted as a “low-brow literature” because the use of satire relativizes the academic world and generates stereotypes. Those stereotypes then form schematic features within a genre that the audience detects and recognizes. However, it is possible to interpret the academic novel as a “high-brow literature.” The academic novel like a *Bildungsroman*, directed to the reader - a university professor who wants to improve the social, economic, scientific, cultural and political relationships within the university community. Furthermore, the genre of the academic novel has autobiographical elements that do not bring into question the choppy nature of the discourse or redefining the literary genre in relation to autobiography: it wants to question the role and authenticity of the author’s declaration, the didactic intent and the literary procedure of satire.

In the 1970's, French theorist Philippe Lejeune identified the basic features of autobiographical texts, which can be used as a genre matrix with limited historical reach - from Romanticism to the present. By leaving the field of just textual classifications, Lejeune reaches for the relationship between the author and the reader and creates the idea of an autobiographical contract. In classifying the autobiography, Lejeune equates the autobiography with a special type, one which emphasizes the origin and development of personality. Lejeune defines the autobiography as a retrospective prose text in which a real person narrates their own living, while emphasizing their personal life, especially the history of the development of their personality. There are four basic definitions: the question of narrating in the first person in prose, the processed subject matter, the identity of the author and storyteller. Lejeune presents the basic idea of the autobiographical contract through a three way identity relationship between the storyteller, the character and the author who signs his name on the book cover. With the author's signature and his own name, the writer marks his text as an autobiographical one. The reader's reception is the one that recognizes the autobiographical contract which is offered (Cf. Lejeune, 1975; Zlatar, 2008, p. 78).

In Lodges *Changing Places*, the autobiographical contract between the author, the storyteller and the character is significantly damaged, but certain narrative figures (persons, space, time, events) become forms that establish the autobiographical prose through secondary texts (author's notes, interviews, biographical data). Beside putting in his own experience as a university exchange professor and a lecturer at the British university in the industrial town of Birmingham (Chaosville), David Lodge as literary theorist and critic bases his novel on Claude Levi Strauss's "binary oppositions" and like "all novelists notices things, takes that one or that one, mixes them up and hopes he is not betraying anyone who might recognize themselves and deem it inappropriate" (Lodge, 2001, p. 290). But, Morris Zapp is the only character whom Lodge gave characteristics of a real person - the critic Stanley Fish. Lodge first met him at Berkley in 1965. He admits to what he used: "his signature habit of watching a baseball game on TV while writing mental books about Milton, then the general lack of awe towards the European civilization, and then his jabs such as 'Travelling narrows the horizons,' ect. (Lodge, 2001, p. 290). Furthermore, space, time and events are also not random, but are inspired by Lodge's exchange at the California (Euphoria) University of Berkley in 1969 during the student revolution. However, the credibility that comes out of the autobiographical features (as a mediate connection with the experienced reality which the novel talks about and shapes, because academic novels can only be written by writers from the academic community) is being discredited by satire (as a mediate connection with fiction) what makes the novel more interesting to a wider

audience. Thus, in light of another binary opposition (reality/fiction) the double intent of the academic novel is confirmed.

Considering it is structured within the binary oppositions of reality and fiction, Lodge's academic novel does not have clearly defined genre conventions, but is opened to mixing different types of literary and other artistic types. As a traditional literary term we should understand a realistically formative procedure that sends the message to the reader loud and clear. For this type of literary praxis, the focus towards the reader is characteristic, and so the literary text is clearly structured to satisfy its primary intent. Another type of literature, the modern one is focused on the sender of the literary message/the storyteller/author. The everyday reality is distorted by the creation of a literary structure which is based upon different literary and other artistic types. In this context, we can talk about *Changing Places* as a sublimite of an academic and an epistolary novel where the defining trait of the traditional literary genre is clearly dismantled. A part of the novel, called *Correspondence* is based upon an epistolary communication between two married couples: Hilary and Phillip Swallow and Desiree and Morris Zapp. In the mutual correspondence, the auto-referential and auto-reflexive strategy dominates, but also indirect commenting of significant events tied to the historical, political, cultural and social context. In the epistolary discourse of letters attention is paid to telling and describing personal emotions and psychological states: Hilary and Phillip's relationship is based upon traditional values that come out of a marriage, so love, caring, and respect for the spouse are made clear in the first few letters. But later correspondence reveals their dissatisfaction and a difficult financial situation which results with infidelity on both sides. The relationship between Desiree and Morris is not a harmonious one from the beginning of the correspondence, thus the reasons for divorce become even clearer. This time wrongly accused of infidelity, Morris tries to save the marriage and stay away from female students and secretaries. Desiree is firmly against reconciliation but her sarcastic letters and infidelity provide a reason to tolerate Morris and his latest flirts. Beside the love intrigues, the epistolary discourse mentions actual political and historical events linked to the student revolution, riots, strikes and life threatening boycotts, but also social events like stereotypical traits "versatile" Americans and "closed-off" Brits, and cultural events (when it comes to the structure of the university, study programs, student structure and the atmosphere of academic society).

Beside the epistolary discourse, a part of Lodge's novel, called *For Reading* consists of articles, ads, daily news, records, comments, manifestos, analytical notes statements and other newspaper types which the author uses to credibly and above all, transparently show events or people crucial to the plot or the

revelation of the novel's plot. Since we are talking about different newspaper types, from the author's personal point of view, the same theme is divided from different points of view with the goal of an entire overview, independent from the author's final attitude. The events concern the year 1968 and the student revolution, turmoil and dissatisfaction of young people who wanted political change, emancipation and sexual equality, both in the U.S. and Great Britain. Since the intensity of the revolution was much stronger in America due to the Freedom of speech movement in 1964, which began at the University of Berkley, the American students were noticeably louder, more demanding and more violent, while the atmosphere at the British university became "politely" heated. But the struggle for social change, democracy and better social rights equally accelerated a reform of the university, advanced the dialogue within the academic community and enabled better student rights.

Furthermore, the modernity of the novel ensues from choosing a film screenplay as the finishing chapter that shows a blueprint of the film with its belonging elements: the description of the scenery, the time during which the story takes place and basic instructions about the actors. At the center of the plot, Lodge placed the confrontation between the main characters, Hilary and Phillip Swallow and Desiree and Morris Zapp, first on an airplane, then in a hotel room. After admitting their mutual infidelities, the main characters try to come to a compromise, both in love and in life. Beside the satire, Lodge's autobiographical element as a theorist comes into play, which he uses for the ambiguity of the very ending: "What I want to say is, you mentally prepare for the ending of the novel. While you are reading, you are aware of the fact that the book has one or two pages left, and you are prepared to close it. But in film there is no way to make out the difference, especially today when films are structured much loosely and have more meanings than ever. There is no way to tell which shot is going to be the last one. The film flows, just like life flows,, people act this way or that way, they do this or they do that, drink, talk, we watch them and in the moment of the director's choosing, with no warning, with nothing resolved, explained, rounded up, the film simply... ends" (Lodge, 2001, p. 279). Since it is a trilogy, the plot continues in the next two books.

The contemporary postmodern novel is pointed towards the instrument of literary creation, or a language used for narrating. However, the threading of different textual discourses like newspaper articles, film screenplays and letters is not the primary role of Lodge's novel. These procedures are not meant to create a new understanding of cultural history, nor is tradition accepted in a new way: Lodge's academic novel only talks about university matters which can but are not obligated to be read from a personal position, a contemporary position, looking for certain allusions of today's academic community. In this context,

Lodge's novel remains in the domain of modern literary expression as a feature characteristic of the academic novel, and literary procedures of narrating (newspaper articles, letters and film screenplays) and satirization, on the one hand confirm the separation from everyday reality, from the contents of a wider social significance, while on the other hand they come closer to it, when it comes to the stereotypical, without deepening the psychological analysis and expressing the psychological state, which is characteristic of the epistolary form.

The Academic novel in the context of Croatian literature

Events in literature always took place alongside stormy changes on the social and political scene. However much some literary historians try to categorize national literature according to some immanent literary traits, this is often impossible because the events in the political or cultural history determine the shifting of literary lines and styles. The same goes for Croatian literature in the last two to three decades.

In European terms, the key events that changed the political and cultural image took place in 1968. The student riots and *The Prague Spring* marked the end of a great enlightening idea about absolute emancipation, equality of genders and total freedom of speech. "Beat", "hippie" and "punk" and other youth movements brought in from America developed a special counterculture by knocking down the modernistic cultural elitism.

The breaking point for the Croatian social, cultural and political scene took place in 1971, with the attempt of redefining the relationships in Yugoslavia. The movement called "the Croatian spring" ended with the capitulation of the Croatian party leadership in Karadordevo in December of the same year and with the victory of the conservative Unitarian forces. The failure was followed by the exile of intellectuals and artists, trials and a new emigrational wave. Hard times came, full of political pressure, stronger repression and ideological surveillance over artistic production. The crisis peaked in the late 1980's. At the same time, the political events in the former Soviet Union shape the political landscape: one by one, Communist regimes fall. In May of 1990, Croatia had its first independent elections since World War II. The Croatian people chose a parliamentary democracy and multi-party political system. After the war, and the establishment of an independent Croatian state, the Croatian literary stage had a time of postmodernism, defined by "esthetic signatures like intertextuality, intermedia, quotes, pastiche, palimpsest, *remake*, recycling, compilations, etc." (Nemec, 2003, p. 257-264).

In the diverse and ever more jumbled production it is possible to notice the poorly represented, but profiled narrative model of the academic novel. As an

example we have two Croatian novelists, Marinko Koščec (1967) and Dražen Ilinčić (1962).

Next to the socially more involved novels *Otok pod morem* (2008), *Netko drugi* (2001), *To malo pijeska na dlanu* (2005), *Centimetar od sreće* (2008), *Četvrti čovjek* (2011), Koščec's novel *Wonderland* (2003) which won the V.B.Z. award for the best novel, mostly deals with the academic community, but also with the sociopolitical circumstances that follow it. Dražen Ilinčić's novels *Berlinski zid* (2006) and *Posljednji korak* are no less critical, considering they discuss homosexuality.

The connective tissue of these two Croatian novels can certainly be found in the genre definition of the academic novel which beside having an academic frame and characters from the academic community, can also have themes and characters from the social margins. However, other criteria according to David Lodge's paradigmatic novel should be taken into account.

The features of satire in Koščec's *Wonderland* and Ilinčić's *Posljednji korak* shine through the theme, characters and narrative procedures. Both novels portray a middle - aged professor who tries to exist within a duplicitous and hypocritical academic and wider social community which relies on elitism, corruption, realization and tycoonship. Both Koščec's unnamed Professor and Ilinčić's unnamed/anonymous Pero describe and comment not only on the impressive atmosphere at the University of Zagreb but also on many other current (and in Croatia, deeply rooted) themes. Ranging from bourgeois primitivism, academic mediocrity and "idyllic" metropolitan suburbs, bigotry, ridiculous literary promotions, infantile TV program, local music scene and studio program, to the corruptness of health system, education and politics, both authors constantly draw on literary procedures of satire in order to easier get through Croatian reality which surrounds them. Also, supporting characters such as Allreaching, Young Hope, and Happy Kljukovac have these general names that are in the service of strengthening the satire. It is this universality of their names which shows just how much society, or individuals in that society, are limited by their identities.

What differentiates these novels from the British paradigm is the unusual alternation of the narrative. In Koščec's *Wonderland*, the paragraphs written in the third person alternate with the ones written in the first person, and it happens without graphic signs in the text, the same as when the narration becomes a commentary or when it becomes a presentation of psychological states. However, it is a bit difficult to follow when the narrator, without an obvious reason, sets himself this or that way. Such alternation of the narrative procedure, unlike Lodge's narration through omniscient narrator, makes Koščec's narrator unreliable, because his narration is set mostly by his own point

of view, his own personal impressions and feelings, so the reader has no reason to believe him more than any other character. However, to justify such a procedure, we should take into account possible binary oppositions which in Koščec's novel are signified by the relationship between the academic/family community, and an individual's destiny, because of which the university professor, trapped in his mother – in – law's apartment with too many of his wife's family, expecting a child and his wife's twin pregnancy with a steady career, turns to a separate world, filled with kinky/erotic fantasies. Thus, by changing the narrative procedures of the narrator, the binary relationship of reality and fiction which the author uses to satirize is even more pronounced. To the events surrounding him, such as alienation, emptiness, quasi – intellectualism, questionable humanity and immorality, bourgeoisie, primitivism, the Professor answers with *spirit*, imagination, hiding within himself, and thus, the satire is felt in that very attempt of building a singular, fictitious world, which is no more humane and in order, than the real world. For example, in reality, the hero will humbly take insults and attacks from the nervous driver whom he had cut off in traffic, while in his imagination, he will bravely tell him off, respond to a violent threat by hitting first: Or he will fantasize about taking female students in consultations or exams, in his imagination will develop an impossible erotic scene, which he will be ashamed of as soon as he comes to. Eventually, he will admit this: "Kind, generous friend, the narrator is not senile" (Koščec, 2003, p. 148).

Also, this binary relationship between reality and fiction is noticeable in Ilinčić's *Posljednji korak*. The main character Pero wants to become an artist/writer, but does not want to be a person who talks about literature, or the artistic world without passion, or the one who humiliates others in order to promote himself and joins clans and fashionable societies. Thus, Ilinčić's protagonist only after death comes out of reality and starts to write fiction in the form of satire as an acclaimed and respected writer. The main hero Pero was, just like Koščec's Professor, an invisible member of academic and literary society, who worked just enough to earn, because "one needs to have a job": "As a scientist, he surely is not behind Rikard, so his results would bring him equal reputation, had they not been published in the wrong publications, had they been supported by more prominent critics, or had they not been left in the drawer, due to negligence or lack of ambition" (Koščec, 2003, p. 40).

Satire as a feature of the academic novel shines through "binary oppositions" of reality and fiction from which it comes, and just like in Lodge's *Changing Places*, it produces stereotypes about the Croatian academic community. We should list a few common characteristics in Ilinčić's and Koščec's novels: university presents an elite institution: "While enjoying their elitism, they are

also safe from trans – categorical comparisons. Because the academic, prostitute – like, veteran and all other elites have their own super – elite, politics and music scene, two sorority branches came to be on a golden television tree” (Koščec, 2003, p. 14). The professors are untouchable icons and mediocrities: “...once you earn a doctorate, nobody can take it away from you, nobody asks if you remember a single letter” (Koščec, 2003, p. 36), and they live at the expense of public budget – parasites: “Who really needs that which the Professor contributes to society? Isn't it perplexing that they want to pay him for it? What good does his existence do locally and globally? It isn't even harmless, because in order to get through his miserable life, he spends state and natural resources” (Koščec, 2003, p. 52). At the same time, the teaching profession is not paid enough: “...he gives the cabbie his seventy – eight kuna, fine, fine. For that much money he spends an entire afternoon working on his articles for the Lexicon of Literature” (Koščec, 2003, p. 184). The professors are pedophiles and bullies: “Rikard beat up a student! In the middle of a test, he jumped at her and started to slap her, to hit her on the head with a dictionary, that is enough of it, that somebody has to put a stop to this flood of nothingness, of human mud, or who knows what, the kid came to me, crying, and he kept on yelling in the hallways, until he was subdued by the doormen” (Koščec, 2003, p. 186). Art and science are relative professions: “And everyone will become a higher breed, a higher species! People nowadays sign themselves as authors into every little thing, in every area, which before was a term reserved for creators or the widest spiritual range” (Ilinčić, 2013, p. 138). There is also nepotism, frauds, falsely acquired titles, etc.

The stereotypical features of the academic community confirm the double role of the academic novel: didactic function and entertainment. But, the Croatian academic novel, next to attempting to better the function inside the academic community, also tries to raise the reputation of the university, the professors, and the academic activities within the society. By pointing out their shortcomings, and by stereotyping, Ilinčić and Koščec make their audience laugh less and less with their satire, and more and more remind them of the reality they find themselves in, and are a part of.

Furthermore, the genre of the Croatian academic novel also has autobiographical features because it can be used to show and confirm the authenticity of the author's narration, didactic intent and literary procedure of satire. Just like David Lodge, Marinko Koščec is a contemporary Croatian writer, a professor of French literature at the Department of French language, at the University of Zagreb, an editor in the publishing house SysPrint, who tries to bring his experience of knowing the academic world and living in it to the reader: “Better yet, the text becomes larger than the person who envisioned it. It forces him to his own service; makes him feed it, to put it entirely in his mouth, and to

create food any way he can, since he does not have anything to give from himself. Thus, almost against his will, the author's "I" turns to the world and merges with it. The world becomes it's media, it's texture and it's destination. This is what differentiates "a book" from entries in a diary. This, incidentally, is why I write books: to deepen, multiply, and enrage my relationships to the world." (Dugandžija, 2014, online).

Moreover, Dražen Ilinčić studied English and comparative literature at the University of Zagreb, as a long – standing journalist in HTV's (Croatian National Television) editorial board for culture, he unquestionably knows the surroundings of which he writes and by this confirms the credibility of his story. Beside the topics from the academic world, the academic novel in its categorization can have marginal topics, such as homosexuality. In Ilinčić's *Posljednji korak*, the resigned narrator talks about his joyless life in the first person, marked with shame, not only for his literary aspirations and academic circles, but also because of his homosexuality. As a homosexual, Ilinčić lays out his analogy in a interview: "It seemed cute to me that this ambitionless hero works sloppily at some academic department. It felt stupid to make him an actor or a media personality. You know how this college rooms are, they still look at the yard, completely hidden from everything, a man can comfortably and lively hide from everything. From his life, from his career... The book is a criticism of any given artistic circle. We live in mediocre surroundings that nurtures mediocrity and loves it. Success and fame in society are achieved by agreement, things get interconnected. You know who you are supposed to have coffee with, how scholarships are given away, how the people praise each other... The only relationship in creating is the one with the audience. I am fortunate enough that TV allows me to nurture a more author – like approach. Since I live in the center of the city and do not drive a car, people often stop me to say – 'Oh, I loved your show!'" (Dugandžija, 2014, online). Besides the everyday living in a homophobic society, Ilinčić describes the position as a homosexual from his own personal experience within the gay society, which is also closed off, alienated and intolerant: "In a bar for queennes in Zagreb; I notice that not a lot of people meet each other, and go to more intimate places, like apartments. It's more or less the same crowd, an emphasized good cheer, laughing, but I get the impression that there is not much joy, but there surely is some nervousness and fear" (Ilinčić, 2013, p. 57). Besides, the literary community for which he feels more and more aversion is unjust and hypocritical, and breaks itself between the resistance and belonging to literary circles: "instead of making art a way of experiencing life, these so – called artists understand art as a way for other people to experience them" (Ilinčić, 2013, p. 31).

Individual narrative figures (people, space, time, events) in a whole, become shapes with which we can suggest a probable reality where seeds of Ilinčić's intimate confession and Koščec's pseudo – autobiography can be assumed, linked to the narrator's profession (writer, professor), setting (Zagreb, Novi Vinodolski, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences), and spaces in which he came to know himself (his office). With such a strategy, both novels make immediate connection with the experienced reality and everyday life. Of course, just like in a paradigmatic academic novel, it falls apart and disappears because of satire and stereotypes.

A literary performance which suggests a traditional, a modern or a postmodern academic novel in the Croatian academic prose comes to fruition by combining different narrative procedures and forms, and also, by playing with narrative perspectives, intertextual strategies, allusions to different books, films, music, history. Also, a deep psychological characterization and expression of the psychological state, introspection, retrospection, longing for harmonization of one's own existence, signifies the search for one's own, but also national identity. This is what makes these novels stylistically and thematically modern: the individual and how his work influences the (twisted) society, and vice versa. The Croatian academic novel fills such referential frames with another feature which should be found within the genre of the *Bildungsroman*, with a note that it does not matter that the characters end up tragically (Pero gets killed, and the Professor dies emotionally), they find their inner peace, and represent progress and hope for a society beyond hope.

Conclusion

The discussion of the development of the academic novel genre resulted in many classifications through which the following features can be singled out: (1) satire as a dominant literary procedure that comes out of the plot, characters and narrative procedures of the academic novel; (2) stereotype as a crossroad between low- and highbrow literature; (3) autobiography as a crossroad between reality and fiction with the (non) purpose of the didactic, and (4) the use of the literary procedure characteristic for a classic, a modern and or a contemporary academic novel.

In Croatian literary studies the concept of the academic novel is relatively unknown, due to few translations of scientific literature and literary material, but also because of different geopolitical and historical circumstances closely connected with the development of science and academic society.

The above mentioned classification of features of academic novels is applied in the classification of the British novel *Changing Places: The Story of Two Campuses* by David Lodge, and has been confirmed as a paradigm of academic

prose. The Croatian novels *Posljednji korak* by Dražen Ilinčić and *Wonderland* by Marinko Koščec share similar features with the English academic novel and bring to the following conclusions in analysis and interpretations.

Satire as the dominant feature of the academic novel in Lodge's *Changing Places* comes out of the need to bridge the gap between the university and a wide reading audience. Next to this, Lodge's "binary oppositions" are catalysts which are used to accelerate and simplify – make stereotypical judgments about the British and American university, their faculty, study programs and students. Koščec's and Ilinčić's satire also has a similar role of binding and better understanding of both the academic, and the everyday world, but it's message is a burdening, and even a depressing one, in a sense of urgency of social, political, economic and cultural problems which troubles Croatia as a country in transition, or as a full member of the EU.

Mutual stereotypical features of the academic community are making all three academic novels even more complicated when we consider the problem of the low- and highbrow literature. The academic novel bows to the interpretation of "a lower type of literature", because the academic world is relativized with satire, and thus, the new stereotypes are actually schematic features within the genre, that the average reader can easily recognize. However, it is also possible to interpret the novels within the features of high-brow literature, according to which the academic novel, just like *Bildungsroman* is completely focused on the reader. The Croatian academic novel also tries to raise the questionable reputation of universities, professors, and academic function within the society in general.

The credibility that comes out of autobiographical features as immediate connection with the experienced reality, which both British and Croatian academic novels us, is tarnished by the literary procedure of satire as a indirect link with fiction and makes the novel more interesting for a wider audience. Just like another binary opposition, (reality/fiction), the didactic function and the low-brow literary value of the academic novel is confirmed. The author of the Croatian novel *Posljednji korak* is not a direct member of the academic community, thus he is not a college professor, but a homosexual, but his direct role is transferred to a wider definition of the academic novel which includes the theme of homosexuality. This means that the analogy between the homosexual orientation and the academic society refers to alienation and homophobia, both outside the community and in it.

Lodge's academic novel exclusively deals with academic topics which may or may not be inferred from his own position that is a necessarily contemporary position by searching for certain allusions to the contemporary academic community. In this context, Lodge's *Changing Places* remains in the domain of a

modern literary expression as a classification characteristic for the academic novel, and the literary procedures of combining (newspaper articles, letters and film screenplays) and satirization, on one hand, confirm the alienation from everyday reality, from the content of a wider societal meaning, while on the other hand, they come closer to it, when it comes to stereotypes, without any deeper meaning of the psychological analysis and expressions of psychological states which is more characteristic for the epistolary form. Literary performance of Ilinčić's and Koščec's novel is realized with the combining of different narrative procedures and forms, and also by playing with narrative perspectives, intertextual strategies, allusions to different books, films, music, and history. Unlike Lodge's novel, the deepened psychological characterization and expression of the psychological state, introspection, retrospection, and the longing for harmonization of one's own existence signifies the search for one's own, but also national identity. This is what makes the Croatian academic novels stylistically and thematically modern and more than didactic, in the sense that an individual and his work influence a (twisted) society, and vice versa.

Similarly to the English academic novel *Changing Places: The Tale of Two Campus*, through determination and application of classification properties of the academic novel, Croatian novels by Dražen Ilinčić and Marinko Koščec make the Croatian literary genealogy richer for one more genre.

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