

JEANS STYLE

Aleksandar Flaker and Popular Culture

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1 Stamać, Ante: Smjerovi istraživanja književnosti. In: Ders./Škreb, Zdenko (Eds.): Uvod u književnost. Teorija, metodologija. Zagreb: Globus 1998, pp. 551-589, here p. 551.

2 Oraić Tolić, Dubravka: Aleksandar Flaker i Zagrebacka skola. In: Užarević, Josip (Ed.): Oko književnosti. Osamdeset godina Aleksandra Flakera. Zagreb: Disput 2004, pp. 21-38, considers Zdenko Škreb, Aleksandar Flaker and Ivo Franges to be the »founding fathers« of the Zagreb Stylistic School, and to the category of »younger brothers« she assigns Stanko Lasić, Miroslav Bekker, Viktor Zmegač, Milivoj Solar, Radoslav Katičić, Krunoslav Pranjić and Gajo Peles.

3 Dukić, Davor: Promislanje književne historiografije u hrvatskoj znanosti o književnosti. In: Biti, Vladimir/Ivic, Nenad/Užarević, Josip (Eds.): Trag i razlika. Citanja suvremene književne teorije. Zagreb: Nakl. MD / HUDHZ 1995, pp. 39-56; Užarević, Josip: Znanost o književnosti i teorija interpretacije. In: Biti/Ivic/Užarević 1995, pp. 13-37; Oraić Tolić 2004, pp. 21-38.

4 Užarević 1995, pp. 13-37.

5 Cf. Johnson, Richard: Što su uopće kulturalni studiji? In: Quorum XVII/3 (2001), pp. 178-237.

6 Clothes, soap-operas, shopping malls, glossy magazines and, of course, literature. It is a well-known fact that *Mythologies* by Roland Barthes (Paris 1957) have established all these as the scope of their interest. It is also worthwhile to mention that literature was the main discipline of the founders of cultural studies in Birmingham Center, Raymond Williams and Richard Hoggart. Cf. Duda, Dean: Kulturalni studiji. Zagreb: AGM 2002, p. 19.

7 Ibid., p. 11: »Discourse of cultural studies opposes, in more than one way, each of the three traditionally

I.

Contemporary literary theory – an offspring of the past two decades – is so extensively marked by the vastness of its domain and the extent of its problems, that it is, theoretically and practically speaking, impossible to achieve its full systematization, that is to form the unique epistemological paradigm.¹

These words, written by the Croatian literary theoretician Ante Stamać, are quoted here for two reasons:

1. They are a part of the introduction to chapter *Directions of Literary Research* (which is also the last chapter of capital work of contemporary Croatian literary theory, *Uvod u književnost [Introduction to Literature]*);
2. They implicitly state three basic problems that prevent homogeneity and standardization of scientific texts, i.e. the question of object, methods and goals of study.

Contemporary Croatian literary theory (before the »troublesome« past two decades, mentioned by Stamać) and its institutional independence are heavily marked by the works of so called *Zagreb Stylistic School*.² A number of (more) contemporary experts³ have attempted to offer a (historiographical) systematization of works by the members of the Zagreb Stylistic School, as well as to point out the directions of the School's development and the dynamics of thought achieved by each of the School's members. They confirmed the *Croatian Philological Society* (1950) as the institution that gave contemporary Croatian literary theory its form,⁴ the literary magazine *Umjetnost riječi (Art of Words, 1957)* as the means to disseminate ideas of literary theory and criticism, and the collection of papers *Uvod u književnost (Introduction to Literature, 1961, 1969, 1983, 1989, 1998)* as the synthesis of the work achieved by authors that marked this particularly vital period, the »golden age« of Croatian literary theory, and offered the methodological framework for establishing dialogue with the next generation of literary theoreticians.

Authors who belonged to the Zagreb Stylistic School considered the literary text (determined by the elements of style and theme in the literary text, and not by race, class and moment) as a starting and final point of literary analysis. Classification and periodisation of literature, as the utmost goals of literary analysis, are developed through the immanent approach to fiction. Of course, more recent achievements in literary theory have now prevailed over this idea. The poststructuralist turn, which abandoned the system of binary oppositions and undermined previously stable parameters of philosophical, aesthetic and sociological thought, reached its peak in deconstruction and cultural studies, which are based on the neomarxist doctrine of cultural materialism and its offspring, the Frankfurt School – most of all on Horkheimer's and Adorno's *Dialektik der Aufklärung (1947)*, Althusser's theory of ideological provisions of society, and Gramsci's neoliberal doctrine and its critique of hegemony of thought. Anticipating the idea of cultural industry as the prerequisite for the foundation and functioning of cultural mechanisms,⁵ cultural studies, however, in their further development, were based on undermining the traditional epistemological elements. By proclaiming itself (at least formally) as a branch of the humanities whose area of interest expands indefinitely into the domain of so-called cultural practices,⁶ cultural studies deliberately (and under presumption of aversion towards anything conventional⁷) doesn't establish the methodological apparatus. Cultural studies have no apparent systematic methodology nor limitations of their area of interest.

Identification of the discursive context, i.e. culture, is placed in a vast area: it can be a »nationalist discourse, fashion discourse, anthropological discourse, discourse of literary criticism, wine-growing, Marxism, feminism, cultural studies or even discourse of common sense«. ⁸ Without the need to engage any further in polemics with the principles of such studies, we shall focus on their positive aspect: if it wants to remain functional, the humanities (even though in such a context cultural studies leave the impression of an epistemological *cul de sac*) must be open to the inclusion of different areas. The same can be stated about literary theory:

key epistemological elements (discipline, area of research, methods of research) and is, furthermore, based on their undermining.»

8 O'Sullivan et al. In: Duda 2002, p. 10.

9 Stamać 1998, p. 554.

10 Zmegač, Viktor: Problematika književne poviješti. In: Škreb/Stamać 1998, pp. 35-73, here p. 47.

11 Cf. Duda 2002, p. 21.

12 Užarević 1995, p. 13.

13 Katičić, Radoslav: Književnost i jezik. In: Škreb/Stamać 1998, pp. 107-130, here p. 120.

14 Ibid., p. 123.

15 Biti, Vladimir: Pojmovnik suvremene književne teorije. Zagreb: Matica Hrvatska 1997, p. 387.

16 Flaker, Aleksandar: Umjetnička proza. In: Škreb/Stamać 1998, pp. 335-377, here p. 373.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid.

20 Williams, Raymond: Analysis of Culture. In: Williams, R.: The Long Revolution. Harmondsworth: Penguin 1965, pp. 57-88, here p. 57.

21 Even the title of the magazine *Umjetnost riječi* was initiated by Flaker. The title is meant to suggest theoretical principles of this particular circle of literary theoreticians: art/literature is the sum of procedures through which things are put out of the automatism of perception.

22 The Tartu School turned towards the analysis of the entire culture, and not literature in particular, only in its later phases. But, even then, culture was seen »in its dualism [...], as the part of a broader cultural mechanism«. In: Lotman, Jurij Mihaljovič: Kultura e eksplozija. Zagreb: Alfa 1998, p. 208.

While establishing its disciplines and pursuing the paths of its research, it is simultaneously dependent on a world view, conceptions and ethical notions of its time; in other words: on its historical situation.⁹

II.

According to the general view of the Zagreb Stylistic School, literature is a privileged, autonomous and highly placed (in the hierarchy of cultural knowledge) sub-system of society,¹⁰ its essence and artistic crystallization. On the other hand, contemporary literary theory and most of all cultural studies regard literature as something more common, as an object placed firmly within society and emancipated from elitist exclusivity.¹¹ Soap operas, glossy magazines and literature are regarded as equally valuable texts examined by theoretical discourse. More precisely, literary text »is not some kind of substantial reality any more, it is an intersection of codes and relationships«. ¹² The Zagreb Stylistic School, which based its work on principles of inherence and the ideas developed by formalism and structuralism, considered the literary text an enclosed and privileged object of theoretical analysis.

In the first edition of *Uvod u književnost*, Radoslav Katičić, a linguist by initial vocation, in an attempt to prove the distinguishing marks between fictional and non-fictional texts, stresses that the reader is the element which determines whether a »combination of words« will be adequately (that is, purposefully) perceived. Rightfully noting that the »fictional or non-fictional nature of texts depends exclusively on the plane of realization of their contents, in other words – on the reader's attitude«, ¹³ Katičić establishes a direct relationship between the text as a linguistic base and the context as its external, non-linguistic structure; this is established not only on the level of the formal organization of the literary text, but on the level of the semantic relevance of the particular structure, as well. This step out into context, made by the well-known Croatian linguist, can be interpreted as a fundamental liberation from the limitations of inherence, which were still vital in Croatian theory at the time. Therefore, it is important to explain Katičić's concept more thoroughly. According to Katičić, understanding the context does not include the »non-linguistic world in which a linguistic content is realised«. ¹⁴ Such a dilemma – simultaneous inclusion and exclusion of the non-linguistic plane in realization of contents – can be solved by putting Katičić's concept into the context of Riffaterre's structural stylistics, in which literarity is a necessary part of the process of reading itself: »Text has the ability to prepare and at the same time to redirect reader's expectations.« ¹⁵ Therefore, in Katičić's concept, non-linguistic structure doesn't exclude allusions to a broader, non-linguistic cultural and social reality: the reader's position – in the very moment of reading – is determined by the literary text. However, Katičić remains within the framework of the inherent approach to literary text.

Professor emeritus Aleksandar Flaker, one of the founders of the Zagreb Stylistic School is responsible for the chapter on prose in *Uvod u književnost*. The final words of this chapter (in the latest edition from 1998) point out that a significant factor in the »creation of [the] contemporary novel« is its »interaction with the visual communications of mass-media«. ¹⁶ Flaker doesn't stop at the remark that television, especially »in the first years of its existence«, ¹⁷ when a number of popular TV-adaptations of prosaic masterpieces was made, was highly dependant on »a novel and its tradition«. ¹⁸ By raising the question about the relationship between TV and literature (»would it be wrong to say that literature is already under pressure because of the television's need for interesting stories and other elements fit for this media?« ¹⁹), Flaker implicitly suggests that one creative act of literary production loses its autonomy: it is now placed somewhere between the mechanisms of production, circulation and consumption of cultural products. Literature opens up towards the media and, after that, towards consumers who define the structure of cultural needs and desires. This process is, of course, reversible: the structure of literary texts itself became influenced by the media, media culture and the consumer's desire. The form and contents of literary texts became dependent on the needs of the market, and literature itself became (which is, after all, a part of culturology's agenda) a form of practice »such as production, commerce, politics or raising a family«. ²⁰ Let us not forget that Flaker, in his formative period as a literary theoretician, was a successor of formalism²¹ and the Prague School of structuralism (Mukarovsky), as well as the Tartu School (especially early Lotman); none of them is incompatible with the »rigid« immanentism²² of his most influential work so far, *Stilske formacije* (*Stylistic Formations*):

23 Flaker, Aleksandar: *Stilske formacije*. Zagreb: SNL 1986, p. 45.

24 According to Pavličić, Pavao: Rani Flaker. In: Užarević 2004, pp. 11-19, the »early« Flaker was a historian, and the »mature« Flaker (since 1970's) is a culturologist. His mature works were more influential, and can be considered »a common good in Croatian literary theory«.

25 Haramija, Dragica: *Zanri slovenskega mladinskega realističnega romana*. Ljubljana 2003, pp. 171-179.

26 I would like to briefly point out that the Symposium was titled *Romanticism in Slavic Literatures*. Did Flaker, who first applied for participation and only after he »started [...] to read« (Flaker, Aleksandar: *Proza u trapericama*. Zagreb: Liber 1983, p. 19), saw the young narrator of »young prose« primarily as the manifestation of romantic »Wertherism«?

27 Flaker 1983, p. 62.

28 *Ibid.*, p. 29.

29 Fiske, John: *Understanding Popular Culture*. London, New York: Routledge 1989.

social formation of literary text or stylistic formation as a whole is not determined on the basis of our knowledge of non-literary, social and economical processes, but primarily upon the structural relationships within the literary text or stylistic formation itself.²³

My main thesis here is that literary theory in the beginning of the 20th century (when, with the rise of Russian formalism and American new criticism, it detached itself from the interpretation method and positivism) followed a similar path as Croatian literary theory, which through the works of Aleksandar Flaker (especially in the later period of his research²⁴) began its process of separation from the idea that the literary text is a privileged object of literary research.

III.

The final confirmation of these examples of a shift in the theoretical paradigm can be found in Flaker's other mature works (such as *Poetika osporavanja*, 1982; *Ruska avangarda*, 1984; *Nomadi ljepote. Intermedijalne studije*, 1988; *Riječ, slika, grad. Hrvatske intermedijalne studije*, 1995; *Književne vedute*, 1999). Even their form (Croatian literary critics refer to them as »picture-books«) and their contents prove their profound influence on the activation of the connection between literature and culture. However, this shift occurred even earlier: a general disposition towards knowledge, as well as the critique of theory and science in the 1970's (that can be traced particularly to the works of Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu) coincided with the changes in Flaker's theoretical works. Early signs of this modification can be found in his *Proza u trapericama* (*Jeans Prose*, 1976, 1983), which was originally published in Germany under the title *Modelle der Jeans-Prosa* (Kronberg/Taunus, 1975). Flaker gave the foundations of this typology, initially called »young prose«, in his paper written for the Slavistics symposium in Warsaw in 1973, the work was later published in Croatia under the title *Hrvatska proza u trapericama* (*Croatian Jeans Prose*), 1974, and afterwards in the daily papers *Vecernji list* (*Književnost u trapericama*, 11. i 12. 1. 1975). Certain segments of this book were published abroad even before the German edition: in 1973 in a Polish translation (*Szkic do badan »Mlodej prozy«*), in 1980 in English (*Salinger's Model in East European Prose*, 1980), and in 1982 in German (*»Jeans-Prosa« in den Slawischen Literaturen und in der DDR*, 1982). The validity of this model was confirmed in Poland in 1976 (in a collection of papers on literature after World War I, *Pokolenia i grupy literackie po 1918 roku. Antologia opracowań i szkiców krytycznoliterackich*, Kraków), and after that in Hungary (Miklós Szabolcsi: *Próza – farmerban*, Nagyvilág, 1977). But echoes of Flaker's model are still vital in literary theory in the region of former Yugoslavia: Bosnian experts connect jeans prose with the new reality prose, Serbian and Macedonian literary theory accepted the term »jeans prose« (*proza u farmerkama*) for the description of certain models of prose with urban motives, and Slovenian critics apply the term »jeans novel« (*roman v kaubojkah/jeans roman*) to describe a genre of the so-called youth novel.²⁵

Flaker's model of jeans prose is based on the antagonism of the novel's protagonists (primarily from Central and East-European literature²⁶) towards the world of adults, rural prose and consumerist cosmopolitanism (»the world of hi-tech and material prosperity, the world of the *establishment*«²⁷). The reader wants to become friends with the novel's author (Salinger), and heroes are joined in gangs on the basis of – if nothing else – the nice weather (Stefanović) or animosity towards the old (Aksenov). Although all heroes are oriented towards the future (»not everything is lost yet«, Soljan), they don't necessarily wear jeans: the jeans motive symbolises the ironic superiority and oppositional attitude of the hero (individual) gang towards the Other of everyday culture. Flaker is reluctant to explicitly call jeans a »totem« of culture or cultural practice, although he sees in this garment »an attitude, not just a pair of trousers« (Plenzdorf): »In general, I am not inclined to ideographically interpret literary texts and incorporate sociological elements or alimonies into them.«²⁸ However, jeans are an attitude of being free, and this element of their concept provokes us to associate Flaker the historian (jeans as a form of resistance) with culturology (jeans as an object that negates social differences, an object which is a *free act of resistance*²⁹).

Here I would like to analyse more thoroughly the way in which Flaker's reading of jeans prose opposes standard contemporary models of interpretation. Writing about the attitudes towards the condition of 20th century theory and science, Josip Užarević makes

30 Užarević 1995, p. 26.

31 A broad spectrum of writers can be placed within this model: Russian (Vasily Aksenov, Anatoly Gladilin, Valentin Kataev and Vladimir Nikolaevich Voinovich), Serbian (Bora Cosić, Momo Kapor, Dragoslav Mihailović, Milislav Savić, Mirjana Stefanović, Svetozar Vlajković), Slovenian (Rudi Seligo), Polish (Janusz Andermann, Ernest Bryll, Marek Hlasko, Tadeusz Konwicki, Marek Nowakowski, Edward Stachura), Macedonian (Dimitar Solev), German (Volker Braun, Ulrich Plentzdorff, Rolf Schneider, Karin Struck), Bulgarian (Stanislav Stratiev), Ukrainian (Valery Shevchuk) and, finally, Croatian (Tito Bilopavlović, Kazimir Klarić, Vojislav Kuzmanović, Alojz Majetic, Zvonimir Majdak, Grozdana Olujić, Pavao Pavličić, Ivan Slamnig and Antun Soljan).

32 Flaker 1983, p. 60.

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid., p. 16.

36 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 132f.

37 Ibid., p. 74.

38 Duda 2002, p. 16.

39 Williams 1965, p. 57.

40 Ibid.

41 Flaker 1983, p. 216.

42 Ibid., p. 96.

43 Duda 2002, p. 21.

44 Ibid., p. 24.

45 I should mention that, according to Flaker, opposition has a far deeper meaning than the one demonstrated (in the sociological sense of the hero's aversion towards nature, technology or the grown-up Other) in *Proza u trapericama*. In *Stilske formacije*, the work of the historian interested in description of a literary system in its totality, Flaker the structuralist claims that some sort of opposition is »inherent to any literary text as a work of art« (Flaker 1986, p. 39). Flaker's description of stylistic formations, founded in typologies proposed by Mukarovsky and Jakobson, uses the opposition »between [...] the aesthetic function and societal function« (*ibid.*) as one of the major distinguishing marks among formations.

46 The concept of young prose was not »saying enough about what I

an interesting remark: »the observer's position and the way he looks at things are crucial (inseparable) components of the cognitive process.«³⁰ Flaker, as a historian and successor of the Zagreb Stylistic School, sees language/style as the key categories that enable us to talk about jeans prose as a literary model which has poetics of its own. Usually, this type of prose modifies spontaneous speech in order to isolate the hero from the world of adults (through the proliferation of language) and places him within the sphere of the underaged. Although in further explanation of the basic opposition³¹ the author disassociates himself from the potential reader's interpretation, in which the »opposition us – them«³² is »given [...] on the level of social juxtaposition«,³³ on the linguistic level Flaker the culturologist adds the cultural paradigm as well: opposition is given »on the level of *cultural* and linguistic disagreement«. Flaker's analytical process intensifies the structural patterns inherent to text: analysis of the narrator (the intelligent narrator »that wears jeans«; the brutal and intelligent narrator), language (of the young; urban slang) and intertextual and transcultural elements of the text's structure (quoting of literary classics and the culture of modern mass media). However, in our opinion, Flaker's cognitive process (which leads to such an analysis) was developed in clear (although unconscious to the author himself) interaction of the way he sees the text and the way he sees culture. In the introduction to his analysis, Flaker states something crucial: the purpose of the study is to »talk [...] not only about the particular type of prose which is apparently widely spread in our culture, *but about >these things<, that is to say about a lots of stuff that actually lie outside of the narrow field of theoretical observation*«. ³⁵

Flaker notices that clothes are a sign of one's social status.³⁶ They are also a concept used for the creation of a myth, which encourages the masses (by the demasking of »the myth of a beautiful, happy world, >the best of all worlds«³⁷) to reposition the myth from a former, peripheral status (a myth about a boy or girl in jeans) to the center of the text/culture. The cognitive horizon of *Proza u trapericama* included the interpretation of meaning and value of the patterns of everyday life: of love relationships demoted to mere carnal pleasure, of the reduced ability to assess or develop one's own identity, of a specific relationship towards the world of nature and technology. Flaker made here a shy but significant step from the literary text to the text of culture. Undoubtedly, in this context we could say that Flaker in *Jeans Prose* not only »opens the space for a new way of thinking about everyday symbolic structures and activates a definition of culture«,³⁸ but also engages in an act which Raymond Williams (in his attempt to define culture) calls »cultural analysis«. In Williams' text, crucial for the institutionalization of cultural studies in Great Britain (*Analysis of Culture*, 1965), apart from being ideal and documentary,³⁹ culture is also defined as a social category. Culture, defined in this way, is »a form of activity same as manufacturing, trading, politics or family raising«. ⁴⁰ A novel's heroes define their identities through pop-cultural products (or at least the ones they receive via mass media). On the basis of pop-hits by the Beatles or songs by Frank Zappa and Simon & Garfunkel⁴¹ they create the cultural field which forms jeans prose. Letters recorded on a tape, the hero's way of conduct (»pure blood and natural erotics«⁴²), urban hooliganism that expunges rural elements, the relationship towards the cultural tradition and the world of *establishment* – all this is but a part of everyday symbolic structure. These »mundane activities which [...] are based on particular values and produce meaning«, ⁴³ Flaker didn't, at the time, see as being cultural text (texts). Instead of cultural practice whose power is demonstrated in establishing the structure of a cultural field, Flaker sees in jeans (whether worn out or not) just a potential for establishing a dialogue with the cultural center. Similarly, in the author of jeans prose he sees a way to controvert the traditional epistemological literary structure. In spite of the fact that this process remains unconscious in principle, Flaker nevertheless »took an attitude« which, through the dialogue with pop-cultural phenomena, enabled a new way of thinking in literary theory.

Activation of the intersection of literature and culture is manifested not only on the level of methodological technique, but in the modification of the language of literary theory as well. Let us return to the introductory chapters of *Jeans Prose*. Flaker discontinues with the use of the term »young prose«, considering it too unattractive.⁴⁴ Although he doesn't miss the opportunity to mention that unsatisfactory level of precision⁴⁵ influenced his decision to change the terminology in question, Flaker also points out the unattractiveness of the term »young prose« in comparison to the term »jeans prose«. But he turns towards theoretical discourse⁴⁶ as well, by introducing names such as Walt Disney, Gina Lollobrigida, Louis

wanted to talk about»; however, »the term »jeans prose« is perhaps [...] even less precise than the first one«. In: Flaker 1983, p. 24.

47 Pavličić 2004, pp. 11-19, here p. 19. – He mentions, but only in passing, a few Russian (Shklovsky, Lotman and Bakhtin) and Croatian theoreticians (Batušić, Benešić, Donat, Pavličić, Skreb, Zmegač), as well as Susan Sonntag, Gertrude Stein and Felix Vodicka.

48 Duda 2002, p. 16.

49 Ibid., p. 28.

50 Užarević 1995, p. 17.

51 Flaker 1983, p. 60.

52 Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 130-145.

53 *Ibid.*, p. 70.

54 Duda 2002, p. 10.

55 *Ibid.*

56 *Ibid.*

57 Flaker 1983, p. 29, adds that he was »particularly delighted by the fact that in *Nin* my book was reviewed on society pages«, but at the same time he criticizes the author of this review for ascribing some quotations from *Proza u trapericama* to the »cultural sociologists«. Although the journalist's idea that literature can be used as a tool for analysis of socio-cultural reality is perhaps in collision with the essence that Flaker had in mind, it's not quite sure were the reference is not totally arbitrary: the fact that a theoretical text mentions jeans, tape recorders and pop-music could put into question the very seriousness of the theoretical approach in the 1970's.

58 Užarević 2004.

Armstrong, Ludwig van Beethoven, Frédéric Chopin and Duke Ellington, enriching a capital of cultural knowledge in *Proza u trapericama*. Flaker »writes in such a manner that he can be perfectly understood not only by his fellow theoreticians, but by any educated person as well«.47 The consequence of this fact is the following: »Culture is relocated from the elitist oasis of eternal values, great works of art and sublimity of spirit to the common experience of everyday life.«48

IV.

Flaker's sensitivity regarding cultural context, that dominates in the analysis in *Proza u trapericama*, binds together the meaning of text and social experience. By demonstrating that subjects are socially constructed (they listen to popular music, watch movies, wear jeans), Flaker assumes a critical position towards »the theoretical approaches that favor only one point in interpretation, through which the meaning is constructed or disseminated«.49 Here I would like to draw following conclusions:

Flaker's theoretical method is not based on undermining the traditional epistemological elements of literary theory (as in the case of cultural studies). However, the framework of the theoretical discipline in his *Proza u trapericama* is – depending on one's point of view – either broadened (literature in dialogue with culture) or narrowed (structural analysis doesn't fully exhaust all the characteristics of literary text); in any case, it is changed. Flaker's work opened a discussion on introducing new areas into »serious« literary theory.

Proza u trapericama confirms that theoretical discourse, as well as the methodology of theoretical work (as Josip Užarević points out), gained a new appearance in the last few decades of literary theory development (including Croatian theory). Flaker's book reflects the features that characterize contemporary literary theory: an orientation towards the text (which is not only literature, but culture as well) and the need to reexamine methodological base of a discipline.50

The shift in the vantage point achieved by contemporary literary theoreticians is thorough, and that results in a shift of the object of analysis itself. In this particular example, literary discourse starts to interact with cultural practices (which Flaker calls »civilizational complexes«): with objects of mass culture and pop-music. The narrator in literary text (as well as the theoretician) »must first of all be an *intelligent narrator* that is familiar with *cultural texts*«.51 Through this »civilizational view« (an upside-down and detached point of view52), the narrator, whose way of thinking is symbolized by the cultural totem, jeans, clearly points out his attitude towards the literary text; of course, phenomena of mass culture ranging from »pop-music to jeans«53 become the models of popular culture as well.

Finally, I would like to clarify my position on the meaning of culture, activated in Flaker's work – the one according to which culture can be considered a »discourse creation«54, an incoherent whole whose »meanings are used depending on the particular needs«.55 *Jeans Prose* tells the story of the history »of its discourse creation, that is [...] its uses«.56 When Aleksandar Flaker writes about what he calls »civilizational complexes«, he analyses the discursive practices used in literary text and remains primarily a historian – however, not only a literary historian, but a historian of Central- and East European culture. In a formal, methodological sense, he doesn't openly give up on inherence, but essentially in his works after *Proza u trapericama*, such as *Ruska avangarda* [*The Russian Avant-Garde*, 1984], *Nomadi ljepote* [*Nomads of Beauty*, 1988] and *Knjizevne vedute* [*Literary panoramas*, 1999], culture becomes the main object of his interest. This point is well illustrated by the following shift in terminology: the project *Pojmovnik ruske avangarde* (*Dictionary of the Russian Avant-Garde*)57 was renamed to *Zagrebacki pojmovnik kulture 20. stoljeca* (*The Zagreb Dictionary of 20th Century Culture*), and the collection of papers dedicated to Flaker's 80th birthday was titled *Oko knjizevnosti* (*The Eye of Literature*)58.

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