



# **Towards a Bi-polar Typology of Slovenian Mountaineering Literature**

W kierunku dwubiegunowej  
typologii literatury  
górskiej autorstwa  
słoweńskich wspinaczy

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SLAVICA TERGESTINA  
European Slavic Studies Journal

ISSN 1592-0291 (print) & 2283-5482 (online)

VOLUME 28 (2022/I), pp. 176-198  
DOI 10.13137/2283-5482/33712

The article proposes a typology of mountaineering literature written by Slovenian mountaineers. It differentiates between two poles: the heroic and the contemplative, or, in more generic terms, the epic and the poetic. A sketch of the origin of this typology in mountaineering texts themselves is followed by an elaboration of the two constituent types with reference to two exemplary cases, namely Klement Jug and Nejc Zaplotnik. Writing in the early 1920s, Jug emphasised the heroic side of alpinism where both celebration one's own feats and critique of one's colleagues' failures are supposed to serve the nation and humanity. Writing in the early 1980s, Zaplotnik saw in climbing an aim in itself where both accomplishments and failures primarily serve one's own inner journey. The article concludes with the assessment that Zaplotnik's writings have since become more typical than Jug's, not least because of their proximity to a specifically Slovenian version of the *Bildungsroman*.

MOUNTAINEERING LITERATURE,  
SLOVENIAN MOUNTAINEERING,  
SLOVENIAN NOVEL, NEJC  
ZAPLOTNIK, KLEMENT JUG

Niniejszy artykuł stanowi próbę zaproponowania typologii literatury górskiej autorstwa słoweńskich wspinaczy. Teksty te oscylują między dwoma biegunami: literaturą heroiczną i kontemplacyjną, lub też – używając terminów gatunkowych – między epiką a liryką. Omówienie zakorzenienia tej typologii w samych tekstach górskich poprzedza analizę obu typów poprzez odniesienia do dwóch modelowych przykładów, mianowicie Klementa Juga oraz Nejca Zaplotnika. Tworząc na początku lat 20-tych poprzedniego stulecia, Jug kładł nacisk na heroiczny aspekt alpinizmu, w którym zarówno celebrowanie własnych osiągnięć jak i krytyka porażek innych wspinaczy miały na celu służbę narodowi i ludzkości. Piszący we wczesnych latach 80-tych XX w. Zaplotnik widział wspinaczkę jako cel sam w sobie, gdzie zarówno osiągnięcia jak i porażki służyły przede wszystkim wewnętrznemu rozwojowi jednostki. Artykuł konkluduje, że pisarstwo Zaplotnika stało się bardziej typowe niż Juga, również dlatego, że bliższe jest typowo słoweńskiej wersji gatunku *Bildungsroman*.

LITERATURA GÓRSKA, ALPINIZM  
SŁOWEŃSKI, POWIEŚĆ SŁOWEŃSKA,  
NEJC ZAPLOTNIK, KLEMENT JUG

**1** This article was written at the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, in the framework of the research project *Mountaineering Literature: Slovenia and Beyond (J6-1808)*, which was funded by the Slovenian Research Agency.

**2** Miha Potočnik discusses Julius Kugy and Henrik Tuma in order to associate these two types with two typical views of mountaineering as well as with two characteristic themes of mountaineering literature: the experience, on one side, and the athletic achievement, on the other (see Potočnik: 232). Indeed, Tuma, who in many ways was similar to Klement Jug, put a clear emphasis on his own sport-based approach to mountaineering, which he related to nationalism in a quite interesting and original way: 'Since alpinism as a sport has the psychological element of competition, that is, the sense of victory in the human conquest of nature, it often combines and intersects, in an almost natural development, with nationalism.' (Tuma: 59)

When trying to outline mountaineering literature (particularly prose) within the broader field of mountain-related literature it might appear that we are dealing with a relatively homogenous notion.<sup>1</sup> For these are mostly writings that narrate either an individual (usually outstanding) mountaineering expedition or an entire career of an individual (again, usually outstanding or at least noteworthy) mountaineer. This homogeneity, however, is quickly complicated by a great typological and generic diversity. Some works resemble the documentary genre, others read like literary autobiographies, while many take the form of the picaresque novel, the adventure novel or the *Bildungsroman*, or adopt elements of detective fiction, the philosophical novel, the romance, the realist novel or even the epic. Whereas some works of mountaineering literature are clearly characterised by a dominant generic pattern, mountaineering literature as such is a protean phenomenon marked, like most literature, by the syncretism of generic forms.

The literary merit of a given work depends, of course, on the author's literary talent, but the scope of its readership, especially within the mountaineering community, is also determined by the exceptionality and intensity of the narrated feats. This does not seem to hold as much for the genre of the work: the work's generic structure seems to depend mostly on the author's type of personality.

Theorists and historians of mountaineering, but also mountaineers themselves, have been interested in detecting not only the possible sources of motivation for mountaineering but also the various types of mountaineers, depending on the explicit motives for their endeavours or on their understanding of the essence or purpose of mountaineering. The most common result is the simple binary opposition between athletes and romantics (as it is employed, for instance, throughout Ante Mahkota's 1979 book *Sfinga* [The Sphinx]).<sup>2</sup> Henrik

Tuma's book *Pomen in razvoj alpinizma* (The Meaning and Development of Alpinism) and Klement Jug's essay 'O smotru alpinizma' (On the Purpose of Alpinism) discuss two additional motives and hence types of mountaineers: the aesthetic and the religious one. One can encounter other suggestions, including the scientific motive (originally in relation to cartography, later on tied to medicine), but only as auxiliary motives for mountaineering which do not have a central place in the typology of the modern alpinist.<sup>3</sup>

Reading modern Slovenian mountaineering literature, which started to develop rapidly as Slovenian climbers gradually gained prominence in the world of mountaineering, we can detect all the four central types, which appear in several variations and combinations. However, these types do not have equally dominant intertextual proto-patterns or models. It turns out that a condensed bi-polar typology is the most appropriate starting point for a typology of mountaineering literature with regard to its intertextuality. As demonstrated by Mitja Košir, the two basic types of Slovenian mountaineering stem from two formidable and ground-breaking, now legendary and inspiring mountaineering personalities: Klement Jug (the ethicist) and Nejc Zaplotnik (the romantic and aestheticist), both of whom have articulated their experiences and notions of mountaineering (see Košir). This article starts from the hypothesis that their mountaineering writings established two typological foundations, or generic proto-patterns, which the majority of modern Slovenian mountaineering literature references (more or less directly and recognisably).<sup>4</sup> In what follows, I will try to outline the basic features of these two generic templates.

**3**  
The cartographic motive can be observed in some of Jug's writings. Jug would also try to use his experience of the mountains for new discoveries in the field which we would now call *psychology*. Moreover, Himalayan expeditions have played a significant role in the advance of high-altitude medicine.

**4**  
It would be possible to find other generic lines, including a kind of *autreflexion* starting with Ivan Bučer (his 2008 novel *Koča na robu* [The Hut on the Edge] includes a fictional character whose features are reminiscent of Jug) and leading to the most recent work, Milan Romih's 2019 novel *Skozi trave oblakov* (Through the Leaves of Clouds), whose fictional character seems to have borrowed his main features from Slavko Svetičič. Nevertheless, this line, which only includes a small number of works, is not based on the typology of the author, nor does it have a really prominent or influential proto-text.

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The first distinct type of Slovenian mountaineering literature was set down by Jug. He contributed a series of articles about his ascents, whose features became ever more recognisable; at the same time, he suggested some guidelines for this sort of writing in his article 'O smotru alpinizma'. He based them on his understanding of alpinism, which had developed after his first major ascents. In his view, 'striving for victories, for prominence', is the primary motive, the 'core' of mountaineering, and this type of alpinism ('alpinistika', as Jug called it) 'educates and strengthens the character' (Jug: 24). Therein lies the real *purpose* of alpinism, according to Jug: 'it is the testing ground for will, for comradeship; hence, it tests, trains, perfects the strong characters who engage in it' (ibid.). This morally educational goal holds true 'for society at large, too': 'Alpinism is capable of giving us workers with a strong will to overcome every obstacle, including those instigated by our own base instincts, workers with a sense of comradeship loyalty, disciplined workers who will stand their ground in any profession and be of service to the nation and to humanity. We do not need humble and meek people, it is strong people we need!' (Ibid.: 24-25)

This, according to Jug, is 'the higher, ethical and central cultural purpose of alpinism' (ibid.: 25), which is why he believes mountaineering to be more than just a sport although that is predominantly what it is. This educational purpose of mountaineering self-evidently presupposes mountaineering literature (since 'the masses' do not engage in mountaineering themselves they can only come into contact with it and its values through literature). Therefore, in this programmatic essay, Jug develops several guidelines for this type of writing. It ought to educate and improve both young mountaineers and hill-walkers in general:

*This growth concerns the alpinist's abilities, which mountaineers can enhance by describing their experiences to each other, or the development of the ethical and thereby cultural moment in alpinism, that is, the strengthening of character, which true alpinism requires by itself through courage, sacrifice for one's companions, loyalty, renunciation of comforts and other pleasures, and self-willed discipline which in the cultured human being must replace obedience. Vivid accounts of our mountaineers' experiences will be of great importance to the nation; history demonstrates that nations kept strong only as long as they knew sacrifice; but when so-called civilisation softened them and made them dependent on pleasure and individual happiness, they collapsed. (Ibid.: 26)*

These guidelines are in line with Jug's generally ascetic, moral(istic) outlook (for which, see Virk) and with his strict, though perhaps not entirely consistent, ethics, which was torn between egocentrism, on the one hand, and the imperative to act for the nation and humanity, on the other. In mountaineering, Jug found an almost ideal synthesis of his egocentric and social tendencies. Mountaineering is his ideal educational tool, as it corresponds to all his main notions about the right way to live: it strengthens the will, imposes selflessness and (self-)sacrifice, raises people ethically and otherwise above others (elitism), shows them how to overcome fear (of death), teaches them determination, discipline and boldness: 'Let us be bold, because only he who can make sacrifices is great, only to his will does destiny bend! The path to peaks, to victories, leads over precipices and through dangers!' (Ibid.: 73). For Jug, the goal lies not – as it does later for Zaplotnik – in the path itself, but purely and solely in the victory, the record. Competition is the essence of mountaineering. But the record-hunting ego trip also has

a community-building element. The insolent record hunter's egoism has, in the final consequence, a common, socially beneficial effect – this is Jug's ingenious formula for justifying his own egoism as an eminently social act. In his early mountaineering essay, he offers this apologia for record-hunting tenacity as a socially valuable trait:

*True, there is something flawed about tenacity and 'record hunting'. But there is much good in it. We must remember that it is the tenacious record hunters who are the most agile and independent people. Without them, humanity would make little progress. In today's age of wide-spread demagogy, this is exactly the kind of people we need. These are the quiet and unassuming workers who care little if their successes are flaunted – by others. Determined and hard-working men who perform their greatest feats out of sheer tenacity and record hunting are still better than rotten, mediocre fog. It is certain that most difficult tours are not undertaken for the beauty of the mountains and suchlike, which is what alpinism usually uses to defend itself, but for the sake of tenacity and record hunting. In this, the impartial alpinist who loves danger and exertion will surely agree with me. Thus, we should not condemn strenuous alpinism, because that is precisely what gives us strong-willed people. And we need them more than mediocrities, of whom there are always more than enough. Humanity is richly rewarded for the victims that are almost inevitable in this process by the people who do not fall. Braggarts are never record hunters, because their aspiration is quenched by their bragging. But the true tenacious record hunter can only quench his aspiration through action. (Ibid.: 52)*

Great achievements are not possible without a strong will and, for Jug, its cultivation is the basic goal of mountaineering. It is a prerequisite for

the attainment of all other virtues. The will to power, which is neither Nietzschean nor nihilistic – its ultimate goal is a strong subject who will dominate others and subsequently assert traditional cultural values from the position of sovereignty – was increasingly at the forefront of Jug's pedagogical project in mountaineering; accordingly, he was planning a series of articles in the months leading up to his death on the self-education of the will through mountaineering. The chief aim of this project was to create a nation made up of individuals of an indomitable will. In moments of greatest enthusiasm aroused by mountaineering, Jug's utopia calls for a nation of daring mountaineers.

Jug proceeded with the application of these views in his own practice as a mountaineering writer although he was unable to compile a book of mountaineering texts because of his premature death in the North Face of Triglav. However, his collected mountaineering texts<sup>5</sup> were published posthumously, accompanied by a foreword written by his classmate, friend and (on one occasion) fellow climber, Vladimir Bartol. These observations – except for the last ones found in his possession when he died while climbing a new route – had previously been published in *Planinski vestnik*, the Slovenian alpine journal.

As far as these texts are concerned, Jug's main merit is having introduced new elements in the description of mountaineering adventures, which subsequently became fairly standard.<sup>6</sup> He described in detail the overcoming of difficult spots on a given route, without false modesty, sometimes emphasising boastfully his abilities and courageous exposure to mortal dangers; in short, the traditional, relatively benign mountaineering genre became greatly diversified and enriched with sincere insights into the subjective experience of the mountaineer and with action-packed passages aimed at building up suspense. On many occasions, Jug openly and frankly placed

**5** The earliest of these texts remain humorous in style (mostly in the tradition of Jančez Mencinger and Janko Mlakar), more about hillwalking than mountaineering. Nevertheless, it is already here that Jug works out some of the fundamental ethical values which would later form the core of his mountaineering.

**6** For a critique of the discourse of these writings by Jug, see Virk: 356–78.

the daring mountaineer – himself – high above ordinary earthlings (‘semi-mountaineers’ and ‘philistines’ are two of his favourite pejorative labels), and the feelings of euphoria he felt at his daring achievements set the tone for the postulates of his mountaineering philosophy. He strongly emphasised some of the (traditional) virtues of mountaineering – comradeship, the overcoming of the fear of death, strong will, the resolve to transcend limitations, overcome increasing difficulties, and be the best – and he developed a philosophy of mountaineering from them.

If we attempt to define Jug’s writing typologically, it turns out that it is a distinctly heroic-epic, male-centred type of writing. The hero’s deeds, the heroic ethics and the exceptional individual with his achievements are at the forefront, and it is all permeated by a philosophical-pedagogical discourse. If we were to summarise the characteristics for clarity, this might be the list: the ethical dimension of mountaineering as a means to educate the individual; the significance of climbing achievements for the nation and for humanity; the national mission of mountaineering as such; the overcoming of nature; the climber as a fighter facing the mountain; the values of will, comradeship, courage, tenacity and perseverance; the central role of one’s own outstanding achievements; detailed descriptions of the overcoming of enormous difficulties; detailed descriptions of climbing itself; a yearning for the discovery of an undiscovered world; competitive, athletic and record-breaking aspects of climbing; the cultural significance of mountaineering; mountaineering as hard work; the importance of shared goals; relentless criticism of the weaknesses of others; selective (and mostly rhetorical) self-criticism; the masculinity of mountaineering; a patronising view of women and an underestimation of their mountaineering abilities.

Zaplotnik's mountaineering writing belongs to a different, more poetic type – although the two types, including some elements of the two authors' views on mountaineering, overlap at least partially, mostly due to the theme they share. For instance, they both think that climbing should be done as freely as possible, they are both solitary mountaineers, they both stress comradeship as one of the most important values of mountaineering, they both believe that mountaineering is about transcending boundaries, they are both (mistakenly) convinced that they are invulnerable and that danger in the mountains is mainly subjective. But their respective mountaineering philosophies nevertheless differ quite clearly, and Zaplotnik's literary discourse is different from Jug's. This is often true even when there is apparent similarity, as in the following case:

*I was up against a rock face: either mountains or love! I chose the former even though I didn't understand anything. How can anyone love me and at the same time tear me away from the mountains which have become my life? But it's hard to love me, because even my deepest feelings have never bound me to the desolate world of the everyday. On the contrary! They give my dreams and yearnings more drive. I've always been ready to leave everything behind in order to be able to follow the path which I feel is calling me. I met her in the mountains and then she wanted to tear me away from them. (Zaplotnik: 23)*

The passage is highly reminiscent of Jug's writings both thematically and stylistically, and yet there is a crucial difference: Zaplotnik's entire opus is permeated by an atmosphere of love, Jug's by will and duty.

In contrast to Jug's egocentric voluntarism (and its underpinning in the object theory of his philosophy professor, France Veber, which

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Although it is perfectly obvious that, unlike Jug, Zaplotnik does not justify his mountaineering as a 'service to the nation and to humanity', but rather as his own personal choice and life goal, he does make the following statement when listing the reasons for his efforts in the Himalaya: 'For personal satisfaction? True, that is a reason, but when you come back from a successful expedition, or when you succeed somewhere in the mountains of Europe, you've got the feeling that you've done something that will make people all over the world say the name of Yugoslavia with respect and admiration.' (Zaplotnik: 158)

seeks to control and subdue animate and inanimate nature, including oneself), Zaplotnik's outlook on life and philosophy is a pantheism akin to Asian spirituality and imbued with empathy for others, with sympathy for, and connectedness to, animate and inanimate nature:

*I became part of a universal order which lived in me and in which I lived. [...] You feel the world, you feel the Earth, the Sun, the wind, everything breathes with you and intoxicates you. The friend who is with you is silent, only their eyes are glowing in the centre of their sunken face, and you know without asking that they're experiencing the same thing. That they're experiencing life itself! Without desire, without thinking, you're experiencing the existence of yourself and all the nature around you. [...] And you're lying among the sparse tufts of yellow, sharp leaves of grass, with an open heart, sipping the eternal paths of the stars, counting falling stars, while the wind is slowly covering you with fine sand which crunches between your teeth and sticks to your forehead. And you're overwhelmed by the eternal restlessness of high mountains, the natural flow of life which we've almost forgotten. That's when you feel that Mother Earth gave birth to you, that you're just part of barren valleys, green pastures, broken glaciers, that you're part of the murmuring river and the black, silver-sprinkled sky. (Ibid.: 25, 43, 118)*

Whereas for Jug the focus is on will, duty and the educational purpose of mountaineering, the key concepts of Zaplotnik's mountaineering discourse are desire, yearning, dreams, freedom and the path. For Jug, transcending boundaries signifies ascending towards the status of a superman and therefore acting for the nation and humanity, but for Zaplotnik it means above all a better knowledge of oneself.<sup>7</sup> Jug

advocates record breaking and the athletic, competitive aspect of climbing. When this attitude temporarily takes hold of Zaplotnik, he sees it as straying; for a short while he becomes ‘an athlete’, ‘a stupid craftsman’, a machine (Zaplotnik: 167), but eventually he finds his way back ‘to himself, to his inner self and, through himself, back to other people’ (ibid.: 168). Climbing ‘is not just a sport for me, for me climbing is life itself’, he writes (ibid.: 37), thus continuing the older tradition of mountaineer aesthetes, such as Josip Ciril Oblak and Cene Malovrh (while after Zaplotnik, this thought was most pronounced by Mat-evž Lenarčič). Jug has a clear goal in sight, but Zaplotnik’s philosophy is different: ‘Whoever seeks the goal will remain empty when they reach it, / but whoever finds the path will always carry the goal within themselves.’ (Ibid.: 26) In contrast to Jug, Zaplotnik does not glorify the climber’s superheroism: ‘there are no heroics’, he writes (ibid.: 32). Their attitudes towards death also differ: in Jug, the fear of death should be overcome following heroic ethics, facing death is linked to courage, and death may be necessary for higher goals (for Jug’s discourse on suicide, see Virk). Zaplotnik adopts a different discourse: the proximity of death increases the intensity of life and the desire for it: ‘To move on the edge between life and death is to live truly.’ (Ibid.: 37) The real significance of walking on the edge is to get closer to life itself. Therefore, a different tone prevails from the one in Jug’s writing, even when formulations seem similar, as in this case: ‘They who live in the midst of dangers which they know and are prepared for do not play with life. All human beings need confirmation that they are not just part of the crowd, that they are not just a number, and if they can only find something which lifts them above the crowd, they will cling to it even if others point at them suggesting that they are being unhealthy or even suicidal.’ (Ibid.: 38)<sup>8</sup>

**8** Janez Gregorin (45) and Albin Torelli (55) were among the first to refute the accusations of suicidal mountaineering, similarly arguing that it is an increase in the intensity of life. Later, of course, there were more such examples (including, e.g., Tomazin 1993a: 81). Lenarčič made the most profound philosophical argument for this at the very beginning of his first book, *Smisel in spoznanje* (Sense and Understanding): see Lenarčič: 9–10.

**9** Consequently, it may sometimes seem inconsistent, e.g.: 'no ascent is worth a human life' (Zaplotnik: 145), writes Zaplotnik, while simultaneously claiming that he would sacrifice not only his toes, but life itself to reach the summit of Mount Everest (ibid.: 184).

**10** Here is an example of actual, not merely rhetorical, self-criticism, which Jug does not know: 'because I'm a prisoner of the path I follow, because I'm selfish, arrogant and overambitious' (Zaplotnik: 112).

The same is true of the ethics; in Zaplotnik's work, they are not straightforward, clear-cut, systematic or abstract; they are much more worldly and complex than in Jug's.<sup>9</sup> They both emphasise comradeship as the highest value, but this takes on different meanings for them – Jug is an elitist who puts himself above others, which situates his comradeship closer to patronising, while Zaplotnik is a democratic egalitarian ('People, people! Let's come together and we'll see that we're the same all over the world: we want to live! And do it as well as we can!' [ibid.: 140]). In addition, Zaplotnik is self-critically aware<sup>10</sup> and he admits that 'the climber's terrible yearning' (ibid.: 96) is sometimes stronger than comradeship and mountaineers' written or unwritten ethics. Zaplotnik's ethics of comradeship undergo a dialectical development: from the professed abstract assertion that in the mountains comradeship is essential for him (ibid.: 57), through 'the climber's terrible yearning', which is in fact a negation of the thesis (ibid.: 96), to the synthesis deriving from the experience of the antithesis: 'I'm becoming increasingly aware that comradeship is worth much more than success.' (Ibid.: 136)

Jug's approach to mountaineering is ethico-pedagogical, Zaplotnik's is poetico-philosophical. This difference is clearly reflected in their literary discourses. Zaplotnik's writing style is markedly literary. He uses beautiful, poetic, metaphorically rich language, he does not stick to so-called action, but also focuses on observing nature, people, self-observation. In terms of genre, it is not a homogeneous mountaineering report, but rather a syncretic *Bildungsroman*. His *Pot* (The Path) has a complex literary structure. The many flashbacks and flashforwards make the plot irreducible to a simple story, a good many chapters conclude with a meditative poem, and there are many literary references. He does not describe his extraordinary successes and experiences to highlight his own exceptionality or superiority (and

thus, like Jug, set an example), but to demonstrate the beauty, intensity and fullness of life.

The characteristics of Zaplotnik's writing can be summarised in the following points: poetically formulated narrative; literary references; the yearning dimension of mountaineering; connectedness to nature; the significance of mountaineering in achieving a fuller life; the view that you cannot fight nature and, consequently, you cannot defeat it; the absence of a national mission of mountaineering; the values of comradeship and transcendence of limitations; empathy for fellow human beings; detailed descriptions of overcoming difficulties complemented by poetic descriptions and philosophically meditative passages; dislike for the athletic aspect of mountaineering; the value of shared goals; relentless self-criticism and tolerance of others' weaknesses; criticism of civilisation and urban western culture and compassion for the underprivileged.<sup>11</sup>

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Keeping in mind the purpose and totality of Jug's mountaineering writing project, we come to realise that it has not found a suitable successor in Slovenian mountaineering literature – especially not in terms of making detailed accounts of mountaineering feats meaningful through an elaborate philosophy of life and with an emphasised pedagogical, ethical and national purpose. Only individual elements of Jug's writing have been influential. First and foremost in this respect are detailed descriptions of ascents themselves and the emphasis on the superhuman efforts involved. This becomes the dominant form of mountaineering reporting for some mountaineering writers – including, for instance, Mahkota's *Sfinga* and Ivč Kotnik's 1994 book

**11**  
His naive views of contemporary China (ibid.: 190) cannot spoil this impression.

12

Mahkota is very clear: 'I'm not a romantic mountaineer, but rather an athlete who competes for success, for a record.' (Mahkota: 547)

*Dotik neba* (Touching the Sky) – overshadowing all other aspects. In almost all mountaineering books it constitutes one of the most appealing components, the one that most satisfies the target audience's reading appetites. No less influential have been the focus on the athletic and record-breaking aspects of mountaineering (evident already in Tuma and later in Mahkota,<sup>12</sup> Kotnik, Silvo Karo, Iztok Tomazin et al.) and the awareness of the cultural significance of mountaineering (explicitly in Tuma, Albin Torelli and Karo, and implicitly in most mountaineering works). Jug's legacy includes frequent reflections and comments on mountaineering ethics (see, e.g., books by Tomazin, Pavle Kozjek, Karo, Tadej Golob, Matevž Lenarčič and Marija and Andrej Štremfelj), although they are often different in content from Jug's, as well as research motives for mountaineering ('Research is one of the essential reasons for my mountaineering', writes Andrej Štremfelj [Štremfelj and Štremfelj: 31]), condescending attitude towards 'tourists' or non-mountaineers in the mountains (Kotnik, Mahkota), a patronizing attitude towards female mountaineers and women in general (Mahkota), emphasis on will (see Mahkota: 236), egocentrism and uncompromising criticism of others (Mahkota, Tadej Golob) and the national motive (Kotnik et al.). In general, however, Jug's tradition is most strongly maintained by those mountaineering works in which the male-centred, action-oriented aspect of mountaineering prevails.

Zaplotnik's writing seems to have more immediate successors. The key words of Tomazin's mountaineering books, especially his debut, *Korak do sanj* (A Step towards Dreams) are, similarly, dreams, desire and yearning; he also associates mountaineering with overcoming limitations, especially one's own; according to him, achievement is not more important than experience; there is a perceptible appeal of Asian spirituality (even more strongly in his later works) and the same idea

as in *Zaplotnik* (as opposed to *Jug*), namely that you cannot defeat the rock face or the mountain (see Tomazin 1989: 95, 119). *Korak do sanj* in particular is full of poetic, stylistically polished descriptions of nature and meditative passages, and, like in *Zaplotnik*'s book, the high points of experience culminate in a poem (Tomazin later published an aesthetically accomplished book of poems, *Iskanje Šambale* [The Search for Shambhala], which includes a preface by the Dalai Lama). Finally, Tomazin shares *Zaplotnik*'s use of literary references and establishes a strong intertextual connection to *Zaplotnik*'s proto-text:

*Cilja ni.  
Je le vse, kar srečaš,  
začutiš in  
spoznaš na poti do cilja.*<sup>13</sup>

Or, in English translation:

*There is no goal.  
There is only what you encounter,  
feel and  
learn on the path to the goal.*

Other remarkably aesthetic works of mountaineering literature also make part of this tradition: Igor Škamperle's equally contemplative and at the same time nostalgic book from 1992, *Sneg na zlati veji* (Snow on the Golden Bough), Milan Romih's poetic first book, the 1992 volume *Takrat me počakaj, sonce* (Wait for me Then, Sun), as well as, partly, the skilfully narrated books by Marija and Andrej Štremfelj (*Objem na vrhu sveta* [An Embrace at the Top of the World, 2020]) and Franček Knez

**13**  
Tomazin 1989: 179.  
And here is *Zaplotnik*:  
'There is no meaning, there is no goal, only the eternal path is in me, the path and the stops along it.'  
(*Zaplotnik*: 201)

(*Ožarjeni kamen* [The Glowing Stone, 2009]). Just as Zaplotnik concludes several chapters with poems, Knez concludes them with words of wisdom. Zaplotnik's legacy includes a strong display of empathy, especially towards the locals in the foothills of the Himalaya, notably in Marija and Andrej Štremfelj's book as well as in the many books written by Viki Grošelj. In Grošelj's case, even the literary procedure is often the same as in Zaplotnik's: for instance, a chapter portraying a Sherpa uses his name as the title, setting up a literary monument to him. There are parallels with Zaplotnik's *Pot* even in Karo's *Alpinist* (The Alpinist), the book with a well-crafted plot which is closer in type to Jug's athletic, record-hunting tradition, but as a whole it approaches the structure of a *Bildungsroman*. Like Zaplotnik's novel, it begins with an account of the author's growing up on a farm, his working hard and coping with poverty (see Karo: 15–35, 297; see also Garibotti: 7); the ability in later life to overcome extreme mountaineering endeavours is linked to their early lives by both authors.

Zaplotnik – despite the unfortunate passage quoted above – broke with the nationalist discourse in mountaineering, which had been promoted by Jug. He put the search for oneself at the heart of his motives for mountaineering. In modern mountaineering literature, this personal motivation far outweighs the nationalist one, which is still partly preserved in classical, big-group Himalayanism and its accounts; however, it all but disappeared in later writing. Tomazin formulates this different attitude in an exemplary way: 'For me, risk, toiling, suffering and, in the end, success for "our mountaineering", for "our nation" or for anyone else are not essential. I do it mainly for myself and for my friends, for my dreams, yearnings and needs.' (Tomazin 1993b: 159)

The legacy of Zaplotnik's literary discourse may include various other elements, such as frequent literary references (see, e.g., books

by Kozjek, Tomazin or Lenarčič), and finally, perhaps, the pantheistic tones found in Tomazin and, in a particularly interesting, hybrid form, in Davo Karničar. Karničar employs a paraphrase of the 'Song of Songs' in the erotic description of his greatest mountaineering achievement, but he also expresses a sort of pantheism in combination with Christian imagery and an egocentrism reminiscent of Jug:

*I'd love to be a stone, perhaps a seemingly immortal tree on a stormy ridge, I'd like to fulfil my task, become a meaningful fragment of the whole. How? By continuing the species, by giving others a chance through self-denial, by calculatingly enduring the pressures of everyday life and glorifying toys for adults? That's not good enough for me, I was born into this world because there is no better world, and the serpent in the Garden of Eden saw the futility of what it was doing.*

*There really is not much chance left for us not to blush at eternal values, immortality. But there is a path! The meaning of the mountain's existence was only fulfilled when a human climbed it, parachuted from its summit, flew over it in a hot-air balloon, when a skier left a trail on its slopes.*

*I've become a meaningful fragment of the emergence, creation, life and disappearance of our planet. I skied from the highest point to the foothill of the magnificent mountain. I lived up to expectations, my existence won't peter out in the banality of imaginary values. Believing that I too had been entrusted with a special task, I sought it out, revealed it, accomplished it. Although my contribution is insignificantly small, it is an integral part of the history of the planet which will one day, somewhere, be talked about[.] (Karničar et al.: 120-21)*

14

See, for instance, the 2008 Slovenian language and literature syllabus for Slovenian grammar schools (Poznanovič Jezeršek et al.: 54).

\* \* \*

The comparison of the impact of the two generic proto-patterns in contemporary Slovenian mountaineering literature shows that while Jug's athletic, record-breaking, action-packed model of writing was ground-breaking, the more aesthetically ambitious mountaineering writers have been more inspired by Zaplotnik, although – like Zaplotnik himself – they have also adopted some elements of Jug's literary discourse. The popularity of Zaplotnik's model, especially among the more literary-minded (as evidenced, among other things, by their more frequent literary references), is not surprising; the authors' literary preferences have undoubtedly been shaped by the Slovenian literary canon. And if we follow the typology of the Slovenian novel as set out by Janko Kos (see Kos 1991a and 1991b), Zaplotnik's *Pot* belongs to the most characteristic type of novel in Slovenian literature: the disillusionment novel of victimhood and search for happiness. The protagonists perceive themselves as victims (with a trace of romanticism: the hero of Zaplotnik's *Pot* feels he is a victim of the modern urban, industrialised, bureaucratic world, alienated from a primal contact with nature) and their lives follow the path of a yearning search for happiness – exactly like Zaplotnik's. This may also have been the reason why *Pot* was included in the school literary canon.<sup>14</sup> Both models of mountaineering literature are equally important for the Slovenian mountaineering community; however, Slovenian literary scholars favour Zaplotnik's line, which is a more literary one and more in line with the traditional typology of the Slovenian novelistic hero. ♡

*Translated by Andrej Zavrl*

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## Povzetek

Članek predlaga tipologijo alpinistične literature, ki jo slovenski alpinisti in med njimi zlasti mednarodno uveljavljeni himalajski plezalci pišejo znotraj širšega polja planinske ali gorniške literature. Gre za spise, ki popisujejo bodisi posamezen (zvečine vrhunski) alpinistični podvig ali pa panoramski pregled posameznikove (nič manj vrhunske ali vsaj nadpovprečne) alpinistične kariere, pri tem pa posegajo po elementih reportaže, literarizirane avtobiografije, potopisnega, pustolovskega, filozofskega ali razvojnega romana ter celo detektivke in junaške epike. V tem žanrskem sinkretizmu članek izlušči dva prevladujoča tipa alpinistične literature: junaškega oziroma epskega in kontemplativnega oziroma poetičnega. Virom te tipologije članek sledi v razprave v okviru same alpinistične literature, kjer sta na primer že Ante Mahkota in Miha Potočnik razlikovala med alpinističnimi športniki in romantiki, Mitja Košir pa je ta tipa alpinista povezal tudi s paradigmatskima predstavnikoma, tako da mu je športni tip utelešal Klement Jug, romantičnega pa Nejc Zaplotnik. Članek tako ta tipa opredeli s pomočjo literarnovedne analize Jugovih in Zaplotnikovih alpinističnih spisov. V svojih člankih in zapiskih z začetka dvajsetih let 20. stoletja je Jug poudarjal junaško plat alpinizma, kjer naj bi poveličevanje lastnih dosežkov in kritika neuspehov drugih alpinistov pedagoško služila narodu in človeštvu. Zaplotnik pa je v svoji knjigi z začetka osemdesetih let (*Pot*), nasprotno, v alpinizmu videl samozadostno prakso, na cilj nezvedljivo pot, kjer naj bi tako dosežki kakor neuspehi služili predvsem alpinistovi poti k sebi. Za Juga še značilno izpostavljanje etične razsežnosti alpinizma kot sredstva za vzgojo posameznika torej pri Zaplotniku zamenja poudarjanje hrepenenjske razsežnosti alpinizma; premagovanje narave se umakne iskanju stika

z naravo; namesto samopoveličevanja se pojavi samokritika; podrobno opisovanje tehničnih vidikov plezanja pa nadomesti kompleksen siže z vložnimi pesmimi in literarnimi referencami. V sklepu članek ugotavlja, da imata danes Zaplotnikova *Pot* in osebnost večji vpliv med alpinističnimi pisci kakor Jugov diskurz in mit. To utemeljuje z navezavo na tipologijo slovenskega romana, ki jo je razvil Janko Kos, saj se zdi, da Zaplotnikova *Pot* pripada za slovensko literaturo najznačilnejšemu romanesknemu tipu, namreč deziluzijskemu romanu žrtve in srečoiskateljstva. Junak Zaplotnikove *Poti* namreč sebe doživlja kot žrtev sodobnega urbanega, industrializiranega, birokratiziranega, od prvinskega stika z naravo odtujenega sveta, njegovo življenje pa poteka po poti hrepenenjskega iskanja sreče.

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