

## Methodological Approach to the Literary Character

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### Abstract

The literary character is a structural and semantic element of the literary work as a whole. Depending on the perspective from which it is observed, the predominant spiritual and scientific basis and the genre in which it appears, the literary character is further referred to as a hero, personality, figure, agent or actor. It is an instance of a literary text and one of the structural elements of a literary work, but also an independent system. The terms “personality” and “character” are often equated, but at the same time there are differences in the context of their use. In this sense, character is usually regarded as a “broader concept”, whilst personality is attributed to people when a certain individuality and relative stability with respect to changes is assumed. The vagueness of the term personality is also due to the fact that it is generally used in everyday speech as a positive or negative trait of an individual in the ethical and psychological sense and a description of their psychological characteristics, particularly in relation to attitudes, emotional relationships and motivation. It is precisely this usage of the term personality in everyday speech that makes it closer and more relevant to students in teaching literature. Therefore, personality as a structural component of a literary work is oftentimes given as the starting point for the interpretation of a literary work in teaching literature. Nevertheless, in the traditional personality analysis in literary works, this vagueness of the concept of personality is often reduced to an evaluation of their ethical attitudes, i.e. attention is paid to whether the personality is positive or negative. In this way, one loses sight of the fictionality of the literary personality as a phenomenon that exists exclusively in a literary work, which is the only one “giving” it ethical attributes and psychological characteristics. In contrast to traditional literary analysis, the character analysis in recent literary science frequently focuses on the characterization process, which has also had a rather positive effect on the methodological approach to the literary character in teaching literature.

**Keywords:** literature methodology, teaching literature, literary character, characterization, interpretation.

### 1. Introduction

The literary character as an independent system consists of content-related elements that are connected with each other and directly built into ethical, sociological, biological, historical, psychological or other characterizations, while the indirect characterization process of the literary character is realized through formal elements such as narrative structure, plot, description, etc. In characterizing the literary character, all components of the structure of a literary work are included, while at the same time it is considered both as an independent part of the artistic whole and as an integral part of the whole.

Exploring the motivational system underlying the whole activity of the character makes it possible to understand and grasp the character, which is also conditioned by the interpreter's point of view. When characterizing or interpreting a literary character, however, it is impossible to separate the literary character from the other elements of the literary work in its entirety, since all these parts appear in the characterization of the character, but the literary character should be explored simultaneously, as an independent part of the whole and as a part integrated into the whole and determined by other parts of the literary work. The result would be the central experience of the literary character as an aesthetically organized structure whose autonomy is determined by the entirety of the literary work.

The literary character is frequently imposed in school interpretation as the most receptive structural element of a literary work. The choice of the literary character can also serve as a motivational tool to further the pupils' or students' interest in exploring the role of the character in a literary work, but also theoretical questions about the general role and significance of the literary character in literary science. Specifically, the literary character is structured depending on the narrative form; however, regardless of whether it is a fable, fairy tale, novella, novel or another narrative form, the literary character as the one who carries the plot and exhibits the personality traits, that is, the embodiment of an inner, conditionally autonomous world artistically formed according to real life and brought through fiction, is always observed both as an independent part and as part of a whole.

Nevertheless, being that the literary character, as a multi-layered creation composed of several elements, is one of the central literary and structural layers of a narrative work, i.e. the most important element of a work of art in understanding the ethical, aesthetic, ideological and thematic and other qualities of the work, it is not surprising that many foreign and domestic theorists have studied the theory and typology of the literary character. Therefore the paper relies on theoreticians whose research, with their diverse approaches, has contributed to the typology of literary character theories and the understanding of the various processes of characterization. Given that school interpretation is often based on scientific interpretation, these literary and scientific contributions have had a great influence on methodological approaches to the literary character.

## 2. On the Literary Character

The attitude towards the literary character changed in proportion to the attitude of society towards the individual. The old criticism or rhetoric, according to Vlatko Pavletić, "distinguishes in terms of characters between the following figures and genres: portrait, formula, allegory, personification, description of customs" (2009: 34), whereas, for instance, in the identification and semantic classification of characters Hamon aims to both combine "*quantitative*" (frequency of notes on the character explicitly stated in the text) and "*qualitative*" criteria thus pointing out that the following should always be asked:

"[...] is the information on the *being* of the characters given to us by the characters themselves or did we learn it indirectly through the comments of other characters (or the author himself/herself), or is it implicit information which we can obtain after looking at what the character is *doing*. Every analysis of a novel must, sooner or later, distinguish between what the character is and what it does, between *being* and *doing*, *qualification* and *function* [...] or between *narrative* and *descriptive expression*." (2000: 446)

Some literature theoreticians like Milvoj Solar will emphasize that the terms “personality” and “character” are often equated, but at the same time there are differences in the context of their use. In this sense, character is usually regarded as a “broader concept”, whilst personality is attributed to people when the following is assumed:

“certain individuality (characters in a fairy tale, for example, are distinct types, but cannot be understood as elaborate characters) and relative stability with respect to changes (if the character changes radically in each new situation and always ‘plays certain parts’ – as is the case in some modernist works – we talk about character destruction)” (2011: 236).

According to Solar, the vagueness of the term personality is mostly reflected in the traditional character analysis in literary works, often reduced to an evaluation of their ethical attitudes, that is, paying attention to whether the personality is positive or negative while losing sight of the fictionality of the literary personality as a phenomenon that exists exclusively in a literary work, which is the only one “giving” it ethical attributes and psychological characteristics. In contrast to traditional literary analysis, more recent literary science often focuses on the process of characterization in character analysis (2011: 236).

According to the semiotic approach as one of the more recent approaches to the literary character and its place and role in a literary work developed by Phillipe Hamon in his work titled *Towards a Semiotic Model of Character* (2000: 446), from the aspect of semiology, the character in the text is regarded as a sign and is given a signifier i.e. name by which it is recognized. However, this “marking” of the character is neither constant nor predetermined, but the character is perceived as a construction which is, with the collaboration of context and the reader, gradually realized and materialized through reading.

The signs addressed by semiotics must be recognized, and in order for semiotics to address signs, they must be “embedded in the expression and understood based on at least partial knowledge of the metalanguage in which they function by producing meanings and impressions and generating attitudes” (2009: 34). According to this understanding, in dealing with literary characters, semioticians will focus on the functionality of the actantial level of the story, while semanticists will reflect on the implied motivational system of literary characters without going into ideological, political, sociological or psychological or other dimensions of literary characters. When dealing with the literary character and addressing the importance of the character in prose, Arnold Bennett gives it a special significance by pointing out that good prose is based on „[...] character-creating and nothing else” (2000: 431).

Georges Polti noted the „doing” of a literary character as an important determinant of the character itself and emphasized the significance of the relationships between characters where the liveliness and intensity as well as the emotional aspect of a literary character come into play. On the other hand, Greimas defined the actantial relationships according to their functions in the plot and their interrelationships (*subject/object*). Shklovsky reduced the character relationships to the language of mathematics (*A kisses B*), which Barthes, like most theoreticians, will generally avoid since in this „mathematical” way the character becomes a constant and such an understanding of the literary character would interfere with the very essence of the literary work and the possibility of its always different reception. When addressing the issue of the literary character Beremond, inter alia, points to two modeled characters: *the recipient* and *the initiator* without which there is almost no action and they never actually appear in a pure form when it comes to novels with a more developed plot.

Lidiya Ginzburg distinguishes between the „literary role” of the character and the “literary personality” attributing one-dimensionality and one-sidedness to the „literary role” and multidimensionality and liveliness to the “ literary personality”, while Foster divides characters into relief and non-relief ones. (according to Pavletić 2009: 28-147)

Despite the fact that, in addition to the aforementioned theoreticians, many others, such as Goodman, Huxley, Tinjanov, Markiewicz, etc., have dealt with the issue of the literary character, whether they developed typologies of the literary character, theoretically explained it or touched upon it in their literary studies, it can be concluded that there is no actant model that could be universally applied to all literary works, which would also be contrary to the nature of the literary work itself and, as already mentioned, its always different reception.

As regards the Croatian literary theory scene, which is concerned with the theory of the literary character, i.e. with general questions on this topic, the literary science contributions of Milivoj Solar, Gajo Peleš, Vlatko Pavletić and Zvonimir Diklić stand out, whose theoretical findings, inter alia, are used in this paper.

Touching upon the theoretical essence of the literary character in a chapter of his book titled *Ideja i priča*, where he refers to the literary character as a personality, Milivoj Solar emphasizes two important aspects of each personality, which will be discussed later in this paper, and points out the complexity of this structural element of a literary work, which always carries a certain uniqueness and autonomy:

“Personality is not merely an element of a literary work like the plot or motif; personality is a way of designing the work as a whole which is, depending on the understanding of the nature of the character, always ‘interpreted’ or at least accepted as a work that potentially carries a certain ‘vision of a man’. Personality belongs to the world of the literary work **and only in a certain understanding of this world**<sup>1</sup> lies the possibility of it becoming the subject of an analytical process.” (2004: 174).

Gajo Peleš also sought to answer the theoretical question of the literary character, while achieving “precision and systemic consistency of terminology” (Užarević 1995: 32) in the chapter of his book “Značenjski sustav ili svijet pripovjednog teksta” titled “*Priča i značenje*” (cf. Peleš 1989: 241-277), which was included in his subsequently published book “*Tumačenje romana*” where it is titled “Semantička substruktura romana ili njegova ‘forma sadržaja’”, in which he defines and develops the literary character as a “psychemic, sociemic and ontemic narrative figure” while also elaborating semantic sets and the hierarchical order of narrative figures (cf. Peleš 1999: 218-283). Peleš’s previously published book “*Iščitanje značenja*” is also relevant for exploring the literary character, in particular chapters “Lik i ličnost: ili o odnosu književne i izvanknjiževne zbilje” and “Konstrukcija lika (knez Miškin i Benjy)” (cf. Peleš 1982: 43-62).

Furthermore, in his essay “Znakovita životnost i životna znakovitost lica u književnosti” included in the book “*Umijećem do umjetnosti*”, Vlatko Pavletić presents an overview of actantial models and their creators and, inter alia, points to the conventions of context and the acquisition of meaning when it comes to literary heroes and argues that:

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1 Pointed out by the author of this paper.

“within a certain culture, the novelist must take into account the value system if he wants a person to receive his works and acknowledge the hero status socially, contextually. **The author is not the only one determining who can be the hero, this is also defined by the conventions of the context in which the text acquires meaning.**<sup>1</sup> Therefore, in certain periods of the revolution, the crowd may also become the hero of the novel since the hero does not depend on a) anthropomorphization (it can be an animal as well) and b) individualization.” (2009: 33)

Given that this paper, in addition to the literary approach to a literary character, discusses the literary character in the methodological context, i.e. school interpretation of the literary character, particular importance is given to the methodological aspect where Zvonimir Diklić, when addressing the literary and literary-methodical angle of the literary, theatre and film character emphasizes that:

“In relation to other elements of a literary and artistic creation – the character has a particularly prominent place, meaning, function and purpose in the structure of the work. The literary character is a multi-layered creation composed of several elements, one of the central literary and structural layers of a narrative work, its most important element, demonstrating ideological and thematic and other qualities of the work and the purpose of the literary work as a whole.” (1989: 9-10)

Despite the fact that this is a narrative context, for a methodological approach to the literary character it is useful to consider the arguments of Maša Grdešić indicating the attributes of a literary character, which can be used in the methodological context to modernize literary content and successfully motivate pupils for the school interpretation of a literary work, but also for reading literary works in general:

“The characters are, even more than events, the element of a narrative text that makes the readers compare it to reality in search for a connection between literary heroes and the people around them, their friends and neighbors, but also themselves. Characters provide us the possibility of identification, but also the refusal to identify with them, they cause feelings of sympathy and antipathy, love and hate, fun and boredom, and in some cases even infatuation. (Grdešić 2015: 61)

In conclusion, when it comes to the literary character as a subject of exploration or characterization, it is certainly necessary to note the relevant understanding in literary theory, which highlights two aspects of the literary character: **character analysis and technical process analysis**<sup>2</sup>, as pointed out by Milivoj Solar:

“The first [...] aspect is the one where the character is understood exclusively within the story in the broadest sense of the word, that is, a certain concept of the world of the prose work in which the world of the novel is considered in analogy with the mythical world. The character appears as a function of the story, its psychological characteristics are being considered as relations between certain circumstances which condition and thereby reveal human destiny; the character is inexplicable outside the medium in which it appears, and characterization is only one of the modalities of developing a story. Therefore, to paraphrase Aristotle, there is no

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novel without a story understood in the broadest sense of the word, but the novel is possible even without distinct characters.

The second aspect is the one in which the character is being interpreted in such a way that the world of the novel is brought into a certain connection with the real world, which means that the character is, either way, “measured” in relation to real people. The character is then necessarily brought into a certain “imitation” relationship with certain types of man, it is aimed at being assessed as a representative of certain historically important human abilities or as a direct expression of highly specific philosophical, political, religious or scientific doctrines. This is when the character becomes a function of the idea; the novelist expresses himself through his characters, the characters speak of certain attitudes they represent or want to fight against. This means the characters by their very existence, the choice of characteristics that the author attributes to them and their way of acting in the story demonstrate how the novel should be understood or interpreted.

[...]

Both aspects, however, must retain the distinction between the analysis of the term character and the characterization analysis as a process of character presentation in literary works; the dominance of one aspect of the understanding of the novel’s artistic world determines both how the character will be roughly understood and how the analysis of the way of characterization will be approached in general.” (2004: 174-176)

### **3. On the Characterization of the Literary Character**

Characterization can be defined as the totality of the literary processes involved in shaping a literary character. It is a complex process incorporating other elements of a literary work and influenced by various literary process, while, as argued by Solar: “everything in a work belongs to the characterization of the characters and nothing belongs only to the characterization of the characters” (2004: 169). However, regardless of the complexity and totality of influential characterization elements and processes, if we want to define a characters it is necessary, as noted by Peleš:

“[...] to carefully single out, with an almost descriptive procedure, its basic attributes. We get them by following the character through events, we determine it in each plot segment in which it has some function (direct or indirect). By describing a character, we seek to reconstruct its basic semantic components found in the text itself. The character is an artificial fact that we must not combine directly with other features outside the literary work until we finish reading them in the structure where they were found, and the same holds true for other thematic units of the text. This artificial fact has its own form, which is, due to its artificiality, a firmly harmonized value and therefore carries a particular semantic burden. To reiterate information theory, the more firm a system, an independent set of components, the more information it contains. It is therefore inappropriate not to read the character, as a unit of information, within the system where it gets its semantic value. Far-fetched psychologizing in analyzing a literary structure, in connection with the character, did not entirely take into account the features of this sign of personality in the system from which it was taken. In particular, post-Romantic criticism, with its vague character–author, character–person (as an extra-literary fact) comparisons, attached to the sign of personality properties which did not take into account the interdependence of that unit in a particular thematic system. When pointing out the necessity to read the semantic properties of a character in the thematic

system analysis, we do not have in mind the post-Romantic psychologizing of impressions but the structural and analytical process where we try to determine the components of the sign of personality and their function in the text." (1982: 22).

The problematization of characterization processes and the motivational system of a literary character depends on different types of characterization or different interpretation approaches to the character, particularly because characterization depends on the inclusion of all elements of the literary work. When it comes to the question on all possible types of characterization, Solar answers by defining the basic possibilities of characterization:

"[...] if, in fact, we ask ourselves in what ways we can learn anything at all about a character in a literary work. It is basically the same as asking ourselves how we can learn anything at all about a man's character, since the fictional character of a novel belongs to the fictional world of the novel in the same way that the real character belongs to the real world. To that end, there are following possibilities for learning about the character: we learn about people based on what they say, what they do and how they look." (2004: 169-170)

As mentioned in the previous part, Zvonimir Diklić deals with the typology of characterization of a literary character in the methodological context, noting that the way of characterization depends on the way the author structures the literary character. Character structure includes the composition of the personality with regard to its internal characteristics, which are influenced by temperament, upbringing, environment, education, social circumstances and issues, and other forming conditions, followed by the logical and content-related and the literary and artistic component relevant for character formation and finally the philosophical, aesthetic and experiential and cognitive world of the reader in whose consciousness literary characters are materialized and become fictitious personalities, but also part of the collective consciousness, i.e., in the words of the philosopher Terence Parsons, "nonexistent objects"<sup>1</sup>. Depending on how the author structured the character, Diklić distinguishes several types of characterization: ethical, psychological, sociological, philosophical, historical, physiological (biological), speech and linguostylistic characterization of the character and characterization of the character depending on narrative prose type. (2009: 83-99) As part of this typology of characterization, we can also talk about aesthetic and ideological characterizations, which dictate the content and nature of the literary work itself. Aesthetic characterization defines the beauty and harmony of literary character formation, i.e. the literary and artistic component of its construction, while the ideological approach presents the ideological attitudes of the character, explores his ideological views on the world, society, family, etc.

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1 "Such objects do not have a reference, that is, a thing they refer to in real life, but they have limited meaning since the expressions used for naming them always refer to a certain set of described properties. Emma Bovary is an example of such an nonexistent object and narrative figure, e.g. a set of properties named with an expression. According to Parsons, there are three types of fictional objects: a) "incomplete", e.g. "golden mountain", which only has the property of "being a mountain", but does not have the property of, for example, "being golden" and "being a mountain", but does not have, for example, the property of being high; b) "nonexistent", which can be complete, such as characters in a novel where all of their properties are given, or incomplete, such as the aforementioned "golden mountain"; c) "impossible", or objects such as "round square", which has contrary properties (in theory, they can be both "complete" or "incomplete"). (Peleš 1999: 302-303).

#### 4. Characterization in the Methodological Context

The characterization of a character also depends on the narrative form or the type of narrative prose, so that in this sense there is a significant difference in the technique of shaping a literary character that appears in a fable or fairy tale in relation to the creative process of character formation in a modern novel, especially when it comes to the methodological context. Since the modern novel comes close to a philosophical discussion in its structure and approach to the subject in question, the characterization of the novel character is much more complex than the characterization of the character appearing in a simpler prose form. (Diklić 2009: 83-99)

The ethical characterization of the character or the ethical interpretation approach is the process through which the author shapes and determines the moral code, the social orientation of the character in relation to the individual and/or the community, the general relations between the characters, the character's relationship to the world and to life. Hence, the ethical characterization includes the social conditioning of the moral norms of a literary character and its component of morality. A textbook example of such a characterization is found in the novel *Kurlani*<sup>1</sup> by the Croatian author Mirko Božić, when the narrator describes one of the most notable male characters, Andrija Kurlan:

*Andrija left the house clean and fair, wearing new clothes and shoes, with his face washed with the youthlike contours. His sunburned gnarled fists clenched with health and strength, the full wreath of veins tensed under the white shirt and loosened down the karst as supple tendons, easy and bouncy, from stone to stone, as if preparing to fly. The lad felt ethereal, like his purebred young stallion, his gaze pierced through people with impudent clarity, faintly derisive and increasingly haughty, full of the freshness of a rested morning and himself; he pondered about his tensions and heroism that will be conveyed and used today in the tavern and in a song, in the circle dance, on the meadow, with the lads, with brothers and – perhaps – around the nightfall, in a secluded place, with some capricious and alluring girl. It preoccupied him the most. [...] I'd shatter the corn with her, the land would be worn-out flat underneath. He feels the coming downpour of lustful shivers boiling in his groins. But in it, he is unskillful, cloddish or unlucky. He then hurries his bouncy light pace, his body tilts on the slope, his arms spread a bit as if he is spreading his wings and swooping into the valley, quiveringly and swiftly like an eagle. (Božić 1989<sup>a</sup>: 222)*

Through the psychological characterization of the character or psychological approach, the author is uncovering conscious and subconscious states, as well as psychological processes of the literary character, motivation for character's actions and behaviors, together with his emotional, intellectual and volitional life. A special place within this characterization is given to the utilization of psychoanalysis in the formation of the character. The finest illustration of

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1 In his modernly structured prose work titled *Trilogija o Kurlanima*, which includes the novels *Kurlani Gornji i Donji (Kurlani, Upper and Lower)* (1952), *Neisplakani (Uncried)* (1955) and *Tijela i duhovi (Bodies and Spirits)* (1981), the Croatian author Mirko Božić (Sinj, 21 October 1919 – Zagreb, 1 August 1995) uses the unique Shtokavian dialect and his own specific neologisms vividly painting the souls of the characters with originality and expressivity and elevates them to the level of universal forces that comprise the general picture of the world and man. With his original linguistic expression, the writer creates a rich palette of characters and depicts a certain culture, time and space, and it is precisely these elements that form a unique linguistic and literary expression.

this characterization is found in the way Božić subtly insinuates the ambivalence of Andrija's character, whose duality grows deeper and becomes more complex during the trilogy novel.

*Andrija frowned, he unwrapped the shroud and saw a small face, white and motionless. He felt something soft and powerless piercing his heart again. There is this ache within him that will cost him life yet cannot seem to get rid of it. May everything in him that is pitying and mild, everything feminine and forgiving be damned. Both dead and living children weaken him, thin his blood out, melt his heart. And that will certainly be the end of him. And how can such a weakling continue the line of Kurlan. This repels him from marriage too, although he has long been tortured by the carnal urges and a fearful trepidation that he will die before he gets to embosom a body of a woman. (Božić 1980: 281)*

Božić's narrator announces consistently but unobtrusively the coming psychological states and spiritual changes of this character that will follow from novel to novel of the trilogy:

*Andrija took the lifeless infant bundle, that with a tender sentiment melted his Kurlan temper, already softened with mother's blood, which he wished to vex and boil to the needed mountain measures of strengths and manliness, in vain. (Božić 1980: 281)*

*Andrija felt a monstrous uncoupling: the heart is alive but the soul is dead? (Božić 1989<sup>b</sup>: 241)*

With the sociological characterization of the character or sociological approach, the author forms the social determinants of the character (social origin, class, social adaptation, interpersonal relationships, influence of the social environment) and sociological features such as material status, political beliefs, socio-ethical attitudes, class affiliation, etc. become evident. Andrija Kurlan, in the context of the novel in which he originates and exists, evidently belongs in the rural environment. The author, using the character's environmental affiliation through adjectives ("irascible and wild"), alludes to both relationships and the impact of the environment on the social (in)adequacy, while using them as a type of gradation for portraying the metamorphosis of the character after a personal and public catharsis:

*Andrija Kurlan, "irascible and wild peasant", proved himself as a hero with his selfless struggle and revealed himself as a man with his peaceful sorrow (Božić 1989<sup>b</sup>: 215).*

With the historical characterization of the character or the historical approach, the author determines the historical conditionality of the character by materializing it in a given time and space in which it lives and acts. It reveals the social moment in which the character acts, that is, historical events related to the character. The author puts Andrija Kurlan, a commander during World War II, in a situation where he, as a commander and the person in charge, has to take responsibility and in the name of higher and moral good kill his own brother Krđa Kurlan to save many lives and brings Andrija's character to their father:

*You heard his dry sob, his sorrowful soul. Your son seeks comfort, not a curse. Be kind to him! There's your life purpose! There's your fatherly purpose!*

*Son! There's war! ... People are dying in many ways. (Božić 1989<sup>b</sup>: 300)*

*History will never do justice when describing the nameless agony of Kamešnica, the skeletal stone throne for generations to come. (Božić 1989<sup>b</sup>: 280)*

The philosophical characterization of the character or the philosophical approach deals with the analysis of the literary character's inner world, determines its life philosophy and

relationship to the world, his mental and cognitive notions and ideological stances. The author indirectly exposes Andrija's inner world, while clearly expressing Andrija's relationship to the real world as well as his beliefs:

*He is not just a champion – the doctor proclaims excitedly – He is a hero! A tragic hero – he exclaims– (...) Strmenduša! What a word! What symbolism! A soul on a slope, on the edge of an abyss. A fistful of soil of Strmenduša was surely called soul by the peasants, but it means something else for me now. Matan would now certainly say: “A fool speaks of the soul!” He came from this place but his roots don't go deep, he does not seek to understand the meaning of forefathers, even his thoughts about the future are depthless. Strmenduša? Stremenduša is a word from the ancient times. The battlefield of the souls! A mutual destiny! To be or not to be! Winners and losers. The living and the dead. (...) The ancient choir would praise Andrija to the skies and be proud of him. “You are great, Andrija! I gotta hand it to you! You saved our souls in Stremenduša. You prevented a bloodshed amongst brothers by shedding your own brother's blood. You are mighty, Andrija! You are a human and soldier's honor! (Božić 1989<sup>b</sup>: 292-293)*

Physiological (biological) characterization of the character (physiological and biological approach) refers to exploring the bio-physiological factors of the character relevant for its characterization, such as hereditary traits, traits evoked by a certain environment or acquired by the impact of the surroundings in which the personality is formed. In the *Kurlani* trilogy, Andrija's biological determinants have been stressed several times:

[...] *it has been told that he could race a horse for a short time. (Božić 1989<sup>b</sup>: 236)*

Moreover, the character of Andrija Kurlan, as the whole Kurlan family, bears the motivation in the biological heritage which in its genetic structure contains the code for survival in the rocks, in difficult living conditions where everyday life is agony, surviving the struggles thanks to the boiling Kurlan blood, instinct and passions:

*He saw himself in tomorrow's night, with Iglica inside a steaming bed. He will peel her like an orange and painfully bite her sweet pink breast. They will burn together in the naked sleeplessness for the first time, the abundance of passion will flow through his fingers like water, pour out of his hand like dough, blow on the tips of his ears like the wind because the passion has overflowed both of them like rain in two deep mountain canyons of life. (Božić 1989<sup>a</sup>: 391)*

The linguostylistic characterization or the linguostylistic approach determines and analyzes the characteristics of the speech of the narrator (author) and the hero, the linguistic features and function of language (lexical, semantic, phonetic, morphological, syntactic phenomena) and the author's stylistic techniques applied in the characterization, the logical, affective and impressive values of the character's speech, emphasizing the vividness, specificity and emotionality of author's style used to form the character and its expression. It is precisely this linguostylistic dimension of Božić's *Kurlani* novels that has been the most extensive research subject<sup>1</sup> given the author's unique language, his spirit, knowledge and imagination that he used to create and portray the distinct world of his characters whose speech is a device of the novel and does not exist anywhere beyond it. The intensity, vulgarity and passion of Andrija's speech are the best reflection of his inner strength, bravery and handsomeness. The author also manages to portray Andrija's loudness and toughness by a specific lexis.

*Ya gonna shoot? – he screams while pulling the machine gun from the shoulder.*

*Who the fuck are ya! Who is on whose land? I am Andrija Kurlan! This is my land! You are on my land, you ass!*

*He firmly grabs... "Light of anger, bell of roar!"*

*Hooold! – the goat yells, again.*

*Move the rifle, I'll blow your guts, you goddamn goat! Get your stinkin' ass up! Call my brother! Brotheeer! Krđa, Krđaaa! Krđaaa!*

*All sweaty, fired up, in bare water, in a torch of anger – he takes it out on the doggie.*

*In the blue twilight and sleeping crown of the... his depths unfold with the hundred-eyed darkness.*

*Strmenduša! (Božić 1989<sup>b</sup>: 256)*

Depending on the nature and structure of a literary work or literary character, the analysis of a literary character usually combines two or more types of characterization, meaning that the qualitative element of interpretation is best achieved by an interdisciplinary approach which is always based on the aspect of literary theory and principally guided by literary theory. Thus, in the manner school interpretation in order to explore this remarkable male character of Božić's *Kurlani trilogy* in the sense of literary science as well as methodological sense, different interpretive approaches can be combined, in order to interpret Andrija's character in all its literary aesthetic richness. Methodological interpretation processes reveal that this is a literary character who is lonely, introverted, introspective, preoccupied with existential issues, but above all with the question of guilt. It offers an opportunity to analyze the hero's consciousness or his philosophical musings on life, i.e. in an essayistic way, reflects upon certain issues in the hero's interest. The characters thoughts, or better to say, profound painting of his emotional and mental world, are the center so the narration about the character is replaced by the internal monologue as the fundamental tool for the literary formation of the character. Andrija Kurlan is shaped through narration, dialogue, description and internal monologue, he is portrayed in the most intimate world of impressions, associations, memories, fantasies and thoughts.

## **5. The Literary Character in Methodological Context**

The literary character is reflected in the minds of pupils and students as an important component of literary art, that is, an essential aesthetic phenomenon whose literary theory, stylistic, linguistic, psychological, literary history, philosophical, sociological and other determinants are clarified in the literature teaching process. A meticulous analysis of all layers of a literary character reveals the creative laws of its genesis and meaning. The methodological approach to the literary character enables the pupil to acquire the conceptual (terminological) tools with which to interpret the character and enter its structure.

Through school interpretation, a literary work is transferred to the teaching process, while the methodological approach to the literary character requires certain phases such as the perception of the literary work as a whole, the affective reaction to the literary work and the character, and the rational inclusion of the literary work as an esthetic fact in which the character is formed.

When dealing with the literary character in a methodological context in which the way of processing and the methodological approach to a literary character in literature teaching are considered, organized and realized, it is important to point out the role and importance of the school interpretation introducing the young reader or pupil to the process of conceiving a literary work as an aesthetic object.

School interpretation<sup>1</sup> has an educational purpose, addresses all the essential elements of a literary work and does not have to provide novelty, but given the possibility of its implementation in teaching literature at all levels of education from primary to higher education, it can lead to scientific interpretation, although it does not have to, and is always based on a template of scientific interpretation. Scientific interpretation is a procedure used for obtaining scientific knowledge, the value of which can be confirmed or denied by methodologically systematized literary discourse, and it can address an individual element of a literary work and presupposes novelty. Interpretation is the unique way of understanding and presenting a literary work, and sometimes it is difficult to distinguish it from literary theoretical analysis and criticism. Nonetheless, the analysis breaks down the literary work into its component parts in order for the work to be seen in its complexity, while criticism is the process aimed at assessing the quality of a literary work, and interpretation is the task of discovering the internal laws of the literary work structure. To interpret means to logically present the aesthetic essence of a literary work and to reveal its artistic distinctiveness and specificity, which is realized precisely in its uniqueness and inimitableness. Nonetheless, since a literary work as a work of art is "alive" and as such inexhaustible, it is not surprising that even today in literary science there is no absolute theory of interpretation with a generally accepted logical terminology. Therefore, the interpretation of a literary text and thus the literary character is based on several different literary theories which enrich literary science with their diversity and complementarity of various theoretical and methodological perspectives and reveal literary works that have never been, nor by their nature can be, "fully"

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1 The first mention of school interpretation can be found in the handbook titled *Pristup književnom djelu* (Frangeš-Šicel-Rosandić), from 1962 and in our region, it was mostly and most comprehensively dealt with by Dragutin Rosandić. His manifesto of this new methodological concept that began to develop and developed in the late 1980s by the name "school interpretation" can be regarded as the text for the interpretation of this concept published in 1973 in the work titled *Metodičke osnove suvremene nastave hrvatskog ili srpskog jezika i književnosti*, and can also be found in the book *Metodika književnog odgoja i obrazovanja*. The final sentence of that manifesto states: "Interpretation affirms the active and creative process of teaching literature that teaches the student to experience, feel, imagine, observe, analyze, conclude, explore, or simply discover the meaning of a work of art." (Banaš 2010: 428-440). Building upon Rosandić's methodological contributions, Zvonimir Diklić deals, among others, with exploring the literary character in the methodological perspective, that is, building and forming the entire methodological system of character interpretation, referring to it as "the system of teaching (school) interpretation" (cf. Diklić 1989: 10). Reflecting on the differences and similarities between didactic and scientific knowledge, also addressing "school literature", Ante Bežen indicates the similarities and differences in the cognitive process of scientific and school interpretation (cf. Bežan 1989, Bežan 2008). Following, inter alia, Rosandić's assumptions, in his work titled "Znanstvena i seminarska interpretacija. Odnosi književne metodologije i visokoškolske didaktike književnosti", Zvonko Kovačević develops the concept of seminar interpretation as an interpretation appropriate for teaching in higher education and comparing its correlates and correspondence with scientific interpretation (cf. Kovačević 2008: 251-262).

interpreted – which indirectly, through school interpretation, affects methodological approaches to the literary character and literary work in teaching literature.

One of the starting points for the interpretation of a literary character, but also for interpretation in general, is the pupil's aesthetic sensibility as an essential determinant of modern literature teaching. Given that the pupil is a fully-fledged aesthetic component of the teaching process, it is necessary to awaken and develop their aesthetic experience, sharpen their literary and observational skills and critical mind and shape their literary taste.

Interpretation of the literary character as an independent unit that is at the same time part of the literary work as a whole, activates and encourages the emotional, imaginative, intellectual, critical and creative potential of the pupil. In the methodological approach to a literary character, the experiencing of a literary character and a literary work is conditioned by the pupil's reception, as well as overall life experience. For a successful design and implementation of the methodological approach to a literary character, the teacher's comprehensive knowledge of the literary work in which the character exists and the methods of its interpretation is needed, as well as coexistence with the world of the work, a clear and thought-out interpretation plan, and methodological invention and communication skills (according to Rosandić, 2005: 215).

## 6. Conclusion

Even though the emphasis of this methodological approach is on the literary character, the interpretation is always guided by the idea that the character can be seen only in the totality of the work of art that it builds and creates as its individual element. The characters' behavior and action, the moral of the work and the universal sense, the leveling of the characters or the loss of those features that determine the contrast between the characters as well as the psychological nuances and complex characterization should determine the methodological approach to a literary character. Starting primarily from the work in which the character is created and exists, it is necessary to combine the concretization of the character achieved through various characterizations within the literary work and the interpreter's personal, independent intervention in the creative process of constructing a literary character in the context of the literary work as a whole.

Through the school interpretation of a literary work, which is always based on a scientific interpretation template from which it takes all relevant knowledge, processes it and adapts it to the teaching process, taking into account all the reception requirements of the particular age of the pupil for whom it is intended, introduces the interpretation of the literary character as an integral world that has its own laws, and these laws are revealed in the literary work and by reconstruction of creative processes shaping the literary work as a whole. In structuring its system, the school interpretation of a literary work interprets the literary character taking into account the pupils' cognitive-experiential abilities, and understands the literary text as a source of aesthetic experience and knowledge.

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