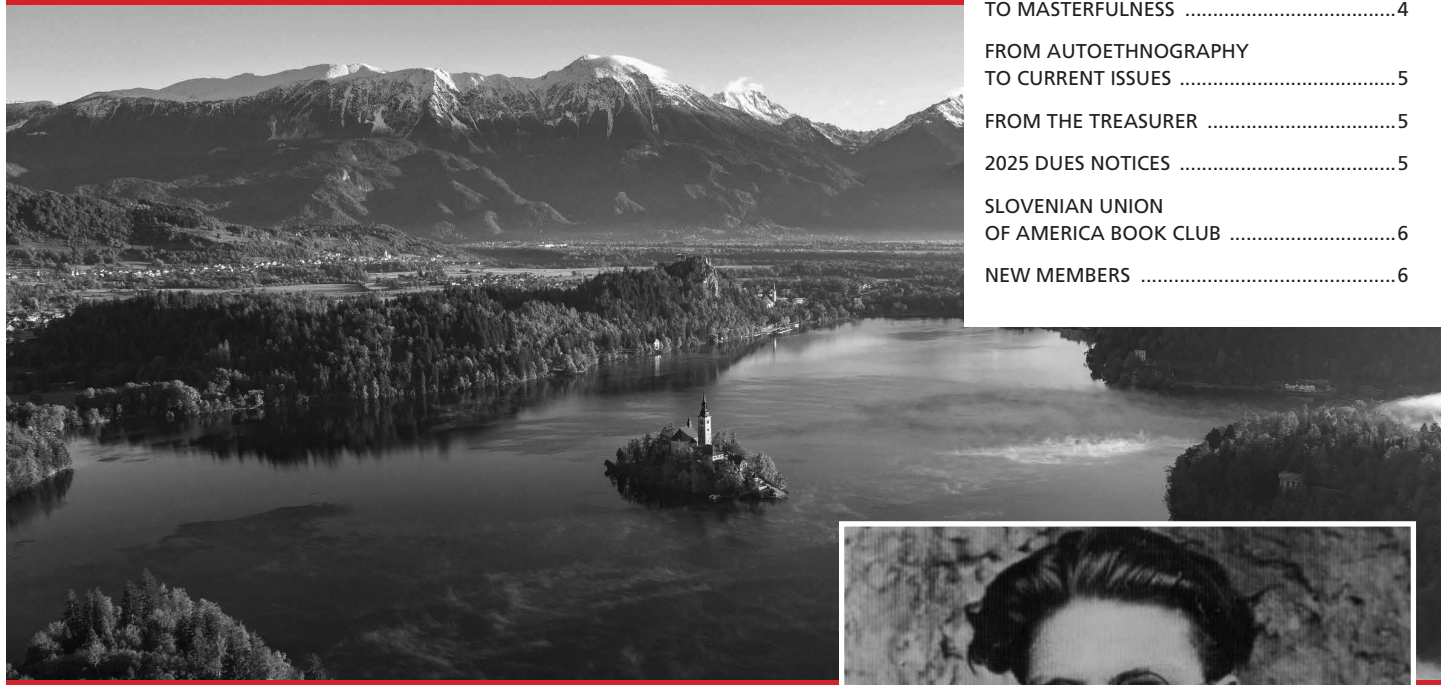




THE SOCIETY
for SLOVENE STUDIES

LETTER

WWW.SLOVENESTUDIES.COM | SPRING-SUMMER 2025 | #94



By unknown author - Digital Library of Natural and Cultural Heritage of Slovenia: Collection of Portraits of Srečko Kosovel.

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President's Message...

FUTURE EVENTS OFFER MEMBERS OPPORTUNITY

One of our Society's functions is to cast a spotlight on the notable activities of our members that might otherwise not attain the visibility that a published book, a news posting or other publicity would bring them. These reports on members' activities often include an implicit invitation to the rest of our membership to join up and participate in those activities, to the extent they're ongoing and may be of interest to you. In this issue of the Newsletter, various Society members invite you to follow next year's special events around the centennial of poet prodigy Srečko Kosovel's death (1903-1926); to join the Slovenian Union of America's quarterly book club sessions online, each featuring a book by a Slovene author or about Slovenia; to view the short film documentaries of SSS member Romana Turina; to contribute from your family archives to a project documenting the relatives who stayed behind in Slovenia; or to discover a great contemporary Slovene poet who writes in his local dialect.

Please let us hear from you about your notable efforts to explore and elevate some aspect of Slovenian culture. Send your reports to our Secretary, Kristina Reardon at Kristina.Reardon@gmail.com

We'll be back in touch in early fall with the line-up of Slovene-related topics to be covered at this year's Association for Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies national conference to be held in Washington, DC – and more. ■

Michael Biggins, president,
Society for Slovene Studies | Spring-Summer 2025

Slovenian Literary Updates

> 2026 TO BE THE YEAR OF KOSOVEL

It will soon have been 100 years since the poet Srečko Kosovel (1904-1926) died, and the government of Slovenia has called for a celebratory year to commemorate his life and work.

"The Year of Kosovel will be an opportunity to increase the visibility of this extraordinary poet, and celebrate his influence on both Slovenian and European cultural heritage," reads the official notice, posted on the Slovenian government website gov.si

The *Slovenia Times* recently published a piece on the announcement, remarking upon his "impressive body of work," which includes upwards of 1,000 drafts, which is particularly notable, given Kosovel's age upon his death: a mere 22 years old. Now wonderful memories remain.



Srečko Kosovel.

"His poetry continues to resonate with readers today, spanning from intimate reflections on nature and existentialism to sharp critiques of contemporary political and social issues."

— SLOVENIA TIMES —

"The proclamation of the Year of Kosovel is an important opportunity to re-examine the messages of this great poet from the Karst," continues the announcement from the Slovenian government, which also cites Kosovel's "social engagement and literary power," which left an indelible mark on Slovenian and world literature.

Plans include efforts to continue to advance Kosovel's stature as a poet through education, research and tourism initiatives. ■

SOURCES:

<https://sloveniatimes.com/42505/srecko-kosovel-year-to-be-celebrated-in-2026>

<https://www.gov.si/en/news/2025-02-13-government-proclaims-2026-year-of-the-poet-srecko-kosovel/>

> IN ELVIS'S ROOM LONGLISTED FOR DUBLIN LITERARY AWARD

In Rawley Grau's expert translation, Sebastijan Pregelj's 2019 novel *V Elvisovi sobi* (*In Elvis's Room*) was longlisted for the 2025 Dublin Literary Award. The translation was released by Sandorf Passage in 2023. While the translation did not ultimately win the award, this honor is a testament to both the original text—which won the Cankar Award and was short-listed for the Kreznik Prize—and to Grau's literary translation.

The novel centers 1980s Yugoslavia and features main character, Jan, alongside friends Elvis and Peter, whose friendships and identities are challenged once Jan is drafted into the military amidst the breakdown of Yugoslavia and the emergence of an independent Slovenia.

"confronts history—both its beauty and horror—without hiding anything, and in doing so tells a highly, nuanced, emotionally-charged story about living with memories from a country that no longer exists."

— INDEPENDENT PUBLISHERS GROUP (IPG) —

In Elvis's Room is the second of Pregelj's novels to be longlisted for the Dublin Literary Award—the other being his 2014 novel *Kronika pozabljanja* (*A Chronicle of Forgetting*), also released in Grau's translation in 2019 and brought to publication by Litterae Slovenicae. ■

> SLOVENIAN LITERARY NIGHT HELD IN CLEVELAND

The St. Vitus Social Hall in Cleveland hosted a literary evening to discuss and celebrate Slovenian-American writers on February 11, 2025. The four featured writers included:

- **Karel Mauser** (1918-1977), a novelist, poet, and essayist;
- **Ivan Zorman** (1889-1957), a poet;
- **Rose Mary Prosen** (1931-2008), an essayist and poet;
- **Marie Prisland** (1890-1979), who founded the Slovenian Union of America and its signature publication, *Zarja - The Dawn*.

The event also featured talks by the Consul General of Slovenia in Cleveland (Suzana Cesarek and the president of the Slovenian Union of America (Joseph Valencic), among other teachers of the Slovenian language in university and community contexts (Dr. Luka Zibenik of Cleveland State, and Mojca Slak of the St. Vitus Saturday Slovenian School). ■

FREE COPIES OF A BOOK ABOUT RADO LENČEK

Thanks to Slovenska Matica president and SSS member Aleš Gabric for providing copies of *Rado Ludovik Lenček—Humanist, Učenjak, Domoljub* (Ljubljana: Slovenska matica, 2023). The 114-page book is richly illustrated.

To request a copy, please write to Timothy Pogačar (pogacar@bgsu.edu).

SLOVENE STUDIES

JOURNAL OF
THE SOCIETY FOR
SLOVENE STUDIES

Slovene Studies volume 47 will be published later this year. An article by the winner of the Rado Lenček Graduate Student Prize will appear in the issue.

Timothy Pogačar, editor

Slovenia participates in 2025 World Expo in Osaka

Slovenia participated in this year's World Expo—which runs from April to October in Osaka, Japan. The theme this year's world's fair is "Designing Future Society for Our Lives," and Slovenia's interpretation of that theme was, for its display, "From Heart to Heart," which the Expo Slovenia cite says "present[s] Slovenia as an innovative, culturally rich and naturally beautiful country."

This year, Slovenia's exhibit is part of a pavilion with nine other countries (including Balkan neighbor Croatia). On May 15, the Slovenian government reported that Spirit Slovenia—the agency coordinating Slovenia's Expo presence—had announced that Slovenia's exhibit "exceeded expectations in terms of both the number of visitors and the international contacts established in the first month." At the time, they reported around 11,000 daily visitors to the Slovenia pavilion alone—20-40 of whom are Slovenian. ■



SHARE YOUR LETTERS FROM SLOVENIA

SSS Member **Joe Valencic**, *president*,
Slovenian Union of America

Do you have old letters from Slovenia? Please share them. You may not be able to read Slovenian, but scholars in Slovenia can. Your letters are needed to collect the valuable stories about Slovenians in the U.S. and around the world.

Every letter contains history.

You may not think your folks did anything special. But through their correspondence, we learn of their joys and challenges and how their families in Slovenia responded. Saving letters to and from Slovenia is a new project led by Dr. Mirjam Milharčič Hladnik from the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SAZU). Many Americans met her last year when she toured the U.S. with her new book, *Daring Dreams of the Future: Slovenian Mass Migrations*. She wrote the documentary film, *100% Slovenian: The Stories of Slovenian Women in America*. She is with Slovenian Migration Institute of the SAZU Research Center.

Dr. Milharčič Hladnik is a passionate researcher of the personal stories of Slovenian immigrants that letters reveal. She writes about the experiences of our predecessors and what we can learn from them. The Slovenia Letters project is endorsed by the Slovenian Union of America.

You can share your letters by making copies or scans. If you don't need to hang on them, donate your letters to the Slovenian Migration Institute. Dr. Milharčič Hladnik is coming to the U.S. in September 2025 and can meet with you to learn more about your correspondence.

Are you interested in saving your Slovenian letters? Tell us where your letters come from, who wrote them and when. Get in touch at Mirjam.Milharic-Hladnik@ZRC-SAZU.si ■

NOTICE

LAURA BASSI SCHOLARSHIP

The Laura Bassi Scholarship was established in 2018 with the aim of providing editorial assistance to postgraduates and junior academics whose research focuses on neglected topics of study, broadly construed. The scholarships are open to every discipline and the next round of funding will be awarded in Summer 2025:

Application deadline:

July 31, 2025

Results:

August 10, 2025

All currently enrolled master's and doctoral candidates are eligible to apply, as are academics in the first five years of full-time employment. Applicants are required to submit a completed application form along with their CV through the application portal by the relevant deadline. Further details, including previous winners, and the application portal can be found at: <https://editingpress/bassi> ■



DIALECT:

From *Simplicity* to *Masterfulness*

BY GORAN ŠUŠNJAR, SSS MEMBER | KULTURNO DRUŠTVO IVAN TAVCAR, POLJANĖ NA GORENJSKEM

It's somewhat unusual nowadays to speak of the significance of Slovene dialects in this highly globalized world when one can meet Slovenes on all continents and when people from all over visit Slovenia. Moreover, English is becoming one of the dominant or universal means of communication. In addition, it was not long ago that dialects were considered outdated, backward, of little worth, and even shameful in Slovene society. So, dialectal utterances would appear only when a speaker, a person, or a role was to be ridiculed and made fun of.

But a dialect can be one of the riches of the Slovene cultural heritage as well as a source for studying linguistic changes that took place from the twelfth century on. This is the perspective from which we examined the youngest of the Slovene dialectal groups, Rovtarsko, at three events in the Tavčar manor house at Visoko. Rovtarsko is the Poljansko dialect that is spoken in the Poljanska River valley from Škofja Loka, to Gorenja Vas, to Žiri. The Poljansko dialect arose from the mutual influences of Old Slavic, the speech of previous inhabitants, and later the languages of peoples that colonized the territory of the Freising domain in numerous waves from the west. The influences occurred in a number of linguistic dimensions—from changes or shifts in certain sounds, the appearance of new words, and syntactic changes.

The dialect was formed foremost by pronunciation of words and also original creations that were later attested by Slovene folklorists and passed from generation to generation in the oral tradition. Today as well the use of dialect is most common in oral communication and between people in the same geographical area.

Two events were devoted to looking at dialect in its simplest form: in daily

*...it was not long ago
that dialects were
considered outdated,
backward, of little worth,
and even shameful in
Slovene society*

communication, the work of public officials, amateur songwriters, word coining, and amateur theater. Those in attendance emphasized that the use of dialect is an expression of their identity; they are more open and feel closer to their neighbors.

At the two other events, participants offered an academic view of verbal creativity in dialects. Dr. Miran Hladnik conducted a conversation with Dr. Marija Stanonik in which she traced the path from a very simple dialectal text examined by folklorists to literary forms of dialectal texts, and then literary forms either in poetry or prose. Dr. Stanonik, who has pioneered the recording and publishing of dialectal texts, noted the hindrances she encountered, because the standard written language does not make possible recording certain dialectal sounds. The speakers also underlined that literature in regional dialects is more prominent on the periphery of the Slovene ethnic space, though there are exceptions.

At the final event, Dr. Irena Novak Popov spoke about one of those exceptions. She led the audience through the creative development of the poet Janez Ramoveš, who wrote some of his poetry in the Poljansko dialect. In 2012, Ramoveš received the Jenko Prize, the professional

prize of the Society of Slovene Writers, for his collection *Skuz okn strejlam kurente* (Shooting kurents out the window). Dr. Novak showed with select poems that the author himself interpreted how Ramoveš not only brought the somewhat lesser known world in the Poljanska Valley beneath Mt. Blegoš into Slovene poetry but he proved that it is possible to write excellent poetry in the dialect of his native valley. It is possible to find dialectal forms that function authentically and freshly in expressing universal truths, thoughts, and ideas.

Declamation offers another dimension of dialectal poetry. In addition to the author, Dr. Novak called on his wife Uršula, who set quite a few of the poems to music, to sing some of them at the event. Then the poems came to life in yet another way.

Consideration of the Poljansko dialect attracted public attention: on the one hand, it informed about the significance of the Slovene cultural heritage; on the other, it posed the question of how far to limit the influence of the standard language, which has had a large role in maintaining Slovene distinctiveness. Because of this, some attribute exceptionally great meaning to the standard language and see attention to dialects as a threat to the national interest.

It will be possible to reconcile the two views with a broad enough outlook and actions. ■

(Goran Šušnjar's article "A Gift from the U.S.: The Sculpture of Ivan Tavčar at Visoko," appeared in Slovene Studies 46.1–2. Dr. Miran Hladnik is a longstanding member of the SSS. The events described took place earlier in 2025.)

From Autoethnography to Current Issues

BY ROMANA TURINA: Filmmaker and SSS Member.



Frame from the film 'Three Sisters in a sketchbook' (Turina 2024)

The essay film **Three Sisters in a Sketchbook** (Turina 2024) won Best Biographical Film at the Toronto International Women Film Festival 2025, and Best Short Documentary at the LA Independent Film Channel Festival 2024, with a list of selections to other festivals, including the Tokyo International Short Film Festival 2025, the LA Independent Women Film Awards 2024, and the Hollywood Independent Filmmaker Awards and Festivals 2024.

This recognition amplifies an important moment in the process of personal ethnographic discovery of Dr. Romana Turina, a professor working at the Arts University Bournemouth, in the UK. Starting with the essay film *Lunch with Family* (2016), she traced her Slovenian heritage, and its links to the history of a small region, Istria, now divided between Slovenia and Croatia, once part of the former Yugoslavia. The film illustrated the surfacing in the family of one important figure, her Slovenian ancestor Dr Vladimir Turina, and with him the history of Turina's Slovenian paternal side. The discovery took Turina into the depths of Slovenian history, and the issues related to it were in part explored in the short essay film *San Sabba* (Turina 2016), which completed Turina's PhD work at the University of York (UK), focused on the controversial representation of the history of one city and its cultural profile in Italian cinema, Trieste in the north-east of Italy.

Three Sisters in a Sketchbook (Turina 2024) looked at the other side of the family, in

this case the Venetian-Greek-Croatian-Slovenian mixed population of the Istrian coast. Focused on the story of three sisters, belonging to the maternal side of Romana's family, the film analyzes the recovery of sliced images of three women as young girls. The essay film is based on interviews with the now elderly women and aims to elicit a response from the audience on issues related to the education of girls from underprivileged backgrounds, who in this case saw their lives deprived not only of education but also of loving parental care. Linked to the contemporary issue of neglected childhood, still present in many societies, the film aims to stir a debate on the position of girls in certain societies and the process of evolution needed to allow them access to education, and possibly a more self-determined life.

Dr Turina's essay films can be viewed, in their progression, on several channels, including on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/@Romana.Turina-m1r/videos> ■

FROM THE TREASURER

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RADO LENCEK

GRADUATE STUDENT PRIZE

Ludmila Lazar
Meta von Rabenau
Karl Ryavec
Gojko Stare

2025 DUES NOTICES

Dues notices are being mailed to all members along with the minutes of the last business meeting and the financial report. Thanks to SSS members Frank and Luke Strgar for reviewing the financial report.

Dues have increased from twenty to thirty dollars annually because of increasing printing and shipping costs. The joint membership rate remains thirty-five dollars but with one, not two sets of mailings. The lifetime membership rate remains three hundred dollars. Thanks to members who have taken lifetime memberships.

Many members have opted to pay dues on the SSS website. There are two options. The PayPal option sends money into the SSS PayPal account (see the financial report); the GoDaddy option sends money directly into the SSS bank account. ■

Slovenian Union of America Book Club

The Slovenian Union of America (SUA) book club meets quarterly for 90 minutes over Zoom to discuss books to help us better understand our Slovenian heritage as it pertains to the main Slovenian immigration periods to the U.S. and elsewhere. We also read books that explain what was happening in the homeland or nearby countries in these same time periods. Typical turnout might be anywhere from 15 to 25 participants. We've read books like Mary Russell's *The Women of the Copper Country* (about Michigan labor activist Ana Klemenc), Richard Flanagan's *The Sound of One Hand Clapping* and Goran Vojnovič's *Fig Tree*.

SUA membership is required. Meetings are informal, with each participant usually getting a chance to speak for a few minutes. The learning isn't just from reading the book, it's also from each other as we discuss the book. See the SUA website under Cultural Interest Groups (CIGs) for more details about the book group: www.slovenianunion.org

The first meeting of Season 5 will take place on Tuesday, October 7th to discuss *I Saw Her That Night* by Drago Jančar. Please email suabookclub@gmail.com with any questions. ■

DIALECT: FROM SIMPLICITY TO MASTERFULNESS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

SELECTED COLLECTIONS OF POEMS IN POLJANE DIALECT by Janez Ramoveš:

- *Božjastnice*. [Epileptic Poems.] Kranj: J. Ramoveš, 1990.
- *Striptiz: namesto Kim Basinger*. [Striptease: Instead of Kim Basinger.] Kranj: Suša, 1995. Published under the pseudonym Ivan Čankar.
- *Moja velika debela mama: antologija poljanske naivne poezije* [My Big Fat Mother: An Anthology of Naive Poetry in Poljane Dialect.] Škofja Loka: J. Ramoveš, 2001. A collection of poems attributed to various poets, all of them pseudonyms for Janez Ramoveš.
- *Poročilo iz geta*. [Report from the Ghetto.] Ljubljana: Atelje T, 2001.
- *Staroselski ciklus*. [Indigenous Cycle.] Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 2006.
- *Čreda*. [Herd.] Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 2010.
- *Skuz okn strejlam kurente*. [Shooting Kurents out the Window.] Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 2012.
- *Soloples za neveste*. [Solo Dance for New Brides.]. Ljubljana: Sanje, 2015. Published under the pseudonym Marija Dolinar.

- *Na Pasja ravan*. [Climbing Dog's Plain.] Ljubljana: eBesede, 2020.
- *Skupinska slika*. [Group Portrait.] Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 2021.

PARTIAL DISCOGRAPHY OF MUSIC composed and performed by Uršula Ramoveš and the Boys from Badger Hollow [Fantje z Jazbecove grape] with lyrics by Janez Ramoveš:

- *Sugar Free Baby*. 2000.
- *Anglčeskeje Live*. Ljubljana: Sanje, 2007.
- *Talisman*. Ljubljana: Celinka, 2012.
- *Hribovske balade*. Ljubljana: Celinka, 2020.

ALSO VISIT THESE WEBSITES about Janez and Uršula Ramoveš:

https://www.culture.si/en/UršulaRamoveš_in_Fantje_z_Jazbecove_grape
<https://www.obrazislovenskihpokrajins.si/en/oseba/ramoves-janez/>

AND, ON YOUTUBE see this videorecording of the conference from Goran Šušnjar's report: https://youtu.be/ENwfsOmK10w?si=2P4uxlXqaMnkkf_X

NEW MEMBERS

DAMIAN GERKMAN

He is a U.S.-based healthcare provider currently residing in Mexico City, Mexico with his spouse who is a U.S. diplomat. A proud descendant of Slovenian political refugees who immigrated to the United States in 1950, Damian is currently pursuing Slovenian citizenship under Article 13. He recently visited his ancestral homes in the municipality of Kamnik, reconnecting with extended family and cultural roots. Damian is actively studying the Slovenian language and excitedly planning his next trip. He looks forward to deeper engagement with the Slovene diaspora and learning more about Slovenian history and culture.

GRACE GUYOT



She is from Cleveland, Ohio, where her family immigrated to in the 20th century. She completed her undergraduate studies at Baldwin Wallace University before

relocating to Edinburgh, Scotland, to pursue a degree in Scottish Law. Currently working in the legal sector in Scotland, she aspires to cross-qualify in Scottish, American, and Slovenian law. Grace has a longstanding passion for languages, having studied Spanish, Arabic, and French at the university level. She is currently expanding her linguistic proficiency by studying Slovene.

ALEXIS WLLKMAN

She is a climate finance researcher living in the Seattle metro area. Her connection to Slovenia is through her maternal grandmother who was born in Črenšovci and immigrated to the United States after World War II. As a graduate student, Alexis focused on natural capital and agroforestry, using Slovenia's land management regime as a case study. She is currently working on learning Slovenian so she can better communicate with her extended family.

The society also welcomes new members

LISA ADAMICH, Florida
COLIN MCCARTHY, Pennsylvania
JOEL SEKUTA, Washington
ROMAN SHAPLA, Ohio
MIRIAM STARC, New York
MARIO STARC, California
RYAN UMPHREY, Ontario