It has been generally agreed – since the rise of philosophically oriented aesthetic theory in Ancient Greece and Rome – that any authentic work of art (irrespective of its genre) has definite goals to achieve. The so-called classical theory of art underscored such values – pursued by genuine, high art – as unity, truth, and beauty. These three “transcendental”s were embedded – as it were – or still better, “reflected” in the very ontological structure (that is, a form) and a subject-matter (a content) of various artworks. Recalling this basic assumption of axiological theory of art is only to make us aware that most of the changes in artistic paradigms, all sorts of avant-garde revolutions and upheavals, started from the questioning of established value-core of art and works of art belonging to an earlier period which was to be “transcended” and overcome. Bearing the abovementioned assumptions in mind, one can rightly assume that this axiological rule can be applied to such a literary genre as novels. As works of art they are subject to this value transformation and a paradigm change. It goes without saying that there have been, and still are many, often mutually exclusive, ways of understanding the very essence of novels. Soon after the rise of this genre (the 18th century, England) novels were unanimously treated as a literary, fictional presentation (or representation) of real events. Moreover, it was a strict aesthetic rule that they should preserve and expose a close correspondence with the real world, whatever the latter might have meant. Even some differences in understanding of the nature of novels did not prevent certain authors as well as literary critics from regarding them as a specific kind of instrument. Thus, as unique literary genre, novels made their contribution to a general world-view in its aesthetic (axiological), philosophical and social aspect. According to such 20th century theoreticians like Dibelius, Propp, Geiger, Ingarden, or philosophers – aestheticians like Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Goldman, Lukacs, literary critics like Daiches, Elleman, Naganowski or artists like Kundera, Broch and Canetti – to mention but some of the most prominent ones – early novels
depended heavily (and to some extent they still do) on their unique, inimitable technique (narration) which was geared up with a description of a given reality they tried to represent. Such technical devices as the plot structure, the presentation of space and time, the manner the characters are shown to us – readers – make it possible for a novel to come into its intentional being. It is a generally accepted opinion that the early novels as well as the later, great realistic tradition of the 19th century literature viewed from the subject matter and the narration technique reveal strong and close relations with the transcendent reality. In other words, novels – as those specific instruments – were supposed and expected to reflect (in the most faithful and detailed manner) the surrounding world and various characters acting in it. During the early period of the novel’s existence and presence in Europe, the presented world–view offered by such pioneer writers like Fielding, Smollet, Defoe, Swift, Richardson, Goldsmith or even iconoclastic Sterne (enfant terrible of English letters) was based on what one may justly refer to as a generally agreed standard, to resort to a famous phrase of Daiches. It was the regular, predictable and established reality and even if some phenomena turned out to be of inexplicable and unknown, cruel or alien nature there was a definite hope that one day they would be justified and accounted for at least by artistic means. Like in the renowned concept of the Great Chain of Being, every element in the universe (human beings included) was supposed to occupy its appointed position, not to be challenged or menaced by some unfortunate and accidental circumstances. The aforenamed agreed standard applied both to the objective and subjective side of the world, and those two aspects of reality had to be taken into account by all writers. This “silent” assumption (a kind of thought idiom of the time) meant nothing else but the characteristic trait of the Rieglean Kunstwollen, which can be formulated as follows: the world–view (the metaphysical message to use another term) articulated in the literary production of the time was always based on and made up out of events and characters corresponding to the real texture of a presented (represented) reality. From this point of view (this aesthetic and philosophical paradigm), the initial material of a literary vision, that is, the World itself, seemed to be a rational structure (though not known in all aspects) ever pointing to its Creator: the ultimate reason and ground of all existence. Thus every entity, its essence and its purpose, its relations with other entities, could be explained and justified in terms of something necessary in the Great Chain of Being. The first European novelists assumed a God–like position in relation to their fictional, intentional worlds. They equipped themselves with vast, often unlimited knowledge of “the Past”, “the Present”, and “the Future”. Being the creators of their own worlds, their unique universe, they wanted to imitate the