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INTERLITERARY COMMUNITIES, INTERLITERARINESS  
AND THEIR GENRE ASPECT

The comparative study of literature went through several stages of development from positivism to different morphological approaches. In the first stage the most important category was that of "influence": literatures were, as a rule, divided into "major" and "minor" ones. The contactology, thematology (Stoffgeschichte), the problems of the motif migration prevailed. At the same time the idea of comparative morphology arose together with the approaches of Czech formism, Alexander Veselovsky, Russian formalism, structuralism and F. Wollman's eidology<sup>1</sup>. The crisis of autonomous methods under the impact of hermeneutics and communicative aesthetics, eventually deconstruction, changed the position of the author of the artifact. The problems of the reader's reception led to the dominant role of the reader and to his deconstructivist dictatorship. The semantic category of influence has been weakened and practically rejected in the well-known Slovak discussion<sup>2</sup> in which especially the conception of "major" and "minor" literatures was sharply criticised. No wonder that the substitution of the aesthetics of production by the aesthetics of reception was accompanied by the term "counter-motions of the receiving environment". The "communicative stage" of comparative studies is not, however, the last one: the Slovak literary theorist Dionýz Ďurišin and his research team (from Slovakia and Russia; singular members from the Czech Republic and from the Commonwealth of Independent Countries) formulated the new conception of "interliterary communities" and "specific interliterary communities" in 80's. The limits of "old" traditional comparative studies have been overcome by cultural typology (J. Lotman and D. Likhachev) and by "lite-

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<sup>1</sup> O. Sus; *Geneze sémantiky, hudby a básnictví v moderní české estetice. Dvě studie o Otakaru Zichovi*, Masarykova univerzita, Brno 1992.

<sup>2</sup> F. Wollman, *K metodologii srovnávací slovesnosti slovanské*, Brno 1936.



rariness" interpreted in I. Neupokoyeva's project of world literature<sup>3</sup>.

D. Ďurišin's volumes called *Osobitné medziliterárne spoločenstvá* (*Specific Interliterary Communities*, 1-5, Bratislava 1987-1993) dealt with various communities in which two or more national literatures had formed a differentiated unity (e.g. Spain, Canada, South Africa, former Czechoslovakia, Switzerland and others). I.D. Nikiforova analyzes the interliterary community of tropical Africa, A.G. Cheremin that of South Africa, J.A. Riauzova writes about the developmental tendencies of the literatures of Africa written in Portuguese, while N.D. Lakhovskaya deals with the Franco-African novels. The contexts of national literatures are analysed in N. S. Nadyarnykh's article on interliterary community in Russia. L.Vajdová writes about Byzantine-Slavonic community, other researches concern the Prague-German literature, the literary situation in Switzerland, Canada, in Hispano-American territory. Their greatest contribution consists in the detailed analysis of the complicated structures of languages, culture, history, mentality and genetic memory in the zones of the crisis in former Soviet Central Asia, in former Yugoslavia, in Canada, Switzerland etc. The research became a good basis for further analyses including the concepts of world literature.

Dionýz Ďurišin himself published the two monographs on world literature as a natural result of the mentioned research: *Čo je svetová literatúra?* (*What Is World Literature?*, 1992) and *Svetová literatúra pe-rom a dlátom* (*World Literature With Pen and Chisel*, 1993) in which he cooperated with his friends trying to form an integrated entity of literature and graphic art.<sup>4</sup> Ďurišin's books concerning world literature are concrete, rich in different literary material - on the other hand they represent a certain utopia. Ďurišin's concept of world literature is systematic, literary historical and not additional or axiological. *What Is Literature?* is quite a successful, original attempt at constructing the model of world literature on the basis of specific interliterary communities and on the category of "interliterariness". But the real systematic World Literature based on Ďurišin's theses is still only an alluring project.

<sup>3</sup> Ю. Лотман, *Феномен культуры. Труды по знаковым системам* X, Тарту 1978; Ю. Лотман, Роман А.С. Пушкина "Евгений Онегин". Комментарий. Пособие для учителя, Ленинград 1980; Д.С. Лихачев: "Слово о полку Игореве" и культура его времени, Ленинград 1978; Д.С. Лихачев, *Поэзия садов; к семантике садово-парковых стилей*, Москва 1982; See also; I. Pospíšil, *Rozpěti žánru*, Brno 1992, p.4 and further; И.Г. Неупокоева, *История всемирной литературы. Проблема системного и сравнительного анализа*, Москва 1976.

<sup>4</sup> D. Ďurišin, *Čo je svetová literatúra?*, Bratislava 1992; D. Ďurišin, *Svetová literatúra pe-rom a dlátom*, Bratislava 1993.



The next volume of *Osobitné medziliterárne spoločenstvá* 6 is devoted to essential notions and principles; it is – in a way – a vocabulary of "interliterariness" which contains, for example, the following terms: *literary process, interliterary centrism, polyliterariness, evolutionary continuity and discontinuity, variability, syncretism, taboo constructions, evolutionary unevenness, developmental representation, falsifications, genre modifications of translation, supplementary incorporation.*

The studies published in Ďurišin's volumes concern the problems of literary genres and genology only marginally. The second volume contains, for example, the study on the poetological aspect of the formation of the Turkish inteliterary community in Antiquity and the Middle Ages <sup>5</sup>. In the fifth volume the study on the interliterary contexts of the novel in verse of the second half of the 19th century can be found <sup>6</sup>. One of the critical remarks concerning the conception of specific interliterary communities consists in the general character of literature: many factors (social, psychological, economic, cultural etc.), which have to be taken into account, overshadow literariness, historical poetics and poetology, the specific features differentiating literature from music and visual arts. One of the possibilities overcoming the polarity seems to be the regressive movement towards the intrinsic structure of the artifact. It is not, however, a simple return to "influence", but rather a search for the impulses and inspirations which had effected a rise of a certain literary genre. On one side it is a return to *Ideengeschichte* in a way, on the other it represents the renaissance of the author's creative importance (V. Shklovsky's "return of the ball into the game"). The literary genre itself stands somewhere between the general conceptions formulated by Ďurišin and his research team and the detailed poetics of the artifact.

D. Ďurišin mentions in his research the former Soviet Union and the role of Russian in its territory (1987) <sup>7</sup>. The political situation has radically changed since. The project of specific interliterary communities included the two epochs: both the stage of the formation and the culmination of interliterary communities and partly also the period of their disintegration (the U.S.S.R., Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia). Coming back to the situation in the Commonwealth of Independent

<sup>5</sup> I. V. Steblevova, *Poetologický aspekt formovania turkofónneho medziliterárneho spoločenstva v staroveku a stredoveku*, in: *Osobitné medziliterárne spoločenstvá*, v 2., Bratislava 1991, pp. 103–109 (further: OMS).

<sup>6</sup> M. Pokorný a M. Zelenka, *K meziliterárním souvislostem žánrového vývoje veršovaného románu v 2. polovině 19. století*, in: OMS, 5, pp. 199–209.

<sup>7</sup> D. Ďurišin, *Osobitné medziliterárne spoločenstvá*, in: OMS 1, Bratislava 1987, pp. 21–22.



States we may assert that the complementary factor of Russian as means of communication still exists especially in the literatures of the juvenile nations of the East. Ďurišin himself mentioned the works of Ch. Aitmatov, a famous Kirghiz writer. The example of those literatures created in the interliterary community formed by the state administration and its ideological premises is quite useful for the better understanding of the turning point in history, of the time characterized by the increasing role of divergent, disintegrative and resistant evolutionary impulses. The category of "interliterariness" should therefore contain more negative, resistant and divergent factors which are not only the result of the disintegration of some of the interliterary communities, but, above all, the undisprovable characteristic features of their existence. The intentional divergence and resistance usually occur in the more mature stages of the formation of specific interliterary communities, they are - paradoxically - the typical features of the higher degree of "interliterariness" when the interliterary communities reach their evolutionary climax, their crossroads: the reception of different impulses need not automatically mean the disintegration of the community, but rather its enrichment in a different semantic context.

The second important factor in the realization of "interliterariness" in concrete literary works may be called "interpoeticity". In our yet unpublished study <sup>8</sup> we tried to compare the interpoeticity in the works of the three authors living and writing in the former Soviet Union: a Korean from Sakhalin Anatoly Kim, the first Chukcha writer Yuri Rytgev (Rytcheu) and a Kirghiz writer Chingiz Aitmatov. They all write in Russian (Aitmatov and Rytgev also in their native languages). The importance of the genre factor is shown in the form of the novel. Y. Rytgev tried to write a novel, but his early trilogy *Бремя таяния снегов* (1958-1967) was a mere imitation of the didactic Erziehungsroman - later he became rather a short-story writer (with the exception of the mythological biography *Магические числа* (1985). The same is true about both A. Kim and Ch. Aitmatov - none of them overcame the limits of the novella. They, however, tried to form the cycles of novellas, put the small epic narratives together. Although Rytgev, Kim and Aitmatov write novels (Aitmatov's *И долгие века длится день* 1980, and *Плаха*, 1986; Kim's *Белка*, 1984), they were not able to form the model of the rationalistic European novel. The hesitation concerning the European model of the novel may be regarded as a significant feature of the interliterariness and interpoeticity: the

<sup>8</sup> Literární dílo jako reflexe meziliterárnosti (Anatolij Kim - Jurij Rytgev - Čingiz Ajtmatov).



digressive novellas function as a static miniature, a didactic exemplum – thus as quite a different poetical and genre quality. Inside the structure of the novel there are imitations, reminiscences and convergencies and, at the same time, closing and resistant forces and structural divergencies. Many of those phenomena and processes manifested the breach in the unity of former Soviet literature, the disharmony, intentional divergencies which may represent another stage of interliterariness, the phase of temporary alienation and current foundation of a new interliterary model. Therefore, the genre structures as a reflection of interliterariness in one artifact can show us not only mysterious links and new literary entities, but also the pre-stage of the synthesis of world literature.

#### A HANDFUL OF CZECH GENRE STUDIES

The increasing interest to the problems of literary genology can also be seen in recent publications from the Czech Republic, though their creative beginnings often come back to 1980's or even 1970's.

Přemysl Blažiček's <sup>9</sup> essay deals with the novel epopée written by Josef Holeček, one of the last Czech Slavophiles. His large prosaic saga *Our Family* (1899–1930) has been regarded as old-fashioned both in the sense of ideology and morphology. Though the author of the study is more interested in the philosophy of Holeček's artifact, there are still several passages devoted to its genre structure. The epic character of the novel weakens its idyllic atmosphere: Holeček's resistance to the elegant, light life of the urban society is not rooted so much in his love of primitive life forms, but rather in his rejection of simple life decisions. From this standpoint Holeček's epic work imitating large Russian narratives of a chronicle character reminds us of ancient epic poetry tending towards totality of man and his cosmos. Blažiček does not deal very much with Holeček's poetics which could manifest the complex and complicated chains of artistic details, all the elements – sometimes even contradictory ones – the large epic narrative consists of. The study of Holeček's saga demonstrates the importance of epic archetypes in modern fiction; my own experience with the research of the chronicle confirms that literary development is often based upon chains of permanent transformations of ancient epic structures which should not be considered unimportant for the formation of the 20th-century reality.

<sup>9</sup> P. Blažiček, *Epičnost a naivita Holečkových Našich*, Oikumené, Praha 1992.



The group of Czech scholars concentrated round the journal of literary criticism "Svět literatury" ("The World of Literature"), published a collection of critical essays dealing with the regionalism and the regional novel in European and American literatures (*Román a "genius loci"*). The regional character of fiction (regionalism) cannot be identified with the regional features which are a natural part of each artifact: in this case each work of art is "regional" merging together with the general conception of the world and the universe. The locality becomes a creative, mythological foundation of a literary work. The seven separate studies deal with the realization of the "regional" principle in the novel on the material of Russian, French, Franco-Swiss, Hispano-American, Anglo-Irish and Scottish, American and German literatures. It is remarkable and even paradoxical that the "regional" character of the novel is manifested in the works of the writers who spent at least part of their lives in the bilingual or multilingual environments (with the exception of some of them): the Germans connecting their lives with the Czech milieu, Ilya Ehrenburg, a Jew living in Russia, a Frenchman from Switzerland, South Americans synthesizing Spanish and Indian traditions, a North American expressing in his novels a peculiar, multitrade world of South of the United States.

In the study of A. Remizov's novel *Sisters in the Cross* Vladimír Svaton analyzes the genre basis of the best novel of the outstanding Russian author. Svaton's article containing the conclusion of much wider contexts of human life represents a brilliant attempt at the formulation of the general meaning of the regionalism and the regional novel in world literature. Zdeněk Hrbata deals with the French and Franco-Swiss novel (Jean Giono, Charles Ramuz), Anna Housková writes about the categories of the centre and the periphery, the idyll and the anti-idyll in Hispano-American novel, Martin Procházka characterizes the polarity between the centre and the periphery in the 19th-century Scottish fiction and in James Joyce, Eva Věšíňová in the analysis of William Faulkner's novels associated with the fictitious Yoknapatawpha County shows how the First World War built the cultural bridge between America and Europe. Lenka Vachalovská demonstrates the evident similarity of the famous Russian novel (Ilya Ehrenburg's *Stormy Life of Lazik Roitschuvencz*) with the picaresque tradition, and Gabriela Veselá analyzes the regional aspect in the works of the German writers who linked their lives with the Czech cultural environment (Gustav Meyrink).



The collection of critical essays *Román a "genius loci"*<sup>10</sup> represents the conception of poetics based on spatio-temporal relations of the artifact. The linguistic situation depicted in the majority of the essays also manifests the importance of "specific interliterary communities" studied by Dionýz Durišin's research team in Slovakia. It is a pity that the authors did not deal more with the technique of writing and with the intrinsic artistic values. Apart from this, the volume presents the most prolific tendencies of contemporary Czech literary criticism.

The dominant author of the proceeding volume Vladimír Svatoň also published a book of his own called *Epické zdroje románu*<sup>11</sup> (*The Epic Sources of the Novel*) with the subtitle from the theory and typology of Russian Fiction. In the introductory study Svatoň asserts (after he had analysed Herder, Schelling, Schlegel, Goethe, A. Veselovsky, Potebnya and others) that the historical poetics does not imply the permanent modifications of artistic approaches to creation only, but, above all, the general principles of the artistic structure and its relation to the epoch it tried to express and to the constitutive features of human existence. In further genealogical articles Svatoň studies the essence of the novel, the two conceptions of the novel in Lukács and Bakhtin, A. Remizov's novel and "the novel of the disintegration of the empire". Svatoň's searching for the genre dominants of the novel sometimes hides the actual chaotic structure of the artifact: are A. Remizov's *Sisters in the Cross* really only "the novel of the turning point in life", is Gorky's *Klim Samgin* merely the novel of the conflict of cultures? Most probably, the comparison of Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago* and *Klim Samgin*, including the reflections of Russian novel in Ludvík Vaculík's artistic creations, could also come to interesting conclusions.

Nowadays some of the Russians are convinced that the "Petersburg literatura" comes to an end and that literature in Russia is becoming the same category as in the West containing beauty, entertainment, excitement, business and not vision, prophecy and moral authority. Svatoň's studies rather confirm (even – as it seems – against the author's intentions) the fact that Russian literature be-

<sup>10</sup> *Román a "genius loci". Regionalismus jako pojetí světa v evropské a americké literatuře*. URSUS, 4, edited by Anna Housková and Z. Hrbata. English summaries translated by A.Z.M. Procházka. Ustav pro českou a světovou literaturu, Praha, sine.

<sup>11</sup> V. Svatoň, *Epické zdroje románu. Z teorie a typologie ruské prózy*. Vydal Ustav pro českou a světovou literaturu AV ČR jako přílohu časopisu Česká literatura a Svět literatury. Praha, 1993.



came famous more or less through its "non-artistic", "didactic" character. The significance of archetypal patterns was also accentuated in the two proceeding volumes, good samples of contemporary Czech genological thinking.

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