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Interpoeticity as a Crucial Node in the Construction of the Complexes of National and World Literature and Genre Systematics

Abstract

The author of the present article deals with the problems of comparative and genre studies in relation to the construction of the complexes of national and world literature. He regards as a crucial node the category of interpoeticity and the new philology as an entity of linguistics and literary criticism plus the new terminology of comparative and genre studies. The conflict between the area and philological concept could be solved especially by applying the term “interpoeticity” based on the concept of interliterariness and specific interliterary communities and centrism. The concept of interpoeticity is a dominant node permeating and mutually connecting both comparative and genre studies functioning as a specific bridge between the intrinsic and extrinsic spheres associated with literary “comparatistics” and “genology” which deal with comparison and genre analysis, not speaking about the fact that both disciplines are intrinsically permeated: there are no genres without comparison and no comparison outside the sphere of literary genres. The author suggests a solution which should not abandon a certain utopian character in the sense of the reflections of the existing philology and of the gradual integration of more or less innovative approaches. He accentuates the necessity of the modernization and reconstruction or reconstitution of genre studies connected with strengthening literary diachrony suppressed in the course of the dominance of immanent methods based on its wider concept tending towards the integration of gender studies, feminist criticism, multiculturalism, cultural studies, cultural anthropology, and area studies and also “intrinsic” disciplines, such as narratology or theory of the plot/sujetology, but rationally, realistically, moderately without fashionable hyperbolization and without resigning on the positivist accuracy and handling of the facts.

interpoeticity; extrinsic and intrinsic approaches; comparative and genre studies;
philological-area studies; narratology

The intention of the presented block of studies dealing with new trends in comparative and genre studies, their crises, contemporary state and topical tendencies goes back to my article published in 1993 and reacting to the conception of the Slovak comparatist Dionýz Ďurišin, a member of whose research team I was at that time.

The New Trends in Comparative and Genre Studies presuppose an inner connection between the two spheres of literary criticism covering all the substantial elements of the literary artefact, one conditioning the other. The character of literary currents or streams, a schematized picture of literary development reflecting the modifications of society, humankind, and its philosophical Weltanschauung, affects the genre system, its core and surrounding plasma; each epoch brings a new variation of a genre system changing the position of nearly all genres.

The centre of the genre system and its periphery, central and peripheral/marginal genre forms are — to a certain extent — a specific reflection of the evolution of literary streams expressing all the complex of changes associated with the movement of the world as such, not only society, but also nature, climate and all the factors which already positivism regarded as important, though later the role of extrinsic, extrasocial factors was diminished. The witnesses may remember the well-known Hippolyte Taine's triad "race, moment, milieu" in which the last factor is the most important. Taine himself manifested its impact on literature in his *History of English Literature (Histoire de la littérature anglaise, 1864)* mentioning the typical English climate at that time (rain, fog, cloudy) as the reason for the depressive character of literature. Though the sphere of culture in its widest sense as a sort of a firm curtain has become even much stronger since, it is quite harmful to underrate the factors of nature and cosmos and everything the human undertakes.

In one of the articles published several years ago I dealt with or rather discussed the problem of the permanent crises of comparative literary studies and its recent modifications which could be evidently seen as early as the beginning of the 21st century (Pospíšil 2009a).

One of the new positions of the first sphere which is dealt with here — comparative literary studies — concerns the loss of the pure philological character of comparison of literary artefacts which — after quite a long period of the domination of immanent methods — returned into the cradle of culture in its widest sense. This situation, of course, goes back to the changes in literary theory which is closely connected with all the disciplines of

literary criticism including comparative and genre studies. Roman Jakobson's classical statement about literariness as a *conditio sine qua non* of literature that in this way separates itself from the rest of cultural strata manifesting its specificity, but not ceasing to be its integral and natural part is nearly forgotten. It is associated with the postmodernist conception of the end of the theory of literature as understood between the two wars as Galin Tihanov puts it (Tihanov 2019). The reviews accepted Tihano's study and approach as very clever, sophisticated — as always in Tihanov's treatises — with respect and, at the same time, with enthusiasm, and they were substantially right, but it does not prevent me from making a short comment on this issue. First, Tihanov's treatise is more or less based on the analysis of interwar Russian literary scholarship in many-sided contexts, but the Russians were not the only champions of the 20th-century literary theory. They had their predecessors and followers, German (and also some Czech) 19th-century formists/formalists, the real ground of the future Russian formalism and Czech structuralism. There are several investigations which should be taken into consideration more than usually being done (Makhlin 2015; Pospíšil 2015d, 2017, 2022a; Mnich and Blashkiv 2016; Mnich 2021). They brought a new view of some of the key personalities Tihanov more or less dealt with: Bakhtin, Jakobson, and Čyževskýj. The problem consists in the fact that while the first two are widely respected, the third has to be gradually revealed. Having a look at their conceptions, one can find half-concealed impulses which were not stressed in the past and opened new side windows developing the formalist and structuralist concepts of the theory of literature. Another aspect of this contribution consists in a polemic about the concept of "world literature" and "world literatures."

Nowadays, the subject of the polemic seems to me rather a misunderstanding. With reference to my preface to the volume *The 20th-Century World Literatures* (Pospíšil 1999) I demonstrated the divergence of the two concepts accentuating "world literatures" as those national literatures that provide the strongest poetological impulse to literature as such. This process is, of course, historically variable, and I pointed out that in my critical remark; some polemicists with the mentioned concept rightly grasped the subjectivity consisting, for example, in the effort of contemporary national states to support translating into foreign languages, especially into the world ones, by means of scholarships and grants. This is also a part of this historical movement.

Đurišin's permeation of linguistic, cultural, and ethnological aspect of comparative literature pointed to the necessity of a new discipline of an integrating character which should synthesize new philology and some elements of social science which inclined, finally, to the conception of integrated genre typology and area studies in the Institute of Slavonic Studies at Masaryk University (Brno).

While the methodological integrity of comparative studies is nowadays a mere fiction, the importance of comparative studies manifested its strength in modern and postmodern construction of the history of literature. Since the beginning of the 21st century it has not been possible to write a history of any national literature outside its comparative framework. The construction of any history of literature is more or less connected with comparative criteria and with the notion of literary streams, currents or tendencies — each term has, of course, its definite semantic content and range. The general principle of periodization of the literary process consists in the search for a net of mutually permeated criteria; the usual method is a peculiar hierarchy of social, political, and poetological/personalistic criteria;

at the point of intersection of all these factors there are the streams and currents as a specific historical-aesthetic manifestation of the development of poetic forms. The problem of the so-called progress in literature has been put aside similarly as that in the development of society. The periodization obviously has paradigmatic and syntagmatic aspects. The former is represented by the evolution of literature split into autonomous stages defined by the above-mentioned complex criteria. The latter, as a rule, defines the horizontal boundaries of a literary process, say, in the framework of a national literature. The problem is closely linked to the range of each national literature, in simple words, what does belong to a certain national literature and what does not as mentioned above. In Slavonic literatures in general and in the literatures situated in transitory areas or zones (Central Europe, the Balkans) it often means the polyliterariness or the presence of foreign or another literature or other literatures in the area.

The weak aspects of contemporary comparative studies are connected with their methodological dispersion and non-existent methodological memory. One of the relevant aspects of comparative studies is linked to the so-called dialogue of cultures. In the past we were interested in it for various reasons and from various points of view: besides the concrete example of the contradictory Russo-Czech literary relations, it was the dialogue of cultures as such and later also different manifestations of some other phenomena: area studies and the literature of quasipostmodernism, the prose of virtual authenticity etc. In a more general reflection this leads to the conclusion that the dialogue of cultures has an intrinsically inconsistent nature, such as “magical realism,” or similar notions from the sphere of political science. On the surface the dialogue may function as a positive means of communication, but in depth it is also a powerful tool of the strategy of human behaviour. It is a positive source of mutual understanding, but, at the same time, a purely pragmatic medium of reaching individual goals.

The dialogue of cultures and area studies has been cultivated only recently, but as a matter of fact it goes back to the distant past in which they had different names and labels: cultural-historical school, geographical history and the most modern American sovietology. Its main goal is to return literature back to its wider stream together with culture in general, sciences, arts in general, economy and economics, politics and political science and social etiquette. In other words: the dialogue has always had a spatial and temporal dimension, the events in a concrete area have always focused on culture and dialogue of cultures (Pospíšil 2022b).

The contemporary status of comparative literary studies is, therefore, rather complicated; on the one hand, traditional comparative studies are newly revealed as inspiring from some aspects, sometimes they are regarded as predecessors of more modern approaches (area studies), on the other, there is a strong quest for further innovations. And, last but not least, comparative studies appeared in the focus of application as a methodological tool when conceiving a new model of literary history or a history of any national literature which cannot be understood outside its comparative framework (Pospíšil 1993a, 2009a, 2009b, 2013, 2014, 2015a).

As a philologist, I accentuate the dominant importance of the language as a main factor of the identification of an artefact in the framework of national literature. The area, cultural, political, ethic, and some other factors are — in my opinion — only marginal, auxiliary, complementary, characterizing the individual nature of a literary artefact. The complex of

world literature is not a mere entity of everything ever written (how could we know what had been really written in this world and in which civilizations and humankind?). The language as a solid constant, but, at the same time, a very unstable, underestimated factor verifying the national identity of a literary artefact can be seen in the case of the Nobel prize winner Svetlana/Svyatlana/Svitlana Aleksievich, who was proclaimed a Byelorussian because she is a Byelorussian passport holder though her mother is a Ukrainian, so her mother tongue is Ukrainian, her father is a Byelorussian, so her father tongue is Byelorussian, but she has written all of her belles lettres/fiction in Russian.

Language is the real dominant and most important identifier of the nation and there is no reason for the questioning whether its poetic variety based on the aesthetic function may remain a decisive identifier of national literature.

I have been the initiator and constant supporter of area studies in philology in the Czech Republic as an alternative to the purely philological approach towards national in general and world literature in particular. As a member of the so-called Ďurišin's team since the beginning of the 1990s thanks to my friends who dealt with comparative studies and cooperated with the leader of the team, I often argued with his conception being — in my view — too formally geographical or geopolitical and suffering from the lack of the poetic kernel which cannot be ignored. Otherwise, we would speak not about art, but about journalism. The conflict between the area and philological concept could be solved by applying the term “interpoeticity” based on the concept of interliterariness and specific interliterary communities and centrism (see below).

For the first time, the term “interpoeticity” appeared in my article (Pospíšil, 1993b) the publication of which was supported by Dionýz Ďurišin himself (though he did not agree with its content) and was based on the conviction that there were two dominant spheres of literary artefacts — extrinsic and intrinsic — due to René Wellek's rather phenomenological concept in his and Warren's classical *Theory of Literature*. The area or, more precisely, philological-area approach, represents the extrinsic sphere which could be analysed by other disciplines than philological ones, e.g., sociology, history, psychology, philosophy etc. On the other hand, the intrinsic approach has a textual character based on aesthetic, poetic, morphological kernel of the literary artefact. Without the intrinsic aspect it is not possible to understand the artistic creation as a whole; the concept of interliterariness and specific interliterary communities has its counterpart in its intrinsic, poetological sphere. The concept of interpoeticity is a dominant node permeating and mutually connecting both comparative and genre studies functioning as a specific bridge between the intrinsic and extrinsic spheres associated with literary “comparatistics” and “genology” which deal with comparison and genre analysis, not speaking about the fact that both disciplines are intrinsically permeated: there are no genres without comparison and no comparison outside the sphere of literary genres.

We must not be afraid of radical reevaluation of the traditional notion of national and world literature; on the other hand we should take into consideration that many, so to speak, current subjects seem to be just fashionable and shallow, fashionability also concerns the problem of the globalised world, national literatures and supra-national entities. It depends on how the world will develop in a few decades. The key significance of national languages, the role of English as a *lingua franca* for a part of the world, the increasing role of Romance languages, especially Spanish and its geographical varieties, the problem of world

languages which spread through economic and political integration, history, mentality and religion — Chinese, Arabic, Hindi — the struggle of religions and civilizations, the intrinsic ethnic metamorphoses of European countries, the preparatory phasis of the disappearance or liquidation of national states leads to a new situation in which the world might be split into several more or less independent geopolitical and cultural continents.

The role of translations as a real vehicle of the formation of the complex entity of the world literary canon might be diminished as there will be just a few major languages understood by a prevalent majority of the population. Moreover, there might be various kinds of factual strong censorship obstacles created by ideology, religion, and economic interests. The process of globalisation looks different than some thirty years ago. The world will not be only one global village, as some dreamed in the recent past, the role of translation in the formation of world literature will last, only the number of languages into which the key works will be translated will be fewer.

The conflict between area and philological concepts remains very useful and has had a crucial importance, but it should be transformed into a new entity which would not underrate the significance of the poetic language, the core and kernel of the literary artistic work as such — which was already mentioned above. The lack or a weak presence of the poetological aspect is probably the weakest aspect of area/territorial/spatial studies.

I would assert that the permeation of the poetic and area, geopolitical principle is a real way towards the formation of the world literary canon even in changing conditions in the framework of the global change which has been taking place before our eyes.

Speaking about the theory of literary genres (“genology”) we have to admit that this special discipline formed and formulated by Paul van Tieghem found itself rather in the position of a fashionable jargon, but its real function in literary criticism remains approximately on the same level as many years ago when the term “genology/genologie” came into existence. Therefore, we could characterize the contemporary position of “genology” as a permanent search for a new functional position in the whole concept of literary research. I have analysed partial questions of literary genres in tens of studies, later or simultaneously synthesised in a special compendium (Pospíšil 1981, 1988, 1990, 1998a, 1998b, 1999, 2003, 2004, 2005a, 2008a, 2008b, 2014) in which I dealt with the necessity of the modernization and reconstruction or reconstitution of genre studies connected with strengthening literary diachrony suppressed in the course of the dominance of immanent methods based on its wider concept tending towards the integration of gender studies, feminist criticism, multiculturalism, cultural studies, cultural anthropology, and area studies and also “intrinsic” disciplines, such as narratology or theory of the plot/sujetology, but rationally, realistically, moderately without fashionable hyperbolization. It is evident that the term “genology” itself is being used just in several national environments (Poland, Slovakia, Czech Republic, partly Germany, in language modifications in East Slavonic territory/Russia, Ukraine, Byelorussia, rarely in some other places, but in the majority of conceptions genres are usually dealt with in the framework of classical poetics). It was probably the fault of the creator of the term Paul van Tieghem himself who invented and applied the word with so many semantic connotations. The new challenges of “genology” are associated with new genres and with the existence of new technologies in the framework of postmodernism, postpostmodernism and quasipostmodernism (Pospíšil 2005b). The new epoch and the new evolution of literature naturally bring new forms, new morphology, the work with traditional texts

as a product of intertextuality, new technologies give birth to new genres, sometimes manifesting just poetological gestures rather than real, substantial changes of literature as such. The radical social and political turns are connected with the changes in noetic and axiological reconstruction of literature as such. The theory of literature has to react to the fact that contemporary world bestsellers usually stand on the boundary between fact and fiction, fiction and nonfiction, mass literature (Trivialliteratur) and aesthetically high-quality literature, documentary literature/“literature of the fact” and belles lettres (Sachliteratur/schöne Literatur) taking into consideration the significance of genre forms as the only form of the existence of literature with all its feedbacks, emotional impact upon the social processes and political decisions not only in the past, but also in the present.

All these challenges which contemporary comparative and genre studies are being exposed to have to be complemented by the problems of the “new philology” and the development of terminology. Several years ago I organized the two blocks of studies devoted to both problems (Pospíšil 2016a, 2018a, 2008b) continuing my partial research in the preceding years (Pospíšil 1994, 2000a, 2000b, 2000c, 2003, 2006, 2010a, 2010b, 2014, 2015a, 2015b, 2016b).

On the basis of the return to “old philology”, e.g. to the classical book on “the history of Slavonic language and literature in all dialects” (Die Geschichte der slawischen Sprache und Literatur nach allen Mundarten, Buda 1826) by P.J. Šafařík/Šafárik, the contemporary state of the partialization and dispersion of traditional philology proposes a solution which should not abandon a certain utopian character in the sense of the reflections of the existing philology and of the gradual integration of new approaches without resigning on the positivist accuracy and handling the facts. The term “new philology” means a new evolutionary stage of the discipline which cannot be formed only in theory, but mainly in everyday research, in the process of the permanent convergence of linguistics and literary criticism, and of the permeation of new methodologies.

These attempts represented by a cluster of articles written by several literary scholars suggested another possibility of how to develop comparative literary and genre studies in connection with the shifts of meaning in the terminology of literary criticism, mainly its two disciplines the present study deals with.

The genesis and the generally respected usage of new terms could be classified into several types: 1) New or relatively new notions; 2) Accentuation of respected terms; 3) The change of the meaning of already existing terms; 4) Re-defining of well-known terms; 5) New contextualization of respected terms. The most important thing is, however, especially in the case of philology, the language barrier and the textual background of each national literature. The examples of my own new terms: chronicle space pulsation, poetics of the concrete, the chronicle as a basis of myth, the appearance and the disappearance of the causality of the plot, dominant, formative and catenary lines of the plot, dispersion of the elegy and the idyll, the deviation of the chronicle character, pre-post effect/paradox, are special terms applicable to each national literature, but it is very hard to implement them in a wider international context though in one or two cases it was nevertheless partially realised (Pospíšil 2016c).

In the present treatise I tried to cover several spheres to introduce the main subject of the whole thematic block, the answer to the question of the dominant trends in contemporary comparative and genre studies, but not only. An even more important aspect consists

in their problems, obstacles and pitfalls culminating in the sphere of “new philology” and terminology which represents the real key to the shifts in methodology, to new angles of vision of belles lettres in general and the literary artefact in particular.

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