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GROTESQUENESS IN THE FICTION BY STANISLAV RAKÚS

The bibliographical portrait of Stanislav Rakús has been forming itself from the second half of the 1970s along two lines: in the research of a literary scholar and in the open author's workshop of a fiction writer. His contribution in literary scholarship has been in interpretational penetrations into selected novelistic, but more frequently into shorter genres of Slovak fiction writers of the 20th century, especially Peter Jilemnický, Milo Urban, and Alfonz Bednár in such works as *Próza a skutočnosť* (*Fiction and Reality*, 1982), *Epické postoje* (*Epic Stances*, 1988), he captured the transgression into the literature for children and literature for adults in a volume of professional articles called *Medzi jednoznačnosťou a presnosťou* (*Between Clearness and Precision*, 1993), as well as in his latest work which, in his own words, means the culmination of theoretical formulating the issues of literary work of art, *Poetika prozaického textu. Látka, téma, problém, tvar* (*Poetics of Fictional Text. Subject, Theme, Problem, Form*, 1995). The fiction writer, Stanislav Rakús, made his first appearance with a socially lyricized novelette, *Žobráci* (*The Beggars*, 1976), after which followed a volume of short lyricized pieces of fiction, *Pieseň o studničnej vode* (*Song of the Well-Spring Water*, 1979), topical social novellette *Temporálne poznámky* (*Temporal Notes*, 1993). The fictional pieces from the volume *Pieseň o studničnej vode*, namely *Matka Dorota* (*Mother Dorota*), *Jasanica*, *Gendúrovci* (*The Gendúrs*) have become the epical point of departure for TV adaptations. He published a book for children called *Mačacia krajina* (*The Land of Cats*, 1986).

The poetics of Stanislav Rakús is directly tied with his being well instructed in the theory of macrocomposition and microcomposition of

an epic text, but also with a chamber-like character of his author's vision and both artistic and civil reflecting the social reality by means of epic narration. The text by Rakús have always been in active relationship with transparent reality and critical realities of the society which through their power limitlessness disturb the moral standards of social tradition and thoughtlessly, even violently, interfere with the intimate space of man. Still, Rakús does not belong, neither through his fiction nor through his personal character, among the creators of adventurous or catastrophic or in any other way courageous epic projects. The author's resistance against the pressures exerted on artistic literature from the outside which disturbs his artistic getting-to-know the harmony in a well-balanced society, corresponds with both the noetics and poetics of a novellette, to the psychological habit of a novelistic character and the narration model of a commentator of short epical works. The author's idea of a silent, intellectual resistance as a manifestation of civil thinking and the creator's individuality has no violent traits in Rakús' epical conception. The attitude of the author, transformed into the epic space, has been ripening gradually, this is why he commences - maybe even way of paradox - in the fiction book for children, *Mačacia krajina* (*The Land of Cats*) and culminates for the time being in his *Temporálne poznámky* (*Temporal Notes*).

I.

The publication of Rakús' book for childre meant a good deal of surprise for those who encountered his fiction before. The surprise was not in the fact that he addressed the children's reader but rather in the fact that he described the "mystification" of literary reality by the procedures of lyricizing the utterance and focused on the meaning, typological, and situational grotesqueness as noetic stance and form of utterance on social reality. It is not by chance that one is now able to formulate his "fairy-tales" as genological question mark which pertains to the relationship between the legacy of folk fairy tale and literary fairy tale which "moreover" denies its genesis and function. *Mačacia krajina* (*The Land of Cats*, 1986), if we leave it within the space for the children's reader, my and must manifest itself predominantly as a fairy tale reversed.

Fairy tale and modern research of literary scholarship into it rank among the systematically elaborated issues of both history and theory of literature for young people (V. Propp, 1971; J. Poliak, 1983; Z. Klátik, 1971, 1975; J. Noge, 1988; E. Tučná, 1994; B. Šimonová, 1995 and others).

The attention of literary scholars, in their natural generational waves, is devoted to clarification of developmental ties between folk and author's fairy tale, to type and tradition, genre and poetics, and even in a more expressive way, to aesthetics and uniqueness of the author's workshop. What stands behind "all this" is, we assume, an unusually intentional appearance of not only Slovak author's fairy tale which both in the community of literary scholars and in authorial background has been passed over in generational and creative messages (folk tale - author's tale; literary legacy - literary tradition). The readers' interest in author's tale is subject to modifications to which what has to correspond if a differentiated attitude of the author to the forms of the tale and author's tale, but also the attitude of an author to folk tale which started to play a double role. First, an above-the-time message of the quality is presented, of the extensiveness of the spiritual legacy, and of the unique character of the national character of the forefathers, and finally of the essence of a live tradition of spiritual ties in the present literary life.

Simultaneously, the author's tale stimulates the ideas on genealogy, poetics, and aesthetics of a literary form bearing this name. The (ambi)valency of its relationship with folk tale is indicated, reasons are given for age-related aspects and children's aspects, attention is brought to the world of children and internal inter-connectedness of its ethics and logics, the sense of phantasy in the service of the noetics of the text, the qualities of a personality - the specific character of the workshop of an adult author. Finally, one may also find considerations which limit the coexistence or anatomy of cultural phenomena of both literature for children and literature for adults by the fact who and with what intention becomes the author of the author's fairy tale. Finally, may the reasonings take whatever course, i.e. either into theory or into the experience of a text, they do meet at a point of conviction that it is the aesthetic vision and thinking of the world created for the reader which tells a lot of the author's tale.

Fairy tale is part of literary legacy (it is passed over after the death or, metaphorically, after the "presenter" terminates his development in both relative and absolute understanding of the semantics of this notion; folk fairy tale, parables on folk tale, adjustment and media adaptation of folk fairy tale, re-narrating of folk tale, artificial, author's tale...) in such a manner as it forms a firm ground of the literary tradition of national literature, and in the relationship of its kind (moving, wandering, taking-over, echoing of motives, conflicts, and plot, characters, and procedures in a fairy tale), also that of literature within literature.

Authorial fairy tale belongs among those genres of literature for young people which renewed the natural, yes even harmonical, being of a double-housed author perceived as the author for both adult and young reader. This means that the author's strategy, perceived as a whole with specific characteristics of a specific author's workshop has been and is from the works for adult readers into those which are able to find their juvenile readers. One may appropriate the following finding of evaluation of Stanislav Rakús, since it is him on whom we are now going to focus our attention as on the author of the single book for children (*The Land of Cats*, 1986): "S. Rakús, just like V. Šikula, models his characters and relationships among them in the way he does in the literature for adults readers. He does not get away with his noetics and poetics. His *Land of Cats* is populated with both philisters and honourable characters, prototypes of contemporary human characters. He is striving to capture the contemporary world in its ethical totality. The tension is merely expressed as the conflict between Paniberko and the world, in essence it is the conflict within the character, a psychological conflict" (B. Šimonová, 1994). This means that in the above focus is on the symbiosis of the author for adults with the author for children and the interconnectedness is being detected in the extra-literary as well as intra-literary space of the text. Provided we managed to find correct orientation, B. Šimonová is not emphasizing the literary kind and genre (authorial fairy tale) but rather the peculiar character of the author's epical workshop, it even seems she is focusing our attention on the author's strategy and this, as it seems, is constructed upon its well established and verified readers', publisher's, and author's "fame".

We assume it is reasonable to be reminded now of S. Rakús' paper *On Some Confrontational Issues of Literature for Children and Young People* (S. Rakús, 1993) in which he copes with the terms and notions of literature for children, but predominantly he intends to give his views on the relative character of "shifts" between literature and literature within literature. (J. Noge, 1988) through its aesthetic effectiveness and the ability to receive it (them). However, in the above mentioned reflection, Rakús put down also this: "when we speak of literature for children and not of literature as such, we automatically, in the theoretical point of departure itself, place the emphasis on the reader, on human individual in a certain developmental stage of his/hers which indeed plays a major role here, however, alongside its measurable precision it contains in itself far-reaching differences since, let us admit, it is not only the poet but also the reader who are being born, that there exists a difference of

musical and technological type of a child, that the children from one and the same family and the identical type of education may be characteristic by a diametrically opposed level of aesthetic appreciation, and the like". S. Rakús invites us to make relative the role and possibilities of both author and reader in accordance with the genetic predisposition of a personality on both parts. This is why we let the author express his views on the generally valid connection of the author with his work and their common echoing in the noetics and aesthetics of the reader, since "the artistic level of literature for children may only be judged consequentially by a critic, i.e. the adult people who advantage is finally the fact that they themselves had been children. If the art is to remain art, the artistic level of a work of art has remain the essential criterion. The classification of its intentionality, in the given type of literate no doubt essential and natural, may, however, in certain instances, despite usual inter-relatedness of communication and aesthetic phenomena, be artistically irrelevant. This happens when the utterance toward the children's reader contains communication noises, however it remains, as a sovereign aesthetic fact, acceptable for the adults". We assume that the reflections on Rakús' observations gave answer on the commenting impetus from B. Šimonová. For us this also means, based on our understanding of the texts in Rakús' *Land of Cats*, that the authorial fairy tale is in advance "made rid" of "recollections" of the genre, typological, and poetological canon of folk tale but is transparently engaged with its extra-textual, philosophical and ethical value.

It is certainly worth thinking why an epic writer, S. Rakús, decided to write so far his only book for children (*The Land of Cats*, 1986). One may also consider that the author is not aware of any cause for the rupture between literature for adults and literature for children. One may eventually take a somewhat different course and say that the author decided to write a book for children since he has children himself and knows "what is going on" in their world. One cannot omit the author's narrational pleasure in intelligent situational humor. But what if behind the specific book there is merely an embarrassing feeling of an observer in a live literary "space" and this makes complete the fundamental knowledge of a parent? And both the former and the latter is spinned from personal experiences and together, in harmony, is activated in the atmosphere of the author's literary workshop and in the gearing wheels of a common day? What if the impetus for the author was merely his enthusiasm of a person who wants so much and takes a decision since he is convinced that this message from him should be forwarded on?

We believe that in the beginning of S. Rakús's intention to write a book for children one has to be looking for his attitude to literature, just like his authentic knowledge of the world of children with logics and phantasy proper to him, but mainly the author's empirical thesis – the paradox concerning the fact that all things, including ourselves, are subject to change, still nothing ever is changed in the world of a child, not even in the world around the child, this is why one should not make any "educational" pressure in trying to get into this child's world. Finally, "what is at stake is the author's media capacity to articulate through the narrator the characters of various kinds of experience of a lyrical subject, his vision of the world, his reflections, feelings, emotions, attitudes, acting" (P. Zajac, 1993).

The folk tale has its own cannon which is observed in its horizontal line, this means along the chain of philosophy and theme. but in the vertical cross section of its compositional orientation. It is the solution of the story which remains dominant in a folk tale to which the motif is adjusted (ill wishes and obstacles, trials and journeys), its compositional development (repeated and increasing hardships, gradual overcoming of ill-wishing in the conflict surrounding the character, somebody or something), and the contrasting typological, social, moral oppositions among the character (short-tall, a hero-a crook, a kind-a shepherd, good-evil, and many others in the relationship of compositional and prototype clichés). the climax of a folk tale is then oriented to a clear philosophical and moral, this means also to didacticizing harmonic and rightful "conclusion" of the story.

An author's tale takes different manifestations in relation to the folk one: from its compositional, motivational ties to transparent impetuses following from it as far as "forgetting" about its presence. We assume that through this latest possible relationship of the author's tale and the folk tale *The Land of Cats* by S. Rakús is represented. The author of the book has not, with the exception of the last text in the book, equipped with an unequivocal reference to genre specification of the whole of the *Land of Cats*. Finally, in favour of the book of tales speaks the publisher's edition specification for the readers "from the age of nine", the title of the book, and the naming of the last tale, *The Cat Tale*.

S. Rakús offered, through his third person narrator the stories of cats and Tommy-cats who live and manage their urbanistically appropriately built (streets, houses, shops, a railway station, health service station, repair shop...) and for the benefit of its people civilized country (general social maturity of the population demonstrated through their

ritually organized utterance). Moreover, there arises an internal (themes and conflicts) and macrocompositional embracement of the whole (distribution of the book into two parts). As if the name of *The Land of Cats* were directly connected with the first part of the book, the Tommy-Cat Paniberko which was amended by the second part, And Other Inhabitants, and penetrated or rather resulted into the last text in this part, into the *Cat Tale*. The nine stories of S. Rakús' book created an enclosed and mutually conditioned thematic and semantik, philosophical and ethical whole, but first of all a mono-problematic whole which evokes an image of presence of a knowledge "circle" in the information *The Land of Cats* belongs to Paniberko and others, to him similar inhabitants, and this is one more reason why people live there as if in the *Land of Cats*.

The author continues alongside two layers of the text which we specify as semantic generalization of the knowledge:

Tommy Cat ----	parable ----	inhabitants
Paniberko		And others

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and as a compositional

specification of the genre intention:

THE LAND OF CATS ----- THE CAT TALE

identity

We shall proceed with working with the thesis according to which this is a book of fairy tales and we shall argue by means the climax of the text, but also the author's strategy as we have indicated it in the position of a generalized knowledge (a message for the reader) from the story and in the position of (an imitated) specification of the genre. We once again pose a question, why a fairy tale? We assume that S. Rakús in a pre-programmed way obviated the canon of folk tales to write consciously, as we have called it, a fairy tale reversed. In fact a story of the reversed side of the respected ethical standards and educational formulas to deny the tradition of tale as such, to reject the safety net from the fiction of almighty good. Thus, he created for children stories of Evil which stands by in the beginning and lingers at the end our thoughts and deeds, and it cannot be defeated nor overcome, not to speak of punishing it in an exemplary way. Nevertheless, S. Rakús has not comprehended the motif of evil as unsolvable and damaging negative in the qualities of his character, rather as unsuccessful, this is why an

understanding deserving attempt of a lonely character to do good to himself, rather for others and on others, in which he is – naturally – a failure. Once again there appears a variegated model of connecting the conflict and composition as a well thought paradox against the tradition of the genre and the spiritual legacy of a fairy tale. Finally, the noetics of the author's intention has penetrated into the hotbed of the author's strategy both in naming the specific story in the *Land of Cats* and in the book-form semantic whole through the unequivocalness of a proverb: "who is digging the pit for someone else, shall fall into it himself". This is one more reason why laughable stories as "observed" by S. Rakús from not so much laughable practice of people and arranged into compositional schemes of ethical fairy tales with varying philosophical focus have no positive hero, they do not know a successful pursuit to achieving one's aim, nothing in them finishes with friendship, devotion, love, victory, reward, behind the conflict there is no solution for all, even, what should have happened in the conflict (the victory over a concrete evil) is not "material" in the story (intention, decision). The stories in the *Land of Cats* lack ritual sentences (first and final sentences) on which folk fairy tale constructs its atmosphere and licence of limitless fiction and optimism (types of folk fairy tale). However, S. Rakús pays due respect, as against folk fairy tales, to the orientation in time and space for the reader in the story, but equally so to a kind of ceremoniousness, paying great detail to notions, syntax, style, and logics in the utterance of the narrator. The detail emerging in this way creates an internal counterpoint to the story hereby allowing the author to connect with the first episode of a single character (Paniberko: Galamanda, Kebenko, Radošovský) its continuation – development, although unsuccessful in its outcome (i.e. to do good to other people), however, he is engaged with other problems, another conflict and other characters – cats, or in another social milieu and the newly discovered personal environment. These motives are not so important in the story, rather, they serve the purpose of orientational information – in fact this is the hotbed of verbal, typological, situational (sad) humour and rational explanation of the events surrounding the character.

The inhabitants of the *Land of Cats* are happy with their country – one is entitled to assume this since they remained indifferent to it and its mechanisms until these exert their due impact on the former. The relationships in the Land are administratively given and analogical with the reader's respective (here we are having in mind the age of nine years) knowledge of mechanisms in the human society. With the help of

hyperbole, parable, stylized and repeated notional precision and causal perfection of named or described phenomena in the utterance of the narrator and in the utterances of the characters and their acts and intents by means of episodes arranged in the direct chain of the story in which what is interesting is the absence of any positive or personal emotion and the absence of any positive character, but all this through a rational (= non-fairy-tale) narrator, S. Rakús transpositioned in the role of the author into universal human experience figuratively and into the plots of the (reflected) animal world (one would take notice of the wishes and instructions imbedded in the very titles of individual stories in both first and second part of the *Land of Cats*: how he wanted, how he deserted, as the one not willing to give...). In fact, this is modelling of plot situations in the fauna of playful but by their character "uncompromising" little animals. Individual situations emerge as a game of civilization parable which, however, counts equivalently (author-reader) with the presence of active images (shoemaker, physician, boxer, dresser, malicious person, violent person...) in the experience and consciousness of a young reader. The stories in which the destinies of a character develop on the background of the motive of evil have also their own extra-textual plan. What is organized behind the realistic story of the authorial fairy tale is the author's awareness of the unchangeability, unsuccessfulness, loneliness, on the prevalence of selfishness and simple evil in us all and in every time which - as may be assumed - does exceed the experiential and developmental maturity of the "reader from nine years of age" as specified by the publisher.

The intention of S. Rakús' ideational circle of *The Land of Cats* = *Cat Fairy Tale*, i.e. the fairy tale reversed, since the good does not win there and the good ones are not rewarded and happy after overcoming the worries, should be looked for in the intentions of the author with the narrator and the author with the word. Behind the imperative and the universe of the proverb "who digs a hole for another person shall fall into it himself" the author's practical, verified completion of the said proverb is being born with a moral condition on the imperative, "help yourself and all others will help you!" It appears that the parable with the genre of fairy tale has matured, since this was the intention of the author, into rational contemplations and playful messages of a "mature" narrator for the young reader. Playing the game of animals, game of bad luck and lack of skillfulness, the game of the good in which nobody, except perhaps its creator, is interested thereby causing mere troubles, the game of loneliness amongst the many although equals, leads the

narrator to fictional expressing of general instructions on the inevitability of the good, self-sacrifice, but all the time on the concordance with reason and thinking over of all the effective attitudes. They lead toward repeated "proofs" on the irreplaceability of personal culture and positive thinking and appreciation of one's environment, on the concentrated and diligent labour to improve oneself and for the sake of the others. Realistic fairy tales, internal parables of the world lacking love and humanity in the *Land of Cats* indicate, through hyperbolized, verbal, stylized and many-coloured and by functional details both in phenomenon and word oversaturated stylized game of those having bad luck (without reward and success) and malicious persons (they do not escape their own punishment), the sad-beautiful breaking to pieces of the good and understanding against egoism and ignorance, Yes even insensitiveness of one's environment. The idea of humbleness and self-sacrifice in relation to the partners and their problems, regardless of how negligible these may be, gives impetus to the reader's sensitivity to his environment through the examples from the destinies of the characters, no matter how multi-layered this is from the social and typological point of view. The fairy tales cross the limits of intra-textual and linearly structured composition merely by variants of one and the same scheme of story-making which comes from the experience of an adult person and does not even hide the fact that it "derived" the general, the timely, and the social from another dimension of being. The fairy tale and its typological and genre canon have remained a mere background in the *Land of Cats*. As if a "kind and rightful" fairy tale motivated by folklore could not help the real reality, since everything is upside down there and even the good is punished. S. Rakús' *The Land of Cats* made use of the aspect of an adult person in the role of the narrator, hyperbolization of the means of expression and the means of presentation. It made every use of for the atmosphere of the story from the absence of everyday and "fairy-tale" language, it relied on the compositional linearity, on the types of characters in accordance with experience, knowledge, age determinants and the aspects of a child in the literary text. At the same time, S. Rakús' intra-textual operation with the character and his/her language appears so much concentrated on the "logics" of the narrator that the reader is in advance attributed a role of a disinterested instructed reader, not that of a "co-creator" of the story. Finally, is the very "reader from the age of nine years" who cannot rely on and revive in the Land of Cats any single (folk) fairy-tale schemes, procedures, and instructions known to him.

Thus, a fairy tale upside down also for one more reason, namely due to the fact that the stories contained in the *Land of Cats* resig-net from the world of fairy tales, the fantasy of fairy tales, the moral standards of fairy tales, in fact they resigned from the tradition and legacy of fairy tales and offered instead an adult, first of all "pragmatic" philosophical knowledge of the mechanism of life in which there is no place, time, and custom for "feeling human".

II.

The novellette "Temporal Notes" (1995) was published at the time when (in November 1989) any objective social and cultural-political "hindrances" derived from the politics and ideology of a socialist society ceased to exist, the hindrances which forced the author to mast his literary utterance under the genre of fairy tale. This novellette is directly focused into the social reality which the author changes into an epical space of his novellette, and he has chosen this in the most conventional, stereotyped environment devoid of any myths, namely at school where there are students and their teacher.

In a literary text we term the relationship between the author and his text as causal reason for its existence, but the relationship between noetics and grotesqueness is accepted as an expression of a sign intra-textual organizing of a story but, concordantly, also (the author counts with such a capability a priori) its latent extra-textual making topical of the cognitive capability of the author, just like that of his literary text. The noetics of grotesqueness (M. M. Bakhtin, 1973, pp. 112-195) is concentrated on the expression of the contact of two dimensions of a literary text, two real connections of its creator: with the reality (say, social) and a literary reality as composed by him. This means that what enters in the space of the story in a determining and parallel way (reality, fiction) is the author's strategy, since: "Among the traits of identification of a literary text belongs a tendency to say somethings by something else, to say something else, more and deeper by oneself" (S. Rakús, 1995, p. 7). Our probes into "Temporal Notes" (1993) was introduced by the publisher on the flap by a "recommendation", let us say, by a lip service to the text, according to which this is: "a chamber proze from the teachers' milieu. As is usual in arts, it says even what it does not say". It will be shown much too soon that not even this kind of advertising and misleading opening of the story was not enough to the author of the text on the flap and one may further read that in the story "we have as on our palm the problems of the 1980s in

a Slovak town. Interpersonal relationship within the collective of teachers are a model of what is decaying in the whole society. The exclusive hero goes from one failure to another, however, with an irresistible charm. Who would not want to know himself in it?" We are speaking here of the editor's lack of understanding or, rather, commercialization of the story in the given flap also because through this act of advertisement one paradoxically made an unprofessional interference with the author's strategic intention, namely to communicate through the text with the non-textual reality and what was denied in this way, we suppose that this has only been done due to misunderstanding of relationship, was his theoretical ambition to elaborate aesthetic possibilities of "syncretic zones", but also the author's ethical intention of the strategy of the story, i.e. "the tendency to say something by something else, to say it in a different way, say more and deeper by one's own" (S. Rakús, 1995, p. 7).

The aesthetic standard and arrangement of opinion (*poeta dictus*) do not enable Rakús to "catch up" in the story with directness. He is consciously avoiding it through his narrative type and author's strategy. The so far existing ways of interpretation of intra-textual relationship of his epic manner strengthened the significance of the situation of the narrator - the character, the orientation of the story - symbol in the space as well as the compositional both morally and dramatically motivated reconstruction model of the organization of the story. Just to complete the above let it be added that Rakús' texts concordantly meet in the extra-textual "zone" and "dimension" since they want and he wants it as well, as he mentioned it in one of his interviews, "to predominantly deal with ethical problems". The strategy of the author's workshop at this very moment imprints the fiction by Rakús a narrator's obligation to be heading for the moral and philosophical messages of life, further, to record through his slowed down and internally dramatized way the tension which is shown outwardly once in its moral or typological mask, at other times as a breaking point of the action from night till morning, as a game with oneself (alter ego and polarity in the subject) which is directly inspired by the game with the others (records), but also repeated variations of the crises of a small man in "big" reality. The author's strategy aims at coordination of the microstories (those textual, extra-textual), and the semantics of the story) arranged in a block-like manner (action, record). These are repeatedly modelled through the situations - on the level of a *torzo* - also as inconspicuous, maybe even nice and naive, however in their well thought limits even fantastic, but also strategic, predominantly essential evil, since: "The grotesque in arts is

similar to the paradox in logic... at the first singh the grotesque is clever and entertaining, however, it keeps within itself great chances" (L. J. Pinskij, 1961).

In its essence, in the story of the notes of time and about time, however, within time at all times, an idea is cultivated of the existence of a private "secret museum" (J. Johanides, 1996) and a conviction of the activities, spontaneity of mechanism of absurdity in the subject as a reflection and utterance of syncretic zones, this time in the reality of being as well as in the practice of social arrangement. This is why in their consequences one sees the arrangement of variations of latent irrevocably monstrous crises by the subject manipulated "by something" and "somehow" and, concordantly, its realization both in the mask and without it, recorded in the tension of both rational and irrational functioning and communication of "syncretic zones". The conflict within the character and its reflection in the story - a mosaic, evokes latently and unilaterally the tension from the movement of the rational and the irrational (deformation, defence) between the subject and the standards of objective reality. The author found the means of typological caricature in the literary space for expressing an uneven, model-like relationship between the subject and objective reality. Through these, the author and his text penetrated in a verifiable manner into the structure of the mosaic of social existence. The ambition of S. Rakús was embraced by his need to search for the mechanisms limiting the crisis of the subject and the subject in the crisis in the generally known social picture, but also in its objective moral intersection into the personal one (obligation, family) and into a broader one (workplace) context of the character (society).

The author's interest has so far been aimed at the genre of short story (the volume *The song of a Well-Spring Water*, 1979) and at the novellette (*The Beggars*, 1976). These are such genre and narrative groundworks which are modest in their space of the story, however, by their noetics are full of content and open. The content of the stories by S. Rakús are varied (ethical problems), this is why they are concentrated on the horizon of the static generally human problem which has remained fully contained and developed in the epic figure and makes reference to its possible non-epical discourses. Finally, the author himself said of the above in an interview at the time of joint publication of *The Beggars* and *The Song of Well-Spring Water* (1981): "No matter how much I might have contemplated on the specific story, I always come to the point which represents the basis of my fictional message as such -

the interpersonal relationship modelling as an extra-literary impetus the piece of fiction into a plot form". This means then that in the variations of the story he aims at latent semantic (subject) and sign (society, the context of history) "problem", at the paradoxes derived from the standard and implementation of the qualities of man, from the causality of the implementation of the humane, to the logics of being and to the reality and objectivity of the idea of humanity. Noetical openness and moral stability, but also the model-like character of the fictional text by S. Rakús has, apart from the time validity of his stories also a universal reflection in the ideational "conglomerates" of latent, yes even caricatured, moral instructions. In *Temporal Notes*, the need for solving the compositional coexistence of an ordinary story with a temporal parable to non-literary reality is finally solved in the composition through "complementary" development of two independent stories from a single source of information, empirical world, and observations: from the actional (grotesque presence of a character in his/her professional, family milieu and with him/herself), next to the non-actional (functional, detailed records of other characters in a diary of a railway man) of the layer of the story. Moral monstrosity of the coexistence of these two lines of the story finds itself in a complicated grotesque (chance) - grotesqueness (intention) situation of the transparently "handicapped" protagonist who is termed on the flap of this edition of *Temporal Notes* as "exclusive hero" and indirectly ask the prospective reader: "Who would not want to know themselves in him?" The character who consciously and persistently builds its (defensive, research?) secret museum from the records became a source, creator, and consequence of the series in the organization of the story of - paradoxically, laughter, joyfulness, relaxation not evoking - grotesque situations, not even an illusion of a Quixotian protagonist has been created. Just for that reason, although there do exist here initiative, precisely elaborated records of the others and of other things. Detailed records gradually overcome in the linear, present, action "school" story of *Temporal Notes*. The records in the notebook, which is lost and never found again, shall also eat up transparently grotesque situations (library and a bag, strange apartment and surname, Sakmár and nailing a nail), just as well as the mask games (night club, written assignment), or breaking situations from light and darkness (night city, night people), from parodizing (night street, morning street, transportations in the space) and the visions of the journey (home) so that to open the story - remains open - to waiting (for a woman) for the future. Finally, nothing

is known of the records of the analyses, contexts, recommendations, notes, notices (objects of the records, subconsciousness of worries), what these shall be used for, although the narrator of the story keeps looking for them all the time and the reader is given model parables of real action with its literary reality (notes of making it literary, on humour, on the interpretation of a literary text, on the motive and subject of fiction). It is the diary of a railway man repeatedly made topical by the narrator which is getting into a complicated vertical situation of the text (the sequence of its loss and unsuccessful looking for) which is filled by the notes on the many, typologically as if of "the all" from the narrator's working milieu, since all of them in the diary change into the reports on the "problematic" human, but first of all deformed social type. The man, understood as an unpredictable type, evoked in a restlessly combing teacher Zaťko the need to think to the end the usability (although he has no clue of the existence of those by Sakmár) records ad absurdum as an accessible, even common, phenomenon of the real social practice when he developed his ideas in such a manner, as to "continue": At home a person has for his things surely something better, for instance, some special notebook. In it he put records on everything. From the blotting paper, writing pad, and who knows from what else. The respective authorities shall study the notebook after some period of time, shall examine individual small sentences from head to heel, shall illuminate them from top to bottom and shall make their own conclusions. They shall encourage their man, tell him to proceed in this way, because under circumstances, every little sentence may be of significance. Even a seemingly innocent trifle may under the circumstances acquire a wider social significance" (*Temporal Notes*, 23).

The piece of fiction, S. Rakús' *Temporal Notes*, has been made topical against the background of its theoretical reasoning of the openness of a literary text. We have refused to get the contextlessness close to the intention to encipher the text and the social reality by the text. Instead, we find both contextual and non-contextual spaces of his story in the noeticness of the grotesqueness as an "expression" of the existence of universal evil in its grotesquefull variations which came to live and cease to exist in the hotbed of suitable social conditions on the polarity of human-inhuman, for life - against life, for reason - against reason. In the book *Temporal Notes* this usually happens through the prism of satire, parody, laughter without a smile, i.e. as verbally generous coming closer and by the epical point supported detachment of the author from any "clear" diagnosis of the universal evil in man and with man. Evil

(being modified by an enthusiastic or phantastic stupidity = naivity) lives in both literary and non-literary reality unthreatened with a generally and above-the-time honoured mask (power, being important, selection), just like in the non-contextual as well as in contextual spaces of social activities available to him. S. Rakús' literary stylized double diagnosis honours well known attitudes from the openness of a literary work of art in which one relies predominantly on the quality of reception qualities and abilities of the reader. The author has not imposed any such "obligation" to the story.

Grotesqueness in *The Land of Cats* (1986) and in *Temporal Notes* (1995) has become a report on the specific literary life and on the type of the literary creator who is making his fiction into a carnival-like piece of fiction by the variants of the principle of grotesqueness, so as to preserve by epical means the experience with moral standard of a natural, well-functioning society in which the utterance, no matter how caricatured, as well as the uniqueness of the author, unlimitless of his understanding of the noetics and the functions of the epic genre, usually is not limited by extra-artistic realia in the role of an ideological standard.

Translated by Štefan Franko

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GROTESKOWOŚĆ W PROZIE LITERACKIEJ
STANISLAVA RAKÚSA

Streszczenie

Autorka artykułu rozważa zjawisko groteski w epice na przykładzie dwóch powieści słowackiego prozaika Stanislava Rakúsa (ur. 1940) *Mačacia krajina* (1986, *Koci kraj*) i *Temporálne poznámky* (1995, *Uwagi na czasie*). Twórczość tego pisarza cechuje swoista dwubiegunowość: bo oto jest autorem książek dla dzieci i młodzieży oraz dla dojrzałych czytelników, a jednocześnie uprawia krytykę i literaturoznawstwo jako nauczyciel akademicki. Można rzec w jego przypadku, że praktyka literacka inspiruje teorię – i odwrotnie – znajomość teorii pozwala na bardziej świadome kształtowanie prozy artystycznej.

Rakús debiutował w 1976 r. powieścią *Žobráci* (*Żebracy*), w której odwołując się do materiałów dokumentalnych z przełomu wieków ukazał nieprzystawalność systemu i praktyki społecznej. Poetyzacja tekstu, widoczna jeszcze bardziej w kolejnej powieści *Pieseň o studničnej vode* (1979, *Pieśń o studziennej wodzie*) nadawała cechy tragiczności losom postaci powieściowych, a zarazem aktywizowała przesłania ideowe w pozatekstowych relacjach autor – społeczeństwo.

Pisarz w swojej teoretycznoliterackiej rozprawie *Poetika prozaického textu. Látka, téma, problém, tvar* (1995, *Poetyka prozatorskiego tekstu. Przedmiot, temat, problem, forma*) pokusił się o teoretyczną receptę, jak użyć napięć pozatekstowej rzeczywistości w wypowiedzi powieściowej. Najbliższa tym założeniom prozaika jest groteska i jej literackie możliwości. Analizowana tu, w podanych w pierwszym akapicie powieściach, pozwala na wniosek, że Rakúsowi chodzi o bezpośredniość wypowiedzi, w której ujawnia się mechanizm „przerzutni” autorskiego napięcia w sferę etyczno-społeczną praktyki.