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AREA STUDIES AND REGIONAL AESTHETIC AUTONOMY

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The author of the present article deals with the problem of area studies together with the so-called regional aesthetic autonomy based on the view of Dionýz Ďurišin, a famous Slovak comparatist, and developed by some other literary scholars. The author argues with denying the concept of the autonomy of aesthetic values due to the specific features of each region/area.

Key words: area studies, regional autonomy, world literature and world literatures, aesthetic and poetological impulses.

Let us start our short reflection on the subject of value and equality in comparative literary studies with the work of Frank Wollman (1888–1969) which appears to be lively and stimulating even nowadays.

In the last few decades new non-Czech and Czech editions of his works were published and demonstrated that Wollman, apart from the views of his opponents or even enemies who were shocked by the fact that his eighty-year-old reflexions could discover something topical for the contemporary literary development, was a leading personality of the 20-th century literary scholarship in general and of comparative studies in particular. His ideas proved to be progressive even in the era of multiculturalism; he manifested the common roots of our culture, «multiculturalism before multiculturalism», as a cradle of European civilisation and culture, their Mediterranean origin as their common characteristics; therefore he must have spoken against discrimination of Slavonic literatures, must have clashed with some Prague German slavists of the interwar period who then in the years of Nazi dictatorship took control over the Slavonic Institute and its editing activities (the so-called stolen *Slavia*). As early as Wollman's first book synthesis *The Literature of the Slavs (Slovesnost Slovanů, 1928)* which was edited in German recently, showed the significance of Frank Wollman as a creator of a new methodology that was gradually overcoming *Ideengeschichte* and tended towards the eidological, i. e. morphological vision of literary evolution [9; 3; 4; 11]. Especially in the eidological similarity Frank Wollman sought a new, restituted, but relative unity of Slavonic literary community. The theoretical basis of his reflections led him to the constatation that the last simplified version of Slavonic literary community found itself in a state of permanent disintegration; at the same time, however, new common features appeared; they can connect separated chains of national literatures even in the period of Modernism which can be found in

the very conclusion of *The Literature of the Slavs*. But also partial syntheses, such as *Slovene Drama* (*Slovinské drama*, 1924), were published outside the Czech cultural environment, surprisingly in Slovenia, where the Slovene editor confirmed Wollman's brilliant reputation saying that Wollman had discovered the Slovene drama for the Slovenes themselves [10]¹. And, moreover, we could mention the famous Slovak edition of folklore collections organised by Wollman and his prewar Bratislava students [6; 7; 8; 13].

Nowadays some theorists battle for Wollman's methodological heritage. The Slovak comparatist and expert in Italian studies Pavol Koprda in his article prepared for publishing in the *Slovak Review* for 2006 (I had the opportunity to evaluate and recommend it) *Frank Wollman through the Eyes of a Non-Slavist* (*Frank Wollman očami neslavistu*) rightly applies Wollman's methods to the sphere of non-Slavonic European literatures, but keeps on understanding him rather as a combative advocate of discriminated minor Slavonic literatures, though Wollman's strength consists rather in his potentiality to detect the common sources of European culture in its Mediterranean complexity: all our literatures have similar or identical roots and composite aesthetic values.

Ivan Dorovský was the first Czech slavist and comparatist who became a member of Ďurišín's team – the others including the author of this study followed him later after his invitations and after Ďurišín's legendary trip to Brno in 1992, when I spent with my Slovak guest in a stormy debate nearly three hours, and then several times including the Congress of Slavists in Bratislava a year later. Moreover, Dorovský was one of the active members of the team who not only mastered its methodology and terminology, but also developed, completed and modified it. His discipline – Balkan studies in the widest sense – provided him with much material; I would say that it was this area which contributed to his formulations of a more general character.

His study *The Slavonic Interliterary Correspondences and Differences* (*Slovanské meziliterární shody a rozdíly*) turns back to the Balkan cluster of problems, [1]² but in a much wider context. It comprises his work of a few recent years that the author divided into the following three sections: the first one contains the studies devoted to the Balkans and to the problems of Southern Slavs, the second deals with general methodological problems of interliterariness and the traditional and «new» comparative studies, the third concerns the problems of South-Slavonic modernism and postmodernism. Dorovský's studies are – besides several others – perhaps one of the most consistent and, at the same time, most creative continuations of the work of the late Dionýz Ďurišín.

If we formulated, however, the question of the language as an elementary and perhaps also determining feature of a nation in general, we would come to the conclusion that it was not so definite: Byelorussian and – to a certain extent – also Ukrainian nations could serve as an example; they both have their standard languages going back to the past, but in practice they also use another language (Russian) or an interdialect (e. g. Ukrainian *surzhyk*):

¹ See our review: Pospíšil I. [Rev.] / Ivo Pospíšil // *Slavia Occidentalis*. – 2004. – Vol. 61. – P. 195–196.

² The commented books of Ivan Dorovský and Ján Koška (see further) were also dealt with in Czech both in my reviews and in my paper at the Brno Balkan symposium in 2005.

the characteristic feature of the nation is not only language, but, above all, ethnos, territory and mainly the independent national state. Even more interesting is the example of the Irish living in the Republic of Ireland: they regard themselves as a nation as a matter of fact, but practically do not speak their Celtic language, but the Irish variety of English which is – after all – one of the most important sources of «General American», the most common form of American English (for the Celtic Irish the term «Erse» is sometimes used, more often it is the language spoken in the western part of the Scottish Highlands which is said to have been inhabited by the Irish themselves, sometimes even «Irish Gaelic», while «Irish» is a term used for Irish English, as well as «Scottish» for Scottish English), though the Celtic Erse is obligatory taught at schools and is sometimes spoken in western parts of the island; here is the substantial difference from Welsh which is commonly spoken in Wales on all levels and in all spheres of life and which is positively discriminated, or recently from «Scottish Gaelic», which has an immense support by mass media).

Thus the problem of the language and some further components of the formation of the nation remains open and historically dynamic, though it would be quite legitimate to ask about the stability, independence and perspective of the national community which has a territory, national state, but has not the stable, standard language on all levels of national life that is perhaps the only possibility of the sanctioned language communication, approximately similar to the Czech language in the territory of former Austro-Hungary.

A series of studies in bilinguism, polylinguism, biliterariness, heterothallicness etc. is started by a contemplation *On Heterothallicness and Biliterariness in Czech Literature (O dvojdomosti a biliterárnosti v české literatuře)* in which the author deals with emigration, exile and diaspora, besides the others, on the examples of Jaroslav Vejvoda and Milan Kundera. They both seem to represent the two poles of the relation of the initial tradition and a new environment: we must not, however, forget that it is given by the status and stability of national culture and by the strength of diaspora or emigration and also by the situation of a creative individuality; just the Czech-Polish comparison is quite sufficient to understand why Milan Kundera had to become a French writer, why Josef Škvorecký did not become a Canadian writer: this field could certainly become quite important and even fashionable in further decades.

In the next study Dorovský analyzes the problems and contribution of biliterariness and heterothallicness on the fact that they are not the nationalistic notions [1, 81]. The term «heterothallicness» is closely connected with the tradition in Dorovský's interpretation: only the author who knows this tradition – not only the language – can be called heterothallic.

Dorovský exploited much from observing the similarities between Czech-Slovak and Bulgarian-Macedonian relations: this search is meaningful, prolific, demonstrating unexpected views and links, though I am not sure whether the author took sufficiently into account all the relevant details of these relations and their diachrony and also the frameworks of civilization and culture in which the two complexes developed (Turkey, Austro-Hungary). Sometimes the facts which seem to be similar or even identical on the surface are quite different in depth: also this field of research provides many potential chances in the future. Ivan Dorovský returns to similar problems in further studies, for example, in his text *On Literary Bilinguism and*

Inversive Heterothallicness (O literárním bilingvismu a inverzní dvojdmosti). In his study *On the So-Called Autochthonous and Allochthonous Literary Creators (O tzv. autochtonních a allochtonních literárních tvůrcích)* the author comes back – in this case from another point of view – to Milan Kundera and his novel *L'Ignorance* (2000) which was at first published in English and Spanish and only later in the French original, and paraphrases the French critical debate on this subject. This study is then followed by Dorovský's reflections concerning the Bosnian writer Aleksander Hemon (born 1965) and some other similar phenomena.

Ivan Dorovský's selected studies *The Slavonic Interliterary Correspondences and Differences (Slovanské meziliterární shody a rozdíly)* in all three sections – South-Slavonic-Balkan, interliterary and modernist-postmodernist – presents the topical and polemic material demonstrating the urgent situation of the general cultural paradigm of the contemporary world. It is the subject which is at the same time fashionable and topical: Dorovský succeeded in including it within wider synchronous and deeper diachronous contexts without abandoning the grounds and the material he knows best. It is evident that the contexts could be even widened in relation to Europe and to the world rather implicitly so that the Balkan or South-Slavonic specific features might become even more apparent, but it can come later with new materials and with new methodological reactions.

In the past I wrote about the fatigue of methodology in connection with some other things (abandoning the territory of literary scholarship and tending towards philosophy and religion [5]), but I can feel it even here when reading about the still finer and finer tools of the classification of biliterariness and heterothallicness etc.; it would be necessary to refresh this «normative» search by analyzing the intrinsic modifications of the artifact itself what I once proposed – not to a great delightfulness of Dionýz Ďurišin – the term «**interpoeticity**» for.

For the final commentary I left the basic problem, i. e. the study *History of World Literature or History of World Literatures? (Dějiny světové literatury nebo dějiny světových literatur?)*. In connection with some of the views of the classical comparatists (E. R. Curtius), but also of contemporary researchers (Z. Konstantinovič), the author concludes: «I think that the history of world literatures could be written and understood as a set of aesthetically best works which rose in ten cultural zones in the course of centuries. At the same time the canon of best works written in all the languages of this cultural zone is objectively defined by exclusively or above all the representatives of single national literatures of the given zone. This zonal literary history could become the basis of the world literature as part of the world culture and civilization» [1, 49].

I could agree with the majority of these views with the exception of the representational principle which still appears in them; it could be valid in parliaments, but definitely not in literature the aesthetic value of which cannot be measured by strips of land or by state policies. No canon could be defined by the representatives of national literatures of a given zone, the canon is supranational, it unscrupulously overcomes any border, art and aesthetics do not undergo any dictate and if they do, it is only a temporary episode. No positive discrimination can become a constant accompanying element of evolution, perhaps only as a temporary and auxiliary tool, as the development has its own qualities including the category of «bigness»: what is big, has automatically the advantage over small – there is nothing to do about it, and

exceptions only confirm the basic rule. In case of literature it is given, among other things, by the bigness of a nation, by a number of the people speaking the same language and by the readers of the given language, by historical development and its tragic events. The case of Central Europe and of the Balkans evidently confirms this fact and it is only possible to speculate what the situation of Serbian, Bulgarian or any other South-Slavonic literature would be if there was no Turkish oppression, or what would be with the Czech literature, if there were no Hussite wars or the Battle on the White Mountain (paradoxically, one of the speculations is that after the hypothetical defeat of the Catholic side Czech as a language and the Czech literature would completely disappear devoured by the German protestant sea).

Đurišin's conception of world literature was a synthetic one; it presupposed that the world literature was a complex of general, common features of the world literary process: it should, however, mean to compare everything what had been ever written on the Earth (including the works that were not preserved), to define the correspondences and differences and to formulate the world literature as a general literary genotype or invariant. This is, however, too utopian, although it does not mean that this conception is false; on the contrary, it is a goal, we should come nearer to. On the other hand, it is not possible to deny the historically conditioned axiological conception, i. e. the world literature as a set of generally accepted aesthetic and other (cognitive, ideological, didactic etc.) values which rises in history and is historically variable. No representation of cultural space (zone, area) could play a decisive role (the area is useful as a space for the social realisation of literature, as an intersection of several factors and as means of better and deeper knowledge). In this way not only single literary artifacts were presented, but also all the national literatures: therefore we used the term «world literatures» for the national literatures which had the strongest poetological impact upon literature in general – due to many, already mentioned circumstances [9]. It is, however, disputable which national literatures would belong to the cluster termed «world literatures»; it is, however, evident that there will be no Macedonian, Slovak, Czech and Bulgarian literatures (I have to repeat that the conception of «world literatures» is not identical with the synthetic conception of «world literature»). I am not convinced if there will be, for example, Polish or Portuguese or Brazil literature, but I would not definitely measure its greatness only according to the number of Nobel Prize winners. This has been already explained in the introduction to the cited book the significance of which was more or less didactic, though I do not deny its scholarly validity. I think it is necessary to explain and define all the controversial notions and admit that there is also another terminology which need not be denied a priori; they all deserve more attention and understanding; otherwise, literary scholarship could become a sect or caste of confessors of the only right faith though its inner sense should consist in a more exact knowledge. I understand well the basis for the rejection of axiological criteria and for the conviction that this system is not just (Frank Wollman expressed it several times both in his *Literature of the Slavs (Slovesnost Slovanů, 1928)* the German translation and the new Czech edition of which I co-edited, [10] and in his reflection *On the Methodology of Slavonic Comparative Literature (K metodologii srovnávací slovesnosti slovanské, 1936)*; he demonstrated the strength of Slavonic literatures in their significant folklore layer – this is also continued by Ivan Dorovský).

I am convinced that in this sense we should come back – being wiser and less radical – to the half-forgotten Slovak discussion on the term «influence» which was initiated on the pages of the periodical *Slavica Slovaca*. The conviction about aesthetic values of Slavonic literatures that were – for various non-aesthetic reasons – unjustly marginalized in the past – should not lead to the a priori conception of an aesthetic and poetological equality of all national literatures which are represented by their «best» works: aesthetic qualities cannot be relativized from the zonal point of view, they are always absolute, supranational, multinational and panhuman. This, perhaps, should not be too offensive for anybody, and the reading practice confirms it. Equality exists neither among people nor among literary artifacts, every work of art is specific and has its social and existential function. I would advise to see this problem non-emotionally and more historically: what is unknown today can be dominant in the future and vice versa or – as M. Bachin used to put it – all inserted in literature can sometime have its feast of resurrection. Thus, I presume – in spite of the acceptance of Dorovský's study as such – that the case of «world literature and world literatures» is a sort of a misunderstanding, though there still remain substantial differences in opinions. This can be confirmed, among other factors, by the following extract from the author's book: «If I used in the title of my reflections a doubting question, I had in mind the fact that recently several works appeared that were called «history of world literature», though their authors dealt only with some national literatures, regions and zones applied in the works of I. G. Neupokojeva and mentioned by Dionýz Ďurišin as auxiliary terms» [1, 44]. Our book does not represent the history of literature, it is not the history of world literature, the volume only represents «20-th century world literatures». Why the book was conceived in this way, we have already explained above. The problem, however, does not consist in what is mentioned and criticised in the preceding passages, but in something else, in something even more important: in the conception of poetological value and poetological impact.

I met with the problem of equality and value in literature once more in Ján Koška's book *Reception as Creation. The Slovak-Bulgarian Literary Relations, 1826–1989 (Recepcia ako tvorba. Slovensko-bulharské literárne vzťahy, 1826–1989. Bratislava 2003)* [2]. Ján Koška (died 2006) stood close to the activities of the late Dionýz Ďurišin. I am convinced that this book is one of the most original, lively, emotional and argumentative books ever written on the delicate problems of inter-Slavonic literary contacts. In spite of this, I do not fully agree with Koška's vision of Pavel Josef Šafárik's «Slovakness» as a scholar; I rather think that he belonged at least to three or even four scholarly communities (Slovak, Hungarian, Czech and Austrian-German). I also argue whether it is correct to identify real, genuine creation with its reception and reflection: reception, perception or reflection are creative, but they are not identical with creation itself. I also do not agree with Koška's hatred of the term «influence» based on the etymology of the word associated with «flow», «fluent»; Koška regards this as too mechanistic, not reflecting the complicated structure of the artifact properly and correctly, though the whole complex of literary terminology is rather metaphorical or – more exactly – tropical (tropes).

I would strictly keep the historicity of the explication when speaking about Austro-Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic. Anyway, Koška is, in my opinion,

too sensitive to national criteria and points of view (the national origin of Constantine and Methodius, the already mentioned problem of Šafárik's «Slovakness» etc.). He sharply criticizes the fact that during the existence of the Czechoslovak Republic some famous Slovaks were termed as Czechs abroad etc. On the other hand, nearly all the questions Koška deals with are very delicate and complicated. As another and similar example I put the case – perhaps a minor one – of the Moravians and Silesians. The Czech Republic, earlier «Czech lands», is called in spoken Slovak, Polish, Russian, but also in Czech used in Bohemia and often under the impact of the mass media managed from Prague also in Moravia and Silesia as «Čechy» (Čechy, Czechy, Чехия), though it is – historically speaking – only the biggest, western part of the country (not mentioning the complicated German link – «Böhmen», «böhmisch» – which implies the land, not the national principle) and even in the officially supported term «Česko» (it cannot be translated though some «omniscient» Czechs are always ready to give good advice to other nations how to formulate the name of the new state in their own native language). There are, however, several doubting questions: the adjective «český» concerns both «Čechy» and «Česko»: so, Brno should be termed «a south-Bohemian city» as, say, České Budějovice, in German Budweis). I would personally insist on moderate and tolerant approaches – violence has never decided anything for a long time though there are still the people who have another opinion. Everybody has the right for his own conception and everybody has the right to declare his identity according to his wish and conviction – this, of course, concerns not only the Czech-Slovak relations, but also the problem of value and equality in literature.

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АРЕАЛЬНІ ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ І РЕГІОНАЛЬНА ЕСТЕТИЧНА АВТОНОМІЯ

Іво ПОСПІШЛ

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Творчість Франка Волльмана є живою й актуальною і в сучасності. Протягом останніх років з'явилися нові видання, що знову показують ученого як провідну особу в літературній компаративістиці ХХ століття. Його ідеї залишаються прогресивними і в новому контексті ліберального мультикультуралізму; він висловлювався проти дискримінації так званих маленьких літератур, особливо слов'янських, у полеміках з деякими празькими німецькими славістами, які в роки нацистського окупаційного режиму взяли у свої руки Слов'янський Інститут у Празі, а також його журнал (так звана «украдена Славія»). Перша синтетична праця Ф. Волльмана «Словесність слов'ян» («Slovesnost Slovanů», 1928), яка з'явилася зовсім недавно в німецькому перекладі, демонструє значення автора як творця нової методології, що долає *Ideengeschichte* і прямує до ейдологічного, тобто морфологічного бачення літературного розвитку. Саме в ейдологічній близькості Ф. Волльман побачив – хоч і релятивну – єдність слов'янської літературної спільності. Але і книги Ф. Волльмана про окремі специфічні літературні проблеми, як, наприклад, «Словенська драма» (1924), були опубліковані в перекладі за кордоном; вражає, що в цьому випадку в самій Словенії, де редактор видання підтвердив блискучу репутацію Ф. Волльмана; він написав, що вона відкрила словенську драму насамперед для самих словенців.

Автор цієї статті відмовляється від будь-якої позитивної дискримінації в розумінні тотальної регіональної ціннісної автономії, констатує, що естетичні цінності абсолютні і неподільні.

Ключові слова: мультикультуралізм, регіональна автономія, естетичні цінності, ареальне дослідження.

АРЕАЛЬНЫЕ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЯ И РЕГИОНАЛЬНАЯ ЭСТЕТИЧЕСКАЯ АВТОНОМИЯ

Иво ПОСПИШИЛ

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Творчество Франка Вольмана является живым и актуальным и в современности. В последние несколько лет появились новые издания, вновь показывающие ученого как ведущее лицо литературной компаративистики XX века. Его идеи остаются прогрессивными и в новом контексте либерального мультикультурализма; он выражался против дискриминации так называемых маленьких литератур, в особенности славянских, в полемике с некоторыми пражскими немецкими славистами, которые – в годы нацистского оккупационного режима – взяли в свои руки Славянский Институт в Праге наряду с его журналом (так называемая «украденная *Славия*»). Первый синтетический труд Ф. Вольмана «Словесность славян» («*Slovesnost Slovanů*», 1928), который появился совсем недавно в немецком переводе, демонстрирует значение автора как творца новой методологии, преодолевающей *Ideengeschichte* и стремящейся к эйдологическому, т. е. морфологическому видению литературного развития. Именно в эйдологической близости Ф. Вольман увидел – хотя релятивное – единство славянской литературной общности. Однако и книги Ф. Вольмана о частных, специфических литературных проблемах, как, например, «Словенская драма» (1924) были опубликованы в переводе за границей; поразительно в этом случае в самой Словении, где редактор издания подтвердил блестящую репутацию Ф. Вольмана; он написал, что она обнаружила словенскую драму, прежде всего, для самих словенцев.

Автор настоящей статьи отказывается от какой бы то ни было позитивной дискриминации, в смысле тотальной региональной ценностной автономии, констатируя, что эстетические ценности абсолютные и неделимые.

Ключевые слова: мультикультурализм, региональная автономия, эстетические ценности, ареальное исследование.