

The Personalistic Approach as a Bridge

Ivo Pospíšil (Brno, Czech Republic)

The comparison is a commonplace method of cognizance and comparative methods are well-known from nearly all scientific disciplines. In the sphere of literary studies the comparative literary studies have become a discipline which contains its history, theory, terminology and research methods. This long history and elaborate theory and methodology make comparative studies in literary criticism specific.

The comparison in literary studies has been closely connected with the formation of the complex of European literatures, with the Mediterranean area, with ancient Greek and Roman roots of European culture and, finally, with the domain of national literatures. Now, as it seems, the evolutionary circle reached a certain point of return towards searching new syntheses. In the past the comparison often served as an imitation of the classical models (Renaissance, Neoclassicism). The comparison was at disposal mainly in the world of free artistic values which communicated and interacted with one another. It was possible in the world of medieval universalism, later in the Renaissance period and in the era of bourgeois revolutions and Napoleonic wars liquidating the feudal isolation and social hierarchies, with the idea of a more or less united Europe and, of course, in the period of Romanticism with its escapism on the one hand, and social revolt on the other.

The constation of the permanent crisis is a constant accompanying feature of literary scholarship as such; it naturally also concerns comparative literary studies; let us just mention René Wellek.¹ The crisis situation of comparative studies is more or less connected with the crisis of methodology: positivist, morphological/eidological/immanent or receptionist. One of the recent tools how to overcome this impasse consists in area or territorial studies.

The weak aspects of contemporary comparative studies are connected with their methodological dispersion and non-existent methodological memory; new comparatists are often forced to discover again and again the methods and come to the results already revealed.

¹ R. Wellek: *The Crisis of Comparative Literature*, in: *Proceedings of the Second International Congress of Comparative Literature*, ed. W.P.Friedrich, 1., Chapel Hill 1959, s. 149-159.

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.

Comparative literary studies may function as a loose net of historically tested approaches, single methods and visions or as a link of a chain of more complex approaches connected with new subjects and problems of world literature, with the prevalence of certain genre clusters and with the dominant impact of mass literature in general.

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. In the 21st century it is not 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.

The problem has then been prolonged by the permanent existence of one or more other literatures in the area of the major national literature and by the intersection, sometimes even permeation giving birth to bi- or polyliterariness of the key-authors; sometimes the rise of the „cordon sanitaire“, the hermetic closure and the international isolation of these literatures; it is partly the case of Czech and German literatures in certain periods of their development,

especially towards the end of the 19th century and later after the First World War. The oscillation between openness and isolation determined in a way the whole image of literature, especially at the time we are interested in – the 20th-century interwar period when the occurrence of the national tendencies became obvious.

Another problem is linked to the intrinsic structure of a national literature; of course, the dominant role has been played by the literature created in capitals (literary centrism), a natural centres of national life, but due to the historical development literatures were differentiated in greater detail according to their regional roots; e. g. in Czech cultural environment the German or Austrian-German impacts and some other facts connected with the cultural orientation of the 19th-century national revival (Czech pro-Russian, pro-French and pro-Anglo-American orientation as a specific counterbalance to the prevalent German impact or influence). Probably in Czech literature the range of influences might be a little wider and also its volitional element, e.g. the immense impact of Russian literature during the whole 19th and in the first half of the 20th century (Russian poetry, the Russian Golden and Silver Ages, the Soviet avantgarde).

The crucial factor has also been represented by the changing area and political administration framework the national literature developed in: in modern times in Central Europe Austro-Hungary, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia and the Russian and later Soviet influence and the split of both bigger countries after 1990. It is obvious that all the vestiges linked to these processes are potentially still present in the corpus of both national literatures – in both the positive and the negative sense.

What is even more important is the fact that area studies together with the dialogue of cultures can play an important role in the conception not only of history of literature, but also of the theory of literary history (Wellek, 1936). From this point of view, the new editions reacting on a certain absence of historicity in contemporary literary criticism are a mere reflection of Wellek's attempts (Greenblatt, 1993, 2000, 2005; Bassler, 2001, Elbrich, 1999, Kelly, 2002, Papoušek-Tureček, 2005, *Kako pisati...*, 2003, *Writing Literary History*, 2006). In the framework of this return to diachronic approach some new researchers in Russian studies of a younger generation appeared (Tihanov, 2000, 2002, Pospíšil, 2006).

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.

It is probable that the future of comparative literary studies consist in its heterogeneity, polyfunctionality, and plurality of approaches and ranges, not in the rejection of the old and its substitution by the new. It would stand against the natural character of speculative scholarship literary comparative studies and the whole of literary criticism in their cultural, cognitive and area forms are parts of. Nothing put in it cannot be completely lost, rather be integrated into bigger wholes on the one hand, or function separately as alternatives on the other. Comparative literary studies as a set of approaches and models of investigation has a common goal: a more profound analysis of literature in its many-sided contexts can function as a loose framework not limiting, but still with certain boundaries which do not defocus, deconstruct and destroy it. At this very stage of development this aim has not been reached yet.

On the one hand comparative literary studies widen its basement communicating with dialogue of cultures, area studies, postcolonial literature, gender studies, literary feminism, feminist criticism etc., on the other it should be desirable to penetrate deeper into the inner structure of the artefact we nearly forgot about under the impact of cultural comparative studies connected with social sciences and humanities, political science, so-called European studies and such vague terms and spheres comparative studies found itself and got stuck in recent decades.

One of the possible answers to this question are returns to the innovative shapes of some of the old, semi-forgotten methods. When Jefim Etkind started to speak about psychopoetics, it seemed to be brand new, but it was not.² When he spoke about the intrinsic/inner man and the extrinsic/outer speech, began to be clearer that the roots of this thought went back to the 19th-century Russian conceptions the fathers of which are Apollon Grigoryev, Alexander Potebnya and Lev Vygotskii.

The ignorance of more subjective approaches must be substituted by a more careful, gradual, but decisive integration of these approaches into the compact concept of comparative

² Е. Эткинд: Психопоэтика. „Внутренний человек“ и „внешняя речь“. Статьи и исследования. „Искусство“, Санкт-Петербург 2005.

literary studies. *Nihil novi sub sole* – we are speaking about the well-known personalistic approach.

In the old 19th-century concept of Apollon Grigoryev it is based on a more delicate approach to the literary artefact, to hermetic roots of modern literature („organic criticism“) opposed to the prevalent radical positivists called revolutionary democrats in Russia. In Potebnya they are disconnection, disjunction, decoupling between language (word) and thought in his famous treatise *Thought and Language* (1862). The cult of psychology in modernism was then followed by the attempt at the permeation of formalism and psychological methods in Lev Vygotskii's *Psychology of Art* with his brilliant case studies including that of Ivan Bunin's short story *Light Breath*. In one of our articles devoted to this stream in Russian literary scholarship we used the term *autoreflexion* and *autoaxiology* and demonstrate this at the example of Potebnya's analysis of Russian and Ukrainian folklore as well as his notes on Dostoevsky and Tolstoy.³ But there are - except Russian thought - also some Czech vestiges of renovated psychological methods. Some of them can be read in a famous book written by Karel Čapek *Talks with T. G. Masaryk*, specially important is their final supplement called *Silence with T. G. M.* In the situation when it was very difficult to express the idea by words President often used to say in Czech: „To...“ which literally means „it“ or „this“ in the meaning of „behold...“, usually accompanied by a typical gesture embracing the whole world. The shift of emphasis as a commonplace procedure in the direction of the interiorizing of the text as an expression of the hidden, intrinsic psychic, mental motions might function as a necessary pole of complex comparative analysis. The inevitable restoration, revitalization of older psychological methods, now more closely connected with the structure of the text itself as a result of the conflict between the thought and the potentiality of the system of the language, could function as a possible balance between the widening and the deepening of the concept of comparative literary studies. The great return of the writer as a hero of literary communication is thus taking place as the category of the reader was unjustly and incorrectly overestimated.

³ See our studies: *Syntetická metodologie Apollona Grigorjeva*. SPFFBU, D 36-37, 1989-1990, s. 57-66. *Vozvraščenie k istokam (Razmyšlenija o nekotorych položeniach A. A. Potebni v černovykh zametkach o L. N. Tolstom i F. M. Dostojevskom)*. In: *Naukova spadščyna O. O. Potebni. U slov'janskomu kul'turnomu prostori*. Institut movoznavstva im. O. Potebni Nacionalnoj Akademii nauk Ukrajin, Vydavnyčyj Dim Dmytra Buraho, Kyjiv 2013, s. 29-49. ISBN 978-966-489-198-8. *Avtorefleksija/avtoaksiologija tvorčestva i odna tradicija ruskoj estetičeskoj mysli*. In: *Mirgorod. Žurnal, posvjačennyj voprosam epistemologii literaturovedenije*. Akademia Podlaska, Université de Lausanne, Section de langues et civilisations slaves, 2010, No. 2, s. 203-210. ISSN 1897-1431.

The writer as a real creator of a literary artefact - a crucial node and crossroads of all the factors in literary creation and reception. The restoration and revitalization of a new concept of the author has to be understood as a completion to the hyperbolized, exegerated, overestimated reader. As the reader becomes the author and the author is allowed to enter his work and work only as a reader, the author himself/herself may function as a complex reader transforming his experience into an active literary creation converting, transforming his own psychic and existential situation into a literary artefact. The author in all his aspects cannot be ignored or suppressed by the text itself, by wider concept integrating literature into culture and free literature from its specific characteristics. To search for the balance of both poles of literary creation and communication was the real intention of these remarks.

We could give a more detailed evidence from the Czech more or less academic criticism. The Prague Linguistic Circle was not the only important methodology in the interwar period. This was also Geisteswissenschaft represented by the specialist in Czech and German studies Vojtěch Jirát, permeation of positivism, Nietzscheanism, psychoanalysis in Czech Modernism, biographical method, and aesthopsychology (É. Hennequin) in the most important Czech 20th-century literary critic F. X. Šalda, some other original morphological approaches which stood closer to structuralism represented by Frank Wollman, and several specialists in Germanic and Romance literary studies, e. g. František Chudoba, Václav Černý, Otakar Levý, and Prokop Haškovec who stood close to Vilém Mathesius, paradoxically a co-founder of Prague Linguistic Circle and his cultural activism. In Czech structuralism there were potential layers transcending towards these softer approaches taking into account the creator of a literary artefact.

Revitalization of comparative studies means not only its dissolution in culture, area, and gender studies and the dialogue of cultures, but also the innovation of older methods in a different context.

Selected bibliography

Areál – sociální vědy – filologie (2002). Ed. Ivo Pospíšil. Brno, Kabinet integrované žánrové typologie, Ústav slavistiky, Filozofická fakulta Masarykovy univerzity.

BASSLER, M. (2001): *New Historicism: Literaturgeschichte als Poetik der Kultur*. Tübingen.

BERG, Michail (2000): Литературократия. Проблема присвоения и перераспределения власти в литературе. Кафедра славистики Университета Хельсинки, Москва: Новое Литературное Обозрение.

Comparative Cultural Studies in Central Europe (2004). Editors: Ivo Pospíšil (Brno), Michael Moser (Wien). Brno, Ústav slavistiky Filozofické fakulty Masarykovy univerzity.

Česko-slovenské vztahy v slovanských a středoevropských souvislostech (2003). Eds: Ivo Pospíšil, Miloš Zelenka. Brno, Ústav slavistiky FF MU.

Česko-slovenské vztahy, Evropa a svět (2004). Brněnské texty k slovakistice VI. Eds.: Ivo Pospíšil, Miloš Zelenka. Brno, Slavistická společnost Franka Wollmana a Ústav slavistiky FF MU 2004.

DEMETZ, Peter: (1990, 1991, 1992): Cross Currents, A Yearbook of Central European Culture, Yale University, 9 (1990), s. 135-145; 10 (1991), s. 235-251; 11 (1992), s. 79-92.)

DOROVSKÝ, I. (2004): Slovanské meziliterární shody a rozdíly. Brno, Masarykova univerzita.

ĎURIŠIN, D. a kolektiv (1987-1993): Osobitné medziliterárne spoločenské I-VI. Bratislava.

ĎURIŠIN, D. a kol. (1998): Medziliterárny centrizmus stredoeurópskych literatúr. České Budějovice.

ĎURIŠIN, D. (1992): Čo je svetová literatúra? Bratislava.

ĎURIŠIN, D. (1975): Teória literárnej komparistiky. Bratislava.

ĎURIŠIN, D. (1995): Teória medziliterárneho procesu I. Bratislava.

GREENBLATT, S. (2000): Practising the New Historicism. Chicago University Press.

HORYNA, B. (2005): Dějiny rané romantiky. Fichte, Schlegel, Novalis. Praha, Vyšehrad.

HRABÁK, Josef (1976): Literární komparatistika. Praha: SPN.

Integrovaná žánrová typologie (Komparativní genologie). Projekt – metodologie – terminologie – struktura oboru – studie (1999). Hlavní autoři: Ivo Pospíšil – Jiří Gazda - Jan Holzer. Editor: Ivo Pospíšil. Brno, Masarykova univerzita.

JAKOBSON, R. (1995): Poetická funkce. Ed.: Miroslav Červenka. Jinočany: H&H.

JUVAN, Marko (2006): Literarna veda v rekonstrukciji. Uvod do sodobni študij. Ljubljana: Narodna a univerzitetna knjižnica.

Kako pisati literarno zgodovino danes? Razprave (2003). Uredila Darko Dolinar in Marko Juvan. Ljubljana, Znanstvenoraziskovalni center Slovenske akademije znanosti in umetnosti, Inštitut za slovensko literaturo in literarne vede.

KOŠKA, J. (2003): Recepce je kreace. Bratislava, Veda.

Literatura a filozofie (Zdeněk Mathauser) (2008). Kolektivní monografie. Eds: Ivo Pospíšil, Jna Zouhar. Katedra filosofie, Ústav slavistiky FF MU, Brno.

Litteraria Humanitas XI, Crossroads of Cultures: Central Europe, Kreuzwege der Kulturen: Mitteleuropa, Křižovatky kultury: Střední Evropa, Perekrestki kul'tury: Srednjaja Jevropa (2002). Ed. Ivo Pospíšil. Brno, Ústav slavistiky Filozofické fakulty Masarykovy univerzity v Brně.

Litteraria Humanitas XIII. Austrian, Czech and Slovak Slavonic Studies in Their Central European Context (2005). Editors: Ivo Pospíšil, Michael Moser, Stefan M. Newerkla. Brno, Ústav slavistiky Filozofické fakulty Masarykovy univerzity.

MURKO, Matthias (1897): Deutsche Einflüsse auf die Anfänge der böhmischen Romantik. Mit einem Anhang: Kollár in Jena und beim Wartburgfest. Verlags-Buchhandlung. Graz: „Styria“.

NEUBAUER, John, CORNIS-POPE, Marcel, eds (2004-2007): History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe: Junctures and Disjunctures in the 19th and 20th Centuries, sv. 1-3, Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

- Neupokojeva, I. G.: Istorija vseмирnoj literatury. Problemy sistemnogo i sravnitel'nogo analiza. Moskva 1976.
- PAPOUŠEK, V. – Tureček, D. (2005): Hledání literárních dějin. Praha – Litomyšl, Paseka.
- PAVELKA, J. – POSPÍŠIL, I.: Slovník epoch, směrů, skupin a manifestů. Brno 1993.
- Poetics Today. Estrangement Revisited (2005). Vol. 26, n. 4, Winter 2005, Durham, Duke University Press.
- POSPÍŠIL, I. – ZELENKA, M. (1996): René Wellek a meziválečné Československo, Brno, Masarykova univerzita.
- POSPÍŠIL, I. (1993): Sedmero úskalí a inspirací. Slovenská literatúra, 4, s. 292-295.
- POSPÍŠIL, I. (1998): Genologie a proměny literatury. Brno, Spisy Masarykovy univerzity v Brně, Filozofická fakulta.
- POSPÍŠIL, I. (1999): Paradoxes of Genre Evolution: the 19th-Century Russian Novel. Zagadnienia rodzajów literackich, tom XLII, zeszyt 1-2 (83-84), Łódź 1999, s. 25-47.
- POSPÍŠIL, I. (2003): Slavistika na křižovatce. Brno.
- POSPÍŠIL, I. (2004): Problémy a souvislosti současné genologie. Studia Moravica II. Acta Universitatis Palackianae Olomucensis, Facultas Philosophica, Moravica 2, Universitas Palackého v Olomouci, Olomouc 2004, s. 29-46.
- POSPÍŠIL, I. (2005): Ruský román znovu navštívený. Historie, uzlové body vývoje, teorie a mezinárodní souvislosti: Od počátků k výhledu do současnosti. Ed.: Jaroslav Malina, obálka, grafická a typografická úprava Josef Zeman – Tomáš Mořkovský, Martin Čuta, ilustrace Boris Jirků. Brno, Nadace Universitas, Edice Scientia, Akademické nakladatelství CERM, Nakladatelství a vydavatelství NAUMA.
- POSPÍŠIL, I. (2006): Literary History, Poststructuralism, Dilettantism and Area Studies. In: Writing Literary History. Selected Perspectives from Central Europe. Peter Lang Verlag, Frankfurt am Main - Berlin – Bern – Bruxelles – New York - Oxford – Wien, s. 141-152.
- POSPÍŠIL, I. (2006): Teoretická konstrukce a naplněnost kontextu (In margine „nové západní literárněvědné rusistiky“). Brno, Opera Slavica 2006, č. 3, s. 31-36.
- POSPÍŠIL, I. (2007): Co je to areálový výzkum. Cíle, metody, problémové okruhy, tendence a příklady. In: Břetislav Horyna, Josef Krob (eds): Cesty k vědě. Jak správně myslet a psát. Olomouc, Nakladatelství Olomouc, s. 90-108.
- POSPÍŠIL, I.: Primerjalna književnost, srednjeevropski kulturni prostor in teorija literarne zgodovine. Primerjalna književnost 31.2 2008, s. 137-148. .
- POSPÍŠIL, I. (1993): Utopičnost a hlubinnost literární vědy (Meditace in margine projektu Dionýze Ďurišina). Opera Slavica 1, s. 44-47.
- POSPÍŠIL, Ivo (2006): Střední Evropa a Slované. Brno: Masarykova univerzita.
- POSPÍŠIL, Ivo (2007): Próza virtuální autenticity a existenciálního znejistění. SPFFBU, X 10, Slavica Litteraria, s. 5-20.
- POSPÍŠIL, Ivo (2007): The Problem of Value and Equality in Comparative Literary Studies: the Past and the Present (Some Comments on the Conception of „Area Value“). In: The Horizons of Contemporary Slavic Comparative Literature Studies. Ed. by Halina Janaszek-Ivaničková. Warszawa: Dom Wydawniczy Elipsa, s. 39-49.
- POSPÍŠIL, Ivo (Brno), MOSER, Michael (Wien) (2004): Comparative Cultural Studies in Central Europe. Brno: Ústav slavistiky Filozofické fakulty Masarykovy univerzity.
- POSPÍŠIL, Ivo (Brno), MOSER, Michael (Wien), NEWERKLA, Stefan M. (Wien) (2005): Litteraria Humanitas XIII. Austrian, Czech and Slovak Slavonic Studies in Their Central European Context. Brno: Ústav slavistiky Filozofické fakulty Masarykovy univerzity, Brno 2005.
- POSPÍŠIL, Ivo (ed.) (1998): Světové literatury 20. století v kostce. Pod vedením I. Pospíšila zpracovali S. Dembická, J. Kovář, K. Křížová, P. Křiloušek a I. Příkrylová. Praha: LIBRI.

POSPÍŠIL, Ivo (ed.) (1999): *Integrovaná žánrová typologie (Komparativní genologie). Projekt – metodologie – terminologie – struktura oboru – studie* (1999). Hlavní autoři: Ivo Pospíšil – Jiří Gazda - Jan Holzer. Editor: Ivo Pospíšil. Brno: Masarykova univerzita.

POSPÍŠIL, Ivo (ed.) (2002): *Areál – sociální vědy – filologie*. Brno: Kabinet integrované žánrové typologie, Ústav slavistiky, Filozofická fakulta Masarykovy univerzity.

POSPÍŠIL, Ivo (ed.) (2002): *Litteraria Humanitas XI, Crossroads of Cultures: Central Europe, Kreuzwege der Kulturen: Mitteleuropa, Křižovatky kultury: Střední Evropa, Perekrestki kul'tury: Srednjaja Jevropa*. Brno: Masarykova univerzita.

POSPÍŠIL, Ivo, ZELENKA, Miloš (1996): *René Wellek a meziválečné Československo. Ke kořenům strukturální estetiky*. Brno: Masarykova univerzita.

POSPÍŠIL, I.: *Syntetická metodologie Apollona Grigorjeva*. SPFFBU, D 36-37, 1989-1990, s. 57-66.

POSPÍŠIL, I.: *Vozvraščeniye k istokam (Razmyšleniya o nekotorych položeniayah A. A. Potebni v černovykh zametkakh o L. N. Tolstom i F. M. Dostojevskom)*. In: *Naukova spadščyna O. O. Potebni. U slov'janskomu kul'turnomu prostori*. Institut movoznavstva im. O. Potebni Nacionalnoj Akademii nauk Ukrajiny, Vydavnyčyj Dim Dmytra Buraho, Kyjiv 2013, s. 29-49. ISBN 978-966-489-198-8.

POSPÍŠIL, I.: *Avtorefleksija/avtoaksiologija tvorčestva i odna tradicija ruskoj estetičeskoj mysli*. In: *Mirgorod. Žurnal, posvjačennyj voprosam epistemologii literaturovedeniye*. Akademia Podlaska, Université de Lausanne, Section de langues et civilisations slaves, 2010, No. 2, s. 203-210. ISSN 1897-1431.

TIHANOV, G. (2000, 2002): *The Master and the Slave. Lukács, Bakhtin, and the Ideas of Their Time*. Oxford University Press.

VIRK, Tomo (2007): *Primerjalna književnost na prelomu tisočletja. Kritični pregled*. Ljubljana: Studia Litteraria, Inštitut za slovinsko literaturo in literarne vede ZRC SAZU.

VOISINE-JECHOVÁ, Hana (2005): *Dějiny české literatury*. Jinočany: H&H.

Wehrli, M.: *Základy modernej teórie literatúry*. Bratislava 1965.

WELLEK, R. (1936): *The Theory of Literary History*. Travaux de Cercle Linguistique du Prague 6, Praha.

WELLEK, R. (1968): *Názov, podstata a dejiny porovnávacej literatúry*. *Slavica Slovaca* 3, č. 2, s. 121-141.

WELLEK, R. (1959): *The Crisis of Comparative Literature*, in: *Proceedings of the Second International Congress of Comparative Literature*, red. W. P. Friedrich, 1., Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, s. 149-159.

WELLEK, René (1931): *Immanuel Kant in England*. Princeton University Press.

WELLEK, René (1963): *The Two Traditions of Czech Literature*, in: *R. W.: Essays on Czech Literature*. The Hague: Mouton, p. 30 (originally in: *Slavic Studies*, ed. by A. Kaun and E. J. Simmons, Ithaca, N. Y., Cornell University Press 1943, p. 213-228).

WOLLMAN, Frank (1928): *Slovesnost Slovanů*. Praha: Orbis.

WOLLMAN, Frank (2003): *Die Literatur der Slawen*. Herausgegeben von Reinhard Ibler und Ivo Pospíšil. Aus dem Tschechischen übertragen von Kristina Kallert. Vergleichende Studien zu den slavischen Sprachen und Literaturen. Herausgegeben von Renate Belentschikow und Reinhard Ibler, Bd. 7. Frankfurt am Main – Berlin – Bern – Bruxelles – New York – Oxford – Wien: Peter Lang.

WOLLMAN, Slavomír (2007): *Postmodernismus ve slovansko-středoevropském zorném poli: fakta a fikce*. In: *Slavistika dnes. Kolektivní monografie*. Ed.: Ivo Pospíšil. Brno: Česká asociace slavistů, Ústav slavistiky Filozofické fakulty Masarykovy univerzity, s. 213-228.

WOLLMAN, Slavomír (2008): *Van Tieghem a ti druzi: hledání generální literatury směrem k jihovýchodu*. In: *Česká slavistika 2008*. Brno – Praha: Academicus, s. 323-335.

ZELENKA, Miloš (2008): *Juvan, Marko: Literarna veda v rekonstrukciji. Uvod do sodobni študij*. Narodna a univerzitetna knjižnica, Ljubljana 2006. *Opera Slavica*, roč. XVIII, č. 1, 2008, s. 42-44.

Comparative Literary Studies and Area Studies: Advantages and

Obstacles

Ivo Pospíšil (Brno, Czech Republic)

Абстракт

Автор настоящей статьи занимается связью между сравнительным литературоведением и ареальными исследованиями, их выгодами, препятствиями и трудностями. Его изложение начинается с анализа разновидных концепций пространства и времени в литературном произведении, пространством как строительным элементом конструирования литературного артефакта. Опасность применения ареальных исследований к литературной компаративистике в общем состоит в расфокусировании и затуманивании филологического, текстуального ядра литературы в ее сравнительном плане.

Abstract

The author of the present contribution deals with the connection of comparative literary studies and area studies, its advantages and obstacles or pitfalls. He opens his explanation with the analysis of various concepts of space and time in the literary artefact, of the space as a constitutive element of the formation of the artefact. The danger of the application of area studies in general to comparative studies consists in the defocusing and obscuring of the philological textual kernel of literature in its comparative aspect.

Ключевые слова

Связь сравнительного литературоведения и ареальных исследований, методологическая дисперсия, рассеивание, препятствия и затруднения в процессе проникновения литературной компаративистики и ареальных исследований, ареальные исследования как мусорный ящик, поиски методологической целостности

Key Words

connection of comparative literary studies and area studies, methodological dispersion, obstacles and pitfalls of the permeation of comparative literary and area studies, area studies as a litter bin, search for methodological integrity

The problem of the relation between comparative literary studies and area studies consists in their methodological dispersion and a relatively wide field of their intersection. The latest tendencies in comparative literary studies which appeared some 60-70 years ago, stand very close to the spatial aspect of literary studies in general (POSPÍŠIL 2009, 1983, 1986, 1/2005, 2/2005, 3/2005, 2006).

The first cluster of questions is connected with the intrinsic structure of both comparative and area studies (POSPÍŠIL 2002). They both went through several stages of development. The former went through the stage of positivist thematology (Stoffgeschichte), morphological or structuralist stage to a sort of cultural comparative studies enriched by relevant methodological approaches of recent decades, such as feminist criticism, gender studies, post-colonial literature, modern hermeneutics, deconstructive criticism etc. (BASSLER 2001). The latter belonged to a big cluster of spatial approaches in which we were supposed to differentiate intrinsic and extrinsic kernels. The intrinsic one concerns the space as a constitutive element of the structure of a literary artefact, the extrinsic one seems to express its outer relations, the semantic fields the whole process of literary communication is being realised in. The intrinsic is usually associated with Gaston Bachelard's and Mikhail Bakhtin's (BACHTIN 1975, 1979, BACHELARD 1957, HODROVÁ 1989) concepts and those of their epigons. On the other hand, the extrinsic concept is based on some philosophical presuppositions of French economists of the 17th-18th centuries, mercantilists and physiocrats continued by those who wanted to form supranational complexes, such as the concept of united Europe - Fortress Europe (German "Festung Europa"), Central European visions and the study of the enemy as part of the former iron curtain policy during the cold war.

In the sphere of linguistics area studies expressed the necessity to study the changes in the language as a result of spatial, zonal or area relations. The concept of area studies is based on the complex approach, complex investigation, and, therefore, it has to be linked to several scholarly disciplines. We can also compare it, for example, with aesthetics which represents a generalized version of a complex of disciplines based prevalently on one of them as a starting

point; for example, the aesthetician started his career in the sphere of philology, history and theory of visual arts, musicology, study of architecture, urbanism etc. So each aesthetician studied, first of all, one of the arts, e. g. music, literature, painting, architecture etc., and later generalized this experience in a wider concept of aesthetics. The area studies are more or less heterogeneous structures with the prevalent majority of history, political science, philosophy, philology, psychology etc. The best chance how to connect comparative and area studies is therefore the concept based on the material of the studied subject, i.e. language and literature (POSPÍŠIL 2013, 1/2014, 2/2014, 2015) Such a concept was both theoretically and practically launched by the Institute of Slavic studies at Masaryk University in Brno, Czech Republic, in the mid-1990s and was symptomatically called philological-area studies in which philology as such became a natural starting point constructing a hypothetical bridge between the outer and the inner spatial concept both in area and comparative literary studies.

The boundaries of area and comparative studies are associated with their different objects of investigation in which area studies in general inspires comparative studies to be more open and wider, to leave the pure field of literature for a more complex sphere of culture. This dispersion represents, however, its pitfalls or obstacles of its further productive development based on practical results (WELLEK, 1936, ĎURIŠIN 1987-1993, 1992, GREENBLATT 2000).

The methodological starting point of the research of area studies which should enrich philologies and the teaching of languages and literatures was primarily the Brno project – mentioned above - going back to the mid-1990s of the integrational genre and comparative typology, the traditional Brno conception of poetology and the study of literary currents, streams and tendencies, and, of course, philological-area conception in the form of case studies, a cluster of approaches going back not only to the area studies as part of Sovietology from the years of the cold war and iron curtain policy, but also to Josef Dobrovský and the autochthonous Slavonic studies of the 18th and 19th centuries not speaking about the already mentioned roots of French mercantilism and economic teachings studying the whole geopolitical area. The problem of area studies consists not only in the enrichment of philology from the point of view of information and contextual background, but also in the strengthening of the philological kernel and the neighbouring cluster of different disciplines overcoming the philological isolation and, moreover, in practical purposes (OŠMAKOV 1/1979, 2/1979, 1981).

A traditional philologist rarely deals with economy, politics and international relations. The old-fashioned concept of life and institutions seems to be unsatisfactory nowadays. The concept of area studies also strengthens the former philological unity motivating linguistics and literary criticism to a more intensive mutual cooperation. The language represents the basic material for literature, literature is a representative space for the development of language; each language is being realised through literary texts, it is its mode of existence. Unlike traditional philology, the area concept is based on the study of the cultural space which is heterogeneous covering all from the natural and social framework towards sexual life. Therefore philology has to be completed by sociology, political science, philosophy, psychology, gender studies, the concept of post-colonial culture etc. It is evident that both languages and literatures do not cover the cultural space/area completely; on the other hand the cultural area speaks various cultural languages and their products (texts).

Area studies are generally respected now – in spite of the traditionalists’ resistance – but very often are being realised through history and historians or political science and its representatives. It is high time we started to conceive area studies not as a new religion, but as a practical cognitive tool. The negative evaluation of area studies is usually connected with the fact that sometimes they function as a sort of a litter bin, i. e. a sphere of everything, a kind of a mixture, a mess of all and nothing at the same time. This is nothing new as new scholarly disciplines have the same “biography“. They have to define the object of their research and the discipline’s borders which concern information science, newly conceived political science, international relations etc.

The accentuation of space/zonal relations is, of course, not new (Gaston Bachelard, Mircea Eliade, Mikhail Bakhtin, his concept of the chronotope). The boundaries of area studies are associated with their range and with the problem of disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity, i. e. with the search for a new object, a specific “craft“ typical of a new discipline, the knowledge of “know-how“ techniques which are well-known from natural and technological sciences, but also from some social sciences and humanities. Sometimes it is asserted that new disciplines are a sort of a fake, false sciences which have no distinctive limits; each discipline has to have a certain amount of basic knowledge and approaches, sometimes mythologized, i. e. in mathematics, medicine, philology etc. connected with certain subjects the students are usually afraid of, say, anatomy in medicine or historical grammar or syntax in linguistics. This all has to be formulated in the course of the establishing of this new discipline called area studies or philological-area studies.

This is all closely connected with the relations between philology and social sciences; if the kernel of area studies is represented by philology, we call them “philological-area studies”; the discipline represents a specific form of a transcendence of philology towards social sciences; at the same time the philological kernel of area studies has to be preserved. The area character is not a mere mechanical synthesis or a solution of philology and social sciences, but a natural transcendence of philology.

It is inevitable to ignore a fashion of area studies, i. e. a non-critical accentuation of everything which is closely connected with area or space conceptions at any cost; on the contrary, it is extremely useful to stress their connections with other disciplines or notions; area or philological-area studies should be associated with the following terms, such as visualization (ROTT 2002, TOKARZ 2002), history of ideas (Ideengeschichte), the theory of literary history, the dialogue of cultures (POSPÍŠIL 2002, 2004, 2007), culture/cultural studies.

The concept of the net of world cultural areas depends on how detailed and elaborate it should be. The typology of world cultural areas could be identified with that of continents, e. g. North, Central or North America, Asia subdivided into Western, Southern, Eastern or South-Eastern, Australia and Oceania, Africa subdivided due to natural conditions, ethnicity or religion into different regions, such as Sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa, Muslim Africa etc.

The kernel of European areas is closely associated with their complicated history and cultural development with its language heterogeneity and old and new contrasts and contradictions. Traditionally speaking, there are Western Europe, Northern Europe or Scandinavia, Southern Europe, the Balkan, Central Europe, East and South-Eastern Europe; it is usual to speak of the Mediterranean area.

The Central European area represents the most complicated cultural complex, the region with colourful historical and religious developments, the cradle of revolutions and world wars. It reminds a little of the Balkan area though its intrinsic structure – both diachronous and synchronous is quite different (NEUBAUER – CORNIS-POPE 2004-2010, NEUPOKOJEVA 1976, POSPÍŠIL-MOSER 2004).

There is nothing stable in the typology of areas in general and European areas in particular; though the formation of cultural areas is a long-time process, there are some important shifts and modifications; one possible example might be represented by Italy: a

centre of Renaissance and humanism naturally belonged to the West European area in the Middle Ages; its Renaissance concept was then realised in France and England; later when the kernel of Italian culture – the North of Italy with Milan and Venice – became part of Habsburg monarchy, Italy was regarded as part of Central Europe. We can even conclude that very important parts of the Central European area have a transitive character: besides Italy, for example, Slovenia (Central Europe – Balkan), former Galicia, now partly Poland, partly Ukraine (Central Europe – Eastern Europe), Transylvania (Siebenbürgen, Erdély, Ardeal – Central Europe - Balkan), Croatia (Central Europe – Balkan) etc.

The transitiveness may function as a distinctive feature of the whole of Central Europe which gives it a more flexible, rich, complex and synthetic character leading to its really “central” position, and the rest of European areas which, of course, tended to transcend to other countries and determine their characters (former African colonies – Britain, France, up to 1918 Germany, then also Portugal, Spain, colonies in Asia, America). It is also often stressed in recent individual or team publications dealing with the problem of aesthetic values, with the rather controversial subject of “East-Central Europe” (Ostmitteleuropa) or the comparative aspect of area studies in general and Central European studies in particular (POSPÍŠIL 2006, 1/2007, 2/2007, 3/2007, 4/2007, 1/2009, 2/2009, MATHAUSER 2005, POSPÍŠIL, ZOUHAR 2008, WRITING LITERARY HISTORY 2006).

From this point of view it is very important to accentuate the significance of the axiological character of literary artefacts, to integrate the area studies also into the concept of comparative philological studies. The contemporary literary history must also cover the theory of aesthetic values though it is not acceptable to apply here a concept of the so-called positive discrimination. No literary canon can be determined by the representatives of single national literatures only, literature is a supranational phenomenon as part of the communicative process predetermined by the category of the recipient (reader); the product of the process – a literary text – is being mediated through the receptional environment, e. g. translations etc.). In some of the studies dealing with area studies in general and Central European area in particular you can find the term “belatedness“ which is a little pejorative, negatively axiological. Each national literature has its own developmental paradigm, its trajectory of evolution independent of other literatures, so there is no need to gain on or overcome something, it is autonomous, prepared to be integrated with other literary entities, to transform their impulses, but otherwise it has its own evolutionary rhythm and pattern, it is axiologically autochthonous. In some articles of mine I called it “pre-post effect“ or “pre-post

paradox“. The term “literary culture“ brings us a little back to the 19th-century cultural-historical school denying the specificity of literature as a kind of art stressing the importance of cultural studies, semiotics and spatial character of the knots of intersection of various cultural streams and tendencies.

The key relations of area studies including Central European studies covering the cardinal problem of area comparative studies, cultural studies, dialogue of cultures, and genre studies is very close to the yet unsolved problem of the extrinsic and the intrinsic mentioned in the *Theory of Literature* by Warren and mainly by Wellek (WELLEK – WARREN 1948, 1968), the interconnection of which is a dominant task of literary criticism including its area aspect.

The weak aspects of contemporary comparative studies are connected – as mentioned above - with their methodological dispersion and non-existent methodological memory; new comparatists are often forced to discover again and again the methods and come to the results already revealed.

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.

Comparative literary studies may function as a loose net of historically tested approaches, single methods and visions or as a link of a chain of more complex approaches connected with new subjects and problems of world literature, with the prevalence of certain genre clusters and with the dominant impact of mass literature in general.

- 1) Genesis of area studies and its relation to comparative literary studies
- 2) Spatial aspect
- 3) Boundaries of area and comparative literary studies
- 4) Area studies and social sciences
- 5) Area and visualisation (Polish concept of iconosphere)

6) Area and history/theory of literary history

7) Area and dialogue of cultures

8) Area and culture studies

There are two ways to reform comparative studies:

- 1) Minimalisation, deepening, concentration on the text
- 2) Maximalization: a widening, a wider concept, new relations (postcolonial literature, gender studies, dialogue of cultures, area studies, territorial studies)

The reformed comparative studies permeated by area studies transcends the sphere of literature towards society, culture, other humanities and social sciences which gives birth to a more complex use of comparative methods.

Obstacles, pitfalls:

- 1) Vague boundaries of this concept of comparative literary studies
- 2) Weakening of the pure craft of literary criticism
- 3) Dispersion of subjects and methods
- 4) Methodological, didactic and practical consequences – character of a graduate of a wider concept of comparative studies

Some researchers call area studies a waste basket or litter bin, because it really represents a mixture of various approaches and disciplines which is not methodologically pure and which still seeks for its methodological integrity.

The process of the integration of area studies, or more exactly philological-area studies, and comparative literary studies, though it is intensifying and is more profound now than in the past, is a complicated long-distance run.

REFERENCES

BACHELARD, Gaston (1957): Poétique de l'espace. Paris.

- BACHTIN, Michail: (1979): Estetika slovesnogo tvorčestva. Moskva.
- BACHTIN, Michail (1975): Voprosy literatury i estetiki. Moskva.
- BASSLER, Moritz (2001): New Historicism: Literaturgeschichte als Poetik der Kultur. Tübingen.
- ĎURIŠIN, Dionýz (1992): Čo je svetová literatúra? Bratislava.
- ĎURIŠIN, Dionýz (ed.) (1987-1993): Osobitné medziliterárne spoločenstvá I-VI. Bratislava.
- GREENBLATT, Stephen (2000): Practising the New Historicism. Chicago University Press.
- HODROVÁ, Daniela: (1989): Hledání románu. Kapitoly z historie a typologie žánru. Praha: Čs. spisovatel.
- MATHAUSER, Zdeněk (2005): Báseň na dosah eidosu. Ke stopám fenomenologie v ruské literatuře a literární vědě. Praha: Univerzita Karlova.
- NEBAUER, John, CORNIS-POPE, Marcel (eds, 2004-2010): History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe: Junctures and Disjunctures in the 19th and 20th Centuries. I-IV. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- NEUPOKOJEVA, Irina (1976): Istorija vseмирnoj literatury. Problemy sistemnogo i sravnitel'nogo analiza. Moskva: Nauka.
- OŠMAKOV, Nikolaj V. (ed. 1/1979): [Literaturnye proizvedenija v dviženii poch.](#) Moskva: Akademija Nauk SSSR, Institut Mirovoj Literatury im A. M. Gor'kogo, Nauka.
- OŠMAKOV, Nikolaj V. (ed., 1981): Psichologičeskoje napravlenije v ruskom literaturovedenii. Moskva: Prosveščenie.
- OŠMAKOV, Nikolaj V. (ed., 2/1979): [Russkaja literatura v istoriko-funkcional'nom osveščanii](#) Moskva: Akademija Nauk SSSR. Institut Mirovoj Literatury Im. A. M. Gor'kogo Nauka.
- POSPÍŠIL, Ivo (2013): Areál a filologická studia. Brno: Masarykova univerzita.
- POSPÍŠIL, Ivo (1, 2009): Areál a jeho vztahy. In: Novaja rusistika, No. 2, s. 70-78.
- POSPÍŠIL, Ivo (2002): Areál – sociální vědy – filologie Brno: Kabinet integrované žánrové typologie, Ústav slavistiky, Filozofická fakulta Masarykovy univerzity.
- POSPÍŠIL, Ivo (2015): Central Europe: Substance and Concepts. Nitra: Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, Faculty of Central European Studies

POSPÍŠIL, Ivo (ed., 1999): Integrovaná žánrová typologie (Komparativní genologie) Projekt – metodologie – terminologie – struktura oboru – studie. Hlavní autoři: Ivo Pospíšil – Jiří Gazda - Jan Holzer. Brno: Masarykova univerzita.

POSPÍŠIL, Ivo (1/2005): Kulturní dialog a areálová studia (několik poznámek o spojitosti pojmů). Dialog kultur III. Sborník příspěvků z vědecké konference s mezinárodní účastí pořádané ve spolupráci se Společností Franka Wollmana při FF MU v Brně a Českou asociací rusistů. Hradec Králové 26. 10. 2004. Ústí nad Orlicí: OFTIS, s. 17-24.

POSPÍŠIL, Ivo (1986): Labyrint kroniky. Pokus o teoretické vymezení žánru. Brno: Blok.

POSPÍŠIL, Ivo (1/2014): Literární genologie. Brno: Masarykova univerzita.

POSPÍŠIL, Ivo (1/2009): Literární komparatistika, areálová/kulturní studia, teorie literárních dějin a problém hodnoty v současné literárněvědné praxi. Opera Slavica, č. 1, s. 20-33.

POSPÍŠIL, Ivo (2/2014): Literární věda a teritoriální studia. Nitra: Fakulta stredo európskych štúdií, Univerzita Konštantína Filozofa v Nitre.

POSPÍŠIL, Ivo (2/2005): Problema slavizmov i njegov kontekst. Ljubljana: Primerjalna književnost, december, št. 2, s. 17-32.

POSPÍŠIL, Ivo (1/ 2007): Próza virtuální autenticity a existenciálního znejistění. SPFFBU, X 10, Slavica Litteraria, s. 5-20.

POSPÍŠIL, Ivo (1983): Ruská románová kronika (Příspěvek k historii a teorii žánru). Brno: UJEP.

POSPÍŠIL, Ivo (3/2005): Ruský román znovu navštívený. Historie, uzlové body vývoje, teorie a mezinárodní souvislosti: Od počátků k výhledu do současnosti. Ed.: Jaroslav Malina, obálka, grafická a typografická úprava Josef Zeman – Tomáš Mořkovský, Martin Čuta, ilustrace Boris Jirků. Brno: Nadace Universitas, Edice Scientia, Akademické nakladatelství CERM, Nakladatelství a vydavatelství NAUMA.

POSPÍŠIL, Ivo (2006): Teoretická konstrukce a naplněnost kontextu (In margine „nové západní literárněvědné rusistiky“). Opera Slavica, č. 3, s. 31-36.

POSPÍŠIL, Ivo (2/2009): Teorie literárních dějin, literární komparatistika a identita národních literatur (problém východoslovanského areálu). In: Ukrajnistika: minulost, přítomnost, budoucnost. Sborník vědeckých prací. Masarykova univerzita, Filozofická fakulta, Ústav

slavistiky. Eds: Halyna Myronova, Oxana Gazdošová, Petr Kalina, Olga Lytvyniuk, Jitka Micháliková, Libor Pavlíček. Brno: Masarykova univerzita. s. 463-474.

POSPÍŠIL, Ivo (2/ 2007): The Problem of Value and Equality in Comparative Literary Studies: the Past and the Present (Some Comments on the Conception of „Area Value“). In: The Horizons of Contemporary Slavic Comparative Literature Studies. Ed. by Halina Janaszek-Ivaničková. Warszawa : Dom Wydawniczy Elipsa, s. 39-49.

POSPÍŠIL, Ivo (3/ 2007): Trivialita a hledání virtuální autenticity jako nového dialogu. In: Dialog kultur IV. Sborník příspěvků z mezinárodní vědecké konference pořádané ve spolupráci se Slavistickou společností Franka Wollmana při FF MU v Brně a Českou asociací rusistů. Hradec Králové 23.-24. 1. 2007. Uspořádal Oldřich Richterek. Ústí nad Orlicí: Oftis, s. 21-27.

POSPÍŠIL, Ivo, MOSER, Michael (2004): Comparative Cultural Studies in Central Europe. Brno: Ústav slavistiky Filozofické fakulty Masarykovy univerzity.

POSPÍŠIL, Ivo, ZOUHAR, Jan (eds, 2008): Literatura a filozofie (Zdeněk Mathauser). Brno: Katedra filosofie, Ústav slavistiky FF MU.

ROTT, Dariusz (2002): Bracia Czescy w dawnej Polsce. Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego.

TOKARZ, B. (2002): Dwudziestowieczna ikonosfera w literaturach europejskich: Wizualizacja w literaturze. Katowice: „Śląsk“.

WELLEK, R. (1936): The Theory of Literary History. Praha: Travaux de Cercle Linguistique du Prague 6.

Writing Literary History. Selected Perspectives from Central Europe (2006). Frankfurt am Main - Berlin – Bern – Bruxelles – New York - Oxford – Wien: Peter Lang Verlag.

The present study is a modified version of the paper delivered at the 21st congress of the International Comparative Literature Association (ICLA) in Vienna in 2016.

