

The concept of world literature in Czech and Slovak comparative literary studies

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This article draws attention to the lesser-known traditions of world literature research. It follows the line of thought connected with so-called “small” literatures, which aspire to “worldliness” only indirectly and with difficulties because they cannot take advantage of the global economic pressure and hegemony of English. Despite the terminological and semantic differences in their exposition of this phenomenon, current theorists (Emily Apter, Pascale Casanova, David Damrosch, Wai Chee Dimock, Theo D’haen, Marko Juvan, Franco Moretti, etc.) have reestablished the concept of world literature as an international research problem with English as the universal means of communication. These conceptions are based on the socio-economic question “what is the world?” rather than the structuralist question “what is literature?” (Gáfrik 2020a, 116). Damrosch’s monograph *What is World Literature?* (2003) epitomized the American vision of worldliness as a virtual interliterary network of texts translated into English, which is the elliptical refraction of national literatures (281–282). Scholars in Central Europe believe that the methodological discourse cannot be reduced to only one line of study, but that it is performed in different languages and various power relations (Pokrivčák and Zelenka 2019, 112). Since the early 20th century, these scholars have disputed the concept of world literature as a normative poetics based on selected themes, genres, and their heterogeneous discourses, as a standardized canon, or as the masterpieces of the so-called large or developed literatures. Enforcing this idea would allegedly condone the inequality as a kind of epistemological framework codifying the binary opposition of “developed” and “underdeveloped”, or “center” and “periphery”. In particular, the Czecho-Slovak structuralist tradition (Frank Wollman, René Wellek, Dionýz Ďurišin, etc.) has rejected national literature as a natural foundation of world literature and defended the autochthonous values of Slavic literatures within this system. The roots of this “defensive” theory were planted in the Central European intellectual atmosphere as a crossroad of diverse streams of thought and were connected with the structural concept of the Prague Linguistic Circle (Zelenka 2012, 134–135). It was also influenced by the multilingual tradition of the former Habsburg Empire and the phenomenon of migration which implied the aspects of polyglossia and heterotopia as a breeding

ground for scholars of comparative literature (Tihanov 2004, 64). Therefore, the first part of the study aims to describe the differences between the world literature concepts embraced by “large” and “small” literatures; in the second part, it will focus on the Czech and Slovak contributions to this highest category in literary studies.

THE CONCEPTS OF WORLD LITERATURE EMBRACED BY “LARGE” AND “SMALL” LITERATURES

First, it is necessary to remark that few literary notions are as popular as the phenomenon of world literature. It is also true that the vast extent of scholarship on this topic hinders even a basic orientation in the field. Nonetheless, no one can deny that world literature has achieved theoretical hegemony, not only in comparative literary studies (Kola 2014, 47). After all, a field of knowledge or specialization can boost its actual value if modified by the magical attribute “world” as, for example, world economy, world art, world politics, etc. The field thus assumes a quality of a virtual “supersign”, where “the signifier” totally transforms “the signified”. The field or research subject immediately acquires the status of elite and undoubtful value, which concentrates the epistemes of power and primarily metaphorically codifies the state of definite knowledge or the attainment of climax. Such a semiotic transformation is ideally conveyed by the notion of world literature. This notion attracts sustained scholarly interest despite its complicated nature, in which the unlimited circulation of literary texts is projected alongside the fact that this notion has been a direct correlate of political and economic aspects rather than purely literary ones. The combination of such broad notions as “literature” and “world” creates an infinite multitude of associations which lead to controversies and ambiguous implications, because there is no agreement on what is represented by these general terms. In this respect, the question arises about the real character of our “world”. Is it a unified world honoring equal values in all of its parts, or is it a united though unequal world, implicitly suggesting that it consists of a multitude of heterogeneous systems? First of all, it is a question of language, which in the communicative act always assumes a culturally hegemonic character, discernible in translations and its political connotations. Metaphorically, this situation is conveyed by the well-known witticism that national literature is written by authors, whereas world literature is created by translators. The traditional question about translation as a final category to constitute the phenomenon of world literature can be complemented by the importance of competence in reading world languages which is more common in Europe than, for instance, in the USA. The dissimilarity of conditions in which the intertextual and intercultural transfer occurs thus provides different frameworks for the perception and propagation of world literature. The issue becomes further complicated because world literature does not avail itself of an “original” language and because English historically usurped the function of the common “national” tongue as a tool of universal world communication, not excluding forms of artistic exchange. Similarly, we can ask whether world literature, no matter if understood as a heterogeneous, internally structured construct or a virtual philosophical vision, possesses an indispensable feature: is it the historical developmental value or the more mutable aesthetic dimension, the authorial myth

“superimposed” on their works, or a generally acknowledged idea extracted from the author’s text and existing in its own hermetically closed world?

Karel Čapek (1890–1938), who enriched the world lexicon by coining the word “robot” in his drama *R.U.R.* (1921), identified himself as a representative of the “small” Czech literature. In his 1936 essay “Jak se dělá světová literatura” (How world literature is made), he reflected on the question of “what worldliness is and how it is achieved, in brief, how literature is made world literature” (10). Čapek concludes that “small” national literatures cannot acquire worldliness by “catching up with” or “imitating” the “large” literatures; it is better for them to seek a balance between the particularism of the national and the universalism of the worldly. As a matter of fact, the contemporary world is more globalized and thus interconnected in its “national” parts. Such rapprochement logically results in a search for the universal within the particular manifestations of individual national cultures. Overall, Čapek recognizes four types of worldliness: the first type constitutes texts that celebrated worldwide success with the readers, but whose smoothness and trendiness brought them short-lived critical appraisal.¹ Such texts do not have a “local” character, but they construe prefabricated, timeless and universal themes in agreement with the universally accepted aesthetic norm. Čapek links this kind of worldliness with a reception-comprehensible horizon, with fashionable popularization, and, in particular, mass trivialization. The second type is the opposite: books that failed to be immediately popular with a wide readership because of their “unconventionality” and “undefined” beauty, but whose aesthetic and intellectual values increase with the distance of time. The third type represents the sense of “historical topicality” as socially engaged texts expressing general progressive ideas. The fourth type, which Čapek rates as the most significant and most widespread concept of worldliness, can paradoxically be achieved only through “purely and fully national” texts (9). It is only in this fourth type that freely circulating texts can become a durable and universal property, a shared cultural heritage based on the narratives of people and their destinies: “nobody has ever managed to conceive a more worldly and more universal thing” (10).

In this sense, by ingeniously interconnecting theoretical discourse with his own “worldly” writing, Čapek followed the tradition of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, whose use of the notion of world literature in 1827 (although he may not have been the first to entertain it), brought him renown. Although not offering an explicit elucidation of the term, his usage suggests an awareness of interliterary connections, i.e. the ties between individual authors and works. Goethe considered world literature a form of literary communication between the living and dead authors of various nations, a spiritual exchange aspiring to social inducement, and embraced the vision of a future-postulated “dream”, where *Gemeingut* denotes literature as ideal common property shared by all humankind. His propositions imply that we are entering the era of world literature while the concept of national literature is losing its significance, and this binary antagonism has become the source of endless subsequent debates (Strich 1946, 19–20). Since Goethe popularized the notion of world literature, it has been a regular occurrence in the seminal works of literary scholars. Since the early 20th century, it has systematically appeared in theoretical reflections that fall under

the following four meanings: (1) a sum of all national literatures, be it literature that has a “world” character or any literature that can assume “worldly” quality under certain conditions; (2) a selection, compendium, or “cultural pantheon” of literary texts whose “canonical” quality is axiologically and aesthetically related to a preconceived “sample” of texts (which are regarded as classics thanks to their reputation); (3) “the world’s literature”, e.g. in the sense of an intertextual and transcultural network, or “a grid” of ideas, poetics, genres, discourses, and other heterogeneous contexts mediating a nonviolent dialogue of cultures; and finally (4) a reading method resulting from a particular manner of interpretation and hermeneutic perception of art.

It is evident that in practice, the first two concepts, more often than not, were complementary and overlapping. They came into existence between the early 20th century and the interwar period when world literature was understood as an aesthetically and historically important corpus of texts, a set of masterpieces conveying generally accepted ideals of humanity that represent the best products of Euro-American civilization. The first conception was based on the fact that the textual corpus comprised canonical works recognized in individual national literatures as representative. This was the concept of the literature formulated, for example, by René Étiemble in his monograph *Essais de littérature (vraiment) générale* (Essays on [truly] general literature, 1974), which provides a historical recapitulation of the term. In his presentation at the IV Association Internationale de Littérature Comparée/International Comparative Literature Association (AILC/ICLA) Congress in Haag, he interpreted world literature as a synonym for the entire literary output, free from ethnolinguistic and political-religious discrimination previously ensuing from Eurocentrism (1966, 5–16). Étiemble may have intended to highlight the importance of non-European literatures, but in practical literary criticism world literature blended with unnoticeable labyrinths of an unlimited sum of texts whose “worldliness” could not be understood without previous selection. He addressed this threat by saying that every reader creates their own “individualized” world literature because readers choose texts from world literature according to their dispositions (9). Still, it can be objected that not everything written is worth reading or exploring, regardless of the progressive and aesthetic character of these texts.

The other conception was typified by the distribution and subjective reception of these texts: their “world” status was confirmed through competitions, prestigious prizes (e.g. the Nobel Prize for Literature), anthologies, institutional support, and literary histories that present “influential” texts from “large” literatures, but no texts “influenced” by “small” literatures. These concepts of world literature were surveyed by the theoretician Max Wehrli who pointed out, with reference to Fernand Baldensperger and Werner P. Friedrich’s *Bibliography of Comparative Literature* (1950), that a new comparative field, i.e. research into world literature, was in the making. It could be delimited in three ways: (1) as an ancillary field of national literary history; (2) as an international encyclopedic compendium of national literary histories; and (3) as an international field enjoying a higher and ideal status that is just slowly gaining ground (Wehrli 1965, 199). World literature itself is apprehended as “a dynamic his-

torical entity” (199–200), a unity of living literary traditions, not static poetics. In any case, its syntheses should be approached with skepticism because present genre realizations oscillate between the narrative creativity of an ambitious individual and an all-registering compilatory chronicle shielded by the editorial team tied with research directives. If these syntheses do appear, “they should admittedly be deemed necessary, though necessarily limited and methodologically little productive as well” (201). Similarly, György M. Vajda, the Hungarian scholar representing “small” Central European comparative literary studies, observes that writing the world history of literature becomes an autonomous referential “genre” whose function is to deal with the most universal “connections, details and typological correspondences” (1986, 336) and which is realized as (1) the history of ideas; (2) the history of forms, or perhaps of those genres that transcend the scope of national literature; and (3) the history of artistic and literary movements, i.e. the history of poetics combining stylistic and ideological aspects. For Vajda, the posthumous “life” of the text after its creation remains a relevant condition for the inclusion of the text in the “genre” as a sum of generally respected poetics and their means of expression so that the text permanently enters a system that can be instructively described as “world literary infrastructure”. At the same time, the text must join the network of intertextual relations or cultural post-textual adaptations.

The Polish literary theoretician Przemysław Czapliński uses the term “work-pre-tender” (*dzieło-pretendent*) to convey the text’s readiness to become world literature (2014, 14). In order to achieve it, the work indispensably requires that it be also successful in educational practice, i.e. to frequently occur in textbooks (14; Damrosch 2009, 10). Czapliński highlights the interesting fact that it was not until the latter half of the 20th century that works of non-American or non-European origin began to appear in anthologies of world literature which have slowly started changing the accepted canon (15). With the descent of the Iron Curtain marking Europe’s implicit political division, world literature assumed a kind of “ideological canon”. The hard core of the West was formed by the works of Euro-American origin. At the same time, in the socialist countries, world literature was conceived as the entire global literary production, except for national literature, with the dominance of Russian (or rather Soviet) literature and the literary output of the “socialist bloc”. In retrospect, this highlights the fact that the circulation of world literature in its numerous geopolitical, ethnolinguistic, or socio-cultural variations followed different courses of expansion in the West and the East, and, in addition, that there is no obligatory or prescriptive form of world literature as such. It was not solely under the conditions of the divided world that the proportion of national literature to world literature considerably varied, as, paradoxically, for example, in Central and East Europe, where the boundaries continually blurred even after 1989, when the political and geographical disintegration of these “postcolonial” regions gave up the traditional concept of national and, by extension, of world literature. What really matters is that the complicated process of the general renewal of ideologically non-bipolar Europe has not produced a functional definition of the adequate “language” of new unity. Such phenomena as global migration, new colonial trends, disintegration or unification of unstable state forma-

tions have made the notion of national literature relative, including its semantic content, which merged with both the language and its geographical locality. Any national literature thus can present itself as “world literature in a nutshell”, since it represents a multilingual and multinational conglomerate. In contrast, the common language (e.g. its extension to the territory comprising several political unities) integrated diverse poetics and cultural traditions into the same national literature.

The above-mentioned changes imply a gradual transition to the third and the fourth concepts admitting the existence of a great number of literatures spread worldwide. These are not identical to world literature understood as a particular corpus of selected texts or as a virtual symbol of cultural heritage derived from “large” national literatures. Late in the 20th century, therefore, there appeared the notion of “literature of the world of nations” as a primordial equivalent of the term world literature conceptualized as a structurally comparable “grid” or “network”. What remains to be addressed is the synecdochical construction of a term defined in this way, the question of how numerous literatures in the world give birth to world literature, or whether the “global” or “local-national” criteria should be preferred. While browsing representative and widely-spread anthologies of world literature, one finds that these compendia “grant admission” predominantly to works embracing Euro-American culture and written in the so-called world languages. Global criteria make possible the selection and hierarchization of almost unlimited literary material, while the work-pretenders marked with the “genius loci” tag on their way to “the elite saloon” have to get through the selection process of an English translation, and analogical global economic and mass media pressure of marketing and commercial support. From this it follows that even “literature of the world of nations” merely relativizes the “inequality” of values, and because of its usurpatory nature, it fails to constitute genuine world literature. It represents rather a selective world literature sifted through the convenient and advantageous optics of national literatures, which is the awareness of the fixed point enabling us to enter the insecure territory of higher historical abstraction. Any arbitrary literary fact can be classified according to multiple chronological, thematic, genre and other criteria on the flexible synchronic and diachronic axis and compared with an analogical or antithetical phenomenon. This naturally gives rise to the question whether world literature can be grasped without national literature, or in economic terms, if there can exist foreign trade without a domestic market. That is to say, world literature frequently means literature circulating beyond its original territory.

This approach to “the literature of the world” determines its subject neither by its aesthetic value nor through its “humanity” sharing the common cultural heritage, but by its aptitude to become negotiable “merchandise”, a product crossing the border of the commercial free trade. Therefore, literary texts are economic products based on circulating themes, genres, and ideas, irrespective of their “quality”. Literature is, above all, an ideological instrument which implements communication to create a market for the texts to move according to predefined rules. Literary circulation is thus subordinate to economic laws, to global production that is a synonym of “worldliness”. “Inequality” recedes into the background, hidden under the catego-

ry of “international success”, symbolizing aspiration for the status of “worldliness”. In her famous work *La République mondiale des Lettres* (1999; *The World Republic of Letters*, 2004), Pascale Casanova claims that world literature must be perceived within de-ideologized spatial and relational frames rather than in predefined national categories and units. World literature is not a compilation of texts produced in the world, nor is it an artificial canon; it is a movable “network” or a “field” generated by the substance of the common functioning of the European market; and by the dominance of geographical space where the worldliness and universality of literature materialized as a specific example of “the micro-world literature” (18). This is ideally conveyed in French and by Paris as the capital of the literary world. It is this cultural center that becomes the entrance gate, a sort of “filter” of success on the international stage which individual authors enter through an important factor of their texts being translated into several “major” languages. Looking back to Goethe’s *Weltliteratur*, Casanova highlights the power of economic factors: the “world republic of letters” is based on the virtual “interliterary” network without frontiers and barriers, which should not be confused with the concept of universal literature crossing national, political, and linguistic boundaries (11). This notion was admittedly created by world cultures fostered by nations like the Germans, the English, and the French to disguise their cultural dominance. If we want to define the degree of “worldliness” in a particular text, it is necessary to analyze this phenomenon by means of “national contextualization”, i.e. by asking whether such a text, invariably written in a national language, promotes universal values (Auerbach 1992, 83–84).

Similarly, Franco Moretti suggests “distant reading”, that is, understanding world literature not through a detailed study of single texts but through the aggregation and analysis of “big data”, revealing timeless structures of literary phenomena and processes (2000, 56). The purpose of such an analysis should be to identify systemic political relations inscribed in the “signifying” literary form; this is, in fact, a power dissection because literary forms are the analyses of social relations. Moretti proposes to construe a new way of defining and researching world literature (58), which is inspired by Darwin’s evolutionary theory (expressing the heterogeneity, variability, and complexity of forms in historical development) and by economic models of analytical systems, namely Immanuel Wallerstein’s world-systems theory (Kola 2012, 114). Wallerstein presents the functioning of capitalism as a single monolithic but “uneven” system embracing the value antithesis of the center and periphery (Kola 2014, 43), for the economic models of analytical systems represent the fact that the unity of world literature was historically constituted as a specific model of economic globalization only in the capitalist era when the transitions between the center and periphery were removed (Wallerstein 2001, 8). Despite this, concerning the plurality of methods and vagueness of the subject, Moretti considers the study of world literature a problem that cannot be solved exclusively within the potential of literary studies (2000, 66–67).

The fourth concept, currently the most universal and most influential, though methodologically the least rigorous, identifies world literature with the manner of reading, accentuating a fictional world generated behind our real world. World lit-

erature thus comprises all literary works that have transcended their original national culture, whether in translation or the original. There is nothing like one world literature, for every local culture creates its own world literature (Damrosch 2003, 280–281). On the other hand, in Damrosch's concept, "worldliness" as a result of specific interpretation is, to some extent, an established reception practice formed by reading classics, which refers to hermeneutic roots. If Damrosch epitomizes the typical American vision of close reading, the title of his 2003 book *What Is World Literature?* seems like an explicit intertextual reference to Ďurišin's identically named *Čo je svetová literatúra?* (What is world literature?, 1992), although the Slovak scholar is neither mentioned nor quoted in the former text. In the contemporary theoretical context, the elimination of Central European comparative research as "a peripheral element" is not unusual. It is a typical destiny of "small" languages and literatures to constitute themselves "at the edge", far (though not spiritually distant) from ideological centers (Thomsen 2008, 19–20). To explain this process of the semiotic waning of cultural memory, the Slovak comparatist Libuša Vajdová refers to the specific feature of reception openness of "liminal cultures", which "frequently understand the qualities of foreign literatures and cultures much more instinctually than central cultures whose outlook is hindered by the concentration on their own center, their own centrality" (2020, 74). The idea that worldliness is not a fixed quality of literary works but that it results from the new manner of reading, from historical interpretation of poetry, has hardly been "discovered" by comparative literary studies. As early as the first half of the 20th century, Benedetto Croce referred to Ernst Merian-Genast's study "Voltaire und die Entwicklung der Idee der Weltliteratur" (Voltaire and the development of the idea of world literature, 1927) when he formulated three different concepts of world literature (Croce 1997, 74): (1) cosmopolitan (national literature with a unifying brand, which exceeds its limits as a sort of "universal language" of communication); (2) canonical (the normative understanding of a literary whole as a collection of works granted universal value regardless of historical determination); and (3) organic (the natural conception of world literature as a universal phenomenon formed as a total poetical output of humankind). According to Croce, it is only the last definition that grasps the quality and substance of world literature, for it presumes the existence of universal cultural "taste", which facilitates our complete understanding and emotional experience of the works written by diverse nations, along with providing conditions for producing new texts (75).

As we are approaching the present age, in particular the theoretical achievements of the last two decades, we can, in the postmodernist spirit, observe a mingling of individual conceptions, a removal of fixed methodological boundaries and philosophical starting points. Therefore, a classification of world literature from the perspective of research orientation, where it can be determined in ontological and epistemological meanings, seems to be more productive. In the first meaning, world literature is a historically developing form of existence of literary works and their relations. This concept is grounded in the morphological approach to world literature as a summary of forms and structures beyond spatial and temporal delimitation. In the epistemological meaning, world literature instead assumes the form of research orientation

and functions as a specific aspect of the approach to literary communication identifying certain ideas. If we return to the first meaning, in an ontological understanding, world literature designates a strictly defined set of artistic creations which have been a real entity comprising literatures of the whole world since antiquity, following the origin of universalistic ideas, despite the fact that world literature conceived as such still lacked a modern global character. In the second epistemological meaning, world literature philosophically presents the value equivalent of general ideas of universalism parallel to the supreme form of existence of literary relations. In the content of world literature, there is thus an expressively anthropological implication: the history of world literature is a history of the search for the purpose of human history. This typological differentiation of world literature reflects its inner structural character and natural heterogeneity expressed through two semantic planes: as a notion and a concept. Whereas the notion exists as a universally recognized and verbally expressed idea of the phenomenon, the concept is an intentional, pragmatic construct, i.e. a set of principles to model the structure of world literature, as, for example, in the material form of book publication. The notion concentrates in itself the “philosophy of the phenomenon”; the concept, by contrast, its technology. World literature, whose epistemological orientation is based on the tradition of philosophical hermeneutics, abandons the status of a fixed category, offering instead a historically changeable vision of “worldliness” as a process of gradual constitution of topological field where the awareness of multiculturalism, the relation between the intercultural and the interregional is fostered as mutual meeting, as communication and transfer of values and ideas. World literature generated by the moment of reception openness and communicational intermingling of individual texts translates into the aspect of worldliness as a multi-level, gradual and complicated process of the formation of an axiologically equivalent “interliterary network”. “Worldliness” originates as a result of subjective interpretive activity, but it is also a common capacity of a literary act to accept the reception stimulus positively and permanently. The concrete representation of the “worldliness” of any artefact manifests itself when, for example, it is found out how different and geographically remote regions between which analogical communicational meeting grounds are sought have been affected by a particular text culturally and poetologically. For instance, Armando Gnisci illustrates this process by literary production in the Mediterranean as a polycentric model of world literature, where transfer, exchange and translation of literary values take place continuously (1999, 40). According to Earl Miner, the “worldliness” of literature is also a movement postulating the phenomenon of interculturality, which translates literatures of the world to a common denominator (1990, 11). On the other hand, the notion of worldliness can even acquire the negative connotation of “trendiness” if it explicitly denotes the fact that a particular text, “detached” from its context and historical period, becomes a universally comprehensible literary product which in the era of mass-media communication spreads all over the world and is mechanically consumed regardless of its aesthetic value.

The results of the last AILC/ICLA Congress, held in Macao in 2019 under the title “Literature of the World and the Future of Comparative Literature”, have obviously

confirmed that the search for diverse models and forms of world literature is ongoing. World literature should not be a priori rejected if its status and the ensuing interpretation do not correlate with a specific discourse. Therefore, there is not only the call for new theories of prefiguration and circulation of comparative concepts in time and space, but they are determined by local or regional traditions (Pokrivčák and Zelenka 2019, 112). A retreat from the American concept of world literature perceived as a specific manner of reading constituted in our mind through circulation and reception of literary texts communicated in the form of English translations cannot be deemed definite because in present thinking, the English language dominates as a starting point and target of the texts aspiring to “worldliness”. Emily Apter notes that contemporary world literature is perceived as a label and symbol of unparalleled literary achievements rooted in translation (2006, 10; 2013, 325–326). According to David Damrosch, world literature comprises works that have reached beyond the culture of their origin, no matter whether in translation or in the original language. Thanks to their natural circulation, the most privileged are texts written in English or another “world” language, regardless of their aesthetic quality (2003, 297). In this context Dorothy M. Figueira ironically speaks about a new incarnation of the old Pentagon construction of area studies, where: “Under the guise of democratizing and moving away from Comparative literature’s supposed ‘elitism’, World Literature theorists claim to engage the world in a serious fashion, but only if that world speaks English or is translated into this idiom” (2015, 11; 2019, 71).

Despite this pointed claim, the Congress also admitted other concepts of world literature representing a compromise between the American approach and the perspectives of “small” literatures. This attitude was symptomatically voiced by Marko Juvan. In his monograph *Worlding a Peripheral Literature* (2019), he focuses on the process that helps a work of peripheral literature attain worldliness by completing the complicated passage from the particular to the universal. Juvan disapproves of identifying world literature with what could be called global literature because the original concept of world literature implies historicity and a specific wideness of space and time. In Romanticism and post-Romanticism, national poets (such as France Prešern in the Slovenian case) were “cultural saints” in the domestic setting, but they could represent their literatures at the international level only to the extent to which they possessed the authority of “otherness” within the emerging world literature. Juvan points out that for a literary work to become a world entity, it must originate in a large country and be written in a world language (2019, 62). This is naturally connected with economic power, the book market, the utilization of intellectual work, etc. His assumption is grounded in the fact that world literature, whether as a network or a canon, constitutes a hierarchical system in which freely circulating texts enter through the mediation of “large” literatures, most frequently through literature in English. Canonized works, which are results of cultural, philosophical and economic transfers as well as other factors, often employ the motives of Parnassus, Helicon, or Olympus, as places occupied by “gods” and national “saints”, whereby the national celebrities are internationalized and “worlded” (40). Apart from the thematic and motivic plan, language as a place of the aestheticization of national images

is important for the formation of national-secular image of literature. The seminal role is played by the reflection on worlding, and Juvan shows that the emphasis is given here not to the extra-literary delimitation of world literature but to the capacity of literature itself to create the world. It can be added that some literary theoreticians prefer the term “literature of the world”, which seems to be less elitist, less intensively implying certain homogeneity and the notion of a standardized canon of great works (Saussy 2006, 36). Haun Saussy accentuates the aspect of “otherness” and refuses to approach world literature only from a cultural and theoretical perspective (38). Another Americanist, Jeffrey R. Di Leo, formulates the concept of “worlded literature” in the sense of literature marked or affected by the world, i.e. literature interconnected through global networks, translations, migration, etc. (2018, 81–82). World literature thus sublimates into “global” or “globalized” literature, into a new type of political dominance and cultural variety, where the Goethean perspective of “great works of all countries and times” (Corbineau-Hoffmannová 2008, 30) formulates a new type of canon. Juvan realizes that the structure of the world literary system understood as history and process is based on the value opposition between the dominant “center” and the subordinate “periphery”, where Central and South-east European literatures were influenced by hegemonic centers of (colonial) political power in the West (2019, 240). This premise leads Juvan to conclude that their integration into the world literary area was legitimized by criteria derived from the Western canon (250). Although the real power of this hegemony is impossible to ignore, the capacity to read and write in English affects our thinking as well as evaluation.

Juvan’s reflections on world literature also introduce the empirical question of how the ideal history of national literature should look against the world background, or how the history of world literature should logically take into account the functions and development of individual national entities and regions. From this perspective it is evident that world literary history, fluctuating between “the narrative” and “the canon”, should assume the form of hypertextually open literary archives, a sort of palimpsest literary “map”, which will be consciously trans-cultural and hybrid. At the same time, it would preserve the “textualization of the context” and “contextualization of the text”, i.e. an adequate balance between “extrinsic” and “intrinsic” moments on the horizons of cultural and textual lines. Therefore, world literary history should not create a fictive reality generated by words and meanings, but it should rather function as a lively “synergic” and dynamically pulsating organism able to self-regulate the processes of its evolution. Juvan’s concept of world literature uses the Slovenian example to highlight the conditions that must be observed by the texts belonging to “peripheral” literatures to acquire worldliness. It is a transformed way of imitation, analogy, and removal of impediments so that these “national” texts, from the perspective of the vernacular culture, can canonize their “otherness” through translation. This, however, is perceived by “large” literatures as a universally acknowledged value. Although we may not totally approve of Juvan’s idea of world literature, primarily with the emphasis on the power of economic factors and with the linguistic dominance of English, we can appreciate the suggestion that a generally acceptable consensus in the form of the epistemological and termi-

nological groundwork delimited by the set of concrete principles and notions can be achieved. By this the concept makes a seminal theoretical contribution to contemporary discussions on the forms, the nature, and the functions of world literature, permanently oscillating between “the national” and “the universal”.

CZECH AND SLOVAK CONCEPTS OF WORLD LITERATURE IN THE INTERNATIONAL DISCOURSE

When Zoran Konstantinović in his monograph *Vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft: Bestandsaufnahme und Ausblicke* ([1988] 1994, 9) framed the concepts of world literature represented by individual national schools, his primary consideration was to mention beside French, American, and Russian traditions, specifically Czecho-Slovak comparative literary studies, in particular the works of Dionýz Ďurišin (1929–1997). Konstantinović praised his Slovak colleague for developing ontological aspects of the interliterary process as a comparatist application of the structural method since, in Ďurišin’s systematics, interliterariness does not aim at determining aesthetic or individual qualities of a particular artefact, instead, “aesthetics matters there so much as can be attributed to beauty, i.e. an aesthetic function, norm and value, structure or a developmental line” (Koprda 2003, 70). As early as 1982, the Dutch scholar Pierre Swiggers pointed out that Ďurišin can be considered the first to offer “systematic typology of literary relations” (1982, 183) through the positivist transformation of the “impactological” comparative literature into receptively oriented comparative studies, situating a particular text in the semiotic field of “culture” rather than in the sphere of “literariness”. This appraisal was sustained by Earl Miner, who accentuated the impactful concept of reception underlining the maturity of the receiving subject. Ďurišin thus had his share in the complete disintegration of traditional comparative literary studies through decomposing it into “classical” comparative studies, pursuing contactology and typology in the relations between national literatures, and in a new discipline whose subject and methods would focus on the area of interliterary principles (Miner 1988, 109). At the same time, in his later *Comparative Poetics* (1990) Miner warned of the hidden strain of this method: Every culture has a “dominant” poetics resulting from the nature of the prevailing genres. Western, “Aristotelian”, literature is based on drama and so its tradition proceeds to mimesis. Eastern literary thought, by contrast, has respect for lyrics and its nature makes it “affective-expressive”. Ďurišin’s emphasis on “literariness” and “interliterariness” thus remains a “Eurocentric” attitude despite being critical of it (Gáfrík 2009, 30). A similar opinion on Ďurišin’s contribution to modern comparative literature was voiced by the American comparatist Ulrich Weisstein who said that the thematic differentiation between the research of the “genetic relations” and the research of “typological affinities” remains the essential methodological instruction distinguishing between national-literary and comparative approaches whose orientation towards the “uninfluenced analogies” anticipates the later research on interliterariness (1981, 48–51). According to Weisstein, the first stage of modern comparative studies was completed by Paul Van Tieghem’s book *La littérature comparée* (1931), and the second stage by Ďurišin’s monograph *Problémy literárnej komparatistiky* (Problems of compara-

tive literature, 1967). In the same way, Claudio Guillén positions the Slovak scholar as an initiatory figure in the research establishing interliterariness not as a lexically conceptual and semantically invariable category but as “a desire that has been here for many years and which wants to live on further” (2008, 14). The historical dimension of Ďurišín’s monograph *Čo je svetová literatúra?* (What is world literature?, 1992), clearly absent from the contemporary concepts of world literature, was appreciated by René Wellek, in a letter to the present author in July 1993:

I did receive the book of Ďurišín, which, on the whole, I agree with wholeheartedly. I would only feel that Ďurišín is too optimistic when he believes that the comparative view can be extended in practice to Oriental and finally to any kind of literature. I agree with him in theory, but assure him that in American conditions, asking for an excellent knowledge of French and German is a realizable ideal, while Oriental languages could be asked of recent immigrants and certainly natives of that country. (Wellek and Zelenka, letter, 1993)

These particular appraisals notwithstanding, in the community of West European and American comparatists following the AILC/ICLA agenda since the late 1960s, Ďurišín’s opinions have not had as substantial an impact as might be expected, which can be substantiated by the hegemony of the more extensive conception of comparative literary studies represented by Henry H.H. Remak who attached paramount importance to comparing literature with other literatures as well as to comparing literature with other expressive spheres of humanities (1971, 3). Moreover, this concept did not demarcate individual categories so strictly, bringing comparative studies closer to the theory of culture. Ďurišín himself was a solitary researcher who did not seek recognition for his ideas from the AILC/ICLA and from the 1980s, having renounced traditional comparative literature and its terminology, failed to participate in its congresses. The skeptical opinion reflecting his frustration over the theoretical liberalism of the congresses and their methodological extent is vented through his 1980 report saying that the AILC/ICLA organizational policy is lacking a system that would “direct the congress activities to prevent potential impulsiveness and randomization of the research” (1980, 181). The Slovak comparatist and Sinologist Marián Gálik provided eyewitness testimony about a personal encounter between Ďurišín and Remak at the AILC/ICLA Congress held in Innsbruck in August 1979 (which left the latter speechless). Over breakfast, Remak asked Ďurišín about his current research, and the latter offered the surprising response that until that point, he had only been developing “traditional” comparative studies, and that he planned to formulate a new theoretical system of interliterariness independent from the West European and American tradition (Gálik 2002, 61). No doubt, Ďurišín’s reluctance to join the Western comparative thinking was aggravated by the fact that, following the 1989 disintegration of bipolar Europe, a number of Central European and East European comparatists were labeled as “Marxists”. In Ďurišín’s case, it was already Ulrich Weisstein who did so and pointed out that the Slovak comparatist escalated the disparity between specifically traditional (national literary) and modern (interliterary) comparative literature (1981, 49). Similarly, in his monograph *Komparatistik* (1992), the Austrian comparatist Peter V. Zima saw Ďurišín as an epigone of the So-

viet School represented by Viktor M. Zhirmunsky, who transferred the study of interliterariness from historical poetics to abstract structural schemes (1992, 42–49).

Despite the critical response that Slovak comparative literature received, it evidently reached its climax in Ďurišin. Since the scholar's death in 1997, with the change of the late 20th-century paradigm of values, universal theories of world literature based on methodological unity have lost their efficiency and have been replaced by concepts interpreting semantic tension between “the national” and “the international” references to the economic strength of globalization processes (Juvan 2019, 36). Róbert Gáfrik speaks about the consensus in the comparatist community, admiring like Wellek, the systematic approach in Ďurišin's conception, yet warning of its unattainability and practical unfeasibility (2020b, 147). With the exception of César Domínguez (2012) and Armando Gnisci (1997, 184; 2000, 17), who employed Ďurišin's theory of interliterariness in the substantiation of the poetics of European decolonization, Ďurišin's ideas are not a prominent occurrence in the discourse refusing to include in its notions all literatures in the world. In this regard, they share the opinion of the Czech comparatist Ivo Pospíšil, who underscores the fact that Ďurišin's mode of abstraction recedes from the minutious examination of traditional poetics; in other words, the manifestations of interliterariness are not installed in deep structures of textual composition (2012, 9).

In the late 20th century, Czech and Slovak comparative studies went through a crisis resulting from the loss of methodological contacts with the world, which produced a gap in the structural literary history in favor of social and cultural studies (Zelenka 2015, 17). Hence many Czech and Slovak literary historians considered Ďurišin's project of world literature an unattainable category of literary process and parted ways. Nevertheless, we can give a general overview of the principal traditions of Czech and Slovak comparative literature, whose imaginary “completion” culminates in Ďurišin's theory. According to César Domínguez, it signals disciplinary discontent over the lack of adequate methods to explore the complexity and multitude of heterogeneous literary relations molding world literature (2012, 106). We assume that the main significance of Ďurišin's theory consists in developing the term “interliterariness”, which can be understood as a natural condition of world literature. Although today in modern comparatistic reflections, this expression is substituted by the term “transculturality” as more instrumental in expressing our crossing the limits of different spaces and times, Ďurišin was one of the many to witness the radical turn in the humanities. It implies the methodological turn from the temporal perception of phenomena to the spatial vision as a principle which reduces narratological and teleological models deriving their substance from ideological and national stereotypes (Terian 2013, 77).

Czech contribution to thinking about world literature

At the turn of the 20th century, the study of world literature became attractive to a strong generation of literary historians denoted in historiography as “Czech School of Comparative Literature” (Wollman 1989, 35–43). This community, methodologically fluctuating between positivism and philological cultural history, in-

cluded the folklorist Jiří Polívka (1853–1933), the Slavist Jan Máchal (1855–1939), the Balkanist Matija Murko (1861–1952), and the Romanist Václav Tille (1867–1937). After 1918, they drew on the works of French (Gaston Paris, Fernand Baldensperger, Paul Hazard, etc.) and Russian (Alexandr N. Pypin, Alexandr N. Veselovsky, Nikolai S. Tikhonravov, etc., respectively) scholars and developed the comparative concept of Slavic literature as an integral part of world literature, with bilateral East and West literary relations in the foreground. In Bohemia, their emphasis on research into oral tradition resulted in the foundation of a new branch of comparative study – the folkloric thematology – that helped them prove the aesthetic and value “equality” in the literary circulation of folklore genres, especially in folk tales and fairy tales. Although Polívka never theoretically defined world literature, on the whole, he considered it an axiologically balanced sum of national literatures, a fictive dialogue of circulating motives and themes between the West and the East, “a concert” played by Slavic literatures from Central and Eastern Europe along with Western literatures.²

Since the late 19th century, two developmental lines may have been identified in Czech comparative thought, which, with considerable simplification, run parallel to each other rather than engaging in fruitful polemics. Our attention will focus on the first line associated with Slavic studies and conceiving comparative literature as an integral branch of literary history objectified in the relations within the supranational context and centered around historical poetics. There was a general agreement that modern comparative literary studies, regardless of the specificity of their methodology, represent an autonomous discipline with a distinctive range of research problems which focus on literary relationships or compare works from various national literatures. Their morphological orientation remained open to various theoretical inspirations, drawing on formalism and structural aesthetics. Their conception defined world literature as a schematized morphological structure, into which not the whole national literatures were mechanically allowed admittance but supralocal and supratemporal genres and forms. Institutionally, its methodological orientation was grounded in the Brno comparatist school represented by Frank Wollman, perhaps the most distinguished Czech comparatist, and his followers Josef Hrabák, Jiří Krystýnek, Danuše Kšicová, Ivan Dorovský, Ivo Pospíšil, etc. This school has proceeded from genetic (contactual) comparative literary studies to typology and the application of stimuli from philosophy and cultural studies (phenomenology, imagology, intercultural comparative studies, postcolonial studies, East-West studies, area studies, etc.). Still, they invariably linked the comparative method with literary orientation and, in particular, with the genealogical approach.

The hermeneutic starting points of the other line, the “Prague group”, which drew on the tradition of non-Slavic, Romance philology, kept them connected with empirical literary activities and practical literary criticism. Their scholarly pursuits, spanning from the first professor of comparative literature at the Charles University, Jaroslav Vrchlický (1853–1912), the literary critic F.X. Šalda (1867–1937), and the Romance comparatist Václav Černý (1905–1987), to the present generation, were unified by their endeavor to offer an absolutely precise interpretation of an individual artefact and its binary polarity. In the opinion of Václav Černý, the most

prominent representative of this line of thinking, the comparative research is based on an intuitive approach which defies established categories and the institutionalized field. For them, world literature loses its metatheoretical status and becomes instead an interpretational activity, a general intellectual reflection that, through a subjective dialogue, tries to cope with the knowledge of the world's multiculturalism. It should be admitted that Černý nominally followed the French comparatist school, namely Fernand Baldensperger, Paul Hazard, and Paul Van Tieghem, whom he considered "the greatest world comparatists of the time" (1994, 257). However, their methodology and their notion of general literature did not have any discernible impact on Černý's works. It was more dependent on Bergsonian personalism and on the search for accidental interliterary connections, as manifested in his French text *Essai sur le titanisme dans la poésie romantique occidentale entre 1815 et 1850* (1935).

The second generation of the first line, formed in the interwar period (the Slavist Jiří Horák, the Germanist Otokar Fischer, the Polonist Marian Szykowski, etc.), and its leading personalities such as René Wellek and Frank Wollman, synthesized the knowledge of the earlier cultural-historical school and the structural-functional perspective of the Prague Linguistic Circle. Wellek's methodological integrity was reflected in his celebrated *Theory of Literature* (1948, together with Austin Warren) and through his monumental project *A History of Modern Criticism 1750–1950, Vols. I–VIII* (1955–1992), which epitomized the literary-historical combination of Prague structuralism, German neo-idealism (Wilhelm Dilthey) and the Husserlian-Ingardenian phenomenology. In the late 1930s, the young Wellek was obviously under the influence of Van Tieghem's terminological differentiation between "littérature générale" and "littérature comparée", though he later criticized it as a legacy of the positivist "impactology". According to Wellek, Van Tieghem attempted to re-interpret the selective concept of world literature based on the value antithesis of binary oppositions (small and large literatures, advanced and underdeveloped, "transmitting" and "receiving", etc.). The geographical and subject definition in Van Tieghem's conception represented a kind of typological initial stage of the notion of world literature, defying identification with the idea of a mechanical collection of national literatures. In his study, "The Theory of Literary History" (1936), Wellek defined world literature as a developmental (historical) structure consisting of a multitude of circulating forms and genres and aspiring to become the highest aim of literary historical research. This structure exists only in the reception act: it assumes the shape of an aesthetic object, not concretized within collective awareness but solely through individuals. No individual does implement this aesthetic object absolutely. This reveals Wellek's distinctive structuralist and semiotic feeling, derived from his conception of a particular work as the basic aesthetic object set at the beginning of an imaginary developmental line. The aesthetic object is potentially tied with the substantial material artefact, yet it cannot be identified with it from the perspective of aesthetic perception.

In the interwar period, Van Tieghem's concept perhaps most strongly affected Frank Wollman, who was attracted by the international character of "littérature générale", by its geographical delimitation and precisely defined methodological targets. These

substituted the abstract ideal of world literature and, at the same time, transcended the history of national literatures by grasping their area or regional context. Wollman realized that Van Tieghem's recurring "impact" introduced the aesthetics of value difference but at the same time posited the reception character of the interliterary process. The proposition that the essential prerequisite for the development of literary history need not be just influences and contacts but also structural analogies, i.e. "similarities without impact", generated responses from the small Central and South-east European literatures, which offered them an opportunity for theoretical justification of their existence. In his seminal work *Slovesnost Slovanů* (Slavic literatures, 1928), his only attempt at a structurally-conceived literary history, Wollman intended to produce a modern history of the Slavic literatures in their mutual relations and contexts, in formal and aesthetic analogies which would document Slavic literatures as a certain type of general literature, as a specific internally differentiated structure.

Wollman drew on new tendencies in literary research that attempted to objectify their methods and restrict the subject of their study through anti-positivism. He also disputed the theses of German Slavists (Julius Pfitzner, Konrad Bittner, etc.), who underestimated the independence of Slavic literatures and regarded them as underdeveloped in comparison to the Latin-German West. In a fiercely polemical monograph, *K metodologii srovnávací slovesnosti slovanské* (On the methodology of comparative Slavic literature, 1936), the Czech scholar voiced his opinion as to whether Slavic literatures comprise an autonomous unit within world literature or whether they are isolated without any common marks of creativity. When repelling the "biological-genetic" concept of world literature in the sense of a living organism with the circulation of diversely important units, i.e. national literatures distinguished by importance and function, Wollman argued that national literature is the natural foundation of world literature. That is to say, its starting point "are not the organisms of national literatures, but individual forms in their structural relations" (10), i.e. self-propelled structures in a diachronic frame. The inclusion of a particular text in the system of world literature is, on the one hand, demonstrated "by its competence in the development of literary structures" (10); on the other hand, its inclusion is justified by universal "civilizational endeavor" of mankind as a whole. This is the only way to originate developmental lines of great ideas and great authors revealing "the feeling of unity of all people [...] and the connection of their literary manifestations. Yet the humanitarianism, worldliness, unity in novelty themselves [...] are only in the process of making through an endless chain of structures under certain historical and social conditions" (188). The dynamic concept of structure involved exploring analogies in literary forms regardless of their mediation by contact, influence or effect. Thus, this constituted the foundations of "comparative structuralism" consisting in the comparison of forms and syntax of literary works.³

The principle of structural aesthetics in comparative literature and research on world literature was vindicated by Wellek and Wollman. In the Prague Linguistic Circle, they both represented structuralists with an appreciation for literary history, connecting the notion of structure with diachrony. The leading exponent of Czech structuralism, Jan Mukařovský, paradoxically considered the comparative method as

positivist folkloric thematology, and, therefore, favored the category of national literature as a closed immanent system. It was not until the late 1960s that he accepted comparative literature as an independent discipline with its own subject of research, including the study of world literature, as he gave it a certain validity in his study *K dnešnímu stavu a výkladům srovnávací vědy literární* (On the present condition and expositions of comparative literary research, 1967). Frank Wollman's methodological line was continued by his son, the Slavist and comparatist Slavomír Wollman (1925–2012), who connected the research on world literature with the conception of a system. According to him, this connection does not ensue from a mechanical application of system analysis borrowed from cybernetics or the exact theory of information, but it is established by the natural existence of literary phenomena and processes in morphologically recognizable wholes that differ from a non-structured succession of works and criteria. For Wollman, the starting point for this conception, in which “the aging” terms of the traditional comparative literature are enlivened by new functionality, became the monistic concept of history, namely the notion of the unity of literary development including folkloric formations. In this regard, he claims that “comparative studies respect national literature as a historical fact and seeks world literature as a scientific postulate” (1989, 111). World literature is presented here as the “literature of the whole world”, as a selective formation defined through its functionality and the distinctive feature of the aesthetic value where the criterion of attribution is eliminated if it implies the “superiority” and “inferiority” of some literary wholes. From these ideas follows that in the spirit of Van Tieghem's tradition of “littérature générale”, Wollman rejects the concept of world literature as a mechanical aggregate of works or a selective pantheon of classics. On the contrary, he, for the most part, conceives world literature genetically, as a historically changeable and functional entity, or a manifold shape resulting from particular works, “which, having exceeded the local and national frame through international correlations, enter the world awareness through supranational subsystems, motivated by language and ethnic vicinity, by cultural symbiosis [...]” (Mikušáková 1992, 10). This conception – similar to that of Ďurišin – responds to the postmodernist crisis of European rationalism, which questions the potentiality of objective understanding. But a question remains: can world literature be connected solely with a system or an aggregate of regularities? Does its natural heterogeneity not incline to chaos and certain unintentionality?

The concept of world literature in Slovak comparative literary studies

Even though Slovak comparative literary studies sprouted in the 20th century from Czech roots and the shared Czecho-Slovak context, it departed from this inspiration through the deliberate search for new starting points seeking connections with modern theoretical trends, which was conducive to transgressing the existent concept of comparative research linked with traditional “contactology” and positivist factography. It was mainly the literary historian Pavol Bujnák (1882–1933), who in his comparative method applied contactual approaches based on the tradition of Czech positivism. His habilitation thesis *Ján Arány v slovenskej literatúre* (Ján

Arány in Slovak literature, 1924), defended at Charles University, represents an outstanding thesis in the field of “littérature comparée”, and it is considered the first comparatist monograph completed by a Slovak author. The further development of modern Slovak comparative literary studies is personified by Mikuláš Bakoš (1914–1972), whose works, already in the interwar period, drew on literary phenomenology (Roman Ingarden), technological schools (Russian formalism), and later, on Viennese neo-positivism. In his posthumously published collection of papers *Literárna história a historická poetika* (Literary history and historical poetics, 1973), Bakoš criticized positivist biographism and psychologism in literary research. He defined comparative literary studies as a constituent part of literary history, tackling the issues of periodization and typology of literary development, which primarily respects immanent principles. In the second half of the 20th century, Slovak comparative studies, which managed to retain a sense of structural-morphological aspects, developed a specific relationship to communicative and hermeneutic models creatively applied in a number of disciplines and thematic areas (František Miko – comparative stylistics, Viliam Turčány – comparative versology, Jozef Hvišč – comparative genology). This line was concluded with the methodology of the Nitra School, where comparative research followed the axis of genology – semiotics – theory of communication and translation studies. Among others, it was Anton Popovič (1933–1984) who achieved world renown for his theory of artistic translation and reflections on aesthetic meta-communication, anticipating, for example, Julia Kristeva’s later theory of intertextuality. Popovič’s monograph *Teória umeleckého prekladu* (The theory of artistic translation, 1975) offers a semantic and terminological approach to the expression theory of text, which was appreciated as an interdisciplinary enhancement of primary and secondary literary communication.

Another branch was constituted by the innovative endeavor of Dionýz Ďurišin, who completed the split with classical comparative literary studies and, following the 1970s, drew inspiration from modern semiotics, hermeneutics, mathematical methods and reception theory. Developing new terminology and systematics then won over the existing comparative literary studies since it introduced “new comparatistics”: the theory of interliterariness and the interdisciplinary study of world literature drawing on political science, ethnology, cultural geography, and Slavic area studies. It is not generally known that Ďurišin’s concept emerged under the auspices of Frank Wollman, who started his professional career in the interwar period at Comenius University in Bratislava, where he delivered lectures until 1941. Wollman’s morphological conception of world literature as a collection of forms and structures of supralocal and supratemporal significance was grounded in the application of Van Tieghem’s term “littérature générale”, denoting the empirically evident entirety found in a specific cultural-historical area. Later on, the structural substance of world literature also appears in Ďurišin’s concept, eliminating national literature as a starting point for the category of interliterariness. He has it that world literature can exist only in the form of developmental (historical) structure that can be anticipated in every literary process phenomenon and constituted by the receiving subject. Ďurišin’s semiotical transformation of historical structure at the level of communica-

tion to a code, as suggested in his early work *Problémy literárnej komparatistiky*, signifies an original development of Czecho-Slovak structuralism in the 1960s, the time of general criticism of the structure, i.e. of Jakobson's concept of binarism and his proposition about the double articulation of language. Ďurišin's initiative can thus be connected at the national level with Felix Vodička's pioneering *Struktura vývoje* (The structure of development, 1969) as well as with Frank Wollman's late studies, and at the international level with the works of Juri M. Lotman, Umberto Eco, A.J. Greimas, Claude Bremond, Jacques Derrida, etc. (Koprda 2003, 83).

Wollman's multilateral comparisons aiming at an understanding and more precise identification of inter-Slavic literariness became one of the inspirational sources of Ďurišin's theory of interliterary community and interliterary centrism, including the delimitation of world literature. Both authors derive these categories from extra-literary phenomena. Wollman's Slavic interliterary community and centrism are delimited by ethnic similitude intensified by anthropo-geographical determinants: "Close vicinity, mutual contacts, similar living conditions, the same relations with the neighbors" (1936, 10). Similarly, Ďurišin's interliterary process is conditioned by literary, ethnic, linguistic, geographical, and administrative criteria, including varying degrees of differentiation among individual cultures. Wollman's integrating and differentiating dominants, which develop in historical sequence as Slavisms in the sense of structural paradigm in the syntagm and which reflect the process of differentiations within integration – he speaks about the feeling of Slavic sense of belonging (139) – analogically correspond with Ďurišin's integrating and differentiating function of the community. Without reservation, interliterariness based on structural-typological connections endeavors to integrate diverse literary phenomena into world literature. However, Wollman's concept of interliterariness is more inclined to genetic (contactual) relations considered to be equivalent to structural typology. For Wollman, any writing is above all "material existence", especially through its formal starting point (200). In Ďurišin's conception, centrism represents a type community originating from long-lasting vicinity as a specific form of coexistence, whereas the community itself results from unity, similarities, and formal analogies. Centrisms as geographical supranational units in most cases originate in the form of a specific "entanglement" from an unrelated neighborhood. These are not entities determined by the similitude of mentality, economic, or social relations, for they result from geographical proximity. Their coherence proceeds from a strongly accentuated syntactic function and weakened semantic "narrativeness", which is why there can synchronously and syncretically be a plurality of "unrelated" traditions and poetics in centrisms.

Centrism as natural forms of existence and functioning of world literature are rooted in Jaus's reception aesthetics based on the accommodating strategy of the recipient, and on the horizons of his expectations. While in centrisms, individual literatures are geographical and metonymical "neighbors" because it is their choice, which can even be discontinuous, interliterary communication in communities is metaphorically motivated. Ďurišin's division of large interliterary processes into interliterary communities and interliterary centrisms at the same time stands as a dis-

similarity between metaphorical intraculturality and metonymic interculturality. Such difference creates two contrasting, complementary models of world literature. One is derived from interliterary communities and reduces world literature to monocultural unity; the other, resting on the theory of centrism, thanks to the reception aspect, postulates world literature as an imaginary polycentric set preserving the individuality of separate parts, where the exchange of literary values is performed as a dialogue in which the culture's recipients are deliberately open to otherness so as to understand themselves.

Following the postulates of Frank Wollman who proposed a triadic concept of world literature (1959, 11), Ďurišín developed this project at three levels: (1) a sum of national literatures in the whole world; (2) a selection of the best values produced in national literatures; and (3) a formation comprising mutually determined relations and contexts which function in the interliterary process. In his last monographs *Čo je svetová literatúra?* (1992) and *Teória medziliterárneho procesu I* (Theory of interliterary process, 1995), Ďurišín summarized three potential definitions of world literature and research on world literature: (1) additive, mechanical, classifying, which in traditional comparative literary studies produced historiographical syntheses of bigger literary units; (2) an axiological, selective, literary-critical conception grounded in the platform of general or universal literature, a utilitarian approach respecting didactic and reading needs; and (3) a literary-historical concept as an intersection overlapping the preceding two categories determined by mutual complementarity of literary phenomena resulting from specific research on interliterary process. In agreement with Wollman, Ďurišín considers the third definition the main object of comparative studies, but he re-thinks the structure and functionality of this concept. He concludes that world literature is the ultimate interliterary phenomenon functioning on the synchronic and diachronic axes of literary development. World literature as an ever-functioning system corresponds to a specific affinitive model – a conceptual superstructure as a system of thought. The relation between world literature as such and the theoretical reflection of this literary phenomenon is consequently differentiated and changeable. The degree of its “worldliness” is dependent on the “additional incorporation” of finished works into the literary system.

CONCLUSION

Czech and Slovak comparative literary studies, whose most distinguished representatives were the immediate followers of Frank Wollman as well as the collaborators of Dionýz Ďurišín, managed to respond to contemporary methodological movement, i.e. the retreat from formalist-structuralist theories for the sake of socio-political and cultural studies while keeping philological contact with the concrete text. In doing so, it took a balanced position in the dispute over whether to define comparative literature ontologically or epistemologically, i.e. rather institutionally, in the sense of an established university field defined by subject and research methods, or to freely conceive comparative literature as “comparing”, as a type of intellectual reflection, communicatively interconnecting individual spheres of knowledge as a conscious mediator. Czech and Slovak comparatists contributed primarily to elaborating the theory

of interliterariness, which Ďurišín, following Wollman, transferred from a structural basis to semiotics as the methodology of culture and reception theory intertextuality. The theory of interliterariness, which explains the individual quality of phenomena through its developmental laws, thus becomes a methodological instruction that interprets interliterariness as a process of never-ending denoting and replacing some cultural units and codes by others, rather than others being a means for intertextual generation of closed researches. Thus, world literature is not a fixed category but rather “a process” changing into “worldliness”. Ďurišín formulates the idea that any literary texts or literary phenomena “essentially depend on the structural laws of denoting – transformation – communication” (Koprda 2003, 223). The notion of “worldliness” becomes analogical to notions denoting such literary phenomena as “interliterariness”, designating “transformational laws at a higher level than national literature” (223). The substantial contribution of Ďurišín’s postulates is its emphasis on two suppositions. The first is the theory of interliterariness based on material from Slavic literatures, which is rooted in interwar Central European structuralism and in its attempt to de-ideologize the study of literature through comparison of forms and genre structures. The second is the criticism of globalization, whose trends affect not only Western civilization but also the newly-formed Slavic states, which are paradoxically alienated from one another, for example, by effacing their cultural, linguistic, or other identities. Ďurišín’s systematic criticism of the traditional unit of national literature as a starting point of thinking about literature and of the coherent whole defined by a dominant language and strictly delimited boundaries can be inspirational in the study of various Central and East European literatures, that are linguistically, geographically and administratively interwoven and typified by a complicated Slavic and non-Slavic ratio. At present, Ďurišín’s world literature can be understood as a developmental concept suggesting movement from the particular to the universal. Far from being an aggregation of all works or a static enumeration of these works, it is a lively process consisting of mutually conditioned phenomena, relations, and contexts, in which Ďurišín anticipated the recently popular concept of world literature as “literature of the world”, for example, in the sense of intertextual or transcultural “network” or “grid” of ideas, poetics, genres, discourses, and other heterogeneous contexts. At the same time, he raised the issue of research approaches to this phenomenon. As mentioned in the introduction, present discussions on world literature (Apter, Casanova, Damrosch, etc.) accentuating globalization and space, only rarely consider Ďurišín’s theory of interliterariness. Despite this, they agree with him that the call for new concepts and prefigurations can theoretically be pursued through notions which are polysemous but operate with their local connotations within a specific epistemological framework. Beyond any doubt, as a representative of Central and East European comparative literary studies, Ďurišín is positioned at the beginning of this debate. From this tradition, it follows that despite the postmodern skepticism, the research of world literature is justified and that it does not have only a single type and mode of study at its disposal. On the contrary, it is conducted in various languages and power relations.

NOTES

- ¹ Ironically, David Damrosch speaks of global “national” literature as texts which use a comprehensible style and a widespread language (2003, 25).
- ² Polívka in this respect says that “diverse literary elements should combine in great literature and assimilate into it – different flowing rivers merge into the sea which retains its character while growing through the influx of other sentences” (1883, 480).
- ³ In the Slavic community, which saw the first attempts at more modern definition of comparative study (and consequently world literature) as early as the late 1920s, these activities inspired, beside Wollman, the Croatian Ivo Hergešić (*Poredbena ili komparativna književnost*, 1932) and the Slovenian Anton Ocvirk (*Teorije primerjalne literarne zgodovine*, 1936), who positively responded to Van Tieghem’s appeal for literary historical syntheses of a new type as a prerequisite for all-European history of literature in the Central and East European region. Unlike Wollman, these two South Slavic scholars intended to substantiate the autochthony of their national literatures within world literature rather than something like Slavic general literature as a specific structure; that is why their texts preferably tended to remain in the sphere of binary comparative literature.

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The concept of world literature in Czech and Slovak comparative literary studies

World literature. Systematics of world literature. Comparative literature. National and world literature. Czech and Slovak comparative literary studies. "Small" and "large" world literatures.

This article aims to systemize the trends in world literature research, highlighting the differences between the concepts of this phenomenon as embraced by "small" and "large" literatures. It also takes account of the Czech and Slovak line of thinking which questions the concept of world literature as normative poetics or the standardized canon of masterpieces and their various discourses. The historical experience of Czech and Slovak comparative literary studies defending the independent values of Slavic literatures suggests that there cannot be any arbitrary research on world literature. With some exceptions and regardless of their terminologically and semantically different interpretations of this specialism, contemporary theoretical concepts (as embraced by Emily Apter, Pascale Casanova, David Damrosch, Marko Juvan, Franco Moretti, etc.) re-establish recognizing world literature as an international research issue or a subject employing English as a universal means of communication. Imposing such a notion would allegedly condone inequality as a kind of epistemological framework to codify the binary opposition of "developed" and "underdeveloped" or "the center" and "periphery". It was mainly the Czecho-Slovak structuralist tradition (represented by Frank Wollman, René Wellek, Dionýz Ďurišin, etc.) that rejected national literature as a natural starting point of world literature. Anchored in the Central European intellectual milieu at the crossing of various aesthetic movements, these "defensive" theories were linked with the structural concept of the Prague Linguistic Circle, letting alone the multilingual tradition of the former Habsburg Empire and the phenomenon of migration which implied the aspect of polyglossia and heterotopia as a breeding ground for comparative scholars.

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