

The transcultural levels of minority literary history writing: Hungarian literature in Slovakia

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Michal Hvorecký, a contemporary Slovak prose writer, was asked by the Slovak online literary magazine *Platforma* (plav.sk) what he considered to be the best prose work of Slovak literature in the last thirty years. He named the book *Samuel Borkopf: Mojim priateľom z predtrianonskej krčmy* (Samuel Borkopf: to my friends from a pre-Trianon pub) by Alfonz Talamon. The provocative and boundary-breaking edge of the statement is certainly only clear to those who know Alfonz Talamon's literary place and literary embeddedness and are familiar with his work and works. Alfonz Talamon was a Hungarian writer in Slovakia who wrote all of his novels and short stories in the Hungarian language. The first edition of the book mentioned by Hvorecký was published in Hungarian in 1998, after the author's early death, by the publisher Kalligram in Bratislava (Talamon 1998). The Slovak-language edition of 2001, which Hvorecký refers to, was translated by Renata Deáková, and was also published in Bratislava by Kalligram, three years after the Hungarian-language first edition (Talamon 2001). Hvorecký did not mention the translator's name, and the average Slovak reader of the survey probably does not know that the original language of Alfonz Talamon's novel is Hungarian.

The provocative gesture of the Slovak writer can be interpreted in its entirety if we ask the question whether we could imagine a Slovak translation of a Hungarian-language novel by a Hungarian writer living in Hungary as “the best prose work in the Slovak literature in the last thirty years”? Or a Slovak translation of a novel written in English by an American writer? All without providing the translator's name? ...

In the following, I will try to answer the question of why such a question is relevant, validating the theoretical basis of transculturalism, and how the issues concerning minority literature are related to transcultural research.

HUNGARIAN LITERATURE IN SLOVAKIA AS AN UNSTABLE PLACE AND PROVOCATION

The above statement is provocative in at least three respects: with respect to Slovak literature, because a book originally written in Hungarian is placed in the position of “the best Slovak prose work of the last thirty years”, with respect to Hungar-

I first raised this concept at the conference “Transculturalism and Bilingualism” which was held in Nitra, Slovakia on September 17–18, 2019 (Németh 2019).

ian literature, because a work written in Hungarian is “appropriated” or colonized by being presented as a “Slovak literary work”, and with respect to Hungarian literature in Slovakia, because the brief statement does not make it possible to reflect on the complexity of the position of minority literature. But what exactly is meant by the term “Hungarian literature in Slovakia” and what kind of “complexity” are we talking about?

The term “Hungarian literature in Slovakia”, applied to a certain group of literary texts by literary history, is not as clearly defined as we might think. What does the concept of Hungarian literature in Slovakia mean in the first place? The starting point of the concept itself cannot be precisely set either, because the origin of Hungarian literature in Slovakia could be assigned to two different dates. One of them is 1918, the proclamation of the Czechoslovak Republic when, at the end of World War I, historical Hungary, which had been part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, disintegrated and more than one million Hungarians, including writers, artists and scientists, found themselves in the territory of Czechoslovakia, which claimed the northern territories of historical Hungary. The second valid date is 1920, the Treaty of Trianon, which officially defined the borders of Hungary and Czechoslovakia, among others.

Thus, Hungarian literature in Slovakia is the literature of Hungarians living in Czechoslovakia and later, Slovakia. Immediately after 1918, however, the term “Hungarian literature in Slovakia” was not yet in use. In the period between the two world wars, it was mainly called *Hungarian literature in Szlovenszkó* (szlovenszkói magyar irodalom); after 1945, *Hungarian literature in Czechoslovakia*; and in some cases, *Hungarian literature in the Highlands* [Southern Slovakia] (Hangácsi 2017, 37–42). The term *Hungarian literature in Czecho/slovakia* have also been used.

Although we undertook an easy definition above, according to which Hungarian literature in Slovakia is the literature of Hungarians living in Slovakia, it is not entirely clear which authors are referred to and what texts fall within the scope of the term, i.e. what corpus we are talking about. Is it the literature written by Hungarians in Slovakia, that is, by *authors of Hungarian nationality born in Slovakia*? Or is it the *Hungarian-language literature of Hungarian authors living in Slovakia*? Is *every work written in Hungarian whose author lives in Slovakia* part of Hungarian literature in Slovakia? May perhaps the works of *Hungarian-identity authors written in Slovak (or Czech, English, German, etc.)* also be included here? It is another question to what extent authors who have moved from Slovakia and no longer live there are part of Hungarian literature in Slovakia.

There have been various answers to the question of the corpus. Not only authors born and living in Slovakia are recognized by the public and literary criticism as Hungarian writers in Slovakia (such as Árpád Tőzsér, Anikó Polgár or Zoltán Csehy), but also authors born in Hungary and Romania (Transylvania) who have been living in Slovakia for many years, such as Péter H. Nagy and Attila F. Balázs. Some authors born in Slovakia but living abroad (in Hungary, Turkey, Mexico, etc.) are evidently part of Hungarian literature in Slovakia (such as József R. Juhász, Marianna Gyurász, Hajnal Csilla Nagy). Others, however, are not considered Hungar-

ian authors in Slovakia. One of them is Gábor Kálmán, of Slovak origin but living in Hungary, whose novel *Nova* (2011) is set in a Slovak environment. Another such author is Éva Bánki, living in Hungary, whose Hungarian ancestors had been exiled from Slovakia to Hungary after World War II, and whose novel *Esőváros* (Rain city, 2004) is set in the Csallóköz–Dunaszerdahely/Žitný ostrov–Dunajská Streda region and is built on Hungarian history and identity in Slovakia. Up to this day, the Hungarian literary public in Slovakia has not treated the two dominant figures of contemporary Slovak literature as part of Hungarian literature in Slovakia, either: Péter Macsovszky and Mila Haugová, who both write in two languages, Slovak and Hungarian. Both of these authors have published volumes of Hungarian-language poetry with Kalligram. But we can also mention similar, unclear cases from earlier eras – the most obvious one being Sándor Márai from Košice who, on the basis of his biography, can be part of Hungarian literature in Czechoslovakia, Hungary and the West at the same time. What is more, applying the logic of the transculturalism of recent years, the works of Ilma Rakusa, a Hungarian native speaker born in Rimavská Sobota, living in Trieste and then in Zurich and writing in German, can be discussed within the context of Hungarian literature in Slovakia.

The situation is further colored by the fact that, as a result of national borders, which also define literary culture, becoming more permeable after 2000, the volumes of several important authors of contemporary Hungarian literature, not from Slovakia, were also published by Kalligram (e.g. Endre Kukorelly, Szilárd Borbély, Imre Bartók), and a large number of authors not born in Slovakia also publish in contemporary Slovak Hungarian literary magazines (*Irodalmi Szemle*, *Kalligram*, *Opus*, *Szörös Kő*). At some level, these authors seem to be connected to the context of Hungarian literature in Slovakia, and they explicitly participate in its processes with their works.

These questions are also raised in the case of other Hungarian literature across national borders. For example, Imre József Balázs refers to the differences in historicity and individual terminologies when he claims that the concept of Hungarian literature in Transylvania, resp. Romania has “different meanings” in the case of different eras and authors (2015, 9). Similarly, his statement that “Transylvanianness” or “Yugoslavianness” “can be grasped not so much in the writing, but rather in the reading” ought to be given further thought (12). Here we can also mention Melinda Szarvas’s concept of “cultural gravity”, which emphasizes the independence of minority Hungarian literatures (2018, 20), using the concept of the “force of attraction” (25). Perhaps the practical applicability of this concept is echoed by Imre József Balázs’s statement that he regards all the works of authors who moved from Transylvania to Hungary as “Transylvanian” (2015, 19).

Similarly, there are no unified, closed, universal answers to the questions of what can be considered (national) minority literature and what position it occupies in the system of national literatures. Consequently, the position of minority literatures is unstable and varied. Swedish literature in Finland is evidently part of the history of Finnish literature (Laitinen 1981), and appears through such terms as “Finland-Swedish literary history” (Malmio 2012, 72), “Finland-Swedish literature” (74) and “Swedish-speaking Finnish authors” (Heikkilä-Halttunen 2012, 140). In a Cen-

tral European context, it would certainly be an unusual approach to define Hungarian literature in Slovakia as a part of Slovak literature, or to place Slovak Hungarian authors and literary works in Slovak literary history. A cautious attempt to do so was made in the 21st century Slovak literary history (Passia and Taranenková 2014, 69), in which novels by “Hungarian authors living in Slovakia”, notably those by Lajos Grendel and Péter Hunčík that were translated into Slovak, were also mentioned in the subchapter entitled “Regionalism and localism”. Of course, this is still a far cry from Hungarian literature in Slovakia as a whole becoming a part of Slovak literary history.

An interesting addition to the “minority” issue is another perspective from another literature: when Ander Izagirre, who was awarded the Ryszard Kapuściński Prize in Poland in 2022, was asked whether the prize was given to a Spanish or a Basque writer, he answered that despite living in Spain (and even having written his award-winning novel *Potosí* in Spanish), he considers himself a Basque writer because he is of that “identity”. In other words, in this case, it is the role of identity, not of the language or the state, that becomes decisive (Szot 2022, 3).

Hungarian literary studies and literary history writing mark the position of Hungarian literature created in Slovakia (and elsewhere outside of Hungary, written in Hungarian) in the most varied way. In volume VI of *A magyar irodalom története* (The history of Hungarian literature), Hungarian literature written outside the borders of Hungary was “lifted” or “exiled” to separate chapters – depending on one’s perspective (Szabolcsi 1966). The highly influential literary history written by Ernő Kulcsár Szabó does not deal with Hungarian literature outside of Hungary in separate chapters, but presents it as part of the same literary historical narrative, briefly mentioning in passing that the author is a Hungarian living across the border (Kulcsár Szabó 1994). A similar approach is followed in the Hungarian literary history written by Tibor Gintli and Gábor Schein (2007). The academic literary history, edited by Tibor Gintli, employs different strategies within the same volume. In the chapters dealing with the period between 1890 and 1945, written by Gintli (2010, 641–852), there is not a single reference to transborder Hungarian literatures, whereas the chapter after 1945, written by Gábor Schein, even though admittedly fragmentary, does make mention of the different contexts of “transborder” Hungarian literature several times (2010, 853–1062). A peculiar work is *A magyar irodalom története: 1920-tól napjainkig* (The histories of Hungarian literature: From 1920 to the present; Szegedy-Maszák 2007), the last volume of which discusses the history of Hungarian literature from 1920 onwards. Here, Hungarian literature in Yugoslavia and in the West is given a separate chapter, but there is not a word about the existence of Hungarian literature in Slovakia, and not even a single Hungarian author from Slovakia is mentioned in this monumental literary history. The procedure employed by Slovak-Hungarian Lajos Grendel in his book *A modern magyar irodalom története: Magyar líra és epika a 20. században* (The history of modern Hungarian literature: Hungarian lyrics and epics in the 20th century; 2010) is also worth mentioning: he deals with the Hungarian literary context in Slovakia, in the case of some Hungarian authors in Slovakia, where he regards it as important, but not in the case of others.

The unstable, “wobbly” position which Hungarian literature in Slovakia occupies in Hungarian literary histories ranges from inclusion (unity) to exclusion (authenticity). Here, as one of the specific “genres” of Hungarian literary studies in Slovakia, we must also mention *the history of Hungarian literature in Slovakia*, the subject of which is Hungarian literature in Slovakia (Turczel 1967; Szeberényi 2000, 2001; H. Nagy 2007; Fónod 2014, 2015). These Hungarian literary histories in Slovakia once again provide the opportunity for extremely diverse approaches: first and foremost, how they perceive the relationship to Hungarian literature, i.e. whether they discuss Hungarian literature in Slovakia as a special, authentic narration or as part of the whole of Hungarian literature. Secondly, as a minor theoretical challenge, the question of the relationship with Slovak literature also appears.

Hungarian literature in Slovakia as a problem of literary theory and literary history has also appeared in Slovak literary studies. The most elaborate and comprehensive study is certainly Dionýz Ďurišin’s “A nemzetiségi irodalom mint irodalomtörténeti egység” (National minority literature as a literary-historical unit), published in 1985, which outlines five contexts of national minority literature: 1) the developmental process of Hungarian literature in Czechoslovakia; 2) Hungarian literature in Czechoslovakia and Czech and Slovak literature; 3) Hungarian literature in Czechoslovakia and the literature of the Hungarian People’s Republic; 4) Hungarian literature in Czechoslovakia and other minority Hungarian literatures; 5) Hungarian literature in Czechoslovakia and other national literatures (111). According to Ďurišin, “Since the national minority literature is an integral part of the literature of the given state community, its relationship with other national literatures is determined by the relations of the literary complex of which it is a full-fledged creator”. From this, he logically concludes: “It follows from the goals and function of Hungarian minority literature, which is unified with Czechoslovak literature, that it cannot be an integral part of Hungarian national literature” (117).

Hungarian and Slovak Hungarian literary histories represent a diametrically different principle from Ďurišin’s theory: based on the concept of a common language and literary tradition, Hungarian literature in Slovakia is treated as part of Hungarian literature. The vast majority of Hungarian literary histories take it for granted that all fiction written in Hungarian is part of Hungarian literature, and Transylvanian, Slovak, Yugoslav-Vojvodinian, Transcarpathian, and Western authors do appear in these literary histories. However, some overviews would nevertheless forget about Hungarian literature created outside of Hungary, others do not mention the fact of it being “across the border”, and a third strategy treats authors from across the border in an independent context separated from the literature created in Hungary.

The Slovak literary histories (Kasáč and Bagin 1986; Šmatlák 1988; Sedlák 2009), based on the concept of a common language like the Hungarian ones, in fact give up on Hungarian literature in Slovakia, they do not reflect on its existence (with one or two exceptions). One such exception is Peter Macsovszky, whose volumes of Hungarian poetry are listed in the literary history edited by Imrich Sedlák (2009, 634), and another, even better one is Lajos Grendel, who wrote in Hungarian and became a part of Slovak literature quite naturally, due to the fact that his colleague Karol

Wlachovský translated his volumes into Slovak right from the start (Zajac 2019, 6–8). Judit Görözdi dedicated an entire paper to the Grendel phenomenon, in which she notes that

Grendel is the only Hungarian author from Slovakia who is acknowledged within Slovak literature. Works by other Slovak Hungarian authors have been published in Slovak, too [...], they also received critical attention, some of them are respected by the profession (e.g. Árpád Tözsér), but none of them have been received in a way that would have made their work an integral part of Slovak literature. (Görözdi 2016, 309)

Can Michal Hvorecký's quoted statement be interpreted from that perspective? Thanks to Renata Deáková's translation, was Alfonz Talamon able to become a part of Slovak literature like Lajos Grendel? Was his novel's translation into Slovak able to influence contemporary Slovak literature? Or is perhaps another level of knowledge and experience incorporated into this gesture? Is it the experience and knowledge of the transculturalism of the past decades?

TRANSCULTURALISM AND MINORITY LITERATURE

In the literary theory of the past decade, a well-defined base has been formed by the theories related to the interpretation of literary texts along the phenomena of nomadism, heterotopia, hybridity, xenism, extraterritoriality, translocality, diaspora, bi- and multilingualism, globalism, deterritorialization, etc. These concepts touch upon the issue of what is traditionally called minority literature and (e)migrant literature, upon the experience of multilingualism and language change, and are connected to the interpretation of foreignness and otherness, which have provided a significant research area for imagology and comparative studies for decades. In the second half of the 20th century, the concepts listed above became reinterpretable from the point of view of post-colonialism, supplemented, among other things, by the 20th century elements of the theories of power.

In the wake of social, political, ideological and literary changes, the theoretical space of transnational and transcultural literary studies provides a diverse perspective on the text space, in connection with which Ingeborg Kongslie (2006) mentions the terms "immigrant literature", "immigrant writer", "emigrant literature", "world literature", "transnational literature", "migrant literature", as well as "multicultural literature", whereas Hajnalka Nagy, starting out from the terminological debates of Austrian and German literary studies, lists the concepts "foreign literature", "guest-worker literature", "migration" or "migrant literature", as well as the "literature of foreignness" (Nagy 2012, 10). We can proceed to add to this terminological diversity the terms "minority" and "transborder literature", which are used often and in many different ways.

Of course, the application of the transnational and transcultural perspective as an interpretive framework can only be maintained in the case of bringing these concepts into play and at the same time putting them under a deletion mark, if it approaches its subject from the need to overcome homogeneous national viewpoints. Or, as Tímea Jablonczay puts it in relation to transnational literary studies – referring to Adele Parker and Stephanie Young's *Transnationalism and Resistance: Experience and Experiment in Women's Writing*:

The intention to transcend the nation takes place in the space created by globalization, thanks to which, in this perspective, the reflection on the geographical, historical, symbolic, metaphorical meaning and dispersion of meaning of the concept of the nation, not only of the border, prevails. Transnational models address the new globalization by re-interpreting the effects of deterritorialization, the new modes of travel and communication, and themes of national borders and citizenship. Dealing with the nature of borders is also a central issue because movement, going beyond borders also cover subjects, texts, and books in a literary theoretical approach. Crossing therefore not only means crossing a geopolitical border, but also crossing the boundaries between body and language, writer and reader, reader and text, life and writing, so the research has a stimulating effect on the deterritorialization and defamiliarization of border-related concepts. (2015, 138)

In contemporary world literature, literary works that derive their meaning from the transnational and transcultural energies of the global world form a well-defined group. The trope of this world is movement, more specifically the movement of individuals and information, resulting in a peculiar neo-nomadism. The new coziness and new intimacy are created in the movement, the new home is the experience and art of transference. This new home, which is actually homelessness in the traditional, modernist sense, is the new coziness of global postmodernism, the ideal world of globalized welfare capitalism, the idealistic world of information enjoyment, cultural hybridity and linguistic diversity, whose utopia and myth are based on the logic that the hierarchy is shaken, doubted and liquidated precisely by the movement.

But can the vocabulary of transculturalism be used when interpreting the culture and literature of national and ethnic minorities? Is minority literature always in the state of transculturalism? Or do different, often conflicting strategies come into play in the case of minority and ethnic literatures as well? So, in fact, should we resist the generalizing and homogenizing tendencies of transcultural interpretation, and take a textually well-arguable standpoint in the case of texts belonging to minority literature? Dieter Heimböckel and Manfred Weinberg, citing an earlier study of theirs (2014, 138), draw attention to the fact that subgroups of society such as ethnic, linguistic and/or subcultural minorities are not automatically intercultural (the German authors do not differentiate between inter- and transculturalism). It would be a simplistic generalization, for example, to automatically perceive the literature of national minorities as intercultural – we would make the same error of homogenization as previous literary histories did. It is more worthwhile to ask the question how the “potential of interculturality” appears in an author’s oeuvre or a specific text (Heimböckel and Weinberg 2019, 96).

LEVELS OF TRANSCULTURALISM AND BILINGUALISM IN THE HUNGARIAN LITERATURE IN SLOVAKIA

The appearance and use of the concept of transculturalism in both international and Hungarian literary criticism heralded the articulation of new points of view that placed the relations between cultures and the discussion of literary phenomena within a changed framework (Welsch 1999; Dagnino 2015; Thomka 2018; Németh and Roguska 2018a, 2018b). While multiculturalism and interculturalism based their ideas on the concept of homogenous cultures living side by side and having dialogues

with each other, in the age of globalization and digitalization, transculturalism already doubted the possibility of the homogeneity of any culture. Wolfgang Iser puts it as follows: by the end of the 20th century, such circumstances were created that go beyond the borders of national cultures, and all cultures can be interpreted from the point of view of mixing, permeation, hybridity and networking (1999).

In the following, I will attempt to outline a concept that demonstrates the interpretation of transcultural phenomena through the transcultural relations of a national minority literature, specifically the Hungarian literature in Slovakia. The conceptual outline also contains elements which can be formalized and further elaborated and are able to provide an opportunity to map and typify the transcultural relations of literature in general. Of course, this method does not promise the illusion of objectivity either, but rather provides clues for the application of a model that can be further detailed in the case of other minority literatures, but it is also conceivable that the transcultural positions and levels discussed here do not exist or are empty spaces in the circumstances of a literature written in another language.

INTERPRETATION MODELS IN HUNGARIAN LITERATURE IN SLOVAKIA BEFORE TRANSCULTURALISM

Right from its beginning, that is 1920, Hungarian literature in Slovakia has always responded to its own status as a national minority literature, and already between the two world wars it created concepts such as the role of a bridge, the *vox humana*, or the concept of minority genius, which placed between Slovak and Hungarian culture and literature (Csehý 2011, 127–166; 2012, 249–288). A completely different point of view, however, treated the Hungarian literatures across the border as part of the unified Hungarian literature, drawing attention to the same traditional formulas and to the fact that the language of the Hungarian literatures in Hungary and across the borders is the same. The representatives of this view often refer to the fact that, for example in the case of Hungarian literature in Slovakia, the majority of the published literary works do not deal with Hungarian identity issues in Slovakia, do not thematize the phenomena of Slovak-Hungarian coexistence, and do not ponder the uniqueness of minority existence (Németh 2005, 24–34).

These two apparently incompatible views pose the following questions: Does a national minority literature presume a multicultural/intercultural/transcultural relationship to start with? Why and how could minority literary theories come about with the general demand that all Hungarian literary works in Slovakia relate to the fate and identity issues of the Hungarians in Slovakia or are related to Hungarian and Slovak literature, if this does not correspond to reality? Why don't all Hungarian authors in Slovakia incorporate the Slovak context into their texts? How can the contradictions of the previous three points be resolved? How can the theory of transculturalism and transnational literary studies contribute to the discussion of the above phenomena?

Standing on a theoretical basis predating transculturalism, an answer to the above questions can be given that does not solve the problems, but mobilizes a new, different kind of dichotomy (Németh 2013, 16–24). According to this, the works of Hungarian literature in Slovakia display two types of strategies.

In a certain corpus of literature, Slovak-Hungarian relations are not only present but also function as an important meaning-making poetics. In these texts, the peculiarities of Slovakian and Slovak Hungarian reality appear; some texts incorporate Slovak words, phrases and sentences, others are built from elements of specific Slovak Hungarian language use, use Slovakisms; some texts present issues of Hungarian identity in Slovakia, and the dialogue with Slovak literature and Slovak literary influence can also be felt.

Other texts do not feature phenomena referring to Slovak-Hungarian dialogue on either the level of reference or that of poetics. The Slovak Hungarian literary works belonging to this group are in dialogue with the textual universe of Hungarian or world literature, and only the knowledge of the author's name confirms that he or she is a Hungarian from Slovakia.

THE LEVELS AND CONNECTIONS OF TRANSCULTURAL RELATIONS

In order to show the complexity of transcultural relations, I am going to use a model developed by Lucien Dällenbach by interpreting the works of the Konstanz theorists (Hans Robert Jauss, Wolfgang Iser). The Swiss literary scholar modelled the "general topography in which [...] the functioning of the literary fact is created in four interacting stages" (Dällenbach 1980, 130). The literary scholar later adds to this statement that "ideally, a consistent theory of reception should set as its goal the matching of all the relations in question, as well as the analysis of all the problems that these relations raise together or separately" and he identifies the following four stages:

- the subject and process of production;
- the text;
- the subject and process of reception;
- the historical context, unconscious (131).

The operation of Dällenbach's stages, taking transcultural conditions into account, opens up possibilities for the interpreter of the text, thanks to which we can see the levels of transculturalism, the positions of the author, the text, and the reader in a much more complex way, and the situation and functioning of minority literatures also find themselves in a new interpretative framework. It also helps to resolve the contradictions and paradoxes raised above, as well as to answer the mentioned questions, because it offers a much more reflective approach than the previous points of view.

THE TRANSCULTURAL POSITION OF THE AUTHOR

The principle of the author, or literary theories focusing on the author, were mainly widespread in the 19th century. It was primarily in the center of the reading recommendations of positivism and intellectual history, but while positivism concentrated on the author's biography and the endless collection of "positive" facts, historicism sought the zeitgeist embodied in the (genius) artist. From the point of view of transcultural literary interpretation, author-centered ideas play an extremely important

role, since it is usually in the wake of the events of the author's biography (change of country or language, nomadism, etc.) that he or she is regarded as and transformed into a transcultural author. However, in the case of (national) minority literatures, additional possibilities, definitions and positions can be considered:

1) From a biographical point of view, all Hungarian authors in Slovakia are transcultural from the start, since they live on the borderland of two languages and two cultures, and the Slovak-Hungarian contact phenomena are decisive, from the world of everyday life through educational institutions to the linguistic landscape (visual use of language).

2) Under Slovak conditions, it represents a different level of transcultural relations if a Hungarian-speaking author was educated in the Slovak language. A different level of education can result in language change of in his/her becoming a bilingual author (as, for example, in the case of Péter Macsovszky).

3) In addition to the Slovak-Hungarian identities, Jewish, Roma or other identities, or their acknowledgement, also entails a different level of transculturalism in the case of each author (Piroska Szenes, Alfonz Talamon).

4) The term internal migration can be used in the case of authors who, after leaving the areas inhabited by ethnic Hungarians, move to a part of Slovakia that is dominated by the Slovak language. (The best examples of this are Slovak Hungarian authors living in Bratislava: Gyula Duba, Árpád Tőzsér, Gábor Farnbauer, and Zoltán Szalay.)

5) Authors moving to or living in Hungary for a considerable period (e.g. László Tóth, Imre Varga, and Attila Mizser).

6) Authors writing in Hungarian moving to Slovakia (Péter H. Nagy from Hungary and Attila Balázs F. from Romania).

7) Authors of migrant or cosmo-nomadic identity, some of whom have lived abroad for years and others are experiencing global mobility. (Slovakian-born József Czákó lives in Germany, Mária Mórocz in Australia; Péter Macsovszky has lived in the Netherlands, Brazil and Australia; József R. Juhász has spent months as a performer in China, India and Mexico; Zoltán Csehy has spent some time in Italy, Germany and Switzerland as a literary grant holder and speaker at conferences; Pál Száz has spent time in Sarajevo, Paris and Prague, etc. Ilma Rakusa, born in Rimavská Sobota and having Hungarian as her mother tongue but not writing in Hungarian, also belongs to this group.)

8) Authors having partly Hungarian origin, who are only acknowledged by contemporary Slovak literature (such as Veronika Šikulová, Agda Bavi Pain [Jozef Gaál], Uršula Kovalyk).

The question posed earlier can be answered from the continuation of literary approaches concentrating on the authorial biography: namely, why were some minority literary theories created which aimed to be comprehensive but were in fact untenable, such as the claim that the texts of Hungarian literature in Slovakia can be interpreted from the perspective of Hungarian-Slovak realia? The answer is that the literary historians who considered the Hungarian literature in Slovakia to be the intersection of two sets of Slovak and Hungarian literature actually approached fiction from a positivist foundation, i.e. from the perspective of so-called positive facts such

as political and social data and the author's biography, and from this point of view, all Hungarian authors in Slovakia, more specifically the Hungarian literature in Slovakia as a whole, do seem to be multicultural/intercultural/transcultural. However, this concept does not provide a relevant answer to how the abovementioned relations appear at the level of the text.

THE TRANSCULTURAL POSITION OF THE TEXT

Literary theoretical trends that focus on the text and are generally language-centered exclude the author from the interpretation, and are even interested in erasing the position of the author and in solutions that announce the "death of the author". The tendencies that can be classified here, which are mainly characteristic of the 20th century, such as Russian formalism, structuralism and deconstruction, generally perceived the interpretation of literature as the enactment of rhetorical operations. The transcultural characteristics of the text often cannot be fully related to the author's biography. The migrant experience does not necessarily appear in the texts of the migrant author and vice versa: a non-migrant author can also relate a migrant story. The situation is similar in the case of Hungarian literature in Slovakia: not all Hungarian authors in Slovakia reflect the experience of the Hungarian world in Slovakia in their texts, and non-Slovakian Hungarian authors can also work with Slovak Hungarian realia (see the mentioned novel by Éva Bánki).

The possible positions of transculturalism in the Hungarian texts in Slovakia are the following:

1) The text reflects on transcultural relations, and even uses them as its original poetics. However, it is not the transcultural relations between Slovaks and Hungarians or Hungarians in Slovakia and in Hungary that are integrated into the texts, but the dialogue with world literature. In Anikó Polgár's volume of poetry entitled *Régész nő körömcipőben* (Female archaeologist in high heels; 2009), ancient Greek mythology is copied to the stages of a modern birth story; Zoltán Csehy's book *Hecatelegium* (2006) is built on the possibilities of poetic transfer of Latinity, just like several poems by Árpád Tőzsér (e.g. "Euphorbos' monologue") also build transcultural relations with classical literature. In this case, too, intertextuality is the generator of transcultural relations.

2) The background of the reflected transcultural relations is the Slovak-Hungarian coexistence and the Hungarian experience and identity in Slovakia: for example, the poetics of transience and hybridity in Péter Hunčík's *Határeset* (Borderline case; 2008) and György Norbert's *Klára* (2004), which go beyond the spontaneous dialogue relations of interculturalism and the segregational logic of multiculturalism.

3) The operation of bilingualism and the use of the Hungarian language in Slovakia as poetics. One possibility for this is that the texts in Slovak are integrated into the literary work, and the other is that the texts include expressions typical of the Hungarian language use in Slovakia. These two phenomena are often inseparable and follow from each other, see Norbert György's novel *Klára* or Árpád Tőzsér's poem "A kódváltás pragmatikája" (The pragmatics of code switching).

4) Rokko Juhász's volume of poetry *Cumi-cumi* (2016) uses the broadest transcultural potentials of the vehicle of languages as poetics, in which the "author", indicated on the title page, did not actually write a single poem, but instead compiled a dictionary of Hungarian words that make sense in other languages. Thus, poems in Hungarian and hybrid languages were created at the same time, and authors who did not know Hungarian also became capable of writing poems in Hungarian, while meaning evaded the authorial competence.

5) The influence of the foreign language environment on the creative practice and text can result in silence, or the complete absence of the text, its zero position. Some Hungarian authors from Slovakia who left their native country have become silent in the foreign language environment, which can also be interpreted from the perspective of the transcultural experience of language loss and writing loss (in the case of József Czákó and Mária Mórocz). This also includes stopping writing in Hungarian and changing their language. (A typical case is Gábor Farnbauer, who as a writer in Bratislava gradually gave up writing in Hungarian and switched to Slovak.)

6) Language change, bilingualism, multilingualism. The potential for transculturalism on the level of the text can be just as diverse/varied as on the level of the biography (Ilma Rakusa, Mila Haugová, Péter Macsovszky).

7) Slovak-Hungarian relations, the textual presentation of Hungarian identity issues in Slovakia in Slovak-language literature (e.g. Ladislav Ballek's *Ipolyság/Šahy*-novels, Daniela Kapitáňová's *Komárom/Komárno*-novel, written under the pen-name Samko Tále, Pavol Rankov Peter's *Somorja/Šamorín*-novel, written under the pen-name Pečonka, Peter Balko's *Lošonc*-novel, Peter Macsovszky's *Tantalópolis*, Mila Haugová's diary novels).

On the level of the text, Hungarian literature in Slovakia cannot be considered transcultural in general, since it is largely composed of texts that rely on the Hungarian literary tradition and do not build connections with Slovak literature. The whole of Hungarian literature in Slovakia cannot be reduced to the representation of Hungarian identity in Slovakia, nor can it be reduced to a single theme, to the representation of Slovak-Hungarian literary and linguistic relations. The text of the Hungarian author from Slovakia places itself on the terrain of literature in the broadest sense, just like the text of any other author, be they French, German, English, Indian, Chinese, etc. and, as from a bricolage language material, it freely chooses and builds tradition and poetics from the most diverse genres, writing styles, stylistic elements, as original poetics. As such, it is indeed transcultural, in its global sense, and cannot be narrowed down to following Slovak-Hungarian relations.

THE TRANSCULTURAL POSITION OF THE READER

The assumption of the literary theories that emphasize the central role of the reader is that the text in itself, without a reader, is dead, and all texts exist only in readings, without an "original" meaning. On the basis of this assumption, 20th century hermeneutics and reception aesthetics consider the examination of the historicity of the text to be just as essential as following the directions and changes of reception and the stages of canonization and/or marginalization. When reading the texts of Hungarian literature in Slovakia, cer-

tain paradoxes arise due to not recognizing the positions of the reader. One such example is that the literary histories that regard Hungarian literature in Slovakia as the intersection of Slovak and Hungarian literatures only read the texts from the point of view of homogeneous Hungarian literary traditions during the actual interpretation. The application of multicultural/intercultural/transcultural readings is only possible from a theoretical basis which is not shared by many texts of Hungarian literary studies in Slovakia.

The possible levels of transculturalism within the Hungarian reception in Slovakia are the following:

1) Transculturalism is a blind spot in the reception of transcultural-bilingual authors, when neither the critic nor his/her text knows that the work of a bilingual author is being examined, but automatically places both the author and the text under discussion within the homogenous national paradigm.

2) The deliberate application of transcultural readings is exactly the opposite of this. Gabriella Petres Csizmadia (2018a, 165) wrote a study on Mila Haugová, but she also presented an exemplary transcultural reading of the works of Pál Száz, who elevated the Hungarian dialect of western Slovakia to the status of a literary language (2018b, 85–94). Anikó N. Tóth successfully uses the opportunities of transculturalism in connection with the works of Gábor Kálmán and György Norbert (2017, 33–44; 2018, 73–84). In a large-scale study, Zoltán Csehy reads the texts of Péter Hunčík, István Bettes and others in a similar way (2016, 166–190).

3) The reflected examination of how the texts written in different languages by authors who switch languages read each other should include how the Hungarian texts of bilingual authors preserve the imprint of Slovak literature, and how their texts in Slovak rely on the Hungarian literary tradition.

4) It is necessary to examine and criticize the phenomenon that imposed the transcultural relationship on the entirety of Hungarian literature in Slovakia, which homogenizes Hungarian literature in Slovakia as a specific literature bridging Slovak and Hungarian literatures, and makes readings based on linguistic facts impossible.

All this does not mean that transculturalism as a theoretical basis can be treated as a homogeneous quality that solves the theoretical questions of Hungarian literature in Slovakia once and for all. Rather, it is necessary to realize that several conflicting opinions appear within transculturalism, and also, that the concept of transculturalism itself is historical, meaning that our attempts at interpretation do not promise any kind of objective or closed outcome. The reader's position entails the realization of the logic of temporality; in fact, it means the reflection of the historical aspect, namely the understanding that the concept and meaning of Hungarian literature in Slovakia has also changed historically; it has meant different things in different historical periods, and it has given rise to opposing and conflicting concepts in the present. All of this leads to the question of context.

THE TRANSCULTURAL POSITION OF THE CONTEXT

The literary theoretical trends that emphasized contextual phenomena during the interpretation of the literary work appeared in the second half of the 20th century. They convincingly showed that the text is never created by a neutral author and

reader, but the latter two are always created by personal and historical contexts; writer and reader always have a specific identity. The context of the work is therefore provided by issues relating to specific cultural, historical and identity situations, and the writer and the reader always create or read the text along clearly defined interests and contexts. Therefore, interpretation largely depends on the writer or reader's gender, class, sexual orientation, religion, race or ethnicity. The contextualization of different identity possibilities called forth the achievements of postmodern feminist literary studies, ecocriticism, new historicism, ethical criticism, postmodern cultural anthropology and transnational literary studies.

The possible levels of transculturalism in the context of Hungarian literature in Slovakia are the following:

1) The historical contexts of the concept of Hungarian literature in Slovakia, starting with the concepts of Hungarian literature in Szlovenszók between the two world wars, through the official expectations of the years of the communist dictatorship, touching upon the aspects of Slovak literary studies, continuing with the concepts after 1989. The open or latent debates of individual concepts also constitute an important part of diachronic and synchronic studies.

2) Re-reading the texts of Hungarian literature in Slovakia through the concepts, vocabulary and viewpoints of transnational literary studies and transculturalism.

3) The examination of the context of the so-called unified Hungarian literature in Hungarian literary history works in Slovakia and Hungary.

4) The context of the so-called transborder Hungarian literatures, the comparative study of Transylvanian (Romanian), Vojvodinian (Yugoslavian), Transcarpathian, Western, etc. Hungarian literary concepts from the perspective of Hungarian literature in Slovakia.

5) Examining minority narratives such as womanhood, gay identity, otherness, foreignness, etc. in the context of transculturalism.

6) The interpretation of the Hungarian experience in Slovakia placed in the processes of migration and globalization (see Nóra Fábián *A nagyváros meséi* [Stories from the city], 2002). The most detailed and broadest examination of the interpretative and intertextual network of world literary relations.

7) Examination of the internal transcultural relations of Hungarian literature in Slovakia, as the different Hungarian-inhabited regions in Slovakia are characterized by a completely different mentality and language use. An excellent opportunity for this type of interpretation can be, for example, the study of the so-called Ipolyság novels, since this small town on the border, the former seat of Hont County, plays a cardinal role in many works of Slovak, Slovak Hungarian and world literature, for example in Ladislav Ballek's trilogy, Lajos Grendel's *New Hont* trilogy, Péter Hunčík's novel *Határeset*, Pablo Urbányi's novel in Spanish *El zoológico de Dios*, etc.

The consistent application of the principle of context results in a beneficial "deconstruction" of the concept of Hungarian literature in Slovakia, as a result of which its potential meanings multiply, and the concept itself can acquire new, unexpected dimensions that it has not and could not acquire to date. The activation of the most

diverse theoretical bases and the inclusion of the concept in individual identity stories is one of the important strategies of transculturalism itself, since it is built on the possibilities of continuous movement, dynamics, transgression and the crossing of borders.

CONCLUSION

As we can see, the search for the truth behind Michal Hvorecký's small remark has brought to the surface a whole unknown world with its internal contradictions and unstable, provocative situation. At the same time, this approach opens up a view of an extremely wide world and cracks the homogenous notions of literature. Contexts can be built around Hungarian authors in Slovakia and Hungarian literature in Slovakia can be placed in a wide variety of contexts. In this way, the oeuvre of Alfonz Talamon, Anikó Polgár, Lajos Grendel, Anikó N. Tóth, Árpád Tózsér and others could be a part not only of Slovak Hungarian and Hungarian literature, but also of the Slovak context of literature. (This would also apply to Pál Závada and Éva Bánki from Hungary). As a result, these authors would not lose, but win: a new context means new recommendations and possibilities of interpretation, as well as a new kind of canonization that can be linked to other registers.

The transcultural perspective is also able to dislodge minority literature from its fixed and fixated position, as it erases the dogma that language is the only criterion for classification in literary history. "The mother tongue is not a clear criterion", wrote Sándor Hites in relation to Western Hungarian literature (2007, 702), and we can add to this, overriding Dionýz Ďurišin's opinion, that the national border is not a clear criterion, either. Based on the experience of transculturalism, we must pay attention to the complex interplay of language, country, culture and identity – to the network-like connection of possibilities. Thus, Slovak Hungarian literary history that makes use of the possibilities of transculturalism must necessarily refer to Strato, Catullus, Martial, Ovid, Pasolini and contemporary American gay poetry, because Slovak Hungarian Zoltán Csehy has translated volumes of poetry from them, and Slovak Hungarian Anikó Polgár has written a monograph about the Hungarian translations of Catullus and Ovid. Hungarian literature in Slovakia also should refer to such Slovak-language authors as Pavel Vilikovský, Veronika Šikulová, Svetlana Žuchová, Pavol Rankov, and Uršula Kovalyk (as well as the Slovak-Swiss Irena Brežná who writes in German), whose works have been translated into Hungarian by the Slovak Hungarians Erika Vályi Horváth, Tünde Mészáros, Tímea Péntes, and Ildikó Hizsnyai Tóth. Furthermore, it should refer to Agatha Christie, whose novels have been interpreted by Slovak Hungarian Krisztián Benyovszky; as well as those Indonesian poets who were asked by Rokko Juhász to write poetry with the help of Indonesian words, and so on. A transcultural Hungarian literary history in Slovakia cannot be confined to a context reduced by the country and the language, but it constantly creates new contexts and places itself in them, continuously building local and global networks.

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The transcultural levels of minority literary history writing: Hungarian literature in Slovakia

Transculturalism. Literary history. Minor literature. Hungarian literature in Slovakia. Transcultural relations.

This paper deals with the concept of minor literature, which is understood as a kind of provocation towards literary history, and investigates the unstable, “wobbly” position of Hungarian literature in Slovakia occupied in Hungarian and Slovak literary histories. The methodological basis of the article is formed by the phenomenon of transculturalism, which is capable of activating and generating meanings on various spaces, levels and layers of literature. The study discusses different levels of transculturalism through some authors and texts in Slovak Hungarian literature, along with transcultural authorial identity, transcultural meaning-making machinery of texts, transcultural practices of the social context, and transcultural directions and gaps in reception. The purpose of the paper is to classify some transcultural phenomena and to unravel their conceptual and interpretative levels.

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