

The Notion of World Literature and the Definition of Literature in Western and Indian Literary Studies

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Wer ganz am Anfang steht, muß seinen Weg wählen, und wenn er zum Anfang zurück geht, wird er dessen inne, daß er vom Ausgangspunkt aus auch andere Wege hätte gehen können – etwa, wie das östliche Denken andere Wege gegangen ist.¹

The notion of ‘world literature’ is inseparably related to comparative literature. However, the relationship between the two is ambiguous and explained in different ways. Indeed, an understanding of the first term demands a definition of comparative literature itself.

Apart from Goethe’s understanding of the term world literature,² a definition that started the debate, two views have gained general recognition. The first is the additive concept that views world literature as the sum of all (national, or individual) literatures of the world. The second view is a selective one that takes world literature to mean the world’s classics, or ‘peak works’ that are read across temporal, cultural and linguistic borders in which they were produced and become the universal heritage of humanity.

The term world literature has a significant position in Slovak comparative literary studies, especially so in the work of Dionýz Ďurišin. The term was present in his writings from the beginnings of his involvement with comparative literature, but it was only from the mid-1980s that he made it one of the essential terms of his theory of interliterariness.

The Slovak school of comparative literature studies formed in the 1940s, with Karol Rosenbaum, Milan Pišút, and Mikuláš Bakoš considered as its founders. Mikuláš Bakoš took over the project of historical poetics of the Russian literary scholar, Alexander Veselovskij, which demanded ‘the explanation of the essence of poetry from its history’. Veselovskij tried to come to a theory of literature by an examination of its history. In his opinion, literature can be better understood by history than by aesthetics. Mikuláš Bakoš enriched Veselovskij’s thoughts by examining period styles and genres in trying to understand the development of literature.

Ďurišin drew on Bakoš and at the same time took further inspiration from Russian comparative literary studies. Veselovskij had already argued that there are developments in folk literature, the similarities of which can be explained neither by

shared contact, nor by a common origin in the same tradition, but only by similar social and psychological drives.

Veselovskij's parallelist view countered the then-popular 'migration' theory that tried to explain all literary phenomena purely genetically. Viktor Zhirmunskij, following Veselovskij, distinguished two kinds of literary similarities: genetic relations and typological analogies which are independent of influences and contacts. Dionýz Ďurišin further systematized Zhirmunskij's categorization. He conceived of genetic relations and typological analogies as forms of the interliterary process.

Ďurišin's methodology is based on historical poetics combined with genealogy. He saw genealogy as a diachronic phenomenon that can explain the continuity of a literary process in its historical perspective. This also requires a synchronic analysis, which lies in classification of streams and styles. The synchronic aspect forms the ground for the historical periodization of the development of world literature.

As mentioned above, Ďurišin reshaped his view of comparative literature in the mid-1980s and gradually worked out his theory of interliterariness. Of course, many substantial concepts were already present in his previous works. The breach lay in the definite focus on the developmental history of world literature, which he had seen as only one part of comparative literary studies. Ďurišin later got completely rid of this term. Traditional comparative literature seemed to him insufficient in the sense that the idea of comparison only complicated the object and the method of study. He also became convinced that the search for genetic relations and typological analogies alone was not a meaningful object of study. Ďurišin's previous thinking was strongly oriented towards literary history and this tendency intensified in his later period. The aim of the theory of interliterariness was to create a theoretical basis for the writing of a developmental history of world literature.

As far as the definition of world literature is concerned, Ďurišin was well aware of the limitations of the prevalent conceptions of world literature for literary history. The additive conception is simply an uninteresting juxtaposition of individual literatures, and the canonical one inevitably leads to the history of 'big guns', as Slovak comparativists would have it. In such a conception of literature, as Ďurišin used to emphasize, the literatures of 'small' nations are forfeited in the face of the literatures of 'big' nations.

Ďurišin's solution to the problem, in which he draws on Frank Wollmann, is original, well thought-out and systematic. He tried to approach world literature on completely different grounds. Ďurišin viewed world literature as a dynamic system with individual works and literatures as its elements that are interrelated in various ways. These relations form the content of the term interliterariness. World literature is the highest and ultimate category of the developmental movement of literature. The ability of literary phenomena to enter into relations with other elements of the system is decisive for their inclusion in the category of world literature. Since Ďurišin's interest lay in the realm of literary history, he first of all tried to define the categories of the literary historical process, both national-literary and interliterary.

A dissatisfaction with the additive and the selective notions of world literature is a feature of North American comparative literary studies that developed in a different way from similar studies in the former communist countries. I see the main difference

in the emphasis of Central and East European comparative studies on literary history, a discipline that seems to be gradually losing ground in comparative literary studies in the West. Western comparativists looked for a way out of the crisis proclaimed since the 1950s by René Wellek in various hermeneutic and deconstructivist models.³ Recently, a major event to do with the notion of world literature was David Damrosch's book, *What is World Literature?*, published in 2003. After a detailed analysis of Goethe's concept of world literature, Damrosch comes up with his own definition. He does not see world literature as a set of texts, a literary canon, but as a mode of reading: 'World literature is fully in play once several foreign works begin to resonate together in our mind. This provides a further solution to the comparatist's lurking panic: world literature is not an immense body of material that must be somehow, impossibly, mastered; it is a mode of reading that can be experienced *intensively* with a few works just as effectively as it can be explored *extensively* with a large number.'⁴

Damrosch's is a very interesting solution to the question of how a student of literature can deal with world literature. However, it bypasses the question of its history, which the majority of literary scholars, despite methodological problems, undoubtedly consider necessary.

Comparative literature is a form of literary study. Literary studies are traditionally divided into literary theory, literary history and literary criticism. Whereas literary history has exerted a strong hold over comparative literature, calls for comparative literary theory or poetics have always existed. René Étiemble demanded such a poetics. Ulrich Weisstein, in the introduction to *Einführung in die Vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft*, claims that his handbook deals with the problems of comparative literary history and comparative literary theory without diminishing comparative literary criticism.⁵

In his own book, Zoran Konstantinović discusses the issue of the relation of the three traditional branches of literary studies to comparative literature, and I find his view more sober. According to Konstantinović, the relation of literary history to comparative literature is most evident, whereas the relation of literary criticism and of literary theory is more or less unclear.⁶

Earl Miner tried to bring some clarity to the relationship between literary theory and comparative literature in his work on comparative poetics, which he conceived as an intercultural theory of literature. Miner argues that in every culture there is an 'originative' or 'foundational' poetics with explicit poetics that come into existence when critics define the nature and conditions of literature in terms of drama, lyric and epic. According to Miner, these definitions and inferences create a useful basis for comparative poetics. He claims that Aristotle chose drama as the starting point of his thinking about literature, which resulted in the Western tradition focusing on *mimesis* while the poetics of Eastern traditions is based on the lyric. He calls this kind of poetics 'affective-expressive'. Not being an expert on Indian literature and poetics, he was not certain about its foundations. Nonetheless, these seemed to him to belong to the 'affective-expressive' type.

Although Miner's attempt at a theoretical foundation of comparative poetics is no doubt the best thought-out and the most interesting one, he is not the pioneer of comparative aesthetics. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy had already written about com-

parative aesthetics in the first half of the twentieth century. His book, *Transformation of Nature in Art*, published in 1934 and still in print today, is considered seminal for the field. Miner himself admits that he was inspired by James Liu, who had expressed the idea of comparative literary theory very poignantly and summarized the intention of similar endeavours, not only in China, but also in India and Arab countries, where there are hundred- or even thousand-year-old traditions of literary studies:

I believe that comparative studies of historically unrelated critical traditions, such as the Chinese and the Western, will be more fruitful if conducted on the theoretical rather than practical level, since criticism of particular writers and works will have little meaning to those who cannot read them in the original language, and critical standards derived from one literature may not be applicable to another, whereas comparisons of what writers and critics belonging to different cultural traditions have thought about literature may reveal what critical concepts are universal, what concepts are confined to certain cultural traditions, and what concepts are unique to a particular tradition. This in turn may help us discover (since critical concepts are often based on actual literary works) what features are common to all languages, what features are confined to literature written in certain languages or produced in certain cultures, and what features are unique to a particular literature. Thus a comparative study of theories of literature may lead to a better understanding of all literature.⁷

The fundamental problem of literary theory is the question, 'What is literature?' Interestingly, this question hardly ever features in discussions of the notion of world literature. It is undeniably a question that Western literary studies is unable to answer satisfactorily. The theoretical proposals and intellectual traditions from which they originate differ considerably. Terms like fictionality or literariness, the understanding of which is not uniform either, were long expected to provide the desired answer. Some scholars have completely given up on the notion that literature could be defined by a set of properties common to all literary texts and they content themselves with the idea that it is possible to determine only certain features that are characteristic of literature but are not necessarily sufficient. Every well-intended definition apparently fails because it is always possible to find a work that can disprove it. This precarious situation is to a great extent caused by the fact that twentieth-century artists committed themselves to the principle of innovation. The institutional theory, for example, has done completely away with the essentialist explanation of literature. However, this theory is also problematic because it is tautological. A text becomes literary if it is considered to be such by professionals in the literary field. Some postmodern approaches, representing another position, finally abandoned the distinction between literary and non-literary texts altogether.

In his theoretical proposals, Dionýz Ďurišin did not explicitly elaborate on any definition of literature. Similarly to Veselovskij, he intended to come to the understanding of literature by means of historical poetics. His theory, however, ultimately leads to the history of literariness as a constant renovation of defamiliarization by means of literary techniques. Among the definitions of literature current in the West, literariness seems to be the only concept usable in literary history.

The compound term, world literature, consists of two words: world and literature. However, Ďurišin apparently never looked at the problem of defining world literature

in this way. He saw the term as a unity. Ultimately, the words, 'literature' and 'world literature', were synonymous to him, in the sense that world literature is a form of the existence of literature, its final category: 'It is our aim to come to an explanation of artistic literature with specifically intrinsically ordered elements. In this way we secure the specific scientific character of literary studies, which explains and unifies various elements into a system. It comes about on various levels of the developmental movement of literature, namely, from the smallest artistic elements up to the highest, the ultimate category, that is to say, that of world literature.'⁸

For Ďurišin, literary history is eventually related to literary theory by means of historical poetics. In *Problémy literárnej komparatistiky*, he writes:

From the relation of comparative research to literary history organically follows also its relation to the theory of literature. The task of literary theory is to analyse and solve literary questions beginning with structural elements of the art work and ending with its literary and extra-literary determinants in the broadest sense [...]. Within the gnoseological process of literary theory it thus comes to big generalizations, which have a principal character and represent the basic point of departure for other branches of literary studies. They also form the ground for the comparative study of literature (or in other words, literary history) in the exploration of concrete problems of the genesis of an art-work and of its affiliation to a certain literary context. Thanks to their uniqueness, the final conclusions of comparative studies provide material for theoretical study.⁹

Both Ďurišin's theory of interliterariness and comparative poetics try to propose a sophisticated theoretical model by which to understand literature. Comparative poetics pointed to the existence of non-Western traditions of literary studies. Their inclusion in the discourse of Western literary studies, and especially when it comes to a question like the definition of world literature, seems to me inevitable because it requires a universal approach. Literariness or interliterariness as an object of research predetermines the approach to world literature, that is, not only of literatures in European languages, but also to literatures that are independent of the intellectual tradition and the specific cultural situation in which this notion originated. In what follows, I will introduce Sanskrit poetics along the most general lines and will reflect on its meaning for Ďurišin's notion of world literature.

Sanskrit poetics forms a large body of literary theoretical texts whose beginnings go back to at least the third century B.C.E., when Bharata's *Nāṭya Śāstra*, a textbook of dramaturgy also containing parts devoted to *kāvya*, might have been composed. The discourse about literature based on the principles laid down in the *Nāṭya Śāstra* has remained viable up to the present.¹⁰ In the course of centuries, many theories with different views on the nature of literature, or more precisely on the soul (*ātma*) of literature developed. Of course, the notion of literature as we know it today originated in the second half of the eighteenth century in Europe. Therefore, it is legitimate to doubt the existence of similar notions in other cultures. Sanskrit and the present-day Indian languages use words like *sāhitya*, *kāvya*, or *vānmaya* for the designation of what we call literature. Some Indian languages use the Arab word *adab*. *Sāhitya* and *kāvya* designate literature in the narrow sense and *vānmaya* in the broader sense. Already Rājaśekhara, living in the tenth century, had articulated this distinction. These Indian words and the European word, literature, at least as they are understood in the Sanskrit tradition, are

not exact synonyms. This is a fact of essential importance for the issues raised in this paper. It should also be noted that literature is associated in our mind with a written text (the Latin word *littera* means letter), whereas the Sanskrit word *kāvya* is associated with speech (it comes from the root *kū*, meaning 'to emit a sound').

After Bharata, who is today considered a legendary rather than a historical figure, the development of Sanskrit poetics was furthered mostly by Bhāmaha (sixth century), Dandi (660–720¹¹), Udbhata (740–840), Vāmana (780–880), Rudrata (825–875), Ānandavardhana (9th century), Bhattanāyaka (935–985), Rājaśekhara (880–950), Bhatta Tota (950–1000), Kuntaka (950–1020), Abhinavagupta (950–1020), Mahimabhatta (950–1020), Kshemendra (990–1070), Bhoja Rāja (1019–1054), Mammata (1050–1100), Rūpyaka (1100–1150), Hemachandra (1088–1172), Jayadeva (1250–1300), Viśvanātha Kavirāja (1300–1380), Rūpa Gosvāmī (1470–1554), Appaya Dikshita (1540–1613) and Panditarāja Jagannātha (1600–1670).

The development of Sanskrit literary studies (*kāvya-śāstra*) can be divided into four periods (although this division into schools, which was suggested only in the twentieth century, has been criticized recently): 1) the beginning period, starting with the composition of the *Nāṭya Śāstra* (from an unknown date B.C.E. to 600 A.D.); 2) the period of formation of theoretical schools covering the interval between Bhāmaha and Ānandavardhana (600–800); 3) the period of discussions, including Abhinavagupta and Mahimabhatta (800–1000); 4) the commentarial period (1000–1700), which is the longest, but in no way less significant. The most important period is considered the period from Bhāmaha to Ānandavardhana or the period of formation of theoretical schools. The schools of *alankāra*, *rīti*, *rasa* and *dhvani* originated at that time. After Ānandavardhana, Kuntaka propounded the *vakrokti* theory, and in the eleventh century Kshemendra followed with the *auchitya* theory. The *dhvani* school, which is in a way merely an extension of the *rasa* school, has gained the highest esteem amongst Indian scholars.

Jagannātha Panditarāja is considered the last great figure of Sanskrit literary studies. During the British rule, English became the language of education. The emerging Indian universities focused on the Western intellectual tradition and Indian scholars accepted the European approach to literature, breaking away from their indigenous intellectual tradition which was studied only in departments of Oriental studies or by traditional pundits. After attaining independence in 1947, Acharya Ramachandra Shukla endeavoured to gain intellectual independence in literary studies as well. He drew on the indigenous Sanskrit tradition of literary studies, which he enriched with elements of Western literary criticism. At present, in particular the theories of *rasa*, *dhvani* and *vakrokti* feature prominently in the scholarly discourse. They have been applied to contemporary literatures, including non-Indian ones. Some Indian anglicists in particular have tried to apply various Sanskrit theories to English literature. The most ambitious project in this regard seems to me Priyadarshi Patnaik's book, *Rasa in Aesthetics*¹², which is a systematic application of a rather simplified *rasa* theory to some works of world literature. In the West, the tradition of Sanskrit poetics is almost unknown beyond indological departments. Among literary scholars, its value has been recently recognized for example by cognitive scholars such as Patrick Colm Hogan and Keith Oatley.¹³

The Sanskrit theoreticians addressed a wide range of problems such as the nature of literature (*svarūpa*), its definition (*lakshanā*), its function (*prayojana*) and its originating factors (*hetu*). They also discussed literary education (*kavi-śikshā*), literary conventions (*kavi-samaya*), elements of a literary text (*kāvya-sāmagrī*), genres (*kāvya-bheda*), figures and tropes (*alankāra*) and style (*rīti*). However, the most important question they sought to solve was the question of the soul (*ātmā*) of literature. The ancient Indian philosophies, except for Buddhism and the nowadays hardly known Indian materialism, were not satisfied with the idea that the essence of the world lies in its temporariness. They were interested in knowing the eternal, the unchanging, that they believed penetrates the whole universe. Indian literary studies draws on this philosophical assumption. Satyadev Chaudhary says in this regard that, in literary studies similarly, the word *ātmā* designates the inner essence, without which every literary text would just be the transcript of an everyday speech or a scholarly treatise.¹⁴

The word *ātmā* was introduced to Sanskrit literary studies by Vāmana. He was followed by other theoreticians like Ānandavardhana or Viśvanātha Kavirāja. While *rīti*, or style, represented the soul of literature for Vāmana, it was *dhvani* for Ānandavardhana and *rasa* for Viśvanātha. Kuntaka, who preceded Viśvanātha, used instead of *ātmā* the – in many aspects similar – word *jivita*, life, which was for him *vakrokti*. Rājaśekhara and later Viśvanātha and others brought the metaphor to consequence and likened literature to the human body and assigned an element of literature to each bodily part. According to the representatives of the *rasa* theory, the body of literature is formed by word (*śabda*) and meaning (*artha*). *Rasa* is its soul. Qualities (*guna*) like valour pertain to literature as well. Blemishes (*dosha*) are likened to bodily defects, style (*rīti*) to the structure of bodily parts, and figures and tropes (*alankāra*) to ornaments like earrings etc.

Bhāmaha, Dandī and Udbhata, who are the main representatives of the *alankāra* school, do not speak directly about *ātmā*. Despite that, it is clear from their statements that they considered *alankāras*, or figures and tropes, to be essential for literature. *Rasa*, which was already the central topic of Bharata's treatment of literature in the *Nāṭya Śāstra*, was seen by them as an *alankāra* called *rasavat*. They took a similar stance on other concepts of the *rasa* theory like *bhāva*, *bhāvābhāsa* or *bhāva-śānti* which they saw as *preyas*, *ūrjasvī*, and *samāhitāalankāra* respectively. *Dhvani*, which is a basic concept of another important literary theory, was also perceived by them as various *alankāras*, for example *pariyayokta* or *arthāntara-nyāsa*. The adherents of the *alankāra* school, but not only them, significantly contributed to the identification of *alankāras*, or figures and tropes, as we would say in the West. However, *alankāra* is a concept broader than the European tradition understands figures and tropes. If Bhāmaha, who is the historically oldest theoretician, enumerated 39 *alankāras*, Apayya Dīkshita knew of 124.

Vāmana, the founder of the *rīti* school, defined *rīti*, or style, as a specific composition of words (*viśiṣṭa-pada-rachanā*), caused by *gunas*, or qualities. In a way there is no difference between the style and the *gunas*, because style is based on the qualities. *Gunas* are twofold: they are either *śabda-guna* (sound qualities) or *artha-guna* (semantic qualities). Each of them is again twofold: *oja*, *prasāda*, *śleṣha*, *samatā*,

samādhi, mādhurya, saukumārya, udāratā, arthavyakti and *kānti*. I leave their names untranslated, because their explanation would require more space than I can offer here. For the purposes of this paper, suffice it to say that Vāmana considered style, formed by a combination of these qualities, to be the soul of literature. He identified three styles and named them according to the geographical regions of India: *vaidarbhī, gaudī* and *pāñchālī*.

The *dhvani* theory represents a milestone in Sanskrit literary studies. Ānandavardhana, who was its main representative, unhesitatingly determined *dhvani* to be the soul of literature. *Dhvani* is a meaning different from the literal meaning. It is a suggested meaning. The most valued form of *dhvani* is *rasa-dhvani*. Ānandavardhana compares *dhvani* to the grace of a woman, which is different from her limbs, although it is perceived through them. This meaning can be appreciated only by those who possess sufficient literary sensitivity. Ānanda calls such people, that is, those who have a heart capable of enjoying literature, *sahridaya*. His *Dhvanyaloka* is a fascinating study of various kinds of *dhvani* and related issues.

The *vakrokti* theory is another Indian literary theory trying to grasp the essence of literature. Its founder was Kuntaka, whose work fell in oblivion in the course of time and was rediscovered only in the 1920s. Although Kuntaka appeared after the great *dhvani* theoreticians like Ānandavardhana and Abhinavagupta, he links up to the older Bhāmaha. He saw the essence of literature, which he called *jīvita* (life), in expressional deviation which aims at strikingness or imaginative combination of word and meaning. Only this oblique form of expression (*vakrokti*) can be considered the essence of literature. Figures and tropes, as well as *rasa* and *dhvani*, are according to him only aspects of *vakrokti*. Kuntaka analyses *vakrokti* in detail from the level of syllable (*varna-vinyāsa-vakratā*) up to the level of the whole text (*prabandha-vakratā*).

The theory of *rasa*, whose foundations were laid down by the legendary Bharata, enjoys the highest recognition in India. Even adherents of the theories of *alankāra* and *dhvani*, or *vakrokti*, were forced to recognize *rasa* as indispensable. However, only Abhinavagupta, Mammata and Viśvanātha succeeded in interpreting the central ideas of other theories in a way that would support *rasa*. What is *rasa*? *Rasa* is the enjoyment induced by the digest of literature. Bharata's definition of the generation of *rasa* is the basis of the whole theory: '*Rasa* is generated by the combination of stimuli, symptoms and transient emotions' (*tatra vibhāvānubhāva-vyabhichārisamyogād rasa-nishpattih*).¹⁵ The theory of *rasa* is based on a psychological analysis of human emotional life. Eight emotional states (called *bhāva* or *sthāyi-bhāva*) are worthy of literary treatment: love, mirth, sorrow, anger, fortitude, terror, disgust and astonishment. They become eight *rasas*: erotic, comic, pathetic, furious, heroic, horror, odious and wonder respectively. Some theoreticians added another *bhāva* called *nirveda*, the disregard of worldly objects, which becomes *śānta-rasa*, or enjoyment of tranquillity, in the course of reception. A work of art can affect its recipient by evoking various moods which are heightened modes of the above-mentioned emotional states. These moods are called *rasas*. *Rasa* is the most important element of a literary text. The generation of *rasa* and the intensity of this aesthetic experience depend on the perfect combination of all components of the text like one or more of the thirty-three transitory emotions (indifference, contentment, happiness, recollection,

grief, and so forth), of one or more of the eight bodily symptoms (stupefaction, perspiration, goose bumps, and so forth) and of stimuli which are divided into excitive (*uddīpana*) and supporting (*ālambana*). The main characters belong to the excitive and various circumstances, places, seasons to the supporting stimuli.

Kālidāsa's play, *Śakuntalā*, can serve as an example to illustrate these terms. Dushyanta and Śakuntalā, the main characters of this love drama, are supporting stimuli (*ālambana-vibhāva*). The hermitage of sage Kanva at the river Mālīnī, in which Śakuntalā lived and which was one day visited by king Dushyanta when he lost his way while hunting, is *uddīpana-vibhāva*. Śakuntalā's withdrawing her gaze with a blush at hearing what her friend Priyamvadā says to another friend Anusūyā, when she found Śakuntalā intently gazing at a jasmine creeper clinging closely to a mango tree, is an *anubhāva*. Dushyanta considered the blush on Śakuntalā cheeks a clear sign of her love for him and became sure when he found Śakuntalā reluctant to talk to him, while she listened to him with rapt attention and flickered and faltered most beautifully. After their separation, Dushyanta is swept away by overwhelming passion. The cold rays of the moon are as fire to him and Cupid's flower shafts are as hammer blows to his heart. The love-sick Śakuntalā expresses her anguish by her sleepless eyes and pale cheeks. When Śakuntalā goes to her husband's house and is rejected by him, she feels deep despair and anger. These feelings constitute *vyabhichāri-bhāvas*. Let this much be sufficient to illustrate these terms. However, it must be noted, at least in passing, that Bharata's *rasa* theory, which also contains a unique narratology, makes possible a detailed analysis of the emotional meaning of a literary text.¹⁶

The last theory, which is generally not regarded as an independent theory, is Kshemendra's *auchitya* theory. Kshemendra considers *auchitya*, propriety, to be the life (*jīvita*) of literature. His theory is actually a comprehensive commentary on Ānandavardhana's statement that 'the secret of *rasa* lies in keeping the rules of propriety.'¹⁷ Kshemendra analyses twenty-seven kinds of propriety.

The question of the essence or the soul of literature is related to the search for the definition of literature. Bhāmaha, the first historically known Indian literary theoretician, was also the first to propose a definition of literature. His definition became the basis for further definitions, which, to varying extents, elaborated on it. I shall now present the five most influential definitions. They may appear simplistic at first glance; nevertheless, they try to fit the strict definition rules of Indian logic. This is especially true of the more recent ones, such as that of Jagannātha. Bhāmaha defines literature as a 'combination of word and meaning' (*śabdārthau sahitaū kāvyam*).¹⁸ According to Vāmana, literature is 'word and meaning combined with *guna* and *alankāra*' (*kāvya-śabdo'yam gunālankāra-sanskritayoh śabdārthayor vartate*).¹⁹ Mammata defines literature as 'a combination of word and meaning which is without blemishes and is endowed with *guna*, but not necessarily with *alankāra*' (*tad-adoshau śabdārthau sa-gunāv analankrtīh punah kvāpi*).²⁰ Viśvanātha offers a slightly altered definition — he understood literature to be 'an utterance whose soul is *rasa*' (*rasātmakam vākyam kāvyam*).²¹ Many contemporary Indian scholars have a high regard for Jagannātha's definition: 'Literature is a word that presents a charming sense' (*ramanīyārtha-pratipādakah śabdah kāvyam*).²²

In *Literary History: Towards a Global Perspective*, Anders Pettersson tried to define modern Western literature. He assumes that literature is a linguistic creation. Language is a means of communication. Linguistic utterances have a representational character. However, the fictional representational content is not directly associated with a matching reality. Rather, it is presented by the author. On the basis of this train of thought, Pettersson comes to his own definition of literature as 'presentational discourse produced with pretensions to being culturally important, and/or well-formed, and/or conducive to aesthetic experience'.²³

Both intellectual traditions define literature as verbal art that produces an aesthetic experience. This parallel is obvious when we compare Jagannātha's and Pettersson's definitions. However, the nature of the experience, as well as how it is related to language, is understood differently in each tradition.

The theory of interliterariness is a historiographical theory and not an aesthetic one. Nonetheless, it cannot stand apart from aesthetics, because no thinking about literature can neglect its aesthetic and philosophical foundations. Āurišin's conception is structuralist. Mikuláš Bakoš even called Āurišin's comparatistics, structural comparatistics, and 'a continuation of the path of development on which we can find A. Veselovskij and the Russian formalists, as well as J. Mukařovský and F. Wollmann'.²⁴ Structural aesthetics itself stands in the tradition of Western thinking about literature. Miner would probably say that this tradition goes back to Plato and Aristotle, whose notion of *mimesis* relates literature to reality. Literary theory tried to impugn the relation by emphasizing the autonomy of literature and advocated the primacy of form over substance, expression over content. But, although we may speak about mimetic or about anti-mimetic conceptions of literature, as Miner reminds us, we seem not to have liberated ourselves from the shackles of *mimesis*:

Today most theoretically minded westerners would deny that they are heirs to *mimesis*, that their views are shaped by mimetic assumptions. [...] On hearing 'representation', 'fiction', 'origin' or 'originality', 'literariness', 'unity', 'plot', or 'character', one knows the talk is mimetic. [...] Someone may object that these terms are not particularly mimetic but simply terms everybody uses. Nothing could be more Eurocentric. Those are precisely terms that everybody does not use, but only users whose assumptions continue to be mimetic.²⁵

Sanskrit poetics, as Miner rightly points out, can be called affective-expressive. However, it does not mean that the Sanskrit theoreticians did not deliberate on imitation or representation. Already Bharata speaks of *nāṭya* as 'an imitation of human action' (*lokāvrittānukaranam nāṭyam*).²⁶ But there is a difference between the Greek notion of *mimesis* and Bharata's *anukarana*. The Greeks saw all art as *mimesis*. According to Aristotle, drama consists of elements aiming at *mimesis* and the plot is the most characteristic element of drama. On the contrary, for Bharata, only *nāṭya* seems to be associated with *anukarana*. *Nāṭya* without *prayoga*, performance, is *kāvya*, literature. The Western approach to literature is thus dominated by a kind of meaningfulness rooted in *mimesis*. The formalist or structuralist attempt to transcend *mimesis* offers apparently no definite emancipation from its fetters.

The *Rāmāyana* can help us understand this difference in the perception of a literary text. The *Rāmāyana* is a work of *karuna-rasa*, or the pathetic mood. *Karuna-rasa*

is related to the *bhāva* called *śoka*, sorrow. This is the feeling that inspired Vālmiki, the author of the text, to write down Rāma's story. The sage, Vālmiki, was once observing a pair of *krauncha* birds. An arrow of a passing hunter killed the male, whereupon the female bird fell into great grief. The compassion (*karuna*) of the sage was so great that his sorrow (*śoka*) turned into the following verse (*śloka*):

*mā nishāda pratishthām tvam agamah śāsvatīh samāh
yat krauncha-mithunād ekam avadhīh kāma-mohitam*

'Hunter, you will never get fame, because you killed the male bird of the *krauncha* couple deluded by passion.'²⁷ This is the literal meaning of the *śloka* spoken by Vālmiki at the moment of his emotional excitement. He used it later as the metrical basis of his epic poem. The Sanskrit tradition translates the verse in several ways, including a foreshadowing of Rāma's story — Rāma's punishment of the demon king, Rāvana, for the abduction of his wife, Sitā. The short *krauncha* episode became the seed from which the whole text of *Rāmāyana* grew. Death, separation, grief, cruelty of fate or circumstances depicted in the text come from Vālmiki's sorrow, which is thus symbolic of the happenings in the main story. The series of separations begins with the narration of Rāma's childhood. First, Rāma is separated from his father, Daśaratha, when the sage, Viśvāmītra, takes Rāma to the forest in order to protect the ascetics from demons. The individual episodes like Daśaratha's death, the grief of his wives, the abduction of Sitā, Rāma's ravings, Sugrīva's similar fate, Sitā's sadness, her banishment after killing Rāvana, her exit from life to the nether world, and so on, are all saturated with *karuna-rasa*. There is nothing in the story that would deviate from this *rasa*. Even love and humorous scenes contribute only to this central emotion.

With unconcealed pride in the Sanskrit tradition, K.S. Narayanchar uses, in reference to this, a fitting simile (since the word *rasa* still retains today the meaning of 'juice' in Indian languages):

Mere character analysis or plot examination of the Epic without reference to this rasanubhava would be perverse indeed. Neither the comparative method, nor the analytical method of western criticism can ever make much of the *Ramayana* experience. Discussions about *Ramayana's* sociology, metaphysics, historicity would all amount to only digressive, unaesthetic exercises like the paper industry devoted to making use of the sugar-cane-husk, and not sipping its juice.²⁸

The difference between the Western and the Indian view of aesthetic experience has, naturally, consequences for the evaluation of literature. Structural aesthetics views aesthetic value as a potential, present in the work of art. This value is manifested only in the interaction of the objective structure of the work with the currently applied, historically constituted and socially valid structure of norms. On the basis of this process, the aesthetic value that exists in the artwork only potentially, becomes actual.

Dionýz Ďurišin, following Mikuláš Bakoš, recognized three aesthetic values: historical-genetic value, developmental value and actual value.²⁹ The historical study of literature combines the historical-genetic and the developmental aspects, whereas the actual value is a point of departure for literary criticism. The dialectical combina-

tion of all three aspects allows one to respect the variability of the meaning and of the value of artworks in different historical and social contexts and thus achieve ‘real scientific objectivity’.

The attitude of Sanskrit theoreticians to literature leads to a completely different understanding of literature. The value they see in literature does not seem to be susceptible to the influence of time, to historical concretization. *Rasa* is based on *sthāyi-bhāvas*, fundamental human emotions. Such a view of literature is of course not favourable to literary history as conceived of by structuralists.

The existence of affective-expressive poetics – Sanskrit poetics being just one form of them – brings further problems to already-problematic literary historiography. The Slovak project of a history of world literature attempts to overcome Eurocentrism by its openness to include all literatures of the world in its research programme. Nonetheless, the knowledge of non-Western poetics shows that it is Eurocentric in its theoretical foundations. Despite cultural relativism, which inevitably enters the discussion, the goal of research in general is to achieve results with universal validity. Comparative poetics clearly shifts the interest in non-Western literatures and their intellectual traditions from the level of exoticism, a kind of political correctness to include the non-Western world in its thinking as well, or the effort to attain complete historical knowledge of the subject, to fundamental questions of the object of study, not only as major-language literature, but in terms of all literature as a unique human product. Comparative poetics thus becomes a challenge to comparative literary studies as well as to the project of history of world literature as conceived of by the theory of interliterariness .

I can neither offer any solution to the problem nor guess whether any potential solution will be too vague, as is often the case with broad generalizations. Of course, it is always easier to deconstruct than to come up with constructive proposals. This is also a limitation of my paper — it identifies a problem the solutions to which can only come from the collective attempt of experts in various critical traditions.

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NOTES

- ¹ Gadamer, Hans-Georg, *Destruktion und Dekonstruktion*, in *Gesammelte Werke, Bd. 2., Hermeneutik II, Wahrheit und Methode, Ergänzungen Register*, Tübingen: Mohr (Siebeck), 1993, p. 363.
- ² The term world literature (*Weltliteratur*) was first used by the eighteenth century German poet and translator, Christoph Martin Wieland. However, it gained recognition thanks to Goethe, who used it in 1827. Goethe found the term *Weltliteratur* to be related to other similar terms which designated transnational concepts: *Weltkommunikation*, *Weltfrömmigkeit*, *Weltbildung*, as well as the older term *Weltbürger*. The origin of the idea may be traced to Goethe’s interest in newspapers and magazines that relayed news about other countries. Goethe understood world literature as a form of literary communication among living (but also already dead) authors of different nations, as a spiritual exchange for the sake of social agency, a kind of collective consciousness *in litteris*. He did not view world literature as related to something classical or canonical. Quite the contrary, it was related to the topical, to the contemporary, to the modern. His notion of world literature needs therefore to be understood as a process. It is not possible to determine which works belong to world literature be-

cause its topicality always changes. Goethe's notion of world literature is very wide and encompasses everything written (*Schrifttum*), regardless of its literary qualities.

- ³ See Zelenka, Miloš, 'Hermeneutische und dekonstruktivistische Auffassung der Weltliteratur – ein Ausweg aus der Krise?', in Koška, Ján, and Koprda, Pavol (eds), *Koncepcie svetovej literatúry v epoche globalizácie/Concepts of World Literature in the Age of Globalisation*, Bratislava: Ústav svetovej literatúry SAV, 2003, pp. 155–68. The tendency to hermeneutic models of world literature can also be observed among our Western neighbours, for example in the work of comparatists in Prague (V. Černý, V. Svatoň and others) and in Brno (S. Wollmann and others).
- ⁴ Damrosch, David, *What is World Literature?*, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2003, pp. 298–99.
- ⁵ Weisstein, Ulrich, *Einführung in die Vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft*, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1968, p. vi.
- ⁶ Konstantinović, Zoran, *Vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft. Bestandsaufnahme und Ausblicke*, Bern: Peter Lang, 1988, pp. 159–62.
- ⁷ Cited in Miner, Earl Roy, *Comparative Poetics. An Intercultural Essay on Theories of Literature*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990, pp. 5–6.
- ⁸ Ďurišin, Dionýz, *Teória medziliterárneho procesu I*, Bratislava: Ústav svetovej literatúry SAV, 1995, p. 9. – 'Naším úsilím je dospieť k výkladu umeleckej literatúry so špecificky vnútornou usporiadanými prvkami. Tým je zabezpečený osobitne vedecký charakter vedy o literatúre, ktorá vysvetľuje a zjednocuje rozmanité zložky literatúry do systému. Deje sa to v rozličných rovinách vývinového pohybu literatúry, a to od najmenších umeleckých zložiek až po jej najväčšiu, konečnú kategóriu – svetovú literatúru.'
- ⁹ Ďurišin, Dionýz, *Problémy literárnej komparistiky*, Bratislava: VSAV, 1967, pp. 31–32. – 'Zo vzťahu porovnávacieho výskumu literatúry k literárnej histórii organicky vyplýva aj jeho vzťah k teórii literatúry. Úlohou teórie literatúry je analyzovať a riešiť všeobecné otázky literatúry, počínajúc štrukturálnymi zložkami umeleckého diela a končiac jeho literárnymi a mimoliterárnymi determinantami v najširšom zmysle [...]. V poznávacom procese teórie literatúry dochádza tak ku generálnym zovšeobecneniam, ktoré majú principiálny charakter a predstavujú základné východisko pre ostatné odvetvia literárnej vedy. Z nich vychádza aj porovnávacie skúmanie (resp. literárna história) pri skúmaní konkrétnych otázok genézy umeleckého diela a jeho zaradenosti do určitého literárneho kontextu. Konečné zistenia, ku ktorým dospieva komparatistika, poskytujú vďaka svojej jedinečnosti materiál na skúmanie teoretického charakteru.'
- ¹⁰ Tripathi, Radhavallabh, 'Indian Aesthetics on Crossroads,' <<http://www.museindia.com/showfocus4.asp?id=699>>
- ¹¹ The dates in brackets are only tentative.
- ¹² Patnaik, Priyadarshi, *Rasa in Aesthetics. An Application of Rasa Theory to Modern Western Literature, with a Foreword by Prof. K. Krishnamoorthy*, New Delhi: D.K. Printworld, 1997.
- ¹³ See, for example, Hogan, Patrick Colm, *The Mind and its Stories. Narrative Universals and Human Emotion*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- ¹⁴ Chaudhary, Satyadev, and Gupta, Shanti Swarup, *Bhāratīya tathā paśchātya kāvyāśāstra kā sankshipt vivechan*, New Delhi: Naman Prakashan, 2005, p. 149.
- ¹⁵ *Nāṭya Śāstra*, Chapter 6, in Nagar, R.S., *Nāṭyaśāstra of Bharatamuni with the Commentary Abhinavabhāratī by Abhinavaguptācārya*, Delhi: Parimal, 2003, p. 271. (All translations from Sanskrit used in the paper are mine.)
- ¹⁶ For a detailed analysis of Kālidāsa's play see Gerow, Edwin, 'Plot Structure and the Development of Rasa in the Śakuntalā,' in *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, (1979), no. 4, pp. 559–72 and (1980), no. 3, pp. 267–82.
- ¹⁷ *Dhvanyāloka* 3.10 *vritti*, in Pathak, Jagannāth, *Dhvanyāloka of Śrī Ānandavardhanācārya with the Locanā Sanskrit Commentary of Śrī Abhinavagupta and the Prakāśa Hindī Translation*, Vārānasi: Chowkhamba Vidyabawan, 2006, pp. 362–63.
- ¹⁸ *Kāvyāṅkāra* 1.16, in Sastry, P.V. Nāganātha, *Kāvyāṅkāra of Bhāmaha*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1991, p. 6.
- ¹⁹ *Kāvyāṅkāra-sūtrāni* 1 *vritti*, in Śāstrī, Hargovinda, *Kāvyāṅkārasūtras of Ācārya Vāmana*, Vārānasi: Chaukhamba Surabharati Prakashan, 2005, p. 4.

- ²⁰ *Kāvya prakāśa* 1.4, in Singh, Satya Vrata, *Kāvya prakāśa of Ācārya Mammata, edited with Śāśikāla Hindi Commentary*, Vārānaśi: Chowkhamba Vidyabhawan, 2003, p. 10.
- ²¹ *Sāhityadarpana* 1.3, in Ballantyne, J.R. and Mitra, Pramāda Dāsa, *The Sāhitya-Darpana or Mirror of Composition of Viśvanātha*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1994, p. 10.
- ²² *Rasagāṅadhara* 1.2, in Bhanja, Dhananjaya, *Rasagāṅadhara. Text with English Translation and Critical Study*, Delhi: Bharatiya Kala Prakashan, 2004, p. 5.
- ²³ Pettersson, Anders, 'Concepts of Literature and Transcultural History', in Pettersson, Anders (ed.), *Literary History: Towards a Global Perspective. Vol.1. Notions of Literature Across Times and Cultures*, Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2006, p. 16.
- ²⁴ Bakoš, Mikuláš, 'Na cestu', in Ďurišin, D., *Problémy literárnej komparatistiky*, op. cit., pp. 5–6 (6). – '[...] pokračovaním vývinovej cesty, na ktorej nájdeme A. Veselovského i ruských „formalistov“, ako aj J. Mukařovského a F. Wollmana.'
- ²⁵ Miner, op. cit., pp. 26–27.
- ²⁶ *Nāṭya Śāstra* 1.112, in Nagar, op. cit., p. 38.
- ²⁷ *Rāmāyana, Bālakānda* 2.15, in *Śrīmad Vālmiki-Rāmāyana with Sanskrit Text and English Translation*, Gorakhpur: Gitapress, 2004.
- ²⁸ Narayanchar, K.S., 'The Rasa View of Art and its Advantage over Western Poetics – Some Illustrations from the Ramayana and Mahabharata', in Narasimhaiah, C.D. (ed.), *East West Poetics at Work*, Madras: Sahitya Akademi, 1994, p. 116.
- ²⁹ Bakoš, Mikuláš, 'Problém hodnotenia v skúmaní umenia', in *Literárna história a historická poetika*, Bratislava: Slovenský spisovateľ, 1973, pp. 41–45.

POJEM SVETOVÁ LITERATÚRA A DEFINOVANIE LITERATÚRY V ZÁPADNEJ A INDICKEJ LITERÁRNEJ VEDE

**Svetová literatúra. Definícia literatúry. Teória medziliterárnosti.
Štrukturalizmus. Dionýz Ďurišin. Komparatívna poetika. Sanskrtská poetika.
Literárna história. Eurocentrismus.**

Svetová literatúra je jedným z kľúčových pojmov porovnávacej literárnej vedy. Slávny nemecký spisovateľ J. W. Goethe použil tento termín na označenie narastajúcej dostupnosti textov iných národov. Neskôr sa medzi literárnymi vedcami udomácnila aditívna a selektívna koncepcia svetovej literatúry. Slovenský teoretik Dionýz Ďurišin rozvinul svoju vlastnú historiografickú koncepciu svetovej literatúry, ktorá ho dokonca donútila vzdať sa tradičnej literárnej komparatistiky. Predmetná štúdia sa pokúša situovať pojem literatúry, na ktorom sa zakladá Ďurišinova koncepcia literatúry, do diskurzu o pojme literatúry na Západe a v Indii. Komparatívna poetika, známa medzi západnými komparatistami cez dielo Earla Minera, poukázala na existenciu literárnokritických tradícií mimo západného sveta. Miner nazýva východné poetiky citovo-expresívnymi. Sanskrtská tradícia, patriaca tiež do tejto kategórie, má bohatú tradíciu teoretického uvažovania o podstate literatúry. Ďurišin založil svoju teóriu medziliterárnosti na Veselovského historickej poetike, ktorú spojil so štrukturalizmom. Ponúka v nej teoretický základ pre písanie dejín svetovej literatúry, literatúru sa snaží chápať prostredníctvom histórie. Zameriavajúc sa na pojmy ako literárnosť a významovosť, vychádza z predpokladu, že k objektívnemu poznaniu literatúry sa dá dospieť prostredníctvom poznania genetického a vývinového aspektu estetickej hodnoty literárneho diela. Sanskrtská poetika však vidí hodnotu literárneho textu najmä v jeho schopnosti generovať rasu. Skúsenosť rasy je „vychutnávaním“ určitých emocionálnych stavov. Nie je spojená s interpretačnými zmenami spôsobenými inou historickou situáciou. Štrukturalis-

tický prístup, odhliadnuc od obmedzení, ktoré má z pohľadu západných literárnych vedcov, sa v prípade nezápadných literatúr javí ako neadekvátne. Z toho vyplýva, že hoci sa teória medziliterárnosti svojou otvorenosťou voči literatúram nezápadného sveta snaží prekonať eurocentrizmus starších prístupov, jej teoretické základy ostávajú eurocentrické. Citovo-expressívne poetiky predstavujú výzvu pre teóriu medziliterárnosti.

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