

SLAVOMÍR WOLLMAN: Slovanské literatury ve střední Evropě.

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If the two proverbs “an apple does not fall far from the tree” or “like father, like son” have ever proved true in the field of Slavonic studies, it was without a doubt in the case of the father and son Wollman – namely, the father, Professor PhDr. Frank Wollman, DrSc., (1888–1969) and the son, Professor PhDr. Slavomír Wollman, DrSc., (1925–2012). Yet the scholarly pursuits of the father went far beyond the limits of Slavonic literary studies, which was his field of research as a senior lecturer and associate professor in Slavonic Studies at Comenius University, Bratislava, (1923–1928) and full professor at the Faculty of Arts of Masaryk University, Brno (1928–1959), and which became the main subject of two of his major monographs (*Slovanství v jazykově literárním obrození u Slovanů*, 1958; *Slavismy a antislavismy za jara národů*, 1968) [Slavism in the linguistic and literary revival of Slavs; Slavisms and anti-Slavisms in the spring of nations].

The scope of his interest included general literary theory, comparative literature and folkloristics, as well as theatrology, the specialization he established at Janáček Academy of Music and Performing Arts in Brno, following on from his own attempts at historical drama. While working in Bratislava, Wollman, Sr., met his future wife Anna, neé Fajnorová, the Slovak journalist and author, daughter of the prominent Slovak lawyer and politician Vladimír Fajnor; hence their son Slavomír spent his early youth in Slovakia

before starting his studies at the Faculty of Arts in Prague in 1945. So he was perfectly right in 1947 to say: “I am a Czechoslovak – not only by birth but in my mind.”

On completion of his academic programme in Slavonic Studies and Russian at the Faculty of Arts, Charles University, Prague, Slavomír Wollman joined the Slavonic Institute of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences and, regardless of its various reorganizations, including the formal termination of the establishment (revived in 1992), he remained its loyal member until his retirement in 2004. It was because of his high linguistic competence that Wollman became indispensable for the activities of international Slavonic institutions: from 1957 he worked on the Czechoslovak Committee of Slavonic Scholars and from 1963 he was a member of the International Committee of Slavonic Scholars, later on, even presiding over it; besides, for more than five decades he was on the editorial board of the *Slavia* journal, and, finally, its editor-in-chief. Regrettably, the closing stage of his editorial activities was marked by professionally incompetent interference in the journal's content from the then management of the Slavonic Institute of the AS CR (which he opposed in his Statement on the Imminent Threat to *Slavia* on 24th May, 2004); subsequently he was removed by the then director of the Slavonic Institute of the AS CR from his position as *Slavia*'s editor-in-chief on the grounds of harming “the repu-

tation of both the journal and the Slavonic Institute”, his own international scholarly repute notwithstanding.

Apart from a number of papers dealing in particular with Slavonic and Russian drama, Slavonic comparative literature and literary research methodology, prior to his death S. Wollman authored four monographs: *Slovo o pluku Igorově jako umělecké dílo* (The Igor Tale as a Work of Art, 1958), *Porovnávací metoda v literární vědě* (The Comparative Method in Literary Research, 1988), *Česká škola literární komparatistiky* (The Czech School of Comparative Literature, 1989) and *La storia dei generi letterari* (1990).

Wollman’s fifth monograph, *Slovanské literatury ve střední Evropě* (Slavonic Literatures in Central Europe), written in the final stage of his life and edited by Miloš Zelenka, was published posthumously by Masaryk University Brno in 2013, as the first volume of the Slavica Universitatis Masarykianae edition. It includes fourteen papers dated from 1988–2003, thirteen of which have already been published in journals and collections. For the purposes of this edition, the texts were revised, or possibly supplemented, by the author and his editor so as to form a compositionally organized whole, divided into three thematic sections that are devoted to: 1. comparative literature and Slavonic literary scholarship; 2. comparative literary history of Slavonic literatures; and 3. personal features, offering under the title of “Můj život mezi vědou a uměním” (My Life Between Scholarship and Art) what can be classified as “the confessions of a Slavonic scholar”, based on the recordings of Anna Zelenková’s interviews with the reminiscing Slavomír Wollman.

The monograph *Slovanské literatury ve střední Evropě* as well as its first thematic section is introduced by the eponymous study that was delivered at the 9th Congress of Slavonic Scholars, held in Bratislava in 1993, and which contained a concise exposition of intergenerational and differential processes in Central European literatures from the early

beginnings to modernism at the turn of the 20th century. The hitherto unpublished text of “Literární slavica na počátku 21. století – Prolegomena a teze k srovnávacímu nástinu interních a externích korelací a kontrastů” (Slavonic Literary Studies in the Early 21st Century – Prolegomena and theses for a comparative outline of internal and external correlations and contrasts) defines the desiderata of contemporary Slavonic studies, mainly emphasising the absence of comparative literary syntheses on Romance literatures, Anglophonic literatures, Latin American Literatures, etc., let alone Slavonic literatures.

The following paper, “Slovanská filologie na přelomu 20. a 21. století” (Slavonic Philology at the Turn of the 21st Century), while defining this field of research as part of philology focused on Slavonic materials, draws attention to the fact that “the definition and concept of Slavonic philology is dependent on the definition and concept of philology itself”. Subsequently, having given an overview of the changing concept of Slavonic philology, Wollman concludes that the position of linguistics in philology “is central, but not superior”, that the existence of philology as a field of research “is justified only by the recognition of literature as a system which grows from the language and has an impact on it as well. It is thus justified by the structural community of both components that make up a system of systems.”

The paper entitled “Historická poetika jako badatelský předmět” (Historical Poetics as a Subject of Research) on the one hand describes the changes of this concept as introduced by Alexander Nicolayevich Veselovsky (*Istoricheskaya poetika*, 1940), and on the other, it delimits its sphere of activity, stating that “no reliable findings about the development of poetics can be made through simple appraisal of ‘great works’ and their synchronic and diachronic contexts. It is, in particular, a disregard for the role of oral tradition in the whole process that poses a serious danger to comparative scholars at a time when some comparative theories are conceived regard-

less of folklore. Not to mention confining the problems of poetics to one national literature, which necessarily leads to incomplete or incorrect conclusions since poetics always develops in the consciousness and works of major cultural communities. [...] If poetics is conceived as a subject of study, the latter is identified with a developing poetical context which under comparative examination of specific literary creations shows signs of conformity, linkage and mutual relationship in the genre, style and stylistic formation, in the approach to themes and types, in formative procedures and devices, in the hierarchy of various levels of literature and oral tradition, and last but not least, in the judgement, honouring or breaking of tradition.”

In “Humanisticko-barokní slavismus” (Humanistic-Baroque Slavism), referring to the thematically relevant conclusions of Frank Wollman, the author underlines the interconnection of humanism and the baroque and the fact that “namely with the Slavonic nations it is obvious that baroque thought was profoundly influenced by humanism”. And it was the same Wollman, Sr. who coined the term of “eidologie” (Gr. *eidōs* – shape, aspect, form, semblance, nature) which can be translated as “morphology”. The study then gives a detailed account of the genesis of Humanistic-Baroque Slavism flourishing under the Ottoman threat to Christian Europe.

Another theme that appealed to S. Wollman’s intellectual curiosity was “Poetika slovanských literatur” (The Poetics of Slavonic Literatures), as introduced by him at the 10th International Congress of Slavonic Scholars, held in Sofia in 1988. Reprinted in the Brno collection of papers *Litteraria humanitas – Genologické studie II* in 1993, this text of cardinal virtue revives the Jakobsonian search for “common specifics of Slavonic poetry” resulting from the grammatical structure of Slavonic languages, and at the same time, subject to “common and local trends of literary development, and by this token dependent on the evolution of literary genres and movements and on variations of taste. It fol-

lows that the character and development of this poetics depends on the temperament of poets who establish the style and on the background of their creations.”

In “Aspekty poetiky za obrození Slovanů” (Aspects of Poetics During the Slavonic Revival) S. Wollman proceeds from the general poetics of Slavonic literature to historically specified issues. He presents here the outdated theory that the revival involved “only small Slavonic nations which had lost their state and political continuity, and according to some scholars, even the continuity of their cultural and literary development” and summarises the efforts to discern this process with all Slavonic ethnic groups, including the non-Slavonic ethnic groups in larger, linguistically and ethnically mixed regions. He brings to notice the key role of folk culture, mainly folklore, which however does not arise from 18th-century cultural movements or from “scholarly interest” but from “social reality, when the subjugated people themselves acted as an effective agent on the historical stage”.

The second section of Wollman’s monograph on *Slovanské literatury ve střední Evropě* is devoted to literary history and primarily features the paper entitled “Pokračovatelé Dobrovského: etnolingvistická a geokulturní souvislosti v srovnávací slovanské filologii” (The Followers of Dobrovský: ethno-linguistic and geocultural contexts in Slavonic comparative philology) written for the 13th International Congress of Slavonic Scholars, Ljubljana 2003. In its essayistic passages Wollman expresses his admiration for Josef Dobrovský, who was “rather than a founder of an indistinctly defined field of interest, existing from time immemorial [...], its critical reformer and supporter of the new discipline, its methodology and practice”; refuting the persistent accentuation of Dobrovský’s “scepticism about the future of the national language”, he proves that the great scholar “actually feared that Czech might only remain the speech of popular, mostly translated, burlesques staged in the Bouda [shack] theatre,

or subsist as uncultivated slang of poor people in towns or villages". In reference to Wollman's apologia of Josef Dobrovský, it could be added that even by the early 21st century the danger of degradation and abasement of the standard or colloquial Czech language, has not been averted, rather it is gradually increasing. Jagić's concept of Slavonic philology as "inquiry into the entire spiritual life of Slavs" was, in Wollman's opinion, carried out as intended by Dobrovský, including "the following specialisations and gradual emancipation of the whole range of disciplines surrounding the proper linguistic and literary core of philology in the strict sense of the word, and the completion of this process through the motto of the Prague Linguistic Circle – 'word and literature'".

The next article introduces another founding father of Slavonic studies – Pavol Jozef Šafárik; here, under the title of "Šafárik a ti druzí: hledání generální literatury" (Šafárik and the Others: a Quest for General Literature) S. Wollman focuses on Šafárik's "Geschichte der slawischen Sprache und Literatur nach allen Mundarten" from 1826, which "for the first fifty or sixty years served the learned world as the essential handbook of the history of Slavonic literatures until the culminating Revival and Romanticism", and "directly or through followers and plagiarists [...] as a textbook in many countries until World War I".

Subsequently, the author mentions two of Šafárik's followers, or rather plagiarists – Frédéric Gustave Eichhoff, and particular. Therese Albertina Louisa von Jacob (1797–1880), who wrote under "the anagram of her maiden name as Talyj". Wollman gives a detailed description of the genesis of Šafárik's work and its continuation in contemporary West European attempts at defining "general literature", from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe to Madame de Staël and August Wilhelm Schlegel to Friedrich Schlegel.

Under the title of "Moderna" (Modernism) S. Wollman proceeds to the last two decades of the 19th century and the first two decades

of the 20th century to demonstrate that "this new process does retain, despite the seeming disparateness, its own character; that it unfolded in the whole group of Slavonic literatures and is comparable to what happened simultaneously in the non-Slavonic literatures, in the Centre, South, Southeast, North and West of Europe". In this respect, it follows up the final part of the comparative synthesis of Slavonic literatures, published in 1928 by Frank Wollman, who could still rely on autopsy. In Wollman's view the mottoes and names of "moderna" and "secese" (art nouveau) suggest "on the one hand, quest for fresh thought, and on the other, the necessary break with convention, forsaking its sphere and established organisations". The author refers to the secession of Hermann Bahr, Hubert Gordon Schauer, Vilém Mrštík, František Xaver Šalda, Stanislav Kostka Neumann, and also of representatives of modernism in Poland, Russia and the Slavonic South, and concludes his reflection upon Slavonic modernism saying that its immense complexity "reveals a manifest desire and call for action to reject the contradiction between a group and an individual and to induce national and social liberation".

In "Východoslovanská účast v českém literárním vývoji" (East Slavonic Participation in the Czech Literary Development) Wollman refers to the exemplary work of Marian Szyjkowski "Polská účast v českém národním obrození" (The Polish Share in the Czech National Revival, 1931–1946), which inspired the project of "Slovanská účast v českém literárním vývoji" (Slavonic Participation in the Czech Literary Development) aimed at exploring interliterary relations within twelve Slavonic literatures which were then divided into East Slavonic, West Slavonic and South Slavonic segments. Whereas the intensity of Czech literary relations with West Slavs (Slovaks, Poles and Lusation Sorbs) has been stimulated by geographical proximity, their contacts with South and East Slavs has been determined by other spiritual, cultural, linguistic and literary factors. Nevertheless,

even here “literary Europeisms [...] are because of their way of expression, slant and by their very nature also Slavisms in principle”.

Next, Wollman’s attention shifts to the chronology of Czech-East Slavonic literary relations until the onset of Russian Realism, “when Czech literature became for the most part the recipient party”. In the article “Interkurence literárních struktur u západních Slovanů” (Intercurrences of Literary Structures with West Slavs) Wollman determines the basic factors of convergence in West Slavonic literatures, both in spiritual literature, where the most important part was played by national translations of the Bible, and in profane literature; incidentally the author underlines the absence of a language barrier among West Slavs until the mid-19th century, when finally “translators became significant mediators, without whose appraisal no in-depth examination of mutual literary relations in the given segment of nations is workable”. Although Wollman’s next paper “Duše v lyru vkleť a způsoby jejího výkladu: Úvaha o A. S. Puškinovi a hermenutice” (A Lyre-Locked Soul and Ways of its Interpretation: A Reflection on A. S. Pushkin and hermeneutics) basically deals with the works of the greatest Russian Romantic and poet as such; its connection with the Czech literary environment is given by the fact that “duše v lyru vkleť” is “a quotation from Petr Křička’s faithful and delicate translation which helped to fix Pushkin’s famous epitaph in Czech literary consciousness” (namely his poem *Exegi monumentum*, in the Russian original “dusha v zavetnoi lyre” – in Wollman’s close translation “a soul in the lyre inherited or bequeathed to me” – with Wollman paraphrasing a line from Mácha’s *Máj*). Further in the text, Wollman construes and interprets both classical and current contexts of this metaphor: “an approach to the essence of a work, to its soul” cannot refuse to see the fact that “‘a text’ that fails to be emotionally intentional is not a work of art”.

The fourteenth paper and last part of the *Slovanské literatury ve střední Evropě* collec-

tion, entitled “Slované a slavistika: represe – revize – repetice” (Slavs and Slavonic Studies: Repression – Revision – Repetition) and published in 1997, describes, as its original title suggested, “the persecution of Slavonic scholars in the Soviet Union” and its impact on the Slavonic Institute in Prague. Slavomír Wollman reviews in it *Delo Slavistov: 30-e gody* authored by Fedor Dmitrijevich Ashnin and Vladimir Mikhajlovich Alpatov and published in Moscow in 1994. He illustrates his analysis with many valuable, though shocking, details which will be indispensable to any future historian of Slavonic studies between the wars and in the years after, when Slavonic studies and the Slavonic institute in Prague were blamed for “revivalist, bourgeois relics and fictitious absence of the research subject”, which resulted in the abolition of the Institute in 1963. So even today, Wollman’s warning does not lose its gravity since those in power, irreverent towards scholars, assume the right to manipulate scholarly fields and institutions.

As mentioned above, the third section of *Slovanské literatury ve střední Evropě*, entitled “Můj život mezi vědou a uměním” contains “the confessions of a Slavonic scholar”, a specialist that Slavomír Wollman always was, through all his life and scholarly work. He is presented here as a reliable witness and brilliant narrator, grand old man of the Czech academy – as evidenced by the pictorial supplement to the monograph. The interviewer who compiled it, Anna Zelenková, is also the author of the “Bibliografie Slavomíra Wollmana” (1925–2012) [S. W.’s Bibliography], while the book’s editor, Miloš Zelenka, accompanied Wollman’s studies with an erudite postscript “Slavista a komparatista Slavomír Wollman: symbol autority a slušnosti” (Slavonic and Comparatist Scholar Slavomír Wollman: a Symbol of Authority and Respectability). The exceptional nature of Wollman’s personality and scholarly legacy as substantiated by his last monograph is trenchantly summarized by M. Zelenka as follows: “Although Wollman’s scholarly outlook, his theoretical

thinking and wide erudition were mainly recognized abroad, he is celebrated as a true follower of the Czech and Slovak School of comparative literature, remaining a legend

of Slavonic philology even in the Czech and Slovak environment which not infrequently consigns distinguished scholars to oblivion.”

Jiří Fiala

ROMAN MIKULÁŠ, SIBYLLE MOSER, KARIN S. WOZONIG (Hg.): Die Kunst der Systemik. Systemische Ansätze der Literatur- und Kunstforschung in Mitteleuropa. Münster, Berlin, Wien, Zürich, London: LIT Verlag, 2013. 224 p. ISBN 978-3-643-50492-0

The exceptional Slovak literary scholar František Miko once characterized the development in literary study as a pendulum-spiral-like movement, in which current paradigmatic changes are motivated by the need to compensate for all that was previously neglected, underrated, or on the contrary exaggerated and overrated. The poles among which these contradictory movements took place at least from the second half of the 19th century can be characterized through the opposition between the scientific, exact, “harder”, objectivistic, structural approach on the one hand and the aesthetic, “softer”, essayist, existentialist approach on the other. These periodic fluctuations took place in Slovak literary scholarship too, even though it did not evolve in an “immanent order” for nearly half a century but developed under the pressure of political doctrine (therefore its development was not in sync with West-European scholarship: e.g. while the existentialist paradigm was in decline in France, it reached its peak in the Czecho-Slovak context).

The 1970s in Slovak literary studies were dominated by scientism (not statistically, but in term of productivity), concerned first and foremost with adapting models and vocabularies of “cybernetic” disciplines (later complemented with the “Prigogin” concept). By contrast, the 1990s (under the influence of the belated “discovery” of the postmodern) preferred the aesthetic pole – even to the extent of trend obligation (similarly, Borgesian thematization of text and seeming intertextuality became obligatory in writing, as well

as genre hybridity or the Escherian loop between text and extratextual reality).

As far as the contemporary Slovak discourse is concerned: the above-mentioned pendulum has been leaning towards the postmodern (style) or post-structuralism (methodological paradigm) for too long not to inspire some counter-movement. Such counter-movements are initiatives typologically close to the New Sincerity, or “Novaja iskrennost”. Another direction can be seen in the efforts towards the revitalization of scientism in a relatively precise manner. A distinct agent of this orientation in the case of Slovak literary science is Roman Mikuláš, who approaches literary process very systematically, as is evidenced by the collective monograph *Die Kunst der Systemik. Systemische Ansätze der Literatur- und Kunstforschung in Mitteleuropa*. Published by the prestigious publishing house LIT-Verlag (Berlin, Münster, Wien, Zürich, London), it is co-edited by Sibylle Moser and Karin S. Wozonig. The monograph is a major publication in Mikuláš’s widely constructed research project *Literary Science as ‘Systemics’*.

Mikuláš characterizes the project as an effort to “analyze and systematize the options of connecting constructivism, system theory, and chaos research in literary science (radical constructivism, as well as chaos theory are considered system theories)” (project VEGA 2/0143/10). “This new paradigm named ‘Systemics’ (Heinz von Foerster)” according to Mikuláš means a “shift from static structures analysis towards observing movement

in highly complex dynamic systems” (ibid.; literary process can be considered such a complex dynamic system). The project then tries to “connect scientific knowledge on nonlinear (dynamic-chaotic) systems with literary issues” (ibid.). The basis of the concept is “fractal logic of communication building on structural connections of biological, psychological, ontogenetic, sociocultural, ethnological, or anthropological fields of phenomena” (ibid.). Therefore, the research is transdisciplinary in character (study of cognition, emotion, sensory perception, social processes, economy, art history, action theory etc.) and the ambition of the scholars is to overcome the “aesthetics of a structural-semiotic kind” (ibid.).

Mikuláš sees the beginning of implementing system theories into literature in the 1980s and in the context of Slovak science in Popovič’s last monograph “Communication Projects of Literary Studies” (*Komunikačné projekty literárnej vedy*, 1983). However, it needs to be said that even more explicit and programmatic dedication to the system approach towards the literary text is presented in a less-known monograph “Analysis of Literary Work” (*Analyza literárneho diela*) by František Miko (1987; the first chapter is called “System analysis in Marxist literary science” [*Systémová analýza v marxistickej literárnej vede*]) whose distribution was limited for ideological reasons. F. Miko also co-authored a similar collective work “Sign – system – process” (*Znak – systém – proces*, 1987; with a secondary title “On the problems of Marxist semiotics” [*K problémom marxistickej semiotiky*]) together with other representatives of humanities – the researchers Pavol Koprda, Nora Krausová and Valér Mikula.

Back to the project of Roman Mikuláš – its platform created an international forum of researchers from Slovakia, Germany, Austria and Switzerland who took part in *Die Kunst der Systemik. Systemische Ansätze der Literatur- und Kunstforschung in Mitteleuropa*.

The collective monograph is a project with a clear concept and methodology. Its compo-

sition, based on deductive-implicational and complementary sequence, balances all studies, reflecting a well thought-out intention of the editors.

S. J. Schmidt’s “Kontingente Ordnung: Zur Selbstorganisation ästhetischer Kommunikation” serves as a good introduction due to its ontological orientation. It is a constructive re-interpretation of reception theory (including the receptive being of text). The article “Systems Theories and the Study of Literature” by S. Tötösy de Zepetnek is also at the beginning because it explicitly uncovers the basic principles of the systemic approach to literature, including its basic concepts (empirical research of literature, literary institutions, polysystemic theory, système de l’écrit, literary field, and comparative cultural research), as well as a representative bibliography of literature on the subject.

The next, “Systemik der Kunst. Eine verwegene Annäherung” (by B. Wyss), follows, focused on systemic critiques of authoritative aesthetic categories (*aesthetics, culture, signifier – signified*) and concepts (I. Kant, T. W. Adorno, J. Derrida, P. De Man etc.). Furthermore, S. Moser’s “Mit Hand, Herz, Auge und Ohr. Sprache als synästhetischer Prozess” explicates the synesthetic nature of language and through interpretation demonstrates the multidisciplinary and intersemiotic potential of the *systemics* paradigm. “Programmierte Operativität und operative Bildlichkeit” by I. Hinterwaldner justifies its intersemiotic relevance, aimed at the field of simulations and computer games.

D. Berlemann’s “Von der ‚Konfiguration der Eigenzustände‘ zur ‚Erwartungsordnung‘. Heinz von Foersters neurophysiologisches Gedächtnismodell und das soziale Gedächtnis des Literatursystems” is an inspiring attempt at applying Foerster’s model of memory upon the memory of literature (in the Slovak context: the concept of literary tradition by Liba and Popovič). It is followed by an overview study by Roman Mikuláš, “Vom Strukturalismus zur Systemik. Konzeptualisierungen der literarischen Kommunikation”, focused

on the possible similarities between the basic tendencies in German literary communication research and the equivalent models developed by Slovak literary studies. “Synergetik und Marxismus im Diskurs der zweiten Hälfte der 1980er Jahre in der Slowakei” by Pavel Matejovič concludes the previous study through evaluation of domestic efforts to establish a synergic concept, regarding the ideological and political context of the given period.

S. Fenkart (“Kunst und Wirtschaft? Über die Möglichkeiten einer systemtheoretischen Beobachtung”) closes these interesting concretizations and specifications of the systemic algorithm. Based on the theory of Luhmann’s concept and the empirical-material grounds of narrative interviews, two seemingly alien social spheres – art on the one hand, economy on the other – are systematically connected.

Instead of commenting on particularities stated in the studies, it would be more fitting to summarize their conceptual-methodological scheme, as the content of all studies in monograph stems from it.

First of all, the project of literary science as systemics is close to the “grand narratives” – these are written not only in fiction but can be found also in scientific papers. Its goal is to expose or establish a universal explanatory, methodological and terminological framework that would connect the widest-possible variety of scientific fields, both in natural sciences and the humanities (the last attempt to make humanities more exact – accordingly to a [post]positivist ideal – can be considered the theory of art/literary communication as practised by A. Molles in the 1950s, early U. Eco, or in our context J. Levý and A. Popovič in the 1960s and 1970s, with the Prigoginic epilogue in the case of P. Zajac in the 1980s).

It is clear that postmodernism explicitly gave up on writing such “grand narratives”. Still, on a deeper implicit level it itself embodied them by frontally enforced, therefore equally universalistic outcomes (e.g. the feverish and massively multiplied irony or deconstruction of “grand narratives”). Moreover,

scepticism toward “grand (scientific) narratives” is not only the result of repeating inauthentic postmodern slogans learned through observation or just a sign of an inability to follow basic rules of “scientific behaviour”. Credible arguments (by Dilthey, Dewey, Husserl, or Heidegger’s questioning of the very basics of scientism in the sense of [post]positivistic certainty, through Lyotard’s example of Auschwitz as pathological endeavour for rational systematics, up to Deleuze’s thesis that faith is a silenced postulate for exact science etc.) against universally valid systems and their centrally organized hierarchy, as well as against the effort to make humanities as exact as natural sciences, were raised in the 20th century. Yet several of these arguments were formed in the scientism code itself.

So it was in Slovak literary studies. The common thread of all later monographs by František Miko, starting with *Production and Reception (Tvorba a recepcia)* (1978), was a thoroughly justified argument with “physicalist objectivism”, therefore, with the endeavour to identify the “truthfulness” and “accuracy/austerity” of the humanities with the role they play in the “hard” science (after his return to Institute of Literary Communication in Nitra, Slovakia, Miko had a problem with following Popovič’s project that worked with the psychology of art, as he considered its relationship to “physicalist objectivism” to be too unclearly marked). I developed Miko’s argumentation further by justifying the difference between the ontological essence of an object of humanities and natural sciences (*Pragmatic Aesthetics of text*, 1995; *Aesthetics of Difference*, 1997) (*Pragmatická estetika textu, Estetika inakosti*). Other than that, I pointed out the difficulties occurring when making naive causal connections between these two differing ontological orders and their understanding of “realness” (per exemplum and pars pro toto: explaining fear as a physiological reaction and its aesthetic meaning are varying universes of interpretation or semantic constructs, and their connection creates an ontological anacoluthon).

In other words – associating the research objects of different disciplines is not a causal relationship among objects, but migration between epistemes, paradigms, interpretation tools and behavioural patterns that generated these objects as semantic constructs.

Ad hoc, it is not at all important to decide which of these approaches is more “productive” or “correct” – any epistemic viewpoint of humanities cannot be taken for granted without dealing with arguments and beliefs that form the humanities from an opposing point of view first.

Consequently, it is appreciated that Roman Mikuláš openly admits a certain amount of uncertainty in the realization of the “systemic manifesto” as “scientific metadiscourse” on the level of solving particular literary scientific problems (see Final Account of the Project (Závěrečná správa projektu) VEGA 2/0143/10). This fact indirectly confirms my (receptive) guess, that not all those who understand literary science as systemics would aim towards performative and particular realizations of the paradigm but would rather stick to general confirmations of the paradigm’s legitimacy. Thus when cultivating this approach toward literary/cultural/sign artefacts, it is crucial to keep the debates on systemics above the level of the referentially weak and rhetorically autonomous self-generating (empty reproduction of terms and “systemic phrases”). A brilliant example is Miko’s work (in his monographs), because he is able to engage the reader and invite him or her into the text while he methodologically justifies the systematic approach and exem-

plifies its utilization on particular issues.

Aside from the few above-mentioned limitations, I consider the collective monograph *Die Kunst der Systemic. Systemische Ansätze der Literatur – und Kunstforschung in Mitteleuropa*, as well as other publications that point toward Dr. Mikuláš’s initiatives, to be in the category of “true (literary) science”. And I mean this phrase in two ways. First of all axiologically – in the midst of the current deterioration of scholarship (that I observe as a member of scientific committees mainly at habilitations and inaugurations) I posit that in the case of Roman Mikuláš it is a responsible effort at basic research. Secondly, the phrase serves as an epistemological qualifier. What I mean is that the postmodern “anything goes” (justified in its beginnings as a reaction to positivist reductionism) turned, at least in the Slovak context, into a conceptual-methodological anarchy (e.g. arbitrary noncommittal babbling under the protection of the less-than-capable or even mystical transcendences of academic discourse). And Mikuláš’s project prophylactically balances it by making efforts toward serious, responsible and verifiable scientific work.

P. S.: The articles in the collective monograph are all – except for one in English – in German. While this fact provides the project with an international dimension, it may receive limited reception in the Slovak context as (paraphrasing S. Tötösy de Zepetnek) English is becoming the new *lingua franca*. It is highly probable that translation to Slovak or English would be beneficial.

Lubomír Plesník

CRISTINA SANDRU: Worlds Apart? A Postcolonial Reading of Post-1945 East-Central European Culture.

Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012. 310 p. ISBN: 978-1-4438-3999-0

Despite the scepticism of some theorists, postcolonial theory has proved to be a useful tool in analyzing the cultures and societies formerly in the Soviet ideological sphere, and over the last decade this approach has been productively

undertaken by a number of critics worldwide. The experiences of Soviet domination by the countries of the former USSR and the Eastern Bloc and those of Western overseas colonization appear to share a number of characteris-

tics. Among these are, according to Cristina Sandru, “the reliance on binary oppositions of the type ‘Orient’/‘Occident’, ‘self’/‘Other’, ‘metropolis’/‘margin’ and the post-imperial ideologies of national self-determination and modernisation they engendered; structures of othering; formations of identity; representations of difference; the experience of trauma [...]; the emergence of Marxist ideology as a particular outgrowth of previous Western narratives of modernity and progress (including colonialism) [...]; the complex trajectories of complicity and resistance” (33). Within this discursive frame, Sandru develops an astute, informed and detailed analysis of post-1945 East-Central European cultures. Rather than conflating colonial and socialist contexts in a way that could easily become meaningless, Sandru’s historically grounded study carefully draws both similarities and differences between Western overseas colonialism and USSR imperialism towards formulating larger observations about how structures of domination work and how the imbrication of power and knowledge produces ideologically interpellated subjects. Pointing out that both Western imperial capitalism and communism were the products of the Enlightenment narrative of modernity and progress, Sandru argues that the (post)communist arena is one of the blind spots of postcolonial theory. According to the author, who is a UK-based postcolonial scholar of Romanian origin grounded in both English and East-Central European literary tradition, a comparative dialogue with the East-Central European experience is necessary for revitalizing the discipline (5).

The monograph is divided into two parts. The first part is a contextualized study of the modes of power wielded by the communist state apparatus in East-Central European cultures and the resistance against it, drawing on many examples from Romanian, Czech, Polish, Hungarian and other literatures. Specifically, Sandru focuses on the manipulation of language as a form of power, such as the “systematic perversion of language by means of overt and covert ideological propaganda”

(63) and textual resistance against it in what she calls “overcoded fiction” (104) – language of allusion and ambiguity, double talk – that includes such stylistic choices as the “preference for oblique modes of narration, grotesque humour, and fantastic or magical realist topoi” (99). Drawing her examples from fiction, drama and film, Sandru traces a generic development from documentary realism and the intellectual novel to the absurd play, parable, dystopia and magical realism. The study vividly demonstrates how the postmodern turn in East-Central European arts in the 1980s emerged from the need to resist the monologic narrative of the communist ideology and to find experimental ways of articulating alternative points of view so as to escape the censor. These narrative experiments (which Sandru compares to similar trends in postcolonial Anglophone fiction) included “confusion of planes of reality, fragmented narrative voices, the intrusion of historical events and personages, the ironical juxtaposition of public History and private histories etc.” (120). This “postmodernism of resistance” (a term coined by Marcel Cornis-Pope) enacts the tension at the heart of an ideological system based on repression.

The second part of the monograph is a comparative analysis of two authors, one writing from a postcolonial, the other from a (post)communist context: Salman Rushdie and Milan Kundera. At first sight, Kundera and Rushdie could not be further apart in terms of style – the former minimalistic and ironic, the latter flamboyant and excessive. Sandru’s comparison draws attention to the shared political and aesthetic tendencies of the two authors that go beyond their differences. These include the liminal spaces self-consciously occupied by both Rushdie and Kundera (of exile, migrancy, hybridity and carnival) and the ambiguity this generates; the ironic self-referential narrative voice and metafiction; their concern with personal and collective trauma; and above all their concern with the question of how to reconcile the rights of the individual citizen to the

demands of the state. Arguing that Kundera and Rushdie “seek to expose the destructive potential of nationalist, ethicist, totalitarian and fundamentalist thinking” (182), Sandru uses the comparative study to link different modes of totalitarianism – Western capitalism and Eastern European communism – and to analyze Rushdie’s and Kundera’s “postmodern resistance” that, in her view, has often been misread as superficial or as eschewing political commitment. Calling Kundera and Rushdie “cultural translators”, Sandru focuses on their ability to cross the boundaries of mental habit, to look beyond the limits of custom, religion, and tradition and embrace humanity. Her wide-ranging analysis includes almost the entire fictional oeuvre of the two authors.

Sandru’s monograph is one of the best-sustained contributions to the discussion on

(post)communist cultures. It reveals blind spots not only in postcolonial theory but also in the discussions on (post)communist literatures and cultures, ways of remembering and forgetting the socialist past. One of the book’s observations is that there exist hardly any memorials (museums, educational programmes) to the victims of the gulags comparable to those remembering the victims of the Nazi concentration camps. This is one of the blind spots of post-communist selective memory to do with European orientalization of the USSR, which removes the crimes of the Stalinist period to a place “elsewhere”, in the East. Sandru’s study shows that a postcolonial examination of post-war East-Central Europe is not only a good idea, but essential in understanding the dynamics of the post-Cold War ideological order.

Dobrota Pucherová

AGATA ANNA LISIAK: *Urban Cultures in (Post)Colonial Central Europe.*

West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2010. 232 p. ISBN 978-1-55753-573-3.

The book *Urban Cultures in (Post)Colonial Central Europe* offers an analysis of post-1989 images of four Central European cities: Berlin, Budapest, Prague and Warsaw. The author starts her study with the assumption that these cities had to redefine their identities after the collapse of the communist regime. They were politically and economically dependent on the Soviet Union. Furthermore, the Soviet influence left its lasting mark in the cities’ culture and architecture. The author tries to explore how they deal with this legacy, how they respond to globalization, and how they present themselves in municipal media, literature and film. She argues that the four cities are not merely Central European, but also (post)colonial. They are postcolonial because of their former dependence on the Soviet Union and colonial because of current Western economic and cultural domination. In short, they were victims of “Sovietization” in the past and are currently victims

of “Americanization”. Lisiak draws on Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek’s notion of “in-between peripherality” and sees these Central European cities as bridges between East and West. Her study also shows indebtedness to Tötösy de Zepetnek in methodology. She grounds her discussion in the framework of comparative cultural studies as they were developed by Tötösy de Zepetnek, who is also the editor of the series in which the book appears.

The book puts forward an interesting thesis. However, the application of (post)colonial theory to the Central European region and the notion of Central Europe itself are quite problematic issues. Lisiak has her take on these problems, which she discusses in relative detail. In my opinion the problem of Central Europe could have been dealt with more exhaustively. The problem of the application of postcolonialism to the region of Central Europe certainly deserves more detailed attention. There are apparently dif-

ferences between postcolonialism and post-communism, or more precisely post-socialism. The satellite states of the Soviet Union or the countries under its influence were never colonies in the true sense of the word. The problem of race, for example, which is central to postcolonial studies, is also absent in the case of Central Europe. Despite this, Lisiak argues that Said's definition of postcolonial culture can be applied to the Central European region. She does not deny the usefulness of notions such as post-communism or post-socialism or postmodern for the understanding of the four Central European cities, but rather claims that the postcolonial perspective may bring new opportunities for research of their urban cultures.

The book is obviously intended for an English-speaking audience with little knowledge of the Central European region. The purpose of some explanations and descriptions is apparently to provide a context for analysis. For a Central European reader who is, so to say, an informed insider, they may seem quite trivial (especially in chapter three). However, the book undoubtedly offers an interesting perspective on four of the major Central European cities and is an important contribution to the growing literature on the postcolonial interpretation of Central and Eastern Europe. It is an excellent example of a multidisciplinary study of selected cities of the region.

Róbert Gáfrik

MÁRIA BÁTOROVÁ: Dominik Tatarka: Slovenský Don Quijote. Sloboda a sny. Bratislava: Veda, 2012. 244 p. ISBN: 9788022412698

Mária Bátorová's research interest has been in the Slovak writers whose work compares to the great European and world authors. At the same time, they are authors with dramatic life narratives that are reflected in their work and attitudes. This can be said of her previous work on Jozef Ciger Hronský (Veda 2000, Peter Lang 2004) and Pavol Strauss (Petrus 2006) as well as the most recent one dedicated to the Slovak dissident writer Dominik Tatarka and entitled *Dominik Tatarka: slovenský don Quijote. Sloboda a sny*. (Dominik Tatarka: the Slovak Don Quixote. Freedom and Dreams). Her works testify to the fact that Mária Bátorová's favourite analytical approach is comparison, which helps her to specify the identifying characteristics of an author's work. Her monographs avoid chronology that is common or even necessary in typical monographs, and she does not dedicate the same attention to all of Tatarka's works. Instead, her approach is selective. The character of the book is well described by Ivo Pospíšil, who wrote that "the book is exceptional in its complexity and flexible structure...", meaning that the structure

reflects the urgency of the issues that the author chose to focus on, rather than chronology. The book's complexity, on the other hand, means that the book covers all of Tatarka's activities and manages to create an integral character portrait of the author, supported by interpretations of concrete texts. The aspects of Tatarka's character Bátorová is interested in are, for example, the authorial identity (or identities), the authenticity of writing, autobiographical elements in his individual prose texts, as well as Tatarka's opinions on culture, the nation, democracy, freedom, etc. She gives due attention to Tatarka's visions (dreams) such as his God's community and notes his affinity with French existentialism, mentioning in this context absurdity, death, alienation, suicide, revolt and, understandably, freedom. She compares Tatarka with Camus, sketching parallels in their life narratives and work. Although neither of the two writers considered himself an existentialist, both engaged with existentialist issues in their work. Tatarka's concern with existentialist problems posed by Sartre and other existen-

tialists is clear, although it ignores the criteria of any philosophical doctrine and his solutions are different, quite positive, as Bátorová emphasizes. The feelings of anxiety, loneliness and disgust that Tatarka carried with him as part of his individuality were naturally activated also by the two totalitarian regimes he experienced. Of course, Tatarka's reaction to totalitarianism was quite typical for a 20th-century intellectual, as Bátorová emphasizes by providing examples from other European literatures and cultures. In the introductory chapters, Bátorová compares Tatarka with the Czech dissident Ludvík Vaculík, arriving to significant differences between the Czech and Slovak dissent. In the chapter on the relationship between nature and culture she compares Tatarka with the Slovak writer J. C. Hronský. An entire chapter is dedicated to the motif of water, which in Tatarka expresses eroticism. For Bátorová, Tatarka is a typical modernist author, with a focus on individuality, singularity and originality, and she rightly opposes the critics who see him as postmodern. She argues that Tatarka had multiple identities, as shown by the fact that in the same period Tatarka wrote and published texts that were ideologically opposed and irreconcilable, e.g., his schematic socialist-realist novels *Prvý a druhý úder* (The First and Second Strike), *Družné letá* (Friendly Years) and *Radostník* (expressing views against "bourgeois nationalists") and shortly after his anti-regime pamphlet *Démon súhlasu* (The Demon of Agreement) and other similar texts. Bátorová explains this discrepancy by arguing that

Tatarka's anti-regime work was an attempt to save himself. There is however also another explanation. Tatarka was a Christian communist who wrote the above-named socialist-realist works in the sincere belief that he was helping socialism. This assumption seems to be confirmed by the fact that Tatarka never distanced himself from this part of his oeuvre, not even after he saw that he was not defending a good cause. He always referred to his faith. Faith – both religious and political – played an important part in Tatarka's life and work, as Bátorová also knows. Bátorová's monograph reveals that the author is fascinated by taboo subjects. While the book covers Tatarka's life story, his works, philosophy, opinions and relationships, the focus is on Tatarka's personality. This fascination allowed the author to notice also the negative aspects of Tatarka's activities. Dubbing him the Slovak Don Quixote, Bátorová explains: "Dissatisfaction, vision and the ability to strike, to take a position, sacrifice comfort for a vision, this quixotic position is typical for Tatarka." We can add: the ability to take the consequences for this in the face of destructive power, and to bear loneliness. The work is written in an expressive language, showing personal engagement and creativity. At the same time, the work reflects a wide knowledge of the philosophical, aesthetic and cultural context, without which this work would be poorer. Last but not least, Bátorová's close reading is very inspiring, providing impulses for further reading.

Vladimír Petřík

MILAN ŽITNÝ: *Severské literatúry v slovenskej kultúre.*

Bratislava: Ústav svetovej literatúry SAV, SAP, 2012. 248 p. ISBN 978-80-89607-04-4

The monograph *Severské literatúry v slovenskej kultúre* (Nordic Literatures in Slovak Culture) is a result of Milan Žitný's long-time interest in the literatures of Northern Europe and their contact with the Central European region. It gives information about selected aspects of the

works of important representatives of Nordic culture, philosophy and literatures of the 19th and 20th centuries. At the same time it sketches the literary and historical aspects of the Slovak reception of Nordic literatures since the 19th century, especially of the works of Søren

Kierkegaard, Hans Christian Andersen and Selma Lagerlöf. It focuses primarily on translation of Nordic literatures into Slovak. Milan Žitný in particular explores the first translations of Henrik Ibsen's dramas and the reception of the works of Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, who was an active advocate of the rights of Slovaks before World War One. Žitný devotes appropriate attention to the development of Scandinavian studies in Slovakia. However, with regard to this it should be mentioned that the author of the monograph is not just an "outsider" who follows the reception of Nordic literatures as a literary historian. Žitný himself takes an active part in mediating Nordic literatures to a Slovak readership.

As far as the methodology is concerned, Milan Žitný draws on the works of his colleagues at the Institute of World Literature of the Slovak Academy of Sciences in the field of translation studies and literary history. The research on literary reception, as it developed in Slovakia, offers a deep insight into the processes and the structure of the reception of literature in other languages. Milan Žitný has succeeded in exploring the different aspects of this process and in uniting them in an organic whole.

Only few Scandinavian authors received attention in Slovakia. Milan Žitný claims therefore that one can speak about reception only with reservations. The reception was unsystematic, discontinuous and paradoxical. Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson and Selma Lagerlöf can serve as examples. In the case of Bjørnson, his political attitude played an important part in his reception. In contrast, Lagerlöf's work was appreciated basically as

a literary artefact. At the same time, both authors were celebrated as representatives of minor literatures who achieved international renown. In his analysis, Milan Žitný always presupposes certain developmental needs of Slovak culture and sees reception as a part of Slovak cultural identity. However, he does not only ask about the causes of reception but also about the reasons for its absence.

In the introductory chapter, Žitný suggests a tentative periodization of the reception of Nordic literatures in Slovakia. The first translation in various journals and in book form appeared in the period between 1880 and 1918. Scandinavian literatures were mostly seen as a corrective or a complement to one's own national development. The years from 1918 to 1945 are characterized by the energetic translation activity of, for example, Karel V. Rypáček, who translated into Czech as well as Slovak. Žitný sees the period from 1945 to 1990 as a literary-historical problem. The influence of Nordic literatures was weakened by the prevalent cultural policy. Only after 1990 could the reception develop freely. However, the monograph is not only interesting because of its description of the fate of Nordic literatures in Slovakia but also because of the inclusion of the translators' biographies. And it should also be noticed that, in spite of the fact that the book concentrates on Slovak culture, Žitný's perspective reaches further and he often includes in his analysis the whole Central European region. The book gives a well-knit picture of the reception of Nordic literatures in Slovak culture with a lot interesting details.

Róbert Gáfrik

JANA KUZMÍKOVÁ, (Ed.): František Švantner: Život a dielo.

Bratislava: Institute of Slovak Literature, 2012. 200 p. ISBN: 978-80-88746-19-5

The book *František Švantner: Život a dielo* (František Švantner: Life and Work) comprises the proceedings of the international conference on the Slovak inter-war prose writer František Švantner (1912–1950) that

took place in the Institute of Slovak Literature of Slovak Academy of Sciences in Bratislava on 2 February 2012. The conference was held on the 100th anniversary of the author's birth and united Slovak, Polish, German and

Czech scholars in reinterpreting Švantner's legacy. The editor, Jana Kuzmíková is a Švantner specialist whose work on Švantner dates back to her PhD study under the supervision of Oskár Čepan.

František Švantner is of the first generation of Slovak authors who could express themselves in the free atmosphere of the Czechoslovak Republic and in their own language. Although Švantner's writing career lasted only 17 years, it nevertheless produced valuable work reflecting inspiration by international modernism. Beginning from his early work (the short story 'Výpoveď', 1933) through his novel *Život bez konca* (the first complete publication was in 1974 as part of selected works by František Švantner) to his annotated selected works published in 2007 by Kalligram and edited by Jana Kuzmíková, the publishing or suppression of Švantner's work is a silent commentary on the political history and ide-

ological atmosphere that every Slovak writer in the 20th century had to face.

After his first expressionist short stories, Švantner's work turns to naturalism, a style that is absent in many other European literatures, either completely or at this intensity. The book includes a detailed, valuable timeline of the author's life and work, illuminating his life narrative, as well as a photo-documentary. The new research in the monograph thematizes, partly in a new light, the questions of the archaic-mythic irrationalism, the subconscious agency of characters, and the relationship between good and evil that were current in the period philosophical discourse. In this sense, the collective monograph is an occasion to remind ourselves of Švantner's work as well as a significant contribution to Slovak literature studies and more widely Slavic studies.

Mária Bátorová

Werkwinkel: Journal of Low Countries and South African Studies.

Ed. Jerzy Koch. Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, Poland, Vol. 7, Number 2 (2012), ISSN 1896-3307

Werkwinkel: Journal of Low Countries and South African Studies, published by the Department of Dutch and South African Studies at the University of Poznan in Poland, is a unique publication in the context of Eastern Europe. Founded by Jerzy Koch, a Polish scholar of Dutch and Afrikaans literature, in 2005, the journal publishes scholarly articles in Polish, English, Dutch and Afrikaans, straddling a wide and heterogeneous cultural space. In the postcolonial world, however, connections are never too far. In July 2012, the University of Poznan awarded an honorary doctorate to the South African writer and Nobel Prize winner J. M. Coetzee. In his acceptance speech, Coetzee spoke about his Polish great-grandfather, Balcer Dubyl, born in 1844 in the province of Poznan, whose life took him to South Africa as a missionary. Issue 7.2 (2012) of *Werkwinkel* is dedicated to Coetzee's visit to the University of Poznan,

the conferral of the honorary doctorate and the programme accompanying the festive occasion, such as the world premiere of the opera *Slow Man*, based on Coetzee's novel of the same name, with a libretto written by the author himself and set to music by the Flemish composer Nicholas Lens. Photographs from the performance accompany interviews with the artists involved, offering new angles and perspectives on Coetzee's work. In addition, the issue includes three scholarly papers on Coetzee by Polish scholars and several book reviews. The broad range of insightful new material is an important contribution to the scholarship on the work of J. M. Coetzee, one of a few world authors to have become a "classic" in his own lifetime. The much awaited official biography of Coetzee by the South African scholar John Kannemeyer is to be released this summer.

Dobrota Pucherová

LADISLAV FRANEK: *Interdisciplinárnosť v symbióze literárnej vedy a umenia*. Bratislava: VEDA, SAS, Institute of World Literature, 2013. 207 p. ISBN 978-80-224-1277-3

The monograph *Interdisciplinárnosť v symbióze literárnej vedy a umenia* (Interdisciplinarity in the Symbiosis of Literary Studies and Art) is a result of long-term research of the literary scholar Ladislav Franek in the area of literary studies, literary criticism, comparative literature studies, comparative stylistics and translation studies. It reflects the best of his long interest in analysing the works of renowned writers of the Romance languages. As the author states in the introduction, the monograph combines several published studies unified in concept and methodology. They derive from Slovak literary and translation research (the early works of Anton Popovič, Dionýz Ďurišin, Jozef Felix, Blahoslav Hečko), inspired by Spanish and French literary theorists and experts in comparative literature (Claudio Guillen, Jean Cohen).

The monograph shows his targeted and specialized research within the grant project *Reception of Romance Literature (2009–2011)*, centred around the conceptual research work of Ladislav Franek, a member of the Institute of World Literature, Slovak Academy of Sciences.

Selecting 19 studies published in journals, he ingeniously applies multidimensional, synchronic and diachronic approaches to literary research. As for the methodology, he proceeds from studies that present a generalist view, which build upon the theoretical and analytical work of Anton Popovič, to studies focused on significant authors from Romance Literature (Claudel, Cortázar, Martí). The monograph can be praised for its broad interdisciplinary approach, which requires a researcher with wide-ranging theoretical and terminological knowledge in a variety of disciplines (literary theory, stylistics, comparative literature, prosody, etc.).

The monograph is thematically divided into three chapters and it forms a compact

and homogeneous whole. The chapter “The Poetics of Translation” aims at describing the poetics of literary translation, translation criticism in today’s perspective, comparative literature, literary translation, as well as language and art in translation. The studies also reflect the important contribution of Anton Popovič and his interdisciplinary method used in comparison analysis of Slovak literature and other Slavic literature, built on his theoretical and analytical work written in the 1960s. In the second part – “Interliterariness in the Symbiosis of Scholarship and Art” – the author concentrates on various theoretical aspects – mainly stylistic and those of versology. Here he offers his critical view on some early theoretical models, which lack an interdisciplinary perspective on literary translation. In “From Symbolism to Tradition (differences in literature and culture)” he deals with the same issues but links them to the French neo-symbolist poet Paul Claudel, the Argentinian representative of neo-avant-garde Julio Cortázar and the Cuban writer José Martí. Franek explores various inspirations in their writings that go beyond their national literature.

The monograph *Interdisciplinarity in the Symbiosis of Literary Studies and Art* is another important work by Ladislav Franek, in which he shows his far-reaching interdisciplinary scope, beneficial not only in literary research and comparative literature but also in other areas such as translation studies.

Edita Gromová