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Balkan and Mediterranean

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BALKAN AND MEDITERRANEAN

The book contains thirteen theoretical and comparative literary-historical studies. The first three of them discuss the Mediterranean, Balkan-Mediterranean and Balkan inter-literary centrism. First, I define each in its geographical extent. I divide the Mediterranean vertically into western and eastern parts of the coastal territory and cultures, and point out two distinct archetypes. Italy represents a watershed in that it belongs to both cultural archetypes, since non-Slavic and Slavic ethnic groups met together in its eastern part, while relations among non-Slavic ethnic groups and cultures developed in its western part.

I further provide a time-periodization of individual Mediterranean and Balkan-Mediterranean inter-literary centrism. I point out the complex relation between the cultural (and therefore also geographical) center and the periphery, and the importance of their interchange for the development of culture in the context of individual inter-literary centrism. For instance, Greek continental and island literature and culture show an interchange between center and periphery. Then, in an analysis of eastern Mediterranean centrism, I introduce a new term to describe the literature and culture of countries which immediately border on Mediterranean countries. Using the example of the Balkan-Byzantine (Slavic-Greek) and Dalmatian-Venetian (Italian-Slavic) inter-literary centrism, I give evidence of contacts between border countries and Mediterranean culture, with which they often formed a symbiosis, in the form of a center or periphery in the context of the general cultural community. In the framework of inter-literary centrism, I make new use of the concepts of mimesis, analogy and cultural idea.

I believe that Mediterranean and Balkan-Mediterranean culture arose through a synthesis of the Greek Eastern, Near Eastern, Black Sea's and Byzantine cultures, which evolved on both the shores and the numerous islands of the Mediterranean and Adriatic Seas. For this reason, I devote attention to the literature and culture of Crete, Cyprus, the Dodecanesian and Ionian Islands, Hvar and Dalmatia, among others. Each of them created, in my opinion, a distinct (and sometimes even peculiar) micro-region during particular historical phases. Using the example of Cretian and Hvarian (Dalmatian) literature, I demonstrate how the center and the periphery changed, how they formed, how they merged, and how temporally and geographically specific Mediterranean inter-literary centrism "regrouped".

One of the characteristic features of inter-literary centrism is bilingualism, and the duality of literature and of ethnicity connected with it. For this reason,

I give consideration to this issue both in studies on the Mediterranean and the Balkan and in two subsequent independent studies.

I have likewise attempted to define the Balkan-Mediterranean inter-literary centrism, which emerged in the course of historical development and formed part of several cultural regions and micro-regions. I set forth the basic characteristics of Balkan (Slavic as well as non-Slavic) literary development and of those general cultural centers which were connected with it, and which either formed inter-literary centrism outside the Balkan area or were part of other inter-literary centrism. I stress that cultural communication in the Balkan nations was either "mutually Balkan", "Balkan-European", or "Oriental-European". I divide Balkan-Mediterranean inter-literary centrism into two basic types. The first type represents inter-literary centrism in which Slavic-language literary (and generally cultural) elements predominated, while in the second type non-Slavic literary elements (Greek, Latin, Italian, and so on) prevailed. In my view, the general Cyrillo-Methodian cultural tradition is part of the Balkan inter-literary centrism of the given period.

The Balkan-Mediterranean inter-literary centrism is also characterized by considerably extensive apocryphal writings, which in terms of subject, text and motive have enriched numerous works of Western European literature.

In the context of the Balkan-Mediterranean and Dalmatian-Venetian (Italian-Slavic) inter-literary centrism, I devote consideration to Mediterranean elements in the literature of the Dalmatian (Eastern Adriatic) Coast, particularly with regard to the literature of the so-called Hvarian cultural center and questions of the so-called Mediterranean koine. I call attention to certain phenomena which are exclusively or mainly unique to the Adriatic, Aegean, Mediterranean and Black Sea cultures, such as salt-refining, olives and wine-making, folk songs about leaving for work abroad, the awareness of "Balkanness" as a sign of belonging to this society, the numerous common linguistic elements in, for example, the speech of sailors, fishermen and traders, the terminology for geomorphology, flora and fauna, the thematic and emotional bond of literature to the sea as its source of inspiration, and so on. At the same time, I also point out several common linguistic, popular verbal, architectural and other elements that link the Balkan region with the Carpathian.

In two studies linked to one another, I discuss one of the key phenomena of mutual relations between two literatures within the framework of inter-literary centrism and general cultural communities, namely, dual ethnicity. I demonstrate how closely it is connected to, among other things, the language of a work in a concrete cultural-historical context. On the basis of the common triad of exile (emigration) - bilingualism - duality of literature, I document the numerous examples in Czech, Polish, Slovak and Russian literature, as well as in the history of Balkan, Northern and other European and non-European national literatures, of artists who have had a dual ethnicity. In my view, the function of the

text, expressed primarily by its language, is one (if not the only) criterion for specifying and defining the dual ethnicity (multiple ethnicity) of an author or literary work.

I have synthesized my analyses of this problem so as to designate the precise criteria which historians of European literature ought always to consider in any evaluation of the life and work of a particular author or in treating the history of a national literature. The correct classification of artists of this type is all the more relevant today, in that they promoted the co-existence of peoples and cultures, races and nationalities, within the framework of inter-literary and general cultural communities.

Many works written in regiolects, dialects or so-called micro-languages also arose in an environment of diglossia or bilingualism. I have therefore considered it useful to discuss the so-called Slavic micro-literatures in connection precisely with dual ethnicity and bilingual authors.

In a separate summary study, I follow the Cyrillo-Methodian tradition in Czech and Slovak writing and scholarly literature. The coming of the brothers from Thessaloniki, Constantine-Cyril and Methodius, and their pupils to the Great Moravian Empire, and their work there, gave an impetus to mutual cultural relations between the Balkans and the Czechs and Slovaks.

I establish what the Czech national awakening of the first half of the last century knew of the southern Slavic peoples and their languages, literatures and popular verbal tradition, against the background of contacts between the poet Sima Milutinovič Sarajlija and figures active in the Czech national awakening movement, as well as what was written about him here during his life.

I then consider one form of cultural contact between the Czechs and the southern Slavs and its intensity, on the basis of the correspondence of several southern Slavic (Serbian and Croatian) cultural and political figures of the last century (S. Vraz, J. J. Strossmayer and others) with J. E. Purkyně.

The following study also comes from the area of relations between the Czechs and the southern Slavs, namely, Czech-Montenegrin cultural contacts. In it, I discuss in particular Josef Holeček, for whom Montenegro and the Slavic South in general became a long-term source of the most beneficial artistic inspiration. In the period from the 1870s to the first three decades of this century, it was Holeček who did most in this country for the translation and popularization of the popular verbal tradition of the Balkan Slavs. His "Montenegrin Sketches" captured numerous military leaders, among whom the most outstanding was Marko Miljanov. The penetration of the popular verbal tradition of the southern Slavs into other Slavic countries and its reception there has been relatively well researched and studied. Less attention, however, has been given by Czech and other Slavic and non-Slavic folklorists and Slavic specialists to its reception in non-Slavic countries. I have devoted an independent analysis to the reception of this tradition in the Hungarian cultural environment of the second half of the last century.

On the basis of the poetic and literary theoretical work of Jiří Wolker and his Macedonian counterpart, Kosta Racin, I demonstrate what was common, similar or divergent in their opinions on the “social” function of art. I give chief consideration, however, to the entry of Wolker's poetic, dramatic and prose work into the Serbian, Croatian and Slovenian cultural environment of the Twenties and Thirties. In a like manner, I follow the gradual arrival of new information about Macedonian literature and translations of the poetic work of Kosta Racin in this country and Slovakia after 1945.

In an analysis of Czech and Macedonian authors of social literature, I trace certain common and specific features of the Balkan (Slavic and non-Slavic) avantgarde in the period between the two world wars, and show how one of their main principles, the principle of freedom, was applied. I conclude that the unity of idea and style of the Expressionist movement and its poetics was not prevalent in Balkan literature. Its distinctiveness derives both from internal political and cultural developments and the intensity of contact with European artistic currents.

An analysis of certain theoretical problems of translation, illustrated with concrete examples, concludes the entire study. In several places here I make mention, directly or indirectly, of the language of the artistic work and the elements of inter-literary reception which a translation contains.

I have attempted to create a self-contained whole from the results of my research efforts hitherto, intended as a contribution to further study of current methodological and theoretical questions in contemporary literary science.