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TRANSLATED AND NATIONAL LITERATURE

Dealing with the study of translated literature — particularly under the assumption that such a study is only a part of investigations of national literature, and a preparation for the elaboration of a history of national literature in all its complexity — necessitates the establishment of a theoretical relationship between translated and national literature in one language. As this problem has already been brought up on principle,¹⁾ we may now dwell only on some basic conclusions. "The role of translated literature in the development of national literature can be viewed in two ways: with regard to general, predominantly indirect influence on literary developments, and as direct action within the national literature."²⁾ "Firstly, translated literature influences the direction and features of national literature by creating an ideological and literary atmosphere conducive to the formation or development of original literature, by cultivating the taste of readers and preparing aesthetic conditions for the acceptance of such a literature, as well as through its influence on the literary language in general. Secondly, translated literature acts directly on the development of original literature by bringing new ideas, subjects, plots, characters, or means of expression. As an aspect of national literature, translated literature not only participates in its creation, but is woven into its historical courses, becomes a factor of its future development and an intrinsic part of its national tradition."³⁾ This is confirmed by S. Subotin, who points out that "translated works brought into the national language be-

¹⁾ Jovan Janićijević: *The Role of Translated Literature in the Development of National Literature*, — „Savremenik", 1969, 12, pp. 407—412

²⁾ Idem, pp. 407.

³⁾ Idem, pp. 411.

come integral parts of the culture and literature of a given language region."⁴) He says: "Starting from the fact that no phenomenon can be defined as absolute and without exception, we can repeat and state once more that, for the most part, translations are made of what is needed at a given moment, what is lacking in the literary tradition of the time (or preceding that time), what will correspond to current tendencies, conceptions and desires (artistic and ideological) in domestic literature, what can, in the opinion of its creators (which include not only writers-translators, but also professional artistic translators), be integrated with the domestic literary-historic process, what can influence the dynamics of development of domestic literature."⁵) Leytes's stand is no less explicit: "The value of artistic translation in every country not only reflects the general level of poetic culture, but also, to one degree or another, influences the further development of this poetic culture."⁶) Even in expressing an opposition view — that translated works "do not enter the literature into which they are brought by translation" — Lj. Nedić was forced to draw the line with the words: "strictly speaking",⁷) while Byelinski and many others find it indubitable that "translations into the Russian language are part of Russian literature."⁸) On the basis of the given instances it is not difficult to take as unquestionable the fact that translated and original literature are two inseparable currents in a single stream, and that they should therefore be studied in their complex interdependence and inseparability.

Consistent theoretical and methodological conclusions are not, however, drawn from this seemingly unquestionable fact. The branch of science which has so far dealt most with the question of translations was precisely the one to cause greatest theoretical confusion when, compiling an abundance of useful materials for the support of a given stand, it usually drew one-sided or completely unfounded conclusions. This refers to comparative literature. Hence we must here devote greater attention to its basic stands. Here is how Van Tigem defines

⁴) Dr. Stojan Subotin: *The Role of Translations in National Literature and the Problem of Their Study*, from: *Literaturite na malite narodi: Sedmi Racinovi sredbi* — Titov Veles, 1970, pp. 96.

⁵) *Idem*, pp. 98.

⁶) А. Лейтес: Художественный перевод как явление родной литературы. In *Вопросы художественного перевода. Сб. статей*. Moscow, 1955, pp. 100

⁷) Ljubomir Nedić: *Serbian translated literature*. In: *Ljubomir Nedić: Collected Works. I*. Belgrade, b.g. pp. 302.

⁸) Cf. quotation from A. Лейтес: *idem*, pp. 98.

the tasks of comparative literature: "All the tasks which go to make up the exhaustive study of a literary work or a writer can be performed on the basis of the very sources of the history of domestic literature, apart from studies and investigations of received and exerted influences. This is why a special branch of science, which will have its clearly defined goals, its specialists and its methods, must be devoted to this second kind of research.

"This discipline will in all directions pursue the results which have been effected by the literary history of a nation, and link them up to those which, on their part, are attained by the historians of other literatures. Thus a special branch of science will emerge from this complex network of influences. It will by no means tend to interchange various national histories of literature; it will supplement them and unite them, while at the same time the bonds of a more general history of literature will be woven among them and above them.") Without embarking on an assessment of the significance of comparative literature for widening the horizons of the theory and history of literature in general; for revealing the mutual links of national literatures; for studies of the shifting of motives, themes, characters, methods of expression and forms of expression; and finally for the preparation and elaboration of general histories of literature — we will restrict ourselves to an examination of the relationship between comparative and national literary histories, and to the study of intermediaries, for this is directly linked to our subject.

The separation of comparative literature into a special discipline of literary science has made possible an organized approach to the question of the mutual bonds of national literatures, to the study of the influences of certain literatures upon others, of certain writers upon other writers, and upon entire literatures — it has, therefore, speeded up the internationalization of literary science. These are the unquestionably favourable results of practically a century's development of this scientific branch. However, this separation hindered the followers of this method from comprehending the true significance of phenomena which they disclosed, and from understanding international literary bonds simultaneously as a natural blending of cultures, and a means of developing national literatures. P. N. Berkov rightly points out that "the study of various aspects and forms of inter-nationality literary relations, ties, and mutual influences can be fruitful

*) P. Van Tigem: *Comparative Literature*, Belgrade, 1955, pp. 15.

only if those studying them bear in mind the problem of the national traditions in the literatures of the "receivers". Concentrating their attention on the facts of "borrowing" ideas, whole plots, individual episodes, characters, literary forms, metres, expressions, epithets, etc., students of literature, especially orthodox comparative scholars, practically never dwell on the questions of the mutual relationship of such "borrowing" with the national literary tradition of a given nation."¹⁰) "For supporters of the comparative-historical method in the science of literature", he goes on to say, "it is important primarily to establish the fact of borrowing itself; then, — which is considerably less frequent — to determine whether a personal interpretation of the "borrowed" material exists on the part of the writer "who is borrowing", and what it consists of. In other words, borrowing does not exist for comparative scholars as part of a certain national literary tradition, and the act of borrowing is not understood as the introduction of a given fact into another national literary tradition: both are taken separately, independently of the literary and socio-political circumstances enveloping both facts."¹¹)

The conclusions of some of our historians and theoreticians of literature testify in support of the stand that precisely the factors neglected by the supporters of comparative literature — the peculiarities of original heritage and individual creativeness, and the *method of adopting* complete material and *receiving* influences — are what is most important in the study of the nature of influences and mutual ties. Starting from the tenet that "all European nations, in certain periods of their history, absorbed or learned from others", A. Barac points out the importance of the readiness of one literature to receive some influences and reject others: "There are literary tendencies in Western Europe which have borne considerable fruit among the Yugoslavs. These are, for instance, humanism, romanticism, realism. But some have been completely stunted, though they were loudly promoted by individuals. This applies, for instance, to verism in Croatian literature, to hermetic lyricism, to expressionism. It is evident that literary tendencies cannot be treated as goods for export, but succeed only where they find a favourable foundation."¹²) Alt-

¹⁰) П. Н. Берков: Проблема Влияния в историко-литературной науке. Русская литература, 1972, 1, pp. 66

¹¹) Idem, pp. 67—68.

¹²) Antun Barac: *The European Frameworks of Yugoslav Literatures*. In: Antun Barac: *Selected Works*. I. Problems of Literature. — Belgrade, 1964, pp. 112.

hough "by their elements of content and form Yugoslav literatures are part of European literature", the Yugoslav peoples absorbed the new and good factors created by Europe „in their own way, re-doing and recreating them".¹³⁾

The other possibility — that of resistance to a certain influence — is treated by S. Petrović: "It is the generally universal experience of both European and non-European literatures of the 19th and 20th centuries that the literature of a nation — be it large or small — which was politically subjugated, and threatened in its essence, most frequently consciously tended to resist the influence of a foreign literature, and particularly the literatures of those countries most directly threatening the survival or natural development of that nation."¹⁴⁾ It is therefore evident that there is a law of mutual links among individual literatures or literary phenomena, but that it can by no means be reduced to their mutual interdependence, which the supporters of comparative literature predominantly sought to prove, carried away by the separateness of the scientific discipline in which they dealt. Admittedly, the foundation of these mutual ties consists of the properties of radiating literary phenomena, but their possibility of influencing a national literature is secured primarily by the receptiveness of the literary environment in which they act. And the nature of this receptiveness is determined both by momentary literary and social conditions, and by the inherent features of the national literature in question. The goal of the science of literature cannot be the study of causes, but must be the study of results: the investigation of causes is only a necessary introduction to the study of effects. Hence the comparative history of literature is a useful and necessary means in the science of literature, but its final goal is the history of national literature, and the history of general literature. In this sense, comparative literature is an auxiliary discipline of national and general histories of literature.

This stand is confirmed by Velek and Warren: "The most obvious relationships among works of art — sources and influences — were most frequently investigated, and comprise the main subject of the traditional science of literature. *Although it is not literary history in the narrow sense*, the determination of literary relationships among authors represents an evidently very important *preparation* for writing such a lite-

¹³⁾ Idem, pp. 112—113.

¹⁴⁾ Dr. Svetozar Petrović: *The Literature of a Small Nation and Foreign Influence*. In *Literature na malim narodima*. Titov Veles, 1970, pp. 77—78.

rary history."¹⁵) They support the study of literary tradition, which may be national or international, but is in either case unified and original in foundation: "To work within a given tradition and to adopt its means is fully in accordance with emotional power and artistic value. True critical problems emerge in such a study when we reach the phase of weighing and comparing, of showing how one artist makes use of the achievements of another, when we observe this transforming power. It is the primary task of literary history to determine the precise position of every work in one tradition."¹⁶)

The least attention in the field of comparative literature is devoted to the question of intermediaries in the study of literary ties — although creators, intermediaries and receivers are, as a rule, placed in an equal position. This is certainly the result of the need for setting up the closest possible ties between creators and receivers, in which the role of intermediaries was sometimes neglected, and sometimes overlooked. In methodological studies, however, theoreticians of comparative literature were far more tolerant towards the links between creators and receivers. Van Tigem writes: "Among the various ways of exchanging literary influences among individual nations, a very important place goes to the intermediaries who alleviated the spreading and acceptance of foreign literary works, ideas and forms in the domestic literature, within the boundaries of one country."¹⁷) This theoretician enumerates several types of intermediaries: individuals, social environments or groups, criticism in books and periodicals, translations and translators. Without detracting from the significance of the others, especially the critics, we will, in view of our theme, dwell only on translations and translators. Although the first acquaintance of an environment with a foreign literary phenomenon is not usually achieved through translations, the greater influence of those phenomena cannot be conceived without them. According to Van Tigem, "in a great majority of cases translation was the necessary means for the popularization of a foreign book, while the study of the translation was the necessary pre-condition for the greatest number of works in comparative literature."¹⁸) Hence the main tasks in this field

¹⁵) Rene Velek and Austin Warren: *The Theory of Literature*, Belgrade, 1965, pp. 295 (underlined by J. J.).

¹⁶) *Idem*, pp. 297.

¹⁷) *Op. cit.* pp. 128.

¹⁸) *Op. cit.* pp. 136.

would be: studies of translations, through comparison with the source and through the mutual comparison of several translations, and from the standpoint of the completeness, trueness, special features of the translation; study of the social and literary biography of the translator; and finally — study of translators' prefaces and afterwords, which can supply useful information on the affinities of the translator, reading public, and environment in general. It becomes evident at first glance that for comparative scholars, the very phenomenon of mediation is almost more important than the way in which it acts in the national literature. It is often unimportant for the scope, nature and quality of the effect the translation has on original literature whether or not the translations are complete, true, or even artistically valuable. Their influence, on domestic literature is sometimes more ideological, or generally non-artistic, than artistic, but as we have seen, this, domestic literature most often absorbs what it needs or what corresponds to it, and these need not always be the true attributes of the original source. This claim is quite convincingly confirmed by the case of Merimée's „La Guzla”, which, although it did not faithfully transmit either the spirit or the artistic features of our folk poetry, exerted a considerable influence on European literature outside France, for it corresponded to the romantic affinity for the folkloric, fantastic and oriental. Therefore, realizing the importance of the role of translations in literary ties, the supporters of comparative literature did not reveal the essence of this role, with regard to the fact that they could not realize the decisive significance of the special features of national literature, and that they did not observe translation in complex ties with original literature and as part of a unified process — as translated literature.

But translated literature cannot be viewed only as a form of mediation. If we conceive the development of literature as a living and complex process — and this is the only way that it is evinced — we cannot divide the phenomena within it into superior and inferior. Instead, they are all natural units or degrees of the stream itself, which they form in their consecutiveness and simultaneousness. To say that one of them is the goal, and another merely a means, means to consider the entire development as pre-determined. The ties among those phenomena can be either cause-and-effect, or simultaneously active, but from the theoretical point of view they cannot in any way be hierarchic, regardless of the fact that, in practice, translations — which always de-

pend on the source — rarely attain those artistic values which are practically inseparable from the conception of original literature. Furthermore, apart from the effect of translated literature upon original literature, the opposite process is also possible: for the climate which has been created by original literature to cause the translation of those works which correspond to the climate. With regard to all this, it should be concluded that translated literature is an important and inseparable current in the historical course of national literature, a current which challenges or boosts, enriches or confirms, and in any case supplements the other current — that of original literature. Let us pause at this comparison: the flowing tide of national literature did not originate only from its own sources, but also from confluences coming from many other quarters: its basic direction was set by the streams from which it sprang, but its power is made up of the combined waters of all streams flowing into it.

As part of national literature, translated literature must be studied in this complex, and not as something which is an end unto itself. However, just as anatomy — which is an aspect of analyzing the entity of the body — serves to reveal the inter-relationships of the body, the history of national literature makes use of numerous partial researches necessary for the creation of a more complete and faithful picture of the complex events within a unified course. We have already pointed out that studies of ties and influences are held by us to be merely a necessary preparatory action for the history of national literature, and comparative literature, in as much as it touches upon this subject, only an auxiliary discipline in the history of national or general literature. But it should be mentioned that we should not, on these grounds, reach the hasty conclusion that it is enough to know the goal and to attempt to approach it, and that it is less important which roads are traversed in approaching it. We must primarily point out the necessity of comparative-historical studies, and the outstanding importance of developing yet another discipline in the history of national literature: the history of translated literature with all its sub-divisions and auxiliary steps. While comparative literature predominantly restricts itself to the establishment of the radiation of individual literary phenomena, to studying the directions of such radiation and their influences in other literary environments, the history of translated literature should comprehend the results of the literary ties between domestic literature and foreign literary phenomena, should study the emergence and development of foreign literature which has been fully absorbed,

should determine the peculiarities of the adoption and adaptation of foreign literary phenomena within the frameworks of national literature, and precisely establish the course of its translation. Unless this undertaking — whose basic parts are: the forming of reliable bibliographic foundations, biographic study, the elaboration of theoretical treatises and special historical monographs, and of exhaustive general reviews — is completed well and comprehensively, one cannot even imagine a valuable history of national literature, even if it were to be more or less restricted to the history of original national literature. Unless all possible influence, all phenomena which emerged and developed on domestic soil, are taken into account, the history of national literature will be distorted, it will not present the true facts in their true light.

A principled examination of the question of studying translated literature within the frameworks of the history of national literature must halt here. Further consideration should set out in the direction of individualizing various fields of activity: a defined relationship, basically unified, acquires numerous specific features in each national literature, and consequently in ours, also. And this surpasses the frameworks of our present subject, and opens up a new, separate theme.

(Translated from the Serbo-Croat
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