

CULTURAL AND LITERARY CONCRETIZATIONS OF LANGUAGE SPECIFICS FROM THE NATIONAL MINORITY ASPECT

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Abstract: The main objective of this contribution is to introduce the characteristic features and language specifics which are present in the cultural and literary work (1989-2018) of Alexander Kormoš, a Slovak poet living in contemporary Hungary. Based on creative bilingualism of individual texts, it highlights the individual creative language of the author, his diverse concretizations in terms of the centre and the symbolic periphery. It also uses an overall interpretive approach of its collections as well as the aspect of some exchange of cultural code or the impact of "codification". As a special feature of the contribution can be identified the search for the original essence of the lyrical subject on the basis of "used and applied" languages with the help of multilingualism, viewed from the aspect of mutual contact of the Slovak and Hungarian language in poetry (language and its concretization).

Keywords: culture, literature, language, minority, interpretation

Introduction

Language is a system of symbols: linguistics is a scientific study of the language, especially in terms of structure, development and function. Language as a tool of communication is a natural phenomenon of our civilized society. It is a link between the individual and society, since language acquisition: "...is one of the most important factors in forming personality and shaping one's view of the world, as language is one of the most crucial forms of human communication, a medium between the individual and the outside world" (Puskás, 2014, p. 54). However, on the basis of its specificities and peculiarities it varies and is differentiated e.g. the local use of language is specified geographically. This statement is also valid in international environment.

The author and his creative language concretizations are therefore particularly important in such a specific chronotope. The poet is a kind of link between mutual, as well as cultural relations in the background of understanding Central European nations and the national minorities (Zelenka, 2013). The author can make a contribution with his work (also) as a member of a national minority. A multitude of cultures is created in the background of universality based on spiritual principle. Therefore, there is a hidden persistence in cultures under the condition of universal development. Language, as a specific factor in a certain sense is "...a mirror of the social and cultural life of the nationality in its organic relationship with the life of the national majority" (Kormoš, 1990b, p. 44).

1 The aspects of diversity of Slovak language in a minority environment

One of the external prerequisites of the language is the social status. According to this, the Slovak language represents a dynamic category in development horizon. In addition, it is important to apply the inter-language criteria. For this reason "...based on the characteristic ethnocultural, communicative, pragmatic, regiolectal and similar factors, it is possible to talk about the Slovak language as a pluricentric language" (Dudok, 2008, p. 45), especially in terms of pragmatic and cultural dimensions, which allows the mentioned internal differentiation.

The boundaries of Slovak language determine different aspects (genetic, typological, territorial, etc.), which represent rather a plastic boundary. This is changing with the development of the communication environment – synchronically and diachronically in the regions of Hungary inhabited also by Slovak population.

Despite the fact that the Slovak language spoken abroad has a diaspora character, in Hungary it used to have an enclave character. The enclave language resulted as a development of the European geopolitical situation from the 18th to the 20th century. Following the era of Theresian and Jozefian reforms and the fall of the Ottoman Empire, strong Slovak islands emerged in Southern Pannonia (the Lowland: what is today part of Hungary, Romania, Serbia). Enclave refers to a group of people who are separated from their nation and are capable of biological and cultural reproduction in ethnically different environment. It is a compact ethnic settlement in the environment of a different ethnical group that completely encompasses them. They originated historically as a result of human migration. A good example for enclave of the Slovak ethnicity in non-native environment are the Slovak people living in Lowland, thus also in Hungary. Traditional elements of culture are more likely to be preserved in enclave than in diaspora. In Hungary "...a dominant diasporic community has replaced the enclave of the Slovak language, which was almost replaced by the Hungarian; recently an interest in revitalization of the Slovak language has increased, especially favoured by the educated layer of the society; supported by the increasing number of Slovak nursery schools, bilingual education in primary schools, secondary grammar schools and university education, as well as the mass media enhancing the importance of the Slovak language" (Dudok, 2011, p. 40). Generally, education is considered today as a tool of the competitive ability. In our field it symbolically continuous in contacts of nations, nationalities (and its texts) in the process of translation – but possibilities, trends and approaches to the acquisition of the educational level are very important, too (Szokol, Horvathova, Dobay, 2016). It reflects in real life and in school education, too, especially in student's books (Toth, 2015). In this relation the translation between two languages is an important view-point from/to the poetic concretizations (Andričik, 2013; Mura, Torok, 2012). However, we also record language specifics of poetic expressions in the work of some of the Slovak authors in Hungary (Alexander Kormoš, Imrich Fuhl, Gabriel Hattinger, etc.). The linguistic contacts and several cultural processes in Hungary enabled the preservation of the Slovak language, against which new forms of the language replaced it in Slovakia. On the other hand, also those elements of the exosphere had been incorporated into the literary devices (e.g. poems), which appeared in communication practice of the homeland after disappearance of physical borders of the countries. Because of this aspect, the current borders (external, internal) of the language have a heterogeneous character. In connection with the existence of the Slovak language beyond the borders of the homeland, the model of receptive multilingualism is applied, which contributes to mutual convergence and intercultural understanding of those with similar and different language variants (Pekarovičová, 2013).

2 Bilingualism and pluricentrism from the perspective of the minority

Some Slovak authors in Hungary are constantly looking for a broad-spectrum creative spirit at the background of bilingualism. They are trying to emphasize the existence of their nationality from both aspects. Symbolically it can be said that they are based on the theory of pluricentric character of the modern Slovak language of Miroslav Dudok. Besides the territory of present-day Slovakia it has been developing for almost three centuries in Slovak enclaves outside the homeland, also in Hungary, where it has the status of a minority language. This pluricentricity was reflected at all levels of the language, especially in lexical aspects. This is also valid for the literary work of Slovak national authors living in Hungary (Dudok, 2008).

Alexander Kormoš, a well-known Slovak poet in Hungary explains his literary work as the following: "...Why do I write in Hungarian as well? The Hungarians should also have an access

to first-hand information how Slovak intellectuals in Hungary feel" (Kormoš, 2010, p. 7). It is important to note that "...the key question of nationality is the cultivation of the native language" (Hrivnák, 1987, p. 8). It is important to specify that "...the literary work of Kormoš belongs to a kind of literature, which by its civic appeal – I mean especially a clear presentation of ethnic Slovak identity, Slovak roots, but also an effort to become a bridge between the Slovak and Hungarian culture – would provide a motivating artistic message to the reader" (Resutík, 2005, p. 10).

In addition to constant search for security in the world, the most important phenomenon of the literary work of Alexander Kormoš is bilingualism and multiculturalism. Since his literary debut (1973) he has been constantly striving for symmetrical bilingualism. In his literary work, the minority aspect of his human and poetic reference is put into a wider historical and social context. Kormoš "...is undoubtedly the most versatile Slovak poet in Hungary" (Fuhl, 2011, p. 29).

The Slovak language on the level of idiomatic basis (use of interpersonal idioms) in public interaction of Slovaks living in Hungary is a variant and a unique form of the standard Slovak, which figures as a literary language of intellectuals, other members of the community in the context of stylistically inappropriate or appropriate – to express what is expressed by Slovaks living in Slovakia and other places in the same or similar situations and contexts (with slight local variations). This is fully reflected in the poems of Alexander Kormoš, especially considering the thematic and lexical aspects of the language.

3 Alexander Kormoš as a representative of linguistic and cultural specifics

An important element of the pluricentrism of the Slovak language is its text tradition. The poetic language of Alexander Kormoš is characterized by language transparency in the context of rural symbolism. The author also gets into interlingual situation, while trying to understand both (or more) language codes. The conceptualization of "his" Slovak language in the minority environment as a pluricentric language directs towards the core and away from the core of the language users (lyric subjects and readers).

Alexander Kormoš introduced himself on a wider spectrum in the book of poetry called *Chodníky* (Engl. Sidewalks, 1984). It includes 24 poems of the author and 22 translated poems of Hungarian poets. He feels the activity of translation as "...an inseparable activity from his own work" (Divičanová, 1984. In: Rybová, 1984, p. 7, in Slovak: "na stráži stoja stromy / u hraníc skutočnosti"). It is important to emphasize some of the motifs connected to bilingualism and multiculturalism in selected translations of Hungarian authors (Endre Ady, Ferenc Baranyai, Mihály Filadelfi, Gábor Garai, Gyula Illyés, Ervin Sass, József Sárándi, Árpád Tóth, László Tóth, Gyula Urbán, László Újházy). According to his interpretation Gyula Illyés speaks about the former relation between Hungary and Slovakia as a piece of a chain against red coloured borders – the symbol of Ostrihom/Esztergom; Ferenc Baranyai uses biblical motifs to express the consolidation of these relations (Adam, Abel, Eve, Christ, Cain), while the present is described as a big "misery". The topic of mutual coexistence in the village of Csévharaszt in Pest County returns in simple rhyming poems, chastushki (Ferenc Baranyai), while "the trees are guarding / at the boundaries of reality" (Sass, 1984. In Rybová, 1984, p. 120). Ervin Sass has been a dominant representative of Békéscsaba for many years. It is a kind of Babylon (Ervin Sass), from where it is necessary to escape (similarly to ancestors of Mihály Filadelfi, who had to leave the town of Tatranská Lomnica, while symbolically exchanging "valaška" – valaška is a long thin light axe used in past centuries by shepherds in the Carpathian mountains. Mihály Filadelfi is criticizing the assimilation process of Slovaks living in Hungary; he is an advocate of peaceful co-existence. He also highlights the fearlessness of Ondrej Likier Áchim, a Slovak politician of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in the 19th century, who fought for better

life of the poor. Gyula Urbán remembers the famous Slovenian-Serbian musician Tichomír Vujičić, who died tragically in a plane crash near Damascus. He was also a symbol of multiculturalism and understanding.

After 1989 Alexander Kormoš also published anthologies: *Je to?* (Engl. Is It?, 1996), *Medzi nebou a zemou* (Engl. Between the Sky and Earth, 1996), *Pocťa Andymu Warholovi* (Engl. Tribute to Andy Warhol, 1997). The author is using the motif of exclusion from homeland and living with lost roots. It is important to gain freedom in life of a nationality from Tatra Mountains to Danube and Morava to Uh (the symbol of a slowly appearing cultural rainbow).

4 Cultural contacts and influences in the background of language concretization

The author's collection of folk songs from Santov "F Santovském Pilíši" (Engl. Folk Songs from Santov) was published in edition of Dunaj (1990) to commemorate the 275th anniversary of establishment of the village. The introductory part mentions the origin of Slovaks in Santov. The development and social stratification of the village is also mentioned. Apart from his own work, the author draws conclusion about the Slovak community by analysing grave sings in the local cemetery. He points to specifics of the local language (transition from Biblical Czech to Slovak language used in Santov). He emphasizes the connexion of those living in Mlynky and Santov; lists the characteristic features of their dialect with introducing concrete examples. He characterizes the folk song not only from the perspectives of Bartók and Kodály, but Suchoň as well. Here we can see the roots of transculturalism. Practical chapter of the work is the part that deals with the pronunciation of Slovak inhabitants from Santov, and linguistic expression of their folk songs. The folk songs form a tradition of Slovaks from Santov, reflecting their historical past and language. The texts can be read in phonetic transcription. The following songs (mentioned pars pro toto) also reflect transculturalism: *Nefúkaj vetričeg z Dunaja; Prez Javornički, Vi stromčeki, okolo Rajčanky, Od zámky g Dunaju; Pri Olomúci; Vi Germaňi, d'e s'e, čo s'e; Červené vino, čífske koláče; Ket som išel pres Košice; Ot Trenčína mlín mele; F Kaňe galilejskej; F tem inglickém zámku; Já som Gašper z Indije*. The basic direction of his poetry is the definition and postulation of ideals in broader sense of poetic meaning. Our knowledge is related not only to the literary, but also to the linguistic consciousness – behind the theory of Ferdinand de Saussure –, and thus: "*The degree of human knowledge of the objective world is reflected in the individual sub-systems of language, the most obvious being our knowledge of the world is presented in lexis and grammar. Lexis is the most dynamic layer of language ...*" (Tóth, 2017, pp. 108-109). It is therefore important to examine individual and specific poetry testimonials – in view of our partial field of linguistic research – in particular from these aspects.

The first poetry collection of the author after the year of 1989 is *Ohnivá kytica* (Engl. Fire Bouquet, 1991), expressing the same viewpoint. It contains original work of the author, both Slovak and Hungarian. Kormoš puts particular emphasis on love motifs in this collection. Bilingualism can be detected again "...further dimension of the author's polyphonic engagement, with orchestral instrumentation of his poetry, calling for synergy of all instruments, looking for their maximum effect" (Kníchal, 1991. In Kormoš, 1991b, p. 123). In relation of the individual and the society (poet-birthplace), the elements of regional principle can be identified in verses. In wider context, a parallel with nature can be identified, where social memories are made more colourful with the motifs of Pilíš surroundings. It is symbolic that the title of poetry collection "*Verše z Viharašku*" (Engl. Poems from Land of Storms) had changed to *Verše z Búrlivého kúta* (Poems from Stormy Corner). From the perspective of multiculturalism the symbol "waves of friendship" between the Slovaks and Hungarians is a kind of way out of darkness to light. A national author is one, who is capable for multidimensional existence in space. One possible destination is Pilíš in May, the other are the fairy-tale like Tatras,

which symbolize the already forgotten land of ancestors. Multiculturalism is also determined by the allusion of Štúrovo-Szob border.

Another bilingual poetry collection by Alexander Kormoš was published in 1985 with a title "Okřídľovanie kosou" (Engl. Spinning Scythe). In this collection of poems the author also highlighted the emblematic motif of a miraculous bird that is a symbol of survival – survival of individual, nation, nationality and humanity. Even the edition Dunaj itself demonstrates multiculturalism, not to mention the thematic stratification of the poetry collection. The lyrical subject relies on a bond and asks people for help. He is an oxymoronic prisoner of freedom, as well as a conscience of his own nationality. A symbol of "fresh spring" appears again, which gives hope for the future. The poet must remain in a strong central position on both sides of the river Danube. He is a personified witness of the past and present of his homeland; the lyrical subject is his faithful child. The present is described critically, as harmony between people, nations and nationalities gradually dissipates. Hard fate is like a rock in Pilíš. The customs and traditions are confronted from Tatras to Danube in direction to Lowland. The poet is helped by the multicultural environment, time and indestructible love. Times are hard, a man thirsty, words silent. The poet as an eternal hunter, gardener and wanderer has to preserve the language and emphasize the state of the language in his verses. The poet has to remain vigilant against the omnipresent world-wide disease and protect harmoniousness. Language is a unique and unrepeatable miracle that encompasses the whole world. Of course, he is aware of the phenomenon of dying words in a new millennium; he blames the attributes of present for changes in the language.

In 1997, an interesting collection of aphorisms by Alexander Kormoš was published under the title *Aforizmy a iné stručnoslovia* (Engl. Aphorisms and other Shortcomings). It contains short sentences in both Slovak and Hungarian languages; most often it is a Slovak variant and a Hungarian invariant. These occasionally reflect cynicism. In opposition to atheism (socialism) stands the belief (democracy). In these development phases, the individual as a social being has to find his personality. The importance of native language is emphasized, as well as the fear of denationalization and cultural genocide of one's own national minority as the biggest uncivilized act of the modern civilization. From the perspective of multiculturalism, a common homeland is created with the same interests, going ahead with development of the civilization. The centre point of this world is the human being, but the basic vector is the omnipotent God.

An interesting publication by Alexander Kormoš considering the genre of the book is *Rozdúchať stlmený plameň* (Engl. Blow the Dimmed Flame, 2003). It contains 80 sonnets both in Slovak and Hungarian language. Particularly interesting is the sonnet crown, which includes translations from Hungarian literature into Slovak. (3 sonnets; László Nagy, György Faludy), translations from Slovak literature into Hungarian (7 sonnets; Vojtech Kondrôt, Marián Kováčik, Viliam Turčány, Štefan Strážay) and translation of a sonnet from a Lowland Slovak author into Hungarian (Pavol Samuel). The system of symbols forms a unified coherent system in the background of declared symmetrical bilingualism. The reflexive reader is offered a possibility to be confronted with the artistic talent, because sonnet is a special form of poetry that requires talent from the author to formulate his ideas with high intensity. Testimonies by the poet create a tension between words and reality. The "flame of the language" is a symbol of poetic utterance in opposition to silence. It emphasizes the importance of homeland in the era of terrible present.

Until the present, the last independent collection of poems by Alexander Kormoš was published under the title *Večne živý prameň* (Engl. The Eternal Source, 2016). The author thematically returns to Pilíš and its surrounding; he is a faithful child of his homeland with "singing" (personified) Slovak language. The lyrical subject has a fear that his nationality might soon disappear from the map of Europe. He emphasizes mutual

understanding, a kind of "Kormoš polyphony" of cooperation and co-existence. Important is the inhesion that is symbolized by Pilíš mountains as an eternal homeland of Slovaks in that region. It is necessary to talk and avoid silence, shout or sing beautiful Slovak songs. The lyrical subject is afraid of them, as they are lost in the new millennium. He is deeply embedded in words. Apart from the native language, the crying soul is protected by the typical guitar sound of Kormoš that overcomes sadness, fear and misery. The aim is to see the silver lining – own words of the nation. The author often idealizes his thoughts: Is really language the queen of queens? This publication also includes the author's cycle of translations from literature of other nations with an emblematic title "Mostom dúhy" (Engl. Bridge Over the Rainbow). This part of the work contains translations of poems into Slovak (pars pro toto) not only by Endre Ady, Attila József, György Faludy, but also the poems by Gábor Hattinger-Klebaško, Imrich Fuhl, Josip Gujaš-Džuretin, Gennadij Golovat, Vilmos Moldován and others. This fact also points to multiculturalism and polyphony of testimony of friends, poets and personalities. Regarding the Slovak-Hungarian cultural context it is interesting to mention the poems of Vojtech Kondrôt about Ady, his translations of poems by László Nagy and comparison to translations by Alexander Kormoš or Emil Boleslav Lukáč, the poem of Mihály Filadelfi – Tatranská Lomnica, and mainly the poems of Zoltán Polner about Gyula Juhász and his work in Skalica.

5 Conclusion

The modern Slovak language is constantly evolving and is characterized by motion in different interaction. As an anthropocentric entity, the language is present in almost every moment of our existence. However, the development of language is not limited. It is used in the mentioned enclaves and diasporas. It is not isolated, but remains in contact with other languages (in discussed context it is the Hungarian language). Therefore, the clear development concept of Slovak language as a state language seems to be limited. For this reason, the pluricentric understanding of the language is justified. The pluricentric concept of the Slovak language involves the language used in literature as well. There is no need for many linguistic sings (primarily we think about the poetic, specific language of the Slovak poetry in Hungary, which serves a typical example) to constitute the variety of the language, and we do not even interpret it as a meta-language. To create a special group and language identity, the social and symbolic function of the language is essential. We have emphasized it with our basic approach to concrete (poetic) text.

If we apply these findings creatively, we can conclude that Alexander Kormoš has been an integral part of the cultural milieu of the Slovak minority literature in Hungary for 45 years. His poetry "...is characterized by constant analysis of the relationship between power and truth, and most of his poems are filled with melancholy" (Anonymous, 2008, p. 3). The era and regimes are changing, but the words of the poet are constant. The poetic language of Alexander Kormoš is relentless, but fights for a better world. By the analysis and interpretation of his poems and work, we can come to a conclusion that also in a minority environment the aspects of pluricentrism of the Slovak language can be identified in contact with the Hungarian language. It is a special phenomenon, a kind of symbol of mutual co-existence of two nations or nationalities. This created a bridge of understanding and cooperation also in Central Europe. It demonstrated how diversity of language/languages is applied on multicultural basis.

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