

The changing strategies of self-fashioning in minority literature, with special regard to Hungarian literature in (Czecho)Slovakia

Zoltán CSEHY

Comenius University in Bratislava, Faculty of Arts

zoltan.csehy@uniba.sk

ORCID: 0000-0002-9514-1636

ABSTRACT

Minority literatures are politicized entities organized along rather complex strategies of self-interpretation. Minority literature is always a relational concept: it tries to interpret itself in relation to the literature of the majority or the universal, while also trying to take into account specific, individual qualities. This study attempts to draw the lines of the strategies of self-interpretation and face-shaping in Hungarian literature in (Czecho)Slovakia from 1918 to the present. It traces the historical and poetic changes in the various interpretative frameworks and also attempts to pay attention to the relationship between Hungarian literature in Slovakia and Hungarian literature in Romania (Transylvania), since what has been called Transylvanism has long been the model of Hungarian literature in (Czecho)Slovakia, too. Various ideological constraints led to the development of increasingly specific concepts, such as minority messianism or the ideology of communist universalism. Self-fashioning is a term of new historicism, but the theoretical framework will also be extended to transcultural literary interpretation. The relationship to identities is also a fundamental issue in minority studies, and their performativity and malleability become especially interesting. It is very important to distinguish between the poetic and political aspects of these phenomena. Today, the poetics of transculturalism makes some of the products of minority literature exceptionally exciting, in which linguistic hybridity, transitions, vernacular linguistic experience or minority esthetics may play a major role. Social homogenization and insularity have been replaced by strategies of poetic dynamism. The study also looks at trends in polycultural integration.

Keywords: minority studies, self-fashioning, Hungarian Literature in (Czecho)Slovakia, transculturalism

The question of whether there is or was (or will be) a linguistically and esthetically self-identical Hungarian literature in (Czecho)Slovakia is the subject of an almost periodically renewed debate (Cselényi 2005). The literary discourse of the Hungarian speaking minority, which we call this only for want of a better term, began with the establishment of

Czechoslovakia in 1918 and continues to this day. Its basic characteristics include the loss or gain of domain which parallel the complicated changes in geopolitical borders, the discourse of the language of the subordinate, and the impossibility of classification of authors and works according to precise criteria. Neither place of birth, nor the publication of their work, nor language, nor identity are criteria in themselves. Hungarian literature in (Czecho)Slovakia is the result of the interplay of several interpretative strategies. By the end of the Czechoslovak period between 1918 and 1939, the country's identity was already in question: some areas were annexed to the German Empire, others to Hungary, and a fascist Slovak puppet state was created (there were still Hungarian literary aspirations in Slovakia, although the proportion of minority population had changed significantly). This first period is usually referred to as the period of Slovensko (and Rusynsko) Hungarian literature. After World War II, Czechoslovakia was restored, but Subcarpathia was annexed to the Soviet Union, and the field of Hungarian literature in Slovensko and Rusynsko was reorganized. This is the period of what has been termed as Hungarian literature in Czechoslovakia. In 1993, Czechoslovakia split apart, and it led to a small scale but still noticeable reorganization, and Hungarian literature in Czechoslovakia has since been referred to as Hungarian literature in Slovakia. The spaces of Hungarian literature in Slovensko, Czechoslovakia and Slovakia have thus been rather unstable, and strategies of identity formation remain regional rather than collective, although the political representation of interests requires joint action.

This volatile spatial experience has also kept questions of collective self-definition and self-fashioning in constant flux. There have been as many strategies as there have been ways to contextualize this problematic literary and esthetic space. Alongside collective self-fashioning and profile creation, there have also existed individual creative strategies, and this has remained a function of how open the author's profile has been to the possibilities of connection. The minority status of a writer can also be their defining characteristic. At other times, minority identity is an almost negligible component of a strategy of self-formation. Hungarian literature in (Czecho)Slovakia can be conceived of as a self-principled, "mission-heavy" minority literature, it can be emphatically regional literature, a transcultural complex, and it can also be integrated into universal Hungarian literature (Németh 2005, 5-52), but due to its multi- or transcultural characteristics, it can also be linked to the discourses of Slovak (or earlier Czech) or Central European regional literatures, although based on literary-political rather than esthetic principles (Németh 2022, 96-113).

The obvious question is whether the so-called minority author chooses only a poetic-linguistic program or something else as well? If we look for the answer in the famous book on Kafka by Deleuze and Guattari, it is clear that the answer is more complex, because the language of the minority author has a very strong deterritorialization index due to the

absence of what has been termed the language of space of reference (Deleuze and Guattari 2009, 33–56). In our case, the deterritorialization index is interesting in relation to Hungary: certain registers of the Hungarian language are not integrated into the minority language use but are absent or only partial, and this can and does have a literary dimension. If a Hungarian author also writes in Slovak (e.g. Gábor Farnbauer) or in Hungarian despite their basically Slovak language disposition (e.g. Peter Macsovszky, Mila Haugová), they are exploiting the poetic tension of deterritorialization, and this can be classified as a poetic gesture of discourse-generating power (Csehy 2020).

Deleuze and Guattari's other important thesis is that in minority literature everything is re-politicized and acquires a collective value, and thus a specific sensibility is developed (2009, 37–40). Literature and politics form a system of relations that oscillates between two extremes: a predominantly esthetic, seemingly “anti-political” direction and one that is committed to minorities (nationally, politically, ideologically, etc.). In both cases, the voice of the subordinate is ultimately heard. And it is in the same system that a way of speaking is formed based on the mixing, mutilation or obfuscation of (or perhaps the shift between) languages, or on the esthetics of local dialectal or vernacular varieties, which in its transcultural complexity may seem exotically closed or perhaps enigmatic, but it is possibly in this domain that the degree of self-identity is strongest.

Minority literature can be a diverse terrain for a moral-esthetic emancipation process, but it can also be a stigma, a community program, an activism that the author either shyly rejects (because they see it as a sign of ghettoization) or proudly embraces (because they see it as a mission of some kind). But literature can also be minority literature in the sense that it is born on the margins of a “big” or “stronger” literature, and this essentially results in language shift (Toldi 2013, 44–53). Or it can also be minority literature in the sense that it is born on its own (but linguistically distinct) margins of another literature, such as Kafka's oeuvre written in Prague German. Imre József Balázs distinguishes four basic modes of language use in the playing field of the minority literary “schizophrenia” of what he calls *minor* and *major* language use (Balázs 2006, 229–236; 2008, 245–257; 2017, 115–132). The local language is the language of everyday life, of intimacy, the other language is the language of the state and of power (in the case of Transylvania, this is Romanian), the third used language mode is the “language of the space of reference”, which is the “heroic” language of the great literary ancestors, a “utopian language variety”, and even, in a certain sense, sacralized, and then there is the “cultural language variety”, which can be conceived of as “taking on the characteristics of all three other language varieties, while at the same time being able to distance itself from them and to reflect them. In this way, we can explain how it is possible that in the different periods of Hungarian culture in Transylvania, there have been new attempts to ‘swallow’ the

cultural language: the Transylvanist literature of the 1920s and a strand of literature of the 1970s attempted to identify the language of culture with the sacral language variety (Kántor and Láng 1973, 11–12). In the 1940s and 1950s, the language of literature was flooded with the traits of the bureaucratic language of power. The literature of postmodern fragmentation or the late modern literature of the 1960s and 1970s can be read as a kind of ‘minor’ language variety, which Deleuze and Guattari evaluate in terms of the trait of multilingualism. If we follow this line of thought, the language of culture can indeed be seen as open to all these varieties: they can be mutually used and understood” (Balázs 2006, 229–236).

If we look at the history of the efforts of Hungarian literature in (Czecho)Slovakia to interpret itself, we get a very varied picture. Ethnicity is also always a spectacular representation. It is represented in the paradigm of the “we-structure”, since – in our case – the minority ethnicity (Hungarians in Slovakia) is in relation to two larger and more coherent main identities, the Slovak and the Hungarian. In both directions, it is necessary to formulate some kind of self-definition and to develop some kind of dual presence strategy. Ethnicity also manifests itself in techniques of identification and transmission, and this is linked to the shaping of cultural memory. In what follows, I will examine these strategies of self-fashioning by means of a brief overview of attempts at establishing a homeland and narrative in what has been called Hungarian literature in (Czecho)Slovakia. This history of change is also a history of variability, i.e. movement traced in the collision zone of different concepts in cultural politics, society and ideology.

Gábor Kemény, in his first work to summarize the history of (Czecho)Slovakia (and referring to it as Uplands, following colloquial usage) Hungarians entitled *Így tűnt el egy gondolat* [Thus an idea disappeared], matter-of-factly links the concepts of value and minority destiny. Kemény’s conception offers the algorithms of a program based on a pseudo-aesthetics and exhausted in literary-political gestures, which suggests a limited, missionary, and mystical traumanarrative. This way of speaking would thus provide the real voice of “Northern Hungarian literature” (Kemény 1940, 73). Kemény simultaneously stresses the principle of integration (that minority literature is an inseparable part of Hungarian literature) and the importance of distinction (that the unity of the sense of mission and the individual voice that voices it).

Aladár Komlós, in his essay entitled *Magyar költészet Szlovénzkón* [Hungarian poetry in Slovensko], published in the journal *Nyugat* in 1926, already considered the theory of value-relativizing “literary price inflation” to be generally valid for minority literature. Critical permissiveness and solidarity resulting from an attitude that fetishizes national destiny are not suitable for the development of a serious literary discourse. “We are Hungarians, let us not hurt each other. Today, when the fate of Hungarians is going so badly, we must not make unfavorable criticisms of the art of the successor states. Hungarians will

perish if you don't buy the *Collected Poetical Works* of this or that good Hungarian author immediately", reads the ironic text (Komlós 1926, 396). The thinking typical of the early period of minority literature thus expanded the concept of literature itself, seeing it as part of the strategy of saving the nation and the language. The best authors, such as the young Sándor Márai or László Mécs, esthetically stepped out of this hybrid mode of discourse that embodied group identity. This departure was criticized sometimes, and mythicized other times. According to Pál Szvatkó, "Márai is as big as a whole minority literature", but "Slovensko identity" was as present in his works as the taste of Macedonian tobacco a Macedonian could feel when smoking a cigarette in London (Szvatkó 1937, 11). He denounced the fact that Hungarian literature in Slovensko was rather "only" supplier literature, that the most prominent authors were allowed to be part of the universal Hungarian literature, and that it had no real identity in relation to other national regions lost to Trianon (especially the Transylvanian model). At the same time, the narrative of Márai's oeuvre in Kassa appeared as a mythical energy, even as perceived today.

The first anthology that can be considered a representative Hungarian literature in Czechoslovakia was edited by Ferenc Sziklay titled *Lirai antológia* [Lyric Anthology] and published in Berlin in 1926, containing the work of twenty-six authors (Sziklay 1926). The book was subtitled *Szlovenszkó és Ruszinszkó magyar költőinek alkotásaiból* [From the works of Hungarian poets of Slovensko and Rusynsko]. It could not be published in Czechoslovakia: the new state imposed a ban even on the import of Hungarian books, lifted only in 1928 (Mezey 2006, 53). This anthology was therefore essentially an "illegal" enterprise, financed by the Hungarian state. Lajos Turczel described Sziklay's purely Slovensko and Rusynsko anthology as a "serious literary and literary life organizing act" (Turczel 1987, 77-78). This book did not offer a unified minority position or outline a definite and unified esthetic strategy, emphasizing primarily the minority presence. Gyula Farkas, a lecturer at the University of Berlin, even denounced the lack of a collective Uplands feel, stressing that the poems lacked "the deep rootedness and complex problematics so characteristic of Transylvanian poetry" (Farkas 1927, 28-29). The forcefulness of the Transylvanian model would dominate even in the 1930s. In the foreword to the second volume of the anthology *Szlovenszkói Magyar Írók* [Hungarian writers of Slovensko], this was expressed emphatically: "Transylvania, the builder of fraternal unity and of the unified literary arc that understood the song of the new times, also set an example for the Slovensko that is an unquenchable wellspring of literary values" (Dallos and Mártonvölgyi 1937, 6-7). Lajos Tamás's study comparing Slovensko and Transylvania was published in the journal *Magyar Minerva*: the comparison was based on statements that were treated as facts, according to which "the adjective Transylvanian is today a special honor in universal Hungarian literature", and that Transylvanian literature annually produced new

values and an “elevated Hungarian spirit” (Tamás 1934, 161-162). It was the premise of Transylvanian works that they were to convey the lessons of minority fate, and this, at least according to Tamás, was the secret of their success. The Transylvanian identity, which was presented as static, was also more coherent in terms of its historical-sociological components than the Slovensko one: Transylvanian literature was “more deeply Hungarian”, Transylvanian literature was “more deeply rooted, more closed”. Contrary to the mystified interpretation of Transylvanian artistic identity, the number of Slovensko defects was, according to the author, almost innumerable: the Slovensko multicultural perspective made it impossible to go deeper, literature in Slovensko was too experimental and Western-oriented, its language adhering to a purist pan-Hungarian national ideal; in the Slovensko system, the heroism of literature founding essentially denied historical tradition (lyricists traced their own family tree back to Endre Ady), while in Transylvania it found it in its rich history and continued it (Kántor and Láng 1973, 7–14). In 1932, Endre Kovács used the analogous literary program in his title: *Erdély példája Szlovenszónak* [Transylvania is an example for Slovensko] (Kovács 1932, 14). Kovács encouraged a literary exploration of Slovensko and the acceptance of a “new psychological situation”. It is not to be neglected that the Transylvanian journal *Korunk*, for example, has maintained lively contacts with Slovensko authors from the very beginning (1926), and even if Sándor Csanda’s statement that “the most significant forum of Hungarian scholarly-publicistic literature in Czechoslovakia between the two world wars was *Korunk* in Transylvania” is a clear Marxist exaggeration, it illustrates the paths of intellectual cooperation and convergence of worldviews (Csanda 1985, 9). This idealistic Hungarian literature in Slovakia, which is both companionable and individualistic, is sometimes accompanied by anti-centralist outbursts: Zoltán Fábry, for example, frequently expressed anti-Budapest views in the 1980s, condemning the relationship of official Hungarian literature to minority writers, and in one of his writings even speaking of a “dead center” and suggesting the emergence of “reviving peripheries” (Fábry 1981, 45-48). According to Fábry, Slovensko is partly a “book colony”, but mainly a “mentality colony” (Fábry 1981, 358-360): the real model for periphery literature was not the pan-Hungarian context, but the Transylvanian model, which Fábry also over-mystified in his statements about the 1920s and onwards.

In his 1926 volume of essays, Imre Keller, on the other hand, called for metropolitan standards instead of a separate way ideology (Keller 1926). He considered the “benevolent indulgence” approach on the part of Hungary a trap. What was needed, in his view, was not a unique model, but domestic critique heightened almost to the point of “cruelty” (Keller 1926, 149). Gyula Alapy, who wrote about with the first ten years of minority literature (Alapy 1929, 171-192), thought in terms of the indissolubility of the integrity of Hungarian literature, using Slovensko as a purely geographical auxiliary term, and rejecting any

kind of ex post facto historical construction, including the applicability of the Transylvanian model.

The mere existence of László Zapf's essay *Magyar irodalom Csehszlovákiában* [Hungarian literature in Czechoslovakia] (Szeberényi 1984, 109–118; Göllnerová 1933, 89–96), however, already testifies to the fact that the logic of the pan-Hungarian integrity was adopted by the need to develop a new scholarly narrative conceived in the spirit of Slovensko. This was also supported by official cultural policy, since the threat of irredentism was eliminated by the heroism of “creating a literary life”. Zapf's work was written as a university thesis supervised by Pavel Bujnák, who provided the Hungarian program at Comenius University with lectures exclusively in Czech and Slovak (or a unique mixture of the two languages), and this model fitted in his nationalist, distorted conception of literary history perfectly. Bujnák became known as an advocate of the complete separation of Hungarian literature in Slovakia, who, in addition, adjusted to the contemporary geopolitical situation and historically separated, post facto and on a territorial basis, the part of the Hungarian literature that was “the Slovensko part”, and presented the authors of Hungarian literature as Hungarianized Slavs (Bujnák 1933, 378–390).

The traditional pan-Hungarian concept continued to prevail in anthologies published in Hungary: for example, the *Uj anthológia* [New anthology] compiled by Mihály Babits and published in 1932 ignored the specific issues of Hungarians outside Hungary, its editor thinking instead in terms of a unified Hungarian literature on an esthetic basis and following the confrontation of generations (Babits 1932).

The more significant concepts of cultural and literary policy with regard to the self-understanding of what is referred to as Slovensko Hungarian literature can be divided into the following way: human literature (Zoltán Fábry's concept), proletarian culture as a radical counterculture (Edgár Balogh's concept), minority messianism (Dezső Győry's concept), and the ideal of the Swiss model (Pál Szvatkó's concept). Fábry's humanist program shifted towards Slovensko identity, created on the analogy of the Transylvanian model, and then took an increasingly radical left turn, defining itself as a literature of reality. Edgár Balogh, a Transylvanian, in his 1932 essay *Harcos proletárok kultúrája* [The culture of the valiant proletarians], already saw the question of minority literatures resolved within the framework of a future hegemonic proletarian culture (Szeberényi 1984, 152–160; Kántor 2007, 67–73).

The ideology of minority messianism, called into being by Dezső Győry, can also be interpreted as a form of decentralization and minority self-defense. This idea creates the notion of the “minority genius” from the perspective of regionalism, and in fact treats literature as a socio-cultural tool. According to Rezső Szalatnai, “Győry was the first to say that Slovensko is our homeland” (Wallentinyi 1937, 15). Sándor Berkó's summary of the history of literature in 1939 made Dezső Győry

a central figure in minority literature, who “recorded certain stages of the social and intellectual development of the Upland Hungarians as a fine seismograph” (Berkó 1939, 945). “I believe in a Minority Genius”, wrote the author, and then he outlined a definite program: “And as you are acquiring such a minority spirit, you are planting this spirit in all Hungarians. You all in Slovensko, in Transylvania or in Vojvodina – all Hungarians in Europe: you are a minority in the same way. Hungarians need a new life. A great Hungarian Renaissance. Then you can redeem the world. You can give the world a new Messiah: the Messiah of life on earth. The Messiah of the future. This is what the Minority Genius means” (Győry 1927, 2). Rezső Szalatnai also propagated Győry with great enthusiasm in the 1928 issue of the pamphlet *Vetés* [Sowing]: “Open Győry’s volumes of poetry as a prayer book. Let the vision of his eyes become part of your vision, let the rhythm of his heart be one with your heart, and let his muscles, stretched to the sky, be your muscles of messianic power” (Szalatnai 1928, 6). Szalatnai went as far as speaking of a new spiritual form, built on the diasporic existence, and described the philosophical and literary esthetic foundations of Győry’s poetry in key terms of Taine’s positivist program: he saw poetic power as embodied in the intimate relationship between the historical landscape and the responsible poet (Wallentinyi, 1937, 91).

In the 1930s, Pál Szvatkó developed his own autonomist theoretical framework based on the Swiss model. His paper *A svájci példa* [The Swiss example], published in 1937 in the journal *Új Szellem*, proposed the creation of three Hungarian cantons within Czechoslovakia. Highlighting the positive effects of decentralization, he made a clear distinction between canton and self-government, while also trying to justify the possibility of a national autonomous form of life by drawing a parallel with the county tradition of historical Hungary (Szvatkó 1994, 92, 180-189). Szvatkó denied mystification and messianistic notions: he wanted to realize his program of minority self-organization based on the urban literary tradition and the traditions of “Indo-Germanic” bourgeois Hungarians. His European vision was the widest among the theorists of the time: he sought an esthetic-based literary consensus, backed by a healthy construct of tradition. The essence of this construct of tradition was based on the old traditions of Hungarian literature in the Uplands (Pázmány, the printing presses of Nagyszombat and the Szepes region, Kármán, Madách, Jókai, and Mikszáth) (Szvatkó 1994, 7-26).

With the annexation of Rusynsko and the creation of the independent Slovak State, not only the borders but also the boundaries of literature changed. The anthology *Szlovákiai magyar költők kis antológiája* [Small anthology of Slovakia Hungarian poets] was published in 1940, during the time of the independent fascist Slovak State (Csáky and Aixinger 1940). The anthology is evidence of a reduced presence: the truncation is not only territorial, but also racial and ideological. In the midst of prison ordeals and censorship restrictions, Zoltán Fábry’s 1941 essay (sent under

a pseudonym to the Bratislava *Magyar Hírlap*) is particularly important for redefining the relationship with tradition: “In our lands, the absence of tradition once meant protest, free flight, root-and-branch denial and trying everything. Today, life without tradition means rootlessness, drifting away, running away, and assimilation” (Fábry 1985, 222).

The new post-war minority era unfolded immediately in an ideologically contaminated space. The constructive relationship with tradition outlined above could not even unfold, since Marxist and even Stalinist literary politics called for a departure from the national tradition. The example to be followed was that of proletarian internationalism and Soviet literature at the top of the literary hierarchy. József Szőke, in the foreword to the anthology *Új hajtások* [New shoots], formulated this departure from the national tradition as follows: “Our beginning writers see their role models in Soviet literature, as the high standard of literature that they strive to achieve in their work every day. They work and create together with Slovak writers, learning from the experience of the work of Slovak and Czech writers” (Szőke 1953, 7). Minority fate was presented as a multiply contaminated space of existence: “Gone from the stage of Hungarian literature in Czechoslovakia are the lying penscripts who faithfully served the gentry and cozied up to fascism, gone are the nationalist hirelings who tried to incite the Slovak and Hungarian working people against each other, gone are the scribblers who brooded over the ‘minority question’ and the ‘destruction of the Hungarian race’”, stated Szőke (1953, 7). The new Hungarian literature in Czechoslovakia was degraded into a servile, reproducing literature and subordinated to the operation of the Sovietized Czechoslovak cultural policy machine. Literature became a form of power representation. In essence, self-interpretation remained within the slowly taming Marxist paradigm until 1989, minority literature was dissociated from that of Hungary, while at the same time it established its official institutional system, ranging from controlled publishing to Marxist workshops for producing the history of literature. The bourgeois literature of the first period also fell through the cracks of this paradigm. Hungarian literature in Czechoslovakia was divided by its Marxist theorists into so-called “periods of blossoming” (Fábry 1963), which were far from involving any blossoming. This blossoming, however, did not take place in the wild, but in a closed greenhouse: the relatively isolated realm of Hungarian authors in Czechoslovakia. The works of Hungarian authors in Czechoslovakia who fitted in well with official Czechoslovak cultural policy were published in Slovak or Czech translations, and book-exchange agreements allowed Hungarian minority works to reach socialist Hungary.

After 1989, space was opened, and the most innovative concept of minority culture was developed by Kalligram Publishing House, based on the common experience of the Central European region. The period between 1991 and 2016, which was marked by the name of publishing house’s director László Szigeti, was characterized by an

international openness that found inspiration in the works of Milan Kundera, Miklós Mészöly, Adam Michnik, Czesław Miłosz, Tadeusz Konwicki, Bohumil Hrabal, Pavel Vilikovský, and Jan Patočka, among others, who advocated regional cultural dialogue. The concrete and metaphorical boundaries of the Central European region are sometimes delimited as the terrain of grotesque or absurd play, defined by the dynamics of mergers and splits. This is not to be neglected even as an esthetic-poetic starting point. Minority literatures have hitherto been regarded primarily as path finding dwarf literatures, with some added local “surplus value”, but without any discourse-forming power in terms of their intrinsic value. With the creation of the Slovak branch of the publisher, it essentially doubled in size. The multilingual presence was also felt on other fronts: in the movement of published books between Central European languages, in their circulation, in the publication of multilingual but almost identical international series, in the public discussion of shared cultural and literary issues, and in the mutual cultural sensitization. Hungarian literature in Slovakia became a part of this vital system, and, thanks to its dual ties, it was able to occupy a relatively prominent position in this discourse. Movement between languages was ensured by mutual translation. Far more important than the author’s identity affiliation and biographical data was the representation of the multifocal identities formed in the texts and the need to create a shared Central European esthetic narrative, which also functioned as a world literary entry point and a regional trademark. The political and cultural diversification of the Visegrad countries gradually pushed the idea of Central Europe into the background, and the common esthetic paradigm also lost its appeal. With the transformation of Kalligram, this large-scale regional dialogue was also transformed, with an undoubted loss of prestige in terms of the development of a world literary horizon.

Thanks to the transcultural movements and the spread of transnational historical understanding (Gyáni 2018), broader and networked interpretative spaces similar to those described above were once again created in the late 2010s. An example of this is the excellent publication *Literární kronika první republiky* [A literary chronicle of the first republic] edited by Petr Šámal, which includes the literatures of the Hungarian, German, Rusyn, and Polish cultural milieus in the Czech and Slovak literary history discourse, and sees a linguistically diversified political-cultural space as a unified network (Šámal 2018, 266–270).

The concept of multiculturalism based on multivalency and dialogue, which is also marked by the name of Kalligram, can be seen as a continuation of the concept represented most succinctly by Zoltán Németh Hungarian literary thought in Slovakia. Following Wolfgang Welsh’s interpretation of transculturalism (Welsh 1999, 194–213), Németh developed his own strategy for the study of regional literature (Németh 2023). It is based on the assumption that it is not only homogeneous national perspectives that are unsustainable, so is

the idea of the homogeneity and separability of cultures. Hybridity or permeation and networking are among the basic properties of texts, and a particular aspect of the author's self-fashioning and fate history (multiculturalism, migration, identity, etc.), as well as the cultural policy context, are part of the literary narrative. Drawing on the conceptual apparatus of her transcultural lexicon (confluence, amalgamation, literatures of mobility, cosmo-nomadic and neo-nomadic lifestyles), Arianna Dagnino concludes that transcultural literatures cross borders and assert global perspectives at the same time, and therefore cannot be fully classified within any single national literary paradigm (Dagnino 2012, 1–14; 2015, 199–204; Wiegandt, 2020). According to Németh, “Hungarian literature in Slovakia could rightly appear in both Hungarian and Slovak literary history, it is not worth discussing in isolation” (Németh 2023, 14). In the study of the spaces and border crossings of multiculturalism, which is an inescapable given, language also necessarily transforms contamination, hybridity and the experience of migration into poetic energy. This kind of multilingualism also entails an internal multilingualism of literary expression, but the change of language and identity also becomes a relevant interpretative context.

Németh devotes a special chapter to perspectives on a transcultural history of minority literature, but the very title seems to generate a contradiction. If it is not an exaggeration to claim that a transcultural narrative can be constructed synecdochically, the notion of minority automatically loses its contours, since various (regional and global) minority components are mixed into the narrative (Hungarian, Slovak, Jewish, queer identity or inclination, migrant experience, cosmo-nomadic lifestyle, etc.). In essence, is it the proportion of the components of the mixture that determines which minority literature the given text belongs to? If we also take the breakdown of linguistic (including grammatical) boundaries seriously, the hegemony of the discourse of power will remain a matter of perspective, and in this relational system, it will again become unnecessary to reconstruct the historicity of the minority literary narrative. If we make permanent translation in general terms the basic communication model of transcultural existence, then we also produce misunderstandings and losses in addition to the creation of a shared communication platform. Is it a question of creating geometric spaces of our own construction, which the interpretative invention fills with content and creates a historical dimension? The interpretive strategy offered by the variant of transculturalism applied to Hungarian literature in Slovakia, in my opinion, is not yet able to offer a coherent historical concept but can, at best, be considered an innovative reading technique, which struggles mainly with the truisms of the romantic national literary view, with inherited trauma narratives, and with concepts projected back to earlier historical processes. By its very nature, the transcultural interpretative strategy actually devours its subject and, if not invalidates, then obscures the contours that were previously considered to be the basic characteristics of text, authorship

and context. The text is liberated and placed in many new (global or even regional) contexts, multiplying itself, and it is precisely because of this multiple functionality that its capacity for dialogue is highlighted. The history of Hungarian literature in Slovakia as a context, if it is still needed at all, can be at most a component of this system, and it is by no means necessarily the most essential component of the text's identity.

To sum up, the complex conglomerate of literature of the Hungarians living and working in the former Czechoslovakia and present-day Slovakia is a highly diversified and multicultural space that has attempted to articulate and assert its own position in a variety of contexts. This almost continuous process of self-definition and self-literacy, full of contradictions and ranging from the founding of literature to the extreme of potential self-absolution, is a history of change whose lessons can be applied to the study of the dynamics of narrative construction in the history of minorities in general.

Bibliography

- Alapy Gyula. "Kisebbségi irodalmunk tíz éve (1919–1928) és ennek könyvészete" [Ten Years of our Minority Literature (1919–1928) and its Bibliography]. *Kazinczy Évkönyv*, Kassa, 1929, pp. 171–192.
- Babits, Mihály, editor. *Új Anthologia. Fiatal költők 100 legszebb verse*. [New Anthology. 100 Most Beautiful Poems by Young Poets Budapest]. Nyugat, 1932.
- Balázs, Imre József. "Minor és maior nyelvhasználati módok az erdélyi magyar irodalomban" [Minor and Major Modes of Language Use in Hungarian Literature in Transylvania]. *Kisebbségkutatás*, vol. 15, no. 2., 2006, pp. 229–236. In English: *Identité nationale: réalité, histoire, littérature*. edited by Ioana Bot and Adrian Tudurachi, București, Institutul Cultural Român, 2008, pp. 245–257.
- . "Trees, Waves, Whirlpools: Nation, Region, and the Reterritorialization of Romania's Hungarian Literature". *Romanian Literature As Word Literature*. edited by Mircea Martin, London, New York, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017, pp. 115–132.
- Berkó, Sándor. "Felvidéki szellem, felvidéki irodalom" [Highland Spirit, Highland Literature]. *Korunk*, vol. 14, no. 11., 1939, pp. 941–948.
- Bujnák, Pavel. "Literatúra maďarská na území ČSR" [Hungarian Literature on the Territory of the Czechoslovak Republic]. *Československá vlastiveda VII*. Praha, Sfinx, 1933, pp. 378–390.
- Csáky, Mihály, and Aixinger László, editors. *Szlovákiai magyar költők kis antológiája. Szlovákiai magyarok kincsestára* [Small Anthology of Slovakian Hungarian Poets. Treasury of Hungarians in Slovakia]. Pozsony, Toldy Kör, 1940.
- Csanda, Sándor. *Nemzetiségi irodalmunk és kapcsolatai*. [Our Ethnic Literature and Relations]. Bratislava, Madách, 1985.

- Csehy, Zoltán. *Arctalanság, arcadás, arcrongálás. Önláttatási stratégiák és diszkurzusretorikák kisebbségi kontextusban* [Facelessness, Face-giving and Face-destruction. Strategies of Self-translation and Discourse Rhetorics in Minority Contexts]. Budapest, rec.iti, 2020.
- Cselényi, László. *Negyedvirágzás, avagy van-e (volt-e, lesz-e) hát cseh/szlovákiai-felvidéki magyar irodalom?* [Quarter-flowering, or is There (Was There, Will There Be) a Hungarian Literature in the Czech/Slovakian Highlands?]. Dunaszerdahely, Lilium Aurum, 2005.
- Dagnino, Arianna. "Transculturalism and Transcultural Literature in the 21st century." *Transcultural Studies*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2012, pp. 1–14.
- Dagnino, Arianna. *Transcultural Writers and Novels in the Age of Global Mobility*. West Lafayette, Purdue University Press, 2015.
- Dallos, István, and Mártonvölgyi, László editors. *Szlovenszkói Magyar Írók antológiája II*. [Anthology of Hungarian Writers from Slovakia II]. Nyitra, Híd, 1937.
- Deleuze, Gilles, and Guattari, Félix. *Kafka. A kisebbségi irodalomért* [Kafka. For minority literature]. transl. Karácsonyi Judit, Budapest, Quadmon 2009.
- Fábry, Zoltán. *Harmadvirágzás* [Third Flowering]. Bratislava, Szlovák Szépirodalmi Kiadó, 1963.
- . Fábry Zoltán összegyűjtött írásai II. [Collected writings II.]. Bratislava, Madách, 1981.
- . Fábry Zoltán összegyűjtött írásai V. [Collected writings V.]. Bratislava, Madách, 1985.
- Farkas, Gyula. *Az elszakított felvidék magyarságának szellemi élete* [The Spiritual Life of the Hungarians of the Breakaway Highlands]. Budapest, Pallas Irodalmi és Nyomdai Rt., 1927.
- Göllnerová, Alžbeta, editor. *Pavlovi Bujnákovci ctelia, priatelja, žiaci* [A book for Pavel Bujnák: Admirers, Friends, Pupils]. Bratislava, Academia, 1933.
- Gyáni, Gábor. *Nemzeti vagy transznacionális történelem* [National or Transnational History]. Budapest, Pesti Kalligram, 2018.
- Győry, Dezső. "Kisebbségi Génusz. Önvallomás" [Minority Genius. Self-confession]. *A Mi Lapunk*, vol. 7, no. 1., 1927.
- Kántor, Lajos, and Láng, Gusztáv. *Romániai magyar irodalom* [Hungarian Literature in Romania]. 1944–1970. Bukarest, Kriterion, 1973.
- Kántor, Lajos. "Balogh Edgár útja a Sarlótól a Korunkig" [Edgár Balogh's Journey from Sarló to Korunk]. *Tiszatáj*, vol. 61, no. 5, 2007, pp. 67–73.
- Keller, Imre. *Irodalmi mozaikok* [Literary Mosaics]. Kassa, Athenaeum, 1926.
- Kemény, Gábor. *Így tűnt el egy gondolat. A felvidéki magyar irodalom története 1918–1938* [So a Thought Disappeared. The history of Hungarian Literature in the Highlands 1918–1938.]. Budapest, Mefhosz Könyvkiadó, 1940.
- Komlós, Aladár. "Magyar költészet Szlovenszkón" [Hungarian Poetry in Slovensko]. *Nyugat*, vol. 19, no. 17., 1926.

- Kovács, Endre. "Erdély példája Szlovenszkónak" [Transylvania: an Example for Slovensko]. *A Reggel*, no. 235, 1932.
- Mezey, László Miklós. *Felelős irodalom* [Responsible Literature]. Pomáz, Kráter, 2006.
- Németh, Zoltán. *A bevégezhetetlen feladat. Bevezetés a „szlovákiai magyar” irodalom olvasásába* [The Unfinishable Task. An Introduction to Reading „Slovak Hungarian” Literature]. Dunaszerdahely, Nap Kiadó, 2005.
- . "The Transcultural Levels of Minority Literary History Writing: Hungarian Literature in Slovakia". *World Literature Studies*, vol. 14, no. 3., 2022, pp. 96–113.
- . *Transzkulturalizmus: elmélet és gyakorlat* [Transculturalism: Theory and Practice]. Budapest, Magyar Akadémiai Tanács, 2023.
- Šámal, Petr, editor. *Literární kronika první republiky* [A literary Chronicle of the first Republic]. Praha, Academia, 2018.
- Szalatnai, Rezső. *Magyar magatartás és irodalom Csehszlovákiában* [Hungarian Attitudes and Literature in Czechoslovakia]. Pozsony, AB-ART, 1994.
- . "A Kisebbségi Génusz költője" [Poet of the Minority Genius]. *Vetés*, no. 1, 1928.
- Szeberényi, Zoltán, editor. *Szlovenszkói küldetés. Csehszlovákiai magyar esszéírók. 1918–1938* [Mission to Slovensko. Hungarian Essayists in Czechoslovakia. 1918–1938]. Bratislava, Madách, 1984.
- Sziklay, Ferenc, editor. *Lirai antológia* [Lyric Anthology]. Berlin, Ludwig Voggenreiter Verlag, Magyar Osztály, 1926.
- Szőke, József, editor. *Új hajtások. Fiatal szlovákiai magyar írók és költők antológiája* [New Shoots. Anthology of Young Hungarian Writers and Poets from Slovakia]. Bratislava, Csehszlovákiai Magyar Könyvkiadó, 1953.
- Szvatkó, Pál. *A változás élménye* [The Experience of Change]. Pozsony, Kalligram, 1994.
- . "Mit adott Szlovenszkó az új magyar irodalomnak?" [What did Slovensko Give to the New Hungarian Literature?]. *Szlovenszkói Magyar Írók Antológiája IV*. Nyitra, Híd, 1937, pp. 9–15.
- Tamás, Lajos. "Az erdélyi és szlovenszkói irodalmi élet" [Literary Life in Transylvania and Slovakia]. *Magyar Minerva*, vol. 5., 1934, pp. 161–162.
- Toldi, Éva. „Nyelváltás és regionális hovatartozás-tudat” [Language Change and Regional Identity]. *Kortárs magyar kisebbségi irodalmak. Posztkolonializmus, gender studies, littérature mineure* [Contemporary Hungarian Minority Literature. Postcolonialism, Gender Studies, Literature Mineure], edited by Balázs Imre József. Kolozsvár, Egyetemi Műhely Kiadó, Bolyai Társaság, 2013, pp. 44–53.
- Turczel, Lajos. *Tanulmányok és emlékezések* [Studies and Memories]. Bratislava, Madách, 1987.
- Wallentinyi, Samu, editor. *Új magyar líra* [New Hungarian Lyric]. Kassa, Karpatia, 1937.

Welsch, Wolfgang. "Transculturality: Puzzling Form of Cultures Today." *Spaces of Culture: City, Nation, World*, edited by Mike Featherstone Mike and Scott Lash, London, SAGE, 1999, pp. 194–213.

Wiegandt, Kai, editor. *The Transnational in Literary Studies: Potential and Limitations of a Concept*. Berlin and Boston, MA, De Gruyter, 2020.

Author's profile

Zoltán Cséhy is an associate professor at the Department of Hungarian Language and Literature, Faculty of Arts, Comenius University in Bratislava. His professional interests focus primarily on Hungarian and Neolatin Literature, Minority Studies and Translation Studies.