

Personal Ethos in the Literature of Slovak and Czech Dissidents: The Essay as a Form of Expressing an Active Personality

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This article discusses texts by selected authors from the period of »consolidation« in Czechoslovakia. The first part briefly outlines the sociohistorical context of dissident writing.

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Introduction

Twentieth-century art cannot do without reflection on significant social problems, without artists' focus on man and his diverse, varied existence. However, it is important to distinguish whether this is done only through the prism of a subjective view of artists with an emphasis on descriptions of their own maladies and experience, without any concentration on any abstract meaning and scope, without great conceptions and transpersonal goals. Such "talking about oneself" has reduced art to a trivial level of common everyday conversations.

Few writers have been able to grasp the trivial authenticity that modernism allowed in art at the beginning of the twentieth century, in a way that made it art with propositions of the fundamental problems of life. For the outstanding personalities living under the totalitarian conditions of the Warsaw Pact countries after the Second World War, it was the essay that became their genre of narration, through which they were most capable of reflecting reality.

Faced with the diversity and ambiguity of the current of modern movements, as well as their postmodern continuations, entropy became entrenched in thinking about literature and art. However, in the second

half of the twentieth century in the Eastern Bloc countries it is possible to distinguish two basic streams in art: the official and the alternative one.

Outstanding personalities of twentieth-century alternative culture, whose primary medium was the word, still relied on the word and still had confidence in it. They placed all their hope for the resolution of social (and more often also political) conditions in it. Literature of inner emigration¹ and dissent² are symptomatic of alternative culture. In various communist countries, their mode of existence and the extent of their activities differed.³

In international projects, Czechoslovakia emerges as one state, largely compact and without any resolution. As a rule, Slovak participation is missing. From my own experience, I know that *-slovakia* was still a mere suffix of *Czecho-* (i.e., Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia) for the West in 1996. From the outside this may seem acceptable. However, upon closer inspection one discovers dissimilarities. The difference between the Czech lands and Slovakia has deep historical roots and also continues into the twentieth century. However, it was only together that the Slovaks and Czechs were able to break loose from the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

In Czechoslovakia in the late 1960s the Slovak politician Alexander Dubček conceived of “socialism with a human face.” Dubček came from a communist family and by the end of the 1960s he was working as a reform communist. His politics were inspired by movements in intellectual and artistic circles, as well as among the “workers” created by the 1950s – that is, political processes, gulags, the creation of cooperatives, the dissolution of monastic orders, and so on. Already by the preparatory phase of the 1960s it is necessary to trace parallels and differences in development in the Czech lands and Slovakia.⁴

In the period of “consolidation” following the Prague Spring, sanctions emerged in the Czech lands under the leadership of Gustáv Husák, against which it was necessary to take a stand in one way or another. Sanctions against intellectuals were much more striking than in the past. Thus, the situation crystallized – many intellectuals from the period of revival in the 1960s left and lived abroad – actually, they were “allowed” to do so under dismal conditions as in the case of Jiří Gruša, Pavel Kohout, Arnošt Lustig, and others, or they were monitored at home like Ludvík Vaculík, Václav Havel, and others, and from their “emigration into their own world” (“life in truth”) they organized important resistance with a risk of interrogation, imprisonment, and other forms of persecution, including inferior social standing without work or without an adequate job.

In Slovakia in this situation, the sanctions were not set as an “either-or” alternative.⁵ After the purges in 1970,⁶ political differentiation of the unreliable became a tool for breaking up the potential solidarity of dissidents

in Slovakia. Unlike Dominik Tatarka, Jozef Jablonický, Miroslav Kusý, Hana Ponická, Marian Városov, Thomas Strauss, and others, some politically engaged intellectuals quietly obtained new inconspicuous positions. Culture was saved by writers engaged in the organs of the Communist Party. Through this differentiation, the last remnants of hope for a common front of further resistance were smashed.

The social life of the “parallel culture” in the Czech lands was organized through public manifestos such as “The Two Thousand Words” (which automatically belong to parallel culture for their courage to criticize the party and its practices), petitions to the samizdat series *Edice Petlice* (Padlock Edition), and other activities. Many participated in this and, despite monitoring by the police, it was tirelessly promoted by Vaculík and Havel.

1968, normalization, and consolidation

In 1968 the awareness of democracy, which made it possible to cooperate, was indelibly set in the consciousness of the citizens of Czechoslovakia. The reform thesis of “socialism with a human face” had become a slogan and Alexander Dubček became a national symbol. Lubomír Lipták considers the changeover from 1967 to 1968 to be the beginning of a “new stage of our history.” The “national front” (a notion used by Lipták) that was formed did not target the Czech nation, but was against conservatism; it did not reject Prague, but centralism in general.

Suppression of the reform efforts by armed forces from Warsaw Pact countries (i.e., occupation) was a twofold disappointment for the people of Czechoslovakia: 1) the rest of the countries did not join in, but they served a hegemonic power, and 2) the people themselves, under the influence of this power, stepped back from their positions on the path to freedom. The years of “normalization” and “consolidation” meant only resignation and large-scale “inner emigration.” On the other hand, this situation was also a challenge to maintain one’s own “human face” despite “consolidation.” Two burning human torches became the conscience of the time and a uniting factor, two students from Prague: Jan Palach (who burned himself to death on 16 January 1969 in protest against the ongoing “normalization”) and Jan Zajíc (who burned himself to death a few days later). Over the following years, environmentalists were rather well organized as well as the Slovak Catholic dissident movement connected with foreign countries, which resulted in the Candle Demonstration in 1988, which was also the beginning of open protest and revival and the fight for democracy in Slovakia one year before the Velvet Revolution. (Korec, *Bratislavský*)

An important role in the preparations for 1968 was played by *Kultúrny život* (Cultural Life) with Pavol Števček as its editor in chief, and within this especially *Oneskorené reportáže* (Belated Reports) by Ladislav Mňačko. The initiatives around Echo appear unique and exceptionally progressive for the 1960s. Milan Zemko's ideas fundamentally revise communist society and in all their proposed coordinates are reminiscent of the changes that took place after 1989 (Zemko 22–25).

The “consolidation” period was marked with deepened schizophrenia, an atmosphere of fear of ubiquitous power, total “inner emigration,” or actual emigration abroad. In Slovakia, “inner emigration” and the dissident movement were concentrated in fine arts circles and in the Catholic underground (see Strauss, *Tri otázky*).⁷ Other activities in other professions were either sporadic and individual, or persistent but isolated. Resistance against the authorities was not organized and institutionalized in Slovakia⁸ as it was in the Czech lands.

The Slovak issue as part of the resistance

As so often in the past, the issue of the autonomy of Slovakia, connected not only with the ideological hegemony of the USSR but also the state hegemony of the Czechs in Czechoslovakia (Lipták 5), came to the fore in Slovakia again in the 1960s. The Czech lands, as a historically independent formation, did not need to struggle with such issues. This is the “external” difference between the Czech and Slovak dissident movements. At the same time, it is also a very complicated element that clouded the situation for Slovak dissidents, and it divided rather than united Slovak society on the edge of what was already symptomatic nationalism. Part of the opposition, who unreservedly and gladly functioned later under the sun of autonomy in a functioning society, were reluctant to support independence. (The same situation was repeated once again after 1989.) On the other hand, the activation of national awareness also stirred up the old Slovak nationalists (from the first Slovak Republic from 1939 to 1945), who in the old spirit hatefully and in the name of democracy attacked not only the contemporary communists but also the resistance fighters that fought against Germany in the Second World War. The formation of the “national front” and its operation is analyzed in detail by Lipták with the following conclusion: “The Slovak participants in the fight for democracy in the republic brought into it zeal and stubbornness, but above all the temperament and enthusiasm of a real national and nation-liberating fight” (353). When the Soviet troops withdrew from the streets of the

cities into their garrisons, the question of ratifying the constitutional law on the Czechoslovak federation was again placed on the agenda. After a lengthy process of the application of Constitutional Law no. 143/1968 Coll., which theoretically changed and amended the constitution from 1960, basically creating a new constitution, the first Slovak government was appointed by the chairmanship of the Slovak National Council at the beginning of January 1969. On 30 January 1969 the Federal Assembly gathered for its first session (Rychlík 271 ff.).

Proceeding from this socio-historical context, which developed author's personalities as dissidents, I categorize dissidents (i.e., those thinking differently) based on certain differentiating features, some of which overlap:

A: Common features:

a) Coming out against or a radical attitude towards power and violence (all that were demonstrably prosecuted and persecuted by the government); and

b) The natural world and maintaining it under unfavorable conditions.

B: Differentiating features:

a) The scale of importance (public appreciation or also function) before becoming part of the dissident movement;

b) After becoming part of the dissident movement: organized dissent (in the Czech lands), scattered dissent (in Slovakia);

c) Differing level of education;

d) Affiliation with the Communist Party: political persuasion, revision of the ideology of socialism, Christian universalism, a liberal attitude; and

e) The relation to the nation.

Here it is important to realize what strength there had to be in the common features listed above if they were able to maintain the idea of unity despite such significant differences. The dissident author type may have the following identity:

a) Supranational or panhuman (Havel,⁹ Vaculík,¹⁰ Strauss,¹¹ Hnitka¹²)

b) Both panhuman and national (Tatarka)¹³

c) Panhuman, national, and also Christian (Korec).

Within the differentiation listed above, every dissident author has his own special identity that shows in his works in a very pregnant way through the subject, which manifests itself as unique and original, without any reference to the relations (or boundaries) of genres and other theory-given criteria in the selection of the theme, motifs, and later in their way of reflecting and their poetics of processing. Because the works of the authors mentioned above reduce the plot and fiction is a distinct subject reflecting sociopolitical events, these authors' predominant genre is the essay,¹⁴ and

distinct essay-like elements are also present in their other writing. Under the sociopolitical conditions of the twentieth century, the genre of the essay and its characteristics overstepped its boundaries and shifted into drama (Havel), into prose works in an authentic, diary, documentary form (Tatarka, Pavol Strauss, and Jozef Hnitka), or into journalism (Vaculík).

If action is the essence of existence of these authors, despite the fact that they were silenced by force, the living “subject matter” of this production, these essays, has more than documentary value. Based on possibility and due to its “vivacity,” it has also actively entered into the civic consciousness, and thus it became active in the process of awareness. In cases when the author was not allowed to publish at all, he lived in an area in a “happening” way and he alone “performatively” influenced a relatively broad audience with the risk of police or physical persecution.

Such alternative literature (the essay) accompanies official politics and official thinking like a shadow, like a correction, like a reservoir of different thinking, a possible potential of transformations.

The individual authors were more or less aware of the power of their influence. Havel describes the inner mechanism of the functioning of the word against power in the following way:

The operational range of this special power cannot be recorded based on the number of followers, voters, or soldiers because it extends in the “fifth column” of the social consciousness, the hidden intentions of life, the suppressed desire of man for his own dignity and fulfillment of elementary rights, his real social and political interests. Thus, in question here is power that does not dwell in the force of a social or political group limited in this way or that, but above all in the power of the potential hidden in the *whole society*, including all its power structures. This power does not rely on its own soldiers but, so to speak, on the “soldiers of its enemy”; that is, everybody that lives in falsehood and can be at any time – at least theoretically – struck by the power of truth. Is it a sort of a bacteriological weapon, by means of which – once the conditions have ripened for it – a single civilian can disarm an entire division. (Havel 20)

An addition to Havel’s reflections above is made in one of the texts by Tatarka; a discreetly hidden reflection on power and the possibilities of overcoming it:

No defeat is absolute. Based on the assumption of the fundamental that you have a desire to undergo a struggle, that you have courage and or self-confidence to fight an adversary, you are watchful and wait. A suitable moment and the position you take will add regiments and divisions to you that make you, presently, positionally, historically weaker than your adversary. And this is surely the Biblical story of pitting one’s strength against another’s, the story and case of David and Goliath. (Tatarka 47)

“The Two Thousand Words” by Vaculík was the first serious attack against the power and positions of the governing party. Because it was issued publicly and it was possible to affiliate with it, it also had great political power. Here, Vaculík analyzes mechanisms of power that cannot possibly be identified with:

The Communist Party, which enjoyed a great deal of confidence from people after the war, had gradually exchanged it for offices, until it got them all and had nothing else. We must say it like this, and it is also known to the communists that are among us and whose disappointment from the results is as great as the disappointment of others. A wrong line of leadership has changed the party from a political party and an ideological alliance to a power organization that has acquired a great amount of attraction for power-hungry self-seekers, accusing cowards, and people with a guilty conscience. (Vaculík, “Dvatisíce” 1, 3)

In the Czech lands, the social life of the “parallel culture” was organized: from the public manifestos of “The Two Thousand Words,” which due to their courage to criticize the political party and its practices automatically belong to parallel culture, via the foundation of the Committee for the Defense of the Unjustly Persecuted (*Výbor na obranu nespravedlivě stíbaných*, VONS), via petitions to the Padlock Edition and other activities, in which many participated but which, despite monitoring by the police, were tirelessly supported by Vaculík and Havel. Vaculík expressed the contempt for the regime and the absurdity of the “functioning” of the system in one sentence: “So why do the brutes ask if they expect only one answer?” (Vaculík, *Český* 57). For them, the situation was not easy. Vaculík describes the sadness over the relations in the following way:

Again, I have experienced that trembling, incomprehensibly and inadequately coming from some ill part of my body perhaps. Nor could I speak; on my way back, Saša took me home. After a common friendly farewell, at home (fortunately I was there alone, out of shame), I worked my way through anger: are those boys of his possibly more valuable and precious than mine?” (Vaculík, *Český* 38–39)

In *Hovory o kultúre a obcovaní* (Conversations on Culture and Discourse), Tatarka begins with a description of the feeling his comfortable shoes give him in the streets of Paris. He is led by two experiences to reflect on possibilities generally, on the “tradition of broad possibilities”: during a visit to a certain Parisian student and his lodging he can see the familiar wide bed he himself used to have once in his student room:

I couldn’t resist, I got out and looked. Almost exactly the same room as mine some time ago. On the walls there was old faded wallpaper, a wide, enormous

bed that took up almost three-quarters of the space. Half of it would suffice not only for sleeping but also for God knows what kind of performances, and you wouldn't fall. God knows who introduced a bed of such oversize dimensions and when, but it is maintained as a tradition of broad possibilities. (Tatarka 45)

In a friend's cottage, where he relaxes, he is again reminded of the variants of possibilities by tools brought from the loft: "Surely I can create what I want, this all is at my disposal, so why wouldn't I attempt something that could be called a work of architecture. This all was caused by the tools the tools opened my eyes to age, shapes, quality" (Tatarka 50).

He puts individual conclusions next to one another in an associative way, and so it is up to the reader to figure out connections. He describes life situations in a mosaic-like way and reflections arising from them about sociopolitical, historical, and aesthetic issues. Topically, the present alternates with the past here – the terse advice of a Polish historian about the suffering of the Polish nation through art – a gibbet, as a monument that has become a memento for the living, the death of a little son on insurgent territory, an extreme existential situation in which, as a prisoner of the Germans, he was close to death, as well as other horrors of the war, experiences rooted in his subconscious.

My first boy, still in his swaddling clothes, used to walk in the mountains as a partisan; he paid a high price for the uprising. I'm no longer surprised by death. But nonsense still keeps surprising me. Before I rose, everything was decided concerning us. . . . And what is the consolation for a nation that doesn't weigh in terms of power? A nation whose fate has become to always be liberated by someone and from something? . . . Liberators will become redeemers, and if we do not defend ourselves against them, they will keep paying a high price for us with a gradually more liquid dollars until they buy us out at a giveaway price forever. (Tatarka 46)

The identity of dissident authors manifests itself in not forgetting about what makes the essence of the meaning of life. The authentic narrative is almost stenographically recorded. The artistic processing is visible in the authorial selection of facts, the usage of paradox, verbatim and factual but also transferred naming of actual experience, reflection of reality, and also very emotionally engaged or discursive language.

The essence of creation in the authors' essays is their sensibility to socio-political events and also the mutual reflection of works published in samizdat. In the introduction to *The Demon of Conformism*, titled "Outcry of Epiphany," Havel writes: "As a medium of human self-awareness, literature can simply never entirely break free from the clime of its place and time. This is why in places where politics penetrates everything so markedly, literature is also more penetrated by it" (Havel, "Výkřik" 5)

Limited space prevents me from mentioning and analyzing all the authors listed above that became emblematic in various types of dissent in Czechoslovakia.

In conclusion, it is possible to point to a broader context. The interpretation of the situation for the entire Eastern Bloc also legitimizes a personality from nearby Poland as the analyst of the nature of the twentieth century: Czesław Miłosz. By the beginning of the 1950s, when he published his essays as *The Captive Mind* (1953) in his London emigration, Miłosz showed a double existence – a public mask and a private face – and revealed the pretence and hypocrisy of eastern totalitarian society. Miłosz was not a political writer. He only needed to identify, for himself, what was going on in the country he left, so that he could exist freely; that is, without a double face. In emigration he also published his novel *The Seizure of Power*, which elaborates on the theses of his previous essays in a fictionalized form. As Ladislav Volko points out in the introduction to the Polish edition of Miłosz's novel (2002), Stanisław Barańczak speaks about the possibilities of the protagonists of this novel as about a defeat. He has the following in mind: collaboration, isolation, and death. However, in the panorama of history we can really see the isolation of the “inner emigration” as a hidden corrective for contemporaries and as a motivation for reflections about a possible future direction of humankind.

NOTES

¹ The notion of “inner emigration” emerged in the period of the Third Reich (see Lowy). I use it metaphorically for a different historical period, and so it is not identical with the meaning it had in the 1930s. It is different mainly due to the gesture of the voluntary decision that the personalities of the “inner emigration” had to exist outside the official current and in a substandard position of a citizen and artist. It also differs in a certain courage to express one's own opinion. In 1930s Germany something like this would have been impossible due to the extreme threat to existence and very probable incarceration in concentration camps. Despite this difference, I use this notion to stress the affinity between the types of free existence in two totalitarian systems of the twentieth century: fascism and communism (see Courtois et al. 24–25).

² The notion of “dissent” is an inexact notion. According to Zdeněk Mlynář, it was Western journalists and people active in the opposition that participated in introducing it and did not know how to more precisely term themselves “differently thinking.” Being a dissident referred to expressing one's own opinions in public, “not to live in lie” (Solzhenitsyn), to live the “life in truth” (Havel), and “to defend one's own reality” (Šimečka). In Czechoslovakia a question of the natural world is related to dissent. That world had been formed against the conformism of “real socialism” (Kusý). The natural world and its interpretation constitute the explicit part of Dominik Tatarka's reflections; for example, in his work *Návraťky* (Recordings). (see Bělohradský 83; Mlynář 660; Kusý, 95; Patočka, 9; Kmet')

³ After the death of Stalin, the politics of the Soviet Union attempted de-Stalinization

twice; once during the twentieth convention of the Communist Party in 1956, and then during the twenty-second convention in 1961. After that, imprisonments set in again. In art, a pilot role in the process of democratization was played by Boris Pasternak and Vladimir Vysotsky and the conception of the “rebellion of personality.” The establishment of *samizdat* in the 1960s represented an uncensored platform. Recall the “Chronicle of Current Events” from 1968 and the foundation of the “Initiative” groups from 1969; these were the first programmatic activities for human rights in the Eastern Bloc. In Poland in 1956 there were attempts at reform that ceased very quickly. However, the government had to respect the Catholic Church, where the intellectuals found their refuge. In 1970 there were workers’ strikes in Gdańsk and Gdynia, and in 1980 the establishment of the Solidarity (*Solidarność*) social and workers’ movement. The nation also organized itself into a community thanks to the election of Karol Wojtyła as pope. In their difficult history, Poles had been trained in perseverance, and in the Second World War they organized an underground state structure. In 1981 they moved away from communist rule and took their own way. In Hungary, oppositional thinking is based on the experience from 1956. János Kádár tried hard to depoliticize the state and reform it economically. The intellectuals, followers of Georg Lukács, opened theoretical debates on contemporary socialism. At the same time, Hungarian dissidents were in operation and utilized their economic advantages; in the 1980s they achieved dialogue with the reform wing of the authorities. In 1961, the Berlin Wall was built in East Germany. In church and cultural circles, protest groups had been formed since the mid-1970s. These were peace and ecological initiatives demanding disarmament and nature conservation. The expulsion of Wolf Biermann from East Germany took place in 1976. Galleries, books, and newspapers appeared outside the official scene. Human rights took a place in the movement’s agenda only before the revolution.

⁴ There are a relatively large number of resources on this issue in historical studies, and individual aspects of dissent have been dealt with elsewhere (e.g., Catholic dissidents and alternative fine arts; see Bátorová; Courtois et al.; Dobiáš; Kaplan; Kmet’ & Marušiak; Lesňák; Lipták; Mikloško; Pešek; Pešek & Letz; Petřivý; Rychlík; Strauss.

⁵ An exception was the imprisonment of Milan Šimečka, and later Ján Kalina. Unlike similar cases in the Czech lands, nobody protested when they were taken into custody.

⁶ For more detailed statistics as well as differences in the results of the purges in the Czech lands and Slovakia, see Jan Rychlík’s chapter “Rozdíl při průběhu čístek v ČR a SR” (280–282).

⁷ In a very exemplary way, using various individual yet symptomatic examples, Strauss captures the inner developmental rhythm connected to foreign countries. (See also Strauss, *Utajená*; Strýko; Lesňák; Korec, *Od barbarskej* I, II, III)

⁸ See Jablonický, *Samizdat*, *Samizdat 2*, *Samizdat o disente*; Kopsová et al.; Kusý; Kusý and Šimečka; Šimečka; Váross.

⁹ Václav Havel was born in 1936 in Prague to a “bourgeois family,” which is why he was not allowed to study under the communist regime. In 1967 he graduated from a distance-learning program in dramaturgy from the Academy of Performing Arts (DAMU) in Prague. In 1963 his first play, *Zabradní slavnost* (The Garden Party) was staged at the Na Zábradlí theatre, in 1965 *Výrozmění* (The Memorandum), and in 1968 *Ztižená možnost soustředění* (The Increased Difficulty of Concentration). In 1969 his plays were banned in Czechoslovakia. He refused to leave Czechoslovakia and published in *samizdat*. He was a co-founder and one of the first three spokespersons of Charter 77 (*Charta 77*). He was imprisoned four times and constantly spied on. In 1989 he took part in the foundation of Civic Forum (*Občanské fórum*) and helped determine the direction of its activity. He holds many Czech and foreign awards. In 1989 he was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. An unusual biography of Havel, from his dissident years, is the book *Dálkový výslech* (Long-Distance Interrogation; an

interview with Karel Hviždala, 1986). In 1989 he was elected president of Czechoslovakia. There is much secondary literature on Havel, but no monograph has been published yet.

¹⁰ Ludvík Vaculík is a Czech prose writer, columnist, and publicist, the author of the manifesto “The Two Thousand Words,” a founder of the samizdat Padlock Edition (*Edice Petlice*, founded in 1971), and a signatory of Charter 77. He was born on 23 July 1926 in Broumov, near Valašské Klobouky, as the son of a carpenter. From 1941 to 1943 he took a two-year course offered by the Baťa company in Zlín, where he worked until 1946. In 1946 he passed his school-leaving examination at the Business Academy and left for Prague, where he graduated from the College of Politics and Social Studies (*Vysoká škola politická a sociální*) in 1950. His literary career begun in 1953, when he was working as an editor in the political literature division at Rudé Právo publishers, where he worked until 1957, later for the weekly *Beseda venkovské rodiny* (Village Family Meeting), and after 1959 in youth broadcasting for Czechoslovak Radio. Throughout the 1960s he attracted attention through his socio-critical journalism. In 1965 he joined the editorial board of *Literární listy* (Literary Papers), later renamed *Listy* (Papers). This was the most significant periodical of the reform-minded intelligentsia and he stayed with it until the periodical was banned in 1969. By then, he had started his career as a prose writer as well; for example, his novella *Na farmě mládeže* (On the Youth Farm) was published, as well as his novel *Rušný dům* (Busy Home). However, today only his non-conformist novel *Sekeřka* (The Axe) is considered his real entrance to literature, which draws its motif from the destiny of his father.

¹¹ Pavol Strauss was born in 1912 in Liptovský Svätý Mikuláš (central Slovakia) and died in Nitra in 1994. He spent his childhood and youth in the family of his maternal grandfather, the Mikuláš-based physician, Bartolomej Kuks. The family was trilingual (in Slovak, German, and French). He graduated from the prominent secondary school in Mikuláš, studied medicine in Vienna, and, after his transfer to Prague, graduated from Charles University. He published two collections of poetry in German, *Schwarze Verse* (Black Verse) and *Kanone auf dem Ei* (The Gun on the Egg), both of them from 1936 to 1937. Two collections remain in manuscript (*Worte aus der Nacht* ‘Words from the Night’ and *Und der Bruder Abel lebt ja noch* ‘And Brother Abel Lives On’; both from 1940). He returned to Slovakia and experienced two conversions: to Marxism (in Prague) and to Catholicism (in Slovakia in 1942, lasting until his death). In 1944 he was imprisoned by the Gestapo, and then freed. Until 1948 he continued publishing and working as a surgeon, then as a head physician in Skalica. He received a fellowship in Zurich in 1946, and was then transferred to Nitra to a position in which he was not allowed to practice surgery. He mainly wrote for himself: essays, journals, and aphorisms (a rare genre). All of his works were published after 1989. An unusual biography of Strauss is presented in the book *Človek pre nikoho* (A Man for Nobody, 2000). The first scholarly monograph on Strauss, *Paradoxy Pavla Straussa* (Pavol Strauss’ Paradoxes, 2006) was written by the author of this article.

¹² Jozef Hnitka was born in 1913 in Turzovka (northern Slovakia) and died in Nitra in 1992. He studied at the Pedagogical Institute in Levice and received his degree at Comenius University in Bratislava. His fields of study were history, geography, and Slovak language and literature. He taught in several places in prewar Czechoslovakia and he joined the Communist Party. During the wartime Slovak Republic, he was a political prisoner in Ilava and he participated in preparing the Slovak National Uprising. He was one of the leaders of the uprising in northern Slovakia and took part in fighting in Strečno. He was arrested several times; he was constantly on the run with a fake ID. After the war he published the novel *Križové štácie* (Stations of the Cross). In the 1950s he was expelled from the Communist Party and from the Writers’ Union; he lost his job and did not have the right to work or publish. For his entire life, with the exception of the 1968 and 1969, he was listed in the ŠtB (secret police) files as an “enemy of the state.” After 1989 he was rehabilitated

by the Union of Slovak Writers and the School Administration in Bratislava. In 1991/92 he published *Útek z rakvy* (Flight from the Coffin) in samizdat. In 2003 a collection of his works was published, *Transfúzia* (Transfusion, Petrus publishers) with a detailed calendar in the concluding part and an epilogue by Anton Hykisch (and edited by the author of this article).

¹³ Dominik Tatarka was born in Drienove in 1913 and died in Bratislava in 1989. He studied at Charles University in Prague and at the Sorbonne in Paris. He entered into literature through his collection of novellas *V úzkosti bládnia* (In the Anxiety of Searching, 1942) and *Panna zázračnica* (The Miraculous Virgin, 1945). He participated in the Slovak National Uprising, and in the 1950s he made his works conform to socialist realism. At the same time, he secretly wrote his *Demon súblasu* (The Demon of Conformism, 1956, published as a book in 1963). He insisted on protesting against the entrance of Warsaw Pact troops into Czechoslovakia, returned his state award, spoke on SNP Square in Bratislava, and students carried him on their shoulders. However, he remained ostracized in Slovakia, then made contact with Czech dissidents, was one of the first signatories of Charter 77, published in samizdat, and wrote *Písачky* (Scribbles) and *Navrávačky* (Recordings).

¹⁴ Regarding the essay, “this term was used for the first time and canonized by Michel de Montaigne (1533–1592). From the viewpoint of formal logic a subject-object synthesis is dominant, which is an inherent part neither of poetry, nor of epics – not only methodologically, but also from the viewpoint of the character attributes (metonymical or metaphorical depiction of the model of the theme). Often it also has the form of brief, esthetically impressive and distinct journalistic performances that are a valuable resource for thinkers. However, even then a sensually and aesthetically dynamic modeling of the theme is characteristic for the essay, which is usually realized as a pendant of a novel plot by means of a polynome, polyvalent trope in a characteristic imaginative, often even poetically composed developmental movement” (Valček 155).

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Osebni etos v literaturi slovaških in čeških disidentov: esej kot oblika izražanja aktivne osebnosti

Ključne besede: literatura in etika / češka književnost / slovaška književnost / disidentstvo / disidentski pisatelji / družbena vloga / esej

Prispevek obravnava zapleten problem, zato je njegova struktura razvejana.

1. V sklopu, ki obravnava družbenozgodovinski kontekst, so disidenti opredeljeni po določenih lastnostih, ki se med seboj povezujejo:

– skupne lastnosti: a) močno nasprotovanje politični oblasti in nasilju (vsi, ki jih je dokazljivo preganjala politična oblast in jim je grozil zapor, izguba službe itd.); b) ohranjanje naravnega stanja tudi v neugodnih razmerah;

– posebne lastnosti: a) stopnja pomembnosti (prepoznavnost, položaj) preden so postali disidenti; b) potem, ko so postali disidenti: organizirano nasprotovanje (na Češkem), razpršeno nasprotovanje (na Slovaškem); c) različne stopnje izobrazbe; d) prepričanje, revizija socialistične ideologije.

Kako vplivne so morale biti skupne lastnosti, da so uspele ohraniti ideje o enotnosti kljub velikim razlikam?

Vsak disidentski avtor ima svojo značilno identiteto, ki se pokaže v »ne pozabljanju« bistva oziroma smisla življenja. Avtorjeva globoka izkušnja izvira iz njegove zavesti in se kaže v »avtentični« naraciji. Iz avtorjevega načina izbiranja dejstev je jasno, da gre za umetniško obliko komunikacije.

2. Osrednji del tega prispevka je analiza tekstov izbranih avtorjev in del iz časa konsolidacije Českoslovaške socialistične republike. Izbrana besedila so eseji, ne romani, novele ali kratke zgodbe. Meje esejov so se v 20. stoletju premaknile, in sicer proti dramskemu in proznemu žanru – v avtentični, dokumentarni obliki ali obliki dnevnika (Tatarka, Vaculík, Gruša, Strauss, Hnitka).

Ta vrsta umetniškega ustvarjanja nima le dokumentarne vrednosti, ampak se je, zahvaljujoč svoji vitalnosti, ustalila v javni zavesti (kjer je bilo to mogoče) in učinkovito širila spoznanja. Če avtor svojega dela ni smel objaviti, je lahko na javnost (predvsem pa na ljudi iz svoje okolice) vplival na »hopeningih« in »predstavah«. Taka dejavnost je bistvo obstoja. Spretno je izražena skozi tematiko, motive in način refleksije in poetike ter izvirno in avtentično presega meje žanra ali drugih teoretičnih meril.

Etos te alternativne kulture se izraža v univerzalnem kodeksu najstarejših etičnih norm. Lahko bi rekli, da so to prastari eseji, ki želijo na pozitiven način vplivati na sedanost in vzpostaviti tehtno prihodnost.

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Esej in interdiskurzivnost: vednost med singularnostjo in *sensus communis*

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Izmenjave med različnimi področji vednosti so značilne za transverzalne diskurze, ki jih zajemata literatura in časopisje. Esej se kot žanr odlikuje po interdiskurzivnosti, ki se v tekst vpisuje na način singularnosti. Toda singularna konfiguracija pomena, ki v eseju uteleša Kantovo »estetsko idejo« ter prečka obstoječe kulturne kode in sisteme vednosti, iz katerih sicer izhaja, ne bi bila mogoča brez »sensus communis« – pojma, razumljenega kot struktura občih mest, sklicevanje na zdravo pamet ali Kantov »Gemeinsinn«, ki je predpostavka estetske sodbe. Opisana bipolarnost eseja je osvetljena s perspektive družbene zgodovine vednosti in v kontekstu razmerja tega žanra do tiska, knjige in časopisja.

Ključne besede: literarni žanri / esej / singularnost / interdiskurzivnost / estetska sodba / *sensus communis* / Rožanc, Marjan / Jančar, Drago

Kot sta v svojih metaesejih, tj. esejih o esejih, nakazala že Georg Lukács in Theodor W. Adorno, proizvodnja in obnavljanje znanja postajata čedalje bolj disciplinarno urejena in sistematizirana, posebej v dobi modernosti, izhajajoči iz racionalizma razsvetljskega projekta. Ob tem pa se vsaj od mitiziranega časa razkroja antičnega mita naprej v evropskih družbah ohranja potreba – pa naj bo še tako obrobna – po diskurzih, kakršne po njunem prepričanju uteleša esej in jo stopnjuje s svojo vmesnostjo in žanrsko neuvrčenostjo. Je pač križanec med estetsko, fiksijsko konotativnostjo besedne umetnosti in pojmovno razlago resničnosti. Lukács v eseju »Über Form und Wesen des Essays«, napisanem v obliki pisma prijatelju Leu Popperju, trdi, da »oblika eseja doslej še vedno ni prehodila poti osamosvojitve, ki jo je njena sestra, namreč književnost, prepotovala že zdavnaj: poti razvoja iz primitivne, nediferencirane enosti z znanostjo, moralo in umetnostjo« (Lukács 29; prev. po Adorno 7).¹ Lukács meni, da zato »esej vedno govori o čem, kar je že oblikovano, ali v najboljšem primeru o čem že vidnem, torej k njegovemu bistvu sodi to, da ne dviguje novih stvari iz

praznega ničā, temveč zgolj na novo ureja tiste, ki so nekoč že bile žive« (Lukács 23; prev. po Adorno 7).² Lukácsева razmišljanja razvija Adorno v »Eseju kot obliki«, ko ugotavlja:

S popredmetenjem sveta v času napredujoče demitizacije sta se znanost in umetnost ločili; zavesti, ki sta ji bili nazor in pojem, slika in znak eno, ni, četudi je kdaj obstajala, mogoče obnoviti z zamahom čarobne palice, in njena ponovna vzpostavitve bi zapadla nazaj v kaotičnost. (Adorno 9)

Tudi on vidi esej kot obliko, ki izstopa iz diferenciranosti moderne kulture in se izogiba kakršnemu koli določljivemu polju vednosti:

Esej pa si ne pusti predpisovati svojega resorja. Namesto da bi prišel do kakih znanstvenih dosežkov ali ustvaril kaj umetniškega, še njegovo prizadevanje odslikava sproščenost otroškega, ki se brez predsodkov razvname nad tistim, kar so drugi že storili. (Adorno 7–8)

Esej Adornu pomeni žanr alternative in odpora »panožno organiziran[i] kultur[i]«, njenim »ideal[om] čistega in snažnega«, normam torej, ki z razločitvijo filozofije od znanosti in umetnosti »nosijo sled represivnega reda« (10). V eseju je namreč po Adornu »strnjeno ohranjena izkušnja posameznega človeka«, ki pa jo ta žanr paradoksnost doseže ne le z navezavo na »individualn[o] izkušnjo«, temveč tudi s fragmentarnostjo in eklekticismom, s katerima kritično nasprotuje slehernemu metodičnemu znanju, sistemu disciplinarnih razlik in reduciranju resničnosti na resnico, ki jo je zmožna artikulirati znanost, metoda ali teorija:

V razmerju do znanstvene procedure in njene filozofske podlage kot metode potegne esej v skladu s svojo idejo vse možne konsekvence iz kritike sistema. [... Eseg je] radikalen v neradikalizmu, vzdržnosti od vsake redukcije na en sam princip, v poudarjanju parcialnega proti totalnemu, v kosovnosti. [...] Eseg se ne ravna po pravilih organizirane znanosti in teorije, kjer je po Spinozovem načelu red reči enak redu idej. (Adorno 12–13)

Esej sta Lukács in Adorno potemtakem ocenjevala kot enega od diskurzov, ki prečijo razmejitve med ustaljenimi vrstami kulturnih praks, zanemarjajo disciplinarne pristojnosti nad področji, predmeti, metodami in preverjanjem vednosti ter zaobidejo mehanizme njene institucionalne dostopnosti. Te govornice se odlikujejo s transverzalnim povezovanjem in medsebojnim osvetljevanjem znanj iz različnih strok, z izpostavljanjem tistega, kar v njih ni zajeto, česar te niso zmožne misliti, in/ali s preizkušanjem veljavnosti »specialističnih« posplošitev v kompleksnosti in »totalnosti« življenjskega izkustva, v njegovi jezikovni raznoličnosti.

Najstarejši med transverzalnimi diskurzi je, kot nakazuje Lukács, pesniški oziroma literarni. Johansen v knjigi *Literary Discourse* obširno utemeljuje, da literatura izvira iz t. i. mimetičnega diskurza, ki že tisočletja obstaja zato, da ustvarja podobe resničnosti ter mimetizira in konfrontira ostale družbene jezike, od mitologije, filozofije, religije ali znanosti do zgodovine, tehnike, morale in običajev. Govorica literature njihova delna zajetja resničnosti križa med sabo in jih modelira prek eksemplaričnih zamišljenih svetov in zgodb, individualiziranih perspektiv in likov; mogoči, zgolj diskurzivno podani svetovi literature dopuščajo naslovníkom razmišljujoče in podoživljajoče opazovanje obzorij takšnih govoric. Takšno dožemanje besedilnih informacij je v literaturi prosto pritiska k njihovi »interesni« uporabi v dejanskem življenju bralcev (Johansen 89–109, 415–432). Za razvoj literarnega diskurza v novem veku in za družbeno zgodovino vednosti nasploh je bil ključen Gutenbergov izum tiska sredi 15. stoletja. Peter Burke v *A Social History of Knowledge* pomen novega medija povzame takole:

Pomen novega medija ni bil omejen samo na večji obseg širitve vednosti in prenašanje razmeroma zasebnih ali celo skrivnih znanj (od tehničnih do državnih skrivnosti) v območje javnosti. Tisk je spodbujal tudi *interakcijo med različnimi znanji* [...] Vednost je standardiziral tako, da je ljudem na različnih krajih omogočal brati iste tekste ali preučevati iste podobe. (Burke 11, poudarki dodani)

Tisk je kot medij dodal nov zagon izmenjavam med vrstami in polji znanja, tako da se je zaradi njega v novem veku okrepila tudi mimetično-eksemplarična interdiskurzivnost literarnih žanrov, in to najmočneje v pripovedni enciklopedičnosti romana. Roman je kot reprezentativna, najbolj priljubljena literarna zvrst modernosti vsrkal in – v stiku z odprtostjo, nezaključenostjo, sodobnostjo in singularnostjo izkustva – dialoško soočil in kritično osvetlil raznotere kulturne jezike in kode, tudi svojo lastno žanrsko preteklost (Bahtin 10–24, 31–33, 132–137). V obzorju Gutenbergove galaksije pa se je književnosti pridružil nov tip transverzalnega diskurza, ki je prav tako kot novoveški roman usmerjen v zdajšnjost, v nezaključeno, kompleksno in raznorodno dogajanje resničnosti – to je tiskano novičarstvo, časopisje (prim. Vogrinčič 148–152). Z industrializacijo, urbanizacijo, koncentracijo založniško-medijskega kapitala, razvojem telegrafa in drugih komunikacijskih tehnologij v 19. in 20. stoletju se je ta diskurz postopno razvil v množične medije, kakršne poznamo danes.

Že v tisočletnih tradicijah ustne kulture, kakor tudi v antičnem in srednjeveškem pismenstvu so se množile razne prakse posredovanja novic in mnenj o rečeh, ki so z odstopanjem od rutin zbujala pozornost, zanimanje, pretresenost in radovednost, in o zadevah, ki bi utegnile zarezati v življenjske navade in izkustva naslovníkov: takšna poročila so prek besedilnih

struktur z visoko stopnjo informativnosti metonimično, fragmentarno in povzemajoče posredovala raznovrstne komplekse znanj in izkustev – o vojnah, ukrepih oblasti, političnih spremembah, naravnih nesrečah, čudežnih doživetjih, zločinih, komičnih pripetljajih, moralnih prestopkih, govoricah, umetniških dosežkih, izumih in odkritjih, neznanih deželah itn. V primerjavi z naslovniško omejenim dosegom oblastniških razglasov, glasnikov, slov, sejmarskih povestičarjev in pevcev balad, pa tudi dopisovanja v izobraženih skupnostih (menihov, plemičev, premožnih meščanov in razumnikov) se je pretok novic močno razširil po izumu tiska, denimo v obliki letakov in balad o posameznih dogodkih ali neredno tiskanih knjig novic. Toda šele v 17. stoletju, ko se novica spreminja v iskano in cenjeno tržno blago (Burke 168), začnejo po Evropi nastajati časniki, ki na današnje dnevnikarje že spominjajo po formatu, izgledu, rednem izhajanju, datiranju, tematski raznovrstnosti ter uredniško-izdajateljskem vzdrževanju plačljivega stika med viri informacij in bolj ali manj množičnimi bralci (Stephens; Martin 2–9; Kay Baldwin 89–93; Burke 186–189; Vogrinčič 147–174). Časniki so prinašali različne aktualne vsebine iz sveta in/ali domačega okolja: politične, verske, moralne, družabne, trgovske in gospodarske, zabavne, poučne itn. Njihova moč je bila v tem, da so s tematsko raznovrstnostjo in ažurnostjo sproti stregli najrazličnejšim potrebam po novicah med pismenimi stanoviti in poklici, se prilagajali svojemu družbenemu okolju in ga reflektirali, še bolj pa v tem, da so vplivali na javno oblikovanje mnenj, vrednot in vednosti (od tod sploh beseda informacija). Zaradi njihove dejanske ali potencialne moči jih je oblast vseskozi skušala nadzorovati ali omejevati (Martin 5–6, 9; Kay Baldwin 91).

Tednikom in dnevnikom za splošno publiko so se v drugi polovici 17. stoletja pridružili prvi učeniki kulturni časopisi oziroma revije, na primer *Nouvelles de la République des Lettres*, ki so prinašale članke v spomin umrlim učenjakom, ocene novih knjig in podobno (Burke 29, 168), v 18. stoletju pa še literarne revije in moralni tedniki, kakršna sta bila *Tatler* in *Spectator* (Vogrinčič 50–51, 184–190). V takšnih revijah se je uveljavljal žanr periodičnega, eksemplaričnega eseja, ki je med svojim občinstvom vzgojno razširjal vzorce uglajene konverzacije in obnašanja ter razglašal elokventno izpisana osebna mnenja o različnih literarnih, kulturno-umetniških, družabnih, opravljenih, moralnih, političnih in učenih temah, primernih tudi za elegantne kavarniške debate (Kay Baldwin 94; Vogrinčič 50–51, 168, 184–190). Razvoj dnevnih časnikov, tednikov in literarno-kulturnih revij je s poročevalskim, uredniško nadzorovanim komuniciranjem raznovrstnih tematik – z njihovim kanaliziranjem od bolj specializiranih virov informacij k manj diferenciranim ciljnim naslovnikom – proizvajal izkustvo dogajajoče se, mnogolične resničnosti, sestavljene iz prežemajočih se polj

vednosti. Tako se je vzpostavljala skupni (»občič«) prostor javnosti, obenem z njim pa še kultura tihega branja, ki je kot način preživljanja prostega časa nastopala v vlogi pomembnega kanala za diskurzivno oblikovanje zasebnosti, osebnega izkustva, znanja in omikanosti. Diskurz tiskanih medijev se je z literarnim čedalje tesneje povezoval, zlasti v 19. stoletju: bil je medij za oglaševanje, trženje, objavlanje, diseminacijo in kritiško obdelavo literarnih besedil; z vključevanjem pisateljev v vrste novinarjev, poročevalcev, feljtonistov, urednikov ali kritikov je soustvarjal pogoje za avtonomizacijo in javno prepoznavnost literarnih producentov; ne nazadnje je postal snovni vir za bolj mimetične, verjetnostne literarne žanre in smeri, ki so se pogosto tudi strukturno opirale na publicistični jezik in zvrsti.

Za oba transverzalna diskurza, literaturo in časopisje, torej velja, da specializirane sisteme znanj in njihovo notranjo samoregulacijo – vsak po svoje, pa tudi v medsebojnih izmenjavah – soočata z odprto, nepredvidljivo, kompleksno in kontingenčno semiozo izkustva. Literatura kot področje fikcije svojo vrsto vednosti proizvaja in preoblikuje na način singularnosti. Iz Attridgeve *The Singularity of Literature* in Clarkove *The Poetics of Singularity* je mogoče razbrati misel, da se v literaturi dogodek edinstvene eksistencialne fokalizacije resničnosti besedilno uresničuje predvsem prek poetske sintaktike, tj. posebne, neponovljive in samonanašalne konfiguracije informacije, ki je ni mogoče brez preostanka prevesti oziroma posplošiti v kategorije nobenega od obstoječih označevalnih sistemov – ne v filozofijo, ne v znanost, ne v zgodovino, religijo ali politiko.

Clark v svoji knjigi zabeleži, da se pojem singularnost v literarni vedi pojavlja med njenim »protikulturalističnim zasukom« od začetka 90. let 20. stoletja naprej. Izraz po Clarku označuje način bivanja literarnega dela, ki se upira težnji, da bi to delo razumno opisali s pomočjo občih kategorij in pojmovnih sestavov, kakršne poznajo sociologija, psihologija, ekonomija, filozofija itn. Literarno besedilo je singularno ne samo zaradi upiranja inteligibilnosti v redovih občega, temveč tudi zaradi svoje dejavne kritike posplošujočih diskurzov, ki si ga skušajo polastiti, in še zato, ker iz razpoložljivih kulturnih kodov inventivno ustvarja izjemni dogodek pomena; literarna invencija »natalnega« pomena prelamlja z danimi sistemi označevanja, zato tak pomen ne more biti razumljen kot primer katere koli vnaprej dane tipske kategorije, temveč šele sam ustvarja konfiguracijo konteksta, znotraj katere ga je mogoče resnično dojeti (Clark 2–4, 12, 28–29, 125–126). Še pred Clarkom je Attridge singularnost literature razložil kot posebno vrsto različnosti posameznega literarnega dela od vseh drugih tovrstnih del: to je razlika, ki z inovativno zmožnostjo za transformiranje kulturnih kodov, vpletenih v posameznikovo znanje in izkustvo (v njegovo »idiokulturo«), omogoči izbruh drugosti, to je tistega, kar je v teh kodih

obstajalo le kot manj verjetna potencialnost, nekaj, česar si ta kultura dotlej ni znala ali mogla zamisliti, si verbalno predstaviti. Singularnost pomeni Attridge predvsem vpeljavo novih perspektiv in razmerij med danimi diskurzi. Po njegovem se artikulira v enkratni formi, konstelaciji besednega in zvočnega gradiva teksta, ta pa se odpira le odgovornemu bralnemu dejanju (Attridge 20–40, 63–73, 136).

Če naj bi za literaturo po Attridgeu in Clarku veljalo, da besedil zaradi singularnosti njihove strukture ni mogoče brez preostanka prevesti v nobeno drugo ustaljeno, obče veljavno kategorialnost, pa na drugi strani časopisje in množični mediji težijo k ravno takšni prevedljivosti med posamičnim in občim. Prek skupinskega, splošno dostopnega jezika jo omogoča predvidljivo javno mnenje, doksa. Zato se zdi presenetljivo, da je med tako različnima vrstama transverzalne vednosti, kot sta »fikcijska« literatura in »faktično« časopisje, vendarle mogoče najti vezni člen. To je *sensus communis*. Lahko ga razumemo najprej v logičnem in retoričnem pomenu 'obče znanega', 'zdrave pameti', 'tistega, kar že ve ali lahko dojame, doživi vsakdo' (ta pomen se zdi primeren časopisju kot glasniku in oblikovalcu javnega mnenja), vendar tudi v posebnem Kantovem pomenu 'skupnostnega čuta' (*Gemeinsinn*) kot nujne predpostavke estetske sodbe, sodbe okusa – ta pa meri na umetniške izdelke, kakršna so literarna dela.

Kant v *Kritiki razsodne moči* raziskuje »modalnost sodbe okusa« in pri tem utira pot mišljenju singularnosti. Lépo je povezano z ugajanjem nekega predmeta prek posebne, »eksemplarične« vrste nujnosti, takšne, ki je ne utemeljuje noben zakon; to je razvidno iz estetske sodbe, ki zahteva, da z njo soglašajo vsi, čeprav jo »imamo za primer občega pravila, ki ga ni mogoče navesti« (Kant 76–77). »Sodba okusa pripisuje vsakomur strinjaje. Tisti, ki razglša nekaj za lepo, želi, da bi vsakdo *moral* pritrditi danemu predmetu in ga enako razglasiti za lepega,« nadaljuje Kant in vpelje tezo, da je »pogoj nujnosti, na katero se sklicuje sodba okusa, [...] ideja skupnostnega čuta [*Gemeinsinn*]« (77; izvorni poudarek). Skupnostni čut, kot ga razume Kant, »se bistveno razlikuje od zdrave pameti, ki ji včasih pravijo tudi skupnostni čut (*sensus communis*)«, ker slednja »ne sodi glede na občutje [kakor estetska sodba, op. M. J.], ampak vedno glede na pojme, čeprav ti pojmi ponavadi nastopajo le kot nejasno predstavljena načela« (78). Okus Kant sicer obravnava »kot neke vrste *sensus communis*«, saj se nereflektivna razsodna moč pogosto opira na kak splošno razširjen občutek; v tem smislu se govori »o čutu za resnico, o čutu za spodobnost, pravičnost itn.« (133) Toda »vsakdanja človeška pamet« (zdrava pamet) ni kultivirana, njen *sensus communis* je le »navadni čut«, razumljen kot vulgaren, navzoč vsepovsod (134; izvorni poudarek). Skupnostni čut, kot ga tolmači Kant, je drugačen: je metafizičen in samorefleksiven pojem, brez dejanskih korelatov

v družbeni empiriji in abstrahiran od psihološke kontingenčnosti. Odvisen je zgolj od apriornih form subjekta. Ne gre za neki dejanski, v družbi prevladujoči čut, ampak za hevristično, hipotetično, zaželeno, s samo estetsko sodbo konstruirano subjektovo »idejo *skupnostnega čuta*, se pravi, zmožnosti za presojanje, ki v svoji refleksiji upošteva v mislih (a priori) predstavn način vsakega drugega, da bi svojo sodbo primerjala *tako rekoč* s celotnim človeškim umom»; po Kantu »primerjamo svojo sodbo ne toliko z dejanskimi sodbami drugih, ampak predvsem z njihovimi možnimi sodbami, in [...] se prestavimo na mesto vsakega drugega, in sicer tako, da enostavno abstrahiramo od omejitev, ki so naključno povezane z našim lastnim presojanjem« (134; izvorni poudarki). Subjekt sodbe se s svojo sodbo »dvigne nad subjektivne zasebne pogoje sodbe« (135). Kantu torej skupnostni čut pomeni nujno, a zgolj zamišljeno predpostavko absolutnega, abstraktnega subjekta, v skladu s katero se z njegovim občutjem, predstavljenim v sodbi okusa oziroma estetski sodbi, lahko uglasijo vsi (Kant 79).

Kantovo razlago estetske sodbe in lepega, ki je »brez pojma spoznana kot predmet *nujnega* ugajanja« (Kant 80; izvorni poudarek), radikalizirajo moderne koncepcije singularnosti. Sodbe okusa so namreč najčistejši primeri kantovskih »refleksivnih sodb«, v katerih umanjka obči pojem ali termin, s katerim v predikaciji določamo referenta – tistemu, o čemer se izrekamo, ni mogoče najti nobenega določujočega splošnega pojma, ni ga mogoče umestiti v obstoječe sisteme vednosti in ga v njih utemeljiti, argumentirati (Clark 5). Gaschéjevo formulacijo, da je »občnost, konstitutivna za mišljenje, [...] v literaturi inherentno odvisna od enkratnosti in singularnosti«, ponazarja Clark z eksemplaričnostjo Dickensovih romanov, v katerih so splošni družbeni, moralni in drugi problemi obravnavani prek likov posebnežev, edinstvenih situacij in izjemnih nazornih podob (Clark 6). Dopolni jo s Kantovim primerom za moč pesniške imaginacije, zmožne oživljati »nedoločljive kvazi-pojme«. Upodobitev Zeusa kot orla z bliskom po Kantu omogoča domišljiji (»upodobitveni moči«), da

se razširi na množico sorodnih predstav, ki dajejo misliti več, kot je mogoče izraziti s pojmom, ki je določen z besedami. Estetski atributi tvorijo *estetsko idejo*, ki za to idejo uma nadomešča logični prikaz, v resnici pa rabi za to, da poživlja čud, in sicer tako, da ji odpre pogled na nepregledno polje sorodnih predstav (Kant 155, izvorni poudarek).

Estetsko idejo razume Kant »kot tisto predstavo upodobitvene moči, ki daje veliko misliti, a ji ne more ustrezati nobena določena misel, se pravi noben *pojem*, kot predstavo torej, ki je noben jezik ne more popolnoma doseči in narediti razumljive« (Kant 154, izvorni poudarek). Iz tega je razvidno, da je Kantova »estetska ideja« zarisala tloris tako za Lukáčsevo,

Adornovo in druge teorije o specifični refleksiji, spoznavanja in vednosti, ki odlikuje eseje, kakor tudi za sodobne koncepcije singularnosti.

Spoznadni odnos do zapisanega, ki ga vzpostavljajo singularne sodbe okusa na podlagi konstruiranega, v želji izrekanja zasnovanega »skupnostnega čuta«, in »estetska ideja« kot anti-diskurzivno amalgamiranje razvejenih reprezentacij in konotativno nakazovanje označevalnega presežka nad pojmovnimi sistemi – ti dve Kantovi ideji sta prvini, ki se ujemata z duhom eseja. V etimologiji francoske besede *essai*, ki jo je za naslovno oznako svojih besedil v letih 1580–88 prvi uporabil Michel de Montaigne, se namreč ne skriva samo znani pomen 'poizkusa', 'preizkusa'. Ta semantika sicer napoveduje za zvrst značilno provizorično, empirično in eksperimentalno, skeptično, kritično in individualno (singularno) razmerje do avtoritativne, tradicionalne, na knjigo in črko vezane vednosti. Toda beseda *essai* vsebuje še kulinarčni pomen 'pokušanja' (Schlaffer 522), kar žanr eseja pomenljivo postavlja v pojmovno polje okusa, s tem pa tudi čutnega spoznavanja, impliciranega v koncepcijah estetskega in književnosti.

Tako Montaigneva kakor tudi evropsko vplivnejša Baconova varianta eseja (1597–1625) – tega tipično novoveškega, v humanističnem individualizmu utemeljenega žanra – sta dejavnika, vpletena v premik, ki ga Foucault označuje kot prehod od komentarskega razmerja do avtoritet tradicijsko akumulirane vednosti, značilnega za antiko in srednji vek, k empiričnemu in kritičnemu odnosu do podedovanega znanja (Foucault 55–57, 92–95). Iz kritičnega empirizma se je na podlagah kartezijanske metodičnosti postopno razvila moderna znanost. Kot v tej zvezi opaža Graham Good v knjigi *The Observing Self*, pa se esej pri omenjenem prehodu ni pridružil sistematični, disciplinarni samoregulaciji in akumulacijskemu progresizmu znanosti, pač pa je vztrajal pri singularnosti književnosti, kjer novo literarno delo nikakor ne razveljavlja ali omejuje resnice svojih predhodnikov, kot se to dogaja v znanostih (Good 1–8). Pri tem je esej osebno izkustvenost, uveljavljeno z renesanso, še naprej interdiskurzivno soočal z arhivi vednosti in aktualnimi, pozneje tudi v časopisju obravnavanimi temami, izbranimi iz različnih področij razpravljanja – od morale prek politike, geografije in etnologije do filozofije, znanosti in umetnosti. Na ta način je esej v procesu pisanja oblikoval svojo delno, fragmentarno, perspektivirano, provizorično in estetsko resnico – prav takšno, ki ustreza Kantovemu opisu »estetske ideje«. Po Adornu esej »svobodno misli skupaj vse, kar se znajde skupaj v prosto izbranem predmetu« (Adorno 13).

Vse do danes prevladujejo predstave o eseju kot prostoru individualne, svobodne, do vsakršne disciplinarnosti in avtoritet kritične vednosti, utemeljene in preizkušene v osebni eksistencialni izkustvi. Napajajo se v glavnem iz tipično modernističnih Adornovih formulacij, sovražnih do

množične kulture. Toda ne glede na vse, kar vemo o literarni singularnosti eseja, ni več mogoče spregledati niti njegovega opiranja na *sensus communis*, in to ne le v Kantovem pomenu, temveč tudi tistem, ki mu je filozof v svojem intelektualnem kriticismu in razsvetljenskem odporu do podedovanih predsodkov starega režima izrecno nasprotoval.

Prvič, v območje retorično-logične *sensus communis* sega esej prav pri svojem izvoru. Zgodnji Montaignevi eseji so namreč nastali z medbese-dilnim navezovanjem na obča mesta (*loci communes*), torej na tradicionalno preverjene, splošno sprejete, utrjene in avtoritativne nadomestke za samostojno argumentiranje. Prvi Montaignevi eseji so se razvili iz avtorjevih glos in komentarjev na klasična dela, tudi na kompendije sentenc, kakršna so bila Erazmova *Adagia*,³ na prav takšne zakladnice izrekov in eksempljev, sprejetih iz antičnih avtoritet, se obilno opirajo tudi Baconovi eseji (Good 1, 26–54). Vse to zgodnje eseje – njihovi laičnosti in tihemu, intimnemu nagovarjanju individualnih bralcev navkljub – približuje oratorski didaktičnosti pridige, namenjene občestvu vernikov, na primer pri Janezu Svetokriškem, ki v dobi baroka na podoben način, z množico izkustvenih ali citatnih zgledov obravnava sorodne moralne teme.

Drugič, *sensus communis*, razumljen v Kantovem pomenu »skupnostnega čuta«, impliciranega v estetski sodbi, je zajet v estetskem spoznavnem razmerju do vednosti, značilnem za esej. Kot »polliterarni« žanr, soroden avtobiografiki in avtoportetu, se esej namreč izmuzljivo giblje med neposredno neuporabnimi in nepreverljivimi kvazi-sodbami literature – te služijo oblikovanju oziroma »brezinteresnem« dojetanju portreta fiktivske osebe ali implicitnega avtorja – in preverljivimi sodbami znanosti, filozofije, novinarstva, literarne kritike in drugih nefiktivskih oblik razpravljanja. Esej interdiskurzivno absorbira koncepte ene ali več disciplin, a jih predeluje oziroma sintaktično umešča vase tako, da – po zgledu Kantove »estet-ske ideje« – definicijsko določenost prevzetih konceptov poetsko pretopi v »promiskuitetno« jezikovno vezljivost besede, označevalca. Adorno v tem smislu ugotavlja, da esej »zavrača tudi definicije svojih pojmov« in zajame »antisistematični impulz v lastni postopek«, kar pomeni, da »uvaja pojme brez ceremonij, 'neposredno' tako, kakor jih sprejema« (Adorno 14). Pojmi, ki so »implicitno že konkretizirani skozi jezik, v katerem so podani«, so v eseju natančneje »določeni šele v razmerju drug do drugega« (14). Ker se esej odreka strogi metajezikovnosti in »je sam v bistvu jezik«, ga ne zanima definiranje terminov, pač pa raje »pospešuje interak-cijo svojih pojmov v procesu duhovne izkušnje« (14). Iz tega je mogoče sklepati, da beseda, ki ni terminološko zamejena, z razraščanjem asociacij v mnogotere pojmovne mreže daje vtis mnogolične, singularne, miselno-čutne življenjske totalnosti izkustva. Za zgled naj citiram še en odlomek iz

Adornovega eseja o eseju, ki v literarizirani besedi prestavlja v življenjsko situacijo ravno teoretsko tezo o razliki med disciplinarnimi pojmi in njihovo transverzalno »konkretizacijo skozi jezik, v katerem so podani« (14):

Način, kako si esej prisvaja pojme, bi bilo najlažje primerjati z vedenjem človeka, ki je v tuji deželi prisiljen govoriti njen jezik, namesto da bi ga po šolsko klepal skupaj iz elementov. Bral bo brez slovarja. Če bo isto besedo v vsaki drugačnem kontekstu opazil tridesetkrat, se bo o njenem pomenu prepričal bolje, kot če bi prebral njene naštete pomene [...] (Adorno 14–15).

Znanje, ki ga predstavlja esej, dobiva tako dvoumen status: ne tvori jo ga čiste, od subjekta izrekanja ločljive propozicije, katerih resničnost lahko preverjamo zunaj besedila, temveč so zajete v modalnost, prek katere se nam v estetskem doživljanju razodeva neka perspektiva, z njo pa fikcija navzočnosti osebe (avtorja), ki jo besedilo predstavlja, konstruira. Merilo resničnosti estetsko posredovanega pričevanja ni več skladnost z zunajbesedilnimi, disciplinarnimi kriteriji, temveč avtentičnost ali, z drugo besedo, singularnost eksistence, prikazane v pisanju. Montaigne je v predgovoru bralcu o svojem esejskem razmerju do vednosti značilno zapisal:

[Hočem], naj me svet vidi v vsej preprostosti, naravnosti in takšnega, kakršen vsekdar sem, brez olepševanja in umetničenja: zakaj tisti, ki ga slikam, sem jaz sam. [...] Tako, dragi bralec, sem jaz sam predmet svoje knjige. (Montaigne 5)

Tretjič, a ne nazadnje je treba opozoriti še na *sensus communis* v pomenih 'zdrave pameti', 'obče znanega', 'splošno razumljivega, dojemljivega'. Tudi ti vidiki so v eseju trajno navzoči. Montaigne in Bacon, za njima pa še mnogi drugi esejist, so se pogosto lotevali tem, ki niso last kake specialne discipline, temveč veljajo za splošno življenjske, doživljajsko dostopne vsakomur. Montaigne se je na primer poleg osebne obravnave topik učene kulture ukvarjal s temami žalosti, laži, stanovitnosti, strahu, prijateljstva, vzgoje otrok, oblačilnih navad, Bacon pa smrti, zavisti, ljubezni, potovanja, odlašanja, opreme doma ali prevar. Tovrstne teme so esejisti osvetljevali tako z interdiskurzivnimi navezavami na disciplinarna spoznanja zgodovinskih, pesniških, filozofskih, političnih ali religiozних avtoritet, kakor tudi s primeri, izbranimi iz osebnih izkušenj, in z uporabo samostojnega sklepanja. To argumentiranje pa mora upoštevati *sensus communis*, če hoče biti sprejemljivo za »splošnega bralca«, ki mu je žanr eseja namenjen. Ko na primer Bacon ugotavlja samoumevno resnico, da se človek boji smrti, jo primerja s prav tako splošno znano izkušnjo, da se otroci bojijo zakoračiti v temo (Bacon 33); ko življenje maščevalnežev primerja s čarovnicami, uporabi stereotip, da so te hudobne in zato končajo nesrečno (41); ko

razpravlja o zavisti, se sklicuje na »znano« dejstvo, da so ljudje visokega rodu nevoščljivi povzpeticom (53). *Sensus communis* je torej pogoj singularnosti eseja celo v obliki stereotipov, predsodkov in spontanega zdravorazumskega sklepanja. Vse to esejist sicer pogosto kritizira in spodbija, a po drugi strani nezavedno sprejema. Stereotipija *sensus communis* namreč lahko vzpostavlja celo sam subjekt izkustva, če je to spontano in ni kritično reflektirano. Obča mesta javnega diskurza vstopajo v esej prek rabe knjižnega, splošnega, disciplinarno nevezanega ljudskega jezika, nanje pa se esejist opira, kolikor hoče svojo osebno izkušnjo in mnenja poljudno približati »splošnemu bralcu« in njegovemu okusu. Če sklenem: izrekanje singularne resnice v eseju spremlja tudi večja ali manjša mera stereotipnega *sensus communis*.

Tega se je esej verjetno navzel zlasti prek kanalov objavljajanja. Njegov izvorni medij je bila tiskana knjiga (Montaigneve in Baconove priljubljene zbirke esejev so bile izdane v več knjižnih izdajah), ki je eseju pomagala doseči tako rekoč zunajčasovno dostojanstvo »književnosti«; toda že od zgodnjega 18. stoletja se je žanr čedalje bolj selil v periodično časopisje, kjer se je spreminjal v sprotni, aktualni forum za izrekanje osebnih stališč in mnenj o moralnih, družabnih, političnih, umetniških, znanstvenih in drugih zadevah (Good 55–57). V dnevnikih, tednikih in mesečnikih se je esej v 19. in 20. stoletju pogosto mešal s publicističnimi žanri feljtona, glose, kolumne, kritike, potopisa, portreta ipd. (Poniž 47–49). S tem so vanj začele močnejše prodirati diskurzivne strukture in ideologije, ki so dnevno oblikovale javno sfero. Zaradi ekonomsko pogojene težnje po trženju novic, prizadevanja za njihovo relevantnost in sprejemljivost za čim širše kroge bralstva, pa tudi zaradi moralno-politične tendence vplivanja na javno mnenje so periodična tiskana občila ne nazadnje morala računati na »skupnostni čut« in stereotipijo zdrave pameti. Z ozirom nanju – da bi ju potrjeval ali po potrebi tudi spodbijal – je transverzalni diskurz časopisja izbiral in predstavljal tudi tematike z raznoterih področij vednosti. Razpetost eseja med singularnostjo literarizirane eksistence in ideologizirano vednostjo, ki jo reproducira stereotipija medijskega *sensus communis*, se še danes kaže tudi v reprezentativnih sodobnih slovenskih esejih, na primer pri Rožancu in Jančarju, ki ju bom čisto na kratko obravnaval za konec.

Nagrada za najboljši slovenski esej, ki jo podeljujejo od 1993, se upravičeno imenuje po Marjanu Rožancu (1930–1990). Rožanc je med slovenskimi esejisti izjemen, ker na moderen način obnavlja držo montaignevskega izjavjalca – miselno iskanje, nikdar pomirjeno z vnaprej danimi miselnimi sistemi ali z dozdevno dokončnimi resnicami, konfliktno razmišljanje, ki fragmentarnost, začasnost in protislovnost vednosti veže na prav takšno naravo samega subjekta izjavljanja in pogoje njegovega

družbenega, političnega *biosa*, ne more biti drugačno kot samokritično, težeče k iskrenosti in neponarejeni skromnosti. Njegov esejistični diskurz ni učeno, retorično popestrjeno in literarno okrašeno podučevanje javnosti s piedestala kulturniške avtoritete. Rožanc v eseje prenaša znanja z raznih področij (šport, zgodovina, literarna zgodovina, filozofija, teologija, politika itn.) in jih transverzalno prepleta. Ponekod jih le na kratko evocira, vpelje v digresijo, značilno za anarhično strukturo žanra, drugod pa metodično razvija, tako da se bliža disciplini znanstvenega traktata. Po Montaignevem zgledu Rožanc to vednost samorefleksivno zameji v enkratnost, začasnost in minljivost osebne izkušnje. Miselne tokove, interdiskurzivno pripojene na filozofijo, teologijo in druge vede, vnaša Rožančev opus v fragmentirano avtobiografsko zgodbo o iskanju identitete, kjer se v gestah besedilne profanizacije – kakor ponekod pri Montaignu – povežejo s telesom esejista. Telesom, ki je nepopolno, enkrat ekscesno, seksualno, transgresivno, drugič pa bolno, trpeče, umirajoče in končno.

Toda Rožanc pri singularnem konfiguriranju pomena vendarle potrebuje *sensus communis*. Ko v esejih razvija svoje videnje eksistencialnega, metafizičnega in družbenega položaja modernega posameznika, se opira na splošno znana predstavna področja (sicer tudi tematiko časopisja in medijev), kot sta košarka ali nogomet, ne izogne se niti stereotipom, zasidranim v javnosti, na primer kultu planiške skakalnice kot ponosa in emblema slovenstva (zbirka esejev *Demon Iva Daneva*). Ko z natrgano avtobiografsko pripovedjo spenja refleksije o svojih identitetnih krizah in jih skuša predstaviti na širšem duhovnozgodovinskem ozadju modernega individualizma, in ko pri tem povzema, komentira življenja in dela drugih pisateljev, filozofov in teologov, svoje izkustvo nezavedno postavlja na stereotipno argumentacijsko matrico, značilno za moralni in politični diskurz dela slovenskega katolištva. Privzema strukturo enačenj po vzorcu »Bog = smisel, ateizem = nesmisel«. Porazsvetljenski svobodomiselni individualizem je znotraj tega stereotipa nerefektirano označen z nihilizmom, saj je možnost za oblikovanje eksistencialnega smisla brez teistične transcendence vnaprej zanikana. Toda ta *sensus communis* je pri Rožancu razvit v singularno, lahko bi rekli heretično smer: o tem priča njegovo naslanjanje na eksistencialistično in personalistično krščansko misel, še bolj pa radikalizacija kristološkega utelešenja duha v obliki križanja transcendence z imanenco telesa, čutnosti, spolnosti in prigradnosti življenjskega toka (na primer knjige esejev *Iz krvi in mesa*, *Manibejska kronika*, *Roman o knjigah*).

Jančarjev primer lahko samo še na kratko omenim. Drago Jančar je med najbolj nagrajevanimi in prevajanimi sodobnimi slovenskimi pisatelji, kar trikrat je prejel tudi Rožančevo nagrado za eseje. V obdobju razpadanja jugoslovanskega komunističnega sistema in v prvih letih tranzicije je njegov

javni položaj kritičnega, disidentskega intelektualca vplival na dojemanje sporočilnosti njegovih esejev: ti so delovali kot pogumno, osebno izpostavljeno, z zgodovinsko erudicijo podprto in z bogatimi literarnimi sredstvi oblikovano razmišljanje o javno pomembnih zadevah, kot so zgodovinska usoda in perspektive Slovencev, svobode in demokracije, Balkana, Evrope in Srednje Evrope. Ko pa se je Jančar na prelomu tisočletja v javnosti s svojo literaturo, intervjuji, izjavami in čedalje pogostejšimi časopisnimi članki začel izraziteje povezovati s t. i. desno politično opcijo, je ideološko nesočutna kritika pod sloji literarizirane singularnosti njegovih esejev razkrila mnoge *loci communes*, stereotype, predsodke in mestoma celo publicistično strankarsko tendenčnost, skratka pomenske strukture, na katerih je med drugim temeljil tudi politični diskurz slovenske tranzicijske desnice (prim. Bogatajevo kritiko Jančarjeve *Duše Evrope*). Ta, za zdaj v slovenski literarni javnosti razmeroma obrobna in osamljena sprememba odnosa do resnice, ki jo izpričuje politični, umetniški, zgodovinski oziroma kulturološki esej, vendarle ni singularna. Umešča se v širši vzorec sprememb, ki jih v postkomunističnih družbah doživlja pisateljska beseda: iz edine možne alternative vladajoči ideologiji in s tem glasnice prave, neideologizirane resnice, se spreminja v eno izmed besed, vrženo med ideologeme znotraj pluralne ideološke sfere in njenih diferenciranih *sensus communes*.

OPOMBE

¹ »Die Form des Essays hat bis jetzt noch immer nicht den Weg des Selbständigwerdens zurückgelegt, den ihre Schwester, die Dichtung, schon längst durchlaufen hat: den der Entwicklung aus einer primitiven, undifferenzierten Einheit mit Wissenschaft, Moral und Kunst.« (Lukács 29)

² »[D]er Essay spricht immer von etwas bereits Geformtem, oder bestenfalls von etwas schon einmal Dagewesenem; es gehört also zu seinem Wesen, daß er nicht neue Dinge aus einem leeren Nichts heraushebt, sondern bloß solche, die schon irgendwann lebendig waren, aufs neue ordnet.« (Lukács 23)

³ Montaigne je po upokojitvi v knjižnici na svojem posestvu uporabljal 271 knjig, poročja Burke – samo tri so bile o pravi, šest o medicini, šestnajst o teologiji, skoraj sto pa o antični in novejši zgodovini. Burke ugotavlja, da je bil Montaignev način branja sicer izviren, a tipičen za njegov čas: v knjigah je iskal moralne eksemple in je očitno uporabljal tudi priročnike z *loci communes*, čeprav jih je deklarativno preziral (Burke 191).

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The Essay and Interdiscursivity: Knowledge between Singularity and *sensus communis*

Keywords: literary genres / essay / singularity / interdiscursivity / aesthetic judgement / *sensus communis* / Rožanc, Marjan / Jančar, Drago

Knowledge is increasingly becoming organized by discipline; however, according to Lukács and Adorno, the essay genre represents a persistent need for discourses that distinguish themselves through transverse crossing of knowledge from various disciplines and through the testing of “specialized” generalizations in the complex “totality” of life experience. The oldest among such transversal discourses is literature, and in the modern era this has been joined by print media: newspapers and journalism. Literature produces and transforms knowledge through singularity; according to Attridge and Clark, literary texts are singular inasmuch as they configure information that cannot be translated into any conceptual system. On the other hand, newspapers and journalism are tending towards a level of translatability, generality, and *doxa* such as are established by public opinion through a generally accessible language. Both types of transversal knowledge – literary and journalism – are connected by a *sensus communis* in the logical and rhetorical sense of “generally known,” “common sense,” “that which is known or can be understood or experienced by everyone,” and also Kant’s sense of a “communal sense” (*Gemeinsinn*) as a necessary prerequisite for aesthetic judgment.

The etymology of the French word *essai* (including the sense ‘tasting’) evokes the sensory cognition implied in the concepts of the aesthetic and literature. Foucault saw the essays of Montaigne and Bacon as embodying the shift from the medieval commenting relationship toward traditional knowledge to the empirical and critical relationship from which modern science developed. However, the essay did not join the systematic drive of science, but persisted in the singularity of literary works. It interdiscursively confronted personal experience with various discursive fields, and shaped a fragmentary, perspectivized, and aesthetic mode of truth. Regardless of the literary singularity of the essay, which realizes Kant’s notion of the “aesthetic idea,” the genre also relies on the *sensus communis*. It developed from intertextual commentary on ancient *loci communes*, but its mode of knowledge is aesthetic: the essay absorbs the concepts of other disciplines and melds them into a “promiscuous” poetic semiosis, which, by producing ramified representations, evokes the complex totality of experience. On the other hand, essayists often tackle topics accessible to the “general reader,” and they are not immune to stereotypes and common sense. Since

the eighteenth century, the essay has become established in newspapers, where it is has become susceptible to the ideologies of the day. The essay's tension between the singularity of literarized existence and the ideologized knowledge of the (media) *sensus communis* is also evident in contemporary Slovenian examples (e.g., Marjan Rožanc and Drago Jančar).

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