

The theoretical basis of comparative literature in Slovenia is discussed and its development presented. Concerning its theoretical foundations, the discipline is related to the main streams of literary science in the world. Within their frame, its issues have been the relationship between comparative and general literature, the special role and meaning of the comparative method, its attitude towards the national literary history, aspects of literary theory, the relationship between comparative literature and philosophy, etc. With this as a basis, the development of comparative literature in Slovenia is presented from its origins during the Romantic movement (M. Čop) and its approaches, discussed within the context of the national history of Slovene literature (I. Prijatelj, F. Kidrič), to its complete affirmation in the work of A. Ocvirk. D. Pirjevec emerged from Ocvirk's school and introduced some remarkable innovations. In recent Slovene comparative literary studies, both outlines - Ocvirk's and Pirjevec's - are being further developed, but in a changed form, which can be understood as a synthesis of scientific and philosophical approaches.

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**THE THEORY
AND PRACTICE
OF
COMPARATIVE
LITERATURE
IN SLOVENIA**

Fundamental questions

1. The fundamental relation of Slovene comparatists to questions deemed essential in the major schools of comparative studies can be most clearly formed as a question of the relation between comparative literature and so-called general literature or general literary studies (littérature générale, histoire littéraire générale, general literature, allgemeine Literaturwissenschaft, Weltliteraturgeschichte). The French traditional school, in accordance with its strictly empirical orientation, has mainly advocated to the thesis that comparative literature differs from general literature. However, it largely hesitated at a more precise definition of this relation. Van Tieghem defined general literature as a special discipline which creates greater international literary-historical syntheses, so that national literary history and comparative literature are some kind of introduction to it. Although, in principle, he distinguished it from comparative literature, he still discussed it in one of the chapters of his theoretical outline of comparative literary studies as though it still somehow belongs to it. The standpoints of C. Pichois and A. M. Rousseau are similar; in their theory of comparative literature they pay attention also to the problems of general literature, although they regard it as a special field. Against this, M. F. Guyard, under the influence of Carré, separated it entirely from comparative literature: at the same time he doubts that such a synthetic discipline, based on world history, could be a real science at all. A consequence of such a standpoint is that comparative literature in this strictly orthodox French sense cannot grow out of local frameworks and remains limited to researching two-sided influences, effects and relations, which means that it is really

changing into some kind of auxiliary branch of national literary history, concerned mainly with external origins, impulses and connections. And so a consequence of such a standpoint really is that many literary historians — W. Krauss, for instance — still look on comparative literature as mainly a subsidiary discipline which is to aid national literary history.

It is, of course, almost unavoidable in Russian comparative literature that comparative and general literary studies almost completely overlap, so that there are no differences in principle or practice between them. In this case the comparative school may appeal to an old tradition which, in the nineteenth century, generally had the label 'general literature' — especially at universities — for what was in Western Europe generally called comparative literature. The relation of the American school to this question remains unclear, especially since the term 'general literature' frequently means mainly the theory or even the philosophy of literary art. But American comparativists, of course, mainly tend to equate comparative and general literary science in so far as they do not declare for an extreme standpoint — R. Wellek, for instance — according to which national literary sciences, including comparative literature as a special science, should be abolished and merged into one single, general literary science.

Slovene comparatists defined their views regarding the fundamental question of comparative literature at its founding. They did it in a way that probably suits its developmental tasks and, at the same time, it is in accordance with recent tendencies in world comparative literature. When A. Ocvirk outlined his *Theory of Comparative Literary History* (1936), he mainly followed the French school, which is evident mainly in the fact that at the heart of the chapters on the methodology of comparative literature he placed the problem of influences, responses and mediators. But it was already here that he stressed the importance of researching literary genres, forms and styles which, from the orthodox French standpoint, meant a move into the domain of general literature. Similarly, in the chapters on the theory of comparative literature, he placed at the centre a theory of influences, and he also enumerated as essential for comparative literature some other themes which belong to the field of general literature, e. g. the problem of the national and supranational, the unity of European literatures, international literary streams, the concept of world literature. Therefore it is understandable that, in the discussion of Van Tieghem's ideas about general literature, he was against its separation from comparative literature. "It is completely unnecessary to separate comparative literature from general literary history, since they are both founded on the same conceptual and theoretical bases." This means, then, that comparative literature and general literature are not different disciplines, but are one and the same; or, more precisely: comparative literature necessarily includes general literary history and theory.

With such a starting point Slovene comparative literature avoided the narrowness of the French orthodox school, which later on led to an even narrower view with Carré and Guyard, and to some polemics between the French, American and Russian schools in the fifties and sixties. This standpoint means that Slovene comparatists also do not limit their research to binary "actual" relations, but that they want to research wider, more relevant literary problems at a level that is generally required by all the major schools of current comparative literature. The necessary consequence of such a standpoint is that comparative literature cannot be just a subsidiary discipline of national literary history, but a field with an independent subject, objectives and tasks. An external sign that comparative literature in Slovenia has never been separated from general literary science can be noticed in the fact that the Department of Comparative Literature at Ljubljana Faculty of Arts carried in its title both labels alternatively — comparative literature and world literature.

2. A dispute about the relation between comparative literature and general literature, which is apparently merely historical-terminological, leads to the most important problem for Slovene comparative literature — what is the essence of the subject matter vs. methodology of this discipline?

This principal problem raises the question of how appropriate it is to describe comparative literature as comparative. Is its essence determined above all by 'comparing', or is this process by itself atypical of it and therefore the name of the science itself rather infelicitous? This negative standpoint was articulated by the French positivist school, namely by Guyard in his laconic sentence, "comparative literature is not comparing", with which he wanted to say that the essence of this science is not in comparing. Therefore, in the definition of comparative literature as 'the history of international literary relations', he consistently substituted the notion of comparing with the notion of relation, a notion typical of Comte's positivism.

But the problem of comparing in connection with comparative literature is much more complicated. It is obvious that comparing in its most general, simple and direct meaning cannot be the main characteristic of comparative literature, since it is an inevitable subsidiary method of many practical disciplines, professions and sciences. Comparing individual works or authors is a usual method not only of daily literary reviews, criticism and essays, but also of Slovene literary history. Župančič's poetry cannot be examined except by comparing the poet's texts with each other, or with those of Murn, Gregorčič or Prešeren. There is nothing comparative here in the sense of comparative literature.

It may seem at first glance that it becomes comparative when it is connected to discovering influences, for instance by comparing some of Heine's and Stritar's poems in order to find out where and how Heine influenced Stritar. But even in these directions there may occur

conceptual difficulties as soon as we see that the same procedure is used by national literary historians, comparing Slovene poets or novelists with each other. With this we suddenly face the additional problem of how to demarcate the fields of national and comparative literary science. At first glance the most satisfactory solution may seem to place the comparing of some author with another Slovene author in national literary history, and with foreign authors, in comparative literature. But if we were satisfied with this the difference between the two disciplines is determined merely on geographic terms, not in the nature of the subject itself or in the objectives and methods of its research. Moreover, such demarcation would lead into obvious nonsense, since it would mean that Prešeren's influence on Stritar should be studied by a specialist in Slovene, and Heine's by a specialist in comparative literature, although it is evident that such a study could be done either by a specialist in Slovene who knows Heine well enough, or a specialist in Germanic languages with an appropriate knowledge of Stritar: neither one nor the other would need a special knowledge of comparative literature.

The general solution is evidently possible only on the basis of realizing that the real starting-point of comparative literature is not just any one, but a very specific type of comparing, so that comparing only with this becomes the ideal and methodological basis of an independent discipline of literary studies. This specificity becomes evident as soon as we take into account that, as a concept, comparative literature was formed after the year 1800 in close relation with similar names for other sciences, e. g. comparative anatomy, physiology, mythology, linguistics, etc. Analogically, as in these sciences, in comparative literature it was not about ordinary comparing, which stops at the similarities and differences between individual phenomena or kinds of phenomena, but about a very specific type which enables us to pass from the individual to the general, essential, primary. Just as F. Bopp, for instance, was led by comparing conjugation systems in Indo-European languages to their common origins, to a proto-language; so in comparative literature it was about comparing, which is to lift individual literary phenomena, formed at the national, geographical and chronological literary-aesthetic level, into a domain of higher historical, cultural and spiritual events, and it is only there that their mutual origin, essence and meaning is shown. Since something like this is only possible in an international framework, comparative literature was conceived as a general, European or global literary discipline, always supposing that at its basis comparison is of that specific kind which can make it a special discipline.

Comparative literature in the strict sense of the word begins only where comparing individual literary phenomena leads to higher literary units of literary event (literary movements, streams and trends; kinds, genres, and forms; rules, structures and processes);

these of course necessarily transcend racial, national and linguistic boundaries, so that in the very meaning of the word they are international. Or, put differently — the comparative method becomes a basis of comparative literature only when it reaches a higher perspective, focused on a common origin, essence and sense. So it is not possible to claim that any research which deals with influences between two literary works or authors is comparative, even though they belong to different national literatures. Its comparativeness is small or even minimal as long as it limits itself to comparing the two phenomena in their similarity and difference and from this ascertains an actual influence; but comparative defining does not lead to the inclusion of individual works and authors in the framework of a higher literary unit, and it is only there that a real sense of their similarity and difference is shown; and at the same time the deeper meaning of the basis that unites or separates them and, thereby, what enables influences among them is also explained.

To illustrate the problem we shall make use of something frequently discussed in Slovene literary history: the influence of Scott's historical novels on Jurčič; such a discussion can by itself be only Slavistic or Anglistic, it could be comparative only when comparing an analysis of *Deseti brat* and *The Antiquary* as included in higher literary units, which is possible in this case mainly with placing of both works within the development of European romanticism and realism, or the problems of the European novel. Both can be done only on the basis of a global theory of romanticism and realism or the modern European novel, its various types and developmental phases.

From here it is already possible to conclude that comparing can be lifted to the level of comparative literature only when it is anchored to a general theory of literary kinds, genres, and forms, epochs, movements and processes, all at the level of European/global literature. With this, other questions appear; for instance, the question of the relation between theory and history, or between scientific-empirical and philosophical-abstract methodologies within comparative science, past which no principal discussion on its subject, objectives and methods can go.

3. A more precise definition of the essence of comparative literature enables a more precise demarcation of the fields of national literary history and comparative literary science. It is very difficult to define this boundary, which is often controversial, and sometimes topical, from purely practical reasons. As soon as we start from the recognition that comparative literature begins where comparison is directed at general literary units, there is no clear dividing line between national and comparative literary sciences, but there is an area between in which they both intervene. Many question of literary horizon, response and influence that can be studied in the more narrow framework of national literary history can become a starting-

point for a distinctively comparative treatment. It holds true for all the themes of Jurčič-Scott, Prešeren-Petrarca, Cankar-Ibsen types, etc. The answer to the topical question of why such themes in modern times emerge not only in Slovene comparative discipline, but also in Slovene, English, Romanistic and Germanic studies probably lies here. According to the tradition of the French comparative school even these themes belong above all in comparative literature, while from wider contemporary viewpoints, only when connected with the general systems, rules and structures of literary events.

4. Consequently, comparative literature is not defined by comparing as such or the comparative method, nor by simple descriptions of international relations, influences, responses and so on: both become a basis for comparative literary studies only when they forward research into higher, essential, primary units of literary development. Therefore, comparative literature does not come into existence as a sum of the histories of individual national literatures, but with a study of their structural units: these are not a simple sum of individual literary characteristics, phenomena and particles and, therefore, they can be the subject of a special, independent discipline.

Incidentally, it is possible to state here two theses which would demand special study:

— because of the nature of its subject, comparative literature is strongly theoretical and not merely a historical science; while for national literary history literary theory is predominantly a subsidiary study, it is central or even essential in comparative literature;

— because of the more abstract nature of its themes (general literary-aesthetic structure, rules, processes) the methodology of comparative literature is not only scientific-empirical, but occasionally also philosophical-abstract.

It seems appropriate here to draw attention to the fact that a more firm relation of history and theory, science and philosophy is probably necessary for all sociological, humanistic and artistic studies, and that, because of its specific themes, comparative science especially is very much exposed to theorisation, sometimes even the philosophical categorisation of its subject area. In connection with the relation between scientific and philosophical methodology some other questions are emerging for comparative literature. No matter how open to the problems of general aesthetics, the philosophy of art, the comparative study of art or even the philosophy of language, comparative literature also has to draw some boundaries in which to maintain its own territory and to stop it from expanding shapelessly into typically philosophical problems. Although these boundaries are difficult to describe, it is obvious that they are determined by the necessity of a historical-empirical basis, from which comparative literature originates, bases itself upon and with it also examines philosophical problems, categories and ideas that arise in its research.

1. To the well-known fact that the originators of comparative literature in Slovenia were I. Prijatelj and F. Kidrič, and its major founder A. Ocvirk, we must add the less known fact that the first to deal with comparative literature in a scientific, systematic and efficient way was Matija Čop (1797-1835). In this sense he may be considered as a predecessor of the Slovene comparative literary discipline. That he created a foundation not only for literary criticism and Slovene literary history, but also encroached on the field of comparative discipline is understandable because he was a contemporary of the Schlegel brothers, Sismondi, Bouterweck and Villemain, who in the romantic period initiated comparative literature or general literature. In this sense, Čop's interest in European literature was undoubtedly in step with the times, with its most modern trends. Many pages of his published and also unpublished work discuss this: in his own annotation to Čelakovsky's review of "Krajska Čbelica" he talked in 1833 from the European standpoint about literary genres and forms, about what they meant for recent literatures, about the principal problems of rhythm and verse; here and in an essay, *Slowenischer ABC-Krieg*, he also wrote about the relations between literature and the social basis of language, style and poetic creation. A number of his notes on literary kinds and genres, and also on European literary movements and streams, attract attention, especially, of course, those on contemporary Romanticism: in his unfinished essay on Polish drama he outlined, from a typically comparative standpoint, a general European dispute between classicists and romanticists. In his letters to Savio, to Polish acquaintances and others, we find many examples, descriptions and evaluations of comparative literature — for instance, on Byron's influence on Mickiewicz; on making a parallel between Byron and Foscolo; on problems of ancient and Christian mythologies in contemporary poetry; on the characteristics of epic poetry; on the essence of the novel, etc. On the basis of Čop's statements, evaluations and formulations it is possible to assume that, for him, comparative literature was the same as general literature: comparative viewpoints were not only a subsidiary means of understanding Slovene literary creativity, but an important guideline for comprehending literary problems. What also attracts attention is the broadness of this interest, since it expands from distinctively literary-aesthetic, formal and formalistic problems to questions of evaluation and even to relations of social life with literature.

Considering Čop's viewpoints on European literature it is also possible to talk about their actual importance for the growth of Slovene poetic creativity since, in indicating the principles of Romantic classicism and a special aesthetic function of romantic forms, he contributed to the beginning of Slovene romantic classicism in Prešeren's central period. From the standpoint of present

comparative literature it is even more interesting to see how, even in Čop's work, functions which Slovene comparative literature is still carrying out today, are beginning to form — information on foreign literary founders and authors, an attempt to evaluate their works from the primary viewpoint, sometimes also using this information as a stimulus for Slovene literary development. It is true that none of these functions is essential for comparative literature; that it must occasionally perform them in Slovenia lies in the special character and position of Slovene literature, which is less autarchic than the greater European literatures, but therefore may be more dependent on external influences and also on their critical and systematic response to them. But above all there is an attempt in Čop's study of general literary questions to understand historically and theoretically the development of poetic genres and forms, literary streams and processes, especially those that are of international importance and therefore crucial to Slovene literary development.

2. It is probably not a coincidence that with the decline of Slovene romanticism the introductory steps towards comparative literature in Slovenia came to an end, too. From the period of romantic and poetic realism we find only individual cases of Slovene and foreign authors being compared, sometimes on the level of pure Slovene or Slavonic studies, mostly only as a means of literary criticism and essay-writing, i.e. in the sense that, by itself, it is not a sufficient basis for comparative literature as a real discipline. Such comparisons can be found in numerous writers of the time.

New incentives towards comparative literature came to Slovenia with the generation which appeared after 1900 (Matija Murko, Ivan Prijatelj, Ivan Grafenauer and France Kidrič). In researching the Slovene literary past, especially in the framework of studies of Prešeren and his work, this generation, on the basis of distinctively positivistic, and partly also *geistesgeschichtlich* approaches, started paying more attention to the so-called European "background", the literary horizon, responses and influences of foreign authors on Slovene literary authors, relations with European impulses, programmes and streams, partly also to the reception and translations of foreign writers in Slovenia. Although this revealed a number of typical comparative problems, its attempts in this direction still seem no more than a mere addition to Slovene literary history. Studying responses, translations, influences and international literary relations here remained a subsidiary means of elucidating Slovene literature, but it did not become an independent discipline with special goals, tasks and methodology. Significantly, most of these researchers exaggerated when dealing with the influence of foreign authors on Slovene writers (the Schlegel brothers' on Čop and Prešeren, Scott's on Jurčič, Goethe's on Stritar, etc.). The importance of these influences was sometimes greatly exaggerated, and at other times totally denied or even ignored. This oscillation was merely because it

did not want to include them in higher literary systems at the international level, but it was only interested in them as a subsidiary means of explaining individual phenomena in Slovene literature, which meant understanding them in isolation, but definitely not in the spirit of comparative literature. This holds true for the literary historians who followed this generation and used comparative elements for the further elucidation of Slovene literary events and not to develop from them the problems of comparative literary discipline.

Some of the generation from the early 20th century - especially I. Prijatelj and F. Kidrič — paid special attention to relations between Slovene and other Slavonic literatures, and partly researched the individual systems of these literatures, irrespective of Slovene literary problems. At first glance it seems as though a special branch of comparative literature was developing in this direction, so-called "Slavonic comparative literature". But this label is problematic, just as the whole system which this discipline is supposed to unify, is disputable. In the theory and methodology of comparative literature as an internationally recognized discipline there holds in general a principle that its domain is the only one, therefore it is not possible to divide it according to linguistic, racial or national viewpoints into partial, regional or local comparative literatures. We do not know any special "Romance" or "Germanic" comparative literature, so from the purely scientific standpoint it is not possible to talk about a special comparative study of Slavonic literatures which would have an independent subject, theory and methodology. It is possible to study a number of Slavonic literatures together, or relations between them, from different standpoints — as an addition to individual national Slavonic literary histories (Slovene, Russian, Polish, etc.); as a sum of more Slavonic literatures together, which is a domain of Slavonic studies as a whole; or in a concatenation of wider, international literary processes which are outside the Slavonic linguistic domain and therefore demand study from European or broader starting-points. Only such a perspective on the history and theory of Slavonic literatures belongs in the field of comparative literature, but within comparative literary discipline it cannot form an independent comparative field which would be distinguishable from the others and therefore autonomous.

The Slovene comparative discipline had actually adopted this standpoint with Čop, who by no means understood Slovene relations to other Slavonic literatures as an unique phenomenon but as a part of a complex system of relations with the whole of Europe or the world. This problem was clearly and conclusively defined by A. Ocvirk in his *Theory of Comparative Literary History* where, among other things, he discussed the possibility of partial literary-historical syntheses which were to deal with geographically, nationally or linguistically closed fields. "These partial syntheses, which certainly have their own meaning, do not persuade us that Romance, Germanic or Slavonic literatures each on its own would form harmoniously

closed wholes and develop only in mutual close fertilisation... So Europe is the focus of all literary creation and only within its domain can all sorts of problems be solved successfully."

3. The theoretical and literary-historical work of A. Ocvirk after 1930 laid the foundation of Slovene comparative literature on which it has mainly proceeded up to last few decades.

As is evident from discussing some of the principal questions of Ocvirk's *Theory of Comparative Literary History*, the problems of a comparative discipline, as outlined in this work, are based on the findings of the French school, but by no means dogmatically. This is shown not only by comparing this theoretical survey with Van Tieghem's book *La littérature comparée*, but also with later French works of this kind (Guyard, Pichois-Rousseau). Ocvirk did not limit his theory of comparative literature to the problems of the mediators, responses and influences, but directed it to wider themes, such as literary movements and streams, kinds and genres, ideas and styles, general questions of European and world literary development. Therefore, it is justifiable to claim that Slovene comparative literature did not follow blindly the traditional French model, but remained open to theories and ideas from other comparative schools.

Something similar also holds for Ocvirk's practical work in the field of comparative literature, which is not restricted to the principles laid down by the French orthodox, predominantly positivistic school. What is noticeable is that Ocvirk, in both his university lectures as well as his published essays, apportioned quite a large part to literary theory, closely connected with literary history. With this he greatly influenced the direction of comparative literature in Slovenia, since he removed it from straightforward history and directed it to those contemporary concerns of comparative literature which place at the centre of their research literary-theoretical questions, or connect literary history with literary theory as closely as possible in some other way.

The other notable characteristic of Ocvirk's work for comparative literature is that even in explicitly comparative-historical discussions he stressed literary-aesthetic, formal-stylistic or psychological-personal facts, which took him away from the over-external categories of the French school, such as the literary horizon, mediators, responses, destiny and the reception of a literary work or author. He did not deal with these themes as something important in themselves, but as elements for wider research.

Finally, perhaps the main feature of Ocvirk's comparative-historical practice is that he rather rarely dealt with problems of influences, or he dealt with them only in terms of wider questions of literary movements, trends and stylistic movements. He did this in his studies of realism or symbolism in Slovenia, of Cankar's development into decadence and symbolism, of Kosovel's relation to modernist poetic trends. In all this he set an example for the

comparative discipline so that it regularly included the analysis of influences in the study of the greater comparative issues, i. e. movements, streams, genres, ideas (cf. D. Pirjevec, *Ivan Cankar and European Literature*, 1964, and J. Kos, *Prešeren and European Romanticism*, 1970).

A survey of Ocvirk's position in the development of Slovene comparative literature would not be complete without noting that, in spite of distancing himself from the French school and emphasizing literary theory, he remained faithful to the historical empiricism of his teacher, P. Hazard and his circle. Ocvirk was consistently putting it forward, not only in his comparative-historical analyses, but also in his studies of formal-stylistic questions, in literary-aesthetic explanation and in literary theory itself. This accords with his constant rejection of ahistoricity, of abstract theorising and especially of the excessive influence of philosophy on comparative literature. Comparative literature is to remain strongly anchored in the historical and empirical: the use of philosophical categories, notions and methods may deprive it of its scientific value.

4. At this point it is possible to understand, measure and evaluate the movement introduced in the development of Slovene comparative discipline by Dušan Pirjevec. His starting point was Ocvirk's school, and in the first decade of his work he mainly followed its principles, problems and methods. But after 1962 he adopted new views. The main characteristic was a rejection of the historical-empirical standpoint and methodology, and then taking a new approach to literature, which was essentially philosophical in its perspective and methodology, both in comparative literary history and theory. In the historical area he replaced historical analysis with phenomenological-existential interpretation, and in literary theory he introduced instead of poetics, stylistics, and verse theory such disciplines as the phenomenology and ontology of literary work. He paid special attention to the problems of literary hermeneutics, the first to do so in Slovene literary studies.

When introducing such far-reaching novelties he based them on European literary disciplines, aesthetics and philosophy. In particular he adopted Ingarden's phenomenological theory of literary art, namely the principle of autonomy of literature as 'merely intentional' and 'quasi-realistic' and therefore not explicable according to the principles of biography, psychology or sociology. From Heidegger's philosophy he took as a starting point for his discussion of the autonomous essence of a literary work the idea that through the so-called "ontological difference" poetry is revealing a metaphysical way of thinking and discovering the truth, which is in relation with "being". Comprehension of a novel, as proposed by Lukacs in his *Theory of the novel*, was for Pirjevec a starting point for his own historical-theoretical comprehension of the novel as that literary formation at whose centre stands an always problematical, active and

therefore tragic hero of the modern world. He related his study of literary hermeneutics to a great extent to the philosophical hermeneutics of H. G. Gadamer, and his views on the development of the European mode of thinking about the essence and destiny of art on that of E. Grassi and some others.

Approaches of this kind were obvious in Pirjevec's major treatises, especially in his interpretations of great European novels and analyses of contemporary literary scholarship, aesthetics and artistic modes of thought, especially structuralism. It can be noted everywhere that he gave priority to philosophical aspects over empiricism or empirical historicism. In spite of that it is not possible to claim that Pirjevec's study of literary phenomena was in the very sense of the word ahistorical, since he understands them from the viewpoint of historical thought. He does not care any longer about empirical history, but for history in the sense of Heidegger's *seingeschichtlich* problems and so-called "historicalness" which was carried into effect in it.

All these questions also belong in the complex of 'Heideggerianism' in Pirjevec and in Slovenia in general. Therefore, they go beyond the framework of the present discussion, which is limited to the meaning of Pirjevec's work for the development of Slovene comparative literature. From this standpoint it is essential to place the question of what the changes introduced by Pirjevec meant for the further orientation of Slovene comparative literature. Did they evade the essence itself of the comparative discipline, or were they still in the framework of its fundamental intentions? These questions probably cannot yet be answered precisely, but at least the main direction of where to look for an answer is already noticeable. The work of Pirjevec has undoubtedly opened new horizons for comparative literature in Slovenia, but also disturbed its unity, developmental coherence and firm belief in its purpose. Nevertheless, it remained in accordance with the real subject of the comparative discipline, and even with its basic trends set by the theory and practice of Ocvirk. Many incentives by Pirjevec can be understood as consistent steps in directing comparative literature to the crucial problems of literature at the international level. Consequently, he avoided the less important, merely external or factographic-empirical details of literary events; instead he concentrated on the great themes of literary creativity, on the essential characteristics of the novel, the literary work as such or its aesthetic relations to literature.

At this point the question of whether Pirjevec's shift to philosophical methodology was not in some ways too radical, and therefore risky for the basis of our discipline, remains open. Opening so widely on typically philosophical problems which often lead from the literary field to general problems of art, experience and thought, a danger of the merging of comparative literature with the philosophy of art, aesthetics and philosophy as such will arise. Moving too far in this direction could cause a re-forming of comparative literature into

comparative aesthetics, a general philosophy of art or general aesthetics, its refounding in these disciplines and the abolition of its autonomy.

5. After the death of Dušan Pirjevec (1977) and Anton Ocvirk (1980) comparative literature in Slovenia passed into a new developmental phase, suggested by some individual tendencies even before that. It is true that new directions in literary studies (reception aesthetics, poststructuralism, deconstruction, theoretical psychoanalysis, new historicism, feminism, etc.) affect its most recent position. But its present constellation is still being determined primarily by the bases created by it in the first decades after World War II. This means that a model of historical empiricism favoured by Ocvirk, and an example of philosophical interpretation or literary-historical hermeneutics, as introduced by Pirjevec are still very much present in it. What was special about the last fifteen years in the expansion of comparative literature was that both models are very rarely kept in it in the pure original form, separated from each other or even in opposition to each other; the most characteristic tendency of the entire discipline is now oriented to their linking, synthesis or at least co-ordination. Here it is inevitable that empirical methodology is losing a fair bit of its strictness, based on positivist consistency in researching influences, international literary processes and multinational relations; on the other hand a philosophical approach which substituted comparative research with an interpretation of *scingeschichtlich* problems, as shown in the thematic structure of the most representative texts of individual epochs, gradually deviates from the Heideggerian concept in Pirjevec and moves to more rational and also differentiated *geistesgeschichtlich* studies. It is exactly this which enables scientific methodology in Slovene comparative literature not to be placed in exclusive opposition to non-empirical or even explicitly philosophical approaches, but that it seeks in them — quite the contrary — argumentation and support for its comparative research into internationally acknowledged literary trends, periods and movements, as well as the structural characteristics of literary kinds, genres, types and styles.

The same orientation is also evident in the area of its recent contributions to literary theory, which already with Ocvirk became one of the major preoccupations of comparative literature, but mainly in the form of strict empirical research into formal questions, especially verse and linguistic style. On the contrary, Pirjevec almost completely avoided such research; instead, he introduced reflections on the foundations and boundaries of literary science, and all from the standpoint of a Heideggerian understanding of science in the era of modern technology. Thus he developed above all a methodology of literary discipline on the level of Gadamer's hermeneutics and Heidegger's "thought of being". In recent Slovene comparative literary studies, both outlines — Ocvirk's for literary theory and

Pirjevec's for the methodology of literary disciplines — are being further developed, but in a changed form, which can be understood as a synthesis of scientific and philosophical approaches. The methodology is becoming one of the central fields of Slovene comparative literature, and with this it is losing its Heideggerian character, formerly acquired with Pirjevec; instead, all existing methods, scientific and philosophical, traditional and modern are reflected in it, in the sense of methodological pluralism; the central problem for such a methodology is how to avoid eclectic indifferentism, and how to put forward principles of differentiation, functionalism and selection in the study of individual methods. The centre of gravity of literary theory is moving from particular questions of verse and style to general problems of literature as a special mode of existence, with specific functions, structures and postulates of value, especially at the level of literary kinds, genres and types. A special place is held in this methodology by literary hermeneutics, already introduced by Pirjevec. This is increasingly important for the historical and theoretical verification of scientific and research positions which have already been put forward in literary scholarship or are only now entering it.

At the centre of comparative literature as developed in Slovenia in the last twenty years is, of course, still Slovene literature, with its relations to global literary events, especially to new literary trends and movements like postmodernism. In these studies, both historical-empirical, as well as *geistesgeschichtlich* methods, approaches and perspectives are being practised. For this comparative-historical understanding of the past phases of Slovene literary development the example of deconstruction is gradually becoming a stimulus towards a reevaluation of traditional schemes, forms, trends and approaches to comprehending the history of Slovene literature from the standpoint of comparative literary scholarship.