

Pedro Calderón de la Barca se propuso captar la trágica dimensión de la existencia humana haciendo depender la voluntad del hombre de los valores morales. El poeta a pesar de su propia experiencia quiso creer que la prudencia y la elocuencia serían capaces de fomentar el sentido común que se basa en lo verosímil. Pero con todo eso, la sutil arquitectura de su dramaturgia es un amargo testimonio de su tiempo. Quizá ésta sea la razón por la cual recurramos a sus dramas en épocas de crisis. Porque ofrecen un a singular experiencia hermenéutica, aportando un sueño sobre la (mítica) Edad de Oro del ingenio que aun se sentía capaz de tocar lo infinito.

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MÁRIA BÁTOROVÁ:

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Pavol Strauss (1912-1994) was an outstanding Slovak poet, essayist, and thinker. Undoubtedly, he belongs to the elite of Slovak philosophically educated personalities. Nonetheless, despite the fact that the beginnings of his literary career go back as far as 1936, his work is little known in Slovakia itself. Pavol Strauss was namely one of those intellectuals who did not concur with the communist ideology. The cause for the disagreement was his religious belief. He was a practicing Catholic since his conversion in 1942. He did not go abroad, as many did, but stayed in Slovakia practicing his medical vocation and writing and distributing his works in the circle of his relatives and friends. Most of his works were published

only after 1989 when the communist regime collapsed.

It is the duty of literary scholarship to reflect about Strauss's work and to place it in the context of Slovak and world literature. Mária Bátorová, who is a well-established Slovak literary scholar and writer, embarked on this task in the present monograph. Strauss was a prolific writer. Mária Bátorová follows his work from the first collections of poetry written in German, through diaries and essays, to aphorisms filled with life experience and wisdom of their author. Mária Bátorová reveals the basic poetic principles of Strauss's multifarious work, and at the same time always calls to attention the context in which it was created. She consequently points out the paradox, which forms the foundation of Strauss's way of thinking, in its various manifestations. Strauss's intellect prefers conceptuality and dialogue. His work is abstract, perhaps even elitist and controversial. It is satiated with Christian faith, which Strauss adopted in his mature years, but, paradoxically, it is relatively devoid of references and allusions to Biblical accounts and symbols.

It should also be noted that Strauss was an original and not an unimportant poet. His poetry written in German differs from everything that was written at that time either in Germany (although one can find some parallel with Gottfried Benn, for example) or elsewhere in the world. To Paul Strauss, poetry meant mainly a relation to oneself and in this way to the world. This makes him close particularly to Rilke and Valéry. Strauss registers the outside world of things through his own inner experience. The motive of death, which is considered essential to Rilke's poetry, is the principal theme in Strauss's poetry, the initial stimulus to writing. The motive of death is also present in Franz Werfel's works, but not as

an existential entity, as a part of speculations about one's existence as is the case with Rilke and Strauss. Strauss is also close to Werfel in motives of pain and childhood. The concentration on truth in opposition to the aesthetizing and misleading meaning as well as the conviction that writing is autobiographical and that it is not necessary to tell a story, to write a novel, ranks him with Valery. Thus, one can also conclude that Strauss's collections of poetry, on account of their form, language and poetics, belong into the context of middle European lyrical poetry.

Strauss himself was aware that, as a physician and as a writer, he represents a synthesis of exact science and artistic thinking and his is indeed an outstanding manifestation of intellect in the realm of art. After 1946 Strauss was writing only in Slovak. Nevertheless, his Slovak works can justly be considered as one of the climaxes of Slovak literature.

The work of Pavol Strauss can be seen in the coordinates of free thinkers he read and admired. He led a dialogue with them and saw the problems of his life and of the present under their aspect as well. He refused dialogue and confrontation with the socialist culture which he deprecated. He became an unorganized, silent dissident whom the state power registered but did not pursue.

As it has become clear from the analyses of his diaries, career and material goods were insignificant for Strauss. He was primarily concerned with the opportunity to freely express himself, to freely think and write. Strauss was convicting socialism of stagnation and retrogression. The socialist superstructure was primitive, simplifying and inferior for intellectuals of Strauss's caliber. He disavowed any connection with it and remained in his own world of basic existential questions which he was solving his whole life: the relationship between the sacred and

the profane, between humanism and faith, the question of the complexity of world and its comprehension in terms of Greene paradox.

The author of the monograph managed to capture the personal tragedy of Pavol Strauss. His value system acquired by his upbringing, by the study at foreign universities (Vienna and Prague), by the atmosphere of the first CSR and by the free pursuit of his own path encountered the hard reality of the century and the country he decided to live in. Strauss was a man of silence, but he was in need for socialization. His work, which is humanly and socially engaged, had to be silent.

Works as those of Pavol Strauss, which were written without the intervention of any censorship and which are characterized by the struggle for universal values and the purpose of human existence, can become, as the author of the monograph herself states, a vision for the way of life and creation of values in the 21st century. In spite of their delayed publication, they have something to say to every generation. The monograph of Mária Bátorová is an unquestionable contribution to Slovak literary scholarship. The topic, the treatment of the material and the lively style can make the monograph interesting even to readers beyond the circle of literary scholars.

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