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ATTEMPT AT A NEW APPROACH TO THE LYRICAL SHORT STORY

It is becoming more and more obvious that the phenomenon of lyricism cannot be confined within the frames of a single national literature. In order to delineate the chain of 20th century lyrical fiction either from the point of view of a certain national literature or from the point of view of the comparative history of literature, we shall first have to elucidate the problems of the genre.

In analysing the subject–object relationship we must pay particular attention to prof. János Barta’s conclusions regarding the theory of literary genres. Following Emil Staiger it is justified to examine the category of “lyricism” instead of “lyrical poetry” (Adrian Marino also practically follows this line in defining the “types of creation” in his Dictionary of Literary Ideas).

From the theoretical definitions and historical illustrations of the intermingling of genres we come to emphasise the following characteristics: the alloying of epicism and lyricism can be facilitated by the autobiographic character—if it manifests itself as the self-quest of the personality (and not as a simple evocation of facts), and the distance between the author’s self and the object disappears. The tell-tale signs of lyrical fiction are the conveyance, concentration and enrichment of the lyrical theme with new experiences, the formation of experience-blocks within the œuvre. It is a lyrical recollection, which is mostly interwoven with a factual recollection, and still: it is the process of resonance that comes into prominence. In any case we take the basic attitude as decisive—the emotional attunement of the
human being as subject, emerging in the given situation, becoming manifest in the (apparently) free forms of fiction. But a close analysis will reveal that lyricism is a compositional element in these works, an organic part of the structure.

In treating the theory of the short story we must mention the terminological confusion and inconsequence in the international literature of speciality (the fortuitous use of the terms ‘sketch’, ‘short story’, ‘novellette’, etc.) which indicates the opposition—still prevailing in the universal short story theory—between the historical (normative) and the non-normative conceptions. The classical theories of the short story, based on classical short stories, prove to be too narrow for the description of more recent works. From among the most known versions we shall accept Georg Lukács's definition (which, in many respects, reminds us of that of the German Vischer's), especially because it successfully proportionates the social and the aesthetic determinants: "The short story proceeds from the individual occurrence, and—in the immanent extensity of the modelling—it abides by it. The short story does not claim to represent the totality of the social reality, and it does not aim at revealing its entirety from the point of view of a fundamental and timely problem. Its verity is based on the fact that an individual—mostly extreme—occurrence is possible in a society at a certain stage of its development, and this mere possibility is characteristic of that society. So it can dispense with the social genesis of people, of their relationships and of the situations in which people act. For this it has no need of mediators in order to set the characters in motion and it can dispense with the concrete perspective too. The peculiarity of the short story may, of course, materialize in an endless inner variety, from Boccaccio to Chekhov, but at the same time it is this particularity which makes it possible for the short story to play—from a historical point of view—the part of the forerunner as well as the part of the rear-guard of longer epic forms, and may at the same time be the artistic expression of the fact that the totality is no more or not yet representable." It is then justified to see in the short story the