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Two Women, Two Literatures and One Fight for Dignity and Voice in the Society - About the Mexican Jesusa of Elena Poniatowska and the Polish Marta of Eliza Orzeszkowa

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Abstract

Over the last centuries women have fought for their rights. On the pages of literature appeared hundreds of heroines who wanted to change the world. Poniatowska and Orzeszkowa – two women from distant cultures and times – created outstanding literary characters. The novel of Elena Poniatowska, published in 1969, was the chronicle of 20th century in Mexico, which included documentary material about Jesusa Palancares and her story about the revolution in 1910. The work is the epic of the folk hero closed in the labyrinth of solitude and attempt to determine his own character. Jesusa will be compared with Marta, the main character of Eliza Orzeszkowa's novel, which was published in 1873 and is dedicated to the social rights of women. This contribution aims to discuss the literary techniques and topics in works of the important women-writers in Poland and Mexico. This paper analyses the novels not through feminism, but through the study of culture and politics. In the comparative analysis of *Marta* and *Hasta no verte Jesús mío* the paper shows similarities and diversities in the texts, considering differences in national identity and similar social-political situation as a bridge between the cultures.

Keywords

women, rights, Poland, Mexico, comparative literature

Introduction

Do the iconic timeless female protagonists, women who have had positive and lasting impacts on our lives, who have inspired us with their strength, who were independent, self-confident and unforgettable, really exist? It is not easy to quickly mention even few names which are recognised all around the world. Intrigued, I put this question to different people, from different countries, that means different literatures – but no one could answer easily, even though woman has always taken part in men's life. But why? Why are the female protagonists so formless that they are pushed into the background?

Since the Middle Ages there has existed in literature an enormous verity of heroines – coquettes who giggle, model mothers and wives or ruthless killers. In the literary compositions until the middle of the 19th century, woman as a heroine was mostly only an addition to a man, citing the first letter of Saint Paul which says that woman was created from man and for man. Women in literature, which for a long time was a domain for man, were showed as wives, lovers, mothers or objects of desire or jealousy. For medieval poets, women were the objects of renaissance love, reasons of suffering. Romantic poets saw the woman as mother, wife, virgin, who serves motherland. Mary Ellmann in her book *Thinking about Women* presents that this big part of literature repeats the same classification: citing Freud's assumptions, literature connects male protagonists with solid form and female ones with liquidity and formlessness (Rose). Therefore, the female characters refer mostly to the features like passivity, instability, materiality, spirituality or irrationality (Eagleton). Of course, we cannot generalize. The assumption that all novels include only a picture of women as mother or wife would be false. These two classic and socially recognized (approved, accepted) roles dominate in literature but the individualistic, passionate and complex female protagonists have challenged and are challenging the readers. The first

signs of literary emancipation were found in the literature of positivisms, but the breakthrough was brought by modernisms. With the 20th century came the time of feminist literature¹ which tried to create a new type of novels, a new type of female protagonist – free and independent from the male world. In this feminist phase texts with social commentaries came into being, showing suffering women from the poor class, the labouring class, slaves, and prostitutes. Female writers wanted to change the thinking about literature, which for a long time was preventing women from being heroes and presenting them as eternally waiting to be saved, constantly dependent, victims, usually in the name of love. However, Orzeszkowa in *Kilka słów o kobietach* explained the complex situation of emancipation of women. The inequality between the genders was not only the fault of men. She saw the biggest problem in women being spoiled by the society and that often the emancipation meant for them to sit and read books, what in men's eyes was considered as lazy and parasite style of life (Lange).

The goal of this article is not feminism itself. The idea is to show two different and distant literatures, two female writers who described two average female protagonists from their societies. Not a stereotypical picture of women, but the de-mythologized characters, lacking mother-wife symbolism, and, as a result, deprived of formlessness. Poniatowska created even an anti-women picture: Jesusa prefers to be a man. The reason for her to think like that is that the male part of society had more freedom, and as woman, she has not ever felt respected (Poniatowska, *Jesusa*). Poniatowska and Orzeszkowa engaged stereotypes of women with maternal instinct, which were cultivated over the ages. These female writers were brave enough to give up the sanctification of female nature, show the true face and fight for respect in the society. The authors combined the issues of sex with the topic of liberation, sometime madness, they provided the readers with an amazing, unexpected, but different image of women. They showed, with distinct results, the fight for the right to live.

Elena Poniatowska was born on 19 May 1932 in Paris and since 1942 lived in Mexico (Finkelstein). She worked over 50 years as a journalist² engaged in social issues in Mexico. She dealt with extraordinary people and in her works we can see “her interest in Mexican society and her empathy with the marginalized by poverty, class or disability” (Hurley 123). Her books *Hasta no verte Jesús mío* and *La Noche de Tlateloco* are “two the most ambitious and sophisticated examples of contemporary documentary fiction in Spanish America” (Gonzalez 122). Eliza Orzeszkowa was born 91 years before the Mexican writer in the small Polish village next to Grodno (today Belarus) (Detko). She came from a rich and noble family, got conventional education at home and in a monastery. She married a rich Polish landowner, Piotr Orzeszko, and occupied herself with teaching women in poverty (Detko) and if not for the historical events, she would probably have remained the average Polish woman from 19th century. But the social and political issues and the revolt³ in 1863 destroyed her silent idyllic picture of the world.⁴

¹ Żmigrodzka divided the women's liberation movement in Poland in the 19th century into three periods: pedagogic phase (the need of women's professional education), “movement of enthusiast” (fight for freedom and intellectual rights) and economic phase (fight for work and higher education). The progress in the women's situation was treated as an obligatory component of the new Polish social system (Żmigrodzka).

² She started her journalist career in 1954 in Excelsior Newspaper. She was responsible for “society news columns and interviews with social and cultural elite” (Finkelstein 131).

³ Orzeszkowa took a personal part in the revolt. Together with other women she led the group which provided food, medicine and clothes to the insurgents (Sokolova).

⁴ Orzeszkowa was a representative of the positivism writers. She valued Kraszewski for turning his attention to reality, to everyday truth and that it inspired him (Detko). In the 19th century tendentious novel was a literary genre between “literature and others, ‘science’ branches of writing” (Barczyński 18). The writers were expected to know the surrounding reality and its problems through studies and observation (Barczyński). Orzeszkowa's first period of literary production is characterized by the “press function” (in *Marta* she focused on the women's right to work and in *Eli Makower* she demanded developing new forms of national economy). The important topic in her works was the woman question, like in *Ostatnia miłość*, *Wesoła teoria i smutna praktyka*, *Marta*, *Maria* or *Pamiętnik Wacławy* (Detko). Her interest in this topic followed from her own experiences which did not allow her to accept the weak position of women in Polish society.

Once the greatest Mexican poet, Octavio Paz said that Elena Poniatowska was the biggest female writer in Mexico, but she was never satisfied with her novels (Żurek). Despite that she belonged to the French aristocracy and the richest families in Mexico, she always wanted to be independent, to do something for what she had to fight with her abilities, not with her name. Elena Poniatowska created the best literary picture of Mexican society reflecting the situation of the poor people in the 20th century. She did not only portray the people, but, first of all, she expressed her objection to class society, social injustice and political oppressions (Żurek). The book *Hasta no verte Jesús mío*⁵ was dedicated to her brother and others who died on 2nd October 1968 in Mexico City during the student demonstration (the so-called “La Noche de Tlatelolco”). Almost 5000 people were killed when they gathered on the Plaza de las Tres Culturas in Mexico City (Sherman). Her works belong to so called “testimonial fiction or fictional biography derived from testimony⁶” (Hurley).

After the big breakthrough in her life, which was the revolt from 1863, Eliza Orzeszkowa was stimulated to think about social and political situation in the Russian Partition. She supported the enfranchisement of peasantry and improvement of the situation of women, helpless and uncertain of the new circumstances. The novel *Marta* was written in 1872 as a critical opinion about the evaluation of chances of people in the new world. Orzeszkowa considered Marta’s fortune as an obligatory element of the future of Poland (Żmigrodzka). The main protagonist played an important part in the initial literary period of Orzeszkowa, because it tells a story about misfortune and misery of uneducated women (poor education was a key motif) (Lange), unprepared to live, to fight for bread, and it works as a big disapproval of the pointless education system for the young girls and the lack of right to a proper education and work (Żmigrodzka). In this novel, Orzeszkowa did not show any social help for people; the heroine was alone, weak and fought with destiny in the capitalist world like Don Quixote with the windmills. The Polish writer showed the awfulness of the world, unfairness, exploitation, deprivation of people; she described the new world but she did not show the solution for these problems.

Also Jesusa⁷ fought against her destiny; when the reader gets to know her, she is already tired of life and old. Elena Poniatowska, while describing her protagonist, used such an adjective as “dry” to portray her face, her skin and her body without water, without life: “Jesusa ist auch ausgetrocknet . . . Jesusas Augen, die von roten Äderchen durchzogen sind, blicken müde. Am Außenrand ist die Pupille erdfarben, grau; das Braun ihrer Augen, und der Tränenwinkel ist blutunterlaufen. Unter der Haut ist auch kein Wasser . . .” (Poniatowska, *Jesusa*). At this moment, the reader is meeting Jesusa, but it is also the first meeting of the Mexican writer with her. Poniatowska was fascinated by Jesusa’s life and the way she was speaking about it. Her life story is represented in small reports scattered all over the almost 400 pages. Poniatowska showed the world with her eyes, she allowed Jesusa to talk about her life, sometimes even with her vulgar brutal language (especially when she is talking about political issues). The first-person narration took the readers on a trip in time and space through Mexico. The novel is full of facts about Mexican history, traditions and politics. We got to know names, dates and facts about the spiritual community (the Mexican group of spiritualism in the 20th century) or detailed description of traditions, daily routine and experiences, details of traditional Mexican cooking, spices and ingredients as well as the process of preparations:

In the novel *Ostatnia miłość* she showed the fortune of a divorced woman and her picture in the eyes of the society, which was an allusion to Orzeszkowa’s life and her experience as a lonely woman (Jankowski).

⁵ 1970 Poniatowska won Mazatlan Prize of Literature for *Hasta no verte Jesús mío* (Finkelstein).

⁶ *Hasta no verte Jesús mío* cannot be called a testimony (written oral stories based on the interviews with illiterate people) (Hurley), because Josefina Bórquez after reading the final version of the book declared that “las cosas son puras mentiras” (the facts showed in the book are pure lies) (Steele 33). Elena Poniatowska explained that she changed some parts of the interviews to keep the readers’ interest and “set Jesusa apart from the stereotypical model of the mujer abnegada y sufrida” (passive and self-scarifying . . .) (Hurley 130). Others rate Poniatowska’s book to “testimonial narratives”, which is a journalistic form “interpreting society and providing a voice for marginalized groups” (Finkelstein).

⁷ The role of the protagonist is based on the almost weekly interviews between 1963 and 1964 with her informant Josefina Bórquez. (Lopez).

. . . luego una molienda de chocolate y una de arroba de café cada tercer día. El chocolate se tuesta en comal de barro y se muele en metate con caon canela y azúcar. Se tortea con las manos para sacarle la grasa y entablillarla. Allá en mi tierra redondean las tablillas con sopas y luego se rayan en cruz con la uña para cortarlas. Aquí las hacen con molde. Luego se tiendan a secar. Mi madrastra me enseñó a batir el chocolate con un molinillo, y lo hacíamos al gusto de cada cristiano de la familia, y eran más de veinte, con agua o con leche, con medio cuarterón, entero y hasta con cuarterón y medio. (Poniatowska, *Hasta no verte*)

A different tactic was represented in *Marta*, a tendentious novel in which the third-person omniscient narrator showed the story of solitude and helplessness of a woman against the background of the political and social situation after 1863 in Russian annexation. The case of Marta was not an unusual fortune, it came from a strange mystery coincidence which was the Orzeszkowa's reality. Compared to *Jesusa*, the life of Marta is short and colourless. The narrator did not allow the reader to get to know her detailed life story. Orzeszkowa portrayed Marta's past only in few sentences. The lecturer got to know the protagonist in the moment of the big tragedy, which met her – the death of her husband, the only financial source of her life, when she lost all of her belongings due to debts. The dark dress of Marta,⁸ her pale, almost white skin was combined by Orzeszkowa with the grey colour of the outside world. Because of financial problems, the protagonist had to move to a poor area, with uneducated neighbours from the lowest social stratum. Everything here was grey, shaded, smoky and dirty, streets without a sun, covered in smoke from the chimneys. And Marta was like a sensible flower, which due to the lack of sun is slowly dying. Orzeszkowa, describing the new life of her protagonist, has always used the same adjectives: dark, grey, dirty and plain. The only two exceptions were Marta's memories about her childhood. She was born in a noble family, in a small house in a pleasant village, not really rich, but comfortable, close to Warsaw, with a lot of fruit trees and cereals:

Posiadłość ojca jej, o kilka mil zaledwie od Warszawy położona, składała się z kilkunastu włók urodzajnej ziemi, kwiecistej, sporą przestrzeń gruntu zajmującej łąki, pięknego brzozowego gaju, który dostarczał opału w zimie i ponętnych przechadzek w lecie, z obszernego sadu pełnego drzew owocowych i ładnego domku z sześciu frontowymi oknami, wychodzącymi na okrągło wykrojony, gładką murawą zasłany dziedziniec, z zielonymi, wesoło wyglądającymi żaluzjami. Z gankiem o czterech słupach, na które pięły się fasole z pąsowym kwieciem i powoje o bujnych liliowych kielichach. (Orzeszkowa 41)

The idyllic description of the Marta's past is represented in a colourful way, alive and bucolic, in contrast to her sad and dark present. Before the big tragedy, the heroine was a mother and a wife – these were her main roles. Moreover, she learned a bit French, drawing and playing the piano, but they were additional activities to her main roles, decorations. She did not know the real life, she lived in a fairy tale and illusion.

In Poniatowska's novel the adjectives do not play an important role. She used naturalistic and realistic procedures to describe *Jesusa's* life and her surrounding world. The pictures of Mexico are without embellishing, full of ugliness and real dirt of plain places, like *lavoir* (washing place) and the pictures of real poverty:

Jesusa gehört zu den Millionen von Männer und Frauen, die nicht leben, sondern überleben . . . Ich kam in der Berührung mit der Armut, mit der wirklichen Armut, dem Mangel an Wasser, das man in Trageimern holt und vorsichtig transportiert, damit man es nicht verschüttet, dem

⁸ In her first novels Orzeszkowa was still an inexperienced writer and her favorite literary ruse was to divide the characters in her novels into white or black, nothing in between. So is *Marta*: clean, poor, a victim of a political and social situation in Poland. The goal of this trick was to demonstrate the need of properly prepared women to live in modern society (Detko).

behelfsmäßigen Waschen auf den Waschbrett, weil es keinen Waschplatz gibt, dem Mangel an Strom, den man durch Abklemmen stiehlt, den elenden Hühnern, die Eier ohne Schale legen, nur mit einer Haut überzogen, weil sich durch das Fehlen von Sonneneinwirkung kein kalk bilden kann. (Poniatowska, *Jesusa* 13)

Marta was not used to her new life, daily activities were for her a big challenge. Overcoming fear, shyness and tears was stopping her from starting a new life, which she had to create from the beginning. The question was, if Marta – a young, beautiful woman with slim waist, white hands and silky black hair – could manage to find strength. She made a big step going to an employment agency, looking for a job as a teacher. She was sure that she can get it easily. Marta was not used to seeing people looking for a job, begging on the street, for her a job was something which is laying on the ground and she only has to bend over and pick it up. Eliza Orzeszkowa showed the female psyche which was trying to understand her surrounding world and the rules which dominated in that reality. She described Marta's confusion, as could not understand why she was not able to get a job, why only men could do it. Her disorientation, which was a result of her female blissful unawareness, forced her for the first time to think about complex and complicated social situations. This unexperienced woman finally admitted how ignorant she was, that she has been never interested in social issues. She thought that her common sense was enough for living, but she could not understand the rules that control the world. She did not know how to live (even if she was 21 years old), the same as she did not know how to play the piano (even if she has learned it for nine years).

Orzeszkowa focused her novel on the situation of a single woman in the 19th century, who has represented the destiny of many others female victims. The Polish writer was one of them; after the divorce, Orzeszkowa had had to force the humiliation of being helpless and alone. She knew that if a woman wanted a job, she had to do something perfectly. Thus, she made Marta follow that way. The protagonist bought books to improve her French, but even her biggest desire could not make it possible that in a few days her unused to study mind learn the whole French grammar. She really tried, but her memory could not remember all what she wanted. She learned something one day, but next day she had already forgotten it. Finally, fate smiled to Marta, she got a job as a French teacher in a private house. After a few days she realized that her student can speak better French than she, so she left. At this point Marta was still proud and self-confident, she did not take the money for the classes because she did not teach Jadwiga anything. The protagonist applied for a job as illustrator in a newspaper, sadly her basic knowledge of drawing brought her the next painful failure. She wanted to work in a shop with materials but she was too shy, without experience and knowledge. Marta realized that she could not do anything well, she had some talents but only cursorily knowledge of all of them. Hunger and poverty started to face her more often, as a result she began to work for little money in bad conditions in a dressmaker factory, full of women like her:

Suknie ich były podarte, błotem ulic poplamione; włosy ich zaledwie przeczesane, w bezkształtny kłęb z tyłu głowy zwinięte, rozsypywały się w nieładzie po chudych szyjach i tylko kiedy niekiedy jeszcze jakiś płócienny, lecz nieskażonej białości kołnierza, jakaś obrączka ślubna na palcu połyskująca i złotymi połyskami całe zgnęźniałej postaci urągać się zdająca przypominały jakieś przyzwyczajenia dawne, jakieś uczucia i związki serdeczne, które upłynęły w dal niedościgłą na zbyt wartkiej fali niepowrotnej przeszłości. Były to istoty, które, już zmęczone krótką przebywą drogą, omdlałe na sercu i umyśle, z chorym ciałem, a w nim konającym duchem, wlokły ciemne, ciężkie, beznadziejne swe istnienia, milczeniem, niby ostatnią przez los im zostawioną szatą, oślaniając upornie poranione wnętrza. (Orzeszkowa 106-107).

Marta also changed here, but it was not a development/progress⁹ which Orzeszkowa was fighting for. Her beauty disappeared; she transformed into a simple, gray, average, poor woman. She was slowly dying. Marta got sick, because of the conditions; her work was worth much more than she earned. The owner exploited her, but the necessities of life forced her to stay. One day, however, Marta was unfairly accused of irregular conduct. She put her pride above her duties as mother and left. Shortly Marta regretted her decision, but she did not get a second chance.

The action in the story moved slowly, it was easy to follow; there is only one main plot, one main character and the writing style is simple. These factors helped Eliza Orzeszkowa to achieve her goal – nothing should distract readers from the main problem, the destiny of Marta, who after the next failures changed. There was no sign of this proud and self-restraint woman, whom we met in the first pages of the novel. Orzeszkowa showed that the new world was tough for her, it taught her a painful lesson of true life, where woman was a zero, nothing, if there was no man next to her to complete her. Marta became furious, full of anger and jealousy. She felt down low accusing the whole world of her failure, of that which it did not give her, that which was now requiring from her, like proper education and experience.

Poniatowska showed that the world gave Jesusa beauty, gentleness, modesty, piety and submission, which were seen as the only proper virtues of women. The Polish writer opposed it and portrayed the result of making women dependent, when women were treated as beautiful flowers which grow up only in greenhouses and could not survive outside with wind and storm. In the outside world only strong and proud or weak and humble women would survive. Marta realized it too late. In the cold room, without fire a small, sad child got sick. According to the doctor, she should bring wood to make fire and buy medicine, but the last precious coin was just left. However, she did not scream or cry, she was the shadow of the old Marta, weak and tired, not feeling responsible for her child's life anymore. That was too much for her, the whole situation destroyed her morality, her best feelings; she could not get a job, but she should not beg because she was young and healthy enough to work. This continuous circle did not bring a solution. In the last scene Marta was unconscious, mad; her life forced her to steal three rubles. The reader can see her last minutes, when the people were chasing her. She was running, but she could not do it anymore, thousands of thoughts came to her mind but she knew she had no choice: jail and shame or brutal but quick death. Orzeszkowa focused not only on the discrimination of women, but also on the politics which created the weak position of women in the country and as a result pushed them to the edge. In the final scene Marta saw a car coming, she turned and allowed it to crush her. The story of Marta was taken with big interest and had a big influence over women's liberation movement not only in Poland but also in Germany and Switzerland (Detko).

Poniatowska's novel had a different purpose. The book was the book of a witness, it was not a sociological and anthropological document. The Mexican writer used ideas, anecdotes; she cut, added, and changed it, whenever it was needed. The goal was to find a place for Jesusa Palancares in Mexican literature, as a hero, as a woman-soldier. Poniatowska wanted to show her in a different way than the traditional picture of Mexican women. Fighting was her nature. She could protect herself from the attack of women or men. She was not a saint; Jesusa loved to drink, dance and party, she was the lost one, who could not find the right way.

Jesusa was born in Oaxaca, her grandmother was an American Indian from the region and her grandfather was French. Her mother took care of her father-in-law and he left all his stuff to her. Angry sons forced Jesusa's father and his family to leave the village forever. And that is how the endless wandering of the protagonist started. She could not find her own place and strike root. She was homeless, without home, without motherland:

⁹ For Orzeszkowa, the important thing was a continuous development of mankind. She stated that tradition should support the progress of the civilization. Tradition was for her opposing custom, which is created in this moment and is equivalent to traditionalism (Noworolska).

Al fin de cuentas, yo no tengo patria. Soy como los húngaros: de ninguna parte. No me siento mexicana ni reconozco a los mexicanos. Aquí no existe más que pura conveniencia y puro interés. Si yo tuviera dinero y bienes, sería mexicana, pero como soy peor que la basura, pues no soy nada. Soy basura a la que el perro le echa una miada y sigue adelante. (Poniatowska, *Hasta no verte*)

As a child Jesusa was not a proper girl, because of poverty she could play only with stones, arrows, slingshots and marbles. She said about herself that she had not been behaving as a girl, she was a boy. She was playing with boys in wars and fights, she was killing small animals or throwing stones from up the trees. Her father was working on a railway embankment. He used dynamite to destroy the hills to make a space for the new railways. When he could not find any more job in Tehuantepec they moved to Salina Cruz. Here he was working in many different places. After the death of Jesusa's mother, despite working, he tried to cook, clean and wash. He did not want to leave the kids alone, so he started working at night on a ship. Her mother died when she was small and her father began new relationships, which Jesusa did not like. She always took care of her father in her own way. Jesusa was the queen and her father made everything she wanted, so she destroyed all his relations. She was loud, brave but also aggressive. She loved fighting, that was her life. The novel is full of cases of Jesusa's aggression, like when she had beaten the wife of her brother, because she forced her to learn how to make tortillas, which was Jesusa's Achilles' heel. The only person, who the protagonist respected, was her stepmother - Evarista Valencia. She was the daughter of the director of the jail and taught Jesusa how to be useful: working, cleaning and cooking. Evarista's task was to prepare Jesusa for real life. She beat the girl with a wood to strengthen her, so in the future she can survive. Evarista was educated, she was also an American Indian, but she could speak Spanish, she went to school, she got the chance, which Jesusa did not.

That experience taught her to be strong, not to yield to anyone: "No me rajaba, nunca me le rajé a nadie" (Poniatowska, *Hasta no verte*), but she has never objected to her stepmother. The fury - which appeared when Evarista beat her - was released when she hit with her head against the wall. During the Mexican Revolution in 1910 her father joined the revolt and took her to battle field. To help Jesusa overcome the fear, when she heard the shots, her father gave her water with gunpowder to drink, which was believed to make people brave. The protagonist got used to that life, full of danger and adventures. When she was 15, Jesusa was forced to marry the 17 years old Pedro Aguilar, who made her life really difficult, punishing Jesusa for her conceitedness. Only while he was fighting, she was using her short periods of freedom:

En el changarrito de Chilpancingo me gustó mucho cantar y tocar. Me fijaba cómo tocaban la guitarra y yo misma principié a rescarle. . . . Yo era muy alegre, mucho muy alegre que fui, eso sí, y muy cantadora.

Si no me pagaban diez pesos por una botella de tequila o de coñac o de vermú, yo no tomaba. Bajo apuesta sí, pero no porque tuviera ganas de tomar. (Poniatowska, *Hasta no verte*)

Once Pedro got to know it, her adventure life finished. He threatened her with death and assumed the control of her life; Jesusa could not wash herself, change clothes or make hair. Pedro beat her because of the most trivial reasons. He hit her with a machete on her back, she did nothing, except sitting on the ground and protecting her head with her hands. Jesusa could not love him; the pain, which he caused her, brought only anger and hate. Poniatowska emphasized the desexualization of Jesusa's relationship to show her "unwillingness to submit the male domination" (Williams 218-219). She prayed for him to be killed, even if she had lost her soul. The protagonist was a martyr for her whole life, but she never suffered so much as in the marriage. They never talked with each other, so for Jesusa the word "love" did not have any meaning, she never felt it.

After taking control of her life, Pedro took Jesusa to the battle field; she had to wear male clothes and big hat to cover her hair. She learned to be fearless, being afraid only of god, but not of the world. She sighed with release when she got the message about the death of her husband. Jesusa felt free and full of

hope to finally start normal life, but the destiny threw next stones of sorrow on her life's road, she got robbed. As a result, Jesusa had to stay in Mexico City and look for a job. Due to her experience, she was not used to talk with people and ask for help. A few days later one of her neighbours, who was worried about her, helped Jesusa to get a job as housemaid. Furthermore, she explained her how the calendar worked: the meaning of the days and months. The protagonist realized how limited and ignorant she was, but finally her life got better. Thanks to new job she could rent a small room, buy tortillas or tamales and afford to drink coffee and atole. She adapted quickly to the new life and learned its rules. She worked two years in the fabric of cartoons, cleaning in the restaurant "Netzahualcoyotl", later even becoming its owner for a while. Jesusa worked during the day but the night was the blessing for her; she was drinking and dancing over and over again. When she did not like her job or the conditions, she simply looked for a new one. She worked in a ceramic fabric, in a pharmacy in Cuauhtemotzin with doctor Rafael Moreno or in a hair salon. But she loved to work with soldiers (in Oaxaca, Ciudad Valles, Guajalote or San Luis Potosi). She joined the artillery to take care of the soldiers, to cook, clean and iron for them. Together with a soldier group in Ciudad Valles she started working with pork to make the delicious Mexican chicharrones.

Jesusa confessed openly that she did not like children and that is why she had never had one. But she had her heart in the right place. For the first time she adopted a 10 years old boy, Rufino. Despite that she had tried to teach him and to give him everything, he became a thief. When after two years he disappeared, Jesusa decided never to take in any other child. However, she took Periquito and Angel under her protection. She could not admit that they broke her heart but some feelings inside stayed up to now (she kept for all these years some child shirts). Jesusa was taught to be strong and hard, so she tried not to show any little sign of emotion:

Yo no sé lo que es tristeza. Nunca he tenido tristeza. Me habla en chino porque yo no entiendo de tristeza. ¡Ah, el llorar es uno, pero la tristeza es otra! Es mala, no sirve, a nadie le importa más que a uno mismo. Yo lloro cuando tengo coraje, pero nunca he sido triste. (Poniatowska, *Hasta no verte*)

On the other hand, her strong and impulsive character inconvenienced her many times. She got arrested several times: unfairly due to prostitution and justly because of the destruction of someone else's possessions. Since Jesusa did not want to pay for the damages, she stayed in jail as long as they were chased off with food for free. The whole Jesusa's life as well as social and political situation in Mexico were told from her perspective. She was not afraid to talk about politics aloud, especially about the women's situation before, during and after the revolution in 1910. Beaten, helpless and humiliated, women had only right to work at home or in low-paid jobs, as housemaids. Believing it would be better to be a man with freedom and respect is the reason why Jesusa "rejected the role of submissive wife, subverting thereby the traditional model of the 'good' woman" (Williams 217). In the end, we see the protagonist old, alone, betrayed by friends and revolution, already resigned to the world and death, more silent and humble thanks to the spiritual community. The church gave her the illusion to be able to control her life and, due to reincarnation, it gave her the hope for a happier future (Steele, 2010). The community explained the Jesusa's sorrow and pain in this life as a punishment for what she did in her previous incarnation as a queen. She kept living inside her own world, as in a temple waiting to finish a penance for her previous sins, so her soul can be reborn in 33 years in a new, better life.

Conclusion

Mexico and Poland – at the first sight two completely different countries, with distinct traditions, history and culture, separated by the distance of almost 10 000 kilometres. Mexico was taken in possession by the Spaniards in the 16th century, who tried to destroy the native culture. Poland was divided into three parts (Partition of Poland 1772-1795) by the neighbouring countries, which later, among other things, attempted to impose German or Russian language, politics and culture on the assumed Polish lands. The neighbourhood of the US contributed to many political issues, which repeatedly brought about wars or warfare, like the Mexican-American War (1846-1848) or the Border

War (1910-1919). The geographical location of Poland caused numerous problems with Germany, like three Silesian Uprisings (1919-1921) or the invasion of Poland in 1939. The social and political – mostly uncertain – situations were reflected in both, Polish and Mexican literature. After the Mexican Revolution in 1910 many issues, which up to that point were a trouble spot in Mexican society, were only cursorily solved. The same happened in Poland after the revolt in 1863; the situation of women in both countries in different times became to be an important issue. Orzeszkowa saw the failure of romantic mottos in the January Uprising and she fought for a new Poland with new political assumptions, especially for a new and better social situation of women. Her novels had only one goal, to show the weak spots in the up to then politics and its consequences. Poniatowska showed the biggest disasters in Mexican politics from the perspective of victims, she allowed them to talk. She made her novels very picturesque and vivid for the reader to empathize with the protagonist. Jesusa's character can be understood from two perspectives. Firstly, as a rewriter of the official version of the Mexican history (Chevigny) or from a socio-political perspective (as a voice of women and men trapped without hope in Mexico at the beginning of the 19th century) (Davis). Both female writers focused on showing in literature the political influences of the domestic and foreign policy on the society, which means the influences of the locations of the countries and their meanings as cultural and political bridges: Poland as a connection between Eastern and Western Europe and Mexico as a link between Latin and Northern America.

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History, Art and Consumerism— Richard Powers' *Three Farmers on Their Way to a Dance*

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Abstract

This article analyzes three narrative lines as depicted in Richard Powers' *Three Farmers on Their Way to a Dance* (1985) and the way his depiction of real, photographed, present and past characters along with a narrative reference to a photograph create a metafictional and intertextual frameworks through the use of which Powers symbolically points out a sensibility of the late 20th century and its difference from early 20th century related to the vision of the world, understanding of reality, art, and history. In addition, the article emphasizes Powers' use of postmodern allegory and the way it creates another meaning which points out a commercial and consumerist character of the 20th century and which also symbolically represents a history of technical and artistic depiction of the world.

Keywords

art, consumerism, postmodernism, history, past, allegory, metafiction, intertextuality

Richard Powers' novel *Three Farmers on Their Way to a Dance* is seemingly a traditional narrative reminiscent of social commentary on the situation in Western Europe during the World War I which depicts social and psychological effects of war on everyday life of people. He, however, juxtaposes this narrative line to contemporary story of modern life represented by two protagonists living in American urban setting. Moreover, he further complicates and extends the story by dealing and playing with the idea of a depiction and creation of reality, facts, and truth from the point of view of the observer and the observed, creators and perceivers of reality. All three stories of different characters are narrated from different perspectives and all are somehow connected with the past, especially with the beginning of the 20th century, the World War I and its politics. Most characters, especially these from two narrative lines depicting the narrative present, that is the 1980's (an unnamed ironic and witty narrator P., a writer for a computer company news, and Peter Mays, a stockbroker) do not have a direct experience with the past but they are connected with it through its indirect reconstruction and reproduction represented either by a narrative of other characters (creators of reality) or through their own study of historical materials and "facts". Through this indirect narrative reconstruction of the past Powers not only comments on the World War I effects on the life of common people, their personal tragedies, on the power of propaganda and the impact of the contemporary corrupted politics on the life of people, on the historical background of the European immigration to the USA, but he also gives a history of the media which create reality. What dominates in the novel is especially Powers' depiction of the changing nature of both continents (Europe and North America) from the 19th century to the present. This change is also connected with the changing sensibility of the 20th century as mostly expressed through Powers' depiction of newly emerging technologies, their connection to business, economy and politics. In addition, Powers's narrative also deals with the role of new technologies (photography) in the production and creation of reality. To emphasize this, Powers uses a sophisticated imagery associated with the idea of technology (cars, Henry Ford, photography, the city of Detroit, computer companies), politics (socialist and nationalist ideas as represented by three farmers, by Ford, politicians, the World War I), economy, business and consumerism (urban setting, products sale, eating in restaurants,

inclusion of comments on economy and its value), and art (August Sanders' and others' photographs, Diego Rivera's mural paintings in Detroit, USA, ballet, theater, and the cinema).

As it was mentioned above, two narrative lines are associated with the present and they refer to the past indirectly. The story of an unnamed narrator, P, is a story of a lonely stockbroker living in the modern city, bored by his work and interested in arts and history through the study of which he rediscovers the past. The story of Peter Mays, narrated also from the first-person narration point of view, is a story of another contemporary man, a minor writer for a computer company news. This story is reminiscent of a love romance between him and Alicia Stark, a waitress which eventually turns out to be a story of his discovery of the past through his passionate admiration of an actress (theatre, art again) playing modern monodrama about Sarah Bernard. The role contemporary actress plays, that is that of Sarah Bernard, is also associated with Europe and the World War I. Mays' recuperation of the past is a return to his family roots and turns out to be a history of his family emigration which implies a symbolic connection between Europe and the USA, past and present, a history of both the artistic and technological transmission of knowledge and reality to a new land, that is the USA.

Both these stories are marked by a certain mystery, unreliability and unexpected twists (Peter Mays, all characters' connection to the picture of Three Farmers, unexpected heritage— Alison Stark, for example, revelation of history—Mrs. Schreck) but all are also closely connected with the picture entitled "Three Farmers on Their Way to a Dance" made by a famous photographer, August Sanders, in 1914, and with the farmers' story (through the admiration of the photograph an unnamed narrator discovers a mystery of Mrs. Schreck's connection to one of the farmers, a photographer, her European background and heritage— after arrival to the U.S.A. she adapted a name of one of the men on the picture because he was reminiscent of her disappeared lover; and Peter Mays traces his European background, unexpected heritage and connection to an iconic representative of an American industry from the beginning of the century, Henry Ford, because of his meeting with one of the men in the picture, an unwilling journalist admired by Ford). The last story line is different and gives a story of three men of different nationalities going to a dance during May Day of 1914, that is shortly before the beginning of the World War I. This story is narrated from a rather traditional point of view and gives close social observations and depiction of the setting as well as of personal histories of three young men from 1914 onwards. The narrator's third person omniscient narration enables Powers to give a close social observation, to depict the feelings of the characters, their perception of the politics and war, their emotional condition, love affairs, understanding of history and art. This narrative line begins in the following way:

Three men walk down a muddy road at late afternoon, two obviously young, one in indeterminate age. They walk leisurely . . . They may be brothers. All three carry canes; the singer waves his in a simple, monotonous sweep, conducting his own performance . . . It is the first of May in the Rhineland Province of Prussia, 1914 . . . Faintly over the newly planted fields comes the odor of the last five years' compost and fresh manure. With this smell, equally faint, comes the sound of an orchestra. (Powers 17-18)

As can be seen from this passage, this narrative line is reminiscent of traditional realistic writing pretending to give a truthful, objective and realistic picture of reality, but its narrative credibility is undermined by a narrator's revelation, in the context of other two stories and the picture on the cover of the book, that this narrative is rather a metanarrative, that is a reconstruction of the story from a position of an omniscient narrator becoming not only an observer, but also an interpreter and constructor of reality and meaning. So, while this story indicates a movement from the past to the present, the other two narrative lines indicate the movement from the present to the past in an attempt to reconstruct it and understand a connection between the past and present, Europe and the USA, old and a new century, art and the means of its production, politics, and business. Thus, all narratives' main focus is a photograph and its interpretation evoking several meanings. The men in the picture move in the muddy country road and are staring towards indefinite horizon being taken by a photographer whom, as a reader learns, they do not believe. They are, however, later convinced to buy the pictures. The farmers' movement symbolically expresses a transition from an old to a new century characterized

by different social, technical and economic condition. As the narrator observes, “Along a muddy road, just beyond a white, right-hand border, out of the frame, they head toward either a dance, complete with young woman—call her Alicia—or that unmitigated act of violence called the twentieth century” (Powers 212).

As can be seen from the extract, the farmers’ movement is a movement towards folk, popular music and entertainment which evokes an abandonment of the old, 19th century’s agrarianism, and which indicates a forthcoming importance of popular and mass culture. The photographer himself embodies a new character, the relationship between technology, art, consumption, consumerism and “reproduction”. The farmers do not trust a photographer, that is a new technology enabling a producer to create a massive reproduction of the objects of consumption, the photographs in this case. Thus, on the one hand, these (artistic) objects lose “the aura” (Benjamin 2008) of their originality and, at the same time, become reproducible to create profit as characterized by Walter Benjamin in his famous essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* of 1935.

As Benjamin indicates, the reproducibility of art in the 20th century causes a loss of authenticity, it becomes accessible to masses but, at the same time, it enables to produce a detail and reality which is impossible to see through a natural observation. It can be seen in the following extract in which Powers points out a commodification of art in the 20th century Jamesonian late capitalism through the narrator’s comments on Mays: “. . . Mays hit on the connection between music and market mania. One dealt in bulls and bears, the other in crescendos and diminuendos. But both were about hidden movements, contexts, worldless proofs...Both dealt in cult objects, collectibles. Abstractions made the best purchasable commodities.” (112).

Also as John Dewey observes, a great benefit of the machine age as depicted in this novel is the availability of art for masses not only for the privileged, and this availability of art is caused by a mass production (27). Thus, it is not random that Powers uses a complicated intertextual allusions to and quotations from Benjamin’s work to point out a changed nature of art and its connection to business, consumerism and politics in the 20th century.

Powers’ pointing out the connection between art, consumption, consumerism and politics manifests itself in all narrative lines of his novel. The plot reconstruction of the farmers’ story indicates their connection to art, its mechanical reproduction and commerce by buying and keeping a photograph of themselves; by Peter’s later status of a war journalist (paid for the production of news, the newspapers); and through his meeting with an iconic representative of production (of cars), business, and consumption, that is Henry Ford. This meeting also implies a symbolic connection between economy and politics which manifests itself in Powers’s intertextual comments on Ford’s biography and a depiction of his unsuccessful mission to stop the war (a Peace sailing of a commercial ship from the USA to Europe) organized by him. Peter May, in another narrative line, wants to become rich through his alleged heritage associated with his ancestors and their connection to mechanical reproduction producing profit as represented by Henry Ford, a typical early 20th century American industrialist, and he is interested in art not because of the quality of the artistic performance, but because of its ability to “reproduce” the past revealing not only his ethnic, but possible economic background for which he has to pay (to buy the tickets); and an unnamed narrator finds the city of Detroit to be a perfect representation of the mass reproducibility expressed through the connection among business, mass consumption (as a city of cars), art imitating other (European) arts (Renaissance Center in Detroit, evoking the image of mechanical reproduction), and art’s consumerist character (Rivera’s mural paintings which he was paid for, the photography in the museum) to which, however, Mays has an ironic distance. In addition, Powers illustrates a commercial character of art and its changing status (reproducibility) in the new century through a depiction of Sander, the author of the photograph of three dancers, the narrator’s comments on him and other businessmen as well as their own views on art. The narrator comments on Sanders saying that “Sanders always considered photography a trade, a livelihood earned by hard work. Art and income were bound together. In addition to documenting the working class, Sander specialized in commercially lucrative commemoratives. He photographed emigrants departing for America” (Powers 40).

Through a depiction and characterization of personalities in the novel, Powers points out a transition from the individual to mass production, from original to reproducible art, from traditional, hierarchical to the mass society, from the past to the present, from the old to a new century the main features of which are *mass society and (re) production, industrialism, technology and self-reflexivity* as exemplified by sciences, arts, and theories. While the farmers represent a traditional, hierarchical, rural society and agricultural production, Sander is a symbolic precursor of a new century also because of his understanding of production. This late 20th century period is characterized by advanced technologies influencing individuals' perception of the world (computers and computer companies most of the characters representing this narrative line are associated with). In Powers' narrative, this sensibility of a new, that is 20th century, is marked by impersonalization and boredom. On the other hand, Powers' use of self-reflexivity implies partly also an ironic distance from both periods, the early 20th and late 20th centuries. The self-reflexivity is represented by various theories, comments, intertextual allusions, observations, theorizing about theories all creating a complicated a meta-theoretical framework incorporated in the narrative frame of all stories. Powers's narrative becomes not only a self-reflexive history of two centuries, but also of their sensibility, of the history of immigration, the history of war and its connection to politics and production, the history of changing sensibility and the visions of the world as perceived by common people, politicians, businessmen and artists. Understanding of individuals' lives as a symbolic expression of the sensibility of the period further anticipates their changed roles in the contemporary, that is rather postmodern period of the 1980's. While, in Powers' novel, the early 20th century is characterized by the appreciation of industrialists and artists, late 20th century is depicted as the period worshipping the icons of the popular and mass culture such as actors, singers, and sportsmen who become subjects of mass production and manipulation. Reflecting on Sarah Bernhardt, Peter Mays observers that "We are left to pick out of the reproduction the auburn mop, the other-worldly movement, to reconstruct, despite the machine, the cult of this personality . . . But her contemporaries chased the red-haired Sarah forward in time, into the promise of a new century. We can at best chase the reproduction backward for some misunderstood resemblance" (Powers 172).

This also manifests itself, for example, in Peter Mays's worshipping of the popular actress imitating, reproducing and playing another actress, Sarah Berthrand representing the earlier period.

The self-reflexive observation as suggested above can be seen in the following extract in which the narrator comments on Peter Mays' perception of the world reminiscent of the mental image of the changing spirit of several centuries:

Mays had trouble with this one. Production and consumption came to the same marketplace, and he could not see the virtue of one over the other. His mind was elsewhere—on Nurse Cavell, on Sarah Bernhardt, and not least of all on Kimberley Greene, who he wished had not turned out to be so substantial. His mind was on patriotism not being enough, politics not being enough, producing, consuming, all amounting to little in the climate of endless violence. (Powers 201)

Watching the theatre performance and the consequent associations in Peter Mays' mind thus symbolically express the spirit of the postmodern period: its self-reflexiveness, its consumerist character, violence but also chaos. The idea of self-reflexivity is incorporated in the narrative process through the narrators' comments through the process of which they express a self-reflexive nature of the whole contemporary postmodern period as manifested in the real life, theories, individual and public speech as well as in the sciences and technology.

Allegory and Breaking Binary Oppositions

The metafictional elements in the novel represent a contemporary sensibility by the incorporation of the comments on the theories and histories which break a clear, unified, and chronological vision of the world and traditional binary oppositions. Many chapters include comments on arts, on the theory of arts, history, film, theories and philosophies themselves (on Walter Benjamin, chapter 19, for example). The binary oppositions are broken and best exemplified by a metaphor of three-dimensionality and the stereoscope implying both technology and three-dimensionality. In James Hurt's view, "Powers draws

upon parallax to bring his three stories into three-dimensional focus and thus signals his novel's affinity with Joyce's *Ulysses*" (24). And Flores Valadié further comments on the function of three-dimensionality in Powers' fiction: "It is therefore the perception of the object at two different times that can result in a vision in three dimensions. In Powers' fiction, such an image, both original and reconstructed, both material and imaginary, both past and present, is invested with an aura of its own" (online).

In my view, three-dimensionality is represented by the three stories themselves each of which overlaps with and develops the imagery and motifs from the other one, all being connected through the image of a photograph, its meaning and connotations it evokes. This three-dimensionality is further developed through Powers' playing with characters' status of the objects and subjects, observers and the observed all creating an allegorical dimension of the novel further creating an allegorical history of the vision and perception of reality from the 19th century up to the narrative present, that is the 1980'. It is not a traditional allegory with moral and didactic intent, but rather a postmodern, fragmented allegory as understood by Craig Owens. In his view, "In allegorical structure, then, one text is read through another, however fragmentary, intermittent, or chaotic their relationship may be; the paradigm for the allegorical work is thus the palimpsest . . . Conceived in this way, allegory becomes the model of all commentary, all critique, insofar as these are involved in rewriting a primary text in terms of its figural meaning" (54).

Powers' novel thus can be read, through various different works and theories included in his novel as intertextual and metafictional elements as a novel on the history of vision and perception of reality. This novel can also be read as a novel on a changed position and understanding of the subject-object relations as represented by different "discourses" such as literature, arts, science, and various theories themselves. The narrator P comments on the stereopticon and its meaning suggesting a three-dimensionality:

One context did not replace the other but existed concurrently, like the two views needed to create the illusion of depth in a stereoscope . . .

With two slightly different views of the photo—the essayistic and the imagined—side by side, I needed only the stereopticon itself to bring the image into fleshy three-dimensionality. Walking home through the drifts of the dark, I began to imagine what shape that machine might take, I saw the thin film of the image spreading out in two directions, back through the past, through catastrophe, to that idyllic day that had brought the taker and subjects together, and forward, far forward in time until the product of that day crossed the path of one who, like me, took on the obligation of seeing.

Perhaps this third element, the viewer, would arrive at the notion that the photo carried some personal legacy for him, a message woven into the complex personal history of his work, family, and love. (Powers 334).

This extract symbolically depicts an erasure of the boundaries between the perceiver and the perceived reality, between subject and object, between a writer, a producer, and a reader, that is a perceiver, an interpreter and observer. Such a view and vision blurs traditional Cartesian division between the subject and object. In Powers' novel, all become equal and form their own story and vision of the world which interacts with the other visions and interpretations of the world and create an interactive image of reality none of which is privileged but all are mutually interconnected and create a pluralistic and interactive vision of the world and sensibility typical of the late 20th century.

Conclusion

In his novel *Three Farmers on Their Way to a Dance*, Powers gives three different stories connected with three different periods. All these stories are loosely associated with a photograph depicting three farmers on their way to a dance at the beginning of the century. These narratives create a three-dimensional and cyclical picture of reality and undermine both traditional realistic, but also modernist and, in a way, postmodernist narrative techniques. They represent an artistic commentary on a complicated nature of history, violence and the transition between the 19th and the 20th century, the

history of immigration, the connection between technology, business and art, and a difference between pre-industrial, industrial and late capitalistic periods. In addition to this, based on the allegorical principle and developing the image of three-dimensionality, Powers also comments on history of the vision of the world as perceived in these different periods as well as the history of these periods' technical and artistic representation through a depiction of a changing status of the role of an observer and the perceived, observed object.

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The Reflection of Leo Tolstoy and Ivan Turgenev Relations in the “Albert” Fabula and Motifs Organization

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Abstract

The short story “Albert” is usually interpreted as a manifestation of Leo Tolstoy’s aesthetics. Thus, the narrative of the story is generally beyond the research scope. Tolstoy had been influenced by Turgenev when writing the story. Their relations were analysed through the sociocultural concept of the literary field. Tolstoy rejected the “patron – newcomer” type of relations. The conflict was explicitly depicted in the story narrative. This observation was confirmed by a comparison of three editions of the story. Albert represented Leo Tolstoy himself when he (the story protagonist) rejected Delesov’s patron intentions.

Keywords

Russian literature, narrative, literary field, Leo Tolstoy, Ivan Turgenev

Introduction

I follow Bourdieu (1995; 2000) to explain the cultural and historical processes in Russia in the middle of the 19th century. He divides the spheres of human activities into several fields of which the field of political power is the widest one. Other fields, including the literary one, are incorporated into the former. The structure of the literary field presents a set of positions affecting each other: agents (writers, poets), consumers (readers and critics who constitute the main economic force), art historians, publishers, gallery dealers, museum supervisors, sponsors, collectors, and so on. Politicians and government bodies also take this position, partly affecting the field through prizes and pensions. The forces compete, yielding a diversity of issues, manifests, polemics, actions, and presentations.

Bourdieu identifies two types of capital: economic and cultural. The economic one exists as profits produced by publishers, critics, gallery dealers. Cultural capital is produced by literary agents themselves, expressing itself in recognition in community, in a right for writing, legitimating the writer’s position. The first issue definitely affects the second one. The creativity of an author and value of his/her masterpieces are determined by the field which endows a writer with a power and acknowledgement. The monopoly for legitimating a writer is a core issue in literary competitions. It is very important that the introduction of beginners into a community is a way of confirming and expanding the power for acknowledged authors.

Primarily, the evaluation of the position (classic vs. beginner) is provided by readers; their attitude towards an agent defines the position in the field. The abundance and social value of the audience provide an objective measure of the (in)dependence of an agent from public demands and interests, thus opposing “pure art” to “commercial” one. Changes in quality and abundance of the audience follows the appearance of new writer positions.

The model is feasible to describe the literary process in Russia in the mid-19th century, since it was the time when professional literature was institutionalised and independent periodicals started to circulate providing specific niches for the writers of a new type. The relations between A. A. Fet and I. S. Turgenev can be taken as a typical example: the younger poet had to accept the editing of his verses from the patron to meet the demands of the audience. As soon as Fet had gotten enough cultural capital,

he denied any significant role of Turgenev in his success that resulted from the trauma of dependence (Zemledeltseva).

Tolstoy's behaviour could be characterised within the concept as a deliberate violation of the rules, and this fact does not contradict a general line of development of Russian culture at the time. As Lotman put it in his *Culture and Explosion*, gradual processes running inside a synchronous working structure are responsible for succession, while explosion yields innovations. "Both gradual and explosive processes play equally important roles in a structure which operates synchronically: some ensure innovation, others succession. In the self-appraisal of contemporaries, these tendencies are regarded as hostile and the battle between them is construed as a battle to the death. In reality, these represent two parts of a unified, integrated mechanism and its synchronic structure, and the aggression of one does not subdue but, rather, stimulates the development of the opposite tendency" (12).

The mid-19th century shows an "explosion" in Russian literature, with the field of culture permeated by scandals (Penskaya). This phenomenon is discussed in a series of papers. Books believes that "scandal always has a structure and always possesses semiotic organization; it looks like a fragment of a system penetrating another one. Decomposition or at least a violation of some norms and customs running in a society is its main goal. In such capacity scandal is a type of anti-ritual" (9).

Quarrel as a rejection of dependence

The well-known, and typical for Russian literary community of the 19th century, controversy between Turgenev and Tolstoy, appeared in the spring of 1861 and allows one to pose several theoretical issues addressing the sociology of culture, psychology of creativity and patterns in Russian literary process. However, the sense trail coming out of the conflict is not yet completely comprehended. The quarrel of the two writers, ending a long-time opposition and almost resulting in a duel, had happened on May 26, 1861, in Stepanovka, which was Fet's estate. The poet described the point in his memoirs many years later. Turgenev wrote to Annenkov on June 7: "That was my fault, but the challenge, speaking scientifically, resulted from our long-term enmity and antipathy of our natures" [Виноват был я, но вызов был, говоря учёным языком, обусловлен нашей давнишней неприязнью и антипатией наших обеих натур] (*Complete collection of works and letters*, vol. 4, 340).

This "long-term enmity" resulted from psychological, social and historical reasons; both persons had a keen sense of dislike. Turgenev perceived the difference between two literary, and, to some extent, age generations in terms of kinship, for he considered Tolstoy a "child" in their relations. In his letter to Mary Tolstaya (sister of L. Tolstoy), Turgenev said he loved the young writer with all his heart, while still feeling free "to grumble him continuously, as a sober uncle does with the nephew" [ворчать на него беспрестанно, как рассудительный дядя на взбалмошного племянника] (*Complete collection of works and letters*, vol. 3, 71). Reporting on Tolstoy's behaviour, he pursues a tutor's position: "I'll show him [Tolstoy] the letter; let him blame himself" [Я ему дам прочесть это письмо – пусть казнится!] (71). In the letter addressed to Annenkov, Turgenev said that he "gave his heart to Tolstoy, but the feeling is so strange, pretty close to fatherly" [полюбил каким-то странным чувством, похожим на отеческое] (73). In 1857 Turgenev wrote to A. V. Druzhinin that Tolstoy "runs through most beneficial alteration, and I am happy of that like 'an old nurse'" [совершаются самые благодатные перемены – и я радуюсь этому, «как нянька старая»] (188). In a letter addressed directly to Tolstoy, Turgenev gingerly uncovered his attitude to the young writer: "Apologies for my treating you as if I pet you: I'm older than you are for almost ten years; and besides, I feel myself to become under-tutor and chatterbox" [Извините меня, что я Вас как будто по головке глажу: я на целых десять лет старше Вас – да и вообще чувствую, что становлюсь дядькой и болтуном] (179)¹. Fet recalls that N. Tolstoy (brother of the writer) who repeatedly saw the tiffs said "Turgenev fails to adopt the idea that Leo is growing up and escapes from his tutelage" [Тургенев никак не может помириться с мыслью, что Лёвочка растёт и уходит у него из-под опеки] (123).

¹Untranslatable phrase: that is the same word in Russian for "uncle" and "under-tutor".

Such attitude forces Turgenev to refuse Tolstoy independence both in family, and literary issues. Upon the divorce of Mary Tolstaya, Turgenev, who was not cold to her, wrote that he hoped she would be cared by elder brother Nikolas, since “Leo is a poet, he engages everything too fast and vividly; the point is that yet he does not show any persistence” [Лев Николаевич – поэт; он за всё берётся слишком быстро и живо – и выдержки в нём до сих пор не было] (254). Moreover, Turgenev asks his friends in Saint Petersburg to have a look over Tolstoy who has been rushing back to his sister from Europe, as soon as Tolstoy appears in the capital, and to report Turgenev immediately.

Tolstoy’s “youth” was stressed by the elder writer as well. Recognising Tolstoy literary talented, Turgenev called him a “furious troglodyte”, “stick-in-the-mud savage” (Novikov) and was very insistent in lecturing him by providing a list of necessary readings, such as Shakespeare, Belinsky, George Sand. Turgenev was too much insistent forcing Tolstoy to drop all activities but literature. That was what Turgenev expressed in the very first letter, before he came to know Tolstoy in person: “You have already proven you are not a coward, but military carrier is not for you — literature is your mission, you must be an artist of words and thoughts” [Вы достаточно доказали, что Вы не трус — а военная карьера все-таки не Ваша — Ваше назначение — быть литератором, художником мысли и слова] (63).

The writers often quarrelled for nothing, broke up for a long time, Turgenev’s attempts to impose Tolstoy became weaker or stronger, from time to time, but each time they restarted the relations, and Turgenev immediately began to speak about the literary mission. In 1858, he wrote: “Yet what has been done was still done by amateur, surely gifted, but amateur; I would like to see You at the bench, dressed in an apron, with the sleeves rolled up” [До сих пор в том, что Вы делали – всё ещё виден дилетант, необычайно даровитый, но дилетант; мне бы хотелось видеть Вас за станком, с засученными рукавами и с рабочим фартуком] (291). In March of 1861, upon the prolonged tiff, Turgenev raises the issue again being happy to learn that Tolstoy is coming back to art: “Each man is created with a predestination; specialty is a feature of any living creature — and art is Yours, definitely — of course, it does not exclude a chance to deal in pedagogy, especially at the primarily pattern that is only possible in Russia” [Каждый человек так создан, что ему одно дело приходится делать; специальность есть признак всякого живого организма, — а Ваша специальность всё-таки искусство, — это, разумеется, не исключает возможности заниматься и педагогией, особенно в том первобытном виде, какой возможен и нужен у нас на Руси] (*Complete collection of works and letters*, vol. 4, 307). The letter unambiguously shows a contemptuous approach to any other occupations of the young writer, but literature.

To some extent, Turgenev projects on Tolstoy his own experience of the relations with V. Belinsky. In his letter on A. V. Druzhinin’s paper devoted to Belinsky, Turgenev is annoyed that Tolstoy does not appreciate any reference person in his immediate community; further Turgenev lets out a hope that Tolstoy would change their relations in the nearest future. This letter is remarkable for Turgenev’s jealousy of Druzhinin expressed for the first time: “As I can see, you are now quite close to Druzhinin, and he supervises you. That’s a good deal, but take care not to be overfed by him” [Вы, я вижу, теперь очень сошлись с Дружининым – и находитесь под его влиянием. Дело хорошее – только, смотрите, не объестьтесь его] (*Complete collection of works and letters*, vol. 3, 160). If earlier Turgenev was ready to step back and recognize Tolstoy as a self-sustained person, now he claims: “I want to trace each your step” [Я желаю следить за каждым Вашим шагом] (168). And he does. He even supervises and patronises Tolstoy: pays his debts, watches for the publications, transfers, behaviour of Leo Tolstoy.

Reciprocally, Tolstoy refuses to be in the position of a youngster. Moreover, in his letters and diaries he calls Turgenev “Vanichka”. Admitting Turgenev’s high aesthetic flair, Tolstoy never respected him as idol: “He is a wrong man, since he’s cold and useless, but very smart in art and hurting nobody” [Он дурной человек, по холодности и бесполезности, но очень художественно-умный и никому не вредящий] (188). Stressing that “Turgenev has made a silly life himself” [Тургенев глупо устроил себе жизнь] (85), Tolstoy in turn takes the position of a judge, making thus any subordination psychologically impossible.

The coterie of the *Sovremennik* journal was awaiting Tolstoy when he arrived in St.-Petersburg in 1855, because that was “a new force, the talent and, besides, ear!” [новая сила, не только талант, но и

рпаф] (Eikhbaum 213). Several writers whose position in the editorial board became worse at the moment, were trying to patronize Tolstoy, "to supervise him, bring him over" [под своё руководство, под свою власть] (221).

Since the mid 1850, Tolstoy needed very little help in promotion among the upper layers of the literary field, in comparison to other beginners. He started gloriously, and the masterpieces yielded him a great advantage. Meanwhile, Turgenev partly took care of Tolstoy's reputation, and besides sponsorship became an editor and promoter of the writings of the young writer. Thus, in 1856 he asks I. Panaev to "spur off Tolstoy to get *Youth* or another Caucasian novel for January issue" [подшпоривать Толстого, чтобы он доставил «Юность» или кавказскую повесть к январской книжке] (*Complete collection of works and letters*, vol. 3, 129). In 1857, being together with Tolstoy abroad, he wrote to V. Botkin "I am happy to see it; frankly speaking, he is the only expectancy of our literature" [Я радуюсь, глядя на него: это, говоря по совести, единственная надежда нашей литературы] (195). Simultaneously, Turgenev reports to Annenkov that Tolstoy had written a wonderful thing: "It should be slightly adapted and cleaned up, and then You definitely meet the perfect thing" [Её надо будет несколько переделать и обчистить – и тогда выйдет отличнейшая штука – Вы увидите] (205). (Here he referred to the short story "Albert" which is the subject of the analysis in this paper). Being well acquainted with the principles of the business of magazines, he considers the masterpiece from the point of view of public acclaim. However, Tolstoy himself felt free from these calamities. Besides, Turgenev actively promoted Tolstoy's novels in Europe (Gromova-Opul'skaya).

The strategy of Leo Tolstoy's symbolic behaviour could be described as a set of markedly scandalous symbolic actions. For example, the social position of the young writer was clearly contradictory: he was both an aristocrat and originated from a cultural periphery. This was discussed by Eikhbaum who detected the specificity of the status of the future novelist in the literary process: "Tolstoy entered literature as a provincialist, a man from uncertain epoch, retarded savage, 'autodidact' (as Turgenev called him) while with earldom. He had no relations to people and culture of the 1840s. That was the fact that helped him to take the specific position" (108). Following the "explosive" mainstream, Tolstoy defiantly refused Turgenev in patronship.

Thus, the controversy between the two writers takes origin in the different levels of literary process. The insistence of Turgenev on patronising the young writer provoked a repulse from Leo Tolstoy, who violated the rules operative in the literary community. It escalated the conflict and resulted in the break-up of relations, for a long time.

"Albert" as a reflection of Turgenev-Tolstoy relations

Tolstoy planned the short story "Albert" at the beginning of January of 1857 after his meeting with the violinist Georg Kiesewetter. The first version was done in Dijon "under the supervision" of Turgenev, but the final version appeared after a long work on February 28, 1858 (Mendelson, "Albert" 287). N. Nekrasov, who was editor-in-chief of the *Sovremennik* journal, refused the story; it aroused interest neither among readers nor in the Tolstoy's milieu. Critics said it was the author's failure (Kleiton 53). Nonetheless, the story still draws attention of researchers as being a "precursor" of Tolstoy's treatise "What is art?" (1897 – 1898); it should be said that they mainly concentrate on the study of the writer's mind towards the mission of art (Kleiton 53), aesthetic position of the writer (Zakharova), technique of a musical description in words (Borovskaya). In general, the studies fix an implementation of an art system of the writer (Scherbenok). The story is considered a variation of a Christmas story genre (Fatjushina). There have been studies of the story's possible sources as well as literary parallels; for example, some similarities to Kireevsky's novels were found (Mozharova). A comprehensive study comparing the manuscripts of Tolstoy's earlier texts with his diaries (Burnasheva) definitely shows that Tolstoy read Pushkin's biography and his works during the writing of "Albert" (Burnasheva). Apart from the parallelism in sense and textual issues found between the Pushkin's and Tolstoy's works, a reserved supposition is made that the short story's plot is affected both by Pushkin's idea of an opposition of a poet and crowd, and real relations of Tolstoy to Botkin, Annenkov, and Druzhinin, who used to lean on the young writer (Burnasheva, 2001). Overall, however, there has not been enough research into this issue.

The sociology based literary analysis of the short story, providing a new insight into the plot and motivations, will allow to reveal the creativity trends in the narrative. Further, we will show how the relations of Delesov and Albert, the main personages of the story, correspond to the patron-ward interaction model. Besides, we will analyse the impact of Tolstoy and Turgenev relations on the short story's plot, especially the case of Tolstoy's stay in Turgenev's apartment from the mid of November 1855 till the beginning of January 1856.

Delesov's occupation is not indicated in the final version of the story. His role is substituted by the "litterateur and poet Krapivin" in the earlier versions (Mendelson, *Comparative review* 296), then by "clerk and writer Sedmy" accompanied by the artist Delesov (297). Thus, originally Delesov (or at least the personage taking his position) is supposed to be an art worker; he is unambiguously merged into the art field where the patronship situation must be realised.

The patronship situation itself stipulates that the persons from different age or cultural generations are involved: the "elder" has sufficient cultural capital fund and feels free to share it, while the "younger" has no opportunity to enter the desired cultural subfield without a patron's assistance. The patron provides a carrier to the ward. Delesov thought about the talented but poor musician Albert whom he had invited to his home in the following manner: "Let him live with me awhile, then we'll find him a place or arrange a concert for him and pull him out of the shallows, and then see what happens."² [Пуускай поживёт сначала у меня, а потом устроим ему место или концерт, стащим его с мели, а там видно будет] (Tolstoy, *The Complete Works of Count Tolstoy*, vol. 5, 37). Moreover, Delesov indeed helps the musician to promote his talent: "I spoke to the director of the theatre about you today," he said, also lowering his eyes. "He will be very glad to receive you if you will let him hear you." [Я говорил нынче о вас директору, - сказал он, тоже опуская глаза. - Он очень рад принять вас, если вы позволите себя послушать] (45).

Normally, a patron expects to get some benefit from his tutelage, say, to increase his cultural capital due to the enforcement of the "teacher" status. In case of Turgenev and Tolstoy, the former hoped to regain the credibility in the *Sovremennik* journal by the young writer. Delesov expects his activity to raise his own moral image due to the magnanimous act: "Though it may seem strange to many of my acquaintances," he thought, "yet one so seldom does anything for others that one ought to thank God when such an opportunity presents itself, and I will not miss it. I will do anything — positively anything in my power — to help him". <...> "Really I'm not altogether a bad fellow," he thought. "Not at all bad even — when I compare myself with others." [Хоть это всё странным может показаться многим из моих знакомых, — думал Делесов, — но ведь так редко делаешь что-нибудь не для себя, что надо благодарить Бога, когда представляется такой случай, и я не упущу его. Всё сделаю, решительно всё сделаю, что могу, чтобы помочь ему <...> Право, я не совсем дурной человек; даже совсем недурной человек, — подумал он. — Даже очень хороший человек, как сравню себя с другими...] (37).

Besides these rather typical elements of the model of sponsorship, the story shows some specific scenes directly related to the relations between Tolstoy and Turgenev. It has been noticed that patron and ward are to belong to different age generations. The difference may be exaggerated: Turgenev claimed himself in letters to be "under-tutor" and "old man", thus forcing Tolstoy into a childhood discourse, using kinship terms; it resulted in artificial expansion of the ten-year age difference.

At the beginning of the story, Delesov's age is indicated as "... and the young man, who was named Delesov, returned to the ballroom" [Молодой человек, которого звали Делесовым, вернулся в залу] (28). As soon, as Delesov heard Albert playing, his self-perception of his own age had drastically changed: "By some strange concatenation of impressions the first sounds of Albert's violin carried Delesov back to his early youth. Now no longer very young, tired of life and exhausted, he suddenly felt himself a self-satisfied, good-looking, blissfully foolish and unconsciously happy lad of seventeen." [По какому-то странному сцеплению впечатлений, первые звуки скрипки Альберта перенесли Делесова к его первой молодости. Он - не молодой, усталый от жизни, изнурённый человек,

² All English quotations from "Albert" are based on the version translated by Louise and Aylmer Maude.

вдруг почувствовал себя семнадцатилетним, самодовольно-красивым, блаженно-глупым и бессознательно-счастливым существом] (31–32). The third edition enforces Delesov's self-awareness as an aged person. This point is sustained through an extended description of reminiscences. On September 14, 1857, Tolstoy wrote in his diary: "What Delesov has remembered when waltzed. How he danced in sweat and kissed. *Old man* (here and further emphasis is mine) — everything is crude for him, but previously a tree, a cloud were full of poetry to him" [Что вспомнил Делесов при вальсе. Как танцевал в поту и поцаловал. *Старик*, — для него всё голо, а прежде и дерево, и облако, вокруг них всё было поэзия] (217). This change is provoked by the appearance of the "younger", "tutored" personage.

Another reason to compare "life" and literary texts consists in the modelling of the range of reading: Turgenev was very insistent in forcing Tolstoy to read some books, to develop the taste. Similar situation is seen in the story: "Delesov went into his study and chose several French books and a German Bible. 'Put these books in his room tomorrow, and see that you don't let him out,' he said to Zakhar." [Делесов прошёл в кабинет, отобрал несколько французских книг и немецкое евангелие. — «Положи это завтра ему в комнату, да смотри, не выпускай,» — сказал он Захару] (45).

A denial from sponsorship is another meaningful issue for the analysis. Tolstoy did not believe in the promotion in higher literary community, but bet for patrimonial cultural capital. It resulted in the outright demonstration of independence. Albert, in turn, suffers from the invasion into his freedom and denies any help; thus, he denies Delesov's invitation to visit director of the theatre replying "'Thank you, I cannot play!' muttered Albert under his breath, and went into his room, shutting the door behind him very softly." [Благодарю, я не могу играть, — проговорил себе под нос Альберт и прошёл в свою комнату, особенно тихо затворив за собою дверь] (45). In the final edition of the story the musician just escapes at night, from his "patron".

There is a set of other coincidences between real life and the story important for the analysis. Names are the starting point. The servant's name, Zakhar, remains the same in all editions: "Zakhar was a Petersburg valet who had been in Delesov's service for eight years. Delesov, being a lonely bachelor, could not help confiding his intentions to him, and liked to know his opinions about all his undertakings." [Захар был петербургский лакей, уже восемь лет служивший у Делесова. Делесов, как одинокий холостяк, невольно поверял ему свои намерения и любил знать его намерения насчёт каждого из своих предприятий] (36). This apparently refers to Zakhar Balashov who served Turgenev for many years; Tolstoy knew him. The hero patronizing a youngster is called either Mikhail *Ivanovich* (that stands for patronymic name), or Dmitry *Ivanovich*; Albert visits the saloon of Anna *Ivanovna* (who might be a prototype of Anna Pavlovna in the novel *War and Peace*). So, the frequent usage of the same patronymics might refer to Ivan Sergeevich Turgenev.

Chronotop is the next item. The phrase "Is it cold outside?" [А холодно на дворе?] (48) in the story is a proof. Fatjushina (2014) links this fact to a Christmas story pattern, on one hand, and, on the other hand, to real circumstances of the Tolstoy and Georg Kiezwetter meeting. Besides, Tolstoy stayed in Turgenev's house in Saint Petersburg just in winter, so it might refer to the work conceived a year before.

Place of action is conspired in the third edition. There is a single tip coming from Zakhar characteristics: he was "a footman from Saint Petersburg". The episode when Delesov was making the farewell visits before his leaving abroad says: "Going off Gorokhovaya, he suddenly saw at the first sidewalk rather sad and shabby figure that seemed acquainted to him" [Выезжая из Гороховой, на первом тротуаре он заметил совсем не весёлую и не красивую фигуру, которая показалась ему знакома] (154). This specificity might have sense, since Gorokhovaya is located quite close to the house (Fontanka Embankment 38) where Tolstoy stayed with Turgenev (Novikov).

Biography details are the third item. The third edition contains a very important, though poorly visible, detail of Delesov's behaviour: he was very poor in housekeeping:

"Is it cold outside?" he inquired.

'A hard frost, sir,' replied Zakhar. 'I forgot to inform you, but we shall have to buy more wood for fuel before the spring.'

'How is that? You said that we should have some left over'."

[— А холодно на дворе? – спросил Делесов.

— Мороз здоровый, Дмитрий Иванович, — отвечал Захар. – Я забыл вам доложить, до весны ещё дров купить придётся.

— А как же ты говорил, что останутся?] (48).

A. Fet reports in his memoirs a case which happened between Turgenev and his peasants: "A peasant complained cunningly on the lack of land necessary to carry out his duties, and asked to add some. Having said 'Yes', Turgenev met a long line of peasants bringing similar request. Finally, Turgenev lost his land completely". [Какой-то мужик ловко подвёл Ивану Сергеевичу о недостатке у него тяговой земли и просил о прибавке таковой. Не успел Ив. Серг. обещать мужику просимую землю, как подобные настоятельные нужды явились у всех, и дело кончилось раздачей всей барской земли крестьянам] (Fet 188). This trait was well-known, and Tolstoy criticized Turgenev for it.

The artist Biryuzovsky, the hero of the story, appeared in the third edition, defending Albert against critics. Alenin says: "An officer told me once that there are no *Sebastopol* heroes, since all of them are buried. Here and in art there is a single survived against hundred of died, and that is their destiny. Here they are, the dead heroes, spent everything for the service. And that is he! [Albert]" [Один офицер говорил мне, что нет *Севастопольских* героев, потому что все герои лежат там на кладбище. И тут, и в искусстве есть на одного уцелевшего сотни гибнущих героев, и судьба их та же. – Вот они, эти погибшие герои, отдавшие все своему служению. Вот он!] (162). A collation of the musician to a war man unwittingly brings associations to the author who served in field army forces in Sebastopol.

One more biographical match is the perception of a talent by higher community. Very soon Tolstoy was referred to as a "savage", with respect to constraints and customs circulated in Petersburg literary community. Albert, in earlier versions of the story, meets similar evaluation from cultural agents. "Looking at him touching the violin, I definitely understand he is not a great artist' said Alenin. 'Well, I am not expert in it, but what I see he is *smelly* and *dirty*, indeed' said the son of minister". [— Я по одному тому, как он берётся за скрипку, вижу, что это не большой артист, — сказал Аленин. — Уж этого я не знаю, — сказал сын министра, — только что он *вонюч* и *грязен*, это положительно] (158). "I dealt a lot with artists. It is a race among them who are unkempt, as I call them. These gentlemen believe they need not *to shave*, *to wash*, *to comb* and to learn in order to be an artist". [Ведь я не мало возился с артистами. Их есть целая порода, нечёсанных, как я называю. Эти господа воображают, что надо *не бриться*, *не мыться*, *не чесаться* и не учиться, чтобы быть артистами] (159).

Above all, Albert shows the behaviour similar to the one shown by Tolstoy, though with different origin. A. Fet reports again that Turgenev had to keep silent till midday to avoid waking up Tolstoy, who had had fun on the eve: "For an hour we spoke in whisper taking care about the earl sleeping behind the door. 'That is all the time' said Turgenev with a sad smile. 'Came back from Sebastopol, stayed at my home and had a ball. Sprees, gypsies and card for all the night, and then sleeps as a killed one till two p.m. I've tried to keep him in, but now I pull the plug'." [В продолжение часа, проведенного мною у Тургенева, мы говорили вполголоса из боязни разбудить спящего за дверью графа. — «Вот все время так,» — говорил с усмешкой Тургенев. — «Вернулся из Севастополя с батареей, остановился у меня и пустился во все тяжкие. Кутежи, цыгане и карты во всю ночь; а затем до двух часов спит как убитый. Старался удерживать его, но теперь махнул рукою.»] (Fet).

Albert behaves himself in a similar manner: "Delesov was already awake and sitting in his drawing-room drinking coffee and reading a book. Albert had not yet stirred in the next room. <...> Towards noon groaning and coughing were heard through the door." [Делесов проснувшись сидел у себя в гостиной за кофе и читал книгу. Альберт в соседней комнате ещё не шевелился <...> В двенадцатом часу за дверью послышалось кряхтенье и кашель] (43-44). Here the hero wakes up late just because he spent half a night in serious meditation. The third edition makes him more similar to the "prototype": "Guests appeared in a couple of hours, but Albert was still sleeping.'So, what about

your wonderful creature?’ said the son of minister entering the room together with French man Pichot. ‘Mishap! He’s terribly drunk and still sleeps’ replied Delesov”. [Часа через два стали приезжать гости, Альберт всё спал.— Ну, что ваше необыкновенное создание? – сказал сын министра, входя в комнату в французом Пишо.— Несчастье! Ужасно пьян и спит, — отвечал Делесов] (156).

Albert’s speech: “I often think’ he paused, evidently collecting his thoughts — ‘that if Beethoven were alive he would weep with joy listening to Sonnambula for the first time when Viardot and Rubini were here’.” [Я слышал в первый раз Соннамбулу, когда здесь были Виардо и Рубини] [Note: Pauline Viardot-Garcia, the celebrated opera singer with whom Turgenev had a close friendship for many years. Rubini, an Italian tenor who had great success in Russia in the ‘forties of the last century.] (39).

The description of the sponsorship situation, the main hero’s conscious denial of his “beginner” status in the cultural field, and a set of evident factual coincidences allow one to say that there was direct influence of the author’s relations with I. Turgenev regarding the short story’s motivation and plot line. It should be stressed that Tolstoy used basically a new position in the literary field, opposing the rules and laws of culture circulating at the time. This fact was immediately reflected in his works. Apparently, the short story “Albert” presents the crucial, for the literature of the 19th century, conflict with Turgenev, which yielded material for later Tolstoy’s works. The origin of some essential issues of Tolstoy’s work could hardly be understood without the analysis of the author’s social relations within the literary field.

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From Text Comprehension to Creative Writing from the Aspect of Cognitive Linguistics

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Abstract

Text comprehension is understood as a social and cultural phenomenon in which it is possible to identify the developmental phases, that is ontogenesis, from the aspect of communicating entity. The age-receptive value, as well as the age-receptive variability of text, is reflected in the texts for children. Works of folk or authorial provenance anticipate the mental dispositions of a child subject. Developing the understanding by children is resulting from formal and content criteria. Understanding – like speech – grows. The supreme level of text comprehension is the improvisation of larger narrative formations: Compared with the primary contact with the text in the form of rhymes, the form is released and the epic breadth of expression increases. The child as authorial subject produces a text that is characterized by such variability of expression values which is contained in the child's current mental model reached through conventions and receptive experience. The study will demonstrate the expressive value of text using examples of creative writing of children. Methodologically, it relies on the semantic communication model of text and the expressive value of text.

Keywords

text, mental model, communication, speech, cognitive linguistics

Introduction

The ability to write – to create a text is not innate. The ability to write cannot be interpreted without accepting reading skills that are ontologically earlier. The relationship of reading and writing is in analogy to the relationship of disposition to hear / to listen and the ability to speak / to talk. The word (to) “hear” contains the semantic core in the sensory-cognitive abilities to capture the sound stimulus spreading as a kind of waves transmitted by physical space. The word (to) “listen” contains an identifiable semantic value to remain in intentional actions based on the physiology of hearing.

The ability of humans, more precisely a child, to speak in the mother tongue is seen as natural. A prerequisite is that the child lives in an environment where it has the direct contact with live, that is, authentic language. Sound impulses are already perceived in the prenatal period. Probably a child gradually understands the first meanings of words and grammatical constructions due to speech-situational stereotypes. Speech is a tool of socialization of human beings.

The ability to read and write is a matter of culture as well as conventions and stereotypes that are established in the process of speech and text communication. Around the age of three years, such vocabulary is created that the child can communicate at: the pragmatic level - through a verbal expression it meets its needs (the child can express the need for food, thirst, desire to play, feeling tired); the level of interaction – the child answers simple questions when communicating with adults, it responds if the adults are talking about it; at the level of the initiator of verbal communication – it starts the interview itself, especially with peers (communication with other children on the playground, on a walk). The three areas of communication could be considered as elementary communication skills.

Understanding the text as cultural construct

In fact, the child perceives text formations which are not only communicative, or having only pragmatic aim, but are bearers of aesthetic information which, in order to be communicated from the aspect of the child, or more exactly perceived, must correspond to the child's mental maturity and must be pursued by adequate expressive means. For example, at the age of 3 – 4 years it is imitativeness at the level of word – the so-called "para-words", dominant rhythm and rhyme, verse-syntactical parallelism, dialogisation, content aimed at a child's receiver, or that which is subject to the child's attention, usually from the aspect of the child's cognition of the world as well as socialization. The examination of texts for children from the aspect of reception is actually uncovering the age-receptive dispositions of artistic text for the perception by a child. Text reception conditions are affected by individual or social income, by the reading as a process of exploring the world contained in literary texts in the individual consciousness of the child. One of the prerequisites for the reception of an artistic text is the degree of identification of the percipient with the author's projections in the text. The prerequisites are as big and likely as is the rate of the author's identification (Miko 57), or the author's meeting the reader's expectations at the level of generic and age stereotypes in the form of imitation, identification, and the extent of distance in the modelling of the artistic image of the world in the text.

On the other hand, the conditions of text perception are contained in the disposition of readers, which is called reading competence, or receptive competence, and, vice versa, the so called receptive obstacle (Kopál 15). The literary scholarship itself dealt with the issue of what to include into reading, or receptive competence. As Kopál (15) has pointed out, "the receptive competence is constituted of dispositional elements composing a set of qualities of the recipient for reading, reception, for the activities of acquiring the text, for searching the meaning and reception of art. These elements are of psychological, gnoseological, ontological, social, socio-cultural nature."

From the didactic point of view, it is necessary to deal with certain standard competences that are mentally conditioned, though one cannot deny the existence of individual exceptions. This mental conditionality is known as age appropriateness. Kopál (17) claims that:

In connection with adequacy, we will speak about the creation and reception of literary texts for children and youth in general. It is also because this term is most frequently used, since literary theory introduced the term age aspect to reflect the specificities of the creation and reception of children's literature. It describes the age-receptive variability of the text - the fact that a literary work has certain requirements given by a set of information to be received by children, adolescents or adult recipients.

Developing an understanding among children results from formal and content criteria. The properties of communication, at the level of contacting, are hierarchical in nature, which means that we can objectively speak about different levels of the development of understanding by children, using the differentiation of Karandašev (55). The first - the basic - level, according to his interpretation, is the level of *activeness - reactivity* and age specifics are called *stages*. The second level is *conditionality - non-conditionality* and age specifics are called *phases*. The third level is determined by the *subject orientation - object orientation* with age specifics called *periods*. The fourth level of the hierarchy is *situation - position*, development sections are called *epochs*.

Psycholinguistic foundations of text comprehension

At a certain level of an individual's mental maturity the text is a bearer of such qualities and an intermediary of such functions as the speech in early ontogeny. Based on this analogy, it is logical to identify further degrees of similarity between the language and information transmitted by the text, as well as its process of production and reception. In this context, we refer to the arguments of Nebeská (27) who claims that the production as well as the reception of speech should be treated as active mental process. Reception is not a passive acceptance of acoustic or optical signal. Speech quality is the process of retelling the contents of the story (in the case of narrative formations) depending on how the recipient is prepared to perceive a particular speech/text. An individual should be motivated for

production as well as reception, therefore, he/she must feel an inner need to decode the incoming information. The recipient develops mental activity in order to understand the content and meaning of the enunciation. The reception itself may, in accordance with the communication strategy of the recipient, acquire superficial or selective character.

In case of the communication through text, Nebeská (27) adds the following to the recipient's communicative activities: perception of the text, text comprehension, interpretation; which implies that the text reception should be understood as a complex process, whose "basis is the comparison of the perceived text with the content of the assumed structures of the recipient. Reception of written or spoken text causes the activation of specific contents. The recipient creates a mental image of an area of reality through a sub process. If this mental image, at least partially, coincides with the mental image of the producer, we can say that there is correspondence between the producer and the recipient".

Since at the beginning of the study we worked with the analogy between language and text, we will apply a certain degree of analogy to the question of understanding the speech and text. Text comprehension process is syntactic (Nebeská 28). The author further states that text comprehension occurs in cycles, i.e. understanding the text is cyclical in nature. Since we cannot exactly identify the boundaries of the relevant cycle, or determine the kinds of cycles necessary for understanding depending on the kind of text, the definite answer to the question of text understanding is also complicated, as is the complicated process of modelling the text understanding. Nebeská (28) also points to the assumption that even if the understanding is supported by sub-processes, they may not have all the same importance for the understanding of the text. She adds that mental image of an area of reality occurs in the mind of the recipient due to partial synthesis process.

It is possible to similarly understand the argument of Laird Johnson (1983) who speaks about processional essence of text comprehension. It lies in the continuous creation of mental models and their cooperation with each other is ensured by still ongoing recursive procedures. The mental model is not an end-product of understanding the text, but always a sort of transient. It maintains an adequate level of uncertainty, the mental model is always incomplete, it always can be replaced by a modified or totally different model.

If at the beginning we discussed the motivation of the recipient in oral communication to decode the content sent by the producer, we should analogically think of the motivation of the text addressee, which is projected into expectations associated with some degree of predicting the content of the text. Nebeská (28) introduces the concept of expectation, which is considered to be a sort of filter of perception of the communication event and which implicitly includes the standards that are applied in a given community and which are assumed to be respected by the producer. Creating expectation is, therefore, considered as a mental process. These expectations are similar to frameworks, schemes, scripts.

In fact, previous experience and knowledge help us with lexical processing, as well as with understanding the text itself. Linguists and psychologists are seeking the identification of the process of text understanding. The following components of text comprehension emerge: semantic coding, vocabulary development, creating mental models of the text, text comprehension based on context and perspective. Semantic encoding is a process where information obtained by sensory perception is converted into a meaningful representation of what we see, based on the understanding of the meaning of the words.

Each text represents an internally organised structure.¹ The text's basic feature is its internal cohesion. Without it one cannot speak about iconicity which is most dominant and obvious in artistic texts, though imminently present to various extent in any other type of text as well.² In a continuous text one can clearly identify the means of internal cohesion. Textual syntax precisely specifies those devices that provide a text with links backwards - anaphoric devices of text fixation, as well as those that indicate what will follow in the text - cataphoric devices. The presence of anaphoric devices

¹ A text, whose dominant feature is cognitive, represents a hierarchical structure due to logical and causal relationships. The subject when perceiving the text penetrates into the mentioned structure, he/she understands the causality of relationships and remembers them through the process of re-perception.

² A text, whose function is primarily operational, shows a certain degree of iconicity.

represents the theme development, i.e. deepening the image from several aspects, while the cataphoric devices are related to the text's rheme, that is, to what is happening. The proportionality of both types of devices depends on the features and content of the communication. A necessary condition for understanding the text are the inference mechanisms, which also form a basis for the cohesion and coherence of the text.

The text itself does not provide any information; it is only an intermediary, a medium in which it is encoded. The text only allows the recipient to decode it and to create the idea by himself/herself. In this sense, the ability of reading with comprehension is the ability to create a series of ideas mediated by the text in the mind of the subject (student/child).

Ontology of the reception of cultural text by a child

A literal interpretation of rhyme has a character of declaration, which is due to the characteristics of the rhyme as a genre. The rhyme, especially the folk rhyme, is of an etymological nature, representing the first contact of the child with culture in the form of verbal art. This simple genre fulfils the function of utility along with the dominant aesthetic function. In rhyme, the child is the subject and object of speech at the same time. Repeating the rhyme means knowing, from the aspect of the child, its content and functionality, which makes up the receptionist sense of rhymes. With the child's emerging mental dispositions, his/her disposal for narration evolves. The first receptive contacts with the narrative formations are represented by tales (stories) in verse form. In general, the actors are animals that act and perform like humans. With the addition of the image into these narrative formations there comes cognitive shift. The child is able to understand more extensive prosaic narrative formations. In a folk fairy-tale, the identification with the hero of the story deepens even more. Conceptually, the fairy tale represents an image of the journey, which is an archetypal pattern of living and constitutes values for the child as a human young. The ability to retell the fairy-tale in the form of improvisation is the culmination of the first phase of the ontology of a child's perceptual dispositions.

The rhyme focuses on the question of who the subject of speech is (who speaks?) as well as on the question of the position of the subject of language (from what perspective does the subject speak?). In the first question the age of the subject of language is accentuated, while in the second question it is the social position of the subject and his/her relationship to other subjects. Every thinking and speaking is performed from partial perspectives, with ways of thinking and speaking differing with regard to different points of view. The rhyme is a culturally and socially accepted formation which is a part of speech practice of the subject, the child, with emphasis on its age.

Highlighting the age has a content and formal dimension, the speech attracts attention. The rhyme emphasizes the semiotic basis of speech. It accepts the dependence of the subject and its speech on the age, which implies fragmentation. It respects its gesture, motion, audio and rhythmical basis. The fact that the rhyme originated as a folk verb formation and thus it is an expression of the collective consciousness, it is a confirmation of the semiotic foundation for the later emergence of the symbolic, which has a systemic form; in speech, it is related to the sphere of articulated meanings and relies on social and legal patterns. In this context, the semiotic connects with the empiricism and it is analogous to psycholinguistic analysis of the speech of little children. The semiotic and the symbolic are two modalities that are associated with the process of signification. They are mutually connected, they overlap and are inseparable. Their ratio determines the different types of discourses, while the natural language is a balanced form of the semiotic and the symbolic.

A personality is also formed under the influence of language, more specifically, language standardization. Dolník (28) interprets the relationship between the subject and the language as follows: "An individual adopts fixed language-social standards, i.e. conventionalized language responses within the social interactions in a given linguistic community. We speak of settled interpretations tied to perception, evaluation, feeling, thinking, behaviour and actions, that is, the perception and apperception, evaluation, emotional, cognitive and behavioural standards." According to him, an individual applies his or her accommodative – reaction ability. Accommodative means to adapt to the collective, which implies that language helps to specify its position within the linguistic community and assimilation means individual manifestation of personality.

Current cognitive linguistics claims that categories of perception are determined by language. Language gives form to the image of the world. Natural processes that lead to language acquisition tend to perceive the world as categories of language becoming tools for shaping the mental world; the whole process is viewed as self-evident. The truthfulness of the theory of linguistic determinism is conditioned by the relationship between one's own language and the linguistic realism of the world. From the point of view of linguists it is the language determination, from the point of view of the bearer of this realism it is the fact that the language is adapted to the world (Dolník 30). Experiencing and expressing emotions and associated ratings are related to culture and language.

In this context, the rhyme is understood as a cultural-semiotic formation in which accommodative-assimilation principle is applied in order to enhance natural processes of language acquisition, which lead to the acquisition of greater linguistic freedom and speech autonomous entities.

The rhyme is an experience and, semiotically, it is situated in an early stage of childhood, when a basis is constituted as an assumption for the emergence of the symbolic in order to be negated later, whereby this negation leads to a qualitative transformation of the starting base. At first glance, the time dimension of rhyme functioning is ontologically closing. However, some elements may re-emerge later. Such a moment is every game at the level of words with different meanings. Explicitly the rupture of symbolic system is shown in the so-called nonsense poetry. The higher developmental phase is characterized by the semiotic self-expression which can be achieved here only by a symbolic system. While in the rhyme the semiotic is subordinate to the symbolic, it acts as the promotion of social production of texts and meanings, in the avant-garde directions, but also in the nonsense poetry it is the opposite process. The joy stems not from the correct articulation, which is a confirmation of the system, but from the erosion of the system, the order of meanings.

Table 1
Ontology of reception of cultural text by a child

Cultural text + age of the child	Universal JOS	Receptive effect	Projection of the child in the text	Language form of the genre	Gestures	Interpretation by the child
The rhyme (1,5 - 3 years)	Thematisation of speech and the moment (<i>we call, shout, ask</i>)	Joy from declared text, movement and game	Collective subject	In verses	Pantomime	Literal; The rhyme and rhythm are respected; the form associates the content - is crucial
Story/fairy-tale in verses	Episode - Animals like human beings; simple story; circumstances - minimal	Interest in the event; image of the world out of the childish subject	Substituted by zoomorphic elements	In verses	Sound	Almost literally; the form partially recedes the meaning of narration
Fairy-tale	Where, when, who, in what circumstances, magic	The image of light is modeled by verbal reception	The child identifies itself with the positive hero	Non fixed speech - prosaic - oral speech	Sound and symbol	Improvisation/ retelling, redemption of causality

Source: my own

Algorithm of text creation

The youngest developmental stage in cognitive maturation of a child is characterised by literal declaring of simple rhymes. This developmental period at the level of the author's production includes the period when creating the text means to draw or to talk according to illustrations. The written way of communication has a non-standard form. These authorial "texts" represent the transition from the reception to the author's production from the aspect of cognition. While in the spontaneous drawing the child's idea is fixed, in retelling a famous fairy-tale the key phrases are activated based on what was heard and the illustrations represent the key story changes and turns.

When the text is created, the problem of the individual to manage the topic in the predetermined stylistic formations must be solved. The author creating the text solves the given topic as the dominant issue, but, simultaneously, also other accompanying problems by inventing and discovering his/her own strategy, and at the same time respecting the mandatory standardised features of the stylistic formation.

The strategies that an individual person chooses are subject to creativity. The creative mastering of the task means to find divergent solutions, to implement the divergent production which creates a variety of responses that are appropriate to the assignment. Creativity in its true sense means to produce more. In terms of teaching style, it means that the creative individual can handle the same topic in several ways, i.e. he/she is not satisfied with the first version of the idea, but looks for the optimal expression and final development. In individual text creation, it supposes revising a greater thematic unit, with subsequent retries helping to obtain the final variant as the optimum solution.

At first glance, oral or textual utterance seems to be a series of sentences. However, their alignment is not accidental. A sentence is the lowest unit in which the topic is reflected. The alignment of sentences is subject to the hierarchy of motives - the topic is based on motives. The text is the oral presentation, which originated as a summary of motives and is considered to be a coherent thematic unit. It implies that, when composing the text (but also when analysing it), the topic is the highest organising element. When searching the patterns of text creation, the topic must be considered as the master subject. Thanks to the topic we achieve that the interrelated themes take a form of sentences and compound sentences, thus forming a whole.

The ability of an individual to create oral presentation (text) is related to his/her knowledge of the issue, as well as to the ability to think logically and subsequently verbalise the judgement. If we exclude the phenomena like experiential and educational complex, then the act of creation of speech/talk/text is restricted to the ability to structure one's own ideas into a sentence or compound sentences. From the topic of one sentence another sentence grows, developing the previous one or establishing a new theme which is in a logical relationship to the previous sentence, as well as to the whole.

The author always begins to create the text from the perspective of the whole. The perspective of the final text with a comprehensively mastered assignment, that is, a topic as a whole, is primarily conditioned by the topic. There is an idea of macrostructure in which knowledge about the world, an individual opinion or knowledge of standards is applied. These take a form of written procedures and stylistic genre. Macrostructure is firstly materialised in a form of an outline and subsequently the author reviews the original strategy and improves it. The more mature the author is, the more the rate of his original creation and the text itself.

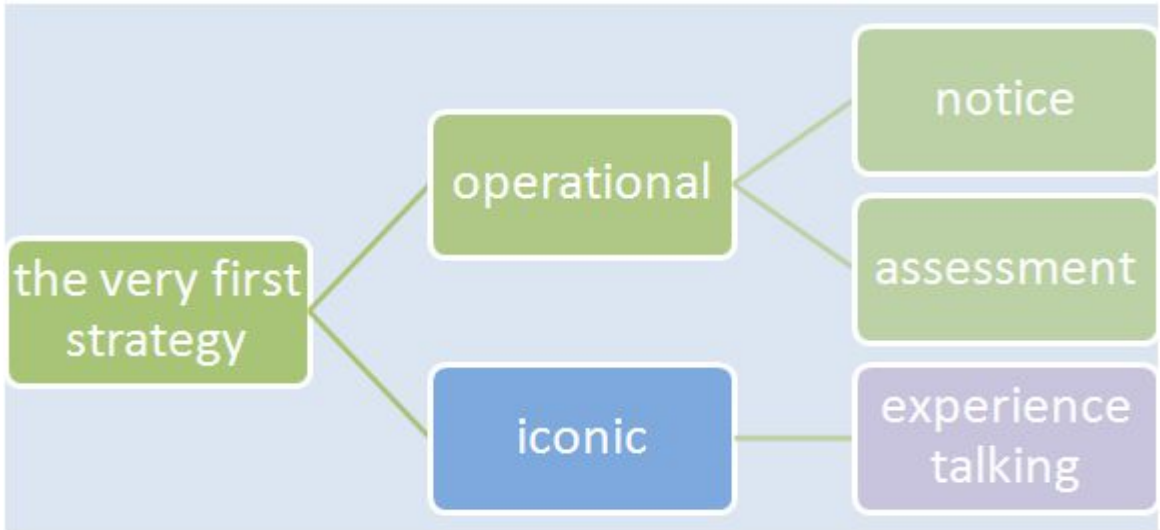
Standard school mastering of the topic is given by expectations in the communication. Non-standard mastery can also mean a new vision of the problem; understanding the topic from an unusual point of view. Great importance is attributed to motivation, usually combining the school premises.

The individual text creation is conditioned by some degree of experience and set of information. At the point of identifying his/her own communicative intent, i.e. function or genre of the text, the author decides the initial quality of the future text. He/she chooses between whether the text will be primarily of operational or iconic character. From the aspect of a child in school age, it is most natural to create a text that reflects the image of the child's life experience, i.e. survival situation. Hence, the experience is naturally implemented into the text. Its verbal expression is close to the spoken language therefore it is easy for a child's author to opt for this language means, or to create an image of speech. We suppose that the choice of language means is intuitive and based on associations. There is thematisation at the

beginning of the algorithm of text creation. This is the orientation of the author in the issue he/she is going to write about. The moment of topic selection represents the beginning of the text. Before the specific textual presentation of the topic, the preliminary analysis of themes occurs. This operation repeats during the text formation. This is called recursive cycle throughout the text creation. The order of operations in the indicated algorithm allows the divergence of lateral branching as well as feedback of the whole cycle. This is done in terms of stylistic improvements of the text.

Scheme 1

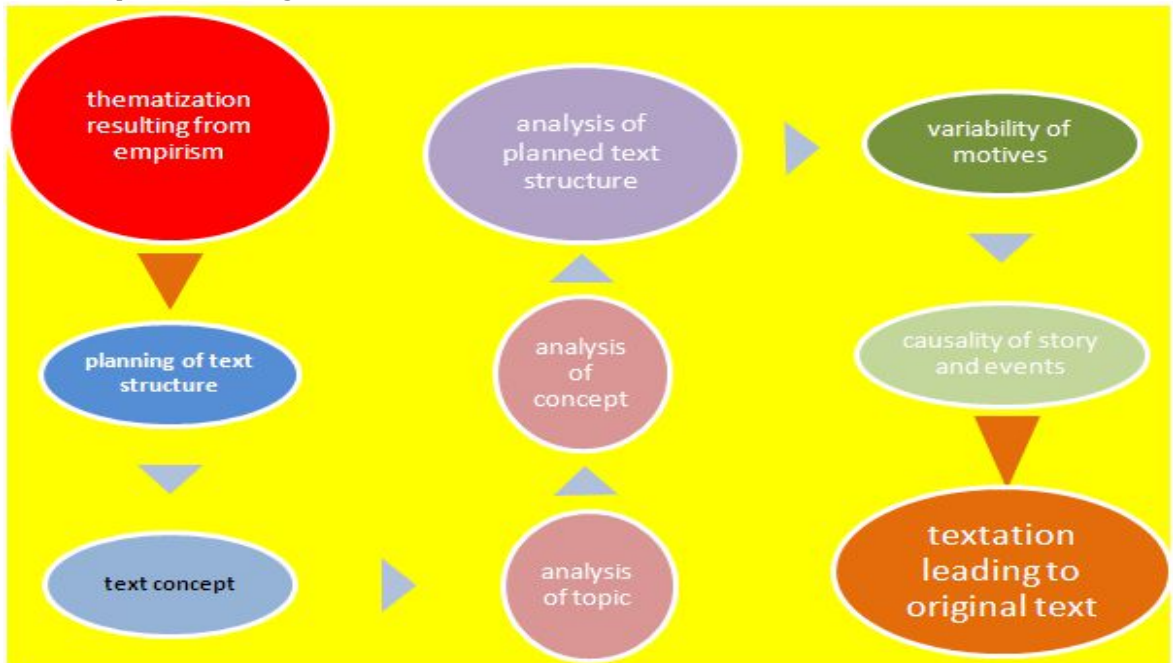
Authorial strategy during text creation



Source: my own

Scheme 2

Chain of operations as algorithm of text creation



Source: my own

Techniques of creative writing

Creative writing is a tool for the development of communicative language competences, literary competence, and, at the same time, it is a method of teaching and learning in a unique way that affects the development of children. Eliašová (96-98) identifies four groups of creative writing techniques: techniques of search and assignment of topics, techniques of stimulation towards writing, techniques to overcome and eliminate blocks when writing, and techniques of writing. She recognises the following associative practices which precede writing: 1. *clustering* - whose contents are different kinds of conceptual maps; 2. *cinquain* - a method that aims to teach students to summarise the information and to capture their own thoughts; 3. *writing through a game* - that is text formation under the rules of a game; 4. *writing according to patterns and rules* - is a dialectical connection of managed activity through content data; 5. *literary writing* - writing inspired by literary texts, which serves as an incentive to create their own texts (e.g. text reduction, adding their own conclusions, changing perspectives, advertisement text); 6. *writing induced by stimulus* - place, music, image, movement, dance, utility objects, nature, foreign texts or statements.

Regarding the principles of association procedures, the activity of creative writing called Drawn Reading of a Story (*Mal'ované čítanie príbehu*) is activated; it is suitable for language teaching in the first grade of primary school or in the pre-primary education when many children already know the alphabet in a reduced form - the so-called capitals. The nature of the activity lies in the fact that children form associations to the concept of a fairy tale. The purpose is to demonstrate that the child can freely reproduce authorial as well as folk fairy-tales, respect the causal and temporal sequence, which is outwardly manifested by improvisation and individual reproduction of the heard text / story with the help of relevant illustrations. Children during their playful activities draw out the prepared drawn reading. They are repeatedly in contact with the story, follow the direction of the text from left to right, identify the beginning and the end of the text. Children reproduce the story read by the teacher. The illustration initiates their verbal speech and, at the same time, it is also an instrument of expression of the story that they remember. Children work collectively, they write words they know (i.e. conjunction) into a common big picture or they finish the picture. The activity is based on the children's ability to deduce a story with which they have a repeated and confidential experience. From this point of view the choice of fairy-tales as pre-concept is strategic, since it decides on the success of the activity.

Conclusion

Text comprehension is understood as a social and cultural phenomenon in which it is possible to identify developmental phases. In the texts for children the age-receptive value as well as the age-receptive variability of the text are reflected. It is a fact that the literary works of folk or authorial provenance anticipate the mental dispositions subject to the child's recipient. The receptive competence of a child is formed by elements that are manifested as a set of qualities of children's recipients. In cognitive psychology the term mental model is used. The highest level of text comprehension by a pre-school child is represented by improvisation of more extensive narrative formations; if compared with the primary contact with the text as rhymes, the form is released and the epic breadth of expression increases. The development of production abilities of the child goes from pragmatic texts to larger narrative formations with implicit image of speech acts. Under pragmatically oriented texts we understand the genre of the rhyme because its role is to enhance speech. A child produces a text that is characterised by the variability in expression levels which the child has reached through conventions and receptive experience contained in the current mental model. Creative writing starts before literacy. Linking the names of fairy-tales with characters that act in it is a precursor of authorial writing. Similarly, inserting connectors as operators of the story that is captured by drawing means, from the perspective of a child, a free recapitulation of events, and thus also a certain manner of improvisation. It is important that the child follows it with its inner vision and inner speech; it is only a step towards the entry into creative writing. In terms of school children, it is natural for children to produce texts that are based on narration. The story forms part of a sequence of mental models of children 7-10 years old. The child is able to form a mental picture based on the text and analogically it is able to model it in its own authorial text. As shown by children's works, the iconicity is built through the

description of experience and is aided by developing a dialogue. The image plays a crucial role in the production and reception of a text by a child.

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Appendices

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Deň so vode
(Trojvi písanie)

Bu ma som mesle je šikovisko. Čer lebo sa tam chodievame kúpať. My - tri kamarátky sme sa v uborke vybrali kúpať. Voda bola teplá, tak sme skúsali naše plavecké schopnosti. Ľužku napadlo, aby sme si sadli, kto skôr prepláva šikovisko po šírke. Uhlasili sme.

Posavili sme sa na breh a ja som navrhla, aby sme odvrátili šarab. Lea počkala do broku a ma jej povel sme skočili do vody. Pod vodou som nás nič nevidela. Okolo mňa preplával huf ryby, čo mi dodalo odvahy. Plávala som stále vpred a sčítala sa len na prvnú zem predt mnou. Na druhý breh som sa napokon dostala ako druhá. Vtom nastal problém.

"Kde je Ľužka?" opýtala som sa Ley. Tiež hľadela do prievadu. Vo vode neboli ani náznak pohybu a medzi ľuďmi som "kamorku" neopoznávala. Premkol ma strach. Mala som chuť vchnúť sa do vody a prehládvať každý centimeter vodnej plochy. Niečo mi však hovorilo, že mám počkať.

"Baf! Máim vás!" vyskočilo razom niečo z kríku a ľuho ma to objalo. Bola to Ľužka. Tričky sú sme sa začali hlasno smiať a hostili sa do mäkkej brávy.

"A za štvrtý výkon vás obe pozývam na zmrulimú!" usmiala sa Ľužka a z vrecka vyťahala tri zmrú. Zmrulina bola super! Mala som citrón a čokoládu, rovnako ako Lea a Ľužka.

"Nabudúce si to môžeme kludne opakovať," navrhla som keď sme vychádzali zo zmrulinárne.

"Jasné!" prikýpli dievčatá a pridali do broku. Bol to úžasný deň!

úvod, povel, koniec ?!

vyborný (1)



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Growing up Dalit in Bengal: Conversation with Manohar Mouli Biswas

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Abstract: This is an interview of Manohar Mouli Biswas, Bangla Dalit activist and writer, where he expresses his views about the identity of Dalit people and the historiography of caste in India. He further speaks about the uniqueness of Bangla Dalit literature, its similarities with Dalit writings in other Indian regional languages and the position of Dalit women writers. He is candid enough to speak about certain autobiographical elements that provided him with the impetus to be a Dalit writer. He further speaks about Dalit drama and its performances which is a marker of its acceptance amongst the viewers. He emphasises on the role of translation of Dalit literature to generate awareness among the larger reading public towards Dalit literature.

Keywords: Dalit, Caste, Social Activism, Bangla, Translation.

“Caste is the monstrous reality of India. One cannot deny that. It is very deep-rooted and bears the foundation of religion. It has religious sanctions. Historically, it could be seen that many changes had been brought in; however the monster still lives.”

(Arjun Dangle, “Arjun Dangle in Conversation with Jaydeep Sarangi and Angana Dutta”,
<http://www.setumag.com/2017/01/arjun-dangle-in-conversation-with.html>)

Q. Whom would you call a Dalit? Would you consider all the oppressed of the society, irrespective of caste, to be Dalits?

A. The word “Dalit” involves a general perception in its meaning. Anybody in the society, oppressed in any manner whatsoever, may be called a Dalit. I’ve no intention to deny this perception or occurrence in general and in this regard I want to specify that oppression happens in society in various forms, at times by certain activities of the ‘majority’ on the ‘minority’ people, sometimes by the mighty on the weaker, or by a rich on the poor. At times it is unleashed by a man living in the urban domain on the one who inhabits a pastoral space, or sometimes by a white on the black. All these oppressions, as I have mentioned, bear the “class” identity in them. But in Indian society caste system is prevalent and many a time the oppressions take place even on the basis of “caste” identity of an individual. Usually a person having the scheduled caste identity or the defiled caste identity, such as, very particularly, the “Shudra” or the Ati-shudra or the “untouchable” is found to be oppressed in the society, or to be the victim of atrocity because of undignified low caste identity. These people are identified as ‘Dalit’.

In order to reply to the question ‘Who is Dalit’ we may historically refer to The Simon Commission. This Commission was formed in the year 1927. Sir John Simon as the Chairman was assigned to look into the Indian social and political spectrum and on the basis of the recommendation of this commission in 1935 certain caste-groups of Indian society who due to their marginalization were entitled to enjoy the reservation facility in services and in other places provided by the Government itself, are now specifically called the Dalit-castes or “Dalits” in India. In Simon Commission these people were noted as “depressed classes” at that time.

Q. Many Dalit activists consider the minority communities to be Dalits. Do you agree with this view point?

A. First of all, we need to understand what is Dalit activism. By Dalit activists, we understand those who have their own commitment and activities to remove the shackles of Dalitism that has eventfully eventuated on them for a long time, from the days of immemorial past, and in their way of activism they need to adopt that history into their study. The historiography of caste describes it as an institution prevailing in society from the Vedic days and since this institution is seen to work against the concept of equality in human dignities and values, each of the Dalit activists should have to fight against it. In my view Dalit activism is more social than political. Some people are also there to whom it is more political than social. Historically we know, Gautam Buddha is the first one who stood against these human inequalities of caste system and he thought of bringing about equality in society. What I mean to say is that he was in favour of a casteless society. The whole of India, by and large, accepted his egalitarian humanism. Even in the postcolonial days of the country some Dalits underwent conversion to Buddhism to get rid of social discrimination. They are said to be people associated with “home-coming” status or are referred to as the “ghar-wapsi” people. The Mahars of Maharashtra and some other scheduled castes all over the country followed this path of conversion. They, though the Buddhist religious minority in the country, enjoy the Dalit status in view of their activism against the discriminations and marginalization. Now the question comes about the other religious minorities. I’ve already mentioned that the case is more political than social. That is the reason why Kanshi Ram, a renowned Dalit social activist and politician, and the founder of a Dalit political party (BSP) formed BAMCEF (Backward And Minority Communities Employees Federation), an organization of a wider national canvas to play his agenda. As a Dalit writer and activist, I do have interactions with those fellow brethren.

Q. Do you think that the Blacks around the world are marginalized in the same way as the Dalits?

A. In my writings many a time I’ve made this point very clear that the Blacks and the Dalits suffer similar kind of discrimination, and here again in discussing the question repeat the same. One thing I specifically point out that the Afro-Americans in the soil of America (but not all the Blacks in all the countries around the world) and the Dalits all over India, both undergo the discrimination in treatment resulting in social and economic, educational and cultural marginalization in their lives. In the first case discrimination takes place due to colour of the skin of the people and in the second case discrimination takes place due to caste-identity of an individual. The first one is racial discrimination and the second one is caste discrimination. Both are similar in character. One is skin-colour identity and the other one is caste-genital or caste-locus identity. In none of the cases above an individual has control to get himself free from the shackles of it. Both are related to an individual’s birth and heredity.

Q. Do you think that the Dalits are victims of “cultural silence”?

A. This question is very vital and intrinsic one to me. To reply to it I shall go back to the question Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak raised in 1988 “Can the Subaltern Speak?” in the book *Marxism and Interpretation of Culture*, edited by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg. It is one general apprehension in the minds of all that the subaltern cannot speak well but, according to me, they can speak and they speak in their own tongue. Their language may be understandable to few or may not be to others, their tongue may be palatable to some or may not be to many. That does not matter. And similarly the Dalits have their own culture. It is unfortunate that nobody wants to see or enjoy that culture if the same is performed by the Dalits. But ironically if the same is performed by others it becomes highly enjoyable. This is a phenomenon what I want to call “Cultural Rigging”. This “cultural rigging” endorses the fact of “cultural silence”. We may use an Anglo-Bengali expression to explain it and that is what we call the “Nirbakaization” of Dalit culture.

Q. Would you consider a Dalit to be suffering from mental bondage?

A. It would be perhaps an unwise statement to say that the Dalits do not suffer from any mental bondage. The hatred poured on them, and the uncaring treatment and negligence that these people have been victims of since centuries, played a crucial role to make them socially, educationally, culturally and mentally retarded. This retardation might have alienated them from the mainstream in turn. Some people will be annoyed if I give a data from the Global Wealth Report, 2016 where it is told that at this moment 25.4% of total poor of the world live in India alone. The Dalits are the worst victims in this scenario. Therefore the mental bondage they suffer from is undoubtedly an unseen shackle which enchains them.

Q. Do you think that Dalit activism is essential even in 21st century?

A. In reply to this question I feel happy to say that a good number of benevolent academicians have on their own initiative taken up the cause of the Dalits, highlighted their issues and discussed those in the classrooms. A number of reputed Indian Universities and Colleges are organizing seminars and academic discussions on this particular issue. Under such a benign condition of patronization from the mainstream to look into the Dalit issues I personally feel a separate movement or activism by Dalits alone need not be taken up in this 21st century. Even then if any activism or movement becomes necessary to solve any untoward and uneven incident in the society, this democratic weapon may undoubtedly be employed.

Q. What is the place of Bangla Dalit literature in comparison to other Dalit literatures of India?

A. It's a fact known to all that Bangla Dalit literature is not inferior in any way to any of its kind in any of the states in India. But the fact remains open to all that the Dalit literary and cultural movements started first in an organized way in the state of Maharashtra in India about seven decades ago in the later half of the fifties. This literary activity by the Dalits was in a form of a movement there and they are the people who first coined the word/terminology "Dalit Literature" which in the later stage became popularly known all over India as well as around the world. The people who first started the movement (at least one section of them) became more revolutionary and violent in action. They formed one wing within the fold of concerted movement "Dalit Panther" by name in 1972, where they took the social, economic and political agenda along with their writing activities. This movement then spread to Gujarat, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and in other places. In Bengal the Dalit litterateurs, without taking up the name of Dalit writings, had been in the process of writing since the first decade of twentieth century. I've edited one book "Shatobarsher Bangla Dalit Sahitya" in 2011 where I've accommodated at least 83 Dalit writers spanning from 1911-2010.

Q. What is unique about Bangla Dalit literature?

A. Dalit literature as I've told earlier is mainly based on the phenomenon of caste discrimination and atrocities associated thereto. The history of Bengal is bit different from that of the other places due to some reasons. These reasons might have given uniqueness to Bangla Dalit literature. We know that the kings of the Pala Dynasty who were Buddhist by religion and who were disbelievers in the caste system hailed from the lower strata of society and had ruled Bengal for about more than four hundred years from 750-1155 A.D. During their days Bangla literature became popular by the contributions of 84 Siddha poets, popularly, known as Charya poets. Out of 84 Siddhas, we know 43 poets hailed from the marginal castes. Many of them told of their own social life. And secondly, Bengal had suffered Partition in 1947 and in the refugee camps after Partition the stringency of caste system was stark. Thirdly, the Communist Party of India was formed in 1920 and they had ruled West Bengal for 34 years continuously. During the Left-Rule, very unusually, a mass massacre of Dalits happened in Marchjhappi.

All these incidents have contributed something unique in nature, something complete in realization, something counterproductive and innovative in movement. These sufferings have given birth to literary works by Bangla Dalit writers.

Q. What are the points of similarities between Bangla Dalit literature and Dalit literatures in other regional languages of India?

A. The most common feature found in case of Dalit literature irrespective of whichever Indian regional language it is written exhibits the application of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's thought and philosophy. The aim is to build the society in new form in this postcolonial phase. Dalits are seen to raise voices of protest against torture unleashed upon them in each of the states. This is the most common thing among all Dalit writings in each of the Indian languages. In West Bengal Bangla Dalit Sahitya Sanstha was formed in 1992 to launch a movement after the sad demise of Chuni Kotal, a tribal girl who committed suicide under the severe caste discrimination while she was studying M.Sc. in Vidyasagar University of Medinipur. Though abit late in comparison with other states but it was a good start. Another mass massacre of Dalits happened in the same state in Marichjhappi in 1979 and a good amount of literary creation took place at that time. These kinds of incidents are seen to happen in other places also, such as, an atrocity happened on Dalit people in Karamchedu village of coastal Andhra Pradesh in 1985 where 6 Dalits were brutally killed and 3 women were raped. This Karamchedu incident gave a jerk to Telugu Dalit writings. Similarly in Kannada DSS (Dalit Sangharsh Samity) got its shape in 1974 to launch protest against the sufferings and atrocities on the Dalits. In the state of Tamil Nadu the incident of mass massacre on Dalits happened in the village of Kilvenmani in 1968. Maharashtra which is called to pioneer this movement had formed The Maharashtra Dalit Sahitya Sangha in 1956 which had organized its first conference in 1958 in Bombay. This year Bangla Dalit Sahitya Sanstha is celebrating the Silver Jubilee Sangiti (conference) on 24-25th of December in the Ambedkar Mission of Hridayapur in North 24 Parganas district.

Q. What is your take on Dalit women? Are they doubly marginalized?

A. Dalit women are compelled to undergo two kinds of marginalization at a time, one is due to their birth in lower castes and the other one is the sex/gender marginalization. Naturally they are marginalized doubly and it is related to their birth. Unfortunately none has his or her own control as per the choice of his or her birth is concerned.

Q. Would you give us some idea about Bangla Dalit women writers?

A. The women of undivided Bengal had shown some prominence in the field of social, political and literary activity in the eighteenth century. In Bengal the "Chowar Vidroha" happened just after losing independence to the British/East India Company in 1757. It first started in 1760. In the later phase of it the leadership was given by Rani Shiromoni, a Dalit woman who was put into the jail of Fort William in 1799. Perhaps, she was the first Indian woman who became captive in the British jail and she died in 1816. A Dalit woman writer named Sulochana was born in the Namashudra (at that time their name was Chandal) caste in 1776 in the village of Thakurkona of Mymensingh district and she wrote a book of poems (kavya) named "Sri Sri Gopini Kirtan". Another woman, born into washer-man community in the village Shaltora of the Bankura district was Rami Dhopani who wrote a number of Vaishnavite poems as she was a close associate of Sahajia Chandidas. Her pseudonym was Ramtara. Presently there are a number of Dalit women writers and poets who are writing and are involved in social movements. Some of them are Kalyani Thakur Charal, Smritikana Howlader, Manju Bala, Kiran Talukdar, Sushama Moitra Sarkar, Lily Halder, etc.

Q. What prompted you to be a writer? How would you like to identify yourself- a writer or specifically a Dalit writer?

A. I had to suffer dire poverty in my childhood, and perhaps it happened due to my birth in the untouchable Namashudra caste. None of my forefathers had got the privilege to go to school. I've seen the pains suffered by these illiterate masses and the humiliation faced by them. I've no shame to say that I'm a first generation learner in my family. Naturally all the pains pent up within my heart had forced me to become a writer. And I'm very glad to say that I'm born a Dalit, I know the Dalits well and I write about the Dalits, sometimes about the non-Dalits. It is now the people's choice whether they call me a writer or a Dalit writer whatever they like.

Q. Do your childhood experiences have any bearing upon your decision to be a Dalit writer?

A. Of course. I always feel that personal experiences work as impetus to elicit the urge to write. My childhood experiences (as I've told in my autobiography) have supplied me the materials to write. If you call me a Dalit writer then I will say yes, in my childhood I had been a child-labourer in the agricultural field with my poor parents. I was born into a marshy area of south Bengal nearer to the Sunderban in the district of Khulna. Though born to illiterate parents every time I got their support and encouragement to get at least some education in life.

Q. Can you please explain your choice of diction in your writings?

A. It is perhaps something sad to see that in the field of our education, particularly, in our academic courses nothing has been accommodated in the syllabi to let the society know about where we people have been born. Then is it so that we want to see only the brighter and glamorous aspects of the country and desire to be ignorant about the Dalits who have been Dalitized in society centuries after centuries? Shall we not tell our students how poverty has engulfed our society? What I want to assert is that let us frame our own diction of literature to tell the truth of the country.

Q. What is the response of "mainstream" writers to your literary works?

A. The literary works, whatever little I've done, have all got very good response from the mainstream writers and you will be surprised to note that my autobiography which has been translated into English has been well appreciated both in home and abroad.

Q. Do you consider translation as an important tool to make people aware of Dalit literature?

A. Dalit litterateurs generally write in their mother tongue. Unless it is translated in international language they cannot reach out to other people beyond the barriers of regional language. Translation, particularly in English, has brought Dalit literature into global visibility.

Q. Recently your autobiography has been translated into English. What is your response to that?

A. My autobiography was initially written in Bengali and it got good response from Bangla readership. It was well reviewed in the highly-circulated Bengali daily newspaper the *Ananda Bazar Patrika* on 28.11.2015. And as soon as it was translated into English it reached the global readership. The English version has been widely reviewed in different reputed journals/magazines, such as *EPW*, *The Daily News* of Sri Lanka, *Indian Literature* (a Bimonthly of Indian Sahitya Academy), *South Asian Research* of London, *Transnational Literature published from Adelaide*, Australia, *Contemporary Voice of Dalit* (Sage publication), New Delhi, *Commonwealth Essays and Studies, France* etc. Positive vibes from different parts of the world overwhelmed me.

Q. Do you notice any difference in the mindset of present readers of Dalit literature in comparison to earlier readers?

A. Dalit literature is a very newly developed phenomenon and it has reached the global readership. The mindset of the earlier readers was that the Dalits cannot create any literature. Now, at this moment the temperament of the readers regarding Dalit literature has undergone a significant change. They have no hesitation to accept the ground reality of the Dalits in society.

Q. What do you think is the future of Dalit literature in India?

A. As long as patriarchy will exist in society, the sex/gender discrimination shall exist. Similarly, I understand, as long as caste system will prevail in society hatred related to caste and discrimination as a consequence of it will exist. And this will prompt the composition of Dalit literature. As time is a path-maker of newer kind of discrimination and deprivation, Dalit literature will also march ahead as a protest to these social curses contributing to literature in newer form and shape.

Q. How crucial is the role of Bangla Dalit literature in shaping the history of Dalit literature in India?

A. The backbone of Dalit literature is Dalit consciousness. Every mind wants to cling to the known and the familiar. So is the case with Dalit writers. The Dalits of Bengal had shown an unparalleled history towards this direction of self-consciousness in the year 1872-73. During that time in some parts of south-central Bengal (Faridpur, Khulna, Barishal etc.) the Namashudras, then called Chandals, had given a call for "General Strike" refusing to render services to the houses of the landlords and the affluent. This consciousness worked against those who had developed their mental setup to regularly hate and dishonour these people. [Ref: The 1873 Movement for Dignity and Equality before Law]. This particular incident, I feel, marks a crucial role in Bangla Dalit activism shaping the consciousness of all the Dalits of the country and contributing to the growth and development of Indian Dalit literature.

Q. Will you tell us about your mother?

A. Everyone perhaps shares a feeling of pride to talk about his/her mother, at least I do. My mother was nice, peace-loving and sincere housewife, very simple in character. She didn't know how to quarrel with any one. I was born in a joint family of my father and great uncle. Both my mother and great aunt would do all sorts of manual labour at home needed for an agriculturist impoverished family. I've already told you that I'm the first-generation learner in my family. Sometimes it would happen that while I would go to school in the morning my mother would fail to prepare any food for me and so I would go to school without taking any food. In the afternoon while I would come back home I would see she was also fasting for me. After I came back home she would feed me and then she would eat. So long she was alive she was the "living goddess" to me and even after her death in 1996 I bow in front of her photograph to get her blessings in any crisis of life.

I'm very proud of my wife also as she loved and respected my mother as her own mother. My mother hailed from an extremely rural background and even after shifting to an urban locale as Calcutta she would speak in her own dialects with anybody whosoever would come across her.

Q. Your autobiography is male dominated. Why are you silent about women in your family?

A. I started my autobiography with the depiction of my mother and great aunt and by giving descriptions about how they carried out the daily manual jobs. In the occasion of community festivals also the readers come across some women characters. The society in which I was born is of course a male dominated one, but the women in our society would enjoy their own freedom, would get respect and justice in an equal manner. In this context I remember one incident that I referred to in my

autobiography. It was about the husband who had misbehaved with his wife and later begged pardon to her in the village "salisisabha".

Q. What is the role of literary activism in Dalit Freedom Movement?

A. Literary activism, I believe, is a mighty weapon to rouse the unity and solidarity amongst the Dalits. When the writers, I mean the Dalit writers, take out a procession in the street in the morning of the second day of their Sangiti(Annual Conference) it brings their voices united together by uttering the slogans like "What we want? We, the Dalit writers, want freedom. We want freedom" or, "What is our sword? Our pen is our sword to fight. Fight, Fight, Fight;" etc. It generates the concerted efforts to remove the shackles of marginalization that hover upon us.

Q. Do you think a literary association and forum can reform a society from caste stratification?

A. It is a very difficult question to reply. You know the religious history of this country. Gautam Buddha was born into the Hindu-fold in ancient India. He wanted to introduce certain reforms into Hinduism by removing the caste stratification which he realized was against egalitarianism. This caste stratification has got its root in the Vedic scriptures and that is the reason why many a man thinks that Hinduism will not exist if caste stratification is not there. Naturally Buddha's reformation of Hinduism was not accepted and ultimately his preaching became a separate religion. Many of the Dalits have opted for conversion to Buddhism and many of the Dalits who are Hindus by birth have got their faith and mental allegiance to Buddhism. Dalit writers want to set up casteless and classless egalitarian society. It is encouraging to see they are getting support from the intellectuals, scholars, academicians and many other broad-minded people of the society.

Q. Are you satisfied with translation of your works?

A. My autobiography "Amar Bhubane Ami BencheThaki" which has been written in Bengali using my regional dialects in many a place and which is very difficult to translate into other language, has been translated and edited by Angana Dutta and Jaydeep Sarangi into English. The way they have accomplished the job has satisfied me. I'm contented with their work and the same has been published by a reputed publisher of Calcutta. Earlier in this interview I have mentioned that the translated work has got lot of appreciation from home and abroad. A number of reputed university teachers and researchers have taken part to translate my poems into English. There are two volumes of poems: "Poetic Rendering As Yet Unborn" and "The Wheel Will Turn". I'm really thankful to the contributors and the editors who have done the job because of their love for me.

Q. Is/was there any thing like Dalit sishu sahitya or literature/magazine written for Dalit children in Bengal?

A. In Bengali there is a nice saying: "Ghumiye Ache Sishur Pita Sab SishuderAntare". It means, "Father of child lay asleep into the mind of each of all the children". If we talk of the Dalit sishu sahitya in Bengal it simply mentions them who are habitually writing rhymes (in Bengali we call Charakar) depicting the Dalit life suitably understandable to all the children including the Dalit children. The children generally recite their rhymes in different cultural programme. Very prominent of these rhyme-writers are Bimal Biswas, editor of Adal Badal Patrika, Amar Biswas, editor Chaturtha Dunia Patrika, Nani Gopal Sikdar, editor Ataeb Patrika, Sadhan Naskar, Kalipada Mani, Smritikana Howlader, Srimati Kiran Talukder, etc. all of whom chose regional language as their medium of writing. This use of the regional language makes them the special of subaltern speaking.

And in Bengali a number of autobiographies have been written by the writers such as Manohar Mouli Biswas, JatinBala, RaicharanSardar, Baby Halder, Manotanjan Sarkar, Sripada Das, Jagabandhu Biswas, Sunil Krishna Mandal, Bibhutu Bhusan Biswas, Anil Ranjan Biswas, etc. who have drawn their childhood

as if the Dalitsishusahitya assumes the embodiment from these writings. We know in most of the times the simplicity of the children surpasses the wisdom of the elders. And so we may keep it in mind, though the movement of Dalit literature and culture is related to injustices and discriminations they suffer, Dalitsishus (children) sahitya tells many serious things through the simplicity of their own.

Q. How strong is Bangla Dalit drama? Did you perform any role?

A. In the movement of Dalit literature and culture the role of drama is undoubtedly very important. This is audio-visual media able to cut permanent impressions in the minds of all. Plays are performed during the annual conference of Bangla Dalit Sahitya Sanstha. Raju Das, Prangobinda Biswas, Harshabardhan Choudhury, etc. are the best performers. They have written lot of plays which have helped the movement to march ahead. I've never performed any role but one of my writing "Hidimba-Ghatotkoch Sanglap" has been performed by Raju Das and his wife Namita Das in many a place and it has earned lot of appreciations. One theatre group of Shyambazar, Kolkata, under the direction of Bharganath Bhattacharjya staged this Hidimba-Ghatotkoch Sanglap as a commercial show for several nights in a hall in Kolkata. It has been translated into English by Professor Ipshita Chanda, and the same I have come to know, has been performed in the Durga Puja festival in London by some Bengali artists there and earned appreciations from the public abroad.

Q. Is your movement Kolkata based?

A. This is not at all limited to Kolkata only. At least in a dozen of districts of West Bengal we have noticed the performances to be organized by the local artists irrespective of caste and creed the dramas, written by the Dalit writers. As for reference I remember in 18th Sangiti of Bangla Dalit Sahitya Sanstha which held at the village Charanpur in the district Burdwan on 24-25th December 2009, the "Chowar Vidraha" written by Sunil Kumar Das was staged. The Twentieth Sangiti which had held on 25-26th December, 2011 in the village Kalai Beria, Chatna, district Bankura the same drama was also staged there.

Jaydeep Sarangi is a bilingual writer, academic, editor, interviewer, translator and author of a number of significant publications on Postcolonial issues, Indian Writing in English, Australian Literature, Marginal literatures and Creative Writing in reputed journals/magazines in different shores. He is the Vice President of *GIEWEC* (Guild of Indian English Writers, Editors and Critics). Sarangi has delivered keynote addresses in several national and international seminars and conferences. Widely anthologised and reviewed as a poet, he authors five poetry collections in English and one in Bengali. He is Associate Professor in English, University of Calcutta, Kolkata. He may be reached at jaydeepsarangi@gmail.com

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Manohar Mouli Biswas is at present the President of Bangla Dalit Sahitya Sanstha. He has been editing a famous pioneering bi-monthly literary magazine named "Dalit Mirror" in English for more than a decade. During his stay at Nagpur in 1968 for his Departmental Training as Engineering Supervisor in P and T Dept. of Central Govt. he came in contact with Dalit people and Dalit Literary Movement. That changed the course of his life as a writer.

His poems and short stories are of special flavor. His works are illuminated in the light of Dalit consciousness. Some of his famous works include: *Ora Aamar Kabita* (They are my poetry) poetry collection, *Dalit Sahityer Dikboloy* (History of Dalit Literature), *Dalit Sahityer Ruprekha* (Outline History

of Dalit Literature), *Poetic Rendering As Yet Unborn* (Translation from his Bengali Poems). He has written more than a dozen books, and he has published his autobiography named *Aamar Bhubaney Aami Benche Thaki, Surviving in My World: Growing up Dalit in Bengal*. His recent book is *An Interpretation of Dalit Literature, Aesthetic, Theory and Movements through the Lens of Ambedkar* (2017)



Manohar Mouli Biswas, Jaydeep Sarangi and Mahuya Bhaumik (from left to right)