Bulletin of the *Transilvania* University of Braşov • Vol. 2 (51) - 2009
Series IV: Philology and Cultural Studies

THE INTER-HUMAN AS ONE SOURCE OF IDEOLOGY

Alina Silvana FELEA[1]

Abstract: *The critical discourse rarely approaches the problems of the idea and ideology in literature, even if their presence in art is obvious. A very good illustration of the importance of the idea in the literary work is Dostoievski's work, which was studied carefully by Mikhail Bakhtin. One of the theorist's conclusions was that the inter-human space is a generator of energies, most of the ideas forming in this area that belongs to everybody and to nobody in particular. Bakhtin's theory has similarities with Witold Gombrowicz's conception about the so- called Form.*

Key words: *Inter-human, ideology, literature, dialogical, form, novel.*

1. Introduction

In literary criticism and theory little has been written about the ideas in literature. Reserved to philosophers, politicians, moralists, theologians, to others, in general, the subject ideology remains rarely visited by criticism, not because of inability, but from lack of interest, probably a momentary one. Paradoxically, nevertheless, if we keep into account of the status of the Idea which is, in fact, the ground stone of the Letters: „Everybody – says Phillippe Hamon – agrees that a text is a product anchored in the ideological, it is not limited to being, it also is useful to something, that it produces ideology and is produced by ideology. But agreement does not inaugurate and does not found a method. (..) and the theoretical models do not seem to have been refined and have not become more sophisticated since, let us say, the works of Goldmann and Macherey". (Hamon 6) For Bakhtin, the ideology of a fictional work is the conceptual equivalent of the ideas contained in the novel. It concerns the logical unity of the concepts about life and the world, the characters' word about himself/herself, about his/her circle of friends, but also the word that he/she utters about the world.

2. The Ideology in Literature

The metaevaluation of the enunciation itself, centred on the subject idea, is missing as well. To critics it may seem at least redundant to talk about their own reflections about ideology. Actually, the idea is the foundation, but also the matter criticism is built with, it is omnipresent, taken for granted. The idea is taken for granted generally, in literature as well, only that when it distributes the stresses by literary research, the priorities are different. Nobody has been astonished in a while by the fact that important in the art of the letters is not only what is said (the content, the ideas belonging to the non-literary), but also how it is said (stress on the aesthetic). It is well-known that understanding a work means understanding its structure, its organization that it is – a

[1] Dept. of Romanian Language and Literature, *Transilvania* University of Braşov.

BDD-A20286 © 2009 Transilvania University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:50:20 UTC)

definition among others – a „technique" by which you come closer, or move further away from reality or you create another reality. The idea can be the starting point, and more than that, - although, at first glance, it seems a contradiction in terms – it can be the solid terrain that one can attach on the fluid and a bit technical structures, constructions and procedures. These are, some of them, degrees of abstraction on a scale in which the first indicator would be the so called simple, basic idea.

Considered by many legitimate and legitimated in the epic, the idea is ignore by many others. The explanation, in this last case, lies in the traces, still persistent, of the belief in the existence of a categorical disjunction operated between spirit, thinking, on the one hand, and sensitivity, feeling, on the other hand. In fact, the taming of the idea, its humanization seems very difficult to achieve in literature. When such performance is achieved, it is saluted with enthusiasm. It is the gesture Bakhtin does, one of the two thinkers I will refer, when he approaches the subject of the presence of the idea in Dostoievski's work.

The ideological platform constructed by the theoretician to value a brilliant work because of the artistic presence of the ideological proves to have many common points, of convergence, with the reflections of Witold Gombrowicz from his *Journal*. The Polish writer, considered usually a difficult writer, fought a battle not only with his own limits (let us not forget that he went in exile in 1939 in Argentina, taking life from the start), but with the false, stupid and pretentious conventions, with ready-made ideas, inherited and continued as such. He declared war to acceptable ideas as well, that for him had to prove their validity in fearful confrontations, but to the so-called taboos, that few dared to touch (for example Poland, the Polish patriotism, the Polish culture, the art, criticism, education, the university etc.). A lucid conscience for whom „tact" was one of the hypocrisies. But to the same extent, a tormented, problematic „ego", who programmatically refused to „answer to the expectations". The wish to astonish was, as the writer confesses, „attached" to his spirit!

In another way, not necessarily personal, Bakhtin came to the observations that drew our attention. Studying carefully and pertinently Dostoievski's novels, the theorist noticed the sensuousness with which the writer dedicated himself to the ideas, knowing to get closer to them, and also to keep the necessary distance. This was possible also because Dostoievski „had the brilliant quality to hear the dialogue of his époque", „he heard the strong, consecrated voices", but also „the voices not fully expressed, ideas that smoulder in the sore" (Bakhtin 124). Dostoievski's genius proved to be also in the way in which he gave „flesh" to the ideas with the help of the characters that do not simply talk. But this was Dostoievski.

Many other writers do not know how they should treat the idea, in what way to approach it in order to give it originality, freshness. Not even Gombrowicz, the author of *The Wedding*, *Cosmos* etc., does not seem to be totally relaxed in this confrontation, but his word is never shy. The intellectual courage, almost limitless, and the sharp intelligence get him quickly in the profound areas of Thinking or, to say it differently, get him to the heights of the Idea. Reflection was his favourite tool, but this did not stop him to declare: „We do not express ourselves in the sphere of the notions, but in that of the characters" (Gombrowicz 118). With little respect for scientific truth, true to the value of his own truths, Gombrowicz was ironical toward those who „distribute teachings, build, consolidate, form, launch, orientate"

BDD-A20286 © 2009 Transilvania University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:50:20 UTC)

(Gombrowicz 42). Although, through thinking, he could not withdraw completely from these operations.

The reaction of rejection of abstractions is largely spread among the writers for whom literature is not supposed to be the terrain for the subtleties of the intellect. That it could not be subtle, but the much elaborated idea is considered as lacking charm, and even non-artistic. One of the famous exceptions was Dostoievski. With him, the character is „the man of the idea" (Bakhtin) and, more important than that, an idea-character that is built through the dialogue with other consciences. The idea is essentially dialogical, Bakhtin thought, creating thus one of the concepts that was so successful in theory and literary analysis: dialogism.

The beauty of this theory does not annihilate its difficulty, because the assuming of the idea, the feeling or its corporeality give authenticity to the being that surpasses its material nature in this way. The human being gains self-consciousness, becoming unique. In spite of this, „The idea cannot exist in the isolated individual conscience" (Bakhtin 121), it is formed, it is de-formed and re-formed in connection with other ideas. In the contact point of different consciences truth emerges. Only there, and not *intra muros*. The consequence is that the inter-human is the generator of energies, and the individual, even if he/she produces them, too little in isolation, very much in dialogue, consumes the ideas. Here we can invoke the subtle and true observation made by Gombrowicz: „My problem is not perfecting my conscience, but more precisely finding out its boundaries" (Gombrowicz 70).

Bakhtin insured us using, obviously, Dostoievski's example, that „the full ideological significance", therefore the transpersonal one, can meet and merge with individuality, without harming one another. Bakhtin is, as is well-known, the father of the intertextuality concept, but accepting the fact that we do not fully belong to ourselves and „we cannot trust ourselves completely" does not interdict the question that, probably, is futile in front of intertextuality: What are the boundaries of my conscience? Any writer, even with the acute consciousness of intertextuality, will ask himself or herself this question.

But the follow-up of the process of formation of ideas in the area of inter-human is connected with another aspect that mass culture can explain. In this area everybody's and nobody's ideas appear, in fact impersonal truths that Bakhtin was referring to, together with the false ideologies, the conventions, the mundane aspects that repeat themselves like a coat worn by everybody. These are charges for a trial against automatisms. And everything starts from, as Gombrowicz would say from the metaphor of the orchestra: „among people Form takes shape, and it determines every human being. They are like a voice in the orchestra that has to be in harmony with its sound, has to find its place in the melody; or like a dancer for whom more important than what he dances is to unite with the others during the dance.

The consequence is that my thought and my feeling are not really free and personal; I think and I feel „for" people, to match with them; and I deform myself as a result of this supreme necessity: to harmonise with others in the Form. (...)

The consequence is that for me there are no ideas or feelings that are really authentic and „proper". The artificial even in our most intimate reactions – this is the element of the human being subjected to the „inter-human" (Gombrowicz 216).

And another quotation to explain better the concept of Form, central notion with Gombrowicz and personalized according

BDD-A20286 © 2009 Transilvania University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:50:20 UTC)

to his measures: „even in a small group of people, that talk freely, you can notice the necessity to have one form or another, created by chance and independent of their will, because reciprocal conformation... as if all of them would indicate to each one his place his „voice" in the orchestra.

People represent something that have to be organized in every minute, but their organization, their collective form is created as a result of thousands of impulses, so it's unpredictable and cannot be controlled by those who make it. We are like tones that the melody springs from, like words that are arranged in sentences – but we do not dominate what we utter, the expression falls upon us like a lightning, like the creative force, it springs from us, and is restless after all. But where Form is born, there should be Superiority and Inferiority – that is why the process of rising of one at the expense of others appears with people – and this pressure up that eliminates one by one, however absurd and unfair, represents the indispensable necessity of Form, it is the creation of the superior sphere among humans" (Gombrowicz 293).

Although apparently a necessary evil, more correctly, though, a reality beyond good and evil, momentary structure with the most diverse levels, organisation in continuous change, Form was the great challenge for Gombrowicz. Because he too could not be excused from the general law, he gives to the essential conflict that we carry two tendencies: the first that aspires to form, to definition, and the second that defends herself and refuses form. Gombrowicz finds a niche that would save from this mill where consciences (Form) go, the ones that are really superior. Indeed, the differentiation is at work. But how? How does individuality surpass the Form after it merged with it? How does it know its essence and depth and then to change Form? The question was asked, why would we wait for the answer? „The duty of the writer – says Gombrowicz clearly – is not to solve problems, but to assert them, in order to draw the attention towards them, to be among people, where they would be in a way tamed, civilized" (Gombrowicz 191).

3. Conclusion

We will not finish with this apparent abdication of the writer, but with a „prophecy" that would open the path for a new type of discussions: „The most modern current of ideas will be the one that will rediscover the human being as an individual" (Gombrowicz 123). But this prophecy was not fulfilled yet and it may be hard to be fulfilled because, on the one hand, nobody believes any more in the beautiful unity of Descartes's *cogito*. On the other hand, and paradoxically, for many the individuality is the same with one (because of a long-practiced reflex). The ego tries to be familiar with the idea of its own multiplicity, but also with the many connections, relations, influences that condition it. In order to find the equilibrium again and to be at peace with the new individuality, probably time is still necessary. But even when the necessary time has passed, there will be untold truths because, as very well said Philippe Hamon, „any production of sense is exclusion, selection, difference, opposition..."

References

1. Bahtin, Mihail. *Problemele poeticii lui Dostoievski.* Bucureşti: Editura Univers, 1970.
2. Gombrowicz, Witold. *Jurnal*. Bucureşti: Editura Univers, 1998.
3. Hamon, Philippe. *Texte et idéologie*. Paris: PUF, 1984.

BDD-A20286 © 2009 Transilvania University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:50:20 UTC)