

THE BOOK – TREASURE IN HEAVEN AND TREASURE ON EARTH

It could be said that every book is a thought for itself – it is as big as it can fit in that *paradise library* that Gaston Bachelard imagines “up there, in heaven” and, as Serbian aesthete and academic Sreten Marić refers to in his essay that “with the power of poetry” it “reflects our union with the Cosmos” most essentially in the act of a reverie... Indeed, in order to understand *the poetics of space*, we would have to master the daydreaming of *happiness* and magnify the path to the realisation that “before every act, the man needs... to sing his own future to himself”. In that Bachelardian interpretation, one reveals why “the reverie is attributed the values that give a mark to a man in his depths.” And the book is an undeniable connection between the real and the fictional world, a kind of treasury of desires and visions from the eyes of a writer who dreams things along a path that is difficult to explain in any other way but through the sentences found in the dark that is phantasmagorical, illuminated for a moment by someone who knows when they heard and uttered in whisper before a self-born book.

At the beginning of the *general encyclopaedia* we read that one of the oldest large libraries – the Alexandrian one – was built in the 3rd century BC and was founded by the Ptolemies. There is also the fact that with “about 700,000 volumes it became the centre of scientific thought and literature of the Hellenistic era”. In addition, it is noted that “it was destroyed in the 6th and 7th century. We also read that “the oldest libraries were established at about the same time as written monuments.” Among others, the following libraries were mentioned: the Sumerian library in Nippur, the Assyrian library in Nineveh, libraries in Alexandria and

Pergamum, where the tiles were written in wedge-shaped letters. In ancient times, in the Balkans, books and written texts were kept in the monasteries and churches, and later in university libraries. Long would be the list of those important libraries would be quite long and, generally speaking, collections of books whose treasures preserved valuable testimonies of ancient civilisations and the meanings of culture of the East and the West. Our Nobel Prize winner, Ivo Andrić, points out that “great and good works of man, which do not know what it means to change and grow old and which, or so it seemed, do not share the fate of the transient things of the world,” and therefore “books are necessary, life is necessary. One should not be separated from the other.”

We can find many similar thoughts conceived in the concord of works read and the life experience itself, especially in the writings of great writers and philosophers such as, undoubtedly, Johann Wolfgang Goethe, who, while contemplating literature and time, writes: “Literature is a fragment of fragments: the least of what happened and was spoken, has been written; and of the things that have been written, very few have been preserved is just a fragment of a fragment. Although, through a sort of self-contained act, one book read gives rise to another, and thus, united by the concord of associations and fertile ideas, they create the third, fourth and who knows which book. Therefore, regardless of whether it is a book of prose or poetry, the reading itself makes the reader want to transform the unutterable into speakable, giving rise to walking through the opaqueness of mind into something that is clearly described; translatable for the first time into the Word.

Undoubtedly a great writer and thinker, Meša Selimović, argues that “a writer creating a serious piece of work should persuade a man to think, in order to defend himself against banality, stupidity and trash of every kind.” True, he was primarily

referring to the creation of Romanesque works, but the thought is applicable to creation in general, especially in the poetic language, trying to enable people to communicate as meaningfully as possible from different sources: dream and knowledge of something higher and different from anything previously said and sung.

We would say that there a lot of wonder about it, and there are no final responses in quests for the primal particle of poetry, regardless of the fact that numerous theoreticians of literature, language specialists and aestheticians are writing exquisite signpost essays and trying to establish the origin of poem creation.

Among other designers and interpreters of the poetic word, fundamental to the creation of any permanent literary work, the famous Mexican poet and essayist Octavio Paz tells us that poetry is “metamorphosis, change, an alchemical operation, and therefore it borders on magic, religion and all other efforts to transform man and make of ‘that one’ that ‘other one’ who is he himself...”

After all, a book read in childhood, with an eye to the world at the same time real and nourished by illusion, at first unintelligible in polysemy, only later becomes a signpost to some spiritual point of view and to some of the truths important for understanding one’s self in a multitude of others. This truth, grasped by the first reader’s vision, enables the devoted reader to possess the keys to the universal lock.

The stories and poems since the ancient ages to date represent the treasures of language and the nursery of spirit. The importance of such stimulating literary works is immeasurable for the culture of people and the question arises: how

would the world really look like without the gifts of Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, Khayyam, Imadaddin Nasimi, Goethe, Tolstoy, Pushkin...? What would we know today without the masterpiece "Don Quixote" by Miguel de Cervantes, which "after the Bible, is the most translated book of all time," and has been translated "into all modern languages and saw over a thousand editions." Connoisseurs of this unsurpassed literary work say that it has influenced the creation and growth of remarkable artistic achievements of "Tolstoy, Defoe, Fielding, Scott, Dickens, Flaubert, Melville, Dostoyevsky, James Joyce, Victor Hugo, Hemingway, Beckett, Czesław Miłosz, Borgues..."

It would be pointless to enumerate the names of literary works and authors who have indebted people with their artistic values, especially if we know that the reading taste is impermanent in the aesthetic understanding of those works, without which our consciousness has no power to conquer a higher degree of cognition. True, many philosophers such as Hegel, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, Freud, Adler, Jung, and writers versed in actionable theories, or more simply endowed with sharp wit, are constantly striving to expand spiritual perspectives and the distinctive thought of diverting from something already seen into a space subordinate to a self-born wit, a kind of daydreaming in waking state. To this extent, the Serbian avant-gardist, poet and philosopher, Dušan Matić, could pronounce the thought that "poetry is the perpetual freshness of the world."

Also, this lucid thinker emphasises the importance of the act of reading itself and of listening to readers in evaluating the books read, quoting the words of Jorge Luis Borgues: "Sometimes I suspect that good readers are even blacker and rarer swans than good writers. Reading, obviously, is an activity which comes after that of writing; it is more modest, more unobtrusive, more intellectual." Also

interesting is Borgues' poem "June 1968", in which we find the essence of valuable books in the library and what a man feels in that space, surrounded by the complex meanings of intimacy.

It is difficult to classify and explain contemporary literature with some well-known theoretical formula. Much of this, depending on the aesthetic angle and worldview, is placed in the context of epochs. To this view we owe the non-generalised statements already made about the meaning of the existing life, especially the question conceived in the poetic language. From the beginning of time to the present, the books carry the driving energy and said through the language of Blaise Pascal, that in them we should "make sense of our contradictions". After all, the Old and New Testaments, the Qur'an, and the Talmud invite readers to reveal their obscure faces in a mirror without a limiting frame – in fact, the custom of recognising the Logos that is not subject to human vanity and mundane possessiveness. Poetry, in some magnetised language, differentiates the acquired poetic frames every time over and over again. By the power of these transformations and the growth of man's great ideas, which have always brought back to life the creative impulses: truth, freedom, goodness and beauty, the thought of the brilliant Dostoevsky imposes on us that "for the secret of man's being is not only to live but to have something to live for." And we have partial determinants of such and similar matters in the works of many world writers.

The general art and literature in any case, looking from the anthropological aspect, cannot be singled out from the established, facts for the development of civilisation values that in the directory of the European and generally, world, cultural heritage exist and resist marginalisation. This proves that literary creation in the Balkans has its authentic artistic growth by many modern directions that are avant-garde

and that do not come down to narrow deliberations in the meanings of daily requests. The springs of metamorphoses imply spiking, that in the vision of French writer André Malraux mean the bloom of the world's future "library" – symbolically understood as the remembrance of the man's creation so far and generally the most grateful construction dedicated to the inexhaustible imaginable enigma.

These days, in Belgrade's *Politika* daily, we could find an interesting article about today's reader, who, as the author Aleksandra Đuričić points out, still opts for paper books with "smell and texture", unlike the bland, impersonal "Kindle" that entertains dozens thousands of books, defeating us once again by reminding us of our finiteness. The article was written to echo Alberto Manguel's book *Packing My Library*, demonstrating how much we are all at a "crossroads of paper and digital book" today. By all means, we could name other examples of new techniques and technologies in printing, especially when it comes to the books made on mobile phones, Facebook accounts and emails, all in order to reduce people's distance from each other, being subordinated to the pace of living, writing and reading in various innovative ways in preventing the marginalization of books. Thus, contemporary author Milanka Mamula, who lives both in Italy and in Serbia, explaining the genesis of her new novel, written in form of text messages, knows that this new creation, alternative by its formation, is somewhat uncertain in acceptance by the readership, but it is worth trying. At any rate, it deserves due attention in overcoming default models. This phenomenon of fast living and, in general, facing the fate of time, was formulated by the Serbian contemporary poet Dragiša Drašković with a sentence: "I was going to say, and it's been a decade already..." Also, when regards myriads of newly published books, the thought of Serbia's most renowned poetess Desanka Maksimović comes to the mind, words

uttered at Belgrade's Book Fair once: "Here, I feel both happy and sad – happy to see thousands of new books, and sad for not being able to read them all." Indeed, don't we all who respect and love literature feel the same, wherever we live: in Azerbaijan, Japan, India, Turkey, Russia, Egypt, Norway, England, Mexico, Serbia... If we are all to broaden the horizon of culture, above all believing that literature, and primarily poetry, justifies its manifold function by a more complete and acquisition of freedom and enrichment with indispensable properties of love and peace today – and even more so tomorrow.

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