

## THE TEACHER AS A MODELLING FACTOR OF LITERARY POETICS AND GENRE STRUCTURE

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**Abstract:** *The author of the present study analyzes the role of the character of the teacher in literature as a modelling factor of literary poetics and genre structure. The theme of the teacher needs certain literary forms, certain morphology, usually a certain genre, literary kind based on different semantic levels (critical, satirical, humouristic, psychological, philosophical and existential); it is demonstrated on the material of the prose works by B. Němcová, Z. Winter, A. P. Chekhov, J. Drda, Ch. Aitmatov, J. Škvorecký, and G. Swift. Literature likes human characters who have special professions and can become symbols, emblems of human fates in general. Besides soldiers, national heroes, political leaders, doctors of medicine, solicitors etc., an important position is occupied by teachers. Though the social and power role of the teacher is still weaker, in literature there is quite a lot of arguments why it is so.*

**Keywords:** *the character of the teacher in literature, poetics, genre structure, critical, satirical, humouristic, psychological, philosophical and existential semantic levels (B. Němcová, Z. Winter, A. P. Chekhov, J. Drda, Ch. Aitmatov, J. Škvorecký, G. Swift)*

In literary scholarship or criticism the problem of the subject or theme has always been solved in relation to poetics or poetology, i. e. to the morphology of the literary artefact. There has always been a clash of the two principles: theme/subject/story/plot (the terms are evidently often used in different meanings in connection with the methodology each school of literary criticism insists on) and poetics, i. e. literary morphology. The character of the very relation is two-sided: the subject/story/plot influences and forms the poetics of the artefact, on the other hand, the conventional genre structure determines – in a way and to a certain extent – the shaping of the story/plot. It is obvious that the depiction of the Napoleonic wars in Tolstoy's *War and Peace* needs a different genre structure than the description of a love affair or a passing amorous passion. This is the pathos Victor Shklovsky develops when he – of course, much later after his formalist period – speaks about the content form and the formative content. Obviously, the

problem does not consist in the priority of either form or content in the original meaning of the Russian formalism concept but in the dialectical bonds between the two poles of artistic creation.

The aim of this concise contribution is not the mechanical description of how the subject of the teacher or teachers has been realised in literary artefacts, but, on the contrary, the analysis of the pressure the subject/story/plot generates upon the form and genre structure of literature. Therefore, the subject of the teacher in literature does not represent a mere collection or array of various examples or realisations, but the comparatively complicated processes of genre formation under the impact of content elements of the plot. The figure of the teacher is, consequently, not only an artistic reflection of the human character's reality, but through the intrinsic potentiality the very demiurge of a literary creation.

Thus the theme of the teacher might influence both the morphological and content structure of the literary artefact: we used the similar method several years ago when writing about the phenomenon of madness in the 19th- and 20th-century Russian literature.<sup>1</sup> The enclave character of Russia preserving the European Middle Ages against the Reformation and also contacting the Europe of Modern Times manifested the enclave character of Russian culture connecting the allochthonous and autochthonous impulses. The subject of madness appears on the following three levels: 1. As a destruction of rationality, rational and moral structure of the world under the impact of existential aspects leading to disintegration of human beings. 2. As a social and ethical substitution in which the category of madness can help the characters to overcome their social barriers. 3. As a compromising, imposed social role. For example, in Pushkin's poetic and dramatic works the presence of the motifs of madness leads to various genre transformations: from Shakespearean drama to the existential dramatic structures as a result of the generic modification of medieval exempla. The motifs of the disintegration of reason functions as a catalyzer of the restructuralization of the original genre which becomes another, new genre basis: the lyric-epic poem becomes the inverted narrative poem of historical character, the burlesque poem tends to psychological novella, the historical ode changes into the tragedy of the personality, the dramatic exempla into existential tragedies.

The theme of the teacher is determined by literary streams, by the aesthetics the streams imply (Romanticism, realism, modernism) and by their generic basis: on the other hand, the theme itself may lead to specific ideological and morphological levels: to didactic, exemplary contemplations, nostalgic memories of the past, to the idealisations of childhood, to the protest against normative history, against the passive role of men and women, to madness or to the category of the fool or foolishness<sup>2</sup>, but also to humour and satire. The teacher is often depicted as a stranger, fool, naive and simple man, as somebody who has a very low social status, a humble servant of the urban or rural society, a good man who shares the interests of the community he/she lives in and those of his/her pupils/students; on the contrary, he may represent a repulsive type of man, traitor, crawler, a dunce, primitive who cannot understand the simplest and elementary human moral principles. In general, the teacher is very often manifested as an outcast, permanently degraded by the society who is forced to behave as extremely dependant

<sup>1</sup> I. Pospišil: *Fenomén šílenství v ruské literatuře 19. a 20. století*. Masarykova univerzita, Brno 1995.

<sup>2</sup> See D. Hodrová: *Hledání románu. Kapitoly z historie a typologie žánru*. Čs. spisovatel, Praha 1989.

and whose moral behaviour is being affected by the tendency to mechanical respect for social and professional hierarchies.

Speaking about literary genres the teacher theme leads to the philosophical contemplation, to moralizing and descriptive prose, to the university novel or to the novel of the fool, possibly the most profound level of the teacher theme. The thematic level of the main character forms and formulates its literary expression, searches for its adequate genre structure. To sum up, the teacher subject which is by no means an ordinary cluster of everyday motifs, but very often something specific, extraordinary, exclusive, not normal even if the main character does represent a disgusting example of human character. So to speak, paradoxically, the teacher who is usually regarded as a very conforming, loyal, cowardly type of man, reveals his/her non-conforming, protesting, non-loyal construction. Therefore his/her factual impact on the aesthetic and genre structure of literature is much stronger and stranger than that of other figures, characters and heroes. Vice versa: literature in general is probably the only field in which the teacher even nowadays might represent the real, consistent and strong human character: neither the didactic nor exemplary one, nor the cowardly and disgusting.

From the historical point of view it is understandable that the perception of the teacher outside literature and arts in general developed due to his/her social position and moral status; he/she reaches his/her culmination in the Enlightenment period and mainly later in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries when his/her role was exaggerated which was manifested more in his/her moral and ethical than economic position; in interwar Czechoslovakia even his/her economic position in connection with the other strata of society improved a great deal, but in literature the character of the teacher has always stood extremely high, and the words „extremely“ or „extreme“ have also other meanings in this context as he/she has always occupied an extreme position as a literary character, at least in the eyes of the reading public: too moralistic, sometimes extremely loyal or even humbled, another time cowardly, wicked, malicious, sometimes heroic, sometimes reflecting and profound, but never medium-sized, average, colourless. Probably it was the literature, the *belles-lettres* which provided the teacher with the spiritual qualities he/she has never or very seldom had in reality.

Let us have a look at a cluster of literary patterns in which the character of the teacher shine with brilliant intensity. We have chosen several literary prose artefacts from various national literatures which illustrate the intrinsic modifications of the character of the teacher in literature on the one hand and its role in the formation of poetological and generic structure of literature on the other.

The Czech „postromantic“ writer **Božena Němcová**'s (1820? - 1862) *Pan učitel* (1860, *A Teacher*) shows „her“ teacher as a modest, pleasant and humanist character, a typical representative of little Czech men who created the Czech national character at least in the country among the poor peasants. Her simple, transparent depictions reveal 19<sup>th</sup>-century Czech village social structure with the Catholic priest, teacher, peasants and poor people idealizing the character of the teacher with his sad fate, with his non-romantic behaviour, rather sentimental moods and simple, didactic, instructive, religious and moderately optimistic (that of the Enlightenment tradition) vision of the world. Němcová characterizes him as a bridge on which the child can easily get from the bank of the childhood to the opposite side of the adulthood, stressing the teacher's

ability to enable a simple socialization, adaptation to the prevalently inimical world. In her descriptions of the village school the authoress accentuates the sentimentalist/preromantic opposition of urban and rural environment. The short story or novella has a memoir character: it depicts the evolution of the relation of a small girl to her village teacher from the first years at school up to the teacher's death. The incipit of the short story manifests the people's hopes and understanding of the role of the school in the 19<sup>th</sup> century; at the same time, the short story manifests the authoress' own ethical and aesthetic conceptions, her preference of the village life, the idealization of simple people and the role of the social elite, taking into account the teacher's economic motivation: „Myslilít' moji rodiče a nemýlili se, že k životnímu vzdělání mi lépe škola vesnická s řádným, svědomitým učitelem než škola městská poslouží. Znalít' bezpochyby, že nejen ve městě, ale sem a tam i v městečku hrává si učitel na pana profesora a dává si taktéž říkat od rodičů i od žáků a v té důmince že se nesníží, jak toho třeba, k žákům svým, ani v mluvení ani v obcování; pracujeť obyčejně napřed se zámožnějšími, a ponevadž, jak desátá a čtvrtá hodina padne, od učení přestává, pro děti nuznějších rodičů času mu nezbyvá; v hodince, v privatě, za něž zvláště má placeno, odhaluje teprv tajnosti všelikera umění, dělá nejdůležitější úkoly, opravuje bedlivěji a mírněji všeliké poklesky dětské. Však nižší městské školy bývají velmi přeplněné a těžko jimi k vyšším, prázdnějším třídám probřednouti.“<sup>3</sup>

The teacher had no good reputation because of his/her poverty, weak hygiene and physical punishments he carries out: „Vždy mi doma u nás říkávaly děti, že je pan učitel ušňupaný, že má vestu a prsty samý tabák, že nosí pod paží rákosku, a když se rozzlobí, že zaskřípá zuby, že si položí dítě přes koleno a kam řeže tam řeže. Učitel byl pro mne tedy člověk hrozný, ošklivý a bála jsem se ho více než Mikuláše.“<sup>4</sup> Her real teacher, on the contrary, demonstrated quite different qualities: kindness, love of nature, understanding, empathy, social feelings, love of books, culture and education; he has often become a natural tutor and spokesman of the interests of the people: „Byltě pan učitel učiněná dobrota a láska jak k nám, tak i k lidem. - Kdo jaké rady potřeboval, jakou stížnost měl, kdo prosbu jakou neb žádost napsanou míti chtěl, každý jen k panu učiteli, poradil a posloužil každému poctivě, nežádaje odměny.“<sup>5</sup>

If he was a friend of the priest or other powerful and influential people in the village, he could even more help their neighbours. Nature, music, culture, books – there are the spheres in which the teacher seemed to be unsubstitutable. Němcová also presents the teacher's life portrait, his intimate problems and tragic fate of his family when she is by chance present at his funeral. The old-world model of the teacher the reader can find in Němcová's *Pan učitel* represents the serious beginning of the Czech tradition of the literature on teachers: the natural continuation is manifested by the so-called university novel. It may seem paradoxical and even ridiculous, but the model is quite similar; the teacher no matter which type of school he/she comes from still fulfills the main tasks of his/her profession in changing social situations which reveal more intimate and complicated parts of his/her life due to his/her more complicated social functions.

While Němcová constructs his image of the teacher due to the contemporary situation of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the Czech historical novelist **Zikmund Winter** (1846-

<sup>3</sup> B. Němcová: *Pan učitel*. Praha 1958, p. 8.

<sup>4</sup> B. Němcová: *Pan učitel*. Praha 1958, p. 12.

<sup>5</sup> B. Němcová: *Pan učitel*. Praha 1958, p. 29.

1912) looks back to describe the life of a bachelor in the Central-Bohemian town of the period of the Renaissance in his novella *Nezbedný bakalář* (1883, *The Naughty Bachelor*). The teacher with university ideals directly taken from Charles University, with a relative freedom of the students' behaviour and morals has to be confronted with everyday routine and tension in social relations far from the ideals of free society: „Do města vjel bakalář na plesnivém valachu napřed, za ním fasaňk se studenty. Primáné a sekundáné jsouce nejstarší a nejrozumnější, zpytavě hleděli na obě strany nového svého vůkolí; terciáné a ostatní drobotina nepřestali se ani teď, když na ně rakovnická obec seběhla se podívat, thřati se za nosy a štěbetati jako housátka.“<sup>6</sup>

Z. Winter – unlike B. Němcová – is a pure realist, depicting the everyday details including the bachelor's realist attitude to life: a touch of sadness and nostalgia pervades the tiring depictions of the life in a little town close to Prague especially when the novelist accentuates the didactic, the national and the revival role of the bachelor in the sense of the 19th-century Czech national revival programme: „Když neměl pan bakalář hlavu pitím obtíženu, byl učitelem i správcem školy výborným. Milá byla slova, když se ve škole mezi primány a sekundány, kteříž v jedné síni seděli pohromadě, bakalář rozhovořil se o tom, jak veliké věci předkové naši před celým světem dovozovali.“<sup>7</sup>

**Anton Pavlovich Chekhov** (1860-1906) – besides humouristic short stories, world-famous dramas and the only novel called *Sakhalin* (1893) - wrote several novellas with striking melancholic and nostalgic atmosphere. One of the most expressive is the novella *Учитель словесности* (1894, *The Teacher of Literature*). The plot is based on the disillusionment of an ageing teacher who gets even with his life: „Мартовское солнце светило ярко, и сквозь оконные стекла падали на стол горячие лучи. Было еще только двадцатое число, но уже ездил на колесах, и в саду шумели скворцы. Позже было не то, что сейчас вот войдет Манюся, обнимет одною рукой за шею и скажет, что подали к крыльцу верховых лошадей или шарабан, и спросит, что ей надеть, чтобы не озябнуть [...] Меня окружает пошлость и пошлость. Скучные, ничтожные люди, горшочки со сметаной, кувшины с молоком, тараканы, глупые женщины... Нет ничего страшнее, оскорбительнее, тоскливее пошлости. Бежать отсюда, бежать сегодня же, иначе я сойду с ума!“<sup>8,9</sup> The desire, longing for leaving the tedious life full of stereotypes reminds of Tolstoyan philosophy of „non resisting evil through violence“.

The profound view of life is also represented by *The Centaur* (1962), a novel by **John Updike** (1932-2009) in which the teacher presents himself as a mythical being from ancient Greece tossed between the lofty ideals and banalities of everyday life.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Z. Winter: *Nezbedný bakalář (Starobylyý obrázek z Rakovnicka)*. Melantrich, Praha 1984, p. 44.

<sup>7</sup> Z. Winter: *Nezbedný bakalář (Starobylyý obrázek z Rakovnicka)*. Melantrich, Praha 1984, p. 64.

<sup>8</sup> А. П. Чехов: Учитель словесности, in: А. П. Ч.: В человеке должно быть все прекрасно... Письма, рассказы, пьеса. „Молодая гвардия“, Москва 1980, pp. 197-198.

<sup>9</sup> During John Updike's short stay in Brno in 1986 I met him and made a concise interview with him. It is characteristic that he knew and praised modern Russian Soviet prose (mainly the so-called village prose, specially V. Rasputin) and, of course, the Russian classical literature, including Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, and Chekhov. See our article and interview with Updike: *John Updike v Brně*. Rovnost 8. 4. 1986, p. 5. Some new comments see our remark: *Pozapomenutý rozhovor s Johnem Updikem v Brně*. Salon, Právo, 25. 9. 1997, s. 2.

<sup>10</sup> Jna Drda (1915-1970) was a writer of quite a complicated life and ideological position. He became famous as early as the 1940s in the framework of the phenomenon of „the Protectorate prose“, the literature characterized by specific poetics based mainly on psychological introspection and a more expressive style (*Městečko na dlani*, 1940; *Živá voda*, 1941; *Putování Petra Sedmilháře*, 1943; his collection of short stories from the Prague anti-Nazi uprising in May 1945 *Němá barikáda - The Dumb Barricade*, 1945 - the short story *Vyšší princip - The Higher Law* - is its part) was one of his last aesthetically valuable artefacts).

The informal heroic behaviour can be demonstrated by the Czech writer **Jan Drda**'s<sup>11</sup> short story *Vyšší princip* (*The Higher Law*); the title goes back to the frequent saying of the teacher of Latin at a Czech grammar school during the German Nazi occupation in the period of the so-called Heydrichiade, Nazi terror following after the assassination of the German Reichsprotektor Reinhard Heydrich in summer 1942. If the reader wants to understand this short story in 4 pages in its complexity, he should be informed about the details of the *Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren* including the closing of Czech universities and colleges after mass demonstrations in Autumn 1939 celebrating the anniversary of the foundation of the Czechoslovak Republic mainly the university students participated in. The teacher (in Czech he is labelled „professor“ according to fashionable French titles) is not definitely a heroic character, rather just the opposite; he is interested only in Latin and the life in his ancient Graeco-Roman world. But the horrible situation which irreversibly touched his Latin class made him the man who not only risks his life, but expresses his great trust in his students; he completely fulfilled his human fate and his civic duty. In the very beginning he is being represented more or less as a ridiculous oddity who is manifested also by his appearance: „V nehrabaných, špatně žehlených šatech venkovského střihu, obličej zdolčkovatělý obrovskými jizvami po černých neštovicích, a aktovkou věčně zatěžkou klasiky, z nichž citovával dlouhé odstavce opojen krásou textu a zapomínaje na svůj krákoravý hlas, byl pro septimány figurkou krajně komickou.“<sup>12</sup> In such words the author describes the cathartic moments of the plot: „Kolega Vyšší princip se vrátil do třídy za pár minut. Nohy se pod ním chvěly, že sotva došel ke katedře. Zhroutil se na židli, sevřel své obrovské vypouklé čelo kostnatými prsty, a dočista přejinačeným, dětsky naříkavým hlasem tiše bědoval: Neslýchané...Neslýchané! Pak se přece jenom vzmužil, a pohlédnuv do očí své třídy, zkameněl zlou předtuchou, chraptavě koktal: Vaši...vaši...spolužáci...byli zatčeni... Jaké absurdní – nedorozumění ...moji...moji...žáci...[...] Také já...schvaluji atentát na Heydricha.“<sup>13</sup> The situation stylized in concise, compressed manner (the homonymous Czech film, 1960 – director Jiří Krejčík – was too lengthy and therefore much less effective) needs the knowledge of some other typically Czech allusions linked with the specific period of the Nazi occupation and with the Czech historical emblems (confirmation of the assassination of Reichsprotektor R. Heydrich, the enforced approval with executions of political opponents in the 1950s, the so-called coping with the religious question in 1958, the disagreement with the Soviet occupation in 1968, etc.).

One of the few Soviet Kyrgyz world-famous writers **Chingiz Aitmatov** (1928-2008)<sup>13</sup> cultivated, above all, the topics of a creative man, either painter or writer as a main character or a narrator of the plots. One of his earliest short story written in both versions (Kyrgyz and Russian, later he wrote prevalently in Russian, e. g. his magical, mythological novels *The Day Lasts More Than a Hundred Years - И дольше века длится день*, 1980, *The Scaffold - Плаха*, 1986, *Cassandra's Brand - Тавро Кассандры*,

<sup>11</sup> J. Drda: *Vyšší princip*, in: J. D.: *Němá barikáda*. Čs. spisovatel, Praha 1985, p. 24.

<sup>12</sup> J. Drda: *Vyšší princip*, in: J. D.: *Němá barikáda*. Čs. spisovatel, Praha 1985, pp. 26, 28.

<sup>13</sup> See R. Porter: *Four Contemporary Russian Writers*. Berg Publishers, Oxford - New York - Munich 1989. See our review: *Čtyři podobizny*. Čs. rusistika 1990, 5, pp. 288-291. See also our treatises on Aitmatov: *Trnitá cesta k zralému lidství*. Světová literatura 1981, 5. *Touha po románu: Ajmatovo Popraviště*. Kmen 50, 17.12.1986. *Ajmatovova cesta k románu: druhý pokus*. Světová literatura 1987, 4, pp. 233-235. See also our book *Spálená křídla. Malý průvodce po české recepci ruské prózy 70. a 80. let 20. století*. Masarykova univerzita, Brno 1998.

1996) is *The First Teacher* (*Первый учитель*, 1962) in which the author synthesizes his Romanticism, love of creativity, humanity, nature and human transformation of interpersonal relations manifesting the October Revolution in an idealised shape: „Но в том-то и дело, что в те дни люди по темноте своей не придавали значения учебе, а Дюйшена считали в лучшем случае чудачком, который возится с ребяташками от нечего делать. Охота тебе — учи, а нет — разгони всех по домам. Сами они ездили верхом и в переправах не нуждались. А все-таки следовало, конечно, нашему народу призадуматься: ради чего этот молодой парень, который ничем не хуже и не глупее других, ради чего он, терпя трудности и лишения, снося насмешки и оскорбления, учит их детей, да еще с таким необыкновенным упорством, с такой нечеловеческой настойчивостью?“<sup>14</sup>

The connection of the main character with nature and with the lives of simple village people is the thematic dominant and the source of his strength as well as the poetical passages of the narrator of the story: „Может быть, это и была первая весна моей юности. Во всяком случае, она казалась мне краше прежних весен. С бугра, где стояла наша школа, открывался глазам прекрасный мир весны. Земля, словно бы раскинув руки, сбегала с гор и неслась, не в силах остановиться, в мерцающие серебряные дали степи, объятые солнцем и легкой, призрачной дымкой. Где-то за тридцать земель голубели тальные озера, где-то за тридцать земель ржали кони, где-то за тридцать земель пролетали в небе журавли, неся на крыльях белые облака. Откуда летели журавли и куда они звали сердце такими томительными, такими трубными голосами?“<sup>15</sup>

In connection with the contemporary tragic situation in Kyrgyzstan and other countries of the former Soviet Central Asia Aitmatov seems to have been a typical representative of the conviction that education, culture and arts are the main successful tools in the process of humanization of mankind in which the teacher plays the most important role - one of the Enlightenment illusions.

On the contrary, one of the most negative image of the teacher in world literature is represented by the novella *The Legend Emöke* (1963, *Legenda Emöke*) by the Czech prose writer and translator **Josef Škvorecký** (born 1924). The novel as a result of the liberalization wave in the Czechoslovakia of the 1960s contains nearly all important „curious questions“ of Czech and Czechoslovak history including the expulsion of Germans and Hungarians after 1945, cold war events and atmosphere and – above all – the type of a teacher as the most repulsive character – opposing a beautiful Hungarian lady named Emöke – who is not able to learn even a simple party game. The hatred and contempt of teachers is firmly confirmed in Czech social environment and represents the reverse side of Němcová’s love of her teacher and his idealization in the sense of the Enlightenment ideals; the teacher here is rather a symbol of immoral adaptability, endless flexibility, animality, opportunism and cowardly behaviour. The teacher in the Czech environment never evokes neutral reactions, rather always the prejudiced ones, nowadays mostly only negatively („they have holidays, therefore their profession is not a real work where there is only a holiday; though everybody knows this is a disinformation, everybody likes to use it; famous a school cleaning woman’s statement: „Everybody can make it:

<sup>14</sup> Ц. Айтматов: *Первый учитель*. Москва 1978, p. 32.

<sup>15</sup> Ц. Айтматов: *Первый учитель*. Москва 1978, p. 41.

to dress nicely and stand before the class“; I have even the suspicion that at universities the bureaucracy often does not understand why – except the clerks – there are also professors and students). At the same time, the opposition of the poetical legend and a opportunist, unimaginative character of the teacher as part of „the legend“, the narrated story and the constructed plot brings the nostalgia and weariness of life, and the art of narrating as a creative aspect of human activity; it is probably not accidental that the similar motifs of creativity are connected with both the negative and the positive character of the teacher who as if evoked these motifs and aspects: „Příběh se stává a zapadá a nikdo jej nevypráví. Potom někde žije člověk, odpoledne jsou horká a marná a přijdou vánoce a člověk umírá a na hřbitov přibude nová deska se jménem. Dva, tři, muž, bratr, matka nosí ještě několik roků to světlo, tu legendu v hlavě, a potom také umřou. Pro děti je to už jen starý film, nezaostřená aura rozlité tváře. Vnuci nevědí nic. A ostatní lidé zapomenou. Pro člověka není už ani jméno, ani vzpomínka, ani prázdno. Nic.“<sup>16</sup>

The negative and contemptuous relation to teachers is only insufficiently sneaking feature of the contemporary Czech society, though outwards it is evaluated as prestigious. One of the striking examples may be one passage from the memoirs of the secretary of the former Czechoslovak Union of Writers (in the 1960s) Vlastimil Maršíček (1923-2000) quoting another Czech writer František Flos (1864-1961), a school inspector by profession, who even rejected to pay the teachers their daily allowance for their rare business trips: the teacher is not a mere profession, it is a mission, so they do not need any money.<sup>17</sup>

The British prose writer **Graham Swift** (born 1949)<sup>18</sup> in his novel *Waterland* (1983) presents the character of the teacher of history who revolts against the traditional concept of history as a process realized by great men and women only: „What is a history teacher? He’s someone who teaches mistakes. While others say ‚Here’s how to do it’, he says, ‚And here’s what goes wrong.’ While others tell you, ‚This is the way, this is the path’, he says, ‚And here are a few bumbles, botches, blunders and fiascos...’ It does not work out; it’s human to err...“<sup>19</sup>. He starts teaching quite a different history of little people not from above, but from below coming to the realistic, rather skeptical view of the world’s evolution (About Empire-Building): „Once upon a time people believed in the end of the world. Look in the old books: see how many times and on how many pretexts the end of the world has been prophesied and foreseen, calculated and imagined. But that, of course, was superstition. The world grew up. It didn’t end. People threw off superstition as they threw off their parents. Then said ‚Don’t believe that old mumbo-jumbo. You can change the world, you can make it better. The heavens won’t fall.’ It was true. For a little while – it didn’t start so long ago, only a few generations ago – the world went through its revolutionary, progressive phase; and the world believed it would never end, it would go on getting better. But then the end of the world came back again, not

<sup>16</sup> J. Škvorecký: *Legenda Emöke*. Čs. spisovatel, Praha 1963, p. 7.

<sup>17</sup> See V. Maršíček: *Nezval, Seifert a ti druzí... Necenzurovaný slovník českých spisovatelů*. HOST, Brno 1999. See also our review: *Noblesna, upřímnost, kouzlo nechtěného a sami proti sobě*. KAM-příloha 2000, 2 (únor), p. VI-VII.

<sup>18</sup> See his novels *The Sweet-Shop Owner* (1980), *Shuttlecock* (1982), *Waterland* (1983), *Out of This World* (1988) *Ever After* (1992), *Last Order* (1996), *The Light of Day* (2003), *Tomorrow* (2007), *Making an Elephant: Writing from Within* (2009).

<sup>19</sup> G. Swift: *Waterland*. Pan Books Ltd., The Picador Edition, London 1981, p. 203.



as an idea or a belief but as something the world had manufactured for itself all the time it was growing up. Which only goes to show that if the end of the world didn't exist it would be necessary to invent it. There's this thing called progress. But it doesn't progress. It doesn't go anywhere. Because as progress progresses the world can slip away. It's progress if you can stop the world slipping away. My humble model for progress is the reclamation of land. Which is repeatedly, never-endingly retrieving what is lost. A dogged and vigilant business. A dull yet valuable business. A hard, inglorious business. But you shouldn't go mistaking the reclamation of land for the building of empires."<sup>20</sup>

Thus the teacher in Swift's conception became a visionary and a prophet of new attitude to mankind's history and - more or less – to the core of human existence, and that is probably the most philosophical level the topics ever reached.

Literature likes human characters, who have special professions and can become symbols, emblems of human fates in general. Besides soldiers, national heroes, political leaders, doctors of medicine, solicitors etc., an important position is occupied by teachers. Though the social and power role of the teacher is still weaker, in literature there is quite a lot of arguments why it is so.

## UČITEL JAKO MODELUJÍCÍ FAKTOR LITERÁRNÍ POETIKY A ŽÁNROVÉ STRUKTURY

**Abstrakt:** Autor přítomné stati analyzuje úlohu postavy učitele v literatuře jako modelující faktor literární poetiky a žánrové struktury. Téma učitele vyžaduje jisté literární tvary, určitou morfologii, obvykle jistý žánr, literární druh založený na různých sémantických rovinách (kritické, satirické, humoristické, psychologické, filozofické a existenciální); tu se předvádí na materiálu prozaických děl B. Němcové, Z. Wintera, A. P. Čechova, J. Drdy, Č. Ajtmatova, J. Škvoreckého a G. Swifta. Literatura má ráda lidské postavy, jež mají zvláštní profesi a mohou se stát symboly, emblémy lidských osudů obecně. Kromě vojáků, národních hrdinů, politických vůdců, lékařů, advokátů atd., mají tu významnou úlohu také učitelé. I když jejich společenská a mocenská role stále slábne, v literatuře je dost argumentů, proč tomu tak je.

**Klíčová slova:** postava učitele v literatuře, poetika, žánrová struktura, kritická, satirická, humoristická, psychologická, filozofická and existenciální sémantická rovina (B. Němcová, Z. Winter, A. P. Chekhov, J. Drda, Ch. Aitmatov, J. Škvorecký, G. Swift)

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<sup>20</sup> G. Swift: Waterland. Pan Books Ltd., The Picador Edition, London 1981, p. 291.