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Jaroslav Lopuschanskyj, Natalija Daschko (Hg.)

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THE PERCEPTION PERSPECTIVES OF THE WORK OF INGEBORG BACHMANN

Ivan Zymomrya (Drohobytsch)

A systemic understanding of interaction features which delineate the paradigm „author – character – reader“ is essential not only in the dimension of its strategic content perception on a receptive esthetics level, but also with respect to semantic pragmatics of the texts' structure. Since „each highly artistic literary work, – as reasonably emphasized by an authoritative Ukrainian literary scholar Hryhoriy Klochek, – is a unique phenomenon, adapted to express inimitable art sense. That is why the links between its components are also unique. The cognition of a highly artistic work system always comes as a revelation“¹. This problem sees its complete disclosure through a relational prism which is interpreted by the established kind of a narrative contact between the author, character and reader. Such contact is directed toward its defining line, based on a dialogue. Qualitative understanding is meant – and in a broader sense – the manifestations of a dialogue as an array and its contentual and semantic features. Definitely, dialogue's philosophy, having its origins in antiquity, gains strong ground where the artistic communicative significance is of prime importance. It specifies the organic relationship and its logics that lead to a dialogue within the concept of „author – character – reader“. The Russian literature specialist Oleksandr Levidov's (1895 – 1968) work is worth mentioning here. It states the systemic nature of an aforementioned combination, where character is an intermediate between the reader and the author, as the creator of a literary text². The latter manifests itself as a certain pattern when it comes to genre and style features in the works of an outstanding Austrian writer Ingeborg Bachmann (1926 – 1973).

I. Bachmann debuted in the Austrian literary periodicals at the turn of the 40's-50's after publishing prose miniatures ›The Ferry‹ (›Die Fähre‹), ›The Great Game‹ (›Das schöne Spiel‹), ›In Heaven and on Earth‹ (›Im Himmel und auf Erden‹),

¹ Григорій Клочек, Внутрішня гармонізація художнього твору як чинник його цілісності та художньої довершеності, in: Наукові записки Кіровоградського державного педагогічного університету ім. В. Винниченка. Серія: Філологічні науки (літературознавство), Кіровоград 2012, вип. 111, с. 3–11, тут с. 10.

² АЛЕКСАНДР ЛЕВИДОВ, Автор – образ – читатель, Ленинград 1977, 360 с., тут с. 335–336.

›The Shore‹ (›Das Ufer‹), ›The Sphinx's Smile‹ (›Das Lächeln der Sphinx‹), ›The Mannequins of Ibycus‹ (›Die Mannequins des Ibykus‹), ›The Caravan and the Resurrection‹ (›Die Karawane und die Auferstehung‹), ›The Commandant‹ (›Der Kommandant‹), ›I also Lived in Arcadia‹ (›Auch ich habe in Arkadien gelebt‹), ›The Shop with The Dreams‹ (›Ein Geschäft mit Träumen‹), ›A Cripple‹ (›Der Hinkende‹), ›The Window on the Ethna‹ (›Ein Fenster zum Ätna‹). The documentary ›I Cannot Live among People. In the footsteps of Ingeborg Bachmann‹ (›Der ich unter Menschen nicht leben kann. Auf den Spuren Ingeborg Bachmanns‹, 1980) presents interesting evidence about the reorientation of her artistic and aesthetic principles. The author – the German film director, poet and literary critic Peter Hamm – edited the I. Bachmann's frank confession about the total loss of attraction to poetry in her artistic beliefs, as she reached the limits of traditional capabilities typical for this writing mode. It was prose and its genre modifications that turned to be most suitable for adequate reproduction of contemporary atmosphere characterized by the crisis of moral values. As W. Weiss has precisely observed, „Ingeborg Bachmann combines her new metaphorical speech form with finding the sence in human life under threat or with elegiac complaints about its loss. She never separates avantgarde from history and traditions“³.

Although I. Bachmann's contemporaries adopted a certain distance, while analyzing her prose works, they were constantly in the center of literary debate within the German-speaking area. It is worth emphasizing the fact that in 1968 she was awarded the Great Austrian State Prize in Literature. It was a real precedent in the matters of recognizing her heritage at home. The writer was able to form a new aesthetic thinking in Austrian literature⁴, which had a significant impact on Elfriede Gerstl, Elfriede Jelinek, Barbara Frischmuth, Marlene Haushofer, Marianne Gruber, Anne Mitgutsch, Elisabeth Reichart, Margit Hahn⁵.

An artistic effect is a manifestation of creative intuition and at the same time „the way of poetic painting“ (I. Franko). It plays a significant role in realizing a fact of model visions. A similar approach makes it possible to understand and interpret I. Bachmann's creative phenomenon. Her artistic intuition – as to the active contemplation – causes a specific empathy effect, the perception of eternal and not „unstable“ truths. All this relates to the aesthetic, ethical and artistic functions.

Understanding human life, man's present and future, his individual psychology aspirations and continuity – these are the issues that create the foundations of I. Bachmann's art. The writer's attention is attracted by the impact of social environment on identity formation (eg the short story ›Barking‹) and by the particula-

³ WALTER WEISS, Zwischenbilanz – österreichische Beiträge zur Gegenwartsliteratur, in: *Literatur und Literaturgeschichte in Österreich*; [hrsg. von Ilona T. Erdélyi], Budapest 1979, S. 203–215, hier S. 206.

⁴ ZOFIA KRZYSZTOFORSKA-WEISSWASSER, *Obraz i problemy kobiet we współczesnej literaturze austriackiej*, in: *Wiek Kobiet w literaturze*; [pod redakcją Jadwigi Zacharskiej, Marka Kochanowskiego], Białystok 2002, S. 307–321, hier S. 307.

⁵ ІВАН ЗИМОМРЯ, *Австрійська мала проза ХХ століття : художня світобудова* : [монографія] / Іван Зимомря ; [наук. ред. Р. Т. Гром'як], Дрогобич-Тернопіль 2011, 396 с., тут с. 193.

rized man's place in the society when there is a co-existence of emotional, volitional, rational and irrational elements in his inner world.

The author avoids conformist approaches and established views in her quest to find and perceive the general truth and historical events, to undertake an individual assessment. She chose the difficult path, not only in the semantic configuration of her literary works, but also in the psychological completeness of images. Hence – the interest in the signs of personal otherness. Their variety outlines the comprehensive relationships between people, languages and cultures.

In the artistic universe of I. Bachmann this otherness doesn't acquire the features of a privileged state, but it remains largely out of comprehension and understanding of a near reach. So, in the story ›Your Happy Eyes‹ (›Ihr glücklichen Augen‹, 1972) a physical defect – an almost complete blindness – becomes the protagonist Miranda's inseparable component of a harmonious existence. She isolates herself from the outside world that offers only the marginal position prescribed for a disabled person.

The linkage to the operating images of limited reality that Miranda multiplies due to their separation into perceptual nuances is a guarantee of her melancholic, sad and yet peaceful existence. Dissolved in it with her doubts, anxieties and pain, the character shuns any dislocational changes in her „I“. She believes in charms that „dieses genaue Sehen ihr erspart bleibt und ihr Gefühl dadurch nicht beeinträchtigt und geschwächt werden kann“⁶. The vision of filtered reality, revealed as hostile space through her lens glasses, causes an involuntary reflex of alienation and rejection. Thus, sensory experience – together with intense aesthetic impressions and life illusions – creates for Miranda the basis for her false well-being, as well as some optical and visual images – for the prospects to face borderline situations, „to look into hell“⁷, to observe an „unhappy, perfidious, doomed, covered with crime or abased faces, sleepy mugs“⁸.

I. Bachmann's work reflects in an original way the ideas of a prominent German philosopher and sociologist Georg Simmel (1858 – 1918). A number of his works had as their subject the outline role of otherness in society. The founder of the so-called „conflict sociology“ („Konfliktsoziologie“) defended the idea that the otherness expresses increased objectivity of its carrier, for it lives in a „synthesis of near and far“⁹.

Such a view on social conflicts was particularly relevant to I. Bachmann. She experienced a mental distance to Austria as her homeland and expressed a desire to learn the related (German, Swiss) and unrelated (Italian, Slovenian, French, American) cultures throughout her life. At this, the writer aimed at emphasizing the features of their identity.

The interest in a symbolic meaning of cultural and regional identity can be explained to a great extent by I. Bachmann's birth place – the city of Klagenfurt in

⁶ INGEBORG BACHMANN, *Ihr glücklichen Augen*, in: I. Bachmann. *Simultan : Erzählungen*, München-Zürich 1991, S. 77–96, hier S. 78.

⁷ Ebenda, S. 78.

⁸ Ebenda, S. 79.

⁹ GEORG SIMMEL, *Gesamtausgabe. Band 11. Soziologie. Untersuchungen über die Formen der Vergesellschaftung*, Berlin 1992, 1051 S., hier S. 766.

Carinthia, on the border between Austria, Italy and Slovenia. This fact greatly influenced her artistic worldview formation.

My youth – recalls I. Bachmann – was spent in Carinthia in the south, on the border, in a valley that has two names – German and Slovenian. The house where my ancestors have lived for generations – Austrians and Veneds – yet still has a strange name. So there is another boundary against borders: the language one; I was at home here and there, among the stories about good and evil spirits of two or three countries, since there starts Italy across the mountains, within an hour's travel¹⁰.

It should be added: this extraneous and unnecessary feeling in Austrian social and cultural life was typical for a number of prominent figures. Among them – I. Aichinger, G. Artmann, P. Handke, M. Holzer, G. Rühm. As I. Bachmann, they consciously went into exile and had to adapt to different socio-political and cultural systems as expatriate writers.

I. Bachmann's characters are not just objects of art but also subjects at „I am a person“-level. Therefore, the author's position is not accentuated, and mostly remains in the subtext. Based on its significance, the reader himself has the opportunity to finish building the episodes, thoughts and states of aesthetic series characteristic of the characters. The Austrian writer did not set a goal in itself to explain to the reader the social principles. In terms of the psychology her vision is built primarily on the basis of immoral nature dominance influencing the actions of characters. Thus narrator's emotional input is minimized. This leads to a visible loss of motivation in the majority of situations and characters' impulsive outbursts.

The means of depiction are subject to a specific purpose, namely to embody in fiction the ideological and aesthetic vision so that it acquires the life and artistic credibility. Associative relations and contemplative moods play a symbolic role in I. Bachmann's small prose. „Remembering spaces – L. Cybenko differentiated reasonably – presents itself important in shaping the writer's mental space (I. Bachmann – I. Z.) in general, and in forming the consciousness space of creative personality, which is outlined by one's living world horizons. „Childhood mental landscape“¹¹ occupies a prominent place among them.

A motivated combination of the examined factors is exemplified in I. Bachmann's story ›Youth in one Austrian City‹ (›Jugend in einer österreichischen Stadt‹, 1959). This early text is devoid of linear and concise storyline presentation. Its connection with reality is emphasized by the use of toponymic proper names: Durchlassstrasse, Bethovenstrasse, Kreuzberg and more. Focusing on fulfilling the purposes of art, the author did not copy the reality reflection, and aesthetically mastered the living material. That's why in her artistic universe the creativity takes place in some different shape from those prevailing in the real environment, with its social and psychological time-space laws and regularities. The narration is done

¹⁰ INGEBOURG BACHMANN, Werke. Bd. 4., Essays, Reden, Vermischte Schriften ; [hrsg. von Christine Koschel, Inge von Weidenbaum, Clemens Münster], München-Zürich 1978, 541 S., hier S. 301.

¹¹ ЛАРИСА ЦИБЕНКО, Топографічна поетика Інгеборґ Бахман: метагеографія письменницької уяви, іп: Вісник Львівського університету. Серія філологічна, Львів, 2008, ч. 1, вип. 44, с. 230–241, тут с. 232.

in accordance with the personal childhood memories diction, which leads to a concealed and innuendo element. It is achieved by the fragmentation of sentence structures, that are drawn onto the epic poetry or lyrical prose verge. Children's perception of the world is not disturbed by a visible interference in textual fabric coming from mature man's position and his prevailing worldview. On the other hand, from the transferable records and associative chains of images and pictures that prompt the recipient to build their own reflection, there emerges a dense image of critical moments in author's life – witnessing violent events that unfolded during the war in Klagenfurt.

In the ›Youth in one Austrian city‹ I. Bachmann combines the impersonal narrative type with conventional „now“ in narrative time. The memory mechanism reconstructs the experienced by reproducing past memories in the mind, and gives it an immediate perspective from the narrative point. The originality of time perception enables I. Bachmann to emphasize the relative nature within the sense of life fullness as accurately captured by the psychology of a moment. In general, it is typical for art practices of iconic XX c. Austrian short fiction creators, for example, T. Bernhard or I. Aichinger. According to O. Astafiev compelling statement „it covers memory resources, the policy of reconciliation and understanding – proceeding from ideology and sociology to art and culture“¹².

The analyzed story opened the collection ›The Thirtieth Year‹ (›Das dreissigste Jahr‹, 1961). It is noteworthy that there are no open and didactic accents. Instead – there are parable philosophemes full of existential meaning. They are characteristic for other texts, which form the structure of I. Bachmann's debut prose books. The writer has inscribed into stories the original concept of human relations with the environment. Its starting point is the freedom of individual consciousness „I am“ from the regulating power coming from outside. However, I. Bachmann gave no universal formula to eliminate the tensions within the complicated matters of aesthetic, ethical, political and ideological dimensions. Instead, by making language tools more compact, she offered the reader a series of branching conflicts: an internal devastation in generational relations between „parents“ and „children“ as a sign of afterwar transformation in social character (›The youth in one Austrian City‹), disharmony between the actual and the desired (›The Thirtieth year‹), parents self-fulfillment in children (›All‹), the search for harmonious coexistence in the same-sex communication (›Step towards Gomorrah‹), the universal values profanity (›Between the Murderers and the Crazy‹), the gender relations dehumanization (›Undine Goes‹), the loss of the established speech norms efficiency and semantic relationships (›Ein Wildermuth‹).

I. Bachmann is an active follower of ideological positions outlined by the Austrian philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889 – 1951). Accordingly, she emphasizes persistently in her prose samples the following thesis: world order must be restored in the process of ordering a language as a truth manifestation; verbal codes can improve, correct, balance, assess, condemn and verify the reality. Proceeding from

¹² ОЛЕКСАНДР АСТАФ'ЄВ, Література австро-українського П'ємонту, in: Олександр Астаф'єв. Орнаменти слова: Розвідки, статті, рецензії ; [упорядкування, післямова М.І.Зимомрі], Київ-Дрогобич, 2011, с. 340–350, тут с. 342–343.

this, complex social and political issues can be positively resolved or aggravated through the language, giving them a clear or vague outline. In this sense, we should refer to the Austrian novelist and critic Ferdinand Kürnberger (1821 – 1879) statement that L. Wittgenstein used as an epigraph to his book ›Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus‹ (1921): „... all known, and not only casually heard, can be pressed in three words“¹³. Hypocrisy is an obstacle to bringing a language up-to-date in a postwar period that lies in the adaptation, conformity, conventionality. „With the updated language, – said I. Bachmann – a meeting with reality is always realized where there is a moral, cognitive breakthrough...“¹⁴. The author’s collection ›The thirtieth year“ warns: the society is doomed to destruction without the revival of moral values. Hence – the aggravating problem of subjective (preferably favored status of „I-person“) and objective („I-person“ actual status) identity as a unit of society. This topic is closely related to the implementation of an aesthetic code within I. Bachmann’s creative output. On the one hand, there was the fame in literary and art circles and among the readers, which came with the first works, and on the other – internal alienation, estrangement, isolation.

The writer’s search for her own identity was accompanied by a dramatic life conflicts and collisions. Thus, individualistic disturbances and presence of doubt played a major role in her works, including her short fiction. The Austrian writer’s approaches to artistic strategies as to the internal organization of the texts belonging to short epic form were dictated by her experience and according to the logic of cultural and historical situation developing in Western Europe in the second half of the XX c.

¹³ LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN, *Tractatus logico-philosophicus* : Logisch-philosophische Abhandlung, Frankfurt am Main 2003, 138 S., hier S. 5.

¹⁴ INGEBOURG BACHMANN, *Werke*. Bd. 4 (zit. Anm. 10), S. 192.