

EMOTIONS IN THE DISCOURSE OF A LITERARY ESSAY: OLGA TOKARCZUK ABOUT BOLESŁAW PRUS'S NOVEL "LALKA"

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The article interprets Olga Tokarczuk's essay *Lalka i Perla* about the novel *Lalka* by Bolesław Prus. An attempt will be made to explain what cognitive value this text has for the reader of Tokarczuk's prose and for the reader who is interested in Prus's novel, and to answer the question whether this essay can be considered as a contribution to literary-historical or other literary-scientific knowledge about Prus. The central thesis of the article is that Tokarczuk's writing about Prus is an example of emotionalized discourse of fictionalized historiographical prose, a hybrid and marginal essayistic genre that appropriates the features of both fictional prose and modern literary scientific writing, compressing some of the traditional essay's procedures, such as presenting personal viewpoints and intentionally impregnating the discourse with private emotional manifestations. The aim of the paper is the analysis of Tokarczuk's writing and the assessment of the scope of her essay in the context of knowledge of Prus's novel.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI:

Bolesław Prus, emotions in a literary essay, Olga Tokarczuk, Polish literature, history of literary reception

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1. INTRODUCTORY CONSIDERATIONS

In Olga Tokarczuk's oeuvre, there is no text that would be genealogically, methodologically, or teleologically related to her discussion or essay (we will return to the genre determination) *Lalka i perła* (Krakow, Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2001). Given the author's already prominent literary status at the beginning of the 2000s, a new reading of the 19th-century Polish literature classic, the novel *Lalka* by Bolesław Prus, was expected. The criticism did not react affirmatively, but on the contrary (Rzymowska 2021: 97–98). We will not present the objections of critics and literary historians – and the author's responses – here, as they are not relevant to our topic, but we will explain why this is the case: there is no doubt that Tokarczuk did not intend, and therefore did not write, a literary history study. Whoever approached her essay with such expectation had to be disappointed, so that objection is not worth repeating. Equally irrelevant are the author's comments that she is not a connoisseur of literary history and that she simply wanted to write about a book that was extremely important to her; all this is well-known and implied. And indeed, her reading is burdened with two obvious facts in the essay, which are otherwise associated with Tokarczuk: the first is the author's arbitrariness when it comes to the literary canon – the library created around Prus's work is not her reference; second, the saturation with the psychological, pseudopsychological, parapsychological, and especially mythological and archetypal, as in her novels, also dominates here. A distinctive feature of this text is its emotional openness, a radical orientation towards an emotional discourse as a valid way of reasoning about a literary-historical topic. But it should be borne in mind that Tokarczuk talks about Prus's novel immanently, she is not interested in literary paradigms or historical poetics. Her reading does not intend to reconstruct (and many readings of Prus have dealt with this) 19th-century Warsaw and the characters who could have been exactly as described by Prus's narrator, she is interested in universal psychological truths, which she attributes importance of the criteria by which literary masterpieces are recognized; a text that does not have this and does not provide the reader with the possibility of psychological identification with the character would be excluded, in her opinion, from reception. Her Wokulski is not a picture of a Warsaw citizen of a specific time, nor an attempt at psychoanalytic reading of a complex character; Wokulski is a symbol, and a highly abstract one, of the mythical (on the mythical and archetypal as an implied integral part of reflection on literature, see Frye 1969: 283–284) in the literary character (Tokarczuk is therefore a combination of mythical, allegorical,

and symbolic readings, if we accept M. Głowiński's typology, see Maryl 2007: 161). She sought, and found, in Prus types that she herself had imagined. It should be reminded that Tokarczuk is not an advocate of Freudianism and psychoanalysis, but is, here it is almost the opposite, a follower of Jung's theory of symbols and archetypes. It is not easy to determine the basic archetype¹ in question; here it is Gnosticism (Rzymowska 2021: 104),² a layered and complicated religious and philosophical doctrine, in which Tokarczuk, in her characteristic „double bottom“ method, wraps a network around Wokulski, interpreting his significance in the way which is questioned by the reader : What does Gnosticism have to do with Wokulski, and is this fusion of character with the archetype intentional, simulated complexity? Tokarczuk is close to this extreme. The “double bottom” refers to Gnosticism and gnosis on the one hand, and the specific work on the other hand; namely, the pearl in the title provides a concrete comparative context: it refers to the *Hymn o Perle*, as translated by Czesław Miłosz (or *Pieśń o perle*), along with some references from Indian and Buddhist traditions, which may not have the weight of a direct comparative counterpart, but are part of the literary tradition of mysticism in which Tokarczuk places not her reading (she does not define herself as a Gnostic) but Wokulski as a literary symbol. She defines the “pearl” directly symbolically as Wokulski's “soul” (Tokarczuk 2001: 80) and interprets the understanding of Wokulski as a kind of mystical experience:

/.../w racjonalnym nastawieniu Wokulskiego pojawia się szczelina, przez którą przedostają się demony. Przypomina to stan znany w psychologii jako obniżenie progu świadomości, gdy świadomość w momentach krytycznych zostaje pozbawiona energii i staje się receptywna, przytłumiona i zarazem najbardziej uwrażliwiona na znaki. To mały epizod psychotyczny w tej prozie – wzbudza czujność czytelnika, uaktywnia zmysł symboliczny, działa jak dźwięk budzika. W takich chaotycznych, niezwykłych wędrówkach, wspomnieniach, przeczuciach i zachwytach Wokulski rodzi się na nowo. (Tokarczuk 2001: 24).

It is not inappropriate to ask how reasonable it is to compare a Gnostic text with a non-Gnostic one (this is a question fundamentally raised by Rzymowska 2021: 117), but we must face the consequences of the comparison. If, at the beginning, we

¹ Tokarczuk may be following N. Frye, but her “method” has more in common with the narrative mode of her novels than with archetypal criticism.

² Tokarczuk is not the first to try to read the Polish canonical work in the context of the traditions of Gnosticism and the concept of gnosis, as Rzymowska claims.

have established that Tokarczuk has all the freedom of non-academic writing, there is no reason to object to her comparative choice. Although it may seem that her long essay does not have a defined method, except to guide the reader towards the most important theses by using questions as chapter titles, the open structure, fluidity of observations, and intentional impression of incompleteness are unmistakable signs of Olga Tokarczuk's narrative method. Our intention is to point out that emotionalized reading – skillfully narrated – has significant historiographic cognitive value, for some readers probably even greater than a classic literary-historical insight. Leading the reader patiently through the details of the novel, often small and seemingly peripheral, Tokarczuk offers a privileged interpretation that allows the established reader chain to continue almost indefinitely, not to produce further literary-scientific theses, but to direct readers to Prus's novel as an enduring source of universal human truths. Thus, this seemingly unfinished and sketchy, above all intuitive, text has an unusually ambitious mission.

2. THE MYTH OF THE PEARL AND THE WOKULSKI SYNDROME

Tokarczuk briefly explains why she has chosen *Hymn o Perle* as a counterbalance to *Lalka*: “właśnie *Hymn o Perle* ze względu na bardzo znamienne w nim obecność metafor snu i przebudzenia, drogi i celu, zstępowania i dźwigania się w górę – tych samych znaków, które tak bardzo poruszyły mnie w *Lalce*” (Tokarczuk 2021: 76). In the *Introduction (Wstęp)*, Tokarczuk presents several theses that will further guide her and our reading: the main character cannot be approached from a safe distance (her narrative already departs from the literary understanding of the character as a textual instance to which distance is necessary because otherwise we lose the ground of structured textuality); it is impossible to distinguish one's own lived experiences from the mentally experienced impressions during reading; time relates differently to literature than to people – time has not harmed *Lalka*. The novel is characterized, according to Tokarczuk, by a duality inherent only in masterpieces: simultaneously telling about historical time and people who could have been real in a specific time and about psychological truths that have no time, for which it is always now. Wokulski is a modern, eternal man (“Wokulski jest człowiekiem współczesnym, czyli odwiecznym.”).³ Tokarczuk is also fascinated by the form of the novel: instead of linear chro-

³ For shorter excerpts, we do not list the pages in the printed edition due to the availability of the digital edition of the essay, listed in the Bibliography.

nology, Prus's narrator narrates in sequences, broken, fragmentary, as an individual perceives everyday life, as a series of not always subsequently connectable fragments that are laboriously and inaccurately attempted to be combined into a whole. Admitting already in the introduction that the essay is a result of private reading and that she is only interested in the "case of Wokulski" because it emotionally touches her, Tokarczuk enrolls herself among the authors who – seamlessly – write both eruditely and emotionally. There is no contradiction in that.

In the second chapter titled *Czy istnieje coś takiego jak plan?* Tokarczuk emphasizes the importance of the fact that the novel was published (and written, discontinuously) in installments for the *Kurier Codzienny* newspaper, as if Prus himself had not always known where he was heading and how far he would get, so some contemporaries criticized him for having the action "disintegrate" and "dissipate". Processuality and the lack of predetermined constraints influenced the final effect on the reader, or in the words of Tokarczuk: "Będzie to zawsze głębokie przeżycie – i będzie to zawsze kategoria emocjonalna, nie intelektualna." Emotionality here denotes a private, intimate relationship with the text, a reading that can be idiolectic, such that others cannot communicate with it. In addition, the author is skeptical about the benefits of allegedly consensual, scholarly critical readings ("Niech Bóg ma w opiece dzieci ślęczące nad podręcznikami do literatury."). Having stated her position that *Lalka* should be read as if it were a dream (as well as all other literature), she adds: "żadna teoria nie jest w stanie raz na zawsze, od początku do końca, wytłumaczyć sensu dzieła literackiego."

In the chapter *Kim jest autor?* Tokarczuk writes: "Książka udowadnia także, że cała rzeczywistość mieści się w ludzkiej psychice. Nie wiem, dlaczego nie jest to oczywiste dla wszystkich." Indeed, it becomes obvious that the author, with her background in psychology, understands the relationship between author and reader within the dialectic of psychology and literature, which is just one reception possibility, not universal as the author suggests. The character is indeed more real to the reader than the writer, but not because we psychologically identify with them, but because as readers we only have the text as the only solid support (even with a living author, such as the very media-present Tokarczuk, her original intentions do not have to concern us as readers, communication with the text is enough). Without entering into a dispute with Tokarczuk, it is worth underlining that her discourse is psychologized, not only in terms of repeated references to the psyche of characters but in terms of the disciplinary psychological metalanguage.

So what is *Lalka* about, according to Tokarczuk? It tells of "initiation" and transformation, of fulfillment in a spiritual sense, of an inner journey which, again

from the perspective of psychology, could be called “individuation”, distinguishing an individual from the collective. Tokarczuk refers to Jung’s thesis that the less a person is connected to their inner being, the more their life is subordinated to collective norms. The entire novel is read by the author as a symbolic representation of Wokulski’s psychological process of self-knowledge. In the chapter *Wezwanie* (“The Call”), Tokarczuk gradually indulges in her spiritual horizon, which is not easily relatable to Prus’s novel, except at the most general level: “Dawne tradycje religijne traktowały proces inicjacyjnego przebudzenia jako odpowiedź na Wezwanie. Przekonanie, że to człowiek decyduje się na przemianę, uważały za złudzenie. To świat duchowy kieruje wołanie, na które człowiek może odpowiedzieć, jeżeli je w ogóle usłyszy.” There are several objections to this: which specific ancient religious traditions is she referring to; what is “The Call” (obviously, the gnosis); Wokulski was therefore “called” and he answered. In principle, it should be added that by the end, Tokarczuk records a series of such therapeutic and pseudo-religious sentences,⁴ and whoever cannot accept them in the context of the novel of positivism and the conventional conception of Wokulski as a character who unites the features of a romantic and a positivist will not find much more in her reading than an attempt to apply psychotherapeutic discourse to the “case of Wokulski.”

3. WHO IS OLGA TOKARCZUK’S WOKULSKI

Tokarczuk is less interested in Wokulski himself, more in the “Wokulski syndrome”. She describes it as a state of conviction that love, friendship, and the respect of others can be earned only by what someone does, and not by what someone is. Behind such, Tokarczuk believes, a pathological attitude is an inferiority complex, it is not enough to “be”, one must “act”, and a deep longing for simple existence, in which one simply “is”: if a person experienced fulfillment in childhood simply by “being”, they will have a supply of self-acceptance sufficient for a lifetime; if not, they will spend the rest of their lives proving that they are worthy of existence. Who is Izabela then? “Anima”, the opposite of Wokulski, a metaphor that he only vaguely perceives, the earthly embodiment of a higher meaning that Wokulski only anticipates; Izabela is a sign, a point in the spiritual world of

⁴ “Czym jest Głos, z którym rozmawia Wokulski? Czym jest Głos, który mówi: ‘Więc niech się stanie człowiek’/.../Myśle, że Wokulski, choć sam o tym nie wie, rozmawia z Bogiem”.

Wokulski. Izabela loses her human properties, becoming pure abstraction, essentially only in the context of diagnosing the "Wokulski syndrome". If the interpretation of this syndrome had to be reduced to one consistent thought, which would be both literary-historical and not just phenomenological-psychological, it would be an insistence on spiritual transformation as the real theme around Wokulski, the impossibility of his character to accept his present as final, self-perception of the status quo as a step towards change that is inevitable.

In the chapter *Czy romantyzm jest chorobą?* Tokarczuk argues that romantic thinking is at the core of Wokulski's personality. She rightly wonders if romanticism meant the same to Prus as it does to us today. Implicitly, it is suggested that "romantic" is an introduction to initiation, a path towards intuition and deeper knowledge, "morbid self-awareness". The concept of romanticism, predictably, Tokarczuk understands psychologically, as a set of psychological traits that lead to a certain attitude towards the outside world, an attitude marked by hypersensitivity, irritability, resignation towards everything collective; "byłby gotowością poświęcenia siebie w imię spraw ponadindywidualnych, a z drugiej strony – realizowaniem swoich zamierzeń wbrew tym sprawom" – the willingness of the individual to dedicate themselves to supra-personal matters, and at the same time, the realization of oneself despite everything supra-personal. Here is the Romantic paradox: Wokulski seems to have "escaped" from Prus and embarked on a path against the will of the writer, a positivist and rationalist. However, this murky spot in the analysis needs to be clarified: if we read Tokarczuk correctly, romanticism here denotes Wokulski's need for change and inner transformation, combined with a rejection of the real world and its constraints. Such a literary type, if we go back a little to the drawers of literary history, will become dominant very soon after Prus's time, and it is precisely Prus, as an empirical person, who is the anticipation of such radical individualism.

Tokarczuk reduces a novel that is a grandiose panoramic insight into social life from the end of the 19th century to "crisis", mental and psychological, as the only mechanism that drives the characters and their characterological motivation. Wokulski is a man in his mid-forties, in a typical mid-life crisis, preoccupied with attempts at his own transformation, in which he ultimately fails in life, but succeeds ontologically – if we follow Tokarczuk – by attempting suicide under the train tracks and finally disappearing into the unknown. Furthermore, Tokarczuk reinforces the claim about the lack of women in the novel: the world of *Lalka*, apart from the fatal and therefore stereotypical Izabela, is a world of men, in which women are accompanying subjects (Prus is a great advocate of female

emancipation, but he is also a positivist realist, who did not idealize women's destinies; on Prus's (un)realistic depiction of women in Paris whom Wokulski meets, see Forajter 2017: 35). Femininity appears on the margins, in a series of secondary episodes (Pani Zasławska, a type of older, wise woman, by whom Wokulski cannot be surprised; surrounded by women, he does not know how to position himself, he manages much better when he stumbles upon the longed-for Izabela, whom he hardly knows, dreaming of her imaginary character). It is easier to love characters than living people, this subtext can be discerned in Prus's text wherever the motifs of the classic romantic notion of love are interwoven.

In the light of the above, what does the "pearl" have to do with the 19th-century Wokulski? Tokarczuk compared Wokulski's search for "treasure" and inner change with the *Pieśń o perle* ("pearl" here is a precious gem at the bottom of the sea, hidden in a shell) as an allegory of life's journey and the search for treasure, which is of course a metaphor for spiritual fulfillment. What is a "pearl" to Wokulski? "Perła byłaby więc metaforą duszy", answers Tokarczuk. To save oneself, it means to find one's inner self and preserve it as the greatest treasure from the outside world. The longing for Izabela contrasts with his search; saving himself for her means giving up on her. The suicide attempt is the last stage of his captivity. His liberation is his disappearance from the world of "the doll". We read (Serbian translation) *Himna o perli* as an addition, as "svedočanstvo o traženju sopstvene duše" (a testimony of searching for one's own soul, Vujičić 1985: 120), which Tokarczuk included after her essay (in the edition by Czesław Miłosz: *Hymn o Perle*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1989).⁵

Is Olga Tokarczuk's reading of Prus "retoryczna przesada", a rhetorical exaggeration? Was it reasonable to resort to the metaphor of the "pearl", an archetype about the search for treasure, if we know that *Lalka* is a classic work of Polish positivism? Is Wokulski's wandering around Paris just that, the flaneurism and spleen that abounded in the literature of French realism and modernism, and it was precisely during Prus's time that the fashion for the individual motif, lost in the metropolis, arrived in literature, where until recently romantic poems and dramas in verse were written (as was the case in all Slavic literatures in the middle of the 19th century) – the historical-poetic argumentation does not dispute the path

⁵ We compared it with the translation from Polish into Serbian by Petar Vujičić, which was based on Miłosz's older version (Belgrade 1985, translator's afterword on pp. 101–123). Miłosz's text is an adaptation, not a translation. It is a text that, as an apocrypha, could not be approached in any other way. The text is part of the Gnostic literary canon. It is a short prose of only two or three pages, which makes it seem like narrative poetry, but it is philosophical lyrical prose (not a prose poem).

taken by Tokarczuk. Free from paradigmatic thinking, Tokarczuk reads the novel *Lalka* as a text about any man anywhere in the world who, having fallen unhappily in love, tried to find fulfillment in the “center of the world”, a hectic metropolis that offered every kind of comfort, except that it could not give him the “pearl”, because it was already in him.

If we do not accept the “therapeutic” approach to the person of Wokulski, the reading offered by Tokarczuk does not resonate with the established drawers of literary history, in which *Lalka* has long since settled comfortably. The value of her essay lies in its bareness to the essentials, which is neither a fable, nor time nor space, nor relationships, nor the narrator’s voice, nor Prus’s deviation from the paradigm of positivism, but in the reduction of the main character to the key motive that enabled his persuasiveness, namely, in the journey on which he searched for the “soul”, and this is indeed, one must agree with Tokarczuk, the archetypal literary impetus. The fact that Prus “wrapped” Wokulski in the clothes of a specific era and external appearances historically known to us does not make the archetypal reading wrong.

4. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

We will try to explain how we read and perhaps understood Olga Tokarczuk’s essay. Not doubting that her approach deviates from the usual literary-historical analyses, this fact alone does not diminish its cognitive value. But we do not read it as arbitrary, completely private reading of a favorite novel, which has no particular intersubjective value. It does, however. It is about an emotionalized historiographic discourse and the question of whether emotional expressions and psychologizing reduce the cognitive potential of her essay. Our intention is to answer this question in principle, using a selected example. Our basic thesis is that emotions in historiographic discourse, and we believe that Tokarczuk’s essay on Prus should be read in this way, do not contribute to its clarity, but far from diminishing it automatically. An emotional statement will not make the text more convincing by some magic. Olga Tokarczuk’s psychologism towards Prus’s text is convincing because she applied it to herself, i.e., to her writing. Or: “historia idei i historia instytucji/.../ są tematami, których historyk nigdy nie może zrozumieć ani też nie może uczynić ich zrozumiałymi bez zasadniczego zainteresowania, które ja nazywam psychologicznym” (Rosenwein 2015: 360–361). Tokarczuk did not come to insights that could not be reached in a conventional way. Her essay is important because it legitimized

the deductive emotional reading of Prus. It cannot be said that all previous approaches were rational and objective. The trouble with Tokarczuk's essay is that it is difficult to separate what is psychology, what is emotionology,⁶ and what are just conventional insights from the sociology of literature in her presentation. The fact is that a literary historian has no source for his emotionological theses, except for his own emotions and the text in front of him: about Prus's inclination, intentions, opinions, one can only guess; the only thing left is exactly what Tokarczuk does – after reading the novel, compose a text that is a reflection of personal emotional experiences that reading has provoked. Her essay is a source for the reader to understand primarily *her* worldview and attitude towards literature, not a source by which her subject, the novel *Lalka*, would be originally illuminated.

The question remains: who corresponds more, not necessarily better, with today's readers of Prus, Tokarczuk's essay or the mountain of literary-historical Prusology? The psychological profiling offered by Tokarczuk has no basis in the social characterization of characters created by Prus. What does Izabela's behavior have to do with her origin? Wokulski's attitude towards Izabela is largely a consequence of his empirical rootedness in the social moment, as Prus presents him. Tokarczuk does not address these constraints. I would, therefore, call her approach "archetypal psychotherapy", an attempt to associate the archetype with the psychology of a literary character, very receptive to this kind of experiment, and to enable contemporary readers to identify with the character in this way (this is again one of Jauss's propositions, in which Jauss establishes a typology of identification,⁷ not questioning the process itself, see Maryl 2007: 162), a state that the literary historian does not reveal, and if it happens to them in private reading (Tokarczuk, calling her reading private, is at the opposite pole in relation to the formalism of New Criticism, which, in a condensed version, requires that the text be interpreted separately from the person of the author, and especially from the person of the in-

⁶ We use the term in the way Rosenwein (2015: 363) conveys it, based on the works of Peter and Carol Stearns: "postawy i standardy wobec podstawowych emocji i ich małkiskiej ekspresji podtrzymywane przez połączenie lub przez określoną grupę w jego głęści; zażę sposoby, w jakie instytucje przysławają i stymulują te podstawy w ludzkich przybwach". That would be the definition of discipline. Tokarczuk partly fits into this horizon, because she is interested in the character's "behavior" and interprets it using the language of emotions and the reconstruction of the psychological state. The "language of emotions" in Tokarczuk's case is almost identical to the language of psychology and psychotherapy and is devoid of the metalanguage of literary history and theory.

⁷ He divided identification with the character into associative, admiring, sympathetic, cathartic, and ironic.

terpreter,⁸ see Maryl 2007: 156), they will not place it as a literary-scientific thesis (see Nycz 2013: 249; the author distinguishes three approaches: “praca z tekstem”, “praca nad tekstem”, and “praca tekstem”); Tokarczuk applied the first approach to *Lalka*, we tried the second one. In the approach “z tekstem”, Prus’s text is a source in the interpretation of phenomena and meanings that are outside of itself; in the second approach, the text itself is the object of analysis). Going this other way, Tokarczuk’s essay tests our beliefs: it is easy to believe that all the literary-historical nitpicking about Prus has nothing to do with the readers who are more interested in how all this relates to them. But although this relativizing approach is seductive, we fundamentally believe it is wrong. Literature is not psychology or psychotherapy; it can be that for those who need it, but it has the right to be “just” literature, just text. Prus’s text is not (just) a man’s search for the soul, as much as such a reduction seems an ideal deduction.

Lalka is a successful attempt by a positivist writer to shape a novel that introduced a complex sensibility of the transitional period of the 1880s into Polish literature, when drastic changes in the organization of European societies changed the psychology of the individual. Wokulski is an excellent example of both a romantic and a positivist. It seems that these categories were of little interest to Tokarczuk. However, the use of archetypes, which should have a more comprehensive effect than the use of literary-historical “shackles”, does not resonate emotionally with all readers, because it is precisely that – too emotional. We understand the emotional concepts with which Tokarczuk interprets Wokulski, but that is precisely the problem: what have we gained if we are given what we have already had? But it cannot be said that Olga Tokarczuk owes us anything. She is transparent in explaining her reading position, so we have no reason to have different expectations from those she herself indicates.

It has become customary to write about the novel *Lalka* (which can be considered “established” in literary history, what is considered old or new is subjective, see Domańska 2010: 49) as the first Polish modern novel in which the main character is actually the city; Warsaw is Prus’s true subject. The novel was written in the 1880s, during the most difficult political pressure and strictest Russian censorship, during the reign of Tsar Alexander III (1881–94). The novel about contemporary urban life passed through the most ruthless censorship during that decade. Prus is the central figure of Polish positivism and a sharp critic of the contemporary

⁸ We mention this because it was the New Criticism that tried hard to define the empirical and non-empirical stakeholders of the reading process.

Polish person (in the article *Nasze grzechy*) whom he reproaches for laziness, lack of productive work, neglect of the achievements of modern industry and economy, backwardness in education, and he did not spare writers and journalists either, whom he accused of not understanding the nature of their calling and catering to low taste. Prus is primarily a keen observer, a writer with a sense of reality, detail, concreteness, but he is not devoid of idealism; on the contrary, his ideals are the highest possible: “savršenstvo, sreća i korisnost” (perfection, happiness, and usefulness, Benešić 1946: 436). Therefore, Prus is not a narrowly positivistic writer, but rather a philosopher of positivism, who defined positivism far beyond the poetics of the novel, as a life principle that defines the overall human attitude towards the world that surrounds him directly. Wokulski is a character who is supposed to embody the virtues promoted by Prus the positivist, but let us not forget that Prus was primarily a sharp observer of real people, very aware of their real limitations. Wokulski is therefore a portrait of a man whose emotions overpower him and who lacks the strength of will. Izabela as the main female character is a type completely devoid of emotions (hence the “doll”); but in the novel there is also an episode about a young mother who was falsely accused of stealing a doll, about which Prus read in the newspapers, allegedly it happened in Vienna, so it was likely an external stimulus for him). Izabela is one of the characters through whom we gain insight into the nature of the social relations that Wokulski establishes. Overall, Tokarczuk’s essay is an indicator of the unexpected directions that the reception of a complex text such as *Lalka* can take. Tokarczuk operates with the text, not on the text. Her approach is non-philological; we would say it is operational-psychological (Nycz 2013: 239; Nycz uses the term “operational” or “operacyjnej” theories, as he broadly calls them, of the “humanistic text”).⁹

Finally, Tokarczuk, and her writing career that followed in the years after the essay on Prus had been published, lead us to the question: Does anyone else need knowledge of historical poetics? The “ordinary” readers, for whom literature is not a profession, are not preoccupied with it; they read what resonates with their person. In this respect, Tokarczuk has offered, at least to her readers, a text – an emotionalized essayistic prose – that psychologically and stylistically corresponds to their horizon of expectations. Her reading is shaped as a meditation, as a reflection that aims at the reader’s emotion, not their prior knowledge of Prus, but their emotion towards Prus’s novel, and not as a whole, but towards the main character,

⁹ In the context of Tokarczuk as the author of a socially engaged sensibility, we see that she understands the text as a metonymy of the psychological state of the character’s inner soul transformation.

counting on the reader's experience of identifying with Wokulski. This is the readership that Tokarczuk addresses with this essay, that it is the cognitive potential of her attempt to emotionally-psychologically interpret one of the most complex characters in Polish literature.

Our intention was to answer the question of whether she succeeded in that – for her readers, she did; for others, she encouraged such readers to return to Prus.

LITERATURE

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EMOCIJE U DISKURSU KNJIŽEVNOGA ESEJA: OLGA TOKARCZUK O ROMANU „LUTKA“ BOLESŁAWA PRUSA

TEA ROGIĆ MUSA

SAŽETAK

U članku se tumači esej *Lalka i perla* (*Lutka i perla*) Olge Tokarczuk o romanu *Lalka* (*Lutka*) Bolesława Prusa. Pokušat će se objasniti kakvu taj tekst ima spoznajnu vrijednost za čitatelja proze Tokarczuk i za čitatelja kojega zanima Prusov roman te odgovoriti na pitanje može se li taj esej držati prinosom i književnopovijesnoj, ili nekoj drugoj književnoznanstvenoj, spoznaji o Prusu. Središnja je teza članka da je pisanje Tokarczuk o Prusu primjer emocionaliziranoga diskursa fikcionalizirane historiografske proze, hibridnoga i rubnoga esejističkoga žanra koji prisvaja značajke i fikcionalne proze i modernoga književnoznanstvenoga pisanja, komprimirajući i neke postupke tradicionalnoga eseja, kao što je iznošenje osobnih stajališta i intencionalno impregniranje diskursa privatnim emocionalnim očitovanjima. Cilj je rada analiza pisanja Tokarczuk i procjena dosega njezina eseja u kontekstu poznavanja Prusova romana.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI:

Bolesław Prus, emocije u književnom eseju, Olga Tokarczuk, poljska književnost, povijest književne recepcije

