

Reading Writers, Writing Readers and All that Bestiary

Actually, I don't really know, what should I start with; this theme is as wide as the Atlantic ocean I have flown over recently. It is easy to get lost and simply start to tell my autobiography – that's me, writer and reader, all in one, a live illustration of the theme. Perhaps this could be quite interesting in another place and another time –under an exotic tree with some cold beer. Here, among people, most of whom perfectly know this kind of life themselves - with a book in a hand and a laptop under an armpit - I can only say: my autobiography as a reader is far longer than as a writer. Because my first experience with reading was when I was three years old. At that time I felt a mystical joy of reading and read absolutely everything without any exception –words on house walls, names of shops. And at the same time I read books from my parent's library - maybe too difficult for such a young gentleman – for example, "Crime and Punishment" by Dostoyevsky and "Don Quixote" by Cervantes...I don't now actually, what I understood in these books. Not very much, of course. But one thing I had clearly - a unique joy of reading. I traveled in another, much more interesting, much more live world; the world I can't find now. This world is gone – together with my childhood and my joy of reading. Now I read a lot too, but I read in a different way – like a literary specialist : analyzing, always asking myself, what in this piece is right or wrong, how all of this is done, how much does the writer keep the purity of genre. I would be very glad if I could get back my childish and innocent view. Sometimes I look with envy at housewives who shed tears over a cheap love-story. Writers as readers are, unfortunately, worthless. They know, paraphrasing an international saying, how the sausages are made. Everyday, or almost everyday, dealing with both processes – reading or writing – a writer is only a hair away from literature poisoning. Furthermore, there also are side-effects of writing and reading - myopia, hemorrhoids and alcoholism! We can only be jealous of "not-writing" readers. They live healthy, happy and easy lives.

Besides, there is a separate, special type of reader – the writing reader. This type is very popular in Lithuania: every village has it's own writing reader. That is rhyming housewives, accountants who write endless epos, plumbers who write fantasy books, and other strangers. As I work in a newspaper and edit its literary supplement, I know them quite well. Actually, I know them much better than I would like to. These are beings who have mystic ability to torture redactors to death. Even the chief-redactor of the daily newspaper, my boss, a solid person in a gray suit, always ran to hide from one such visitor in the only safe place – the men's room. And so, as the men's room was occupied, I had the bad luck to spend many hours of my life listening to the poem about the beauty of Lithuania's fields written by that visitor. Once, I was careless enough to say her – of course, in a delicate way- what I really thought about her poem. Then, about a week later - I'm not kidding – I received an official letter from City law court. In the envelope there was a complaint of the poet I have mentioned. She was complaining that I violated the International Human Rights Convention, the Constitution of Lithuania and limited her word freedom by refusing to publish her genial poem. Luckily, this happened when the soviet times were over, and the city procurator had a delicate sense of humor and answered her complaint with a short insertion: "Dear Lady, apologizing I must inform you, that Klaipeda law court is not reviewing poems anymore. I wish you big luck in your creative work!"

The following day I wrote a short poem, dedicated to my friend – also a poet. At that time he was working at a parking lot and had no time even to go to a bathroom. He had written a short but painful poem about the real reason for Mona Lisa's smile. I wrote him sort of an answer – a poem, called "Philately" – this is, if you still remember – stamp collecting.

Philately

I work at a newspaper
everybody sends me
letters with poems

which you must read

here even unwillingly
but still will start
to collect stamps

I noticed, that these writing readers are most active during the full moon. So I dare to guess that this proves that reading writers are close relatives of zombies, werewolves and other Terminators.

However, writing readers are perfect examples which illustrate that (to your own misfortune) if you once learned to read, one day you may find yourself as a writer. And that is quite disastrous – the only thing left is to learn to do what others expect you as a writer.

All good poets I know are always a little bit shy to speak about their profession. Every time they delicately imply that there exists a big difference between what society calls a writer and a real person, living his own life and simply blinking when somebody calls him a writer. Smarter ones are able not to identify themselves with their mythology up to their old age. But they also may experience that their own myth materializes, and starts chasing the poor author of its works through the streets like some kind of hired killer. Here we could remember Borges, who felt another, mythological Borges behind his back. Unfortunately, not everyone is blind as Borges was, and able to run away from themselves. Others, who believed they were poets of the literary process, sooner or later were caught by their Shakespearean ghosts.

And it is hard not to believe – when you always hear: you are a writer, you must live, look, even piddle like a writer and so the restless soul winces. Professional rules! To tell the truth, I don't like people who call themselves professionals. Professional – that's Hollywood. That's an industry, trying to produce a saleable product. For me, an amateur, an entire year filming the life of a single tree with an old camera is much more interesting. Not many special effects maybe, but undoubtedly this is much more real than any stupid reality show.

Actually, it's enough just to try to realize logically this collocation: REALITY SHOW, to understand that something bad happened with this reality and with ourselves too. Reality can't be shown – it can only be lived.

That's why I, *a priori*, forgive all if the sins of those who read, even if they read love stories and not my poetry. Because literature cheats you conventionally, honestly. Literature doesn't try to prove that, for example, "A Thousand and One Nights," is based on real life and real events. Besides, in the near future in some film based on these Arabian tales, we will probably see the socially correct note we all know: "All characters in this film are fictitious. Any similarity to Bill Gates and Ophra are accidental and have nothing in common with the real life."

And we can only agree with this note – because if you once have been in another reality, like Borges said, in "orbis tertium", you have to admit: any similarity with the life the author creates is accidental and has nothing in common with this reality show we all live in.