

Introduction

The common denominator of many modern debates on cultural processes occurring today is the emphasis put on the role of language. The linguistic aspect is not just related to the narrow understanding of language, but more to the narrative dimension of reality. Textual analogy is thus being used today in the context of cultural and social phenomena investigated by many scholars. It is also being used to recognize the role of the language in shaping the way people see the world and how they act within it. In effect emerges a scientific discourse which takes the narrative and textual dimension under certain circumstances as granted and simultaneously puts it under a critical view. Such a methodological approach allows The papers collected in this volume tackle this very question by highlighting selected topics bound by the narratives visible in many stances in contemporary societies. The main research problem here remains however entangled in the context of the relation between language and reality. In consequence we often seek the outcome of our research within the social sphere seen as a reflection of the semiotic structures imposed on human agency. The semiotic analysis is thus being used as a tool for interpretation of acting individuals, as well larger social processes. Literature might be therefore treated as such a reflection of reality and investigated with the methods of social and human sciences.

The first article in this volume by Jumana Mussa deals with the representation of characters in the works of Terry Pratchett, with the special emphasis put on two main characters – the sisters Esmeralda and Lily Weatherwax. These characters occur in Pratchett's works often and are associated with the representation of repetition and similarity. That notion brings the ideas of Gilles Deleuze and Jacques Derrida into discussion, which are broadening the linguistic discourse by a critical analysis of the semiotics found in modern literature. The issue of representation is related here to the question of identity. The way in which the mentioned characters interact with each other, in this case “mirrored” in the sibling. In effect the motive of copy and originality reoccurs and resonates symbolically. This raises further questions of mortality and the forces of life like desire for example.

The next paper by Gaida Khatib is also related to the literature. It tackles the issue of evolution of feminist literature in the Arab cultural tradition. The author combines the Western and Arab traditions in order to understand how the process of emergence of feminine works is taking place in both of those two worlds. This paper raises the question of historical roots of this kind of works. Therefore we might say that there's no single origin of feminine literature in the Arab world as it is being characterized by many sources of influence.

The paper by Edith Shamir-Tixell shifts from the notion of literature, but still remains within the category of discourse. It highlights the issue of volunteering in Israel and puts light onto the mobilized culture that emerged in this country through the years. This phenomenon is being treated by the author as a dynamic process. As the number of military volunteers decline in recent time Shamir-Tixell investigates the educational aspect of this problem. As a result we might see a significant effort made by the Israeli government to change the declining statistics through specific programs raising awareness of the volunteering ethos. Next article by Hila Nadav Carmel takes the Jewish Laws of Niddah as a point of reference in the debate how religion and social norms shape the attitude towards women and their body. The author highlights the role of religious rituals and norms imposed by traditional Judaism on women and takes it as a starting point in the debate on the issue of power struggle that takes place on the social level. Such a move reveals women's struggle for their rights, as well their change in attitude towards religious tradition and self-awareness.

The article by Lilia Rosenfeld tackles a similar issue in the Israeli social context. It is focused on the place of elderly people and their subjective needs. A special controversy surrounds the issue of euthanasia and suicide, which in the case of the elderly is being raised more and more often nowadays. The author of this paper brings into consideration the most significant aspects of the debate on euthanasia with the relation to the issue of pain and suffering.

The last article in this volume by Or Anat Elimelech Raikin is focused on the use of modern technology by terrorist groups like ISIS. The use of cyberspace in the modern warfare is taken by the author as an example of the transition occurring not just purely on technological level, but also in the organization's goals and tactics. The paper highlights various motivations behind ISIS's use of cyberspace and the role of the ideology of the "Cyber-Jihad."

As we might see the papers collected in this volume make the attempt to bring various aspects of the narrative on contemporary reality into the light of the relation combining language and the social order. The authors of these papers tackle diverse problems we might find in the modern world and deliver an interesting analysis using the methods and terms of the social sciences.