Politics and fiction: intertextual links

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Abstract: The projection of political technological means and election campaign methods on the events described in the political novel and their comparison creates intertextual links, which contributes to thorough perception of characters, events and their development in fiction. The author aims to interpret the political storyline in terms of modern political science, comparing the legitimate and non-conventional means used in political campaigns with their literary reconstruction. In the author's opinion, the two forms of the literary work existence – the author's and the one in the reader's imaginative reconstruction can coincide in case the reader's thesaurus lacks information gaps in the field accompanying the storyline. Stocktaking of Robert Penn Warren's election technology reconstruction in the novel "All the King's Men" is in the focus of the article.

Introduction

Full understanding of fiction depends not only on the reader's linguistic skills and general educational level but also on his ability to interweave the knowledge of the extralinguistic reality into the comprehension process enabling him to adequately interpret the events. The latter include not only those of existential or everyday nature happening to the literary character but the ones of the wider world, which requires some extra information from various areas of knowledge to get a concise and clear comprehension of the literary work and its characters. At the same time the scopes of the readers' thesauruses may differ: it depends on various factors – age, education, and taste for some particular literary genre etc. – all this affects fiction perception and requires at least some minimal idea of the theme and the subject matter to fill the gap that prevents from full and objective character assessment. In reference to the genre of political novel this means that its comprehension demands understanding political processes, technologies and means used at a definite historical epoch, for it allows building firm intertextual links and make an adequate and objective estimation of the characters, events and developments depicted in the novel.

Not only that. The author's personality, his outlook, critical judgements, biography facts and literary views are not less important for the same reason as they all participate in the mental reconstruction of the larger image of the literary work that always exists in at least two forms: one being what the author wrote and meant to tell and the other – what the reader understood and reconstructed in his mind. The closer the two images are the more precise understanding is achieved.

Here the intent is to illustrate some intertextual links between virtual political technologies and those artistically described and reconstructed in "All the King's Men" by Robert Penn Warren.

Works by J.L. Blotner [1], Ch. Bohner [2], J.A. Grimshaw [3] are devoted to the study of R.P. Warren's biography and literary heritage; there are many other literary critics and scientists who make research in this field and the Robert Penn Warren Circle in the USA make a considerable contribution in the research. The linguistic forms referred to political technologies embodied in R.P. Warren's "All the King's Men" contributing to the perceptual unity of the literary image of the politician are touched upon by I.Y. Dulalaeva [4].

Robert Penn Warren (1905-1989) received Pulitzer's prize in 1947 for his novel "All the King's Men", which may be considered a literary reconstruction of Huey Pierce Long's life and political career (1893-1935). The proof of this is that many events in the life of the radical democrat, the 40th governor of Louisiana find their reflection on the pages of the novel [5]. It is of vital importance that R.P. Warren reconstructed not only the developments in the biography of the prototype but also the political technologies and means that H.P. Long used to reach his ambitious goals, such as, stumping the state and radio address as means of political campaigning, developing and delivering an unprecedented programme to build the state's infrastructure and provide education and economic opportunity to the masses. H.P. Long is widely known for his "Share our Wealth" movement that swept the nation during the Depression. Although mention should be made that R.P. Warren did not confirm the fact that he depicted Huey Long in the character of Willie Stark [5]. It is obvious, for literary characters cannot be

counterparts or dittos of real men; they can only serve as prototypes, or may give the writer a creative impulse being a kind of a launching pad that gives a good start but the creative "flight" is always free. Still, Huey Long's 1928 slogan "Every man a king, but no one wears a crown" very much reminds of the title of the novel.

Materials and methods

The projection of political technological means and election campaign methods on the events described in the political novel and their comparison are a new perspective in the study of fiction. The author aims to interpret the political storyline in terms of modern political science, by comparing the legitimate and non-conventional or even deviant means used in political campaigns with their literary reconstruction in fiction. The analysis of linguistic forms of semantic structures referring to political technologies allows assessing the vocabulary of political discourse and its role in the character depiction.

To effectively build the intertextual links we are to have a glimpse of at least some election technologies which are considered in terms of their legitimacy, techniques and methods, image-making, policy management and marketing in the works by P. Vasilyeva [6], M.E. Koshelyuk [7], E. Malkin, E. Suchkov[8], V.V. Poluektov [9] and others; the work by G.S. Jowett and V. O'Donnel [10] provides a detailed consideration of propaganda and persuasion psychology.

Stocktaking of legitimate and non-conventional election technologies in "All the king's men" by Robert Penn Warren

The central character of the novel is Willie Stark. We witness his growing political maturity from the very beginning of the novel. First he is "a hick, a cocklebur" who by virtue of kinship becomes County Treasurer and collects money to build a school. However, the contractor selected a construction company whose bid was not the lowest one. The reason for that is the tie of kinship and respect for the District Commission's vested interests. To divert public attention from what is happening, the local authorities resort to the trick that is known as "false dichotomy". The aim of it is to divert public attention from the fact that there were more intermediate bids besides the two that were considered. But the newspaper hype about Jefferson Constructions' use of black labour, who, due to the higher qualifications, get higher wages than the white builders, and the threat of unemployment for the local population thus reaching their aim - everybody forgets about other companies' bids. This is what

false dichotomy means: there are more options to choose from than it is positioned by the stakeholder [11, p. 74-75].

Realizing the deceit, Stark is seeking justice and truth; he wants the local press to expose the unscrupulous construction company by publishing a revealing article, but being refused, issues leaflets at his own expense and tries to spread them. He buttonholds passers-by at the crossroads and explains to them what is going on; he goes from house to house, but people even do not take the trouble to open their doors thinking him to be an obtrusive travelling salesman. The school emergency exit collapses during the fire drill, resulting in the tragic deaths of several children, and that becomes the start of Willie Stark's political career. Some parents of the children who died recognize him at the funeral, and that makes Willie Stark a public figure, recognized and respected in the area as the one who has warned of the dishonest deal consequences. Here we observe that conventional legitimate technologies such as leaflet distribution and face-to-face convincing talks fail, but what is of importance – someone's bad luck may turn another man's good luck, which is evidence that a person may come to politics by chance and that an incident may play a fatal role in man's life [11, p. 71].

Then time comes when more experienced politicians from the Harrison's outfit conceive to split MacMurphee's vote, summoning a candidate-victim, putting in "a dummy" to run for governor, "framing" Willie Stark, who is an ideal "dummy", ambitious enough to become governor of the state, the more so as to be on the list of Democrats in the primaries is like to run for governor. But Stark is still unaware of the aberrant election technologies, he is not aware that he is used "blindly" as Harrison's means to win the election. He is "licked at the polls" but he is still naïve "to keep his faith". [11, p. 74] The truth, which he learns from Sadie Burke, his secretary during the campaign, reverses his world outlook. This is a turning point in his political career and philosophy. That is another bright example of a literary reconstruction of the non-conventional election technologies used to split the vote by means of putting in a "candidate-victim" who is initially doomed to failure.

An integral part of the election technology is "stumping", implying campaign trips in the constituency. When Willie Stark is "a dummy" to split MacMurphee's vote his propaganda speech contains a scrupulous elaborate programme of the new taxation, plans for building the state roads and an abundance of figures, which very much reminds of H.P. Long's "Share our Wealth". In Uptown where everyone knows Willie Stark, crowds of people go to

the fairgrounds just to look at him, but the farther he moves away from Mason City, which is his constituency, the less his programme speech is listened to. However, to attract the folk the event organizers triggered another election means - freebie for voters. Poverty makes people attend the event, where food is given out free of charge. Once Stark learns about his being framed, his manner changes radically: he denounces those who use him as a dummy - Harrison, his helpmate Tiny Duffy - and waives the vote in favor of his political opponent. The staged technology of the "candidate-victim" does not work by mere chance. What is more, Willie Stark learns how to woe his constituency – henceforth all his speeches appeal not to reason but to emotions.

Willie Stark won the 1930 election. His experience taught him the main thing in politics – victory at any cost: "… he had a meat ax in his hand and was screaming for blood." [11, p. 102]. He resorts to the non-conventional and often deviant electoral technologies ever since – threat, blackmail, denouncement of his political opponents buying a big wad on the radio and airing some facts of their biographies, handling and manipulating people, using irrelevant proof in the arguments and debates with the people whom he wants to attract or employ etc. Sometimes the reader finds him to be a learned lawyer who is able to put forward convincing arguments to make the interlocutor change his viewpoint, sometimes he is wearing the mask of a "one of the lads" to be favoured by the local folk, which helps him to avoid the impeachment, in such a way every time adjusting his political image to the circumstances and the current situation. The variety and flexibility of aberrant means facilitate the achievement of political goals but do not contribute to the creation of the fair and ideal politician whose goals and means do not contradict excluding each other. The end is tragic: not only is Willy Stark shot like his prototype but soon before dying he realizes the fact that he might have had a different lot had he acted differently.

Conclusions

Summarizing, we can say that political electoral technologies thus skillfully reconstructed by R.P. Warren in his political novel include false dichotomy, splitting the vote, nomination of the candidate-victim, stumping for agitation and counter agitation, radio propaganda, image making, manipulating associates and intimidating political opponents, appealing to the voters' emotions in public speeches. The list is not full, for the events development in the novel allows continuing it.

The few examples of political technologies embodied by R.P. Warren in his novel come in handy for building intertextual links that enlarge the reader's thesaurus and contribute and facilitate perception and estimation of the literary images of politicians providing a thorough view on the political events depicted in the piece of fiction.

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