

MAN AND WOMAN IN LITERATURE –
BEING IN THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST.
THE INTERPRETATION OF JAROSLAV
DURYCH'S PROSE ABOUT THE RELATION
BETWEEN MAN AND WOMAN FROM THE VIEW
OF THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

JAN HOJDA

ABSTRACT

In this article, we are trying to interpret the artistic expression of the relation between man and woman in the prose of a Czech writer, Jaroslav Durych (1886–1962). We highlight how Durych's literary work portrays the mutuality between man and woman and how it grasps the question of its sense. At the same time, while regarding literature as a symbolic expression of human way of being, we want to enter into dialog with this literary quest and formulate a theological answer to it. The theological starting point of our approach is the idea of Trinitarian anchoring of the dual unity of man and woman. The conclusion of our interpretation is that Durych's prose illustrates the journey of male and female mutuality as a journey of human transcendence and as a moment of a new determination of man in the mystery of unconditional love. In this way, Durych refers not only to the nuptial mystery of man and woman but also to its grounding in the mystery of Christ.

Key words

Theological Anthropology; Man and Woman; Trinitarian Love; Literary Interpretation; Jaroslav Durych

DOI: 10.14712/23563598.2017.7

The main focus of this article is human sexuality. Several aspects of the question what human existence as male and female means will be illuminated from the perspective of theological anthropology. For this purpose, we are going to focus on the literary work of a Czech writer, Jaroslav Durych (1886–1962). In his prose thematising the relation between man and woman, we will trace the testimony concerning human struggle to discover own self and offer a theological response to this literary quest for the meaning of human sexuality.

The article will show that Durych's literary expression of the relation between man and woman testifies mainly to two facts. Firstly, thanks to the sexual duality of man and woman, man can find himself only in his self-transcendence. Secondly, the mutuality of man and woman is anchored in the mystery of unconditional love, and it is the expression of man's purpose in this love. The interpretation of Durych's art can serve as an example which helps us confirm and present a theological idea that sexual duality is an expression of Trinitarian self-sharing with man in a new way.

The first part of the article will briefly deal with this theological idea and describe the methodology of interpreting literature from the perspective of theological anthropology. The main part will sketch the possible references of Durych's work with regard to the mutuality of man and woman based on the mystery of Christ.

1. The Dual Unity of Man and Woman as a Theme of Theological Anthropology

The fact that a human being exists as a man and a woman is one of the most significant themes of theological anthropology. In this context, a contemporary bishop of Milan, Angelo Scola, uses the phrase *the dual unity of man and woman*. This expression accents that sexual duality is an essential part of God's image in man, which is supported by the fact that each man's purpose is in Trinitarian love. In their essential difference (duality of sexes) and unity (human nature), man and woman form *imago Trinitatis*.

Participating in Trinitarian love, the relation between man and woman is fulfilled when it is directed towards sexual alterity of the other and based on self-giving and conjoint openness to new life. The bond between man and woman thus gains its nuptial character; marital love then becomes a paradigm of all other kinds of love.¹ That is why, in some way, each other relation of love reflects nuptial mystery and analogically portrays its essential features: difference, self-giving in love and fruitfulness.

In this way, the dual unity of man and woman and its nuptial mystery are grounded in the self-giving of Trinitarian love *ad extra* to man. It means that they can be explained only in the light of the incarnated

¹ Cf. Angelo Scola. *The Nuptial Mystery*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans 2005, p. 9.

Son² or, more precisely, in the unity of human and divine nature in Christ.³ The Son opens himself to man in love, which he got from the Father. The Son accepts the gift from the Father as something essentially “different”. At the same time, he identifies with him and becomes “one”. In this way, the act which is directly coming from the Father through the incarnated Son to man can be characterized as an act of nuptial consecration to Trinitarian love. The mystery of Christ is thus a nuptial mystery. In the light of Christ’s nuptial mystery, it is possible to see why God created man and woman as an “identity in difference” or, in other words, “a unity of two”.⁴

Nuptial mystery thus describes and realizes love, in which God shares everything with man. However, this love is not defined in this way⁵ as it can be grounded only in Immanent Trinity. Similarly, the main features of nuptial mystery – difference, self-giving in love, fruitfulness – find their eternal origin in God. In an absolute degree, the elements of difference, love and fruitfulness are present in the mystery of eternal interpersonal sharing of the Trinity. Unlimited self-giving of the Father to the Son and unlimited receptiveness of the Son with regard to the Father is the basis of their absolute unity in God’s essence as well as of their absolute personal difference. After that, the bond of the unity between the Father and the Son finds its expression (its fruit) in the person of the Holy Spirit.⁶

That is why we can see the Holy Spirit as a “space” and “expression” (fruit) of the Father’s and Son’s mutuality. Man is created *by* the Father *through* the Son *in* the Holy Spirit; *by* the Father and *through* the incarnated Son, human being is initiated *into* the “space” of their mutuality. The human person as a being created through Christ is defined in interpersonal mutuality (essential difference and unity of nature), which can be freely fulfilled only by the participation in the unlimited love of God.⁷ Thanks to this participation, interpersonal mutuality finds its expression in its openness towards new life. The space of their mutual unity in love becomes also the space of fruitfulness.

² Cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 22.

³ Cf. Scola. *The Nuptial Mystery*, p. 11.

⁴ The phrase ‘unity of two’ is used by John Paul II in *Mulieris Dignitatem*, 7. The context of this usage is Trinitarian rather than Christological.

⁵ Cf. Scola. *The Nuptial Mystery*, p. xx (Preface).

⁶ Cf. Angelo Scola. *The Nuptial Mystery: A Perspective for Systematic Theology? Communio: International Catholic Review* 30 (2003), p. 218.

⁷ For more information, see Jan Hojda. *Extáze, exodus a exitus Juraje Hordubala: Teologicko-antropologická studie*. Jablonec nad Nisou: In 2013, pp. 93–101.

Christ's nuptial mystery, or the mystery of the relation between Christ and the Church, illuminates the face of man by the light of the Trinity. Love as the purpose of man can be understood only in the light of eternal love. Without this illumination, human sexuality remains unexplained or reduced only to biological (animal) or cultural phenomenon.

The mystery of Christ does not only open a way towards grasping God's intention with man, but it shows the aim of man's own journey. In theological anthropology, we can thus trace two tasks. On the one hand, we infer certain truths about man from the universally valid self-giving of God in Jesus Christ. On the other hand, we reflect concrete human experience. With this help, we are trying to show that human searching for own identity finds a universal response in Christ. Our aim is to grasp how the journey of man, expressed in its concreteness, becomes a journey directed through Christ to the Father.

That is the reason why, this article wants to trace a concrete way of human questioning about the sense of male and female mutuality. A special testimony about man is offered in literature. Because of this, we turn our attention to Jaroslav Durych and his literary rendering of the relation between man and woman.

2. Theological Reading of Literature as a Specific Part of Theological Anthropology

As concerns literary work, we do not have to approach it primarily as a testimony about the spiritual life of the author. We can rely on the idea that literature is always something more than an expression of authorial intention since it forms its own fictional world, which is a demonstration of a specific human action and whose sense is thoroughly anthropological. Its last purpose is no other than to "express" a man. In other words, fictional literature is always related to a specific way of being human. Rather than to the phenomenal level of our life, literary work refers to its metaphysical grounds, to the question what it means to be a man.⁸ Then the reader enters into the immanent world

⁸ Concerning the reference possibilities of fiction to the questions of human existence, mainly to the norms and values, see Bohumil Fořt. *Fikční světy Thomase Pavela*. In: Thomas Pavel. *Román: morálka a svoboda*. Praha: Ústav pro českou literaturu AV ČR 2009, pp. 90–91. Then see also Pavel Hošek. *Kouzlo vyprávění*. Praha: Návrat domů 2013, pp. 15–24.

of the work as he can find a symbolic expression of his own being there.

In this context, the theological interpretation of literature will be directed towards the theme of a man. With this regard, reading literature will be a peculiar way of experiencing human searching for own dignity, interpersonal closeness and anchoring of own existence. From the theological point of view, we will try to show how this human quest can find its response in God's self-sharing.⁹

That is why our interpretation of Durych's stories will not be aimed to reconstruct the ideas of the author. Rather than that, it will reflect the way how the mentioned texts symbolically render the theme of human existence in sexual duality. It will also try to show that this human pilgrimage on the background of male and female mutuality is determined, guaranteed, redeemed and fulfilled in the mystery of the incarnated Son. In this sense, our reading of literature is an interpretation within the area of theological anthropology.

3. Durych's Stories on Male and Female Relation as a Parable about a Human Being

The relation between man and woman is one of the most significant themes in Jaroslav Durych's prose. It is possible to identify some common features in the various ways of the rendition of this relation. It is related to the life pilgrimage of his male and usually also female protagonists. The male protagonist is always challenged to abandon his former life. On the one hand, this former life provides the main character with safety. On the other hand, it enchains him with solitude. In contrast, female protagonists are characterized by their existential poverty, which enables them to fully accept their male counterparts, create a firm bond between them and, finally, initiate their men into an eternal mutuality.

In this way, the realisation of the relation between man and woman gains its specific dynamics. It is always directed from solitude to unity, it leads to the transformation of male protagonists and ascribes a special power to the poverty of female characters. This special power of poverty is the essence of the irrevocable bond between main heroes

⁹ Cf. Jan Hojda. *Teologická četba literatury – cesta víry k člověku. MKR Communio* 4 (2014), pp. 67–68.

and heroines. Thanks to this, one becomes a gift to the other, they inhere in one another and form one unified “us”. This bond is also often called a nuptial bond. Many times, it also finds its expression in fruitfulness. Mutual openness and self-giving of one to another is thus fulfilled as a conjoint openness and self-giving towards new life.

Despite numerous differences, these specific features of Durych’s prose about the relation between man and woman enable to view the stories as conceptually consistent. It is possible to regard them in a single view since they form together a parable about human existential pilgrimage. The story of the relation between man and woman in the work of Jaroslav Durych is thus trying to depict the story of man as such so it can be seen as a testimony of one’s direction towards his or her fulfilment.¹⁰

This symbolic character of the narratives is also underlined by the fact that they are often told on the background of the horrors of a war or horrible social conditions, which overshadow human dignity. In contrast to this, there is the mutual unity of man and woman which is the moment when human face comes to light and which enables to highlight the immeasurable value of man, which is peculiar to everyone. The pilgrimage of a hero, guided by the beauty of a poor lady, shows to be a journey of sacred initiation, on which a man leaves the shadow of solitude and anonymity and finds not only himself but also human belonging and finally also the transcendent source of his own life and his true home.

4. The Duality of Man and Woman as a Way towards their Fulfilment

All of the aspects of Durych’s work mentioned above offer many references concerning the question what it means for one to be a man or a woman. We can already mention some of them. At the same time, we can notice how these references are in accordance with the above-mentioned characteristics of male and female mutuality as a nuptial mystery.

The story of man and woman could not be complete within literary narrative if it was not crowned by their mutual self-giving. In this way,

¹⁰ Cf. Jan Hojda. *Muž a žena v próze Jaroslava Durycha: Hledání teologicko-antropologického smyslu*. Praha: Dauphin 2011, pp. 115–124.

man would stay divided in himself if he did not develop his life within male and female duality (4.1) and if he did not find himself in mutual self-giving (4.2). He would never find himself if he was not directed towards the unity with the other, if he was not willing to get tied by their common bound and if he was not opened to new life within this mutuality (4.3).

4.1 Sexual Difference as an Essential Feature of a Human Being

In this way, Durych's prose refers to an essential dimension of human sexual duality. Man cannot find himself without being directed to the other who shares a human nature *with him* but is a human in a *different way* from him. This difference of the other is not conditioned by any circumstances; it cannot be overcome and reduced. Instead of this, it is inscribed into a basic ontological structure of man, and it is universally shared by everyone. Sexual difference is thus a permanent expression of the fact that each person is in his or her essence reliant on the other and that only thanks to this irreducible difference he or she can find self-realisation. In the deepest purpose, a man is a unity in difference. The relation between man and woman is thus paradigmatic relation, which prefigures all other interpersonal relations of people. It connects them with the universal dimension of human history (understood as a history of human life transmission), opens them towards the fulfilment in immeasurable love and gives them a sacramental character.

4.2 The Unity of Man and Woman and the Fulfilment in Self-giving

It is apparent that Durych's literary work does not only refer to the essential dimension of male and female sexual difference, but it also inseparably underlines the relational dimension of a human being. It shows that man can find himself only when he shares himself with the other in his self-giving. The unity of man and woman can be thus fulfilled only by free mutual self-giving in love.

4.3 Fruitfulness as an Expression of Male and Female Unity

The stories about the relation between man and woman often connect the theme of their unity with fruitfulness. (For example, in the novel *The Carnival* [Masopust] the unity of the male protagonist and his female counterpart is underlined by the motive of mutual giving

and overlapping of their faces. Similarly, the fruitfulness which accompanies their uniting is symbolized by the transmission of a face to a child.) The world of Durych's literary work thus shows a next aspect of human existence as man and woman. The mutual unity of man and woman is the result of their willingness to get tied by love, which transcends them and forms a "space" of their common being. The bond of love, which unities man and woman together, unites the two also in a conjoint openness towards new life. It connects them in their self-giving to somebody else, who finds a ground for his or her growth and development in the space of their mutuality.

The references of basic thematic structure in Durych's stories about the relation between man and woman thus underline three main features of the realisation of male and female mutuality: the importance of sexual difference, the unity of man and woman in love (their realisation in self-giving) and fruitfulness as an expression of their mutual unity. It thus reminds us of Angelo Scola, who views these three features as the basic categories of nuptial mystery, in which one is created as a man and a woman.¹¹

5. The Life Journey of Male Protagonists and the Mutual Duality of Man and Woman

As mentioned above, the life journey of male protagonists belongs to significant conceptual features of Durych's stories. His male hero leaves his old style of life and opens to the new one. Before he finds himself thanks to a poor lady, he has to lose himself first; before he is accepted by the girl, he has to stop owning himself; before his self-giving to her, he has to leave the "prison" of his affluence.

In the following paragraphs, we will focus on the theme of male protagonists and their life journey. We will accent their transformation, which is reached by the journey from self-centredness towards a total reliance on the gift of absolute love. This transformation from the struggle to determine own existence towards its realisation in grace also illuminates some important features of male and female mutuality.

¹¹ Cf. Scola. *The Nuptial Mystery*, p. xx (Preface).

5.1 Self-enclosure as an Effort to Determine Own Existence

In the beginning or, more precisely, before the beginning of their journey, the main male characters are closely tied to their social status, which is connected with wealth, garnering property or with the vision of climbing up a social ladder. It can concern e.g. the status of a manufacturer, being a member of manufacturer's family or nobility, being a soldier or an officer. Apart from a clearly defined social status, the protagonists are tied to their home, which divides them from the others and which seems to be a space closed from the outer world. One of next general features of the male protagonists is their isolation from their own parents. It is either them, who limit their contacts with the parents or the bond between them is reduced just to the level of using common property or heritage.

There we can notice that it is their high social status, isolated home or the emancipation from the parents which helps the characters to delimit and determine their own existence. They are trying to find their own dignity by this status. In particular, it is apparent with regard to soldiers and officers, who are tied by their ranks and by the vision of future career progress. Through their homes isolated from other people, they are trying to get their own existential space. Through their separation from parents, they are trying to find the source of their life just in themselves.

5.2 Self-determination without Transcendence:

The Shadow of Isolation, Brooding Home and Suffocating Life

Nevertheless, the struggle to determine their own existence does not bring the expected results to the protagonists. This wall, which is supposed to give them confidence and room for self-realisation, becomes a wall of prison. This is accented not only by the motive of home closed from the outer world, but it is also the social status of the characters which divides them from the others. It is most apparent in the stories told on the background of hopeless social situations of the industrial era. These stories underline the isolation of the protagonists, both the manufacturers and officers, from the poor.

In historical narratives, the main heroes are characterized by a distinct confessional or national limit. This wall divides them from the environment to which they finally enter when guided by the beauty of a poor woman. For example, we can mention George from *The Descend*

of the Idol (Bloudění: Větší valdštejská trilogie). He is characterized as a rebel fighting against everything and everybody, with the exception of Albrecht von Wallenstein.

The characters thus live in the shadow of solitude caused by their inability to cross their wall towards other people. In this way, they are eventually divided in themselves. This kind of self-enclosure does not enable them to actualize their own being. Their existence cannot develop in its dynamics; it becomes “choked”. This is underlined by a repetitive motive of sultry, even unbreathable moments. For instance, in the novel *A Soul and a Star* (Duše a hvězda), the character of Henry suffers from tuberculosis, a deadly illness. The home of male protagonists appears to be suffocating and oppressive. They cannot stay there; however, at the same time, they cannot leave it and cross the border of its walls.¹² Then the estrangement from their parents becomes a symbol of their moving away from the source of their own life. After that, they are unable to share and give life; they are tied to their illusions and their activities remain unfruitful. Being far from the source of their life, they suffer from weariness and diseases, they cannot be with themselves, they are desolated in old-age and their rebellion finally turns against themselves.

5.3 The Paradox of Human Journey:

A Natural Desire for a Supernatural Goal

In the beginning of a usually long pilgrimage which directs the male protagonists to the unity with a poor woman, there is a struggle to abandon the state of self-enclosure. For example, the tendency to go out of own self is demonstrated by a repeated way to periphery, by the effort to join the poor or by searching for female beauty. Nevertheless, the characters still remain enchained in their own solitude and go back to their self-enclosure. They are thus characterized by a deep desire in their heart to transcend themselves and go out of their own self and, simultaneously, by their inability to realise this journey.

On the one hand, they are attracted by the new purpose and relate themselves to what they lack: self-discovery (finding a new way of life) through an unconditional accepting by the other, new home based on

¹² After mentioning the character of George from *The Descend of the Idol*, it is apparent that the bond to a “suffocating home” can be understood as a bond to “homeland” or own idea of a homeland, which is again characterized by a self-enclosure and division from ancient roots.

unconditional sharing, finding the inexhaustible source of own life in immeasurable self-giving. On the other hand, they are not able to transcend themselves as they are enchained by their limits. The main paradox is that their deep desire cannot be satisfied by themselves.

5.4 The Journey to the Unknown and the Purpose in Grace

The new purpose of the protagonist does not originate in their own will, and it is not their own choice. Only when a supreme and formerly unknown power seizes them is their straying changed into a pilgrimage directed to an unknown goal. This power comes to light in different ways. However, as a *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*,¹⁵ it attracts the characters by the mystery, which is both frightening and irresistible. Then they are fully subdued and the power enters their hearts. It usually shows itself as a power of an absolute judgment. It unveils the naked existence of the characters; it shatters their former certainties and designs their way as a pilgrimage without the possibility of going back.

The characters are led by a formerly unknown absolute power and enter into a new experience. A new existential space opens to them, and they direct their ways towards new home. This home is under a veil, but it can be hoped for and expected. Although the characters are led by an absolute power, they often lose their orientation. In this way, they also lose themselves. They touch the borderline of their being and not being, which questions the self-evidence of their existence.

Noticeably, they often direct their way to the poor. When the male protagonists enter the society of the poor and outcasts, they become existentially naked and essentially reliant on altruistic accepting and giving. Facing their finality and reliance, they get open to an absolutely new way of being. Even though it is still shrouded in mystery, they can expect it as grace; it shows itself as something what can be gained only as a gift.

In this way, they can access a new source of life. Although it still remains a mystery, it can be hoped for and expected as a new and

¹⁵ This expression is used by Rudolf Otto to describe the experience with the holy (*Das Heilige*, 1917). This characteristic is then used by C. S. Lewis, who does not regard the phenomenon merely as an experience of human heart but as an experience referring to God, who reveals himself to man (cf. Pavel Hošek. *C. S. Lewis: mýtus, imaginace a pravda*. Praha: Návrat domů 2004, pp. 33–34). This idea of Lewis also corresponds to our understanding.

formerly unknown gift. The journey to this source is often formed by a reconsideration of a lost childhood. Also in this sense, the journey of the characters is a return to their ontological origins.

5.5 The Encounter with a Poor Lady and the Mystery of Love

The unknown absolute power is revealed and becomes familiar only at the end of the existential journey of the hero when he encounters his poor lady. In her, the male protagonist is totally accepted, he is bound to her by an irrevocable mutuality and, thanks to her, he finds the transcendent source of his life in an immeasurable and simultaneously tender giving. The mystery of the poor lady thus shows the absolute power as a power of immeasurable *self-giving*, *receptiveness* and *mutuality*, as a mystery of eternal love.

6. The Journey of Male and Female Mutuality as an Act of God's Grace

In retrospective, we can notice that there are some reference possibilities concerning human sexuality as regards the life journey of the male characters.

6.1 The Duality of Man and Woman as an Expression of Gratuitous Direction of Man in God's Love

The different, which is not under control of the male protagonists, is the only possible means of reaching the aim of their existential journey. They cannot define it or possess it; however, they can be finally defined by it, or they can receive it. In the world of Durych's pilgrims, this difference is firstly showed as a power of an absolute judgment and absolute grace. Later on, thanks to a poor lady, the mystery of this power is revealed as a mystery of love.

In this way, the immanent universe of Durych's prose interconnects the theme of male and female difference with the theme of the difference between a man and the power of absolute love. Only thanks to these two differences, a man can be an addressee of an undeserved gift of love. Because of that, sexual difference can be seen as an expression of the absolute power of grace and definite purpose in the mystery of unconditional love. In this way, a literary text can refer to the mystery of human existence. The duality of man and woman and their mutual reliance is not a mere natural feature; its reason is the fact that God

comes gratuitously to people and gives them their purpose by the free possibility of self-sharing.

Sexual difference is an essential feature of human beings only because their purpose is the eternal love of God. It is a guide of man and gives itself to him. At first, it leads him to his own self; only this love can be his origin and end. However, the love of God leads a man also to the other, and it is then given to him in this person.

6.2 The Duality of Man and Woman as a Natural Reliance on Supernatural Fulfilment

This guidance of God and his self-giving can never be under control of people. That is why a person is defined by difference (sexual duality) in his relation to the other. This duality is not conditioned by personal choice; it is not in one's hands but it defines him. At the same time, this difference is in accordance with the deepest human desire and leads a man to himself. It thus directs his steps towards something which will always be unreachable. Nevertheless, it is this impossibility which helps him to find his true self. After finding home in a place which he cannot possess, he can experience himself as being infinitely and gratuitously loved.

From the view of the purpose of man in God's love, the mystery of male and female dual unity becomes a nuptial mystery. In this mystery, man can be an addressee of eternal love, which binds him and leads him to mutual self-sharing. From the view of the direction towards the ultimate goal, the duality of man and woman is fulfilled as a "primary sacrament". When man and woman are united in a nuptial mystery, their bond makes God's eternal love visible and present.

7. The Mystery of a Poor Lady and the Anchoring of Male and Female Duality in the Mystery of Christ

The characters of poor ladies gain a privileged position within the fictive universe of Durych's prose. They are highlighted by some unusual and differentiating features, such as being raped, having experience with prostitution, being of exotic origin or having supernatural perfectness. In spite of all differences, all of these characters have something in common; they firmly and permanently bind their male counterparts and lead them to the fulfilment of life in perfect self-sharing.

The mystery of a poor lady or girl is a point towards which the whole existential journey of the heroes is directed. The male characters can find their goal only by participating in this mystery. The character of a poor lady does not only refer to the nuptial love of man and woman but also to its anchoring in the mystery of Christ, the incarnated Son of God. This is going to be elaborated in the following paragraphs.¹⁴

7.1 The Unlimited Receptiveness of Poor Ladies

When asking why poor ladies can lead the male protagonists to their fulfilment, we can propose a simple answer. This special feature of their personality is gained by their essential and absolute poverty. It is often connected to the fact that they are usually outcasts having lost their inner and also social self. They are often orphans and homeless. The poor ladies cannot anchor their being in a social status or family membership; nor can they secure their existence by being tied to a place, which would belong just to them. They are existentially naked, and their essential way of being is characterized by the openness to absolute receptiveness.

Because they are infinitely poor, they can infinitely accept and also give themselves. Their ontological status is thus defined by the fact that they are identical with the act of absolute accepting and absolute self-giving. In the core of their heart, they have totally vacant space for accepting somebody else. They make their deepest self totally free for their counterparts; they come out of themselves and their own being is directed towards their counterparts. Then they can accept even a man who is marked by sin and who is crookedly turned just to himself as a gift of absolute value. And not only this: They are the bearers of an unconditional acceptance, which is so attractive that it cannot be resisted despite any opposition or curse.

Only because of this, the protagonist of *God's Rainbow* (Boží duha) can proclaim that, during his journey to his poor lady, he was attracted by something majestic and sublime. He is attracted by the mystery of the poor lady up to the state of vertigo, which forces him to fall into its depths. In *The Descend of the Idol*, George calls Angeline “an

¹⁴ The following paragraphs are based on the study: Jan Hojda. Nekonečná krása chudoby – teologický smysl dívčí krásy v próze Jaroslava Durycha. In: Karel Sládek et al. *Krása spasí svět*. Červený Kostelec: Pavel Mervart 2015, pp. 175–183.

abyss”, which irresistibly attracts him from the very beginning. The beauty of a poor lady is thus an eternal beauty of poverty, a limitless power of receptiveness, which is impossible to resist. We can thus say that the female potential to accept a new life is, in the case of the poor ladies, showed in an absolute measure. This is the reason why a poor lady can represent absolute accepting, unlimited openness to the other. Thanks to this, the other person can come out of his own isolation. This acceptance has also a creative power; it guides a man out of nothingness to existence and shows him as somebody of an immense personal value.

7.2 The Connection with the Absolute Giver as a Ground of Essential Poverty

The poor lady does not only provide her counterpart with limitless acceptance, but she also leads him to the participation in her own way of being. She lets him enter into her own mystery. This aspect illuminates why Durych’s prose deals with the theme of daughterhood alongside the essential poverty of ladies. The motive of orphanhood pushes the relation of the poor lady to her origin to a supernatural level.

Sometimes it is exemplified by a moment when the character of a dead father overlaps with God the Father as it can be found in *A Soul and a Star*. Sometimes it concerns motherhood which is elevated by the self-giving of a mother for the life of a daughter as it is in *God’s Rainbow*. This absolute maternal self-giving can be directly connected to fruitfulness and handing down own face (as in *The Carnival*) or handing down own beauty, which can be find in a symbolic short story “*The Alms*” (*Almužna*). Nevertheless, a lady can be also directly claimed that “God was her father” (*The Descend of the Idol*). In each case, the poor lady is anchored in her connection to (motherly or fatherly) Giver, who absolutely gives himself to her.

7.3 The Bond of Eternal Love

The essential poverty of the poor lady is thus defined in relation, and her unconditional receptiveness is grounded in unconditional giving. Then the acceptance of the male counterpart does not mean anything else than involving him into the sharing in which the poor lady accepts everything by her daughterhood and then gives everything to the other. In other words, the heroes of Durych’s stories can be unlimitedly, irrevocably and perichoretically tied to their female

counterparts only because they are involved into an unlimited, irrevocable and perichoretic mutuality. They get involved in the environment of genuine eternal sharing (expressed by “the elevated parenthood”) and of eternal receptiveness (expressed by “elevated daughterhood”). Just because of the reason that the daughterly bond of the poor lady to the self-giving source of her life transcends the limit of time and space, the male hero can be attracted by the poor lady even before he meets her. This moment is transparently seen in the motive of a difficult journey not only in *God’s Rainbow* but also in the short story “A Dream” (*Sen*).

7.4 Anchoring the Dual Unity of Man and Woman in the Mystery of Christ

Thanks to their limitless poverty, the female characters can unreservedly accept their male counterparts, mediate to them the participation in limitless receptiveness and involve them into a (perichoretic) mutuality of unconditional love. Only in this way, the relation of man and woman gains its nuptial character, which is also the key to the whole story. Rather than a specific position of a woman within male and female duality, the female characters demonstrate the vertical anchoring of human sexuality.

Durych’s poor lady thus gains distinct Christological features. Her peculiar daughterhood represents Christ’s sonship in his eternal receptiveness with regard to the Father; her limitless openness to accepting her male counterpart refers to the divine power of the Son to involve man into his eternal receptiveness; her ability to irrevocably bond her counterpart to herself represents Christ’s power to get connected with each man in the Holy Spirit and thus guide him to the space of his eternal mutuality with the Father.

The mystery of the poor girl thus refers to the mystery of Christ and the Trinity rather than to individual aspects of marriage. In this way, it also refers to the eternal ground of human sexual duality, which gains its nourishment there. Without this ground, it is impossible to fully explain the male and female sexual duality; without it, this duality could not exist.

In this sense, the symbolism of female characters turns our attention to the following fact: Only somebody who is the addressee of the Father’s limitless gift, who is limitlessly accepted in the incarnated Son and who finally participates in the limitless mutuality of both can be

“a unity of two”. Only in this way, there can be a person who is essentially open to absolute giving by an insurmountable difference of the other. Only in this way, a man can be essentially directed to a total interpersonal acceptance. And only in this way, he can gain his purpose in a total mutuality, which transcends him and which enables him to find himself.

Conclusion

In this article, we followed the literary work of Jaroslav Durych concerning the relation between man and woman. Focusing on the theological notion of male and female unity and its Trinitarian anchoring, we attempted to enter into a dialogue concerning the testimony about a man as offered by the art of literature. We thus mentioned some aspects of human sexuality.

With regard to the links between the theme of sexuality and the existential journey of man within Durych’s work, we underlined the essential character of human sexual duality. Thanks to the difference between man and woman, a human being is essentially a creature who finds the purpose in self-transcendence and finds his or her self in self-giving.

After that, we noticed that the direction of Durych’s pilgrims to their counterparts is the fruit of the encounter with a supreme power of absolute judgment and absolute grace. In this way, we pointed out the possibility of understanding male and female dual unity as an expression of one’s purpose in gratuitous self-sharing of God. Sexuality thus illustrates the paradox of man that human nature can be fulfilled only through gratuitous grace respecting human freedom, and only in this grace a human being can find the purpose.

Finally, we sketched some possibilities of grasping symbolic potential of the female protagonists. We characterized their essential poverty as an ability to unlimitedly accept their male counterparts, mediate to them the unlimited self-giving and eternally tie them to themselves. The poor ladies who lead the male protagonists to the fulfilment of their own existence have distinct Christological features. They demonstrate the fact that dual unity of man and woman needs to be anchored in the mystery of Christ.

In this way, we are getting back to the main starting point of the whole article. At least in the prose of Jaroslav Durych, the literary quest

for the meaning of the relation between man and woman shows the following: Man would lose himself if he did not recognize the mystery of his own existence in the light of the eternal Trinitarian love.

*Katedra kulturních a náboženských studií
Pedagogická fakulta
University of Hradec Králové
Rokitanského 62
500 03 Hradec Králové
e-mail: jan.hojda@uhk.cz*