

Writer's nature

Miha Mazzini

The organisers asked us to write down our thoughts about "Writer's nature". Being boring ex-geek I had to first check the definition of the nature in the Oxford Living Dictionary:

1. "The phenomena of the physical world collectively, including plants, animals, the landscape"
2. "The basic or inherent features, character, or qualities of something."

Two meanings? Which one did the organisers have in mind? Did they want to confuse us? I doubt it, that would be against their better nature.

Definitions

Let's clarify the task and use two different words for two different meanings:

1. "the **world**" = "physical world collectively, including plants, animals, the landscape"
2. "the **character**" = "inherent features, character, or qualities of something"

Obviously:

1. "the world" = everything **outside** us
2. "the character" = everything **inside** us

Nature is one: divided into interior and exterior of a human being.

(Sideline I would love to follow: If the world is outside and the character is inside, the border between inside and outside must be **our skin**.

We could say: nature is one, divided by our skin.

The skin is breathable: input and output go through the pores.

The pores are accepting the world and excreting the character.

OK, back to the world and the character ...)

Ancient Greece

Some people believe this is not the only world. Above and below (around?) it is another world of gods and demons, let's call it **meta-world**.

In ancient Greece, they believed there were special creatures from the meta-world coming to write and called them **muses**.

Aeschylus fought on the Marathon Plain and in the Battle of Salamis in the Persian Wars, whereupon a Muse started speaking through him and he wrote over seventy plays.

He has nothing to do with his writing, all was done in the meta-world. He was a decent man and didn't want to brag with the work of others. So he asked that the inscription on his gravestone mention only his military achievements.

If the muses exist, writer has no character (or the character doesn't matter)..

Renaissance

In the Renaissance Western civilization developed the personal consciousness of the individual. Leon Battista Alberti wrote in 1436 that the artist is "alter deus", another god.

In his view, a writer is not excreting meta-world but his character.

Pico della Mirandola kept god's influence, stating that the artist does not create on his own but moulds, choosing which seeds he cultivates in himself (free will!), but the material on which he works is always given to him by God through nature.

The world is thus an extra mediator involved in the relationship between the artist and God.

The path of creation is thus: meta-world -> world -> character -> world.

The character is accepting the world, filtering it and excreting work of art.

The Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution

From its onset, the era of industrialization began standardizing all processes but found that it was impossible to do so with some parts of the creative process. How do you plan inspiration? How do you plan the idea?

Two conflicting explanations developed:

1. writing is just a **skill** (there are no muses, no meta-world, nothing special in the character)
2. writing is **spiritual** (new religion with its own priests and priestesses, own martyrs and saints: Character = muse.)

Both are alive and well and mixing today. We're the leftovers of our ancestors.

Writing as a skill

If writing is just a skill, like a shoemaking, then:

1. everybody can learn it (recipe from Malcolm Gladwell's bestselling book *Outliers*: "10,000 hours is the magic number of greatness." Now, you don't have to read it. I told you the secret.)
2. if it can be learned, there can be schools for it. (Estimated total number of applications submitted to Master of Fine Arts programs in the USA last year: 20,000.)
3. if writing is work like every other, soon robots will be doing it.
4. if everybody can do it, it's worthless, so it should be done for free.

This kind of writing needs a world that's commercial, where everything can be bought and sold. The world of agents and publishers dealing with the writer's product as a commodity.

Writer's character must be malleable, following every fad and fashion, bootlicking everybody in the publishing industry above him/her and stabbing in the back all other writers (he/she is replaceable and knowing it).

A perfect character is the one oozing money.

Writing as a spiritual act

If a writer equals god, then:

1. the writer has received a unique divine gift.
2. Whatever the writer does, it's divine. The writer is king Midas turning everything into gold. (I read a book by a writer where he describes interiors of all apartments he has lived in. Don't forget the books with notes, letters, shopping lists, ..., and of course, Piero Manzoni was in 1961 literally selling [Artist's Shit](#).)
3. Because the writer is divine, everything is allowed. Utter egoism and narcissism are preferred - other people are just food for the divine work.
4. if it's divine, it's vocation = so it should be done for free.

This kind of writing needs a world that has lost the meaning, the religion, the ideology, the uniting forces for the masses.

Writer's character is the guru's character.

A perfect character is the one oozing meaning for the atomised and the individualised.

The most well-known example is American author L. Ron Hubbard who has published the first version of his text in pulp magazine *Astounding Science Fiction*

(1950) and a year later published his text as the holy book of a new religion
Scientology.

Prediction

Writers in the skill group would love to be the writers in the spiritual group, while the
later would love to have the money of the first.

The skill group is getting bigger by the day, the spiritual is almost extinct. Obviously
the character mostly just reflects the world. If the world is consumerist, the character
can deviate a little, but not much.

If inside and outside are almost the same, the difference between the world and the
character is gone.

The skin is gone.

Filtering is gone.

Writer's insides will be all over paper or screens.

Character = world.

If all the world is already inside of the character, books about me, me, me, me, me
and me will be very popular. Writer's will bravely march on, fighting for more me, me,
me and me.

The urge to write will become the urge to transport in the book not only the best of
the character but everything.

Words won't be enough, every picture and sound should be recorded and stored.

Everybody will write, nobody will read.