

## **Can the Aesthetic Liberate the Man? – Emancipation and Prus' Chronicles Seen Through the Approach of Rancière and Foucault**

**We want to be free.** It is one of the slogans of the West and the East. We want to define our own life, decide for ourselves, to create ourselves, to realize ourselves. We want that, but .... This is how it happens that it does not really leave us. For various reasons we do not become free or we are not fully free. The purpose of the interdisciplinary project **Can the Aesthetic Liberate the Man?** The emancipation and the "Chronicles" of Bolesław Prus in the optics of Rancière and Foucault are discerns of the reasons for disrupting our freedom and of finding a way to make it possible for us.

Rancière, a well-known French philosopher, believes that the essence of politics and a broadly understood aesthetics is common, i.e. political and artistic practices have as their object the sharing of social space. (This is the famous Rancière "distribution of the sensible") In this process, Rancière gives art more meaning. According to him, it can change the political sphere. However, Rancière says something more. He believes that any change at the political level is preceded by changes in the level of how people experience the world. Rancière wrote, for example, about French workers of the nineteenth century, who struggled for their rights. Because they were able to differentiate themselves from the daily life. And that's what we want to address in the project. **Does the aesthetics liberate.** We want to see if and what changes in the experience and experience of life have preceded or allowed change at the political level. Another Frenchman, whose thought we particularly want to use, is Michel Foucault. He in turn focused on reaching reaching the roots of certain phenomena, ways of thinking, their analysis, which was of critical importance. The scope of power (who says: who is the one that speaks; when does he speak; what does he speak of) shows the discourse. Therefore, analysing the discourse practices recorded by Prus' *Chronicles* will help to show the emancipation processes in the nineteenth century.

Empirically, the project will base on the material provided by *The Chronicles* written by Bolesław Prus, a series of articles, columns written over the period of nearly fifty years. Consisting of 20 volumes, the narration attempted to record the then situation in city, Warsaw, Poland, Europe and sometimes around the globe. It is connected with my second research objective: analysing the experience recorded over such an extensive time frame. Until now, there have been no attempts to perceive *The Chronicles* as a whole, e.g. as a fifty years long legacy of the experienced human existence. The project *Can the Aesthetic Liberate the Man?* will investigate the entire *Chronicles* in terms of the subjects they raise, perceiving it through the category of emancipation, analysing and embracing the recorded aesthetic experience.

During the completion of the project, one of the objectives is to refer to theoretical as well as literary and historical **methods**, as it results from the accepted research basis. Referrals to various structures and concepts developed by other scientific fields (especially in sociology and history) may also be incorporated. At the same time, it will be a process of preparing the grounds for the philosophical analysis of the emancipation as a phenomenon combining both politics and art/aesthetics, and thus enabling to explore their interconnections. In this part, it will become particularly important to refer to Rancière and Foucault's research concepts and practices.

The tangible **outcome** of this project will be a new kind of apprehension of both Bolesław Prus and the Polish experience of the second half of the nineteenth century. The studies will relate to the *practical aesthetics*, an area postulated by aestheticians, which failed to have many material implementations. In addition, the frame of the aesthetic experience will be broadened. Results of both the complete project and its individual stages will be presented continually during the conference and provided as articles and finally published in a book.

Drawing from the existing status of research, the project aspires to expand the way of thinking (relating to aesthetic experience and emancipation) and propose a completely new perspective (analysing *The Chronicles* by Bolesław Prus through a common category of emancipation.) It will provide the grounds for the achieved outcomes to initiate similar studies or oppositional conceptualisations.