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## Autobiography As A Genre Of Literary Remembering And Communication (And Its Presence In The Texts Of Albert Martiš)

### ABSTRACT

The paper points out the importance of autobiography as a significant form of literary development. It is characterised by its main and typical features from the point of view of the most influential cultural thinkers. It expresses the general meaning of (chosen) individuality in the background of contemporary context and versatile (determined, diverse) contacts. By such an object, it comes to the axiom that it is a kind of (re) presentation of the world, the period, creative people and their efforts in the cultural, literary, prosaic field. After general observations, the paper deals with the Kulpín native Albert Martiš (1855 - 1918), a prominent figure among the Slovaks in Serbia; then a resident, citizen, teacher, minority author within the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. It mentions the author's work, his memories of childhood and school years, but also his contemporary life. Based on this, it also reflects on unusual themes and portrayals of artistic material from the aspect of Martiš's short story-making. It analyses his versatile cultural-enlightening activity, with emphasis on his autobiographical features and short stories. This type of memoir literature presents Albert Martiš - according to literary criticism - from his best creative side. At the same time, the article interprets, from an objective-subjective point of view, his commemorative prose with autobiographical elements entitled *Memories of the Lower Land Revival*. Based on the documentary character of this work, the text analyses surroundings, social situations and prominent cultural and literary "workers" of the time. With special regard, it emphasizes the life and work of Albert Martiš, his gradual confirmation of education, morality and character, of course, in the background of the examined prototexts. The paper points out the most typical features of this segment of his literary work in the mentioned short stories, in which their specific diversity (even characteristic) is particularly interesting. The interpretation method from the position of perceptive reading presents various (concrete) elements of autobiography, which not only derive the typical features of Albert Martiš's author idiolect, but also the overall social "atmosphere" of the Lowland in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In this way, the individual and collective memory of the past is being concretised at present, thanks to the interpreted prose, which is in fact a kind of media in various contexts of the cultural-literary tradition of all of us (also in the future).

### KEY WORDS

Ethnic minority. Slovaks in Serbia (Vojvodina). Autobiography. Albert Martiš. Interpretation.

## 1. Introduction

The complex cultural development of the nation is closely related to the issues of diachrony and synchrony. It is a sign of continuity, viability, purposefulness. This creates art, which is in its entirety and in parts a part of immaterial culture. The literary-historical aspect also has a peculiar and inevitable bond, a kind of pulsation of an expanding, but sometimes also a narrowing, artistic space. The advance of the culture of mankind (including the arts) is carried out as the progress of different regions that are more or less connected to one another. For this reason, it is extremely important to observe and then interpret artistic - in our case prosaic - texts of a selected (often regional, peripheral, non-dominant) region that is naturally tied to a particular chronotope. For this reason too, the coordinate system of the region is in the broadest sense a problem of space and time: in the literary work of the environment and events, in the literary process of the question of literary situations, life, culture and tradition. In the context of tradition that is related to the region, this is a complementary issue. What characterizes the unity of time and space in the physical sense is in the creation of literary situations a unity of the local or the global and creativity or tradition. In the case of creativity and tradition, there are multiple interrelationships and connections between the present, past and future. For the historical existence of literary works, this means that both present and past works are confirmed in their multidimensionality. Each new link reveals a new meaning and value aspect of a literary work. In this we see the uniqueness and unrepeatability of the analysis of a literary work - especially from the aspect of the past and the present. It combines both individual and collective memory with contemporary access to prototext, and perhaps even literary metatext - in the cultural-literary context of Slovaks living abroad too.

## 2. Literary memory and autobiography as its typical genre concretization as a starting point for research

This memory (from the position of literature) naturally also has its genre concretization. One of the most typical forms that are „*objectified*“ in the process of literary communication is autobiography. Autobiographism is what „...we can call a *stylistically characteristic literary reception of ideas*.“<sup>1</sup>

Autobiography is an epic literary genre of narrative character, based on the author's thorough presentation of his own life or some of its sections. It is the preferred type of memoir literature, which has declared its upsurge since the second half of the 18th century. The term „autobiography“ was first used by the English romantic poet Robert Southey (1774 - 1843), who in 1809 called the biography of the Portuguese painter Francis Vieira (1699 - 1783) an autobiography. The definition of this genre was not only a subject matter for the Slovakistic but also the Slavistic literary science<sup>2</sup>, thus pointing out the pitfalls and specifics of the genre boundaries of autobiography itself.

At present, autobiography is often narrowed down to being a biographical work. In a broader sense, however, we understand it as an artistic text in which its author describes the extraordinary events of his/her life. In a narrower sense, we can speak of strict (true) autobiography with special poetological features that separate it from all other types of memoir works. It is therefore retrospective prosaic information created by a real person about his or

<sup>1</sup> MEDARIC, M.: Autobiography and autobiographism. In *Russian Literature*, 1996, Vol. 40, No. 1, p. 31.

<sup>2</sup> See for details: GUSDORF, G.: Conditions and limitations of the genre of autobiography. In *Pamietnik literacki*, 1979, Vol. 70, No. 1, p. 261-278.

her existence, with the main emphasis being on one's own individual life and its subjective history. American researcher Kathleen Lynch states in her review article of a major publication (A History of English Autobiography, edited by Adam Smyth, 2016, Cambridge University Press) that: „Even as we write about autobiography before 'autobiography', we often still read early modern autobiographical narratives through the lens of generic conventions that reified an introspective, retrospective self.“<sup>3</sup> That is why we should approach these texts of older autobiographies in both directions: from the past to the present and vice versa. In this way, the tradition and actual interpretation of given literary texts is contaminated.

An autobiographical text is one whose author is the same as the narrator presenting an actual reality in an unmediated way. The events described by him or her originate in his or her personal life and are actually verifiable. More than the aesthetic qualities, it emphasizes its documentary character, i.e. a significant degree of objectivity or conformity with reality. Autobiographical literature has its origin in the subject and in events that are situated outside the text and precede it. Such a text creates a new textual reality that is a hybrid of fact and fiction, and its form is the result of the possibilities of language and poetics through which the very effect of autobiography ultimately arises. These are texts that speak of the author's life through the deliberate involvement of fictionality in an autobiographical statement. Thus, in fact, fictional and factual narration is linked to the analysis of autofiction and metabiographic works. In this form, there are theorists who explain the method of engaging fiction in an autobiographical text as a means of reflecting on remembrance, as a possibility to depict their own life and create their own self by writing - also by putting their own identity behind the secondary line of the literary text.<sup>4</sup> The stability of the subject is able to achieve such a degree of self-knowledge that he / she presents it as authentic in the text. The author of the text „...is not only the originator of its meaning, but also unifies the narrated events of individual life anchored in historical time. The constitutive principle that allows all of this is the individual memory, acting as a guarantor of its individuality and hence the uniqueness of its experience (behind the coherent and complex identity - note P. Š).“<sup>5</sup> The identity of this subject is this memory, which is created during the autobiographical narration.

This genre has also become popular among the Lowland Slovaks, who gradually bear witness to their lives and diverse cultural endeavors. We must not forget the fact that individual Lowland communities have their own identity of Lowland Slovaks, which is the result of not only auto-identification but also recognition or acceptance by the surrounding other-ethnic communities. The issue of identity, however, requires reaching into the collective memory of local residents from the past. It is important to draw on their life stories, everyday and festive moments, interpret their assessments and opinions, and thus understand their complex view of the world.

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<sup>3</sup> LYNCH, K.: Inscribing the early modern self: The materiality of autobiography. In SMYTH, A. (ed.): *History of English autobiography*. Oxford : Cambridge University Press, 2016, p. 56.

<sup>4</sup> See for details: FONIOKOVA, Z.: Fictionality in factual narrative. The case of fictional meta-autobiographies. In *Česká literatura*, 2018, Vol. 66, No. 6, p. 841-869.

<sup>5</sup> TARANENKOVÁ, I.: Písať o sebe, písať seba. K podobe slovenskej autobiografickej literatúry v 19. storočí. In TARANENKOVÁ, I. (ed.): *Podoby autobiografickej literatúry 19. storočia*. Bratislava : Kalligram – Ústav slovenskej literatúry SAV, 2012, p. 680.

### 3. Identity attributes in the background of Lowland space-time

One has to mention the suggestive review from the English philosopher Julian Baggini (of the prestigious publication *The Philosophy of Autobiography*; edited by Christopher Cowley, 2015, University of Chicago Press), who in his assessment of the history of identity in terms of development and continuity, stated that: „*The origins of this conception of the self can be tracked back to at least John Locke in the seventeenth century. Locke argued that a person was individuated not by the substance that made them, be that matter or an immaterial soul, but by its psychological features. A person, he argued, is a thinking intelligent being that has reflection and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing in different times and places. This is often called the psychological continuity view of personal identity.*“<sup>6</sup> Every person - both as an individual and as a member of (their) community - thus creates and manifests his or her identity throughout life. Its complexity „... *is always composed of several components - identities - and their contexts. Ethnic, religious, local, cultural and socio-professional identities are universally found in every environment of the communities of the Lowland Slovaks. They appear alternately, situationally - depending on the particular situation, moreover, most of them at the same time.*“<sup>7</sup> They are interconnected and provide a breeding ground for the genre of autobiography itself. In it, the most significant manifestation - in a given chronotope - belongs to its own village and to the local community. It is also related to religious identity and identification that determines almost every human activity. The geographical conditions of the Lower Land also determine to some extent the individual's job classification. In addition, he/she also creates a cultural identity that is firmly attached to the attributes and parameters mentioned. In the case of the Lowland Slovaks, it expresses membership of the Slovak, Lowland and local culture. Naturally, these features also overlap in the autobiographical texts of selected national revivalists at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries.

The Vojvodina environment in the period of *Matica slovenská* and before the First World War was rich in cultural movements; Báčsky Petrovec became the center of the cultural life of the Vojvodina Slovaks in those decades. This lively atmosphere was also created by personalities who are still remembered to this day. One of them is the national revivalist and writer Albert Martiš, who lived all his life in the Lowlands and is „... *considered to be the first Lowland Slovak novelist.*“<sup>8</sup> His „...*generational affiliation was manifested also in the literary follow-up to post-romanticism and to the pioneer of Slovak Lowland prose of the Matica period, Félix Kutlík.*“<sup>9</sup> At Martiš, this was first manifested by the fact that he started to introduce Yugoslavian themes and motifs into literature, but in his later work he focused on contemporary issues with a slight inclination to the home environment. In a sense, he was a kind of predecessor of Ján Čajak. In this symbolic cultural chain of Slovak literature, his work thus functions as a sort of clasp.

<sup>6</sup> BAGGINI, J.: The philosophy of autobiography. In *Life writing*, 2019, Vol. 16, No. 3, p. 497.

<sup>7</sup> LENOVSÝ, L.: Kolektívna pamäť a lokálna identita dolnozemsých komunití. In AMBRUŠ, I. M., HLÁSNIK, P., PASCÚ, B. (eds.): *Svedectvá slovenského dolnozemského bytia – aspekty zo slovenskej dolnozemskej kultúrnej histórie a kultúrnej antropológie*. Nadlak : Vydavateľstvo Ivan Krasko, 2012, p. 174.

<sup>8</sup> ANDRUŠKA, P.: Národnostné (a národné) literatúry ako realita súčasných kultúrnych kontextov alebo Prvá úvaha o „transylvánskej mačke“. In ANDRUŠKA, P. (ed.): *Dolnozemske podoby slovenskej kultúry*. Nitra : Univerzita Konštantína Filozofa v Nitre, 2007, p. 92.

<sup>9</sup> HODOLIČOVÁ, J.: Život a dielo Alberta Martiša. In HRONEC, V. (ed.): *Autobiografické črty a poviedky*. Báčsky Petrovec : Kultúra, 1996, p. 15.

## 4. Albert Martiš as a representative of the autobiographical genre in Vojvodina

The relatively later phase of the literary development of the Slovaks in Serbia (i.e. since 1880) coincides with the constitution of artistic prose of a realistic focus, whose representative was also Albert Martiš as a „...pioneer in depicting the ethnic color of the Slovak Lowland environment. In relation to nationwide prose, his work can be typologically determined as a regional variant.”<sup>10</sup> Albert Martiš was literally active in the years 1878 - 1918, so by this time limitation he was directly connected to the years of realism as a literary period. Through his comprehensive activities, he joined the Hlasisti movement (named after the journal Hlas - Voice) that set out to spread awareness, education and Slovak consciousness. The village people became the main inspiration for his literary works. In this chronotope he cultivated tales (especially short forms) with various variations. He was a teacher in Padina; he wrote stories and dramas, tried to write a novel, and contributed letters and articles to contemporary Slovak periodicals.

He was born on April 20, 1855 in the Slovak-inhabited Bačka village of Kulpin (father Peter Martiš, mother Apolónia Franková - she came from a family of teachers in Kysáč/Kisač). His family created a cultural atmosphere in which young Martiš grew (along with two siblings). Already as a nine-year-old he had to help his parents (his father in the shop and his mother with sewing). His father often changed jobs, opened a tavern and shop, but he was not able to manage them, so he later started teaching (in Bingula, Bačka Palanka and Hajdušica). When his father was a teacher in Syrmian Bingula, the pastor Juraj Jesenský noticed the boy's talent and convinced his father to let him study. Young Albert passed the entrance examination to the Serbian gymnasium in Novi Sad in 1867. In the upper classes he was taught philosophy by Jozef Podhradský, a prominent representative of the Vojvodina Slovaks. When asked about his nationality, Martiš answered that he was a Slovak. (Identification of national identity as the starting point for autobiography.) The beginnings of his literary work date back to the gymnasium in Novi Sad. It is interesting to note that he also contributed to the handwritten school magazine Sloga (Concord), which was written off in six copies; he published a translation of the Slovak legend Chory král' (Sick King). During his two-year studies in Novi Sad (1867 - 1869) he began to become involved in the cultural and national (minority) life of the Lowland Slovaks. In 1869 he went to Novi Vrbas, the lower German Evangelical Gymnasium (1869 - 1873; his parents were again convinced of the usefulness of studying at this school by Slovak Karol Zvaríny; he completed the second to fourth grades), in which professor Michal Godra, an important cultural factor of Vojvodina Slovaks and at the time the director of this gymnasium, instilled love for his mother tongue. However, he lived mainly at the mercy of the families where he was eating free of charge. Later, he also drew inspiration from his experiences for his short stories (Nevďačná Švábka - Ungrateful Swabian, 1916; Pomsta študentov - Revenge of the students, 1917 etc.). He decided (again under the influence of Karol Zvaríny) to go to the newly opened normal school (preparandum) in Prešov, transferred from Nyíregyháza, which accepted students free of charge. The Slovak pupils established a student association, Napred (Ahead, 1874), which was (symbolically) a spark for Slovak awareness. During the summer holidays of 1874 and 1875 Martiš went to supplicate (i.e. collect money for the school) in Slovakia. It was a lifetime experience for him: he wrote down his travel experiences in a diary, which today is of value not only as documentary material, but also as autobiographical memories written at a high literary level. He passed his teacher's examination in Szarvas (1877; a year before he was a teacher in Hajdušice). In the same year he was employed as a teacher in Padina and got married. His first wife Jozefina (born Garayová), the daughter of an evangelical teacher in Bácsky Petrovec, died in 1888, leaving two children behind: Mariena (born 1878) and Ján (born

<sup>10</sup> HARPÁŇ, M.: *Zápas o identitu*. Nadlak – Bratislava : Vydavateľstvo Ivana Kraska a Vydavateľstvo ESA, 2000, p. 37.

1883). After his wife's death, Martiš remarried (1889) - married Antónia Skyčáková, a native of an Oravan Catholic family, converting to the Evangelical faith, but living in Novi Sad with whom he had eight children; only three remained alive: Oľga (b. 1900), Ľudmila (b. 1901) and Pavel (b. 1903), who later continued his father's educational and translation work. Albert Martiš also wrote until his death (thirty years of fruitful writing). He was also one of the most strenuous Lowland Slovak contributors to contemporary periodicals (he was also published in the American press, especially in calendars). In the years 1878 - 1918 he published more than 200 texts: articles, translations, children's works, sketches and short stories - especially in magazines and proceedings such as Brankovo kolo, Cirkevné listy, Dolnozemský Slovák, Dom a škola, Javor, Ľudové noviny, Národné noviny, Národný hlásnik, Obzor, Slovenské listy, Slovenské pohľady, Slovenský denník, Slovenský týždenník, Stražilovo, Tranovský evanjelický kalendár, Včelka, Zornička, Živena. However, his texts were sporadically published also in book form (they were published mainly posthumously).

In Padina Martiš spent forty years of fruitful national awareness-raising work (he also subscribed to the Národné noviny - National newspaper). He worked as a primary school teacher in the years 1877 - 1894. At the same time, he also performed useful edification activities: he read to the Padinans at Thursday markets in front of the parish or school, on the loft, in front of the municipal house, at his house, in their house and at the pub. He then followed up on the readings he had brought to the Slovak consciousness. He attended individual Padina families, carrying out a major revival mission amongst them. He also taught Slovak songs - often accompanied by his own piano playing, founded a reading room (1880) and Vzájomná pomocnica (Mutual Help, 1885, later renamed Savings Bank as a branch of Pančevská banka). In addition, he still had connections with Slovak revivalists in Slovakia. Since „...*despite the warnings and threats he did not cease his revivalist work, he was persecuted, reported to the school supervisor, had up to twelve political trials, hindered in every possible way.*“<sup>11</sup> In 1895, however, he retired ... The last years of his teaching were continually pestered by the attacks of the evangelical pastor Gustáv Bujkovský, who was bothered by Martiš's national cultural activities. After Bujkovský's death (1895), a new evangelical pastor, Ľudovít Doeschall, came to Padina, also a renegade and an enemy of Martiš, who obstructed his efforts (for example, he had him expelled from the church - much like the notary from the municipal committee). As a Slovak revivalist, he did not receive recognition from the official and formal authorities, quite the contrary, and therefore faced many inconveniences and struggles. It is interesting to note, however, that he achieved awards in the economic field: he cultivated hops and silks; he was engaged in beekeeping, viticulture and the cultivation of spleen roses. He received a silver medal for his exhibited hops at the World Exhibition in Paris, and a bronze one for his hollyhock (1889). At the Millennium Exhibition in Budapest (1896) he won a bronze medal. From the Emperor Franz Joseph I he received a large medal for merit in the field of agriculture. In addition, he promoted the establishment of a new Slovak base from which to support writers, scientists and artists. Martiš was therefore full of initiative and very innovative in economic and technical matters - he recognized technical progress. However, his impracticality in business matters did not result in much financial gain from his ideas and efforts.

In 1915, Albert Martiš became ill with kidney and bladder disease. On the one hand, illness, but also the general unfavourable conditions and the dearth of the World War, caused Martiš and his family to experience a great shortage. It is sad that: „*All his life he was striving for the well-being of the Slovak people of the Lowlands and paradoxically in the last months of his life he literally suffered from hunger.*“<sup>12</sup> However, he worked literally until his last breath. He succumbed to his severe illness on September 19, 1918. His funeral was on September 21, 1918; he is buried in Padina in a common grave next to his first wife. Most Slovak magazines reported his death, highlighting his selfless work for the good of the people.

<sup>11</sup> ORMIS, J. V.: K životopisu Alberta Martiša (doplnok jeho autobiografie). In ORMIS, J. V. (ed.): *Pamäti dolnozemskeho učiteľa*. Martin : Matica slovenská, 1937, p. 105.

<sup>12</sup> JANČOVIC, J.: *Pretvorili dolnozemske rovinu*. Martin : Vydavateľstvo Matice slovenskej, 2012, p. 116.

## 5. Contours of Martiš' autobiographical prose and their literary reception

Albert Martiš received attention of a literary-critical nature by Pavel Bujnák only at the end of his life, in which the reviewer briefly assessed the writer's work of this Lowland author.<sup>13</sup> Even Ľudmila Podjavorinská (true, just posthumously) wrote a short biography of his life in *Národné noviny* (National Newspaper).<sup>14</sup> Even behind these facts, Andrej Sirácky's introduction to his collection *Hriechy mladosti a iné rozprávky* (Sins of Youth and Other Tales), 1933) states that Martiš is unjustly forgotten. In the following decades it was (in principle) no different ... Michal Babinka (only) published a study of his life and work in 1953 in *Nový Život* (New Life).<sup>15</sup> Ján Kmeť briefly arranged and defined his literary work in the overview of the history of Slovak literature in *Vojvodina - Literatúra vojvodinských Slovákov*.<sup>16</sup> Recently, Michal Harpán, Peter Andruška and (especially) Jarmila Hodoličová have noticed Martiš's work.<sup>17</sup> In addition, it is gratifying that the encyclopaedic entries of Albert Martiš are found not only in various publications, but also in *Dejiny slovenskej literatúry* (History of Slovak Literature itself).<sup>18</sup> All biobibliographies agree that he was a pioneer in depicting the ethnic colour of the Slovakian Lowlands environment.

He was an author who authentically knew the life of the Lowlands environment and its people. In the background of his literary work we can characterize that range from short stories through dramatic work to attempting a novel. In the background, Martiš's literary performances can be divided into several groups: short stories, work with Southern Slavonic themes, dramas, attempted novels: *Tiene a svetlo* (Shadows and Light), works for children and youth, translations, articles from various fields.

His most valuable literary work is his own documentary biography entitled *Pamäti dolnozemskeho buditeľa* (Memoirs of a Lowland revivalist, Matica slovenská, Martin, 1937), which Ján Vladimír Ormis signed (as if it were his own book), who however only edited the manuscript: he presented the biography in an abbreviated form, while evidently striving to preserve the meaning and character of the prototext. Thus, in many places, this curriculum is an eye-catching depiction of the everyday life of a man from the Lowlands. Albert Martiš did not finish his own biography, he stopped in full swing on the 66th page (out of five intended sections, unfortunately he could not even complete the third). It is from this text that Martiš' fearlessness - even boldness - can be identified to tell everyone the truth to their face. A short excerpt from the prototext was published in *Národné noviny* immediately after his death by Ľudmila Podjavorinská (she also added some of her remarks to the text). Excerpts from the autobiography were also published by Ján K. Garaj in *Slovenské pohľady* (Slovak views, 1927-1928). Martiš's memories are perhaps the only Slovak memoir about those days from the Lowlands and therefore are of an exceptional value. They are of great importance not only

<sup>13</sup> BUJNÁK, P.: Albert Martiš – poviestkár. In *Národné noviny*, 15.6.1918, Vol. 49, No. 69, p. 2-3; *Národné noviny*, 18.6.1918, Vol. 49, No. 70, p. 2-3.

<sup>14</sup> PODJAVORINSKÁ, Ľ.: Albert Martiš 1855-1918. In *Národné noviny*, 19.10.1918, Vol. 49, No. 123, p. 2-3; *Národné noviny*, 22.10.1918, Vol. 49, No. 124, p. 2-3.

<sup>15</sup> BABINKA, M.: Albert Martiš, život a dielo. In *Nový život*, 1953, Vol. 5, No. 1, p. 67-85.

<sup>16</sup> KMEŤ, J.: *Literatúra vojvodinských Slovákov*. Bratislava : Rozmnoženina Ústavu zahraničných Slovákov Matice slovenskej, p. 71.

<sup>17</sup> See also: HARPÁN, M.: *Zápas o identitu*. Nadlak – Bratislava : Vydavateľstvo Ivana Kraska a Vydavateľstvo ESA, 2000, p. 32-38; ANDRUŠKA, P.: *Súčasní slovenskí spisovatelia z Vojvodiny*. Nitra : Univerzita Konštantína Filozofa, 2010, p. 41-52; HODOLIČOVÁ, J.: Dolnozemský buditeľ Albert Martiš (1). In *Nový život*, 2015, Vol. 67, No. 11-12, p. 43-49.

<sup>18</sup> For example, see publications such as: *Encyklopédia Slovenska III*. Bratislava : Veda, 1979, p. 505; *Encyklopédia slovenských spisovateľov I*. Bratislava : Obzor, 1984, p. 411-412; *Encyklopédia dramatických umení Slovenska 2*. Bratislava : Veda, 1990, p. 37; *Slovenský biografický slovník IV*. Martin : Matica slovenská, 1990, p. 94; *Slovník slovenských spisovateľov Dolnej zeme: Juhoslávia, Maďarsko, Rumunsko*. Bratislava : ESA, 1993, p. 35.

for the history of Padina itself, but also for the Slovaks in Serbia. Martiš is a quick narrator in them, and his lively fantasy is also reflected in them. This work is actually „...a vast record of what he experienced, an engaging description of an intellectual evolution, the awakening of his national, in his masculine age very poised character .... Martiš' sharp pen captured in several sketches the characters and conditions of those whom he met in his life. Namely, the moments of his student life are valuable in the history of our hindered development.“<sup>19</sup> It's a text in which Albert Martiš „...tells the stories of life, and the story flows so smoothly from his mouth and so easily from his heart that it even excites admiration ...Martiš does not narrate read things, but his own experience.“<sup>20</sup> Pavel Bujnák says that „...almost everywhere you see a writer reading his works, you feel his closeness, you feel that he is with you that he wants to lead you ...“<sup>21</sup> After all, Ľudmila Podjavorinská praises Martiš's comprehensive cultural activity, saying: „Appreciating Albert Martiš as a tireless worker, we should put the effort he has made in the field of Slovak writing in the first place.“<sup>22</sup>

Albert Martiš' autobiographical prose, which is of a high artistic standard, is therefore part of the memoir literature. It is in them that he best proved himself as a writer. These texts have a more or less documentary character, giving not only their life, but also the environment, social situation and prominent cultural workers of that time. In *Memoirs of a Lowland revivalist*, one can see how the educational, moral, and labouring character of the Padina teacher was created; he speaks clearly and engagingly about his childhood, his years of study, and particularly his experiences with supplicating.

## 6. Biographical aspects in short prose by Albert Martiš

For his short prose, he drew inspiration from his childhood and student years, contemporary life, animal life, surrounding nations and nationalities. Based on these facts, we can say that autobiographical prose is an integral and important part of his literary work. They are divided into childhood and student years (*Demikát* (*Demicate* – a soup made from bryndza), *Nevďačná Švábka* (*Ungrateful Swabian*), *Noc medzi hadmi* (*A Night Among the Snakes*), *Pamäti dolnozemskeho buditeľa* (*Memoirs of a Lowland revivalist*), *Pomsta študentov* (*Revenge of the students*), *Suplikantské kúsky* (*Supplicant pieces*), *Všeličo z cesty* (*Anything from the roads*)) and stylized third person narrations (*Božie cesty* (*God's Path*), *Prvý hriech* (*First syn*), *Skrižované cesty* (*Crossed roads*), *Stará rozprávka* (*Old tale*), *Ujcov román* (*Mister's novel*), *Známý rukopis* (*Known manuscript*)).<sup>23</sup>

The tale named *Night among the Snakes* with its thrilling story and its extremely exciting narration arouses fear from the perceptive reader, just as the real survival of this incident by little Martiš, whom his parents allowed to sleep at night in the “vineyard cottage” in Ilok at his request. The environment of sniping snakes and squeaking rats and mice, with a terrible thunder and storm, is the expressive basis of the story. He presented his experiences from the gymnasium in Novi Vrbas in two prose works: *The Ungrateful Swabian* and *The Revenge of the Students*. He described one inhuman deed of a rich Swabian woman, whose greed was felt first hand, in the prose *Ungrateful Swabian* (true, with a humane legacy). Also in these autobiographical works are Martiš's educational tendencies and moralizing inclinations, which were also reflected in the prose *Revenge of the Students*, in which the young ones take revenge for the professor's supercilious relationship towards them (with sad consequences). Based on our own reading

<sup>19</sup> PODJAVORINSKÁ, Ľ.: Albert Martiš 1855-1918. In *Národné noviny*, 19.10.1918, Vol. 49, No. 123, p. 2-3.

<sup>20</sup> BUJNÁK, P.: Albert Martiš – poviestkár. In *Národné noviny*, 15.6.1918, Vol. 49, No. 69, p. 2-3.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>22</sup> PODJAVORINSKÁ, Ľ.: Albert Martiš 1855-1918. In *Národné noviny*, 22.10.1918, Vol. 49, No. 124, p. 3.

<sup>23</sup> About more details of Albert Martiš's prose works see: HODOLIČOVÁ, J.: Dolnozemský buditeľ Albert Martiš (1). In *Nový život*, 2015, Vol. 67, No. 11-12, p. 46-47.

experience, we can say that in the short - autobiographical prose of Albert Martiš, one can also encounter factual elements, which are also present in stylized third-person narratives, which are also often personal experiences. In the prose Mister's novel, the novel speaks to the youth that comes together in his house about his first love (in fact, it was Martiš' first love). In the Old Tale, the writer's mother talks about poor parents who send their son Janko to schools. It is through his diligence and honesty that he not only becomes an attorney, but also acquires the hand of the daughter of his principal (magisterial, director).

In terms of journals he also published several stories and sketches with autobiographical motifs. These are most often based on the memories of travel by the author himself. It describes its own significant path along the contemporary modern railway, and the individual villas and cottages along it. On the basis of this fact, it contrasts the poor and rich worlds (also) on the basis of national attributes (bald-chinned, moustacheless, antipathic Swabian versus rich but lazy Serbian). He describes his journey to Pest or Cegléd in the background of lucky coincidences; however, the meeting with Slovaks is slightly criticized (as if they were ashamed of their origin and language). The allusion to teacher Michal Godra, then professor of the gymnasium in Novi Vrbas, is the subject of individual memories, recollections and suggestions. Novi Sad is mentioned as a certain cultural centre of the youth of Albert Martiš, his contact with the „slovakness“ of Jozef Podhradský. A separate sketch is devoted to the author's supplicant „spells“ - not only disappointments and inconveniences, but also cheerful events during his purposeful wandering. As a supporter of the Tisza evangelical normal school, he describes the „manorial begging“ and merry events in thirteen counties (from the Zemplín county stretching from both the banks of the Tisza to the Danube). His journey is interwoven by singing „our nice Slovak songs“, contaminated by Hungarian and German, or meeting with the „really“ Lowlandish people. The incident with a silent Slovak is interesting, who in the Lowlands got chased fifty-two times to stand before the nobility for his Slovak belief. In this chronotope, the words „patriot“ and „patriotic sentiment“ mean something else, even special. The superficiality of school teaching and education is also described, while the arrogant tone of the time is evident: those who have no money, let them not study and go to work in industry. The Slovak element is (in)directly present in the families. This is one of the reasons why the conscious Slovaks strive to raise good people in a nice language - even at their own expense without state aid. The text mentions philanthropy, a collection at (sic) the casino and (kind of) endowments. In this context, Martiš said the following: „Many bad but more good impressions almost every supplicant carries with him into life. I have so many of them that I could write whole books about them“<sup>24</sup> The sketch describing the memory of young Martiš' horrific night among snakes is extremely expressive. On the other hand, it indicates the child's desire for freedom and especially for the beauty of God's nature. The night spent in the family vineyard is - as we mentioned earlier - characterized by terrible darkness: rain, whirlwind, thunder, bangs, frightening lightning and extraordinarily large mice. The huge snake beside the body of a young boy in light summer robes in the open air is described in a particularly interesting way. After all, the story carries an important didactic attribute in which parents' sacred words will become decisive in the future.

The memory of family poverty drags the writer up to his adulthood. He wanted to learn at the gymnasium, but his father needed to put him to craftsmanship. Nevertheless, Martiš - thanks to the parish' and teacher's help - could study. Thus, the complex mental and physical „hunger“ of a young person is accentuated. The author describes in more detail the memories of his student years (for example about family meals). However, his ego is permanently heard internally, dissatisfied with his social status, and so - as the only option - he turns to God: „Lord! Why have you made me poor, that I am forced to eat spongy bread!“<sup>25</sup> Suffering for the inexorable behaviour of the ungrateful Swabian is basically ambivalent, based on the real state.

<sup>24</sup> HRONEC, V.: *Autobiografické črty a poviedky*. Báčsky Petrovec : Kultúra, 1996, p. 71.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77.

Criticism against peasants will in the future (in the adult life of Martiš) transform into a slight criticism of the Padinians, because „...for almost forty years I live among people of bacon like character who does not understand the beauty of nature and therefore does not grow forests but corn for greasy pigs.“<sup>26</sup> The memories of student times are quite comical, acts of revenge from the students in the gymnasium are age-appropriate. It describes the rigor of professors and their different approach to Martiš - the Slovak, who pronounced even Hungarian words softly. In fictionalized texts, parents are also mentioned, of course, with respect and awe - also with autobiographical features: the mother as a tailor prepared a silk wedding suit and the father as an unsuccessful craftsman was given a job as a tutor. It was a real parent world for the child, endowed not by simple fairy tales, but by the life-drawn stories of his own mother. Her desire for education was concretized in the character of a son, who gradually gained (himself) a reflection both of the world and of his parents. The young boy is grateful to the nurturing four-leaf clover of mother - father - teacher - pastor; he avoids carouses, reads, thinks, interprets. Everywhere, however, he remains (to a certain extent) hurt by his own and the surrounding poverty. It is true that he loves his surrounding Slovak people, so he attaches his mind and actions to them as a future medic, lawyer (even a teacher) who wants to work; he basically subscribes to Pan-Slavism (he reads and spreads *Národný hlásnik* (National Announcer Magazine and other Slovak periodicals; condemns the libel against a notable man, scholar and „our honoree“ Jozef Miloslav Hurban), but symbolically honours the Basilica of Esztergom. He realizes that God's ways are inscrutable, but truthful. However, they leave behind some remains - like pressure sores on feet one gets from tight shoes. What is important here are certain parentheses in the text in the form of short lectures by learned „misters“ and their anecdotes about the Bernolák or Štúr period. The events of the last - third - wandering after passing the school are already marked by the life experience of a young person. The young supplicant likes to meet people who sing songs they have heard from Štúr himself. At the same time, Martiš relentlessly hears about the life of the contemporary multicultural Pressburg, where naturally Slovaks, Hungarians, Germans, Serbs, Croats and others meet. Along the way, he gets to know his first love – the faithful Slovak Marka, to whom he accentuates the importance of the connection of heart and reason. He visits Slovak houses with his wards where: „They heard short history of Slovaks, history of Slovak literature, good and bad characteristics of Slovak people, about work for the people, and especially they sang there, at an old, often out of tune but resonant piano, unheard folk songs...“<sup>27</sup>

In his student novel, Martiš describes the life of a young hero who devoted himself entirely to his studies in Prešov. In doing so, he wrote poems about the beauty of Slovakia, the Slovak people, their language, the singing of rosy-cheeked Slovak girls. The main character, like Martiš, is a poetically attuned idealist. He turns not only to God, but also to a girl – a Slovak. In the fictionalized autobiographies of Albert Martiš, faith meets love, while the East Slovak dialect blends with beautiful pictures of the surrounding nature. Thus, the contamination of languages helps the colourful period (however, Slovak is lagging behind, since its teaching is absent even at school). In the narrative concept, however, a Slovak boy and a Ruthenian girl share a common grandmother-Sláva. The body associates with the soul, while the surrounding nature in their chronotope is their natural, even idyllic witness: „...in one day sunbeams lure more grass and flowers out of the ground than in the prosaic Lowlands they do in one week, because Highland rocks collect the life-giving warmth of the sun quicker than the dense, heavy clay of the Lowlands.“<sup>28</sup> In this way, the author gradually becomes convinced that it is necessary to pray to God, to listen to parents and elders. Only good education makes a human human. In this way, the fate of the Padina teacher in a large Lowland village is concretized: „He instilled

<sup>26</sup> HRONEC, V.: *Autobiografické črty a poviedky*. Báčsky Petrovec : Kultúra, 1996, p. 76.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 109.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 126.

*the love of their condition to future peasants, and painted in vivid colors how beautiful the peasant state was, so every pupil wanted to be a peasant. When he vividly described the state of craftsmanship, everyone wanted to be craftsmen ... he was a teacher not only at school, but also in life...*<sup>29</sup> Even so was the Lowland teacher and writer Albert Martiš, who worked and educated, spoke and wrote - also texts with autobiographical motives in which, as in life, he followed the ten commandments of God under all circumstances. After all, as he put it: *„Everything has been fulfilled, except that I have not become a „great gentleman“, but only an ordinary village teacher.*<sup>30</sup> And perhaps that is even greater ... Based on the above facts, we can therefore express a thought that Albert Martiš had and still has a well-deserved place among national revivalists and Lowland economic workers. He was a practical master-educator, economic pioneer, national revivalist and writer. I mean, a man who deserves our attention - even one hundred years after he left us.

## 7. Memoirs of a Lowland revivalist as an important milestone in the autobiographical genre

From the point of view of (auto) biographical attributes, the most significant work of Albert Martiš is his own biography, which he began writing on June 24, 1913; he continued it during the First World War. This work is his most important literary work. It describes the circumstances, based on an axiom, that he was born from April 19 to April 20, 1855. It gives basic information about his parents. He portrays his father as rational; an emotional mother who wiped his child's tears and read nice fairy tales. He describes his childhood as quite lonely, during which the beginnings of the creative path of the man appear. However, he criticizes the Kulpin school, especially the lack of systematic teaching. Additionally, he learned the basics for practical life from his teacher-mister: he learned to instill, collect weeds, catch ground squirrels, observe goldfinches. In the background of his childhood flights, however, are always present his mother's fairy tales, which *„...had a great influence on my upbringing and on my later character.*<sup>31</sup> Gradually, the child becomes a young person who has to help earn bread at home and listen not only to his parents but also to the pastor. The combining of these two elements were the roots so that young Albert Martiš could go and study. He has described his other years at the German Folk School with respect and humour, where *„...I caught up with some things that I had missed and my merry-go-round character inherited from my father began to wake up in me.*<sup>32</sup> His period at this school is interwoven with fabrics and thoughts about fairy tales and legends or certain male and female ideals that, naturally, later disappeared into the wide world of slippery life areas. It describes the significant influence of the Kolényi family not only on young Albert but also on his whole family. However, the gradual rationalization of his life as a young person will only take place during his student flight to the Novi Sad and Novi Vrbas gymnasiums. From the reader's point of view, the entrance exam to the gymnasium is interesting, during which the Slovak identity of Albert Martiš is unambiguously crystallized (a Slovak-Lutheran from Kulpin I am, and a Slovak I will remain to be). From his point of view, student life is described in good and bad terms: learning philosophy or gradually opening up to not only the sanctuary of science, but also his own poor conditions. Cyclically, the text revisits the simple folkish childhood legends that help Albert Martiš gain the attention not only of his professors but also of his classmates. Naturally, he criticizes his strict teachers, but later when writing his autobiography, he comes to the realization that they themselves, as gymnasium students, weren't worth much. His

<sup>29</sup> HRONEC, V.: *Autobiografické črty a poviedky*. Báčsky Petrovec : Kultúra, 1996, p. 131.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.

<sup>31</sup> ORMIS, J. V.: *Pamäti dolnozemskeho učiteľa*. Martin : Matica slovenská, 1937, p. 10.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

cultural talents were also supported by passionate visits to the local theatre, which helped him to become vigorous and opinion-forming. Thanks to this, he could not be seduced from a national perspective. The micro-story about Albert Martiš's meeting with Viliam Pauliny-Tóth (he kissed his hand, and Pauliny-Tóth asked if the young boy is a Slovak) reads effectively. In addition to these official meetings, Martiš lived his student life with vacations, contributions, theatre visits and early smoking. That was perhaps one of the reasons why he had to repeat the first grade ... but later he was able to do so thanks to conscientious teachers (of e.g. the evangelical religion). One can see here the foundations of his later methodology, emphasizing practicality, concretization and understanding. It was his evangelical teacher who: „*spoke his lectures with the fairy tales of life I still remember today. When I became a teacher, I also took that method from him.*“<sup>33</sup> Of course, there are also comical statements about educators; Martiš comments, ridicules, satirizes, truth be told, with the necessary insight and the psyche of a high school student. In the background, he characterizes a person who: „*...was a noble Slovak soul, only to be pulled away; after leaving school he became nazarene, fed pigs and disappeared somewhere in silence.*“<sup>34</sup>

Albert Martiš also describes the occasional visits of his parents by a steam boat when they moved to Bačka Palanka (his father became a teacher there). Happy youth culminates especially in Novi Vrbas, where young Albert finds friends with whom to bath, catch snakes or crayfish, catch fish on a rod and collect bird eggs. The German gymnasium in Novi Vrbas also mentally influenced the young person with Slovak roots: there the famous Slovak Michal Godra taught, a well-known representative of Slovak Lowland literature. Albert is gradually getting closer to reading fiction, which helps him to realize and confirm his own nationality. However, derogation for a certain panslavism led to his being persecuted for many years. He criticizes chauvinism and renegade behaviour, proclaims a slight Slovak belief and the need for peaceful coexistence: it is worthwhile singing both the Hungarian poem *Talpra magyar* (Arise Hungarian) and the Slovak *Kto za pravdu horí* (Who Burns for the Truth). At the same time, the surrounding nature becomes a faithful companion to the young gymnasium student: „*I enjoyed learning in God's nature at that time, and as a teacher I taught my children many times on the turf, and with good results. In the grove, in the woods, it would have been even tastier, and even so at the rattling brook. I recommend it to my willing gentle brothers.*“<sup>35</sup> In national affairs, Martiš only woke up in gradual stages, looking for some kind of contact with the conscious Slovaks: „*Pastor Šimon Beniač began to teach me about Slovak national affairs, which I thought were quite natural, and I could not ensoul myself for it. Yes, I was wondering then, or a year later, how my father could, getting a newspaper in which Sládkovič's death was announced, cry for a total stranger.*“<sup>36</sup> Martiš' journey to Prešov to normal school - a teaching preparation (including a steamship or a classical or even a horse railway at the end of August 1873) is described using local colours. It was a school transferred from Nyíregyháza - and renewed; it started with four students. In his autobiography, Martiš gives a relatively detailed description of the people and the conditions of the school, highlighting in particular the forty thousand books contained at the library of the College, which he also used to its full extent. He learned Hungarian and German, but learned nothing about Slovak. Even then, he wanted to become a Slovak teacher, and therefore with his classmate begged the nobility to be able to learn Slovak. In addition to this difficult process, he mentions the way he reached his Slovak consciousness, which „*...must be cultivated in the receptive soul of youth, as a weak plant, which if left unchecked by the frost, the sun, etc., will if not completely perish, then fall behind in growth.*“<sup>37</sup> In Prešov's normal school, young Martiš encounters a comparison of the Highland

<sup>33</sup> ORMIS, J. V.: *Pamäti dolnozemskeho učiteľa*. Martin : Matica slovenská, 1937, p. 22.

<sup>34</sup> ORMIS, J. V. (ed.): *Pamäti dolnozemskeho učiteľa*. Martin : Matica slovenská, 1937, p. 23.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31-32.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

and Lowland people in Slovakia, while en bloc vigorously defending Slovakness and becoming a fearless Slovak. He criticizes a professor who makes a mockery of Slovaks; he seeks support in a teacher from Sarvaš, who naturally has an understanding of the matter. In fact, we can express the idea that Albert Martiš has matured to become a conscious Slovak exactly whilst at normal school. There he also met with the significant Lowland cultural activist and writer Gustáv Maršall-Petrovský, who had already – there and then – grouped Slovak youth around him. Thanks to him, he confirmed his knowledge of how children should be raised and taught. He opened the gate of Slovak literature; a sign of this is his effort to visit the famous priest and writer Jonáš Záborský in Župčany.

Albert Martiš also describes interesting events during his supplication. It was a life school for a young person, beneficial both materially and mentally. It happened with events that were also recorded in diary form. Comically, he describes the sharp Hungarians in Hortobágy or around the town of Márianosztra, the drunkenness of taverners and their efforts to tipsify the supplicant (in their eyes, young Albert Martiš is a Lowlandish sot, who knows what is good though). During his journey, he meets ardent Slovak men and awakened Slovak women. It warms his heart, but he also recognizes other nations and nationalities - with a background of tolerance. However, he has a special position among the Lowland Slovaks because he comes from Kulpin, where „*our Paulíny*“ was elected as a deputy. He criticizes the closure of the Matica slovenská and secondary schools, emphasizing the soulfulness and need for Slovak poems. The culmination of this idea is Martiš' visit to Jozef Miloslav Hurban at the parish in Hlboké, as: „...*my greatest desire, as a Slovak, was to get to know him and bow to him, he shook my hand and kissed my forehead. I stayed there for three days and three nights. A lot, he told me a lot ... about Slovak affairs and about his activities, especially in the revolution of 1848 – 1849.*“<sup>38</sup> In this chronotope, Martiš also praises nature and compares the surroundings with his native land - while his heart remains in the Lowlands: „*It was a region for me where nature was showing up in all its magnificence, the forests were breathing healthily, and the potatoes were so tasty - not like in the Lowlands, where they are watery, tasteless - that I'd rather eat them than a roasted liver and yet I accepted a station in the Lowlands, breathing prose, and not in the poetic Highlands...*“<sup>39</sup> He describes his conscientious preparation for a teaching exam in his parent's home, where he found peace and possibilities. Successfully mastering this difficult life trial led Martiš to teach the first mixed folk class in Padina. However, he taught a half more hours, walked through the village, got to know the minds, morals and customs of the people and spread the National Announcer, in which he often wrote under pseudonyms. He felt great among his trustees, but: „*It is very difficult to work and seriously teach and teach children well, and even harder to raise them properly. With this and such conviction, I entered among the progeny, in which I loved the people, the Slovak nation, and loving the entrusted children, I put myself into the dust so that they could understand me.*“<sup>40</sup> In his school practice, Martiš returns to the fairy tales he considers extremely efficient from the didactic point of view. He will spend twenty years of his productive life in Padina, where he teaches Slovakness, and therefore he was indicted more than fifty times before a school supervisor and secular court. However, the whole neighbourhood knows that Martiš is hardworking, that he plies and lives nicely with the entrusted, he gives them newspapers and books, i.e. culture. He also meets with the parents of children, sowing spoken and written sophistication, of course, in the spirit of tolerance: „*If I were a teacher in a German community, I would spread civilization in German language by magazines and books and in Hungarian language among the Hungarians.*“<sup>41</sup> His memories are occasionally spiced up with allusions of adults who often got drunk in the village, became unfaithful, played cards, lazed, planned revenge. However, the author's efforts to correct them are evident from the text.

<sup>38</sup> ORMIS, J. V. (ed.): *Pamäti dolnozemskeho učiteľa*. Martin : Matica slovenská, 1937, p. 58.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 75.

Gradually, his attention turns to women and wedding. He describes the courting of his upcoming Petka, to whom his growing respect and later love is evident. The description of the Lowland wedding preparation is again effective from a reading point of view. It emphasizes mutual understanding, but also marital life - for the nation. Thus, in 1879, the Red Cross Association was (also thanks to them) established, in 1885 a monetary institution. The Martiš family said they wanted to raise self-confident people out of their children, not slaves or double-dealers. It is important to know (according to them) the child's soul and its magic nature. At this point, the parent and teacher roles combine and meet. Martiš' memories thus represent a valuable testimony not only of his personal history, but especially as an example of the life of a Lowland Slovak, changes in his identity, work duties, or leisure and other diverse activities. Other aspects of Albert Martiš' autobiography are also noteworthy: „...the image of a childhood in a Lowland village, interethnic contacts in a multi-ethnic environment, teacher's life, characteristics of the local conditions, of the human types, the village atmosphere, the peculiarity of the struggle for preservation and presentation of Slovak national identity with tendencies towards Magyarization, whose bearers were mainly evangelical clergymen, teachers or other members of the intelligence with a Slovak origin.“<sup>42</sup>

The dynamism of Albert Martiš's life in Padina was also crystallized by the fact that in 1883 he began to grow silkworm (so that he reached a record in sericulture in villages throughout Hungary), he cultivated Martiš's „gallows“, namely hops, in 1897 he invented a corn chopping machine and in 1897 a flying machine in the manner of Zeppelin, not with a propeller, but on four wheels. So he worked not only with his spirit but also with his hands. He was also a useful man in the field of journalism and literature (in 1885 he began writing treatises in the National Newspaper; in 1888 he sent his first novel to Slovak Views, that Svetozár Hurban Vajanský published without corrections). Thus he gradually became a writer who - according to him - should have a general education and must also understand academic science.

## 8. Autobiography as a future perspective – conclusions and possibilities of further research

Overall, autobiography as a genre has not only its historical roots and concretizations, but also a perspective. Contemporary man receives from autobiographical texts both objective and subjective information, which enriches him/her and gives him/her a credible picture of older times. He/she recognizes the wider and narrower public surroundings and times, which were similar and different (perhaps even odd). A special space is (also from this aspect) the Lowlands, in our case Vojvodina, where, as mentioned above, at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries were already given testimonies of being and living. These were also autobiographies written by the Lowland cultural representative Albert Martiš. He was a man who acted, helping the people and the communities: how to bring them to prosperity. For this reason, we can say that Albert Martiš did not live in vain and left behind texts that are worthy of reading and interpretation even in today's world. His fictional and autobiographical texts are thus proof of the agility and peculiar colour of the period. Martiš's versatile activity was, and is, evidence that even outside the mainstream Slovak culture (Bratislava, Martin, contemporary Budapest and others) there were „hotspots“ of education and literary activity. Even today, their prototexts give room for interpretation, analysis, evaluation, reading concretization - that is, opportunities for further research are open. In this way, the tradition of the past, the analysis work of the present and the perspective of the future combine.

<sup>42</sup> KMEŤ, M.: *Historiografia dolnozemsých Slovákov v prvej polovici 20. storočia*. Kraków : Spolok Slovákov v Poľsku, 2013, p. 146.

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