



Dvořák, Who Had the Time for Remembrance of Things Past

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How can one explain to high school students a historical happening motivated by love? In 1892 the Czech composer, Antonin Dvořák, was invited to direct the National Conservatory of Music in New York and he left Prague, his home, his work and four of his children and travelled to New York. He had accepted this proposal because of love. Throughout his life, Dvořák carried with him the unrequited love of his youth, a love which projected upon his life and its progression to no small degree. In order to try to explain Dvořák's decision to students, in order to link them to such intensity of love, we must make use of literature; history cannot help us to do that. The article proposes the story "Youthful Love" by Micha Josef Berdyczewski, which gives high school students a clue to the understanding of youthful love and how it can project upon one's life long after one is no longer a youth. This is one example of how literature can help us understand history.

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Jeanette Thurber, like many of us, had a dream. But she, perhaps unlike us, actually succeeded in realizing her dream. She was born in New York in 1850 to a father who was an immigrant violinist to the United States from Denmark. As a young girl, she was sent to Europe, to the Paris Conservatory for her musical education. What impressed her most during her studies there, beyond the high quality of the musical education system in France, was the fact that in France, the state paid for musical education for talented musicians. When she returned to New York, she decided to establish an institution for musical education in the spirit of what she had discovered in Paris. Using her own money and money donated by Andrew Carnegie and his friends, in 1885 she established the National Conservatory of Music in New York and a good part of her long life was devoted to promoting this institution, which became a foremost center of musical education in the United States at the end of the nineteenth century. It existed for thirty years, until its competitors, such as the Julliard School, supplanted it, and the final nail in its coffin was inserted by the Great Depression at the end of the 1920s (Rubin, 1990).

The National Conservatory was a pioneering institution, different from others. Musical talent and excellence, with no connection to social status, ethnic origin or state of health were at the heart of the educational approach that Thurber implemented. The conservatory received students only on the basis of their musical abilities, no matter whether the student was a girl, a disabled person or an African-American. It was a non-profit institution and granted generous scholarships to those who could not afford to pay for their studies. Its curriculum was also revolutionary, and its innovations are still found in music schools all over the world. These include lessons in the history of music, solfège practice, and a comprehensive requirement for every student to study piano. But most importantly, a central goal hovered over the conservatory: to cultivate the national musical spirit (Rubin, 1997: 147).

As the United States lacked a classical music tradition, Thurber searched for a prominent director who would advance the conservatory as much as possible. And she went for the most renowned, most respected of European composers in those days, including Wagner, Brahms, Sibelius, Tchaikovsky, and... Dvořák.



Antonin Dvořák (1841-1904) was the most important Czech composer who had received international recognition. He viewed himself first and foremost as a national composer and considered his music to be Czech music (Beckerman, 1993:14). His talent for incorporating folk motives into the language of the romantic music of the nineteenth century led to his widespread musical influence among a variety of audiences. George Gershwin, for example, one of the foremost composers of popular music in the United States, at the age of 10, in 1908, heard his classmate, the future violinist, Max Rosenzweig, performing Dvořák's *Humoresque*. He recollected that "it was to me a flashing revelation of beauty" (Pollack, 2006: 22). This experience opened the gates of the world of music for him, and the rest is history.

When, in 1891, Jeanette proposed to Dvořák that he come to the United States for two years to direct, conduct and teach in her conservatory, Dvořák was already 50 years old. The days he had earned his living as a café violin player, a church organist, and a wandering piano teacher had long since passed. He was then a busy and particularly respected musician with a very full "list of publications," living in Prague in a large home with his wife and six children. Did Dvořák accept Jeanette Thurber's proposal or did he refuse? That would be a simple historical question for school students: He accepted her offer and travelled to the United States. But a not-so-simple and more complex historical questions for students is that of his motivations. Why would he accept this offer? In what follows, I will try to illuminate a possible answer and I will show how literature could aid in clarifying it for students.

The July 2005 edition of the OAH Magazine of History is dedicated to Teaching History with Music. Its editor calls upon history teachers to make use of music to enliven history for their students: a song from the Civil War period, Gershwin from the 1920s and perhaps, an anti-war anthem in the era of Vietnam. And the articles in this edition echo the same spirit. One of them was written by the well-known American cultural and musical historian Joseph Horowitz, "Dvořák and the Teaching of American History" (2005). In it, Horowitz describes a project, a learning unit, which he initiated in high schools in Brooklyn, Boston and New Jersey, attempting to link music and history during the last decade of the nineteenth century in the United States in a search for an American identity, and using Dvořák as the axis around which this search revolves. The project integrates the New World Symphony, considered the most important classical work of music written in the United States, and the epic poem Song of



Hiawatha by the American poet, Henry W. Longfellow, the era of yellow journalism, slavery and the earlier African slave trade, the Panic of 1893, Dvořák's musical attempt to help the Americans refine their authentic voice, the Indian wars and Buffalo Bill's Wild West show and the Chicago World's Fair, among others. The unit was interdisciplinary in character.

I would like to take this unit one step farther and to enrich its interdisciplinary nature: using not only history and music, but literature, as well. I would like to show how literature could be used to clarify historical possibilities for children; to show how literature could help us understand, for example, why Dvořák decided to leave his four young children in Prague on 15 September 1892, travelled with his wife and his two older children on the three day trip to Bremen, Germany and two days later, boarded the steamboat, SS Saale, landing on the New York shore towards evening after a ten-day voyage, and only returning (except for a brief vacation) three years later.

Dvořák Undecided

In the spring of 1891, Dvořák received a vague telegram from Vienna written by Jeanette Thurber and containing a proposal to take up an important position in New York. Dvořák was not interested. Jeanette Thurber, a stubborn woman, sent another telegram on 5 June, from Paris: "Would you accept position Director National Conservatory of Music, New York, October 1892 and also lead six concerts of your works?" (Clapham, 1966, 17). Dvořák was then on his way to Cambridge. When he returned, he found a letter in his mailbox shedding light on the details of the offer, and a few weeks later, the contract arrived: He would teach three hours per day, prepare four student concerts, conduct six concerts of his own works, with four months of vacation. His salary would be \$15,000 per year. All in all, it was quite a basic contract, not overloaded with clauses, clear, and not very complex. The final version of the contract was apparently signed in January 1892 (Ivanov, 1995; 55). (I will later explain why we cannot be sure of this date). Dvořák's uncertainty continued for six months. These were months of thought and misgivings, months during which it appeared that Dvořák could not make a decision and seemingly wanted his friends and his wife to do it for him.

Surprised by Thurber's offer, he wrote to his good friend Alois Gobl immediately upon his return from Cambridge on 20 June 1891, described the details of the contract and asked:



“Should I accept?...Drop me a line” (Ibid.: 43). Further into this letter, he pointed out that he would have to put off his decision until after his meeting with Dr. Tragy. Tragy, the Director of the Prague Conservatory had been avidly courting Dvořák, trying to tempt him into joining the conservatory. In October 1890, Tragy had announced at a meeting of the Directorate of the Association for Promotion of Music in Bohemia that "Dvořák had finally agreed to accept the position of Professor of Composition, Instrumentation and Musical form, starting January 1, 1891" (Ibid., Ibid.). The offer from Thurber arrived only six months after he had begun to work at the conservatory. It was unpleasant to leave like that. The situation was sensitive.

He asked the advice of his friend from youth, Professor Kopta, who was an authority on American affairs and the English language, as he had lived there for a period and because his wife Flora was American. They went over the contract together and made a few changes. This was already the third version. Dvořák's publisher in Berlin, Fritz Simrock, wrote him in November and tried to put out feelers as to whether he had "something" to publish and wondered whether he had already gone to the United States or not. Dvořák replied that negotiations with the United States were still continuing and that, in the very near future, he would have to decide whether to go or not (Ibid.: 55). The wording of the contract went back and forth and again, back and forth. The contract itself was discovered two years ago by Thurber's great granddaughter and it was exhibited to the public in the fall of 2013 at Bohemian National Hall in Manhattan to mark Dvořák's 172 birthday. The New York Times pointed out that the language of the contract was complex, "sometimes calling to mind another famous musical contract – it can be difficult to read all the discussions of the 'party of the first part' without thinking of Groucho Marx's Otis B. Driftwood in 'A Night at the Opera'"(Cooper, 2013).

In the end, after misgivings and new wording of four versions of the contract, it was finally finished. Otakar Dvořák, one of the Dvořák's six children, writes in his memoir that the decision was made in a democratic vote around the dining table and his mother, Anna, was the one pressuring to accept the contract for economic reasons: "I remember the lunch when my mother again discussed this question with Father and she proposed that we all vote on it. At that time, eight of us sat at the table. Some votes were "for" and some votes were "against," but there were more votes "for." The contract was in Father's study, on his table, ready to sign. Mother



discontinued lunch and took Father's hand. They went into the study and she gave him a pen to sign the contract...Mother took the contract and delivered it to the post office. That made the trip to America definite" (Dvořák & Polansky, 1993). It appears that Anna was so anxious to "settle the matter" that the Dvořák family neglected to write the date at the head of the contract, in the specified place, which remained empty. Only at the bottom of the contract did Dvořák's signature appear alongside the year: 1892.

What exactly did Jeanette Thurber actually offer Dvořák? She mainly offered him money. A great amount of money. A very great amount of money. Jeanette offered him 15,000 dollars a year, which equaled 35,000 Bohemian zlotys. "That was more than a royal salary; no one in the king's court earned such a salary" (Ivanov, 1995: 22). In daily terms, he would have earned 97 zlotys per day in New York. That was almost his month's salary in Prague: At the Prague Conservatory he earned 1200 zlotys per year, 100 zlotys a month. And that in itself was very much more than the 18 zlotys per month which he had earned as a young viola player in the Provincial Theater Orchestra (Ibid: 43).

This was an overwhelming monetary offer. And even so, Dvořák had many misgivings about the proposal. The students could connect to these concerns. Maybe they would be surprised at the lengthy decision making, but they could relate to it from the world of capitalism, or neo-capitalism, in which they have been growing up, and from which they are going to school. They well know the value of money and the importance of accumulating it. They could certainly understand the power of the temptation in Thurber's offer and, they likewise might wonder at Dvořák's indecision. But I would like to propose another historical explanation which, for me, could better explain Dvořák's misgivings and ultimately, his decision to travel to the United States. But this explanation must be mediated for children as it is both close to them, yet far from them as well. This explanation focuses on love, a love which, even if high school students have experienced it, they do not have the ability at that age to understand how it operates through the years. And its power and intensity. For that, mediation is necessary.



Dvořák in Love

In 1865 or a bit earlier, Dvořák had fallen deeply in love. He was then about twenty-four and was playing the viola in the Prague Theater Orchestra; she was an actor at the theater, named Josefina Cermikovi. She was 16, the daughter of a jeweler; he was teaching her to play the piano (Smaczny, 1991:553). He fell in love with her. And she did not return his love. Dvořák was in pain.

In the song cycle, *Cypresses*, which was published in 1862 by the Czech author, playwright and poet, Gustav Pflieger Moravsky, eighteen songs told a story of love and its pain. It was a song cycle which dealt with the tortures of a lover remembering his love and missing her terribly, hoping to see her. In his imagination, he drifts into the past and tries to hold on to memories. He dreams of happy days and minutes which they had spent together...and awakens from the dream immersed in despondent thoughts. The dream has disappeared and distressful reality is even more painful. He looks at an old letter she had written him. That is the only thing that he has from her and he feels even more lonely and lost. Grief-stricken, he goes out into nature where he hopes to find an isolated rock under which he may bury his sorrowful heart. But even the majesty of nature cannot ease his pain (Doge, 1996: 47-8). Dvořák found an expression of his unrequited love in this song cycle and composed music for it. It was his first vocal work, and it was written almost at a single stroke of the pen. During 11 days in July 1865, he composed 15 songs, and after a short break, he composed another three in two days. There are those who identify this intensive composition as testimony to its very personal nature. He dedicated the cycle not to Josefina but rather to his close friend Karel Bendl, but we may assume that only his embarrassment prevented him from dedicating the piece to the person who really was the source of its inspiration (Novy, 1996:32),¹

Dvořák never succeeded in overcoming his love for Josefina. I believe that this left him with a restlessness which accompanied him all his life (Peress, 2004: 6). He was dealing with the desire to be close to her and to be in pain, and then to distance himself and perhaps to recover. But the distance was also painful and then he returned to be in pain by being close to her again.

¹ There is disagreement among researchers as to whether he actually dedicated the song cycle to her or whether she was actually the love of his life (see, for example, Beveridge, 2007: 388) but for the sake of the discussion here, I take sides in this disagreement and make the assumption that Dvořák was in love with Josefina.



Perhaps the choices he made and his frequent travelling were connected to this unrest and in the desire to assuage the pain for which he could not find relief. His soul found no rest. Apparently, love not only has the power to attract, but also the power to repel. It determined his moves, which led him on his journeys but it also made him return.

In 1873 he married Josefina's younger sister Anna, perhaps in order to make sure that he could remain close to her all his life. Josefina was married four years later to someone else, Count Vaclav Kounic, who was not only a count but was also an active politician and who frequently spent time for work and for enjoyment in Vienna. Dvořák built a summer home for his family at Vysoka, about sixty kilometers north of Prague, where he spent most of his summers with his wife and children among the apple orchards and alongside the pigeon coops. Josefina's and Vaclav's summer home was a few dozen meters from theirs.

And even in the summer home, when Josefina was so very near, her presence was apparently sometimes hard to bear. In order to deal with this difficulty, he often made journeys which were unusual and out of the ordinary in those days ((Ivanov, 1995; 67). These certainly occurred more often than those of his friend Johannes Brahms, who traversed the continent, but whose fear of sailing prevented him, for example, from travelling to receive an honorary doctoral degree from Cambridge University because he would have had to cross the English Channel (Clive, 2006: 443); and even more than his friend Tchaikovsky who arrived in New York in May 1891 to take part in the grand opening of Carnegie Hall and after 25 days, was struck by homesickness and hurried back home, not before he managed to visit Niagara Falls (Deak, 2013: 243). In contrast to them, and in general, Dvořák often travelled throughout Europe and had even crossed the English Channel eight times. And now he was crossing the ocean to New York and after two years, he would return for summer vacation to Prague, and then he would again cross the ocean for another year in New York. And then, in April 1895, after Jeanette had failed in her attempts to persuade him to lengthen his stay, he left the United States for the last time and returned to Prague.

While in the United States, he composed his most famous symphony, the Ninth, which Jeanette entitled "From the New World", the name it is best known by today. There too, between 8 November and 9 February 1895, he composed his Cello Concerto. Although at first he had



considered the cello a lovely instrument but one whose place was in the orchestra and was unsuitable for taking a leading solo role in a concerto, he changed his opinion and composed this heavenly concerto. Throughout the work, and especially in the second movement, he scatters hints about his feelings when writing it. In this movement, inter alia, he quotes one of his earlier songs which Josefina particularly loved: “Leave me alone... You really cannot comprehend this ecstasy with which love has filled me...” (Peress, 2004: 6).

In April 1895, when Dvořák returned from New York to Prague, he found Josefina very ill, and in May the love of his life died. He returned to the concerto which he had just completed a few weeks earlier in New York and immersed his grief within it. Towards the end of the third movement, he inserted an echo of the opera Eugene Onegin by Tchaikovsky, an opera which Dvořák knew very well and admired. He quotes a part of the last duet by Tatiana and Onegin in his concerto, a duet in which they understand that their love will never be requited, and one which was particularly loved by Josefina: “Happiness was so close at hand; it was so close!” (Smaczny, 1999: 83). How sad. An entire life in one line.

Dvořák had left New York in April intending to return for at least another six months of work. Mrs. Thurber had already organized a place on the ship August Victoria for him, his wife and four of their children, which was scheduled to leave Hamburg for New York on 17 October (Clapham, 1989: 674). But on 17 August 1895, Dvořák wrote his letter of resignation under his and his wife’s signature. He expressed his sorrow to Mrs. Thurber, apologized, and explained that he and his wife had seriously weighed all of their alternatives and had reached the conclusion that they could not return to New York, as their family circumstances had been very much changed. Anna’s mother had announced that, due to her advanced age of 73, she would not be able to take the children under her protection as she had two years earlier; Anna, herself had been suffering great and continuing sadness as a result of her distance from the children and felt that she could bear it no longer. Their daughter Annie was suffering from rheumatism and it was doubtful whether she could withstand the difficult journey; the small baby was weak and was just getting over diphtheria and a kidney infection and she could not leave the house; Mary had to go to school; and the oldest daughter, Otilite, could not leave Prague (Clapham, 1989: 675). It appears that family circumstances had indeed changed, but



was the death of Josefina a few weeks earlier perhaps also linked to the decision not to return to the United States?

Literature Mediates the Quandaries of Love

If we try to present the students with the power of love as a possible explanation hovering over Dvořák's actions in response to Jeanette Thurber's proposal and finally, his journey to New York, this explanation must be mediated when introducing it, as has been mentioned. Unlike the economic explanation which can stand up for itself, love cannot. The power of love and its intensity, and its long term effects through the years requires explanation. To that end, literature must be mobilized. Apparently, there is no more effective tool to present love to school children. Actually, it is the only tool which can achieve this.

As an example of this type of mediation, I would like to present a short story by author and philosopher Micah Joseph Berdyczewski (1865-1921). The story is called "Youthful Love" (1909) and is a recollection of the past told by the narrator who has "advanced in years and has observed life and its crises." He tells of the love of his youth, Nehama, who did not know of his love for her, and of his soul tortured since then. And yet, although a generation has passed, he can still visualize her in the innocence of her beauty and with her two long plaits of hair.

Youthful Love

Events require that we, the storytellers, describe occurrences woven from life, synthesized visions and the tumult of doing, hearing and seeing. And what are all of these but the sum of the suffering soul and the secret places of its sorrow? Lacking soul, and summation of the soul's torments, these visions and deeds have no value, and we will never know why we must experience them.

Let me tell you of the love of my youth. The beloved maiden did not know that I loved her. I did not tell her and I have not expressed what was in my heart until this day, as I stand before you, my readers. And I am advanced in years and I have seen much of life and its troubles. And the maiden is no longer of this world; she left it earlier than I, and she rests in peace among pure souls, about which no one alive can tell us.



There lived a man in my birthplace whose name was Jonah. He differed from the other Jewish inhabitants in the city in his level of education and knowledge. He spoke politely and dressed well. Jonah was not a rich man and did not own his home but the dwelling which he rented was beautiful. It had curtains on the windows, and its shutters were painted green. Everything in the house was neat and lovely. The chairs were upholstered in white, the book cases had glass doors and the books which were seen through the glass were arranged in good order.

Jonah was not secular but he did not believe in superstitions and ancient customs. As a youth he had indulged in speculative readings, but when he began to support his household, he became an accountant in a firm, and had no more leisure for study. However, on the Sabbath he used to read the books of enlightenment. He was not interested in any local and petty quarrels.

Jonah's wife whose name was Miriam, was a good woman, and in her youth had been fairly pretty. She cooked, was always busy with household needs, and she spent most of the time in the kitchen or in the bedroom. She did not like to sit in the big room, which was the glory of the house, so as not to disturb her husband. When anyone came to visit Jonah she would come in for a moment to greet him or to bring hot tea, and afterwards she returned to her place and disappeared. She guarded and honored her husband's books although she knew that they did not belong to the category of books which all Jews regarded as sacred. She watched over them because she knew that Jonah loved them. She did not wish Jonah to be other than he was. She did not want him to be an old-fashioned Jew and was very happy that their daughter was even more modern than her father and that she knew both languages and literature.

And when I mention the girl who lived in that house, and her soul, the girl who was as the sunlight to me, I touch upon the essence of my story. More than a generation has passed and life is long and varied, but still she stands before me as I remember her, as though still living in her beauty, with her two long plaits of hair and the enchantment of her grace.



Nehama was the only daughter of Jonah and Miriam. She had all the spiritual qualities of her parents. From her mother she inherited straight-forwardness, and from her father, love of knowledge. These qualities gave her a certain purity and gentleness. Wherever she appeared, she exuded radiance. Once, while walking down the street, I saw her standing near her house like a shining star. All that day, I was like a dreamer. I loved her immediately, almost from that moment.

In this period, almost a month passed and I was ashamed to look into the face of my father, my brothers and my sisters lest they should recognize what had happened to me. I went once again to that street hoping to meet her but when I came there I turned away because I was afraid. I was afraid also to speak with any of my friends alone because I thought I would not be able to restrain myself and would reveal my secret.

And lo, one day in the afternoon, Nehama came to our house. I was sitting in the bedroom and secretly reading one of the books of the Enlightenment. My older sister sat in the adjoining hall where we were accustomed to receive visitors. The book which I was reading captivated me, and when I stopped for a while I heard a pleasant voice behind the door. Even if I had never heard this voice, I would have known that it was the voice of my angel. I shall never forget the joy of my heart at that moment. I intended to open the door time and again, and to seek an excuse to say something to my sister. In my hand, I held the handle of the door. I could hear my heart dancing within me. And then my sister opened the door and asked me to come in. Here was the beautiful face opposite me. I was filled with joy and fear.

My sister introduced me and said, "This is my brother, do you know him?" Nehama, not at all embarrassed, turned to me and said, "Why don't you come sometimes to my father's house? We have many books of the Enlightenment. I know that you read these books."

At noon on the Sabbath, I went to Jonah's house. I did not, however tell my father anything. Jonah and his wife received me cordially, asking why I had never visited up to that time. Jonah was well versed in grammar and immediately began talking to me about the Torah portion for that week. He showed me a good explanation of a certain passage which could be found in the Ibn Ezra commentary.



The door opened and Nehama came in looking, very pretty. I rose from my seat and she said to me, "How are you Jonathan?" She then left the room for a moment and brought apples, jam and clear water. When she said "Eat Jonathan", these words sounded to me as pleasant as those of my late mother. At sunset I left. They all accompanied me to the door. It seemed to me as if I had been banished from paradise.

In this way, I began to visit that house every Sabbath. I discussed the Torah portion for that week with Jonah and I saw the beautiful Nehama. I was happy. I lacked only one thing - a faithful friend with whom I could talk about Nehama and praise her beauty. I sought and found such a friend. In a nearby small town, a newcomer had come to dwell in our midst. I met his first born son, Ellyakim. I liked him and we became friends. So on Sabbath I went with him to Jonah's house and he too was received most cordially.

My friend Ellyakim was different from me both physically and in character, but we still became very close. He was a little taller than me; his hair was yellow while mine was black. I chose to read legends and history while he preferred literature and poetry. When I came to Jonah's house, I listened more than I spoke, but my friend loved to debate. I was afraid to touch even the ends of Nehama's dress while he joked with her, and if she did not wish to give him something, he tried to take it from her hand and jokingly struggled with her. To me her beauty was like the divine light, but to him she was a pretty and charming young lady. He also loved Nehama and told me his secret. Strange to say he did not envy me nor I him. It was pleasant to hear the word love when applied to Nehama – a word I could not utter.

Ellyakim, my friend, once dared to write a love letter to Nehama and sent it with his small sister. After some two days, he sent her once again to Jonah's house to receive a book of poems. His sister brought the book and inside there was a letter written by Nehama. It was written in clear Hebrew and also expressed feelings of love.

Ellyakim called me and together we went to the field far from the city. There we sat and read her pleasant words – words which were sweeter than honey. Word by word we read the letter, and after that, I took it from his hand, looked at the charming letters, and re-read the letter sentence by sentence. My heart was overwhelmed.



So began a correspondence between my friend and our beloved. I read her words to my friend and his words to her. Her words were precious because they revealed her soul. Included amongst the words of Ellyakim were also my words to her about her beauty and her sensitive soul. So my friend became the advocate between us. But as for Nehama's words, not for a moment did I think that they were directed to a third person, and I for my part felt no anger in my heart towards Elyakim. On the contrary, his secret, the secret of love, united our souls even more. He never tried to avoid showing me her letters and when I knew that he was expecting her answer, I would go to visit him and sit in his room, anxiously awaiting her letter. Ah, the days of youth, days of innocence and naivete that have come to an end.

And there was evening!

The days of poetic expressions and youthful love are no longer. My friend, Ellyakim, grew older and married another woman. She was not as beautiful as Nehama nor had she a portion of the gifts God had endowed to Nehama. But the young woman whom he married had a thousand pounds as a dowry. And, not to speak ill of the son of a small town, she came from a big city, a county seat.

Do not think that Elyakim had betrayed Nehama. In those days of youth, when they wrote letters of love to each other, he sincerely believed that they belonged to each other. But when Ellyakim became a man and not a youth, he had to become a merchant, to manage a large household and to be an influential person. Jonah, Nehama's father, could not have set him up in these goals.

And I, I always believed that Nehama was beyond my reach. I never believed that she would truly be mine and say "I will follow you". And thus, when I grew older and became a man, I left my city, wandered through other lands and went abroad to learn. I tied myself to poets and philosophers who led me astray for twenty years and I still do not know which gate to enter. And Nehama – she was married to a semi-educated man. She bore him a son and a daughter; she lived an unhappy life and left this world to go to a spiritual world, better than this one. Suffice it to say, her husband took a second wife, who also bore him children. They live a life



of poverty as such people do, and have a little education, without actually being knowledgeable in anything. Elyakim is a prosperous merchant and has no time for remembrance of things past. And I am the only one who, in a remote land, remembers Nehama and her beauty. More than a generation has passed and I am advanced in years and yet Nehama still lives before my eyes, in the innocence of her beauty, and with her two long plaits of hair.

I think that this short story may help children understand Dvořák. The narrator, in retrospect, remembering Nehama who still appears to him with her two plaits of hair, may illuminate the depths of youthful love and life which leads you down paths over which you sometimes have no control, although you would prefer to take other paths. And this tension between life's path and the parallel path, the path not taken, is arduous and difficult, and has an intensity which sometimes motivates one's entire life. I believe that perhaps Dvořák's life, was motivated by this intensity, an intensity that can be illuminated by literature which here, is a kind of crutch supporting history. I consider that a story can facilitate children's understanding of the deeper significance of the phrase implanted by Dvořák in his cello concerto: "Happiness was so close at hand; it was so close!" History cannot really do that. That is the great power of literature.

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