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FASCICULA LIMBA ȘI LITERATURA ROMÂNĂ



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FASCICULA LIMBA ȘI LITERATURA ROMÂNĂ



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**Annals of the University of Oradea
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2011

**ANNALS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ORADEA
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Deschideri

Openings

NEW LITERARY HYBRIDS IN THE AGE OF MULTIMEDIA EXPRESSION

*Reflections on a Thematic Project
Sponsored by the Coordinating Committee of
ICLA*

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Abstract: *Historically, textual study has meant writing and reading verbal texts in the medium of print. Today, however, the concept of “texts” has expanded far beyond the printed word. The final decades of the twentieth century witnessed an explosion of new, popular media forms—notably the internet, television, advertising, video, and digitized sound—as well as a worldwide shift towards the visual, the mass-produced, and the virtual text. This shift has opened up new domains of human achievement in art and culture, but it has also generated new ways of understanding the art and culture of the past, in relation to their medium (the book, the manuscript, the gallery, the museum). The following article describes a book project, edited by the author of this essay, which focuses on literary production and expression in multimedia environments. Literature remains an important focus of research, even as its modes of manifestation and interaction with multimedia environments expand to include new hybrids that stretch the traditional*

definition of what is “literary”. The proposed volume will draw on recent theoretical and applied work in the field of electronic and multimedia literature, expanding, reorienting, and at times correcting it. While the author and his collaborators are eager to build on previous work in the field of multimedia communication, they are also aware that phenomena in this field change or become rapidly obsolete. New theorizations of multimedia work are not only welcome but also necessary. The volume will be divided into five sections, covering: 1) Theoretical and Methodological Questions; 2) Multimedia Productions in Historical Perspective; 3) Regional and Intercultural Projects; 4) Forms and Genres; 5) Readers and Rewriters in Multimedia Environments. The volume is scheduled to be published in early 2013.

Key-words: Literature and multimedia, medium of print, hybrid texts, paradigm shift, digimodernism vs postmodernism, text stretching and redefining, project, ICLA.

In the past, literacy has chiefly meant alphabetic literacy. That meaning has dominated because the chief technologies of literacy, especially the early printing press, have privileged the written language over all other forms of semiosis. [. . . Today’s definition of literacy] includes visual, electronic and (for want of better terminology) non-verbal or gestural or social literacies.

Nancy Kaplan, “E-literacies” (3, 13, 15, 28)

We [...] are in a period of transition, a moment when the modes and the technology for cultural reproduction are shifting, this time from print to electronic environments which opens new possibilities for freedom as well as oppression.

David B. Downing and James J. Sosnoski, “As the Culture Turns: Postmodern Works and Days” (10)

1. Literature and Multimedia, East and West

The 1993 ACLA report on the state of literary studies at the turn of the century, known as the “Bernheimer Report,” described the changes that the discipline of comparative literature had undergone during the previous few decades, emphasizing relationships between “Western cultural traditions,

both high and popular, and those of non-Western cultures; between the pre- and postcontact cultural productions of colonized people, between gender constructions defined as feminine as those defined as masculine, or between sexual orientations defined as straight and those defined as gay; [and] between racial and ethnic modes of signifying” (Bernheimer 19). Conspicuously absent was the interaction between literature and other media and the expansion of literature into electronic and multimedia spaces. “Hybridity” was mentioned in some of the responses to this report, but it was linked to multiculturalism rather than to multimedia.

In 2004, Haun Saussy ends his new decennial reflections on the state of the comparative discipline by contrasting what Bernheimer and his respondents saw in the early 1990s with a new view afforded by the “age of information.” In place of an earlier “data-poor, low bandwidth era of communication,” which explain for Saussy the “paradoxes of traditional literary criticism” that gave “disproportionate attention to small things,” reading in the information saturated twenty-first century “is a journey into a different epistemological world” (32). The new writing and reading technologies make diverse media texts more accessible, without privileging or aestheticizing any of them. They also encourage, according to Saussy, a more “positivistic style of reading” (33), which may lead to flattening the engagement with the texts of a cultural period. We, therefore, need literature to “slow down to its speed, quibble over every word,” and frustrate “the economy of information in which more data and faster access is always better.” For Saussy, “literature is a kind of resistance to information’s charm. An internal resistance, to be sure” (33).

Historically, textual study meant writing and reading verbal texts in the medium of print. The final decades of the twentieth century witnessed an explosion of new media forms, expanding the concept of “texts” far beyond the printed word. “Texts” now include web publications, advertising, film, television, video and digitalized sound, graphic media, mixed media texts, and even installations. These massive technological shifts have inspired enthusiastic encomiums but also appropriate caveats. The editors of the 12.1-2 issue of *Works and Days* (1994), David B. Downing and James J. Sosnoski, warned that “technology has created not only a new division of society between onliners and offliners but also a new form of ‘capital.’ Social status may soon be marked by access to information” (14).

Other theorists like Mark Prensky have differentiated “digital natives” (people “born” and acclimatized in the digital age) from “digital immigrants,” those who are compelled to adopt at a later stage in their development the mannerisms of the Digital Age (see <http://www.marcprensky.com/writing/Prensky%20%20Digital%20Natives,%20Digital%20Immigrants%20-%20Part1.pdf>).

Theorists are also divided over the effects of the new technologies. Cyberutopianists like Ted Nelson, George P. Landow, and others, believe that the new electronic technologies will liberate us, advancing our

cognitive and expressive horizons through borderless multisquential texts. By contrast, “[c]yberdistopians [...] fear that the use of technology will destroy the cultures that we inhabit” (Downing and Sosnoski 16). Most other theorists have articulated a more balanced position, between the claims of “liberation” from “all arbitrary fixity and stability of the print culture” and the awareness of the “constraints of the computer system and the constraints of the writing system the computer embodies” (Jay Bolter 59-60). The text itself is seen as bifurcated, with the “text-to-be-seen” complementing and challenging “the-text-to-be-read.”

The digital divide—or the lack of both digital literacy and access to technology—was more pronounced in the 1990s, at the beginning of the transition from “a predominantly print environment toward a predominantly electronic one” (Downing and Sosnoski 18). Today, a literate public is more accustomed to write and read in multiply-defined textual media. As Mads Rosendahl Thomsen argues, “the future of writing and reading looks much better with these newly blended media, as opposed to the once dominant dichotomy of text versus images” (30). Writers from various cultures have taken advantage of the current computer-saturated environment producing hypertexts, hypermedia installations, and animated works that stretch the very definition of textuality, moving beyond the verbal to the visual, aural, and kinetic.

Critical and theoretical discourse has kept up, at least to some extent, with these developments, emphasizing the need for literary studies to become involved with the new media. In Chapter 22 of his co-authored book, *Transcultural Experiments: Russian and American Models of Creative Communication* (Berry and Epstein 277-89), Michael Epstein introduces his “IntelNet (“Intellectual Network”) project, an “interactive site and virtual community devoted to the discussion and promotion of interdisciplinary ideas in the humanities” (276). Based on the avant-garde technique of collective improvisation, this interdisciplinary and multimedia site seeks to generate new “thinklinks” among already available ideas, and integrate perspectives from the various disciplines. The IntelNet project provides also an electronic forum for their display and discussion. The “Conceptual Provocation” (292) offered by this project is enhanced when it cuts across national boundaries, interfacing divergent traditions and projects. Epstein’s own philosophic and multimedia work unfolded in two related stages: one Russian (1982-89), as leading member of the Moscow Center for Experimental Creativity, the other American (1990-98), after Epstein’s transplantation to the New World. The work of the original members of the interdisciplinary Moscow circle was continued later by a new group of “co-thinkers” (ix) in the US, led by Ellen E. Berry who worked with Epstein on testing “new modes of intercultural communication” at Bowling Green and Emory University (*Transcultural Experiments 2*, 214-28).

Despite their transcultural drive, the new media have at times developed differently in various parts of Europe and the postcolonial world,

being more responsive to hybrid regional interests and agendas. Certain of the divisions that we highlighted in relationship to film in the East-Central European History project (between North and South, Central Europe and the Balkans), also apply to the new media, even though the latter are assumed to follow globalist interests, under the impact of worldwide technologies and messages. We should be careful to question the construction of a world system that relays Western multimedia technologies to non-Western and postcolonial peripheries, as in the “Hollywoodcentrism” that Ella Shohat and Robert Stam (29) attribute to global film. But we should also acknowledge that the “peripheries,” including those of Eastern Europe, have reacted in contradictory ways to the new media, both resisting and embracing them, turning them into political tools to propagate “the authoritative voice of the nation” (30), but also into tools of transnational resistance and innovation.

2. A New Paradigm Shift? “Digimodernism” vs. Postmodernism

The electronic and global networking technologies have mediated a quiet revolution in the humanities and the arts, introducing new forms of scholarly and creative production and reception. A “new paradigm for textual analysis” (Kaufman 11) has been made available, with powerful text-based search engines, multiple layers of indexing, and multi-media contextualizations. Similarly, digitalization has brought about a new form of “fluid-bounded text” (Kirby 52), a “digimodernism” characterized “in its purest instances by onwardness, haphazardness, evanescence, and anonymous, social and multiple authorship” (Kirby 155).” In Alan Kirby’s definition, “digimodernism is the successor to postmodernism: emerging in the mid-late 1990s, it gradually eclipsed it as the dominant cultural, technological, social, and political expression of our times” (2). While Kirby overstates digimodernism’s parricidal separation from postmodernism and theory (one subsection of his book is called “Burying Postmodernism: Post-Theory,” 27), he is right to talk about a new cultural environment that he dates from Pixar’s *Toy Story* (1995), the first entirely computer-generated film (8). It is not very clear, however, how the range of digimodernists texts that followed—from TV shows like *Big Brother* to the film *Timecode*, Web 2.0 forms like Wikipedia, blogs, chat rooms, message boards, and social networking sites, as well as YouTube, Facebook, videogames such as *Mass Effect*, radio phone-in, etc. (51)—fit together conceptually. While it is true that digimodernism has weakened the distinctions between literature and other media, not all the forms mentioned by Kirby are equally relevant to our discussion. Kirby admits that some “texts,” for example those that fuse “high” and “popular” cultural traits, “can be sites of resistance to and subversion of hegemonic forces” (125). They enhance the reader’s agency,

emphasizing his/her participation in “text-making” rather than just “meaning-making” (55).

As Kirby warns, we should not overstate the political gains in this enhanced role. Chapter 5, on “Digimodernist Aesthetics,” emphasizes the “infantilizing” effects of the popular media (especially cinema), characterized by a “recurring tendency [...] to fantasy, or to innocently juvenile sources of humor,” and the “marginalizations of genres (war, musicals, drama) that adults like—tellingly, the ‘woman’s picture’ has given way to the ‘chick flick’” (127). The use of computer-generated imagery (CGI) makes film resemble videogames, losing the distinct “authorial vision” of earlier cinema (176), as well as its “philosophic or political engagement” (177). On a larger scale, the age of digimodernism (and Kirby’s last chapter lists several pages of phenomena associated with it, from the bombings of Bali, Madrid, London, and Mumbai, to Mel Gibson’s *The Passion of the Christ* and Dan Brown’s anti-Catholic *The Da Vinci Code*) brings back forms of grand narratives that promote hatred, oppression, and cruelty against rival systems. Fortunately, other sections in his book are less apodictic. In the previous chapter on “Digimodernist Culture,” Kirby allows that this age has produced a few exceptional works, like Peter Jackson’s *Lord of the Ring* trilogy (2001-2003) which blends seamlessly CGI techniques, digimodernism, and mythology to offer a “trilogy [that] feels revolutionary,” “visually exciting” and “sonically mesmerizing” (181); or like Mike Figgis’s *Timecode* (2000), a “digimodernist masterpiece” that resembles a “cubist cinema” (187), telling four different stories on a split screen that gradually bleed into one another, contaminating each other’s story and exchanging characters between them until a number of larger themes emerge.

In examples like *Timecode* or the TV show *Big Brother* (2000-), digimodernism stretches itself to the point where its documentary intentions break down as they borrow the devices of fiction. In some cases, this can create a disturbing effect in the viewer. As Kirby’s own example of Cindy Sherman’s “digimodernist” self-portraits suggests, the “apparent real” can take on self-ironic connotations. Cindy Sherman’s series of photographs *Untitled Film Stills* (1977-1980), in which the artist poses as a character from the movies of Goddard, Hitchcock, or Antonioni, the “narratives of anxiety and ennui, alienation and perversity” (139) undermine not only our sense of reality but also the “reality” of the movies themselves. The films her poses evoke are “invented fragments of what would be, if they existed, inventions” (140). The artifice of representing a woman is taken to the point of absurdity, denounced through its own excess.

In a number of ways, digimodernism follows in the footsteps of postmodernism, giving it a more realistic, post-9/11 definition. As Susan Suleiman reminds us, “Things are [no longer] so simple; the idea of a post-modern paradise in which one can try on identities like costumes in a shopping mall [...] appears [...] not only naive, but intolerably thoughtless in a world where—once again—whole populations are murdered in the name of

(ethnic) identity” (54). But Suleiman and other theorists are willing to envision a form of “ethical postmodernism” (55) that interrogates essentialist concepts, emphasizing “interaction, interconnection, and exchange” (Friedman 3).

3. Introducing the Project: Literature and Multimedia in Late 20th and 21st Century Europe

In what follows, I will describe a new international project that draws on recent theoretical and applied work in the field of electronic and multimedia literature. An important emphasis in this project will be on literary production and expression in multimedia environments. The volume will be divided into five parts, covering 1) Theoretical and Methodological Questions; 2) Multimedia Productions in Historical Perspective; 3) Regional and Intercultural Projects; 4) Forms and Genres; 5) Readers and Rewriters in Multimedia Environments.

More specifically, Part One offers a number of questions and arguments concerning the definition, hybrid genre, and intercrossed forms of a range of multimedia products, from digital literature to more complex transmedial work. The section begins with Roberto Simanowski’s (University of Basel, Switzerland) discussion of some of the complexities of digital literature, particularly in its interplay of a combinatory system of digital units such as letters, phonemes, and words, and other components (visual, audio, kinetic) that function as part of a more complex language of units. Rodica Ieta (SUNY Oswego University, USA) theorizes a specific form of digital literature, hypertext. Theorist and practitioner of digital literature Alan Bigelow (Medaille College, New York/De Montfort University, UK) predicts that digital writing, far from being endangered, will continue to be enriched with sound work, complex textscapes, textual generators, text-based installations, visual and concrete poetry, and software art. Monica Spiridon (University of Bucharest, Romania) opens another line of investigation, focusing on the shift from the classical forms of intertextuality to new, hyper-coded forms of intermediality.

Kiene Brillenburg Wurth (Utrecht University, The Netherlands) examines the premise, already stated by Kittler in the 1980s, that the digital and multimedia developments bring about the end of separate, sustainable media, with every medium being translated, rematerialized, and merged into every other medium. Wurth calls into question the theory of media convergence, exploring by contrast ways in which media interact but also preserve their materially distinct ways, resisting the pressures of the newest medium to take over and marginalizes previous media. Teresa Vilariño Picos (University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain) takes this argument further, discussing the challenges that transmediation poses for literature.

Part Two offers a brief historical overview of the advent of multimedia productions, seeking the antecedents of the current multimedia

synergies while also pointing out tensions and divergences among the various media. Karl Jirgens (University of Windsor, Canada) retraces the historical sources of neo-baroque features of electronic and multi-media writing back to the sixteenth-century attempts to create immersive environments using mirrors and optics as well as to the work of early twentieth-century Futurists, Constructivists and Dadaists. Bernardo Piciché (Virginia Commonwealth University, USA) focuses more directly on the Italian Futurists, emphasizing their anticipations of the late twentieth-century multimedia revolution through their fascination with technological devices and multimedia hybrids. Michael Wutz (Weber State University, USA) discusses the paradoxical case of the writer D.H. Lawrence who both used and resisted the emerging post-print modern technologies. Lawrence had the most paradoxical on-and-off relationship with the new communication technologies, including the typewriter. Applying the methodology of genetic criticism, Verónica Galíndez-Jorge (University of São Paulo, Brazil) foregrounds the changing concepts of literary creativity as literature entered the age of multimedia. Rui Torres (Fernando Pessoa University, Portugal) discusses a number of methodological and practical questions concerning the digital preservation of the experimental and variable literature of the recent past.

Part Three proposes a regional mapping of the recent multimedia cultures of Europe, one that—while recognizing the global pressures and trends in the visual and performative media—foregrounds also the distinctive features of particular cultural subregions. Central Europe and Russia receive a particularly strong focus because of their alternative mapping and rewriting of paradigms from Western Europe. Other regions highlighted are Scandinavia and Southern Europe. The section begins with Yra van Dijk's (University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands) article on the role of history in printed and digital literature. Exemplifying with “documentary” digital works from the Netherlands, France, and England, this chapter foregrounds the role that technology plays in endlessly recasting optical, visual, and acoustic data into new narratives. Pedro Andrade (Technical University of Lisbon, Portugal) emphasizes the role that hybrid literacies play in a postcolonial redefinition of Europe. Călin-Andrei Mihăilescu (University of Western Ontario, Canada) proposes an “intercolonial” approach to the digital literatures of Europe. He argues that intercoloniality is an intermedial, generative approach that undermines old habits of thinking and forms of writing, offering an in-between space for new articulations. My own article picks up the inter/postcolonial paradigm and applies it to East-Central Europe, arguing that the recent hypertexts, hypermedia installations, and animated works produced in this region stretch the definition of textuality, moving beyond the verbal to the visual, aural, and kinetic.

Bogumila Suwara (Institute of World Literature, Bratislava, Slovakia) focuses on the hypertext work of Polish Czech, Slovak, and Hungarian

authors who have risen to the challenge of multimedia culture by incorporating “visuality” into literary works and producing counter-texts like Peter Fárkas’s rewriting of Mark Amerika’s novel, *Grammatron*, or Markéta Baňková’s multimedia reflections on female experiences with urban life. Reneta Vankova Bozhankova (Sofia University, Bulgaria) focuses on today’s paradoxical conception of space, caught between a postmodern emphasis on extraterritoriality and hyperreality, enhanced by the use of global positioning technologies, and a new nostalgia for real space. Ellen Rutten (University of Bergen, Norway) examines literary practices in a variety of digital genres, from (micro)blogs to Facebook, Flickr, and online creative-writing communities, emphasizing their recourse to linguistic, visual, and multimedial “imperfection.” Finally, Nevena Daković (University of Belgrade) and Ivana Uspenski (University of Arts, Belgrade) discuss the representation of the Holocaust in the new forms of cybertextuality.

Part Four focuses on a broad range of intermediate forms and genres that literature has created or has become part of as it moved into the realm of digital expression, multimedia performance, the blogosphere, and the virtual. In his introductory essay on “Cybrids,” which can be read as a manifesto of intermedia art, Peter Anders (Plymouth University, Great Britain) defines “cybrids” as hybrid compositions that mix physical and virtual elements. Drawing on the increasingly complex interactions between technology and simulation, developed beginning in the mid-1990s in a number of creative practices from architecture (Anders’s main interest) to computer games, Anders argues that these have exacerbated the representational paradox by narrowing the gap between the physical and virtual. The other essays in this section present different kinds of cybrids or intermedial works. Laura Borràs Castanyer (University of Barcelona, Spain) analyzes the role of liquid metaphors in digital poetry. Web writer and artist Andy Campbell, focuses on the possibilities of digital fiction as illustrated in the online journal *Dreaming Methods* (De Montfort University, UK), which he has been editing for over 10 years.

Bo Kampmann Walther (Syddansk Universitet, Denmark) focuses more generally on the wealth of new fiction genres that have emerged in the age of multimedia, often difficult to define because they blend traditional codex storytelling, cinematic linearity, “gamification,” hypermedia, world building, and fan literature. Monica Spiridon (University of Bucharest) discusses the impact of the “narrative turn” in media culture on literary narratology. Anxo Abuín González (University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain) broadens the discussion of narrative, exploring the interplay between narration and more abstract models of logical ordering such as lists, enumerations, numbers, and data bases. Nick Kaye (University of Exeter, England) considers the performative and kinetic aspects of multimedia work, exemplifying them with Gary Hill’s *Projective Installations*.” Joanna Spassova-Dikova (Institute of Art Studies, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences) discusses the transformation of bodies in contemporary performance arts.

As the performing arts are pitted against the digital, the stage begins to be populated with fantastic creatures - monsters, robots, cyborgs, clones, etc. - on the border between virtual and real worlds. Victoria Pérez Royo (Europa Universität Vadrina, Frankfurt, Germany) describes the significant changes in the relationship between the text of the dance, the dancer, and space as the dancer encounters an interactive ballet space.

Astrid Ensslin (Bangor University, UK) focuses on the paradoxical conjunction of two apparently different receptive, productive, aesthetic, phenomenological, social, and discursive phenomena: literature and games. The author argues that, unlike maximally immersive, mainstream blockbuster games, literary and art games are often designed to evoke a critical meta-stance in players towards the artefact and their own hyperattentive interaction with it. Finally, Reneta Vankova Bozhankova (Sofia University, School of Slavic Studies) picks up another popular genre and medium of the multimedia age, the blog. The article focuses on writer's blogs, taking into account the authors' awareness of the diary tradition and allowing for parallel comparisons with the "personal writing" in the 18th-20th centuries.

The last part of the volume foregrounds the need for an enhanced interactive connection between authors, texts, and readers in the multimediated forms of literature. My own article on the author-reader interactions in the age of hypertextual and networked communication emphasizes the cognitive and pedagogical advantages involved in the transition from traditional, often linear modes of reading and writing, to multilevel and interactive modes of rereading/ rewriting. The article contributed by Maria Engberg (Blekinge Institute of Technology, Sweden) explores further the changing conditions of reading in the age of digital media, arguing that electronic and multimedia literature have added a new dimension of "digital literacy" that entails knowing how to parse and interpret images, texts, videos, and so forth, and to perform a multidimensional form of reading. Engberg uses the term "polyaestheticism" to refer to the experiencing of multi-sensory media objects that require several faculties: reading, looking, listening, seeing, moving.

Janez Strehovec (University of Ljubljana, Slovenia) builds further on the idea of the "e-literary text as play," but adds to it the structural concept and metaphor of the "ride." The ride is an intensive and rich event-based and corporeal experience that takes place in compressed time, presupposing ascents and descents, heavy rhythm, suspense and dissolves, emotional ups and downs, and even the daring feeling of uncertainty when the rider realizes that she is not in charge. Francesca Pasquali (University of Bergamo, Italy) discusses the changes brought about by digitalization in the production, distribution, and marketing of electronic literature. Pasquali emphasizes the fact that digitalization processes have led to a redefinition of the role and relationship of authors and readers within a new paradigm of

convergence and cooperation. The article contributed by Susana Tosca (member of the Digital Culture / Mobile Communication Group, IT University, Copenhagen), returns to more practical questions, focusing on the new materiality of reading literature in tablets (*ipad*, *kindle*, etc.) in order to explore how it differs from the practice of reading books and to consider the advantages and challenges it poses. Drawing on his own recent experiments with alternative forms of electronic writing, Artur Matuck (University of São Paulo, Brazil) theorizes and demonstrates practically the uses of—what he calls—the “de-scripting process.” This process relies on the use of “virtual faulty typewriter” which tricks the typist into generating unintended sequences of letters and words, rewriting the original text. The typewriter’s “de-scripting” capacity based on semi-random letter recombination provokes disorder at the linguistic level, as a means of causing semiotic estrangement but also a renewal of codes.

4. Situating the Project in the Current Intermedia Conversation

A major emphasis in this volume is on literary production and expression in multimedia environments. Literature remains an important focus of research, even as its modes of manifestation expand to include new hybrids that stretch the traditional definition of what is “literary.” Multimediatic literature includes a variety of forms, from emblem literature to a host of new genres such as concrete poetry, graphic novels, strips, hypertexts, multimedia performance, installations, and other “combined and simultaneously displayed artforms in which literary texts function as one component” (Cornis-Pope and Neubauer, *History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe* 1: 513). In my previous coedited work, from which I just quoted, the “criterion of simultaneity excludes artforms in which literature merely serves as a point of departure or inspiration but does not appear in the final form; similarly, it does not include the various forms of *ekphrasis*, i.e., literary descriptions of visual art objects, and *verbal music*, i.e., verbal representations of real or imaginary music” (513). In the present volume we do include also forms of *ekphrasis* at least to the extent they break down the boundary between arts, allowing the interpenetration of discourses as in the contamination of literary descriptions with elements of other artistic discourses.

A whole section in our project is dedicated to the interplay of global vs. local/regional emphases. Clearly, globalization is not something to be taken lightly. As Gayatri Spivak reminds us, while cyberliteracy may be “an excellent, enticing, and seductive wonderful thing,” the “invasion of the unmediated, so-called, cyberliteracy in the subaltern sphere is deeply frightening” (Hedge and Radha 285). The contributors to our volume are well aware of these globalizing pressures but they argue that the global messages are often filtered through regional or local interests that created hybrids, both thematically and formally. As D. C. McMillin also argues, global channels have resorted, especially of late, to “strategies of hybridization, dubbing, cloning, and collaging” (103) in an effort to win over

Third World markets. Conversely, Third World countries have employed new media with a postcolonial, regional edge to “build community and create spaces for subaltern empowerment” (197). Our volume foregrounds various examples of creative “entanglements of the global, regional, national, and local” (Chopra and Gajjala 11), emphasizing regional developments in East-Central Europe, in Scandinavia, and in Southern Europe. Even pan-European projects like ELMCIP (Electronic Literature as a Model of Creativity and Innovation in Practice), designed “both to study the formation and interactions of [the European] community and to further electronic literature research and practice in Europe,” take into account the hybrid roots of their object of study. Composed of seven European academic research centers (the University of Bergen in Norway, the Edinburgh College of Art in Scotland, the Blekinge Institute of Technology in Sweden, the University of Amsterdam in the Netherlands, the University of Ljubljana in Slovenia, the University of Jyväskylä in Finland, the University College of Falmouth at Dartington, UK) and one non-academic partner (the New Media Scotland), this organization focuses on the electronic-literature community in Europe as a practical model of networked creativity (see <http://elmcip.net/>), but also as a source of innovative digital work that reflects creative regional alternatives.

Genres themselves have been hybridized, replacing the traditional grand narratives that promoted national or ethnocentric visions with forms of intermediality that emphasize tensions between the global and local. Intermediality is a particularly useful concept since it defines complexity of form, medium, and technology. As several essays in our volume suggest, not only literature, but also some of the other arts have moved towards intermediality. Inspired by the reconceptualization of objects in Cubism, Expressionism, and Futurism (see the essay submitted by Bernardo Piciché), both theater and film have experimented with several media, providing models for modern intermediality. Calin Mihailescu further argues that intermediality is often enhanced by interculturality, as the dialogue of different media traditions creates new hybrids.

As several essays in Part Four argue, one of the most important shifts in textual production has been the emphasis on “non- or multilinearity, its multivocality, and its inevitable blending of media and modes, particularly its tendency to marry the visual and the verbal” (Landow, *Hypertext 3.0* 220). Much of the earlier electronic work exemplifies the hypertextual structures that Landow theorizes, promoting not only textual but also cultural interactivity, “insist[ing] on the collaborative nature of its productions [... and] the distribution of authorship” (Hayles 161). For example, Geoff Ryman (born in Canada, educated in the United States and working in England since 1973) has produced work that mixes genres (science fiction, historical novel, fantasy) and media (verbal narrative, hypertext, performance). His *253: A Novel for the Internet about London Underground in Seven Cars and a Crash*,

discussed in my own article, is an experiment in interactive electronic narrative. The reader is offered preliminary information about the 252 passengers in the seven carriages on a Bakerloo Line train and about the train's driver. The cast of characters includes a husband and a wife in separate cars, a comic ice-cream manufacturer, a mass murderer's former co-worker, Henri Matisse's heir, somebody named Geoff Ryman, a band of street actors called "Mind the Gap," and a pigeon. From this preliminary information, the reader is invited to piece together their life stories, making hypertextual jumps from one character to another in a way that will allow them to relate to each other before the train crashes at the end of the narrative. The reader is challenged to fill in the gaps and make the characters' relationships meaningful, preventing the total annihilation of this narrative world.

Another work I discuss in my own article on multimedia textuality is a rare example of a pre-1990 graphic/spatial composition. Entitled *Terra: Un poem* (Terra: A Poem), it was presented by Crișu Dascălu in the December meeting of the Writers's Association of Timisoara and recently published by David Press. This complex graphic work could not appear in book form until recently for various reasons: one was the experimental nature of the text, which demanded an intricate typographic treatment of every page that no publisher was ready to handle. The text itself, with its esoteric but also political-satiric suggestions intimidated the pre-1989 communist censorship. Both visually and thematically, Dascălu's art poem reconstructs a history of poetic reflection that takes us back to medieval motifs, promising esoteric revelations that are continually thwarted. The imagery maps infernal underworlds and galactic spaces that are equally sterile. And yet, even as these traditional metaphysical spaces fail to enlighten, *Terra* promises new beginnings in the permutational potential of language, verbal and visual. Each page becomes an exploration of the limits of meaning, in a process of self-mirroring that encompasses the antinomies of the universe (see the title page which plays on the "terra/subterrana" opposition). Almost every motif and image works in similar ways: the quotes remind us (through Marshall McLuhan) that nature is a book whose pages have been corrupted by an original error. The "corruption" of meaning becomes increasingly important, as languages begin to merge, words are scrambled, and images increasingly encrypted. The book ends with a writing on the wall that teases us with an undecipherable ultimate truth.

By themselves, hypertextual and networked forms of writing do not guarantee an enhanced textual and cultural experience. Even the most experimental cybertext runs—according Robert Coover—the risk of being overly slack and unstructured, giving way to "that dreamy, [...] lost-in-space feeling of the early sci-fi films" ("The End of Books" 25). We could, in fact, argue that a printed text can provide a well-trained reader with the experience of a "nearly endless narrative" more easily than an electronic hypertext where the complicated logistic of navigating multipaths and the

pressure of “randomness and expansiveness might come to feel as oppressive to [readers] as linearity and closure did for modern and postmodern writers” (Travis 108). The challenge to older modes of reading “text” in the broad sense of the word is stronger in multimedia work that overlaps image, text, sound, and motion. For example, one of Alan Bigelow’s digital installations, MyNovel.org (2006), takes six classic novels (*Moby Dick*, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, *The Scarlet Letter*, *Lolita*, and *On the Road*) and compresses them into four sentences each. These four-sentence novels play against a shifting series of Flash background movies. At any point readers can write their own short narratives by using the tools included on the site. MyNovel.org challenges our assumptions about traditional genre distinctions, interplaying novel, short story, and poetry, while also forcing the literary text out of the static page and merging it with other art forms. Writing becomes an event that redefines itself continually while also drawing on the reader/viewer’s own creativity.

The new technologies have served the goal of enhancing the interactive component in the writing and interpretation of literature, giving authors and readers a better sense of the multilevel nature of literature. However, as long as these technologies are used to reinforce old habits of reading/ writing or to ask “fairly traditional questions of traditional texts” (Olsen 312), they will deliver modest results. Rather than tempering “the friction-producing differences of multiculturalism” with the “friction-reducing technology of informatics,” as Travis (118) proposes, we should use technology to enhance the dialogic aspect of our cultural transactions. One of our urgent tasks is to reintegrate literature in the global informational environment; the latter is inconceivable without the exigencies of creative authorship, critical rereading/rewriting, and cultural reformulation. In turn, the cross-fertilization between literature and the new media environment has produced innovative literary practices that challenge monologic concepts of culture, emphasizing “interference” and “translation” between the participating systems.

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WHAT HAPPENED TO ROMANIAN LITERATURE DURING POST-COMMUNISM?

A Plea for a Symptomatic Critique of Literary Changes

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Abstract. *An ordinary reader (that is anyone but a literary critic) watches in perplexity the years after 1989: it would be difficult for him to say what happened. I have often been asked to give an answer, as short as possible, to such a query: How should we understand the state of Romanian literature in the Post-December period? Where do these disturbances come from? What has changed? What specific tendencies have emerged? How can one draw the diagram of aesthetic tensions and how can one describe the tectonic of the literary genres and values, without going into the specific problems of the prose, poetry, theatre, literary criticism or history? A critique of the symptoms of literary changes would be able to describe the phenomenon.*

Key-words. internal changes of the Romanian literature after 1989, new emergent perceptions on literature, contestations, the variable ratio between fiction and non-fiction, nowadays literary trends, the stable canon and alteration of the canon

We are far enough from the shock of the first years after the Revolution to be able to give a clearer answer. A diagnostic critique of a period demands its right of existence, together with a critical, synthetic analysis, of immediate assessment, a comparative one, one of hermeneutical interpretation. A diagnostic critique means the observation of the actual literary tendencies, noting the symptomatic phenomena beyond the isolated reading of books.

How could I rapidly answer the question “What happened to Romanian literature during post-communism?”, without giving names, paying attention only to the major sociological, moral and aesthetic phenomena?

The first thing, which is immediately visible, is the establishment of an extremely severe attitude, uncompromising to the cruelty of total denial, with regard to the literature written during communism. Everything seemed simple in that regard: nothing from the previous period was valid anymore. The radical negation, without any mitigating circumstances, seemed the only honest attitude. The Romanian writers acquired the freedom of creation they did not have during communism. They won, simultaneously with all Romanian citizens, the freedom of opinion and freedom of expression, in public or in writing. The first visible result was the crystallization of anti-Communist attitude, which led to challenging of the entire communist period - which, following the thread of the contesting logic, had as a consequence the overthrow of the hierarchy of values previously promoted. Nobody and nothing escaped uncontested, not even Eminescu. Everything that came from beyond the December 1989 limit, everything that was promoted then, everything that was considered valuable was poisoned or suspicious. The transition (the first Post-December decade) was confusing and chaotic, because no references were valid anymore, of those unanimously accepted previously (neither G. Călinescu, nor Arghezi, nor Sadoveanu, nor Marin Preda, nor Nichita Stănescu). From the opinion that communist Romania was synonymous with a Siberia of the spirit one easily reached the belief that we need another literature, totally different from communism. The main guilt of the former literature came from the collaboration with the former regime, which forced it to lie. The truth can be told only by the testimonies of the opponents, of the dissidents and of those who suffered during communism. Fiction, regardless of its symbolical content, cannot be given any credit anymore. Only the memoirs of the political prisoners, the diaries of the sceptics and of the opponents can give an idea of the painful and tragic truth of the communist period. For at least a decade, from 1990 to 2000, the reading public prioritized only literature that testified about human suffering

during communism. If the author of the testimony was a writer, all the better, he was even more credible.

In that atmosphere of confusion, and general contestation (everybody contested everybody), the Romanian reader lost confidence in the Romanian writer, maybe also because of the fact that a Romanian cannot trust another Romanian. However, the specific motivation derived from the loss of confidence in Romanian literature, compromised by cohabitation with communism. Readers, those who were left, took refuge in translations. The book market, the bookshops were invaded by translations, which eclipsed Romanian literature for a while. Everybody's synchronization with was new and valuable or only attractive outside of Romania produced a real euphoria. Publishing houses prospered on account of this predictable phenomenon. Not even the prizes of the Writers' Union or of other institutions, often awarded without inspiration, succeeded to attract the readers' attention to the Romanian writer. A lot of writers became impassioned publicists, moral instances of politics in action. Indictment of the past and present was more profitable than fiction literature. Anticommunism proved itself to be just as dependent on communism as opportunism. Separation could be achieved only by adopting a point of view from another sphere than the political one. Reconstruction of the past from the perspective of the post-December present was a vital necessity. You cannot live without memory or only with a negative memory, in which trauma was decisive. Was there really nothing valid from the immediate past of Romanian literature? The ruined authority of critique was not anymore able to do anything sensational in favour of literature. Patience was needed for the wounds of the past to heal, for the aesthetic man to rehabilitate to the religious man and to the ethical man. Another kind of patience was needed for the Romanian to regain self-esteem, looking into the mirror. The Romanian writer was the victim of this self-detestation of the Romanian towards everything that is Romanian, identifiable in all critical moments of our history. Still, one could not admit from a logical point of view, even less from a sentimental one, that 45 years of communism in our history, in our life and in the life of our parents can be so easily erased and turned into void. The unforgiving intransigence of the moral critique was replaced with an ever more analytical judgement. Gradually, since 1995, the aesthetic criterion has been admitted together with the ethical and the political criteria in judging Romanian literature before 1990. What could be recovered without reluctance? First of all, the literature of exile. Then, evasive and subversive *drawer literature*, as much as it was: not only memoirs and diaries, but also prison poetry and subversive fiction. Slowly, the recoverable part becomes increasingly important. At Bessarabia we first looked with enthusiasm, then it was replaced by scepticism. What

seemed simple immediately after 1989 (discerning values) now becomes more and more complicated. We notice that opportunistic literature is not synonymous with all Romanian literature published during communism, because there is also, perfectly valid from an aesthetic point of view, the escapist literature, indifferent to all political commitments, preoccupied only with the performance of expressiveness and the symbolic, even if, from an ethical point of view it might be considered guilty for avoiding confrontation with power. But uncontrolled literature was in itself a counter-power, an alternative, the more so as it evolved from escapism to subversion and sometimes even to internal dissidence.

This recovery effort is the work of critical reviews. It was obvious that Romanian literature in the communist period could neither be accepted as a whole, nor be condemned as a whole. A thorough re-examination of all values was needed, which cannot be accomplished in an erratic debate, naturally and predictably animated by polemics. Only histories of literature, written from individual perspectives, no matter how subjective, but sufficiently well articulated and argued, can give a true, modified, picture, of the hierarchy of values, according to the place of observation (distance, height, angle, evaluation criteria). There also came histories of literature, some before 2000, others soon after. They themselves are symptoms worthy of separate analysis, identifying detached critical perspectives and attitudes, with claims of objectivity.

Critical reviews have attracted discussions about canon. How does it diverge from the version promoted during communism or from the official policy or from aesthetic criticism? We can count on only one post-December canon or should the whole problem of the canon be abandoned as obsolete? The situation of post-December Romanian literature is complicated by the coexistence or intersection of several styles and trends: neo-modernism, postmodernism, entertainment culture. Canon should be discussed in this new context.

II

If it seemed increasingly clear that the axiological situation of Romanian literature during communism can be solved, elucidated by a demanding assessment in the new syntheses, the situation of the new literature, born after 1990, proved to be increasingly confusing. Where was it going? Two phenomena of the new post-December literature largely summarize the significant changes: on one hand, in prose, the variable ratio between fiction and non-fiction, and on the other hand, the spectacular decline of poetry, after misleading inflation, which seemed to be a thriving development of lyrics. Both phenomena occur in two-stroke: a first stage (1990-2000) favorable to non-fiction and relatively neutral to poetry, creating the impression of stability, that is of maintaining poetry at the previous level, the second stage (after 2000) in which fiction regenerated, and the decline of poetry becomes evident.

The increasing interest in confessional literature was followed, about 2000, by a predictable decrease for memoirs and journals, due to relative exhaustion and, especially, to the public's satiety or fatigue. Non-fiction did its duty, although the surprise of interesting testimony is still kept, but without creating the event. Confessional literature did not disappear and will not disappear, but the emphasis fell slowly but surely. There followed, in compensation, the rehabilitation of fiction (I discussed widely the phenomenon in the preamble of my volume in 2004). The novel entered the creation crisis and readership crisis immediately after 1990, but makes a powerful comeback at the beginning of the third millennium, hoping, if not for notorious European successes, at least for modest but reliable assertions.

The eclipse of poetry, for those who wanted to see, seemed to be irreparable within a foreseeable future. A puzzling inflation, fed by the volumes printed and distributed on their own, devalues poetry itself as a literary genre. The writer himself, whether he is a poet, a novelist or a playwright, appears to be, for this reason, of the ease with which bad books are printed, an improvised personality. After 1990, poetry becomes the religion of an ever smaller sect. There appear significant volumes of some poets in the 60's, 70's or 80's, but the new poetry, written by the younger ones does not have the audience of the 1960-1970's. The new poetry is being emaciated (and sometimes even compromised) by the laboratory experimentalism, textualism, sexual exhibitionism. The poetic centrality of the aesthetic canon of the communist period cannot be imagined for the new literature, that which is written after 1990. It is certain that a poet cannot become a great writer, with success to the public in post-December period, as it happened before. It is certain and it is sad, because the market was defeated by mercantilism, hedonism. Everybody was intrigued because I spoke of the post-December decline of poetry. The meaning of my finding was not understood. Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, Eminescu, Arghezi or Nichita Stănescu do not lose their place in the history of world literature; poetry so far has nothing to lose, but the place of poetry to be written from now on loses its rank among literary genres, even if we do not want to admit it. We cannot talk about the pre-eminence of poetry over prose and drama, as we talk about the pre-eminence rule of lyricism during romanticism and communism (that is during our neo-modernism, to use terms from the same sphere). That is what I understand by the lower rank of poetry, a phenomenon known for more than half a century in the entire West. The inevitable happens with us too - I see no surprise.

The thorny issue of poetry entails a longer discussion. It actually extended into controversy: about twenty poets from across the country reacted vehemently negative and in almost all cultural publications to my observation about the decline of poetry (Al. Mușina, Gh. Grigurcu,

Marin Mincu, Liviu Ioan Stoiciu, Ion Mircea, Adrian Popescu and others). I evoke some of my most outrageous statements. The first victim of the reviews of consumerist era is poetry. It is terrible that this happens, but it is the hardest and inevitable truth, both for neo-modernists and postmodernists. The lyric genre is doomed to a confidentiality which seeks protection in the hostile atmosphere of entertainment culture. That is why I said another time (without being understood) that poetry must withdraw in literary circles, in sectarian circles, in universities, on Internet sites. The new volumes of poetry make no sense, because they have no more public, other than the guild. No poet can be a great writer anymore in the age of almighty cultural entertainment. The neo-modernists and the postmodernists can still align for something they may have in common: the defense of poetry. To insist, against the indifference of all, with poetry criticism in all the magazines and all cultural supplements, seems to me a suicide gesture for those publications. Poetry reception on generous columns in the media has no more than the value of a comforting gesture for the poets who do not give up. It is not far the time when the overweight part reserved for poetry in the teaching canon (and therefore in the manuals) will have to be drastically reduced, at the moment. The lyrical boulder in the belly of consumerist age will be rejected with an acute bile crisis. For us it is an unbearable probability, extremely difficult to imagine. In the consumerist world, the poet is the relic of another age, just like lace makers, watchmakers, authors of epic poems or panegyrics, chroniclers and minstrels. Poetry becomes, in the age of mass-media and entertainment supremacy, a curiosity from the category of antiques. Poetry is too slow, too abstruse and sophisticated manner of expression for the speed and efficiency of communication in the information age. During the communist regime, poetry was a secret language, attractive for a public who were under the surveillance and control of a non-ambiguous propaganda. During the communist regime, poetry offered the chance of clandestine communication and complicity of mysteries in a closed society, supervised in all corners of public and private life, which was forbidden any ambiguities, metaphysics and mysteries. Only that way one can explain the extraordinary mass success of some difficult poets such as Ion Barbu, Lucian Blaga, Tudor Arghezi and Nichita Stănescu. Today it would be unimaginable to sell 100,000 copies of a poetry volume by Ion Barbu. In the '60 and the '70, poetry offered the alternative of another language, of another universe, impossible to replace with other refuge solutions; today the refuge alternatives have multiplied, offering even faster compensation pleasure. From communism to consumerism the fate of poetry changes, has changed unsettlingly, its place in the public sphere of literature has drastically diminished.

Leaving aside now the major changes related to poetry and prose, another confusing phenomenon deserves our attention. The conflict between neo-modernism and postmodernism has worsened during the post-December period. Its most visible form is the hostility among the writers in the sixties and eighties. It is a major, symptomatic phenomenon. All this is happening amid the full offence of entertainment culture. Poetry is the first of the victims. Literature itself, regardless of its specific tendency, has lost ground to television, the discos etc. Younger generations express, if not contempt, then a lack of interest for reading, but not quite as disastrous as it is voiced. But it is clear that the Romanian post-December literature is written in a different ideological climate than the immediate post-war literature, although the effects are about the same.

The dictatorship of the market and entertainment functions in a manner as oppressive and evil as political dictatorship. The distortions of literariness and the corruption of the aesthetic are threats just as large in both one case (the communist period) and the other (consumerist period or entertainment era). Therefore, based on this comparison, I would have been tempted to answer that post-December Romanian literature (since 1989 until today) experienced about what the immediately post-war Romanian literature (from 1945 up through 1965) experienced. The similarities are so numerous (confusion of values, the anti-aesthetic attitude, predominantly political or moral, challenge of the great writers of the previous period, dislocation of modernism first by Proletkult, and more recently by postmodernism, the revision of the canon, etc.) that you only have to accept the idea that history repeats itself, in confusing forms. There is a rhythm of auspicious and inauspicious periods in Romanian literature.

There could be some chances of significant recovery after about two decades from the major event (the war in 1945 and the 1989 Revolution), if we judge mechanically. The young writers who asserted themselves (made their debut) until 1960 did not count, but writers who made their debut started around the year 1960, up by 1965, they regenerated the literary landscape and brought about the diversification of the narrative and poetic styles. Similarly, we can imagine that the real change will be brought by the writers who have recently made their debut or will make their debut come around 2010, after they will have got used to the atmosphere of consumerism and will know how to overcome it. Communism and consumerism require from the writer ingenious strategies of defense and tailored promotion of the aesthetic. In fact, for this hope of recovery there also advocates the historic succession of auspicious periods of 40 to 40 years in the history of Romanian literature, with some variability due to historical events: 1840-1848 (pre-48 literature), 1875-1890 (full consolidation and affirmation of

Junimea group), 1920-1935 (the climax of interwar modernism), 1965-1975 (postwar neo-modernism) and... 2005-2015 (another possible peak time of Romanian literature, I do not know how we will call it). To simplify the historical diagram I choose one representative year: 1840, 1884, 1933, 1970, 2010. These are also the best periods for the European assertion of Romanian literature.

A diagnostic critique (a critique of the symptoms of literary changes) can help us for a prognosis, a substitute of hope, not of prophecy. We say, with a small dose of self-suggestion, that contemporary Romanian literature has already experienced the worst it could have. Better times might come. We have aesthetic values entitled to regain their Romanian readers and to impress the Europeans.

Translation by Senior Lecturer Dan Negruț

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Antropologia și universul basmului

Anthropology and the
universe of folktales

THE ROLE OF SILENCE IN FOLK TALES

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Abstract: *The article suggests how the two fundamental methods of analysis: the historical-geographical and the structuralist should be brought together through the study of tales of many regions and of the ‘variants’ emerging in the tales. The idea is that we would turn back towards the source of the tale, and story- (and) tale-telling, specifically to the spoken or told history of the tale (tales are often built-up on each other), in this sense to the basic communicative situations (interaction) that exist between the teller and the audience. It might be added that the reading and analysis of folk tale collections that have been published thus far require us to adopt the same basic approach.*

Key-words: tale, collector, myth, universal motifs, creative tale-telling

In her closing summary to a seminar Marie-Louise Tenèze, the famous French tale researcher, recommended that the two fundamental methods of analysis: the historical-geographical and the structuralist should be brought together *through the study of tales of many regions and of the ‘variants’ appearing in the tales*¹. (What lay behind this

¹ *Introduction à l’ étude de la littérature orale: le conte*, (“Nous essaierons ici, en conclusion, de prolonger brièvement ces réflexions. Elles suggèrent d’abord qu’il est un domaine où les deux approches, historico-géographique et de recherche des structures, doivent se conjuguer: l’étude des ‘choix’ réalisé dans et par les contes d’une certaine région.”)

“We will try here, in conclusion, to briefly expand on these reflections. They suggest, first of all, that there is an area where the two approaches, historical-geographical and structural research, should converge: the study of ‘variants’ that emerge in, and through, the tales of a certain region.” (translated George SEEL, hereinafter GS)

suggestion was partly the large number of unclassified, or unclassifiable eastern and southern European tale variants that had been collected over the previous decades and had not been included in Aarne-Thomson's tale catalogue, and partly an attempt to pacify the tension that had arisen between tale collectors of various nations). The expression used in the French text is *l'étude des choix*; for my part I can state with conviction that the future direction of research can be indicated by a play on words. If we change the expression 'choix' (variants, choices) for *l'étude des voix* (i.e. the study of voices), we would turn back towards the source of the tale, and story- and tale-telling, specifically the spoken or told history of the tale (tales are often built-up on each other), in this sense the basic communicative situations (interaction) that exist between the teller and the audience. (I might add that the reading and analysis of folk tale collections that have been published thus far requires us to adopt the same basic approach).

However, the comparison of variants from a historical-geographical perspective and their structural analysis (processes which require a positivist approach to a certain degree), although they may create many pleasing models, do not take us any closer to the 'essence' of the story; aware of this, it does no harm to remind ourselves of Honti's concerns, which are still valid today: [...] we have seen that the tale appears in the world in spoken and heard variants, and that behind the multiplicity of variants we must assume the existence of a type - the imagined unity which holds together the multiplicity of the variants. This unified entity however, only appears in academic thinking; in reality there is nothing else than the *manifestations* which are independent of the tale and occur as the result of arbitrary circumstances: these are the individual stories.² Another tale researcher, Géza Róheim, who, at the beginning of the twentieth century, studying the plentiful treasures of the world's myths and tales from a primarily psychological perspective, came relatively early to the conclusion that between the words/expressions used by individual peoples (their belief system) and their deeds (their modes of behaviour), there is a strong relationship.³ While discussing the concepts of the language of signs and imitation in

² HONTI: A mese világa, (*The World of the Tale*) Magvető, Bp., 1962. p. 95. Honti rightly warns us to be careful when speaking of the 'relatives' of tale-types; it is also no accident that he emphasises that: "In the process of handing down the path goes directly from one spirit to another, with no communicating elements between life and death. Thus all new appearances of traditional material, all new tellings of the story, are really new creations, since reproduction is more than mere repetition of material stored in the memory." (p. 96.) (translated GS.)

³ On the other hand he also makes clear that anthropologists and psychoanalysts agree on the fact that what is hidden in the subconscious is revealed by mythology. (translated GS) ("Les anthropologues et les psychoanalistes s'accordent maintenant sur le fait que ce qui est dans l'inconscient est révélé par la mythologie.") In.: RÓHEIM: *Psychoanalyse et anthropologie*, Éd. Gallimard, Paris, 2010. p. 276.

his work *The Origin of the Concept of the Power of Enchantment*⁴ he offers the following thoughts: [...] is the essence of cursing not so much action itself but rather the will, the intention of the request? [...] The request must be expressed. It can be expressed in two ways: with words or deeds [...] Deeds – since language exists – are always accompanied by words; words are accompanied by a demonstration.⁵ Words and deeds are the two forms of communication, the timeless mode of the tale hero's manifestation.⁶ We can safely say that there is no element in the tale narrative that is not either one of the two, or cannot be analyzed from the perspective of an organic combination of both, as Lévinas expresses it: "They were also directed by the idea that ... *representation is not a work of the look by itself, but of language.*"⁷ Deed and language can be analyzed precisely in their relationship to each other, just like darkness and light and silence and speech, as Lévinas accurately point out in so many works. "The light makes the thing appear by driving out the shadows; it empties space"⁸ –, or referring to the participants in the interaction: Language is a relation between separated terms. To the one the other can indeed present himself as a theme, but his presence is not reabsorbed in his status as a theme. The word that bears on the Other as a theme seems to contain the Other. But already it is said to the Other who, as interlocutor, has quit the theme that encompassed him, and upsurges inevitably behind what is said. Words are spoken, be it only by the silence kept, whose weight acknowledges this evasion of the Other.⁹ In tales they make their appearance by revealing themselves to each other: in the grip of their enchantments, in their otherness, their guilt, their hiding behind masks and putting on faces; in their existence in the here and now and their promises regarding their future destiny; covered in silence and (to use Lévinas' expression) showing 'demands for an answer' through the vows/promises and curses they make to each other; and their calls for

⁴ RÓHEIM Géza: A varázserő fogalmának eredete, (*The Origin of the Concept of the Power of Enchantment*) Posner Károly Lajos és fia, Bp., 1914. p. 49.

⁵ idem. pp. 49-51. (translated GS)

⁶ Róheim's words evoke what Tengelyi emphasises: "Merleau-Ponty [...] ascribes to expressions not just a forming but a creating character." In.: TENGELYI: *Élettörténet és sorseseemény, (Life History and Episodes of Fate)* Atlantisz, Bp., 1998. p.154. (translated GS)

⁷ Emmanuel LÉVINAS *Totality and Infinity, An essay on exteriority*, (translated Alphonso Lingis) DUP. Piitsburgh, 2000. p. 189. (hereinafter TI.)

"Elles étaient aussi dirigées par l'idée que *la représentation n'est pas une oeuvre du regarde tout seul, mais du langage*" In.: *Totalité et infini*, (orig. Éd. Kluwer Académic, Nijhoff, 1971,) Éd. 08. Paris, 1987. p. 206. (hereinafter TI.)

⁸ LÉVINAS op. cit. p.189. ("Il faut une lumière pour voir la lumière." TI. p. 209.)

⁹ LÉVINAS: op. cit. p. 195.

("Le langage est un rapport entre termes séparés. A l'un, l'autre peut certes se présenter comme un thème, mais sa présence ne se résorbe pas dans son statut de thème. La parole qui porte sur autrui comme thème semble contenir autrui. Mais déjà elle se dit à autrui qui, en tant qu' interlocuteur, a quitté le thème qui l'englobait et surgit inévitablement derrière le dit. La parole se dit ne fut-ce que par le silence gardé et dont la pesanteur reconnaît cette évasion d'Autrui." TI. p. 212.)

action and the execution of their tasks. Since we consider the communicative rule that you cannot *not* communicate an axiom, the tale heroes, the I and the Other (or Others) appear or become involved in every situation, and present themselves for others and to others with a “symbolic” speech. By practising this series (or several series) of misunderstandings they allow the Other(s) to understand the appearance of the original or starting sin and the solution of the curse syndrome: this occurs, as Lévinas decisively emphasises, by means of love expressed for the other, and the understanding of the responsibility undertaken and eternally maintained towards the other.

I believe that it is not exclusively the decoding of universal motifs and symbols which leads us to an understanding of the destiny of tale heroes (even if Ricoeur considers the most important task of hermeneutics to be the examination of the “linguistic - and not exclusively linguistic - surplus of meaning or the expression of a surplus of meaning”¹⁰). It is not through the definition of the archetypes of the hero and a comparison of the different mythologemes that we can appreciate the struggle they undergo for their future destiny¹¹. What offers itself to us as a starting point for analysis is much rather an understanding of the *tale situation* (which is established at the very beginning of the tale by the relating of the problem of destiny and the disturbance of the hero’s life) and the hero’s understanding of the task required to solve the problems of his destiny, and in this context to grasp (or understand) the existential character of the hero.¹² The tale situation

¹⁰ TENGELYI, op. cit. p. 92. (translated GS)

¹¹ Although from our perspective comparison is also an important element, if we are right in assuming – with some perhaps permissible simplification - that mythology is a kind of *store of characteristics*, then the tale itself (in which it is commonly known that ‘reduced heroes’ appear, i.e. heroes who have the one characteristic which is needed to solve the task) is also this kind of store, and in every variant we can find what Kerényi would describe as ‘psychological reality’. Probably within a significant number of the variants which make up the individual types we can experience that in the case of one (or sometimes more) hero(es) the tale teller sets different existential-characters on the tale stage, as a consequence of which the ending takes a different form.

¹² Gábor Biczó writes in his study entitled *The Hermeneutics of the Tale*: “[...] the tale can be conceived of as an exercise in hermeneutics, that is it can be understood as an original attempt at understanding and analyzing” –, and further on: “The tale cannot be set against metaphysics, since it cannot be understood as an original way of analyzing existence as an alternative to philosophy (or hermeneutics), because it simply cannot be imagined before metaphysics. In other words at one point we can find a link which at one and the same time separates and binds together the tale and philosophy. This point is the so-called problematics of the basic issues of existence. As the history of Western metaphysics has conceptualised the essence of the attempts to answer these questions (the methodologically developed answer which relates to the nature of the understanding of philosophical hermeneutics), so the simple and unrepeatable act of telling (speaking) each tale can also be interpreted as some kind of attempt to answer these same questions.” (In.: Péter BÁLINT, *Közéletések a meséhez, Approaches to the Tale*, Didakt, Debrecen, 2006. pp. 13-15.) At this point it is worth reminding ourselves of what László Tengelyi wrote: “Since Heidegger we have learnt to understand metaphysically, with our thinking directed to

created by the tale teller is fundamental in deciding the appearance of the hero in the world, or the arrival to and from the 'otherworld' and the way of life of the community in their environment, and any special circumstances prevailing (living under a curse, poverty, being an orphan, living in servitude, etc.). The tale starts with the hero's attempts to discover his partly visible and partly hidden existential nature for himself.¹³ In this process of discovery (self-understanding) he must make use of all powers of enchantment, 'greater knowledge' and previously initiated helpers, (who either appear to the hero in a dream or who come out from behind a screen on the tale's stage), in order to understand his task through the experience gained from the knowledge acquired or received, and thus achieve his future destiny, which can be understood as his relationship with death. Or, as László Tengelyi claims, quoting one of his favourite philosophers: [...] however in destiny "man recognises his own life, and his pleading for it is not pleading to a lord, but for his return to and approach to himself." It is also true that in destiny "injured life steps up as an opposing power against the sin", although man himself can only come to himself through his destiny because this kind of experience determines his whole life.¹⁴

What is it that we can apostrophise as 'essential' in relation to analyzing the tale? Currently certain significant myth and tale researchers – willingly or not – have indicated a route on which they have taken the first steps, without reaching the end. On the one hand this approach takes a more favourable attitude to other methods of analysis; on the other, it warns tale researchers to take care with the tradition of philosophical hermeneutics and the practical analysis of tales (in relation to which Gábor Biczó writes: "to analyze the characteristics of the tale, as an analysis of an original form of the value of existence, requires that our judgements and statements of position be taken from a fundamentally different, natural, perspective than that of hermeneutics."¹⁵). In the course of analyzing a tale we cannot avoid the attempt to "grasp the existing being", the examination of the textual hermeneutics of the self-fulfilment and return to himself of the matured hero from some kind of sin (from his own or from an Other's). The first point which has importance for us was made by Mircea Eliade when he speaks of "existential barriers" which, in the case of the tale, touch the disturbed time, the current form of existence of the hero, and the uncertain future

being." László TENGELYI: *Sin as an Experience of Fate*, Atlantisz, Bp., 1992. p. 110. (translated GS)

¹³ In *Strength and Meaning in Heidegger* Tengelyi emphasises: "[...] understanding something is the same as referring that thing to one's own future possibilities – to throw ourselves onto the model of these possibilities -, and in this way to set them up in a plan." in: op. cit.: *Life History and Events of Fate*, p. 83. (translated GS)

¹⁴ TENGELYI: *Sin as an Experience of Fate*, p. 44. (translated GS)

¹⁵ BICZÓ: op. cit. p. 12. (translated GS)

overshadowed by the curse, and the survival of the community: [...] we can establish that myths, symbols and ceremonies – whether they arrive somewhere after wandering, or emerge spontaneously in situ - always throw light on certain existential barriers, which are not necessarily historical, and which the individual discovers when he or she is positioned in the Universe.¹⁶

These “existential barriers” define the hero’s room for manoeuvre, and as we can read from Eliade’s train of thought, it does not matter whether they appear in reality or in a deliberately created fiction (which belongs to both the underworld and to heaven), since they throw light on the individual’s existential character, the archetypal form of his manifestation and his way of being. The other point worthy of attention comes from Jan Assmann, who starts from another perspective, that of Heidegger’s being in relation to death, but who also speaks – referring to the tale hero - of a kind of area of activity, the conditions and possibilities of existence, when at one point he refers to a human being’s “*maximum of activity*”. What from our point of view is interesting is that this maximum attempts to direct the hero’s way of being, which is ruined and burdened by a curse, as yet undiscovered, unarticulated and unmanifested, to the attainment of some kind of “death”, or death state, (death and resurrection, descent into sleep or ascent of a tree in the forest) and to an attempt to realise his pre-ordained destiny and his future state of being: The concept of life, survival and permanence – whose opposites are death, disappearance without trace and failure - are the highest of values which define all ‘maximums of activity’.¹⁷ The ‘existential barriers’ and the ‘maximum of activity’ should not be understood as two opposite poles in the world of the tale; they rather offer up many opportunities to analyze the narrative between its beginning and its end, and make possible the analysis of the narrative in the mutual influence and reciprocity of *deed and word* (face and gaze). And this, according to the “essence” of tale analysis is nothing other (particularly since in the context of the results achieved by tale researchers so far the tale cannot be defined, but only described and circumscribed on the basis of a certain quantity of phenomena) than phenomenology or hermeneutics, as Tengelyi remarks: [...] it does not refer to a philosophical ‘position’ or ‘direction’, but primarily to a *methodological concept*: it indicates the *how* of research without determining the nature of the object under examination.¹⁸ We can

¹⁶ M. ELIADE: *Képek és jelképek (Signs and Symbols)* (translated by KAMOCZSAY Ildikó) Európa, Bp., 1997. p. 42.

¹⁷ Jan ASSMANN: *Uralom és üdvösség* (translated by HIDAS Zoltán), Atlantisz, Bp., 2008. p. 85. (*Herrschaft und Heil/ Politische Theologie in Altägypten, Israel und Europa*, C. Hanser Verlag München-Wien, 2000. (*Authority and Salvation* – translated GS)

¹⁸ TENGELYI op. cit. p. 154. (translated GS)

confidently state that this hermeneutic process is different from that offered to us by the French researcher Marie-Louise Tenèze.

2.

In one tale from Beregújfalu, *Jákob*,¹⁹ the tale hero volunteers to find the cure for the cursed (“blackened”) princess’s muteness. Christoph Wulf notes in his work *Silence* that: [...] it is not just speech, but mutual silence that can create a relationship. Silence must be studied.²⁰ Jacob, who has been ‘christened’ in Hell, has the freedom to travel the Underworld, the world of devils and the dead, where he meets the partner ordained for him by fate: Hey Jacob, I have known, since you were in your mother’s womb like millet seed pulp, that I would speak with you. I know you are a Prince, but you won’t be able to stand it [*the silence* PB]. (p. 46.) The cursed princess reveals/shows herself in two ways at the same time: in her other (‘blackened’) self, and in the speech in which she pre-announces their common future destiny. Both are challenges and calls, manifestations in vision and sound and demands for an answer, which Jacob must somehow respond to. Not without a little self-confidence, but lacking the necessary experience, Jacob makes a promise which is neither fully thought through nor fully responsible, that he will lift the curse, whose condition is: [...] that there be a person who can stand three nights without speaking to the Devil. (45.)²¹ Wulf’s statement that “silence refers to the relationship between life and death”²² seems true in many senses in the context of the tales we are dealing with. One possible method of lifting the curse in Hell/the Underworld is *silence* - the acceptance of non-existence and the lord of the Underworld (the Devil) and his laws. From this we can, on the one hand, assume that the dead/cursed can also be reached in the other world through some form of communication

¹⁹ *Tűzoltó nagymadár, The Fire-extinguishing Great Bird* beregújfalusi népmesék és mondák, (*Beregújfalu Folk Tales and Stories*) (PENCKÓFERNÉ PUNYKÓ Mária gyűjtése, collected by Mária Penckóferné Punykó) Hatodik Síp Alapítvány, Ungvár, 1993.

²⁰ Christoph WULF: *Az antropológia rövid összefoglalása* (translated by KÖRBER Ágnes), Enciklopédia, Bp., 2007. p. 141. - WULF: *Antropologie, Gesichte, Kultur, Philosophie*. Rowolt Verlag GmnH, 2004. (*A Brief Summary of Anthropology* - translated GS)

²¹ In the Slovak *Tale of the world’s most beautiful woman* we read of the same conditions relating to liberation from a curse: “May God bless you Alexander; I have been here for three hundred years and no-one has been able to free me. I am the most beautiful woman under the sun, and if you free me I will be your wife, and you will be happy with me. They put me under an enchantment, but if you do what I tell you to you can free me and become king. Here is your bed; stay here, eat, drink, you will not want for anything. But as to what will happen to you during the night, well no-one can say. Whatever does happen just make sure you don’t utter a single word! Then you can free me.” In.: A harmatban fogat hajadon *The Maiden Conceived in the Dew* p. 120. LÉVINAS mentions, in relation to PLATO, that “In the *Republic* Plato says that qua leader no leader proposes or orders what is useful for himself, but what is useful for the one he commands. To command is then to do the will of the one who obeys.” E. LÉVINAS: *Freedom and Command*, In.: *Collected philosophical papers* (translated by Alphonso LINGIS), Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, Dordrecht, 1987. p. 15.

²² WULF op. cit. p. 141. (translated GS)

(whether this contact occurs in verbal or non-verbal form, and which language is used is, to a certain extent, irrelevant from the perspective of understanding the analysis), since “speaking against oblivion, resisting against silence with sunken memories”²³ is a kind of need which is related to the aspect of man which exists in non-being.²⁴ Károly Kerényi in connection with the ‘brotherly meeting’ between life and death widens the field of analysis of death and points out the following: There is no death in the empire of Dionysius; at the most there are the dead, who are present and bear witness to the irreducibility of life.²⁵ On the other hand it is obvious that silence makes possible a turning inwards, a lived-through vision of memory, the evocation, repetition and re- and over writing of sunken memories, and not least of all a connection to an earlier past, which prepares one for complete silence and meditation. In Heideggerian terms thought is hearing and vision (*Penser, c’est entendre et voir*).²⁶ It refers to a past which occurs before the story of the cursed girl, before the tale narrative (“I knew, when you were still in your mother’s womb...”), it steals a common destiny, the sacrifice/promise occurring before the curse, into Jacob’s mind. At this point we should remember Kierkegaard, who emphasises, in relation to prophecy, that the prophet predicts an ill future for the accursed alone, but it is questionable whether the nature of this ill future does not also weigh upon the happiness of their marriage.²⁷ In relation to Jacob’s knowledge, whether

²³ Idem. (translated GS)

²⁴ The heroine of the Mezőség folktale *The most beautiful lady* lives cursed ‘at the bottom of the lake’, and with the help of her future chosen one, Jancsi, who dies because of his boasting, is freed from the clutches of the king of the underworld who has laid the curse and threatens to ruin her destiny. In order to ‘be re-united’ on the bottom of the lake after his death (when they both become members of the same ‘province of being’ for ‘eternity’), Jancsi must withstand three trials, which all share the common element of silence: “the girls will gather around, they will make you dance, pull you about and force you to speak to them, but not a word!” As he withstood the trial, he received his real reward: “Well, my sweet Jancsi, now you’ve saved me from the curse. The real king was not the one who hanged you, he was just the under king. I’m the real king, I was just cursed.” In.: Előbb a tánc, azután a lakoma, mezőszégi népmesék, (gyűjtötte NAGY Olga, szerkesztett és bevezette FARAGÓ József, Bucharest, pp. 71-74) *First the Dance, then the Feast* collected by Olga Nagy, edited and with an introduction by József Faragó). In relation to this symbolic possibility of being we can quote Eliade: “The waters symbolize the universal sum of virtualities; they are *fons et origo*, “spring and origin”, the reservoir of all the possibilities of existence; they precede every form and *support* every creation. [...] This is way the symbolism of the water implies both death and rebirth.” In.: M. ELIADE: *The Sacred and the Profane*. The nature of religion (translated Willard R. TRASK), A Harvest Book, Harcourt, Brace ., New York, 1959. p. 130.

²⁵ KERÉNYI Károly: *Az égei ünnep, (The Heavenly Feast)* Kráter Műhely Egyesület, Bp., 1995. p. 90. (translated GS)

²⁶ P. RICOEUR: *Metafora és filozófiai megnyilatkozás* (translated by JENEY Éva) In.: Válogatott irodalomelméleti tanulmányok, Osiris, Bp., 1999. 206. (*Metaphor and Philosophical Manifestation in Selected Writings on Literary Theory*)

²⁷ KIERKEGAARD: *Félelem és reszketés* (translated by RÁCZ Péter), Európa, Bp., 1986. p. 159. (*Fear and Trembling*) (translated GS)

we are dealing with the trance experienced in sleep, the hiding in the forest, or the enchantments, we can speak of *reduced knowledge*. Following the announcement of the ill-starred future and the method of transformation, this destined togetherness and common survival are also part of memory, and are thus a responsible part of the voluntary acceptance of the undertaking, just as with other cursed/punished individuals, particularly those moving down the road and those who ‘eat the dead’. ‘Not touching’ the Devil can also be analyzed as a repeated complex gesture, a refusal to confront death as an irreversible fact²⁸; the ignorance of non-being in the hope of rebirth²⁹; a gaze upwards or towards others: whether towards the past through memory, or through yearning for redemption. It can also be conceived of as a keeping a distance and turning away from dishonest promises³⁰; hiding from the power that wishes to hide away the I and to take possession of it and destroy its freedom, a turning away from the seeing world, in order to move out of the field of vision. As Lévinas notes: The evil genius’ lie is not an utterance opposed to the veridical word; it is in that interspace between the illusory and the serious in which a subject who doubts breathes.³¹ What is this *intermediary* in the hell of the tale? The Devil attempts to make the unchangeable, irreversible fact of death disappear, because he knows that the hero’s visit/hiding in Hell is *superficial and temporary*. It will only last as long as he keeps his ‘certificate of baptism’; by destroying what is written on it – what is laid down as a fact, i.e. that he is the Devil’s property - he will win back his freedom, which is markedly different and other than the freedom to walk around in Hell. The value of being able to destroy this certificate and the hope of rebirth lies in the fact that the

²⁸ VERNANT writes: “[...] in death we must find the possibility of passing beyond the human condition, to defeat death through death itself, by giving death a sense which it does not have because it is absolutely denuded of it.” In.: J.-P. Vernant: *La mort héroïque chez les grecs*. Éd. Pleins Feux, 2001. 29. (translated GS)

²⁹ VERNANT, in the lecture entitled *The Lesson of Odysseus* says that when Odysseus had gone down into the Underworld and met Achilles, and mentioned his heroic deeds and named him the king of the shade spirits/the dead, he answered that he would rather be the lowest of slaves among the living. From this Vernant draws the following conclusion: we must show that the death of the hero is both a horrible thing and also find the opportunity for him to leave the empire of the dead with dignity. He justifies this as follows: “For a being who lives under the light of the sun to all of a sudden sink into the night and into blindness, not to see any more, not to be seen, to no longer have a face, to be without speech, to be no longer anything or anyone, that is the threat”. In.: op. cit. 30. (translated GS)

³⁰ Kierkegaard refers to the fact that *silence* is the ‘demon’s strength of attraction’, since the deeper the demon’s silence, the more terrifying he is; and although ethics requires an ‘introduction’, the hero is made great precisely by his secrecy and silence, since his silence raises him to both the demonic and the divine world. The hero eases his own troubles with his silence, but at the same time helps the other. In.: KIERKEGAARD op. cit. pp. 152-154.

³¹ LÉVINAS: op. cit. p. 91. (“Le mensonge du malin génie n’est pas une parole opposée à la parole véridique. Il est dans l’entre-deux de l’illusoire et du sérieux où respire un sujet qui doute.” Tl. p. 92.)

hero attributes to it the possibility of defeating death, as Vernant explained. Despite the seriousness it refers to an understanding of the otherness of the Other (to the accursed being in her “blackness”), to the opening up to passion, the acceptance of a common destiny, the maintenance of the word/promise given to the Other, and, to be precise, an understanding of its gravity. In other words it informs that the task towering above him cannot be undertaken half-heartedly. Man either accepts a anticipated destiny with responsibility, or absent-minded turns away from it; in the latter case, however, what is ‘superficial’ really does become once and for all irreversible, which would, however, contradict the spirit of the tale world. Jacob is restricted by the ‘freedom’ of Hell (just like Achilles); at the level of vertical movement and contact he is free, but, as long as he speaks the Devil’s language, the necessary conditions/opportunities for return or ‘renewal’ are not available to him. The silence offered to him by the Princess teaches him that the Other, the enchanted call for help and the readiness to help can free both of them from their captivity. Thus silence is not a simple absence of speech; speech lies in the inverse of language: the interlocutor has given a sign, but has declined every interpretation; this is the silence that terrifies. (TI. p. 91.)³² Silence and waiting³³ (of which Tengelyi appropriately refers to in the Heideggerian sense of “moving away”: “Waiting should be conceived of as a ‘moving’ towards the place where one day...[...]”³⁴) belong completely together, and are conditional on each other, also in the sense that the one who waits does not always take advantage of the promised response. At one point in the story the ‘limping’ Devil³⁵ tries to test Jacob, as he is enveloped in silence and listening, frighten him to death, in order to destroy his hopes for a ‘move away’: Be careful, I’ll cut the top of your head off so that your brains will jump out onto your grandfather’s fields [...] (p. 46.) This devilish speech echoing in the silence, like a laugh ‘drowned in treachery’ (in the Bergsonian sense) is a well-planned punishment, designed for the terrified Jacob as he tries to break the silence, giving him a reason to break the promise to remain silent. He is forced to learn from the failure of his first trial, from Kierkegaard’s ‘demonic temptation’. The anger, which arises from the fact that he does not recognise the connection between the limping devil’s attempt to distract and tempt him, and his

³² idem. (“Le silence n’est pas, ainsi, une simple absence de parole; la parole est au fond du silence comme un rire perfidement retenu. Il est l’envers du langage: l’interlocuteur a donné un signe, mais s’est dérobé à toute interprétation – et c’est là le silence qui effraie.” TI. p. 91.)

³³ TENGELYI shows that in Richir’s analysis the “[...] word ‘waiting’ pours over the tension which pushes and pulls between the ‘demand’ (*exigence*) of the past and the ‘promise’ (*promesse*) of the future.” *Life History and Episodes of Fate*, op. cit p. 206.

³⁴ idem. p. 85.

³⁵ The meaning of limping is recalled in the Hungarian proverb: It is easier to catch a dishonest man than a limping dog.

own promise to achieve redemption,³⁶ gives him no comforting counsel, because it destroys man's spirit and sense of calm. The princess mercilessly reprimands Jacob: Jacob, clear off! Disappear! I don't want to see you if you already can't take these two nights! So get lost! (p. 46)³⁷. After this reprimand he sets off in humiliation to gain experience, of perseverance and wisdom, of the ability to keep secrets and silence, which is linked to the storing away of the internal actions of paying attention, being aware and silence. This setting out on the journey has more than one sense. The desire for expiation stems from the humiliation caused by the failure and the later regret; the responsibility arising from the consequences of the as yet unkept promise gives the hero new strength. He makes a new attempt to activate the knowledge gained from the outside world and from experience. We can summarise this as Tengelyi did:

When, however, we take it upon ourselves to accept responsibility, we commit ourselves to knowingly accept the fact of the existence of a similar connection between the deed we are preparing and the consequences arising out of it at any given period later in our life story.³⁸

Jacob must *commit himself*³⁹ to what is necessary to carry out this transformation: the 'awareness of responsibility', and the Kierkegaardian

³⁶ "What understanding is grasping on to the relationships between isolated elements, or recognising the direction of a movement." ASSMANN: op. cit. p. 83. (translated GS)

³⁷ Károly KOVÁCS' tale *The Hero with the Red Backside*, deals with the same dichotomy of the hero's voluntary/brave acceptance of the task and his hardly questioned lack of reliability: "My dear Beautiful Lady, don't kiss me, don't embrace me, I am a prince, and I have come here to search for you so that you can be my wife. At this the Beautiful Lady said: "That's not so easy! Because they guard me very well. And I know that you can't be relied on." "But you can rely on me. I will obey any kind of command, just don't send me away, because I'm going to take you away with me and make you my wife". In.: Ilona DOBOS: Gyémántkígyó, Szépirodalmi, Bp., 1981. pp. 300-301. (*Diamond Snake*)

³⁸ TENGELYI László: A bűn mint sorseseemény *Sin as an Experience of Fate* p. 208.

In the *Lisa and the Virgin Mary* tale the gypsy gives 'one of her beautiful little girls' from her many children to Mary after one day spying 'the Virgin Mary bathing in blood'; although in vain she is interrogated about what she has seen and is threatened: "If you don't tell me you will be mute, you won't be able to speak, and what's more I'll take your child away from you." In order to make the girl's deeds appear evil "She smeared the trees in blood so they would think she had eaten her own child. Liza became silent. [...] But she couldn't speak, she could only gesture, so that the king believed she had eaten the child." (In.: CSENKI Sándor: A cigány meg a sárkány, püspökladányi cigány mesék, Európa, Bp., 1974. p.136. *The Gypsy and the Dragon; Gypsy Folk Tales from Püspökladány*). The queen's *silence* about the stepmother's horrific deed is a 'commitment'. The secrecy is the conscious confrontation of loyalty and its consequences. It is also a promise which refers to the fact that the sanctity and unbreakability of her word is a fundamental element of the queen's moral order; in other words she can be trusted (*to be accounted* with silence). After the Virgin Mary is convinced of this she gives back both children and also their powers of speech (with which they can prove their own stories).

³⁹ In the concept of accepting a *binding* commitment is the idea of being *bound*, to be chained to someone, promised to someone, tied and committed by a strengthening oath of loyalty; at the same time to be *committed* is to be warned.

'preservation of innocence'⁴⁰ and as a function of this, create, with the aid of the individual and collective memory, an 'intelligent connection'. He must create it because, as is commonly claimed, order must be created, a statement which indicates that chaos precedes order. In this case the 'disturbed' order characteristic of the tale must be renewed by using memory to create social norms so that existence can be tolerated even in the knowledge of death.

Jacob, with the help of the mixed tools of enchantment gained from two conflicting 'people' and inherited through his father 'learns' how to be unnoticed and silent, which means the same as *remembering and accepting responsibility* in the sense that Assmann intends by these terms.

Remembering means remaining conscious of the commitment undertaken [...] Being responsible means to 'respond', to account for your actions to those who are affected by them.⁴¹

Jacob becomes invisible by means of the cap he has acquired; he can disappear and hide from the sight of others, those who he does not wish (at this time) to show himself to; at other times he shows himself, uncovers himself to those to whom he has undertaken responsibility. This game of switching roles between a concealing and revealing of the 'I' guarantees the serious acceptance, the perseverance and the progress towards success. He only reveals who he is to the princess on the second night when the wife appointed to him by destiny has 'regained' her original form of existence and herself asks or urges him to reveal himself in words:

- Well show yourself; who is it who's come up to me?

He says:

- It's me!

- Jacob? But how could it be you?

- It's me, would you like to see?

- I would like to.

He lifts up his cap.

- Well – he says – do you recognise me?

- I recognise you. Hey – she says – God help us, we still have another night!

- Don't worry, now I could take ten more too! (pp. 47-48.)

The utterance "*It's me*", the expression of 'I' in the here and now (I am here) is simply an isolating act⁴² if I do not introduce the Other into the conversation, or rather if I do not demand something of him/her, if I do not open myself to the Other, as in front of a stranger, that I accept

⁴⁰ The fact that the enchanted girl can be ridiculed, teased and made the object of fun simply awakes in her a sense of pride in the commitment she has made. KIERKEGAARD op. cit. p. 171.

⁴¹ ASSMANN: op. cit. p. 85. (translated GS)

⁴² "The uniqueness of the 'I' is the fact that no one can answer for me. [...] The I before the other is infinitely responsible." *Meaning and sense*, In: LEVINAS : Collected..., op. cit. p. 97.

him/her, I make the otherness my own and in this way understand my own strangeness. My differentiation says nothing about me to the Other, or it leaves my expression of it in too great a state of uncertainty. On the contrary, my face, in becoming visible 'de-nudifies' my nudity, which says more than words can, or equips what I have said with the strength of certainty. Lévinas has this to say about the acceptance of a role, in this case a liberating or protecting role:

Apparition reveals and conceals; speech consists in surmounting, in a total frankness ever renewed, the dissimulation inevitable in every apparition.⁴³

On the occasion of Jacob's renewed attempt the princess recognises Jacob from his voice and conversation, but still wants to see him; specifically it is his *face* she wishes to see, and in that the unshakeable commitment, the honesty of the undertaking of the task: love itself. In other words she wants him to reveal himself – after his concealment – as someone who can redeem her from her unfortunate destiny and become great in their shared happiness. Tsuan-tse writes this in relation to art:

Whoever once understands what is right and from then on never mistakes what is right will also forget why it is that right is right. [...]⁴⁴

The initial and projected promise – in merging with the Other – is fulfilled by merging into one, and *love* overcomes the curse and the fickleness in the hero's character.⁴⁵ When he has accomplished his primary mission: to save the princess and the city, he suddenly realises things are far from over. The liberation from the curse is only partial, if it only touches the essential character of the princess who has been transformed into something other, and does not extend to other 'penitents' as well. In this sense Jacob must finally depart from the 'apparent' hell-world by regaining the 'christening certificate' and removing its seal. On the other hand during the return to Hell it is necessary to analyze the crimes and punishments of all accursed members of the community, from the perspective of a higher power: the value system of love and the promise of redemption. In the interpretation of his task Jacob does not just remain silent, remember, undertake responsibility, persevere and learn how to love; he also feels a duty to seek out the truth.

⁴³ LÉVINAS: *Totality...*, op. cit. p. 98.

"L'apparition révèle et cache, la parole consiste à surmonter, dans une franchise totale, toujours renouvelée, la dissimulation inévitable de toute apparition." TI. p. 100.

⁴⁴ A szépség szíve (translated by TÓKEI Ferenc), Európa, Bp., 1984. p. 21. *The Heart of Beauty*

⁴⁵ " [...] all the beauty of love lies in the fact that the bearer – as if he/she were porous, and thus incomplete and permeable, in a figurative sense, undertakes, by merging into one being with another individual, to find satisfaction through the creation of a collective identity formed from their two natures." José ORTEGA y GASSET *A szerelemről* (translated by GILICZE Gábor) Akadémiai, Bp., 1991. p. 41. *On Love* (translated GS)

To seek truth I have already established a relationship with a face which can guarantee itself, whose epiphany itself is somehow a word of honor. Every language as an exchange of verbal signs refers already to this primordial word of honor.⁴⁶

3.

*The Boy who understood the language of birds*⁴⁷ retold by József Ordódy, which appears in Ilona Dobos's *Diamond Snake (Gyémántkígyó)* volume, begins with the dying queen's surprisingly selfish and cruel request and her dying husband's oath of acceptance:

I'll tell you that we won't be seeing each other for much longer. After my death I would really be happy if you did not know another woman. (p. 126.) –,

(“And the king accepted this, saying that he would not marry again, that he would never know another woman except for her”). It is not difficult to sense that this initial moment will cause a major existential problem for the survivors, the characters of the tale. On the way to the funeral the king, who is the only witness and the only one aware of the promise he has given (at least for his part he sincerely believes this), calls his only son and reports a completely different version of his mother's wish than the one she willed and to which he gave his word:

- Well, my son, your mother said that after her death I should teach you wisdom. But if you want to learn something else you can choose that too.

But the son said that he wanted to fulfil his mother's wish. (p. 126.)

In this motif of a conversation which is misleading and on a different subject, two things are particularly emphasised. On the one hand the father, perhaps as a result of the wish of his cruel and unfair partner (which from the perspective of its meaning and as a consequence of its 'enchanted' effect can, with justification, appear to us as a 'curse' as well), realises after the event his mistake in choosing his partner and the 'far-reaching destiny' of its consequence, that in fact his ex-wife had laid a trap for him and destroyed his freedom. So as a result he wants to teach his son greater wisdom. On the other hand the son, who appears to be obedient, with his answer touches on both his 'lower-inheritance' transmitted through his father and the 'original' words gained through intuition⁴⁸ (inner/transparent vision). From the son's point of view, of course, the two do not exclude each other. The seven years devoted to

⁴⁶ LÉVINAS op. cit. p. 202.

(“Pour rechercher la vérité, j'ai déjà entretenu un rapport avec un visage qui peut se garantir soi-même, dont l'épiphanie, elle-même, est, en quelque sorte, une parole d'honneur. Tout langage comme échange de signes verbaux, se réfère déjà à cette parole d'honneur originelle.” TI. p. 221.)

⁴⁷ DOBOS Ilona: *Gyémántkígyó (Diamond Snake)* Szépirodalmi, Bp., 1981. pp. 126-147.

⁴⁸ LÉVINAS writes: Intuition is a vision, is still (or already) an intentionality, an openness, and thus a distance. It thus has a “time of reflection” before what it aims at (even if it aims at it in the original), and is therefore a proclamation or an announcing. LÉVINAS: *Language and proximity*, In.: *Collected...*, op. cit. p. 119.

acquiring wisdom which represent one choice also fulfil the father's *expectations*. (This knowledge is not based on a dreamy reverie, but on reflection, or rather on reflection on the knowledge 'received' from within and without; knowledge which is transformed from disappearance, turning in on oneself, the state of living hidden away from others, and the knowledge held inside oneself). And the father is now made aware of the original *wish/curse* of the mother and his long 'pointless' silence.

- Nna, Alexander. Your time has come, you've finished, and now you should be at home, so off you go. But just remember, if you do go home, don't see anything, don't say anything, just stay silent. You mustn't say anything, to anybody. Whatever your father asks you, don't answer at all. (p. 128.)

When the son returns home, in his happiness to see his son once again the father kisses him, and is also 'kissed by him, but without a word'. After many years *seeing someone again* is a kind of finding oneself in a common existential situation: at one and the same time to belong to the past and to adapt to the future. Or, as Gábor Biczó notes when writing about Courbet's *Meeting* and the relationship between the painter and his patron, both:

[...] are at once forced to confront the strangeness of the other, partly because the man returning home does not resemble the once young man, who happily left his narrower homeland full of hope, and partly because it is also surprising for him that an explanation and interpretation is required of the individuals and intentions, all which seemed self-evident.⁴⁹

The psychological state of re-encountering is full of tension and of waiting (and with the uncertainty, hope, doubt and desire that accompany it) and the uncontrollable reopening of memories. Re-encountering is a kind of adaptation, but not orientation, rather simply a search for a direction, a preparation for following, a grasping of a conversation that has returned, since it is once more me, the mutually held promise, speaks to me as an irreplaceable partner, as a re-encountering of the I which revivifies me from past memory and reforms an existential presence in the here and now. The Other, the searching for the face that has returned, and what has remained in it, its unchanged aspects and what links us to our common past, and the search for what is newly significant and what belongs to another world, is the initiation of a kind of discourse which begins with the uncertainty of "How shall I speak?" At the same time it continues with the following worry: "Will we be able to speak with one and the same language?" Or perhaps the separation (our staying away from each other, becoming strangers and

⁴⁹ BICZÓ Gábor: Hasonló a hasonlóknak, filozófiai antropológiai vázlat az asszimilációról, Kalligramm, Pozsony-Bp., 2009. pp. 159-160. (*Similar to the similar; philosophical anthropological sketches of assimilation*)

other to each other) has reached such a level that we will be unable to speak to each other at all. On the contrary, in a meeting situation, according to Waldenfels, a 'desire to encounter the unknown' supports us, "which we are unable to turn away from when it occurs because even if we do not respond it will count as an answer"⁵⁰

Seeing someone again also smuggles *temporality* into the situation: through the acceleration of memory and the retroactive nature of its operation the past and what happened in the past is linked almost immediately with the present.⁵¹ At the same time interaction which affects the future is also linked through the past made present, since with the observer who is sitting in front of me I also encounter the desire to look into his/her eyes and the joy of recognition, the excitement of uncovering secrets and the fear of being excluded. I expect him/her to satisfy me, to be appropriate for me, in both senses of the word.

The father's kiss can undeniably be interpreted as a kind of opening: the silent, but not mute message of unshakeable love and the maintenance of the dominant relationship to the one who receives it. However, the returned kiss is the confirmation of the fact of the *bond* (here the 'original' bond; the umbilical cord, as a reference to the thread of virtual existence which belongs to the child-bearing mother and the biological father) which links to the father and the joy of meeting each other. But nothing more. There is no reinforcement or reassurance in it, that he would accept the power over the father in the future, or feel it as his own duty, and would consider this bond as a kind of maintenance of the enchantment.⁵² From this point the silence of the son illuminates a transformation in his existential character. Naturally we must interpret this in a different way. The silence is at once a threat and a permanent danger; an expression of will and a preparation for a final separation; the proud sense of superiority in the face of the father's hesitation and a gathering of strength for a solution of the conflict; the temporary extension of the wearing of the mask and the test of the secret function of the ideal I.⁵³

⁵⁰ TENGELYI: Élettörténet és sorseseemény, *Life History and Events of Fate* p. 236.

⁵¹ "[...] I am present in every individual memory, even if I do not recall in concrete form in my memory my past I, because the world which I remember appears to me as I experienced it. Thus all remembrance hides within it a 'double I': on the one hand the present I which carries out the act of recollection, and on the other hand the past I which serves as correlate of the newly appeared world." TENGELYI László: *Tapasztalat és kifejezés, (Experience and Expression)* Atlantisz, Bp., 2007. p. 216.

⁵² ELIADE writes: "[...] in the Indo-European context nets, bundles and ropes can be the tools and requisites of ceremonies and customs of different gods, heroes or demons. In the Semitic world the situation is different: there all types of magic ropes are enchantment tools of universal gods (and demons)." Op. cit. pp. 138-139.

⁵³ Géza RÓHEIM writes in his study *Psziché és társadalom (Psyche and Society)* in relation to the conflict between father and son: "[...] the I projects the father onto itself, enters the father and thus creates the ideal I. The ideal I takes from the father the function of

The obedience to the master, as a someone chosen as a replacement father for an undetermined period of time (i.e. following the words which give direction, the preservation of what has been taught and the behaviour which accompanies this) and the perseverance in silence are also part of the wisdom which protects him from the dangers (including the temptation and lures) which lurk in wait for him.

Because it happened that the king got married. And so he didn't say anything because he knew what his father had promised his mother – that he would not know another woman. (p. 130.)

With the progression of the tale the question is raised again and more pressingly: where did Alexander get to know about his father's promise to his dying mother? At the very beginning, on the basis of what we know about in certain tale variants, we are led to believe that intuition came to his aid. In relation to the timing of the chosen wisdom we can be informed by the knowledge of universal ancient wisdom, astrology and the methods used to read holy scriptures. However, the tale text in question (which at this point also reminds us of the Biblical adventure of Joseph and Potiphar) is quite clear about the source of the knowledge: the *example* of "the son of a poor wheelwright". The other important element in Alexander's wisdom is the speech relating to the example which goes beyond individual life history: prophecy. Levinas writes: "By essence the prophetic word responds to the epiphany of the face" it is not a discourse about moral questions, but "it attests the presence of the third party, the whole of humanity, in the eyes that look at me."⁵⁴ However, here the universal discourse is impersonal in the sense that the existence and power of the Moiras is "not for the individual" and is free of any kind of subjectivity.

- This bird said to me that one day I will become a great man. And you will hold my wash basin and my mother will hold my towel. (p.132.)

The son, temporarily locked in a tower/condemned to death, who is freed from captivity by the wise ones arriving to free him, so that he will not have to change his nature immediately by turning against his father's power and break his word too early,⁵⁵ tells the story of another young

prohibition which previously the father had prohibited; now the I (or rather the ideal I) takes that function on itself." In.: A búvös tükör, Magvető, Bp., 1984. p. 336. (*The Magic Mirror*)

⁵⁴ LÉVINAS: "By essence the prophetic word responds to the epiphany of the face, doubles all discourse not as a discourse about moral themes, but as an irreducible movement of a discourse which by essence is aroused by the epiphany of the face inasmuch as it attests the presence of the third party, the whole of humanity, in the eyes that look at me." (TI. op. cit. p. 213.)

("La parole prophétique répond essentiellement à l'épiphanie du visage [...] mais comme moment irréductible du discours suscité essentiellement par l'épiphanie du visage en tant qu'il atteste la présence du tiers, de l'humanité tout entière, dans les yeux qui me regardent." TI. p. 235.)

⁵⁵ In.: *A kutyafejű tatár* The Dog-headed Mongol tale (after the Mongols invasions of 1242 the Hungarians sometimes referred to the Mongols as 'dog-headed Tatars') the king's

man with a very similar destiny to his own as an allegory. One of the elements of the story is that the wheelwright's son becomes able to understand the language of existence/creation and tries to use this ability not for his own ends, but in the interests of the community in order to re-establish the disturbed order of the world. Both Alexander's father and the king and his whole court who call on the help of the wheelwright's son learn from the case of the raven parents who argue over their young child, which also leads the wise king to the final decision which closes the affair:

- Well indeed the mother just laid the egg and left the nest, the male raven moved out and went to far off lands for him to get food, and he brought him up and so it's only the father who really deserves the little bird. (p.134.)

An interesting turn now occurs in the tale. We are witnesses to a multiple change in perspective and atmosphere: Alexander starts to relate the example of the wheelwright's son, and then the wheelwright's son tells his own story and longs to meet the renowned 'wise prince' who is none other than Alexander.

And so the next day he left and went wandering until he met the famous wise young man. That wise young man, well, he was Alexander. (p. 135.)

The reader now faces a puzzling decision: how did the exemplary wheelwright's son Ludocius (for whom the tale was previously played out, according to the narrative order of the tale), know about Alexander, who from the perspective of the development of his own fate was an indispensable and exemplary model? Does Alexander indicate himself as a condition of his ipseity and innocence in the form of the exemplary 'famous wise boy' during the model narration which has a retrospective effect on everyone? And how can the two young men – who existed at different times and places and followed different paths – have met each other? In point of fact during the narration of the tale Alexander does not even mention that in addition to the time he spent with the wise ones – in addition to these seven years – he also served as a servant for the king of a third country. How is it possible that Ludocius, (who 'only' spoke the language of the birds, and with his silence and laughter 'deserved' his father's murder, and as such whose destiny acquired paradigmatic value) who serves as a model of destiny, at one and the same time predicts the future, filling the role of an astrologer, like Alexander, and also is able to

youngest son also does not speak of the dream, and as a result is beaten out of the house: "Well, my royal father! You know what happened when they took me away from my father? Because I didn't want to tell my dream. I dreamt that the king would hold my wash basin for me, and the queen my golden towel. And the queen would dry me. If I had told that dream, you would have broken my neck without me having passed the trials." In.: Zöldmezőszárnya, *The Green Meadow's Wings* Európa, Bp., 1978. pp. 105-116.

give advice about the future to Alexander who considers astrological knowledge his own?

- Now I'm going to leave you here, but take care of yourself, because I know everything; I know that you are in love with the king's youngest daughter. I know that in my place a servant will arrive and he will find out and surely betray you. So be very careful! (p. 136.)

If Ludocius really does know everything, why is it he cannot foresee his own tragic fate? Maybe his universal knowledge came from his being thrown into the sea (as knowledge acquired from a ritual death and rebirth)? And what led to the young people falling in love? Maybe they 'twittered' in the secret language of the birds in the king's courtyard, as lovers do? Or perhaps the male raven returned as a sign of eternal thanks, as a bird of fate, to predict their approaching fate?

How many maybes! At any rate from the *Two Identical Brothers* tale type, especially from the tale of the *Found Child* told by József Puci from Marosszentkirály⁵⁶ we know precisely that the Other, the foundling, the brother who resembles the 'original' in every detail, is none other than a 'guardian/fate-protecting' being who in the relationship to him reveals his 'original' existential character and realises his existence to come. The foundling disappeared because he was only sent so that his brother could be king. Ludocius's mission is partly fulfilled in the justification of the justice and lawfulness of Alexander's selection and his confrontation with his father's power. In part it acquires 'value' in the threatening situations in which Alexander's physical strength and his discovery of his 'manliness' would not be sufficient. In the norm system of the community truth and what is real is not decided by raw strength, but by law and its wisdom: its reasoned application, which of course cannot exist without a certain degree of strength. As Lévinas justly writes in his work *Being a Son and Brother*: Paternity is produced as an innumerable future; the 'I' engendered exists at the same time as unique in the world and as brother among brothers. I am I and a chosen one, but where can I be chosen, if not from among other chosen ones, among equals? The 'I' as 'I' hence remains turned ethically to the face of the other: fraternity is the very relation with the face in which at the same time my election and equality, that is, the mastery exercised over me by the other, are accomplished. The election of the 'I', its very ipseity, is revealed to be a privilege and a subordination [...].⁵⁷ The fact that József

⁵⁶ Zöldmezőszárnya, *The Green Meadow's Wings* pp. 233-242.

⁵⁷ LÉVINAS: op. cit. p. 279.

("La paternité se produit comme un avenir innombrable, le moi engendré existe à la fois comme unique au monde et comme frère parmi frères. Je suis moi et élu, mais où puis je être élu, sinon parmi d' autres élus, parmi les égaux. Le moi en tant que moi se tient donc tourné éthiquement vers le visage de l'autre - la fraternité est la relation même avec le visage où s' accomplit à la fois mon élection et l'égalité, c'est-à-dire la maîtrise exercée sur

Ordódy is not just any kind of storyteller in terms of his ability to form a text and create a reflexive structure,⁵⁸ cannot be better proved than by how he extends with a long conversation the dilemma (the question of who really is her husband which arises out of the contradictions of the earlier wordless/tight-lipped speaking style) of the young woman who is caught up in the exchange of roles between Alexander and Ludocius, who are both responsible for and help each other. After Ludocius has, with the blood of Alexander's daughter, cured his poisoned friend⁵⁹ he returns to his parents and dies with them. When he woke up he asked for water and a towel. His father held the wash basin and his mother the towel. (p.143). With his appearance as the 'stranger' who has left his family and his urgent questioning words about the past, he at once forces the old people to confess. Contritely, with the sadness of regret they do indeed own up to their former sins. This honest confession which makes obvious their spiritual penance and feelings of guilt affects the son hiding behind the mask of the 'stranger'. The effect of the discourse is to jolt his memory, and, by referring to the past, and perhaps because of the passing of time, perhaps because of fading memory and a strong desire to forget, to justify his present existence in front of the parents who do not recognise him.

- That's the way it is father, I remember it. You are my father and you are my mother. I remember once a long time ago when during dinner a little bird flew up to a vase of geraniums on the window and started to twitter, and I laughed so much. (p. 144.)

And the tale teller / tale hero / Ludocius repeats the earlier story in such detail (and it is precisely the repetition which creates the wonderful reflexive structure and the model story told by Alexander⁶⁰) that we have not the slightest sense that something is missing when the story ends in an unusual way; i.e. by the disappearance of his *alter ego*, the identical Other. The fact that Ludocius steps out of the narrative space of the model story, the closed past tense, and himself becomes a part of the

moi par l'Autre. L'élection du moi, son ipséité même, se révèle comme privilège et subordination [...] TI. p. 312.)

⁵⁸ Ilona DOBOS writes in the *Notes* at the end of the collection: "This and the next tale (*The Two Identical Brothers*, PB) can be traced back to a common source. The framework collection of stories entitled *The Story of Pontianus or The Seven Wise Masters* [...]. The stories are of Indian origin. [...]. Just like in the Indian tale mixture, the main hero Alexander retells the story of Ludocius." p. 453.

⁵⁹ Ernő KUNT writes in *Az utolsó átváltozásban* (*The Last Transformation*) (Gondolat, Bp., 1987.), that: "A small child is only really mourned by the parents and the godparents, because he/she has only lived a very short life, so that the dormant promise within him/her has not blossomed. The parents - being usually young - do not yet feel it impossible that they will have other children." (p. 93.) In all variants the wife accepts willingly/agreeingly the request that she sacrifices their child to keep her friend alive, since the child will be taken by death even without this blood sacrifice.

⁶⁰ I have written about this concept of tale teller who creates a reflexive structure in my study *Mese a mesében: a megkettőződés hermeneutikája* (*Tale within the Tale: the Hermeneutics of Doubling*) Fordulópont 44. Mesék várai? 2009/2. pp. 73-89.

present tense of the narrative, and in this way creates a 'right' to happiness, for us arises naturally and logically from the spirit of the tale. In the same way we can follow from the common existence of the two boys' the story's transgression of the boundary of time and its universal nature. Or as we might say in the spirit of Assmann: The contact with the other is also a contact with ourselves. We can only extend ourselves, or our individual identity through communication and interaction. Individual identity is at once a knowledge of ourselves and also the expectations others have of us and the sense of responsibility which comes from them.⁶¹

4.

The Slovak version of the tale, *The Knight*⁶² (even though the teller obviously feeds off a recognisable Indian source), in the complexity of its texture and its structural development does not achieve the 'over-arching', we might almost say 'artistic', tale telling which we find with Ordódy. We would find it difficult to decide whether Ordódy or the Slovak teller's tale is the 'more archaic'. (Which would at the same time raise the question of what is 'older' and 'more valuable', which would offer a pleasant problem-solving exercise, although one which would not take us very far). However, from the comparison it turns out that the two tale variants emphasise different aspects: Ordódy the model nature and prophetic discourse of the tale, while the Slovak teller the moral judgement. This is why it happens that the motif of the substitution of the 'true' husband and the character of the wife, who desires to uncover the 'wordless' secret differ markedly from Ordódy's version. As a natural result the Slovak tale finishes in a different way, and follows different tale rules: But the wife, the beast, wanted to know why the young man had placed the sword between the two of them on the first night, because however hard she tried the young man's friend wouldn't tell her. When the young man refused to reveal the reason, the wife flew into a rage and poisoned him. But the boy was strong, he didn't die [...] The wife married a knight and after that the boy got himself together and went off to his friend. (pp. 278-279). When examining the different tale tellers' concepts and the way their tales end it is worth searching out earlier variants. János Berze Nagy's collected variants of the "Two Identical Brothers" tale type (AaTh 303), the *Two Identical Princes* and *Heroic Saint George*⁶³, help in the reconstruction of an 'original' variant, although they do not

⁶¹ ASSMANN: *Kulturális identitás és politikai képzelőerő*, In.: A kulturális emlékezet, *Cultural Memory* (Hungarian translation by HIDAS Zoltán), Atlantisz, Bp., 2004. p. 134.

⁶² A harmatlan fogant hajadon, szlovák fantasztikus mesék *The Maiden Conceived in Dew, Slovak Fantastical Tales*, (Hungarian translation by: KÖRTVÉLYESSY Klára), Európa, Bp., 1988. pp. 277-281.

⁶³ Baranyai magyar néphagyományok I-III. (gyűjtötte BERZE NAGY János), (*Hungarian Folk Traditions from Baranya I-III, collected by János Berze Nagy*) Kultúra könyvnyomdai Műintézet, Mayer A. Géza és társai, Pécs, 1940., II. pp. 75-86.

show the same creative tale-telling enthusiasm as the two tellers of the variants above. However, they do each preserve a key motif (e.g. the recognition of the husband) of the 'archaic' variant. The two princes went home with their animals. At home, the queen couldn't tell them apart, couldn't tell who was her husband. So they told her everything just as it happened. (*Two Identical Princes* p.79.)

Then they went home. The little wife was so happy, but she was amazed by how similar they were. She could hardly pick out her own husband. Saint George said to her "He is yours", and then they told her what had happened to them (*Heroic Saint George*, p. 81.)

In the Slovak variant *The Knight*, the boy thrown into the sea, despite his wordlessness / tight-lipped nature (although he himself is an 'educated' person, and in a peculiar way in this variant it is he who understands the language of the birds), does not seem so wise and all-seeing as Ludocius. This variant paints the recognised boy as closed in on himself, with a rigid, strict character prone to insults and cruel threats. Two declarations are sufficient to bear witness to this Theseus-like, enmity-filled character. When his bosom friend, Sandor, recognising his own weakness, asks for his help in sailing the ship, he gives him this answer:

I'll go, friend, I'll take over from you, and you'll sleep with my fiancée.
Just don't make a cuckold of me! (p. 278.)

(The lesson of this variant is that, compared to the other variant, it emphasises that the hero foresees not just his victory, but the temptation which his friend will undergo; the 'invisible' exchange of roles with the other and the prohibition which arises from this, which places responsibility on both friends). At the end of the adventure he must confront the Ariadne-aspect of his wife's infidelity, and so must mercilessly do away with the beast-wife who remains faithful to her lover. Then he looks for the parents he has not seen for a long time, so that he can tell them the meaning of the bird's song, and 'narrate' the life-story which proves his identity, thus turning the promise coded in the song to reality, and while doing this with a unshakeable, lord-like hardness, which tolerates no opposition, interrogates/warns them: Speak the truth, or you'll be one head shorter; I'll cut them off! (p. 280.)

5.

Ordódy's other story, *The Two Identical Friends*⁶⁴, shows many similarities to the *The Boy who Understood the Language of the Birds*, particularly in the second half, when the 'foundling' Jankó also earns his partner through his tight-lipped silence and the dilemma of recognising

⁶⁴ In.: DOBOS Ilona: Gyémántkígyó, *Diamond Snake* op. cit. pp. 147-178. It can also be found in János BERZE NAGY's book, in the tale variant *Jóska még János* (Jóska and János), collected in Bánfa in 1934; it is therefore particularly worthy of attention because it functioned as a kind of 'connecting curtain' to the tale *Móré*, told by the gypsy teller János Cífra from Koronka, which in turn served the same function for Ordódy's *Two Identical Friends*.

the real/true husband from the two 'brothers' repeats itself, although it gains another/new solution.⁶⁵ The hero of Ordódy's tale, Jankó, when he had freed the youngest of the king's daughters from the dragon, quietly made a vow to her: Jankó was exhausted. He needed to rest. He sat down on the sea shore and the princess went over to him and sat in his lap, and thanked him for his goodness to her, but that didn't satisfy him, and he only said: - You are mine and I am yours. Let a spade and hoe divide us! (p. 167.) On the first two occasions, when he had saved the king's two older daughters, he had told them 'nothing' (in the sense of the isomorphia of Durand's vision- speech; he hadn't even dignified them with his attention), obviously he didn't feel that they were 'marked out for him', and so every word he said just became deceitful, misleading and empty exchanges; and so he withheld/hid himself.⁶⁶ He only asked one thing of them, when they were on the way to the dragon: Has the dragon given any sign from the sea? (p. 161); [...] I only asked you whether that ugly beast had given any sign yet? (p. 164.)⁶⁷ Kerényi writes in relation to this utterance, this *sign-giving*:

Dionysius often appeared to women in the form of a bull [...] However, this form of manifestation also served to frighten the uninitiated. [...] Whatever instrument it was that gave the sound of the bull, it required the bull-mask and with all certainty announced the arrival of the god appearing in the mask, so that the uninitiated would turn away in fear.⁶⁸

In our tale we can confidently substitute the bull with the dragon (elsewhere with the dragon serpent), firstly because their existential characters agree, and secondly because the dragon's intention to kidnap and frighten away rhymes with that of the Dionysian bull. And the struggle with the dragon – also in a general sense – the victory won over enormous strength, is not a show of strength, but rather the expression of maturity, independence and the preparation for marriage, and also the entry into the community of adult men. Once again it is only Kerényi who draws our attention to the fact that in this *struggle* (with reference

⁶⁵ It is worth remembering what Honti writes about the *relationships* between tale types and variants: "[...] But the essence of what follows from the relationship is: it is not the common origin which can be felt so much in our tales, such that we can use the word 'relationship' without reservation, not just as a metaphor, but also as an indicator of the nature of the thing itself." In.: HONTI János: op. cit. pp. 61-62.

⁶⁶ In János CIFRA's *Móré* the discourse is avoided in the following way: "I haven't come here to get married, I've come with my mother on horseback, up in the air. With my mother in a carriage. When I saw what was happening I got down so I could help a little. God be with you my lady!" In.: NAGY Olga: CIFRA János meséi, (*János Cifra's Tales*) Akadémiai, Bp., 1991. p. 51.

⁶⁷ In the *Móré* tale it appears in this way: "My lady, what sign is there on the dragon when it comes out of the water? – First the seawater starts to bubble very quickly. After that blue flames start burning. And then red flames start. Then the seven-headed dragon lifts up its head to swallow me." op. cit. p. 81.

⁶⁸ KERÉNYI: Az égei ünep, *The Heavenly Feast* op. cit. pp. 88-89.

to the ancient rites) there is also a kind of trickery;⁶⁹ in our tale Jankó calls on the help of animals (“Pick the heads up and take them away”), proving even if the initiate/future bridegroom cannot deal with a strength greater than himself, he is able to choose his helpers who will bring him victory.⁷⁰ But let us return to the third attempt at rescue. Jankó lets the youngest king’s daughter sit *in his lap*, which is a wordless demonstration of a pledged/promised love, the acceptance of responsibility to others, to care for and protect them. As such accepting her into his lap is also the wordless acceptance and reinforcement of what the girl has accepted, and as such the marriage between them, based on trust and loyalty can take place immediately. We learn of Jankó’s tight-lipped nature,⁷¹ and his wife’s extremely talkative nature from the identical ‘milk-brother’, József’s words:

She had a real way with words [...]. She talked about everything, but I just hummed and ha-ed in answer, because all the time I was only thinking of you. [...]. I got up in the morning and saddled up my horse, but I didn’t answer one word to your wife, so that we left each other quite angrily. (pp. 172-173.)

József (while he is substituting for his brother) tries to take on the tight-lipped role of Jankó while lying in bed. Partly to embody his existential character, and partly so that he does not betray himself nor blurt out his secret, just “humming and ha-ing” in answer as if a pair of pliers would be needed to extract any word from him, as if it would be unpleasant, as if all sadness was pressing on his heart. However the young girl endowed with the ‘gift of speech’ (of whom we can justly suppose that at home she ‘wears the trousers’, it is she who utters certain things, including the original oath of loyalty) is enraged by József’s silence. On her part she rightly believes that her husband has no secrets and so cannot hide any secrets from her, and the reason for his continued silence is the secrecy which offends the previously established trust, the refusal to take part in social interaction and his turning in on himself. Besides this she fears that on some hidden pretext he will perhaps leave her, betray her loyalty, and this explains her open/spoken anger, her rebellion and call to attention, her warning and her punishment as well. József does not take up the challenge laid down to him, and does not accept it as such (and in his own role-play he cannot accept it in this way). The *wordless* departure is also offensive to the wife unaware of the substitution, because her husband/Jankó, however tight-lipped he may be, is/was not

⁶⁹ op. cit. p. 97.

⁷⁰ In BERZE NAGY’s *Jóska mäg János* (Jóska and János) tale the ‘iron-chewing dog’ is a dog that is able to chew through any iron chain (link) and frightens the old witch. Op. cit. pp. 82-86.

⁷¹ Jóska BERZE is himself a man of few words, and so the following proverb is credible coming from him: “Believe a clever person; it’s a waste of time talking to the mad.” op. cit. p. 86.

lacking in a demonstration of his own emotions: most particularly his honesty, his 'eye-to-eye' directness. However testing a task the maintenance of silence is for the doppelganger-husband, understanding it also causes a seemingly equally insoluble dilemma to the wife. The identity of the face is counterbalanced by the *otherness* of the voice, the different tone it adopts. Since however both of them are equally silent, and the wife has not lived for long with her husband-partner, the call to choose is simply a 'weeping', it prefigures the regret caused by the anticipated/foreseen loss, the powerlessness and the awareness of loss. Well yes, here we are now, and there are two of us. So now you can recognise which of us is your husband. Because if you do, both of us will stay here, but if you can't, then we'll both leave. And you'll never see us here again! (p. 175.) The recommended solution from the young butcher, the 'apparent suicide' returns the 'trick' back to the place allotted to it; seeing the play, with its clever twists, the husband must make himself known in front of the wife who is feigning death on the ground, who has fallen into unconsciousness, and so is forced to accept: "Well now I can see – says Jankó – that you can see through us". (p. 177.)

6.

In the Hungarian Romanian variant the *The Little I Don't Know*⁷² (as in all the variants going under the *Nyeznám* title) the hero has to undergo several silence-tests. First of all when, following the instructions of the evil mother-in-law, the father abandons him in the forest, and he lays his head down to sleep and 'in his dream says to his father: "*Father, if you get old, I will take on your burden*" [...]. In the forest – just as the rules of the tale plot decree – an 'old man' pops up to analyse the boy's existential state and his dream. Perhaps we would not be taking too great a leap from the spirit of the tale if we assume the old man, who is called the 'father of orphans' by the tale teller, embodies the archetype of the *ancient father*. It is he who is in possession/has knowledge of all the aspects of the existential possibilities of being a father and being a son, and the solutions to the conflicts that arise out them. It is he who, walking among the living, also bears witness to the fact that he is the glorious lord of the limitless empire of death, which has neither surface nor depth.

- What are you looking for around here, my child at this time? It will soon be evening and you are in the kind of forest which has neither end nor width.

The child started to cry and said that he was looking for his father, because he'd lost him.

⁷² Világ Szépe és Világ Gyönyörűje *The Pretty Girl and the Beautiful Girl of the World* (Hungarian Romanian Folk Tales, translated by Rózsa IGNÁCZ), Európa, Bp., 1982. pp. 31-54.

- Well, don't cry, come with me, and you can sleep at my house, and in the morning I'll show you the way out of the forest. (p. 34).

The "empire of the night" is especially the mystical space where, under the power of the old man, the blessing of the sacrifice (and in all probability the curse as well) takes place. As Eliade writes:

In mystical geography the holy space is rather the *space of reality*, since – as we have recently shown – the myth represents reality to the archaic world, because it speaks of the only true reality, the reality of the *holy*.⁷³

After sleeping in the empire of the night, in the morning the boy retells his dream, and the father of orphans analyses for the boy the inexplicable scenes in his dream and at the same time hints at their consequences: your dream will only come true if you 'listen to me'. The passing on of knowledge, if it only contains one element, refers to nothing other than the awakening of trust, which is followed by the 'the straightforwardness of visual confrontation' (Lévinas). However the old man's 'showing the way' to the child, in the present instance requires a verbal explanation and an indication of the direction which leads to future being and destiny. He receives this from the 'good-hearted' old man, when he is also taught how to defend himself in the earthly world, primarily by the wisdom to defend against verbal attacks (curses, insults, humiliations and defeats), the turning in to oneself, and the continuous silent discourse with himself.

- My child, everything will happen just as you dreamed it. But only if you listen to me. [...] But until you reach your goal, whoever asks you just answer "I don't know, I don't know". (p. 34.)

The later maintenance of the expression "*I don't know*" as a rejection of discourse is a conscious undertaking of a pre-envisioned/coming destiny in the hope that the silence ordered by the father of orphans will indeed turn out to be a pledge of a future existence. This first of all is a question of trust, in the background of which can be felt a kind of commitment, and an open acceptance of responsibility from both parties. What is interesting for us is not the space left when his wife died 'in her fifties' (the tale teller wanted to emphasise the age to demonstrate the husband's desire for a young wife), but rather the husband and the care of the ten year old boy and the psychological background of the unhealthy conflict caused by the arrival of the serving girl with the evil stepmother. The discourse between the father and son (which predates the act of forbidding) and its consequences perfectly illuminate the intentions of the tale teller.

- Father, mother beat me and didn't give any food either.

- Well, that's what stepmothers are like – says the old man. – Time will pass, and you'll grow up and then things will be different. You'll come to work with me (p. 32.)

⁷³ ELIADE: op. cit. p. 50.

The answer the father gives to the complaints of the suffering boy is on the one hand advice to accept the changed situation: the second marriage which can only partly replace the missing care and cannot bring back happiness. On the other hand it illuminates the archetype of the *craving* for a real, or caring, mother, the lack of direct eye to eye contact, irresponsibility, selfishness, division and domination. The boy, lacking personal experience, can hardly understand the essence of the sad advice; and so it is not evident that left alone in the forest he will not meditate on this confusing conversation, nor on his own 'loss' and separation.

The weather was fine, and it wasn't cold. The child collected leaves from the trees and prepared a bed, and lay down under a big branch. That night he dreamt that two angels were looking after him, one on his left, and the other on his right. And the angels said to him "Come along with us, son." The next morning, when he woke up he looked all around but didn't see anyone anywhere. He went off in no particular direction. He didn't know where to go. He wandered here and there in the forest until he got thirsty. He had food, but no drinking water. (p. 33.)

However, understanding the call of the angels in the dream – the heavenly declaration of the passive and unconscious state of being - he then ponders on them in relation to his future destiny in the following way: Well, evening was coming again. He thought: "My father got lost, and he's not going to find his way back to me." (p. 33.) It is not necessarily the naivety or the humility, but rather the attachment to the usual, the bond with the loved being, the innocent anxiety and the lack of calm that we should see in the boy's worries. At the same time his father's words and deeds ring in his memory, announcing the commitment of the Christian religion and the family: - My child, God is with us – and he kissed him. (p. 33.) The boy's thoughts about 'being lost' are clear evidence of the tale discourse's impregnation with symbolism and myth. The desire to find again and the consciousness of being an orphan (being separated, sent away, left on one's own, and being in a strange environment) reinforce the craving to see the one who is far away. While stumbling about in the dark and roaming in an unknown environment he verbalizes his fear and his unrequited yearning (for a face-to-face meeting, the desire to be led away by the other he has found): But it grew dark and he began to cry, and cried out: "Father, father, where are you?" But his father didn't come. (p. 33.). For the audience it is not particularly difficult to recognise – by recalling the example of the prodigal son – the mistake made by the father who remarries for selfish reasons: the avoidance, expulsion and the turning away from social norms (as verified in the abandonment of the little boy who is unable to look after himself and exposing him to unknown forces). And similarly it is easy for the audience to understand the natural reaction of the boy: his yearning for his father. As the tale progresses the audience does not follow the evil

stepmother, since they know from experience that the boy banishes her from his heart, but rather they are curious to see the changes and transformations in the relationship between the father and the son. Otherwise, the audience are relieved to learn that the end once again follows on the *silent obedience* to a helper: the copper stallion (by way of the silent attention to the words of the Other, the dissolving in silence and the returning to consciousness of self⁷⁴):

- Well, tomorrow morning you can go after your father, since he'll be there at the banquet too. But let your stepmother live there happily, just where she is. (p. 52.)

However, this ending would disregard the mythical/biblical accord, the end itself, and the progress of the tale would not be deliberately organised. Purdi, an exceptionally gifted tale-teller, carries to a logical end the special/adapted variant of the story of the prodigal son as well as the real presence and the transformations through the tale of the ancient father at home in both worlds: the underworld and the heavens.

When they saw him, the father and the stepmother, they fell to their knees and thought that an angel had arrived from the sky.

- Father, don't you recognise me? – said Little I Don't Know

- No, my child – said the father.

- Don't you remember that I went with you into the forest to collect wood, and you got lost, and that only God took care of me?

So then Little I Don't Know took off his clothes and lifted his cap and then his father finally recognised him, burst into tears and said:

- I really did you wrong my child! - and kissed him. (p. 53.)

When the son saw the repentant/guilt-stricken 'prodigal' father he forgave him. There is no other reason for this than what Tengelyi showed: "The wonder of forgiveness brings out 'the sensation of new-found life', or in other words love".⁷⁵ In the tale – and also in general – each wordless gesture (crying, a bowing of the head, standing upright) overwrites an earlier cruel or harsh word (e.g. 'sweet little bird' instead of 'ugly little bird') and refers to regret, repentance, the balance of 'a life which has re-found itself', which reconstructs trust, sociability, the feeling of togetherness and love.

Let us consider the sense of *silence/muteness* from another perspective. The tale hero accepts silence for a second time, when he works as a servant disguised in the king's court, and while gardening single-handedly defeats the foreign army. He is silent, and chooses to say nothing rather than opening his mouth, so that at the given moment he can see face-to-face the king's youngest daughter who recognises/chooses him, and fulfil (in both senses of the word: in words

⁷⁴ Alpár LOSONCZ writes: "According to Merleau-Ponty, in some sense all of us must experience silence and the conversation of silence, of forms sinking into silence; whether we behave as if we had never spoken, or whether we are aware of what is happening to those who have been condemned to eternal silence." op. cit. p. 103.

⁷⁵ TENGELYI: op. cit. p. 47.

and in his existential character) the expectations, as yet unknown, which demand he identify himself. His disguise and his silence are both a kind of mask, of which Kerényi writes:

The mask *hides*, the mask *frightens*, but above all it *creates* a relationship between the individual who wears the mask and the being which the mask represents.⁷⁶

In Little I Don't Know's case the mask performs all three functions. The third function particularly shows the existential character of our hero, who conscientiously and with humility weeds and plants flowers in the garden, and with equal perseverance and humility acquires respect, trust and love and strives to ensure her that he is a *gardener* and not a king, a carer, rather than a ruler. With his actions he makes the Other aware that he is concerned with preserving and nurturing the objects and beings given into his care, and not with acquiring power.

The girl was a little disappointed. She closed the door of the goose shed.

- Well, my dear wife, now I can talk too, but don't tell anyone, not your father, not your mother, because if you do, you won't see me again.

So the girl said:

- Very well, my husband; I was frightened that you were never going to say anything to me. I could see that you understood everything, that you understand everything, and so we would get on somehow. (p. 45.)

Love and the mutual responsibility shown to each other, the creation of a society based on trust, frees up Little I Don't Know's tongue, in other words, as Wulf writes: "The termination of the silence brings into existence the individual in whose mask the speech comes out"⁷⁷. Little I Don't Know only becomes himself again when, in front of the king's youngest daughter (for whom he accepted the public humiliation of being locked in the goose shed) he speaks, and reveals himself through language to prove his love and perseverance. Just as when he stands in front of the king with the 'spoken' evidence which bears witness to his exceptional nature and reliability.

To be 'I' [...] means not to be able to escape responsibility, as though the whole edifice of creation rested on my shoulders [...].⁷⁸

He steps out of the long hiding, breaks off the veil which blocks off curious eyes, his simulated 'madness', his awkwardness which for so long was called on to cloak him in insignificance; and through his exceptional deeds become an 'I' who cannot be mistaken for anyone else, who is able to look into others' faces and speak and open up.

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⁷⁶ KERÉNYI: op. cit. p. 85.

⁷⁷ WULF: op. cit. p.142. (translated GS)

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THE PAST AND PRESENT RESEARCH OF ROMANIAN FOLKLORE IN HUNGARY

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Abstract. *The article is an approach of some contemporary anthropological and folkloristical experience in the field of traditional fairy tales and their preservation in the milieu of Romanian minority in Hungary. Interaction and preservation, tradition and contemporary reality are only some issues discussed here, focusing on a particular case of a representative family. The inhabitants of Salonta (with Hungarians living in Romania) and Micherechi (with Romanians living in Hungary), over the years, having the same basic occupations and the same goal to ensure better living conditions, are a special case of exchange of traditions. The heritage of storytelling is preserved and passed on to the children of Micherechi.*

Key-words: folkloristical experience, Romanian minority in Hungary, preservation of tradition, bilingual storyteller, exchange of traditions

A representative starting point in our research is Micherechi village, from Eastern part of Hungary. Before The World War I, Micherechi belonged to Bihar County village, subsequently being attached to Bekes County. Although the village has existed since 1356, we found no data, no documentary record of its existence in the archives of villages in Bihar, but neither of Bekes.

In 1726 there were 15 families residing in the village. In the census done under Jozsef II between 1784-1787, there were already 857 registered tax payers in the village. This sudden surge in population is explained by a villager, Tivadar Pátkas who tells us that many residents of Salonta and

nearby villages moved to Micherechi. In 1869 there were already 1574 people. Meanwhile, in 1848 the Greek Catholic Church (Uniate) was built in the village. A century later, in 1949 the population reached 2242 people. Currently, there is a close communion between people of the two settlements, reflected in the exchange of experience at the administrative level, which is certainly possible also because of survivors who did not forget their origins, keeping their ancestors' traditions. And not just in economy and administration, but also culturally, being known that Salonta's high school students had many times the opportunity to receive Micherechi visiting students in various educational activities, both dedicated to Romanian cultural personalities, and the Hungarian.

For centuries, the occupation of the inhabitants of Salonta and Micherechi was agriculture, which is why they established a close relationship, their common goal being, over the years, the struggle to ensure better living conditions. This appropriation gave the opportunity to share folklore, and refreshing making it over the years being taken Hungarian customs and folklore. Popular traditions of Micherechians have developed gradually. The first reports were heard at meetings of village traditions, such as *mourning the dead*, *parting the dead* and *slaughtering the pig*, but other traditions were heard not only in meetings but also in everyday life, such as *charm*, constantly changed and developed.

Romanian inhabitants of Micherechi were in good friendly relations with the Hungarians in neighboring villages, and at the wedding who were called out of respect for them, the speaker spoke both in Romanian and Hungarian. And other meetings, such as *separation of the dead*, there were mourners who recited poems, said words in Hungarian and Romanian. These poems, stories, in general folk works were collected by *Teodor Sava* until 1965, when he died. An emblematic figure of the village, devoted to such stories, songs, poems was *Maria Patca*, one of the best storytellers of the village. Though she passed away in the '60s, today this tradition of singing, story meetings, is kept, the memory of residents being kept alive. Anyway, a simple peasant who loved culture in general and the popular especially, *Vasile Gurzău*, happened to be the one who inevitably put stronger influence on small Micherechian communities. He was one of the most famous men in the village. His stories are well known in the village, but outside Micherechi. *Vasile Gurzău's* storytelling repertoire sees both themes in the stories of the Hungarian and Romanian folk specific popular texts. Narration was the most authentic of treating and saving tradition stories in the village, because it was a very rich fantasy. *Gurzău Vasile* was born on March 16, 1898 in Micherechi. His father, *Mihai Gurzău* was a poor peasant. The narrator went to the Romanian school in the village, but only for three

winters, because during spring he had to guard the geese. Later, he was a swineherd, shepherd aid, after which he worked in agriculture.

In 1916 he joined the army of the White Church. During World War I, he went to Italy and Galatia. After the war he returned to the village and together with his four brothers worked his father's lands. In 1920 married the poorest girl from the village. They were blessed by God with three children, two boys and a girl. These were raised in the village, but they didn't inherit their father's gift of storytelling, but loved his stories and, whenever they had the opportunity, they listened lovingly. Vasile Gurzau was a very hardworking man, loving the work, and living on land inherited from his father. In 1959, the Agriculture Institute "Balcescu" was founded in the village, where he worked with other people. Here he gained a reputation as a good storyteller, especially because of his unique style of reproducing stories. Unfortunately, the lack of a sound school education put its mark on his personality, his cultural level being quite low, Vasile Gurzău barely learned to read and write. He did not read books or magazines, he did not know any Romanian writers, the only name he knew was the name of Avram Iancu, knowing that he had an important role in the Revolution of 1848.

Whenever the storyteller was asked if he would read somewhere the content of his stories, he answered honestly that he could not read well, and recalled the deplorable condition of the school at the time of his studies, even making an analogy between the picture of small schools and abandoned in the past with the present school, which appeared as a palace. Since school, he realized that stories attracted attention and he remembered that his mother had heard some stories that he liked very much. He began to love the world of fairy tales, because there he did not find a hard and tough world around him. He learned from the elders of the village a lot of stories and songs from women there. He had good mentors, as the village had resources those times, people-loving folk, such as György Ruzsa, Zagon, Ion Trifa, Pipos he had much to learn from, collecting a lot of stories from them. His lived a fairly quiet life until enlisting the army, did not to leave his native lands at all, then, once the war began, he was determined to pass through foreign lands. He went through Arad, Oradea and stood a little in Budapest, where he saw books, he leafed them and realized the miracle of the books, but he didn't know how to read. But all this time he was a soldier, he had the opportunity to create a unique style, a style characteristic only to him. In the army he was the one who entertained Romanian, Hungarian and Serbian soldiers, telling stories in Romanian and Hungarian. After the First World War, he returned home, and as the acquaintances of all storytellers in the village died, he remained the most famous. Villagers always called him at meetings and Vasile Gurzău was so happy that he could expand his knowledge and experience in the stories. He said that while he told the

story, he often remembered other stories and sometimes he was even helped by the villagers who stopped during the story and reminded him of stories and other episodes. Vasile Gurzău also inserted in his tales the village life, agriculture and his home village surroundings.

Knowing that the narrator was unable to attend school because of financial problems his family struggled with, it is no wonder that his general culture was not very developed. He gave evidence of a naive sincere peasant when he believed, for example, that the earth is flat, straight and that the great river flows into it and then pours into the sea, saying that the sea and earth are in the upper world. When he was told that the earth revolves round he said he did not believe this statement because when we fall on it and all would turn upside down and the sea, rivers would leave their bed and would flood the whole earth.

He believed instead that there is middle of the world and said that it is Micherechi - his native village, explaining that statement with the belief that man would go anywhere to return here. He said that the sun is walking, comes and goes because he has power. Just thought about the month. Although he did not know the work of Lucian Blaga, we find similarities between the concepts of simple life of a peasant, a son of Micherechi and the son of the peasants' priest at Lancrăm, for whom "eternity was born in the countryland" (Blaga). After all the research done about the great storyteller Gurzău, we see that he lived in a mythical world and understood the world through a primitive peasant mind, not taking into account scientifically proven things, in which he did not believe. But, indeed he had a rich fantasy, being a man who, without thinking, could tell, and often with remarkable ease, a whole story that he did not learn by heart, but which he just improvised. He was like an actor who felt they had to speak loudly and slowly, to highlight the particular general, to attract attention when necessary.

Vasile Gurzău was primarily a gifted teller of epic stories. This gift fortunately coupled with a dramatic style; we very often find dialogues in his stories, a better dialogue that contains nothing significant. His storytelling art has a close relationship with the listeners, the stories that result in Romanian using the third person, who passed in first person, especially in parts of the dialogue. In Vasile Gurzău's stories we often find the same styles as known in Romanian stories. As the ethnic Romanian and Hungarian citizen, Vasile Gurzău spoke both languages well. Hungarian as mother tongue, he spoke since his childhood, but in his native village, Micherechi, Hungarian and Romanian was spoken, because there were many Romanian people in the village. Micherechians know more words in Hungarian in terms of diseases, machines that they use, even when they translate Hungarian into Romanian. It was found that the narrator did not translate Hungarian stories into Romanian, but took a similar path in Romanian. We note that the story was always

content changed only the most important elements were preserved, as sometimes happens, many parts do not exist in another language.

In Hungary, Vasile Gurzău is certainly the single most skilled bilingual storyteller, one of the last of the Romanian folklore events in Hungary which, fortunately, in addition to the many fascinating stories of Romanians left one side of border a survivor what goes on with an interest worthy of popular creation. This is Vasile Gurzău's niece: PhD graduate with a thesis of literary folklore, our teacher Maria Gurzău - director of the Romanian High school in Gyula, Hungary. Recently at the school there was launched the book *Romanian Tales and stories of Vasile Gurzău*, adapted by Mary Gurzău Czeglédi, a niece of the Micherechian storyteller. Of the 40 tales, stories, stories that Vasile Gurzău gathered, from the front since 1918 and the cooperative farm in Micherechi, Mrs. Maria Gurzău adapted twelve. These stories were read to twelve children in a reading circle, on which students made drawings inspired by their charming content. "*These children drew while I tried to tell some tales of my grandfather Vasile Gurzău,*" said the principal. And here came this book. Tales are not written in dialect, while keeping certain phrases, fragments, expression of the Romanians in Hungary. The storybook, illustrated with drawings from school children in Gyula, is a remarkable work of art, an evidence of research, preservation and growth of Romanian folklore of Hungary, which seeks to make Maria Gurzău continuing the tradition of her grandfather, opening it to a new sound level, but a relevant research that the researcher now makes them successful.

Proof books and studies are great and original, all about the folklore of the Romanians in Hungary, all written with the soul of a great preserver of the language and traditions, but also by an outstanding researcher: *Poetry at the funeral ceremony of Micherechi Romanians, rites of passage the speaker of the wedding, Romanian ring dance of death*, an excellent book too, *Romanian Wedding in Hungary* and other important teaching activities transposed into Romanian traditions in Hungary.

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DREAM AS NARRATIVE CONSTITUTION OF IDENTITY IN FOLKTALES

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Abstract. *This research article deals with the ontology of tale, regarded as the “coming into existence” of the hero and of the tale-listeners. Tale telling may be experienced as a boundary crossing – rite de passage – that on the one hand may be compared to adolescent initiation rituals, and on the other hand may be connected to funerary rites. In the background we can find the linguistic characteristics of initiation that make the sacral aspects of communication visible. Following Lüthi’s interpretation, tales are linguistic phenomena that, by displaying their own world order, create the self-identity of those who enter that world. A dream itself becomes significant through the act of narration, because this is how it can be shared and stored in memory and this is how it becomes the source of an individual’s self-interpretation. The dream in tales is not directed towards the future; it is not a tool for prophecies, it does not reanimate the past, but simultaneously creates the present.*

Key-words. tales, dream, world-order, words, narration, identity construction, one-dimensional world, Dream-lad

Previous Considerations

In his study on “The World of Tales” published in 1937 János Honti invokes the essence of tales in the “will to experience and live through

existence”⁷⁹. According to Honti tales really become interpretable in their functionality; he introduces the essence of tales as a type of communicational relationship whose goal is to situate oneself in the “world of the tale”, and to “think within the framework of the tale”. If Hungarian tale studies had not lost Honti’s initiative, and had not pushed it drastically and fatally into the background then the organic development of Hungarian folk tale research would have made the harmonious establishment of a framework for tale studies possible – which would be varied, and include a space for dialogue – and the outcome would have ensured the reception of folk tales commensurate to their significance and the preservation of Hungarian tale studies on the European level.⁸⁰

While in Western Europe – which compared to the folk tale traditions of the Carpathian basin has a significantly narrower base – modern tale culture is under development, a process which has included research centres, workshops, lecturers, conferences, continuing studies courses and educational programs in schools – in Hungary the preservation and interpretation of the folk tale tradition is left to a small group of people including scholars, esoteric interpreters, professional tale tellers and amateurs, who try to save what still can be saved but who are isolated, and lack effective dialogue and effective institutional funding/support. Behind these tendencies there is the tangible break which, alongside Honti’s tragic death, occurred through the silencing of his clearly defined research and theoretical results. Being a few years younger, Honti’s contemporary, the Swiss Max Lüthi published his volume on *The European Folk Tale – Form and Essence*⁸¹ in 1947, and in many respects his approach to tales is similar to Honti’s. However just as Honti received no consideration in the publications of subsequent Hungarian tale researchers, there are only references to Lüthi’s works, and his writings - considered important in international reference books - have not been translated into Hungarian up to this day⁸². In one of his papers Lüthi writes:

⁷⁹ HONTI János: *A mese világa (The World of Tales)*, In: HONTI, *A mese világa (The World of Tales)*, Magvető, Bp., 1962. p. 9.

⁸⁰ We have to focus on the tendency that began in the 1930s and 1940s. The generations that started their careers or published their theories at that time belonged to the forefront of European tale and myth researchers. The name of Károly KERÉNYI appears in every significant work; he became known worldwide due to Linda DÉGH’s publications in the United States. Later Veronika GÖRÖG-KARÁDY studied African tales and received international acclaim. Re-evoking the figure of János Honti and the re-evaluation of his role in folktale research was the first step Péter BÁLINT recently took when publishing the volume: *Honti és a mesevilág (Honti and the World of Tales)* Didakt, Hajdúböszörmény, 2011.

⁸¹ LÜTHI, Max: *Das europäische Volksmärchen – Form und Wesen*, Francke, Bern-München, 1960.

⁸² In her book summarizing folktale theory Olga Nagy, one of the most significant and most definitive figures in Hungarian folktale research, translates Lüthi’s key concept of

“Exclusively entertainment” – for a long time this was the bottom line of folk tale research; its ultimate thesis. This proper conclusion was drawn from the recognition that the tale – as opposed to myths – is pure poetry without any aims. However, real poetry always strives to be more than pure entertainment.⁸³

Lüthi, probably in the spirit of Walter Benjamin, deals with entertainment as a secondary function and elaborates much more on his interpretation of tales in terms of aspects of their reception and of the human demands which revive the tale. He formulates one of his most important ideas as follows:

All the elements of our reality, even the least significant, most irrelevant detail, strive to become language.⁸⁴

Therefore the tale is a linguistic phenomenon and for the participants of the tale-telling event – for the tale teller, the listener and the reader of the tale – it becomes possible that through the texture of the tale two key moves of identity creation take place: on the one hand they become part of a linguistic tradition; on the other hand their self-interpretation (the sum of their self and world interpretation) becomes possible. Both moves have the character of an initiation, therefore Lüthi uses the concept of “existential trans-illumination” (*Existenzerhellung*):

The tale includes all the essential elements of simple narrative forms and, adjusting them to itself, makes them part of a much more inclusive narrative approach. [...] The tale according to itself shows the essence of the real. [...] We must understand all the individual elements of tales, including, for example, their miraculous elements, as the essence of tale telling and not just as a simple relic of an ancient custom or form of experience. Tales are both entertainment and existential illumination at the same time.⁸⁵

Eindimensionalität with the phrase: *egysíkú* “one dimensional”. (see NAGY Olga: *A táltos törvénye. Népmese és esztétikum*, (The Law of Táltos. Folktale and Aesthetics) Kriterion, Bukarest, 1978. pp. 46 and 50.) This interpretation however loses sight of the gist of Lüthi’s idea. It is true that while Olga NAGY wanted to provide a possible interpretative frame for the aesthetic formation of tale texts she did not aim at unveiling the voice in the tale that questions existence itself (and in the period in question she may not have had the means to do this).

⁸³ LÜTHI, Max: *Das europäische Volksmärchen – Form und Wesen*, Francke, Bern-München, 1960. p. 76. (Quotation translated by Gabriella Nagy) “Ausschließlich Unterhaltung” war lange Zeit die Antwort der Märchenforschung. Sie entsprang der richtigen Erkenntnis, dass das Märchen, im Gegensatz zur Sage, reine, tendenzlose Dichtung ist. Aber echte Dichtung will mehr als Unterhaltung.”

⁸⁴ Op. cit. p. 77. Alle Wirklichkeit, auch die unscheinbare, nebensächliche, drängt danach, Sprache zu werden.

⁸⁵Op. cit., 77/85. Das Märchen aber greift die von diesen einfachen Erzählformen herausgearbeiteten Motive auf, sublimiert sie und lässt sie Glieder werden einer weit ausgreifenden Erzählung [...] Das Märchen fühlt und gibt sich selber als Wesensschau der Wirklichkeit [...] Jedes einzelne Element des Märchens, also zum Beispiel das Märchenwunder, muss sich aus dem Wesen der Erzählung Märchen verstehen lassen und nicht nur als Relikt urtümlicher Sitte oder Erlebnisweise. Als Erzählung schenkt das Märchen Unterhaltung und Existenzerhellung in einem.

Later Lüthi frees tales from the burdens that deprived previous interpretations of characteristics that led them towards an understanding of existence. According to him tales do not serve the world of phantasy opposed to the real world; that is, they do not serve the idea of an escape from reality. Tales are much wider and not just the realisation of some kind of a moral system of expectations; tales do not evolve along the lines of a moral order to be obeyed, but rather “show the events of our real world and allow them to reach the level of words.”⁸⁶ Tales cannot be appropriated by interpretations that understand tales as a kind of compensation for the powerless, a fictive world which fulfils desires and eliminates social tensions.

[Donations appearing in tales] never serve to relieve the economic misery of the hero but to launch a series of tests and to make him move further in the course of his adventures. They make it possible to find his deeper fate and to fulfil it. It is hard to understand why tales were characterized as a “compensation for the powerless, a fictive world which fulfils desires and eliminates social tensions”. Moreover, the concept of “a restructuring of a foreign world through deeds” is alien to them. The hero of the tale is active and enterprising, wanders around and acts.” [...] To consider tales - simply because of the desires appearing in them - as the poetry of the poor [...] is not at all convincing. Essentially tales are not “the bearers of simple men’s desires”; they make a much wider meaning present.⁸⁷

It is understandable that in previous Hungarian scholarly works Lüthi’s perception – just as Honti’s appreciation-centred view of tales – could not be integrated as a main tendency within the field. Lüthi finally makes us see the wider meaning of tales not in action, or in moral approaches related to deeds, but in the display of a particular world order:

The definitive quality of heroes in tales is not virtue. [...]The ethics of deeds (What do I need to do?) stands in opposition to the ethics of events, and answers the following question “How should the world go round?” The intellectual task of tales is to provide the anticipated answer to the question of how the world must be [...].⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Op. cit. p. 81.

⁸⁷ Op. cit. p. 81. [Die Gabe im Märchen] dient nicht der Linderung ökonomischer Not, sondern stößt den Helden ins Abenteuer oder leitet ihn darin. Sie lässt ihn das wesentliche Schicksal finden und erfüllen. Dass man vom Märchen sagen konnte, es sei der Traum der „Unmächtigen, Armen, Gedrückten, denen ein Bewältigen der Welt durch Handeln fremd ist“, ist kaum begreiflich. Das Märchenheld ist aktiv und unternehmend, er ist ein Wandernder und Handelnder [...] Das Märchen wegen seiner 'Wunschdinge' für „Armeleutedichtung“ zu halten [...] ist nicht schlüssig. Es ist seiner ganzen Art nach nicht „Träger der Sehnsüchte des einfachen Mannes“, es ist eine Schau von weit allgemeinerer Bedeutung.

⁸⁸Op. cit. p. 83. Die bestimmende Qualität des Märchenhelden ist nicht Tugend. [...] der Ethik des Handelns („Was muss ich tun“) [steht] eine „Ethik des Geschehens“ gegenüber, die antwortet auf die Frage „Wie muss es zugehen in der Welt?“ Diese Erwartung, wie es eigentlich in der Welt zugehen müsste [...] ist die Geistesbeschäftigung des Märchens.

Summarizing Lüthi's interpretation of tales we may conclude that he considers tales to be linguistic phenomena that by displaying their own world order create the self-identity of those who enter that world.

The peculiarities of tales: a one dimensional world

In one of our previous studies⁸⁹ we have sketched the development of a peculiar interpretative community (related to tale-telling) that essentially – just as was elaborated on above in relation to Lüthi – would not consider the process of tale telling as merely an entertaining pastime. (Although the possibility must not be excluded, entertainment is, however, not present in the modern sense.⁹⁰) Tale telling may be experienced as a boundary crossing – *rite de passage* – that on the one hand may be compared to adolescent initiation rituals, and on the other hand may be connected to funerary rites. In the background we can find the linguistic characteristics of initiation that make the sacral aspects of communication visible. At the same time the question arises: Would it not be overwhelming to burden an epic structure – regarded as elementary – with such depth and such heights? Do we hear in these interpretations the echo of tale-interpretation conceived in the Romantic Age, interpretations that have been long outdated? Due to the nature of the question we cannot give a definitive answer; however with every new approach that tries to grasp the ontology of tales, the tale and tale telling may be perceived more precisely. We have to remember a late work by Martin Heidegger, a 20th century German philosopher, *On the Way to Language*⁹¹. Without discussing this piece of writing - structured as a dialogue - in depth, we can point to an important Heideggerian idea. In connection with this dialogue, Heidegger remarked that for him the conversations with a Japanese Zen Buddhist philosopher represented a definitive turn because his partner “uttered decisive statements without any metaphysics whatsoever”⁹². Without interpreting the Heideggerian idea in depth we can draw attention to the problem that by facing a culture radically different from the European, the philosopher's experience led to the problems of language. It is especially significant because those tale texts that we inherited from previous generations present a perceptually different world that may lead us to a similarly

⁸⁹ BÓDIS Zoltán: *Mese és szakrális kommunikáció*, In.: BÁLINT Péter: *A többes azonossága/The Identity of the Multiple*, Didakt, Hajdúböszörmény, 2010.

⁹⁰ To further elaborate on this point: this problem may be approached only after the reinterpretation of entertainment tales or of the role of humour in tales. The level of tradition that is closely related to tales exploits the possibilities of the role of humour as a way of raising consciousness.

⁹¹ HEIDEGGER, Martin: *On the Way to Language* (trans. by Peter D. HERTZ), HarperOne, 1982.

⁹² Quoted (from C.F. WEIZSÄCKER: *Der Garten des Menschlichen*. Frankfurt/M., 1980) in the afterword to the Hungarian edition by Attila J. Tilmann. (TILMANN J. Attila: *Afterword* in HEIDEGGER, Martin: *Útban a nyelvhez*, Helikon, h. n, 1991. p. 54.)

shocking experience. By reading tales and following their texts we may have a peculiar experience: all tales are on the threshold of understanding – the main characters of the tales have to reinterpret their lives in relation to some event. By operating different interpretative schemes we strive to grasp the possible meaning of tales in vain; we often feel that the tale does not give in easily; all that we can grasp from tales through the help of our schemata only presents a small portion of the otherwise rich textuality of tales. So Heidegger, in connection with the work mentioned above, regards the metaphysics-free language of his Japanese Zen Buddhist conversation partner as a special linguistic possibility through which one can approach the answer that might be given to the crisis resurfacing in Western philosophical thought. This reference by Heidegger raises the question of whether metaphysical and metaphysics-free thought can meet productively in all in other situations, in other dialogues – even in dialogues with the texts of tales. According to Heidegger, Western metaphysical thought, following the world view that crystallized in Greek philosophy, draws a sharp line between the immanent and the transcendent world. The crisis of the Western world means that this break has formulated as a world view. The lifestyle structured in order to annihilate this break, and the modern form of this lifestyle is technical civilization.

The Heideggerian dialogue may be related to one of Lüthi's famous theses mentioned above. According to Lüthi, by its essence the tale does not differentiate between transcendent and immanent elements within the world of the tale, so in a most natural way characters and objects appear, and events take place that according to the metaphysical view of the divided world are located in the two opposing poles. Lüthi labels tales "one dimensional" in the sense that in tales everything stands on one side, everything is presented in such a way that the possibility of this duplication of the world does not appear:

When the hero of the tale meets talking animals, wind, or stars he shows neither awe, nor fear. He does not feel fear, not because the talking animal or star is familiar to him - they do not belong to his world at all, there are no references to them in the context of his knowledge of them. He does not even wonder; he does not feel fear: the feeling of isolation is absent. For him everything appears in the same dimension. [...In myths] humans experience all transcendental elements as if they were something completely different. In tales everything appears in reverse. [...] The hero of the tale does not care about the differences in the beings from the other world, only the task to be completed is important for him.⁹³

⁹³⁹³ LÜTHI, op. cit. p. 10. It is worth elaborating on Lüthi's idea in one respect: characters in tales *may* feel fear, although their fear is not numinous - fear is not brought about due to the invasion of the transcendent; they rather fight the fears of their own world. (see the tale

This proposition may be difficult to approach for the first time since our thoughts are so pervaded by the clash of the two worlds: the immanent and the transcendent. When grasping the problem of understanding the mythic-religious form of conscience an additional aspect is introduced. Mircea Eliade, in his book entitled: *The Sacred and the Profane* which refers to the double world view in the title itself, makes the following point:

Yet the contents and structures of the unconscious are the result of immemorial existential situations, especially of critical situations, and this is why the unconscious has a religious aura. For every existential crisis once again calls into question both the reality of the world and man's presence in the world. This means that the existential crisis is, finally, "religious", since on the archaic levels of culture *being* and *the sacred* are one.[...] it is the experience of the sacred that founds the world, and even the most elementary religion is, above all, an ontology. [...] it is believed to have a transcendental origin and hence is valorized as a revelation received from an *other*, transhuman world. [...] thus enabling man to transcend personal situations and, finally, gain access to the world of spirit.⁹⁴

From our perspective two words emphasized by Eliade, the *being* and the *sacred one*, become significant. It is exactly this which leads us as we reinterpret tale texts from Heidegger's metaphysics-free language, through Lüthi's "one dimensional" world of tales. If the being is primarily manifested as a sacred revelation then it is strangeness, the state of continual secession from being which brings about the development of metaphysical perception. It is a decisive question whether this metaphysical perception appears as a peculiarity of the human conscience. The problem cannot be resolved within the framework of this study; however a few aspects are worth reconsidering in connection with tales. If we consider the one dimensional world of tales as a phenomenon that can be understood as a linguistic configuration that makes it possible for us not to understand the being as *other/sacred*, nor as a stranger appearing in our existence, but rather as something that would enable us to experience it as a recognized identity of being in existence, as the source of identity, then we are facing a peculiar task

entitled John Looking for Fear (*A félelmet kereső János*); the hero fears a frog, a cock, and finally gets scared of a fish – conversation with Péter Bálint)

Im Märchen zeigt der Held, der sprechenden Tieren, Winden oder Gestirnen begegnet, weder Verwunderung noch Angst. Dies nicht, weil ihm das sprechende Tier, oder Gestirn von Haus aus vertraut wäre; es gehört durchaus nicht zu der ihm gewohnten Umwelt, nichts deutet an, dass er von der Existenz solcher sprechenden Tiere auch nur gehört hat. Aber er verwundert sich nicht: das Gefühl für das Absonderliche fehlt ihm. Ihm scheint alles zur selben Dimension zu gehören. [...] Der Mensch erlebt [in der Sage] die Jenseitigen als das Ganz Andere [...] Im Märchen ist es genau umgekehrt. [...] Die Andersartigkeit der Jenseitswesen kümmert ihn nicht, nur ihr Handeln ist ihm wichtig.

⁹⁴ ELIADE, Mircea: *The Sacred And The Profane: The nature of religion* (Translated from the French by Willard R. TRASK) A Harvest Book, Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc. New York, pp. 210-211.

when looking at texts: we cannot be content with a motif-genetically oriented or mere comparative-inventive interpretation of texts: we have to consider tales as identity forming narratives in their complexity and multiplicity, as complex meaning that grasps all variants in their uniqueness.

The Tale as identity-narrative

When analyzing tales as complex meaning our most important statement is that we can consider tales as an especially significant genre since essentially they can be connected to the most basic communicational situation when an event, a life situation, becomes interpretable, and understood (even on the most basic level) in the act of *narration*. Everyday language usage may be noteworthy: in reality *telling*⁹⁵ a tale (“Erzählen”) can be related to the basic act of self-interpretation.⁹⁶ What we describe is a feeling and a group of phenomena lacking structure, which are chaotic in themselves, but which, in the process of telling, gain a linguistic structure (with metaphors of temporality and spatiality). This is then extended by a certain local element of signification that derives from the present tense of the narrative. (We can notice this phenomenon in connection with tale telling when during the act of telling the teller modernizes the inherited text.⁹⁷) This narrative act has an enormous significance; this linguistic structure defines our self-identity: spaces in our past, our memory, future, desires and expectations are included in the role of language which constitutes reality. Tales can be regarded as a special pattern-creating form of narratives because by their formal elements, communicational structures and functions we can consider the establishment of the identity of the given tale teller and his/her community as their fundamental goal. Even from the perspective of form-centred tale studies, in those tales that are considered fragmented, or “corrupted” compared to the ideal type tale model, we may find this type of motivation; therefore we are bound to regard it as the ontological nature of the tale. Max Lüthi draws our attention to the fact that tale tellers perform tales for their audiences primarily relating to themselves:

⁹⁵ Translator’s note: the Hungarian word *elmesél* is derived from the word *mese* meaning “tale”.

⁹⁶ In connection to the hermeneutic problem we must quote Heidegger who pointed out the close relationship between utterance, understanding and interpretation. “All interpretation is grounded on understanding.” (p. 195.) “[...] understanding and interpretation already lie in what has thus been expressed.” (211) HEIDEGGER, Martin, *Being and Time*, transl. by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2008. (“Alle Auslegung gründet im Verstehen. [...] Die Sprache als die Ausgesprochenheit birgt eine Ausgelegtheit des Daseinsverständnisses in sich.”) HEIDEGGER, Martin *Sein und Zeit*, Max Niemeyer Verlag, Tübingen, 1967. pp. 153/168.

⁹⁷ See Ágnes KOVÁCS: *Mesemondás egy kalotaszegi faluban*. (Tale Telling in a Village of Kalotaszeg) In.: Rózsafiú és Tulipánleány – Kalotaszegi népmesék (Roselad and Tulip Girl – tales from Kalotaszeg) (ed. KOVÁCS Ágnes) Akadémiai, Bp., 1987. pp. 237-248. ff. p. 242.

[...] the fairytale hero or heroine stands at the centre of the stories; it is with them that the male and female listeners, readers, and narrators identify, even given a certain distance. It has been established by the observations of field researchers that women like to tell fairytales that have heroines, that soldiers often make their heroes soldiers, and, turning the situation around, that a shoemaker, for example, makes the villain a tailor.⁹⁸

Tale as an identity forming narrative at the same time speaks about a particular complex of tropes that appears many times in tales. It often happens that somebody tells a tale within the story of the tale; an even more frequent phenomenon is the embedded dream narrative. Analyzing dreams in tales Heino Gehrts writes:

It occurs unusually frequently that characters fall asleep, not in daytime periods but during the most crucial events defining their fate; it is obvious that we can encounter widely differing forms of sleep depending on the situation of the hero or the heroine.⁹⁹

However, the dream deserves attention not just because of its frequency but also because of its structure. According to Verena Kast¹⁰⁰ a dream itself becomes significant through the act of narration, because this is how it can be shared and stored in memory and this is how it becomes the source of an individual's self-interpretation:

We can narrate our dreams when we remember them [...] If we narrate our dreams – to ourselves or to others – then we give them a shape [...] we place them within the space of the narrative [The narrator of the dream] often shapes the dream narration uniquely, arrestingly. [...] Therapeutic dream work [...] is supported by the dreamer reliving it as imagination and he/she creates a good dream narrative. A good dream narrative [...] instructs the listener to imagine something and it populates the imaginary space, becoming common to both narrator and listener. The narrator relives the emotions of the dream. [...]

Recent tale research has taken further steps in interpreting dreams in tales: on the one hand it deals with the narrative structures of dream narratives related to psychological narration theory (Judit Gulyás¹⁰¹); on the other hand dream narratives become the source of the hero's self-interpretation. Péter Bálint writes:

The recognition of a dream narrative, the "tale", the "verse" to be told at the right moment and mindfully apprehended, [...] all of these are the result of reflexive mental activity, interpretation and understanding. It is also the result of a discourse that constitutes

⁹⁸ LÜTHI, MAX: *The fairytale as art form and portrait of man* (transl. Jon Erickson) Indiana UP, Bloomington, 1987. p. 134.

⁹⁹ GEHRTS, Heino, Röth, *Von der Wirklichkeit der Märchen*, Regensburg, 1992. p. 99. (translated by B.Z.)

¹⁰⁰ KAST, Verena: *Träume. Die geheimnisvolle Sprache des Unbewussten*. Walter, Düsseldorf 2006. (Translated from the Hungarian version: *Álmok – A tudattalan titokzatos nyelve*, (trans. MURÁNYI Beatrix) Európa, Budapest, 2010. pp. 52-58.)

¹⁰¹ GULYÁS Judit *A varázsmesei álomelbeszélés narratív funkciója*, In.: BÁLINT Péter: *Közelítések a meséhez*, Didakt, Debrecen, 2006. pp. 85-86.

narrative identity and is based both on real dialogue – on the carving out of knowledge received or heard, and on the dialogue of the hero with himself: on continual recording, e.g. repetition and on its silent interpretation.¹⁰²

Dream narratives in tales are especially appropriate to be read as reports on themselves since the narrative told in tales provides information on the system of expectations related to the world of the tale. Narrating dreams acquires a significant role in many tales. In one of Mihály Fedics' tales the dream – since it works as a foresight of the tale's reality, a kind of prophecy – has to be narrated according to social custom; the hero, who breaks this strict custom, becomes an outcast. During the tale it turns out that each and every detail of his dream becomes real, so his narrative has been fulfilled and in such a peculiar way that he is in possession of all knowledge; however he only reveals as much as is uncovered by the passing of time.

At that time in countries, among kings it was customary that whoever dreamt something had to admit it in the morning. This young lad then dreamt about a huge danger for the king and because it came true he never admitted the dream.¹⁰³

In another passage from the tale by Irma Horváth, a gypsy tale teller from the village of Geszt, the character who accompanies the royal couple – who become insecure and helpless in a crisis – always tells them: “Lay down, sleep, maybe you will have a dream about it.” They try to receive the gift of a dream in vain, no dreams come until a certain point when the dream suggests they kill their children. The dreamt sinful deed, however, seems to be stronger than their fears, but in order to avoid the fulfilling power of utterance, they write their dreams down:

Sunday came, time has passed. Well, until they could tell each other what dreams they had, [...] That Sunday they dreamt they cut the throat of the two children [...] but [...] none of them told the other one about the dream. They did not dare to because each of them thought it was only him/her having this dream; the other one didn't – however it was the same dream. [...] – So tell me what have you dreamt? – I have figured that you should write down your dream, I write down mine and then we give the pieces of paper to each other.¹⁰⁴

The tale entitled *Álomfi* (Dream lad)

¹⁰² BÁLINT Péter: *Kedvenc népmeséim/ My Favourite Folktales*, Didakt, Hajdúböszörmény, 2010. p. 107.

¹⁰³ ORTUTAY Gyula: *Fedics Mihály mesél* (Mihály Fedics the Tale Teller), Akadémiai, Bp., 1978. p. 193. In another variant the utterance that connects the dream and the realized event is heard as a revelation. “Who has tied you there?” “Me, my lord.” “What for?” “For having a dream.” “Solve it for me then I'll let you go.” The child replies: “I will never do that unless it happens to me”. Digital publication: János KRIZA *Az álomlátó fiú – székely népmesék* (The boy who could see dreams – tales from Székely), mek.niif.hu/00200/00237/00237.htm

¹⁰⁴ Op. cit. pp. 36-37.

When analysing the problem one particular text seems especially suitable, although we will quote from other parallel tales as well. Our chosen tale – Dream Lad – was collected by Olga Nagy from János Puji, a gypsy tale teller from Marosszentkirály.¹⁰⁵ From a formal point of view the text of the tale is difficult to typologise since as a contamination of two different types of tales it reshapes the essential elements of both. In the idealized world of typologisation we may even consider the tale as a corrupt variant. The close reading of the text however contains essential elements that may support the understanding of the problems discussed above. The tale concerns the wandering of a prince who has extraordinary strength. On the way he meets friends and finally they stay together with Kőmorzsoló (Stone Crusher). With his help they defeat the dragon who holds the princess in captivity – she had been married before and then kidnapped. Let us examine the text in detail. The story continues in a royal court where the strongest prince in the world is born. This child, however, has not become part of the world since “he did not step out of bed until he turned twenty”. This passivity has not created any concern within the family but the outer world starts to speak about the father – maybe he does not even have a son. This is how the tale teller continues:

[...] what a shame. I have a son and then I don't have one. Nobody has seen him. But they all know that he has already turned twenty.

The characterization of the boy receives a particular emphasis. The state of “having and then not having” is a peculiar state which oscillates between being and nothingness; in fact it is a unique phenomenon even in the world of tales. This peculiar existence is a kind of passivity; at the same time it is full of possibilities since later in the tale when Dreamlad meets friends everybody knows that he is the strongest in the world. So without deeds, only by the sheer birth of the hero, he manifests a special quality without having to prove it. The fact that the prince spent his first twenty years in bed may seem strange at first sight; we would not expect this considering his physical strength. However, without any details being provided in the text we have to conclude it from later events, since the twenty years spent in bed is only a pretence: the name of the prince is *Dreamlad*. If we recall the practice of giving names then the prince is the son of Dreams; from the perspective of Greek mythology he is none other than Morpheus the son of Hypnos, who, according to Greek tradition, is the god who shapes dreams, himself resting in a cave – reminding us of our hero. The knowledge within the Greek tradition passed down to our generation is worth considering, as if our tale teller grasped the essential element of the ancient tradition because it is precisely through the

¹⁰⁵ NAGY Olga: *Zöldmezőszárnya. Marosszentkirályi cigány népmesék.* (Wings of the Green Field, Gypsy Tales from Marosszentkirály) Európa, Bp., 1978. pp. 177-184

dreams of our hero that the world of the tale is formed¹⁰⁶. The lad is brought out of this peculiar existence by his father's shame and following the paternal physical creation, after begetting the son he creates his child by word as well. This is particularly emphasized by their dialogue:

- Listen to me! You are in your twentieth year. How come you are not yet walking the ground? What are you doing?
 - Hey – says the lad. – When I descend onto earth, it will sink down.
 - Well, this is so shameful, since you are already twenty.
- So the lad came into existence.

The lad lying in the tower room descends onto the earth by listening to the word of his father and when we follow the logic of the dream analogy then we have a peculiar variant of traditional dream interpretation. Mircea Eliade writes that in dreams and in psychotherapeutic practice in waking dreams,¹⁰⁷ ascending, flying and climbing stairs appear as significant symbols. All this represents the breakthrough to transcendental spheres. Eliade writes:

[...] the documents of anthropology and of religious studies [...] express original spiritual situations [...] flight [...] express(es) a break with the universe of everyday experience. [...] both *transcendence* and, at the same time, *freedom* are to be obtained through the "flight".¹⁰⁸

So in our tale the lad has been in a waking dream and lived his life, his real existence as a potential out of which nothing has resurfaced. The lad living in the tower room, in bed in his never manifesting, hiding state is present invisibly, through his absence.¹⁰⁹ When change occurs in his life he does not ascend, does not fly as mythic symbolism would require, but on the contrary, he "descends" and coming out of the tower room he examines the ground by hitting it with a heavy stick, to see if it sinks down below him. This sign refers to the fact that it is not the hero who approaches the transcendent, the other world, but he that carries it within himself. The earth probed in front of his steps, the earth levelled out is again a reference to the possibility that in traditional symbolic studies represents the levelling out of the world manifested, its harmonization; that is, it indicates an end to differences, to

¹⁰⁶ See the article on *Morpheus* in *Mitológiai enciklopédia I.* (Mythological Encyclopedia) (ed. S. A. TOKAREV et al.) Gondolat, (trans by. Nyíri Éva), Bp., 1988. p. 721. The figure of Morpheus is preserved in its most complete version in the work of Ovid. The study written by Nicole BELMONT is also noteworthy – he provides evidence of the connection between the world of mythology and the world of folk tales. BELMONT, Nicole: *A mesék mitikus tatalma* (ford. Szabó László) in *Honti és a mesevilág* (szerk. BÁLINT Péter), Hajdúböszörmény, 2011. pp. 165-191. N. BELMONT: *La teneur mythique des contes*, In: BELMONT: *Poétique du conte*, Éd. GALLIMARD, Paris, 1999. pp. 194-227.

¹⁰⁷ ELIADE, Mircea: *Myths, Dreams and Mysteries: the encounter between contemporary faiths and archaic realities*, trans by P. Mairet, Harper and Row, University of Minnesota, 1975, pp. 113-119.

¹⁰⁸ ELIADE, op. cit., pp. 105-106.

¹⁰⁹ See HEIDEGGER, op. cit., "Dasein must, as itself, *become* – that is to say, *be* – what it is not yet." (p. 287.)

heterogeneity, to an absence of order and chaos: it creates a spatial transcendence.¹¹⁰ All of this in the tales has a peculiar linguistic agreement when our tale teller summarizes the processes using the word “come into existence”. In this case “coming into existence” is a special choice of words since in the 1960s-1970s, when tales were being collected, it would not belong to the regular word usage of the community. The use of this expression highlights the intention of the speaker to call attention to the fact: birth and coming into existence are two different states and the appearance of the transcendent is not unknown, it is not a different element in the world, but the imaginary that exists beyond the world (the strongest in the world¹¹¹), appearing as an event anticipated by the other characters. During the course of the tale Dreamlad is constantly referred to as: *Twenty years old, never getting out of his bed*. The figure of the Dreamlad and the interpretation connected to his existence is further elaborated by the motif of the *bed* which acquires greater and greater emphasis. From Hungarian folk customs we know well the notion that the bed corresponds to the coffin¹¹² so the twenty years might be considered as a state of apparent death. The name of the Dreamlad gains a new meaning, in the context of the initiatory character of dreams in the Hungarian *táltos* tradition¹¹³, the *révülés*¹¹⁴, through which the individual gains or regains his *táltos* abilities. When we follow the course of the tale closely in terms of motifs and story we see an incomplete tale structure – although if we consider the latest findings of comparative tale research contextual motif analysis may find the *Son of the White Horse* type tale in it, and, as such, this type

¹¹⁰ See ELIADE (1975.) op. cit. pp. 165-168. It is good to remind ourselves of the formula of our *regős* songs “we scuffle in” where the analogy of the songs bringing in the New Year appears clearly.

¹¹¹ It is worth noting that characterizations of the type “the world’s most” refer to the given person’s relationship to the transcendent. Just as in archaic pictures where the appointed person was much taller than others, mythical images also used this symbolic form. cf. ELIADE op. cit. p. 167.

¹¹² See ERDÉLYI, Zsuzsanna: *Hegyet ágék, lőtöt lépék. Archaikus népi imádságok*, (Archaic Folk Prayers) Kalligram, Pozsony, 1999. pp. 197-198. p. 207. “I lay down on my bed, all my body’s coffin.” Gilbert Durand makes us conscious of the isomorphology of *cradle and coffin* (English speakers would say cradle and grave). The bed is therefore the place of birth and of death at the same time.

¹¹³ The Hungarian *táltos* is not to be confused with the *shaman* (sámán) although both have the ability to remain in contact with the transcendental. Whereas the *shaman* had healing capacities and energies, the *táltos* was the one who shared and retold the stories of the community, of the community traditions, similarly to the Welsh bard. He also conveyed stories, messages from the “other” world. (translator’s note)

¹¹⁴ *Révülés*: a certain transcendental state in which the person might meet sacred animals or spirits of the transcendental world. He might speak with them or receive instructions or prophecies from these beings. During the act of *révülés* the person might leave his/her body to meet these spirits elsewhere or the spirits themselves might become embodied in him/her and speak through him/her. (see: Hungarian Ethnographic Lexicon, <http://mek.oszk.hu/02100/02115/html/index.html>)

would provide a different context for interpretation. Izabella Horváth writes in relation to contextual tale research:

Being among pioneers in folktale collection we must strive to be pioneers in analytical methodology. Thus we must recognize that there are some dangers in claiming western origins or “universals” for Hungarian folk motifs if they are taken out of the context of the folk story in which they were found. Comparing motifs without a context assumes that the storytellers amassed a folktale from some “universal” motif inventory, without any regard to the possibility of a deeper, individual meaning of the entire story, and that the teller did this purely for the entertainment and amusement of the listeners. This assumption can be accepted only if it can also be proved to be so in each case. Contrary to this method, the complete SOWH type folktale – besides just being good entertainment – carries a specific, socially conditioned meaning. In this case, the story motifs are not a random compilation of motifs, but they move in a logical order.¹¹⁵

Therefore it is worth expanding our possibilities for interpreting our tale text and connecting it to the initiative type of tales: the logic of the tale cannot follow a kind of structural order but it does reveal the process of initiation. Initiation essentially means an initiation into a state which is on a higher level, which is at the same time a kind of liminal situation for the hero. During the initiation he loses his old state and all those values that belonged to it, or at least they are transformed; the acquisition of new values however, requires superhuman deeds or qualities. In a peculiar way, the most significant difference tinges this process of initiation. While in the *Son of the White Horse* story in its most prevalent variants the hero reaches the higher level state through tests and fights where his strength is continually tested, our tale's hero approaches his fate on a double road: either by the help of stories about him or by dream narratives. The Dreamlad begins his journey and in accordance with the tale conventions he finds “brothers” and companions who have great strength. Wood Curver (Fahorgasító) and Stone Crusher (Kőmorzsoló) would not start to wrestle with him; they do not have to test each other on a physical level. All of them accept the news about Dreamlad. “You would be wondering about this Dreamlad! He is twenty years old, and never got out of bed.”¹¹⁶ From the point of view of our analysis we have to emphasize that the story narrated about the hero is sufficient for him to be able to display himself in front of the world as being himself; through the narratives and tales everybody knows him already, even acknowledges him. During the tale Dreamlad gets married; however, due to a broken agreement a dragon kidnaps his wife. To free his wife from the dragon he sets out on a journey together with

¹¹⁵ HORVÁTH, Izabella: *The Son of White Horse type folktale in Shamans Unbound* (ed. HOPPÁL Mihály-SIMONKAY Zsuzsanna) Akadémiai, Bp., 2008. p. 117.

¹¹⁶ *Zöldmezőszárnya* (Wings of the Green Field) op. cit. p. 178.

his friend, the Stone Crusher, whom he accepted as his brother. Defeating the dragon is possible only when they solve the riddle: where does the dragon hide his strength? With the help of the wife they learn from the dragon himself what his secret is:

[...] there is a stone. There are three letters on it. Whoever can read these three letters is the one to pass the test. Whoever cannot is looking for them in vain.¹¹⁷

At this point in the story it becomes especially interesting that a written text appears that may be the fulfilment of the initiative process. However, it is not enough to read the secret of the dragon; our heroes have to have a dream about it, as if it were the dream that produced the reality of the tale itself through the written text – as a created narrative. Stone Crusher – who seemingly does not have faith in the success of the venture – says:

[...] There is a pit, lie there down and if you dream the dream where we two can lift the stone together then I stay. If not then we both go our own ways.¹¹⁸

With this turn in the tale the text returns to the initial stage; Dreamlad is lying again, however, this time not in a bed but in a ditch: if we identified his previous dream state as apparent death, then here we have to deal with the real experience of death. Dreamlad sees a dream– with a new type of solution in texts – he does not dream about what is going to happen but in parallel with his dream it occurs and comes to pass in reality as well. Therefore, the dream is not directed towards the future; it is not a tool for prophecies, it does not reanimate the past, but simultaneously creates the present. This performative act creates a definitive difference between the two friends. While one of them is active, and fights, the other one proves to be “the strongest in the world” in the act of narration, in the dream narrative.

Meanwhile the prince woke up. And he dreamt the dream that not the two of them would do the test but only his brother alone.¹¹⁹

According to the intention of our tale, reality and the narrative about reality are not different; their identical nature is not problematized. The text of the tale however changes our image of the process of initiation described in tales since in other texts the hero becomes able to reach the next level of existence by actively passing the tests. In this particular tale,

¹¹⁷ Op. cit. 182.

¹¹⁸ Op.cit, 182.

¹¹⁹ Op.cit 183.

through his dreams, the hero profits from the deeds that his friend carries out. Related to the narration of tales it reminds us of the fact that texts of tales do possess a similar status: they may correspond to deeds and ritual processes whose active elements can no longer be accessed directly; however the text of the tale as if it were a dream narrative makes it possible for those in some kind of relationship with the tale – tale tellers and listeners – to realize their self-interpretation on a higher level.

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CONCEPTION OF FRIENDSHIP IN THE HUNGARIAN FOLKTALES

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Abstract. *Friendship in its universal sense is a widespread socio-cultural form of relationship whose importance is obvious from the number of analytical and other works which deal with it. Our common experience tells us that friendship is an important founding element in the organization of social communities.¹²⁰ Wherever we look, both our own experience of events and contemporary local communities bear witness to the fact that friendship is a decisive factor in making our everyday lives liveable.*

Key-words. friendship as relation, social communities, friendship in folk tales, tale interpretation

Friendship in its universal sense is a widespread socio-cultural form of relationship whose importance is obvious from the number of analytical and other works which deal with it. Our common experience tells us that friendship is an important founding element in the

¹²⁰ Of course the meaning of the concept of friendship when considered in the traditional socio-cultural world existing outside Europe shows significant differences. Friendship in the complex systems characterised by *consanguinity* and *affinial relationships* and the decisive functions they play in the working of social life can differ markedly from friendship in the European cultural tradition. Since the aim of the current study is primarily to introduce the concept of friendship through the material available in the folk tale traditions of the Carpathian Basin, we will not analyse examples of friendship in its wider social models, or the universal socio-cultural horizon of the concept.

organisation of social communities.¹²¹ Wherever we look, both our own experience of events and contemporary local communities bear witness to the fact that friendship is a decisive factor in making our everyday lives liveable.

“[...] since friendship is a virtue or implies virtue, and is besides most necessary with a view to living.”¹²²

This is all demonstrated by the numberless expressions rooted in everyday language which treat friendship not as an isolated or independently existing value, but always see it as a form of relationship in a socio-cultural context. ‘True’, ‘false’, ‘interested’, ‘unselfish’, ‘warm-hearted’, ‘guest’, and we could continue to list the expressions which ‘qualify’ friendship with various shades of meaning and opposites, but there is no need here. The multiplicity, or, to put it more graphically, the ‘many-facedness’, which is the essence of the concept still requires some kind of theoretical community, some merit which corresponds to all friendship. This investigation however, would direct us to the field of philosophy, which is outside the scope of the current article. Despite this it is not evident that the seriousness and comprehensive quality of friendship, as a phenomenon that operates on a cultural basis, and which requires generally applicable conditions in order to operate, is governed by the rules crystallised in all traditional communities, or through the situational reality of the subjectivity of the parties involved: friendship is an individual and unrepeatable phenomenon. It should not surprise us if we discover friendship introduced and analysed as an important question in folk tale texts. The reason for this is that the thought world of the folk tale both analyses the world and creates its own picture of the world, and so it is natural that it also deals with such basic questions of life as friendship in numerous contexts. In the following we will try to introduce some of the special features related to this concept through Hungarian language folk tale texts dealing with the idea of friendship common in the Carpathian Basin.¹²³

¹²¹ Of course the meaning of the concept of friendship when considered in the traditional socio-cultural world existing outside Europe shows significant differences. Friendship in the complex systems characterised by *consanguinity* and *affinial relationships* and the decisive functions they play in the working of social life can differ markedly from friendship in the European cultural tradition. Since the aim of the current study is primarily to introduce the concept of friendship through the material available in the folk tale traditions of the Carpathian Basin, we will not analyse examples of friendship in its wider social models, or the universal socio-cultural horizon of the concept.

¹²² ARISTOTLE: *Nikomachian Ethics*, (trans. SZABÓ Miklós) Európa, Bp., 1987. p. 215. “After what we have said, a discussion of friendship would naturally follow, since it is a virtue or implies virtue, and is besides most necessary with a view to living.”

¹²³ In the current analysis we will not examine the artificial text types which make use of the theme of *friendship*. The folk tale is the authentic mode of expression and the collective production of the way of thinking and the value system of a local community. In this context the folk tale supports in an original way the philosophical-anthropological analysis of the socio-cultural function and the structural value of friendship.

In the Hungarian language folk tale tradition and the stories that represent them the number of tales which deal with the theme of friendship as a central question, just like the friendship sub-category of tales, is relatively small when compared to other typical themes, such as death, dreams or stories analysing destiny in an abstract way. The question of friendship, according to the categories in the Aarne-Thompson classification system is expressed in its purest form in the tale type number 516, *The Friend Turned to Stone*. In this system the main type of the theme of the friend became a variation of the friend as a supernatural helper, which has produced superficial, although widespread, texts in the Hungarian language area. In the division of Hungarian folk tales *The Two Faithful Friends* type of tale is made up of many eventful episodes.

In this tale type the king, before his death, tells his servant that he should take care of his (the king's) son's problems. In carrying out the task an important element is that the servant protects the prince from an unknown danger; for example he does not allow him to enter a forbidden room. Of course, according to the tale logic that controls the plot, the young prince disobeys the order (in other words the servant does not manage to carry out the king's last wish), and then falls fatally in love with the portrait of the beautiful girl he finds in the room. Following this, the servant and the prince swear eternal loyalty to each other, and then agree to trick the girl into becoming the prince's partner. On their travels the servant three times manages to identify the danger threatening the future young couple. He cannot tell them about these dangers, because he knows that revealing the secret would bring on him the punishment of being immediately turned to stone (death). The next key episode in the plot of the story is when the servant protects the young couple from the danger that threatens them, and is then unjustly suspected of betraying his friend, a suspicion which he can only disprove by revealing the secret, an act which sees him punished by being turned to stone. The prince, because of the pact made with the servant and his crisis of conscience, saves his true friend. He sacrifices a child, and drips the child's blood onto the lifeless statue, which brings it back to life, and at the same time the child suffers no injury.¹²⁴

Before we prove with any concrete analysis that any examination of the varieties of the tale type which deal with the question of the concept of friendship reveals the subtle and rich inter-relationship of the meaning of friendship - one of the outstanding institutions of social relationships - two further related points must be mentioned. On the one hand, reading the above summary of the content of tales provides us with

¹²⁴ For a detailed description of the type see BERZE NAGY János: Magyar népmese típusok II. Baranya Megyei Tanács, Pécs., 1957. pp. 30-41. (*Types of Hungarian Folk Tales II*)

clear evidence that the tale interpretation of friendship is inseparably linked to everyday thought in the sense of such themes – also dealt with in detail in other tale types – as secrecy, sin, loyalty, death, sacrifice or hope.¹²⁵ To express it more exactly, the clarification of the significance of friendship is widely supported in the existential organisation of the tale type. As we shall see later, we are not dealing with a simple strategy of textual organisation or stylistics, nor are we witnesses to a filtering process which places strong emphasis on the existential aspects of thinking in tales. Rather, we see more clearly that it is hardly possible to identify the functions and analyse the outstanding aspects of the socio-cultural dimensions of friendship and the tale's social and community concepts if it is separated from the themes listed above. We can state that friendship reflects the problematics of a complex socially understood sense of the tale. On the other hand, after reading tales dealing with friendship we may justly feel that here it is not only the ever present common opinions and judgements that come to light through our analysis, but that we can also, in a very real sense, recognise the interconnections of the concept of friendship as the product of philosophical thought in our culture. To put it simply, reading around the theme of friendship in the texts available to us from the tale tradition of the Carpathian Basin offers us a remarkable analysis in a philosophical sense, without the conclusions being expressed in concrete philosophical terms. So the question is how we can show the philosophical meaning of the tales that deal in whole or in part with the theme of friendship while also preserving the special spiritual world and the formal structure of the tale. How is it possible that the tale variants developed in closed peasant communities lead us to conclusions about friendship of identical or similar value to those formulated in the teachings of Cicero or Aristotle two thousand years ago? Let us begin our answer by focussing on a further question!

Who are friends and what is friendship? Tales define friendship precisely within special linguistic and conceptual limits. On the one hand

¹²⁵ See, for example the series of writings which have appeared in the past few years analysing the thinking about death in tales, among which Péter BÁLINT's comprehensive study (*A halál a halál-koma típusú mesékben*. In.: BÁLINT Péter (ed.): *A többes azonossága*. Didakt, Hajdúböszörmény. 2010. pp. 69-84. *Death in Godfather Death-type Tales in BÁLINT P. (ed.) The Identity of the Multiple*), undoubtedly stands out. The author makes it quite clear that paradigmatical existential subjects, such as the question of death, are also the subject of detailed analysis in the community of tale tellers. The study deals with the question through a relevant academic treatment of the concept of death in a philosophical and literary theory sense, and in addition argues that a new analysis appropriate to the status of the genre is required to examine it in an interdisciplinary and global perspective. Péter Bálint also informs the reader that to identify the basic questions of existential thought requires, on the one hand, a faithful philological approach to the texts, and, on the other, that we go beyond the points of analysis required by the traditional system of classifying tale types.

friendship is never a sibling relationship; on the other hand, however, it is always reminiscent of the relationship between siblings. Friendship is introduced in this ambivalent sense in the opening scenes of several stories as a description of the relationship between the two characters. Oszkár Mailand's collection from the Szeker lands at the beginning of the last century features a fine example of the 'brotherliness' of the heroes' friendship. The hero of *The World's Two Fine Peoples* story, János Katona, is only willing to help the Handsome Prince if he accepts him as his brother until death parts them. They swore twelve verses on the hilt of a sword that as long as they lived in the world, they would always call each other 'my dear brother'.¹²⁶ So friendship is just like a sibling relationship, but yet it is not the same; although the brothers' characteristic solidarity and loyalty remind us of a real sibling relationship, everyone is aware of the lack of a real blood link. Friendship and brotherliness are in this context synecdoches of each other. Among the tale types that deal with brother-friendships is an important sub-type in which the brothers grow up in the belief that they are brothers, although one is a foundling or a child that has accidentally joined the family.¹²⁷ Olga Nagy recorded a beautifully worked Hungarian version of this subtype from the repertory of János Cifra, a Calvinist tale teller of Gypsy origin from Koronka.¹²⁸ The story of *József and Károly* analyses the concept of friendship through the perspective of the tale world. Characteristic of the plot is that the origin of the two boy heroes – who in reality are not brothers – is initially a mystery, and only comes to light gradually as the events of the tale unfold. In *József and Károly* as time passes the foundling and the real child begin to resemble each other less and less.¹²⁹ They differ not just in their external appearance – József, the foundling, is tall and thin, while Károly, the king's real son, is short and fat – but also in their characters. The foundling is mentally sharper and

¹²⁶ MAILAND Oszkár: Székelyföldi gyűjtés. A világ két szép népje. Kisfaludy-társaság, Bp., 1905. pp. 534-543. (*A Collection from the Szeker Lands. The World's Two Fine Peoples*)

¹²⁷ In the analysis of the concept of the 'brother friendship tale' the idea of friendship involves the maintenance of an emphasis on the paradox inherent in the artificial, metaphorical understanding of the term, "a friend is someone who is like a brother without a blood link". Brother friendship does not, therefore, refer to the friendly relationship between brothers, although the study of this in tale texts would also be an important task.

¹²⁸ NAGY Olga (ed.): Cifra János meséi. (*János Cifra's Stories*) Akadémia, Bp., 1991. pp. 248-280.

¹²⁹ There are friendship tales where the external similarity of the friends is emphasised. In these tales an important role is played by the identity of physical appearance, which often creates a background for the exchange of roles. In terms of its genre classification *The Two Identical Friends* story is a classic legendary tale. Once during their travels among people Christ and St. Peter get thirsty. A young married couple they meet on the road offer them fresh water as a sign of friendship. Christ, to Peter's incomprehension, gives another child to the couple besides their own, as a reward. The parents are unable to tell the two children apart and it is only over time that it emerges which is their own and which is the 'found' child.

has more empathy, which, over the course of the tale, is a decisive character difference. József is essentially the servant in the *friend turned to stone* type, while Károly is the king's son. The young boys, originally brought up in the belief they are real siblings, gradually develop their friendship as, step by step, the truth comes out. The double sense of the text, which is impregnated with the concept of friendship understood as 'brother friendship', for a time refers to the relationship as one of mutual dependency and opposition. Mutual dependency is shown in the way they help each other; the opposition in the fact that each friend only shows loyalty to his friend after the crisis of conscience that follows the betrayal that he was forced into committing by circumstance.¹³⁰ It is clear, therefore, that the friendship is a relationship that is based on trust, but that it is not without tension.¹³¹

The significance of the 'brotherliness' that is shown in friendship can be approached from other perspectives. What happens if the openly brotherly nature of the sibling relationship – i.e. the unconditional acceptance of the 'other' on the basis of the blood relationship – is damaged? The absolute opposite of friendship, of the 'brotherliness' existing between two strangers, then follows: the opposition and the hatred of brothers, the depiction of which is also a common theme of our tales. Identifying and setting down in textual form the experiences which are related to the significance of the socio-cultural value of friendship, and - through the open discursive aspects of the practice of tale-telling - the communicating of these experiences to the community, become more important in a situation in which we come face to face with the kind of perspectives lacking cohesive elements which appear in the context of the folk tale treatment of brotherly hatred. The *Truth and Falsehood* subject is a well-known and widespread story.¹³² Two travelling companions argue about whether you can get further by telling the truth or by lying.¹³³ The travellers (often brothers) get hungry on their travels and the older suggests that they should eat the younger one's food first, and then eat his later. The younger one agrees to the idea, but when the time comes to eat his brother's food, the brother is only willing to give him food on condition that he allows him to cut one of his eyes out.

¹³⁰ The evidence of mutual loyalty in this type is that one of the friends is even prepared to be turned to stone (to die) in order to save the other from the life-threatening danger, while his friend is ready even to sacrifice a child to redeem his petrified partner.

¹³¹ CICERO, Marcus Tullius: *A barátságáról* (trans. SZABÓ György). (*On Friendship*) Kriterion Kiadó, Bukarest, 1987. p. 73.

¹³² The story of the *Truth and Falsehood* is widespread in Hungarian speaking areas, and has its roots right back in antiquity. It appears continuously in European tale culture and the theme has characteristic Hungarian language variants. It is type no. 613 in the AARNE-THOMPSON classification system.

¹³³ For a detailed description of the type see BERZE NAGY János: *Magyar népmese típusok* op. cit. pp. 209-215. (*Types of Hungarian Folk Tales II*)

The young brother, having no other choice, agrees, but his evil sibling, to prove his point – that falsehood is better than truth – really does blind his brother, who later regains his sight by magical means and becomes a rich man. The elder brother, invited by the younger as a guest, is confronted with his brother's good fortune which, out of envy, he wants to share. However, in the tale, just as in life itself, fate never repeats itself, and the elder brother's wickedness and greed ends with his death. Abstracting from the network of meaning and the message of moral philosophy observable in the story, the brotherly hatred - from our point of view the absolute opposite of brotherly friendship - shines a clear light on the sophisticated social theory of the tale. Friendship, a relationship of mutual solidarity created between two people, is a constitutive element, which the community believes - according to the lesson derived from the position adopted in the tale – rewards both sides. On the other hand the evil brother who, through his brotherly hatred, departs from the normative function of the values arising out of the blood ties of the brotherly relationship – loyalty, solidarity and mutual support - becomes an anti-hero and is severely punished in the tale.

In the tale conception friendship ranks above blood relations in that a brotherly relationship can exist without goodwill.¹³⁴ In the case of brothers the goodwill towards each other is a result of the norms considered natural because of their common origin and the traditional bonds this creates, which in reality do not presuppose the bonds of brotherly good feeling by themselves. No-one can do anything about who their brother is. Friendship, on the other hand, cannot exist without goodwill, which indicates that we cannot be friends with someone we hate.¹³⁵

Brotherly friendship, or in other words 'true' friendship, does not just exist in absolute opposition to what we refer to as brotherly hatred. There is also, in the schemata of friendship, another sub-type to be examined, which deals with the concept of the *false friend*. Stories featuring the false friend emerged from the mixture of various different tale types, mainly those in which the possession of a magic object and the competition to get hold of it features as an aspect of the story. From our point of view, however, it is much more important to understand the nature of another aspect of these stories: the two apparent friends, or more accurately, the asymmetrical relationship between two heroes, one of whom is honest in his friendship, and the other of whom is false. A good example of a tale illustrating false friendship is *Péter and János*, collected in 1949 by Ferenc Szilágyi the younger, from Rozsály.¹³⁶ In this

¹³⁴ Cf. CICERO: op. cit. 87.

¹³⁵ Idem. pp. 82. and 103.

¹³⁶ BÉRES, András (collector.) and KOVÁCS, Ágnes (ed.): *Hajnalpelika – Rozsályi népmesék. (Hajnalpelika – Folk Tales from Rozsály)* Akadémia, Bp., 1989. pp. 17-26.

tale theme two wanderers meet and then carry on their journey together. The nature of their relationship - their friendship - only becomes clear to the audience during the action of the story, when Peter descends through a hole into the underworld, but not before entrusting János to look after his animals. Trust, which to us appears as riskily putting ourselves in a position to be exploited without any kind of prior pledge, is the kind of decision which strangers can only make on the basis of friendship. In the story János pulls up the princess who has been freed from the underworld by Péter, but leaves his friend in the hole. Péter, however, with the aid of wonderful helpers, finally overcomes János, who is punished with death. The essence of false friendship is the problem of the illusion of friendship. The unfounded trust placed in the other draws our attention not just to the gullibility of the cheated party, the unmasking of naivety, but to the danger of the falsehood which is capable of creating an apparent friendship. In Ferenc Szilágyi's text we can really feel the existential risk which lies in the failure of friendship, the danger that arises from a worthless loss of trust, when in the last third of the story he simply refers to János as 'cunning'. This permanently negative description, which reflects the position taken by the tale-teller, in essence the judgement of the community, makes a categorical distinction between the realistic and practical use of intelligence and the treachery hiding behind the appearance of friendship. False friendship is an unacceptable strategy in the traditional normative world, and is discredited as a sin in the principled conventions of the community. The analysis of friendship in tales, however, is not just a refined version of a general analysis of possible individual friends, but also an identification of the general characteristics relating to the continuous working processes of friendship. In the following we will examine two more important relationships; the question of the link between the social status of friends and their friendship, and the conceptual image of the meaning of 'goodness' which characterises friendship.

An interesting characteristic of stories which can be classified as *The Two Loyal Friends* type is that the initial social status of the friends is generally radically different. In the *József and Károly* story the social background of the foundling son remains a mystery; his origin never comes to light. The lack of knowledge about his origin – he is a foundling – also means that he is without the personal identity on which his role in the family-cultural tradition is built, and is thus an important piece of information in the world view of the peasant community reflected in the tales. The social distance between Károly, the king's son, and József, whose status is undetermined due to his hazy origins, is unclear. They appear as basic points of opposition, and the possibilities of friendship they create in the context of the story make clear that in the conceptual world of the tale, friendship is a socially cohesive force. In tales, however,

friendship's capacity to remove in a curative way the social opposition due to birth is not only evident in the typical beginnings of fairy tales. It can happen that the opening situation of the tale is given by real relationships existing in the community of the tale teller. An example of this is the story collected by Géza Nagy in the Karcsa region in 1969, *The Gypsy Boy and the Prince*.¹³⁷ The brief biography which appears as an appendix to the volume informs the reader that the tale teller, Aladár Kovács, from whom the story was recorded, was one of the most gifted storytellers in the community. Géza Nagy, however, also thought it important to mention that the teller did not live in the Gypsy settlement, but built a house among the Hungarians, which is an obvious reference to the fact that Aladár Kovács's personal life strategy involved the desire to integrate successfully into the majority community. It does not seem a forced speculation to point out the relationship between the basic situation of the tale and the tale teller's personal comments relating to the social position of the decisive characters.¹³⁸ The tale teller introduces the friendship between the gypsy boy and the prince with the comment that the two children grew up together and '*really liked each other*'.¹³⁹ During the course of the tale the friendship and the sense of commitment to each other only fulfils a starting function from the perspective of the other actions. As the choice of title indicates, the real hero is the gypsy boy – the reversal of social status is already clear in the title (*The Gypsy Boy and the Prince*) - who sets off with two of his brothers to free the prince's kidnapped sister. In the plot of Aladár Kovács' tale the king's son plays no further role in the later developments; indeed, following the fulfilment of the task, after the homecoming of the hero who has survived an incredible series of adventures, he is not even mentioned. From our point of view however, the tale is less important than the initial situation. Aladár Kovács' words about the gypsy boy and the prince are itself of outstanding value, since "*the greatest thing about friendship is to be equal with people who have a less fortunate fate*".¹⁴⁰ The tale about friendship is a typical example of the levelling of the hierarchical picture of the traditional small community's social conceptions. In practical terms it is not difficult to discover parallels between the gypsy tale teller striving to integrate into the majority Hungarian community and the gypsy boy who makes friends with the prince and is ready to make sacrifices for him. Aladár Kovács' tale ends with the rewarding of the hero who has completed the

¹³⁷ NAGY Géza (ed.): A király virágoskertje – Karcsai népmesék. (*The King's Flower Garden – Folk Tales from Karcsa*) Akadémia, Bp., 1987. pp. 5-21.

¹³⁸ Idem. p. 260.

¹³⁹ Idem. p. 7.

¹⁴⁰ CICERO: op. cit. p. 107. "But here is another golden rule in friendship: put yourself on a level with your friend."

task, as he wins the hand of the prince's younger sister and the empire itself. In the essence of the apotheosis of the tale of how a gypsy boy can become a prince is the paraphrase of Aladár Kovács' own story reworked with metaphorical tools.

The story of *The Gypsy Boy and the Prince* expresses very well how the demands of the tale teller's community through the thought world of the tale drive both the identification and the analysis of basic social questions, whether they be functional or moral. The credible recounting of the tale requires a commitment to the message expressed in the story: the search for truth is an inseparable essence of the tale teller's world of belief.¹⁴¹ Of course the statement that the tale is a 'serious' thing may well be almost a truism, but it is precisely the analysis, basing itself on friendship as a fundamental constitutive element of society - the present analysis being Aladár Kovács' briefly introduced example - which shows that the collective act of interpretation involved in the tale telling, which follows the intentions of the community and the tale teller himself, brings with it 'serious' consequences in the real world. All this is well illustrated by the interviews which describe the customs, traditions and the tale telling techniques of the tale teller's occupation which Gyula Ortutay investigated in his ground-breaking work in the field of tale research into individuality. One of Olga Nagy's favourite gypsy tale tellers, János Cifra, expressed the following regarding the expectations relating to his own 'life work': I started telling tales at the age of thirteen. There was no other happiness in my life. Young people came to listen to me; thirty, forty, even fifty people. I've been telling stories for sixty-two years. It was me that started young people off in the world. I wasn't born to tell jokes, teasing or tricking kind of tales. I was born for other kinds of tale: the history of the world. I was born to bring up the young. I would ask the writer too, that if you've come here for my story, then write it down from beginning to end, because if you don't, I won't be at peace. I won't feel easy if you don't write it down properly. So that people will know if I die that I was the kind of person who could describe himself as a poet in tale telling.¹⁴²

It is clear that Cifra ascribes a significant social function to his work and we must take very seriously his point of view and his

¹⁴¹ Op.cit.. "For the tale teller the logos as speech/tale telling is not simply vision, but 'in some way shows a reference or connection in the tale, and, let us add immediately, as language, with the individual existing in front of us (going beyond him/her, pushing outwards) it sketches out the imagined, created symbolic being - and the created world of values as well." BÁLINT Péter: *Honti szellemi örökségének nyomában*. In: BÁLINT Péter (szerk.): *Honti és a mesevilág*. Didakt, Hajdúböszörmény. 2011. p. 37. (*On the Trail of Honti's Spiritual Inheritance*. In: *Honti and the Tale World*)

¹⁴² NAGY Olga: *Cigány barátaim között*. Erdélyi cigány mesemondók. Régió. Kisebbség, politika, társadalom 1993. 4. évf. 4. sz. 63. (*Among my Gypsy Friends*. Transylvanian Gypsy Tale-tellers. Régió. Minority, Politics, Society 1993 Vol. 4, No. 4, p. 63.)

perspective of the tale teller as having a role in the upbringing of the young in a traditional community; even if, in our experience, the kind of reflective self-knowledge characteristic of Cifra is rarely encountered among traditional tale tellers. The tale still has a key function in understanding the social relations and cultural nature of the tale teller's community. One of the preconditions for this is the faithful recording of the story, the fullest possible recording of the variant that most faithfully reflects the tale teller's intentions. The lesson of the Hungarian language versions of the *Two Faithful Friends* type is that the happiness of the two parties is always dependent on their commitment to be loyal to each other. This loyalty, which is the guarantee of friendship, is not, however a value which is given, but is a product of the character development of the heroes. The unconditional solidarity between the friends is the next event in the tale, which is established by the friendship itself, such that a probable guarantee turns into a certain guarantee. To put it in another way, friendship is the triumph of mutual 'goodness'. But what does 'goodness' really mean and what does it represent in the tale conception of friendship? If we consider the basic course of the plot, then we will notice that originally the clear starting point of friendship always follows a series of tests of an open declaration of loyalty to each other. The first type of test is *giving help*, when the friend helps his partner get the beautiful girl. The second test is *self-sacrificing loyalty*, when the friend saves his partner and his young wife from the fatal danger that threatens them. The third test is when the friend judges that his *bearing witness* to his friend is more important than his own life, and not even the threat of being turned to stone (death) can prevent him from informing his friend. The fourth test which is clear from the plot is the when partner of the friend turned to stone is prepared to sacrifice anything – even the life of the child – in order to bring back his friend. In this tale theme the four tests can be understood as the series of events which are the manifestation of the 'goodness' which represents the essence of friendship.

Let us now consider a concrete example of each of the tests and examine how the way they follow each other in the form of logical units serves the *eudemonia* of the tale.¹⁴³

In the *Morning Star* tale the friends are a prince and a grey-haired old man who is helping him find a wife.¹⁴⁴ The helping friend devises a cunning plan and then kidnaps the beautiful girl. The story charmingly illustrates how the younger man finds spiritual help in the older friend; without his help he would be forced to obey his parents' intention to

¹⁴³ In Aristotelian thinking *eudemonia* is the result of reason directing the active life, the foundation of happiness.

¹⁴⁴ Quoted in ORTUTAY Gyula (ed.): Magyar népmesék II. Szépirodalmi Kiadó, Bp., 1960. pp. 291-297. (*Hungarian Folk Tales II*).

marry him off to another girl in the interests of the family. The help is friendship in itself, since “...friendship springs from a natural impulse rather than a wish for help: from an inclination of the heart, combined with a certain instinctive feeling of love, rather than from a deliberate calculation of the material advantage it was likely to confer.”¹⁴⁵ Real friendship goes beyond the idea of profit.¹⁴⁶ The second test of friendship – when the self-sacrificing friend saves the lives of the young couple – is described in detail in the previously mentioned *József and Károly* tale. In the tale, which has something of the flavour of a detective story, József gets to know that they intend to cut his friend’s young wife’s neck with an axe on their wedding night so that they can smuggle the ‘old baroness’s’ daughter in her place. József lies in wait and pulling out his sword shouts out to the approaching assassin “Don’t you go there, you old hag!”¹⁴⁷ The assassin shouts so loudly that Károly is woken out of his dream and she then proceeds to convince him that József wanted to take his wife away from him, so that he could be king. József is thrown into prison and condemned to death.

The brilliant way in which the tension of the situation is built up is a credit to János Cifra. The friend becomes the victim of his own loyalty, which shows that friendship is a relationship which hides conflict and disagreement within it, although “...friendship by its nature admits of no feigning, no pretence: as far as it goes it is both genuine and spontaneous”, which despite the danger present in this case is an indisputable maxim.¹⁴⁸ József’s downfall warns us that friendship can be undermined and destroyed by suspicion. *Suspicion*, particularly if it is unfounded, cuts friendship down. In Cifra’s reading, József’s downfall really is a spectacular failure on the part of his friend, who is immediately

¹⁴⁵ CICERO: op. cit. p. 87.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. Aristotle’s opinion on the three basic types of friendship. According to this, those who consider friendship primarily a source of profit really do not love each other, but rather the profit that comes out of their relationship. Another form of friendship can be a relationship maintained for the sake of convenience, the essence of which is that it is mutual, but also in this case the situation is not created from the respect of the friends for each other (their attraction), but rather the favourable advantage that arises from their society. In this category Aristotle includes friendship related to hospitality, the essence of which is that the host always offers the comforts of his home to the guest because he knows that he himself can be a guest at any time. So convenience does not save it from being a profitable relationship, but it is more than that. In Aristotle’s thinking the essence of true friendship is the attempt to work for the common good in relation to the other, without taking into account whether or not the initiator shares in that good. Thus a lasting friendship develops when each party experiences the goodwill expressed towards the other, as if it came from himself. The natural mutuality of the folk tale concept of friendship is expressed in Aristotle’s ideas. At the same time it is important to note that in its original context the ethical background of Aristotle’s philosophy of friendship reflected the norms of friendship prevailing in the Greece of his time. ARISTOTLE: *Nikomachian Ethics*. (trans. SZABÓ Miklós) Európa Könyvkiadó, Bp., 1987. See especially pp. 216-222.

¹⁴⁷ NAGY Olga (ed.): Cifra János meséi. p. 271. (*János Cifra’s Stories*)

¹⁴⁸ CICERO: op. cit. p. 87.

ready to believe appearances. The reason for this becomes clear in Cifra's analysis. The theme clearly highlights that in the majority of friendship tales, as a compensation for the asymmetry between the two friends, the weaker expresses doubts concerning the stronger. In the story of *József and Károly* the tale teller always gives József the leading role, while his friend is just a passive party to the events. Károly is fully aware of this; indeed at the beginning of the tale it is clear that:

Károly acknowledged that József had a better mind than he did.¹⁴⁹

In the third 'checking' test of the strength of real friendship the friend illuminates for his friend the secret, mysterious, and maybe suspicious, origin of the events of the story, which causes him to be turned to stone (to die). The fascinating description of the variant can be read in the above mentioned *Morning Star* tale. The friend who helps the prince - the grey haired old man - defeats the seven-headed dragon who has come to attack the sleeping couple, but "[...] a drop of blood is spilt onto the young queen's face. The old man thinks that he can't let it dry there, and so he started to clean her face with his tongue. Then the prince happened to awake and saw him."¹⁵⁰

On the gallows the friend, who was caught in this ambiguous (in fact unambiguous) situation and then sentenced to death, gives the king an explanation for his behaviour, which is also a sacrifice of his own life for friendship. I am ready for death, since I don't want to go on living in this dirty world, but I have one wish: at the time of my death let me tell what I did, and then I don't mind, let death come. So the prince can see that in washing the beautiful queen's face I didn't act sinfully. But you, because you didn't keep your word, you will do penance for seven years, until you truly regret your sin from the depths of your spirit.¹⁵¹ For seven years the prince visits the stone statue of his friend and always warns his young son who accompanies him: "*Don't judge rashly!*"¹⁵² The secondary message hiding behind the commonly given lesson which the prince utters during his penance throws a deeper light on the concept of friendship. Friendship is not a static condition, but an ever pulsating, changing process, a story which stands alone and can be described in a series of events. Winning someone's friendship is much easier than keeping it: since keeping friendship requires continuous 'care'.

The evidence of the argument becomes clear in the expression of the fourth and last formal test. In friendship tales the sacrificial victim brought to re-vivify the friend turned to stone never brings to an end the feeling of guilt which follows the sin committed against the friend. In all cases (at least in the Hungarian variants) the re-vivification of the dead

¹⁴⁹ NAGY Olga (ed.): op. cit. p. 249.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. ORTUTAY Gyula (ed.): *Magyar népmesék II.* p. 295. (Hungarian Folk Tales II)

¹⁵¹ Idem. pp. 295-296.

¹⁵² Idem. p. 297.

partner is linked to sacred-ritual events.¹⁵³ Among these the example of the young couple who are prepared to sacrifice their child undoubtedly stands out. The agony of the parents which leads to the sacrifice in the already often mentioned story of *József and Károly* offers a dramatic example of this. Károly and his wife become aware of the following prophecy: They have a seven year-old child. They don't have any other children. The mother and father take the child over to the stone statue. And then the father takes one leg and lifts the child up, until he reaches the top of József's head. The two parents take the child's legs and pull him until he would split in two, and the child's blood would pour onto József's head. At that point József would be released from the stone statue. But the parents won't do this."¹⁵⁴

Following the logic of the tale, a fortunate turn occurs in the plot, because while the parents are preparing to tear the child apart at the time of the sacrifice he accidentally slips, is hurt and sheds three drops of blood which bring József back to life. The *eudemonia* is the natural end of the tale, and the analysis of friendship in the context of the thought world of the tale allows us to draw two more conclusions. First, according to the imperative of the tale [... the idea] that our regard for ourselves is to be the measure of our regard for our friend is not true; for how many things there are which we would never have done for our own sakes, but do for the sake of a friend!"¹⁵⁵ Secondly, and this follows from the above, friendship requires more than the theoretical acceptance of this principle, since the measure of true friendship is the genuine willingness of the two parties to act for each other. The teaching of the tale holds that the original value of the goodness evidenced to the other in friendship lies in practice and not simply as an article of belief.

¹⁵³ From the latest research it is clear that the sacred elements in the tale have a partly communicative function, which in the end serves to make what is expressed in the tale understandable. "For contemporary communities an understanding of the meaning of tales is only partly given by their conventional signs, a kind of tradition of tale telling which understands the tale as a communal memory. For this reason a personal understanding was also an important element, which did not necessarily follow the rules of meaning creation worked out and handed down by the community, but rather re-evaluated and sometimes misunderstood existing conventions. In this case each tale was not only revealed to the listeners as in its conventional meaning, but as a meaning containing a relative strength which touched personal destiny at that moment and could thus transform it." BÓDIS Zoltán: *Mese és szakrális kommunikáció. (The Tale and Sacred Communication)* In.: BÁLINT Péter (szerk.): *A többes azonossága. Didakt, Hajdúböszörmény. 2010. p. 163. (BÁLINT P. ed. The Identity of the Multiple).*

¹⁵⁴ NAGY Olga (ed.): op. cit. p. 275.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. CICERO: op. cit. p. 101.

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Culinary Discourse in
Contemporary Fiction

Discursuri ale artei
culinare în ficțiunea
contemporană

SPATIALIZING EVERYDAY PRACTICES:

The Kitchen Experience

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Abstract. *The present paper conflates issues of space studies and of the anthropology of everydayness in an attempt to render the possibility of a new approach to literary texts from a multidisciplinary perspective, thus opening new avenues of investigating fiction within the context of blurring or vanishing borders between discourses.*

Key words: space, everyday practices, production, consumption

The semiotics of spaces

According to most theorists, space can be understood and experienced cognitively on one hand, and on the other hand, it can be perceived as being melded with sensual, practical, unreflexive knowledge (see Tim Edensor, 2002: 54), it can be read as an intricate text of a signifying system of a nation, community, or an individual as it is a construction displaying a specific culture. Edensor analyses the relationship between a nation, respectively one's national identity and the national space, a link so strong that it can be reconstituted in Diaspora in the process of confronting with otherness (see p.39), emphasizing the fact that specific, that is the national, landscapes are synecdoche through which nations and individuals are recognized globally, mostly when they are charged with affective and symbolic meanings. Some spaces of national importance connote historical events, thus testifying for significant past cultures becoming "memoryscapes to commemorate significant episodes

in a retrospectively reconstructed national history” (Edensor, 2002: 45) such as Stonehenge or l’Arc de Triomphe, whereas others can celebrate the modernity of a nation turning into the very symbols of its progress such as the Empire State Building or the Sydney Opera House, or exhibit evidence of official power, such as royal palaces or presidents’ houses do, constantly performing the role of points of “physical and ideological orientation around which circuits of memory are organized”(p.47).

Certain spaces are associated with assembly places epitomizing features of national identity, such as Times Square or Trafalgar Square, others turn into symbolic spaces within the dynamics of the everyday and of the popular, such as sports stadia, parks and promenades, show grounds and religious sites, bohemian quarters (e.g. pubs and restaurants), and centres for popular activities of the community, all of them being organized to generate a “sense of being in place within the nation” (p.51). The author visualizes some of the mundane signifiers that convey the familiarity of the space by listing commercial notices, service provision (e.g. phone boxes), roadscapes, domestic architecture, styles of fencing and garden ornamentation, home décor (e.g. kitchen arrangement), foregrounding the relevance of the distribution of these elements within the larger picture of rendering one’s complex identity (see p.51) within the thick intertextuality of landscapes and environments that consolidate one’s life in the world. Features of our domestic environments, so commonly regarded as part of familiar mediascapes as they are employed in television dramas and movies, stand for common denominators to consolidate the relationship between people/s who identify themselves as beneficiaries of the spatial complex network and realize that they themselves can alter the space by domesticating it or narrativising it. There are various ways in which people apprehend and understand familiar spaces and their physical or spiritual relation to them, such as in case of the spatial concept of *home* which covers a wide range of significances – a house, a land, a village, a city, a district, a country or, why not, the world, transmitting the sentimental associations of one scale to others, linking spatial levels together, from the small-scale domestic to the large-scale space (see p.57). The geographical terms are juxtaposed to terms of sensual meanings (a place of comfort, convenience, efficiency, leisure, ease, pleasure, domesticity, intimacy), turning home into the perfect site of a „wealth of unreflexive, habitual practices”(58), and encouraging the experience of home-making as one through which we make ourselves comfortable with the world we live in. Home is the micro-environment which facilitates a display and performance of objects and activities meant to foreground the link to the national constructions of one’s self, as home points to where and how we are located among objects, artefacts, rituals, practices that „configure who we are in our particularity’ and stand for a „form of identity

sustenance and cultural resistance” (62). When we refer to the small-scale environment embodied, for example by one’s home, we easily identify the way individuals domesticate their things and experiences from the external world and turn them into a privatized site where norms of house work and maintenance are entrenched in order to support the dweller’s attempts to differentiate his/her habits and routines. Thus a kitchen can be perceived as an affective, symbolic space “for the interaction with nature”(59) as it is the very place where natural products, mainly foods are transformed into cultural products, specific to the agents in discussion and their expertise in culinary processes as well as their traditional knowledge and practices in the field. The kitchen and the tasks carried out there constitute both a cognitive and an affectively charged site of experiences that can facilitate the shaping and consolidation of a sense of the place which is so deeply embedded in one’s memory and carries with it the mark of identification and belonging. Home, respectively the kitchen of a home, can be perceived as gendered spaces, and are, as we presume, usually feminized due to the nature of the practices that produce and provide the specific values of this space, namely, arranging, ordering, protecting, cleaning, clearing it generating a potential for self-expression, a configuration of the particularity of who we are. Home exists beyond the physicality of the space, that is, it exists in words, jokes, opinions, gestures, actions, the way one wears their clothes, it exists as part of a life lived in movement. (see 64).

The smellscape of the kitchen

David E. Sutton states that the kitchen is a gathering place (2001:IX) where eating can display its pre-eminently social, pleasurable, sensual activities so firmly rooted and integrated in the home life (see X). Subsequent to that, space can be organically connected to performing one’s national or cultural identity by different modes including rituals, habits, everyday, mundane practices meant to legitimate the uniqueness of a particular group or individual. In Alexander McCall Smith’s book *The Sunday Philosophy Club*(2004), Isabel’s home becomes such a site of identification of one’s biases and personality through minor activities such as reading the morning papers and drinking freshly made coffee in the percolator, having breakfast, „her boiled egg placed on the table, she sat down with a copy of the *Scotsman* and a freshly brewed cup of coffee, while Grace went off to start the laundry”(McCall Smith 2004: 67), or preparing dinner later in the afternoon: *Cooking [for her niece Cat and her date, Toby] in a temper required caution with the pepper; one might put far too much in and ruin a risotto in sheer pique.. .She stirred the risotto, taking a small spoonful to test it for seasoning. The liquid from the soaked porcini mushrooms had imparted its flavour to the rice, and*

it was perfect... In the meantime, there was a salad to prepare and a bottle of wine to open... Cat [her niece] had brought a plate of smoked salmon, which she took through to the kitchen with Isabel... They laid the salmon and returned to the drawing room (38-9). Our living spaces turn invisible or present in our memories and dreams and journey with us. In the centre of this dream there is often the kitchen, this warm room where the family gathers, a theatre of operations for the practical arts and nourishing art (see Michel de Certeau, Luce Giard, Pierre Mayol, 1998:148), whether it goes back to medieval days, as in Kate Mosse's example: *The kitchen was alive with hustle and bustle. Great billows of steam were already rising from the huge payrola, the cauldron, hanging on a hook over the open fire. An older servant took the water from the scullion, emptied it into a pot, and then shoved the barrel back at him without saying a word.(...) Next to the hearth, the brushwood was burning fiercely inside the dome-shaped bread oven*"(Kate Mosse 2005: 31) or it is deeply rooted and molded by our hyper/consumerist environment when the temptations of the affluence of food stands turns kitchens into a territory of experiencing the preparation of a meal as furnishing the joy of producing something oneself, of finishing a fragment of reality, of knowing the joys of demiurgic miniaturization. Culinary preparation imposes a coercive series inside of which the various elements can no longer be rearranged, yet the culinary work consisting of chronological sequence like planning, organizing, shopping, preparing, serving, clearing, putting away, tidying up (see Michel de Certeau, Luce Giard, Pierre Mayol, 1998:158), lost its original repetitiveness and humbleness, simplicity and ordinariness, even privacy, in favour of „more creativity, freedom of combinations, a playful search for new flavours and smells and tastes, so that one might say that choosing, matching, preparing foods have become city gestures for 'when you already have enough' (175) . Isabel Dalhousie combines both sequential preparation of a dish with her philosophical creativity so that she could emphasise the pleasure rather than the necessity of food preparation, which has become a hedonistic instance; food is to be savoured peacefully, slowly, with the awareness of their ethical and medical effects, in a permanent attempt to defeat the threats of hyper consumerist, screen-biased society – cholesterol, obesity, heart diseases, nervous breakdowns (see Gilles Lipovetsky, Jean Serroy, 2008: 195). So she went into the larder and retrieved the ingredients for a risotto she would make for cat and Toby. The recipe called for porcini mushrooms, and she had a supply of these, tied up in a muslin bag. Isabel took a handful of the dried fungus, savouring the unusual odour, sharp and salty, so difficult to classify. Yeast extract? She would soak them for half an hour and then use the darkened liquid they produced to cook the rice (McCall Smith 2004: 30). The traditional association of kitchen and

cooking to women has changed as the space and practice have become common to male chefs who author recipes and strategies, shattering traditional spicing and mixing elements, revolutionizing forms and means in huge restaurants cook-rooms, colonized by the media through their chroniclers and reporters, raising culinary practices from the rather rudimentary level to a highly respected and sophisticated one. The kitchen is generally interpreted as the ideal locus of female identity formation and communal solidarity among women, where cooking turns into a powerful language of self-representation and transgression and communication can eventually be seen as a cuisine of gestures, words, ideas, information (see Michel de Certeau, Luce Giard, Pierre Mayol, 1998: 254). In the case of Helen Dunmore's protagonist, Pierre Bourdieu's statements might be explanatory, namely that "ordinary experience of the social world is a cognition" (Bourdieu, 1989: 172) and that "the art of eating and drinking remains one of the few areas in which the working classes explicitly challenge the legitimate art of living, in a "convivial indulgence"(179), especially when Nadine plans, and Tony plans and achieves food preparation and consumption together in a celebration of togetherness. The privacy of the kitchen is inspirational for both as „The kitchen is at the back of the house, facing north against the steeply rising terraced hill and its criss-cross of fire-escapes, backyards and walls shaggy-topped with broken glass. The kitchen is cool and shadowy.”(Dunmore, 1992: 51). The space is unfamiliar for the teenager Nadine and she displays an amateurish performance here when she *takes a tin of ravioli from the cupboard. Opens it and glops its content into a saucepan. Every sound rings hollow in this kitchen. It's too high for its area and has too little furniture in it. Nothing absorbs sound.(...) Apart from ravioli there's a loaf of rye bread, a piece of Parmesan which Tony got from Paolo's where he eats, and six bottles of wine. Otherwise the kitchen is bare of food (...) 'They could use our fridge for the Winter Olympics', Tony had said.'For making snow on the ski-slopes'.*(52). The space regains its functional and aesthetic dimensions when the adult Tony gets to control and dominate it, turning his ordinary cooking into a real art, thus contributing to the semantic shift of the kitchen, from a place of production/consumption into a stage of identity representation and performance: „Tony's sauce bubbles and thickens on the stove. The kitchen smells of basil and vaporizing wine and new bread. Nadine lays two plates. They'll put some of the meat sauce in the ice-crater of the fridge for Kai to eat tomorrow. Tony stirs in the ribbons of veal until the meat whitens and loses its translucency. He turns the mixture once more, then reduces the flame. He throws two handfuls of fresh pasta into a panful of simmering water. The water swells up the sides of the pan and he calms it with a few drops of olive oil”(57).

Conclusion

If food is regarded as a „material reality, as a nourishing substance which sustains the body and gives it strength, thus being the substantialized part of existence” and the act of eating „represents life’s formal dimension and its social facet. (see Bourdieu, 1979:199), then the kitchen becomes a theatre for organizing and rendering everyday practices as fundamental constituents of one’s lifestyle.

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CONSUMER EXCESS, OBJECT BULIMIA AND ALLTHINGS PLENTIFUL

In Chick Lit

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Abstract. *As gluttony or greed both represent a possible facet of the gastronomic experience, in this paper I set out to look at how greed in its shopaholic stance is instantiated in several chick lit novels – the term chick lit means literature for chicks, i.e. young ladies – or more specifically in what I term ‘object bulimia’ or modernist rationality gone bad in postmodernism. Indeed it is part and parcel of the current Zeitgeist, l’air du temps for people to engage in excess, to revel in consumer cornucopia. The new forms of feasting (as opposed to fasting in the Bakhtian vein), of engaging in consumption of the horn-of-plenty of goods and services in consumer society, that include shopaholism (i.e. a form of ideological alcoholism, the addiction to shopping) and the consummate shopaholic are the subject-matter of many a chick lit novels. Equally saliently, a cultural avatar of the shopaholic – the y.u.p.i.e / the upwardly-mobile career woman, whose gluttony is of a more utilitarian nature in the sense that she needs to make room at the top for herself, but room at the top is never enough, her corporate greed obscuring all other existential areas, as Bridget Jones miserably shows in her – aborted – trajectories in Disturbia, or personal Hell. The two chick lit novels I am looking at in this paper for textual evidence of the above are Helen Fielding’s Bridget Jones: The Edge*

of Reason (1999) and Sophie Kinsella's Shopaholic Abroad (2001). And last but not least, it is up to men – according to Candace Bushnell (the author of Sex and the City published in 1996) – to generate alternative paradigms to consumerism and shameless indulging in cornucopia and to herald the way out of this paradigmatic labyrinth, indeed to attempt metanoia, i.e. a change in the mindset, in the mental arrangement of our female protagonists. The way to do this is to overtly engage in minimalism.

Keywords: cornucopia/horn-of-plenty, consumerism, consumer excess, object bulimia, shopaholic, yuppy-ism, minimalism.

Cornucopia and consumer excess

Apart from considerations in the abstract above, another possible conceptual link between studies in gastronomy as culture on the one hand and consumerism on the other hand, redolent of excess is the so-called 'food pornography', a strand of cultural studies, that has consumers – in the Gutenberg sense – of the glossy press gawk at spreads in (women's) magazines that exhibit copious meals that the readers in question can only look at, as they are on perpetual slimming diets. One such analysis of a spread in "Slimmer" magazine goes:

"There's a full-page spread in a woman's magazine. It's captioned Breakfast Special, and shows a picture of every delicious breakfast imaginable. The hungry eye can delight in croissants with butter, exquisitely prepared bacon and eggs, toasted waffles with maple syrup. But over the top of the pictures there's a sinister message: 430 calories for the croissants; 300 for the waffles. The English breakfast takes the biscuit with a top score of 665 calories. It must be a galling sight for the readers of this particular magazine. Because it's "Slimmer" magazine. And one presumes the reader looks on these pleasures in the full knowledge that they had better not be indulged. This pleasure in looking at the supposedly forbidden is reminiscent of another form of guilty-but-indulgent looking, that of sexual pornography. Sexual pornography as a separate realm of imagery exists because our society defines some explicit pictures of sexual activity or sexual parts as 'naughty', 'illicit'. These images are then made widely available through a massive and massively profitable industry.

The glossy pictures in slimming magazines show in glorious Technicolor all the illicit desires which make us fat." (Coward 1990: 309)

Ergo excess, in its manifold forms is also – apart from the more denotative victuals - about consumption of image, of phantasm, it is indeed connotative of the latter – all part and parcel of postmodernism.

In her consumer drive, Becky a.k.a. Shopaholic (a generic nickname to show her archetypal quality) invades and appropriates other spaces than her own; indeed she travels from Britain to America, where she replicates her spending habits with gusto. She can be said to engage in globalization with a difference, that is the globalization of consumerism. In the excerpt below she enters the 'shrine' of all shoppers, Saks Store on Fifth Avenue in New York City with some trepidation:

"Because this isn't just any old shop, is it? This is a world-famous shop. I'm actually here. I'm in Saks on Fifth Avenue in New York. As I walk slowly into the store – forcing myself not to rush - I feel as though I'm setting off for a date with a Hollywood movie star." (Kinsella 2001: 162)

I identify here two degrees of remoteness from reality, a kind of *Ersatz* stance that Becky inhabits momentarily; she is indeed twice-removed: first, by her ingress into mythical Saks on Fifth Avenue, itself an almost infantile realm of infinite consumer possibility, where reality kicks in only when there's an overdraft in the credit cards – and the mythical world of Hollywood showbiz on the other hand, riddled with its inaccessible celluloid demigods ("a date with a Hollywood movie star"). Thus, Becky makes the intangible all too tangible and readily accessible for appropriation, read purchase. Fantasy, potentiality transformed into the palpable. Later, in her pseudo-picaresque excursive – and discursive – endeavour, Becky unfailingly projects her paradigms abroad, indeed globally, thus becoming a perpetrator of globalism:

"God, I adore shopping abroad. I mean, shopping anywhere is always great – but the advantages of doing it abroad are:

You can buy things you can't get in Britain.

You can name-drop when you get back home. ('Actually, I picked this up in New York.')

Foreign money doesn't count, so you can spend as much as you like.

Ok, I know that last one isn't entirely true. Somewhere in my head I know that dollars are proper money, with a real value. But I mean, *look* at them. I just can't take them seriously. I've got a whole wodge of them in my purse, and I feel as though I'm carrying around the bank from a Monopoly set. Yesterday I went and bought some magazines from a newsstand, and as I handed over a \$20 bill, it was just like playing shop. It's like some weird form of jet-lag – you move into another currency and suddenly feel as though you're spending nothing." (Kinsella 2001: 163)

But presently she regains the right road and composure when she acknowledges that dollars are real money and that money in general is not invisible or impalpable. Again the reference to the game of Monopoly is meant to indicate a realm of infantile, Neverlandish hedonist possibility and the generic shopping mall is apt to cater for any absurd, childish, whimsical consumer desire.

The downside of consumerism

Her shopaholic exploits notwithstanding, Becky still experiences epistemological trauma (she doesn't know what sample sales are, hence her episteme (i.e. her knowledge) of all things consumerist is faulty) and consequently feels excluded, ostracized from the select community of real shopaholics:

“Oh, I can't bear this any longer.

‘Excuse me,’ I say, turning round. ‘I didn't mean to eavesdrop on your conversation – but I just have to know one thing. What is a sample sale?’

The whole gift wrap area goes quiet. Everyone is staring at me, even the lady with the silver pen.

‘You don't know what a sample sale is?’ says a girl in a leather jacket eventually, as though I've said I don't know my alphabet.” (Kinsella 2001: 166)

Peer pressure and taxonomic identification, overtones of epistemological worth crop up – what knowledge counts, whose expertise? She is disdainfully excluded, ostracized - the stigma of her ignorance of all things consumerist sticking with her – but only fleetingly, until she follows suit. She is thus ‘resuscitated’ to the prospect of a bargain (“bringing me back to life”). After the traumatizing experience of having to exhibit her ignorance of sample sales, Becky gets out of Saks flustered, in all shame. She can be said to exit Paradise – turned – Hell:

“I have never moved as fast as I do out of that shop. Clutching my Saks Fifth Avenue carrier, I hail a taxi, breathlessly read out the address on the card, and sink back into my seat.

I have no idea where we're heading or what famous landmarks we're passing – but I don't care. As long as there are designer clothes on sale, then that's all I need to know.” (Kinsella 2001: 167)

Post-traumatically, i.e. after the traumatizing experience in Saks Store, she heads out into the unknown as it were, into the urban jungle of New York City, in a beat generation, road-movie manner. In Becky's case, it is not cultural tourism that is instantiated here in her peripatetic stance, but a shopping spree. High culture versus mass culture, one might say. But it is not only our consummate shopaholic who invades, occupies and appropriates paradigmatic space (i.e. the shopping mall), it is also the aftermath of her indiscriminate spending and overspending, of the exertion of her consumer greed, that strikes back, quite spatially so, one might argue, when people start phoning her at home for debt; now her domestic space is being invaded by her creditors:

“I stare at the phone, feeling my smile fade. This isn't a courtesy call at all, is it? He doesn't want me to design a collection of clothes. He's phoning about money!

I feel slightly outraged. Surely people aren't just allowed to telephone you in your own home and demand money with no warning? I mean, *obviously* I'm

going to pay them. Just because I don't send a check off the moment the bill comes through the letterbox." (Kinsella 2001: 85). Frustration that our consummate shopaholic experiences is an issue addressed by several theorists of consumerism – see Frank (2009) and Harris (2010) who discuss consumer society as the flawed Utopia of postmodern times.

Imbibing tea, absorbing values and norms

In moments of respite, in-between shopping sprees, Becky gets her bearings and takes stock of her abundant experience – or her experience of abundance. In such moments, she relishes in that most quintessentially English ritual, taking tea. (Although, as those postcolonially-inclined might argue, tea was brought over by the early colonists from the Orient). But I digress. Again she cannot resist projecting her own values and norms: the values of Britishness, redolent of insularity, centrality:

“Oh God, that's good. That's so good.” For a while I'm silent, letting the steam warm my face, feeling myself relax. I take a few more sips, then open my eyes. “They just cannot make tea in America. I went to one place, and they gave me this ...cup full of hot water, and a tea bag in a packet. And the cup was *see-through*.” (Kinsella 2002: 289)

Having decided that British centralism still stands and that America is but a flawed copy of the Old World, Becky and her husband decide to ‘overtake’ New York, indeed appropriate it – having failed to gentrify it – by getting immersed into its night life. (‘The city-that-never-sleeps’, the very label New York City carries is indicative of a certain kind of abundance, that of entertainment, a plethora of ‘neon civilization’, a sort of excess in electricity consumption): “Well then, lighten up! Come on, a few hours of fun never did anybody any harm. Let's both dress up and go somewhere really nice, and dance, and drink cocktails ...” I kiss him gently on the back of his neck. “I mean, why on earth come to New York and not enjoy it?” (Kinsella 2002: 254)

Now with Bridget Jones, (see Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary* and its sequel, *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason*), lists in the Defoe-ean vein pervade the text. Indeed, Bridget's diary is suffused with entries that yield a plethora of objects and the minutiae of everyday life. A sense of the banal is apparent in her daily lament and this is indicative of her being overwhelmed by the sheer materialism of her existence. This materialism ripples through her private existence (ever so minutely described in an almost Naturalistic manner – see Emile Zola's novels) coming from the other sphere in her life, namely her workplace. The public sphere for this frenzy-ridden upwardly-mobile career woman is equally frustrating. Hence Bridget – as a metonym for consumer society at large – in her bulimia, perpetually depressive and neurotic, vacillates between the power-laden spaces of the workplace and the less satisfying,

imperfect realm of personal fulfillment (restaurants, clubs). Indeed, one of the commodified epitome of personal fulfillment – dare I say, love – is Valentine’s – that she obsesses over for days on end, as entries in her diary show: “Thursday 13 February: 9 st, alcohol units 4, cigarettes 19, gym visits 0, early Valentines 0, mentions of Valentine’s Day by boyfriend 0, point of Valentine’s Day if boyfriend does not even mention it 0.

Friday 14 February: 9 st, gym visits 0, Valentines 0, flowers, trinkets, Valentine’s gifts 0, point of Valentine’s Day 0, difference between Valentine’s Day and any other day 0, point of living: uncertain, possibility of overreaction to disaster of Non-Valentine’s Day: slight.” (Fielding 1999: 84-5)

Monday 3 February: 9st, alcohol units 3, cigarettes 12, no. of days to Valentine’s Day 11, no. of minutes spent obsessing about feminist wrongness of obsessing re: Valentine’s Day 162 approx. (bad).” (Fielding 1999: 78)

All this musing makes her depressed and bulimic, an inveterate consumer not only of food (calories piling up on her lists), but of alcohol, cigarettes, self-help books (dross, which can be decoded as reading bulimia). Gluttony is also expressed here by reference to appropriating otherness (Buddhism) through the westernized channel of commercial self-help books: “Sunday 2 February: 9 st 2 (excellent: am turning into Oriental Boy), cigarettes 3 (v.g.), calories 2,100 (v. modest), boyfriends 1 again (hurrah!), self-help books counted out loud in dismissive incredulous manner by newly re-instated boyfriend 37 (only sensible in this day and age).” (Fielding 1999: 73)

When gastronomic excess is bound to turn her into a Buddha-like figure, Bridget considers extreme dieting and going to the gym. Figure fascism, the socially-constructed obsession with ‘the body beautiful’ is played out here: “Saturday 1 February: 9 st 3, alcohol units 6 (but mixed with tomato juice, v. nutritious), cigarettes 400 (entirely understandable), rabbits, deer, pheasants or other wildlife found in bed 0 (massive improvement on yesterday), boyfriends 0, boyfriends of ex-boyfriend 1, no. of normal potential boyfriends remaining in world 0.” (Fielding 1999: 67)

Greed and ‘the body beautiful’

The prevalence of health discourse – significantly, physical health here, even though Bridget’s mental health as well is a consideration (see her hallucinations about wildlife in bed) – is part and parcel of post-industrial times, when the abundance of high-tech domestic equipment means both that people are spared the effort and also that they now have the time to muse on beauty and ‘the body beautiful’:

“Friday 31 January: 9 st 4, alcohol units 6 (2)*, cigarettes 12 (0)*, calories 4,284 (1,500)*, lies told to fitness assessor 14. *Figures in brackets denote data given to fitness assessor.” (Fielding 1999: 52)

Also the configuration of health club culture can be gleaned here: “Friday 31 January: V. excited about dinner. Have been practising in outfit and really it looks excellent, sleek smooth lines, all thanks to scary pants, which there is no reason he should find out about. Also really no reason why should not be v. g. escort. Am woman of world with career etc.” (Fielding 1999: 53)

As the quote above yields, Bridget hereby places herself outside the boundaries of traditional, canonized femininity, indeed outside the 'Bermuda triangle' of the traditional 3 K's (Kinder/Kuche/Kirche): now, this new breed of woman that Bridget can be said to stand for does no longer engage in acts of domestic power – on her turf, the kitchen (see 'the-angel-in-the-house', a term coined by Coventry Patmore in the 19th century), but expects to be taken out to dinner if the husband/boyfriend needs to eat. Thus, a new iconography of femininity is instantiated, that of trophy-wife, who strives to be beautiful to be taken out to dinner. Emancipation gone bad. A parodying stance of 'the body beautiful' and the efforts and paraphernalia thereof crops up in one entry for the 30th of January:

"Thursday 30 January: 9 p.m. Back home. Shopping experience was perhaps best described as educational. Magda insisted on waving ghastly huge scary pants at me. 'Come on, Bridget: the New Corsetry! Think 70s, think Cross Your Heart, think girdle,' she said, holding up a sort of Cyclist Serial Killer's outfit in black Lycra with shorts, boning and a sturdy bra." (Fielding 1999: 50)

A perusal of the excerpt above yields the notion that the old paraphernalia of – canonized, prescribed – beauty is re-instantiated nowadays, with a difference: the re-invention of tradition, of the corset, paradoxically embraced in post-bra-burning, Women's Lib, emancipated times. Women's Lib proves feeble in the face of this re-interpretation of the roles of women, of feminine beauty as social function ultimately. Re-interpretation is in what follows all about the anthropomorphic parameters of beauty in postmodernism versus classicism, i.e. nowadays women are meant to be more athletic and discard the 'hour-glass' corseted figure of yore. Yet – as postmodernism is about play of surfaces and bricolage - this old-fashioned corseted figure that used to constitute 'the body beautiful' in previous centuries is now being revisited: "Fashion's most romantic story for seasons has been the rise of the corset. Dolce and Gabbana and Christian Lacroix both caught up with Vivienne Westwood and John Galiano who have long been devotees of the garment, now sexy, which used to symbolize figure fascism. Women are begging to wear them, although the work that goes into the boning makes them very expensive. Rigby and Peller, the queen's corsetier, tailors similar corsets or basques from #550. Alternatively there's the real McCoy which tend to be much cheaper. Cornucopia has an ever changing selection of Victorian corsets and tops from boned dresses which have been separated from their skirts. Worn over a simple slip skirt they are the alternative to bias cutting for evening." ("Evening Standard", 12 July 1994 in Appignanesi and Garratt 1995)

Masculinity and minimalism

As mentioned before, there is a paradigmatic alternative to all this as reflected in chick lit – and that is the masculine mode of Protestant restraint and moderation, or more generally speaking, minimalism. Indeed such restraint – as opposed to the consumer excess that the feminine characters in chick lit portray – is perpetuated by male figures

in, say, Candace Bushnell's *Sex and the City*. In her description of New York men, a new, uncanny type of paraphernalia emerges as an alternative to the forcefully 'out-there' typology of the successful businessman. Wall Street is nowadays teeming with them: the bikes (more specifically, tripod bikes) as an alternative to cars. By so doing, Bushnell implicitly engages in green discourse, the discourse of environmental correctness, indeed one of the staples of contemporary society: "Riding a bike is not necessarily a power move," says Mr Eccles. "It's best done by power people like George Plimpton. Otherwise, you have to hide your bike around the corner and surreptitiously take your trousers out of your socks. "Bicycle Boys don't ride their bikes for sport, like those silly guys you see riding around and around the park. They ride partly for transportation and, more important, to preserve a literary boyhood. Think of twilight at Oxford, riding over the cobblestones while a woman waits down by the Cherwell River, wearing a flowing dress, clasping a volume of Byron. That's how Bicycle Boys think of themselves as they pedal Manhattan, dodging cabbies and potholes. While John F. Kennedy Jr. was certainly New York's most famous and sought-after bike-riding bachelor, his ripple athleticism disqualifies him for Bicycle Boydom. Because a Bicycle Boy would rather bike through midtown in a seersucker suit than in shorts and a chest-hugging T. (...) Bicycle Boys are not averse to the chastising pain of a hard bike seat – it helps the literature." (Bushnell 1996: 87-8).

Conclusion

All in all, the way excess is played out in the chick lit novels analysed above is prevalently gender-informed: women seem to be prone to excess, whereas men keep to restraint and 'redeem' humanity at large through their overt minimalism. All the more food for thought for the taxonomically-minded.

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JOANNE HARRIS' GASTRONOVELS OR WAVING FICTION AROUND FLOOD

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Abstract. *For Joanne Harris, food reveals people's character, personality, attitude to life and other people, it's a way of expressing oneself, an opinion she shares with Mexican novelist Laura Esquivel. The magic universe she creates in her novels is inspired by the already classic fairy-tales written by Romantic authors such as brothers Grimm, Andersen and Perrault, where food plays unusual roles and has magical properties. Chocolate to ease pains and solve domestic problems, wine that contains and unleashes long-forgotten memories, feelings and words of the past, recipes that cover a family's secrets which is gradually deciphered while cooking them, these ideas make up the plot of the author's three novels, "Chocolat", "Blackberry Wine" and "Five Quarters of the Orange" our paper focuses on. Although the novels are woven around food, they also cover essential themes such as identity, attitudes towards the Other, the outsider, in small communities, the world of art, war time realities, a.s.o.*

Key-words. *contemporary British fiction, food, identity, sin, intolerance, the Other, memories*

British writer Joanne Harris was born in Barnsley in 1964, of a French mother and an English father, and grew in her grandparents' sweetshop. She studied Modern and Mediaeval Languages at St Catharine's College, Cambridge and was a teacher for fifteen years, during which time she published *Chocolat* (1999), which was turned into an Oscar-nominated film starring Juliette Binoche and Johnny Depp. Her other two novels dealt with in our paper are *Blackberry*

Wine, published in 2000 and *Five Quarters of the Orange*, which appeared in 2001. Her books are published in over forty countries and have won a number of British and international awards. According to Harris, "tastes and smells are particularly evocative to us because as newborns we first experience the world through those two senses. [...] In more recent literature, such references provide a handy means of reflecting different cultures and distant places. It's also a very useful indicator of personality. Eating habits provide us with an insight into a person's background, character, family and upbringing, as well as their general attitude to life and to other people. Besides, readers understand food; in our increasingly diverse and multicultural society, eating remains one of the very few experiences we all have in common; a pleasure, a comfort and a means of expression"¹⁵⁶.

Harris has been marketed as a foodie writer, a French writer, a writer of magical realism, a writer of modern fairytales, something she openly acknowledges: "I didn't pioneer the use of food in fiction: it has been a standard literary device since Chaucer and Rabelais, who used food wonderfully as a metaphor for sensuality. However I do think that my stories have elements in common with Grimm, Andersen and Perrault, who often attributed magical properties to food (the Gingerbread House, the magic beans, Snow White and the apple). I have tried to write a kind of contemporary folklore, in which the reality of the senses merges with the extra-sensory, magical or miraculous"¹⁵⁷.

The first novel this paper deals with, *Chocolat*, is not only about the role that food, and particularly sweets and chocolat, can play in people's lives. It is also about a case of in-migration (the migration of people inside the same region/territory/country), but sharing a lot of the key elements related to out-migration. It is the story of Vianne Rocher, a single mother with a young daughter, who arrives in the village of Lansquenet-sous-Tannes before the fast of Lent and opens a chocolate shop, *La Céleste Praline*, in a disused bakery facing the church, thus disturbing Francis Reynaud, the parish priest. The story is conveyed through the alternation of the narrative voices of Vianne and Reynaud. Accustomed to wandering from one place to another, of never staying put for too long, Vianne reflects on the villagers' reactions to newcomers: "No-one looks at us. We might as well be invisible; our clothing marks us as strangers, transients. They are polite, so polite; no-one stares at us. [...] The people of Lasquenet have learned the art of observation without eye contact". (Harris, 2007:13) The close-knit village community takes a while until it accepts Vianne, but the river gypsies

¹⁵⁶ <http://www.joanne-harris.co.uk/v3site/faq/index.html>

¹⁵⁷ <http://www.readinggroupguides.com/guides3/coastliners2.asp>

who have the same wandering spirit as her are, from the beginning, doomed. Intolerance starts where one least expects it, as the parish priest, Reynaud should show the Christian mercy so much preached on. Instead, his thoughts reveal a world of prejudice and narrow-mindedness: "Every year they try it, coming upriver from the cities and the shanty-towns or worse, further afield from Algeria and Morocco. Looking for work. Looking for a place to settle, to breed... I preached a sermon against them this morning, but I know that in spite of this some of my parishioners [...] will make them welcome in defiance of me. They are vagrants. They have no respect and no values. They are the river-gypsies, spreaders of disease, thieves, liars, murderers when they can get away with it. Let them stay and they will spoil everything we have worked for, *père*. All our education. Their children will run with ours until everything we have done for them is ruined. They will steal our children's minds away. Teach them hatred and disrespect for the Church. Teach them laziness and avoidance of responsibility. Teach them crime and the pleasures of drugs. Have they already forgotten what happened that summer? Are they fool enough to believe the same thing will not happen again?" (Harris, 2007:91-92)

What's more, it seems that his intolerance mirrors the one of the previous priest: "I remember the summer of '75, *mon père* [...] We had plague after plague that summer. First the river gypsies, crawling up what was left of the river in their filthy floating hovels, staying stranded in Les Marauds on the baking mudflats. Then the sickness which struck first their animals and then our own [...] The children stoned the gypsies too, but they were as trapped and desperate as their animals and they kept coming back. [...] We kept them at bay, refusing to sell goods or water, refusing medicine. Stranded on the flats of the dwindling Tannes, they drank bottled beer and river water. [...] Some people, weaklings, began to talk about charity. About pity. But you stayed strong. You knew what to do. [...] it was another two weeks before they left at last. [...] A fire, you said, *mon père* [...] an accident. [...] Some people talked; some always do. Said you had encouraged it with your sermons ..." (Harris, 2007:158-159)

Father Reynaud dreams of having a disciplined „flock” which obeys him unconditionally, like in the old days: „All I want is to guide them, *mon père*, to free them from their sin. But they fight me at every turn, like children refusing wholesome fare in order to continue eating what sickens them”. (Harris, 1999:23)

He sees Vianne Rocher's opening a confectionery shop opposite the Church as a personal defiance, and associates her culinary work to Pagan rituals, out of his control, meant to create chaos and destabilize the order and faith in the village: „Perhaps this

is what Reynaud senses in my little shop; a throwback to times when the world was a wider, wilder place. Before Christ [...] the cocoa bean was revered. Magical properties were attributed to it. Its brew was sipped on the steps of sacrificial temples; its ecstasies were fierce and terrible. Is that what he fears? Corruption by pleasure, the subtle transubstantiation of the flesh into a vessel for debauch? Not for him the orgies of the Aztec priesthood". (Harris, 1999:62-65)

Reynaud lives in a world of black and white, in which he and his ways stand for the good, and everything else, anything he can't control, represents the dark side: "Evil lives with us. Evil wears a winning smile and bright colours. When I was a child I used to listen in terror to the story of the gingerbread house, of the witch who tempted little children in and ate them. I look at her shop, all wrapped in shining papers like a present waiting to be unwrapped, and I wonder how many people, how many souls, she has already tempted beyond redemption." (Harris, 1999:305)

Reynaud plots to prevent the chocolate festival Vianne has planned to organize on Easter Sunday by breaking into the shop to destroy everything he finds, but finishes by giving in to his inner, most secret fantasies stirred by the goodies displayed in her shop window: "It is like one of my dreams. I roll in chocolates. I imagine myself in a field of chocolates on a beach of chocolates, basking-rooting-gorging. I have no time to read the labels; I cram chocolates into my mouth at random. The pig loses his cleverness in the face of so much delight, becomes a pig again, and though something at the top of my mind screams at me to stop I cannot help myself. Once begun it cannot end. This has nothing to do with hunger; I force them down, mouth bulging, hands full. For a terrible instant I imagine Armande returning to haunt me, to curse me perhaps with her own peculiar affliction; the curse of death by gluttony. I can hear myself making *sounds* as I eat, moaning, keening sounds of ecstasy and despair, as if the pig within has finally found a voice." (Harris, 1999:312-313)

For Vianne, with a troubled and nomadic childhood, cooking represents a stable element in life, a way to forget outside troubles and express her identity, one of the few pleasures in life:

"This is an art I can enjoy. There is a kind of sorcery in all cooking: in the choosing of ingredients, the process of mixing, grating, melting, infusing and flavouring, the recipes taken from ancient books, the traditional utensils [...] And it is partly the transience of it that delights me; so much loving preparation, so much art and experience put into pleasure which can last only a moment, and which only a few will ever fully appreciate". (Harris, 1999:62). The sweets she prepares, the chocolates, the pralines in

which she puts her heart, seem to have magic qualities (for which Father Reynaud's most fervent followers accuse her of sorcery): they soothe lost hopes and stir unexpected feelings. According to Margaret H. McFadden in many cultures, women cook and men eat, and food is important to women in traditional societies because it is the one resource that they control. In *Chocolat*, the religious conflict is between Catholics and pagans (i.e. all those who do not observe Sunday mess or other Christian holidays or traditions like Lent). Vianne, a non-Christian, is the representative of the good, while, in an ironic reversal, the villain in the story is the representative of the Church. Vianne bestows grace in a very Christian way by her acceptance of otherness-the poor, the gypsies, the downtrodden. In the same reversal of values, in *Chocolat* the sin of gluttony is manifested by the priest, first in his minds and then in fact, and the good Catholic is revealed to be the perpetrator of the fire on the gypsies' houseboats and the destroyer of the chocolate figures in the shop-the Mayan god and the chocolate pyramid. In *Chocolat*, Vianne functions as the Christ figure, for she heals people and brings them together across generational and class lines. (McFadden, 2004 : 122-125)

In the second novel we are dealing with, *Blackberry Wine*, Harris imagines Jay Mackintosh, a novelist going through writer's block, who needs to regress to his childhood days in order to be able to start writing again. The story is told from the point of view of a bottle of special wine – the blackberry wine who gives the novel its title – (a bottle belonging to the collection of „Specials” that Jay has inherited from an important person in his childhood, Joe Cox – the one who had taught him how to really see the world and enjoy life, and the one who will symbolically „unlock” his pen this time) as old as the main character: "Fleurie, 1962. (...) 'A pert, garrulous wine, cheery and a little brash, with a pungent taste of blackcurrant,' said the label." (Harris, 2000: 9).

Right from the beginning, the reader is swept into a fascinating universe: "Wine talks; ask anyone. The oracle at the street corner; the uninvited guest at the wedding feast; the holy fool. It ventriloquizes. It has a million voices. It unleashes the tongue, teasing out secrets you never meant to tell, secrets you never even knew. It shouts, rants, whispers. It speaks of great plans, tragic loves, and terrible betrayals. It screams with laughter. It chuckles softly to itself. It weeps in front of its own reflection. It revives summers long past and memories best forgotten. Every bottle a whiff of other times, other places, everyone [...] a humble miracle. Everyday magic, Joe called it. The transformation of base matter into the stuff of dreams." (Harris, 2000:9). John Macintosh had become famous with one novel,

and then had settled for writing cheap paperback books under a pseudonym, articles and short stories, but nothing memorable. He resorts to drinking, as he keeps telling himself, in order „to remember, to open up the past and find himself there again [...] He opened each bottle, began each story with the secret conviction that *here* was the magic draught that would restore him.” (Harris, 2000: 13)

The allusion to Proust’s Madeleine scene and the way it conjured the past is too obvious in Jay’s drinking the first bottle of Specials not to be noticed: „It tasted as dreadful as it did when he was a boy [...] and yet it was evocative, catching at his throat and his memory, drawing out images he thought were lost for ever. He clanked his fists as the images assailed him, feeling suddenly light-headed. [...] the wine had awakened something in him, something extraordinary, and he wanted to explore it further. He took another drink [...] He tried for a moment to identify the sensation he felt and eventually recognized it as joy.” (Harris, 2000: 21-21)

But his return to the past doesn’t happen only by way of thinking it and analysing the sensations. On the spur of the moment he buys a farm, which has always been Joe Cox’s dream, and renovates it without changing it too much. In the house over the next several months, Jay uncorks Joe’s last six bottles of Special wines one by one, he meets the people in the village and starts writing about them, thus getting rid of his writer’s block. To Narcisse, another character, a taste of the wine brings back memories of his loved one and tears in his eyes: “The old man took a mouthful and rolled it on his tongue. For a moment he thought he heard music [...] With it came the smell of smoke, fried potatoes and *boudin*¹⁵⁸ the way Marthe used to make it, though Marthe had been dead for ten years [...] ‘Tastes of...’ He could hardly recall what it did taste of, but that scent remained with him, the scent of Marthe cooking and the way the smoke used to cling to her hair and make the apples of her cheeks stand out red. Combining it out at night, loosening the brown curls from the tight bun in which she kept them, all the day cooking smells would be trapped in the tendrils at the nape of her neck – olive bread and *boudin* and baking and woodsmoke.” (Harris, 2000: 255-256)

Writing about food and non-representational memory, Fabio Parasecoli considers that memory depends heavily on the body, not only because most of the material on which the mind elaborates is derived from the senses, but also because the body and the emotions connected with it (e.g. pleasure, pain, fear) influence the way memories are stored and eventually retrieved. Rational processes,

¹⁵⁸ Blood sausage.

hinging heavily on memories, says Parasecoli, cannot be totally isolated from what is traditionally considered irrational, physical, and instinctual. (Parasecoli, 2007:104)

The beginning of the third novel discussed here, *Five Quarters of the Orange*, is as sudden as the other two: „When my mother died, she left the farm to my brother, Cassis, the fortune in the wine cellar to my sister, Reine-Claude, and to me, the youngest, her album and a two-litre jar containing a single black Périgord truffle [...] My mother marked the events of her life with recipes, dishes of her own invention or interpretations of old favourites. Food was her nostalgia, her celebration, its nurture and preparation the sole outlet for her creativity.” (Harris, 2001, 13-14)

As in the previous novel, the story shifts back and forth in time, presenting the present along with unfolding the past. Framboise Dartigen (called Boise when she was a child) tells the story of her childhood with a tough mother who is not close to them, and whose tenderness towards her children is only shown through the meals she cooks for them. Even the names of these three children are somehow connected to food: “My mother had a passion for all fruit except oranges, which she refused to allow in the house. She named each one of us, on a seeming whim, after a fruit and a recipe – Cassis, for her thick blackcurrant cake, Framboise, her raspberry liqueur, and Reinette, for her greengage tart” (Harris, 2001:18)

Oranges were banned from their house because their scent heralded her awful migraines, lasting from a couple of hours to even two days, periods of which she had no recollection afterwards. During the German occupation in the second world war of Les Laveuses, a small village on the Loire, Boise’s mother Mirabelle becomes the mistress of Thomas Leibniz, who can obtain pills for her migraines. When Tomas is found dead, ten villagers are shot as retribution. Following one of her spells, and not remembering anything, Mirabelle is convinced that she had killed him, so she accepts the blame for it, and her family is driven away from the village. All these memories, buried in the past, are deciphered by Framboise in her mother’s album, “valueless except for the thoughts and insights jotted in the margins alongside recipes and newspaper cuttings and herbal cures. Not a diary precisely; there are no dates in the album, no precise order. [...] I recognize some of the incidents to which she refers. Others are twisted to suit the moment’s needs. Others seem to be complete inventions, lies, impossibilities.” (Harris, 2001:14) along its recipes that help her run her own business and thus support herself.

The question here is not what kind of fiction does Joanne Harris write, mainstream or lighter, less important one from the point of view of its literary merits. What we wanted to show in our

article is how modern times fairy-tales can be cleverly woven around food in order to grab the reader's attention and take him into wonderful worlds like hers.

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LE SACRE DE LA NOURRITURE DANS *MEMOIRES D'HADRIEN*

de Marguerite Yourcenar

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Résumé: Dans cet exposé, on a essayé de démontrer que pour l'écrivain français Marguerite Yourcenar, la notion de sacré a une signification particulière, différente de celle religieuse. Tout le cosmos est imprégné de ce sacré et par conséquent on le retrouve dans ses composants les plus simples, comme les aliments. Si la nourriture est sacrée, ce fait a une conséquence directe et immédiate sur le corps auquel elle transmet l'essence de l'immortalité. La nourriture représente ensuite le lien entre l'homme et les autres règnes, entre le microcosme et le macrocosme. L'attitude envers la nourriture est l'expression d'une conception philosophique de l'homme. L'empereur Hadrien manifeste envers cette composante, si nécessaire et si importante de la vie, de la sobriété et y recherche la simplicité, le contact direct avec la nature et avec nos origines humaines.

Mots clés: sacré, nourriture, sobriété, simplicité, nature, immortalité

Abstract: In this research article, we aim to show that, for the famous writer Marguerite Yourcenar, the notion of sacred has a special meaning different from that of religion. The entire cosmos is permeated with the sacred. Therefore the sacred is retraceable even in the universe's most simple components, such as food. If food is sacred, this has a direct and immediate effect on the body to which it transmits the essence of immortality. The food is then the link between man and the other kingdoms, between the microcosm and the macrocosm. The attitude towards food is the expression of a philosophical conception on man.

Keywords: sacred food, sobriety, simplicity, nature, immortality.

L'acceptation du sacré

Le sacré est une notion qui traverse l'œuvre yourcenarienne d'un bout à l'autre. Ce n'est pas une notion religieuse, dans la manière où nous concevons le religieux, parce que celle-ci l'englobe et le dépasse en même temps. La ferveur religieuse prend d'autres formes chez l'écrivain

français et la manière dont elle se rapporte au divin diffère de celle d'un croyant. Elle a eu la révélation du sacré pendant l'enfance et elle le définit de la sorte: Le sacré est un mot qu'il faut prendre très sérieusement. Je plains toujours les gens qui n'ont pas vécu dans le mythe religieux tout naturellement, de plain-pied, au cours de leur enfance. Mon éducation a été très libre, on ne m'a jamais assuré qu'il fallait croire à tel ou tel dogme, mais il m'en est tout de même resté le sentiment de l'immense invisible et de l'immense incompréhensible qui nous entoure.¹⁵⁹

Marguerite Yourcenar éprouve le même sentiment devant une image du Jésus, mais elle y mêle la sensualité et la pitié: Mais tout s'effaçait devant l'effigie, aperçue çà et là dans des églises de Flandre, du Jésus couché, raidi, tout blanc, quasi nu, tragiquement mort et seul. Qu'il s'agit d'une œuvre inégalée d'un sculpteur du Moyen Age, ou d'une bondieuserie colorée de la place Saint-Supplice, m'importait peu. Je crois bien que c'est devant l'une de ces images que j'ai ressenti pour la première fois le curieux mélange de la sensualité qui s'ignore, de la pitié, du sens du sacré.¹⁶⁰ Yves-Alain Favre définit le sacré conçu par Yourcenar comme « la révélation d'une présence qui se pose en absolu, qui, selon les cas, terrifie ou fascine, qui exerce sur l'homme sa puissance prestigieuse, mais sur laquelle, ce dernier n'a aucune prise. »¹⁶¹ Marguerite Yourcenar ne se sent pas attiré par le sacré religieux, à cause des dogmes et des diverses religions qui limitent la liberté de la pensée et qui rejettent, par manque de compréhension, la sensualité et la sexualité. Les religions, vers lesquelles elle se sent attirée, sont la religion grecque, le bouddhisme et l'hindouisme. Dans la dernière, elle retrouve une « chaude sensualité » et une amitié tendre pour les animaux et pour d'autres « êtres appartenant à d'autres espèces et à d'autres règnes. » En commentant un bas relief de Krishna, habillé en berger, jouant de la flûte au milieu de son troupeau, Yourcenar surprend l'apport original de l'Inde à la croyance religieuse :

Ce que l'Inde ajoute à cette immense pastorale cosmique, c'est le sens profond de l'un dans le multiple, la pulsation d'une joie qui traverse la plante, la bête, la déité, l'homme. Le sang et les sèves obéissent aux sons du flutiste sacré ; les poses de l'amour sont pour lui des figures de danse.¹⁶² Le polythéisme grec avec ses dieux, qui ont tous des attributs humains, lui semble plus près de l'être humain, offrant plus de liberté. La pensée grecque nous offre la liberté du choix, parce que, le long des siècles, elle a formulé plusieurs conceptions sur les grands problèmes de

¹⁵⁹ M. Yourcenar, *Les yeux ouverts*, Le Centurion, 1980, p. 41.

¹⁶⁰ Eadem, *Quoi ? L'éternité* dans *Essais et Mémoires*, Paris, Gallimard, 1991, p.1335.

¹⁶¹ Yves-Alain Favre, *Conscience du sacré et sacré de la conscience dans l'œuvre de Marguerite Yourcenar*, dans *Le sacré dans l'œuvre de Marguerite Yourcenar*, Tours, 1993, p. 21.

¹⁶² M. Yourcenar, *Essais et Mémoires*, Paris, Gallimard, 1991, p. 358

l'homme : sur la métaphysique, sur la vie et la mort, sur le sacré. Une religion qui prétend enfermer toute la vérité, ne respecte pas l'être humain, le broie et le sacrifie en faveur de ses dogmes. L'empereur Hadrien sentait que dans les religions monothéistes il y avait le risque du fanatisme. Selon Marguerite Yourcenar, le sacré existe sans avoir nécessairement un dieu, sans une croyance dans une vie après la mort, ou une religion avec des cultes et des rites. C'est un sacré, dont l'essence est l'amour, le respect et la vénération pour toute forme d'existence. Le rapport entretenu par l'écrivain avec le divin se situe « parmi les déistes, c'est-à-dire parmi ceux qui acceptent l'existence du divin, mais rejettent les religions révélées et les dogmes. »¹⁶³ Marguerite Yourcenar essaye de sacraliser de nouveau le monde du XX- ème siècle qui « a le plus sauvagement saccagé et désacralisé la nature, et, ce faisant, l'homme. »¹⁶⁴ Si le sacré se retrouve dans le cosmos, il est décelable aussi dans l'être humain, parce que l'écrivain français a la même conception sur l'humanisme que Thomas Mann et les humanistes de la Renaissance : « l'homme microcosme, formé de la même substance et régi par les mêmes lois que le cosmos, soumis comme la matière elle-même à une série de transmutations partielles ou totales, relié à tout par une sorte de riche capillarité. »¹⁶⁵

Le rapport de l'empereur Hadrien avec le sacré

L'attitude de l'empereur Hadrien envers le sacré est une d'ouverture totale. Il n'a adhéré à aucun système religieux, mais il a senti une curiosité ardente pour toute religion, essayant d'en comprendre l'essence. Il lui a répugné le fanatisme caché au cœur des religions monothéistes. En échange, il s'est initié aux Mystères d'Eleusis, en subissant « une expérience religieuse sans égale. » Il a eu là la révélation d'une harmonie cosmique où chaque individu, chaque geste, tout événement s'encadre parfaitement dans la « mécanique éternelle ». L'empereur a la conviction que le divin s'exprime dans le monde par une tendance à « informer et à ordonner » le chaos et c'est pourquoi il s'est vu comme quelqu'un qui secondait et mettait en pratique cette tendance. Il admirait, mais ne comprenait pas, les ascètes qui cherchaient le divin au-delà de toute réalité concrète, parce qu'il aimait trop le monde qui l'entourait: Ces sages s'efforçaient de retrouver leur dieu par-delà l'océan des formes, de le réduire à cette qualité d'unique, d'intangible, d'incorporel, à laquelle il a renoncé le jour où il s'est voulu univers. J'entrevois autrement mes rapports avec le divin. Je m'imaginai secondant celui-ci dans son effort d'informer et d'ordonner un monde,

¹⁶³ M. Goslar, *Essai de définition du rapport de Marguerite Yourcenar au sacré à travers son œuvre*, dans *Le sacré dans l'œuvre de Marguerite Yourcenar*, Tours, 1993, p. 99.

¹⁶⁴ M. Yourcenar, *Essais et Mémoires*, Paris, Gallimard, 1991, p. 122.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibidem*, p.169.

d'en développer et d'en multiplier les circonvolutions, les ramifications, les détours. J'étais l'un des segments de la roue, l'un des aspects de cette force unique engagée dans la multiplicité des choses, aigle et taureau, homme et cygne, phallus et cerveau tout ensemble, Protée qui est en même temps Jupiter.»¹⁶⁶ Hadrien a secondé le divin en construisant, en mettant sa marque sur l'espace. Il faut rappeler qu'il a construit à Rome : Le Panthéon, « symbole de la suprême ordonnance de l'espace et du temps, image de l'harmonie universelle »¹⁶⁷, le temple de Vénus et de Rome. A Athènes, il a achevé l'Olympièion, il a construit une bibliothèque. Il est le fondateur de plusieurs villes comme : Plotinopolis, Andrinople, Hadrianothères, Hadrianople en Epire, Borysthènes et Antinoé. L'empereur Hadrien a bien rempli son rôle de « de segment de la roue, de l'un des aspect de cette force unique », lorsqu'il a travaillé pour maintenir la paix dans l'empire, lorsqu'il a mis sa politique au service de l'homme et de son bonheur. Sur les monnaies de son règne étaient inscrits les mots: Humanitas, Felicitas, Libertas. Ces mots traduisent le programme de la politique pacifiste de l'empereur, de son effort d'améliorer autant que possible la condition humaine. Il était conscient que malgré tout : Quand on aura allégé le plus possible les servitudes inutiles, évité les malheurs non nécessaires, il restera toujours, pour tenir en haleine les vertus héroïques de l'homme, la longue série des maux véritables, la mort, la vieillesse, les maladies non guérissables, l'amour non partagé, l'amitié rejetée ou trahie, la médiocrité d'une vie moins vaste que nos projets et plus terne que nos songes : tous les malheurs causés par la divine nature des choses. »¹⁶⁸

« Le plus souvent, c'est par la mythologie et la religion gréco-romaine que s'exprime le sens du divin chez Hadrien. »¹⁶⁹ Le sacré se manifeste pour Hadrien dans son attitude envers la religion¹⁷⁰. Il était hanté par le mystère des dieux, il respectait la religion romaine parce que celle-ci ne connaissait pas de dogmes, ne pratiquait aucun rituel cruel et permettait une explication rationnelle de l'homme et de l'univers. Il y a un autre sacré reconnaissable dans les gestes les plus simples, dans le train-train de la vie de tous les jours.

Le sacré de la nourriture

L'épithape d'Hadrien nous éclaire quant à la relation que celui-ci avait avec « animula », sa petite âme et son corps. Si l'empereur

¹⁶⁶ M. Yourcenar, *Mémoires d'Hadrien*, Paris, Gallimard, 1974, p. 159.

¹⁶⁷ R. Poignault, *L'Antiquité dans l'œuvre de Marguerite Yourcenar, Littérature, mythe et histoire*, Bruxelles, Editions Latomus, 1995, p. 691.

¹⁶⁸ M. Yourcenar, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

¹⁶⁹ R. Poignault, *Hadrien et les cultes antiques*, dans *Le sacré dans l'œuvre de Marguerite Yourcenar*, Tours, 1995, p. 179.

¹⁷⁰ J. Beaujeu, dans *La religion romaine à l'apogée de l'Empire*, I, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1995, reconnaissait qu'Hadrien respectait la religion romaine traditionnelle.

s'adresse à son âme, on constate qu'il mentionne aussi son corps. Ce dernier s'est réjoui, le long du temps, de bien des soins et de beaucoup d'amour. C'est seulement vers la fin de la vie de son maître, qu'il le trahit et alors, l'empereur a la sensation qu'il lui est devenu ennemi. « Ce matin, l'idée m'est venue pour la première fois que mon corps, ce fidèle compagnon, cet ami plus sûr, mieux connu de moi que mon âme, n'est qu'un monstre sournois qui finira par dévorer son maître. »¹⁷¹ C'est le corps qui enseigne à l'empereur Hadrien la plus dure leçon, c'est-à-dire, qu'il a des « limites infranchissables », que personne ne peut dépasser. De ce point de son existence, lorsque la mort se laisse apercevoir, il commence à « faire le tour de sa prison », il commence à contempler ce que fut sa vie. Le corps robuste lui a permis de goûter bien des plaisirs comme : la chasse, la nage et la course. Pour l'empereur romain l'état parfait du corps a représenté la meilleure ressource. Par l'intermédiaire de la sympathie, celui qui ne peut plus pratiquer ces sports, peut en échange partager le plaisir de ceux qui sont capables de les exercer. Pour Hadrien, cela signifie de « passer du nageur à la nage ». Parmi les soins accordés au corps, il y a celui de la nourriture. Même dans ce domaine, l'empereur romain se distingue des autres Romains: Trop manger est un vice romain, mais je fus sobre avec volupté. Hermogène n'a rien eu à modifier à mon régime, si ce n'est peut-être cette impatience qui me faisait dévorer n'importe où, à n'importe quelle heure, le premier mets venu, comme pour en finir d'un seul coup avec les exigences de la fin.¹⁷² Même s'il mange pour vivre et ne vit pas pour manger, l'empereur Hadrien reconnaît l'importance qu'il faut accorder à la nourriture, surtout parce que l'art de faire la cuisine s'avère aussi compliqué que celui du peintre ou du musicien. Le sacré intervient dans cette opération quotidienne, car grâce aux aliments, que nous introduisons dans notre corps, nous entrons en contact avec tout l'univers. Ainsi, un fruit est « un bel objet vivant, étranger, nourri et favorisé comme nous par la terre », le pain est « une concoction lourde et grossière » qui se transforme « en sang, en chaleur, peut-être en courage. » L'acte banal de manger se transforme dans un miracle, par un sacrifice « où nous nous préférons aux choses. » La préférence de l'empereur Romain va vers les mets simples, parce que ceux-ci gardent l'odeur et la saveur qui leur garantissent « une ravissante identité ».

J'ai goûté, dans tel bouge d'Egine ou de Phalère, à des nourriture si fraîches qu'elles demeuraient divinement propres, en dépit des doigts salés du garçon de taverne, si modiques, mais si suffisantes, qu'elles

¹⁷¹ M. Yourcenar, *Mémoires d'Hadrien*, p. 11.

¹⁷² *Ibidem*, p. 16.

*semblaient contenir sous la forme la plus résumée possible quelque essence d'immortalité.*¹⁷³

L'empereur se déclare ouvert et curieux de goûter aux mets divers : au gruaud britannique, mais aussi à la pastèque africaine. Un jour, il a goûté même à un gibier à moitié pourri, nourriture délicieuse pour certaines peuplades germaniques. Les repas officiels sont une occasion de constater la mesure dans laquelle les hommes se sont éloignés de la divinité de la nature. Aux mets simples, ils préfèrent les mets compliqués, plus difficiles à digérer. Ensuite pour combiner les mets, ils gaspillent tant d'énergie, ils en deviennent dépendants et finissent par s'en enorgueillir. Nos Romains s'étouffent d'ortolans, s'inondent de sauces, et s'empoisonnent d'épices. Un Apicius s'enorgueillit de la succession des services, de cette série de plats aigres ou doux, lourds ou subtils, qui composent la belle ordonnance de ses banquets ; passe encore si chacun de ces mets était servi à part, assimilé à jeun, doctement dégusté par un gourmet aux papilles intactes. Présentés pêle-mêle, au sein d'une profusion banale et journalière, ils forment dans le palais et dans l'estomac de l'homme qui mange une confusion détestable où les odeurs, les saveurs, les substances perdent leur valeur propre et leur ravissante identité. A un pâté de faisan, savamment préparé par Lucius, l'empereur Hadrien préférait « la chair nette du bel oiseau. » Un repas qui contentait beaucoup l'empereur, lorsqu'il se trouvait en Grèce, se composait du poisson préparé sur un gril au bord de la mer, du « vin résiné » et du « pain clouté de sésame ». Une « sensation presque sacrée » est contenue dans une coupe de Samos. Mais le moment où on mange ou on boit du vin est très important aussi. La sensation sacrée apparaît si le vin est bu en plein soleil ou un soir d'hiver, dans un état de fatigue extrême. C'est alors que le sacré se manifeste en rechargeant le corps de l'essence d'immortalité. La chair cuite, goûtée après la chasse est aussi un moyen de renouer ou de nous rappeler nos origines. « La viande rôtie et le bruit de la marmite raclée » est le symbole de la joie des banquets de camp, vue comme une récompense pour les soldats qui ont été affamés pendant les manœuvres militaires. La nourriture a aussi une fonction sociale bien déterminée, car un dîner réunit autour de la table des amis et des adversaires, des politiciens et des artistes. L'empereur Hadrien se rappelle que pendant les dîners, le juriste Neratius Priscus faisait des projets législatifs, l'architecte Apollodore exposait ses épures et l'aristocrate Ceionius Commodus faisait de la politique. L'attitude de l'empereur envers la nourriture était en fait la simplicité, la sobriété et le dénouement. C'est la même attitude qu'il avait envers l'amour, dans lequel il cherchait : « la créature humaine dépouillée, seule avec elle-même, comme il fallait bien qu'elle fût quelquefois, dans la maladie, ou

¹⁷³ *Ibidem*, p. 17-18.

après la mort du premier né, ou quand une ride apparaissait au miroir. »¹⁷⁴ L'analyse de l'attitude des Romains envers la nourriture, faite par l'empereur, révèle leur évolution historique et le développement de leur culture et de leur civilisation. Les habitants du Latium, « fermiers économes et soldats frugaux » mangeaient de l'ail et de l'orge. Après les conquêtes de certaines provinces asiatiques, ils ont changé leurs bonnes habitudes alimentaires, leurs repas sont devenus plus abondants et les mets de plus en plus compliqués. Des fêtes romaines appelées Saturnales, l'empereur se rappelle l'odeur de friture, qu'il tolérait assez bien. Il éprouvait de l'horreur et du dégoût devant les festins de Rome, à cause du gaspillage qu'on y étalait :

*Mais les festins de Rome m'emplissaient de tant de répugnance et d'ennui que si j'ai quelquefois cru mourir au cours d'une exploration ou d'une expédition militaire, je me suis dit, pour me reconforter, qu'au moins je ne dînerais plus.*¹⁷⁵ La participation à ces festins est mentionnée aussi par Dio Cassius: *Sans cesse, tant à Rome qu'au dehors ; il avait à ses cotés les citoyens les plus distingués ; il assistait même à leurs festins, et, pour cela, il arrivait souvent, porté en quatrième dans une litière.*¹⁷⁶

Le même historien relate le plaisir d'Hadrien de participer à la chasse et de prendre le repas avec ses compagnons de chasse. Son dîner ne contenait pas de vin. Dans *Mémoires d'Hadrien*, il y a une description d'une scène de chasse dans l'oasis d'Amon, non loin d'Alexandrie. Le repas, dans ce cas, est constitué de « portions d'agneau cuit sous la cendre » et du vin de palme. Et parce que le dîner fut un repas lourd, le lendemain le premier repas se compose seulement de fruits.

La relation de l'homme avec la nourriture témoigne de sa philosophie, de sa conception sur la vie et sur la mort. L'empereur Hadrien n'était pas d'accord avec l'abstinence de viande recommandée par certaines écoles de philosophie. Les gymnosophistes indiens détournaient la tête, lorsqu'ils apercevaient « des agneaux fumants », et il se demandait alors s'il y avait une différence entre la souffrance de l'herbe coupée et la souffrance des moutons sacrifiés. Il était presque convaincu que notre sensibilité tressaillait à la souffrance des moutons, parce qu'ils appartiennent au même règne que nous. A toute ostentation d'ascétisme, il préférait la nourriture, fut-elle composée d'oies grasses et pintades, parce que l'abstinence était dangereuse pour l'esprit. Il n'était pas d'accord ni avec les cyniques qui voyaient dans le boire, le manger et l'amour des plaisirs grossiers. Ceux-ci, avaient plutôt peur de leurs démons, car manger et boire sont des plaisirs innocents, puisqu'ils nourrissaient la chair, et ils ne bouleversaient pas l'âme. La nourriture a

¹⁷⁴ M. Yourcenar, *Mémoires d'Hadrien*, p. 75

¹⁷⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 16.

¹⁷⁶ Dio Cassius – *Histoire romaine*, 69, www.editerranees.net/histoire_romaine/dion/Hadrien.html

pour l'empereur Hadrien une importance capitale, car à travers elle, le corps et l'esprit sont pénétrés par « l'Unité, ou le Sacré qui unifie tout par le sens secret qu'il injecte en toute chose. »¹⁷⁷ La conception de Marguerite Yourcenar sur la présence du sacré dans la nature est inspirée de la philosophie néo-platonicienne. Selon cette philosophie, le sacré n'est plus l'attribut de la transcendance, il est présent dans le monde sensible. L'écrivain français a démontré cette conception dans *L'Œuvre au Noir*. « Les objets les plus humbles, les animaux les plus ordinaires sont recouverts de cette sacralité diffuse qui enveloppe le monde de Zénon. »¹⁷⁸ Lorsqu'il boit de l'eau dans la paume, l'empereur Hadrien sent couler en lui le sel de la terre et la pluie du ciel. Par l'eau il s'unit en même temps et avec la terre et avec le ciel. Plus exactement il va comme Roger Caillois « dans le sens des choses ». Il devient ainsi partie de l'univers avec lequel il entre en communion, puisque « l'homme est fait de la même matière que les astres ». Toutes les formes de l'univers sont constituées de la même substance. Tout est organisé et régi par les mêmes lois. Il y a en tout la capacité de jouir et de souffrir. Le simple fait d'exister est le plus éblouissant miracle qui n'est que la victoire de la matière sur le néant. La plus « bienfaisante » existence est représentée par l'arbre ; celui-ci unit le sol et le ciel. Par ses racines, il est attaché au sol, il s'élève vers le ciel, en offrant ses branches aux oiseaux, son ombre et ses fruits aux hommes et aux animaux. Le tout se retrouve dans cette forme d'existence pénétrée de divinité.

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¹⁷⁸ B. Evano, *La sacralisation de la nature dans L'Œuvre au Noir*, dans *Le sacré dans l'œuvre de Marguerite Yourcenar*, Tours, 1993, p. 215.

COOKING AS THE GATEWAY TO IMAGINARY - REALNESS CONCOCTION

In José Saramago's The Elephant's Journey and Diana Adamek's The Sweet Story of the Sad Elephant

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Abstract: *Cooking can become the alchemy of transmuting realness into the imaginary and vice versa. Two fake historical contemporary novels speak of the unnamable visceral desires that are aroused by facts of imagination. The same real or legendary fact of the journey of an elephant given as a royal gift is the pretext of two different novels: José Saramago's 2008 The Elephant's Journey (the hypo-text) and Diana Adamek's 2011 The Sweet Story of the Sad Elephant. Saramago's novel catches the cosmic and ancient epic rhythms of the world under elephant's march across Europe. In the Romanian novel, Roro, the elephant-like man, is the eye through which the world is seen, but he is at the same time the eye regarded by others. The world changes around him, as if the world has started to be governed by him. Where is Roro, after all? Maybe he is only in the mind of the story-narrator, José (Saramago?!). The two novels tell us about the things that leave no trace in the realm of visible and yet have the power to transform us. Food is the route to the discovery of the hidden desires and longing trapped in the body.*

Key-words: alchemy, food, chef, unnamable desires, melancholy, *Elephant's Journey*, bitter-sweet taste in fiction

The Portuguese Nobel winner writer José Saramago dismantles the limits of fiction so as to incorporate in the poetry of a novel the ancient rhythms of epos. His novels are made of the miracle of words, liberating fiction from too canonical paradigms and redefining them in a dreamlike state. The laws of the novel might be too tight, yet the very act of re-tracing them is an act of enchantment and not of deconstruction or of dismembering. The world of the novel is enlarged, is expanded into the abyss before being recaptured in the imprinted word as fiction. The limits of the known meet the depth of the unknown through the writing process.

Many other writers have a great appeal to logical constructions which gives their novels a perfect solidity and the force of genuine human psychology. But Saramago's case is different. His structures are fluid like the ocean. He can move all these waves inside his words of the story and he can bewitch them to take the shape he wants, as the real master-author. The substance of the imaginary is different for him. Just like the bottom of the ocean full of algae and other living organisms and microcosms, his style of writing is full of essences and saps of life. The sensorial universe is very abundant. It is not explored for its own sake, as in the case of feminine prose or of the prose directed to bodily realities. It is turned into an intrinsic rhythm, an ancient one, the rhythm of life, of earthly silence and wisdom and it is delivered to the world of the readers. What we feel different in Saramago's writing is the fact that the known, the parts of the human being and of the world that are recognizable in their interconnection had already met the unknown, the abyss, the fathoms of the ocean, the richness of the unconscious or of the subterranean world even before they are merged and coined together in a phrase. His phrase in a novel already contains the known and the unknown, the past and the future as eluding the present. His temporal elusions are not fractures in the continuity of time, they are expansions of the present, so as to never live it. It is the present the closest time to death. But one can enter it, this present, only when it is tamed and emergent as a cosmic time. One might apply G. Genette's distinctive features on hypotext and hypertext between two novels of close proximity in birth and time. The first is Saramago's *A Viagem do Elefante*, a novel in Portuguese appeared in 2008, the other is Diana Adamek's novel, *Dulcea poveste a tristului elefant*, a Romanian novel appeared in 2011 at the prestigious Casa Românească Publishing House. But this distinction is of little help, if we speak of the intentionality of the second novel. Diana Adamek is an admirer of Saramago's work, who might be her favorite author of all writers. Her intention was not to copy the motif and transpose it into another novel like an embroidery of the same principal motif, with other colors and techniques. Her intention was to pursue Saramago's dream and to install herself as an author in

that dream of fiction, as a way to finding herself as a writer. The close kin of the two novels is a way of projecting the grandness of the world to be multiplied in other concave mirrors. *solomon*, the elephant, and Subhro, his intendent, make the cosmic rhythms of the whole world and Europe resonate and take after their pace, in the journey they must take from Portuguese lands to Vienna. Solomon is a real elephant.

The elephant crosses Europe in two motions found in opposite direction in the two books: West to East in Saramago's book and from Transylvania to Portugal, in Diana Adamek's 2011 Romanian novel. Her character is not a real elephant, but a hybrid. Roro is a child, who, due to obscure reasons, grows up more and more changed into the physiognomy of an elephant. He is monstrous for those around him, even for his own family. The adventure of the main character is his Don Quijotesque way of deciphering the great book of the world. Reality steps in the traces of fiction. Roro's mother, Amanda, is the real Don Quijote of this fiction. She has an obscure dream, to see the elephant sent as a royal gift from Lisbon to Vienna. Roro will appear to enact that dream in reality, a dream which is more linked with fiction that it appears, given Saramago's book, *The Elephant's Journey*. It seems that Amanda's dream was no other than to see in her life *solomon*, the main fictitious character of Saramago's 2008 novel!

Roro is the eye through which the world is seen, but he is at the same time the eye regarded by others. The world changes around him, as if the world has started to be governed by him. Where is Roro, after all? Maybe he is only in the mind of the story-narrator, José (Saramago?!), and yet the novel is designed to make the reader feel this imperceptible trace of Roro's presence in the world. What would be the best way to make the reader taste, acknowledge, sample this presence and Roro's transformations? The novel is meant to be taken as a delight of auditory, gustative and olfactive senses. The climax of such a novel would be the discovery of the bitter-sweet taste. This is what happens to the reader, by sympathizing with Roro's incurable longing and sad story, the reader arrives at the discovery of the bitter-sweet taste of life. It is Diana Adamek's postmodernist way of challenging the reader to imply himself/herself also with other senses in the act of reading, not just with the intellect. The protagonist's capacities are those of a wizard, or so it appears to the others. But the book is not about that. The book avoids any cliché, any very palpable outcomes of the life of Roro, the elephant-like man. Diana Adamek's novel does not speak of known things, but of the unknown. The search is subtle and links the act of eating to its ontological reflection in our ways of appraising the existence.

Cooking and feeding the imaginary: the melancholy of the hidden desires

The Sweet Story of the Sad Elephant continues the story of Saramago's elephant and take the contrary route of *solomon*, only to find the same truth: Fiction is about the things that leave no trace in the realm of visible and yet have the power to transform us. Roro's art, as a chef and emperor of the short-lived things is to change the durable, the permanent into the momentary, into the ephemeral. Food is the route to the discovery of the hidden desires and longings trapped in the body. The subtle insights of the relationship between melancholy and the alchemic power of food are explored in this very refined Romanian contemporary novel of 2011. The book flashes a new light on some everyday occurrences about food melt in a fantastic story. What is the relationship between food and knowledge? What about the relationship between food components and words? Are they mere representations or real substances? Can they enact our obscure desires? What is the chef: an alchemist, a wizard or some knowledge-seeker, obsessed *de l'impossible*, in disguise? How comes that all the characters of this novel suffer from melancholy? Can short-lived things, such as cooking, influence us and leave a trace? Can beauty be known by other senses, not just by contemplation? The novel lives through the magic concatenation of its words, it catches a secret melody of an unheard story and it voices it. The text gives the impression that it is carried forward by the music of the words themselves. The tale appears to be dictated by its inner music and tempo, much like in poetry, not written or constructed through conscious effort. The cradling rhythm of the novel with flash-backs, picaresque meandering realities, unfinished dialogues and stream-of-consciousness bits melted in it breaths like an incantatory spell. This creates the perfect environment for the tiptoed intromission of the fantastic.

The Sweet Story of the Sad Elephant tells us about the things that leave no trace in the realm of visible and yet have the power to transform us. It also states the power of a reality brought into life as a new entity by some mysterious interactions between our desires and the historical course of events. Somewhere in the 16th century, a child, as he matures, gets more and more elephant features, until he grows into a man with elephant-like physiognomy. In compensation to be such an anomaly of nature, he discovers his secret gift, his secret power: that of cooking. It is no ordinary cooking what he does, it is alchemy. His cooking has the power to change the people around him, much like in the philosophical and spiritual dimension of the alchemic process. All the main characters of the book suffer from melancholy. As in alchemy, it is the nigredo phase of the opera, it is the phase of rotting, of disintegration. The miraculous food prepared by a wizard-like chef will

follow the same alchemic process which stands for initiation. The act of baking is similar to the act of maturation; it urges the man subjected to it to become a new person with superior knowledge. The protagonist, whose name is Roro (abbreviation of Rudolf), is happy only around the heat of the ovens. As a child, he manifests a special gift in cooking and making sweets of incredible shapes which imitate, with amazing likeness, people, animals and things of the real world. The taste of any food prepared by Roro even exceeds the artistry of the perfect shapes. It is a taste beyond understanding; it speaks the language of the secret and unnameable desires trapped in the body. It voices the dreams the eater dared not think of. Roro's talent of enacting people's secret desire recalls in our mind another character of contemporary fiction, that of Grenouille, the protagonist of Patrick Süskind's novel, *The Perfume*. There is a big difference between the two protagonists, Roro's monstrous crust makes him immune to inside evil. Roro is the embodiment of kindness and self-sacrifice. But both characters from the two very different novels share the same position in front of the world, that of eccentricity. World becomes nothing more than a synecdoche of Grenouille, irrespectively of Roro's interiority. There are no real traces of the inner self, for neither of them, other than receptioning the whole world as a self. Roro has changed the act of savoring into a moment of supreme experience. In his time, people savoring his food had access to their supreme interiority. Roro is named the emperor of the short-lived things. His empire is not accounted in the history, yet it is recorded in a strange chronicle of his clan mumbled sometimes by Roro, a clairvoyant of the past of his family. Therefore, savoring becomes the living of a supreme moment of beauty. What is beauty, then, on these new grounds, when cooking becomes a form of art? Beauty is intensifying the living, not fixing it in the eternity. Beauty can be experienced also through its taste, the taste of intensification, not only through the distance of contemplation. Dormant beauty existent in things is brought to life by the alchemy of the chef. The cook is he who names things, before and after changing their nature, thus having the prerogatives of a priest, intermediate between the sacred and the profane. Roro's art is to change the durable, the permanent into the momentary, into the ephemeral. It is the opposite of what the great artists throughout the centuries have done. A narration about identity, as seen in the transformations of the protagonist Roro, an elephant-like man, this bitter-sweet story becomes a fairy-tale about words and hidden desires, about the illusions and the deeper not always recognizable realities of the world we live in. Food is the route to the discovery of these hidden realities, because food has direct access to the longings caged inside the internal body. At the same time, it is always no easy task to name the things we long for. Therefore, word is also part of this secret alchemy. Words have obscure powers, too.

Words are prepared and brought together with their evocative flavors in the story about the elephant's voyage. Words bring to life this chronicle of an unknown history. Words appear in a secret writing in the episode of the concave mirrors, towards the end of the novel. They promise to decipher and give meaning to the whole story. Through words we, the readers, communicate with the real narrator of the book, an old man called José, realizing that we are simply integrated to the story he tells. The link to José Saramago, author of *The Elephant's Journey*, becomes the transparent and the postmodern unstable foundation of the book, a foundation that has been so cleverly covered by the baroque polished ramifications. The intertextuality is revealed as the mobile stage of all events. *The Sweet Story of the Sad Elephant* is hard to label. It is a pseudo-historical, pseudo-picaresque novel, at the same time baroque and postmodern fiction. It also comprises a love-story, confessions, pseudo-chronicles, fantastic and essay-like narration, seasoned with voluptuous recourses to intertextuality. It is a novel reflecting in literature the end of epistemology, where knowledge is reached in separation. As prophesized by the extravagant Brazilian theologian, psychoanalyst and essay-writer, Rubem A. Alves, "reality is this encounter between mouth and eating, between desire and object. (...) That is the end of epistemology."¹⁷⁹ The latin word "sapere" is developed in Portuguese into "saber" and "sabor", which shows the original intuition of the natural link between knowing and eating¹⁸⁰.

The adventure of the main character is his Don Quijotesque way of deciphering the great book of the world. Reality steps in the traces of fiction. Roro's mother, Amanda, is the real Don Quijote of this fiction, having an obscure dream, to see the royal gift elephant. Roro will appear to enact that dream in reality. Only the painter Arcimboldo could understand this dream of dessert and bring it to reality in the picture in which he portrays Roro. It is Archimboldo's famous picture of *The Winter*, among his series of season. He understands that winter is not about snow, white blanket of the earth and joy, winter is about desolation and about barren branches, about protuberant roots. Seeing the monstrous elephant face of Roro, the painter immediately understands the wretchedness of winter. The relationship between melancholy and human hunger for the unknown is immediately captured through his art. Roro is doubled by two other characters, who are like his mirrors. One is the future emperor Rudolf II, the protector of mannerist art, the other is Rudolf's sister, Anna of Austria, future queen

¹⁷⁹ Rubem A. Alves, *Cartea cuvintelor bune de mâncat sau bucătăria ca parabolă teologică*, trad. Virginia Gâlea, pref. diac. Ioan I. Ică jr., Sibiu, Editura Deisis, 1998, p. 108 (in Romanian).

¹⁸⁰ Ibidem.

of Spain. But, unlike them, promised to a future they do not want, Roro is free, yet he has no home. His home is the road. Roro is an architect in his own way, being an architect for others of houses and buildings made of pandishpan. When he unveils his products, the other realize they tell a story, each time a new story. The taste of the confectionaries makes it clear that the very substance of dreams permeated them. One does not know: have they been real or have they been something hallucinatory?

A book so rich in flavors is usually a book which celebrates feast as a diurnal moment of life. *The Sweet Story of the Sad Elephant* is not about the diurnal aspect of food, it is about the nocturnal one. It is a book about dreams much more than it is a book about feasts. The profoundness of desire is an obscure place. It is un-locatable easily, yet is somewhere in the body. How can we reach the profoundness of our wishes, how can we reach the bottom of it?

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IL PIACERE POETICO E LA MEMORIA DI SÉ NELLO *ZIBALDONE*

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Abstract: *Nelle sue analisi, Leopardi sottolinea l'importanza dell'opera d'arte come specchio di chi ne usufruisce e di chi cerca, nella dimensione estetica, un modo di porre rimedio all'inappagamento della propria sensibilità. Lo scopo di queste pagine è di mostrare come la riflessione filosofica sull'uomo, in particolare sulla memoria, sul desiderio e sull'amor proprio, permettano a Leopardi di sviluppare un'acuta analisi del piacere poetico – sia piacere del poeta che scrive che piacere del lettore.*

Key-words: Leopardi's *Zibaldone*, involuntary memory, pleasure of representation, art's mirror, reason versus nature, poetic sensitivity

Abstract: In his analyses present in his unique intellectual diary, *Zibaldone*, Leopardi emphasizes the importance of the work of art as a mirror of who benefits and who seeks, in the aesthetic dimension, a way to remedy his /her own insatiable sensitivity. The purpose of these pages is to show how philosophical reflection on man, especially on memory, desire and *amor proprio* allow Leopardi to develop an acute analysis of poetic pleasure – both the pleasure of the poet who writes and that of the *lecteur*.

Key-words: Leopardi's *Zibaldone*, involuntary memory, pleasure of representation, art's mirror, reason versus nature, poetic sensitivity

Piacere poetico e memoria “naturale”

Leopardi rifiuta l'idea della memoria come semplice cumulo di sensazioni ed insiste sull'aspetto (ri)creativo della ricordanza, che non è semplice ripetizione. Egli distingue due tipi di memoria per render conto

¹⁸¹ Le pagine dello *Zibaldone* leopardiano citate in quest'articolo sono quelle dell'autografo (impaginazione sempre riportate nelle varie edizioni dello *Zibaldone*).

di due modi di vivere il passato e quindi il presente. Lo studio delle “forze naturali” e involontarie della memoria gli permette così di mettere in luce una delle principali fonti del piacere della poesia e della rimembranza.

La riflessione sulla memoria involontaria leopardiana differisce soltanto per un dettaglio dall'analisi proustiana del ricordo. Per Leopardi, il ricordo involontario – che per Proust è proprio la “*sensation vraie*” –, pur essendo una sorta di traccia della sensazione passata, non può totalmente e assolutamente essere quella passata, il che contraddirebbe la teoria leopardiana della “conformabilità” e dell’ “assuefabilità” dell'uomo, modellato dal tempo, dall'esperienza, nel flusso del divenire che influisce pure sulla memoria¹⁸². Il miracolo della ricordanza involontaria è appunto di farci vivere *quasi* la sensazione passata; questa memoria “naturale” sembra *quasi* negare il fatto che il ricordo è sempre una rielaborazione della sensazione passata, sempre un'imitazione e mai un vero e proprio richiamo. Ciò detto, la ricordanza involontaria, che la poesia, o altro, suscita nel lettore, è una sorta di “risorgimento” del passato.

Leopardi distingue infatti una memoria dell'intelligenza da una memoria intuitiva, secondo la differenziazione di “due specie di attenzioni”, dato che “non c'è memoria senza attenzione”¹⁸³. L'attenzione volontaria o spirituale dipende dall’ “assuefazione (o facoltà) di attendere”, dall'abitudine della concentrazione dell'intelletto su un dato oggetto; è questa l'attenzione della memoria intelligente, quella degli ingegni “o grandi, o applicati”. Il secondo tipo di attenzione deriva dalla “forza e vivacità delle sensazioni, le quali colla loro impressione costringono l'anima ad un'attenzione in certo modo materiale; quest'attenzione è quella degli spiriti suscettibili e immaginosi, ancorché non abbiano grande ingegno”. Ritroviamo in questa distinzione uno schema “ragione” versus “natura”, schema ricorrente nello *Zibaldone*: ci sono forze artificiali, “fattizie” della memoria e “forze naturali”¹⁸⁴; le prime crescono fino alla maturità mentre calano le seconde. Così, il termine “fattizio” rinvia al carattere acquisito della facoltà mnemonica, ed al fatto che la memoria volontaria è un tentativo dell’ “intelletto” per tornare alla sensazione passata, mentre la memoria involontaria, naturale, fondata sulla ricettività emotiva, può fare risorgere la

¹⁸² La “conformabilità” indica la facoltà naturale dell'uomo a venire plasmato dalle esperienze empiriche e dall'abitudine (dall’ “assuefazione”); per Leopardi, “[c]iascun uomo è come una pasta molle, suscettiva d'ogni possibile figura, impronta ec.” (*Zibaldone*, p. 1452). Lo studio della “conformabilità” e dell’ “assuefazione” mette in rilievo per Leopardi il ruolo primordiale della memoria non solo nel processo cognitivo ma pure nella formazione della sensibilità (vedasi in particolare pp.1675-76, 1733-37, 1764-65).

¹⁸³ *Zibaldone*, pp. 1733-35.

¹⁸⁴ *Zib.*, pp. 3345.

sensazione passata imponendosi all'individuo quasi come la sensazione passata si impose a lui¹⁸⁵.

La memoria involontaria è la meno fittizia poichè si indirizza prima di tutto alla sensibilità; anzi sembra sia la sensibilità a fare echeggiare, per via di una “leggerissima circostanza”, i profondi della memoria. Questa memoria della sensibilità ha le sue radici proprio nella fonte della sensibilità, ossia l'infanzia, ed è questa memoria di sensazioni a determinare le sensazioni presenti, e in particolare quelle poetiche. Le sensazioni dell'infanzia imprimono profondamente la memoria: la durevolezza delle ricordanze di ciò che appartiene alla fanciullezza si spiega per il fatto che, nella fanciullezza, “tutte le impressioni, siccome straordinarie, sono vivissime, e quindi l'attenzione è grande benchè il fanciullo non ne abbia l'abito”¹⁸⁶. Ora, l'esperienza, l'abitudine, l'adattamento al mondo tendono ad annullare nell'uomo la facoltà di meravigliarsi, di sentire, di vedere il poetico della natura, cosicché, solo con la memoria involontaria, egli potrà godere del presente, riportandosi ad un passato in cui ogni cosa stuzzicava fortemente la fantasia:

la massima parte delle immagini e sensazioni indefinite che noi proviamo pure dopo la fanciullezza e nel resto della vita, non sono altro che una rimembranza della fanciullezza (...) vale a dire, proviamo quella tale sensazione, idea, piacere ec., perchè ci ricordiamo e ci si rappresenta alla fantasia quella stessa sensazione immagine ec. provata da fanciulli, e come la provammo in quelle stesse circostanze. Così che la sensazione presente non deriva immediatamente dalle cose, non è un'immagine degli oggetti, ma della

¹⁸⁵ In un pensiero del 24 luglio 1820 (*Zib.*, pp. 183-4), notevole per il suo clima proustiano, Leopardi descrive il sorgere involontario di immagini antiche: “la sera nell'addormentarsi o per qualunque altra ragione (...) ti vedi subito innanzi, non dico al pensiero, ma alla vista, le immagini sensibili di quello che hai veduto. (...) In maniera che questa vista, quantunque appartenga intieramente alla facoltà dell'anima, e in nessun modo ai sensi, tuttavia non dipende affatto dalla volontà, e se pure appartiene alla memoria, le appartiene, possiamo dire esternamente, perchè tu in quel punto neanche ti ricordavi delle cose vedute, ed è piuttosto quella vista che te le richiama alla memoria, di quello che la stessa memoria te le richiami al pensiero. Effettivamente molte volte, neanche pensandoci apposta, ci ricorderemmo di alcune cose, che all'improvviso ci vengono in immagine viva e vera dinanzi agli occhi. E notate che ciò accade senza nessun motivo e nessuna occasione presente, che tocchi nella memoria quel tasto (...)”. Pare proprio che la poetica della memoria in Leopardi contenga in nuce le riflessioni proustiane. Il brano di Leopardi sopracitato, per esempio, ha lo stesso sapore di questo passo di *Le temps retrouvé* (La Flèche, Gallimard, 1991, pp.181-2) : “car ces résurrections du passé, dans la seconde qu'elles durent, sont si totales qu'elles n'obligent pas seulement nos yeux à cesser de voir la chambre qui est près d'eux pour regarder la voie bordée d'arbres ou la marée montante. Elles forcent nos narines à respirer l'air des lieux pourtant lointains, notre volonté à choisir entre les divers projets qu'ils nous proposent, notre personne tout entière à se croire entourée par eux, ou du moins à trébucher entre eux et les lieux présents, dans l'étourdissement d'une incertitude pareille à celle qu'on éprouve parfois devant une vision ineffable, au moment de s'endormir”.

¹⁸⁶ *Zib.*, p. 1735.

immagine fanciullesca; una ricordanza, una ripetizione, una ripercussione o riflesso della immagine antica¹⁸⁷.

Ancora una volta, la teoria della conformabilità determina la poetica leopardiana. Non v'è quasi mai un soggetto puro, il quale abbia una sensazione proveniente proprio dall'oggetto posto gli davanti. L'individuo è come una pasta molle, suscettiva d'ogni possibile figura, impronta¹⁸⁸. L'esperienza plasma la sensibilità, l'immaginazione e la memoria del soggetto, cosicché la percezione dipende nel contempo dall'oggetto e dalla conformazione del soggetto, dalla sua memoria, e pure dalle sue illusioni. L'esperienza passata del soggetto determina il modo in cui percepisce l'esperienza presente. Non c'è mai o quasi mai una percezione pura del sensibile, poichè la sensazione presente fa sempre eco al nostro passato che risuona in noi senza l'aiuto della nostra volontà¹⁸⁹. Proprio questa dimensione prettamente soggettiva costituisce il poetico della natura, cioè il modo necessariamente illusorio in cui le cose si presentano all'uomo, non come noumeni ma come fenomeni singolari per un soggetto parimente singolare.

Con la teoria della conformabilità, Leopardi pone che quello che viene chiamato "verità" è solo una relazione, un rapporto relativo, tra un oggetto ed un soggetto la cui facoltà di giudizio non è mai pura ma necessariamente determinata da cause circostanziali. Così, la vita è più sogno che realtà; o piuttosto, la realtà prende la forma del sogno, dell'illusione. Il sensibile viene sempre percepito da una singolarità fatta di illusioni e di ricordi che influiscono sul presente; solo quando si è persa ogni illusione e la sensibilità è stata sostituita dall'apatia, quando attenzione e memoria sono letargiche, insomma solo nella noia si strappa il velo e si ha "il sentimento della vita", si sente il tempo e si vede il reale nella sua irrealtà.

Il viaggio nel passato si giustifica nella poesia con la vacuità del presente; il poetico della natura non si scompagna dalla conoscenza della sua contingenza. Pur rappresentando "al vivo la nullità delle cose", le opere di genio "raccendono l'entusiasmo", vale a dire che la sensazione poetica è un gioco di specchi tra il presente nullo ed il beato passato. E il poeta ricupera insieme il poetico della natura e il non-poetico, cioè la natura vista attraverso la sensibilità, l'illusione, e la natura vista nella sua contingenza vuota: Un oggetto qualunque, per esempio un luogo, un sito, una campagna, per bella che sia, se non desta alcuna rimembranza, non è poetica punto vederla. La medesima, ed anche un sito, un oggetto qualunque, affatto impoetico in sè, sarà poetichissimo a rimembrarlo. La rimembranza è essenziale e principale nel sentimento

¹⁸⁷ *Zib.*, pp. 514-15.

¹⁸⁸ *Zib.*, p. 1452.

¹⁸⁹ Sull'idea che la sensazione presente si arricchisce necessariamente di una serie di echi delle sensazioni passate, vedasi *Zib.*, pp. 1454-55.

poetico, non per altro, se non perchè il presente, qual ch'egli sia, non può esser poetico; e il poetico, in uno o in altro modo, si trova consistere nel lontano, nell'indefinito, nel vago¹⁹⁰. Così, più la memoria involontaria è suscitata e la ricordanza vivace, più la sensazione è ritenuta poetica da Leopardi, poichè trae l'individuo fuori di sè e del mondo reale, soprattutto se la ricordanza è lontana e poco abituale, “perch'essendo più lontana, è più sottoposta all'illusione”¹⁹¹. L'uomo non può trovare il piacere nel presente se non gli nasce in mente un rapporto da fare con cose assenti. L'assenza, il vuoto, “ciò che non si possiede”, sono i fondamenti invisibili di ogni emozione poetica. Il poetico di un oggetto qualsiasi o di una parola sta dunque nel suo potere simbolico, nel suo rinviare a una molteplicità di cose diverse e assenti: “ Ci piace e par bella una pittura di paese, perchè ci richiama una veduta reale, un paese reale, perchè ci par da dipingerci, perchè ci richiama le pitture. Il simile di tutte le imitazioni (pensiero notevole)”¹⁹². È questo un principio basilare dell'estetica leopardiana. L'arte è consolatoria perché pone rimedio alla contingenza del mondo, un mondo raddoppiato nell'imitazione e reso in certo modo più essenziale. Un oggetto non è poetico in sé ma lo diventa se suscita nell'uomo un rinvio immaginario e immediato ad altri oggetti. In questo modo l'arte dà un senso all'esistenza, colma meravigliosamente il vuoto del mondo, dà un pascolo al desiderio d'infinito. In letteratura la poesia è più atta a consolare della prosa poiché non è, come questa, semplice rimando lineare agli oggetti, superficie attraverso la quale si vede il mondo, è piuttosto evocazione che descrizione. Leopardi riprende testualmente un pensiero di Montesquieu ritenuto “notabilissimo”: “Souvent notre âme se compose elle-même des raisons de plaisir, et elle y réussit surtout par les liaisons qu'elle met aux choses”¹⁹³. Così in poesia, il lettore verrà toccato se la poesia susciterà in lui ricordanze involontarie, solo se toccherà in un modo o in un altro la sua memoria, poiché il lettore vuole trovare se stesso nel testo poetico.

L' “egoismo” del bello

L'artista in genere cerca di ritrovare il meraviglioso della natura che si percepiva da fanciulli, quando ogni cosa era vista nella sua singolarità propria. In fondo, la poesia cerca sempre di ripristinare lo spirito della natura, quell'incanto che attrae formidabilmente l'attenzione. L'oggetto imitato fa più effetto dell'oggetto reale perchè appunto lascia spazio all'immaginazione; il ritratto *non* è la vera persona, ma rinvia ad una realtà al di là del quadro, il quale è sempre come un simbolo della persona, una memoria di essa. Lo straordinario dell'arte e della poesia

¹⁹⁰ *Zib.*, p. 4426.

¹⁹¹ Per il tema del piacere della rimembranza poetica, vedasi *Zib.*, pp. 1860-61 e 4513.

¹⁹² *Zib.*, p. 4495.

¹⁹³ *Zib.*, p. 192.

nasce pure da quella capacità di fare vivere, di dare un'anima alla materia inanimata (parola scritta, colori del quadro) che servono all'imitazione: quella stessa persona ci fa più effetto dipinta che reale, e la troviamo più bella se è bella, o al contrario. ec. Non per altro se non perché vedendo quella persona, la vediamo in maniera ordinaria, e vedendo il ritratto, vediamo la persona in maniera straordinaria, il che incredibilmente accresce l'acutezza de'nostri organi nell'osservare e nel riflettere, e l'attenzione e la forza della nostra mente e facoltà, e dà generalmente sommo risalto alle nostre sensazioni. (...) Così osserva il Gravina intorno al diletto partorito dall'imitazione poetica¹⁹⁴.

Ma l'oggetto della rappresentazione è animato proprio perché la rappresentazione non è mai perfetta, mai oggettiva. Il piacere dell'imitazione è di sentire una soggettività che si esprime, pure quando pretende di volere imitare fedelmente la natura. Sembra siano le progressive meditazioni sull'assuefazione e la memoria a spingere Leopardi a precisare e sfumare l'idea che aveva dell'imitazione. All'inizio dello *Zibaldone* scrive che la poesia deve imitare "la Natura, il Vero"¹⁹⁵. Ma – come scriverà poi Leopardi – siccome la realtà, ossia la nostra percezione del sensibile, è un misto di sensazioni presenti e ricordanze, l'imitazione del Vero deve tener conto della dimensione necessariamente soggettiva della percezione. La natura 'oggettiva', la natura 'logica', sono finzioni della scienza, la natura non è se non poetica. Perciò il poeta non imita la natura se non tornando alla propria soggettività, se non imitando se stesso, perché la natura non si dà se non attraverso una sensibilità particolare, una memoria particolare¹⁹⁶.

Perciò, Leopardi rifiuta una poesia realistica o pittorica. La descrizione presenta solo una brutta copia della natura, inutile e falso raddoppiamento che pretende di mostrare la natura in maniera oggettiva mentre essa non si presenta se non *per* qualcuno, per una determinata sensibilità ("il racconto è ufficio della parola, la descrizione del disegno, il descrivere è da stolto il farne professione, non essendo ufficio proprio della poesia"¹⁹⁷). Leopardi nega l'idea di soggetto estetico dotato di un gusto oggettivo, poiché la sensibilità di ognuno dipende dalle circostanze che la costituiscono, poiché l'emozione estetica dipende dagli echi suscitati nella memoria dell'individuo. Il tema della relatività del bello prende così un nuovo rilievo con la genealogia della sensazione. La bellezza è frutto dell'assuefazione del gusto, è relativa alla memoria di ciascuno, e più generalmente relativa ad una memoria culturale. Leopardi prende l'esempio delle immagini campestri in poesia: un campo di legumi farà meno effetto di un campo di spighe, essendo

¹⁹⁴ *Zib.*, p. 1303.

¹⁹⁵ *Zib.*, p. 2.

¹⁹⁶ Vedasi *Zib.*, p. 4373.

¹⁹⁷ *Zib.*, p. 164.

questo più noto, familiare, e più trattato nella storia della poesia, toccherà maggiormente la sensibilità del lettore. La necessità della sensibilità per il lettore è diventata richiesta di memoria: il fanciullo, il quale per necessità ha poche rimembranze (ha però somma immaginazione), deve trovar poco dilettevoli e belle molte bellissime parti delle più grandi poesie (...) Forse un uomo di poca memoria non è molto atto a gustar poesie. Così un uomo non avvezzo ad attendere. Così un uomo non sensibile nè suscettibile¹⁹⁸. Difatti, l'emozione poetica suppone che il lettore possa immedesimarsi nel poeta, e dunque la sua memoria sia in certo modo stuzzicata dal testo poetico. Il lettore dev'essere toccato, in tutti i sensi della parola : la poesia lo deve commuovere, ma lo 'muove' con lei solo se gli parla di cose che egli più o meno conosce, a cui egli ha già prestato la sua sensibilità. La relatività del bello è indissociabile, come ogni agire umano, dall' "egoismo" dell'uomo, dall'amor proprio: Da per tutto l'uomo cerca il suo simile, perchè non cerca e non ha mai altro scopo che se stesso; e il sistema del bello, come tutto il sistema della vita, si aggira sopra il perno, ed è posto in movimento dalla gran molla dell'egoismo, e quindi dalla similitudine e relazione a se stesso, cioè a colui che deve godere del bello di qualunque genere¹⁹⁹

Il lettore, avido di sentire, di vibrare, si diletterà maggiormente nella lirica, in cui il poeta dà sfogo ai propri affetti. Leopardi, nel brano sopracitato, per dettagliare la sua tesi, distingue brevemente cinque livelli di piaceri nell'imitazione secondo l'oggetto imitato: dalle "cose inorganizzate" fino a "ciò che meglio spetta all'uomo ed a ciascun lettore, cioè le passioni, i sentimenti, insomma l'animo umano"²⁰⁰. Queste conseguenze della relatività del bello saranno argomenti eretti contro l'esotismo romantico²⁰¹. Per Leopardi, l'imitazione pittorica o gestuale di una persona che non si conosce non fa effetto alcuno. Per essere commosso, l'uomo vuole ritrovare nell'opera qualcosa di noto, una parte di sé. L'opera è per lui il mezzo per contemplare la propria interiorità, come artista o come pubblico. Con la meditazione sulla memoria involontaria e sulla natura della sensazione poetica, Leopardi ribadisce l'idea essenziale che l'uomo cerca in ogni cosa la sensazione. Ma questo bisogno di sentire viene soddisfatto grazie all'imitazione di "ciò che spetta al cuore umano"²⁰², grazie alla riflessione dell'interiorità. Il carattere imitativo della poesia (e dell'arte in genere) ci indica quanto il piacere poetico sia un misto inestricabile di sensazione e d'intellezione, di piacere e di conoscenza, di commozione e di visione : il soggetto

¹⁹⁸ *Zib.*, p. 1799.

¹⁹⁹ *Zib.*, p. 1848.

²⁰⁰ *Zib.*, p. 1847.

²⁰¹ *Zib.*, pp. 1303 e 1991-92.

²⁰² *Zib.*, p. 1829.

estetico gode nel sentire e nell'immergersi nella contemplazione, ma contemporaneamente gode nel sentirsi esistere, nel vedersi esistere. Ritroviamo quest'ambivalenza, inerente al piacere poetico, nel tema della ricordanza, modello di sensazione poetica. Il piacere della rimembranza sta nel risorgere nell'immaginazione di una forte sensibilità, ma sta anche nel fatto che, in questo modo, si ha accesso a se stessi, ovvero ad un'immagine antica di sé, ad una parte di sé passata che ritrova concretezza nella ricordanza dopo che questa parte antica di sé era diventata quasi un sogno ; il ritorno è infatti una garanzia che il passato ebbe davvero luogo, una garanzia dell'essere stato. Nella ricordanza, l'uomo sente ma anche vede un'immagine antica di sé che ha la forza della realtà, si accompagna di tutte le sensazioni di quell'epoca e si impone non proprio al pensiero "*ma alla vista*"²⁰³. Perciò la ricordanza può essere concepita come un'esperienza vera della realtà, in quanto ricca esperienza del tempo che fa risorgere per il soggetto la sua interiorità più intima, la sua sensibilità passata che è alla base delle sue ulteriori assuefazioni, alla base dello sviluppo posteriore della sua sensibilità. Il piacere del passato risorto, dell'illusione ravvivata risulta dalla loro oggettivazione che permette all'uomo di confondere i tempi, di vivere due tempi nello stesso tempo ; egli può vivere e vedere il passato appunto perché sta nel presente. La ricordanza, in questo modo, dà ai sogni dell'immaginazione e della memoria l'impressione di esistenza che manca loro di solito. Similmente per il testo poetico in genere, il lettore usa la sua immaginazione e la sua memoria per essere in empatia col poeta, cioè per vivere un'emozione che vede come iscritta nel testo. Il gioco speculare nella ricordanza tra passato e presente, immaginazione della sensazione passata e sensazione presente, si ritrova in un certo modo nella lettura poetica tra visione del testo e sensazioni prodotte dal testo. Il lettore partecipa alla lettura, *scopre* il testo, in tutti i sensi della parola, riconosce nel linguaggio indefinito della poesia il suo carattere simbolico, metaforico, e sta come in agguato per trovare il senso della metafora, cioè per trovare a che cosa essa potrebbe rimandare ; ma nel contempo, il lettore è passivo di fronte al sorgere delle immaginazioni e degli echi della sua memoria. Egli può contemplare il proprio io profondo, il proprio "indicibile", gode del piacere della *riflessione*, ma di una riflessione sensibile, e che gli rinvia la propria immagine. Non a caso, Leopardi ha meditato su quel desiderio ingenito nell'uomo di "mettere gli altri a parte delle proprie sensazioni", su quella "essenzialissima inclinazione, figlia immediata dell'amor proprio"²⁰⁴. Non a caso ha fatto di questa inclinazione "il gran desiderio dell'uomo, il gran mobile de' suoi

²⁰³ *Zib.*, p. 183.

²⁰⁴ Per quanto riguarda l'amor proprio ed il desiderio di oggettivarsi nel proprio discorso o di venire oggettivato nel discorso altrui, vedasi *Zib.*, pp. 486-88, 2043, 4285 e 348.

atti, delle sue parole, ossia il comunicar qualche cosa di sé agli spettatori o uditori”. In realtà, il gran desiderio dell'uomo non è di comunicar con gli altri, bensì di “comunicarsi altrui”, di contemplare la propria immagine negli altri, nel mondo, e questo desiderio vale quindi sia per il poeta che per il lettore, il quale ritrova nella poesia la propria esperienza “di passioni, entusiasmo, sentimenti”.

Il piacere poetico ha un lato sensitivo ed un altro più riflessivo. Al limite, nelle opere di genio, il piacere non è tanto di sentire veramente ciò che il poeta dice di aver sentito formidabilmente, “l'inevitabile infelicità, la nullità delle cose”²⁰⁵, poiché il leggere è già una distrazione, un superamento della noia. Il piacere poetico consisterebbe piuttosto nel vedere rappresentate le proprie passioni: E così quello che veduto nella realtà delle cose, accora e uccide, veduto nell'imitazione o in qualunque altro modo nelle opere di genio (come per esempio nelle lirica che non è propriamente imitazione) apre il cuore e ravviva²⁰⁶.

Leopardi intuisce che la lirica, come scrive Hegel, rispetto al semplice sfogo dell'emozione che mira, come il grido, alla liberazione dall'emozione, ha una ben più alta missione, quella non di liberare lo spirito *dal* sentimento, ma di affrancarlo *nel* sentimento²⁰⁷. Certo la poesia dell'io è uno sfogo, ma questo sfogo non mira all'annullamento della passione, vuole solo liberare lo spirito dalla concentrazione silenziosa, priva di parole e di rappresentazioni, in cui esso si trova quando è in stato di passione. La poesia libera lo spirito mettendogli sotto gli occhi la propria immagine, dice Hegel. Esprimere la passione non è per il poeta farla svanirla, ma purificarla nella rappresentazione, nell'imitazione, darle stile.

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²⁰⁵ Vedasi *Zib.*, p. 259-62.

²⁰⁶ *Zib.*, p. 261.

²⁰⁷ Vedasi HEGEL, G. W. F., *Esthétique*, Paris, PUF, 1992, p.137.

THE IDENTIKIT PICTURE OF THE INSIGNIFICANT MAN IN ANTON CHEKHOV' S SKETCHES ²⁰⁸

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Abstract. *The ordinary man as a special typology and the aesthetic of the insignificance are a late emergence in literature. Only realism uprooted the persistent paradigm of grandeur imposed by heroic times and bestowed a stable citizenship to the character of humble man. Balzac, Flaubert, Dickens, Gogol, Chekhov believed that grand literature should grant the insignificant a major role. Chekhov is the writer of a time-lapse disaggregating. There are two stages in Chekhov's works regarding the aspect of petit clerk typology. If the early sketches use too much a black-and-white, inferior-superior pattern, the second-stage sketches, after 1889, are more refined and complex, more dauntless and more questioning of the ideological impact on human psychology.*

Key-words: typology, the aesthetics of the insignificant, humble man, realism, Chekhov's sketches;

It took literature some good centuries to develop a sense of tackling the domain of the insignificant, of the common fact. The heroic times imposed a paradigm of grandeur persistent in literature, root-bound in the European tradition originating in antiquity. It was with the emergence of Realism when the common fact, the trifling act, the

²⁰⁸ This is a part of a complex research dedicated to the literature of the insignificant fact and to the typology of the insignificant man.

unimportant, could be carved up from the illusion of reality present in a work of fiction. Therefore, only when the artistic frame changed, the carve up of the things and people *not worthy of notice* could be fixed, settled in fixed principles.

Before Realism in literature, the insignificant man and the aesthetics of the insignificant was discovered in the Flemish naturalist paintings. Even since the 15th century, they opposed the lightful, angelic features of the Italian Renaissance. But the discovery of the ordinary man as a special typology is due to the literature of the 19th century. We can say that Realism, as literary phenomenon, was the first republic which was ready to bestow on this character, on the insignificant man, a stable citizenship.

As a reflex of absolutist monarchy, the literature of the classicist century (17th) had abhorred to entitle the humble, insignificant man with the honors of a literary character. He was banned from the noble species and, on the grounds of the purity of genres, he was discriminated, he had no right to exist in a literary oeuvre. However, a concession was made, he was allowed to appear in some burlesque situations. Through the backdoor of the minor species, such as comedy, parody, satire, the insignificant man was put on the stage. The servants were present in parodical occurrences. Sometimes they prove to be more astute, cleverer than their masters, which was not a good impression for someone who started from the lowest level. Despite this, the insignificant man in classicism is a peripheral presence, not the main focus. It is Realism the movement which manages to bestow significance on the presence of the ordinary man. He could be, from now on, a hero of a novel. He has gained through prolonged efforts the dignity of becoming a hero. Of course, not a hero in the heroic sense. But before arriving at such a high point, the insignificant man had to play an important role in history. He had to discover history. The bourgeois revolutions before the 19th centuries had the most propelling role. The presence of the common fact in literature, the presence of diurnal life as opposed to nocturnal romantic evasions contributed to an important mutation. The distance between heroes of literature and men diminished. The distance between two individuals diminished, too, people became used to redefining a sense of equality. An invasion of the concrete, down-to-earth, material elements emerged. Literary Realism brought along the concept that reality, as expressed in fiction, had much in common with concrete, materialistic things.

In the 19th century, the *ordinary* thing became associated with the *mechanical*, repetitive action that eludes our attention because it happens every day and it has no life of its own. It was a nucleus of what happens nowadays, in another paradigm of civilization, when automatization is part of real life. The 19th century gigantic writers felt

the limits of the “too much” tendency in literature: too much good taste, too much shamefacedness, too many headliners. The danger was sterility in art. Balzac, Maupassant, Flaubert, Gogol, Chekhov were impacted by the idea that the art of writing could be rescued only by an honest and bold-hearted, audacious investigation of life and society. They discovered that the writer should be unfeared about approaching life in its all disappointing aspects. A gallery of the insignificant man would consist of various portraits of such fictitious characters. They can be minor characters or they can have the traits of a minor character but be in the spotlight and play the major role: César Birotteau and Rabourdin by Balzac, Bouvard and Pecuchet by Flaubert, Wilkins Mikawber by Dickens, Akaki Akakievitch Bashmacikin by Gogol, Goliadkin by Dostoyevsky, or Lefter Popescu²⁰⁹ by Caragiale. Flaubert, Dickens, Gogol, Chekhov discovered that grand literature is made of small, insignificant things. The dimension or the grandeur has nothing to do with the value of art. The ordinary man is a petit intellectual. He has grand aspirations, failed dreams, lack of a practical sense. He is unable to carry out a proper business or start his own business. But he is talented as a scribe, as a secretary, or as a government clerk, he is good at intellectual activities requiring no risk. This man subordinated to a boss, having a lousy job of little earning, always in debts, unable to fulfill the dreams of his family, is the embodiment of the insignificant man. He is humble and has little chances to grow a sudden pattern of dominance. He is doomed to be forever the timid subject of someone more powerful in voice and incomes and cruelty. His ego is damaged for eternity, without the possibility of resuscitation. Is his life of any interest for anybody else except for the writer himself?

*

There are so many characters incarnating the psychology of the humble, insignificant man in Anton Pavlovitch Chekhov's shortstories and sketches that it would be very difficult to name them all. Chekhov operates with a new vision on the phenomena of reality, bringing along the innovation of artistic means and devices. No more noble feelings and illusory happiness as Pushkin, Lermontov, Turgheniev and Tolstoy embodied it. Chekhov is the writer of a languish disaggregating. Even the noble feelings can be subjected to decay. There is nothing spectacular in this everyday waste of life. Objective perspective and subjective experience have nothing worthy of showing up. The bourgeois life has its own compromises, it is ready to adapt more effortlessly than how it seems in the beginnings. Servility, hypocrisy, ignorance, stupidity, inertia

²⁰⁹ Famous character of the Romanian writer Ioan Luca Caragiale. Lefter Popescu's full given name comes from the Greek name *Elefthérios*. Abbreviated to Lefter, it translates as "Impecunious", which is exactly the character's status before and after having the "luck" to almost win the lottery.

are integral part of existence. The ideal or the lack of it stamp destinies with continuous painful marks. The early sketches written by Chekhov are centered on the characters of petite employees, petite clerks or intellectuals. Such a character is Dmitri Cudarov, secretary. He enjoys overnight celebrity. In a state of profound drunkenness, he managed to escape alive from under the wheels of a carriage. His shameful case has been made public in the papers, thus he is no longer an anonymous figure. There are two stages in Chekhov's works regarding the aspect of petite clerk typology. The benchmark between them is traced by *A Humdrum Story*, published in 1889. In the first stage of creation, Chekhov writes numerous sketches without message. They flourish for the author's own amusement, or even for the small fees paid for them by the humorist magazines. In the second stage of creation, Chekhov sketches knew a certain refinement. Things have more hues, more complexity; they are not just black and white. The psychology emerges as the writer's major ace in the hole. The writer is preoccupied, in this second stage, by the impact of the hostile environment to free thinking. This second stage of his sketches (after 1889), is also more daring, more dauntless. It is also the reflex of Chekhov's own incertitude regarding political ideologies. As contrasted to the second stage, in his early sketches Chekhov has the tendency to generalize too easily. The characters are either "too superior" or "too inferior". The people incarnated by these characters are very fearful, sometimes reaching extreme psychological reactions of paroxysm. They are too docile, too servile and grovelling, and totally uneducated. They do not realize they make themselves the protectors of a despotic and reactionary political regime. In their zealous stupidity, they arrive to be the defenders of such a regime. Chekhov is a great depicter of ideological terror, of the effects it can have on retarded or naïve people. The prohibition of progress, the state of cultural backwardness managed to skip somehow through the Tzarist censorship that Chekhov had to deal with. Emblematic for this backwardness is the sketch about *Book-reading*. It views reading as an idiosyncrasy. The patron of a theatre forces his subordinates to read, as he wants to educate them. But the effects are disastrous. Lacking proper education, the clerks are unable to keep the step. Instead of becoming more cultivated, they become more neurotic. One of them reads all the time, day and night, but does not make any sense of this reading and does not remember anything. He scares his family with his strange behavior since he does nothing else but reading. Reading can be made responsible for the addiction to alcohol which one character develops. Merdiaev reads *The Count of Monte Cristo* and he suspects subversive ideas at every step. In conclusion, the patron of the theatre must suspend reading, as it brings more damage than the good.

If Dostoyevsky was concerned with the tragism of human confrontation with evil, with fundamental and ancestral issues of mankind, with the sacrifice of one's happiness for the fellow-beings, Chekhov is more concerned with the immediateness of life in which he hears the sound and the silence of decay. Chekhov has the talent to find the moments of maximum tension of such petite dramas. The psychology of the humble clerk reflects the strain towards individuality coming from a category of people forced to be chameleonic by their social conditions. The drama relies in their failed attempts to challenge their position in the eyes of the others. But since they had indulged for too long in powerlessness, they can only attempt to audition for a better role, not for a better life.

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UN MANOSCRITTO DI MONICA LOVINESCU

Il fondo speciale del libro della Biblioteca Universitaria di Oradea – documento e letteratura

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Abstract. *Le sedici fogli del manoscritto analizza il romanzo Refugii di Augustin Buzura. Presentiamo questo manoscritto. – Cele șaisprezece foi ale manuscrisului analizează romanul Refugii de Augustin Buzura, precum și alte date adiacente de istorie literară, de importanță pentru cercetă torii istoriei literaturii contemporane. Prezentăm acest manuscris.*

Key-words: romanzo *Refugii* di Augustin Buzura, Monica Lovinescu, fondo speciale del libro, biblioteca, lettura, ossessionamente il presente... ;

Novel Refugii by Augustin Buzura, Monica Lovinescu, special book fund, library, reading, the obsessive present, history of literature

Si è scritto della inaugurazione/l'apertura della Biblioteca Universitaria di Oradea, delle donazioni importanti e dei fondi speciali di libri di codesta, per prima di quelli 10800 volumi del Fondo del libro Monica Lovinescu – Virgil Ierunca, in romeno, francese, tedesco e inglese (di quali 182 sono libri con dediche, e 12 contengono anche appunti) – sale specializzate di quali godono specialmente i filologi, ma anche altri lettori. Mostro il fatto che accanto al Fondo Speciale Monica Lovinescu – Virgil Ierunca, speciale, valoroso e necessario, e altri fondi e donazioni, la biblioteca detiene Il Fondo Speciale di libro Mircea Zăciu (3272 di volumi, dai quali 500 con dediche e 200 con autografi e con appunti), Fondo Mircea Demetrescu, (2200 volumi), libri nel campo della letteratura romena e della letteratura universale, della critica e

storia letteraria, dell'arte, dell' economia e del management, in romeno, francese, tedesco, italiano e inglese. Esse rappresentano parti importanti di quelle che sono state nel loro intero, nei loro spazi, sotto gli sguardi conoscitori (istruiti), le biblioteche di questi eruditi romeni (più letterature/ culture e campi della stessa biblioteca) e quali si incontrano in questo modo, ancora, nelle sale di lettura della nuova Biblioteca dell'Università di Oradea. Alla base della Memoria fatta dalla direzione della Facoltà di Lettere riguardando il conferimento del nome di Mircea Zaciù ad una sala di lettura della Biblioteca Universitaria di Oradea, l'Ufficio del Senato Accademico di Oradea ha deciso in 19.10.2009 il conferimento del nome Mircea Zaciù ad una sala di questa biblioteca. La costituzione nel tempo, la diversità, e la specializzazione di queste biblioteche mostrano in primo piano, la prevalenza dei libri di letteratura, di poesia, di prosa, teoria, storia e critica letteraria, ma anche l'importanza delle opere d'arte, storia e sociologia, di alcune bibliografie e sintesi. Nel fondo Monica Lovinescu –Virgil Ierunca si trovano numerosi lavori consacrati alla storia nazionale e universale, alla stampa e alla vita sociale, al campo musicale ecc. Sono numerosi i libri apparsi nelle editure e nelle collezioni (raccolte) come: Flammarion, Gallimard, Hachette, Payot, Editions de Seuil, Presses Universitaires de France etc., ma anche romene: Minerva (Restitutio, Opere, Scriitori români), Albatros (Cele mai frumoase poezii), Cartea Românească (Hyperion ecc), Dacia (Restituiri, ecc.), B.P.T., E.S.P.L.A., Meridiane, ed altre, volumi apparsi maggiormente negli ultimi 75 anni. Dizionari e storie letterarie, sintesi, numerosi saggi, e libri di critica letteraria alternano con delle serie di riviste, come Tel Quel, Poétique, Les Cahiers d'Hermès, Les Lettres Nouvelles, Critique, Les Cahiers du Sud, La Nouvelles Revue Française, Les Cahiers du Chemin, Monde Nouveau, ecc. In questi fondi speciali di libri sono inclusi anche numerosi dischi e registrazioni musicali (classici) e letterarie, da Richard Wagner a Claudio Monteverdi, fino a George Enescu ed altri. I fondi di libri Mircea Zaciù e Monica Lovinescu – Virgil Ierunca sono costituiti da volumi di poesie e prosa romena e di cultura universale, critica e storia letteraria, arte e storia, in romeno, francese, tedesco, inglese ed italiano. Ricordiamo insieme questi tre fondi, così come si trovano all'inaugurazione della Biblioteca Universitaria di Oradea (in 2010). Essi rappresentano parti importanti di quello che sono stati in loro complessivo e nei loro spazi, sotto gli sguardi di questi eruditi romeni (più letterature/ culture e domini nella stessa biblioteca – letteratura del Ventesimo Secolo, in francese, per esempio, nel fondo Mircea Zaciù) e dove si incontrano così ancora nelle sale di lettura della Biblioteca Universitaria di Oradea. Una grande biblioteca porta sempre speranza e fiducia nella vita. Sotto gli occhi dei giovani, specialmente i libri aprono nuovi orizzonti, istruiscono e formano, rinforzano il cuore e la mente. In questo senso i fondi speciali di libri

sono essenziali. Prevalentemente, i libri rappresentano la vita ed hanno la sua impetuosità. Queste donazioni sono importanti ed esse significano libri (lettura ed interpretazione) e le opzioni dei donatori (la destinazione per i giovani e la scelta di questa facoltà, di Oradea e per la gente di quale sono stati legati). Se avete traslocato qualche volta una biblioteca (ripiano dopo ripiano, libro dopo libro), o se avete visto la scomposizione di un libro (nel momento in cui si trasforma in polvere), capirete in quel momento, spero, il legame tra libri e uomo, e anche di più tra quelli che gli hanno dato vita e gli hanno fatto posto accanto a loro... So, certamente, che quasi tutti i libri hanno un loro destino, ma non posso dimenticare che i fondi di libri che portano i nomi dei grandi eruditi, che non animano più in loro modo unico le pagine dei libri, e le dedicaioni degli amici, in segno di....Una vera Săpânța delle dedicaioni e specchio dei tempi, i libri croce richiamano alla vita, altrove, come scriveva Mircea Eliade, nominato spesso dal professore Mircea Zăciu: "Niente non dura in questo mondo, tutto passa, tutto si trasforma, tutto muore, per rinascere ancora, così, altrove, con altra gente..." Perché di uomini e di libri si tratta specialmente... Ma anche dei riflessi di far bene, di costruire (di poter costruire) durabilmente ed essenzialmente e di portare un pensiero fino alla fine... Tra le soluzioni: nello spirito degli eruditi prima nominati, la conoscenza del mondo e degli uomini, il contatto tra gioventù e mondo, il dire la verità, l'imperativo etico e coerenza con la natura interiore. Nei momenti decisivi, la direzione finale la dà il cuore, la mente sceglie solo le alternative...

Presentiamo in queste pagine gli appunti di Monica Lovinescu, riguardando il romanzo *Refugii*, di Augustin Buzura, *sulla base del fondo di libri Monica Lovinescu – Virgil Ierunca*, della Biblioteca Universitaria di Oradea. Il fondo speciale di libri Monica Lovinescu – Virgil Ierunca, dalla Biblioteca dell'Università di Oradea, donato nel 2010, include 10800 volumi, di quali 182 sono libri con dedicaione e 12 contengono degli appunti. Esso è stato aperto ai lettori nel 2010 (nella nuova sede della biblioteca dell'università), concomitante con il *Fondo di libri Mircea Zăciu*, costituito nel 2003, in seguito alla donazione dei 3272 libri, di quali più di 500 con dedicaione, della biblioteca del professore Mircea Zăciu, della sua famiglia, per la biblioteca dell'Università di Oradea. I fondi di libri nominati rappresentano parti importanti di quello che sono state nel loro intero, e negli spazi delle loro biblioteche questi eruditi romeni (più letterature/culture e domini della stessa biblioteca) e quali si ritrovano sotto gli sguardi dei lettori, (giovani, maggiormente), nelle sale di lettura. Nell'ambito del *Fondo di libri Monica Lovinescu – Virgil Ierunca*, accanto ad altri volumi con appunti degli autori o con dedicaioni, come anche quelle di Ștefan Augustin Doinaș, Marin Preda, Ana Blandiana, Ileana Mălăncioiu, Geo Dumitrescu ed altri, si trova il volume *Refugii* di Augustin Buzura, comprendendo tra le pagine un

manoscritto di Monica Lovinescu, costituito di 16 fogli (tre pagine di quaderno di scuola/A5, più due metà pagine nello stesso formato ed undici pagine formato agenda, faccia anteriore e posteriore della pagina/10 pagine, complessivamente ventisei pagine scritte con penna nera e blu). Il romanzo *Refugii*, di Augustin Buzura, è letto ed analizzato con la matita in mano, con delle citazioni, comparazioni, sistemazioni e riferimenti alla vita sociale culturale romena, ed altre cronache. Alleghiamo qui la riproduzione di queste pagine scritte a mano con penna, trovate fra le pagine del volume analizzato, nella Biblioteca dell'Università di Oradea, dove l'abbiamo identificato, scartabellando parte dei libri *del Fondo Speciale Monica Lovinescu – Virgil Ierunca...*

Consideriamo necessarie in seguito certe sottolineature. Monica Lovinescu scrive nel *Jurnal*, 1981 -1984 (Editura Humanitas, București, 2003, p. 307), nel 4 luglio 1984, che legge “con stupore” e con interesse il nuovo romanzo di Buzura, *Refugii*, e non è stupita “che ha avuto più di un anno di tribolazioni con la censura, bensì che ha visto la luce della stampa”. Il romanzo rende proprio *quello che accade*, dal ingegnere da me tormentato e picchiato, all'ospedale psichiatrico, il villaggio, i capi “nella loro autenticità, quindi incubo, marciume, arretratezza”...” Sono soggiogata e – nello stesso tempo – spaventata al pensiero che dovrò scrivere sul libro. Buzura ci ha trasmesso di non valerci del termine *minatore*. Ma se fosse solo questo. Di fatto, niente di questo romanzo non deve essere nominato, detto, identificato tanto la finzione è rotta dalla più implacabile fra le realtà “ (s.n. – I.D.). È anche la concezione dello scrittore somigliante a quella di Liviu Rebreanu. Nel 9 ottobre scriveva nel *Jurnal*, 1985 – 1988: “Facciamo anche con lui un codice, per il caso quando non fosse lasciato venire a Parigi.” Monica Lovinescu ha scritto costantemente con ammirazione sull'opera di Augustin Buzura, iniziando con *Absenții* („un mondo può aspettare di esitere con tutto ciò”, dovuto a questi Absenți), continuando con *Fețele tăcerii* (romanzo con un respiro speciale dovuto al suo modo di “tremolio della verità”), *Vocile nopții* (nel 1980), e *Drumul cenușii*, sottolineando la tensione e la lucidità della coscienza, la resistenza degli eroi, il nuovo contatto con la storia e le caratteristiche del romanziere moralista, accanto a Marin Preda e Octavian Paler. Dalla prima pagina del manoscritto compare un riferimento dell'autrice “all'altra era dei peccatori” (Marin Preda). L'idea è ripresa/sottolineata in un'altra pagina del manoscritto, quando rimanda ancora “all'era degli sciaururati” di Marin Preda. Già dal 1980, all'apparizione del romanzo *Vocile nopții*, Monica Lovinescu collega l'ossessivo decennio di Marin Preda dell'ossessivo presente, di Augustin Buzura. Il personaggio Pintea è “alieno” in un mondo ostile e vive in un clima di paura. “Lo stato di inchiesta è permanente ... Non solo lungo all'ossessivo decennio, ma anche, sotto forme più o meno camuffate e nell'ossessivo presente.” Lo stato di paura sarà colto dall'autrice anche

nel romanzo *Drumul cenușii*, “il più intenso libro della paura pubblicato ultimamente”, così come scrive nel *Jurnal*, nel 5 aprile 1989.

Similmente con altre valutazioni critiche, Monica Lovinescu registra ed analizza nei romanzi di Augustin Buzura il rapporto dell'autore e la sua narrazione con la storia, l'eleganza della sua scrittura e l'opzione per il reale, la difesa dei valori che definiscono l'uomo, la lucidità/il modello antiutopico, la rivolta, la morte psichica, la paura, la sconfitta e la ricerca, l'alienazione, lo statuto insulare e la passione morale ecc. La lettura e gli appunti dell'autrice, come nelle altre cronache dedicate ad Augustin Buzura, precise, chiare, centrate sulle idee ed i conflitti del libro, sui nuclei epici di questa, evidenziando l'interesse dello scrittore per il sociale e per il modo di delineare i personaggi. Caviamo due esempi di questo manoscritto: a. La presentazione in diverse pagine, di M.N.S. (pp. 43, 51, 459 ecc.); b. I numerosi richiami alle pagine del libro riguardanti al limaccioso sogno, insetti, aridità, miseria della vita di ogni giorno, utilizzando l'analisi psicologica ed il meccanismo degli slogan, l'alternanza unificatore del deserto del villaggio e anche al quello della città, al quello rappresentato dal sindaco Socoliuc e anche dal suo Comune e dal direttore Rafiroiu e dal suo opificio: “Che sta capitando con noi se siamo arrivati a mossinare quello che ci compete di diritto come uomini? ” – seleziona l'autrice, mandando alle p. 315 – 316 del romanzo ecc. L'accento indicato dell'autrice sulla problematica e il senso dell'esistenza, sulla spiegazione dei simboli del libro, del significato della luce dei fari, dei disegni dell'ospedale, del titolo e della parabola dei ciechi (“quando un cieco guida un altro cieco cadrano entrambi nella fossa”), tanto nella presentazione del microcosmo del villaggio e della città, quanto anche della vulnerabilità della protagonista, Ioana Olaru e la braccata di Helgomar, con numerose spieghazioni e note, l'ascolto dei telefoni, minatori, capi, dossier e potere, avvicina la sfortuna, l'oppressione e il protesta del romanzo dell'*idea di base del manoscritto* identificato e presentato da noi e del finale della cronaca, nella caratteristica dell'analisi di Monica Lovinescu: “È morto Helgomar o no? Spuntano ancora Helgomari diversi di quelli dei romanzi di A. B.?”

Analista lucido e critico letterario fedele, Monica Lovinescu realizza in questo manoscritto una lettura minuziosa del romanzo *Refugii* di Augustin Buzura, con il progetto probabile di una restituzione, di una presentazione per i lettori suoi, dei significati di alcune idee ed immagini del romanzo nell'opera di Augustin Buzura, nell'ambito della letteratura romena alla fine del Ventesimo Secolo.

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**BILAN DE LA FRANCE CULTURELLE D'APRES LA
GRANDE GUERRE,
DANS LES LETTRES DE MICHEL RALEA, ENVOYEEES
À LA REVUE «VIAȚA ROMÂNESCĂ»**

(1920-1923)

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Abstract: *This research articles reveals the ways in which Mihail Ralea (1896-1964), one of the most brilliant intellectuals of the interwar Romania, identified the very essence of cultural mechanisms even in the simple process of writing the editorials (Lettres de Paris) he sent to the literary journal „Viața românească” («La Vie roumaine») , while he was pursuing his doctorate(s) in Paris. A forerunner of the interdisciplinary studies in an organic, harmoniously totalizing sense, Mihail Ralea excelled in so many of the humanistic sciences that it would be difficult to isolate one: philosophy, literature, aesthetics, law, psychology, sociology, history of European culture, politology, history of social ideas, anthropology. Before he had elaborated his theories on the specificity of Romanian culture, Ralea found as specific for «l'esprit français» the identification with the so-called l'homme générique, abstrait, l'homme-en-soi.*

Key-words: cultural mechanisms, M. Ralea's "Lettres de Paris", *l'homme générique*, l'esprit français

L'européisme au service de la «culture nationale»

C'est à partir de 1919 qu'ayant accompli à l'Université de Jassy ses études à triple formation, en philosophie, lettres et droit, Michel Ralea²¹⁰ part pour Paris, encore le noyau européen principal de rayonnement culturel, afin d'y poursuivre le doctorat, dans le cadre très élevé de l'École Normale Supérieure.

D'une mentalité perméable aux mouvements d'idées, soient-ils d'ordre social, politique ou scientifique, mais sans prouver le penchant vers les rigidités de compréhension littérale d'un doctrinaire, il se montre du côté de l'idéologie connue sous le nom de «poporanism», la variante roumaine située dans la ligne des courants apparentés qui vont du «narodnicisme» au «populisme».

Des réverbérations de l'époque des Lumières, ils touchent sur l'impératif de l'éducation des couches sociales humbles, c'est-à-dire les paysans – pour les sociétés agrariennes, les ouvriers – pour les sociétés industrielles. Dans le domaine de la création, par rapport au passé, il y a une demande claire: moins d'idyllique en représentation, plus de réalisme, y compris (et permis) celui régi par l'émotionnel. Toutes ces initiatives organisées d'éclaircissement sont finalement dirigées vers le but généreux de la formation d'une «culture nationale», non plus mise à jour par un processus artificiel d'emprunt des modèles, mais par le réglage du métabolisme interne, national, en fonction de la connaissance de l'ensemble des éléments qui composent le contexte du présent auquel il faut s'adapter «démocratiquement et moralement».

Si l'on regarde la déclaration faite par les membres de la rédaction de «Viața românească» [«La Vie roumaine»], dans le premier numéro d'après la Première Guerre Mondiale, on est saisi par l'importance accordée au «point de vue démocratique et moral», à l'«esprit démocratique» et au «désir de se mettre au service de la morale et de la beauté», par la défense de la «liberté de pensée» et du «talent», même si ce dernier revient également, qu'on le veuille ou non, à l'«écrivain réactionnaire et immoral»²¹¹.

Il est évident que par rapport à la modernisation à tout prix, la voie proposée par «Viața românească» suppose la lenteur de l'assimilation des modèles par un peuple pas assez préparé de les recevoir et de faire la distinction entre ce qui lui est vraiment nécessaire pour progresser et ce qui va naturellement pour une culture, mais ne convient pas à l'état organique d'une autre. Quoique la déclaration ci-mentionnée ne reconnaisse pas avoir «professé un programme»²¹², dans les pages de «Viața românească», et qu'elle rejette l'hypothèse d'avoir «donné des

²¹⁰ On emploie le nom sous lequel l'auteur roumain, Mihai D. Ralea, a été connu en France.

²¹¹ Voir *Miscellanea. L'année XII*, dans «Viața românească», tome XLII, année XII, no. 1-3, Jassy, 1920, p. 160-161.

²¹² *Ibidem*, p. 161.

recettes»²¹³, il n'est pas très difficile à observer qu'ainsi comme se passe-t-il d'habitude, les résultats vont exprimer le contraire. Au moins pour le côté programmatique.

Le sens d'une correspondance. Enseignement utile/ enseignement futile

Il est maintenant le moment d'insérer dans la discussion le cas des *Lettres de Paris*, envoyées par Michel Ralea à la rédaction de «Viața românească», pendant son stage doctoral. La série commence en 1920 et va s'achever au 1923, avec le retour de leur auteur dans le pays.

Dans l'édition quasi-complète des œuvres de Michel Ralea, génériquement intitulée *Écrits*, elles couvrent la section «littérature étrangère» (tome 2) et le groupage «Lettres de Paris. Lettres d'Allemagne» (tome 3)²¹⁴. Selon ces rapprochements des genres, on est invité de leur faire soit une lecture en termes d'une contribution roumaine dans l'analyse de quelques parties de la littérature universelle (sur *Les cloportes*, de Jules Renard, *La pécheresse*, d'Henri de Reigier – l'éditeur laisse à côté de cette sélection les rends-comptes sur *La symphonie pastorale*, d'André Gide, et *À l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs*, de Marcel Proust, en découpant en fragments une lettre toute entière centrée sur «la littérature» comprenant «les publications de l'année»²¹⁵), soit une lecture en termes de ce qu'on nomme «l'imagologie» - l'image que le voyageur étranger (le doctorant roumain, Michel Ralea) se fait d'un espace culturel (disons la France).

Il ne faut pas montrer une perspicacité trop grande, afin de constater que les deux perspectives sont très redevables à leurs limites et qu'elles perdent de vue, peu à peu, la contextualisation. Les idées de Ralea sont brillantes, dans l'acuité dont il fait l'exercice pour saisir les mécanismes culturels et donner des caractérisations exactes. Il n'est pas trop dire si l'on considère comme un critique-diagnosticien qui se fait plaisir d'observer, d'ériger ses constats dans une fiche d'observation, de décrire les manifestations et d'en tirer les conclusions qui s'imposent.

Dans les lettres envoyées à «Viața românească», Michel Ralea joue le rôle du médiateur qui reçoit l'information, la pèse et la donne plus loin à un public qui doit être familiarisé avec les points-forts de la culture européenne. De plus, ses «lettres» s'inscrivent sinon dans un «programme», alors dans une «politique» de la revue. Il faut savoir que Ralea fait dans «les lettres de Paris et d'Allemagne» des correspondances pour la rubrique nommée comme telle de «Viața românească». Il n'est

²¹³ *Idem*, p. 160.

²¹⁴ On cite l'édition en sept volumes de N. Tertulian et Florin Mihăilescu, Mihai Ralea, *Écrits*, Ed. Minerva, Bucarest, 1972-1989.

²¹⁵ Il s'agit de la « lettre » du tome XLIV, année XII, 1920, p. 286-292.

pas seul dans cette activité, et pas le seul qui écrive des «lettres de Paris» pour la rédaction de «Viața românească».

Dans la collection de la revue, il y a pour la même période (1920-1921) des correspondances porteuses surtout d'informations culturelles, mais pas seulement de ce domaine, publiées sous le titre de «lettres de...», envoyées aussi de Florence, par Al. Dem. Marcu (*Lettres florentines*), et de Londres, par Dragoș Protopopescu (*Lettres de Londres*). Un autre élément qui frappe: les *Lettres de Paris* continuent après le retour de Ralea à Jassy, cette fois, envoyées par l'historien Andrei Oșetea.

Ce sont des détails significatifs pour l'existence d'une tendance bien définie d'action culturelle de la part de «Viața românească», en vue de faire connaître en Roumanie les mouvements d'idées européennes occidentales. Lire, connaître et puis discerner; faire le choix entre ce qui va ou non à une «culture nationale», entre l'enseignement utile et l'enseignement futile pour la nation.

Le voyageur et son époque

À la manière d'Usbek, le personnage des *Lettres persanes* de Montesquieu, Ralea découvre Paris, pas celui des Lumières, mais la ville-Lumière d'après la Grande Guerre de 1914 - 1918. Il tombe sur une société bouleversée qui cherche pourtant de retrouver son rythme et l'équilibre. Il y a des alliances politiques fulgurantes, des héros, des combattants, des militants, des opportunistes. C'est un monde fragile qui s'efforce à l'oubli de la guerre, du passé, et de s'assurer l'avenir, même par le recours désespéré aux solutions qui ne rejettent pas les utopies. Encore sous les effets de la souffrance collective récente, les arts et les disciplines humanistes continuent leurs vies. Chancelants au début, ils se revitalisent au cours des années suivantes.

La série des *Lettres de Paris* de Michel Ralea commence par quelques descriptions de la vie politique, sociale et économique. Ce sont des «généralités» sur l'état des gouvernements qui changent et sur la politique intérieure et extérieure de la France. De temps en temps, l'auteur décide d'insérer des réflexions traitant de la condition des intellectuels et de la destinée future de la littérature française : «Après les nécessités communes de la guerre, *l'union sacrée* est en voie de dissolution. Les financiers ont repris leurs spéculations écervelées. Les ouvriers se baignent dans la haine et s'opposent partout par leur recette: la grève. Les paysans, enrichis à la suite de la guerre se contentent dans la vie commode du jour au lendemain. Mais les intellectuels restent isolés et impuissants. [...] Et de toute façon ils sont les prolétaires véritables d'aujourd'hui. Doués d'une imagination qui peut concevoir toutes les finesses du bonheur et en même temps dépourvus de tout pouvoir de réalisation matérielle, ils sont les plus malheureux des mortels. [...] Les

temps actuels ne sont pas propices aux intellectuels. La littérature change des prédilections. Devant ses souffrances, la culture française se dirige vers un mysticisme puissant. Le problème du bonheur s'impose. Or toutes les débats sur le bonheur ne peuvent être que mystiques»²¹⁶. Le constat s'accompagne comme chez le héros persan de Montesquieu par un regard critique. Au-delà de toute la rhétorique utilisée, Ralea essaie de transmettre une attitude devant les faits et les événements pris en considération.

La lettre publiée dans le numéro 7-10/ 1920 de «Viața românească» s'agit d'abord de la littérature et, dans sa deuxième et dernière partie, de la présentation du politicien socialiste Alexandre Millerand. Avant qu'il passe en revue dans des rends-comptes de courtes dimensions, presque des notices, les principales parutions de l'année, Michel Ralea se dédie à un plaidoyer pour la cause de la lecture, une coutume essentielle à la vie de l'intellectuel: «La littérature est *le premier amour* de chaque intellectuel. On avait à raison dit qu'ils sont monstrueux les gens qui n'avaient pas écrit de vers à 18 ans. – Après quelque temps, d'une façon brutale et impitoyable, la vie nous oblige à rompre cette mésalliance, étant donné que, dans son empire, l'idylle est un chapitre antipathique. Notre planète humble ne connaît pas encore la république aristocratique de Renan où les poètes occupent les places les plus importantes. De la jeunesse, des spécialisations arides rappellent à l'adolescent la règle du type jésuite que *la vie n'est pas un roman*. Mais on ne peut pas étouffer la vraie nature. La preuve est que poussé loin, au fond de l'âme, le besoin de littérature surgit violemment, comme un fantôme, à n'importe quel âge. On peut se guérir du goût de commettre des vers, mais on ne trouve jamais de remède au besoin vital de lire»²¹⁷.

Ce qui suit à cette défense de la dignité de celui qui aime ardemment la littérature c'est une sorte de liste annotée de lectures, comprenant des nouveautés éditoriales, comme le roman posthume de Jules Renard, *Les cloportes*, le roman de salon d'Henri de Reignier, *La pécheresse*, le roman d'aventures de Pierre Benoît, *Pour Don Carlos*, le roman d'André Gide, *La symphonie pastorale*, le Grand prix de l'Académie Française pour le roman – André Corthis, *Pour moi seule*, et finalement le Goncourt de l'année – le roman de Marcel Proust, *À l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleur*. La description résumable du contenu laisse parfois la place à la voix du critique-diagnosticien qui dans une image à retenir ou une phrase synthétique donne la conclusion décisive: «un panthéiste du détail. [...] Il se sentait bien à l'aise dans la ménagerie des animaux qu'il avait ramassés autour de lui. Cela lui servait comme

²¹⁶ «Viața românească», tome XLIV, année XII, no. 4-6, p. 300-301 [la lettre est signée Mihai D. Ralea et porte, au début, la date «juin, 1920»].

²¹⁷ «Viața românească», tome XLIV, année XII, no. 7-10, p. 287 [la lettre signée Mihai D. Ralea porte la date «Octobre, 1920»].

société. De cette façon, si Mirbeau est mort seul, comme tous les gens sans foi, le cercueil de Renard a été poursuivi, dans le cortège, par un enfant, plusieurs paysans et quelques pauvres animaux qui plaignaient un ami²¹⁸. (sur Jules Renard) ; «André Gide est l'un des talents les plus originaux et remarquables de la France contemporaine. Le mélange de mysticisme religieux, d'idéalisme et de raffinement purement esthétique, semblables à Oscar Wilde ou Théophile Gautier, donnent à sa physionomie une caractéristique toute personnelle. [...] Il faut être lu²¹⁹»; «Nous avons à faire avec une sensibilité délicate qui aime la minutiosité microscopique, qui au modèle de Zola décrit en 20 pages le coin d'une chambre ou la toile d'une araignée. [...] L'ambition de l'auteur est celle de devenir un néo-classique, - de réagir normalement contre l'insanité littéraire.²²⁰» (sur Marcel Proust).

La correspondance de Michel Ralea s'enchaîne tout au long de 1921. Dans le numéro 1-3 de «Viața românească», on publie un collage d'informations comprenant un bilan-analyse de la «situation politique des derniers mois», recevant un verdict immédiat pour la société française : «l'harmonie intérieure actuelle est gravement menacée [...]. L'élément moral reste impuissant devant la loi de fer de la désorganisation économique de l'Europe toute entière. De l'Orient bolchevique jusqu'aux frontières de la France, la famine croissante demande d'autres lois et d'autres organisations²²¹».

Comme d'habitude, Ralea se réserve une bonne partie du discours aux questions culturelles; dans la même lettre, son intérêt vise le Quartier latin, l'enclave estudiantine et intellectuelle présente qui avait vécu, à son opinion, trois vies: celle de la noblesse, celle des cafés artistiques et de la bohème décadente, celle d'un milieu universitaire rigide. Certes, il y a des images percutantes sur le lecteur, des tournements des phrases qui frappent sinon le sens esthétique, au moins la curiosité, mais la conclusion s'avère vibrante, dans son tragisme : «la vie intellectuelle est séchée par la monopolisation impérieuse des soucis économiques et sociaux que la guerre avait laissés. La sérénité des siècles d'un intellectualisme désintéressé n'est pas un trait de nos jours²²²».

²¹⁸ *Idem*, p. 288.

²¹⁹ *Idem*, p. 290-291.

²²⁰ *Idem*, p. 291. Cette perception sera corrigée dans une note de l'étude Marcel Proust, paru toujours en «Viața românească», tome XLVII, année XV, no. 7-9, p. 195-207 : «*Mea culpa* est une pose de l'humilité vaniteuse. J'aurais voulu l'éviter. Je me demande des excuses si je me vois quand même obligé d'y faire le recours. Dans une *lettre de Paris*, envoyée à la revue *Viața românească*, découragé dans une première tentative de lecture par le style difficile, en apparence, de Proust, j'ai écrit des mots - il faut le reconnaître - injustes sur ce grand écrivain. Ensuite, intrigué par une page remarquable citée par le critique A. Thibaudet, j'ai attentivement repris la lecture faite là trop en hâte. Après les 50 pages - le lecteur peut l'essayer à son tour - j'ai été assez récompensé de l'effort déposé».

²²¹ «*Viața românească*», tome XLV, année XIII, no. 1-3, p. 278 [lettre signée Mihai D. Ralea].

²²² *Idem*, p. 279.

Une étude impeccable d'imagologie culturelle avant-la-lettre nous offre le texte inclus dans le numéro suivant de la revue. Il a comme thème les *Caractéristiques ethniques* des français, leurs marques de la civilisation. L'auteur ne se cache pas son étonnement, en découvrant qu'une partie considérable des étrangers avouent fréquemment qu'ils se sentent proches de l'esprit français. Alors comment expliquer tout cela? Selon Ralea, «le Français s'approche plus que toute autre nationalité de *l'homme générique*, abstrait, de *l'homme-en-soi*, de n'importe quand et n'importe où²²³» [...] «en France, dès le début, chacun se reconnaît en quelque chose. On peut dire que ce pays est une succursale de l'humanité, un résumé logique et en quelque sorte artificiel de toute la catégorie humaine.²²⁴»

Avant qu'il essaie de définir «l'esprit roumain» ou «l'âme moldave», Michel Ralea s'exerce dans la définition de l'«esprit français»: celui-ci est caractérisé par «une série des formules impersonnelles, qui transforment la clarté en évidence», «une série des mœurs qui manquent entièrement de personnalité»²²⁵.

Comme on a affirmé auparavant, on a à faire avec un critique-diagnosticien qui s'abandonne très rarement à l'enthousiasme, en préférant de regarder les visages diverses de la société du regard le plus objectif possible. Même s'il est bien évident que Ralea a un penchant pour la culture française, cela n'est pas du tout suffisant pour l'épargner d'un constat peu commode: «Aujourd'hui, son orgueil ressemble à celui du noble ruiné qui préfère de ne pas manger que de donner un bon pourboire. La France ne peut pas jouer le rôle du sage écolier. Elle croit qu'elle n'a plus à apprendre de l'extérieur. Tout ce qui a été bon à dire a été déjà séché par ses génies nationaux; sa vie d'aujourd'hui se maintient tout entière grâce au passé. [...] Pétrifié dans le geste généreux du semeur, il [*le peuple français*, n.m.] ne veut pas humilier son orgueil dans la platitude de l'imitation. Comme le chevalier d'autrefois, résigné et héroïque, il se prépare tout seul l'asphyxion au moyen de laquelle il veut mourir»²²⁶.

Plus loin, dans une autre lettre, Michel Ralea s'arrête sur ce qui fait la gloire culturelle de la France. Le *Bilan de la philosophie française contemporaine* atteint ce point-fort et sensible de l'esprit français. Le critique lui remarque «la fixité» qui a de l'influence sur «la catégorie la plus invariable d'une société: les mœurs». Il attire l'attention qu'«on ne connaît jamais la psychologie ou le caractère spécifique d'un peuple par

²²³ «Viața românească», tome XLV, année XIII, no. 4-6, p. 283 [lettre signée Mihai D. Ralea].

²²⁴ *Idem*, p. 283.

²²⁵ *Idem*, p. 283.

²²⁶ *Idem*, p. 288.

l'étude des élites intellectuelles, qui fatalement doivent rester aliénées»²²⁷.

Le théâtre est encore un pari perdu de la France. Après la déchéance du spectacle boulevardier et la banalité où échoit la Comédie française, il est venu le temps du théâtre intellectuel, qui, malheureusement pour les Français, est une idée appartenant au Nord²²⁸.

L'année 1922 varie le répertoire thématique des lettres. C'est le moment pour Michel Ralea de se mettre à discuter les *Courants critiques et idéologiques* (no. 1-3), en partant de l'observation que «les personnalités qui ont une influence forte sur la culture française contemporaine sont parfaitement opposées entre elles²²⁹», *l'Économie et la politique* (no. 4-6). Puis après un séjour en Italie, d'où il n'envoie pas de correspondances, Michel Ralea renoue avec la série des «lettres», cette fois expédiées d'Allemagne.

Le dernier épisode de l'envoi est représenté toujours par une *Lettre de Paris*, au sujet de quelques traits de l'«esprit français», parmi lesquels on cite «le rationalisme dominant de l'intelligence», «la sensualité de l'âme», «l'individualisme», «la discrétion», «le psychologisme dans la vie et dans la littérature», «le rire»; elle sera publiée dans le numéro 1-3/ 1923 de «Viața românească»²³⁰.

De la littérature prolétarienne²³¹ ?

Il n'y a pas de doute que dans ses *Lettres de Paris*, Michel Ralea donne une preuve de l'influence puissante que la pensée d'Hippolyte Taine avait eue sur la formation intellectuelle du début du XX-e siècle. Redevable au niveau du point de vue à la théorie de la triade race-milieu-moment, prêtant une grande attention à la contextualisation, Michel Ralea ne s'éloigne pas d'une perspective bourgeoise, en dépit de l'intérêt montré au fil de la correspondance aux sujets socialistes.

Même si dans la revue «Viața românească», le premier numéro après la guerre, on trouve une référence à l'appel à constitution d'une «Internationale des intellectuels», signé par Romain Rolland, Henri Barbusse, Georges Duhamel²³², la publication enregistre le message, en

²²⁷ «Viața românească», tome XLV, année XIII, no. 7-9, p. 252 [lettre signée Mihai D. Ralea].

²²⁸ Cf. *Le théâtre de cette année*, dans «Viața românească», tome XLV, année XIII, no. 10-12, p. 132-134 [lettre signée Mihai Ralea].

²²⁹ «Viața românească», tome XLVI, année XIV, no. 1-3, p. 133 [lettre signée Mihai D. Ralea].

²³⁰ «Viața românească», tome XLVII, année XV, no. 1-3, p. 260-266 [lettre signée Mihai D. Ralea].

²³¹ Voir surtout Michel Ragon, *Histoire de la littérature prolétarienne de langue française: littérature ouvrière, littérature paysanne, littérature d'expression populaire*, Albin Michel, Paris, 1986; l'article de Nicole Racine, *Une revue des intellectuels communistes dans les années vingt: «Clarté» (1921-1928)*, in «Revue française de science politique», 1967, volume 17, p. 484-519.

²³² Cf. Nicanor&Co, *L'Internationale des intellectuels*, dans «Viața românească», tome XLII, année XII, no. 1-3, Jassy, 1920, p. 169-171.

faisant pourtant la preuve de l'enthousiasme du bourgeois illuminé, pas de l'élan combatif prolétarien. Et il n'est pas évident pour les membres de la rédaction que l'«Internationale des intellectuels» pourrait être une autre entreprise que, par exemple, «La République des Lettres» des humanistes.

Ces *Lettres de Paris* de Michel Ralea ne tiennent pas du genre de la littérature prolétarienne qui aime bien se former les cadres, en les tirant directement des couches sociales humbles. Elles sont par conséquent des prises de vue sympathisantes avec la gauche, mais encore très bourgeoises.

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VASILE VOICULESCU

Author of Science-Fiction ?

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Abstract. *The article deals with two less known texts belonging to an author canonically considered rather traditionalist. In this context, discovering him as an author of science-fiction texts may be a surprise, not only because of the totally different preoccupation, but because of the very modern approach, one of the texts revealing concerns present also in the contemporary discourses of the environmentalists nowadays, while the other one reveals Vasile Voiculescu as an author with an out-of-ordinary historical intuition, an author who could read and predict through science-fiction the negative events brought up by the instauration of communism in Romania, unfortunately proven true by his literature of anticipation.*

Keywords. science-fiction, eugenics, lobotomy, communism, anticipation, visionary

In Romanian literature textbooks, Vasile Voiculescu (1884-1963), canonical poet and prose-writer, appears as a defender of traditions, a story-teller interested in archaic practices, superstitions, folk legends. Diametrically opposed to this elementary universe, there is another dimension of Vasile Voiculescu's work, namely that of texts inspired by the universe of science and scientists, he himself being actually a scientist – a medical doctor. Such texts, a short-story entitled *Lobocoagularea prefrontală* (*Pre-forehead Lobocoagulation*) and a play named *Demiurgul* (*The Demiurge*), deal with the act of forcing experiments on human race in the name of an ideal which is falsely legitimised. Both texts are dystopias.

The man-of-science perspective comes in as a glove-fitting script for Vasile Voiculescu. He worked as a physician and elaborated a doctoral thesis in medicine. At the same time, he was very attracted to the myths preserved in archaic communities, such as the Romanian

villages of his time. There is certain scepticism in assuming the fantastical or the supernatural elements he inserted into his short-stories. This scepticism takes the form of author's disguise under the mask of a narrator. But this double perspective reflecting the myth and questioning it brings the necessary effect ambiguity of his fantastic prose.

However, the entirely scientific prospective is present in the above-mentioned texts, very different than the content of his other short-stories, plays and poems.

The Demiurge is a play unique of its kind in the frame of Romanian literature. It is the first science-fiction dystopia, it has no precedence in Romanian drama. It was written in 1943 but it was published in volume only in 1972 by the literary critic Mircea Tomuș, editor of the volume. This play could be regarded as a satirical incrimination of the Nazi concept of eugenics²³³, but it also contains many elements of fictions of anticipation. It is pertaining to the series of works of fiction and film giving an alarm signal about the hybris of the modern scientist. Thus, the modern scientist claims no less than the competition with God for correcting His creation or for bettering it. Voiculescu's text has also a visionary dimension. The genetic engineering, anticipated by the Nazi campaign of eugenics, has reached limits unthinkable of even at the middle of the 20th century, when this limits were just themes for science-fiction. The play comprises this dismal outcome. The philosophy behind eugenics is still enacted among us, the contemporary readers of his work. Some of the arguments in favour of birth-control, abortions, euthanasia and cloning are the same as the former arguments in favour of eugenics.

The play could be viewed as a science-fiction anticipation of a bleak future already manifested in the European Postwar literature, namely that of the universe having the specificity of the literature of detention. It is among the first plays of this kind.

In an isolated castle, doctor Al. Mușatin, "the demiurge", has founded an institution of bio-genetic researches. The purpose of the researches is no less than the betterment of species. There is a strange and inhuman atmosphere in the castle. No one really knows who the experimenters are. Neither is it known who the Guinea-pigs on whom the tests are conducted are. The magic, fairy-tale like atmosphere is not missing from the environment, showing Voiculescu's belief in human thrive for the mythical grounds. One of the characters, The Internist She-Physician, notices no difference from the magical atmosphere of Middle Ages, despite the presence of microscope, lamps, electric bistouries.

²³³ *Istoria teatrului în România*, vol. III, Ed. Academiei RSR, Buc.1973 (in Romanian).

The message of the play is a humanitarian one. It reveals a concern present also in the contemporary discourses of the environmentalists nowadays. The play challenges the severe and strict responsibility of a scientist concerning the long-term effects of his work. What if these effects may cause a real alteration of the evolution of man? What if in striving after betterment there is a hidden seed of evil which is thus released and which will never be under control? Can man be so subjected to science as to alter his place in the world and his relationship to others? All these questions are very much on the spotlight today, they have not been forgotten or rendered obsolete, on the contrary, they have been awakened. The evolution of science has not made these fears something not to worry about. Scientific congresses and mass-media are still inflamed nowadays about these questions.

Voiculescu's man-of-science approach is reconciled with the mythical quest for man's place in the world. The place, the role and the destiny of man must have something sacred, something pertaining to another order, as it can be inferred from another short-story written by Voiculescu, *The Revolt of the Beasts*. That short-story explores the relationship between man and beast.

The Demiurge also explores the father-son failed relationship, as a prototype for the failed theory of eugenics, despite the highly humanistic ideal of the father, "the Demiurge". He is unable to sustain love in his family, he forces it onto the members of the experiment, by being convinced that the healthy behaviour of happy couples can be learned. Lucian, the son of the Demiurge, points out to the faults of his father's system, far from being an infallible system. "Only you, here, persist diabolically in horrible errors, imagining that you can stop the wheels of the universe with your poor fingers. The nature is free and you cannot prevent that. That is why nature has its free laws, it has the freedom to do anything She wants with these laws. And She does want the right thing, always." Father's tendencies are to turn science into the source of completing his obsessions, his maniac impulses, as the son reveals. But the son proves no better himself, unable to govern his instincts, calling himself Cain, as the inheritor of a genius badly oriented.

The dramatic tension is mastered by the author with greatness. Voiculescu has the science of getting a gradation without pushing too hard on one perspective and without neglecting the other. It is neither the maniac disorder in the foreground, nor the debate of concepts. Mircea Tomuș, the editor, considers this play one of the most solid dramas of Romanian literature²³⁴.

Another surprising text is the prose *Lobocoagularea prefrontală* (*Pre-forehead Lobocoagulation*), dating back to 1948, published only in

²³⁴ Mircea Tomuș, *Prefață la Vasile Voiculescu Teatru*, Cluj Napoca, Ed. Dacia, 1972

1982 by Mircea Braga in the literary journal "Transilvania", and in 1986 in the volume *Gânduri albe* (*White Thoughts*), after it had been excluded from the 1972 and 1982 editions by the state censorship of the age.

The writing of this text coincides with the time when "Rugul aprins" (The Burning Bush), a Romanian religious cultural movement which Vasile Voiculescu was part of, was forbidden. It has direct links with the reality of the time and with the gloomy predictions of a time of terror that was to come. The text was extremely subversive for the communist regime and even dangerous; therefore it could not have been accompanied by a commentary. Even its publishing was somehow miraculous for escaping the censorship. Mircea Braga included the text in the category of "satirical utopia", inspired by medical experiments of human race betterment during the Second World War. But these experiments referred to eugenics, not to lobotomy, as present in this text.

Lobocoagularea prefrontală (*Pre-forehead Lobocoagulation*) is neither short-story nor tale, it is something between scientific essay and scenario, since it does not contain the presence of individualised characters that could be developed into a novel. If it were to become a novel, the *Lobocoagularea prefrontală* (*Pre-forehead Lobocoagulation*) could have stood near *1984* by George Orwell (1949) and *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest* (1962), by Ken Kessey. Voiculescu's scenario was written before the above-mentioned novels were published.

The severe, calm tone of the beginning of Voiculescu's short-story soon appears to be part of a certain mechanism of irony. It is a deceiving tone, very appropriate for the mechanisms of dystopia. The perfect world of an unsettled future is described with a simulated enthusiasm: "The world has calmed itself down. Under the perfect guidance of the Prefect of the Permanent Presidium of the Peoples of Peace [or the five P's (P.P.P.P.P.), life was running its easeful course for all and for all times. Amazing technical progress has been achieved. And every individual, from his or her place, granted by the abovementioned committee as a birthright, was working zealously and gratefully for the public good". This world seems to have achieved and stabilised the social ideal sought for throughout centuries. This ideal is "the return to the one-dimensional world." This thing has been achieved and made possible through an operation of psych-surgery. This operation emerged as a "salutary measure of psycho- sanitary provision for health". The operation consists of a pre-forehead lobocoagulation. The result is the extirpation of all nervous centres responsible for the emotional life, since previously it had been discovered that the emotions were responsible for all troubles, cosmic or personal, for all earthquakes and for all crimes and suicides. Therefore, for the health of the population, everybody, without exception, was subjected to this operation even immediately after birth.

Along came other procedures, such as compulsory vaccination and revaccination and sterilisation. They were repeated at the age of seven, irrespectively of eighteen. Two small black scars on the forehead were the evidence of normality and of pertaining to the happy race with compulsory happiness. It is to be mentioned that *Equilibrium*, a 2002 film, written and directed by Kurt Wimmer, deals with the same problem of the excision of emotiveness, but 54 years later and has a lot in common with Voiculescu's text.

In a visionary way, Voiculescu describes in fact a totalitarian society in which the authorities have the power to control the intimacy of the individual. Man is annihilated in his essence and is depleted of the resorts through which he could have objected to uniformisation: "The subject is freed from all misfortunes that accompany self-awareness, he loses his selfish ambitions, his dreams of grandeur and the egotistical interest(...). He is no longer tormented by any questions or tormented by mystery." Although this story exaggerates the features and the frame, the scenario imagined by Voiculescu will prove real over some decades. The writer becomes the unwanted prophet of troubled times. The short-story *The Last Berevoi* (1949), which can be read as a cipher for subversiveness, as the critic Elvira Sorohan²³⁵ considers, brings along the same bleak prophecy: "It had rained hard with blood and the times were coming red and whirling..."

All the common places of the totalitarian society are present. The uniformisation of all individuals is the essential premise of the loss of identity. The loss of identity renders the individual more receptive to manipulation. The traditional values are inverted and the normal social hierarchy is disrupted: "It was sustainable without parading it, as the theorists of the five P were already doing it, that this going-backward was in fact an immense progress. What had been lost as depth and as planes was regained in the line. Which was in fact the ideal: the return to the one-dimensional reality". Soon, the first signs of dissidence emerge. This is the sign that somewhere or somehow the science had failed or the sign that something unpredictable was about to ruin all this "harmony". Youngsters especially contribute to that, either through melancholy or to excessive care for adorning their uniforms with flowers and little ornaments (the girls). The authorities are alarmed but could not find vices of procedure. The chaos reaches some proportions when the forbidden words are pronounced: beauty, love, replacing the citizen job of procreation. In couples the young promise themselves to each other as in the old forgotten habit of engagement. Through this break-

²³⁵ Elvira Sorohan, *Utopia magicianului*, în „România literară”, nr.44, 6-12 noimebrie 2002, p.12

through an even greater “calamity” emerges: that of the existence of the spirit.

The merciless repressions are those of the impeccable apparatus of the totalitarian societies: detentions, supplementary works, reduced food ratios, castrations, sterilisations, brain dangerous investigations with the purpose of discovering the causes, failed scientific experiments, or complete coagulation of brains, which only enhances the number of martyrs. The extirpation of epiphysis re-establishes the silence for a while, but the anarchy emerges with even greater force. Apart from the martyrs, there is a new category, that of deserters. Hidden in caves and forests they try to re-establish through acts of magic the connections with the world of the ancestors. The spiritual dimension of mankind, apparently temporarily hidden, is spontaneously reactivated, locating new resources.

Trying to locate the centre of the spirit, the oppressors remember the infallible methods of money, espionage, bribery and denunciation. A young man, corrupted through these methods, acknowledges that all manifestations of the spirit are originating here, in his heart (since the brain was lobotomised for everybody). The authorities realise the heart had been the neglected organ and try new operations to eradicate the problem. “How far can it go?” the author launches in the text. Under this irony there is a tone of discreet optimism, in the end of this scenario. The author is satisfied to have found the existence of an indestructible spirit of revolt in mankind, a spirit which can grow in other locations, too, without being cut out by the completed extirpations.

Although quite brief, *Lobocoagularea prefrontală (Pre-forehead Lobocoagulation)* reveals Vasile Voiculescu as an author with an out-of-ordinary historical intuition, an author who could read and predict through science-fiction the negative events brought up by the instauration of communism in Romania, unfortunately proven true by his literature of anticipation.

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THE BEST SUBVERSIVE NOVELLA PUBLISHED IN COMMUNIST ROMANIA

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Abstract. *The Madman and the Flower is definitely a thought-provoking novel. The reader is surprised by its clear subversive content, expressed through the medium of numerous symbols – the tyrant, the vegetal nation, the moral misery, the mirage of power, the danger of totalitarianism, the political prosecution and the freedom of expression are only a few examples. Such an approach should have been regarded inconceivable in the age of communism. However, the lack of censorship in the countryside might have represented the only chance of this novel to be published. Ironically, it is a work that deserves far more than one chance, since we are talking about an eschatological parable, The heroes stake their selves for understanding truths that might offer them existential(ist) solutions. Heroes carry strong significations and pass through a complex cognitive process, concluding that beneath death is only life. The Madman and the Flower is a successful fusion of poetry, drama and ingenious structure – it is an undervalued masterpiece.*

Key-words: eschatological parable, metaphysical reality, communism, novella, subversive;

Romulus Guga was born in Oradea, studied in Cluj-Napoca and later established in Târgu-Mureş, sharing a common destiny with many writers of the 70's and the 80's. The jobs assigned through compulsory

national allotment, mostly in the countryside, the commutation, the integration into a literary circle, the transfer back to the city and the switch of jobs from high school teacher to writer were common events for the writers of Guga's generation. However, unlike Romulus Guga, others are some fortunate cases of continuity. Romulus Guga, born in 1939, passed away at the early age of 44. His oeuvre has remained in an undeserved anonymity, even nowadays. Only his drama was luckier – occasionally, some of the writer's works are played at the local theatre in Târgu-Mureş. With the exception of friends and devoted admirers, no other category of people with literary proficiency has shown any special interest in Guga's volumes of poetry or prose. By the courtesy of the writer Nicolae Băciuş – a faithful apprentice and tireless protector of Guga's work – the novel entitled *The Madman and the Flower* has been republished twice at a small publishing house in Târgu-Mureş. Personally, I would have initiated a series of author at a publishing house in Cluj-Napoca. The novel *The Madman and the Flower* has reached the age of 40, after its publication in 1970.

What does strike us even more nowadays is the very appearance of the novel in the public literary space in that age of totalitarian regime. It seems truly inconceivable that Guga's *The Madman and the Flower* was actually published in those times of severe censorship.

The novels of Romulus Guga are an upbeat fusion of poetry, drama and ingenious structure. The plays he had been working on ever since his student' years are turned into novel strategic settings. For instance, the play *The Death of Mister Platfus* is part of a 1974 novel entitled *Adio, Arizona*, whereas *The Elephants* appear in one of the key-scenes of *The Madman and the Flower*. Some critics ventured the opinion that the prose has strangled Guga's poetry. This happened because, after the publication of his first novel, Guga's poetry started to decline. The famous Romanian poet Ştefan Augustin Doinaş considered his poetic maturity as something already installed.

However, the cautious reader will identify Guga's obsessive themes in the prose, too, not only in his poetry. But the reader would better be careful, since these themes are recalibrated so as to stretch into the density of prose-writing.

The style created by the Romanian writers of the generation of the 60's, who opened themselves to poetry, parable, myth and truth, is what Guga finds attractive, a patentable style for him. Morality always transcends the universe of Guga's prose, but that is never a strident chord. Guga had a deeply ingrained sentiment of death found in a strange connection with his artistic excess. After Max Blecher (1909-1938), no one lived like Romulus Guga in the intimacy of death, and, at the same time, in competition with it. Maybe that is why Guga hurried to publish five novels in only four years (1970-1974) – chased by time, he

can externalize the poetic and dramatic explosions of the inner self. In Guga's interiorized counter-time, the novel came as the ideal pulsation of ample spaces. His novels are structured on well defined symbolic nuclei, their synthetic form being more important than their length, because they are not too long, except *Paradise for One Thousand Years*. The author tries to reinvent himself in each of these works, firmly assuming that he would always come with something new. The lack of critical reaction might also stem from the author's urge to publish in short time. The critical reaction elicited by *The Madman and the Flower* was soon calmed down by the rapid appearance of newer novels.

The influence of Camus, Sartre, Mann and Kafka can be clearly sensed in the author's confined world, which is one permanently conditioned by absolute decisions. Corporal inaction and metaphysical reality are the characters' ways of being into the world. The asylum, sanatorium, hospital and coffeehouse form autonomous worlds where the inaction is a way of being. The heroes reveal themselves as adventurers of the self, staking the self for understanding truths that might offer them existential(ist) solutions. The text generates thus the layer of a parable. This parabolic dimension changes the individuals, the characters, into symbols and changes the reflected worlds into allegories. The atmosphere is similar to that of Octavian Paler's novels, each of Guga's books depicts one of the various ways of coming to an end, the demise of one's hopes. The favorite formula of the writer is the confession, obligatorily dovetailed with metaphysical meditation, contemplation and debate.

The Madman and the Flower is an eschatological parable, faithful to the orthodox interpretation of the concept. It is not the apocalypse the writer is talking about, but a sort of a supreme world, a post-existence created in order to encounter a revelation. As a metaphysical condition, this type of existence is the product of volition, a philosophical concept frequently employed by Guga. *The Deadman* is the narrator of the book. He is convinced that he is dead; for him, time and future are of no relevance. Actually he traverses the state of non-being through refusing to live.

While in the asylum-sanatorium-prison, the character does not survive because he does not live. His type of existence is a suspension he accepts while he believes in having transcended life. Except the image of the shore meditating on the sea, the expected metaphysical revelation is not clearly depicted. Love does belong to Guga's world – more exactly, the characters do not give up on other strong beliefs for the sake of it. One may sense sincerity and an expression of truth – nothing more.

The most important thing is the way ideas are born and given wings. How simple maieutics defines destinies or even a society, in order to make the immersion in fatality as artistically intense as possible.

However, Guga's heroes have the chance to reinvent themselves, after giving up on a purgatorial view. The character learns to jubilate, after discovering that beneath death is only life. Not remains, but is. This kind of distinction coincides with Guga's philosophy. Life is not what remains at the end of time, but the end is *only* life.

The Madman and the Flower is the parable of an uncured Lazarus, it is the allegory of a Thomas who is unaware of being confused and the story of a bewildered Iona in a modern life. Where does this tragedy of modernity stem from? As Joseph says, the world is locked in a nut. It is a concentric and incarcerated universe. What is more, we are talking about a world that is a non-world, not at all perceived in terms of Schopenhauer. Any attempt to romanticize will result in a failure. Only the truth of life can negatively highlight this paradox – life celebrates everything, especially will, truth and death. Faith and philosophy also have a pivotal role – clothed in symbols, they represent the ideologies of life and death debating their own supereminence. Although the woman can always be found in the middle of the events, she does not cease to be marginalized. Women intervene in achieving wisdom. However, Irina does not intervene when Death meets His Majesty in the latrine. She does not influence, but, like the Doctress, let the patients face their own revelation, a personal cognition women can only inflame – and this is their sacrifice. In fact, the writer contradicts the system of the Philosopher, while realizing the immersion of his ideology in the process of personal volition. He expects that each explanation regarding life should have an a priori correspondent in reality. The patient that believes he is Jesus gambles on an a priori cognition doubled by an inverse one, giving the example of his apocryphal biography, personal fears and future intentions. The deconstructed Jesus is an image of the future that hypothesizes the renunciation of suspension and embraces life as the ultimate truth.

Romulus Guga presents a history of captivity and a parable of incarceration. Or, for those who prefer an extra-eschatological connotation, the novel can be read as an apocalyptic parable. The universe of the author is inhabited by people that have lost their compass when trying to measure humanity. Clucerul cannot live outside slavery, Bășică implies flattery, the Savant has no sense outside the game, Jesus does not gain confidence until he faces judgment, the Philosopher loses the bet with hope outside the symbol of the flower, His Majesty dreams to rule the world but is afraid of rats, Platt and Poney cannot find a sense in life, but in some non-spiritual hobbies, Joseph uses lecture to immerse in the artistic condition, but fails through debility and so on. Each character is a prisoner of fortune. I think the best introduction to this omnipresent argument is Nichita Stănescu's poetry. Guga's relater could warn us from the beginning, alongside the motto from the "Apocalypse",

that what is to be read is a “coincidence of the self”. The failures of the modern man are some apocalypses with different intensities, whereas the term has lost its absolute connotation long before. However, the last level of interpretation should take a conceptual tension into account – this time, a psychological one. Through location, themes and atmosphere, the novel becomes a space of deformed realities. The closed space defines best the multitude of worlds and truths, fake idols and pseudo-volitions of the society. The psycho-critical perspective analyzes the conflict between necessity and coincidence. The latter is associated with irregularity, while necessity implies immutability. However, they are essential and antagonist faces of the same whole: becoming. Something else they have in common is possibility. Guga’s heroes constantly try to seduce with discourses or ideas that sustain the truth of becoming. Although they choose different non-existences in order to justify absolute coincidence, the “Dead”, the Philosopher, Jesus and the Savant parade wearing faces of the becoming and, except the Dead-relater which prefers coincidence, they all choose Necessity. The Savant needs to play and the Philosopher has to grow the flower-hope-ethic, so that Jesus can die and return. What they do not know is that their road is common, but invisible because of the same disease – the refusal to live life to its fullest. The true becoming is life. This is Guga’s message, no matter whether we prefer the philosophical or the psychological interpretation.

The novel is tantalizing and extremely dangerous at its time, through the force of ideas and moral deepness. Today, it seems unbelievable that this book has ever been published. What is more, it is extremely interesting how the work had passed through the hands of the censors, given the multitude of subversive symbols (the tyrant, the vegetal nation, moral misery, mirage of power, danger of totalitarianism, political prosecution, freedom of expression and so on). Never before had anyone dared to publish such an explicit novel. Only Augustin Buzura published *The Absents*, but this work was soon censored due to its political content.

Although many things were written when the novel appeared, it is clear why no commentator dared to go further in interpreting the sensitive and, of course, concluding substructure. A critical analysis would have been more dangerous than the text itself, protected by a careful language. Not for long, though, since the book was interdicted. The appearance of this work can only be explained through the beautiful craziness of the editors in Cluj-Napoca which had traded on the lack of censorship in the countryside. Especially at a second reading, the novel offers numerous perspectives and triggers exciting questions on almost each page. It is our *Huis clos* and our *Der Prozeß* – for younger generations, it means what *Flight Over the Cuckoo’s Nest* once meant

for the American literature. Initially entitled *Jesus and the Others*, the novel *The Madman and the Flower* is a masterpiece. Despite its theatricality, its theories and its unreality, *The Madman and the Flower* remains the best micro-novel written and published in communist Romania.

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GHEORGHE CRACIU. THE PATHWAY FROM AUTHENTICITY TO CORPOREALITY

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Abstract. *The essay deals with the issue of writing as an adventurous quest for the body, a recurrent theme in Gheorghe Crăciun's prose. The obsession of explaining the language through the human body assumes dismantling the body of its alphabetical armor and "writing" it down as an attempt of returning to the authentic corporeality. Gheorghe Crăciun's lucid autoscopia proposes a pure, Adamic language destined to absorb the emotions, the sensations, the blood and the heartbeats of the writer, consequently the act of writing itself turning into the "flesh" of the narrative and resembling a bodily seismogram that fights the constrictive stereotypy of the letter.*

Key words. Gheorghe Crăciun, corporeality, body, authenticity, language

In the volume entitled "Mecanica fluidului" ("Fluid Mechanics") Gheorghe Crăciun wrote: "The conflict between *body* and *letter* can be often resolved in favor of the body. The victory is though momentary and illusory, as the eternal faith of the body assumes transferring its life to the letter. The live, authentic body, seen as the expression of a sincere and unconstrained sensibility, can only exist as a written image."²³⁶

Having set off on the adventure of corporeality, Gheorghe Crăciun's quest for a new style means finding an access to his own body as a writer. Therefore, the author dissipates himself in the pulsatile matter of the text, illustrating the postmodern reciprocal contamination process between the author's body and his work. This obsession of corporeal dissemination into the matter resembles a fragment from

²³⁶ Gheorghe Crăciun, *Mecanica fluidului*, Chișinău, Editura Cartier, 2003, p. 36

Gustave Flaubert's "Temptation of St. Anthony": "I would like (...) to twist my body, to spread myself everywhere, to be in everything, to emanate with odours, to grow like plants, to flow like water, to vibrate like sound, to shine like light, to be outlined on every form, to penetrate every atom, to descend to the very depths of matter—to be matter!"²³⁷ Concerned with the nexus between *body* and *letter*, Gheorghe Crăciun considers that "the corpus of the original word relies directly on the human body, as the metaphor is guaranteed firstly by the analogical and combinatory possibilities of our senses, that is, by an immanent, somatic anthropocentrism."²³⁸ The writer's statement resumes in a postmodern manner Socrates' theory regarding the origins of the language: "Suppose that we had no voice or tongue, and wanted to communicate with one another, should we not, like the deaf and dumb, make signs with the hands and head and the rest of the body? (...) We should imitate the nature of the thing; the elevation of our hands to heaven would mean lightness and upwardness; heaviness and downwardness would be expressed by letting them drop to the ground. (...) And when we want to express ourselves, either with the voice, or tongue, or mouth, the expression is simply their imitation of that which we want to express."²³⁹ Hence the issue of language authenticity, considered by Gheorghe Crăciun as an extension of the body that tries to "write" itself.

For the Transylvanian writer that has developed a mentality subscribed to the ancient "musica universalis", the body represents "a perturbing factor", a disorderly space of the irrational, as opposed to the letter and its spirit, that through equilibrium and transcendence, tends to gauge the indeterminate contingency of the body.

The writer believes that literature should be governed by the principle *sentio, ergo sum* in order to regain its pre-alphabetic ingenuity, only then being able to withstand the assaults of the rational. When the *letter* declares its supremacy over the *body* by subordinating it, literature becomes metaphysical and abstract. It is exactly this conflict between *letter* and *body* that triggers the textual machinery that gravitates between reality and fiction.

While investigating the revolutionary potential of the workings of the avant-garde text Barthes came forward with "an admirable expression" – "the body of the text", that stresses the corporeality of language, rather than its instrumentality or its meaning: "Does the text have human form, is it a figure, an anagram of the body? Yes, but of our

²³⁷ Gustave Flaubert, 1904, *Works of Flaubert*, vol. VII, *The Temptation of St. Anthony*, Sion P. Magee

Publisher, Chicago, Ill., Copyright by M. Walter Dunne, pp.170-171

²³⁸Gheorghe Crăciun, *Frumoasa fără corp*, București, Grupul editorial Art, 2007 p. 370

²³⁹Plato, *Cratylus*, translated by Benjamin Jowett,

<http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/cratylus.1b.txt>

erotic body" ²⁴⁰. For Julia Kristeva this erotic body is the territory of the "semiotic, verbal play, not controlled by symbolic conventions. It is the language that experimental writing liberates, absorbs and employs."²⁴¹ According to Gheorghe Crăciun, the act of writing, be it "collapse" or "salvation", represents „the seismogram of the body". Nurturing a sense of potential equality between *body* and *letter* or between sensation and language, postmodern literature tends "to regain its lost corporeality in the form of *autofiction* or those of *heterotopia* and *dystopia*, notions related to the anthropocentric, ludic and parodic postmodernism."²⁴²

Most of Gheorghe Crăciun's works deal with the act of writing as „an adventurous quest for the *body*", a recurrent theme in the texts of authors like Mircea Cărtărescu and Simona Popescu or in the writings of Jacques Derrida. In his essay "Trup și literă" ("*Body and Letter*") Gheorghe Crăciun offers solid proof for the "aesthetical and formative value of the body" that acquires a distinct narrative status in the postmodern prose.

In one of her studies Carmen Mușat emphasizes the opportunity of several phenomena as love or illness that offer the possibility of perceiving and exploring one's body and own interiority. Starting with the writings of Max Blecher the Romanian prose becomes impregnated with a type of "ailing corporeality" that is processed into prime textual matter. His discourse focuses on investigating the bodily matter, while the act of writing becomes a way of generating an alternate textual body in order to aesthetically surpass the effects of his physical disability. The illness-imposed isolation favors meditation on the imminent perspective of death and on the acute sense of being exiled inside one's own body. Blecher's desire to experiment death from an outside perspective, through a body other than his own, is somewhat paralleled by Gheorghe Crăciun's etymological interpretation of the Latin verb *ex-sistere*, expressing an extension of the self that resembles the process of "skin shedding". Developing a keen sensibility towards his own body and making use of sensation, perception and image, the writer realizes that the distinction between spirit and body anticipates the gap between literature and corporeality. The quest for the inconsistent body and for the immaterial corporeality establishes in fiction the themes of "body as text" and "text as body". Gheorghe Crăciun's metaphor of the "disembodied beauty" represents an attempt of constructing a textual body capable of expressing the somatic valences of the identity.

²⁴⁰Roland Barthes, 1975, *The Pleasure of the Text*, translated by Richard Miller, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, p.17

²⁴¹Jo Anna Isaak, 1996, *Feminism and Contemporary Art. The Revolutionary Power of Women's Laughter*, Routledge, London, p. 15

²⁴² Carmen Mușat, *Strategiile subversiunii. Incursiuni în proza postmodernă*, București, Editura Cartea Românească, 2008, p.160

Intrigued by the possible ways in which the body is revealed in the matter of the text, Gheorghe Crăciun attempts to emphasize in his novels the essential „bodily difference” as opposed to others. ”Compunere cu paralele inegale” (”Composition with Unequal Parallels”), Gheorghe Crăciun’s second novel exposes his concept of ”body as subject”, while in ”Frumoasa fără corp” (”Disembodied beauty”) his following novel, the living body is turned into a ”textual object” displaying its own literary and existential memory.²⁴³

Crăciun believes that the world exists because it invades our living bodies through thought and sense organs, but the language it is transposed in does not belong to us, it is not our „invention”. Consequently, any act of displaying one’s interiority can be considered a subjective image, an altered perception of reality: ”One may be conscious of the fact that the objective world exists disregarding oneself, but put perceiving its absolute objectivity is merely impossible. One’s own perception represents nothing but a deformed image of the surrounding world.”²⁴⁴ In the ”Phenomenology of Perception” Merleau-Ponty wrote: ”If it is true that I am conscious of my body *via* the world, that it is the unperceived term in the centre of the world towards which all objects turn their face, it is true for the same reason that my body is the pivot of the world: I know that objects have several facets because I could make a tour of inspection of them, and in that sense I am conscious of the world through the medium of my body.”²⁴⁵ Therefore, the absolute purity of the theme is to be found enclosed inside the body, not inside the idea. The author aims to explain the language through the human body, that is, dismantling the body of its alphabetical armor and “writing” it down as an attempt of returning to the authentic corporeality.

In his diary Gheorghe Crăciun commented on a peculiar similarity between literature and medicine, between surgeon and writer. According to the observations of Marc Alain Descamps, a surgeon never operates on a ”nude body”. During the surgery the human body is reduced to ”a hole in a white, immaculate fabric, so as to conceal the horror”.²⁴⁶

In order to be investigated both in medicine and in literature the human body must be transformed into an object and literature must be used as a ”a treatise on anatomy”. The human body’s vitality is nocive and inhibits the establishing of an objective relation between the

²⁴³ Carmen Mușat, *Strategiile subversiunii. Incursiuni în proza postmodernă*, București, Editura Cartea Românească, 2008, p.185

²⁴⁴ Gheorghe Crăciun, *Mecanica fluidului*, Chișinău, Editura Cartier, 2003, p. 36

²⁴⁵ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 2005, *Phenomenology of Perception*, translated by Colin Smith, Routledge, London, pp. 94-95

²⁴⁶ Gheorghe Crăciun, *Trupul știe mai mult. Fals jurnal la Pupa russa*, Pitești, Editura Paralela 45, 2006, p.145

observed and the observer. Covering up the body during the surgery can be interpreted as annulling one's identity.

In his study entitled "Mitografia personajului" the Italian writer Salvatore Battaglia traces a map of the mutations suffered by the literary characters until nowadays reaching the conclusion that contemporary fiction has abandoned its characters. During the 1920s literature was revolutionized by the works of authors like Pirandello, Joyce, Kafka, Virginia Woolf, Faulkner, Musil, Sartre or Camus. The structure of the novel changed altering the relationship between protagonist and society and highlighting the fracture between the individual conscience and the universal order. Characterized by inventions like "stream of consciousness" and "interior monologue" based on the uncontrolled succession of thoughts, the novel of the twentieth century dramatizes man's condition in a capitalist society that has reached the phase of absolute monopoly. Placed somewhere between sleep and wake, its characters lead an irrational, absurd life, constantly cutting off from the rest of the world, therefore, becoming prone to objectification: "The protagonists of these novels (as well as their authors) try to evade the inhuman forces of the society by encountering refuge inside the apparently occult and immune universe of the individual conscience. Thus, the objective reality as well as all social forces are expelled from their visual range, this kind of isolation leading to the inevitable destruction of the hero's personality, leaving him with nothing but an impersonal collection of incoherent thoughts."²⁴⁷

Gheorghe Crăciun's texts represent (re)writings of the author's self. The characters that inhabit his prose are insufficient, defective versions of their writer, „fragments from the history of my body”, as he called them.²⁴⁸ Fascinated by multiplicity and inclined towards his own interiority, Gheorghe Crăciun constructs fictional universes playing himself under different masks, escaping from the confinement of the flesh and adapting the illusions of his interiority.

Gheorghe Crăciun explains the process of creation in accordance with the ethical fundamentals of writing. Adopting authenticity as a "method of work" means revoking the collective in favor of the individual perspective, pursuing the sincerity effect of the text, that is, the sense of "corporeal implication": "I've always felt as if my life, the sensations of my own life, are constantly slipping through my fingers. My writing strives for a new language, for a way of access to the live, instant perception. Could this represent, in fact, the experiment?"²⁴⁹

²⁴⁷ Salvatore Battaglia, *Mitografia personajului*, București, Editura Univers, 1976, p. 440

²⁴⁸ According to Arina Petrovici *Fragmente din istoria trupului meu* is supposed to be the title of one of the author's diaries, later included in the volume entitled *Trupul știe mai mult*.

²⁴⁹ Gheorghe Crăciun, *(In)actualitatea prozei*, in the volume *Cu garda deschisă*, Iași, Editura Institutul european, 1997, p. 18.

Gheorghe Crăciun's writings spring from the sensorial consistence of his own body considered to be "the most creditable measuring instrument". The writer denies life in its spiritual sense, considering that reason canonizes by dictatorially imposing a dull, abstract, stereotypical world, while sensation, the same way as art, furnishes one with aesthetic thrill.

The human body, be it a space of pleasure, illness, pain or even death, expresses the global idea of existence. Therefore, authenticity stands, in Gheorghe Crăciun's opinion, for the courage of exposing the truth about one's life experience. Hence, the quest for the live body and for the authentic being can be considered as the major theme of Gheorghe Crăciun's works. His prose represents an intricate web of blood vessels that absorbs the sensations, the feelings and the heartbeats of an author who has transferred the life from his body to the letters of his writing, thus, achieving the strongly desired fictional corporeality.

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MYTHOLOGICAL FORESHADOWINGS OF THE POSTMODERN FRAGMENTARY PROSE

A Speculative Study

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Abstract. *Among the most important analysts of contemporary literature are the ones who chose to build their new theory on the very challenging and productive foundation of the mythological. Such approaches are to be noted in Ihab Hassan's reference to the myth of Orpheus in *Dismemberment of Orpheus: Toward a Postmodern Literature*, as well as in Jacques Derrida's *Dissemination* or Jean Ricardou's *New problems of the nove l-* both of them creating thorough interpretations of the legend of Osiris. This list could also be completed by Cristian Moraru, with his *Poetics of reflection*, a volume in which the critic creates an impressive debate based on the myth of Narcissus. In the Romanian cultural space the archetypal image of the artist is painted by the legend of Master Manole, the one who sacrificed himself for the timelessness of his creation.*

As will be demonstrated in the following lines, the exploitation of the mythological has always created the possibility of the development of some complex approaches to the various problems of the human horizon, whether they concerned literature, arts in general, society or simply human existence.

Key-words: postmodernism, dissemination, textual narcissism, fragmentarism

Mythological interchanges

Many of the important analysts of contemporary literature, before discussing the changes that have occurred inside the phenomenon, choose to build at least one of the foundations of the new theory by starting from an *incursion into the mythological*, among other directions that concern cultural, philosophic, architectural, political and economic aspects. Such an approach is notable in Ihab Hassan's reference to the myth of Orpheus, in *Dismemberment of Orpheus: Toward a Postmodern Literature*, as well as in Jacques Derrida's *Dissemination* or Jean Ricardou's *New problems of the novel*- both of them creating thorough interpretations of the legend of Osiris. This list could also be completed by Cristian Moraru, with his *Poetics of reflection*, a volume in which the critic creates an impressive debate starting from the myth of Narcissus. Their analysis represent more than simple speculations and offer objective points of view of significant importance in the understanding of contemporary artistic thinking. That is why we will take a quick look at them, insisting, for now, on the mythological elements that determined the creation of certain reasonings and the formation of some new concepts that are used by contemporary critics.

The exploitation of the mythological has always created the possibility of the development of some complex approaches to the various problems of the human horizon, whether they concerned literature, arts in general, society or simply human existence. Every age creates its own myths, every dimension of human existence is related to a strategy of symbolisation which is forwarded in different forms, some identical, others regenerated. Contemporaneity, though it „functions” on different coordinates, is not foreign to its past, which stretches to the time of the formation of myths and legends, where in fact lie the roots of most human manifestations, especially artistic ones (although, no such discrepancies existed in other times). As will be seen (and in fact is known), myths will always keep their timeliness and validity.

Orpheus between doubt and dismantling

The „Dictionary of symbols” tells us how Orpheus, the one who descended into Inferno to bring Eurydice back to the land of the living, fails, for one reason only, to save his beloved from eternal death: „Overwhelmed with doubt, Orpheus turns his head back at the middle of the road and Eurydice disappears forever. Inconsolable, Orpheus ends up torn by the women of Thrace.”²⁵⁰ The mythical hero's distrust for the promise of the gods brings him to his tragic end- the dismantling. In all the legend's elements, Orpheus has the face and arms of a seductive

²⁵⁰ Jean Chevalier and Alain Gheerbrant, *Dictionary of Symbols*, vol. I, Artemis Publishing House, Bucharest, 1994, p. 384.

character: he drives away the wrath of the gods, he overcomes all resistance and, above all, he casts spells with the help of his lyre, the magical instrument. However, the cause of his failure is the doubt that grows within himself, which is actually the neuralgic point of his destiny. In the same dictionary we read the observation that „Orpheus fails to escape the contradiction between his aspirations towards the sublime and those towards banality ...”²⁵¹ Therefore, we can find in Orpheus a dimension of opposites, of charm and weakness, of sublime and suspicion, which consequently situates his final *dismantlement* in a symbolic chain of causality, becoming a consequence of his own nature.

But the myth has two different stances: the Orpheus before death and the one after death. Charged with the symbolism of the first Orpheus, the second one offers a number of suggestions that enrich the theories concerning the narrative of the last half-century. One of them belongs to Ihab Hassan. In the book mentioned above, the critic "assimilates the desire of modernism and postmodernism to „tear apart” the legend of Orpheus. As we know, the poet-musician was torn by the jealousy-driven maenads because he preferred young men. They threw Orpheus’ head and lyre into the Hebru river. Orpheus continued to play even after his assassination by the maenads. Starting from this image, Hassan portrays a modern Orpheus, who accepts his disintegration and dissolution, but continues to play his song, asserting „a new creative form.” Ihab Hassan reveals this „heroism of disintegration”, both in modernism and postmodernism.”²⁵², specifying that the border between the two literary currents is traced by the work of Samuel Beckett, that postmodern writing of the "impossible", as Matei Calinescu called it. The latter exhibits a self-destructive and nihilistic character, as will be seen in a certain orientation of postmodern literature. The main observation on which the critic rests refers to the fact that Orpheus – torn and fragmented- continues to play with every particle of his being; in the absence of completeness, in the absence of a center, despite the disharmony between the components, Orpheus continues to create, becoming more prolific now, after each detached element has become a singing lyre in itself.

The plot of Osiris

Some similar conclusions, but also other different ones, were extracted from another fragmentation myth, that of Osiris. In *Dissemination*, Jacques Derrida starts the discussion from a character in King Osiris’s

²⁵¹ Idem, *ibidem*, p. 385.

²⁵² Daniel Corbu, *Postmodernismul pe înțelesul tuturor*, Princeps Edit Publishing House, Iași, 2004, p. 46.

entourage. It is Thoth, one of Osiris's brothers, who, during his reign, created hieroglyphic writing and initiated people into arts, allowing them to express their thoughts in writing. Later, he takes part in the plot designed by Seth, the King's other jealous brother, with whom he will kill Osiris. Although Thoth is accountable to initiate people into the art of writing, the one who helped spread this phenomenon and who gathers all merits is none other than Osiris, the king and sovereign god, a detail which Jacques Derrida points out and clearly emphasizes. The brothers' plot against the king will somehow turn against them, because they attach a special significance to his death. According to the philosopher, „Osiris symbolizes the continuity of births and rebirths. (...) Osiris mutilated: an image of dissociation and disintegration.”²⁵³ Somehow, the conclusions reached are going in the same direction with those established by Ihab Hassan in the case of Orpheus' myth, i.e. that the torn flesh symbolizes the fragmented text, both in its content and in its structure – an important feature of literary postmodernism.

Jean Ricardou seems to be a little more methodical and more explicit in addressing the Osirian myth. We shall follow his narration as well, with the risk of repeating certain elements. Married with Isis, Osiris spreads civilization and agriculture and returns to Egypt where he is unanimously adored. But Seth, his brother, devises a plot against him. He builds and adorns a trunk the size of Osiris and during a celebration he promises to give it to the one whose body will match the size of the trunk. After the failure of the other participants, Osiris lies in the trunk as well and Seth, together with his accomplices pull the lid over the chest, lock it and throw it into the Nile. After a while, Isis discovers the trunk, but one full moon night, Seth recognizes Osiris' body, which Isis had left for some time and cuts it into fourteen pieces which he then scatters. Roaming the marshes in a papyrus boat, Isis discovers the fragments of her husband's body, and after making a wax effigy around every part of her husband, she buries them separately, with the help of the priests, in different places, each fragment representing Osiris as a whole.

Focusing especially on the last part of the legend, the critic examines, by using a comparison with the three phases of Osiris' body, three distinct mechanisms of the text. Mainly, *inevitable segmentation* and *reunion*, *methodical segmentation and reunion* and *systematic dis coherence*.²⁵⁴ The three mechanisms stand for three different stages of

²⁵³ Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, Univers Enciclopedic Publishing House, Bucharest, 1997, p. 390

²⁵⁴ Jean Ricardou, *New problems of the novel*, Univers Publishing, Bucharest, 1988, p. 217: "By admitting the plural order, we subtract ourselves from the disorderly multitude of scattered elements, as well as from the organic unity of a dominant tree. Far from the incoherence, the dis coherence is a contradictory coherence, away from the dispersed body, the disbody is a

contemporary narrative, concluded with the systematization and proliferation of the text's incoherence, just as Osiris's body undergoes fragmentation and dispersion. „It is appropriate to make a distinction between two types of fragmentation: on the one hand there are the *intrinsic* fragmentations (arising from the contradiction between literal line and referential abundance); on the other hand, there are the *extrinsic* fragmentations (underlined by the methodical montages).²⁵⁵ However, the final point of the myth's interpretation brings into question another important element and it relates to the regeneration force of each fragment of Osiris' body, in which the critic sees an eventually beneficial „phraseological fragmentation”, because „not only can a phrase be formed continually, but, as Isis will prove later, any part of the sentence can bear fruit (it is enough for it to be part of a fertile environment).²⁵⁶ As an example, he mentions the text called *Triptyque* by Claude Simon where no character is common to the three very different sections, set in different places; it is an accidental drowning in a country landscape, a monstrous party in a city, a process of delinquency at a resort. Following the same line, we can discuss both George Craciun's volume entitled *Original Documents/ legalized copies* or Mircea Cărtărescu's volume of stories, *Nostalgia*, whose second edition, *The Dream*, bears the subtitle of *novel*, exemplifying the same postmodern narrative strategy of unifying pieces that do not show a deep connection between themselves, either visible or hidden.

The other Narcissus

An equally interesting and subtle approach, this time concerning the legend of Narcissus, is to be found in Cristian Moraru's book, *The Poetics of reflection*. In fact, the whole essay is based on details of the myth, interpreted and sustained with relevant updates. One of the important distinctions²⁵⁷ that the author establishes in his book (and

multiple body. It therefore means that (...) we must admit the existence of a war inside the device.”

²⁵⁵ Idem, *ibidem*, p. 225.

²⁵⁶ Idem, *ibidem*, p. 232

²⁵⁷ Cristian Moraru, *The Poetics of reflection*, Univers Publishing House, Bucharest, 1990, p. 33: „With a particular attention one must now distinguish between two fundamental types of narcissism: a) *the narcissism of "parallel mirrors"*, which involves only the ontic distinction between the reflective and the reflected (leaving aside the means - or, as I said, the intermediary of reflection); we are basically dealing with two parallel images that mirror each other, one of them reaching the self-consciousness and the self as a participant in „the extended self”, the Idea, as soon as the other gives back its shape by mirroring it; and b) *the narcissism of „concave mirrors”*; this type of narcissism accomplishes the extreme version of self-reflection (...), therefore representing itself, but never ceasing to represent the universe; the two mirrors imagined by the former type of narcissism are replaced by a single, concave one, which reflects, in a fascinating spectacle of interior reduplications, its own parts; the literary work as a *concave mirror* resumes itself at different levels of self-reflection, questions its own structure, criticizes itself and theorizes its own shape.”

which regards the present study) is the one between *the authorial narcissism* and *the textual narcissism*. The mythical character is promised a long life with one condition: that of not knowing himself. According to the theorist, the meaning of this expression does not refer to the act of „recognizing oneself” and „seeing oneself”, explaining that not the reflexive dimension would be fatidical for Narcissus, but the reflecting one, that is the act of gaining the quality of reflection, the act of being able to mirror something. Based on this finding, he moves on to make a decalogue of the text’s self-reflection, the basic idea being that „trying «to mirror» an external given, the literary text eventually mirrors its own structures.”²⁵⁸ The two types of narcissism correspond to modern literature and to postmodern literature, respectively, which in its last stage reflects itself. The text, and not something or somebody else, is the other Narcissus, having its own self-consciousness, being aware of its own form, its internal mechanisms and relationships. A text which exhibits itself and, narcissistically, speaks only about itself.

The crushing of Manole

In the Romanian cultural space the archetypal image of the artist is painted by the legend of Master Manole, the one who sacrificed himself (in the folk version he is the one who was sacrificed) for the timelessness of his creation. In some respects, the Romanian myth can be likened to the Osirian one. Here too, the character falls pray to a plot which eventually leads to his death, the Nile in which the ancient hero’s body was cast having its correspondant in the spring that gushed at the exact spot where Manole had found his tragic end.

There are, however, two elements of Master Manole’s legend which suggest, as well as many others, the idea of crumbling, rediscovered in the contemporary narrative. The first aspect is related to the continuous collapse of the monastery walls, which suffer dissolution, disarticulation during the night. The objective literature is separated from the artist’s interiority, though any external image is reflected in the consciousness of the writer. According to the myth, it takes another material to link the elements among one another. The subjective literature relies on the tranplantation of reflexivity in the text’s fabric, which organically grows from it, while revealing its interiority. Modern literature has relied on the symbiosis between the creator’s consciousness and the universe in which it is integrated. If at first the legend of Master Manole speaks about the crumbling of the walls, its end suggests the crushing of the artist. As in the first two myths discussed above, the true symbolic power of the myth is given by its final part, by what comes after the death of the hero. Following the same line of

²⁵⁸ Idem, *ibidem*, p. 91.

interpretation, Manole's collapse has connotations in the artistic dimension as well. Nonetheless, it is essentially about the internal tearing: his indecision brings him closer to Orpheus, but his ability to decide between the human and the spiritual makes him unique. Alone in his decision, he will not be able to carry inside his soul the "burden" of consequences. If the walls no longer fall down, it is Manole's turn to symbolize his creation, through his own crushing. The Artist sacrifices himself in favor of his work (the text).

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THE ROLE OF PRAGMATIC CONNECTORS IN MARIN SORESCU`S DRAMATIC DIALOGUE

The Occurrence of BUT

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Abstract. *Pragmatics has, among others, as an object of study, the argumentation, which is considered a way of acting upon your interlocutor through discourse. With regard to the speech acts which are pertinent for the study of argumentation, a decisive role is played by a number of connectors, rarely taken into consideration by the traditional semantic analysis. Among these, the connector BUT has a special importance, examined in Marin Sorescu's dramatic dialogue.*

Keywords. pragmatics, argumentation, connectors, dramatic discourse, dialogue.

Pragmatics, which refers to the strategies employed by the interlocutors in a verbal interaction, has among others, as an object of study, the argumentation which is considered a way of acting upon your interlocutor through discourse. Argumentation, also regarded as discourse (one which refers to any enactment of the language by an individual), has been defined highlighting the finality or the purpose of the discursive type it represents : argumentation is a discourse meant to persuade the audience/ an interlocutor/ the receiver. This perspective integrates argumentation within the category of human actions. `Argumentation is part of the human actions and its purpose is persuasion, accompanied by manipulation, propaganda, seduction and demonstration(...). An argument to influence` (Daniela Roventă-

Frumușani, 2000:12). Hence, a central role in the theory of argumentation is played by the receiver, he who the speech is aimed at, he who is influenced by the argumentation. With regard to the speech acts which are pertinent for the study of argumentation, a decisive role is played by a number of words – the connectors/linkers – rarely taken into consideration by the traditional semantic analysis. This lack of interest has been signalled by specialists in pragmatics: ‘While the main interest lies with *full words*, others such as *but, look, even*, could not be left aside. This situation changes radically from the perspective of argumentation, when it identifies these elements with a way of operating which is both effective and discreet, as essential mechanisms of the linguistic system of persuasion’ (Maingueneau, 2007:79). The pragmatic connectors are two-fold: they connect two semantic units and they confer an argumentative role to the units they connect. A more comprehensive definition of the pragmatic connectors is offered by Anne Reboul and Jacques Moeschler in *The Pragmatics of the Discourse*: ‘a pragmatic connector is a linguistic marker that belongs to a whole range of pragmatic categories (coordinating conjunctions, subordinating conjunctions, adverbs and adverbial phrases) that a) articulates maximal linguistic units or discursive ones ; b) gives instructions on the linking of these units ; c) demands the expression of certain conclusions derived from the discursive connection, which cannot be extracted in its absence’ (Reboul, Moeschler, 2010:73). Despite the fact that the essential function of connectors is to link sentences, there are some particular situations. The pragmatic connectors will link heterogenous items, implicit elements to explicit ones. To this purpose, here is the analysis of an excerpt from *Iona* by Marin Sorescu:

‘If there are no windows, they should be invented (he drops the knife, wants to pick it up but then changes his mind).

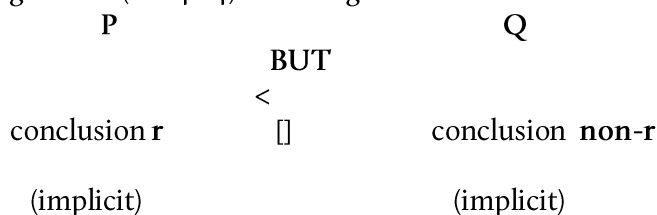
***But** what about my nails? Why have they grown as if I were alive and not dead? (He scrapes with the nails of his right hand the spot which he started carving with his knife. A «hâșc!» sound is heard and then a noise as that of a saw). My nails are knife-like. With ten knives the situation is different! (He starts to work using both hands, calmly, as if he had two saws’ (Sorescu, 2003:21).*

In a sequence containing **Statement 1 (S1) BUT Statement 2 (S2)**, **S1** is an argument that leads to an implicit conclusion, while **S2** suggests a stronger argument than that in **S1**. But in this instance we cannot consider that the **BUT** that occurs before **S2** links the two statements with a contradictory argument: Iona drastically concludes that in the absence of windows, they ‘should be invented’. By adopting his new status, that of an inventor, the character contemplates the ‘making’ of windows in the whale’s belly with the help of a knife, windows that might guarantee his attaining the sanctuary he longs for. In his effort, Iona drops the knife and when he bends over to pick it up, he changes his mind. The connector **BUT** introduces the very reason for his

reversal. The first tool he used is no longer useful since his nails have become knife-like. By using his nails, Iona will certainly succeed in 'inventing windows' more effectively and in a shorter period of time as he, himself, asserts: 'with ten knives the situation is different'. **BUT** does not contradict **S1** here. Through **S2**, Iona affirms his right to strengthen his determination in 'inventing windows' and to redirect or reroute his discourse. We can, at best, talk about an opposition between the tools that will serve him in the framing of windows: a knife vs. ten knife-like nails. The conclusion is that the activity of speaking operates through the category of implicitness. Hence, with regard to connectors, a decisive role is played by this implicitness. If **S2** is evident (Iona's question introduced by 'but'), **S1** is much more vague, dependent on the previous line, i.e. a previous context. The analysis of the argumentative connector **BUT** in this instance demonstrates the complexity of the pragmatic literary interpretative mechanism, often avoided by the traditional approach. This interpretative addition surveys the most hidden facets of the language, which seem insignificant but which, at a closer look, prove their importance by overcoming their superficiality. These connectors do not possess an isolated semantic or symbolical value as other textual items do. They do not offer an actual interpretative version, but they guide the discourse, they do not offer meanings, but ways to decipher the meanings. As a consequence, their function is not stable or rigid, due to the fact that the same connector does not always offer the same version of interpretation. These connectors vary, based on the context and on the oscillation between the implicit and explicit. Oswald Ducrot insists upon the differences between the linguistic sequences linked by connectors and the semantic content that becomes the object of the equation. When he refers to **BUT**, he notes: 'What the sentences indicate is that the speaker detects an opposition between semantic items linked to what precedes and follows them through *but*. But the sentences cannot identify these items, they just urge the interpreter to look for and understand among which semantic items linked by these sequences does the speaker identify an opposition' (Ducrot, 1980:16). Ducrot also clearly distinguishes the linguistic sequences from the semantic units: "We make a distinction between the sequences, i.e. the grammatical sentences that precede and immediately follow the connector (called here **X** and **Y**) and the semantic items articulated by the same connector (called here **P** and **Q**). A clause can contain nothing but **X**-es and **Y**-s and it is usually made up as **X+ connector + Y**; so, it cannot indicate by itself either the nature of the articulated semantic items, or the length of the sequences in which these sequences manifest themselves. As a consequence, its significance couldn't contain a phrase which establishes a rapport between **P** and **Q**; only the clause will draw the interpreter's attention to the fact that he

has to look for two semantic items **P** and **Q** linked, more or less, directly by **X** and **Y** (depending on the way each connector is defined) and which can have between them the implicit relation of the connector” (Ducrot, 1980:17). An example could be: *‘Everybody believes in Him, in the fact that he will rise to heaven, setting a bright example for us. Cause we, people, need only this: an example of resurrection. Then we will quietly go to our homes to die in peace, like all humans, in our homes. BUT we want to see Him first’* (Sorescu, 2003:32). Ducrot (1984:220) considers the importance of *but* and asserts that „by stating **P but Q**, a speaker more or less affirms <yes, **P** is true>. You might have the tendency to conclude **r**: still, it is not the case as **Q** is represented as a stronger argument for **non-r** than **P** would be for **r**”.

In the example above, the first two replies are **P**. **Q** is *‘we want to see Him first’*. Iona accepts the fact that human kind believe in the divine resurrection, but he uses irony to distance himself from his resignation *‘by setting a bright example for us all’*. The character’s despondency becomes acute, resembling Arghezi’s voice in the famous line *‘I want to feel You and cry: He exists’*. Iona wants to witness a resurrection so that he can die in peace, a resurrection he no longer believes possible. So, even though **P** is true (people believe in resurrection) and you would be tempted to consider **r** (we, people, can also revive after death, so we can die in peace), the *but* at the beginning of **Q** turns everything upside down: **Q** (we want to see He who promises our revival, resurrect first) is presented as a stronger argument for **non-r** (if He does not resurrect, we won’t either) than **P** for **r**. The play is based on the concept that Divinity has forsaken the man, abandoned him, denying the man and itself the divine attributes. Nietzsche’s *‘God is dead’*, Arghezi’s Hidden God in his Psalms are followed by Iona’s God (and, implicitly, Sorescu’s)- a Deaf God, insensitive towards the drama of the Being that is trapped in a world where he lives in isolation. The operational modality of the argumentative structure **P but Q** is synthetically rendered by Dominique Maingueneau (2004:84) in this figure:



in which < = *‘to be a stronger argument’*
 [] = *‘to be an argument in favour’*
 [] = *‘to be in contradiction to’*

From what Ducrot states in the case of *but* results the following analysis: the significance of a sentence **X but Y** implies the capacity to associate with **X and Y** the particular content **P and Q**, to consider **P** as an argument for a conclusion **r**, **Q** as an argument for a reversed conclusion **non-r**. To comprehend the meaning of a **X but Y** sentence is, thus, to attribute a particular value to **P, Q, r** and **non-r**. As a result, the process of interpretation can be represented through a complex sentence which contains **BUT**, the interpreting scheme being offered and explained by Anne Reboul and Jacques Moeschler in *The Pragmatics of the Discourse*.

1. The passage from **X but Y** to **P but Q**
 - a) identification of the content of **P** by using the information provided by **X**
 - b) identification of the content of **Q** by using the information provided by **Y**
2. The association of the instruction of *but* with **P but Q**
 - a. we extract **r** from **P**
 - b. we extract **non-r** from **Q**
 - c. we extract **non-r** from **P but Q**
3. The assigning of a meaning to **r** and **non-r** depending:
 - i. on the relevance attributed to **P and Q** in **r**.
 - ii. on the discourse situation (Reboul and Moeschler, 2010:76).

So, the interpretation of the role of connectors (**BUT** in this paper) fulfills, at a different level than the semantic or symbolic interpretation, the analysis of the significance of certain replies in Sorescu's dramatic text. The multiple meaning variations are inviting for any linguist who will be more effectively and practically helped in his stride to establish that new certain interpretative blanks can be filled in when analysing a text. The pragmatic and literary analysis of a dramatic text will be a real 'invitation to semantic inventiveness', which, for Ducrot 'constitutes one of the main contributions of linguistics to discourse analysis' (Ducrot, 1980:18). Another instance is that in which **BUT** is accompanied by a different adverbial structure and its role is to give strength to a statement – e.g. **certainly, surely, yes**. In these case we can talk about polyphony or dialogism. The following illustration is taken from *Matca* by Marin Sorescu. '*I can feel a strange happiness... inexplicable... extraordinarily intense, close to the one I felt when I was a little girl, when I was forgetful and when I was spoilt in my mother's womb.*' '*Yes, yes... spoilt, but not forgetful. But now there is no time for remembrance*' (Sorescu, 2003:66). When a speaker utters 'certainly' or 'yes' **P but Q**, he attributes **P** to another speaker who is introduced in the text and whose point of view is rejected in favour of **Q**. We are looking at two points of view which argue in two opposing ways. The

speaker agrees with the one who supports P but he is at a distance from the other one. `Yes` means `certainly` and together with `spoilt` occurs at a different level in comparison with the structures introduced by `but`. The significances cannot even begin to be fathomed. Irina`s intrauterine memories- she, herself, about to give birth – do not distract her from her mission; on the contrary, they lead her towards the achievement of her redemption by descending into her own death vs. the rising of her son above the waters. Irina braves the `flood` by refusing a life of `a strange happiness... inexplicable` or by being `spoilt` in her mother`s womb and by her realising that she is part of the life-death-life cycle. It is her destiny to create life by vanquishing death. A pragmatic and literary analysis of the argumentative connectors in Sorescu`s dramatic discourse may seem too technical in places, thus diminishing the subtlety and the vision of an exclusively literary analysis. We disagree with this viewpoint especially when it comes to the study of a dramatic discourse, the closest to the daily conversation. While a traditional study sets aside the practical layers of the language, we consider that a detailed linguistic and literary study of these layers will fill the gaps existing in the interpretation of dramatic texts in general. This fact is also stated by Maingueneau (2007:87): `The dramatic linguistic activity is more than a mere communication tool, used just for the periples of drama. It is absorbed, dissipated in the drama. The characters face each other through the words they utter, the relationships are established and they develop not through language but within the language.`

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MEMORY AS A CHARACTER IN PAUL GOMA'S *CALIDOR*

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Abstract: *A literary work based on memory gathers all the spiritual strength of the author in one central point. In fact, this point turns to be the center of an entire fictional universe. The symbol of the point joins the symbolism of the center, as the unique mark of the being.*

Memory has undoubtedly a regaining function, The character is animated though permanent flash-backs: thus he shapes his own destiny as a mosaic.

Memory speaks, yells, cries or whisper together with the character itself. Ezra Pound's imagism, Celine's naturalism and Faulkner's way of confession are echoed in Paul Goma's novel "Din calidor", as far as his style is concerned. But the emotional power of the writing is quite original, as it is hidden behind the apparent roughness.

Key words: memory, calidor, time, voice, existence, conscience

Memory became the main motif in Paul Goma's literary work. Or, better said, it represents the stream that sustains the Fiction-House, filling in all its levels.

The inner structure of his fiction is mirrored in its own consciousness which is also revealed permanently and vividly in his endless saying and writing. There is no sleep, no rest for the Self, as he lives together with the redeeming function of the memory. On the other hand, we can talk about a sleeping Self, who depicts itself in dream, trying to find a solution to his own torment in time, as literature revealed

Instead of saying something about the story-teller's persona, he depicts and reveals himself (...) He reveals himself the moment he

falls asleep` (Walter Biemel, 1987: 192). His falling asleep refers to the moment when his self dissipates, when he unconsciously immerses himself in the dream, in the depths of his subconscious mind ; his awakening leads to bewilderment, confusion, an attempt to recover his self in absolute darkness. This is Proust who, through the whispering voice of the character, lives and explains his endeavour to set his own consciousness in order in time. Time, a character in itself, the wasted time reveals itself with parsimony, illuminating like a fascicle Existence itself, which is contained in a monad.

There does not exist a redeeming function of the memory in Proust`s work; the character is animated by successive flash-backs, thus reconstructing his own fate as in a mosaic. Time-as-character acts at absolute level, at which identifies, potentiates, annihilates, removes or makes everything explicit.

In Calidor the authorial voice awakens the character as an alter-ego; the Self does not dissipate, does not live in an endless inactivity, does not make philosophy.

With its uniqueness, he makes explicit his condition of `being brought to this world` (Paul Goma, 2004,6); hence, he is not sent, nor is he banished.

Thus, his birth has divine, god-like attributes, like an homage brought to the saint mothers from Blaga`s poetics . His being brought into the light establishes his status of Divine Son living in `an idyllic and patriarchal oasis` (Nicolae Manolescu, 2008: 38)

Essentially, memory is the instrument used to embody the writer`s intense and bitterly conscious shriek. Nothing announces his presence, the confession begins abruptly, proudly showing again the eternal present of the centre, of the mythical essence in which all destinies come together. The arcade of his parents` house in Mana is `the holly land` (Paul Goma, 2004: 5), constituting a significant space with a symbolic geometry under the mantra of the name.

Figuratively, the heptagon means, symbolically, a rigid construction for which geometrical instruments are put to use. This involves acuity, precision, vision in space, rigorous calculation. This is translated into a perfect rendition of a mental model.

Memory as a character, represented as a heptagon, is a `living metaphor (...) , a theoretical model of imagination (...), an archetype of imagination, a continued metaphor` (Paul Ricoeur, 1984: 375) which has an iconic character. It is a regular heptagon, symbolically configured with all its sides and angles symmetrical, which meet in the centre through perfect lines and radius.

Memory as a character weaves and sketches the lost paradise with all its coordinates converging towards the same essence, in which

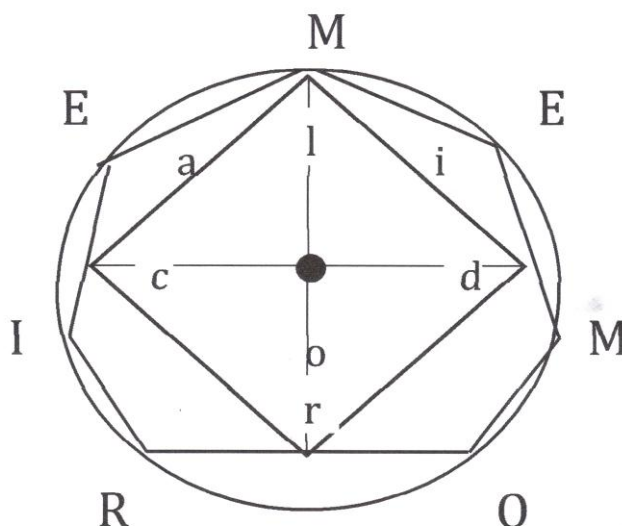
the writer brings together the time of confession and the time of reliving. If with Ion Barbu the heptagon is configured at the end of the poetic cycle in `Isarlic` in order to abstractly symbolize the discovery of the world through vowel and consosnantal alternation (El Gahel) with the help of the `seven cyclic signs` (Ion Barbu, 1984: 71), memory as a character, configured in the same manner, supports Calidor as a rediscovery of a world:

The writing of Calidor is the expression of the Self: nothing can stop the fascicle of light of the evocation that brings to life all the land-marks comprised in memory.

Memory, remembrance are not prepared or anticipated; they patronize the consciousness, protecting it. It does not interpret but offers interpretations, as being `redeeming... last resort and support, the only caress before leaving for the great beyond` (Paul Goma, 1999: 9)

The temporal contortion, caused by the muse of Memory, is apparent: the writer traces back the invisible line of time, living simultaneously both in the present and in the past through his writing. At the end he remains, apparently, in the centre, in a state of bliss which becomes one with the Being, before he is banished from the realm of the `beautiful yearning`.

`I live in Calidor and I gaze (Paul Goma, 2004: 15) – a statement which certifies Memory as both an observer and an apprentice; Beatrice as Memory leads her Dante to the matrix, making him contemplate, write and manage his own truth. This placement becomes the leit motif of the novel, `the beautiful yearning` being rebuilt, if nothing, through imagery. The stream of consciousness, which reveals elements that make up the trajectory of the first beams that leave the centre, ascerains a rare virtuosity; the interior monologue (the voice of the recovering memory) buid gradually the space coordinates of the idyllic essence. Ezra Pound`s imagism used by W. Faulkner in his Southern prose (cf. Mircea Mihăieş,



2003, 12) and by G.G. Marquez in his mythical and realist prose, reverberates as well in Paul Goma's writing; the author positions himself in the mythical point 'trying to make the finite circumference of the world coincide with the infinite circumference of God' (Georges Poulet, 1987: 414).

But what Marquez configures (the small settlement Macondo in 'A Century of Solitude') and what Faulkner evokes (through the plurality of the narrator's self) is different from Calidor: the circles of the Inferno, which consume their protagonists and form an antithesis with the centre of the soul, lead to the exodus of the Being from its point of origin.

Thus, the landmarks of the mythical topos – Home, School and the Village – integrate themselves in a spiral of the Memory. It is the Memory which oversees the reconstruction of the destiny, which is the forceful expression of consciousness, and the forceful inlay of the exiled in a Monad-Time.

'My parents' house neither belonged to them, nor was it my birth place' (Paul Goma 2004: 7). This house is a point of origin he questions again and again.

Once in the light, the Divine Son tries to identify his landmarks: his Home is made up of holly spirit, as well as the School 'a shack made of clay, covered with straw, bought together with the school area. So, my parents' house neither belonged to them nor was it my birth place' ...

The house where he was born identifies, strangely, with the School. The house can be seen as a pre-school and the Divine Son shapes his direction in life by learning. After Memory brings to light the quietness, the imagery – which is, paradoxically, real – the authorial voice needs explanations. The back and forth movement from past to present outlines the need of consciousness to come to terms with the distance. 'Father, why didn't we find refuge in 1940?' (Paul Goma, 2004: 7). It is another example of the authorial voice in an attempt to understand the effects the historical events have on the human destiny. He looks for answers after each sombre event that has marked his existence.

Never The-One-Torn-Apart-from-Dasein (the forsaken one) – 'the reality of *to be*' – (Martin Heidegger, 1988: 28) will never be fully regained; once the roots have been severed, the writer will for ever be on the lookout for a re-configuration of his existence, helped by the retrieving Memory.

Essentially, this is an impossible act. An unattainable act despite the explanations offered by his father, who – like Ilie Moromete who sees himself sitting on a gun-powder barrel – tries to unravel the uncompromising historical events. His frustration becomes obvious after World War I when 'the nation's heroes were buried at Mărășești, Oituz, Cașin' (Paul Goma, 2004: 12). To Basarabia, regarded as 'a second-hand

province`, `the beginners, the inapt and those punished` (Paul Goma, 2004: 12) are sent to defend it and he considers this an expression of a possible feeling of despise towards this province.

This is the way history is reflected through his father`s consciousness when he answers his son`s questions, so this is the way his son recounts the story.

The historical time - an immortal facet of Time - grinds destinies; `when we raise our fists, the whole world will shake with dread` (Alexandr Soljenițin, 2008: 43). With a bitter lucidity, the authorial voice looks for answers, tries to decipher the concrete equations of time.

Soljenițin is not nostalgic about a lost paradise. He is absorbed in dismissing the vision about the new soviet man, who is regarded as an embodiment of the destructive historical time.

Goma reconstructs the time of existence by bringing tribute to his martyr-father and to his martyr-mother. To explain his existence he has to find his severed roots.

Memory as a character replaces the Divine Son. The look back towards the matrix is the mirror `from now and here I look back from Calidor` (Paul Goma, 2004: 20).

Paradox: how can the writer look back `from Calidor`, `from now`, `from here` (which here?) when he is no longer connected to the past?

Memory, the forgiving (or not... ?) mother, moves from present to past in order to enforce the eternity of the centre or to retrace the coordinates of the future radius that converge towards the same point.

Memory as a character rebuilds the home through his father`s voice, finds explanations for leaving the house and for running out of the historical time, maps out the coordinates of his future periples. `I can see my father going round once and again` (Paul Goma, 2004: 49).

The setting of the authorial voice in the present - a narrative technique used by Faulkner in `The Sound and the Fury` through a plethora of voices that form a dramatic volume of tunes - is accomplished when the character is at a loss, i.e. when he is in Calidor, remembering his dialogues with his father (`wandering`, later).

These dialogues are meant to shed light on the reason for leaving, on the definition of the invaders, on the gestures and the deeds recorded in certain decisive moments.

The reverse flow of the spiralling-time brings along, with each twist and turn, new aspects from the inner map of the Dot, of the centre from which his fate stems.

These outward rays are arrayed in a `Wagnerian weave of lite-motifs` (Northrop Frye, 1972: 34), which is centred around the recurrent `I sit in Calidor and I gaze`. This statement defines the entire process of

remembrance; it is the voice of active Memory which often interweaves its narrative valences with the rhythmic images of existence at the centre.

These vindictive valences strengthen the account and emphasize dramatism; the alienation of the character protrudes into the narrator's consciousness, beginning with the position of Calidor `Everything stems from There and Then, everything turns back after long, perfectly round detours, after departures for ever – There and Then` (Paul Goma, 2004: 45)

The interweaving of leit-motifs is Wagnerian due to the arched volutes of the Memory as a character, which cause the winding slip down in Time until their compression in a dot is achieved before the creation of a new, alien and deserted Universe for the Divine Son.

`I sit in Calidor and I see no more` (Paul Goma, 2004: 10) the deliberate slow-down of remembrance occurs right before the account about the preparations for departure, for leaving the protective space.

The spokesperson of Memory, character of memory and live memory-character, is the author who lives in an ever-lasting present, at the centre, while absorbing all the accounts.

A special place in the shaping of a lost paradise is the School. `Aby building demands in-building` (Paul Goma, 2004: 44) states the father in order to explain to his son that the creative sacrifice is the foundation of endurance; the death of Pantelimon Severin, a lad, mythically confirms this and bestows sacredness on the School, which is meant to illuminate.

Anything that is thoughtfully erected, points out Goma, the house erected as a hut and the school organised by his father, become DEED. And the Deeds make up a real saga whose ending painfully means the waste of the Being

`From Calidor I see it all` (Paul Goma, 2004: 63); the vision of the world and of the beings that populate it gives the live memory-character god-like powers, in the sense of absolute domination, governing its own created universe. `The process of oblivion` (Walter Biemel, 1987: 273) does not exist in Goma's works. If the self-consciousness of the character does not reveal certain things or things are rendered schematically, there are always supporting voices which intervene as an aid or as an explanation of things. These voices belong to his father and mother and they highlight the main elements of comprehension

`Only a free man, un razes, like Severin could willingly work like a....`

`Like a slave`, I retort.

`Indeed. Only he who is free works like that (...)

`Mom says that the first time you went to Mana...`

‘The first time? It was like this: we ride on the road from Orhei. I am pedalling, she is sitting on the metal frame...’

‘Just a moment’ mom interrupts. ‘Go further back in time because we shouldn’t readily dismiss our memories, especially now that they are the only things we have...’ (Paul Goma, 2004: 29).

The saga of the tumultuous existence has to be put in order, a ritual of telling the story has to be observed, the Mother-Memory fixing within herself, not incidentally, all the significant details that recompose Destiny.

Mother’s voice clarifies, underlines and clearly emphasizes because ‘one of the ways to salvation from this void can’t be any other than the exigence addressed to the being itself as a free individual in order to achieve what actually constitutes the being and the reason for his decisions’ (Karl Jaspers, 1986: 25). The voices do not die so as to substitute something, because ‘dying only to demonstrate something makes this act contain an element of purpose which will taint it’ (Karl Jaspers, 1986: 25)

The voices communicate and express themselves in an assumed and continual unity, being always part of the background chorus of the account. But the absolute metaphor of Memory as a character is represented by ‘calidor’, the ‘navel of the earth’ (Paul Goma, 2004: 5) from where the journey commences.

Essentially, the entire Memory identifies itself, ambivalently, in calidor, which is absorbed in the consciousness of the authorial voice, while the character lives the moment when ‘the being takes notice of itself’ (Radu G. Țeposu, 1983: 190).

When it becomes itself, the embodiment of the Memory as a character is no longer just ‘an immense eye that attends the spectacle of its own fiction’ (Vasile Popovici, 1988: 15) but the eye that revives the recorded imagery, accepting them through the chorus of voices. This polyphony makes up, as shown above, a Wagnerian aria with a particular dramatism which is experienced in Faulkner’s novels.

In the symbolical mapping out of the Memory as a character we deal with ‘the world’ which ‘overwhelms literature’ (Roland Barthes, 1987: 333), i.e. the writing unfolds impetuously under the rush (the burden, the nostalgic recovery) of the past, of a lost world in a kaleidoscope of icons that are centred upon its own vision, reflecting the uniqueness of the centre, of the dot, of the unattainable core of its own being, that reveals itself. The auctorial voice grows together with its book, raising from calidor, in an endless saying/writing.

So, ‘like the dream, the speech means freedom’ (Jean Claret, 1982: 129). THE WRITING, as well.

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NICOLAE BALOTA ON THE ROMANIAN CRITICISM

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Abstract. *The European criticism around the 6-th and 7-th decades of the last century represented a sum of new trends and manners developed by each culture. The most well-known waves of the moment were, of course. Nouvelle Critique, New Criticism, Neue Kritik. The Romanian criticism was also in the process of finding a new identity, which had to follow the evolution of all human sciences. One of the most authoritarian voices of the new generation of critics and essayists was that of Nicolae Balotă. In his monumental 1969 book of essays, Euphorion, he accomplishes a relevant analysis of the phenomenon starting from the polemics between the defenders of the critical manner of George Călinescu and the forwarders of the new critical methods. The conclusion drawn by Nicolae Balotă is that "the involuntary relativism of the new criticism is not epistemological, but, much graver, ontological."*

Key-words: new criticism, hermeneutical analysis, anthropological criticism, cosmological analysis

The '60s-'70s decade of the last century has represented, for literary criticism, a very interesting transition period, marked, on European scale, by the famous polemic between classicists and modernists, between the representatives of traditional criticism, with all its "analogue" methods and that of "The new criticism", which had begun installing itself in the European tendencies big picture ever since the beginning of the 1940s (phenomenon preceded by twenty years by that of *New Criticism*).

The year 1964 represents a veritable burst of information and diversification of critical intercession marked by Roland Bartes' *Critical Essays, Le Point de Depart* by Georges Poulet, *Towards a Sociology of the Novel* by Lucien Goldman, *Psychocritique du genre comique* by Charles

Mauron, *Onze études sur la poésie moderne* by Jean-Pierre Richard etc. This is why it is considered to be "the first moment of polarization of dispersed forces". (Serge Doubrovsky, *Why the New Critique?*, Bucharest, Univers Publishing House, 1977).

This ascendent process records in 1966 the climax of public institutionalisation of the new tendencies when the republication of the clash between modernists and classicists represents a stage of broad audience on European scale, centered on the divergent arguments of Roland Barthes and Raymond Picard. The former discloses the stale character of positivist-type, lansonian, criticism and, by this means, trenchantly impugns the most well-known ways of realising of traditional, academic criticism, such as biographism, hystorism etc, while the latter, in his 1965 essay "New Criticism or new Fraud?", places the manifestations of modern critique under a question mark: psychoanalysis, psychocriticism, marxist and structural analysis, phenomenological or existential description, as well as any forms of alliance that would result by combining these methods. Despite these disputes, Serge Doubrovsky thinks of the New criticism as a "constituted phenomenon, noteworthy, but not as a unitary school". (op.cit. p. 13) Its fundamental note took form through the establishment of a relationship between the *author* and the *work*. The engagement of criticism does not have, in his opinion, a historical character, but a purely epistemological one.

In this European context, it becomes evident the fact that neither Romanian literary criticism could "miss" this moment of transition, which can be interpreted as a phenomenon of liberalization of critical manner, closely bound with the massive mutations being produced in the field of other humanities, as well as in that of philosophy. Essentially, the new criticism proposes, in fact, new ways of reading. Of course, like any other culture, romanian culture was confronting its own challenges, was starting from its own realities and trying to impose its own evolutive pace.

One of the most authoritative voices, through the pertinency of its arguments and the profound understanding of the age's cultural phenomena and, not least, through its erudition, is that of Nicolae Balotă. The polemic aroused by the printing of his article *The new direction in literary criticism*, in nr. 1/1967 of the magazine *Familia* originates in the perception regarding the false opposition "calinescian-anticalinescian" in the critical picture of the time. Therefore, in his impressive critical essay tome, *Euphorion*, from 1969, he dedicates an ample chapter, called *For a new direction in literary criticism*, to the matter at hand. The new evolutions of literature, since Maiorescu until after the Second World War imposed, in the author's view, a "new direction" in Romanian criticism. Now, more than in any other era,

criticism played and was to play a very important role, being more than an “epiphenomenon” of literature. The renewals that appear in contemporary literature are attributed to a chain of anthropological and self-knowing changes of the contemporary man. The new Romanian criticism does not exclude traditional forms of text science, neither is it mistaken for the new species of 20th century criticism (Nouvelle Critique, New Criticism, Neue Kritik). The role of this type of criticism should be that of propelling conscience, active of literature, which would follow human effort in the sphere of promoting values. The approach must be systematic, accepting the complementary participation of diverse systems and is seen in Hegelian terms: subjective, objective and materialized spirit. Therefore, “present criticism” is described as a field of “ideological confrontations”, where the mutations being produced affect the very “nature of criticism”, but also the “human condition of the literary critic”.

The complex question “Why do we criticize?” becomes the pretext for the focusing of the demonstrative intercession over the finality of the act of criticism, as “Researching the intentionality of the act of criticism is not the same as researching the meanings and functions of criticism”. (All quotes on Nicolae Balota are taken from the tome *Euphorion*, The Publishing House for Literature, Bucharest, 1969) On the one hand, in rapport with its object, the act of criticism defines its primordial role, that of revealing the literality of the work, while, on the other hand, it defines its critical reflexivity, the advent of the subjective, individualizing factor coming as a consequence of this “call” of the work. The subsequent conclusion of the demonstration is that “we criticize because the work incites our spirit, it calls upon embracing a demeanor”. (p.243) Balota speaks even of an organic, atavistic attraction of the critic toward the literary work. Critical interception would therefore have a double substantiation: anthropological and axiological-aesthetical. The organic bond between the critic and the work, which withstands analysis in the fragment *Critical Conscience and the Work of Art*, is what justifies the very exertion of the act of criticism. In another cultural space of the epoch, the French space, the type of critical relationship is more thoroughly gotten into by Georges Poulet, who defines it through the word *identification*. Therefore, the act of criticism is an act of identification between two entities – the reading conscience and the critical conscience: “The act of reading (to which nearly all true critical thinking is reduced) implies the coincidence of two consciences: that of a reader and that of an author.” The proustian pastiches are considered to be a first “time” of critical thinking, whereas he marks “the will to prolong in oneself the rhythm of another’s thinking.” (Georges Poulet, *The Critical Conscience*, Univers Publishing House, Bucharest, 1979, p.45)

The critic is “a conscience seeking and seeking itself” equally, whilst the conscience of the critic is nourished by the conscience of the artist, states Nicolae Balotă, referring to that *libido scienti* that the critic and the poet share. There is also a proposed Manichaeism of the critical spirit, which concurrently manifests itself both as attraction as well as opposition to the tutelage of the work undergoing analysis. Everything is limited through the ethic-epistemological precept of the respect owed to the work. In concordance with the observations of the Romanian essayist, Georges Poulet even speaks of an alienation of the critical ego during reading: When I read, I speak out within myself an *I*, but still, this *I* that I speak out is not myself./.../ Another *I*, which has substituted itself to my own ego and which, as long as the reading lasts, will continue to replace me. (Idem, p. 48). The nodal point of the argumentative demarche in the second part of Nicolae Balotă’s study is the defining of the critical ego as an *act of revelation*, according to which “Criticism makes the work become that which it is”. (op.cit.p.250) E. Simion speaks of the “hidden reality of the work”, whereas N. Manolescu speaks of “the unseen infrastructure of the work”, without considering the work to be just an “existential experience” of the author. But, according to Balotă, the desirable critical attitude rappsports itself to the statute of “closed reality” of the work, which justifies the revealing demarche of the critical act per se, through the author’s very need to discover the human experience stored within. In order to illustrate the statement, the essayist refers to existentialist psychoanalysis to which Sartre, G. Picon or American critics E. Hyman and F. Hoffman subscribe.

In a possible algorithm of the analysis of the “essential structures” of the work, Nicolae Balotă foresees a series of *demarches*, which will necessarily begin from the discovery of the “original intention” of the author. Followers are: the deciphering of signs (semiotic analysis), the interpretation of significations (semantic analysis), the revealing of the cosmological character of the work (cosmological analysis) and the revealing of its originality (hermeneutical analysis). The critical demarche cannot, however, ignore its explanatory function (normative analysis), the act of criticism undoubtedly being an “act of knowing”. The essayist distinguishes the truth of the artistic message from the truth of the work, defining the latter as “that which makes it be, as it is”, referring to the values that the work encloses and proposes. (p.252) The role of the critic is, therefore, that of a seeker of axiological treasures hidden in the text, which dwell both at the level of objective axiological structures, as well as “possible in abstract”, of an aesthetical-philosophical order.

The dichotomy “interpretational criticism” – “guidance criticism”, under the aspect of mentioning the option of the author for the latter, which he also calls “directing criticism” and considers it “the

conscience of a literature *becoming*’, is both interesting as well as necessary. Nicolae Balotă otherwise nuances his classification by identifying at least three types of guidance criticism: creative, normative and fermentative, these being situated in a rapport of “concatenation” and which do not oppose interpretational criticism, but “assume it”. Yet, another delimitation, not just terminological, is realized between the “descriptive-signaletical” and “normative” criticism, meaning that the latter plays the role of revelator and decider on the significations of the work. The author nevertheless warns: “Norm is not to be mistaken for rule, neither is normative criticism to be mistaken for pedagogical pedantry”.(p.269) Therefore, following a true argumentative development, one worthy of a very fine analyst, the author reaches the primary definition of the new type of criticism, which he will himself promoted, the hermeneutics: “To follow, discover, to capture value,/.../, behold the itinerary of a critique that replaces judgmental rigor with the subtlety I allow myself to call *hermeneutics*”. (Idem, ibidem) With an accurate sense of straightness of conduit towards any creation, Nicolae Balotă observes the necessity of constituting, a criticism of criticism alongside the act of criticizing, which is to be ironical and even autoparodical, in the purpose of avoiding the absolutization of any critical relativism. Hence, the author’s entire demonstrative demarche has the main finality of positioning the new criticism, for which he wishes to be “truer”, apart from all previous formulas – be they maiorescian, lovinescian or calinescian – although unequivocally admitting that “...all the great critical experiences of our past live on”. (p.270)

The concept of *anthropological criticism* is introduced by appeal to the evolution of philosophical anthropology, which defined its meaning not until German romanticism, when it attempted an analysis of the thinking man by the research of the works of human culture. Thus, anthropological criticism becomes, in Nicolae Balotă’s conception, by far the most comprehensive investigation formula of man. The author also embraces the problem of the primate of criticism, making the mandatory specification on the hierarchical type: “a primate in the order of writing functions” (p.281), and the explanation is found, in his opinion, in the fact that a creative act of pure aesthetical expression cannot survive in the modern era unless doubled by a valuing act of criticism, for “criticism is a lucid construction and the basis of any expression”. Nicolae Balotă assumes the apparent obscurity of the message when he states: “It may sound bizarre, but mediate prevails over immediate”. (p.281) Nicolae Balotă projects an original vision upon “the critical model” also, which is to detach itself from its template-like, dogmatic aspect: “The critic makes the work become what it is. But not what it *must* be”. The versatility of the critical model is hence revealed,

which “will have to be both universal and particular at the same time”, and the critic itself will have to be “a modeling interpretation”. (idem, ibidem) The plea for the catalytic function of criticism begins from the repeating of the hybrid status of modern literature works and it states that only literary-artistic criticism “can mediate, can catalyze the most diverse aesthetic reactions”. The privileged statute of actual criticism is born through a reevaluation of its past, fact illustrated through Husserl’s famous urge: “Back to things themselves”. (Edmund Husserl, *Meditations Cartesiennes*, 1931, apud Nicolae Balotă, op.cit., p.284)

Of great subtlety we find the positioning of our critic in the posture of that who sees beyond the appearance, beyond the “wrapping” in words of the work: “Not only that which Dostoyevsky says immerses us into the mysterious and complicated labyrinth of his world, but also that which he is silent about”. (p.285) Only in this way does the critical act fully realize its meaning, that of surfacing the entire corollary of meanings of the work, without “killing the tissues it discovers”.

Thus, essentializing the historical route of the interpretive demarche, Nicolae Balotă reaches the basic principle of the new criticism, of relativistic nature, of course, that of “the multiplicity of meanings”, dependant on the reference plan to which every reality reports to. The author sums up the theories of Barthes and Eco (on the open work), the perspectivism of German sociologist Georg Simmel, mentioning that the two critics “radicalize relativism”, in the sense that they “do not consider the modification of the work’s meaning to be a historical fact, but a given ontological fact”. The work objectively has, intrinsically, more meanings, added to which come those appointed by criticism. Nicolae Balotă’s conclusion is that “the involuntary relativism of the new criticism is not epistemological, but, much graver, onthological”. (p.289)

Reported to the European tendencies of the time, one can affirm that, like other cultural phenomena, the Romanian criticism of the 1960s has manifested an active attitude, contouring its identity as well as its place in relation to the evolution of the Romanian criticism phenomenon from Maiorescu to the present day, through the incontestable critical authority of Nicolae Balotă.

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Traditions, anniversaries

Tradiții, aniversări

IOSIF VULCAN AND THE 1865 LITERARY MAGAZINE “FAMILIA” – IDENTITY, LANGUAGE, ORTHOGRAPHY

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Abstract: *Apart from publishing Mihai Eminescu’s debut poems, Iosif Vulcan, founder of the literary magazine “Familia” in 1865, had an important role in the cultural press of the 19th century in the matters of language and orthography. The transition from a Cyrillic alphabet to Latin writing brings along the problems of variant spelling, the instability of orthography. As we can see, for the 19th century the question of orthography was ultimately an issue of identity. The controversy in the epoch was about the adoption of the etymological principle in writing, on one hand, and on the other it was the adoption of the phonetic principle. As we can see nowadays, the phonetic principle emerged victorious. Iosif Vulcan was, by his formation, a follower of the Latinist school in favor of the etymological scholarly principle. However, as much as we expected him to be on the opposite side of Maiorescu, because so was his intellectual circle, Iosif Vulcan manifested a moderate position, contradicted the extremists of his party and imposed some of Maiorescu’s ideas on the issue of orthography.*

Key-words: Cultural unity, language and literature, publications, identity of language and culture, unitary spelling, language and national tradition, neolatin language

Last year, in 2010, the literary magazine “Familia” celebrated 145 years of ongoing tradition in the field of letters and arts. “Familia” is recognized as one of the most prolific and most prestigious Romanian cultural publications. It is based in the Transylvanian city of Oradea. Since 1865 it had the most effective continuity for a Romanian-language magazine. Some years of interruption happened between 1906-1929 and after 1944 until 1965, during the first two harsh decades of communism²⁵⁹. After 1965, the magazine “Familia” emerged as one of the most imbatable redute of literary criticism.

Every Romanian, either specialized in literature or of a different background, is familiar with Iosif Vulcan, the founder of “Familia”. This young 24-year-old intellectual, Iosif Vulcan, had the intuition to recognize a genius in the 16-year-old Mihail Eminovici, whose first poems appeared in “Familia”. It was Iosif Vulcan who suggested the change of name into Eminescu, thus marking the birth of the most important name for the Romanian culture: Mihai Eminescu.

Apart from this, Iosif Vulcan had an important role in the cultural press of the 19th century in the matters of language and orthography. This quintessential role shall be further detailed in this article.

The question of orthography in the 19th century must be linked with the evolution of Romanian culture, which is much accelerated after 1850. The transition from a Cyrillic alphabet to Latin writing brings along the problems of variant spelling, the instability of orthography. In the Romanian philology and linguistics of the 19th century the Latinist current emerged around 1830. The advocates of relatinization through lexical borrowings were either moderate, in the limits of common sense, or extremist, leading to artificial examples contrary to the naturalness of language development. The relatinization process happened in other neo-Latin languages, too²⁶⁰, so it had precedent.

The adoption of the Latin letters was accompanied in the epoch by the controversies of two parties of Romanian scholars about orthography. As we can see, for the 19th century the question of orthography was ultimately an issue of identity, not just an issue about the functionality of writing. As the promoter of the magazine with the most longevity of continuous publication, Iosif Vulcan was of course interested in the controversy about the spelling and orthography.

In the spirit of Romanticism, he shared the ideals of his forerunners about the cultural unity of Romanians from all over the places. Iosif Vulcan belonged to the party that was more moderate. The

²⁵⁹ See on the site <http://www.revistafamilia.ro/familia.html>

²⁶⁰ *The Cambridge History of the Romance Languages*, edited by Martin Maiden, John Charles Smith, Adam Ledgeway, Cambridge University Press, 2011, p. 635.

defenders of the so-called Latinist current advocated the recirculation of Latin words through new lexical borrowings from Latin. Romanian journalists and writers, including Iosif Vulcan, opposed the Latinist current extremist tendencies, being aware of the role that language plays in the development of national culture of a people. One of the central ideas, propagated by I. Vulcan, was the identity of language and culture.

The controversy in the epoch was about the adoption of the etymological principle in writing, on one hand, and on the other it was the adoption of the phonetic principle. As we can see nowadays, the phonetic principle emerged victorious, because it is the simplest and the most reasonable one. The advocates of the etymological principle wanted to preserve the Latin form in writing, even if the speech had already performed its evolutionary laws. If the language had been used by scholars and linguists only, the etymological principle could have been applied in real life, but it would have been very unlikely to be used by all strata of the society.

Titu Maiorescu, the greatest Romanian critic and aesthete of the 19th century, was the strongest advocate of the phonetic principle, which eventually won the dispute. The researches on the subject, as quoted in the bibliography, attest that Iosif Vulcan was, by his formation, a follower of the Latinist school in favor of the etymological scholarly principle. However, as much as we expected him to be on the opposite side of Maiorescu, because so was his intellectual circle, Iosif Vulcan manifested a moderate position, realizing that for his magazine it would be easier to be printed in letters using the phonetic principle. We must reinforce that this was not his party, his formation, his guideline, but he was a real intellectual true to his larger principles of life. If his formation was somehow contradicting his larger principles, he made a correct decision. He even advocated the opinions of Titu Maiorescu from the adverse party and he asserted them and helped at their adoption. Yet he had the passion and the ardency of the etymologist party, when speaking about the Romanian language, even if he was not a linguist. All his ideas on culture show to us that he was a modern man of his time. We understand the difference between his position and that of Maiorescu. The Romanian literature had already gone through the 1848 phase of revolutionary ideals. In Maiorescu's time, *l'esprit critique* emerged as the sign of a culture more interested in the reflection of its own values, a culture that could take skepticism and crisis as instruments of discerning the values. Iosif Vulcan did not belong to that school of debate and of thought, but he could recognize its benefits. As an example of his moderate position, he even showed combativeness towards the etymologist exaggerations of the intellectuals from his own circle. His position was that of finding the mid-way. When the phonetic principle was adopted, he showed his disappointment and kept militating in the

pages of “Familia” for the reconciliation of the two orthographical systems, namely of the phonetic with the etymological ones.

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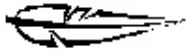
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RECENZII

BOOK REVIEWS

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Kulturwissenschaftliche Literaturwissenschaft. Disziplinäre Ansätze – Theoretische Positionen – Transdisziplinäre Perspektiven by Ansgar Nünning, Roy Sommer (ed), Tübingen, Gunter Narr Verlag, 2004.

A European History of Philosophy and Literary Criticism

Abstract: *This review presents a work of general interest for literary critics and researchers, who deal with such themes pointing to an interdisciplinary approach of literature. This study presents the possibilities of highly conscious usage of the cultural studies terminology in the field of literary criticism from the second half of the 20th century and the first decades of the 21st century. The collective volume, coordinated by a consecrated researcher, professor at the Gießen University, in Germany, offers syntheses, clarifications and examples of applied literary studies from a cultural studies perspective. This collective work brings important clarifications to the notions pertaining to the sphere of the interface between theory of literature and cultural studies.*

Key words: *Ansgar Nünning, cultural literary studies, European history of philosophy and literary criticism, history of mentalities, interdisciplinarity of literature, sociological and anthropological studies, discourse analyses and poststructuralism*

German Professor of English and American Literature and Culture, Ansgar Nünning gathered for this reference work a team of experts in interdisciplinary studies that brings a valuable contribution to a very ambitious but successful project. The authors of this book define the theoretical frame for an interdisciplinary research field that often leads to a biased usage of terminology. In the introductory chapter professor Nünning outlines the principles of a cultural literary theory after establishing the differences and the common ground between literary and cultural theory. As a natural next step, the chapter presents the methodological possibilities of the enunciated principles of interdisciplinarity. The instructional character of the book may be observed based on the attempts to offer graphic representations of historical or systemic evolutions of both literary and cultural theories. The main argument to practice a cultural literary theory, according to Ansgar Nünning is also to be found in the historical development of criticism, which, according to this study, evolved from a text-oriented towards an interdisciplinary direction in the last two decades. Ansgar Nünning understands literature as part of the cultural system of the human society and therefore defines

the main role of literary theory by interpreting literature from a historical perspective as a social and symbolic system. The book offers in its second part case studies on the particularities of the terminological use of words like *cultural studies* or *Kulturwissenschaften*, which are often used synonymously in the processes of the international (American and European) knowledge exchange. Britta Herrmann deals with the import of American models into Germany, reflected both at the level of theoretical contents and at the institutional one since 2000, when German Universities introduced *Kulturwissenschaften* in the academic curricula. The problems of the hybrid study field are debated and exposed by Hartmut Stenzel who shows the implications for the Romance studies, whereas Herbert Grabes synthesises the most important guidelines to be followed in an interdisciplinary approach characteristic to literary theory and cultural studies. Grabes's chapter excels at what one might expect of the depth and precision of the scientific argumentation, which takes into consideration the fine influences between national philosophy histories and the study objects of the literary theory, such as genre and species and their development in Europe. The third

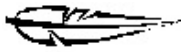
part of the work challenges the concepts of the cultural and literary studies since the '70s and tries to define the role of the perspective in the definition of any accurate terminology. Doris Bachmann-Medick offers an instrument of interpretation that goes beyond the formula of *culture as text* by taking into

account the configurative role of the history of mentalities and of the memory research results, among others.

This book addresses both young and experienced researchers of the literary phenomena, which are keen on keeping up with the new tendencies in the field.

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Lecturi actuale. Pagini despre literatura română contemporană by Bogdan Crețu, Editura Timpul, Iași, 2006.

Present-day Readings. Pages on Contemporary Romanian Literature, "Timpul" Publishing House, Iași, 2006

The Gifted Critic

Abstract: *The third volume of Bogdan Crețu (born in 1978), Lecturi actuale (Present-day Readings) is the embodiment of equidistance. Many young Romanian would-be critics aspire to this status by using either a trend of denial or a trend of hotshotness. Bogdan Crețu knows that it is preferable for a critic to recognize his limitations. His book is one of commonsensical re-comforting criticism. In the midst of the convulsions of the patched and dispatched fictionality through criticism, he points to the surprising element of the analyzed text. Within the tide of numerous young "critics" highly and deliberately obfuscated by the literature they write about, Bogdan Crețu stands apart, reinforcing the value of moderate, reasonable criticism.*

Key-words: assumed act of criticism, discernment, balanced critic, critical verdict, generation of Romanian young critics

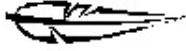
There is a certain illusion of exhaustiveness traceable as far as the attitude and the discourse of the new wave of young Romanian critics are concerned. A critic recognizing his limitations and uncovering them is not so much at a disadvantage after all. The vanity of a sententious conceptual language is more likely to cloud the judgments of those who do not accept from the start that "less is more". The third volume of Bogdan Crețu (born in 1978), *Lecturi actuale (Present-day Readings)* is the embodiment of equidistance. It is a book of commonsensical re-comforting criticism. The author manifests an honest involvement in his own texts and in the texts under his focus. As an assumed act of criticism, the argumentative trajectory is developed with uprightness. Bogdan Crețu's book of criticism has the discernment to stay clear of two recent trends or dangers. The first avoided danger is that of collecting reviews written on different occasions and insufficiently polished, stuffing them inside the covers of a new book just to score more points of his CV. The second danger could have been the trend of denial, very en-vogue among young starlets of criticism, that is to turn maliciousness into a credo perpetuated for its own sake. To those two trends of

interpretation arising from other young critics' sense of hotshotness, Bogdan Crețu opposes the substance of his writing and the equilibrium of his book. Bogdan Crețu is a critic of vocation. Humor and the consciousness of relativism are two coordinates showing the maturity of this young voice of Romanian criticism. *Lecturi actuale (Present-day Readings)* shows a certain continuity with Bogdan Crețu's former book on criticism, entitled *Critical Arpeggios*. Although his third book is based on the overall yearly work and presence in the cultural press, literary journal and magazines, observing the literary phenomena, Bogdan Crețu knows how to include the fragmentary and the transitory in the act of critiquing without using it as a screen or as a pretext to hide behind. Romanian poetry, prose, diaries, anthologies and translations are the genres covered by the young critic Bogdan Crețu in his radiographies. The chosen benchmark is that of chronology as a structural principle. With tender-mindedness, the critic by-passes paradigms establishing features of the different generations of Romanian literature, for instance the 60's, the 70's, the 80's, the 90's, the 2000's. As a reviewer of fiction, Bogdan Crețu has the ability to offer bird's-eye view perspectives and to launch

aesthetical diagnoses. In the midst of the convulsions of the patched and dispatched fictionality through criticism, he points to the *surprising* element of the analyzed text. The texts receive thus an extra-covering of their specificity. The suggestions embedded by the critic make a discrete critical verdict, tenfold more pertinent and more impacting this way. Bogdan Crețu's style of writing has a natural flow, is impetuous and energetic. It seems the style of a critic devoted to the text under his lens, responsible with his words and patient with the writers. Instead of concentrating on the shortcomings of the analyzed books, the critic identifies an evolution of the "criticized" author. He therefore clearly distinguishes the evolution from involution and has the patience to regard stagnation as a part of evolution. Within the tide of numerous young critics highly and deliberately obfuscated by the literature they write about, Bogdan Crețu stands apart, reinforcing the value of moderate, reasonable criticism. Bogdan Crețu's critical discourse is stamped by attributes such as natural, revigorating and persuasive. He truly seems in love with both his hermeneutic writing and with the others' writings, those scrutinized by his critical analysis.

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Cuvintele careucid. Memorie literară în romanele lui E. Lovinescu by Ligia Tudurachi
prefață de Ioana Bot, Editura Limes, Cluj-Napoca, 2010;
(*Words that kill. Literate Memory in E. Lovinescu's Novels*, preface by Ioana Bot,
Limes Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca, 2010)

The History of an Illegible Story on Words

Abstract: *Ligia Tudurachi challenges the linear model adopted by literary historians in treating the prose-writings of Eugen Lovinescu (1881-1943), Romanian critic who swerved the direction of Romanian literature from the ideology of traditionalism to modernism. Previously, Lovinescu's novels were regarded as the not very accomplished attempts of a great critic to write prose. Ligia Tudurachi emphasizes the inner circulation of Lovinescu's discourses from criticism to prose and vice versa. The characters of Lovinescu's novels are unable to sustain their inner balance, but this happens because they live under the fatality of the uttered word. Words become words of terror, terrorizing words, reflections on stereotypes. The young researcher finds credit for her theory of illegibility in Lovinescu's theories on suggestiveness.*

Key-words: *Lovinescu's prose, paradoxical characters, fatality of words, suggestiveness, words that kill*

Ligia Tudurachi (born in 1975) ventures an unusual approach of the prose writings belonging to one of the most influential critics of Romanian literature, Eugen Lovinescu (1881-1943). The young researcher of Cluj-Napoca changes the filter of the previously imposed outlooks of literary history. As a linear model, the history of literature outlook was an ongoing unchallenged branch for generations of critics and decades. It meant the record of the historical development of literature and it left little room for

deconstruction. The prose of a critic like Lovinescu – whose main achievement was to swerve the direction of the Romanian literature from traditionalism ideology to modernism – would have been treated as an appendix of his oeuvre of criticism, in a chapter of linear literary history. With critical discernment and intelligence, Ligia Tudurachi transits again all common places of Lovinescu's reception, deconstructing them with talent and nonchalance. The reconstruction of Lovinescu's texts of fiction is

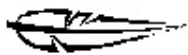
based on the researcher's ample narratological pirouettes. Ligia Tudurachi resorts to suggestions from the history of ideas and of mentalities. Her book is a cultural study on the poetics of Lovinescu's novels. The researcher insists on the linguistic level of Lovinescu's prose. She finds the ferment of psychology in this very level of the words, even of the autonomous forms of speech. Lovinescu's critical thought on culture imprints inner patterns and establishes relevant senses. The phenomenon of inner circulation of Lovinescu's discourses, analyzed and explained by the researcher, is the most solid argument for the relevance of the new approach proposed by this book. Firstly, there is the problem of suggestiveness, a concept used by Lovinescu himself in criticism. But it was given little importance to suggestiveness as employed by Lovinescu to express himself in free prose-writing. This concept refers both to a theory of language and to a reverie instilled by the word itself, aspects retrieved now by Ligia Tudurachi. In the rediscovery of fictitious world, Lovinescu shows predilection for strategic usage of quotation. The resort to quotation has a structuring function. Memory and the quoted passages enter a game of exclusiveness. Ligia Tudurachi arrives at a useful conclusion able to decode the specificity of Lovinescu's novels: that of paradoxical characters. The characters of Lovinescu's novels are unable to sustain their inner balance. They feel the need to be assisted by quotations. The act of quoting

opens up that memory which is unable to dilate. Quotation has, at the same time, the function of staging the text. The researcher has a special gift in analyzing the word-related irreducibility. Among all totalizing sentences of this book, there is one which can sustain the whole textual outlook on Lovinescu's novels. It is about "the phenomenon of the same indeterminations dissolved into a generic identity". It is the main ace of the volume, an expressive way of synthesizing the perspective. It has not been expressed before by the record of Lovinescu's reception. Another good point of the book is the identification of formulas and specific issues of Lovinescu's novels. Such an example would be the fatality of the uttered word. It becomes a Golgotha of Lovinescu's protagonists. They become aware of this new fatal identity. Words become words of terror, terrorizing words, reflections on stereotypes. The author finds credit for her theory of illegibility in Lovinescu's own confession. In the book *The Mutation of Aesthetic Values*, Lovinescu writes that every word is charged with an electricity of non-uniform value of action. That is why the critics writing on his prose insisted on the way in which the characters differentiate between divergent conducts. The critic as a novelist insisted on a multiple determination of conduct, gesture and the nature of character through words. The great secret of Lovinescu's works is that he was interested in words, not in people. Life meant the vital transposition of an aesthetic

experience. This is a fundamental sentence about Lovinescu. Ligia Tudurachi underlines it constantly. *Words that kill* is a provoking study about the hidden forces and chimeras of the word, as Lovinescu lived them. Ligia Tudurachi is very talented stylist of language, with well-trained critical concepts, who knows how to define her hermeneutical adhesion. As readers of her book, we should

not dismiss the fact that she writes her book on illegibility as a declaration of love. Seduced and skeptical at the same time, Ligia Tudurachi lived under the fatality of her theme, just like the analyzed Lovinescu's characters of fiction. She cannot escape the empire of *words that kill*, she is under their regime through the revelation of using them.

MARIUS MIHET



article code 393-027R7

Fragmentarium. Impresii despre oameni și cărți, by Antonio Patraș
Editura Timpul, Iași, 2006; (*Fragmentarium. Impressions on Men and Books*,
Timpul Publishing House, Iași, 2006)

A Critical Voice about Other Critics

Abstract: *Antonio Patraș's book, Fragmentarium, reveals him as a very good diagnostician of literature, a consecrated figure among the young Romanian critics under 40. He belongs to a new generation of critics rooted in the balance of strong verdicts on literature, who prefer to state judgments confirmable by time, instead of juggling with withdrawable findings. The most exciting sections of this book are by far those dedicated to validated critics. Antonio Patraș has the courage to assess and resort to the act of critiquing many important Romanian literary critics. The talented author of this book is likely to become one of the leaders who decide in time the stakes in the arena of Romanian criticism.*

Key-words: *verdicts on literature, criticism, validated critics, generations of Romanian critics*

Antonio Patraș (born in 1973) envelops all qualities pertaining to the Romanian school of criticism of the Moldavian city Iași (Jassy). He manifests both sobriety and extemporaneous writing, balance and refinement, scholarship

and self-irony. This enumeration can continue. Like Bogdan Crețu, colleague at the University of Iași (Jassy) and his friend, Antonio Patraș is a very good diagnostician of literature. As a critic, he does that without

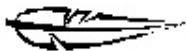
being seduced by the dazzling fervor of transient things or literary fireworks. He examines the books with enthusiasm; he is a seeker of fine fragrances, always writing with accuracy. His books of criticism so far attest that he never juggles with gratuitous verdicts of criticism to withdraw them later. He prefers to write things that sustain themselves through years; so happens in his monographs dedicated to the Romanian writers I. D. Sîrbu (1919-1989; novelist, playwright, philosopher, political prisoner under communism) and Garabet Ibrăileanu (1871-1936; literary critic, theorist, sociologist, novelist) and in his collection of articles on criticism entitled *Fragmentarium*, further discussed here. When elaborating an interpretation, Antonio Patraș makes this a singular act. He seriously scrutinizes the book or author in question, he later traces the dominant lines of the volume in order to emphasize its intentionality, and he always does that from a position of balance. This trajectory is similar to that of the most well-known young Romanian critic, Daniel Cristea-Enache (whose book we presented in the book review section of the previous ALLRO 2010 issue). As we can see, the young generation of critics (under their 40s, publishing their first articles after the Fall of communist regime in 1989) seek methods to make themselves understood and rooted in the balance of strong verdicts on literature, verdicts which can be confirmed by time. The division of Patraș's book *Fragmentarium* into

five chapters does not operate a precise distinction between books and authors and does not claim to do so. The five chapters are: I. *The ink and critic* (about Dan. C. Mihăilescu, Florin Faifer, Alex. Ștefănescu, Bogdan Crețu, Daniel Cristea-Enache, Dragoș Varga Santai, Ion Simuț, Leonte Ivanov) II. *Reading, an unpunished vice* (Dragoș Cojocaru, Valeriu Gherghel) III. *Critical savings of criticism* (Ibrăileanu G., E. Lovinescu, G. Călinescu, Eugène Ionesco, Ion Negoitescu, Virgil Nemoianu, Matei Călinescu) IV. *Books of recent time* (O. Nimigean Mircea Danieluc Mariana Codrea, Nikita Danilov, L.D. Teodorovici, Cosmin Manolache, Dan Miron, Sorin Catarig), V. *The rest is literature* (Venedikt Erofeev, Andrei Platonov). As we can see, the author's selection of authors in all chapters is dictated by theme, by topic, so it is somewhat at random. The most exciting sections are by far those dedicated to validated critics. Antonio Patraș has the courage to assess and resort to the act of critiquing many important Romanian literary critics. Articles on young critics and on inter-war critics, along with those on the generations affirmed twenty to forty years ago, make an original mosaic in his book. As we can see, Antonio Patraș is not interested in the symptoms of criticism; he is more interested in the achievements of criticism reflected in everyday production of books and literary press or media. If I may compare him to his fellow-critics, Antonio Patraș has the exuberance of Dan C. Mihăilescu; he can

proceed to empathetic judgments, like Nicolae Bârna; he can manifest the positive atrocious stubbornness of Gheorghe Grigurcu. Antonio Patraș, among all the young critics, may be tempted to write a novel in secret, at least I suspect him to do so. His style of criticism, never monotonous, proves it. Irony and self-irony are cultivated with an almost malignant confidence in them. This style is quite different from the cold, objective style of a research. He dresses up his reviews with oases of exclamations, with sudden collapses of the discourse in order to revive the attention of the reader, in order to resuscitate it in case it is lost. At his ease, he passes from one register of speech to another with effortlessness. I reckon that Antonio Patraș alteration of register is not so much due to a confectioned style, I think it is his way of being in the midst of the creative act, his means of following the focused author. I appreciate, most of all, the honesty of his writing, honesty being the most serious and difficult trial of a literary critic. Some of the articles of this volume entitled *Fragmentarium* are not as good as the rest (the articles on Leonte Ivanov, O. Nimigean, Dragos Cojocaru, Nikita Danilov, Mariana Codruș are prosaic, somewhat uneven and written without the genuine nerve). But the reader can quickly forget that, by rereading the other sections. A very subtle commentary (completed in the

book on Ibrăileanu) is applied to the Romanian elegant novel *Adela* (1933). There is also the interesting scrutinizing of Eugen Lovinescu's *Agendas*. The critic Lovinescu was also the great rival of Ibrăileanu in the epoch. As for the other most influential critic of Romanian literature, George Călinescu (1899-1965), Patraș remarks his anthropocentric vision as a poet, stamped with narcissism and self-irony. Călinescu's inclination to write poems is seen by Patraș as a manifestation of his thirst for knowledge. Patraș is not intimidated by controversy, so he retakes the rebellious volume written in Romanian by the very young Eugène Ionesco, the 1934 volume entitled *NU* ("No") and he also rediscusses Ion Negoitescu's *Straja Dragonilor* (*Dragons' Watch*). Patraș's volume also refers to translations, not only to books written in Romanian. The author makes relevant commentaries on emigrated world-famous critics, essayists and scholars Virgil Nemoianu and Matei Călinescu.

Already in the top of the younger generation of literary reviewers, Antonio Patraș passed the stage of confirmation and went to lodge of the consecrated. Having the assets necessary to radiograph carefully the literary phenomenon of today and yesterday, Antonio Patraș is likely to become one of the leaders who decide in time the stakes in the arena of Romanian criticism.



Șapte teme ale romanului postpașoptist by Andrei Bodiș
 (Seven Themes of Romanian 19th Century Post-forty-eight novel,
 Paralela 45 Publishing House, Pitești)

The Critic (or The Poet)'s Disownment of Irony

Abstract: *Andrei Bodiș is a consecrated Romanian postmodernist poet. He surprises his readers with a book in the form of an essay, entitled Șapte teme ale romanului postpașoptist (Seven Themes of Romanian 19th Century Post-forty-eight novel: 1855-1865). This book risks interpreting the nebulous time of novel-writing beginnings in Romanian literature. His essay leaves aside the irony distinguishable in his poetry. The book is addressed to students and is designated like an intellectual game in order to make more comprehensible and more appealing that decade of Romanian literature. Andrei Bodiș finds multiple keys of interpretation and multiple openings, conducting to the possible stakes of this study, which is "How to better understand our postmodernists by rereading the classical".*

Key-words: *novel-writing beginnings in the Romanian literature; essay and intellectual game; postmodern irony; l'amour, society, city, suffering, death, writing as novel themes.*

Andrei Bodiș's essay *Șapte teme ale romanului postpașoptist (Seven Themes of Romanian 19th Century Post-forty-eight Novel: 1855-1865)* assumes the risks of interpreting a nebulous time of novel-writing beginnings in Romanian literature (the childhood of the novel, after 1848) which may not be so much on the taste of the nowadays reader of novels. The author is an acknowledged poet and writer of the Romanian generation of the after 80's (born in 1965). He is the perfect example of how a writer of his generation, recalibrated

on a personal itinerary in literature, is able to recapture the temporal fault line of earlier time and reintroduce it into the circuit of criticism. The Romanian novel immediately after 1848 does not benefit from the same amount of exegesis, qualitatively and quantitatively, as the 20th century Romanian novel. The rereading of this post-1848 epoch is done in the manner of Mircea Cărtărescu's *The Levant*. Unlike Cărtărescu's critique through pastiche and language, creating thus a new form of poetry, Bodiș resorts to critical

discourse. It is very interesting that Andrei Bodiú's approach, belonging to a writer of poetry and fiction, does not push forward the irony specific to postmodernism. Personally, after reading Bodiú's poetry, I have expected an ironic view from a postmodern author like Andrei Bodiú on those beginnings of the Romanian novel. However, he manages to dynamite the expectations of the reader, by refusing both the ironic perspective and the cold, austere academic one. In his analyses, Andrei Bodiú manifests a naturalness that few of us would have suspected. His style refused the ultraspecialized language, the scientific jargon. The author prefers to be seductive rather than scholarly. After reading the preliminaries of this book, we, the readers, realize that this essay is not actually an essay, it is... an academic course for students. It investigates the most important 19th century Romanian novels after the 1848 moment, more exactly covering 1855-1865. The list goes as follows: *Manoil (1855)*, *Elena (1862)* by D. Bolintineanu, *Un boem român (1860)* by Pantazi Ghica, *Don Juanii din București (1861-62)* by Radu Ionescu, *Mistere din București (1862)* by Ioan M. Bujoreanu and *Catastihul amorului-La gura sobei (1865)* – anonymous. It should be mentioned that

these are not the first emergent novel of Romanian literature. The popular novels (books) had quite a tradition beginning with the 17th century. Demetrius Cantemir wrote in Romanian a political *roman a clef*, a cryptic satirical story of the Baroque, called *The Hieroglyphic History (1703-1705)*, with characters portrayed as animals, discovering the uselessness and the absurd of argumentation. Unfortunately *The Hieroglyphic History* was not circulated and remained unknown to writers and readers, delaying the advent of the Romanian novel. The Prince of Moldavia, Demetrius Cantemir (1673-1723), encyclopedist, scholar, ethnographer, linguist, philosopher, composer and writer, is more famous for his historical writings in Latin on the Ottoman Empire's "Growth and Decay". While reading Andrei Bodiú's essay, I was surprised at his option for this theme, taking into account his other books: the micro-monograph on *Mircea Cărtărescu* and *The Direction of the 1980's in Romanian Poetry*. Bodiú's approach of the early Romanian novel is totally westernized, in the sense of analysis on the themes, symbolism, essential recurrent motifs. The seven themes defined Andrei Bodiú in the novels between 1855-1865 are: *l'amour*, the society, the city, the suffering, the

death, and the writing. Analyses are relevant, clear, and often empathetic; the author takes the courage of some polemics disguised or open with other researchers of the period in question. The references to Nicolae Manolescu, the most authoritative voice of criticism of our days, editor-in-chief of the Romanian most influential literary journal, "*România literară*", are inescapable, since Manolescu is the author of a very comprising *Critical History on Romanian Literature (5 centuries of Literature)*, where he deals with these beginnings of the Romanian novel. Andrei Bodiú accepts all of Manolescu's points of view, which is unusual. I would have expected a certain combativeness in a good, constructive sense, knowing Andrei Bodiú's speech verve. Maybe it was not the case; maybe all the quoted affirmations are irrefutable. But constructive opposition would have been beneficial indeed to Andrei Bodiú's book, since it is not his style to be so mild and soft with other critics.

Eventually, the announced "seven themes of the post-forty-eightyish novel" remain ... three: love, society and writing. I would not count this as a fault. The book is designed as a great scheme to attract students to the study of literature. With generosity, Andrei Bodiú has them

in mind first. The professor Bodiú created a handbook with immediate application, comprehensive, easy. For student of philology, feeling literature like a game is something instantly attractive, and Andrei Bodiú makes the best of it. The Romanian writers considered less digestible by the history of literature are immediately made more approachable. Andrei Bodiú, a poet disguised as a critic, has his charm in literary criticism. Or vice versa, the critic has the charms of a poet. His unusual formulations appeal to the most unexpected sensibilities. His sagacious synthesis, his alert correlations denote a good spirit rooted in the values of today and yesterday, an avid consumer of Romanian literature. Another gain of the present study is the style: simple, direct, salubrious. In a word, accessible. We will not be blinded by any floral or misplaced formulations. The author leaves room the teacher within him, graciously. On the other hand, the student can take advantage and lead the analysis beyond the focused time limits (the decade 1855-1865) up to modern and recent times. "How can we better understand our postmodernists through re-reading our forerunners?"- this is one of the stakes of Bodiú's essay. Finally, the study of a farther epoch becomes a tool of understanding the poetry of our times.

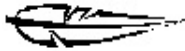
The openings of this essay are multiple keys of interpretation. Every reader is captivated by Andrei Bodiú's ability to enchant his students with his own fascination of the theme.

A book with no siblings among the other volumes of the same author, *Șapte teme ale romanului postpașoptist* (*Seven*

Themes of Romanian 19th Century Post-forty-eight novel: 1855-1865) is the first book of criticism exposing the qualities of a great teacher (not of the theorist or poet Andrei Bodiú) in the most encompassing sense. Perhaps this is the most nostalgic of Andrei Bodiú's writing.

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Literatura română contemporană. Prelungiri, by Irina Petraș
(*Romanian Contemporary Literature. Follow-Throughs*)
Cluj-Napoca, Casa Cărții de Știință Publishing House, 2010

The Critic and The Live-able Texts and Worlds

Abstract: *Books are live-able, one should abide in them. Akin to Heideggerian terminology, the critic is the person who receives the text as the very world or home of the author whose text is dealt with. This is the new vision of critiquing embraced by Irina Petraș, author of Literatura română contemporană. Prelungiri (Romanian Contemporary Literature. Follow-Throughs). Once assuming the choice that a certain text is worth-abiding in it, the critic explores it with the risks of exploring a new world, rather than for the sake of finding the faults and criticising the author. Irina Petraș's unique style of criticism is succulent, always refined and flavoured with the sensations given by the "inhabited" texts.*

Key-words: *criticism, Romanian contemporary literature, panorama, abiding in texts*

Irina Petraș, a well-known critic, translator, writer, communicates a rare form of critiquing for the welfare of Romanian contemporary literature: that of full-risk criticism. Establisher of essential new approaches on the oeuvres of

canonical Romanian writers, Irina Petraș is, at the same time, a tireless observer of literary phenomena and a meticulous author of dictionaries of writers and anthologies unique of their kind. The book entitled *Literatura*

română contemporană. Prelungiri (Romanian Contemporary Literature. Follow-Throughs), issued in 2010, at Casa Cărții de Știință Publishing House, continues the *Panorama of the Romanian Literature* published in 2008 (in Romanian). Irina Petraș's criticism does not camouflage behind protective theories and abstractions. She is aware that any act of critical reading through biased lenses may demonstrate its own short-sightedness even from the start. Therefore, the vision adopted by Irina Petraș is a lot more encompassing: the critical reading should be an act of *living in* the analysed text. Books are *live-able*, one should abide in them. More akin to Heideggerian terminology than to meta-literature, the critic is the person who receives the text as the very world or home of the author whose text is dealt with. Therefore, once assuming the choice that a certain text is worth-abiding in it, the critic explores it with the risks of exploring a new world, rather than for the sake of finding the faults and criticising the author. Apparently such generosity would betray critical judgements due to an inchoate permissiveness. But the irony and the edge one finds in the works of Irina Petraș dismiss any redundant empathy or excessive familiarity. Faults of the texts analysed are found in an easier way because they represent the disappointment of the genuine reader who is Irina Petraș. As if she were born with a supplementary optical nerve, she senses any shortcomings of constructions, of hues, any betrayal of the reader in the name of the reign

of the imaginary claimed by the analysed author. If the author betrays his/her own world, the critic is the first to sense it. The style of criticism is succulent and flavoured with the sensations given by the inhabited texts. The flavours of her style are always refined; they do not fall into the trap of chasing a certain intensity for its own sake. By changing the focus and by turning off the nagging voice of criticism, Irina Petraș allows herself a more relaxed and reflective perspective regarding the texts which can enrich her and can satisfy her complex sophisticated taste as a reader. Integrity, seeing the act of reading and the act of writing about books, becomes the foundation of a new critical vision. This new vision is supported by a genuine philosophical questioning of the world. The German philosophy, the French art of discourse and sometimes the English wit are traceable in a charming plaiting in the writings of Irina Petraș. At the root of this new approach there is a hidden vocation of the system. This system finds its validity in the correspondences between language, horizons, unconsciousness and style as in the philosophical system of the great Romanian poet Lucian Blaga. On the other hand, being a believer in the merely finite, but properly-done-things more than in the absolute truths, Irina Petraș steps away from the dangers of imagining and elaborating a new system pending out forever as unfinished project. On the contrary, the things she achieves and carries out to completion translate her

philosophical conception on life and death to a higher degree than some utopian projects left in embryo. The writer Irina Petraș admits that she is aware of her “death-able” status, for which she coined a new word in Romanian, “murtudine”. This is her “essential” quality, the quality that pushes her forward in the adventure of permanently interpreting the world and its books. Assumed consciousness of death is something anyone encounters at some point. The difference is that the Writer Irina Petraș lives with that assumed consciousness every day, because it is the only way by which she can transform it into a “science of death”. The science of death

is the only route to master the unknown, to render it into an art. Living with one’s own death and not against it makes all her acts become “intra-vital”.

Apart from its gravity, this new vision brought into literature by Irina Petraș is always grounded on the plain old common sense. It shows that criticism should not be so eager to remove the common sense of not separating theory and life for the sake of living in theories. The vocation of integrality, as Irina Petraș manifests it in all aspects of her work, is a vital necessity for Romanian contemporary literature, given the risky tendency of criticism to split into unstable theories.

BOOKS IN CIRCUIT

With this rubric of our book review section, we present books returned to the Romanian public after being translated, either belonging to authors of Romanian diaspora or books rediscovered after many years of circulation in another language.

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Title in Romanian: *Gândirea romanului*, by Toma PAVEL,
Humanitas Press, Bucharest, 2008
Original title: LA PENSÉE DU ROMAN
Translated from French by Mihaela Mancaș

Novel's Force of Absorption

Abstract: *Toma Pavel's research on the theory of the novel, La pensée du roman, is a book of a lifetime vision. The author has the indisputable merit of linking the theory of novel with man's orientation towards transcendence. His thesis is a new way of looking at the history of novel as the plait of two tendencies: the idealistic and anti-idealistic, modeled by man's relating to otherworldly heavens or soul-imprinted images. The idealistic wave of the novel is the quest for perfection. La pensée du roman may reveal why, never mind how punctilious the architecture of a novel is on the vertical scale, the centre of a novel is a labyrinth and it is so due to its force of absorption. Toma Pavel's theories freely arrange themselves just like the grain of sands in a sand-glass. In the magic mirror of the theory on the novel we see the past and its marks and we also see the mirror of our time.*

Key-words: novel, genre, idealistic wave of the novel, realistic wave, rethinking the theory of the novel, new vision on the novel

Toma Pavel's research on novel gets to the heart of this very prolific and prolix genre. *La pensée du roman* is a book of a lifetime vision. The author is a world-famous theorist of literature, who not only constructs, but also follows in his book the inner invisible threads of a labyrinth multiplied and encased in other stone labyrinths. Born in Romania, a graduate of the University of Bucharest, Thomas Pavel teaches Romance Languages and Literatures, Comparative literature at the University of Chicago. He is a Gordon J. Laing Distinguished Service Professor. Toma Pavel has the indisputable merit of linking the theory of novel with man's orientation towards transcendence. The theorist follows that thread even since the Hellenistic times to nowadays and he sees its clear correlation and intersection with other turns of thought, with other patterns and man's chosen fictitious or artistical representations. The author does not start from cold preconceived theories. On the contrary, he starts from re-reading massive tones of books, not only

longish but with reiterative conflicts (*Amadis de Gaula, Rocambole*). Who can praise nowadays in spending time to read *Amadis*? Yet, this was the novel read by Don Quijote. Cervantes was the genius who sensed the fathoms of this abyss for the human mind: the idealistic tendency of the novel shall never catch up with reality, its goal is irrecoverable. It is at this point that we, the readers, are with the author and writer Toma Pavel, and we have that revelation, too: the idealistic tendency can never engulf reality, nor can it be engulfed by it (the reality in both senses, the fictitious veridicity of an oeuvre, its true-to-life quality and our innate tendency to rely on what we see, on what surrounds us). The novels pertaining to the idealistic wave have something in common from Longos and Heliodorus up to Al. Dumas (sr.) or Eugene Sue: the whole conceptions, mind-sets, characters, adventures of actions make them excluded, abstracted from the surrounding world. But, as in a utopia, they shall never have the chance to touch reality. For the

ancient novel, the mythos was the parallel world, therefore the rupture is of another kind. Longos's novel is the expression of a golden age, with no time-threats. But the picaresque Latin novel already contradicted the separated world of mythos, the heroes had the worries of survival, they lived in reality.

The idealistic are so enveloped in the perfection of human being or of the happiness they produce, that never ever can they offer a confrontations of their characters with life. Their encapsulation in their phantasy or the equivalent of it will always constitute a barrier either to life itself or to the world they depict. But what can a writer offer when deprived of his own idealism or that of his character? One should just think of the deep vulnerability towards idealism of some main reformers of the novel: Cervantes, Balzac, Flaubert, who created the most genuine anti-idealistic characters. (I am referring here to few essential writers, but the book is saturated with novelists and examples from all ages and it has a very solid index on topics, notions and oeuvres).

It takes Balzac to turn the novel into the real inheritor of the ancient epic, creating the world again, this time endowed with the courage of confrontation with idealism.

We can read now Flaubert's immersion of Emma Bovary in the world of sensations as a proof that the anti-idealistic novel does not extract itself from reality, not even at this epidemic level, and not even if its character

does. Instead it finds ways of subtly fusing with reality.

Toma Pavel's interpretations on the 19th century novel and on the 20th century novel are unshakeable. But the professor has not started with scholarly opinions on the best epochs of the novel. He reached them after enjoying his journey through the pure adventurous ages of the genre.

We could name books that studied the novel in connection with the sociology of its ages, with the history of mentalities, with the cultural climate, with structural changes of the bourgeoisie or historical events. Or others seeing the role of the individual, the worlds inhabited by his/her consciousness, the internal focalization of the novel. But Toma Pavel's volume, while retaining something of all these approaches, comes with a substantial difference: the novel's quest to protrude into reality and not be just an endless game of imagination is shaped by man's attempts from all ages to reach divinity. It is not only the horizon contained in the novel, begotten by it, where we should glance, it is also what produced that horizon in the first place, what shaped it to take one form and not another.

His thesis is a new way of looking at the history of novel as the plait of two tendencies: the down-to-earth one and the idealistic one, modeled by man's relating to otherworldly heavens or soul-imprinted images. The idealistic wave of the novel is the quest for perfection. The down-to-earth is soaked in idealism, too, but it drags it into the confrontation to reality.

La pensée du roman is an open invitation to a ride on questioning ourselves as humans, in the mirror constructed by the novel throughout centuries. Zones of this huge fabulous mirror of fiction may be eye-deceiving, concave, other parts are the perfect reflection of what it is, others are obscured, and others are merely dust-laden, such as the forgotten, obsolete books. But this particular work, since it is a vision, captures not only the essence of all-times novel, the presence of self, of characters, of society, but also the presence of God or of theistic changes throughout ages. This perpetual relation with the transcendent has not been seen so clearly for the novel before Toma Pavel. Since Toma Pavel's book is compelling its readers to further expand its maieutics, we should feel free to ask ourselves many other questions about our daily reaction to idealism or the need of it. What renders the novel its force of absorption in its interaction with the imagination of the readers? With all the quotidian invasion of prefabricated soap that we are exposed to every day, designed to trigger out feelings, is there still room for idealism, as in the sentimentalist novel of the 18th century? Or have our emotions become subjected to manipulability more than we want to give in? And if so, aren't we, as readers, even more asphyxiated by the novel without an ideal? Toma Pavel's thoroughly well organized study urges you to accept nothing else than a freedom as expanding as the air you breath while throwing a critical regard on the development of the novel as a

genre. He does not forget, so neither do the readers of his book or his students, *le Roman* is a genre in which we want to be free, to feel footloose. Who would enter the world of a novel with his imagination committed to it just because it is compulsory reading? Toma Pavel's rethinking of the theory of novel, as the original title in French suggests it, reveals nothing else but the very heart of the novel since all times: to have that force of attraction which can postpone death, to delay time with Scheherazade's science of surrendering to the inside forces of the Tale itself. A well-known scholar, essayist and writer emigrated from Romania, Toma Pavel re-reads for his own pleasure the forgotten books of mankind. Toma Pavel is right, there's no Story of the novel for you if you don't have the time to listen to it, if you don't have time to re-read books of forgotten times. The vision of the present of the novel is incomplete if you cannot take your time. Toma Pavel's inner strength— to leave the tales free, just to enchant them into an act of re-arranging themselves into his history of the novel as a book of theory — comes not only from his taking of his share of time to read, but also from his believing in tales. You cannot describe the emergent symbols of a volume of theory, as you could for a novel. Yet, I feel like choosing three symbols to metaphorically convey my impressions of Toma Pavel's book: *the labyrinth*, *the clepsydra* and *the mirror*. *La pensée du roman* reveals that, never mind how punctilious the architecture of a novel is on the vertical scale, the centre of a novel is a

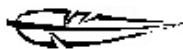
labyrinth and it is so due to its force of absorption. As for the clepsydra, Toma Pavel's theories freely arrange themselves just like the grain of sands in a *sand-glass*, circulating through all times and reversible as the act of turning the clepsydra outside-down. As for the mirror, the development of the novel

reflects the history of ideas of a culture. In the magic *mirror* of the theory on the novel we see the past and its marks and we also see the mirror of our time, in the now of the gaze, by trying to figure it out.

THE LANGUAGE WE LIVE IN. Books on language

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101 cuvinte moștenite, împrumutate și create, by Marius Sala, Humanitas Publishing House, Bucharest, 2010 (101 Words Inherited, Borrowed and Created)

A Best-Seller Book on Language

Abstract: Marius Sala's book speaks about words as about living things, although they are considered from the point of view of lexicology, therefore from a scientific perspective. The author discusses the birth, life and death of words. This book is a fabulous research tool for those willing to find more things about Romanian. It speaks about the Latin heritage, about Romanian as importer and exporter of words. The book is already a great success.

Key-words: Romanian lexicology, Latin words, life of the words, words as living beings, etymology

101 words inherited, borrowed and created is a recent book conceived as a precious tool for all people interested in the Romanian linguistic phenomenon. This book is not just a great book on lexicological aspects which crowns a very rich activity of the most known Romanian linguist of the moment in the field of language formation and Romance languages: Marius Sala. It is a book on words

as living beings. At the same time, we should not forget that the number of words in a language is practically infinite. A very keen specialist, Marius Sala has conceived this new Humanitas collection (series) initiated by this volume as a journey into the world of words to illustrate the most important facts of the Romanian lexic. The name of the series is very illustrative: *the Life of the Words*. In the first

part of this volume, the author discusses the birth, life and death of words. For the last 100 pages he makes us accompany him when he deals with the origin and history of the Romanian language, with her vocabulary..As a grammar research tool, this book by Marius Sala talks about etymology as the science that reveals to us the true sense of words. He presents “the birth certificate” of the words, where he includes direct and indirect etymology. This part is written in the form of a fairy tale, identifying the old origin of a word with its remote country. Who issues the birth certificate of a word, we may wonder. Marius Sala tells us: it is usually a specialist who assumes the authenticity of the things written by him. The special etymological dictionaries are presented. This is a fabulous research tool for those willing to find more things about Romanian, who are in need of references. Establishing a direct and an indirect etymology is what concerns Romanian linguists. The direct etymology is the so-called last “station” of words. The indirect one is that of remote origin of words and it is, at the same time, the adventure of some words. Two criteria are fundamental for the establishment of direct etymology, the phonetic (formal) criterion of and semantic (content) criterion, which require to be further supplemented by other criteria: the geographic criterion (geographic spread), the functional one (positive words in the language), the semantic-onomasiologic one, the historical one and the social one. In any language, in addition to words inherited from the mother

tongue, there are many words created by internal means (derivation with prefixes and / or suffixes, composition) or lexical borrowings (loanwords). Both these situations are abundant in Romanian. The process of formation of words in Romanian is inherited from Latin, with suffixes: -ar <lat., arius [aurar<lat. aurarius (goldsmith)] or prefixes, des-<Lat. dis-[a desface <lat. disfacere(to undo)], the borrowings being made from the languages with which Romanian came in contact. Some borrowed words have not encountered any resistance from the words belonging to the old fund of the Romanian language. Others were in competition, at first, with the old forms. Most of these loans of words are explained by their usage by bilingual speakers of Romanian. “Travelling words”, which have Romanian as the “final station”, may originate from European languages or languages on the continent, many come from Latin or Greek, the two great languages that underpin European civilization. Words that are based on a Latin term passed through several languages before they come to us have come Romanian from Greek (alambic, cremă, prosop/distillery, cream, towel), German (aspirină, archebuză, bivouac/aspirin, harquebus, bivouac), Hebrew (calvar, heruvim, scandal/hell, cherub, scandal), Arabic (algoritm, cifră, zero/algorithm, figure, zero), Sanskrit (caravană, junglă, safir caravan, jungle, sapphire), Persian (azur, bazar, calic/ azure, bazaar, pauper). The words forming the vocabulary of a language do not live solely;

they are organized according to their meanings, often forming semantic fields. The author stops on the words inherited from Latin to Romance languages, including the Romanian language. Such words refer to parts of the body, animals, and colors. Speaking about the death of words, we are reminded that over the centuries, in any language, words are subjected to limitation of use, they die of old age (many words from the Turkish language, Hellenic, Slavonic), being replaced with more expressive other words. But until today, Romanian retains the most important words coming from Latin. And other considerations are the author's notes about the remarkable unity of our language, about diachronic and geographical variations and social variations of language. In the Latin Heritage Chapter, reference is made to the words kept from the Latin. Latin-inherited words in Romanian are about 2,000 words – basic words, no derivatives, with a central position in the lexicon, about 500 are the Latin words inherited by each of the Romance languages (*acoperi, a lega...*) and some are stored only in Romanian (*împărat, oaie, creștin, lingură, a apuca/king, mutton, Christian, spoon, to grab*). Romanian is a large importer of words. The Romanian language, before it was crystallized, had words borrowed by Latin from the idioms of other populations. In Romanian's case, we borrowed this way, from the substrate, as it is called, about 80 words from the Thracian languages, with their Dacian branch. They can reach up to 130 words, if we take into account

the **probable** but **not certain** ones, because there have been no texts in the Thracian preserved. These words refer to nature, water, vegetation, fauna (*groapă, mal, pârâu, brad, brusture, balaur, barză* /pit, beach, river, tree, burdock, dragon, stork). 89 terms are considered by Gr. Brâncuș as belonging to the substrate clearly, to which can add another 17, from a list of 43 words, considered likely from the substrate by the same author (*brâncă, fluture, creț, codru, negură, păstăie* /scrambled, butterfly, chalk, forest, darkness, pods). The Romanian language is the creator (inventor) of words from proper names (joben, penteleu, marghioală, brașoave), of expressive utterances (*hârș!*, to scrape).

At the same time, Romanian is an exporter of words. Its exportations go to in most Slavic languages, to Hungarian, to Turkish, to Albanian, to Gypsy (Romani). In the pastoral terminology, referring to shepherd life, we encounter 25 terms of Romanian origin in Slovak, in Hungarian, over 200: *mioară, găleată, mocan, putină, urdă* /sheep, bucket, Mocan, little, urdă. The word for cheese, "brânză" is present in 13 languages, and polenta—*mămăligă*—in 11 languages...). Other Romanian words like "securitate" are exported into non-neighbouring languages by modern and livresque means to create local color. Marius Sala's book ends a 250-page brilliant vivid presentation of words with a selective bibliography, an index of words (about 13 pages) and some exercises imagined by the author for the readers aiming

the opportunity to playfully check their knowledge. The book knows a great success already among readers, students and teachers

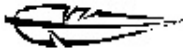
alike, awakening their interest for the study of etymology, vocabulary and history of the Romanian language.

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L'individu, la mort, l'amour. Soi-même et l'autre en Grèce ancienne, By Jean-Pierre Vernant

Gallimard, © 1989, present edition: 2007 (in French)

The Individual and the Collective

Abstract: *As we can see from Jean-Pierre Vernant's (1914-2007) exemplary life, his own consciousness and the collective consciousness of the „polis” never excluded each other. Vernant is the anthropologist who revealed the depths of our ancient-Greece based thinking. L'individu, la mort, l'amour. Soi-même et l'autre en Grèce ancienne reveals how the values of the collective rendered different senses for the individual apprehension of death, eros and conscience. For the ancient Greeks, one face of death(that which is not absolute terror) incarnates values seeded in the absolute, in the ideal, more than in the intimacy of subject. Eros is viewed as different from Plato's concept of Penia (deficiency) but in connection with the excess of plenitude, the plenitude of One as in the orphic Eros.*

Key-words: *individual in ancient Greece, anthropology, alterity, funerary ideology*

How can our individual consciousness not exclude the collective one, but be integrated into it, into the multiplied force of the *polis*?

The answer could not come from anyone else but from Jean-Pierre Vernant, a man who incarnated in reality the qualities of a hero in his 20th century life, as an authenticity of his

being, not merely as a scholarly experience.

We are all aware of the revolutionary content of his books. Vernant is the one who retrieved our hidden self by recuperating the Greece of invisibility; he understood the differences between our patterns of seeing and those of seeing the unseen, the blindness, the

immobility. The Kollosus as the statue and the double of the dead, the mobility of psyche, the dead body, the perfectly inert integrated body, the time and memory, what makes the subject be a subject, the same and the otherness, these are all retrospections we have gained because Vernant reduced our figural blindness to them. If we are so familiar with his works, we are surprised to find out that he even experienced the heroic in the full sense, by being an active fighter of French Resistance in the Second World War. We earned as a privilege of modernity the individual values of separation from the collective, as a key to the freedom of expressing our personalities, our own values and feelings as individuals. In our age when the individualistic egocentric values prevail, it is hard to find someone like Vernant, a great man for whom the collective consciousness of the „polis“ and his individual consciousness are not disjunctive, on the contrary, they focus on and serve the same interests and goals.

The present book goes further than the previous of Vernant's books, because it is the recuperation of this individual-collective relationship itself, of what made it possible and of how it impacted the essential dimensions of human existence: death, eros and consciousness as shaped by the encounter with alterity and contrasted against gods. Vernant's world is not the world we know through retold ancient mythology, The book *L'individu, la mort, l'amour* casts a necessary light on the hidden abyss of our matrinely formed thinking, it reveals the role

of obscurity in the realm of the visible. Vernant dared to discover what happened to the Greek in his passage through death. The dead were still social beings. The social memory had a different value system, it could implant in the absolute even the precarity of human life. Death is two-faced: one is the heroic death, which validates the individual, the other is the death embodied by feminine figures, which is the dimension of horror. Calypso, «la cachée» and «celle qui cache», the very incarnation of transparency, is for Ulysses such a temptation of death in oblivion, promising immortality but requiring an impossible price. Ulysses refuses such immortality, he prefers living among his folks, he prefers the precarity of a human life lived among his people, inside the collectivity.

Nobody could have cast a light in that invisible land, without periclitating the abyss itself, without the danger of turning it into mere discourse. Vernant did it not only for himself, but mostly for us. There is an intact power in this hidden force of darkness. The French anthropologist saw it connected with the demos, with the democratic life of the republic, he did not see it as the obscure soul of an individual, but as the individual in relationship to his community. Still sharing his vividness among other scholars at a conference in October 2006, more alive than ever, before passing away in 2007, at the age of 93, Jean-Pierre Vernant not only lived and fought throughout the 20th century. He outdid the century as he has outdone the limits of the anthropological research. He had influenced a

century of Western thought. If other scholars are famous through their discoveries, if other philosophers brought a new turning of the thought (Heidegger, Derrida), Jean-Pierre Vernant is the anthropologist who revealed the depths of our ancient-Greece based thinking.

Annals of the University of Oradea, Romanian Language and Literature Fascicule is an academic, openly peer-reviewed journal that appears once a year.

The 2011 ALLRO is issued before December, 15, 2011.

The executive editors and the advisory board shall decide on any change about the frequency of the journal.

ALLRO specializes in bridging the world of academic literary criticism and theories with the aliveness of everyday literary phenomenon as reflected in the cultural media and book-production. The general outlook of our journal is that the field of theory should be connected and not disconnected from the extremely contemporary realities of books. At the same time, our journal aims to restore to literary criticism the value of creativeness once shared with the literary oeuvre, by not trying to crush in theories the irreducible mystery of any book of literature.

At least 70 % of the articles are in English. Up to 30 % may be represented by researches published either in Romanian or in a circulated language of the same Latin parentage: French, Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese.

Anthropology and literature was the chosen theme of this issue. For the next issue the theme is

Time and literature.

The topics covered by our journal:

The dynamics of Romanian literature, trends.

The dialogue of Romanian literature with other cultures and literatures.

Identity, otherness, anthropology and literature, cultural studies.

Identity and its expressions in literature.

Time and literary theory.

Myths and Post- modern authors.

Language phenomena, Romance languages and literatures.

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Foundation: As a research journal, the beginnings of ALLRO can be traced back to the academic year 1966- 1967, when, under the name *Lucrari stiintifice*, the section of academic research emerged at the University of Oradea. In 1991 the research journal changed its name and template, focusing on topics of immediate relevance and on thorough going studies, on cultural studies, research articles on Romanian literature, comparative literature. The present 2011 issue is the first issue published online. If previously only the abstracts have been published in English and in other circulated language, with this issue, all the topics about Romanian literature and Romanian language are published mostly in English

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