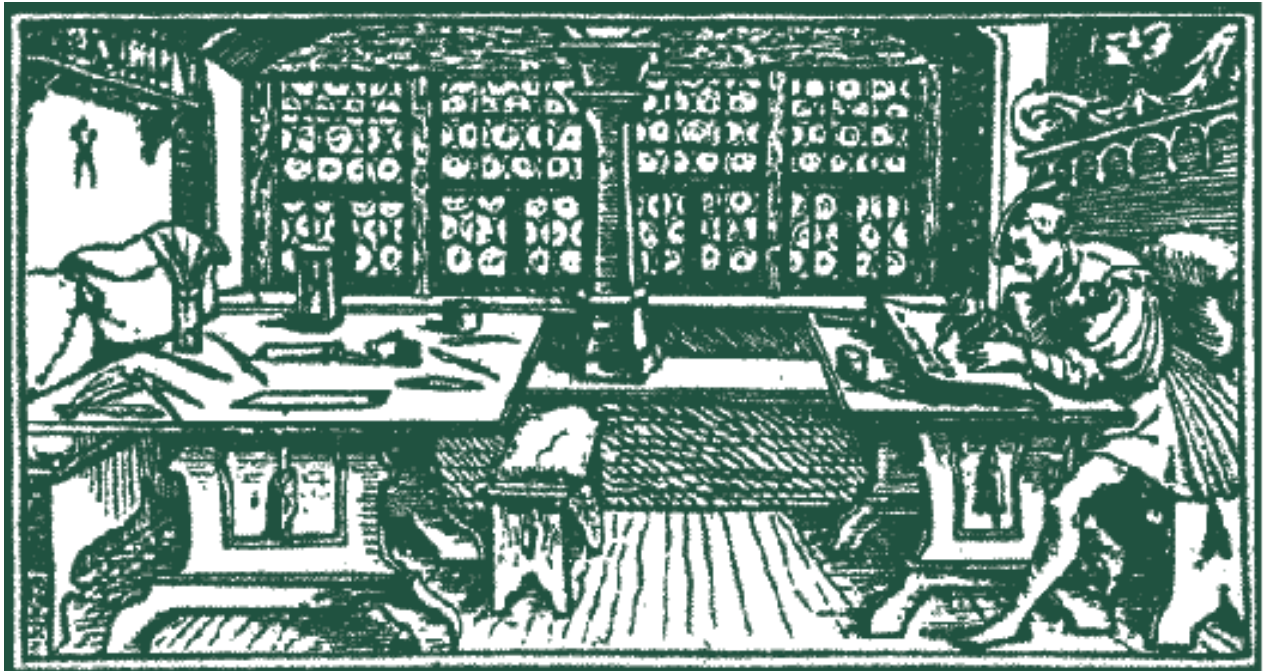




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LOW GERMAN ELEMENTS IN THE ENGLISH LEXICON

DORIN CHIRA¹

ABSTRACT. The vocabulary of English is heterogeneous and diversified. The Romans, the Danish and Norwegian invaders, the Norman French conquerors, the prestige of the ancient Latin and classical Greek, contacts in multilingual situations, or the great colonizing nations have contributed a lot to the English vocabulary. In this article we attempt to delineate briefly a foreign element that has influenced the building of the English lexicon.

Key words: *Indo-European, Germanic, Low German, High German.*

REZUMAT. *Elemente germane în vocabularul limbii engleze.* Vocabularul limbii engleze este eterogen și diversificat. Influența romană, cea a invadatorilor danezi și norvegieni, autoritatea și prestigiul limbii latine, greaca clasică, influența limbii franceze, contactul lingvistic sunt câțiva dintre factorii care și-au adus contribuția la consolidarea vocabularului limbii engleze. În lucrarea de față este oferită o scurtă descriere a unui element străin (Low German) prezent în vocabularul limbii engleze.

Cuvinte cheie: *Indo-European, Germanic, Low German, High German.*

English, German, Dutch, Danish, Norwegian, Swedish, Icelandic belong to the *Germanic* branch of Indo-European languages. *Proto-Germanic*, the hypothetical common language, is not directly attested. The Germanic branch of Indo-European languages is traditionally divided into three main branches: *East Germanic*, *North Germanic*, and *West Germanic*. Gothic, the only East Germanic language of which there is any evidence, is a language mainly attested by a partial translation of the Bible, made by the bishop Wulfila in the second half of the 4th century. The North Germanic branch includes the Germanic languages of Scandinavia (Danish, Swedish, Norwegian), Faroese, and Icelandic. German (both High German dialects spoken in southern Germany and Low German dialects of northern Germany), Dutch/Flemish,

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English, and Frisian (most nearly related to English) belong to the West Germanic branch.

German is spoken mainly in Germany and Austria, and used with others, as an official language in Switzerland and Luxembourg and as a regional form in the Italian Tyrol and elsewhere. It is historically divided into two main dialect areas: *Low German* (north of a line from south of Magdeburg to the frontier with Belgium) and *High German* (to the south of this line). The criterion for this division is whether or not forms underwent the so-called Second Sound Shift, by which [t] > [ts], e.g. in the word for 'ten' (standard High German 'zehn'), [p] > [pf], e.g. in the word for 'apple' ('Apfel'). The term *High German* refers to a group of dialects of Southern Germany; in time it became Standard German. In a very wide sense, the term *Low German* refers to all forms of the Western branch of Germanic which are not High German. The term is used in a narrower sense to exclude English, but to include Dutch and Flemish. In the narrowest sense of all, the term refers only to the dialects of Northern Germany.

In the present paper, under the term *Low German*, we have included Dutch, Flemish, and Frisian (a Germanic language spoken in coastal regions and islands in the north of the Netherlands and in the neighbouring western Germany to the Danish border); these are all closely related languages of the Low German subdivision of Germanic, to which English belongs. The tight connections between England and the Low German speaking countries date from the time of the Norman Conquest. Frisian, however, was particularly close to Old English in vocabulary and sound, and many similarities persist nowadays. The commercial activities of these countries are well known. Dutch and Flemish merchants and immigrants settled in England. English sailors were in close contact with their Dutch neighbours. Dutch and Flemish artists and specialists in science sometimes worked in England and enjoyed privileged ranks and status. English soldiers fought side by side with Dutch and Flemish soldiers in the wars of the Low Countries. Naval rivalries and conflicts in their colonies, the struggle in South Africa, and the close ties provided by World War II, were some of the features of Anglo-Dutch relations. They also constitute some of the routes by which Low German words came into English. The words that have made their contribution to the English lexicon belong to various domains:

- **nautical**: *buoy* [Du. *boeie*, buoy, fether, through Romance forms (OFr. *buie*, chain) < L. *boia*, fether, orig. a neck collar: apparently first applied to the chain anchoring the float], a floating object fastened in a particular place to point out the position of shoals, rocks, anchors, etc. under the water, or the course of ships; a device used to keep one afloat; *caboose* [MDu. *kabuys*, *kambuis*, cabin house, ship's galley], a small kitchen on the deck of a ship; an

oven or fire place erected on land; a hut, a cabin, a prison; a guard's van on a train; a car for workmen; a person's buttocks; *cruise* [Du. *kruisen*, to cross, *cruise* < *kruis*, cross < L. *crux*, cross], sail for pleasure making for no particular place; walk or travel about making for no particular place; of an aircraft, motor vehicle, travel comfortably and economically at less than top speed; *deck* [< MLowG. *verdeck* < *ver-*, prefix of indefinite force + *decken*, to cover], a covering, surface or floor; a material used to form a covering, esp on a ship; any surface area used to stand or move on; a floor or platform; cover, clothe; cover or clothe in a rich or ornamental style; provide with a deck; *dock* [originally, mud channel made by a vessel's bottom at low tide: hence, *dock* < MDu. *docke*, channel], an artificial basin; a wharf or pier; the bed in which a vessel lies dry at low water; a trench or canal to admit a boat; *filibuster* [Sp. *filibustero* < MDu. *vrijbuit*, freebooter < *vrij*, free + *buit*, booty], a freebooter; any of a class of pirates who pillaged the Spanish colonies in the West Indies; a member of an American band of adventurers who incited revolution in various Latin American states; a person who engages in such an act; act as a filibuster; *flue* [MDu. *vluwe*], a kind of fishing net; *flyboat* [Du. *vlieboot*, after the *Vlie*, a channel between the North Sea and the Waddenzee + *boot*, boat], a fast sailing vessel; a small boat; a fishing boat used in Shetland; a swift boat used on canals; *freebooter* [Du. *vrijbuit* < *vrijbuiten*, to plunder < *frij*, free + *buit*, plunder], a person who goes in search of plunder; a pirate; *garboard* [Du. *gaarbord* < *garen*, to gather + *boord*, board], the first range of wooden planks or metal plates on the outer hull of a vessel next to the keel; *hooker* [Du. *hoecker* < MDu. *hoeck-boot*, lit., hook boat], a two-masted Dutch coasting or fishing vessel, later on a one-masted fishing smack from Ireland or SW England; now usu. An old or fondly regarded boat; *hoy* [MDu. *hoei*], a small sailing vessel for carrying passengers and goods; *pea-jacket* [altered by folk etymology (after *pea*) < Du. *pijjekker* < *pij*, coarse, thick cloth + *jekker*, jacket], a short double-breasted overcoat of coarse woollen cloth, worn esp. by sailors; *reef* [Du. *rif*], a narrow ridge or chain of rock, coral lying at or near the surface of the sea or other water; *skipper* [MDu. *schipper* < *schip*, a ship], the captain or master of a ship, esp. of a small trading or fishing vessel; *smack* [Du. *smak*], a single-masted fore-and-aft rigged sailing vessel, usu. employed for coasting or fishing; *splice* [MDu. *splisse*,, akin to *splitten*, to split], nautical, join ropes by untwisting and interweaving the strands of the ends so as to form one continuous length; *taffarel* [Du. *tafereel*, a panel, picture, diminutive of *tafel*, table], a panel; the upper part of the flat portion of a ship's stern above the transom, usually decorated with carvings; *train-oil* [earlier *trane* < MDu. *traen*, a tear; basic sense "exuded oil"], oil obtained by boiling the blubber of whales; formerly also, oil obtained from the blubber of seals or from various fishes; *yacht* [Du. *jacht*, earlier *jaghte*, short for *jaghtschip*, pursuit ship (i.e.

against pirates) < *jaght*, a hunt < *jagen*, to chase + *schip*, a ship], a light fast sailing ship, esp. for conveying royal or other important people; a small light sailing vessel, esp. one equipped for racing; *yawl* [< MLowG. *jolle* or Du. *jol*], a two-masted fore-and-aft rigged sailing boat with a short mizzen stepped far abaft of the rudder post; a small undecked two-masted fishing boat; *walrus* [Du. *walrus*, walrus, lit. a whale horse], a large pinniped mammal allied to the eared seals, which is distinguished by two large downward-pointing tusks, and is found in the Arctic Ocean.

- **commercial:** *brandy* [earlier brandywine < Du. *brandewijn*, lit., burnt wine: so called from being distilled], a strong spirit distilled from wine, or fermented fruit juice; *cambric* [< Kambric, Flemish name of Cambrai, city in N France, where originally made], a fine white linen; a similar cotton fabric; *colza* [Du. *koolzaad* < *kool*, cabbage + *zaad*, a seed], rape; rapeseed; *cope* [Du. *koop*], buy; exchange; make an exchange or bargain; *duit* [Du. *duit*, a small weight of silver], a small Dutch coin formerly in use, the eighth part of a stiver; any very small coin or sum; a bit, a jot; *excise* [altered < earlier *accise* < MDu. *accijs*, earlier *assijs*], a tax, a tool; payment or imposition of excise duty; the government office responsible for the collection of excise duty; *firkin* [with diminutive suffix *-kin*, < ODu. *vierde*, fourth], a small cask for liquids, fish, butter, etc., originally containing a quarter of a barrel; a unit of capacity equal to half a kilderkin; *gulden* [MDu., short for *gulden florijn*, golden florin], any gold coin, esp. in Germany or the Netherlands; *hawker* [altered by folk etymology (after *hawk*) < MLowG. *hoker*, huckerster < MLowG. *hoken*, to peddle, orig., to crouch (as with a burden)], a person who travels about selling goods; *hop* [MDu. *hoppe*, akin to G. *hopfen*], the ripened conelike spikes of the female hop plant, used to give a bitter flavour to malt liquors, and as a tonic and soporific; a narcotic drug; *isinglass* [probably altered < MDu. *huizenblas*, lit., sturgeon bladder < *huizen*, sturgeon + *blas*, bladder], a firm semi-transparent substance, a comparatively pure form of gelatin, obtained from the swim bladders of some freshwater fishes, and used in cookery for making jellies; *mart* [MDu. variant of *markt*, market], a periodical gathering of people for the purpose of buying and selling; trade; an auction room; a city, region where goods are bought and sold; *muff* [Du. *mof* < Walloon *moufe*, a mitten], a covering into which both hands may be inserted from opposite ends to keep them warm; *pickle* [MDu. *pekel* < *pikken*, to prick, in sense "that which pricks, or is piquant"], originally, a spicy sauce served with meat, later, a salty or acid liquor, in which food, esp. vegetables or fruit, is preserved; a particular type of food preserved in a pickle and eaten as a relish; *rix-dollar* [Du. *rijksdaler*, lit., dollar of the realm < *rijck*, realm + *daler*, dollar], a coin and monetary unit of various countries such as the Netherlands, Germany, Austria, used in their commerce with the East; *scone* [perhaps < MDu. *schoonbrot*, fine bread <

schoon, beautiful + *brot*, bread], originally, a large round cake made of wheat or barley meal baked on a griddle; now, a small sweet cake made of flour, milk, and a little fat, baked on a griddle or in an oven; *sledge* [MDu. *sleedse*, akin to *sledde*, but of Frisian origin], a low vehicle mounted on runners for transporting heavy loads, esp. one for conveying passengers or loads over snow or ice; also, a toboggan; *stum* [Du. *stom*, must, new wine < *stom*, dumb], unfermented or partly fermented grape juice, must; flat wine renewed by the addition of stum; *smuggle* [< LowG. *smuggeln*, to creep], convey goods clandestinely into or out of a country; obtain, convey, remove secretly; *waffle* [Du. *wafel*], a small crisp butter cake, baked in a waffle iron, and eaten hot with syrup, butter, etc.

- **military**: *blunderbuss* [Du. *donderbus*, from *donder*, thunder and *bus*, gun, box, tube], a short gun with a large bore, firing many balls or slugs at once; a talkative or blundering person; *beleaguer* [Du. *belegeren*, to besiege < *be-*, by + *legeren*, to camp < *leger*, a camp], besiege; *bulwark* [MDu. *bolwerk*], a substantial defensive work; a rampart, a fortification; a person or principle that acts as a defence or shelter; the part of a ship's side above the level of the deck; *forlorn hope* [altered < Du. *verloren hoop*, lit., lost group < *verloren*, pp. of *verliezen*, to lose + *hoop*, a band, group], a picked troop sent to the front to begin an attack; a storming party; in pl., people composing such a troop; a dangerous or desperate enterprise; the losers at a gaming table collectively; *furlough* [earlier *furloff* < Du. *verlof*], a permit for leave of absence, esp. as granted to a soldier, missionary; a passport, a permit; grant a furlough; *hackbut* [Du. *hakebus* < *hake*, *haak*, hook + *bus*, a gun, gun barrel, lit., box: so named from method of support during firing], an early type of portable firearm; *knapsack* [Du. *knapsak* < *knappen*, to snap, eat + *zak*, a sack], a bag of canvas or other weatherproof material with shoulder straps, carried on the back esp. by soldiers and hikers; *linstock* [altered < Du. *lontstok* < *lont*, a match, lunt + *stok*, a stick], a staff with a head to hold a lighted match, and used to fire a cannon; *onslaught* [Du. *annslag* < *slagen*, to strike], an onset, an attack; esp. a vigorous or destructive assault or attack; *roster* [Du. rooster, originally , gridiron (< roosten, to roast), hence a grating, list (from the ruled paper used in making lists)], a list or plan showing the rotation of duties and leave for individuals or groups in any organization, orig. a military force; a group of people considered as being on a list or roster; place on a roster; *snaffle* [short for *snaffle piece*, probably < Du. *snavel*, horse's muzzle], a simple bridle bit without a curb and usu. with a single rein; *sutler* [ModDu. *soeteler* < *soetelen*, to do dirty work], a person who followed an army and sold provisions to the soldiers; *tattoo* [earlier *taptoo* < Du. *taptoe* < *tap toe*, shut the tap: a signal for closing barrooms], an evening drum or burgle signal recalling soldiers to their quarters; a drum beat intended to raise an alarm,

attract attention; a military entertainment consisting of an elaboration of the evening tattoo by extra music, marching, and the performance of exercises by troops; a rhythmic tapping or drumming; a continuous beating; *uproar* [Du. *uproer*, a stirring up], a state of tumult or commotion; a violent disturbance; a sustained protest, an expression of outrage; noisy confusion, noise of shouting or tumult; throw into confusion; make an uproar; *wagon* [Du. *wagen*], a sturdy four-wheeled vehicle for transporting heavy or bulky loads, often with a removable cover; a carriage of any kind for the conveyance of passengers and luggage; a covered horse-drawn vehicle operating a regular service for the conveyance of passengers and luggage; a truck used to convey minerals; a light wheeled vehicle; a caravan used by Gypsies; a child's pram; a police patrol wagon; a station wagon, an estate car.

- **miscellaneous:** *booze* [Du. *buizen*], drink for company and enjoyment; to drink habitually or excessively; *brake* [< MLowG. *brake* or Du. *braeke*, flax brake < *breken*, to break], a toothed instrument for braking flax or hemp; a baker's kneading machine; an instrument for peeling the bark from willows for basket making; *boss* [Du. *baas*, a master, originally "uncle"], the master; a person in authority, an overseer; a business manager; a manager of a political organization; *bruin* [Du., brown, a name for the bear in Reynard the Fox], a personal name for a bear; *boor* [Du. *boer* < MDu. *gheboer*, fellow dweller < *ghe-*, with + *bouwen*, to build, cultivate], a husbandman, a peasant; esp. a Dutch, German, or other foreign peasant; a rustic; a clumsy or unrefined person; a rude, ill-mannered, inconsiderate person; *dope* [Du. *doop*, sauce, dip, baptism < *doopen*, to dip]; *dune* [ODu. *duin*], a mound or ridge of loose sand, or other sediment, formed by the wind, esp. on the sea coast; *domineer* [Du. *domineren*], rule arbitrarily or despotically; act imperiously; tyrannize; be overbearing; assume lordly airs; predominate, prevail; *drill* [Du. drill < *drillen*, to bore], make a hole in, make a hole or passage in something or sink by or as by drilling; turn round and round; shoot a person; train or be trained in military exercises and the use of arms; instruct or be instructed; inculcate knowledge into a person by strict methods; *frolic* [Du. *vrolijk* < MDu. *vro*, merry], joyous, merry, playful; free, liberal; make joyous or merry; an outburst of fun, a scene or occasion of gayety; *hanker* [Probably < Du. or LowG. source, as in Flemish *hankeren*, to desire, long for, Du. *hunkeren*], linger or loiter about in longing or expectation; have a longing or craving after; *hustle* [Du. *hutseln*, *husselen*, to shake up (coins, lots)], shake to and fro, shake about; push roughly; obtain or produce by forceful action; steal; sell or serve aggressively; crowd together, jostle each other; engage in prostitution; *kermis* [Du. *kermis*, originally *kerkmis* < *kerk*, a church + *mis*, mass: originally the feast day of the local patron saint, hence, a fair or carnival held on that day], in the Low Countries, parts of Germany, an annual fair or carnival; also, a similar fair

or bazaar, for charitable purposes; *kit* [MDu. *kitte*, container made of hopped staves], a cylindrical wooden tub, barrel, or pail, with or without a lid and having a handle or handles; a collection of articles forming part of the equipment of a soldier, the bag containing these; a number of things or persons viewed as a whole; a set, a lot, a collection; *loiter* [MDu. *loteren* (Du. *leuteren*, to dawdle)], waste time in idleness, linger indolently on the way when on an errand, journey; allow time to pass idly; waste carelessly or on trifles; *luck* [Probably < MDu. *luk* < *gelucke*; basic sense “what bends together”, hence, “what occurs, what is fitting, lucky occurrence”]; *malle-muck* [Du. *malle-mok* < *mal*, foolish + *mok*, a gull], a fulmar, petrel, or similar bird; *mangle* [Du. *Mangel*, abbreviation of *mangelstok*, from *mangelen*, to mangle and *stok*, staff, roller], a machine for squeezing water from and pressing linen, clothing after washing; *maasbanker* [altered < Du. *maarsbanker*], the scad; *pad* [Du. *pad*, path], a path, a track; the road, the way; a track made by animals, esp. cattle; a horse with a naturally easy pace, a horse for use on the road; *plaque* [MDu. *plak*, a disk, tablet, spot, patch], an ornamental plate or tablet of metal, porcelain hung up as a wall decoration; a flat raised patch, growth, or deposit; *skate* [Du. *schaats*, a skate], either of a pair of steel blades curved upward at the toe and fixed or attached to boots, for gliding over ice; a boot with such a blade permanently attached; also, a roller skate; *rant* [Du. *ranten*, to rave], behave in a boisterous or riotous manner; also, sing loudly; use bombastic language; *ravel* [MDu. *ravelen*, tangle, fray out, unweave], entangle, confuse, perplex; unwind, unweave; make plain or clear; become confused; examine or inquire into something; *scoop* [MDu. *schope*, bailing vessel, *schoppe*, a shovel], a utensil for pouring or conveying liquids; a basket; a shovel; an instrument with a bowl-shaped blade, used for cutting out a piece or core from an object or a soft substance; a scooped shot or stroke in hockey, cricket; a place scooped or hollowed out; a natural concavity; an item of news acquired and published by a newspaper in advance of its rivals; *snap* [< MDu. or MLowG. *snappen*, seize], esp. of an animal: make a quick or sudden audible bite at something; feed on something in this way; close with a snap; catch or seize quickly, suddenly; snatch; bite off sharply and quickly; cause to make or emit a sharp sound; wink or blink quickly in anger; take a snapshot; break suddenly; quickly change one’s behaviour or position; *split* [MDu. *splitten*], of a storm, rock: break up a ship; suffer shipwreck; go to pieces; cause to break into parts; divide or share between two or more people; divide or separate into parts, parties, factions; run, walk at a great speed; *slim* [originally, useless, bad, weak < Du., crafty, bad, akin to Germ. *schlimm*, bad], slender, thin, small, slight, insubstantial; sly, cunning, crafty, wily; in poor health, delicate, not robust; *snip* [Du. *snippen*], take quickly or suddenly; cut using scissors, etc., esp. with small quick strokes; snub, check, repress; *spatter*

[Frisian *spateren*, to splash, spurt], spit drops of saliva or particles of food from the mouth; splutter while speaking; fly or spurt in drops or particles; walk through or tread in a splashy substance; splash or stain with spots of liquid; *spelter* [< or akin to MDu. *speauter*, LowG. *spialter*], zinc; an alloy or solder of which zinc is the main constituent, and copper usu. the second; *spancel* [LowG. *spansel* < *spannen*, to stretch, tie], an animal fetter, esp. one used to hobble a cow during milking; to fetter or hobble with a spancel or spancels; *snuff* [< MDu. *snuffen*], a preparation of powdered tobacco taken by inhalation through the nostrils; a medicinal powder taken by sniffing; a pinch of snuff; an inhalation of snuff; snuff-coloured; *sprue* [Du. *Spruw*, sprinkle], thrush, candidiasis of the mouth; a condition caused by deficient absorption of food by a diseased small intestine; *schipperke* [Flemish, little skipper, diminutive of *schipper*: from earlier use of breed as watch-dogs on boats], a breed of small black dog distinguished by pointed erect ears, a large ruff of longer fur on the neck and chest, and usu. a docked tail; *wentletrap* [Du. *wenteltrap*, lit., a winding staircase, spiral shell], a shell of any of various marine gastropod molluscs, which have spiral conical shells and ridged whorls; *wainscot* [< MDu. *wagenschot*, wainscot], imported oak of high quality, chiefly used for fine panelling; logs, planks, or boarding of this oak; a piece or board of this oak; a thing or person resembling old wainscot in hardness or colour.

- **agriculture:** *decoy* [< Du. *de kooi*, the cage < *de*, def. art. (akin to “the”) + *kooi*, cage], a pond from which net-covered channels lead, into which ducks or other wildfowl can be enticed for capture; *morass* [Du. *moeras*, a marsh, fen], a bog, a marsh, a very wet or muddy area of ground

- **people:** *burgher* [Du. *burger*], an inhabitant of a borough or chartered town; a freeman or citizen of a foreign town; *burgomaster* [< MDu. *burgemeester* < *burg* + *meester*, master], the Mayor of a Dutch or Flemish town; *manikin* [Du. *manneken* < *man*, man + dim. suffix *-ken*], a little man, a dwarf, a pygmy; *markgrave* [Du. *markgrave*], a military governor of a German border province; later, a hereditary prince in any of certain states of the Holy Roman Empire; *outlander* [< Du. *uitlander*, foreigner], a foreigner, an alien, a stranger; *palsgrave* [Du. *paltsgrave* < *palts*, palace + *graaf*, count], a Count Palatine; spec. the Count Palatine of the Rhine *youunker* [Du. *jonker* < *jonk*, yong + *heer*, lord, gentleman], a young nobleman or gentleman, a youth of high rank; *wisecre* [altered by folk etymology < MDu. *wijssegger*, altered (after *wijs*, wise + *zeggen*, to say) < OHG. *wizzago*, a prophet], a pretender to wisdom; a foolish person with an air or affectation of wisdom; a wise or learned person, a sage.

- **art** *easel* [Du. *ezel*, ass], a frame used to support a picture, a blackboard; *stipple* [Du. *stippelen* < *stipple*, a speckle, diminutive of *stip*, a

point, akin to *stippen*, to prick], paint, draw, engrave with dots, small pots, or flecks instead of lines; paint in or apply dots, spots.

- **South African:** *kloof* [Afrikaans < Du. *klooven*, to cleave], a deep valley, a ravine; a gorge; *banket* [Afrikaans < Du. *banketje*, almond rock], compact gold-bearing conglomerate; *commandeer* [Afrikaans *kommandeer* < Du. *kommandeeren*, to command], seize (men or goods) for military service; *klipspringer* [Afrikaans < Du. *klip*, rock + *springer*, jumper], a small antelope, inhabiting rocky terrain in sub-Saharan Africa; *krantz* [Afrikaans < Du. *krans*, a wreath], a wall of rock encircling a mountain or summit; a precipitous or overhanging cliff above a river, valley; *laager* [Afrikaans, *lager* < Du. *leger*, a camp], a camp, an encampment; *outspan* [Du. *Uitspannen*, from *uit*, out and *spannen*, to span]; to unharness oxen from a wagon; break a wagon journey in this way; a place for grazing or encampment when travelling by wagon; *steenbok* [Du. *steen*, stone + *bok*, buck], a small red-brown antelope of eastern and southern Africa; *steenbras* [Afrikaans < Dutch *steen*, stone and *brasem*, bream], any of several South African marine fishes of the family Sparidae, an edible game fish found in shallow waters; *springbok* [< Du. *springen*, to spring + *bok*, a buck], a common and gregarious southern African gazelle, characterized by the habit of leaping when excited or disturbed; South African; spec a member of a South African national sporting team; South African soldier; *spoor* [[Du. *spoor*, a track], the track, trail, or scent of a person or animal; the footprints of a wild animal hunted as game; trace a n animal by spoor, follow a spoor or trail; *ratel* [< Du. *raat*, a honeycomb + *das*, a badger], a badger of Africa and southern Asia, black in colour with a light grey back and head, having powerful claws on the front feet, and feeding on honey, insects, and small animals and birds.

English is an insatiable borrower while other languages take measures to preserve native elements and exclude foreign words from their lexicon. Many languages from all over the world have contributed to present-day English vocabulary. However, English remains English in all its essential aspects; the 'Englishness' of English has never been affected by these borrowings.

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SHOULD LEGAL LANGUAGE BE REFORMED?

MIHAI M. ZDRENGHEA¹

ABSTRACT. *Should legal language be reformed?* If we want to make legal language a clearer and more efficient means of communication, we have to identify all the elements that are most likely in the path of clear comprehension. Some aspects of legal language present great difficulties for lay persons. Comprehension can be made difficult by linguistic elements and not elements that are specifically legal. As it was so often proved, to identify the problem is relatively easy but to find a solution is another matter. In what follows we will try to identify some of the more common elements of legal English that, according to our study, have been found to distort comprehension.

Key words: *legal discourse, specialist community, utterance, discursive pattern*

REZUMAT. *Este necesară o reformă a limbajului legal?* Dacă dorim ca limbajul legal să devină o metodă cât mai clară și eficientă de comunicare, atunci trebuie să identificăm acele caracteristici care, cel mai probabil, sunt de natură să împiedice înțelegerea. Unele aspecte lansează provocari mai mari decât altele; mai mult decât atât, înțelegerea poate fi împiedicată de aspecte lingvistice care nu țin neapărat de domeniul legal. În abordarea de față, ne propunem să evidențiem câteva dintre cele mai comune aspecte ale limbii engleze din domeniul legal care credem noi că împiedică înțelegerea.

Cuvinte cheie: *limbaj legal, comunitate de limbaj, enunț, model discursiv*

1.0. Some of the most important questions in the law deal with meaning, especially the interpretation (or “construction”) of documents like the Constitution, statutes, contracts, deeds and wills. In many ways, interpreting a legal document is not that different from understanding any other writing. Yet there are some interesting, and very important differences.

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David Mellinkoff (1963) shows that the claimed precision of legal language is largely a “myth”. He has been joined more recently by critical scholars who emphasize the indeterminacy of language. There is no doubt that lawyers tend to exaggerate the precision of legal language. The huge number of lawsuits each year over the meaning of some word or phrase in statutes and other legal documents, virtually all written by lawyers, is reason enough to question the legendary precision of legal language.

What makes precision so difficult to obtain is not merely the indeterminacy of language, however. For the most part, legal language can be made precise enough for ordinary purposes. While one can be amazed by the large number of disputes regarding the meaning of legal language, it is equally possible to wonder at the vastly larger number of legal documents that function more or less as they should. An equally important impediment to precision in legal language is the fact that there may be competing considerations at stake. Often the legal drafter is forced to choose between the flexible and the precise, knowing that each direction has its own attractions and dangers. In other cases, he/she may deliberately opt to be imprecise for strategic reasons.

Some aspects of legal language present great difficulties for lay persons. Comprehension can be made difficult by linguistic elements and not elements that are specifically legal. As it was so often proved, to identify the problem is relatively easy but to find a solution is another matter. Technical words and jargon arise precisely because they facilitate communication within a profession. But in the case of legal affairs the problem, is communication with the public. Language that may be useful to a lawyer becomes a mystery to the lay person. Linguists, for instance, use a specific vocabulary (like *phrase marker* or *conversational implicature*) but they do not have to explain it to the public, and everybody seems to live quite happily without that knowledge. In contrast, people who have legal problems have the right to understand the meaning of the contracts that they sign because they will be, subsequently, held legally responsible. To make sure that people understand a legal document, it should be as free as possible of technical terms and jargon. However, if technical terms are required in order to avoid ambiguity, they should be explained in ordinary language. It comes as no surprise that archaic, formal and unusual vocabulary and syntactic constructions may also be problematic for lay persons, even if they sometimes serve the function of making the text more exact².

Some of the best evidence that people have trouble with legal terminology has been noted from the fact that jurors, after they have received their instructions, all too often turn to dictionaries for enlightenment. Jurors

² The idiosyncratic legal uses of *(afore)said*, *same* and *such*, to mention a few anachronisms, are no longer part of ordinary language and thus reduce understanding. The same holds for forms composed of *here-*, *there-* and *where-*, such as *hereof*, *therewith* and *wherein*. (Tiersma, 1999:204)

do this even though the rules prohibit them from consulting any outside source (which includes dictionaries). If we want to make legal language a clearer and more efficient means of communication, we have to identify all the elements that are most likely in the path of clear comprehension. In what follows we will try to identify some of the more common elements of legal English that, according to our study, have been found to distort comprehension.

It is widely accepted that one of the things that make legal language hardest to understand is its unusual vocabulary. We cannot deny the fact that some technical terms are relatively well known (*defendant, judge, jury*), but others are at best vaguely known by many people (*beyond a reasonable doubt, negligence* or *wrongful imprisonment*). Many terms seem familiar but they have an unexpected meaning for the lay person (as in *aggravation* or *file complaint*). Still other vocabulary items are completely unknown to those who do not have an education in law; they include words like *estoppel, lis pendens, per stirpes, testator* and *tort – feasor* (Tiersma, 1999:204).

Many people have limited exposure in their daily lives to highly literate vocabulary. But formal or highly literate vocabulary also causes comprehension difficulties. Not everyone knows what *initiate* or *terminate* means, but virtually any speaker of English understands *begin* and *end*. Lawyers, of course, hear such terms much more often and are better educated than the average person, so they may not realize the extent of the problem. Research suggests that the profession's frequent reliance on impersonal constructions, often using nouns in place of pronouns like *I* and *you*, is another factor that makes legal documents hard to understand.³

2.0. Legislative statements have a conventionalised communicative purpose mutually shared by the practising members of the specialist community. This shared communicative purpose is largely reflected in the way legislative statements are conventionally written and read by the members of the community, particularly in the way some of the syntactic and discursial resources are used in this genre. The typical use of complex-prepositions, binomial and multinomial expressions, nominalisations, the initial case descriptions, a large number and variety of qualificational insertions make syntactic discontinuities somewhat unavoidable in the legislative statements and, to a large extent, account for the discourse patterning that is typically displayed in such provisions.

³ Consider a contract of sale in which a consumer buys an automobile; the contract might provide that *vendor shall have the right to modify this clause with thirty day's notice to vendee*. As the buyer, can I modify the clause? Am I the **vendor** or the **vendee**? It is clearer, of course, if the more ordinary terms *buyer* and *seller* are used. But clearest of all is to personalize it by stating that *we have the right to modify this clause after giving you thirty day's notice*. (Tiersma, 1999:205)

In spite of the fact that legal language may produce confusion with lay persons, many of the attempts to reform legislative writing in the Western world have largely been ineffective because of their failure to recognise the legislative provision that reflects a sphere of practical reasoning which needs to be understood in its own terms. Legislative writing has a long and well-established tradition and the style of legal documents has become firmly standardised with the inevitable result that the legal draftsmen tend to become comfortable with tried and tested linguistic expressions and style of writing over a period of time. It is also true that there have been some improvements in style that have taken place in the past few decades, especially in the way textual – mapping devices are used to reduce information load at a particular point in the provision (see Bhatia, 1987), but such reforms have been few and far between and, hence have gone unnoticed by ordinary readers.

On the part of the specialist community, therefore there is a need to show two kinds of concern. First, a need to show greater awareness of their loyalty to the real readers of legislative documents. Second, a need to use linguistic resources more consistently, particularly in the case of those where certain linguistic forms are traditionally associated with some very specific meanings (see Swales and Bhatia, 1983). This is particularly desirable in the use of what specialists call “proviso-clauses”. This practice will create fewer problems of interpretation for many of the readers, the specialists as well as non-specialists.⁴

Many of these aspects of legal style serve little or no function besides making that an utterance or writing is in some sense legal, or at least associated with the profession. That should be harmless enough. If lawyers want to pronounce *defendant* in their own idiosyncratic way, or spell *judgment* without an *e*, no one will be the worse off. But other stylistic features produce more harm. For one thing, emphasis on group cohesion necessarily excludes those who do not belong and who have not learned to “talk like lawyers”.⁵

The legal code is not designed to cover a single instance of human behavior, but rather a range of related behaviors in a delimited range of situations. The main problem is saying neither too much, and thus having an oppressive legal code, nor too little, and so licensing instances of behavior that are unacceptable. This is of course very much a language problem. Goldman (1986: 51) makes the very important point that many legal concepts, such as

⁴ There is also a greater need to make more effort to use long syntactic discontinuities more sparingly, perhaps as an exception rather than a rule.

⁵ Furthermore, long and complex sentences with unusual word order and other odd features make legal language convoluted, cumbersome, and hard to comprehend. Unless they have a legitimate function that cannot be otherwise conveyed, these stylistic features of legal language have little to commend them.

accident and liability, are based upon concepts which appear universal across human languages, for instance happenings which have an agent and those which do not. The basic concepts of the rights and obligations of a member of a community are deeply embedded in the fabric of language itself, and existed before there were codified laws (Gibbons, 1994: 3).

Legal proceedings are usually concerned with testing the applicability of the generalizations found in the legal code to individual instances of behavior or to particular cases. This is managed with very small exceptions through language, so for example trials are linguistic events. Language is then central to the law, and law as we know it is inconceivable without language. Many lawyers pride themselves upon their mastery of language, and regard such mastery as a critical skill for legal professionals. There are well-established formalized social processes for legal disputation through which judgments are obtained. These do not appear to be different in type from other decision-making processes of a political or administrative type. Furthermore, while there is a discourse or genre for disputation, Goldman (1986: 55) makes it clear that there is not a specific legal register or jargon.

3.0. One characteristic of the law in pre-literate cultures is the relative lack (although not a total absence) of *codification* of the law. This means that few concepts have undergone the process of reification (usually nominalization) into specific legal terminology which is typical of literate societies. Goldman (1986: 56) also shows how even trained anthropologists can be sufficiently ethno-centric as to mistake the absence of codification for the absence of the concept.

Danet and Bogoch (1994: 101) directly address the relationship between literacy and the language of the law. They examine the development of the language of wills in a society where literacy was becoming more established. The linguistic consequences of these developments are several, for example in a spoken will assumptions can be made about shared knowledge – those present will know when the will was made, and what property the testator has. In a written will such assumptions are less valid, so such details as dates, and specific details of property must be included. Those present at an oral will would also naturally be addressed directly, using for example the second person pronoun, while this is less appropriate in the more objective written will. Danet and Bogoch show (1994: 112) that neither the presence nor the ordering of the stages of wills had fully stabilized in Anglo-Saxon England as each seems to be generated afresh with little of the uniform routinised language of the modern written will – in other words, the codification process was not complete. This lack of a codified genre to perform the function of bequeathing is also reflected in meta-comments upon the text itself.

The advantage of codifying law, precedent and other legal documents in a stable written form are obvious. It means that the legal system is less dependent upon the memories or judgments of the individuals. Halliday (1985a&b) suggests that some of the linguistic consequences of written codification are increased nominalization, grammatical metaphor and lexical density. Increased nominalization entails nouns replacing verbs, which is related in turn to grammatical metaphor, since processes (e.g. 'to pay') which are most naturally expressed as verbs often become nouns (e.g. 'the payment'). Halliday (1985a) also suggests that increased complexity at the phrase level is usually accompanied by reduced syntactic complexity in the sentence or clause complex. Unfortunately, unlike scientific English, the language of the law appears to have the worst of both worlds, combining complex phrases with complex sentence syntax. Both Maley (1987) and Bhatia (1994) provide examples from legal documents and explanations of this phenomenon, and elsewhere Gibbons (1990) has detailed the complexity of police cautions.

4.0. The preceding outline of three central areas of legal discourse has attempted to show how the discourses of law are integral to a particular kind of legal system and legal culture. Any reformation of legal discourse must take into account the contingency between language change and legal, i.e. institutional change. That is not to say that such change is neither possible nor desirable; only that reform can only be achieved by the cooperation of relevant government and legal authorities and with recognition of the adaptation and compromises involved. In a review article, Danet (1990) has outlined developments in the plain language movement in the USA, England, Australia and some European countries. Her review of the literature indicates that the plain language movement has made substantial progress in the simplification and reorganisation of many business and government documents.

The task of simplifying legislation remains more intractable and virtually untouched, despite government initiatives (Eagleson, 1991). It is not simply a matter of conservatism; amending existing legislation in any volume of the Statute book is a daunting and expensive task. But the more difficult problems arise from the institutional situation outlined above. Given the detailed, explicit nature of much legislation, a change in words can result in a change of meaning and consequent uncertainty. More general rules would be simpler and more comprehensible but there are attendant problems of vagueness and applicability. Yet there are signs that governments and their draftsmen

are prepared to do what they can (Bhatia, 1987 b; Eagleson, 1991) and may in the future do even more.

Reform of the discursal procedures of the courtroom also raises questions of structural reform, since discursal patterns and traditions of advocacy are derived from the adversarial system and the rules of evidence. Realistically, governments are unlikely to contemplate dismantling the adversary system, which in any case is for many people a valuable and cherished institution, encapsulating traditional values like “the golden thread” of British justice (see Carroll, 1993). But here again concessions are being made, when a glaring need for them arises, as it has in the question of the evidence of children (see Brennan, 1998). There is a real possibility that some relaxation of evidentiary requirements may create a more flexible and productive atmosphere for these particularly vulnerable witnesses (see Carroll, 1994; Eades, 1993).

No one would deny that the language of the law should, wherever possible, attempt to shorten the gap between it and everyday language that is the source of much incomprehension, frustration and frequent disadvantage. That task will be made easier if observers and critics of the legal process are able to distinguish between the criterial forms of legal language, that is to say, those that are integrated deeply into institutional structures, practices and ideologies and which may or may not be open to reform; and those that are unhelpful, peripheral and therefore dispensable.⁶

All in all, the movement advocating plain English has made substantial progress in improving the language of consumer contracts. Yet there are many areas in which lack of comprehensibility still creates problems for the public. Lawyers, of course, tend to defend their technical vocabulary as essential to communication within the profession, even if it may be difficult for the lay public to understand. Reality, as usual, is more complex. Some features of legal language are definitely archaic. One of the main justifications for continued use of antiquated vocabulary is that it is more precise than the modern equivalent. However, this is virtually never

⁶ The legal lexicon differs in many ways from ordinary speech and writing. Each of these differences must promote the main goal of any language: clear and effective communication. Not surprisingly, archaic language is generally unnecessary and fails this test. Jargon and technical terminology are more problematic because they actually facilitate in-group communication while greatly reducing comprehension by the public. More moderate voices might reject the conspiracy theory, but nonetheless suggest the legal vocabulary is full of hoary words and phrases, many survivors from Anglo – Saxon, Latin and Law French days, that should long ago have been relegated to the history books.

true.⁷ There is no doubt that legal language has improved considerably over the past decades, at least in certain areas. Nonetheless, the Plain English Movement still has plenty of work to do.

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⁷ A vital document is a medical consent form, where a patient acknowledges the risk of some medical treatment and authorizes a doctor to proceed. They are often drafted by lawyers. Research indicates that patients do not understand these forms very well and that use of plain language principles improves readability. The same issue arises when someone signs a form consenting to allow the police to search a building or vehicle. Also drafted by lawyers, these forms likewise tend to be in legalese rather than plain English. Releases of liability raise similar concerns. Ordinarily, organizers of risky ventures like scuba diving, automobile racing, or skiing require participants to sign such releases before they are allowed to engage in the activity. Somewhat unexpectedly, here judges are less likely to presume that if you signed it, you must have read and understood it. (Tiersma, 1999:228)

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ON PHRASES AND CLAUSES

ALINA PEDA*

ABSTRACT. *On Phrases and Clauses.* The aim of this study is to point out the reasons why the distinction between phrases and clauses is sometimes difficult to make, by tracing the roots of the problem back to the terminological confusion brought about by the challenging similarities exhibited by these two linguistic items whenever non-finite verb forms feature in their configuration. A solution to the terminological problem is put forward in the form of a more systematic clear-cut classification of the various phrases and clauses in English Syntax.

Key words: *gerund, infinitive, participle, phrase, clause.*

REZUMAT. *Despre sintagme și propoziții.* Acest studiu prezintă o sinteză a trăsăturilor fundamentale ce caracterizează pe de o parte sintagmele, iar pe de altă parte propozițiile din sintaxa limbii engleze, oferind, totodată, o nouă clasificare a celor două tipuri de structuri, cu scopul de a permite o schemă clară de analiză, esențială pentru evitarea confuziilor care se produc adesea datorită prezenței structurilor verbale nepredicative.

Cuvinte cheie: *gerunziu, infinitiv, participiu, sintagmă, propoziție.*

1. Definition. The English term “phrase” dates back to the 1520s, being the result of a back formation process that yielded this noun from the plural of *phrasis*, namely “phrases”. The Latin *phrasis* (plural *phrasēs*) meant “diction” or “style”, coming from the Greek *phrasis*, which had the additional meaning of “speech”, from *phrāzein* = to speak, to declare, to tell, to point out¹. The English term “clause” dates as far back as the 1220s, being the result of a

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¹ “phrase.” *Dictionary.com* Unabridged. Random House, Inc. Last updated on 3.06.2011. Available at: <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/phrase>

back formation process that led to the creation of this noun from the Latin *clausula* (the feminine form of *clausus*, the past participle of *claudere*, meaning “to close”). In Medieval Latin *clausa* meant “the closing of a rhetorical period” and the word “clause” entered Middle English through Old French sometime between 1175 and 1225.²

Here are the most relevant definitions that have been given to the English word “phrase”:

- a brief, apt, and cogent expression³
- a sequence of words intended to have meaning⁴
- a word or group of words forming a unit and conveying meaning: expression, locution⁵
- any small group of words within a sentence or a clause⁶
- a word or group of words read or spoken as a unit and separated by pauses or other junctures⁷
- a group of grammatically connected words within a sentence⁸
- a sequence of two or more words arranged in a grammatical construction and acting as a unit in a sentence⁹
- a word or group of words forming a syntactic constituent with a single grammatical function¹⁰
- two or more words in sequence that form a syntactic unit that is less than a complete sentence¹¹
- a sequence of grammatically related words lacking subject and predicate¹²
- a sequence of two or more words that does not contain a finite verb and its subject or that does not consist of clause elements such as subject, verb, object, or complement [...]¹³

² For more information on phrases see Alina Preda, *Phrasal Syntax*, Argonaut, Cluj-Napoca, 2011, p. 7-67. For further details regarding clauses see Alina Preda, “Finite Subordinate Clauses Revisited”, in *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai.Philologia*, LVII, 3, 2012, p. 207- 216.

³ Ibid.

⁴ <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/phrase>

⁵ *Roget's II: The New Thesaurus*, Third Edition, published by the Houghton Mifflin Company. <http://www.answers.com/library>

⁶ <http://grammar.about.com/od/pq/g/phrase.htm>

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ *The New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy*, edited by James S. Trefl, Joseph F. Kett, and Eric Donald Hirsch, published by Houghton Mifflin Company. Available at: <http://www.answers.com/topic/phrase>

⁹ <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/phrase>

¹⁰ “phrase.” *The Merriam Webster Dictionary* <http://www.merriam-webster.com>

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² <http://www.answers.com/topic/grammar-and-usage>

¹³ Ibid.

The following are some of the most pertinent definitions relegated to the English word “clause”:

- an expression including a subject and predicate but not constituting a complete sentence¹⁴
- a group of words containing a subject and a predicate and forming part of a compound or complex sentence¹⁵
- a group of words, consisting of a subject and a predicate including a finite verb, that does not necessarily constitute a sentence¹⁶
- a group of words that contains a subject and a predicate. A clause may be either a sentence (an independent clause) or a sentence-like construction within another sentence (a dependent clause)¹⁷
- a syntactic construction containing a subject and predicate and forming part of a sentence or constituting a whole simple sentence¹⁸

The above-mentioned definitions point to the fact that in English syntax the phrase ***does not contain a subject and its predicate***, being merely a sequence of words that function as one grammatical unit in the larger structure of a clause. On the other hand, the clause ***contains a subject and its predicate***, being a group of words that function either as an independent or as a dependent unit.

If these definitions were universally valid and widely accepted, no confusion would ensue and phrases should be easily distinguished from clauses. However, some linguistic realities seem to require that we abide by a less stringent definition of the term “clause”, namely accept that clauses may be **independent**, in which case they must be finite (containing both a subject and a tensed verb around which the other elements of the predicate cluster), or **subordinate**, which may be **finite**, **non-finite**, or **verbless**, depending on the kind of verb they contain.

A **verbless clause** is an elliptical clause structure. It is characterised by omission of the verb, yet it contains, if not all, at least some of the other clausal constituents: subject, objects, complements and modifiers. Verbless clauses usually act like adverbs, showing time, place, manner, reason, result, purpose, concession or condition:

- The court procedures over, we were allowed to leave.
- Although terribly upset, she managed to keep a reassuring smile on her face for us to see.

¹⁴ *Collins Thesaurus of the English Language – Complete and Unabridged* Second Edition, 2002 © HarperCollins Publishers 1995, 2002

¹⁵ *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language*, Fourth Edition copyright ©2000 by Houghton Mifflin Company. Updated in 2009. Published by Houghton Mifflin Company.

¹⁶ *Collins English Dictionary – Complete and Unabridged* © HarperCollins Publishers, 2003.

¹⁷ <http://grammar.about.com/od/c/g/clauseterm.htm>

¹⁸ <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/clause>

- The three kids took turns taking care of me – Don in the morning, Stu in the afternoon, and Pip at night.

A *non-finite clause* is a subordinate clause that contains *only a non-finite verb form* and **no finite verb forms** (marked for tense, aspect and/or voice).

- *The court procedures being over*, we were allowed to leave.
- *The court procedures finished*, we were allowed to leave.
- *Although feeling terribly upset*, she managed to keep a reassuring smile on her face for us to see.
- The three kids took turns taking care of me – *Don being there in the morning, Stu working in the afternoon, and Pip doing his shift at night.*

A **finite clause** contains both a subject and its predicate, consisting of a finite verb form (marked for tense, aspect and/or voice) around which the other components of the predicate cluster.

- ***Once the court procedures were over***, we were allowed to leave.
- ***Although Maya was feeling terribly upset***, she managed to keep a reassuring smile on her face for us to see.
- The three kids took turns taking care of me: ***Don was there in the morning, Stu worked in the afternoon, and Pip did his shift at night.***

All the highlighted examples in the first two of these three sets clearly have many more things in common with the finite subordinate clauses in the third set than with any kind of phrase. Consequently, there is no denying that they are clauses, even though they do not contain both a subject and a tensed verb. If we compare these three groups of sentences, the first containing verbless clauses, the second *non-finite subordinate clauses* and the third **finite subordinate clauses**, the differences marking the three types of clauses are revealed. Thus, a **finite clause** has a **finite verb** marked for tense, aspect and/or voice (***were, was feeling, was, worked, did***). A *non-finite clause* contains a *non-finite verb form* (*being, feeling, working, doing, finished*). A verbless clause contains no verb forms whatsoever, hence its name.

It was actually the existence of non-finite structures that led to a terminological confusion: thus, some linguists use the term “non-finite clause” for groups of words containing infinitives or participles (to be more specific “infinitive clause” and, respectively, “participle clause” or “participial clause”), whereas others employ the term “verbal phrase” for the same structures (more specifically “infinitive phrase” and, respectively, “participle phrase” or “participial phrase”), hence the challenging problem of differentiating between phrases and clauses when non-finite verb forms feature in their configuration.

2. Classification. Since a less approximate definition and a more systematic classification of phrases and clauses are, obviously, required, here is a possible taxonomy likely untangle the intricacy of terminological confusion so common in this area of morphological and syntactic analysis.

2.1. Phrases. Each phrase acts like a single part of speech, namely a noun, adjective, adverb or the verb of a clause, and any phrase must have a head, its central constituent, which determines the syntactic type of that particular phrase. Depending on the core element around which all the other phrasal constituents cluster, the central word that gives the phrase its syntactic properties, eight different types of phrases can be identified – **Noun Phrases, Prepositional Phrases, Adjective Phrases, Adverb Phrases, Verb Phrases, Gerund Phrases, Infinitive Phrases and Participial Phrases.**

2.1.1. The Noun Phrase consists of a noun, called the head-noun (or, less frequently, of a pronoun, an adjective or an adverb) plus any determiners, **premodifiers** and/or **postmodifiers**. Whereas **premodifiers** are words or phrases modifying a noun placed after the determiner and **before** the head-noun, **postmodifiers** are words, phrases, or clauses modifying a noun which immediately **follow** the head-noun.

Here are some examples of **premodifiers** expressed by the structures in question:

- **Infinitive Phrases:** an extremely cheap **wear-at-night-and-throw-away-in-the-morning** outfit
- **Gerund Phrases:** a **reading** lamp
- **Participial Phrases:** our **quickly sinking** ship, my **deeply hidden** feelings¹⁹

Here are some examples of **postmodifiers** expressed by the structures in question:

- **infinitive clauses:** the idea **to leave her here**
- **nominal clauses:** The idea **that we should leave her here** was not mine.
- **participial clauses:** the children **digging a ditch**; the women **injured in the accident**
- **relative clauses:** The children, **who were digging a ditch**, seemed undisturbed by the crash.; The women **who had been injured in the accident** were soon taken to hospital.; The idea **that he had come up with** was excellent.²⁰

2.1.2. The Prepositional Phrase is a phrase consisting of a preposition (the head of the Prepositional Phrase) and its complement. Apart from a noun,

¹⁹ For the distinction between gerunds and present participles see Alina Preda, *Phrasal Syntax*, Argonaut, Cluj-Napoca, 2011, p. 17.

²⁰ For the distinction between relative clauses introduced by the relative pronoun 'that' and nominal clauses introduced by the conjunction 'that' see Alina Preda, *Phrasal Syntax*, Argonaut, Cluj-Napoca, 2011, 23-27 and Alina Preda, *Clausal Syntax*, Casa Cărții de Știință, Cluj-Napoca, 2012, 12-15.

a pronoun, a numeral, a noun phrase and, more rarely, an adverb, an adjective or another prepositional phrase, the following structures under discussion can also feature as complement of preposition: a *Gerund Phrase*, an ***Infinitive Phrase*** or a nominal clause:

- He always smiles before *slipping off to sleep*.
- We could do nothing but ***wait for the others to finish***.
- This newly-formed organisation is for whoever believes in justice.

2.1.3. The Adjective Phrase is a group of words consisting of an adjective and its modifiers. The constituents of the Adjective Phrase cluster around its head, which must be an adjective – either an adjective proper, or an adjective originating from a participle. The participles that can be premodified by *intensifying adverbs*, such as *very, extremely, quite*, etc., as well as those that can take comparative and superlative forms, can be said to have fully acquired adjectival value: *very interesting, extremely charming, quite astonishing, terribly bored, quite worried, more interesting, the most surprising, less worried*, etc. The modifying constituents that precede the head are either *adverbs* or *Adverb Phrases* and form what is called *premodification*. The head may be followed either by the adverb **enough**, or by the adverb **indeed**; these adverbs are known as **postmodifiers**. The **postmodification** in an Adjective Phrase may also include *complementation* items, **prepositional phrases** or *clauses* (**infinitive clauses** or **comparative clauses**), which bring more specific details about the head of the phrase or, in the case of a comparative structure, about its premodifier (cases of discontinuous or split modification).

E.g. The water is *too cold to drink*. => *premodifier* + **adjective** + complementation by means of an **infinitive clause**. Compare with: The water is *too cold, so that we cannot drink it*. (finite adverbial clause)

2.1.4. The Adverb Phrase is a group of words consisting of an adverb and its modifiers. The constituents of the Adverb Phrase cluster around its head, which must be an adverb. The modifying constituents that precede the head are usually *adverbs of degree* (either *intensifying* or *focusing adverbs* – *only, just, relatively, quite, really*, etc.), which form what is called *premodification*. The head may be followed either by the adverb **enough**, or by the adverb **indeed**; these adverbs are known as **postmodifiers**. The **postmodification** in an Adverb Phrase may also include *complementation* items, **prepositional phrases** or *clauses* (**infinitive clauses** or **comparative clauses**), which bring more specific details about the head of the phrase or, in the case of a comparative structure, even about its premodifier.

E.g. It happened *too quickly to see much*. => *premodifier* + **adverb** + complementation by means of an **infinitive clause**. Compare with: It happened *too quickly, so that we were unable to see much*. (finite adverbial clause)

2.1.5. The Verb Phrase versus the Verbal Phrase. There is one compulsory constituent in the case of both the Verb Phrase and the Verbal Phrase, namely the Verb Group. The Simple Verb Group consists of only one verb, the lexical verb, whereas the **Complex Verb Group** contains one or more **auxiliary** verbs plus the **lexical verb**. The Verb Group may be classified as **finite** or **non-finite**. **Finite Verb Groups** contain a **tensed verb**, **non-finite Verb Groups** contain a **non-tensed verb**, also known as a **verbal**. A Verb Group together with its objects and complements forms a Verb Phrase. Consequently, **Verb Phrases** may also be either **finite** or **non-finite**. The former are called **Verb Phrases** proper, and the latter **Verbal Phrases**.

The Finite Verb Phrase must have a clearly stated subject (except for imperatives in which the subject *you* is understood). Since the Finite Verb Phrase consists of a Finite Verb Group plus all its objects, complements and modifiers, it always performs the syntactic function of **Predicate**.

E.g.: No one but a clever man **would have taken such liberties with his appearance**; and though these eccentricities **were revolting to Soames, he derived a certain satisfaction from them**.

(John Galsworthy – *The Forsyte Saga*. Vol. I *The Man of Property*, p. 37)

Non-finite Verb Phrases are called Verbal Phrases, because the central element in their Verb Group must be a non-finite verb form, also known as a verbal. Depending on the type of verbal they contain, Verbal Phrases may be classified as gerund, participial and infinitive.

2.1.6. The Gerund Phrase is a word group that functions as a noun and contains a **gerund** plus its logical subject, as well as its **objects, complements** and **adverbial modifiers**.

- Romanian politicians cannot help **helping themselves**.
(gerund + its direct object => Gerund Phrase, Direct Object)
- We were fined for **his driving without a permit**.
(subject + gerund + Adverbial Modifier of Manner => Gerund Phrase, Complement of Preposition)

2.1.7. The Infinitive Phrase is a word group that contains an infinitive and functions either as a noun or premodifies a noun.

- Tell her **to be there on time!** (Infinitive Phrase, Direct Object)
- There's no solution to the world's problems save **to impose restrictions on reproductive rights**. (Infinitive Phrase, Complement of Preposition)
- You must never hand in a **copy-from-one-document-and-paste-into-another** thesis. (Infinitive Phrase, premodifier of the head-noun)

2.1.8. The Participial Phrase is a word group that contains a participle and functions as an adjective, premodifying a noun.

- A **happily married** man would never speak like that.
- The **quietly sleeping** baby is being watched by two nurses.
(adverb, premodifier of the adjective + adjective originating from a participle => Participial Phrase, premodifier of the head-noun)

2.2. Clauses. Clauses may be independent, if they express a complete thought through the combination of Subject plus Predicate, or **dependent**, if they do not express a complete thought. Due to the fact that they are **subordinate** word groups, **dependent clauses** work like nouns/Noun Phrases, adjectives/Adjective Phrases or adverbs/Adverb Phrases within the clause or within the sentence they belong to. Consequently, they are classified as **nominal** if they act like nouns, **relative** if they behave like adjectives, and **adverbial** if they work like adverbs. A single independent clause appearing on its own forms a simple sentence, within which the subject, objects and/or complements and modifiers are expressed by *words* or *phrases* (nouns, Noun Phrases; adjectives, Adjective Phrases; adverbs, Adverb Phrases; Prepositional Phrases, etc.).

2.2.1. Finite Clauses. In the syntax of complex and compound-complex sentences, which contain not only independent, but also **subordinate clauses**, the syntactic functions mentioned above, namely subject, objects, complements and modifiers may be expressed by **clauses**. Here are some examples:

- *Her home address* is only known by her closest friend.
- **Where she lives exactly** is only known by her closest friend.

The underlined word group in italics has the same syntactic function as the underlined word group in bold: the Noun Phrase *Her home address* is the Subject of the sentence, and so is the clause **Where she lives exactly**. This clause, consequently, acts like a noun, being called a **nominal** clause.

- I intensely dislike *their recent behaviour*.
- I intensely dislike **what they have been doing**.

The underlined word group in italics has the same syntactic function as the underlined word group in bold: the Noun Phrase *their recent behaviour* is the Direct Object of the sentence, and so is the clause **what they have been doing**. This clause, consequently, acts like a noun, being called a **nominal** clause.

- Vladimir lives in a *high-tech* house.
- Vladimir lives in an *astonishingly high-tech* house.

- Vladimir lives in a house whose high-tech architecture, design, features and gadgets would astonish anyone.

The underlined words in italics have the same role as the underlined word group in bold: the adjective *high-tech*, as well as the Adjective Phrase *astonishingly high-tech*, modifies the noun “house”, and so does the clause **whose high-tech architecture, design, features and gadgets would astonish anyone**. This clause, consequently, behaves like an adjective, describing a noun, so it is a **relative** clause, postmodifier of the head-noun “house”.

- Todd will give you a ring *later*.
- Todd will give you a ring *in the evening*.
- Todd will give you a ring **when he lands in Rhodes**.

The underlined words in italics have the same role as the underlined word group in bold: the adverb *later*, as well as the Prepositional Phrase *in the evening*, modifies the verb group “will give you a ring”, being an Adverbial Modifier of Time, and so does the clause **when he lands in Rhodes**. This clause, consequently, works like an adverb, showing time, so it is an **adverbial** clause whose syntactic function is also Adverbial Modifier of Time.

2.2.2. Non-Finite Clauses may be either *infinitive* or *participle*. **Infinitive constructions** that complement an adjective or postmodify a noun and those which operate as adverbial clauses are classified as **non-finite infinitive clauses**.

- I am proud **to announce that my kids won the competition!** (infinitive clause, Adjective Complement)
- Hurry up! You know we’ve got a train **to catch**. (infinitive clause, postmodifier of the head-noun)
- This book has definitely given him something **to think about**. (infinitive clause, postmodifier of the head-noun)
- We bought another puppy, **to please the children**. (infinitive clause, Adverbial Modifier of Purpose)
- **To look at her**, you would never guess that she is nearly 40. (infinitive clause, Adverbial Modifier of Condition)

Participial constructions that complement an adjective, those that operate as relative clauses, postmodifying a noun, and those which behave like adverbial clauses are classified as **non-finite participle clauses**.

- The cat was busy **carefully feeding her kittens**. (participle clause, Adjective Complement)
- The man **hiding in the barn** is her uncle. (participle clause, postmodifier of the head-noun)

- She brought me a flask **filled with old Irish whiskey**. (participle clause, postmodifier of the head-noun)
- **Being a perfectionist**, Dana always double-checks everything. (participle clause, Adverbial Modifier of Reason)
- **Washed in cold water**, this shirt will not shrink. (participle clause, Adverbial Modifier of Condition)
- She forgot to hand in both her essay and her project, **failing History twice**. (participle clause, Adverbial Modifier of Result)

3. Conclusions. This new framework of analysis rests on the role that the various non-finite structures play in the economy of the sentence. Thus, non-finite clauses do not include gerundial constructions, but only a subset of the infinitive and participial structures. Thus, the term **non-finite infinitive clauses** covers just the infinitive structures that postmodify the head of a Noun Phrase and those which act like adverbs, whether they are part of the complementation in an Adjective Phrase or in an Adverb Phrase, or simply show purpose, result, etc., being reduced adverbial clauses. Additionally, the term **non-finite participle clauses** comprises those structures that complement an adjective, as well as those which postmodify the head of a Noun Phrase, and the ones that act like adverbs, these being, in fact, reduced relative or adverbial clauses. Consequently, gerundial constructions, which always behave like nouns, can only be **Gerund Phrases, never clauses**. Similarly, infinitive structures that act like nouns or **premodify** the head of a Noun Phrase shall be called **Infinitive Phrases**. In addition, participial constructions that **premodify** the head of a Noun Phrase will be called **Participial Phrases**, since more often than not such structures can take comparative and superlative forms, or can be premodified by intensifying adverbs, which shows that they have acquired full adjectival value, as different from the participial constructions that postmodify nouns and which we must view as participle clauses.

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THE HEROIC FIGURE IN KURT VONNEGUT'S *DEADEYE DICK*

ALEXANDRU OLTEAN¹

ABSTRACT. *The Heroic Figure in Kurt Vonnegut's Deadeye Dick.* The following article endeavors to show that Rudy Waltz, the protagonist in the novel *Deadeye Dick*, can be viewed as a heroic figure. In constructing the character in this manner, the author opts for a more direct exposition of his opinions, thus moving away from his standard sense of neutrality, which allowed the reader to agree or disagree with the ideas expressed in the novels. Several sections of this article have been taken from my unpublished PhD thesis entitled *Funny Comment, Sad Context: A Literary and Linguistic Analysis of Kurt Vonnegut's Works*, Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca 2013.

Key Words: *Kurt Vonnegut, Rudy Waltz, Deadeye Dick, heroic figure*

REZUMAT. *Figura eroică în romanul Deadeye Dick de Kurt Vonnegut.* Articolul propune să arată faptul că Rudy Waltz, protagonistul romanului *Deadeye Dick*, poate fi privit ca o figură eroică. Construind astfel personajul, autorul optează pentru o expunere mai directă a opiniilor sale, îndepărtându-se prin urmare de simțul său standard de neutralitate, care lăsa la îndemâna cititorului să decidă dacă este de acord sau nu cu ideile exprimate în romane. Mai multe părți ale acestui articol au fost preluate din teza mea nepublicată de doctorat intitulată *Comentariu hilar, context trist: o analiză literară și lingvistică a umorului în romanele lui Kurt Vonnegut*, Universitatea Babeş-Bolyai, Cluj-Napoca 2013 se îndepărtează de simțul său standard de neutralitate, care lăsa la îndemâna cititorului să fie de acord sau nu cu ideile exprimate în romane, în favoarea unei expuneri mai directe a opiniilor sale. Mai multe părți ale acestui articol au fost preluate din teza mea nepublicată de doctorat intitulată *Comentariu hilar, context trist: o analiză literară și lingvistică a umorului în romanele lui Kurt Vonnegut*, Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj 2013

Cuvinte cheie: *Kurt Vonnegut, Rudy Waltz, Deadeye Dick, figură eroică*

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Introduction

Taking into account Kurt Vonnegut's bibliography as a whole, one of the most pertinent and best pointed out characteristics of Vonnegut's approach and style, in terms of character creation and development, is the sense of neutrality that the author injected into his subjects. For reasons that will be discussed further on, Kurt Vonnegut made it a point in his novels to create characters, both central and secondary, that could neither be considered wholly good or completely evil, but instead contained a heavy dose of both. Yet to every rule there is an exception. The purpose of the present article is to show that, whether by chance or by the author's intent, in constructing the protagonist Rudy Waltz in *Deadeye Dick*, Vonnegut put aside his tried and true formula and effectively created his one and only heroic character.

Vonnegut's personal objectivity

The neutrality that so characterizes the author's work stems from his earliest considerations of the way in which human beings can perceive the world around them, and therefore how a person can render that world in art. Long before artists of the 1960's and 1970's proceeded to deconstruct the standard values that had long been considered as sacred, including, or perhaps especially in the area of art, Vonnegut was busy in the late 40's and all throughout the 50's throwing into question the fundamental beliefs of his country in particular, and of mankind in general. Among his earliest conclusions is perhaps the one best expressed through the epitaph of his third novel *Mother Night* (1961) which says that *we are what we pretend to be, so we should be careful what we pretend to be*. This statement epitomizes a notion which bothered the young author for over a decade before he could finally express it in such simple words, the notion that reality, as we envision it, is nothing more than a construct, a byproduct of our own skewed perception. From such a standpoint, universal truth and objectivity do not exist, instead each individual may endeavor to describe the world around them as he or she sees it, a notion that is nothing new today. At the same time, however, Kurt Vonnegut also believed firmly in the educational aspect of literature, which in turn would be rendered mute in a text whose notions are stated to be wholly subjective and unique to the writer himself. As such, what the author adopts is a particular brand of personal objectivity, through which Vonnegut performs two tasks in most of his works: to present both the positive and negative aspects of a situation as objectively as possible (in *Slaughterhouse Five*, for example, war appears as both horrible and inevitable, and fate is something that you cannot escape but must at the same time stand up to) and to invite the reader to agree with the author's personal standpoint in the matter.

In order to maintain this sense of personal objectivity, the neutrality of the protagonist is key. For this reason, as the writer himself points out (or claims to have been told by his father), he “never wrote a story with a villain in it” (Vonnegut 1969:8) which would mean that, by extrapolation on the principle of co-dependency between good and evil, he never wrote a story about a hero either. Sure enough, Vonnegut’s most famous protagonists attest to this conclusion. Howard Campbell of *Mother Night* would be a war hero if not for the fact that, in his duty as a spy for the Allies, he had done such a good job at playing the role of a Nazi propagandist that he’d effectively become what he pretended to be. Jonah of *Cat’s Cradle* is a writer who fails to live up to his “sacred obligation to produce beauty and enlightenment and comfort at top speed” (Vonnegut 2011[1963]:166), not only because he never completes his first book but, more importantly, because he comes to accept the circumstances of the world around him and therefore becomes “a victim of apathy which causes one to give up the world as a lost cause” (Freese 2009:222). Billy Pilgrim of *Slaughterhouse Five* has the potential of being a genuine Messiah, if not for the fact that Vonnegut makes him out to be a bungling fool with hardly any control over his fate, and a preacher of a philosophy of apathy that is wholly contradictory to the author’s standpoint. Dwayne Hoover of *Breakfast of Champions* is a likable fellow if not for the fact that he is going insane.

Yet to every rule there is an exception and, as will be shown below, with the novel *Deadeye Dick* Vonnegut veers away from this principle of objectivity which has up until now been ubiquitous with his writing and presents a protagonist who, in spite of his adamant claim to neutrality, is in fact wholly one-sided and in agreement with the author’s personal point of view. Thus, rather than being a text that analyzes the positive and negative aspects of the American gun culture and of the cruelties that people inflict upon one another (which is what novel is ultimately about), *Deadeye Dick* presents a world that is singularly fraught with cruelty and omens of impending doom, before which the image built around the protagonist Rudy Waltz takes on distinctively heroic connotations.

A hero in a horrid world

Aside from the two novels that are riddled with death and destruction – *Cat’s Cradle* and *Slaughterhouse Five* – never does Vonnegut create a text that is quite so full of darkness, with so few positive characters. Despite his entertaining nature, Otto Waltz is ultimately a fool who unwittingly aids in the proliferation of death, one way or the other (be it that he gives his son the keys to the gun room or that he saves the life of and befriends Adolf Hitler). His wife Emma is a useless human being who only really comes to life once tumors begin growing in her brain. Chief Morissey is a murderer at least

because he blew the head off of August Gunther, who in turn is a degenerate pervert and even John Fortune, the would-be hero, becomes an outcast and dies bitter and alone on the other side of the world. Celia Hildreth, perhaps one of the most innocent persons here, the protagonist's one true hope for love, is turned by modern medicine into a hag that eventually becomes borderline psychotic. Last but not least, this novel portrays a society that has become so jaded, so enamored by its gun culture and the violence that comes out, that the voice of this society, which is to say the press, deems it proper to call the neutron bomb which obliterates the entire population of Midland City a friendly bomb (Vonnegut 1982:33) because it didn't damage any of the property. The one individual that can be considered decent in *Deadeye Dick* other than Rudy is the woman that teaches him about how being born is like opening up a peephole and dying means closing it again, this being the only person who shows any sort of compassion for what the young boy must be going through after the accidental murder. Yet she in turn is also in prison, and guaranteed to not be treated fairly because she isn't white and the novel makes several references to the fact that this is a racist society. Under such bleak circumstances, one has to wonder whether becoming a would-be neuter, regardless of the shooting incident, is not the best thing that Rudy Waltz could have done.

After accidentally killing Mrs. Metzger and her unborn child with one faithful bullet and after witnessing the downfall of his family as a consequence, the traumatic event leaves Rudy Waltz with the belief that he mustn't touch anything because it "was very likely to be connected to a push-pull detonator and an explosive charge" (Vonnegut 1982:112), or, in other words, that any interaction he has with anything in the world would inevitably lead to disaster. He decides to effectively become what he calls *a neuter*, an individual who wants nothing – be it spiritual, physical, social or financial – and strives to accomplish nothing, lest his endeavors might lead to another disaster. Of course, if we consider this portrayal of a completely neutral individual, what quickly becomes apparent is that the real neuters in *Deadeye Dick* are Otto and Emma Waltz after the tragedy. Beginning with this faithful moment on the two "were zombies. They were in bathrobes and bedroom slippers all day long [and] they stared into the distance a lot" (Vonnegut 1982:108). These are truly neutral people, unwilling to do anything, but exist from one day to the next. Rudy, on the other hand, despite claiming to be every bit the neuter his parents have become, is far different. More important than his fear of doing bad things is his desire to not cause his parents any more pain than they've already had to endure and so he decides to make sure that "as long as they lived, they never had to prepare a meal or wash a dish or make a bed or do the laundry or dust or vacuum or sweep, or shop for food. I did all that, and maintained a B average in school, as well" (Vonnegut 1982:98). Rudy takes on

the Herculean task of carrying out the workload that was previously done by a team of servants while still studying hard enough for school to get good grades. Thus he becomes the ideal son – altruistic, hardworking and kind – and later, as a grown man, Rudy maintains the same level of humanism that makes him an upstanding individual. Moreover, Rudy further separates himself from the class of neuters he claims to be part of by trying to engage himself in art when he writes his play *Katmandu* and by consistently identifying himself with a character in a play when he feels the need to detach from an unpleasant situation. How successful Rudy is as an artist is irrelevant. As Kurt Vonnegut mentioned on more than one occasion, the very act of trying to create a piece of art enriches and ennobles the soul, and Rudy's decision to write his play and run with it as far as it could take him must be seen as evidence of his desire to express himself in a deeply personal manner so that others around him might realize that there is a soul beneath the seemingly hollow shell that he otherwise presents to those around him. Just as important, if not more important, than his endeavor to delve into art is the fact that Rudy maintains his pretence of neutrality, that he returns to his life as a servant to all, demanding nothing from anyone except what might rightfully be his, at the expense of his possible artistic career that would have uplifted him from his present status. Keeping in mind the kind of society portrayed in *Deadeye Dick*, in which "the Dark Ages – they haven't ended yet" (Vonnegut 1982:240), Rudy effectively makes the choice of maintaining his spiritual integrity no matter the cost. The irony therefore of *Deadeye Dick* is that, while being "a quiet lament for his un-lived life" (Morse 1992:81), it is also the story of how much of himself an individual has had to sacrifice in order to keep the remainder whole. In this respect, if we were to express *Deadeye Dick* not as a novel but in the form of a play (the way Rudy sees his life on more than one occasion), the shape it would take is that of a modern-day Greek tragedy in which Rudy Waltz could only be portrayed as a hero.

Why make Rudy a heroic figure

What remains now is the task of trying to find a reason why Kurt Vonnegut, who had so far been so good at maintaining a sense of balance in the portrayal of his protagonists, would end up creating a character such as this one. Few people would disagree that *Slaughterhouse Five* can rightfully be thought of as Kurt Vonnegut's most celebrated novel, not only because of its innovative style and approach but also because it expresses the author's ability to finally deal with the trauma that he suffered during his war-time experience. This process of coming to terms with what essentially determined the subject matter of his writing up to that point – the massive, even

unimaginable destruction that humanity can inflict upon each other and the world – marks a pivotal moment in Kurt Vonnegut’s career. Now, freed of this traumatic burden that had been stewing in his mind since he was first sent overseas, the author must have felt that his career had reached a crossroads from which he was unsure of the direction he should take. Beginning with the 70’s, *Slaughterhouse Five* and all his previous novels, now reprinted, were selling all across the world and the rights to a film production of his most famous novel had been bought. During this period, Kurt Vonnegut toyed with new means of expressing himself, such as film, theatre writing and even drawing. It wasn’t long though before such endeavors were met with less than favorable reviews. In light of the difficulties encountered and the revelations he had, Vonnegut finally returned to the art form that he is well familiarized with and used his newly discovered autobiographical style to explore subject matters that fall much closer to home for this middle-class American citizen of German descent that had essentially lived all throughout the twentieth century. It is in light of this career shift that we can state the fact that, while *Slaughterhouse Five* may deal with Kurt Vonnegut’s most protruding scar, novels such as *Breakfast of Champions* and especially *Deadeye Dick* are far more personal, because they represent a fictional reconstruction of his childhood environment.

Connections to the history of the Vonnegut family can be made from the very first page of Chapter One, when the protagonist Rudy introduces himself. His full name is stated to be Rudolph Waltz and he is said to have been born in 1932, in Midland City, Ohio. He is thus an American who, in accordance with his name, is of German descent and who is born in the inter-war period in a city from the State of Ohio, which is incidentally right next to the State of Indiana, where Kurt Vonnegut was born. The text then takes the comparison between author and character one step further, with the introduction of Rudy’s father Otto (another distinctively German name) who in turn was considered “the heir to a fortune” (Vonnegut 1982:2). He is thus born into a wealthy family, which had accumulated its riches through industry, in the same way as Kurt Vonnegut’s family rose to financial prestige. The Waltz family is famous in Midland City for its outrageous wealth and their extravagant display of that wealth. For example, in a city filled with middle-class laborers and only one single rich neighborhood (that eventually disappears), it is reasonable to presume that few, if any, could afford a six-month honeymoon or desire to spend so much on extravagant things. In the case of Kurt Vonnegut’s parents, things weren’t much different. After all, when they were married “Edith and Kurt’s wedding celebration was one long remembered in Indianapolis. It was probably the biggest and most costly party which the town had ever seen or is likely ever to witness again”

(Vonnegut 1994[1981]:363). In both cases, that same wealth would be gone not long after Kurt, respectively Rudy, would come into the world.

Although the details of their lives are significantly different – Vonnegut even warns the reader that “this is fiction, not history” (Vonnegut 1982:xiii) – nonetheless, it is easy and expected for us to consider Otto as being “a psychological though not factual portrait of Vonnegut’s father” (Allen 2009[1991]:139). Both men are artists (although, unlike Kurt Sr. the fictional character is not successful at all), both suffer through life-altering moments that effectively destroy their artistic capacity (for Otto it is going to jail for letting his son handle guns, for Kurt Sr. it was the effect of the Great Depression) and both are portrayed as having become moody and paternally distant afterwards.

Just as Otto Waltz is a fictional representation of Kurt Vonnegut’s father, so too is Rudy’s mother a recreation of the author’s mother, in fact even more so. Born under the name Emma Wetzels, Rudy’s mother is brought up in a rich family and marries a man who, although an artist, also belongs to a wealthy family with a distinguished name. For half her life Emma lives under the distinct impression that “nothing bad was supposed to happen to her – ever” (Vonnegut 1982:93). She is described by her son as being “purely ornamental” (ibid), never really showing affection towards her children, who end up being raised by servants. When disaster strikes and the Waltz family becomes poor, Emma becomes completely useless, more or less giving up on life, until shortly before her death, when tiny brain tumors compel her to become an active member of society in the area of local arts. This is essentially a frame by frame reconstruction of Edith Vonnegut, right down to the attempt at entering the artistic world. What sets the two apart are that the fictional character is involved in the criticism of fine arts and dies of cancer, whereas Kurt Vonnegut’s mother tries her hand at writing and commits suicide, but these differences are reasonably insignificant and it is obvious that the author had his mother in mind when creating this character.

Then there are other aspects that more or less mirror the environment and circumstances in which the author grew up. When presenting the marriage between Otto and Emma, the narrator points out that “the Wetzels and the Waltzes were proudly agnostic” (Vonnegut 1982:22), which is what can be said in real life about the Vonneguts and the Liebers. Furthermore, like Kurt Vonnegut, Rudy is the youngest offspring and, although he doesn’t have a sister, he does have an elder brother. In addition, Rudy Waltz may have belonged to a wealthy family until age twelve, but thanks to the Great Depression the neighborhood around his home has deteriorated, as other rich families lost their fortune or simply moved away. Thus, as a boy, Rudy would bring home such friends as “the eight-year-old son of a tool-checker” (Vonnegut 1982:38). Inviting friends over is not something that Rudy would

do for long, since his father, clearly unable to relate to the less fortunate and less educated society, would make Rudy's friends uncomfortable with references to pieces of literature they can't possibly have read. In a similar fashion, Kurt Vonnegut Jr's childhood friends were average kids, belonging to middle-class citizens who must have been far different in upbringing and character than the author's previously wealthy parents. It is conceivable then that Kurt's friends may have felt awkward in a similar fashion when visiting, at least in the sense that Kurt Sr. would not have known how to approach them.

Although there is now no way to confirm this with the author himself, the conclusion that seems to take shape under these circumstances is that the protagonist Rudy Waltz hits a little too close to home in terms of character and surroundings to make it possible for Kurt Vonnegut to maintain the standard level of neutrality (concerning issues of right and wrong, good or bad) that was the hallmark of his previous works. Whether it be because of the consequences of his mishap with the rifle or thanks to his own basic nature, Rudy remains kind, helpful and just a bit hopeful, an all around decent anomaly living within a society that is murderous and cruel, or simply uncaring. Despite everything that happens, Rudy remains someone who "had known blissful unselfishness which could serve as a good example to the rest of the world" (Vonnegut 1982:198), a sense of altruism that he tries to share with those around him via his play *Katmandu*. This final element added to the protagonist's persona solidifies Rudy Waltz as the image of the kind of person that Kurt Vonnegut had always endeavored to become, the sort of decent individual that uses art to preach a sense of humanism and decency to anyone who will listen, regardless of how decrepit society as a whole might become.

By living up to Vonnegut's ideals, Rudy becomes a heroic figure for the author himself, and, by extrapolation, for any reader who chooses to share the author's perspective of how people should behave. The question that arises though is whether or not we can still speak of objectivity in this case, since the nature of the protagonist clearly falls towards the positive side of the spectrum of good and evil. And if objectivity is out the window, then we must wonder whether *Deadeye Dick* is not in fact Vonnegut's analysis of American society during the second half of the twentieth century, but rather his personal, subjective opinion that society is on an accelerating downward spiral (something that comes strongly out his speeches from the 80's on), but that even in the darkest hour innocent people may still walk among us.

Conclusion

After nine novels in which Vonnegut maintains his formula of personal objectivity, the emergence of Rudy Waltz as a distinctly positive, heroic

character marks a distinctive change in the author's approach to the topic he discusses. An analysis of the humor of this novel, as shown in my yet unpublished PhD theses, shows an obvious drop in its intensity in this humor, the hypothesis being in this case that in his later years Vonnegut became more morose and more direct in asserting his opinion, rather than letting the reader decide for himself. Coupled with the close connection between the circumstances of Rudy Waltz's life and the author's biography and ideology, the conclusion is that Vonnegut was aware, at least to a certain degree, of what he was doing when he created a protagonist that is more one sided and which contains many of the traits of a tragic hero, an innocent individual in a world that is steadily going to the dogs.

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THE "INDIVIDUATION" OF LITERARY CHARACTERS AND THE STYLING OF THE NARRATIVE TEXT

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ABSTRACT. *The "individuation" of literary characters and the styling of the narrative text.* The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate that the author, which is also the character of the Romanian novel, *Rusoaica*, namely Gib I. Mihaescu, individualizes both his masculine and feminine characters, through the dynamic of their corporality. The characters' corporality is stylized (by different stylistic and rhetorical procedures), so that the descriptive fragments portraying the human body (in movement or static) confer a high aesthetic sense to the entire narrative text.

Key words: *style/ stylize, "individuation", singular, dynamics body, artistic process, experience.*

REZUMAT. *„Individuarea” personajelor literare și stilizarea textului narativ.* În această lucrare încercăm să demonstrăm că autorul-personaj al romanului românesc, *Rusoaica*, Gib I. Mihăescu, își singularizează personajele masculine și feminine prin dinamica corporalității acestora. Corporalitatea personajelor este stilizată (prin diferite procedee stilistice și retorice), astfel încât, fragmentele descriptive care au ca obiect corpul uman (aflat în mișcare sau în repaos) conferă o puternică notă de estetizare întregului text narativ.

Cuvinte-cheie: *stil/ stilizare, „individuale”, singular, dinamica corporală, procedeu artistic, experiență.*

*

A literary text has specific recognition indices of an era style, of the style in which it is written and, not least, of the style of the literary characters. New cultural researches (Laurent Jenny coord., *Le style en acte*; Philippe Jousset, *Anthropologie du style* etc.) establish an anthropology of style, which emphasizes human ways of "acting" and "making" gestures.

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Gib I. Mihăescu writes the novel *Rusoaica – The Russian Woman*, which he publishes in 1933. Both at the time and during the syncope in the 1950s, the novel was considered by literary critics as a subjective and confessional writing, namely "the diary of Lieutenant Ragaia" - who is the main character of the work.

Through this study we propose a novel analysis from an aesthetic and stylistic point of view, by detailing the manner in which the author edits/touches up the narrative text by styling the characters' corporality and by aestheticizing the experiences that each of these "human beings" undergo, close to each other's corporality. The descriptive fragments (which have as object of description the human body, especially the female one) and the fragments in which the author describes his characters (male and female) in motion seem lack interest in terms of critical interpretation. But these narrative passages are deeply stylized through various artistic devices and they give inclusive meaning to the literary text.

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The dynamic corporality of the characters plays a very important role, creating a "stylistic of existence" in the novelistic world, according to Laurent Jenny, in his book *Le style en acte* (Jenny, 2011, 15). We will analyze the attitudes, expressions and gestures of the characters and the means through which they "express themselves" in a given situation. This dynamic of corporality asserts the characters' behaviour and their interaction; it also creates and imposes the difference of style between the characters.

The analysis tools for this study are: the body, the style/ "stylization", "individuation", "differentiation". In the article "*Du style comme pratique*", published in the journal *Littérature*, Laurent Jenny considers style as a set of practices, which are in an interdependent relationship with individuation and differentiation:

«il me semble en effet qu'on peut situer le style parmi un ensemble plus vaste de pratiques, pratiques vitales tout autant que productrices, et qui toutes ont pour objet l'individuel. Dans cette notion vague de pratiques de l'individuel, je rangerai, répondant aux suggestions de divers auteurs : l'individuation, la distinction et la stylisation» (Jenny, 2000, 98).

In the same article, the author defines the concept of "individuation" in the following terms:

«je fais acte d'individuation (...) Il s'agit donc de revendiquer une forme d'ipséité vide par des gestes aussi communs qu'allumer une cigarette, fermer une porte pour s'isoler ou décider d'appeler quelqu'un sur son telephone portable. Par ces gestes, je me rappelle que je ne me confonds pas avec une

collectivité qui régirait mon existence, que la gratuité de mes choix m'appartient et que je possède un espace propre qui m'est dû en tant que je suis un individu et non pas une chose ou un animal» (*ibid.*, 108).

In the literary text *The Russian Woman* (Rusoaica), the primary means of "individuation" of the characters is the *corporality*, characterized by attitudes and perceptive styles, manifested through the perception and the awareness of the personal body or of the body of others, establishing a somatic relationship between "me and my body" or "me and the other body." Ragaiac is aware of his own limbs, admiring his hands so that the character himself analyzes the dynamic of his own corporality:

„Și instinctiv îmi ridic, în lumina ochilor, tăietura ovală și fină a mâinii mele; degetele se lipesc lungi și unghiile, pe care nu le-am manichiurat de atâta amară vreme, mă uimesc cu grația lor” (Mihăescu, 2009, 158).

Ragaiac highlights the cut of his hand by an epithet (it is "smooth") and metaphorically notes the "graciousness" of his nails, even if they have not been trimmed for a very long time (amara vreme) by using once again an epithet ("amara") to suggest the long time passed since he lives in the cottage, on the Dniester river. By using these artistic devices, the moment of perception of his own hands is strongly stylized and gives a stylistic effect to the fragment. It also defines the masculine style of the character relating to his own body, namely narcissistic.

The same character has the consciousness of the body of the other, especially the female one (related to two women: Niculina – the real one and the Russian - the imagined one), but he also perceives the male corporality (such as Serghe Bălan – Niculina's husband and Iliad - his friend). He analyzes the corporality of the others and interprets certain body signs. In these cases, corporality dynamics is analyzed again by the protagonist, therefore distinguishing himself again, but in a different style, as the observer. For example:

„Mâna îi căzu moale în jos; în locul roșului aprins al mâniei și al sănătății lui debordante, se așternu pe figura-i galbenul pal al stuporii, apoi negrul cadaveric al veninului” (*ibid.*, 107).

„picioarele i se muiaseră de tot și capul i-a căzut pe-o parte, ochii i s-au deschis ca la un spânzurat... abia mai putea merge” (*ibid.*, 116).

These descriptive passages reveal the changing of corporality signs in the case of Serghei Bălan when being caught and arrested, he discovers Niculina's betrayal. His limbs unbend, his face turns yellow and then goes black, his eyes are staring, signs which show that the body loses its vitality. All these traits acquired by the character are rendered through stylistic constructions ("the pale yellow of stupor", "the black corpse of venom", "his

eyes were open as those of a hanged man") "individualizing" the character. Except that their expression, from the speech of the character as an observer (who notices the inability of the other to act), allows no possible interpretations coming from the reader who makes contact with the text, as they already render everything about the corporality of the character concerned.

The positions taken by the character Ragaia in analyzing the other's corporality dynamics have as purpose the observation (as we demonstrated in the cases above), as well as the knowledge and appropriation of the otherness body (as we will demonstrate further on). Considering the fact that the characters exist through style and the style is usually formed as a result of aesthetic experiences, we will focus on such an experience lived by the character as an observer, namely a reading experience.

The reading experience enhances his belief that the Russian woman (the "ideal" corporality desired by our character) will come, as her soul is eager for freedom. To "see her better", Ragaia resorts to the feminine types of Russian novels, lending her features of: Avdotia or Sonia (from *Crime and Punishment*), Zina or Daria (from *Demons*), Nastasia Filipovna from *The Idiot*, Ekaterina Ivanovna or Gruşenca from *The Brothers Karamazov*, Natasha from *War and Peace*. We deduce in this way why the "ideal" is called the Russian woman - "created" by merging the world of Russian books and the burning desires of his soul. The Russian heroines are the literary model for the "ideal" corporality of the character.

Reading prompts the aesthetic emotion in the character, which is the first effect of perception. Laurent Jenny, in the volume *La vie esthétique - stases et flux*, understands the emotion in a kinaesthetic sense, to *actuate* (Jenny, 2013, 20) and, thus, the theorist argues that the aesthetic experience is a dynamic one. Thus, the Subject aestheticizes the female body in the same content of aesthetic experiences, including the books:

„Îi pot înfripa un şold, un braţ, mâna ei lunguiaţă, pentru înfăptuirea căreia e de ajuns să mă uit la mâna mea. Picioarele lungi, [...] sânii, ca două mingi de tenis, în săculeţul strâns de reţea [...] Fluturarea părului şi culoarea lui o văd; încâlceala lui şi plimbările mătăsoase pe care le face pe gâtul gol. Ochii îi văd de minune [...] Dar faţa îmi scapă [...] Faţa Valiei e o închegare sacră” (*ibid.*, 169)

This process of highly stylized description of the feminine "ideal" corporality, for the waiting character, is a repetitive one. The attempt to reconstitute the female body is put in motion by the "story" of Iliad, the protagonist's friend, who had presumably had a long awaited affair with The Russian Woman, embodied by Valia, a woman from a group of fled Russians on the Dniester River:

„O, era divină, părul ei tuns mai lung şi încurcat în inele de-un castaniu închis, care ziua părea negru, atârându-i pe umerii plini şi rotunzi... şi mâinile lungi,

și trupul lung, și picioarele lungi... Când stătea goală și înaltă în fața mea, cântându-mi ca într-un vis de nebunie..." (*ibid.*, 157)

The character also puts into discourse the female corporality in its immediate proximity, which is embodied by Niculina:

„o orășeancă înaltă și brună, cu trăsături ferme, cu ochii puternici și mari. Pieptănătura neagră, lucioasă și linsă, se împletea într-un coc mare la ceafă. Rochia cenușie închisă îi ajungea până la pulpe, iar picioarele-i erau goale în pantofi cu toc săltat” (*ibid.*, 50).

„cu statura ei de brad, cu figura ei de gazdă hoțescă, vestită în frumusețe peste șapte văi” (*ibid.*, 174)

„ochii parcă-i sunt mai întunecoși sub înfățișarea asta, iar trăsăturile au parcă un accent mai sever, mai nobil, de mare cocoană” (*ibid.*, 221).

The corporality dynamics of characters is two folded: it aestheticizes the human body, by resorting to stylistic devices, arousing the pleasure of perception for the "viewer" (character or reader) and it differentiates the style of characters. The aestheticization of corporality creates visual images (it seems that the two female characters are "posing", which, at first glance, creates discontinuity in the literary text and slows down the action. But, according to Marielle Macé, in the study *Façons de lire, manières d'être*, "to be" is the equivalent of "to do" (Macé, 2011, 21), causing tension and suspense at the same time, while reading. The hypostasis of this female body in itself and its insertion in a speech render the text active.

Each character has its own style of expressing itself, as a singularity. Ragaia has a brutal/ aggressive style, acting impulsively in almost all circumstances. This style is well highlighted by verbs of motion („repezi"- to dart, „țâșni"- to blow out, „porni" - to run up, „năpusti" - break in which) create dynamic images:

„mă repezii înainte orbește” (*ibid.*, 113).

„țâșnii de pe scaunul meu, care căzu cu zgomot, și mă năpustii asupra-i” (*ibid.*, 115).

„Pornii în pas alert să traversez bățătura pichetului de la un colț la altul [...] Pasul îmi crește nervos” (*ibid.*, 177).

The exception to this rule is given by a single situation in which the character dramatizes his gestures in front of the desired woman by successive body movements:

„O desprinsei cu eleganță și îndelungi sărutări [...] Și râsei cu poftă adevărată [...] Aici luai mâna Niculinei și o scuturai” (*ibid.*, 95).

Niculina also has a brutal/ aggressive style, the agitated movements of her body being noticed by the viewer character and by the reader:

„Ea mă înlănțui deodată și mă trase spre mijlocul odăii” (ibid., 95).

„când fusei a doua oară repezit în părete” (ibid., 113).

„Dintr-un salt ea m-ajunge, m-apucă de mână și cu cealaltă împinge ușa pe care o deschideam” (ibid., 202).

„Și pașii ei porniră în fugă pe loc, corpul începu să i se zbată [...] capul îi căzu pe spate” (ibid., 228).

„La mișcarea mea, Niculina s-a ridicat cu totul în crivăț” (ibid., 238).

The uncertain style of Iliad is in opposition to the style of the protagonist and of Niculina:

„gemu el stins, împleticindu-și pașii pe care instinctiv îi face îndărăt...” (ibid., 184).

The style of Valia’s body movement is sure and decisive, as noticed by Iliad:

„Și-a pornit-o drept, fără nicio vorbă, spre Nistru... ca un... ca un leu...” (ibid., 149)

„A pornit cu pas sigur și a zâmbit trist colonelului” (ibid., 163)

*

In this paper we demonstrate “the meaning” and “the action” of the style of the character in a literary text. Through style, the character exists; it is unique and it renders the text active. According to Laurent Jenny:

«La fonction du style apparaît donc essentiellement comme une *deixis* qui oriente la réception de l’objet en différenciant la pertinence de ses propriétés remarquables. Ceci peut nous aider à clarifier la question de la réception attentionnelle du style. Le style, en tant que distribution de valeurs d’emphase, suscite effectivement une réponse attentionnelle» (Jenny, 2000, 102).

The novel *Rusoaica* (*The Russian Woman*) offers as means of character’s individuation a heavily stylized corporality dynamics that creates the styling effect of the literary text. This process of aestheticization, which seems to prevail over the narrative, does not reduce the text to passivity, but rather gives it dynamism.

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CIVILIZED / BARBARIAN - AN INSIGHT INTO THE DARK MEMORIES OF CHRISTIAN CRUSADES THROUGH MUSLIM EYES

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ABSTRACT. *Civilized / barbarian - An insight into the dark memories of Christian Crusades through Muslim eyes.* This study starts from the well-known imaginary Persians of Montesquieu and makes an attempt to compare and adjust their fashionable sham identity of Muslims, as accredited by the French writer, to that of the real Muslims voiced in Tariq Ali's novel *The Book of Saladin*, 1998 (Verso, 2010). The novel tells the story of retaking Jerusalem from the Crusaders in 1187, under the ruling of the Muslim warrior Salah al-Din (westernized Saladin). Starting from the "clash of civilizations" much-discussed issue and after an unbiased data-confronting research, the British Pakistani Tariq Ali appears as a reliable narrator of the historical truth and an honest revealer of the horrific marks left upon the Muslim and European conscience by the crimes committed in the Middle Ages by the Christian Crusaders. His novel also includes a wide variety of reflections on issues of great interest concerning the value system of Islam, and ultimately raises a "who's who" question on what should we call "civilized" and what "barbarian".

Key words: *Christian Crusades, Islam, Salah al-Din, jihad (Djihad), Jerusalem, civilized, barbarian, identity*

REZUMAT. *Civilizați / barbari – O introspectivă în memoria întunecată a cruciadelor creștine prin ochii unui musulman.* Acest studiu pornește de la binecunoscuții persani imaginați de Montesquieu și propune o comparație (și totodată o ajustare) a falsei lor identități islamice, așa cum a fost acreditată

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aceasta de către scriitorul francez, la identitatea musulmanilor adevărați, evidențiată în romanul lui Tariq Ali, *Cartea lui Saladin*, 1998 (Verso, 2010, Humanitas, 2011). Acest roman spune povestea recuceririi Ierusalimului din mâinile cruciaților, în 1187, sub conducerea războinicului musulman Saladin. Pornind de la mult dezbătută problemă a „ciocnirii civilizațiilor”, în urma cercetării mele preponderent istorice, scriitorul britanic de origine pakistaneză Tariq Ali apare ca un narator credibil al adevărului istoric și un revelator onest al urmelor dureroase lăsate asupra conștiinței musulmane și deopotrivă europene de crimele comise în Evul Mediu de cruciații creștini. Romanul său include totodată o mare varietate de reflecții asupra sistemului de valori al Islamului și, în ultimă instanță, ridică întrebări cu privire la cine au fost cei „civilizați” și cine „barbarii”.

Cuvinte-cheie: *cruciade creștine, Islam, Saladin, jihad, Ierusalim, civilizat, barbar, identitate*

Motto:

“I think globalisation has provincialised the West”.
(From an interview with Tariq Ali in *The Baloch Hal*)

“Chacun appelle barbarie ce qui n’est pas de son usage”.
(Michel de Montaigne, *Essais*, I, XXXI)

The clash of civilizations has been a passionate and tense issue in the European and American contemporary socio-political thought, just like the definition of Europe through Christianity. However, after centuries of history, culture and tradition, this component of the European identity has been recently dropped out, at least in the discourse of political treaties: in the Treaty of Lisbon amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Community, signed at Lisbon on 13 December 2007, Europe has decided that Christian values might not after all be that important, so as to identify a continent through them to the exclusion of other religious communities living in it. As a consequence, Europe’s Christian heritage was removed from the definition of Europe.

It is no doubt that contemporary Europe is more than ever a “unitas multiplex”, which now voices all the religions, ideas and beliefs in an unprecedented liberal climate. In Western Europe, a lot of peripheral intellectuals coming from minor, less known cultures have come to freely express themselves and even become famous. Among them, the case of the activist Muslims or anti-Muslims is most prominent nowadays. One of them is the British Pakistani writer Tariq Ali (b. 1943), raised a Muslim and having turned into a left-wing atheist, who therefore is not a fundamentalist Islamic, but rather a free-thinking intellectual, novelist, historian and journalist, more prone to facts than to fiction. As he declared in a recent interview, “to be anti-Islam is not a

career” for him, which already makes a huge difference in the Islamophobic context of some cultural environments nourished by proper Muslim writers.

Tariq Ali has just finished an Islam quintet of novels focused on the topic of elite families. Within this project, *The Book of Saladin* (Verso, 1998, 2010) tells the story of retaking Jerusalem from the Crusaders in 1187, under the ruling of the Muslim warrior Salah al-Din (westernized Saladin). As a history-based fiction telling the story of a Muslim through the eyes of another Muslim (writer Tariq Ali), and particularly on a delicate inter-religious issue like the retaking of Jerusalem, this is the very type of novel that one should not easily take for granted without further documentation. A data-confronting research proves most necessary if you want to tell truth from lies and check upon the novelist’s honesty or bias. Let us not forget that, when it comes to Muslims, our classic knowledge promptly refers to the well-known imaginary Persians of Montesquieu, where the fictional pact is so tight that we sometimes seem to forget that there’s a French speaking (disguised as a Persian), and not real Persians.

This study makes an attempt to compare and adjust the fashionable sham identity and values of the Muslims accredited by the French writer Montesquieu during the 18th century to that of the real Muslims, pictured from real models, who are voiced in Tariq Ali’s novel.

The story seems to me most beneficial to the contemporary Christians in seeking of historical truths, just as much to the Muslims, too. As a story teller, Tariq Ali can be inarguably taken as a reliable narrator of the horrors committed by the European Crusaders upon the Muslim and Jewish population of Jerusalem in the 11th century, but the reader’s main intellectual interest in such a story should particularly lie in the confrontation of feelings, acts and ideas, taken and expressed by the Kurdish Sultan Salah al-Din, which reveal to us a piece of Islamic world that is full of subtlety and refinement, with both rigors and kindness, and which in many respects is considerably different and superior to the fictionalized one pictured by European Montesquieu.

The idea of this study is that, as compared to the merciful and spiritualized approaches of the Muslim military campaigner Salah al-Din, the fierce image of the greedy and merciless Christian Crusaders should raise a ‘who’s who’ question on what should we call “civilized” and what “barbarian”.

From accurate historians² to socio-human essayists, Christian crusades are being more and more seen today as a business affair of the Medieval Western monarchs, who quickly abandoned their original religious

² All historical information and data about the evolution of the first two crusades and the performance of their main actors come especially from Asbridge, 2013, Căzan, 1990, Grămadă, 1961, Maalouf, 2007, Montefiore, 2012, Morriison, 1998.

ideals. The first crusade actually started in 1095, when pope Urban II launched an appeal for the reconquest of the Holy Land and the salvation of Christian believers from the oppression of Islamic rules. This primal goal of the crusade was actually a result of a particular request of the Byzantine Emperor Alexios I Komnenos, who asked to be helped fighting against the Seljuq Turks from Anatolia. These Muslims had captured Jerusalem about four centuries and a half before, by the middle of the 7th century, and the Muslim conquests were now a threaten to Europe itself.

From the very beginning, the crusades were also animated by economic goals, an idea to the support of which we could also remember the original indifference of the Germans towards the first crusade, within a period of relative economic prosperity on their lands. The actual interest of many people in going to the crusade was, as historians certify, to get rid of poverty or, with the already rich, to grow richer. Even the daughter of the Byzantine Emperor, Ana Komnena, who feared the coming of the crusaders, mentioned their “greed for money, which apparently makes them always ready to break their vows, without any scruples or serious motives” (*Apud Căzan*, 1990: 61, my translation / S.D.).

As a matter of fact, the Byzantines used to consider the Western European knights “barbarian” (Grămadă, 1961: 33). In *The Alexiad*, the same Ana Komnena describes the coarse behaviour of the first Crusaders at her father’s Court, which is explained by historians through the difference of nobility and cultural level existent at such time between Western Europe and the East (Middle East and the Byzantine Empire). By that time, it was the East that could boast of its “chivalrous” manners on top of its society, and not West Europe, where hunting and wars, including related “customs”, were the only spare-time habits of some brutish, not sophisticated nobility (*Idem*, 37).

The most radical criticism on the issue of the Crusades is that of Warren Treadgold who, in his history of the Byzantine state (2001), appreciates that it was not the Turks but the crusade from 1204 which actually destroyed the Byzantine Empire; an irony that made some new critical voices say that this was an “unequalled counter-performance”³ (that is, to start from the idea of freeing the Holy Lands to the benefit of the Christians, and end in the destruction of the greatest Christian empire of the East).

In the first crusade, fought in the 11th century, Jerusalem was not the first siege of the crusaders, because they first conquered other cities of Palestine and created the first feudal Christian states in the Middle East. For a few years they seemed to forget their original sacred goals, indulging themselves into luxury, until the recapture of Jerusalem was eventually revived mostly by

³ Răzvan Voncu, “Islamul, de la conviețuire la confruntare” (Islam, from cohabitation to war), in Constantinescu, M. (ed.), 2005: 124, my translation / S.D.

the massive amount of pilgrims, peasants and little nobility, who still believed in the sacred character of this military expedition.

In 1099, the crusaders besieged and captured Jerusalem, after a bloody massacre of the civil population of the Muslims and Jews found in the city. Both Christian and Muslim chronicles speak of the streets “washed” in the blood of Muslims and Jews, after a couple of centuries of peace, when various religions and people had co-existed in the city without any priority claims on anyone’s part. Now they were living a time of Apocalypse, with people trapped in closed spaces and set on fire. Chronicles say that not even a single life of woman or child was spared. The military heads of the crusaders even despoiled the Church of the Holy Sepulchre of gold and precious stones, while the petty crusaders traded water and food to make some money to the expense of their own fellows. In the crusaders’ days of victory, everything looked like a riot of gregarious instincts and change of mentalities, which disgusted even their own observers. From that moment on, this particular “conquest of Jerusalem was to become in the Islamic world the very symbol of Christian intolerance” (Morrisson, 1998: 39, my translation / S.D.)

In his novel, Tariq Ali also remembers, through the words of Salah al-Din himself, stories about the cannibalism of the crusaders, who are said to have even fried and eaten Muslim and Jewish little babies. He insists on heaving read about this atrocity both in Christian and Muslim chronicles and admits that, later on, the Muslims wanted to punish the Christians in the same way, but were severely reprimanded by their elders. The fact that the Christian crusaders left a bloody trademark on the Holy Lands has never been controversial, and yet, it was only in 2000 when Pope John Paul II made an explicit apology for all the crimes committed in the past by the Romano-Catholic church, including in the general types of wrongs “everything from the Crusades to the Inquisition, the forced conversions, to sins against women and anti-Jewish acts”⁴. (CNN)

In Tariq Ali’s novel, the regrets for losing Jerusalem (in Arabic, *al-Kuds*) combine with the Sultan’s longing, as a child, for a time of reconquest which, with the passage of time, simply overpowered his life:

“The only story that really moved me as a child”, he tells to his Jewish scribe, “was that of al-Kuds. The cruelty of the barbarians was like a poison that makes men mute. Al-Kuds was never absent from our world of make-believe. We used to climb on our horses and pretend we were riding to drive the Franj out of al-Kuds” (33).

⁴ “Pope John Paul II Makes Unprecedented Apology For Sins of Catholic Church”, *Sunday Morning News*, aired March 12, 2000, 9:01 a.m. ET, URL: <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0003/12/sm.06.html>, last accessed on May 08, 2014.

In the religion of Islam, Jerusalem is the third holy city, after Mecca and Medina, and ultimately, if an Islam Believer cannot fulfil the fifth pillar of Islam (*hajj* - the holy pilgrimage to Mecca), a pilgrimage to Jerusalem could be taken as an acceptable substitute⁵. Many years after his childhood hopes had matured, Salah al-Din, now a successful campaigner, came to release Jerusalem from the symbolic strains of a single religion and decided, as Ali himself mentions in one of his theoretical books⁶, to proclaim liberty in the practice of all religions and beliefs, as a form of respect shown to the three “peoples of the Scripture”: the Jews, the Christians and the Muslims.

In the European 18th century, when concepts like Reason, Nature or Justice made people ponder upon human nature, state governmentality or education, the cultural movement of the Enlightenment showed an overt interest towards exotic foreigners coming from the Middle East, such as the Persians were perceived at the time. When Montesquieu’s *Persian Letters* were brought out in 1721, the book was very much indebted to particular European sources like Jean Chardin’s *Voyages en Perse* and *Voyages* by Jean-Baptiste Tavernier and Paul Rycout, while on the other hand, Montesquieu had never travelled himself to Persia. The “Letters” quickly achieved great fame, but what really excited and is still important in this book nowadays is the cultural and ethnocentric stand of Europe and, particularly, of France, a position that can be implicitly inferred, at the expense of marginal exotic cultures, from the author’s considerations of philosophy of history and philosophy of law⁷. The fictional pact with this book is so tight that innocent readers often forget that the only authentic mind in this book is that of Montesquieu himself, and that his Persian-disguised characters cannot account for genuine Eastern stands, but only for cultural stereotypes. The much acclaimed “epistemological privilege of being a stranger” (Todorov, 1999: 480, my translation / S.D.) only applies in this novel as a premise necessary to accede self-knowledge and self-criticism, and shall particularly apply to France and Europe, but not to the truth we need about Muslims or the Middle East.

⁵ See Franco Cardini, *Europa și Islamul: Istoria unei neînțelegeri* (Europe and Islam). Iași: Polirom, 2002.

⁶ Tariq Ali, *Ciocnirea fundamentalismelor - cruciade, jihaduri și modernitate* (The Clash of Fundamentalisms: Crusades, Jihad and Modernity). Antet, 2007.

⁷ Montesquieu, a baron from Toulouse, also worked as a magistrate in this city. In *Persian Letters*, he apparently parallels the West and the East, Europe and the Middle East, and particularly France and Persia, but in philosophical terms, the shocking differences found by the two Persians in France will be finally reduced to quite a similar idea: the absolutist monarchy of France, just like the despotic regimes of Asia and the Middle East, are both quasi-identical forms of oppression, raising the Enlightenment’s questions about the nature of absolute vs. relative values, or the issue of the human rights in one of its early stages.

In his great study⁸ about the French philosophical tradition of reflections on the Otherness, essayist Tzvetan Todorov detects in the French moralists and philosophers a deep contradiction: tolerance is easy as long as you do not actually *know* the Other. See one instance only: Montaigne's ideas about the cannibals reveal a projection of his own ideals upon a culture for which he does not have either a real understanding or genuine interest.

In a much newer historical context, Tariq Ali's *Book of Saladin* also resumes this particular leitmotiv of the stranger, which this time is impersonated in the Jewish scribe Ibn-Yakub, chosen by the Sultan to dictate his memories to him. This character, together with the Sultan's women and one uncle (Shadhi), is among the very few one-hundred-percent fictional characters of the novel, which is why we should look at him and try to see what the author meant by him. The answer is clearly stated right in the pages of the book: the Sultan wanted to dictate his memories to a man capable of revealing the truth after his death, and he denied in this respect his own Muslim historians, rejected for their exaggerations and literary embellished style. By keeping the Jewish scribe as an accurate registrar of truth, the Muslim author Tariq Ali practically made a promise of honesty to his readers, something that operates like an ideological stand for the entire book. Saladin's meeting with this scribe starts from the nostalgic remembrance of losing Jerusalem in favour of the "barbarians" and ends a few years after the Muslims led by Saladin had recaptured the city, in 1187.

In what concerns the *civilized/barbarian* or *believer/unbeliever* oppositions and conception, the whole book should be read in the reversed European equation.

Sultan Salah al-Din (1138-1193; Westernized *Saladin*) was the founder of the Ayyubid dynasty in Egypt and Syria and a name often quoted in the history of Europe, mainly for his military confrontations with the almost legendary king Richard "the Lionhearted", within the third Christian crusade. As figured in its very title, *The Book of Saladin* revolves around the personality of this great warrior, who is built not only as a political man dedicated for about forty years to the same political creed, but also as a Muslim who, in the meanwhile, never stops meditating upon its own condition or upon the very rationale of Islam and Islamism.

Contemporary scholars appreciate at present that "only rarely is the non-mythical Saladin discernible" (Lev, in Fierro, ed., 2010: 212): "a legend in his own lifetime" (*Ibid.*), the "Reviver of the empire of the Commander of the

⁸ Tzvetan Todorov, *Noi și ceilalți* (We and the Others), Iași: Institutul European, 1999.

faithful" (Fierro, in Fierro, ed., 2010: 2), as Salah al-Din was called, has become "a legendary figure, in the East as much as in the West" (Eddé, in Fierro, ed., 2010: 186), a ruler whose personal charisma and deep understanding of military tactics and human relations in times of war got mixed up with the insights of an unaccomplished scholar, who remained all of his life close to the learned and mystics.

The great novelty for a European eye on this book lies not so much in the Sultan's modesty and austerity of living, or even in his sense of honour and worship of forerunners, but most prominently in his hatred of war and the high appreciation of his soldiers' lives. Leaving from the fact that "it is not always easy to make decisions which affect the lives of so many people" (103), Salah al-Din believes that one should not enter a war but only when this is the last thing left. By this position, he proves to be a wise follower of his father and uncle, who were his models:

"My father's main concern, as always, was to avoid bloodshed" (72); "My good uncle Shirkuh was always reluctant to lose the life of any of his men without a good reason" (75-76).

His high appraisal of people's lives, his honest, unvengeful spirit, the proofs of mercy and forgiveness shown in historical moments when the Christians shocked the public opinion with their acts of cruelty and greed are not the results of a romantic vision, as one might think, but were explicitly registered in historical documents, in parallel with the unconceivable bloodsheds performed by the crusaders.

All historical and philosophical studies about Islam and Salah al-Din support Ali's literary stands about the military policy enforced by Salah al-Din during his political regime, first in Egypt and Syria⁹ and then in his entire empire. What makes this Muslim ruler exceptional for his times, and not only, is his complete disregard for money and wealth. Although he left sixteen sons behind, Saladin's possession at the time of his death was assessed at 1 piece of gold and 47 pieces of silver. He practically had given away all his preys to his soldiers and there was nothing left to pay even for his own funerals. Throughout a life of endless war, the real Salah al-Din is said to have "subordinated money to men" (Lyons & Jackson, *apud* Lev, in Fierro, ed., 2010: 212): "This policy left him in penury but made the others indebted and earned him fame as generous" (*Ibid.*), appreciate the exegetes¹⁰.

⁹ The novel advocates for his qualities as an enlightened ruler: "The Cairenes liked the Sultan. They knew that his tastes were modest and, unlike the Caliphs of the Fatimids, Salah al-Din had not taxed the people to accumulate a personal fortune. He rewarded his soldiers handsomely. His administrators had made sure that the country had not been plagued by famines" (156).

¹⁰ On the other hand, the scholars have understood that his army, which was almost entirely made of Kurdish and Turkish chivalry, with no pedestrians or military slaves, in practical terms indicated a

The same material disregard of Salah al-Din also involved food and diet, as he was almost a vegan, following a diet of great simplicity. Nevertheless, he is reported to have served to his army a “substantial breakfast” (240) every morning in his military campaigns, with meat dishes that were always the same for everybody. As a follower of Muhammad’s *hadiths*¹¹, he considered that people’s trust in their rulers is increased when they all eat the same, but this decision was at the same time deeply enrooted in religion:

“The Sultan insisted that everyone should eat the same meal. He told his emirs and secretaries that this simple rule recalled the earliest days of their faith. It was necessary to show both friend and enemy that, in a jihad, all were equal in the eyes of Allah” (240).

Or, on a similar occasion, he tells his nephew:

“[R]emember, we are all mortal, and rule only because people let us rule. Avoid greed and never display ostentation. Rulers who behave thus betray their own insecurity. (...) I have learnt that to win the respect of the people and, in particular, of our soldiers, one must learn to eat and dress like them. We are the lawgivers, Farrukh Shah. We must observe each law and set an example” (168).

Similarly to an underlying idea found in the exceptional historical novel of Robert Graves, *I, Claudius* (1934), which depicts the arbitrariness of life and death in the decadent morals of the Roman empire, Sultan Salah al-Din gives no credit to his greatness, and simply believes that a great man’s biography is the result of arbitrary circumstances in his destiny:

“We are never in full command of our own biographies, Ibn Yakub. Allah pushes us in a certain direction, the courage and skill of our commanders can change the course of a battle, but ultimately a great deal depends on fate. To a large extent it is who lives and who survives on the battlefield, or on the track to where the fight will take place, that determines our future” (74); “At (...) critical moments, timing is everything. Even a short delay, and victory withers to defeat”. (132)

History seems to support his scepticism and opinion on the arbitrariness of fate, for in the famous battle of Hattin (1187), known for serious errors of military tactics on the Christians’ part, the great trial for the Europeans was the desert:

“Some collapsed from sheer exhaustion. (...) Crazy by thirst and burnt by the sun, they pleaded for water, praying to their God and then to Allah, much to

luxury to which the Sultan had to pay a suitable price. It was the annual maintenance of this expensive army that cost him his entire fortune, but legends emerged from this very strategic choice he made.

¹¹ The *hadith* is a body of traditions about the life of the Prophet Muhammad, including his sayings. In the Islamic world, it has the second authority after the Qur’an.

the disgust of their knights who belonged to the Orders of the Templars and the Hospitallers" (274).

As for the meaning of war, the history of ideas pursued the parallel significations and complementariness of the terms "holy war" and *jihad*, who opposed the Christians and the Muslims in quite similar actions and goals¹². To Salah al-Din, as put by one of his scholars, an everlasting jihad was not an option, in spite of the Sultan himself spending a life in fighting such war:

"There were some hot-headed fools for whom the jihad meant a state of permanent war with the Franj, but Salah al-Din was never sympathetic to such a view" (200), testifies a character for his Sultan.

Besides, what made him be called the "Muslim prince of chivalry"¹³ of the Middle Ages was the fact that, once victorious, he used to spare a lot of lives, especially of kings and wives of noble men, as well as the lives of most Christian civil population found in the conquered cities. In his manly respect for women, Salah al-Din also left the Christian widow of Amery I, Maria Komnena, to leave Jerusalem with her entire fortune, which could have been easily confiscated as a prey of war. Such generosity is, to my knowledge, singular for that time¹⁴.

In a book of religion and war, it is natural that the inner core and climax of the plot should lie in a military confrontation of high prestige. This shall be the battle of Hattin, which also provides a famous episode cited in the chronicles, when, after capturing several Christian rulers, Salah al-Din executed a knight, Reynald of Châtillon, by his own hands, but spared the life of the circumstantial king Guy of Lusignan during the same scene, by saying, according to the chronicles (same idea in the novel):

"It is not the wont of kings, to kill kings; but that man had transgressed all bounds, and therefore did I treat him thus"¹⁵.

¹² See Jean Flori, work cited.

¹³ See the name of the book of Charles J. Rosebault, *Saladin Prince of Chivalry*, Kessinger Publishing Co, US, 2004, focused on Saladin's "exceptional magnanimity".

¹⁴ However, unless for a few illustrious exceptions, the Sultan set a ransom price on the largest body of prisoners of war left in Jerusalem, a decision that today looks more rational and tactful rather than political, and to a certain extent even merciful. His acts of mercy and friendships with some Christian commanders like Raymond of Tripoli were usually openly criticized by his intimates: "Friendship has no place in the midst of a jihad where the very future of our faith is at stake" (294), warns him in the novel one of his scholars, Imad al-Din.

¹⁵ According to the anonymous text *De Expugnatione Terrae Sanctae per Saladinum Libellus* (The Conquest of the Holy Land by Saladin).

In his explanation, the death of Reynald of Châtillon was motivated by the fact that the prisoner had breached all the codes of honour and the promises made to Salah al-Din. This knight was defined by historians as a “classic type of the anarchical feudal and brigand knight which was so known to Western Europe” (Grămadă, 1961: 171, my translation / S.D.). Nevertheless, his extraordinary greed and cruelty, even for those times, make the aforementioned explanation provided by Salah al-Din quite exact and turn the knight’s execution into a personal issue and a matter of principles. Historians usually do not advocate for Châtillon, but there are still some voices saying that the knight’s reckless behaviour towards the Crusaders’ truces with the Muslims “provided Saladin with the *casus belli* he had been waiting for” in order to start the hostilities with the Christians (Eddé, in Fierro, ed., 2010: 186)¹⁶.

Salah al-Din’s relationship with Richard (the Lionhearted) was also described as one of military rivalry and chivalrous mutual respect. History tells that, when losing his horse in a battle, Salah al-Din sent Richard two replacements, and later on, there was even a moment when the well-known opportunistic Richard proposed that his sister should marry Saladin’s brother and that Jerusalem could be their wedding gift. This is particularly odd, considering the reasons the Christians were supposed to be there for, not to mention that such an alliance was unacceptable at the time, which is why the Pope never approved of that.

Here is the image of almost legendary Richard the Lionhearted, not forgot in the European history for changing political moods, who is now looked through the eyes of the Sultan’s Jewish scribe (as spokesman for the Muslims):

“Three knights I spoke with separately corroborated another view. According to them he fights ferociously only when he is surrounded by other knights. They insist that he is capable of low cunning, treachery and cowardice and has been known to desert the field of battle before any of his soldiers when he fears defeat. His execution of our prisoners at Acre was the act of a jackal, not a lion” (352-353).

As compared to this image, Salah al-Din looks annoyingly unfit for such war, as noticed by his people:

“Salah al-Din was not a vindictive or cruel man. He did not harbour grudges. He usually counselled against vengeance. I heard him say once that to act purely of revenge was always dangerous, like drinking an elixir which becomes a habit. It was impolitic and did not differentiate Believers from the barbarians” (198).

¹⁶ Morrisson (1998: 55) uses the same Latin expression *casus belli* with reference to this episode.

Theoretical considerations about the Islam are spread throughout the entire book and at some point in the story are even subject to debate, against a Gnostic Cathar knight, arrived at the Sultan's court under exceptional circumstances. Confronted to this character, who says that Islamic religion is too much based on lust and the promise of pleasures in heaven¹⁷, the Muslim theologians state that the absolute secret of their religion is an absolution of man from the fear of death:

“Islam has broken this fear of death. That alone could be counted as one of our great achievements for without breaking this fear we cannot move forward. We are held back” (118).

The theological confrontation ends with the Sultan pointing out the very rationale of the Islam, which differs from Christianity in this apparent absence of spirituality and idealism:

“I think, however, that you are wrong. The driving force of our religion is not fornication, but the relation between god and the Believer. (...) All is counted. All is measured. Life is a trade in which there are gains and losses. He who does good earns good, and he who does evil earns evil, even on earth. (...) At the final reckoning Allah has a book of accounts from which the deeds of men are read and carefully weighed. Each is paid what is his due. This is our religion. It shows the influence of our world. A real world. It speaks a language which is easily comprehensible and that is the reason for its success” (120).

The presentation of women is most surprising in this novel, especially as compared to Montesquieu. Salah al-Din had a very large harem of about one hundred and fifty wives and mistresses, while fictional Usbek had only five wives, outnumbered by a number of eunuchs who supervised them draconically. The revolt of Usbek's wives and the cruel repression of the rebels symbolizes, in Montesquieu's novel, the violent and despotic regimes of the Orient, where women in particular are perceived as having no rights at all. And yet, *The Book of Saladin* becomes, through female-characters like Jamila or Halima, two of Saladin's wives, the vehicle of most unbelievable and unimaginable feminine conducts in terms of Muslim worlds. The homosexual love, without any notable consequences, arising between two

¹⁷ Bertrand of Toulouse appreciates that the key-point of Islamic belief is that after death the heaven “removes all earthly prohibitions”: “Your heaven is the most voluptuous of all. Are not your knights who fall while fighting the jihad promised the most delicious pleasures in heaven? Erections which last for eternity and an unlimited number of houris to choose from, while they sip from rivers heavy with wine” (119).

wives of the Sultan, has obviously intrigued all the readers of Tariq Ali and raised a lot of questions from his interviewers. Asked if he had evidence about such free and unpunished homoerotic love, he admits to have fictionalized it based on sheer logic:

“Well, if there are over hundred and fifty women in harem to share just one man, it is very obvious that some might fall in love with each other. Also, there are women who love the same sex. This happens in the Muslim world, too”.
(From an interview with Tariq Ali in *The Baloch Hal*)

One of these women, Sultana Jamila, was imagined as an advocate of modern European reason in a world of Islamic beliefs. A daughter of a sultan who “adored her and insisted that she be educated just like her brothers” and who “refused to tolerate any attempt to restrict her learning” (94), Jamila can be seen as a feminine *alter ego* of Tariq Ali, especially when she states, in the purest post-Montesquieu manner:

“(I have been devouring the writings of al-Farabi.) He has reinforced my instinctive belief that human reason is superior to all religious faiths, ours included” (221-222).

Abandoned by her female lover, Sultana Halima, she will be denied her progressive visions with the most obedient Islamic words of the entire novel:

“True freedom lies in the commands of Allah and his Prophet alone. Why should we be so arrogant and assume that we alone, a tiny minority, speak the truth, while a majority of Believers who refuse to doubt are, by virtue of this refusal, prisoners of prejudice?” (185)

Would this be a question that Tariq Ali asked himself? If we had not known his biography, we would have probably remained to sheer assumptions. But yet, given his autobiographical pages from *The Clash of Fundamentalisms*, we can now say that the author has never been a true Believer, but has remained faithful to the Islam as to one of his major cultural identity roots.

In conclusion, this novel speaks of Middle East worlds that modern Europe has always imagined different, in ways that were most of the times convenient to it. Besides, there are always things that we, as Europeans, would like to hide, or at least not to remember, or things that we always rewrite in most fashionable or excusable terms. This book, after an honest data-confronting research, is just one proof that, in order to better understand Eastern worlds, perhaps we should just let them speak for themselves.

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DIPLOMACY: CAREER OR POLITICAL REWARD? THE IMPORTANCE OF AVOIDING NEGATIVE LABELLING

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ABSTRACT. *Diplomacy: Career or Political Reward? The Importance of Avoiding Negative Labelling.* In the context of international relations more or less discretely determining the direction of world events being evaluated and dealt with in consequence, the role of soft power and diplomatic relations proves to be of significant importance in avoiding negative labelling and stereotyping taking place, thus ensuring a collaborative openness across borders. This paper addresses diplomacy in terms of being an elitist career or a political reward for active political figures, focusing on the recent European news of horse meat being mislabelled and sold as beef in British supermarkets and the linguistically controversial interview that H.E. Dr. Ion Jinga, Romanian Ambassador to the United Kingdom, gave on CNN in defence of Romania.

Keywords: *Diplomacy, international relations, stereotypes, communication, negative labelling.*

REZUMAT. *Diplomația: carieră sau recompensă politică? Importanța evitării etichetării negative.* În contextul în care relațiile internaționale determină într-o manieră mai mult sau mai puțin discretă direcția evenimentelor lumii, evaluarea și tratarea acestora în consecință, rolul relațiilor diplomatice și al *soft-power*-ului se dovedește a fi de o importanță semnificativă în evitarea etichetării negative și a stereotipurilor, asigurând astfel deschidere spre colaborare peste granițe. Această lucrare tratează diplomația în termeni de carieră elitistă sau, dimpotrivă, recompensă politică pentru personajele active politic, punând accent pe recente știri de la nivel european cu privire la carnea de cal etichetată greșit și vândută în supermarket-urile britanice drept carne de vită și pe interviul, controversat din punct de vedere lingvistic, acordat de Excelența Sa Dr. Ion Jinga, Ambasadorul României în Marea Britanie, la postul de televiziune CNN în apărarea României.

Cuvinte cheie: *diplomație, relații internaționale, stereotipuri, comunicare, etichetare negative.*

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There is no need to further argue on the importance of communication in defusing the uprising of either potential or incipient conflicts, as it has proven its efficiency throughout both earlier and more recent local and universal history. "Although force may sometimes play a role, traditional instruments of power are rarely sufficient to deal with the new dilemmas of world politics. New power resources, such as the capacity for effective communication and for developing and using multilateral institutions, may prove more relevant."²

It is not a rare case for prejudiced judgement to take place at the lowest or highest levels and discriminatory treatment to be applied as a consequence. A few viable explanations for this common behaviour could be that these people have either an incomplete knowledge or a developed habit of generalization not limited and controlled or perhaps they have a personal interest in advancing incomplete or false information to their own profit in some respect. To systematically advance such information when pursuing one's interest means to consciously produce and string together empty words. In the words of Harry G. Frankfurt, professor of philosophy emeritus at the prestigious, ivy league Princeton University, "bullshit is a greater enemy of the truth than are lies," because "the bullshitter's sole concern is the advancement and advantage to his or her agenda;" "it is impossible for somebody to lie unless he thinks he knows the truth. Producing bullshit requires no such conviction."³ Unfortunately, not even the well-educated escape the risk of producing stereotypes. It takes *finesse* to be willing and able to take a step back and acknowledge that the absolute reality might not be that which most easily appears in front of one's eyes or the one that would better suit one's interests or desires. Taking this step *backwards* is crucial for the *advancement* of clear, clean, fresh, stereotype-free ideas. A detached, passion-free, bird's-eye-view allows things to be seen in a broader context, thus creating the premises of a better understanding and a clearer image on it, *closer* to reality although *farther* from the eye at the beginning.

When stereotyping takes place, labels are attached and (mis) perceptions are created and, if repeated, perpetuated further and further on. Thus, behaviours are shaped and encouraged in an inaccurate direction. This labelling takes place when an individual or a group is perceived as being deviant from the norm and the 'normal' majority, therefore looked at with suspicion at first and with rejection after a while, for they are considered outcast. In a democratic world, every citizen is entitled to his or her opinion, but it is that of the majority that passes as a label upon a minority disobeying

² Nye, Joseph S. Jr. (1990), "Soft Power" in *Foreign Policy*. No. 80, Twentieth Anniversary. Washington Post. Newsweek Interactive, LLC. 164.

³ Frankfurt, Harry G. (2006), *On Bullshit*. Princeton University Press. Princeton, NJ.

the 'rules', not fitting the mould, not following the 'norm.' It was Edwin Lemert who introduced key concepts to what we call *labelling theory*, but it was Howard Saul Becker's book, "Outsiders," that convinced sociologists that he is a champion of key concepts of the labelling theory. From George Herbert Mead we know that people obtain labels as a consequence of how others perceive them and their behaviours. In the presence of other people, individuals are playing various roles at various times, to which other people might openly show their reactions, which are then interiorised by the former, aware of how they themselves are viewed and/or judged. These reactions and opinions, oftentimes exteriorized with the help of specific terms which describe or classify people, shape self-identity and behaviours of individuals. Groups play a powerful role in creating self-image and encouraging behaviours.

In ascribing a label it is most common for groups to be interested in those elements that do not fit the pattern, labelling being thus more concerned with deviant behaviour than with normal roles. These deviant roles are the source of negative stereotypes, which tend to support the disapproval society's holding for those behaviours. As Emile Durkheim put it,⁴ crime is not so much a violation of a penal code as it is an act that outrages society, which is why labelling comes in handy to satisfy society's need to be in control of such behaviour. If we extend the understanding of her work and these words in particular, we could also infer that deviant behaviour is just as much of an act that shocks society as crime is and it is not connected by default to moral codes or legal rules not being followed. If powerful negative labels are associated to an individual, their self-concept and social identity will change. *Stigmatization* can also act as a driving force towards persisting in a deviant behaviour, thus making the individual actually *becoming* a member of the group he or she was at first only *perceived* as being a part of. The idea of the power of negative labelling in contributing to further involvement in delinquent (or deviant for that matter) behaviour was also advanced by Frank Tannenbaum, who further argues⁵ that the greater the attention given to this negative label or *tagging* (a term he introduced first in his afore-mentioned book), the more likely it is for that person to identify themselves with it and act accordingly. Moreover, man having both psychological and social needs as we learned from Maslow, it is not surprising therefore that a negative label that turns into social stigmatization is a powerful psychological tool. It is similar to an oppression that, "the longer it lasts, the more profoundly it affects the oppressed. It ends by becoming so familiar to him that he believes

⁴ Durkheim, Émile (1951), *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*. Transl. John A. Spaulding and George Simpson. Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press of Glencoe. Transl. of 1897a. Edited with an Introduction by G. Simpson. Republished in 1952, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

⁵ Tannenbaum, Frank (1938), *Crime and Community*. Ginn. Boston.

it is part of his own constitution, that he accepts it and could not imagine his recovery from it. This acceptance is the crowning point of oppression.”⁶

The central idea for stigmatic labelling is the attribution of an inherent fault. It might not even be a real fault, but one that is perceived by some as being out of the ordinary. Erwin Goffman imagined the two opposing sides meeting and trying to keep up a conversation. “[W]hen normal and stigmatized do in fact enter one another’s immediate presence, especially when they attempt to maintain a joint conversational encounter, there occurs one of the primal scenes of sociology; for, in many cases, these moments will be the ones when the causes and effects of stigma will be directly confronted by both sides...”⁷ It is then that, upon a closer look and possibly a better understanding, the stigmatizers have the chance to make a change to their beliefs and thus maybe even change the outcome of their labelling upon the stigmatized. The reverse might also happen at this point and reinforcement to occur. However, Goffman alerts us society’s demands are filled with contradictions. A stigmatized person may be told he is no different than others, but he must declare his status as a “resident alien who stands for his group.”⁸ One has to give the impression that the burden of the stigma is not too heavy, yet keep himself at a required distance.

The need for such a controlled behaviour, however, falls under the notion of *discrimination*, for it presumes a prejudicial and/or distinguishing treatment of an individual or a group based on their actual or, oftentimes, perceived membership in a certain category, a treatment that is “worse than the ways people are usually treated,”⁹ because the alleged or real membership is linked to an undesirable group or social category and people tend to be reluctant when it comes to dealing with what they are not used to. It is for the same reason that “discriminatory behaviours [...] all involve some form of exclusion or rejection.”¹⁰ “When we don’t really know what people are like, it is easy to make guesses, fill in the blanks or make generalizations about «them» based on very limited knowledge. In short, we make judgements about others before we know the full story.”¹¹ These pre-judgements or prejudices can be seen as two-faced coins: if “they” are stupid and lazy, then “we” must be intelligent and hard-working. These are a common consequence of ignorance, misinformation or fear of differences and a generalization that “they” are all

⁶ Memmi, Albert (1965), *The Colonizer and the Colonized*. Orion Press. New York. 321-322.

⁷ Goffman, Erwin (1963), *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. Englewood Cliffs, NY: Prentice-Hall. 13.

⁸ *Ibidem*. 108

⁹ Cambridge Dictionaries Online. Accessed on June 10th, 2013. <<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/>>

¹⁰ United Nations Cyber School Bus. June 10, 2013. <http://cyberschoolbus.un.org/discrim/id_8_ud_print.asp>

¹¹ N.B.: A good target audience, the students.

alike. However, these stereotypes are not innate, we learn them. When such pre-established beliefs turn into actions, we have people being treated unfairly, thus the need for awareness and that step backwards.

People all around the world must deal with various types of discriminations. The word itself, "discrimination", comes from Latin "discriminat" meaning "distinguished between." Despite of the international bodies with an active involvement in promoting human rights, there is still a long way to go for discrimination to be eradicated.

One of the challenges that Romania has been facing since the falling of the communist regime 24 years ago, due to the Revolution of 1989, is its association to the present day with 'communist' practices. Romania is often perceived as a poor, corrupt state. Without painting the reality in bright pink, there is much more to Romania and its people than that.

Starting from its geographic position in the continent, Romania has seen itself in the situation of struggling on more fronts to make its place known to outlanders, be they simple citizens or strategic geo-political partners. Romania is habitually listed under the Eastern European countries (see, for instance, the United Nations' Population Division's classification of countries by major area and region of the world). This occurs, perhaps, due to a number of reasons, out of which two might appear as more prominent: the Soviet legacy of the past tailing the country long after its end has occurred and a constant common overlooking of the fact that the actual Eastern border of the European continent is officially recognized as being the Ural Mountains, not the Black Sea. Culturally, Romania can be perceived as belonging to the Central European countries group, due its territory of Transylvania formerly belonging to the Austrian-Hungarian Empire. The common history and the intermingling of Austrian, Hungarian and Romanian cultural elements in Transylvania and in Southern Bukovina are attributes that give Romania the status of a country closer in traditions to countries in the centre of the continent than on the South-Eastern Europe. Moreover, from a strictly geographical point of view, Romania's position within Europe is approximately at equal distance to the continent's extremities. Thus, Romania can rightfully claim (and it officially does) that it should be listed as a South-Eastern ...Central European country.

One of the stories that has been recently travelling round the world is the controversial horse meat adulteration scandal. The many trans-national implications of this case have made its publicity grow beyond the borders of Ireland, where it was first discovered by the Food Safety Authority Ireland (FSAI) during its food fraud programme. The first tests were conducted on 27 frozen burgers, out of which 37% were found to contain equine DNA, the European Movement Ireland NGO states on its website. The results of these

tests were received by FSAI on January 11th, 2013 and broke to the media 4 days later, this news rapidly gaining a snowball effect and travelling round the world. A survey conducted by *Which?*, the largest consumer body in the UK, shows that it was not so much the safety that concerned the population – there would have to be larger concentrations of the veterinary drug phenyl butazone or ‘bute,’ often found in thoroughbred racehorses, than the concentration discovered by FSA in the meat it tested for these mislabelled products to be dangerous for the human body. What alerted the public more appears to have been the issue of mislabelling the products, which resulted in 30% of the population buying less processed meat and a quarter (24%) buying less ready meals with meat in it or resorting to vegetarian alternatives.

However, along with concerns regarding mislabelling the products on the shelves, worries about food safety and quality control *have* arisen, but what kept the story on the first pages were thoughts and suspicions of food fraud and organised crime being involved in the food chain supply business worldwide. Not long after the scandal broke to the media it emerged that a key intermediary involved in the trade appeared to be using a secretive network similar to companies that link to the formerly convicted arms trafficker Viktor Bout.¹² The Organised Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP) pointed to Draap Trading Ltd., a Dutch intermediary firm based in Cyprus, as playing a pivotal role in shipping horsemeat across Europe, the same author asserts. The plot thickened as it appeared, according to the same journalist, that the person who was running the afore-mentioned Dutch supply society, Jan Fasen, had been convicted the previous year for having sold South American horsemeat as German and Dutch beef. Moreover, more and more journalistic sources available online point to Spanghero, a French distributor, for inaccurately having applied a French stamp certifying that the food was beef and not horsemeat, Christophe Guillon, Findus society’s head, said for the New Eastern Europe quarterly journal. The same hypothesis is supported by preliminary investigation results printed in the ..French newspaper *Le Parisien*.¹³ As for the Romanian authorities, the same writer noted, the president of the Sanitary-Veterinary National Authority for Food Safety (ANSVSA), Mihai Turcanu, concluded that the meat left Romania with the correct label on it, but “who knows what they (the intermediaries) did with it afterwards.” This idea was supported also by Sorin Minea, head of Romanian food industry federation, Romalimenta, who blamed the crisis on an “international mafia ring,” Jamie Doward argues in his article in *The Guardian*.

¹² Doward, Jamie, “Horsemeat Scandal Linked to Secret Networks of Firms.” Accessed on June 15th, 2013. <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2013/feb/16/horsemeat-scandal-victor-bout-firms>>

¹³ Pepine, Horatiu and Sonya Diehn, “Romania Refuses to be Fall Guy for Meat Scandal.” February 14th, 2013. July 10th, 2013. <<http://www.dw.de/romania-refuses-to-be-fall-guy-for-meat-scandal/a-16600711>>

This story has many ramifications, some of which point to Romania, others to France, or Poland, or Cyprus. What is clear, the same writer from the *New Eastern Europe* journal further argues, is that the country of origin for the mislabelling is ...not clear. Europe will have to wait until the end of this 2013 summer for the European Commission to release its due final report.

In the light of these events, as well as due to the echo of the many-sided present relationship between the British and the Romanians, Romania finds itself at this particular moment in its diplomatic history in serious need of a boost of positive image capital in the United Kingdom, as well as elsewhere abroad. The inflammatory discourses of radical British politicians (and adherent media) on the subject of Romanians' and Bulgarians' presumably imminent immigration in the UK due to the labour market restrictions being lifted as of January 2014 situate Romania in an even more delicate diplomatic position. It is for this reason that a need for the Romanian representatives' good presence and firm reactions proves to be crucial for the strengthening of the relationship built up until this moment with their British partner.

Being keen on preserving its credibility, Romania has immediately reacted on this subject, launching its own internal investigation, Romanian Prime Minister Victor Ponta and His Excellency, Dr. Ion Jinga, Romanian Ambassador to the UK have repeatedly reassured Europe. Moreover, the Romanian government has declared itself open to collaboration. Among these reactions was also the televised interview that HE Dr. Ion Jinga gave on CNN on February 12, 2013. Although the duration of this interview was not extensive, the 3 minutes and 44 seconds on air were enough to spur intense debate in Romania over the surprisingly poor linguistic performance given by the Romanian Ambassador to the UK, when he was presented with the opportunity to brush off the suspicions tainting Romania's image in the horse meat adulteration scandal.

He began his plead for Romania by making it clear that in his opinion the first responsibility to inform the public belongs to the retailer and *then* to the supplier of the product who, in its turn, has to see from whom it bought the minced meat. To make his point clear, he made his sentences short and clear, while also repeating this idea twice: "I repeat: if you want to find a good and proper response to your question [regarding the findings upon the Romanian investigation, n.a.], you have to check the supply chain of minced meat. Romania does not belong to this supply chain." However, although he made valid points, his confused look, long pauses and interrupted words were not consistent with his determined attitude to defend Romania in this scandal.

Although the beginning of the interview was bumpy and his non-verbal signals less convincing than expected of a man in his capacity as

ambassador, after the first minute Mr. Jinga appeared to regain his confident and determined attitude, conveying his message in a faster and more passionate manner, only to return again shortly after that to his broken answering pace. This detail was noticed and noted as well by the president of the Writers' Union in Romania, Nicolae Manolescu in *Romania Literară* in an article written in defence of Dr. Ion Jinga's controversial linguistic performance on CNN.

As long as according to an internal inquiry conducted by the Romanian government there proved to be “no evidence of any breach of European rules committed by the Romanian companies or on the Romanian territory,” Mr. Jinga further argues, he believes it is a matter of credibility that also needs to be addressed in order for the media to not manipulate its public and lead it to wrong paths. In supporting this idea, he stresses the word “no” when he speaks about no evidence being found of any wrong doing having taken place in Romanian abattoirs, has a determined attitude and invokes also the Romanian Prime Minister's speech that stated the same idea.

He keeps an open attitude, showing that Romania is fully cooperating with the British authorities and with the European Commission on this issue and he ends his interview by reiterating the idea stated in the beginning, that “Romania does not export any kind of minced meat.”

Strictly from a linguistic point of view, His Excellency did make a couple of disagreements (“there is no Romanian company that supply or export [...],” “the products [...] was made from minced meat”), a couple of minor grammatical errors (“at any kind,” “an investigation it's in progress) and mispronounced a word (“bought” pronounced as “boat”). This could have been caused, nonetheless, by a technical problem that led to a difficulty to focus, which is the official position adopted by Romania, The Press Office of the Romanian MFA officially explained. However, despite these linguistic considerations and his easily perceivable non-British accent, his argumentation was clear, simple and to the point.

The press clarifications available online on the Romanian MFA's website explain HE's performance on CNN the following way: “the broadcast experienced a series of technical difficulties, as the interview journalist was in Hong Kong and Ambassador Ion Jinga at CNN's London bureau (a few seconds' lag in the dialogue, voice overlay, echo); these generated long pauses and broken words. At the end of the interview the Ambassador informed the local CNN team of the situation and they confirmed it was not the first time this had happened and apologized for the problem.” One day after the infamous CNN interview, Wednesday, February 13's edition of “Sinteza zilei,” a prime time televised political talk-show aired on one of the leading Romanian TV stations, the moderator of the talk-show presented the TV spectators an internal e-mail

conversation between CNN producer Vicky Bennett, CNN Senior Director/TD Nikhil Cherian and the press officer of the Embassy of Romania. The content of this e-mail exchange came as a confirmation of the press clarifications made by the Romanian Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

Despite these official motifs offered by the MFA's Press office, the voices that criticized Mr. Jinga's performance on CNN did not appear to lose their intensity and questions arose as to why His Excellency waited until the end of the interview to inform the CNN team of the technical difficulties he was experiencing on-air. However, it is certainly worth mentioning that this was the first time in his more than 20 years long career as a diplomat that HE, Romanian Ambassador to the UK has been criticized for his fluency in English. As the afore-mentioned press communiqué shows in its last paragraph, "during his term of office in London Mr. Jinga has granted several dozen interviews to the British media. Only in the past two weeks [before the horse meat adulteration scandal broke to the media, n.a.] he had spoken over ten times in defence of the rights of Romanians to unrestricted circulation and in support of Romania's image in the UK." And it is true. Listening to other interviews that are available online, whether given to BBC or other broadcasting companies, listening to speeches that he held on various occasions at various receptions, the linguistically disappointing CNN interview stands out. Why now? Why this interview? Something appears to have gone wrong indeed.

Looking more into Mr. Jinga's professional background, we find out he graduated from highschool as the valedictorian, has a BSc in Physics, is a BA graduate from the Faculty of Law, holds an MA diplomas (one in Belgium), he benefited from a NATO Research Fellowship and holds a PhD degree in Law, had pedagogical experience within the Diplomatic Academy in Bucharest and worked as a physicist engineer at the Institute for Nuclear Energy Reactors in Pitesti, Romania. He gradually advanced in his diplomatic career since 1992. His Excellency was also General Director for EU Affairs, between 2003 and 2008 holding the position of Ambassador of Romania to Belgium. Since March 2008 he has been representing Romania's Foreign Affairs as Ambassador to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. His diplomatic activity was acknowledged in 2007, when the *Diplomatic News* magazine and Diplomacy and Global Risks organization awarded HE the title of the Ambassador of the year 2007 in the Kingdom of Belgium while in Brussels. Career-wise, 2012 proved to be a significant year for HE, for he was awarded the title of the Diplomat of the Year in Europe by the *Diplomat* magazine based not more, not less than in London, "a confirmation for the excellence level of the bilateral relations between Romania and the United Kingdom, within the frame of the Strategic partnership re-launched last year [2012, n.a.] with the visit of President of Romania, as guest of Her Majesty's Government", the MFA press release published online states.

In the *laudatio* given by the *Diplomat Magazine's* Publisher, Hugo de Block van Kuffeler upon awarding the title of the Ambassador of the Year in Europe in 2012, he referred to HE Dr. Ion Jinga as "one of the most active ambassadors here in London", with a "charismatic approach to diplomacy", whose "active role has overseen an increase in bilateral trade between UK and Romania by 50% since 2009". His constant travels around UK have served to create "strategic partnerships in public diplomacy, cultural institutions, academia" and "promote the interests of his country's community here, living in the UK"; "world champion in all of these, he has done a huge amount to change the media's perception on his country to one of Europe's great assets", Mr. Hugo de Block van Kuffeler further declares.

The negative labelling that the CNN interview was followed by, directed towards HE Dr. Ion Jinga as a career diplomat, was therefore based on a singular public performance. What is again surprising and seems to defy logic, Romanians being the ones often complaining to be mistreated when abroad upon stating their nationality, is the fact that the negative reactions to this interview came from the local Romanian press and Romanian public, not from the international media. Without rejecting the combined importance of content *and* form in delivering a message and every point made by Mr. Jinga's new opponents and, at the same time, far from negating the role of public appearances, especially in international media of high calibre, in the context of a sensitive topic in need of clarifications from a state official on duty, it appears to go against good judgement to draw a conclusion based on a single event, however controversial this event might be. With this in mind, the focus should be on how Romania and the Romanian community are perceived abroad, what Romania's representatives are doing to help improve this perception and the subsequent bilateral relations and how effective their activity is. It is then, the moment the end result of these relations are analysed, that conclusions might be drawn whether the political rewards or career paths are the ones keeping an official of this rank in his office. It is then that accountability can and should make its presence felt, with all that it entails.

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KOMMENTARE AUS DEN WICHTIGSTEN TAGESZEITUNGEN DEUTSCHLANDS UND LUXEMBURGS ALS INDIKATOREN FÜR GESELLSCHAFTLICHE ENTWICKLUNGEN IN BEIDEN LÄNDERN

HANS W. GIESSEN¹

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG. Der Beitrag vergleicht zwei Kommentare aus der wichtigsten deutschen und der wichtigsten luxemburgischen Tageszeitung zum selben Ereignis, der Kontroverse um den französischen Komiker Dieudonné. Es zeigt sich, dass die rechtsgerichteten, rassistischen Positionen Dieudonnés in beiden Ländern deutlich abgelehnt werden. Die semiotische Interpretation deutet darauf hin, dass dies in Deutschland die Mehrheitsmeinung ist, obwohl es auch andersdenkende Minderheiten zu geben scheint; diese sind in Luxemburg offenbar inexistent. Zudem fällt auf, dass die luxemburgische Presse plurilingual ist, obwohl wir uns dort in einer Phase der Kodifizierung einer eigenen Nationalsprache befinden, während in Deutschland, das ja eine etablierte Nationalsprache besitzt, nur monolinguale Texte existieren.

Schlüsselwörter: *Kommentare, Tageszeitungen, Sprachenwahl, semiotische Interpretation, Rechte Positionen*

ABSTRACT. *Commentaries from leading German and Luxembourg daily newspapers as indicators of social development in the two countries.* Two commentaries from the leading German and Luxembourg daily newspapers are examined in regard to the same event, the controversy about the French right-wing satirist Dieudonné. It can be shown that his positions are rejected in both countries, to a significant extent. The semiotic interpretation shows, however, that in Germany the rejection is accepted by a large majority, whilst there exist differently thinking minorities, whereas such minority positions seem to be non-existent in Luxembourg. Another striking point is that the press of Luxembourg is plurilingual in spite of the fact that a new national language is in the process of being codified, whereas in Germany with an established national language only monolingual commentaries can be found.

Keywords: *commentary, newspapers, choice of languages, semiotic interpretation, right-wing positions*

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REZUMAT. Comentarii din cele mai importante cotidiene din Germania și Luxemburg ca indicatori de limbă ai dezvoltării sociale în cele două țări. Sunt analizate două comentarii apărute în importante cotidiene din Germania și Luxemburg. Aceste comentarii vizează același eveniment: controversa privind satiristul francez de extremă dreapta Dieudonne. Se poate demonstra că atitudinea acestuia este respinsă în ambele țări, într-o măsură semnificativă. Interpretarea semiotică arată, totuși, că în Germania respingerea acestuia este acceptată de o largă majoritate, existând, în același timp și minorități care au alte atitudini; aceste grupuri minoritare par non-existente în Luxemburg. Un alt punct important îl constituie faptul că presa din Luxemburg este multilingvă, în ciuda faptului că o nouă limbă națională este codificată, în timp ce în Germania, țară cu o limbă națională recunoscută, pot fi găsite doar comentarii făcute într-o singură limbă.

Cuvinte cheie: comentariu, ziar, opțiune lingvistică, interpretare semiotică, orientare dreapta-stânga

1. Einleitung

Anfang Januar 2014 hat der französische Innenminister Manuel Valls die französischen Präfekten und Bürgermeister angeordnet, die in der zweiten Kalenderwoche 2014 beginnende Tournee des rechtsgerichteten Komikers Dieudonné M'bala M'bala (wörtliche Übersetzung des Vornamens: der „Gottgegebene“) zu stoppen und sämtliche Auftritte verbieten. Anlass war eine durch Dieudonné patentierte Grußform, die an den Hitlergruß erinnert; rechtliche Handhabe gab es zudem durch Steuerbetrügereien des Komikers. Valls Vorgehen wurde vom französischen Präsidenten François Hollande explizit unterstützt, der sich diesbezüglich am Dienstag, dem 7. Januar 2014 zu Wort gemeldet hat.

Natürlich schaltete Dieudonné einen Anwalt ein und berief sich auf seine Meinungsfreiheit, die Valls und Hollande beschnitten hätten. Der Rechtsstreit und seine Folgen sollen hier jedoch nicht im Vordergrund stehen. Vielmehr geht es um die Berichterstattung und insbesondere die Kommentierung des „Auftrittsverbots“ im Ausland, insbesondere in Deutschland und in Luxemburg. Der Beitrag hat auch nicht die inhaltliche Bewertung des Ereignisses in Frankreich zum Ziel. Vielmehr soll die Bewertung des und der Umgang mit dem Ereignis in Deutschland und Luxemburg dargestellt werden.

Beides sind Nachbarländer Frankreichs; beide Länder haben eine enge historische Beziehung zu Frankreich. Vor dem Hintergrund der deutschen Geschichte, die Luxemburg ebenfalls sehr stark beeinflusst hat, war zudem zu erwarten, dass die spezielle Thematik in beiden Ländern mit Aufmerksamkeit beobachtet werden würde.

Die Bewertung des Ereignisses sollte als semiotisches Zeichen genutzt werden, das Einsichten über die öffentliche beziehungsweise zumindest die veröffentlichte Meinung (zu den Begriffen Habermans 1990) in diesen beiden Ländern gestatten würde. Zudem erlaubt die Untersuchung Aussagen zu den kommentierenden Zeitungen und zur Nutzung der Textsorte Kommentar in beiden Ländern.

2. Die untersuchten Zeitungen

In Deutschland gibt es eine größere Anzahl überregionale Tageszeitungen, die gemäß eines Rechts-links-Spektrums eingeordnet werden können. Zudem gibt es Regionalzeitungen sowie Boulevardzeitungen - im Gegensatz zu Luxemburg mit einem Staatsgebiet von der Größe des kleinsten deutschen Flächenstaats, des Saarlandes, und einer Einwohnerzahl von lediglich etwas mehr als einer halben Million. Da es solche Zeitungen in Luxemburg nicht gibt, musste die Untersuchung, wenn ein Vergleich auf der selben Ebene durchgeführt werden sollte, auf Qualitätszeitungen begrenzt werden.

In Deutschland reicht das Spektrum der Qualitätszeitungen von der linksalternativen „Tageszeitung“ über das sozialistisch orientierte „Neue Deutschland“ und die linksliberalen Blätter „Frankfurter Rundschau“ sowie „Süddeutschen Zeitung“ über die tendenziell wirtschaftsliberale „Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung“ zur konservativen „Welt“ (sowie, je nach Definition, auch die „Berliner Zeitung“ und der „Tagesspiegel“, bezüglich derer diskutiert werden kann, ob sie besondere, weil aus der Bundeshauptstadt stammende Regionalblätter sind - die sich auf Berlin konzentrierende Abonnentenstruktur spricht für die Einschätzung als Regionalblätter, gleichzeitig findet man beide Blätter aber auch an fast allen deutschen Bahnhofsbuchhandlungen, so dass sie auch eine teilweise überregionale Verbreitung haben). Die „Süddeutsche Zeitung“ ist die Qualitätszeitung mit der höchsten Auflage.

In Luxemburg existieren (trotz einer begrenzten Einwohner- und daher auch Leserschaft) mehrere Tageszeitungen: das „Luxemburger Wort“, das „Tageblatt“ und die „Zeitung vom Lëtzebuurger Vollek“. In Luxemburg ist die Zeitungslandschaft insofern analog zur Situation in Deutschland gegliedert, als die Zeitungen unterschiedliche politische Ausrichtungen haben. So ist das „Tageblatt“ sozialdemokratisch geprägt und die „Zeitung vom Lëtzebuurger Vollek“ bekennt sich zu linken politischen Positionen. Da das „Luxemburger Wort“ der Katholischen Kirche und der in der Nachkriegszeit am längsten regierenden Partei, der sozialkonservativen Christlich Sozialen Volksunion, nahesteht, ist ihr Einfluss besonders groß. Sie fühlt sich auch selbst (gemäß der Aussage des leitenden Redakteurs C. Langenbrink im Gespräch mit dem Autoren dieses Artikels) auf einer Ebene mit den Deutschen Qualitätszeitungen und gilt insgesamt als das wichtigste Blatt des Großherzogtums.

Die Überprüfung hat ergeben, dass alle genannten Zeitungen in Deutschland wie in Luxemburg über die Dieudonné-Auseinandersetzung in Frankreich berichtet haben. Jedoch findet sich nicht in jeder dieser Zeitungen eine Kommentierung. Für diese Untersuchung war aber ein Kommentar als bewertende Textsorte (Lüger 1995) von besonderer Bedeutung. Sowohl in der „Süddeutschen Zeitung“, als auch im „Luxemburger Wort“ finden sich am Tag unmittelbar nach Hollandes Eingreifen (also am Mittwoch dem 8. Januar 2014), Kommentare zum Thema. Die Kommentierung erfolgte also in zwei Blättern, die sich im jeweiligen Land als dominierende nationale Meinungsführer verstehen.

3. Das Thema

Es war erwartet worden, dass die Dieudonné-Auseinandersetzung in beiden Ländern diskutiert werden würden - vor allem, weil sich Valls und sogar Staatspräsident Hollande persönlich positioniert hatten.

Dennoch ist deutlich, dass es die Berichterstattung über provokante Komiker oder Musiker in Nachbarländern nicht selbstverständlich oder auch nur üblich ist. Um ein vergleichbares Ereignis zu nennen: Der deutsche Liedermacher und Komiker Hans Söllner befindet sich seit Jahren im Rechtsstreit mit den deutschen Justizbehörden, weil er für die Liberalisierung von Rauschmitteln eintritt, aber auch, weil er das staatliche System als korrupt empfindet und bayerische (und auch bundesdeutsche) Politiker (bis hin zur Bundeskanzlerin Angela Merkel) mittels eines Vokabulars charakterisiert, das über aus juristischer Sicht offenbar bereits mehrfach diskutiert wurde ob es den Tatbestand der Beleidigung erfüllt hat (Beck 2006). Dennoch ist diese Kontroverse meines Wissens zufolge noch nie Anlass für eine ausführlichere Berichterstattung im Ausland gewesen, geschweige denn für Kommentare.

Wenn nun der Fall des französischen Komikers Dieudonné eine solche Aufmerksamkeit in Drittländern erregt, bedeutet dies zunächst, dass eine Dimension erreicht worden sein muss, die im Fall Söllners nicht gegeben ist. Diese andere Dimension kann qualitativer oder quantitativer Natur sein. Als quantitativ wäre in diesem Fall der Zuwachs an Interesse und Zustimmung zu bewerten, die Dieudonné im Frankreich erhält - bis hin eben zur Tatsache, dass sich der französische Staatspräsident zu einer Intervention veranlasst sah; aus qualitativer Sicht ist in Deutschland und Luxemburg sicher die rechte politische Gesinnung Dieudonnés eine besondere Erwähnung wert.

In der Tat beschäftigen sich beide Kommentare mit Dieudonnés Antisemitismus; beide Kommentare machen deutlich, dass die Anordnung von Valls zwar der Anlass dafür ist, dass sie geschrieben wurden, dass aber die politische Positionierung des Komikers der tatsächliche Grund ihrer Existenz sei.

4. Inhaltliche Gemeinsamkeiten

Beide Zeitungen positionieren sich eindeutig: Dieudonné sei ein „Brunnenvergifter“, so die „Süddeutschen Zeitung“; seine Position sei « intolérable », so das „Luxemburger Wort“. Beide Zeitungen analysieren auch die politischen Folgen auf analoge Art und Weise: Sie fürchten, dass Dieudonné zum „Märtyrer“ mutiere („Süddeutschen Zeitung“), da er sich als « victime d'une censure » stilisieren könne.

Beide Kommentare bewerten die Person Dieudonnés insoweit identisch; zudem scheinen sie auch eine ähnliche Bewertung der französischen Gesellschaft zu teilen, in der es offenbar viele Bewunderer Dieudonnés gibt. Beide Kommentare verweisen darauf, dass der Antisemitismus als Problem in Frankreich existiere und offenbar überwiegend sozial genährt werde. Die „Süddeutschen Zeitung“ verweist auf die hohe Arbeitslosigkeit im Nachbarland, die zu einer gesellschaftlichen Spaltung führe - viele arbeitslose Jugendlichen erleben sich demnach in einer gewissen Diskrepanz zum politischen System, in dem sie Opfer geworden seien.

Die „Süddeutschen Zeitung“ bewertet die Stimmung der Dieudonné-Unterstützer als Ausdruck einer Ohnmachtsgefühls arbeits- und machtloser Jugendlicher „gegen die da oben“. Diese Diagnose scheint das „Luxemburger Wort“ zu teilen, wenn es schreibt, dass die Situation in Frankreich einen gewissen Populismus fördere « de « celui qui dit tout haut ce que d'autres pensent tout bas » ».

Damit teilen beide Zeitungen die Position, dass ein rechter Antisemitismus auch durch soziale Schief lagen nicht gerechtfertigt ist. Die Ablehnung rassistischen Gedankenguts prägt deutlich und uneingeschränkt beide Kommentare.

5. Inhaltliche Unterschiede

Fraglich ist jedoch, ob diese Bewertung, der Bedeutung beider Zeitungen gemäß, auch als Indikator für die öffentliche Meinung in beiden Ländern gilt. Ist die öffentliche Meinung in Deutschland und Luxemburg wirklich so eindeutig antirassistisch, wie diese Kommentare vermuten lassen?

Es wurde bereits darauf hingewiesen, dass es sich um Qualitätszeitungen handelt, die also eher von den gesellschaftlichen Eliten gelesen werden - denjenigen « tout haut », die sich ja, so offenbar die Position Dieudonnés, von denjenigen « tout bas » entfernt hätten. Fraglich ist mithin, ob diese Diagnose Dieudonnés auch für Deutschland und Frankreich gilt. Möglicherweise sind beide Kommentare als Indikatoren für das Meinungsbild bezüglich der Positionierung der gesellschaftlichen Eliten in beiden Ländern zu lesen, aber nicht für die Positionierung der Gesamtgesellschaft. Zumindest

könnte es sein, dass die Bewertung durch die öffentliche Meinung weniger deutlich und uneingeschränkt ausfiele. Gibt es diesbezüglich weitere Hinweise in beiden Kommentaren?

Möglicherweise gibt es in der Tat einen Indikator, der gleichzeitig auf einen der wesentlichen Unterschiede in beiden Kommentierungen verweist.

Im „Luxemburger Wort“ ist an keiner Stelle davon die Rede, dass die Positionierung des Kommentators der öffentlichen Meinung (oder auch nur gesellschaftlicher Teilmeinungen) widerspreche. In der Tat wird die Situation in Frankreich so geschildert, als handele es sich ausschließlich um einen zwar moralisch bewerteten, doch aus der Distanz durchgeführten Blick auf ein anderes Land, das lediglich deshalb besondere Bedeutung hat, weil es eben das Nachbarland ist. Damit wird eine deutliche Diskrepanz zwischen der Situation in Luxemburg und in Frankreich hergestellt.

Erfolgt diese Positionierung zu Recht (handelt es sich also nicht um einen Wahrnehmungsfehler des Kommentators), würde es sich tatsächlich um ein Indiz dafür handeln, dass die Gesellschaft in Luxemburg weitgehend frei von rechten, rassistischen Positionen ist.

Diese Interpretation wird bestärkt durch Unterschiede zum Kommentar der „Süddeutschen Zeitung“. Dort gibt es diese Eindeutigkeit offenbar nicht. Der Kommentator verweist explizit darauf, dass sich Frankreich in einem Dilemma befinde, „das man in Deutschland nur zu gut kennt“.

Darüber hinaus gibt es einen weiteren Unterschied, der offenbar auf jeweils anderen Erfahrungen mit der Problematik rechter rassistischer Positionen fußt. Der Luxemburger Kommentator hat und kennt keine Lösung für das Problem des Umgangs mit Personen wie Dieudonné: « le dilemme est insoluble ». Dagegen scheint der Kommentator der „Süddeutschen Zeitung“ Lösungswege zu kennen, die offenbar in Frankreich auf fast sträfliche Art übersehen worden sind: „Nötig war das nicht, der Mann wäre leichter zu haben gewesen. Jahrelang hat sich der Staat nicht darum geschert, dass dieser „Clown des Hasses“ weder seine diversen Geldstrafen noch seine Steuern bezahlt. Zu spät, nun darf ein Rüpel und mutmaßlicher Straftäter zum Märtyrer mutieren.“

Dies verweist offensichtlich auf Erfahrungen, die das im Anfangsabsatz postulierte Bekenntnis, dass man dieses Dilemma „in Deutschland nur zu gut kennt“, noch verstärkt. Dem Kommentar der „Süddeutschen Zeitung“ ist also recht eindrucksvoll zu entnehmen, dass es ähnliche Positionen wie diejenige Dieudonnés auch in Deutschland gibt. Die Eindeutigkeit der Positionierung macht deutlich, dass die Leserschaft der „Süddeutschen Zeitung“ offenbar nicht dazu zählt. Weitere Formulierungen deuten darauf hin, dass die rechten Rassisten in Deutschland wohl lediglich eine Minderheit darstellen; der Kommentator spricht von „rechtsextremem Gruppen und Spinner[n]“. Vor allem der Ausdruck „Spinner“ deutet auf eine kleine gesellschaftliche

Teilmenge, über die sich der Kommentator im Gefühl der Meinungshoheit positionieren kann.

Dagegen scheint es in Luxemburg nicht nur keine Notwendigkeit zu geben, auf politische Strömungen und deren Vertreter zu verweisen, die Dieudonné nahestehen. Der etwas hilflose Blick auf das Nachbarland legt nahe, dass der Kommentator das Problem auch nur aus der Ferne kennt.

Die Kommentare konnten mithin als semiotische Zeichen genutzt werden. Demnach scheint in Deutschland und Luxemburg rechtes rassistisches Gedankengut mehrheitlich, zumindest von den gesellschaftlichen Eliten, deutlich abgelehnt zu werden. In Luxemburg scheint es gar nicht vorhanden zu sein, während es in Deutschland offenbar immerhin eine gesellschaftliche Teilmenge gibt, die solche Positionen vertritt.

6. Formale Unterschiede

Neben dem Inhalt sollen die Kommentare auch für ein Blick auf die Zeitungskultur in beiden Ländern genutzt werden.

Zunächst fällt auf, dass der Kommentar einer Zeitung, die einen Namen in deutscher Sprache hat (das „Luxemburger Wort“), auf Französisch publiziert worden ist. Ein weiterer Blick in die Zeitung bestätigt, dass dies kein Einzelfall ist. Auch in Berichten und Artikeln finden sich französischsprachige Texte - in der Regel bei Themen, die mit dem frankophonen Ausland zu tun haben. Dagegen werden Berichte und Artikel aus dem deutschsprachigen Ausland auf Deutsch publiziert. Offenbar hat das „Luxemburger Wort“ überwiegend deutsche Presseagenturen abonniert, denn die Mehrzahl der internationalen Artikel ist ebenfalls auf deutsch. Es finden sich aber auch, wenngleich seltener, englischsprachige Artikel im „Luxemburger Wort“.

Zumindest wird dadurch das Gefühl einer gewissen Authentizität erzeugt. Die Reporter der Zeitung, die aus und über den frankophonen Bereich berichten, sind der Sprache dort so gut mächtig, dass sie auch selbst in ihr schreiben; dies gilt umgekehrt auch für den deutschen und den internationalen Raum.

Zudem ist dieses Faktum ein Indikator dafür, dass es in Luxemburg offenbar möglich ist, eine plurilinguale Tageszeitung zu produzieren. In Deutschland wäre dies, der persönlichen Einschätzung zufolge, undenkbar. Demnach findet sich in der gesamten „Süddeutschen Zeitung“ kein einziger Artikel, der nicht auf Deutsch geschrieben wäre.

Auch dies ist eine interessante Beobachtung, die einen Eindruck von der linguistischen Realität in den beiden Ländern widerspiegelt. Obwohl es in Deutschland vielfältige Diskussionen gibt, ob nicht zu viel Englisch im Sprachalltag auftrete (z.B. Schneider 2008), lässt sich im Text der „Süddeutschen Zeitung“ lediglich ein einziger Anglizismus feststellen („Clown“); die anderen

Alienismen sind relativ alt und werden vermutlich von der Mehrzahl der Leser nicht als solche empfunden; sie stammen aus dem Lateinischen, dem Griechischen und dem Französischen. Umgekehrt ist die Situation in Luxemburg, wo man erst seit dem zweiten Weltkrieg (und aufgrund der in dieser Zeit von den Deutschen begangenen Taten) überhaupt begonnen hat, den lokalen moselfränkischen Dialekt in Abgrenzung zum Deutschen zur Nationalsprache zu kodifizieren (das Lëtzebuergische). Es läge nahe, zu vermuten, dass diese ‚neue‘ Sprache besonders geschützt werden müsste. Dazu kommt ein weiterer Aspekt: In Luxemburg besteht (im Gesamtstaat) etwa ein Drittel beziehungsweise (in der Hauptstadt) etwa die Hälfte der Einwohnerschaft aus Bürgern, die keine luxemburgischen Staatsangehörigen sind (vergleiche Giessen 2009), so dass die Vermutung naheliegt, man würde die eigene und eben ‚neue‘ Sprache besonders schützen müssen. Im Gegensatz zu diesen Vermutungen kennt man entsprechende Ängste in Luxemburg aber offenbar nicht - und die Etablierung des Lëtzebuergischen als neue Sprache scheint trotzdem nicht als gefährdet empfunden zu werden.

Die französische Sprache wird im „Luxemburger Wort“ offenbar angemessen und analog zu ihrem Einsatz in Frankreich selbst genutzt. Auch diesbezüglich gibt es Unterschiede zwischen den Kommentaren der beiden hier analysierten Tagesszeitungen. Das vom „Luxemburger Wort“ genutzte Französisch bewegt sich auf sehr elaboriertem Niveau. Dies entspricht insoweit dem auch von allen französischen Qualitätszeitungen eingesetzte Sprachcode (Lüger 2008). Insgesamt kann daher festgestellt werden, dass das „Luxemburger Wort“ als plurilinguale Tageszeitung so souverän mit den Kulturkreisen umgeht, aus denen es berichtet und deren Sprache es jeweils benutzt, dass es sich sogar im Sprachniveau anpasst.

Dagegen überrascht die „Süddeutsche Zeitung“ mit einem eher umgangssprachlichen Sprachniveau. Vokabeln wie „ein Rüpel“, Phraseologismen wie „der Mann wäre leichter zu haben gewesen“ oder gar „Leck mich...!“ gibt es auf vergleichbarer Ebene im Kommentar des „Luxemburger Worts“ nicht und widersprechen auch den Erwartungen, die möglicherweise an eine überregionale Qualitätszeitung gestellt werden. Andererseits drücken sie direkte Betroffenheit aus. Möglicherweise handelt es sich um eine linguistische Reaktion auf die inhaltliche Brisanz des Themas, die der Kommentator ja für Deutschland sieht. Falls diese Einschätzung tatsächlich den Grund widerspiegeln sollte, würde auch dies ein erneutes semiotisches Licht auf die Situation in Deutschland werfen.

7. Zusammenfassende Bewertung der Kommentare

Die Analyse der Kommentare zur Person des französischen Komikers Dieudonné M’bala M’bala aus der jeweils wichtigsten überregionalen

Tageszeitung Deutschlands und Luxemburgs zeigt viele Gemeinsamkeiten, aber auch signifikante Unterschiede. Gemeinsam ist, dass die rechtsgerichteten, rassistischen Positionen Dieudonnés in beiden Ländern deutlich abgelehnt werden. Offenbar entspricht diese Ablehnung jeweils der herrschenden Meinung. Während es aber in Luxemburg keine nennenswerte Gegenposition zu geben scheint, deutet der Kommentar der deutschen „Süddeutschen Zeitung“ an, dass es hier eine - wenn auch offenbar nicht meinungbestimmende - Minderheit gibt, die ähnliche Positionen vertritt.

Vor dem Hintergrund existenter beziehungsweise fehlender rechtsrassistischer Positionen ist interessant, dass das „Luxemburger Wort“ offenbar als plurilinguale Tageszeitung Erfolg hat und mithin die Realität im Land widerspiegelt. In der plurilingualen Gesellschaft Luxemburgs scheint es keinen Rassismus zu geben - als Folge dieser Offenheit? Die „Süddeutsche Zeitung“ ist dagegen monolingual, während es in Deutschland offenbar vergleichbar problematische Strömungen gibt. Ihre Betroffenheit angesichts des Rechtsrassismus drückt die „Süddeutsche Zeitung“ mittels eines überraschend saloppen Sprachniveaus aus. Dies verstärkt den Eindruck, dass die Problematik in Deutschland als durchaus virulent empfunden wird.

Anhang

Quellentexte

Carré, Gaston (2014), « Indépassable dilemme ». In: *Luxemburger Wort*, Mittwoch, 8. Januar 2014, Seite 3

La vertu politique doit élever la voix contre ceux qui tentent de l'outrager, mais à trop s'indigner finit par dresser un théâtre aux guignols les plus excités. Tel est l'indépassable dilemme qui régulièrement pèse sur la démocratie, qui dans l'affaire Dieudonné, en France, vient de trouver une nouvelle déclinaison. Voilà un épouvantail donc qui sur scène flatte le poil du Français dans le sens de ses penchants les plus inavouables, d'un antisémitisme en particulier qui dans son expression la plus grasse ne cesse de roder dans l'inconscient collectif. Peut-on laisser l'épouvantail grimacer sans réagir? Non, bien-sûr: les couillonades antisémites de Dieudonné sont intolérables. Interdire ses spectacles, suite à l'incitation du ministre de l'Intérieur Manuel Valls aux municipalités, revient toutefois à l'ériger en victime d'une censure que ses partisans auront beau jeu de dénoncer, tandis que l'«humoriste» bénéficie d'une publicité dont le plus puissant des imprésarios n'aurait osé rêver. Cet allumé qui dit avoir pour amis Ahmadinejad et Bachar al-Assad, fouette en son public le besoin de «casser du juif», mais les tribunaux par leurs amendes assurent sa promotion et les

maires qui interdisent son numéro le consacrent en héros muselé, sur l'impérissable modèle, cher à tous les populismes, de «celui qui dit tout haut ce que d'autres pensent tout bas». Répétons-le cependant: le dilemme est insoluble, entre tolérer l'intolérable ou tendre aux malfaisants les verges avec lesquelles ils vont vous flageller.

Wernicke, Christian, „Gottes Strafe“. In: *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. Mittwoch, 8. Januar 2014, Seite 4

Frankreichs Regierung steckt in einem Dilemma, das man in Deutschland nur zu gut kennt: Ist ein Verbot hilfreich, um Umtriebe rechtsextremer Gruppen und Spinner zu stoppen – oder verschafft der Zugriff der Staatsmacht solchen Brunnenvergiftern nur unnötig Publizität und Profit? Paris hat sich für die harte Hand entschieden und will den galligen Komiker und notorischen Provokateur Dieudonné mit einem landesweiten Auftrittsverbot belegen. Dieser selbsterklärte „Gottgegebene“ geriert sich seither als politisch Verfolgter.

Und siehe da, französische Jugendliche erklären sich zu Tausenden mit ihrem fragwürdigen Idol solidarisch. Viele von ihnen interessiert wenig, was Dieudonné an Rassenhass verbreitet. Sie sehen in dem Provokateur vor allem einen, der „gegen die da oben“ poltert, gegen das Establishment. Sie fühlen sich verraten von einer Republik, in der jeder vierte von ihnen keinen Job hat. Und sie zeigen das per Armbewegung, mit ihrer „Quenelle“ – einer Geste, die den Nazi-Gruß imitiert und etwa dies sagen soll: „Leck mich...!“

So wird „der Gottgegebene“ nun zum falschen Helden. Nötig war das nicht, der Mann wäre leichter zu haben gewesen. Jahrelang hat sich der Staat nicht darum geschert, dass dieser „Clown des Hasses“ weder seine diversen Geldstrafen noch seine Steuern bezahlt. Zu spät, nun darf ein Rüpel und mutmaßlicher Straftäter zum Märtyrer mutieren.

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FUNCIONES DE LAS UNIDADES FRASEOLÓGICAS EN EL TEXTO NARRATIVO

IULIA BOBĂILĂ¹

ABSTRACT. *Functions of the phraseological units in the narrative text.*

This article aims at providing an overview of the concept of phraseological unit according to Spanish lexicologists, analyzing its key features and their implications for the textual functions in the narrative text. The practical part of the paper explores some of the stylistic-semantic functions of the phraseological units in Carlos Ruiz Zafón's novel *The Shadow of the Wind*, with a special emphasis on their desautomatization and their role in the depiction of the characters.

Key words: *textual function, phraseological unit, stability, desautomatization.*

REZUMAT. *Funcții ale unităților frazeologice în textul narativ.* Articolul își propune o trecere în revistă a conceptului de unitate frazeologică în lucrările lexicologilor spanioli, analizând trăsăturile sale principale și implicațiile acestora asupra funcțiilor textuale în textul narativ. Partea aplicativă a lucrării explorează câteva dintre funcțiile stilistico-semanticice ale unităților frazeologice în romanul *Umbra vântului* de Carlos Ruiz Zafón, cu accent pe dezautomatizarea acestora și pe rolul lor în caracterizarea personajelor.

Cuvinte cheie: *funcție textuală, unitate frazeologică, fixare, dezautomatizare.*

1. Definición y rasgos definatorios de las unidades fraseológicas

El concepto de "unidad fraseológica" (UF) ha pasado por varios avatares, en compañía de una profusión de denominaciones utilizadas para las distintas posibilidades de agrupar, sistematizar y estudiar las combinaciones de los lexemas: solidaridades léxicas, locuciones, frasesmas, frases hechas, colocaciones, etc. La variedad de las denominaciones y la (no) aceptación de ciertos fenómenos

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idiomáticos como miembros con todo derecho del grupo de las unidades fraseológicas ha motivado a los investigadores del fenómeno a argumentar sus definiciones y a proponer delimitaciones novedosas. Además, el debate terminológico, así como el posicionamiento de varios autores con respecto a los rasgos definitorios de las unidades fraseológicas, ha incidido directamente sobre los principios de selección de dichas unidades de un corpus dado y el consiguiente análisis de sus funciones textuales o de las dificultades de traducción.

Recordamos que, en ámbito español, Casares fue el primero en proponer una clasificación de las unidades fraseológicas, deteniéndose sobre las locuciones, las frases hechas, los refranes y los modismos. Desde su punto de vista, la locución destacaba por la estabilidad de la combinación de los términos y la existencia de un sentido global característico que no se podía deducir de una simple aglutinación de los significados individuales de los componentes. Aún entonces, el lexicógrafo señalaba las dificultades encontradas a la hora de indicar criterios precisos para denominar las diversas modalidades combinatorias de la lengua, situadas entre las locuciones y los refranes:

“[...] entre el campo de las locuciones [...] y el terreno propio de los refranes, queda una zona amplia, de límites borrosos, poblada de esas fórmulas pluriverbales que los diccionarios, con criterio indeciso, llaman indistintamente ‘expresiones’, ‘giros’, ‘frases hechas’, ‘frases proverbiales’ o simplemente ‘frases’.”²

De esta manera, Casares anticipaba, a través de la denominación general “fórmulas pluriverbales”, la multitud de argumentos que iban a seguir a favor de la ubicación de algunas de estas unidades en el centro o la periferia del continuum fraseológico. Por ejemplo, Ruiz Gurillo considera que “el centro está formado por unidades que muestran mayor estabilidad y que son equivalentes a la palabra o al sintagma (locuciones), y la periferia por unidades que superan esas estructuras, entre las que se pueden encontrar refranes, vocabulario técnico, expresiones figuradas [...]”³ El espacio intermedio quedaría asignado a las así llamadas “frases proverbiales”, cuyas dimensiones varían desde una simple combinación sintagmática suboracional hasta la oración o el texto entero.

Zuluaga opta por enfocar los *enunciados fraseológicos* como expresiones fijas equivalentes o superiores a la frase, cuya característica definitoria “es el funcionar como unidades comunicativas mínimas con sentido propio, enunciadas por un hablante entre dos pausas y en unidades de entonación distintas”⁴. El mismo autor indica la fijación⁵ como rasgo determinante de las

² J. Casares, *Introducción a la lexicografía moderna*, C.S.I.C., Madrid, 1950, p. 185.

³ L. Ruiz Gurillo, *La fraseología del español coloquial*, Barcelona, Ariel, 1998, p. 63.

⁴ A. Zuluaga, *Introducción al estudio de las expresiones fijas*, Tübingen, Max Hueber Verlag, 1980, p. 191.

UF, con lo cual a los hablantes les queda únicamente la tarea de escoger, de un inventario establecido de expresiones, las que más se adecuan a sus propósitos comunicativos: “La repetición sin alterar la forma de la expresión conduce a la fijación y ésta constituye el rasgo definitorio de las unidades fraseológicas. [...] La fijación fraseológica es para el hablante nativo la peculiaridad que tienen ciertas expresiones (las unidades fraseológicas) de ser reproducidas en el discurso como construcciones ya hechas.”⁶

A su vez, Corpas Pastor escoge la alta frecuencia de uso, la institucionalización y la idiomatidad como rasgos definitorios de las unidades fraseológicas e insiste, con razón, en la existencia de distintos grados de actualización de estos rasgos:

“Son unidades léxicas formadas por más de dos palabras gráficas en su límite inferior, cuyo límite superior se sitúa en el nivel de la oración compuesta. Dichas unidades se caracterizan por su alta frecuencia de uso, y de coaparición de sus elementos integrantes; por su institucionalización, entendida en términos de fijación y especialización semántica; por su idiomatidad y variación potenciales; así como por el grado en el cual se dan todos estos aspectos en los distintos tipos.”⁷

En su *Manual de fraseología española*, Corpas distingue tres esferas distintas en el ámbito de las UF, basándose en las nociones de sistema, norma y habla introducidas por Coseriu, y concede un espacio de ‘autonomía’ a las colocaciones, opción que ha suscitado tanto aprobación como rechazo por parte de otros especialistas en lexicografía. Así, la primera esfera corresponde justamente a las colocaciones, definidas como “unidades fraseológicas sólo fijadas en la norma y que no constituyen enunciados completos”. La segunda esfera incluye las unidades fraseológicas que “están fijadas en el sistema y que no tienen carácter de enunciado”, es decir, las locuciones, mientras que la tercera esfera está constituida por unidades fraseológicas que “tienen carácter de enunciado y están fijadas en el habla”, esto es, los enunciados fraseológicos.⁸

Ruiz Gurillo retoma la fijación como una condición necesaria de la existencia de las unidades fraseológicas, pero le añade la idiomatidad como “la propiedad no necesaria de las UFs, según la cual el significado de la estructura no puede deducirse del significado de sus partes, tomadas por separado o en conjunto”.⁹ En otras palabras, el criterio semántico empieza a ir

⁵ Para un análisis de los diversos tipos de fijación, la fijación fraseológica, la pragmática y la posicional, cada uno con sus respectivas subcategorías, véase A. Zuluaga, “Spanisch: Phraseologie/Fraseología”, en *Lexikon der romanistischen Linguistik VI/1*, 1990, p. 125-131.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.125.

⁷ G. Corpas Pastor, *Manual de fraseología española*, Madrid, Gredos, 1996, p. 20.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

⁹ L. Ruiz Gurillo, *La fraseología del español coloquial*, Barcelona, Ariel, 1998, p. 12.

adquiriendo protagonismo, al lado de la estabilidad estructural, y el tándem fijación-idiomaticidad permanece como punto de referencia en las investigaciones sobre los rasgos de las unidades fraseológicas.

2. Funciones textuales de las unidades fraseológicas

Las unidades fraseológicas, debido tanto a su relación con el acervo de sabiduría popular, que le confiere estabilidad, como a la maleabilidad de su estructura, a raíz de las opciones estilísticas de los autores, pueden contribuir de varias maneras a la articulación del sentido de un texto literario. Penadés Martínez, tras pasar revista a las propuestas de análisis textual de uno de los tipos más expresivos de unidades fraseológicas, los refranes, destaca que, en la mayoría de los casos, se ha insistido “en la necesidad de examinar su función comunicativa, dicho de otro modo, el tipo de acto de habla al que, en principio, corresponden”.¹⁰ La identificación de la función comunicativa es sólo un primer nivel del análisis, que involucra lo que indican, en general, los diccionarios fraseológicos sobre la función del refrán, fuera del contexto discursivo. En un texto concreto, a esto se suma la evaluación de la influencia de otros integrantes textuales, que pueden modificar el valor discursivo del refrán. Consideramos que es una exigencia aplicable a todas las categorías de unidades fraseológicas, si se tiende a un enfoque hermenéutico lo más completo posible¹¹.

En cuanto a una posible tipología de las funciones textuales de estas fórmulas pluriverbales, Zuluaga distingue entre las funciones inherentes y las funciones no inherentes de las unidades fraseológicas. El primer tipo de funciones caracteriza, según el investigador, a todas las UF y está determinado por sus rasgos estructurales; se distinguen, de este modo, la función fraseológica, la función de connotación o evocación, la función icónica y la función lúdico-poética.

La función fraseológica “consiste en facilitar y simplificar al máximo tanto la formulación del mensaje por parte del autor como la recepción por parte del lector u oyente”.¹² Por lo tanto, la función fraseológica es una consecuencia directa del deseo de los hablantes de condensar su experiencia en fórmulas relevantes¹³ para diversas situaciones comunicativas y deriva

¹⁰ I. Penadés Martínez, “El valor discursivo de los refranes”, en *ELUA*, 20, 2006, p. 295.

¹¹ Además, I. Penadés Martínez (*ibid.*, p. 299) hace una propuesta tentadora, al intuir la contribución que aportaría al repertorio de los valores discursivos de los refranes un estudio sociolingüístico, “con el fin de averiguar posibles relaciones entre el uso de cada refrán y las características sociales del hablante que lo emite”.

¹² A. Zuluaga, “Sobre las funciones de los fraseologismos en los textos literarios”, en *Paremia*, 6, 1997, p. 631.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 632.

también de la ley del menor esfuerzo, que aúna eficacia y concisión. Desde el punto de vista de Zuluaga la función inherente es el resultado de tres propiedades principales de las unidades fraseológicas:

- la institucionalización o fijación en la norma lingüística social, lo que lleva a la aparición de unidades como “valga la expresión”, “como suele decirse”, “según dice la gente”;
- la posibilidad de que presenten un sentido nuevo cada vez que están insertadas en un texto que activa varias de las facetas expresivas de sus componentes, por lo cual una misma unidad puede cumplir diversos papeles en textos de distinta índole;
- la brevedad de la expresión, gracias a la cual estas unidades contribuyen a la realización del principio de economía lingüística.

La función de connotación es característica sobre todo a las unidades fraseológicas que contienen elementos marcados desde el punto de vista diatópico, diastrático o diafásico. Utilizar expresiones características al lenguaje coloquial, por ejemplo, puede conferir un mayor grado de autenticidad al discurso, mientras que la inclusión en las unidades fraseológicas de topónimos o de otros nombres propios de referencia para la historia de una región remitirá inevitablemente a la región evocada.

La función icónica “consiste en presentar un contenido mediante una imagen concreta de orden visual”¹⁴, lo que matiza y refina el sentido de la unidad fraseológica, mediante el efecto producido sobre el receptor por la interacción del código verbal con la representación plástica de los componentes.

En la función lúdico-poética prevalecen los rasgos formales de los significantes de la unidad fraseológica, englobados en la categoría de procedimientos fonoestilísticos, como las aliteraciones, las rimas o las repeticiones, que acentúan las notas humorísticas del texto en que están empleadas. Zuluaga insiste en que hay muchas unidades fraseológicas que potencian los efectos humorísticos de un texto, pero lo esencial de la función llamada “lúdico-poética” es, a su modo de ver, el vínculo entre la musicalidad y la rima del enunciado fraseológico.

Las funciones no inherentes de las unidades fraseológicas están determinadas, en primer lugar, por las alteraciones¹⁵ a las que están sometidas distintas partes de estas unidades. Según Zuluaga, los cambios en la estructura consagrada de una unidad fraseológica tienen la función de

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 634.

¹⁵ I. Penadés Martínez recuerda que la misma situación se puede comprobar en el caso de los refranes, dado que el hablante tiene la posibilidad de adaptar el refrán a su intención comunicativa: “No siempre los refranes son utilizados por el hablante en lo que podríamos denominar su forma canónica, es decir, en la forma en que son recogidos por los repertorios paremiológicos.” (I. Penadés Martínez, “El valor discursivo de los refranes”, en *ELUA*, 20, 2006, p. 294).

“desautomatización” del lenguaje, activando y reforzando el “potencial expresivo de los enunciados”. De esta manera, el juego libre con variantes combinatorias inéditas suspende el proceso rutinario de asignación inmediata de un sentido a la unidad fraseológica.

Las relaciones de las unidades fraseológicas con otros elementos contextuales generan, a su vez, “funciones de composición o estructuración de la materia narrativa” o “funciones semántico-estilísticas (por ej., comentario, explicación, descripción, argumentación, exhortación, enseñanza, caracterización de personajes, valoración afectiva, humor sátira, etc.).”¹⁶ En nuestro análisis sobre las funciones de las unidades fraseológicas en la novela *La sombra del viento* de Carlos Ruiz Zafón seguiremos la taxonomía de Zuluaga, concediendo un espacio más amplio a la función de desautomatización y sus particularidades en el texto mencionado.

3. Funciones de las unidades fraseológicas en *La sombra del viento* de Carlos Ruiz Zafón

La novela *La sombra del viento*, relegada por algunos a la categoría de los best-sellers, considerada por otros como un ejemplo de buena literatura¹⁷, fue publicada en 2001 y se convirtió rápidamente en un éxito de ventas. La novela cuenta con un joven narrador, Daniel, rodeado por una pléyade de personajes bien individualizados, de los que destaca Fermín Romero de Torres, en cuyo lenguaje se mezclan el humor y la erudición, la parodia y la sabiduría.

3.1. La caracterización de los personajes

Las unidades fraseológicas aparecen con frecuencia en enunciados en los que se alude al aspecto físico, a las pasiones o a las capacidades mentales de los personajes de Ruiz Zafón. El personaje más locuaz de toda la novela,

¹⁶ A. Zuluaga, “Sobre las funciones de los fraseologismos en textos literarios”, en *Paremia*, 6, 1997, p. 638.

¹⁷ L. Cerezo y M. Dueñas desmontan los prejuicios que gobiernan la distinción rígida entre literatura de calidad y literatura de entretenimiento, presentando los resultados de un análisis cantitativo del léxico en dos novelas españolas contemporáneas, *Llámame Brooklyn* de Eduardo Lago y *La sombra del viento* de Carlos Ruiz Zafón. La primera fue ganadora del premio Nadal y del Premio Nacional de la Crítica, mientras que la segunda, como lo hemos mencionado, gozó más bien de un éxito de ventas. Tras la comparación de la densidad léxica, la frecuencia léxica y las palabras clave de ambas novelas, las autoras llegan a la conclusión de que tales parámetros, que podrían ser aducidos como argumentos (por lo menos desde el punto de vista léxico) para evaluar la calidad literaria, son similares en el caso de las dos novelas, con la sorpresa de que en *La sombra del viento* algunos tienen valores ligeramente superiores. (L. Cerezo, M. Dueñas, “Calidad literaria frente a fenómeno editorial: análisis cuantitativo del contenido léxico de dos novelas contemporáneas”, en *Actas del I Congreso Internacional de Lingüística de Corpus*, Murcia, Editum, 2009. p. 1218-1234).

Fermín, admite, durante el primer encuentro con Daniel, el narrador, que la habladoría es una de sus debilidades: “— A mí es que me pierde la boca. Empiezo a hablar y... oiga, de lo del secuestro, que quede entre usted y yo, ¿eh?”, (78)¹⁸ —mientras que la locución “ser una tumba”, utilizada en la respuesta del narrador, indica ya, desde el primer encuentro de los dos, la relación de confianza que se establece entre ellos: “No se preocupe. Soy una tumba. Y gracias por el vino.” (78). La presencia de las unidades fraseológicas en el diálogo inicial de los dos anticipa, de hecho, la recurrencia de este recurso expresivo en toda la novela. Asimismo, para sugerir lo importante que es para él la literatura clásica, Fermín insiste en su pasión por los autores griegos mediante una expresión con función intensificadora, “ponersele a alguien la piel de gallina”: “[...] lo mío, de corazón, eran las humanidades. De niño sentí la llamada del verso y quise ser Sófocles o Virgilio, porque a mí la tragedia y las lenguas muertas me ponen la piel de gallina.” (100).

Hay también unidades fraseológicas que se utilizan con el propósito de ilustrar con más expresividad las reacciones psico-fisiológicas de los personajes: “el corazón me dio un vuelco” (81, 228), “la Bernarda se puso como un pimiento morrón” (120), “a Fermín se le caía la baba” (120), “sentí que se me caía el alma a los pies” (182), “Y qué niña, oiga, para cortar el tráfico. De un fino que de qué” (158). A veces, los parámetros contextuales hacen que ciertas unidades fraseológicas adquieran sentidos distintos de los consignados en los diccionarios fraseológicos. La expresión de admiración a través de la locución “estar alguien hecho un pincel” queda en un segundo plano, dejando lugar a la ironía sutil y cómplice ante el aspecto deplorable de Fermín, a pesar de que éste lleva, por fin, ropa decente: “ —Está usted hecho un pincel —decía mi padre—. ¿Verdad, Daniel?” (101). De hecho, la caracterización de los personajes va acompañada por comentarios irónicos recurrentes que ocasionan la utilización creativa de unidades fraseológicas ya existentes, o la creación de unidades fraseológicas nuevas, como en el caso de la original observación de Fermín sobre la caída ‘perpetua’ de Daniel: “Usted es de los que se caen del árbol y nunca llegan a tocar el suelo.” (377); “Bendita inocencia la suya, Daniel. Se cree usted hasta lo del ratoncito dientes. Y si no, de muestra un botón: el embrollo ese de Miquel Moliner que le endilgó Nuria Monfort.” (268).

Además, teniendo en cuenta lo decisiva que es la capacidad de discernir la verdad de la mentira en un contexto histórico como el de la novela, plagado por oportunistas, las unidades fraseológicas sirven también de apoyo argumentativo a las advertencias sobre las intenciones reales de los personajes: “Obviamente, la fámula miente por los codos y hasta sobre el tiempo.” (352); “—No haga cuento, que se le ve hecho una mierda, Fermín.

¹⁸ Todos los números indicados entre paréntesis, al final de las citas, remiten a las páginas correspondientes de la edición de la novela *La sombra del viento* mencionada en la bibliografía.

Menudo susto.” (350); “Si Freud está en lo cierto, eso significa que tal vez el cura nos haya colado un gol.” (268); “Cuando todo el mundo se empeña en pintar a alguien como un monstruo, una de dos: o era un santo o se están callando de la misa la media.” (353).

3.2. La función persuasiva

La acción de la novela está marcada por momentos de tensión, típicos para la vida diaria de la gente bajo la dictadura franquista, lo que agudiza al máximo el instinto de supervivencia de la gente. Fermín pretende ser un maestro en el arte del disimulo y de la adaptación a las circunstancias, por lo cual en sus comentarios abundan alusiones al mundo animal, en el que hay que superar en agilidad y perspicacia al contrincante. Mediante el uso de unidades fraseológicas construidas alrededor de núcleos del campo semántico de los animales y complementadas, a menudo, por comentarios metatextuales (“valga el símil taurino”), Fermín consigue persuadir a sus amigos sobre la necesidad de anticipar los movimientos de los demás y utilizar la dosis justa de astucia para solucionar los problemas: “—Para ver cómo reacciona. No te diré nada, por supuesto. O te mentaré otra vez. Lo importante es clavar la banderilla, valga el símil taurino, y ver adónde nos conduce el toro, en este caso la ternera. Y ahí es donde entra usted, Fermín. Mientras Daniel le pone el cascabel al gato, usted se aposta discretamente vigilando a la sospechosa y espera a que ella muerda el anzuelo.” (354); “Y no estaría de más echarle un ojo encima a esa Nuria Monfort, que me parece que está resultando ser lo que mi difunta madre denominaba una lagarta.” (269).

El mismo efecto se consigue en los diálogos entre Fermín y Daniel, en los que Fermín se toma en serio el papel de abrirle los ojos al joven y temperar su idealismo. Se llega así a la superposición de varias funciones, las funciones de consejo o advertencia y la función persuasiva: “—Pero a su padre ni una palabra de todo esto, o va a acabar por criar una piedra en el riñón./—¿Y qué quiere que le diga? Ya hace tiempo que anda con la mosca detrás de la oreja” (379); “En contra de lo que usted cree a pies juntillas, el universo no gira en torno a las apetencias de su entropiada.” (374).

En muchos enunciados, las unidades fraseológicas acentúan la experiencia de vida de Fermín y a éste le resulta fácil convencer a los demás de sus dotes de observador de la realidad o de hábil evaluador de la gravedad de un asunto: “Eso es pan comido. A mí no hay organismo oficial que se me resista.” (163); “Evidentemente, el inspector Fumero está en esto hasta el frenillo.” (352). Por ello, no es de extrañar que sus palabras lleguen a adquirir valor de enseñanza vital, comparable con el de los preceptos irrefutables del ámbito eclesiástico: “—Fermín, lo que usted diga va a misa.” (294).

3.3. La desautomatización

Compartimos el punto de vista de Zuluaga¹⁹ que, al utilizar el término de “desautomatización”, subraya el potencial creativo de las alteraciones intencionadas de las unidades fraseológicas, lo que resulta de especial interés en la novela analizada. Los personajes insertan elementos inéditos en posiciones clave de las unidades fraseológicas o cuestionan la vigencia de ciertos refranes invirtiendo el orden de los componentes y acaban por establecer otras relaciones causa-efecto.

Uno de los ejemplos más paradójicos de desautomatización ocurre en el diálogo entre don Anacleto, el catedrático, y Fermín, en el cual la sentencia bíblica “No sólo de pan vive el hombre” se convierte en “No sólo de bromuro vive el hombre”²⁰. La inserción aparentemente aleatoria de la palabra “bromuro” es motivada si analizamos el contexto discursivo: se alude al bromuro utilizado en tipografía, dado que dicha expresión aparece en un diálogo en el que se critica la falta de escrúpulos de la prensa, ávida de publicar cualquier tipo de noticia escandalosa, con tal de alimentar el apetito de sensacionalismo de la gente. Sin embargo, si un personaje abusa de sus inclinaciones de jugar con el lenguaje a lo gongórico, con florituras fraseológicas inoportunas, que ponen a prueba la paciencia de los demás, Fermín sanciona rotundamente su verborrea. Este intercambio de réplicas es elocuente para poner de manifiesto los límites de la eficacia discursiva del uso las unidades fraseológicas, si el hablante no sabe cómo evaluar las prioridades pragmáticas de la situación²¹:

“La prensa, ave rapaz que medra en la desgracia y el oprobio, no tardó en olfatear la carnaza [...]. Don Anacleto asintió con vehemencia pastoral.
—Sí, pero no olvide el refranero, acervo y voz de nuestro sentir más hondo, que ya lo dice: la cabra tira al monte, y no sólo de bromuro vive el hombre. Y aún no han oído ustedes lo peor.

¹⁹ A. Zuluaga, “Sobre las funciones de los fraseologismos en textos literarios”, en *Paremia*, 6, 1997, p. 637.

²⁰ Sin aventurarnos a suponer que esta nueva forma del refrán pasará a formar parte del refranero español, no deja de ser una prueba de que nos queda mucho por descubrir respecto a la capacidad de regeneración de los enunciados fraseológicos: “Tal vez así empecemos a hablar de su vitalidad, si comprobamos que los no usados son sustituidos por unidades nuevas, creadas siguiendo los modelos de los refranes tradicionales y que merecen formar parte de unos repertorios paremiológicos que todavía no han sido actualizados.” (I. Penadés Martínez, “El valor discursivo de los refranes”, en *ELUA*, 20, 2006, p. 300).

²¹ I. Penadés Martínez pone también de manifiesto que el uso del refrán está sometido a reglas precisas desde el punto de vista de la adecuación al contexto comunicativo: “El locutor del refrán, el sujeto hablante que lo enuncia, no está obligado a manifestar su adhesión a la carga cultural o ideológica de la paremia emitida, pero sí tiene la responsabilidad pragmática de adecuar con éxito la situación-tipo establecida por la paremia al contexto del aquí y ahora de la enunciación.” (*Ibid.*, p. 291).

—Pues vaya al grano vuesa merced, que con tanto vuelo metafórico me están entrando ganas de hacer de vientre —protestó Fermín.” (183)

La desautomatización se utiliza también con la función de refutar conclusiones precipitadas y Fermín tiene otra vez el papel de decidir si la alteración de la unidad fraseológica es aceptable o si no hace más que estorbar porque aplaza el esclarecimiento de los hechos. En un intento de competir con la destreza léxica de Fermín, Daniel invierte los términos de la frase “llevarse el gato al agua” y más bien despista al interlocutor, en lugar de propocionar una explicación de lo ocurrido:

“—Menudas ojeras me lleva usted, Daniel. Parecen terreno edificable. Se conoce que se llevó usted el gato al agua.

De vuelta a la trastienda me enfundé mi delantal azul y le tendí el suyo, o más bien se lo lancé con saña. Fermín lo atrapó al vuelo, todo sonrisa socarrona.

—Más bien el agua se nos llevó al gato y a mí —atajé.

—Las greguerías las deja usted para don Ramón Gómez de la Serna, que las suyas padecen de anemia. A ver, cuente.” (292)

El siguiente ejemplo de alteración del refrán “Del dicho al hecho hay gran trecho” es revelador para la naturalidad con la que Fermín pasa de un nivel diafásico a otro. La abstractización de la unidad fraseológica, a través de la inclusión de la voz “participio”, funciona como un indicio de su agilidad mental y su facilidad de acercarse al registro culto del habla:

“[...] procedí a indagar en torno al tal Miquel Moliner [...] supuesto interno en los hoteles penitenciarios del municipio.

—¿Supuesto?

—Y nunca mejor dicho, porque valga decir que en este caso del participio al hecho no hay trecho alguno. [...] puedo certificarle, amigo Daniel, que nadie ha oído hablar de un tal Miquel Moliner en calidad de preso, visitante o ser viviente [...].” (293)

Uno de los casos más desconcertantes de desautomatización de la unidad fraseológica aparece cuando este proceso consiste en la adición de unos lexemas que conducen a la formación de juegos de palabras. En el ejemplo siguiente es esencial recurrir a la función icónica de la unidad fraseológica “darle calabazas a alguien”, para poder explotar el potencial semántico de la imagen de San Roque, como un peregrino que lleva agua en una calabaza. Además, la lección de ‘ars amatoria’ impartida por Fermín está salpicada de alusiones a Freud, a la electricidad o a la gastronomía, y ‘aderezada’ con locuciones adverbiales más un comentario metatextual condescendiente:

“—O sea, que le dio calabazas.

—A Fermín Romero de Torres no le da calabazas ni san Roque. Lo que ocurre es que el hombre, volviendo a Freud y valga la metáfora, se calienta como una

bombilla: al rojo en un tris, y frío otra vez en un soplo. La hembra, sin embargo, y esto es ciencia pura, se calienta como una plancha, ¿entiende usted? Poco a poco, a fuego lento, como la buena escudella. Pero eso sí, cuando ha cogido calor, aquello no hay quien lo pare. Como los altos hornos de Vizcaya.” (160)

Conclusión

El estudio de las unidades fraseológicas en *La sombra del viento* demuestra el potencial expresivo de la hibridación estilística que impregna la novela. No nos hemos propuesto hacer un análisis exhaustivo de las unidades fraseológicas encontradas en el texto, porque esto excedería la extensión del presente trabajo. Las unidades exploradas reflejan, no obstante, la contribución de sus funciones semántico-estilísticas a la dinámica del sentido del texto, y la posibilidad de que el contexto discursivo permita, a su vez, innovaciones estructurales y funcionales de estas unidades.

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NOTES AND BOOK REVIEWS

DOSSIER LE GONCOURT ROUMAIN 2013

En 2013, cinq universités de Roumanie, parmi lesquelles l'Université Babeş-Bolyai de Cluj-Napoca, ont été conviées à un projet qui popularise la littérature française contemporaine et stimule l'intérêt pour la lecture. Il s'agissait de choisir des quinze titres sélectionnés par l'Académie Goncourt, le Goncourt roumain pour le meilleur roman. Réuni à Bucarest en fin d'octobre, le jury des représentants des étudiants, conduit par Paule Constant (membre du jury Goncourt de France) et par l'écrivaine roumaine Gabriela Adameşteanu, a choisi le meilleur livre. Et si les Français ont apprécié plutôt Pierre Lemaître et son roman *Au revoir là-haut*, le jury roumain a arrêté son choix sur *Le quatrième mur* de Sorj Chalandon.

Bien que subjective, car il est tellement difficile de parcourir et d'apprécier tous les romans que les éditions françaises font paraître pendant une année, cette première sélection nous laisse entrevoir la fascination de la littérature actuelle pour *l'histoire*. Il s'agit de l'Histoire avec « la grande hâche » (comme disait Georges Perec), mais aussi de l'histoire personnelle des gens célèbres ou anonymes.

Ainsi la Grande Guerre a « reçu » le Goncourt français avec le roman de Pierre Lemaître, *Au revoir là-haut*; la Seconde Guerre Mondiale est le cadre pour le roman *Arden* de Frédéric Verger, tandis que le roman qui a obtenu le Goncourt roumain, *Le quatrième mur* de Sorj Chalandon s'intéresse à la guerre plus actuelle de Liban; une forme subversive – le terrorisme – est traitée dans *L'invention de nos vies* de Karine Tuil.

Quant à l'histoire des gens célèbres, autrement dit les biographies (plus ou moins) fictionnelles, elles se sont focalisées sur deux princesses du XVIII^e siècle (*L'échange des princesses* de Chantal Thomas), sur la figure de Staline dans la vision de Jean-Daniel Baltassat (*Le divan de Staline*), du fils d'Albert Einstein (*Le cas Eduard Einstein* de Laurent Seksik) ou du peintre Courbet (*La claire fontaine* de David Bosc).

L'histoire personnelle et la quête identitaire traversent les romans de Sylvie Germain (*Petites scènes capitales*), de Boris Razon (*Palladium*) et de Thomas B. Reverdy (*Les Evaporés*). Yann Moix avec *Naissance* et Pierre Jourde avec *La première pierre* s'interrogent, le premier avec ironie et le

second avec tristesse, sur la réception littéraire, sur la manière dans laquelle l'esthétique influence l'ontologique.

Le dossier qui suit présente une partie de ces romans avec des comptes rendus signés par des personnes qui ont constitué le jury de Cluj-Napoca.

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Sorj CHALANDON, *Le quatrième mur*, Paris, Éditions Bernard Grasset, 2013, 330 p.



«L'idée de Samuel était belle et folle: monter l'*Antigone* de Jean Anouilh à Beyrouth. Voler deux heures à la guerre, en prélevant dans chaque camp un fils ou une fille pour en faire des acteurs. Puis rassembler ces ennemis sur une scène de fortune... ». C'est le projet fondamental, suivi avec obstination par les personnages de Sorj Chalandon, Samuel et Georges, de son roman le plus récent, *Le quatrième mur*, le préféré des

jurés du Prix Goncourt Roumain en 2013, et primé du Goncourt des lycéens de la même année. L'option de l'écrivain français sera, par conséquent, de construire l'entier schéma narratif de son roman autour sur ce thème obsessif de l'intrusion de l'esthétique (dans une relation sinieuse avec le mythique) dans la réalité terrifiante de la guerre du Liban des années '80. L'expérience de journaliste de guerre de l'auteur a

énormément compté dans ce roman qui traite de la condition de l'artiste en zone de conflit militaire.

Refugié grec, ayant une origine juive occultée en permanence dans cet espace de la fatalité, où le massacre s'est transformé en habitude, Samuel rêve de monter, à Beyrouth, l'*Antigone* de Jean Anouilh. Après des démarches vraiment compliquées, par lesquelles il sollicite l'approbation de la police paramilitaire et des combattants, le protagoniste obtient l'impossible, une heure de repos, pendant laquelle la guerre se tait, substituée par l'art. La même fatalité détermine une maladie subite du personnage. Il ne peut plus transformer son rêve en réalité, mais, pendant son agonie, il convainc son bon ami Georges de le faire à sa place.

Le prologue et l'épilogue du roman, incluant des passages de l'œuvre d'Anouilh, complètent la narration, en la rendant circulaire, et dénotent l'enjeu central d'une intertextualité que Chalandon promeut, d'ailleurs, aux différents niveaux de la textualité. La temporalité même, par exemple, est scindée par cette intrication de l'historicité, du mythique et de l'esthétique en égale mesure, dans une tension permanente avec la tentative de l'auteur de construire un discours doublé par une certaine vraisemblance (qui est toutefois fissurée à différents paliers du roman, si on pense seulement au comportement utopiste des personnages). La dimension mythique est projetée, d'ailleurs, dans l'évolution même de ces actants. Bien que le montage de la pièce ne puisse avoir lieu à cause d'un nouveau massacre, Georges, revenu à la maison, reste incapable de se

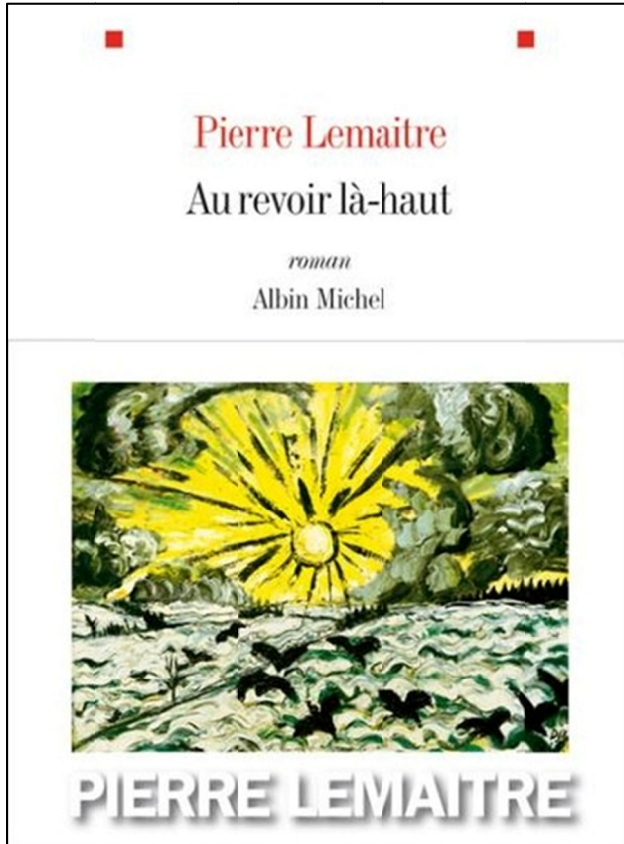
réadapter aux misères du quotidien et, surtout, il reste incapable d'accepter le compromis d'avoir lui-même refusé, finalement, la guerre, afin de venir dans une France tranquille, sous le même signe d'une Antigone qui ne pourra jamais accepter son existence telle quelle. L'infusion mythique, à son tour, est complétée par une certaine infusion éthique ou psychologique, non seulement par les présences spectaculaires du roman (car les personnages, par l'obsession de transformer leur idéal en réalité, disqualifient la passivité et l'ignorance dont l'individu actuel, qui reste à l'extérieur de l'événement, fait preuve en ce qui concerne son rapport avec les grandes tragédies de la contemporanéité), mais aussi par la proposition d'une solution esthétique pour les horreurs de l'histoire (car le temps de la représentation théâtrale signifie, au fond, un sursis pendant lequel les ennemis – dans leur diversité totale – s'accordent réciproquement le droit naturel à l'humanité).

L'excellent roman de Sorj Chalandon se construit donc comme un exercice nécessaire d'introspection devant les réalités présentes (réalités qu'on considère, très souvent, comme des fictions restituées avec détachement dans les manuels d'histoire), aidé, sans doute, par le grand avantage d'une formule narrative vraiment éloquente. Les histoires ordinaires et extraordinaires, les individus très communs, malgré leur « folie », l'excellente dimension morale du roman s'avèrent les aspects les plus significatifs de cette grande réussite de la littérature française contemporaine.

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Pierre LEMAITRE, *Au revoir là-haut*, Paris, Éditions Albin Michel, 2013, 566 p.



Un par un, quarante ans se sont écoulés pour que la promesse soit remplie: « si un jour je devenais écrivain, ce serait avec la guerre de 14-18 », révèle l'auteur dans une interview. Il est devenu écrivain, la preuve est la pile de romans déjà publiés, *Alex, Robe de marié, Cadres noirs, Sacrifices, Les Grands Moyens*. 2013 a entraîné l'accomplissement de la promesse faite à soi-même: le livre sur la période de la guerre de 14-18. *Au revoir là-haut* est découvert par les lecteurs à chaque coin de rue, étant en tête des ventes, mais aussi de la liste de l'Académie Goncourt. Pierre

Lemaître, vivant de sa plume depuis 2006, reçoit avec joie le Prix Goncourt pour le livre présent aussi sur les listes du Prix Femina et du Grand Prix de L'Académie française.

Après une trilogie et six romans policiers, *Au revoir là-haut* est une métamorphose qui garde le meilleur du genre policier (crimes, bouleversements, action) et l'accouple avec le roman picaresque. Sans la mépriser, Lemaître rejette l'étiquette de « roman historique », parce que ce qui l'intéresse est le parcours de ses deux personnages principaux, Albert et Édouard, anciens

soldats de la Grande Guerre, à travers la période de l'après-guerre. Pierre Lemaitre n'opte pas pour une illustration fidèle de l'époque (par exemple, il a omis la grande fièvre espagnole qui a hanté après la guerre). Les faits réels sont entrelacés avec des faits vraisemblables, mais, le plus souvent, les faits réels sont ceux qui semblent être imaginés: ainsi, l'exhumation des morts et l'enterrement de plusieurs soldats dans les mêmes cercueils se sont vraiment passés après la guerre. Néanmoins, l'auteur a beaucoup travaillé pour se documenter sur l'époque, il a expliqué dans ses interviews qu'il avait consulté des analyses, des articles, mais aussi lu de la littérature romanesque d'après-guerre.

Une telle découverte est la lettre de Jean Blanchard pour sa femme, un des martyrs de Vingré, avant d'être exécuté: « Je te donne rendez-vous au ciel où j'espère que Dieu nous réunira. Au revoir là-haut, ma chère épouse...» (p. 9). Ce morceau de lettre a donné le titre du livre: un adieu au monde. L'au revoir d'un seul, devient l'au revoir de tous ceux qui sont morts à la guerre. Non seulement l'adieu d'eux, mais également de ceux qui ont survécu à la guerre et sont rentrés chez eux en trouvant un monde qui ne se préoccupait que des morts, et oubliait les démobilisés. On ne sait quoi faire avec les invalides de guerre qui dérangent la société. La lecture du livre nous fait témoins d'une

vraie ingratitude envers ces gens qui ont mis en jeu leur propre vie pour la patrie.

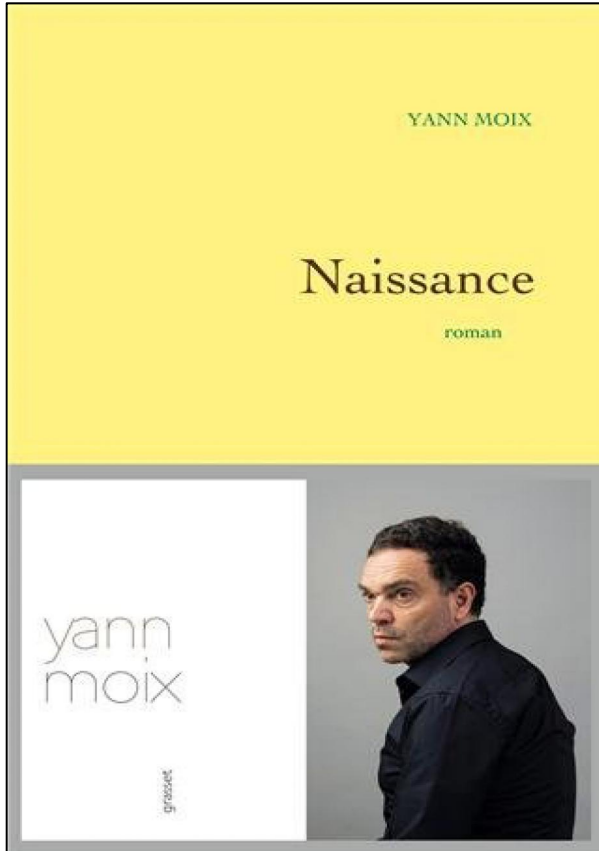
Deux de ces survivants, liés par une amitié indéfectible, Albert et Édouard retournent en France seulement pour comprendre qu'ils ne sont pas voulus, mais rejetés. Les morts sont glorifiés et les vivants oubliés! Albert, même si physiquement sain, est toujours agité, insomniaque et constamment perdant (sa femme Cécile l'a abandonné, il a perdu son travail). Édouard, sérieusement blessé par un coup d'obus qui lui a arraché la moitié du visage, refuse l'intégration dans une société où, pour lui, tous les visages se sont effacés, même le sien, et « dans un monde sans visage, à quoi s'accrocher, contre qui se battre? Ce n'était plus, pour lui, qu'un univers des silhouettes décapités » (p. 217). Les deux, « condamné[s] à vivre » (p. 91), ne se laissent pas en proie au désespoir, mais imaginent une escroquerie qui va les rendre millionnaires: exploiter le talent artistique d'Édouard et vendre des monuments (inexistants) à ceux qui voulaient construire, dans les localités de France, des monuments dédiés aux héros de la patrie.

Pierre Lemaitre a tenu sa promesse, et maintenant il veut continuer l'histoire avec d'autres romans qui couvriront la période 1925-2015. On attend à bout du souffle l'image complète de cette balade des deux poilus.

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Yann MOIX, *Naissance*, Paris, Éditions Grasset, 2013, 1143 p.



Les Éditions Grasset semblent avoir fait un pari risqué avec la publication du roman *Naissance*, pari gagné, au moins du point de vue de la critique littéraire, qui lui a attribué, en 2013, le Prix Renaudot.

Yann Moix (qui n'est pas au premier roman publié, donc écrivain expérimenté déjà) pourrait se trouver dans la situation d'avoir écrit un roman excellent, mais gagnant aussi le prix du plus grand nombre de lecteurs perdus sur la route des mille deux cents pages... Comment convaincre les lecteurs à

mener au but une entreprise normale pour un quantum de quatre ou cinq livres? Évidemment, ses éditeurs ont tout misé sur les qualités de ce texte, qui, à notre avis, sont certes.

Divisé en dix parties, le roman a la forme d'une autobiographie, mais moins traditionnelle. Le pacte autobiographique est contesté, dans sa logique, par une mémoire pantagruélique, et si le livre suit d'abord un ordre quasi chronologique, il est abandonné en fonction des analepses et des prolepses qui renforcent son

caractère d'autofiction. L'auteur possède une culture générale exceptionnelle où la part de l'invention n'est pas à ignorer; les détails s'accumulent pour générer l'effet contraire: l'histoire s'avère impossible à croire, les événements racontés ne sont pas à prendre au pied de la lettre, tout au moins on peut leur faire une lecture symbolique. Des écrivains célèbres prêtent de leur biographie pour construire « l'autobiographie » du protagoniste. Ainsi, l'auteur donne la parole à André Gide, Georges Bataille, Alain-Fournier, Charles Péguy, ou met en dialogue le Yanne Moix de 1989 avec Yanne Moix de 2013.

En tant que roman de formation, *Naissance* permet l'analyse détaillée des divers aspects de la condition de l'enfant, des relations familiales. Mais, expert dans l'art de la divagation, Yann Moix a le temps de passer en revue beaucoup de thèmes à la mode aujourd'hui: l'antisémitisme, la Corée, la xénophobie, l'immigration, le statut de l'écrivain, le sexe, la violence, le terrorisme, les deux guerres mondiales, l'art. Ce sont des clichés ou des stéréotypes que l'auteur sanctionne à sa façon, et au-delà de toutes ces discussions, il y a un puissant sentiment de haine qui semble animer les faits et les opinions.

L'une des marques distinctives de son style est l'humour dans tous ses états (dialogiques bakhtiens, formes ubuesques, distanciateurs bergsonniens ou transtextuels genettiens): ironie, (auto) persiflage, sarcasme, cynisme, satire, pastiche, parodie, etc. Si le destin

du bébé qui vient de naître n'est pas sous un bon augure, le rire le sauve de tout: de la mort, de l'oubli, de l'ennui, de la folie, du manque d'amour et d'estime. Il y a de l'humour même dans le choix des noms des personnages tels que Marc-Astolphe Oh (son parrain et son formateur), l'abbé Chacoupé, le rabbin Bras-de-Mort, le patron de bar Philatète Dupied Ytelair, le professeur de « désallemand » Mol Fendu, etc.

Roman polymorphe, *Naissance* contient des poésies, il parodie le style épistolaire (qu'il s'agisse de lettres d'amour traversant toutes les épreuves associées à ce sentiment ou de lettres officielles ou amicales comme celles de Marc-Astolphe Oh à Gaston Sosthène Vuitton), des compte-rendu de son livre dans divers journaux et revues dont l'invention est visible à travers les noms hilarants de leurs auteurs: Jean-Flegme Anonyme (de *Viande magazine*), Pascal Valium et Baptiston Ligature (de *Chose littéraire parade*), Louis Jevouhé (de *Tatane*), Gilles-Genou Tanspisse (de *Zozo Kinka Polopi*)...

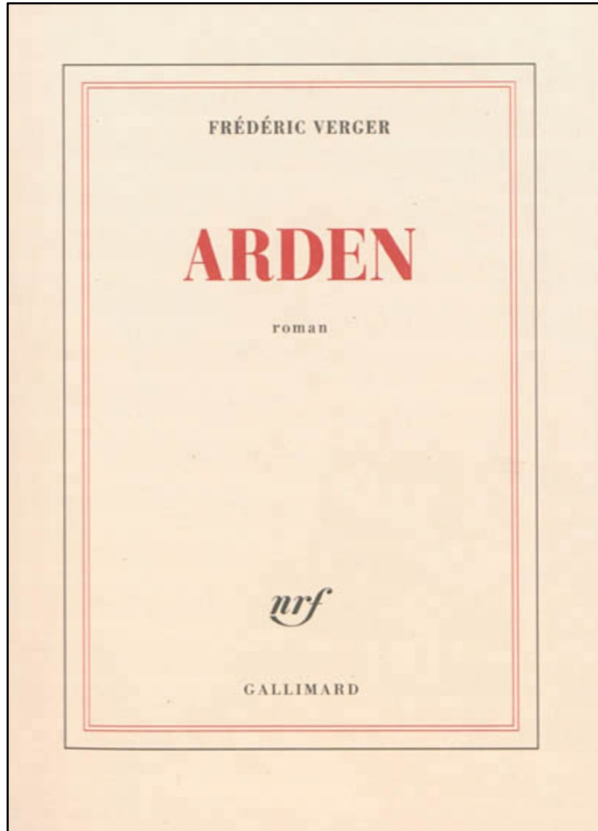
Baroque serait le mot définitoire pour le roman: dimension exacerbée, logorrhée indomptable de l'auteur, formes ludiques frisant l'irréel, visions cocasses sur les personnages qui dénoncent leur artificiel romanesque. Et, jaillissant discrètement, la souffrance d'un être humain aux prises du biologique, du familial, du social, et surtout de l'esthétique.

Certainement, une *renaissance* de Yann Moix.

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Frédéric VERGER, *Arden*, Paris, Éditions Gallimard, 2013, 478 p.



Le débutant Frédéric Verger ne fait que ramasser des prix depuis la publication de son roman *Arden*, et nous n'énumérons que les plus importants : il est sur la liste des finalistes pour le Prix Goncourt 2013, obtient le Goncourt serbe, et, surtout le Goncourt 2014 pour le premier roman.

Le titre du livre, *Arden*, nomme le lieu où se passe une grande partie l'action du roman. Il s'agit du Grand Hôtel Arden, appelé de cette façon par le personnage Alexandre Roucoule « parce qu'il se trouvait au milieu d'un parc immense, une véritable forêt » (p. 19),

mentionnée par une chanson ancienne: « *Il ne faut plus aller en la forêt d'Arden* ». Cette liaison entre le titre du roman et le lieu de l'action, n'en est pas une gratuité: le destin des personnages se trouve, en grande partie, mis sous le signe de la forêt. Arden a pour le roman beaucoup d'importance: c'est le témoin et l'accompagnateur fidèle des personnages tout au long du livre. Il s'agit, donc, d'un *topos* mythique: premièrement, parce que des événements réels sont insérés dans un lieu inexistant en réalité, et, aussi parce qu'il semble évoluer, se transformer, comme le ferait

un personnage, devenant vital pour la construction du roman.

Le roman est un éloge à la vie vécue dans sa forme la plus simple et authentique, et une preuve de ce que la guerre peut faire d'une telle vie. Alexandre Roucoule et sa femme vivent une vie tranquille sur le domaine d'Arden, où Alexandre administre l'hôtel qui porte le même nom. À part les personnes qui viennent et s'en vont, Salomon, l'ami d'Alexandre, est le seul à visiter le domaine. Cette visite, a toujours le même propos: l'opérette, le seul liant entre les deux. Mais, cette vie tranquille est menacée par le déclenchement de la guerre. Même si nous n'avons pas de dates précises, nous comprenons qu'il s'agit de la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale. Salomon, qui est d'origine juive, est en danger, tout comme sa fille Esther. L'apparition de la fille dans le paysage d'Arden engendre un autre événement: l'amour (ré) apparaît dans la vie d'Alexandre. Il y a toute une série de petites expériences qui enrichissent la vie des personnages pendant cette lutte commune contre la guerre.

En tant que lecteur, nous devons reconstituer le puzzle dont les pièces sont mises à notre disposition par les 487 pages et par un narrateur omniscient. Ce qui domine dans le roman sont la narration et la description; le dialogue est rare. Tous ces éléments font de l'acte de lecture une tâche qui n'est pas simple, mais avec chaque page tournée le lecteur va se perdre dans la forêt d'Arden, en essayant de retrouver

les souvenirs qui y sont éparpillés. Ce sur quoi s'appuient les techniques d'écriture dans *Arden* est le pouvoir du souvenir: « Lorsque nous étions enfants, il arrivait souvent que nos parents nous confient, ma sœur et moi, à la garde d'une tante qui habitait à Montreuil au dernier étage d'une maison étroite et haute [...]. C'est elle qui fournira avec des souvenirs d'Arden la matière de ce livre » (p. 9-17). Cependant, le ton n'est pas sentimental, permettant à l'humour aussi de prendre sa place.

D'autres thèmes sont intégrés dans la trame du roman: l'amitié qui fait les gens prouver leur solidarité aux moments les plus durs, la guerre qui oblige les personnages à trouver des solutions pour survivre, l'art qui est proposé comme solution contre la guerre: écrire une opérette pour créer une autre réalité. Et, au-delà de tous ces motifs, *Arden* semble valoriser l'écriture, ne serait-ce que dans sa forme la plus simple, celle de la correspondance amicale, qui réalise la véritable communication entre les êtres humains: « Il avait pris goût à cette tendresse épistolaire et l'amour à distance qu'il éprouvait pour sa fille quand il composait ses deux lettres mensuelles lui semblait le sentiment le plus fort, le plus pur qu'il ait jamais éprouvé » (p. 39).

L'auteur d'*Arden* réussit à emmener son lecteur dans un complexe voyage sur la nature de l'homme, observé devant le beau comme devant le mal.

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Karine TUIL, *L'invention de nos vies*, Paris, Éditions Bernard Grasset, 2013, 504 p.



Karine Tuil, auteure de neuf romans, parmi lesquels: *Tout sur mon frère* (2003), *Quand j'étais drôle* (2005), *Douce France* (2007), publiés chez Grasset, réussit, à travers le plus récent de ses romans, *L'invention de nos vies*, à nous transposer dans un monde d'hommes influents, des intérêts et des pouvoirs, monde qui semble s'être inspiré de la réalité d'un film.

Le titre du roman est assez suggestif pour l'histoire du livre: Samuel / Samir Tahar, le personnage principal du roman réinvente sa vie, pour entrer dans un monde qui, en tant que musulman provenant d'une famille modeste, lui était

refusé. Donc, il décide de prendre l'identité de son meilleur ami juif. Cette fausse identité lui offre, apparemment, la possibilité d'une vie parfaite: il fera une brillante carrière d'avocat à New York, marié avec une épouse influente, père de deux beaux enfants. Mais, la réalité en est autre: il a inventé son passé, il a enterré un amour et, vingt ans plus tard, son univers fabriqué va tomber, car « il pouvait bien inventer sa biographie, ce ne serait jamais la sienne. Il s'était composé un personnage comme un auteur crée son double narratif » (p. 115).

Le roman est riche en ce qui concerne les motifs et les symboles.

L'auteur touche des sujets et des aspects sociaux qui sont très actuels, parce que « L'art de la réussite consiste à savoir s'entourer des meilleurs » (p 79). La société d'aujourd'hui est une vraie machine qui manipule les gens selon les intérêts personnels, selon ce qui est à la mode, selon les exigences de ceux qui détiennent le pouvoir. Arriviste moderne, Sam montre jusqu'où peut conduire l'ambition et quelles en sont les conséquences.

On nous dévoile aussi une autre réalité: l'origine est une marque que nous portons toute la vie, et, malheureusement, être juif ou être musulman, du point de vue social, sont deux choses différentes. Comme musulman, dans une famille simple, Samir n'a aucune chance de trouver un emploi, mais comme juif, et s'appelant Sam, les chances changent en sa faveur. Il renonce à l'amour d'une fille, Nina, et des années plus tard quand il se marie, l'amour ne sera pas un critère dans son choix: « Une fille pareille possédait tout ce qui pouvait encore impressionner Tahar. L'un des plus beaux carnets d'adresse de New-York. La respectabilité sociale. La considération des puissants. Ça lui importait. Ça comptait beaucoup pour lui qui n'avait jamais été cet homme estimé, célébré » (p. 47).

Comme lecteurs du roman, nous pouvons observer ce que le mensonge réussit à faire dans la vie du personnage. Une leçon morale se trouve à la base de

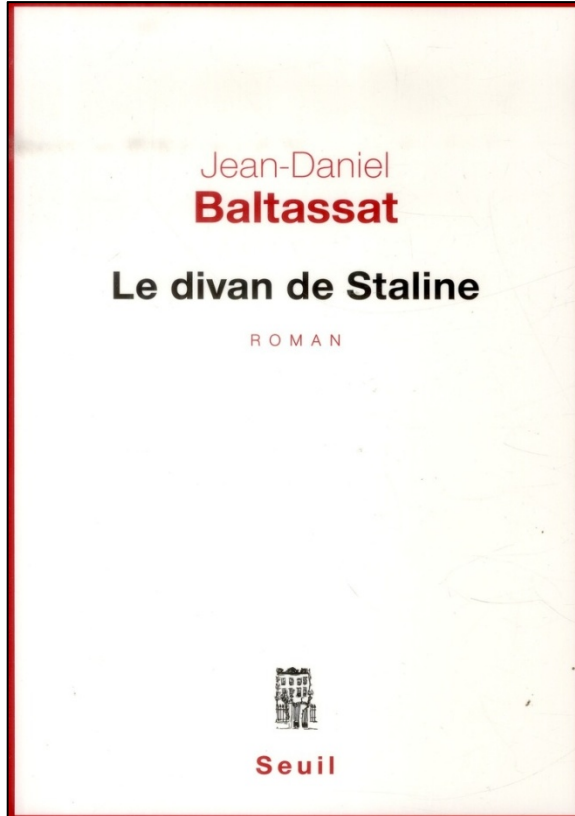
l'écriture du roman: « Avec le mensonge on peut aller très loin, mais on ne peut jamais en revenir ». Le personnage réussit à aller très loin, sauf qu'il y a un moment où toute cette vie basée sur des mensonges, commence peu à peu, à se défaire. Un mensonge attire toujours un autre, et, conduit la vie de celui qui ment, sur des chemins qui surpassent sa propre volonté: il devient l'esclave de sa parole inventée. Et l'existence d'un frère mêlé à des actes terroristes, et à qui Sam payait les études, l'associe à des terroristes, il est donc arrêté, interrogé, et, vu son château de mensonges qui s'écroule rapidement, les enquêteurs américains ne le croient plus sur parole... Il y aura un prix pour le mensonge, qu'il va payer cher. L'amour enterré revient dans la vie du personnage, les vérités cachées sont confessées, et, même si son monde se désagrège, il commence à se sentir libre, libéré de tout ce qui l'emprisonnait: « Libre. Libre et heureux. » (p. 492). Après le dévoilement de son secret biographique, il ne doit plus jouer un rôle, il est finalement libre d'être Samir.

L'invention de nos vies est donc, sans doute, un roman qui dit des vérités dures, sans hésiter. L'invention de quelques personnages, représentatifs pour nos temps, nous aide à mieux comprendre qui nous sommes, indépendamment de notre milieu social, et, ce que la société peut faire de nous.

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Jean-Daniel BALTASSAT, *Le divan de Staline*, Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 2013, 210 p.



« Un peintre raté qui a pris pour bonheur d'écrire des romans » – comme il se décrit lui-même – Jean-Daniel Baltassat est né en 1949 en Haute-Savoie et a fait des études d'histoire de l'art et de cinéma. Actif dans le milieu artistique, à partir des années 1980, il décide de se consacrer entièrement à la littérature. Évidemment, son écriture romanesque est profondément marquée par sa formation artistique. Le mot et l'image se disputent la primauté dans son discours.

Publié en août 2013, aux Éditions du Seuil, le neuvième roman de

Baltassat, *Le divan de Staline*, fait l'objet du choix du jury de l'Académie Goncourt pour la rentrée littéraire de l'année 2013. Inspiré par la visite de l'auteur au palais Likani, le roman est le résultat du mélange entre la réalité historique et la fiction sur la vie de Staline. En jouant sur la curiosité des masses à l'égard de la vie intime des personnalités du monde, l'écrivain offre une image unique du dictateur, le plus sanglant criminel du siècle.

L'histoire et l'art ont une place référentielle dans le roman, à côté de la

psychanalyse, ce qui a attiré le lectorat et la critique en France. Le prétexte des séances psychanalytiques, auxquelles les personnages jouent, se retrouve dans le titre: le divan qui existe dans le bureau de Staline à Likani est une copie parfaite du divan de Freud, « où ses pigeons s'allongeaient pour débiter leurs rêves et leurs foutaises névrotiques » (p. 129). Sur le modèle du « charlatan viennois », comme il appelle Freud, Staline « fait » le patient, en racontant ses rêves et en les interprétant lui-même.

« L'action » se déroule pendant le séjour de Staline au palais de Likani, en Géorgie, à l'approche de son 70^e anniversaire. Le prétexte du séjour est la rencontre de Staline avec Danilov, un jeune peintre prodige, recommandé par la belle Vodieva, l'ancienne amante du dictateur. Avec le soutien du Politburo, l'artiste envisage de créer « un monument à l'éternité de Staline », capable de rivaliser avec le mausolée de Lénine, sur la Place Rouge. En fait, il n'y a pas d'action dans le roman, car rien ne se passe. Le lecteur comme les personnages vivent dans une attente continue. On assiste à un huis clos terrifiant qui, sous le masque du jeu, cache la mort.

L'écrivain joue avec les sentiments et les impressions du lecteur. En présentant un Staline faible, un vieillard qui s'occupe de son jardin tout en réfléchissant sur le passage du temps et

sur la mort, Baltassat arrive presque à susciter la sympathie et la pitié. Staline n'est plus un tyran, mais « un corps malingre aux épaules étroites, aux flancs flottants dans l'ampleur du manteau » (p. 70). Allongé sur son divan, il semble se dénuder devant l'assistance. Il commence à dévoiler la vérité sur son passé, sur Lénine, le plus grand des pères menteurs, sur sa mère, sur ses amours, mais, prenez garde! ce n'est qu'une apparence. De dessous de ce masque de faiblesse attendrissante surgit avec force le vrai Staline, le maître du jeu, la force du mal incarné. Tout est bien calculé et pensé à l'avance. À la fin, on entend le rictus diabolique du bourreau jouissant de la souffrance de ses victimes, quand il fait connaître à Danilov la vérité sur la mort de ses parents sur l'île de Nazino.

Le style sobre de Baltassat, avec ses phrases longues et les multiples digressions rendent parfaitement la tension du récit. L'atmosphère est encombrante. L'écrivain réduit la réalité d'une nation opprimée aux limites du palais Likani devenu l'image de la Russie bolchévique.

Lire *Le divan de Staline*, c'est pénétrer, sous le signe de la fiction, dans un des plus terribles épisodes de l'histoire. C'est investiguer, avec les instruments de la littérature, les abîmes du mal. C'est jouir d'une belle et riche écriture tout en plongeant dans l'intimité du crime.

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Laurent SEKSIK, *Le cas Eduard Einstein*, Éditions Flammarion, Paris, 2013, 302 p.



Né à Nice en 1962, Laurent Seksik est médecin à vocation d'écrivain, car, malgré ses études médicales, il ne peut pas s'opposer à son penchant vers l'art d'écrire. L'élément qui caractérise tout l'œuvre de cet écrivain est, sans doute, son intérêt aux troubles mentaux, aux maladies psychiques, aux âmes solitaires qui ne trouvent pas leur place dans une famille déchirée.

Publié le 21 août 2013 chez Flammarion, le roman de Laurent Seksik,

Le cas Eduard Einstein, représente un des quinze livres sélectionnés par le jury de l'Académie Goncourt et une grande surprise de la rentrée littéraire de 2013. Les 302 pages traitent d'un sujet intéressant et délicat – la vie privée du génie Albert Einstein – l'écriture d'une richesse considérable donnant envie à en savoir plus sur ce physicien, fin connaisseur de la relativité.

Le cas Eduard Einstein renvoie à ce mélange de littéraire et de médical

que l'auteur préfère. Reprise une seule fois dans le corpus du récit (« Mais sur **le cas d'Eduard Einstein**, pas un mot », p. 185), cette construction dévoile le statut du cadet de la famille Einstein, qui n'est pas présenté en individu quiconque, mais plutôt en tant que cible des recherches scientifiques, en tant qu'hypothèse particulière à résoudre. Il n'est pas le fils favori, l'enfant gâté, comme l'est, d'habitude le cadet, au contraire, il est le rejeté, l'incompris, un malade dont les crises font l'objet de toutes les pratiques de la psychiatrie et de la médecine, en général – il est *un cas*.

Le roman est, assurément, audacieux, étant donné qu'il se propose de lever le voile sur cette histoire méconnue du fils d'Einstein, sur le mystère de leur relation. Ayant déjà publié en 2008 une biographie du grand génie, Laurent Seksik réussit de nouveau à écrire un livre sincère, documenté, racontant une partie de la vie du physicien, qui, le plus souvent, sombre dans l'obscurité. Plus exactement, diagnostiqué schizophrène à l'âge de vingt ans, Eduard Einstein est conduit par sa mère, Mileva Maric, à la clinique de psychiatrie Burghölzli (à Zurich), où il restera jusqu'à la fin de sa vie. Soumis, tour à tour, à des thérapies difficiles à supporter (le traitement par électrochocs ou le coma insulinaire), Eduard passera tous ses jours à recevoir les visites de sa mère dévouée et affectueuse, et à attendre l'arrivée de son père, qu'il ne verra, pourtant, qu'une seule fois. Ce roman nous montre une

nouvelle facette de la personnalité d'Albert Einstein: tandis qu'il est l'homme qui a résisté à tout, qui à tout vaincu, qui a fait avancer la science, il se trouve démuné face à la condition de son fils malade. Paradoxalement, le grand savant est un père faible, lâche, impuissant et absent.

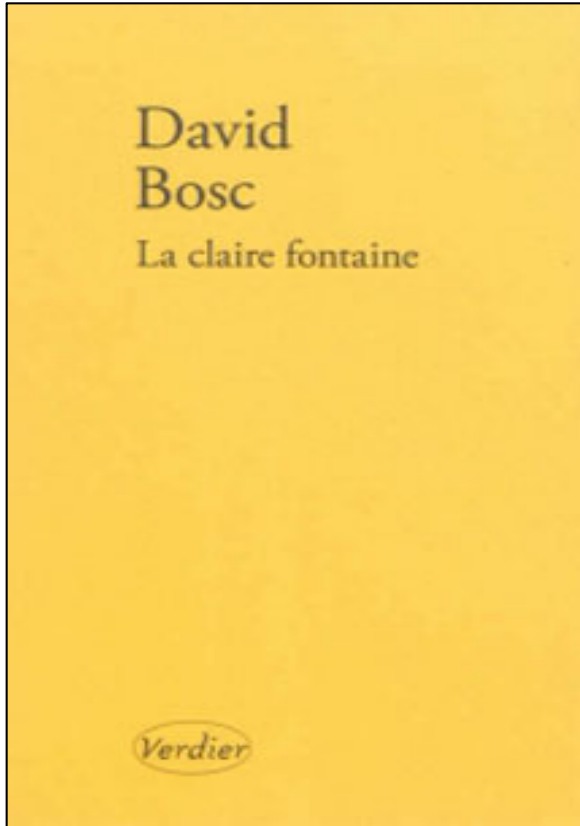
L'une des grandes qualités de ce roman est le fait que l'auteur essaye de se glisser dans la peau de chaque personnage, de raconter une histoire à trois voix – d'où la polyphonie du discours. Tous ces bonds de la troisième personne du singulier à la première personne ne font que susciter l'attention du lecteur qui arrive, de la sorte, à connaître «le cas Eduard Einstein» d'une double perspective: d'abord, il y a la version du narrateur, disons, objective et, ensuite, l'image que le protagoniste même se fait sur les événements de sa vie. Il est le fils qui désire de l'attention et de l'amour, le cadet qui se nourrit de haine, le fils toujours à l'ombre de son père, vu « qu'il n'y a pas de place dans ce monde pour un autre Einstein » (p. 46).

Somme toute, Laurent Seksik réussit, à travers son roman *Le cas Eduard Einstein*, à offrir une peinture exhaustive de la famille d'un grand génie, qui au-delà du succès dont il jouit dans sa profession de physicien, reste malheureux. L'auteur pénètre, tour à tour, l'esprit et l'âme de ses trois personnages principaux (la mère, le père, le fils) et en fait la source d'une histoire où haine et amour se conjuguent à tout pas

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David BOSCH, *La claire fontaine*, Paris, Éditions Verdier, 2013, 116 p.



David Bosc, écrivain français qui a fait son entrée dans la littérature avec les romans *Sang lié* (2005) et *Milo* (2009), a conquis avec le dernier roman, *La claire fontaine* (2013), son titre de noblesse des lettres françaises. Ce roman a reçu de prestigieux prix littéraires (Prix suisse de littérature, 2014; Prix Marcel Aymé, 2013; Prix Thyde Monnier de la SGDL, 2013), et il a fait partie des quinze livres sélectionnés pour le Prix Goncourt, et cela à juste titre.

Le roman raconte l'exil du peintre Gustave Courbet en Suisse après ses tracasseries avec la Commune de Paris.

Loin de ses origines, loin de sa passion principale, la peinture, il se voit et se présente comme un homme mort. La Suisse, par le paradis qu'il lui offre, le fait renaître. Gustave Courbet va y rencontrer la joie de vivre dans la nature: « Et le Paradis de Courbet, c'était peut-être au cœur de la forêt, dans le maelström de la sauvagerie, un grand corps fait de fleurs. » (p. 51).

David Bosc mêle le réel et l'imaginaire; il imagine pour ses lecteurs « l'histoire » de Gustave Courbet. Ce peintre devient personnage et sa vie devient, donc, une histoire à raconter. Le

livre lance un défi à la curiosité intellectuelle de chaque lecteur. Ses personnages renvoient à des personnes qui ont existé en réalité (Courbet, Rimbaud, Baudelaire), des artistes célèbres qui ont choisi la liberté comme principe de création et comme principe de vie. La liberté est vécue comme une façon de s'exprimer pleinement, dans son individualité, et non pas comme une forme violente ou agressive. Elle est le refus de tout héritage, mais elle suppose aussi le courage de se situer contre l'opinion publique, de dépasser les frontières traditionnelles, les conventions.

La littérature forme les lecteurs, nous laisse comprendre le roman de David Bosc, *La claire fontaine*. Elle est une source, une fontaine, pour ceux qui ont soif de connaître le monde. La littérature est très importante aussi parce qu'elle corrige le réel. David Bosc veut donner une image plus « claire » de la dernière période de la vie de Gustave Courbet. Pour réinterpréter la vie de Courbet, le roman crée un jeu de bricolage: presque chaque chapitre est suivi par des extraits des rapports de Police de Paris qui donnent une image assez mauvaise du peintre; nous allons citer la manière dont son départ est relaté pour bien souligner l'étroitesse d'esprit des gens de la loi: « Courbet a quitté Ornans, il cherche à établir une installation sur la frontière la plus proche de son pays, et se met à l'abri pour le futur procès de la Colonne. » (p. 16). Dans les rapports de Police, Courbet

apparaît, à chaque fois, comme un homme qui a des intentions douteuses ou qui ne respecte pas la loi. Toutefois, le roman le présente comme un personnage très sociable et très proche de la société où il vit.

Pour ceux qui ne cherchent pas un repère social, *La claire fontaine* met en filigrane un discours métatextuel; il nous dit que la littérature est essentielle parce qu'elle raconte, parce qu'elle propose des histoires qui lient des générations et des mondes différents. L'art est une forme d'enrichissement comme bien le suggère le personnage principal du roman.

Bio-fiction, *La claire fontaine* se rapproche de *Rimbaud le fils* (1991) de Pierre Michon ou des *Arpenteurs du monde* (2005) de Daniel Kelhmann, romans qui essaient de revoir les images des personnalités du monde entier pour mieux les faire intégrer dans le paysage quotidien. Dans le roman de David Bosc, le peintre ne reste pas toujours une figure de génie, mais plutôt il devient un homme avec ses points faibles et ses vices. Tout en respectant son talent, le roman présente aussi la décadence de Gustave Courbet, sa maladie et sa dépendance alcoolique.

La claire fontaine est une leçon de vie très actuelle sans morale explicite; le roman montre que la liberté est une manière de vivre une vie riche en expériences; il invite les lecteurs à rejoindre leur fontaine claire, ou, autrement dit, à suivre leur voie.

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Chantal THOMAS, *L'échange des princesses*, Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 2013, 334 p.



Née à Lyon en 1945, Chantal Thomas est une des présidentes d'honneur du Prix Marguerite-Duras et officier de l'ordre des Arts et des Lettres. Universitaire et écrivaine de succès, elle est remarquée par la critique littéraire dès son premier roman – *Les adieux à la reine* – qui a été couronné par le Prix Femina en 2002.

Spécialiste dans l'histoire du XVIII^e siècle, Chantal Thomas publie, lors de la rentrée littéraire 2013, un roman sur les mariages arrangés entre les familles royales de la France et de

l'Espagne. Remarquablement documenté, le roman présente les enjeux politiques qui affectent d'une manière définitive la vie des quatre enfants destinés à être les héritiers de la couronne. L'infante Anna Maria Victoria, âgée de 4 ans, se rend en France pour épouser le jeune Louis XV (11 ans), tandis que Mlle de Montpensier, la fille du régent Philippe d'Orléans, voyage vers l'Espagne pour devenir la femme du Prince des Asturies. Peut-on rêver d'une symétrie plus parfaite? Mais si on sait que le mariage n'a pas eu lieu, l'auteur

raconte les événements en créant un présent qui nous fait oublier la fin et nous fait vivre une nouvelle histoire.

Malgré leur volonté, les deux jeunes filles quittent leur pays pour assurer la paix entre la France et l'Espagne. On ignore totalement, à cette époque, la psychologie des enfants. Les sentiments, la peur, le bonheur n'ont aucune importance devant les intérêts politiques, mais on traite les deux princesses comme de simples marionnettes. C'est ainsi qu'à la fin, lorsque le plan d'alliance matrimoniale échoue, ces enfants sont renvoyées dans leur pays, comme « des paquets de linge sale ». La fin est édicatrice sur cette réalité: « Elles se croisent à nouveau, ne s'embrassent pas au passage. L'échange s'effectue en sens inverse. La reine douairière d'Espagne contre l'infante-reine de France, une demi-folle contre une enfante déchuë. » (p. 328).

Dans une approche fictive et personnelle de cette réalité historique, l'écrivaine présente en parallèle deux personnages féminins, deux attitudes distinctes par rapport à une situation capitale de la vie. L'infante, se livre avec innocence à ce jeu, croit aux fausses promesses de bonheur, devient amoureuse de son futur époux, souffre la déception comme un petit ange, attire la tendresse et la pitié des autres personnages et du lecteur même. Au contraire, les 11 ans de Mlle de Montpensier l'empêchent de rêver. Consciente de son statut de marionnette

royale, elle ne s'oppose pas à la volonté de son père, mais elle vit pleinement cette expérience traumatisante. Les lettres envoyées en France sont l'expression de sa rébellion intérieure. D'un ton satirique, la jeune fille analyse chaque détail en le rendant plus terrifiant. À la première vue, on n'aime pas ce personnage, on veut échapper à sa présence démoralisante, mais à force de le rencontrer dans les pages du roman, on commence à s'habituer à sa manière de concevoir la réalité, on prête sa vision critique sur le monde insensible de la politique.

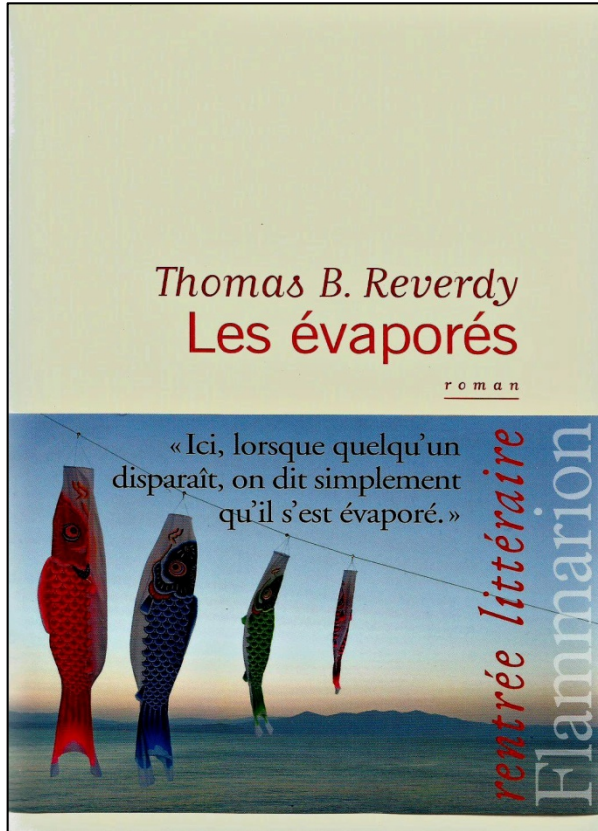
Pour un passionné de l'histoire, *L'échange des princesses* peut être une lecture très agréable. Plein d'humour et d'ironie, il reconstitue, de façon minutieuse, une tranche de la France et de l'Espagne monarchiques. La vie à la cour, les lieux devenus touristiques gagnent une nouvelle valeur pour le lecteur qui s'amuse à reconstituer la vie des êtres presque légendaires. L'histoire est racontée comme par un chroniqueur qui veut nous convaincre de la vérité des faits. Il insère des morceaux de lettres et de billets authentiques, vraiment écrits par les personnages historiques, qui ont vécu ces événements; il apporte ainsi un plus d'authenticité et de crédibilité à son histoire.

Par ce roman, Chantal Thomas nous donne un exemple d'histoire où la vie humaine importe peu, et nous propose une immersion dans le monde de la catastrophe, « mais une catastrophe sous des lustres étincelantes ».

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Thomas B. REVERDY, *Les évaporés*, Paris, Éditions Flammarion, 2013, 304 p.



Thomas B. Reverdy est l'auteur de plusieurs romans: *La Montée des eaux* (2003), *Le Ciel pour mémoire* (2005), *Les Derniers Feux* (2008) et *L'Envers du monde* (2010). Publié en 2013, *Les évaporés* a reçu le Grand Prix Thyde Monnier de la Société des gens de lettres (SGDL).

Le titre est très intéressant et mystérieux. Qu'est-ce qu'on fait quand une personne disparaît? Bien sûr, on appelle la police qui ouvrira une enquête. Mais au Japon non. S'il n'y a pas de traces de crime, rien ne se passe : « lorsque quelqu'un disparaît on dit simplement qu'il a fait une fugue, ou qu'il s'est évaporé. » (p. 109).

On peut lire ce livre comme un roman policier, mais aussi comme un roman d'amour ou une quête de soi-même. On a les histoires parallèles de Monsieur Kaze, Akainu, Richard B. et Yukiko, qui à la fin se mélangent et fusionnent. Sauf le prétexte du départ de San Francisco, l'action se passe au Japon de nos jours. Le livre décrit un espace exotique, un Orient qui ne cessera jamais de fasciner l'Occidental, pour qui ce livre peut constituer une initiation à la culture japonaise contemporaine.

L'auteur insère dans le roman des citations extraites de l'œuvre de

Richard Brautigan, écrivain et poète américain, qui a inspiré un des personnages de ce livre. Il s'agit de Richard B., poète et détective privé à San Francisco, qui déteste voyager. Cependant, il accompagne son ex-petite amie japonaise, Yukiko, au Japon, pour retrouver son père qui *a disparu*. Bien sûr, ici intervient l'amour. C'est la raison évidente pour laquelle Richard décide d'aider Yukiko, et de partir dans l'autre coin du monde. Il espère un je ne sais quoi, une conciliation peut-être, un signe, il veut seulement que quelque chose se passe, car « les mauvaises raisons d'agir avaient toujours le même nom et Richard le connaissait par cœur: c'était l'espoir. » (p. 30).

Ensuite, l'enquête nous conduit dans les régions de Japon détruites par le tsunami et, dans ce triste décor, le poète-détective privé croit qu'il est proche d'accomplir son désir. Malheureusement, ce n'est qu'une douce illusion, car l'espace change les personnages. Yukiko de San Francisco n'est pas la même au Japon. Elle est trop imprévisible, trop différente, les deux cultures se touchent, mais ne fusionnent pas.

Mais le personnage qui intrigue le plus est Monsieur Kaze. C'est lui qui *s'est évaporé*. Il travaillait dans le domaine des affaires et, une nuit, il a disparu, pour protéger sa famille. Mais la famille le cherche. C'est très intéressant de voir ici le terme *évaporé*, car il peut être un fait commun au Japon, mais un concept nouveau pour nous: « Ce que

nous appelons ici *johatsu* remonte à l'époque Edo. Les criminels ou les gens qui avaient une dette d'honneur allaient se purifier aux sources du mont Fuji. Il y a là des sources chaudes et des établissements de bains, ce sont des villes d'hôtels. Ils prenaient une auberge, ils entraient dans les bains de vapeur et ils disparaissaient. C'est pour cela qu'on les appelle des évaporés. Peut-être certains se suicidaient en prenant le chemin de la forêt. Mais d'autres réapparaissaient, quelques années plus tard, ailleurs. » (p. 110-111).

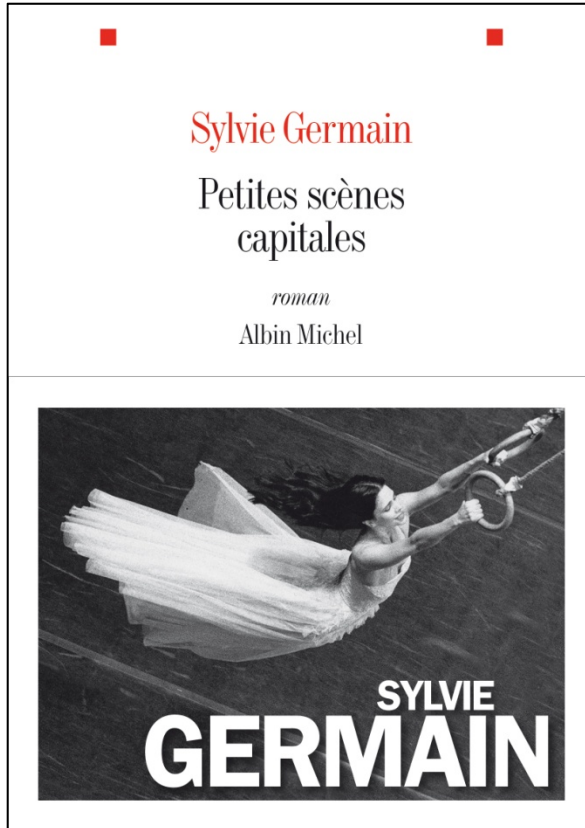
Un autre personnage qui mélange son histoire avec celles des autres est Akainu, un gamin de quatorze ans, devenu orphelin après le tsunami de 2011. Son histoire s'ancre dans une réalité apocalyptique qui illustre le destin tragique de tant de familles *évaporées*, mais, cette fois, non pour des raisons personnelles, mais à cause d'une catastrophe naturelle où l'homme devient un simple jouet écrasé par une force avec laquelle ne peut pas se mesurer.

À la fin du livre, l'auteur précise dans une note qu'il a écrit le livre en 2012, à Kyoto, un an après les catastrophes de Tohoku et Fukushima. *Les évaporés* est un portrait du Japon contemporain, bouleversé par les catastrophes naturelles et nucléaires, par la crise, l'influence de Yakuzas sur l'économie, la pauvreté, et, ainsi, on voit l'autre face, la pauvreté, la misère, car « la misère est une énergie renouvelable. » (p. 73).

IZABELLA ŞARAMET

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Sylvie GERMAIN, *Petites scènes capitales*, Paris, Éditions Albin Michel, 2013, 247 p.



Membre de l'Académie royale de langue et de littérature françaises de Belgique et couronnée de nombreux prix littéraires, parmi lesquels on peut mentionner le Prix Femina en 1989 ou le Grand Prix Jean-Giono en 1998, Sylvie Germain réussit à construire une œuvre qui s'impose grâce à sa cohérence et à son écriture poétique.

Publié chez les Éditions Albin Michel, le roman de Sylvie Germain, *Petites scènes capitales*, un des livres sélectionnés par l'Académie Goncourt en 2013, est un récit de vie, celui d'une histoire

familiale. À travers les événements (« scènes ») qui ponctuent la vie de Lili, le roman devient une quête identitaire et une quête de l'amour.

Toutes les quarante-neuf scènes évoquent des moments qui marquent la vie de Lili. *L'incipit* nous fait découvrir une petite fille regardant avec sa grand-mère une photo en noir et blanc. C'est la première *scène capitale*, liée au souvenir de la mère de Lili. Après le départ de sa mère (qui les quitte, elle et son père, et puis meurt), son père refait sa vie avec Viviane, ancien mannequin, qui a déjà

quatre enfants, les jumelles Christine et Chantal, Paul et Jeanne-Joy. Lili Barbara, car elle avait deux prénoms, l'un pour la maison et l'autre pour être employé à l'école, assiste à des épisodes troublants: Christine, sa belle-sœur, meurt à cause d'un hématome, Chantal, l'autre jumelle, s'enfuit après la mort de sa sœur, son frère avoue à sa famille son penchant pour la religion. Le temps passe, elle se laisse porter par Mai 68, et essaie de se créer une nouvelle famille chez les hippies du Val-d'Oise. Il s'agit, en fin de compte, de la métamorphose d'une famille, car tout le roman joue sur la décomposition et la recomposition des relations familiales.

En ce qui concerne le style de Sylvie Germain, il faut mentionner l'élégance et la délicatesse de son écriture, tout le roman étant, en effet, composé de petits poèmes en prose. La beauté de l'expression et la richesse des mots, de même que leur harmonie et leur musique, font de ce roman une œuvre pleine de poésie: « La voix du commencement, d'une attente indéfinie infusée de mélancolie, de patience et d'émois oscillant entre chagrin et ravissement. Voix de sa solitude avec son père » (p. 21) ou « S'en aller, s'éloigner, perdre de vue des proches, de corps une maison, et de peau, de chair, de cœur un amour depuis longtemps failli, sans pour autant partir de nouveau à la dérive, ainsi se développe par à-coups et brisures

l'avancée de Lili Barbara dans le temps » (p. 174).

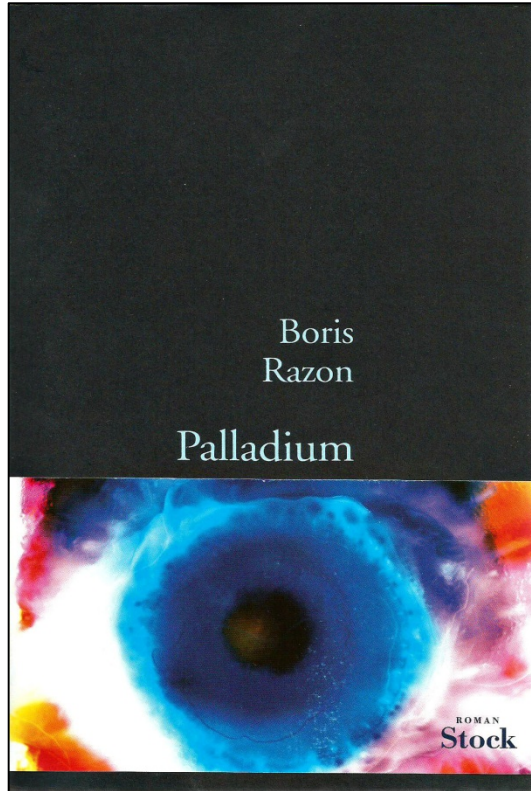
Petites scènes capitales est un récit très émouvant, se construisant comme une belle exploration de l'âme humaine. Le texte est fragmentaire, l'écrivaine se servant aussi de la technique de l'ellipse. Les quarante-neuf scènes sont comme des flash-backs, ou bien comme autant d'entrées d'un journal écrit à la troisième personne. Un journal qui nous découvre la quête identitaire et toutes les transformations subies par Lili Barbara, cette enfant solitaire qui trouve le bonheur dans les cris et le chant des oiseaux. Cette quête d'identité est aussi une quête de liberté: « Elle a envie de crier *Non non et non !* de gueuler *Merde! J'en ai marre de vos drames, marre du malheur, marre de vous tous. Je veux partir, partir partir!...* Mais elle n'y arrive pas. » (p. 111).

Le texte, en grandes lignes triste, mais contenant des fragments d'une grande intensité émotionnelle et dont le rythme est assez vif, est une fiction touchant à la plus sensible corde de l'âme. Avec ce roman, Sylvie Germain ne cesse de montrer les multiples possibilités dans l'analyse de l'inter-générationnel. Le paradoxe contenu par le titre (*Petites scènes capitales*) invite le lecteur à penser à la signification métonymique d'un geste ou d'une action, car, somme toute, le roman de Sylvie Germain représente le récit d'un destin.

DANIEL GHERASIM

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Boris RAZON, *Palladium*, Paris, Éditions Stock, 2013, 474 p.



Le roman décrit l'expérience du journaliste Boris Razon, tombé malade et obligé de rester plusieurs semaines immobilisé sur un lit d'hôpital. Mais pourquoi *Palladium*? On a l'explication au début du roman:

1. *Mot emprunté du latin et dérivé du grec, et qui, par allusion à une statue protectrice de Pallas, désigne ce qu'un peuple considère comme assurant sa durée.*

2. *(Figuré) Tout ce qui permet à une chose de rester conservée.*

Le livre est un *palladium*, car l'écriture est la seule qui permet la conservation de la mémoire, des

événements et des personnes. C'est aussi l'esprit du narrateur, prisonnier dans son corps-sarcophage, le seul qui est libre de voyager pendant tous ces mois, d'explorer les profondeurs de l'humain. Mais, en même temps, avec la vie, il entre avec toutes les aventures vécues dans l'autre partie, inconsciente, invisible, cachée.

Divisé en trois tomes, *Palladium* est donc l'histoire d'un homme malade. L'auteur nous prévient au début qu'elle sera une histoire ténébreuse, parce qu'il donne comme épigraphe, des citations *Des aventures d'Alice au pays des merveilles*, de *l'Odyssée* de Homer et du

roman d'Orhan Pamuk, *D'autres couleurs*, citations devenues les grandes articulations narratives.

Le livre commence avec un prologue où est notée la date: 29 juillet 2005, et puis il essaye de se rappeler les événements qui ont déclenché la catastrophe. On se retrouve 64 jours avant, quand tout se déroulait bien. L'eau sale, polluée, le poisson cru, on ne sait pas la cause. Mais la métamorphose commence. Et tout comme Alice tombe dans le trou de lapin, le personnage plonge dans les bas-fonds de l'humain. À la deuxième partie correspond la citation de *l'Odyssée*, parce qu'on entre sur le territoire d'Hadès, avec toute sorte de créatures, monstres, démons, putes, chiens maquillés, des hommes-légumes, hommes-oiseaux. Et, finalement, la troisième partie, qui est la plus triste et douloureuse, car le narrateur apprend qu'il ne sera jamais la même personne, qu'il ne pourra jamais faire les mêmes choses, qu'il ne tirera plus voluptueusement sur sa cigarette (Orhan Pamuk – *D'autres couleurs*).

Les sensations sont celles qui dominent le roman ou, plutôt, le manque de sensations. Le protagoniste essaie de transmettre ce qu'il sent et on imagine sentir. Comme Dante, il descend à l'Enfer, mais c'est l'Enfer des malades, l'Enfer des sensations. Les faits réels se mélangent avec les faits irréels, comme dans un cauchemar. Mais, malgré tout, l'amour trouve sa place dans ce monde

de proscrits, et c'est l'une des réussites du roman. C'est l'amour pour Caroline, sa compagne, qui le sauve: « Tu ne peux pas comprendre ce que c'est que l'amour dans une chambre d'hôpital. Mais c'est la seule chose qui compte » (p. 427).

On peut observer que l'amour ne vient jamais seul. Presque toujours la mort est près de lui: « Pourquoi le sexe et la fête flirtaient-ils avec la mort? Pourquoi ces églises se trouvaient-elles au milieu de la perdition? » (p. 358). Le roman a une véritable dimension psychanalytique freudienne et se construit sur les concepts de pulsion de vie et de mort (Eros et Thanatos). Le personnage fait une incursion dans l'inconscient humain, il découvre l'enfer qu'il y a toujours en nous, la bête, les désirs, la violence, l'instinct de survie, le désir de tuer. Lui aussi meurt plusieurs fois, un monde est détruit pour laisser la place à un autre, et, presque chaque fois, apparaît Caroline et le désir d'avoir un enfant avec elle.

Palladium est le roman de la souffrance et de la douleur, par excellence. C'est une histoire qui explore la profondeur de la psyché, miroir à deux parties, la surface et les ténèbres, on a l'homme et sa réflexion, le doublement, la métamorphose. Et la métamorphose se passe vraiment: « Il ne pouvait en sortir qu'un. Et je suis celui-là. Lui le joyeux, le chanceux, le normal, nous l'avons laissé à l'entrée de l'ascenseur. » (p. 456).

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Pierre JOURDE, *La première pierre*, Paris, Éditions Gallimard, 2013, 190 p.



Le livre de Pierre Jourde, *La première pierre*, a été couronné du Grand prix Jean-Giono en 2013 (prix créé pour distinguer l'œuvre d'un auteur qui a défendu la cause du roman) et sélectionné parmi les quinze livres en piste pour l'attribution du plus prestigieux des prix littéraires français, le Prix Goncourt. Le récit essaie de reconstituer, à la manière d'un reportage captivant, le conflit né autour d'un autre livre du même auteur, *Pays perdu*.

Ce livre, paru en 2003, rend hommage au pays natal de son auteur, l'Auvergne. Un livre qui, bien qu'il ne présente pas d'images idylliques de la

campagne, mais plutôt objectives, décrit la rudesse de la vie, les beautés, et aussi les parties négatives de la vie rurale. *La première pierre* examine la réaction des habitants du village vis-à-vis du roman antérieur: certains se sentent offensés par le livre ou bien par le fait qu'il révèle ce qu'il fallait cacher, d'autres ne lisent que les fragments qui paraissent les viser, et il y en a même qui n'ont pas lu le livre. Ils forment tous un groupe inattendu de « critiques littéraires », qui ne jugent pas le livre selon ses valeurs esthétiques, et qui sont incapables de séparer la vie réelle et la littérature.

Les huit premiers chapitres du livre reviennent sur les événements déclenchés par la découverte du contenu du premier livre. En 2005, lorsque l'auteur et sa famille veulent passer les vacances en Auvergne, les villageois deviennent violents. Tout d'abord, leur violence se manifeste subtilement, dans les mots écrits sur un carton à l'entrée de la localité: « Bienvenue à Charletu le poète », formule par laquelle on exprime le mépris envers les origines de l'écrivain. Plus tard, la violence devient physique. Quelques injures coulent et puis les premiers coups. Les gens commencent à jeter des pierres. C'est le petit enfant de l'auteur qui en sort blessé. C'est dans cette partie du texte qu'on retrouve le syntagme du titre, plus précisément dans la question que se pose le narrateur: « Qui a jeté la première pierre? ». D'ailleurs, le titre d'inspiration biblique est intéressant parce que la référence biblique touche, d'une part, le problème de l'adultère en ce qui concerne les origines de l'écrivain et, d'autre part, le thème du meurtre par lapidation comme punition.

L'incident finit avec un procès, décrit dans le sixième chapitre, suivi par les condamnations, dans le septième chapitre, et ensuite, par une réconciliation. Le reste du récit apparaît comme une sorte de méditation sur la genèse du *Pays perdu*, une réflexion où l'auteur s'interroge sur ce qui a constitué la source de la violence. Le récit se

construit donc aussi comme une justification. On ressent le besoin aigu de l'auteur de chercher les mobiles et les circonstances atténuantes, de justifier ce qui, normalement, n'est pas censé être justifié: « Mais tout choquait dans le livre, les moindres détails étaient pris comme des critiques ou des indiscretions malveillantes quand tes intentions étaient au contraire de dresser une sorte de portrait épique, de tableau héroïque du lieu. » (p. 133).

Une autre particularité qui attire l'attention est l'humour du narrateur. Bien qu'il ne soit pas le trait le plus important du roman, il intervient là où l'événement raconté le réclame, c'est-à-dire dans les situations de crise, par exemple dans l'altercation entre le personnage et Henri, un villageois septuagénaire qui a perçu le livre, *Pays perdu*, comme un affront: « tu n'as pas eu le temps de le voir passer de la position de l'agresseur debout, hurlant, à celle du dormeur tranquille absorbé dans la sieste profonde de l'été, à midi, sous l'arbre » (p. 44).

L'emploi de la deuxième personne du singulier donne une touche d'originalité au roman et une intense sensation d'intimité. À part cela, le livre est une réflexion sur la littérature, en général, sur son pouvoir sur les gens, et sur la faible frontière entre réalité et fiction. Somme toute, le roman est, indiscutablement, la *pierre* relancée par Pierre Jourde.

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concentrates on the manifestations of English loanwords as witnessed in the corpus of the Romanian financial and economic publication *Capital*.

The discussion in this book is based on seven large chapters.

The aims and the organization of the book are outlined in *Introduction* (pp. 7–10).

Chapter I, *Theoretical Aspects of Borrowing* (pp. 11–73), is a literature review synthesizing the most important theories, arguments, and ideas regarding Anglicisms. After elaborating on some terminological issues and touching upon the distinction between several theoretical terms, the author pins down the acceptations in which her two key terms (*borrowing* and *code-switching*) are used in the present study, with special attention to the relation and the possible delimitations between them. As such, “the term *borrowing* ... will be employed to refer to any English word used in Romanian, including dictionary-listed compounds ... will be used in its narrow meaning ... to refer to elements of a foreign language (the source or donor language) being used in the context of another one (the recipient or host language). The term *code-switch* will be used to describe two- or multiword English phrases used in Romanian discourse” (p. 40).

In the second part of the chapter, the author goes on to further narrow down these meanings, she gives her definition of the term Anglicism, and illustrates the criteria taken into account when deciding whether to include certain Anglicisms in the corpus or exclude them from the same collection of words.

Chapter II, *Factors Promoting and Constraining Borrowing* (pp. 75–116), continues the series of theoretical

chapters offering solid background information to readers.

First, the author discusses the two most common motivations behind lexical borrowings. They have traditionally been identified as need and prestige. On the one hand, borrowing because of need occurs when a new concept or thing is encountered which already has a name in the source language but not in the recipient language. On the other hand, borrowing because of prestige occurs when a speaker perceives that there is greater social cachet attached to a word from another language. This can greatly influence the degree to which languages experience lexical borrowings. For example, due to the prestige of the Anglo-American civilization, the impact of the English language is noticeable in most European languages, including Romanian.

Later in the chapter, the author presents some structural, semantic, social, and pragmatic constraints on borrowings. What we learn from this section is that, unsurprisingly, lexical categories outnumber functional categories when it comes to borrowing and it is true that, by and large, borrowed nouns are numerically superior to other grammatical classes such as verbs, adjectives, or adverbs.

Finally, going from general principles to language-specific phenomena, the author looks into the Romanian–English contact situation in an attempt to provide the social and historical background necessary for a better understanding of the phenomena to be presented.

Chapter III, *Methodology of Research* (pp. 117–139), discusses the methodology of the study and provides the results of the qualitative and

quantitative research. It starts with the qualitative analysis of Anglicisms and the presentation of the different stages of data elicitation. As far as the quantitative analysis is concerned, we find interesting details about the number of individual Anglicisms in *Capital* 1998 and *Capital* 2005, their distribution according to different criteria, and the 100 most frequent Anglicisms in *Capital* 2005. A comparison of the use of the most frequent Anglicism types reveals that in most cases the token frequencies increased considerably between 1998 and 2005.

The data in Chapter IV, *Types of Borrowed Elements* (pp. 141–187), offer further support for the hierarchy of borrowable word classes that other investigators have postulated, namely that nouns are more likely to be borrowed than adjectives, which, in turn, are more readily borrowed than verbs and adverbs.

As far as the different word formation processes are concerned, derivation seems to have a very important role in Romanian. Although derivation with suffixes and/or prefixes seems to be a straightforward means of enriching a vocabulary, when it comes to this corpus, things are not that clear, as Romanian and English affixes can be attached not only to English but also to Romanian stems, giving thus rise to various combinational patterns. As expected, the pattern of English affixes attached to English roots is the most represented one, but the other patterns also reveal interesting properties.

At the end of the chapter, we find a brief description of some other word formation mechanisms such as blending, clipping, abbreviation, and composition.

The results of the qualitative analysis of the data are presented in the following two chapters, each of them focusing on the grammatical integration of Anglicism into the Romanian morphological system. They can be justifiably considered the most original and important chapters of the book.

Chapter V, *The Morphosyntactic Integration of Borrowings* (pp. 189–265), looks at the integration of English borrowings in Romanian. The discussion proper is preceded by some theoretical considerations concerning integration, with a separate section dealing with different factors influencing this “importation with phonological and morphological substitution” (p. 189). This brief yet enlightening presentation contributes to providing background knowledge, which facilitates the information processing in the analysis that follows.

First, a larger section is dedicated to nominal Anglicisms, with special interest in four aspects of their integration: gender, number, definiteness, and case-marking. As case endings are omitted more often than other inflectional morphemes, nominal Anglicisms prove to be the least integrated from the perspective of case marking.

Then, a shorter section is devoted to the integration of adjectival, adverbial, and verbal Anglicisms, as well as to so-called bilingual compound verbs built on the light verb *a face* ‘make/do’. The lack of integration of adjectives into the Romanian inflectional classes of gender, number, and case leads to the generalisation that lexical elements belonging to this word class are not very much assimilated from a morphological point of view. Nevertheless, verbs are almost always adapted to Romanian

both morphologically and syntactically, even in those cases when they are adopted as noun phrases inside verb phrases headed by a light verb.

Chapter VI, *Code-Switches* (pp. 267–287), begins with a set of generalities and theoretical considerations of code-switching in general. The framework of the discussion is offered by the well-known Matrix Language Frame model. The chapter briefly touches upon the quantitative impact of all the code-switched elements found in the corpus, their morphological composition and internal structure, and, as expected, their morpho-syntactic integration. The final paragraphs shed some light on the differences and similarities existing between the way borrowings and code-switches behave from a morpho-syntactic point of view.

The findings are summarized in Chapter VII, *Conclusions* (pp. 289–294).

The book ends with a section of five appendices and an extensive list of references for further reading.

The breadth and depth of the literature review, which constitutes a solid background for the entire study, emphasizes the credibility of the author and her familiarity with the relevant literature in the field.

What I especially liked is the large number of tables, figures, diagrams, and pie-charts. They are extremely useful for summarizing the data upon which the study and its conclusions are based. In fact, I believe they are an indispensable part of any statistical analysis.

The definitions and examples are carefully selected, the explanations are adequate, and the arguments are clearly presented. What is more, all the arguments and claims are supported by a wealth of illustrative and relevant examples.

The following are some of the observations that I would like to highlight.

First, in some cases, foreign quotations are given in the original and hence in languages other than English; cf. Romanian on pp. 35, 37, 60, 63, or French on p. 103. In other cases, Romanian words appear in English sentences; e.g. "... are premodified by adverbs such as *foarte*, *puternic* or *exclusiv*" (p. 245). The most salient shortcoming of this book, in my opinion, is that, with the exception of some sentences given in sub-section 5.6.2, all the corpus examples throughout the book are given only in Romanian. Unfortunately, in none of these cases does the reader find (at least rough or approximate) translations or interlinear word-for-word, let alone morpheme-by-morpheme glosses. As a result of this, some aspects of the discussion may remain vague to those linguists who do not read in this Romance language. In other words, the Romanian words or texts are not accessible, through translations or paraphrases, to non-Romanian speakers. I consider it a shortcoming because I believe that this book should be available to an international readership interested in language contact.

Second, although the dedication to most topics is thorough and very clear, one topic seems to be only briefly discussed. This is the case of code-switches in Chapter VI. Whereas the author's argumentation about leaving out the investigation of their gender assignment is well motivated, I see no explanation why the author has condensed the discussion on the integration of code-switched elements into just a few pages, leaving out several phenomena and the illustration, for

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instance, of examples of phrasal Anglicisms using Romanian plural. Probably this is connected with space and/or scope restrictions, and therefore it should not diminish in any way the overall quality and importance of this monograph.

One final remark is in order here and this is related to a terminological inaccuracy: the author talks about the thematic role “experimentator” (p. 239). To the best of my knowledge, this

thematic role does not exist, but the correct theta role is called Experiencer.

I wish to emphasize that these shortcomings do not detract from the real value of the book.

All in all, the book under review is a fine example of application of the methods of corpus linguistics to the study of Anglicisms in Romanian. It is a welcome contribution to the study of language contact, and for this the author is to be praised.

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