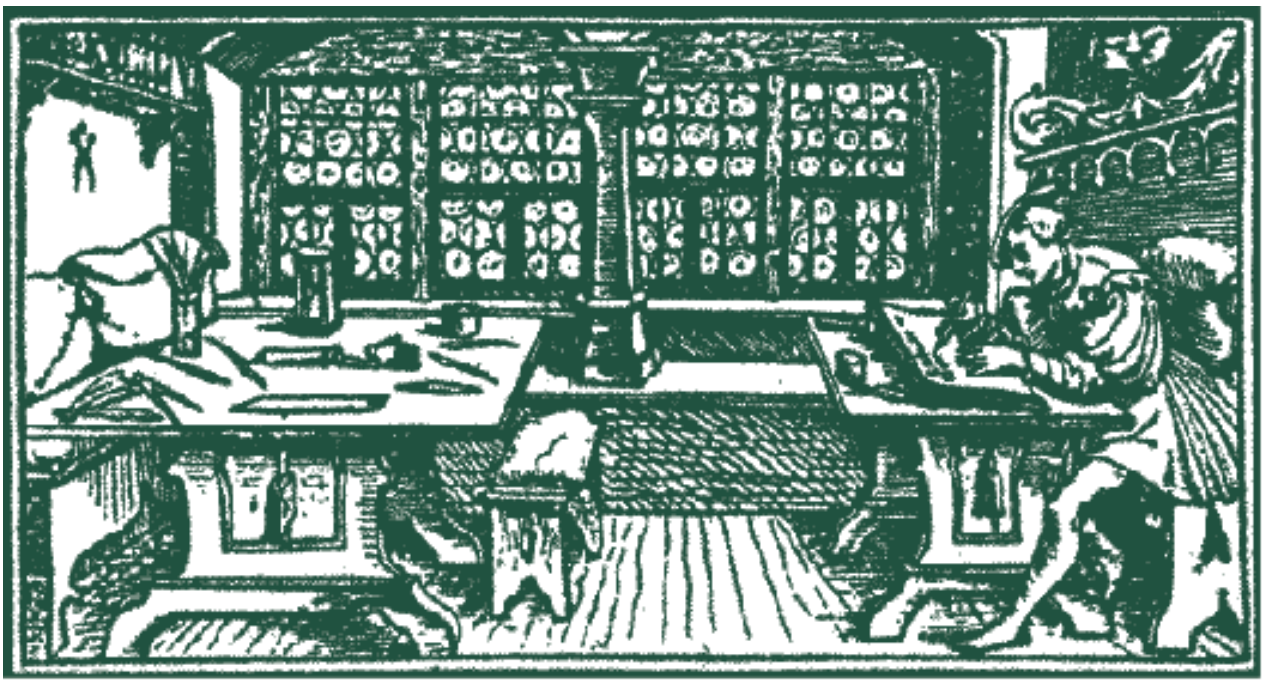
STUDIA UNIVERSITATIS
BABEŞ-BOLYAI



PHILOLOGIA

3/2013

STUDIA UNIVERSITATIS BABEŞ-BOLYAI

SERIES

PHILOLOGIA

EDITORIAL OFFICE: 31st Horea Street, Cluj-Napoca, Romania, Phone: +40 264 405300

YEAR **Volume 58 (LVIII) 2013**
MONTH **SEPTEMBER**
ISSUE **3**

S T U D I A
UNIVERSITATIS BABEŞ-BOLYAI
PHILOLOGIA

3

INTERPRETATION AND SUBVERSION

Issue Coordinator: Mihaela Mudure

Desktop Editing Office: 51st B.P. Hasdeu, Cluj-Napoca, Romania, Phone + 40 264-40.53.52

SUMAR - SOMMAIRE - CONTENTS – INHALT

WOMEN'S WRITING: IDEAS AND TRENDS

TEXTS, CONTEXTS, SUBTEXTS

REVIEWS

STUDIA UBB PHILOLOGIA, LVIII, 3, 2013, p. 7 - 13
(RECOMMENDED CITATION)

THE STORY OF THE MIND AS THE AVATAR OF TIME AND THE PAST IN DORIS LESSING'S *THE MEMOIRS OF A SURVIVOR*

SIMONA ELISABETA CATANĂ[1]

ABSTRACT. ***The Story of the Mind as the Avatar of Time and the Past in Doris Lessing's The Memoirs of a Survivor*.** The essay analyses the stream of consciousness technique in Doris Lessing's novel insisting on the concept of time and the importance of creative *rewriting* and *rereading* (reinterpreting the past) as key factors conducive to a new literary work.

Keywords: time, past, story, mind, creative rewriting, rooms, walls, narrative games.

REZUMAT. ***Narațiunea spațiului mental ca avatar al timpului și al trecutului în opera lui Doris Lessing, Memoriile unei supraviețuitoare.*** Lucrarea analizează tehnica fluxului conştiinţei în romanul lui Doris Lessing insistând asupra conceptului de timp şi importanţei *rescrierii* şi *recitirii* ca factori cheie pentru un nou text literar.

Cuvinte cheie: timp, trecut, narațiune, spațiul mental, rescriere creativă, camere, ziduri, jocuri narative,.

Argument

My essay investigates Doris Lessing's *The Memoirs of a Survivor* in order to point out that fiction writing is the outcome of revisiting and rewriting the past. Firstly, I will focus on the idea that one's stream of consciousness puts forth original stories which evince the ever repeated pattern of times, pasts, events, thoughts, ideas. Secondly, I will dwell upon Doris Lessing's concepts of time, the past, and *the story* in order to demonstrate what Linda Hutcheon states in *Narcissistic Narrative* (1984: XIV): "discourse constitutes more than a repository of meaning; it involves both the potential for manipulation – through rhetoric or through the power of language and the

[1] Simona Elisabeta Catană teaches English at the Polytechnic University of Bucharest. She has a PhD from the West University of Timişoara, with a thesis on the past and the games with fiction in Peter Ackroyd's literary work. Her publications include essays on Peter Ackroyd and literary translations. Contact address: <catanasimona@yahoo.com>.

vision it creates – and also the possibility (if not the permissibility) of evasion of responsibility through silence". Doris Lessing's discourse urges a competent reader to investigate and understand the past as a construct created by transgressing *the wall* of reality and by entering *the rooms* of imagination or the worlds we finally build in our interpretation of other times - lived times, remembered times or just historical, immemorial times.

Like all feminine writers, Doris Lessing's bend for the hypersensitive aspects of human existence, her deep-going insights into one's consciousness and past in order to either obliterate or cope with reality has triggered heartrending stories of the mind. One's mind is one's story. One's mind provides various plots. As many minds as many stories. What is put together and the way we put the story pieces together depends on our previous experience with other texts. Thus, we can recreate a story out of the tumultuous world of the mind beset by dreams, by the haunting past of memories. If put together resourcefully, the story of the mind breathes novelty and flavour no matter how reminiscent of other stories it might be. Thus, I contradict Peter Ackroyd who states that "there's nothing original in the world, actually" (Ackroyd qtd. in Gibson and Wolfreys 233).

Rewritten times and the past

> "…and behind us that other indefinite region, shifting and melting and changing, where walls and doors and rooms and gardens and people continually recreated themselves, like clouds" (Lessing 70)
>
> "Just as the old patterns kept repeating themselves, re-forming themselves even when events seemed to license any experiment or deviation or mutation, so did the old thoughts, which matched the patterns" (Lessing 121)

Doris Lessing's *The Memoirs of a Survivor* is third person narrative told by an anonymous narrator beset by a barbaric, cruel reality which is not objectively presented by having no historical period, no year associated with. The book starts by referring to its time as if everyone were familiar with: "we all remember that time" (Lessing 7). The idea of an ever repeated pattern of time and events is stated at the beginning of the narrator's insight into her own memories and past. She seems to attempt to demonstrate this thesis all along the narrative, which is interspersed with two leitmotivs: *the rooms* and *the walls*. Her room overlooks other rooms which she enters, investigates and changes, the same as one does with one's thoughts and dreams. The rooms stand for the past, for her dreams and for her haunting memories of an irrational reality she had to take for granted. To enter a room, she had to penetrate or "dissolve" a wall which represents one's Reality and Reason, one's censorship of thoughts and imagination. The last words of the book tell

us that "the last walls dissolved" (Lessing 190), inviting the readers to interpret the story according to their imagination, to activate their knowledge of other texts in order to make a coherent story out of what they have read. They are offered freedom of interpretation in a straightforward way.

The implied author's hair-splitting method of presenting the past, her focus on some repetitive scenes of her past, on her fears, concerns, thoughts, is meant to invite us to ponder on the implications of her narrative. Her story hides other stories. At first sight, we read a boring account of a sordid historical period marked by war, extreme poverty, famine, barbaric attitudes, violence. The anonymous narrator was entrusted with Emily's upbringing from an early age and keeps remembering the time elapsed from the moment she met Emily to her present. As she admits, her job is watching Emily out of the window, taking care of her beloved entrusted child and waiting for her return home. Her mother's duties and obsessive concerns are enlarged upon in slight details which point out her obsessive stream of consciousness, her fears, emotions and remarks. She puts forth her remarks on Emily's dress code, her eating habits, on her falling in love with Gerald, on their concern with helping and taking care of a disorganized group of savage, irrational and dangerous children. By focusing obsessively on these details, the narrator admits that she has been under the sway of repetitive, unimportant details which have the force of a tyranny lying heavily upon her mind. It is the tyranny of the sameness, of the ever repeated pattern of the haunting past and time:

> Being invited into this scene was to be absorbed into child-space; I saw it as a small child might – that is, enormous and implacable; but at the same time I kept with me my knowledge that it was tiny and implacable – because petty, unimportant. This was a tyranny of the unimportant, of the mindless. Claustrophobia, airlessness, a suffocation of the mind, of aspiration. And all endless, for this was childtime, where one day's end could hardly be glimpsed from its beginning, ordered by the hard white clock. (Lessing 41- 42)

In line with the same idea, the narrator remarks that beyond humankind's bend for imitation caused by one's appreciation of the past, there is one's "originality of the mind" which casts a glimpse of novelty in the sea of repetitive time: "one of the things we now know was true for everybody, but which each of us privately thought was evidence of a stubbornly preserved originality of mind was that we apprehended what was going on in ways that were not official" (Lessing 8). According to the narrator, imitation is the driving force of progress in society; it does not lead to stagnation but to renewed ideas, to improved patterns of life: "How else do things work always unless by imitation bread of the passion to be like? All the processes of society are based on it, all individual development. (…) But in fact people develop for good or for bad by swallowing whole other people, atmospheres, events,

places – develop by admiration. Often enough unconsciously, of course. We are the company we keep" (Lessing 51-52). In terms of fiction writing, the idea is conducive to intertextuality, which implies a revision of other texts, times, language patterns into one's new or renewed story and discourse.

Rooms recreate themselves the same as people do, the same as art and all around us: clouds, seasons, times, events: "people continually recreated themselves like clouds" (Lessing 70). At the level of fiction writing, rooms can stand for different cultural and literary contexts whereas their content can stand for what has been created so far, for what already exists. The anonymous narrator acknowledges that sometimes certain rooms disappear while others change for better or worse. Thus, they can also represent one's consciousness processes which can assault us, change us or completely disappear. I think this is the reason why they are associated with what the narrator calls the "personal": "now I must return to the 'personal'" (Lessing 61).

The narrator either describes buildings or rooms. She keeps opening the doors of imagination and acknowledges either a state of order (creation) or chaos (the rough, unprocessed material at the root of our existence). Rooms also change due to our various interpretations and visions. Revisiting the same room is the same as revisiting certain texts which we never find the same, always attributing them a new meaning, a new textual association and a new interpretation based on our improved experience with other texts:

> Opening another door, everything stood as it ought: there was order, a room not only ready for its occupants, as neat as hotel bedroom, but one which he, she, they, had just left, for I could feel a personality or presences in a room seen through a half-open door. Which, entering, perhaps only a moment later, I might find in chaos, as if it were a room in a doll's house (…) (Lessing 60)

> ….for I never saw that room again. And it was not that I looked for it and failed to find it…would it be accurate to say that I forgot it? That would be to talk of that place in terms of our ordinary living. While I was in that room, the task made sense; there was continuity to what I did, a future, and I was in a continuing relation to the invisible destructive creature, or force, just as I was with the other beneficent presence. But this feeling of relatedness, of connection, of context belonged to that particular visit to the room, and on the next visit it was not the same room, and my preoccupation with it was altered – and so with the other rooms, other scenes, whose flavours and scents held total authenticity for the time they lasted and not a moment longer. (Lessing 61)

Dorris Lessing's narrator is the prototype of the creator who acknowledges what caused her artistic product: a permanent revision of other contexts (rooms), a permanent obliteration of reality (the walls) and a permanent insight into the past in order to recreate it as the present. Her discourse is double-layered and that is why it is "manipulative" in Linda

Hutcheon's terms. At the first level, the discourse reveals the simple story of a woman's concerns with her entrusted daughter. The second level, perceived only by competent, knowledgeable readers, leads to a connotative realm meant to expose what fiction writing amounts to: revisiting and rewriting the past. The survivor is the writer who has taken the pains of delving into the rooms of imagination and knowledge of the past in order to put order in the chaotic sea of thoughts and to come out with an artistic product.

The implied[2] author is concerned with the nature of her writing. She investigates the connotations of "it" as the source of all creation and existence. The idea is reminiscent of what Peter Ackroyd, who, through his narrators' voices, admits in several books: "nothing comes out of nothing" (*Albion* 43). By pondering on the driving force of a literary creation, Doris Lessing's narrative can be associated with what Linda Hutcheon calls "narcissistic narrative" or "process made visible": "the text's own paradox is that it is both narcissistically self-reflexive and yet focused outward, oriented toward the reader" who is meant "to participate, (…) engage himself intellectually, imaginatively, and affectively in its co-creation" (Hutcheon 6-7). The implied author's analysis of "it" accounts for the author's concern with the irrational past which resists a truthful and trustworthy interpretation. The way she cannot explain how an unknown passer-by in her life changed her entire life by entrusting her with a child who becomes the only concern of her existence, she cannot give a definite interpretation of what the driving force of the present consists of or a reliable interpretation of what "it" stands for:

> Perhaps, indeed, "it" is the secret theme of all literature and history, like writing in invisible ink between the lines, which springs up, sharply black, dimming the old print we knew so well, as life, personal or public, unfolds unexpectedly and we see something where we never thought we could – we see "it" as the ground-swell of events, experience. (…)
> For "it" is a force, a power, taking the form of earthquake, a visiting comet whose balefulness hangs closer night by night distorting all thought by fear – "it" can be, has been, pestilence, a war, the alteration of climate, a tyranny that twists men's minds, the savagery of a religion.
> "It", in short, is the word for helpless ignorance, or of helpless awareness. It is a word for man's inadequacy?
> "It", perhaps – on this occasion in history – was above all a consciousness of something ending. (Lessing 136)

What the implied author suggests is that the process of her story-telling is based on her creative reworking of what she has found in the investigated rooms or in the past, in other texts and previous textual

[2] In *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, Wayne C. Booth (1961: 73-74) analyses the concept of "implied author" as "the official scribe of the narrative".

experiences, after having transgressed the wall of real life which, as she admits, is her "enemy": "for us the enemy was Reality" (Lessing 21). Fiction is based upon the author's imaginative reconstruction of what she has found in the process of investigating the rooms she used to enter. At this point, Doris Lessing's book turns into an apology of imagination, of rewriting and rereading as the cornerstone of valuable literary creation.

The story of the mind is caught between the present time of narration and the various times of the rooms visited, investigated and changed. Chronological time does not exist. We witness what Currie calls a "space-time compression" (Currie 103), which, in this case refers to an all-encompassing present within the imaginary space of the mind. Instances of fictional past time can be represented by the rooms which give their narrator food for thought and creation. Her permanent state is that of waiting and expecting, pondering and making various associations between the worlds/rooms/times encountered in her voyage through her past time. The various times enter an inevitable narrative game which is reminiscent of Gerard Genette (1980) and Paul Ricoueur's theories of the games with time. Ricoeur's insights into Proust can be associated with Dorris Lessing's analepsis: "Whether it is a question of completing the narration of an event by bringing it into the light of a preceding event, of filling in an earlier lacuna, or provoking involuntary memory by the repeated recalling of similar events, or of correcting an earlier interpretation by means of a series of reinterpretations – Proustian analepsis is not a gratuitous game. It is governed by the meaning of the work as a whole" (Ricoeur, 1985, vol. 2: 83). Instead of what Ricoeur calls "Proustian analepsis", I would place Lessing's analepsis or the numerous moments of flashback which account for the games with time in her narrative.

Time turns into a cold, insensitive and irrational entity the same as the world perceived by the anonymous narrator of *The Memoirs of a Survivor*. The time of her irrational world can be associated with what Ricoeur calls "memory" and "expectation" as "modalities of the present" (Ricoeur, vol. 1, 1984: 8). The remembered past times or the times of the rooms she visits and analyses represent what Ricoeur – based on Genette's account of the games with time in *Narrative Discourse. An Essay in Method* (1980) – calls the "narrated time" (Ricoeur, vol. 2, 1985: 80).

To conclude, my contention is that not only time is creatively rewritten and reshaped but also the past associated with the story of the mind. Doris Lessing's *The Memoirs of a Survivor* is an interesting account of revisited times turned into a story which subtly theorizes the condition of fiction and the past as based on one's imaginative and creative revision of other textual and temporal experiences.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Albion: The Origins of the English Imagination. London: Chatto & Windus. 2000.
Booth, Wayne. *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961.
Currie, Mark. *Postmodern Narrative Theory*. Hampshire: Palgrave, 1998.
Gibson, Jeremy, Wolfreys, Julian. *Peter Ackroyd: The Ludic and Labyrinthine Text*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000.
Hutcheon, Linda. *Narcissistic Narrative*. *The Metafictional Paradox*. New York and London: Methuen, 1980.
Lessing, Doris. *The Memoirs of a Survivor*. London: Picador, 1976.
Ricoeur, Paul. *Time and Narrative*. Volume 1. Translated by Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1984.
Ricoeur, Paul. *Time and Narrative*. Volume 2. Translated by Kathleen McLaughlin. and David Pellauer. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1985.

STUDIA UBB PHILOLOGIA, LVIII, 3, 2013, p. 15 - 20
(RECOMMENDED CITATION)

LAURA CERETA'S ART OF PARADEIGMATA AND ERISTIC STYLE

DANIEL R. FREDRICK[1]

ABSTRACT. ***Laura Cereta's Art of Paradeigmata and Eristic Style.*** Laura Cereta (1469–1499) was an eighteen-year old female author who fought for women's education during the Italian Renaissance. Cereta's *Letter to Bibulous Sempronious. Defense of the Liberal Instruction of Women* reveals two powerful rhetorical strategies for marginalized authors: the argument from *paradeigmata* and the use of an *eristic*, wrangling prose style.

Keywords: Laura Cereta, *paradeigmata*, style, rhetorical analysis, Renaissance, Italy, eristic, author**.**

REZUMAT. ***Arta Laurei Cereta privind paradigmata si stilul eristic.*** Laura Cereta (1469–1499) este o autoare în vârstă de optsprezece ani care a luptat pentru educaţia femeilor în perioada Renaşterii italiene. Lucrarea lui Cereta intitulată *Letter to Bibulous Sempronious. Defense of the Liberal Instruction of Women* prezintă două puternice strategii retorice pentru autorii marginalizaţi: argumentul din *paradeigmata* şi utilizarea unui stil *eristic*, contondent.

Cuvinte cheie: Laura Cereta, *paradeigmata*, stil, analiză retorică, Renaştere, Italia, eristic, autor**.**

Introduction

In any period of literature, rare is an eighteen-year old author. The Italian Renaissance had Laura Cereta who, by eighteen, was well-educated in Latin and deeply trained in the art of rhetoric; she wrote with the passion of a modern suffragette and with the logic of an ancient legal advocate. It is getting more customary today for scholars to seek out marginalized voices in literary and rhetorical studies. Scholars who want to showcase a marginalized author who is also great in both content and style would do well to give Cereta attention, for she has an important work, her *Letter to Bibulous Sempronious*

[1] Dr. Daniel R. Fredrick is an assistant professor at the American University of Sharjah where he has been teaching courses in writing and speaking since August 2008. He began university teaching in 1996, before moving to the UAE. He has taught in California, Texas, Florida, and Bulgaria. Fredrick has published articles for professional journals and presented papers at national and international conferences on topics related to rhetoric. Contact address: <fredrick.dan@gmail.com>.

Defense of the Liberal Instruction of Women which reveals the literary war between the sexes while underscoring a savvy use of powerful rhetorical strategies. In this fascinating piece of rhetoric, Cereta challenges male dominance in education, a dominance which, we learn from the antagonist, is justified by male intellectual superiority. In her fiery rebuttal to a fictional 'Everyman,' Bibulous, (whose name means 'the drunkard'), Cereta displays great command of rhetorical ability. Some of the dominant strategies in her arsenal, two in particular, her use of *paradeigmata* and her *eristic*, wrangling prose style, are the focus here.

Bibulous Sempronius asserts that women with superior intellects are aberrations of female gender, that the average woman doesn't amount to much when it comes to things intellectual. Aggressively disagreeing, Cereta is "moved to demonstrate" the "inborn excellence" that is common to all women which, she deduces, is common to "all people" (495-97). But how can she prove it? If Bibulous says that women are of weak intellect in general, then Cereta faces a serious rhetorical challenge: one powerful example can be shrugged off as an aberration while a few examples can also be shrugged off as a series of aberrations. What Cereta must do is provide examples that not only show depth but also breadth. That means she needs a lot of examples of intellectual females to establish a representative pattern, or else Bibulous will simply reply with a stock argument, something akin to 'one swallow does not make a summer.'

Paradeigmata

Most notable in Cereta's epistle is the impressive list of twenty-three exemplary women from ancient times to Cereta's contemporaries. Because Cereta's essay is rarely anthologized, I offer below a catalogued list of the famous females she references from world history. They are numbered as they appear in the text. Prophecy/Divinity: 1. Sabba of Ethiopa; 2. Amalthea; 3. Eriphila; 4. Nicostrata ; 7. Manto of Thebes; 8. Tritonia Athena; Letters: 9. Inachian Isis, 10. Zenobia; Philosophers/Poets: 11. Philiasia, 12. Lastheneia, 13. Sappho of Lesbos, 14. Leontia, 15. Proba, 16. Cornificia, 17. Tulliola, 18. Terntia, 19. Cornelia;Political Rhetors: 20. Semiamira,21. Sempronia,22. Hortensia,23. Nicolosa [Sanuto] of Bologna,24.Isotta Nogarola, 24. Cassandra Fedele.

This arguing from *paradeigmata* affords Cereta two rhetorical benefits. First, because Cereta can, 'on the spot,' recollect these examples from various histories (Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Christian), literature and rhetoric, she demonstrates on one hand her own exemplary erudition. In other words, she shows that a woman can plunge into the depths of intelligence. Indeed, the long list of examples not only functions as support for her argument but also (by its impressive cataloguing) confirms her own ability to systematize knowledge and therefore, demonstrate her own intelligence.

The second benefit is that these examples offer a condensed, synoptic history lesson for a male opponent who may be ignorant about women's history—as Cereta venomously and condescendingly implies. And by doing this, Cereta can show how expansive is the breadth of female intellects while implying that male intellects are lacking in that breadth because they are unaware of these other rival scholars. Put another way, Cereta is educated in notable men from history, but her male audience members most likely are not educated in women's history. Using these examples of superior women in prophecy/divinity, letters, philosophy, poetry, and rhetoric further shows how effective Cereta is at adjusting her argument to audience, uniting shared values with Bibulous, for they both view these subjects as critical areas of learning. But these examples do more than establish Cereta's *ethos* and provide her audience with necessary lessons from women's history: they also highlight the dynamic, collective intellect of women, an idea which directly addresses Bibulous' claim that a woman of intellect is an aberration of her sex.

Cereta may seem at this point to be offering a powerful argument, but Cereta's list still comprises *exceptional* women, and were Bibulous not inebriated, he may have challenged her on this point because her examples on the surface are actually supporting his claim. Thus, one of the apparent weaknesses of Cereta's examples is that each woman from her list *is* an aberration just as Bibulous himself purported that Cereta, as an intellectual women, was an aberration of her sex; for example, few women (and few men) are deft at political oratory, yet Cereta underscores that ability in Sempronia and Hortensia. Are Sempronia and Hortensia representatives of an average female intellect? Clearly, they are not; they are unusual, strange, rare examples; they are aberrations, just as Shakespeare's intellect is an aberration of male intellect. On the surface, then, the intellectual ability of these women seems exceptional, a problem in Cereta's argument which should surely cause Bibulous to predict his victory in the debate.

Upon closer analysis of Cereta's examples, however, these seemingly rare women highlight a *general* pattern of the female capacity to adapt successfully to changes in human progression, especially changes brought on from progress in literacy, and from moving from an oral to a literate culture. For instance, Cereta's earliest examples are of women who are imbued with divine understanding much like Homeric bards are imbued with divine inspiration. In the next set of examples, Cereta's women move from being divinely inspired to being experts at literacy: in other words, it is a human trait of both men and women to transition from an oral state of mind to a literate state of mind with the advent of learning and using the alphabet. No doubt, reading and writing allowed these women to engage in abstract thought which in turn fostered an ability to engage in philosophical and

rhetorical debates. Thus, the female intellects in Cereta's list can spar with male sophists and philosophers, create poetry, and succeed now and then in male-dominated politics as Sempronia "swayed the minds" of the male Senate, an ability Cereta further highlights when mentioning the daughters of Hortensius and Cicero.

The logic of Cereta's *paradeigmatae* demonstrates the following: although the changes in human communication (from an oral to a literate state) is unique and intriguing, what is *not* unique is the female ability to adapt successfully to the social context especially in paradigm shifts when oral cultures begin to appropriate literacy. With these examples, Cereta easily pins Bibulous between two choices: if he disagrees with Cereta, he is clearly guilty of "having rejected the studies which make men wise. . ." (495). On the other hand, if he agrees, he must extend the intellectual opportunities for those women who "choose to exercise the gift of reason" (497). Furthermore, characterizing Bibulous as a drunk allows Cereta to strike with double force. Since the male bias against women will probably not change (at least not in her lifetime) as a result of her letter, Cereta implies that both an understanding of women's intellectual history and changes in social reform will not take place as long as drunken arguments (fallacious arguments) reign supreme from those in power.

Eristic Style

If Cereta's arguing from *paradeigmata* is a noticeable feature of her letter to Bibulous, even more distinguishing is her eristic, wrangling prose style. Cereta is in a verbal war with men who are prejudiced against the education of women, and like any deft rhetorician, she adjusts her style appropriately to the context: in this case, a fight. In other words, her style needs to be wrangling to meet the demands of eristic rhetoric (Richard Enos 5-7). In most situations, this hot-headed style would be inappropriate. But Cereta is a lone "mouse" fighting for a movement. Cereta claims that if she were alone in her suffering, she "would have been silent" (496). However, to fight for all women, she must not only express her discontent but also express that discontent in a prose style that gains her recognition, for Cereta needs exposure in order to penetrate the seemingly impenetrable male bias. Had her style been a plain style or a plainer style (as she employs in *Letter to Augusinus Aemilius, Curse against the Ornamentation of Women*) she may not have mustered enough power to defend all of women against the likes of Bibulous. To experience her eristic style, consider some of these examples: Cereta objectifies Bibulous as an "animated stone," and a "foolish and angry dog" (495-497). But her attacks are equally strong against women who have

"chosen lesser goals" than the intellectual life. Cereta scorns the members of her sex who are more "concerned with parting their hair correctly, adorning themselves with lovely dresses, or decorating their fingers with pearls and other gems" (497). And she looks down on other women who, in modern terms, may be called pseudo-intellectuals who "delight in mouthing carefully composed phrases, indulging in dancing, or managing spoiled puppies" (497). But her greatest insult is to women who have allowed themselves to be nothing more than objects of beauty who "gaze at lavish banquet tables…or, [stand] at mirrors, to smear their lovely face" (497). In judging the effects of Cereta's rhetoric and specifically the effects of her eristic style, one may mistakenly argue that Cereta's argument is just an irritated rant, and perhaps it may be. However, changing the views of a culture takes more than a sober request from an eighteen-year old girl. Cereta must "polish and weary [her] pen against chatterboxes swelled with false glory" and use her [training] in the arts…[to] block the paths of ambush" (498).

Does she succeed? That is the question readers should ask about any piece of rhetoric. Put differently, how does one rate the success of a piece of rhetoric that clearly did not accomplish what it set out to do? I argue that despite the letter's obvious inability to change the culture overnight, it was successful in that it allowed Cereta to voice herself (impressively and fearlessly) in a society that preferred to stifle her. She is successful individually and historically. As for her goals to defend all of women, the fact that her style even today seems shockingly venomous may be testament that her fiery prose was of immeasurable importance in the long struggle of a feminist social movement that has carried on across all societies and times in patriarchies.

Conclusion

A larger question to think about is the idea of effectiveness in rhetorical documents. How do we determine whether a piece of writing is effective? Scholars, such as Cheryl Glenn, who are sensitive to Cereta's feminine struggle (although she does not mention Cereta in her major work *Rhetoric Retold*), perceive the state of Renaissance women glumly. Glenn is too focused on the injustices done to women to highlight what a moment of great success this letter may have been: "The social system did not allow for actual women to achieve public success or fame" (136). With a slightly different perspective, George Kennedy offers more praise of women's efforts during the Renaissance, arguing that "Women participated actively in the society." (230). Perhaps we should move away from Glenn's somber historical view as well as Kennedy's suspiciously enthusiastic view toward one which forces us to ask the following question: how does one judge the effectiveness of rhetoric in a situation where the rhetor is almost pre-determined not to be heard or to be considered

inferior? In a sense, Glenn and Kennedy are both right: Cereta's letter is an active participation in society as Kennedy would say, but it is also determined to fail by the social system as Glenn would say. I think a better focus would be to re-examine our assumptions of "effectiveness." The fact that a contemporary audience can look back five hundred years and marvel at this work is testament to its effectiveness, both in style, argument and message, even if the letter did not bring about the immediate changes that Cereta may have wanted.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Cereta, Laura. *Letter to Bibulus Sempronius, Defense of the Liberal Instruction of Women. The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present.* Ed. Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg. Boston: Bedford, 1990.

Enos, Richard. *Greek Rhetoric before Aristotle*. Prospect Heights: Waveland Press,1993.

Glenn, Cheryl. *Rhetoric Retold: Regendering the Tradition from Antiqiuty through the Renaissance.* Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1997.

Kennedy, George A. *A New History of Classical Rhetoric.* Princeton: Princeton UP, 1994.

STUDIA UBB PHILOLOGIA, LVIII, 3, 2013, p. 21 - 31
(RECOMMENDED CITATION)

WOMEN'S WRITING IN ISIDORA SEKULIĆ'S FEMINIST ESSAYS[1]

MAGDALENA KOCH[2]

ABSTRACT. ***Women's Writing in Isidora Sekulić's Feminist Essays***. This paper discusses the essays by Isidora Sekulić from the point of view of gender insisting on her perspective on several women writers. Mention is also made of her 1911 essay *Is Constantin Brunner right?* and her polemics with C. Brunner, a German philosopher of Jewish origin who claimed woman's mind is inferior to man's.

Keywords: essay, gender, inferiority, inequality, feminism, Isidora Sekulić, women's literature, woman writer.

REZUMAT. ***Scriitura feminină în eseurile feministe ale Isidorei Sekulić.*** Lucrarea de faţă discută eseurile Isidorei Sekulić din punctul de vedere al studiilor de gen, insistând asupra modului în care ea a apreciat o serie de scriitoare. Se menţionează eseul ei din 1911, *Is Constantin Brunner right?*, şi polemica sa cu C. Brunner, filozof german de origine evreiască, care susţinea că gândirea femeii este inferioară celei masculine.

Cuvinte cheie: eseu, gen, inferioritate, inegalitate, feminism, Isidora Sekulić, literatură scrisă de femei, scriitoare.

Preliminary remarks

Isidora Sekulić (1877-1958) is one of the most important Serbian women writers of the twentieth century. With a great degree of independence, Sekulić developed an extensive and modern essayistic project in Serbian culture, which I would like to present here. I decided to focus on the question of how she perceives foreign and compatriotic women writers in her texts and to present a few gender issues from her essays which reflect her concept of

[1] This paper is a part of the project entitled "Serbian Feminist Essay" 357/PB/IFS/10 of Ministry of Science and Higher Education in Republic in Poland.

[2] Magdalena Koch is professor of Serbian and Croatian literature and gender studies in the Institute of Slavic Studies at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań (Poland). She is the author of the monography *Journeys in Time and Space. The Fiction of Isidora Sekulić* (2000) and *...when we mature as a culture...Early 20th-Century Serbian Women's Writings (canon - genre – gender)* (2007) and co-author of the book *Milena Pavlović Barilli EX POST* (2009). Contact address: <mkoch@amu.edu.pl>.

women's involvement in culture. Even now, more than fifty years after her death, there seem to be two fundamental patterns regarding the perception of Sekulić in her own culture. On the one hand, she is perceived as an icon of Serbian femininity and the paragon of women's intellectual writing. When in the 1990s a Belgrade publisher Plavi jahač (Blue Rider) launched their series *Biblioteka Plave čarape* (*Blue Stocking Library*), they decided to commence with Isidora Sekulić's book *Saputnici (Fellow Travellers*, 1913*)*; the series subsequently included her essay *Balkan* (1940) and the novel *Đakon Bogorodičine crkve (Deacon of Mother of God Church,* 1919*)*. At the end of the twentieth century she was proclaimed (perhaps a bit overenthusiastically) "a woman of the millennium" of Serbian culture (Tasić 1998: 4). On the other hand, radical feminist circles consider her too "universal", a woman writer who, first and foremost, cultivated classical, traditional standards of writing, following masculine patterns (Udovički 1977, Leovac 1986, Ribnikar 1986), which made her writing similar to the predominating masculine discourse, perceived as normative. Yet, despite these claims, her essays (especially the feminist ones) feature a significant number of texts distinctly articulating the issue of gender and the concept of women's writing.

My extensive research on Isidora Sekulić's essays and fiction unequivocally proves that such a bipolar, contrasting perception of her work would not have pleased her. She would not have felt comfortable with the "feminised" model of her canonisation, as many of her essays show that she did not want to be confined solely to the context of literary women's "subculture", so frequently belittled within the existing system of patriarchal Serbian literature. She insisted on being considered in relation to the mainstream, by rejecting the condescending, preferential treatment, so frequently attributed to women's writing and refusing double critical standards. Yet, she never avoided feminist subjects whose difficulty is visible even in her debut volume of prose *Saputnici (*1913, *Fellow Travellers)* and in the subsequently published essays, such as *Ima li pravo Konstantin Bruner?* (1911, *Is Constantin Brunner Right?*), *Ženina lepota* (*On Feminine Beauty*), *Iz života kurtizana* (*From the Life of the Courtesans*), *Ženina konzervativnost* (*Women's Conservatism*), *Srpskoj ženi* (*To a Serbian Woman*) or *O ženi u literaturi i istoriji* (1952, *On Woman in Literature and History*). Before World War II she also actively contributed (which is perhaps a less known fact) to the periodical *Ženski pokret* (*Women's Movement*), the publication of "Društvo za prosvećivanje žene i zaštitu njenih prava" ("The Society for the Education of Women and the Protection of their Rights"), a feminist organisation set up in 1919 whose active member she was. Sekulić also belonged to the organisation "Udruženje universitetski obrazovanih žena" in Yugoslavia (**"**Federation of University Women in Yugoslavia").

I would like to look more closely at how Sekulić – an intellectual – verbalised the issues of her own sex in her essays, how she commented on the work of fellow women writers, both her compatriots and foreigners, and how this affected Serbian literature.

I. The essay as a project of "I" and experience

First, it would be appropriate to consider why the essay was, for her, an ideal way of participating in culture. It seems that the genre afforded considerable formal independence and, also, when selecting subjects, it enabled an expression of her own visions and intellectual convictions. It gave her an opportunity to engage in polemics, to make her own, separate voice heard and highlight her (feminine) subjectivity. As a rule, the essay forces the writing subject to define the concept of self, it grows from personal experience, which may render the text dependent on the scope of the author's life experience. This was emphasised by Montaigne, the "founding father" of the modern variety of the genre and even the inventor of its name. Thus, the essay tends to rely on subjective factors, on the author's travels, reading, erudition, experiences, personal tastes (Sendyka 2006: 43). If so many factors affect both its form and the manner in which it is practised, why should the experience of the writer's gender not be considered a significant, formative element? The fundamental framework within which the subject expresses his or her self, a specific point of departure for the writer is the body, the subject's ultimate medium. This is a question which Rosi Braidotti raised in her book *Nomadic subject* (Braidotti 1994). Thus, the essay has elaborated the tradition of rendering the experience through the text and one of the more important characteristics of the mode is, first and foremost, the *concept of the self* (Good 1988, 23; Sendyka 2006: 48). Therefore, the subject should not be an abstract element of essayistic narration; it becomes the "incarnated" material assuming concrete bodily substance. Thus, it cannot be "universal", as it always remains at the intersection of the writer's biological (*sex*), social and cultural (*gender*) identity. If we also think of the linguistic aspects, the subject is always an inscription, a textual incarnation of concrete cultural codes. The essay becomes the materialisation of a "corpor(e)al" message (the reality of the body).

If the "I" is essential for the essay and if the author speaks from the perspective of his or her own experience, an essay written by a woman will obviously be marked, in some way, by a personal aspect; it will, thus, be a text containing encoded gender information. Consequently, I am going to try to "decode" these texts by Isidora Sekulić which display a distinct gender aspect. In short, I am going to try to present her essayistic *modus scribendi* in terms of gender. That is why I selected for this analysis the essays where the theoretical questions of women's writing were thematised and the texts devoted to Serbian and foreign women writers.

II. *Is Constantin Brunner right?* or on Sekulić's early concept of (anti?) feminism

Isidora Sekulić's essayistic discourse of gender is suspended between two important texts separated by an interval of forty years. The former, entitled *Is Constantin Brunner right?*, was written about one hundred years ago, in 1911, at the beginning of her essay writing career. The other, *O ženi u literaturi i istoriji* (*On Woman in Literature and History*), is from 1952, five years before the death of the seventy–five-year-old Isidora; it was an attempt at answering a questionnaire on the intellectual activity of women. The very fact that Sekulić bridges her deliberations on women's contribution to literature with essays should sensitise us to the problem and make us aware that since she returned to the genre, she must have perceived it as very important.

The essay *Is Constantin Brunner right?* is the key to understanding Sekulić's complex feminism and her discourse of gender. It was published two years before she made her debut with her first book of fiction and even now it is hardly known and discussed. In my opinion, it may be treated as an example of how traditional paradigms of considering women's involvement in culture are transgressed, as a specific programme of intellectual (if not feministic) emancipation, not only for the author but also for modernist Serbian women writers or, even wider, European women, as Sekulić sketches both Serbian and European contexts. The essay accurately summarises women's contribution to influencing culture in the past and predicts the hardships of implementing this task in the future. She even anticipates certain thoughts from Virginia Woof's famous essay *A Room of One's Own* from 1929. Yet, instead of becoming a programme for Serbian women artists, *Is Constantin Brunner right?* was misunderstood in Serbia at that time, causing consternation, then sinking into oblivion. Even nowadays, few specialists are aware of it. The essay's theses appalled not only women liberationists. For example, a somewhat amazed author, signing as BB (most probably the chief editor Jelica Belović *Bernadžikovska), bluntly wrote in a women's almanac Srpkinja (The* Serbian Woman) published in 1913 in Sarajevo:

> [Isidora Sekulić – M.K.] most surprised our readers with her text *Is Constantin Brunner right?* („Бранково Коло", no 33 and 34, 1911). Our dear professor wants to present herself as a Serbian Karin Michaëlis („Das gefärliche Alter" – *The Dangerous Age*), who mercilessly exposes weaknesses of her own sex, but in her doing so she exaggerates. We do not agree with her opinions (...)) (*Srpkinja*, 1913: 43–45).

Through her essay, Isidora Sekulić even in the early phase of her career exposed a very significant problem of European modernism. Even if marginally, she tackled the issue of qualitative and quantitative involvement of women in literature, culture, and history throughout the ages and in

contemporary times. This was an opportunity to engage in polemics with the misogynic voices of European philosophers of that time, such as Constantin Brunner or Otto Weininger, whose works she had read. In her own way, she tried to determine what the future involvement of women in the process of intellectual development should consist of. A classic misogynic argument and a constant cultural component (unfortunately quoted till today) consisted in isolating biology or nature as factors testifying to the other sex's "inferiority" and defining a woman solely in terms of the anatomical and the reproductive functions of her body. At the beginning of the twentieth century, women's voices were more distinctly heard, which slowly shifted the axis of the discourse from biological to social, political, cultural, educational, and feministic aspects. It should be emphasised here that Isidora Sekulić was one of the first in Serbia to tackle the problem in her essays.

The essay was a reaction to *Die Lehre von den Geistigen und vom Volk* (1908), the work of a German philosopher of Jewish descent, Constantin Brunner (1862–1937)[3]. When explaining Brunner's philosophy, Sekulić does not refer to the entire two–volume work, but only to the fragment devoted to women. In her interpretation, Brunner's main thesis in this fragment is that a woman "cannot think properly and she is illogical" (Sekulić 1966: 202). Sekulić quotes her own essay, where she claims that "a woman who wants to become logical and educated must fight a decisive battle with herself", as "nature, whose economy subordinates a new unadapted woman quite early on and with brutal force, offers her sexual maturity and thus best protects her against philosophy, logic, aesthetics" (Sekulić 1966: 202, my underlining – M. K.). Yet, when she attempts to diagnose women's problems, she remains within the patriarchal tradition. She deals with complex matters of women's creativity and thinking in a way that is critical and by no means succumbing to easy optimism. The essay's fundamental thesis outlines the still subordinate position of women in the men's world of science and thought:

> No other god is so hard to serve as man; woman is enslaved by man and a slave loses her soul. This is the essence of the problem. (…) A woman follows a man (…) He chooses, he makes demands which *we* fulfil, he legitimises our worth. *We* are still living someone else's consciousness, the consciousness of man. (Sekulić 1966: 203, 204, my underlining – M. K.).

[3] Constantin Brunner is the pseudonym of Leo Arjeh Yehuda Wertheimer (1862–1937), a German philosopher of Jewish descent. The pseudonym was later registered as his official name, under which he is mainly known. In 1908 he published a two–volume philosophical work *Die Lehre von den Geistigen und vom Volk*, which Isidora Sekulić read in German and which she quotes in her essay. He is also an author of *Liebe, Ehe, Mann und Weib,* or *Der Judenhaß und die Juden, Unser Christus oder Das Wesen des Genies* . 1933 he emigrated from Germany to Holland (The Hague) were he died in 1937. The ICBI - International Constantin Brunner Institute was established in The Hague.

Isidora Sekulić does not restrict herself to the proud and spontaneous enumeration of the "inventory of female wisdom", as her contemporaries did. It is also interesting that while writing about women's situation in her essay, she uses the inclusive form "we" (which I marked with italics in the quote). She loyally takes the side of women striving to emphasise their presence in culture and identifying with them. Interestingly, in her essay, the author presents an inspiring list of female achievements throughout the ages, referring to such outstanding representatives of her sex as Sappho (7th/6th century BC), Sophie Germain (1776–1831)[4], Anne Louise Germaine de Staël–Holstein (1766–1817), George Sand (Aurore Dudevant, 1804–1876), Anette von Droste–Hülsoff (1797–1848). This nearly obligatory list is completed with a few new, contemporary names. She also draws attention to such women as Mme Ackermann (Louise–Victorine Choquet, 1813–1890), Maria Konopnicka (1842–1910)[5], Marie Eugenie Delle Grazie (1864–1931)[6], Maria Curie (1867–1934), and Helena Richter (1861–1942)[7]. Her fundamental diagnosis is as follows: "Those who judge us (Brunner, Weininger, Bergson, and their ilk – M. K.) are in many respects right, as the process of liberation from subjugation cannot be fast and glorious, but it must be slow, despairing, pitiful, and lasting" (Sekulić 1966: 205).

The ostensible antifeminism of the essay consists in the fact that the author is not exhilarated by the spectacular achievements of several individual, eminent women in history. Those who had excelled only begin a laborious process of accumulating women's spiritual energy in culture, forming their subjectivity, acquiring significance by their own sex. It is striking that with her characteristic inner independence but also uncompromising honesty and humility combined with a great measure of irony, Sekulić justifies the critical theses of various "Weiningers" (*Geschlecht und Charakter*, 1903) and "Brunners" (*Die Lehre von den Geistigen und vom Volk*, 1908) - the metonymical expression belongs to her - who doubt the creative potential of women's mind. She knows that their theses are rooted in a rich source of numerically predominating group of average, uneducated women and that it is "this army, great and colourful […], that constitutes a rich statistical source justifying the views on what a woman can do and how she can do it" (Sekulić 1966: 206). Rather than being indignant, the Serbian writer acknowledges that men, with the advantage of their knowledge and education, have the right to expose the shortcomings of women's thinking; she acknowledges their point of view and their judgement:

[4] French mathematician interested in the theory of numbers.

[5] A Polish poet, novelist, writer for children and youth, translator, journalist and critic, as well as activist for women's rights and Polish independence.

[6] An Austrian writer, playwright, novelist, and poet.

[7] Austrian writer of Jewish descent and the researcher of English romanticism.

> those who judge us are scholars, researchers and they have the right to doubt and criticise, while women should meet them half way; and only in this way science, not fashion, may become part of the movement (Sekulić 1966: 206).

She is convinced (and this is the essence of her difficult and demanding feminism) that:

> the time will come when there will be many brilliant women, philosophers of pure blood; these times are, of course, still far away and today's proud and arrogant generation of educated women will disappear without a trace, becoming the foundations for the edifice which is still a castle in the air (Sekulić 1966: 207–208).

Sekulić thinks that women will grow more aware of their capabilities by persistent work. This is a process that has already started, a process that will still require great intellectual effort: "The process of our liberation is laughable and pathetic, serious and tragic, but we just have to go through it, as any other solution would simply negate our existence" (Sekulić 1966: 208, my underlining – M.K.).

This short essay from the preliminary phase of Isidora's writing demonstrates that she considered the issues of gender as fundamental. She showed that she was aware of the distinct division of cultural roles and of the misogynism of many authoritative philosophers. She also hoped that the situation would change in time. Through her intellectual work, she tried to resist by engaging in polemics with the "Brunners" and the "Weiningers". It should be noted, however, that when diagnosing the problem of women's cultural involvement, she referred to a wider European context, without restricting her perspective to the local phenomena of Serbian culture.

III. Isidora Sekulić's essays on women writers or woman as a reader

In the aftermath of the essay *Is Constantin Brunner right?*, it would seem that Sekulić should further research women's intellectual activity and comment on the literary work of fellow women writers, but this part of her work is slightly disappointing. Only eleven out of several hundred essays are devoted to other women writers. Three discuss the work of foreign authors: the English Virginia Woolf (*Вирџинија Вулф,* 1929)1929), the Swedish Selma Lagerlöf (*Умрла је Селма Лагерлеф*, 1940, the first woman writer to have won the Nobel Prize in literature), and the French Françoise Sagan (*Франсоаз Саган, награда критичара; и даље*, 1954). The remaining eight essays present the work of her compatriots: Danica D. Hristić (*Даница Христићка. Белешке и успомене*, 1923), Danica Marković (*За добар спомен Даници Марковић*, 1932), Jelena Dimitrijević (*Јелена Ј. Димитријевић*: *Нови свет, или у Америци годину дана,* 1934), Jelisaveta Ibrovac (*Један леп књижевни рад* 1938),

Milica Janković (*Над гробом Милице Јанковић*, 1939), Vida J. Radović (*Око једне женске књиге*, 1940), Smilja Đaković (*Забележити име Смиље Ђаковић*, 1946) and Milica Kosić Selem (*Из хартија у фијоци*, 1957). Sekulić devoted her essays to women for various reasons. Some discuss their work in general or review individual pieces (as is the case of Woolf, Kostić–Selem, Radović, Dimitrijević, Ibrovac), others celebrate women writers and their work at their death (Hristić, Marković, Janković, Lagerlőf), others present their work (the case of Smilja Đaković, whom she wanted to preserve for posterity), while one essay was written to tell the story of a spectacular literary success of a very young, nineteen–year–old François Sagan, after she had been awarded a French critics' prize for her debut *Hello Sadness*.

Close examination of the ways of interpreting the work by European and Serbian authors reveals differences in perception. Those representing great and influential European cultures, such as English, Swedish, or French, are treated in universal terms: the interpretation of Woolf's or Lagerlöf's writing is not confined to feministic framework. For Sekulić, Selma Lagerlöf constitutes an example of a great writer of mythical spirit who transforms the primitive into the aesthetic and the aesthetic into the religious. She is presented outside the context of gender or feminism. Virginia Woolf is, for her, an author applying interesting writing techniques and she is especially impressed by her novel *Orlando*, Sekulić devoted most attention to this controversial text. At some stage, she even tries to answer the question as to what *Orlando* is, but treats the text in universal terms – as an odyssey of the soul or a fantasy about the metamorphosis of a human being. However, Sekulić refrains from defining this special category of universality which Woolf presented in *Orlando* and which she even more forcibly defined theoretically in *A Room of One's Own*. (Probably Sekulić had not read when writing her review of *Orlando*). Woolf wrote that a truly universal and great mind is always androgynous. In each of us two powers preside, one male and one female, and their harmonious intellectual cooperation leads to a healthy state of mind which becomes really prolific when it uses all its potential. In *Orlando,* Woolf showed the implementation of the metaphor of androgyneity in history – a combination of both elements: masculine and feminine in the eponymous protagonist, who only then forms a certain, truly universal, and complete code. Isidora seems to have intuitively sensed this potential carried by the novel because she wrote about a specific principle of "embryonality" applied by Woolf, which seems to be a metaphor of androgyneity. Sekulić must have been preoccupied with a specific androgynous completeness of the text before, irrespective of Woolf's ideas, because in her debut volume *Saputnici* (*Fellow Travellers*) she implemented an innovative measure of narrative transgression in the text *Nostalgija* (*Nostalgia*) and showed that there is no

such thing as the "universal" text and even the subject in the first person singular within one small volume may be androgynous (or gynoandrous)[8]. It is, therefore, clear that Isidora Sekulić could understand the issue of the universalism of writing and the reception of texts in such a broader way (approximating Virginia Woolf's subsequent interpretation). Perhaps, for her, the universal involvement of women in literature did not consist in adapting to the literature popularly considered as "universal", i.e. standardised throughout centuries by the masculine vision of how literature should be practised. I tend to believe that Sekulić intuitively applied this more mature aspect of universalism, which her British fellow writer articulated in this pertinent sentence:

> It is fatal for anyone who writes to think of their sex. It is fatal to be a man or woman, purely and simply; one must be woman-manly or man-womanly. […] Some collaboration has to take place in the mind between woman and man before the art of creation can be accomplished. […] Some marriage of opposites has to be consummated. (Woolf, 1992: 136)

This evolution of views and expression is perhaps less distinctly seen in the eight essays which Isidora devoted to her compatriots. Probably she did not apply double standards to the recognised European writers representing mature literary traditions and she evaluated them in terms of the universalism of their creation. Serbian women writers, as representatives of a less significant literature from the outskirts of Europe, with less (or differently) developed tradition of cultural involvement and strongly marked by the patriarchal tradition, require a distinct gender or feministic context when presented in her essays. She wrote not only about the writers whom she had personally known (Dimitrijević, Marković, Janković) but also about the activists of the Serbian emancipation movement (Danica Hristić, Jelizaveta Ibrovac) or Smilja Đaković, the editor of a literary periodical *Misao* (*Though*t) Besides presenting the authors, Isidora Sekulić wanted to preserve them for posterity and, as a feminist, she felt that she had a mission; perhaps that is why there is more gender, femininity, and loyalty in her enunciations.

IV. On woman in literature and history

Towards the end of her life, in 1952, forty years after the publication of the essay *Is Constantin Brunner right?* Sekulić wrote a short, four pages long essay *O ženi u literaturi i istoriji* (*On woman in literature and history*), which is an attempt at answering a few questions about women's creativity. The seventy-five years old writer approaches the subject with solemnity and

[8] I wrote about it more extensively, especially on pages 248–261, in my book *…kiedy dojrzejemy jako kultura…Twórczość pisarek serbskich na początku XX wieku (kanon–genre–gender),* Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, Wrocław 2007.

greater understanding. She is aware that the problem requires several separate treatises, if not books, for which she had then neither time nor physical strength. She emphasises the need to write a study on the genealogy of women's activity in history, science and art: "a whole book analytic, polemic, synthetic, and with the other side, men, in view as well" (Sekulić 1966: 404).

She is also convinced that the precise presentation of a woman both from ethical and intellectual perspectives deserves another book. Sekulić is aware of the need to present woman's moral attitude in southern Slavic folk art, too. The essay is brief, sketching hastily and just mentioning these complex unsolved problems. Yet, what follows is one basic conclusion: in her declining years, Sekulić perceives the issue of women's cultural involvement more seriously than at the beginning of her literary career. She becomes more aware of gender, as if she had got rid of the illusion that the universal treatment of the problems is sufficient. In other words, towards the end of her life, Sekulić seems to be convinced that it is necessary to properly contextualise the work of fellow women writers. She also saw her own work in the wider, European context, (sub)consciously comparing herself with Woolf: "I wrote essays much earlier than Virginia Woolf did but nobody noticed that" (Marinković 1963: 238-239).

Summing up

Let me now draw conclusions and answer the provocative question set in the title *Is Constantine Brunner right?.* The essays we have presented clearly prove that Isidora's writing features a distinct feministic aspect, which the interpretation of her work should neither ignore nor marginalise, as it has frequently happened (Leovac, Ribnikar, Udovički). It is obvious that she was preoccupied with the issue of women's creative work both from the theoretical and the practical perspectives of women's writing. Moreover, her treatment of the problem evolved from a more universal perspective understood in terms of the androgynous or gynoandrous properties of man/woman writer to the perspective of gender. Sekulić seems to have been engaged in an intellectual, inner struggle. She was eager to neutralise the feministic issue, especially when analysing European women writers, but she was also willing to emphasise it when she wrote about Serbian female authors. Her method oscillates between reading along universal lines and reading in terms of gender. In her declining years, her attitude towards gender became more decisive and even though she no longer had the strength to elaborate on the issue, she got increasingly bitterer witnessing the neglect and the marginalisation of Serbian women writers.

There is only one answer to the rhetoric question asked exactly a hundred years ago by Sekulić herself in the title of the essay *Is Constantine Brunner right?* and highlighted by me in the title of this presentation. With all her creative work, with all her intellectual model of writing and her demanding concepts of women's intellectual involvement in culture, Isidora Sekulić strove to prove that Constantin Brunner was, after all, wrong. At any rate, her rich literary and essayistic heritage distinctly contradicts his belief.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Braidotti, Rosi. 1994. *Nomadic Subject*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Good, Graham. 1988. *The Observing Self. Rediscovering the Essay.* London and New York: Routledge.

Leovac, Slavko. 1986. *Književno Delo Isidore Sekulić .* Beograd: „Vuk Karadžič" i „Jugoslavijapublik".

Marinković, Nada. 1963. *Jasna Poljana. Studije i ogledi.* Beograd.

Ribnikar, Vladislava. 1986. *Književni pogledi Isidore Sekulić.* Beograd: Prosveta.

Sekulić, Isidora. 1966. *Ima li pravo Konstantin Bruner?* [in:] eadem, *Analitički trenuci i teme. Sabrana dela, knjiga XI,* Novi Sad: Matica srpska.

Sekulić, Isidora. 1966. *O ženi u literaturi i istoriji* [in:] eadem, *Služba. Sabrana dela, knjiga XII.* Novi Sad: Matica srpska.

Sendyka, Roma. 2006. *Nowoczesny esej. Studium historycznej świadomości gatunku.* Kraków: Universitas.

„Српкиња. Њезин живот и рад, њезин културни развитак и њезина народна умјетност до данас", Сарајево 1913.

Tasić, D. 1998. *Otmena, napaćena, usamljena* , „Politika", 19-20 decembar, Beograd.

Woolf, Virginia. 1992. *A Room of One's Own. Three Guineas.*Edited with an Introduction and Notes by Morag Shiach. New York: Oxford University Press.

Udovički, Ivanka. 1977. *Esej Isidore Sekulić.* Beograd: Institut za književnost i umetnost.

STUDIA UBB PHILOLOGIA, LVIII, 3, 2013, p. 33 - 42
(RECOMMENDED CITATION)

IS THERE A WOMAN IN THE TEXT? THE GHOST OF MÂNJOALĂ'S INN

ILEANA ALEXANDRA ORLICH[1]

ABSTRACT. ***Is There a Woman in the Text? The Ghost of Mânjoală's Inn*.** Caragiale's story *Mânjoală's Inn* decodes the situation of women in a patriarchal society, what Simone de Beauvoir calls the prison bars of "femininity" enforced by law and custom. The peripheral status of the inn establishes a socially cohesive space vis-à-vis Dominique Strauss-Kahn's recent mishap in a New York hotel. Within a literary comparative context, the story and the incident offer a register of feminine voices that speak about communal identity, shared experience, and a collective past. From a faraway land of silent voices or from a more immediate space, the two heroines invite the reader to discover and to make them alive with new possibilities. So, the questions I intend to explore are, who are these women and what do their stories tell us.

Keywords: Caragiale, silence, patriarchy, sexuality, homosociality, witchcraft, subaltern, femininity

REZUMAT. ***Există vreo femeie în acest text? Fantoma Hanului lui Mânjoală.*** Povestea lui Caragiale, *Hanul lui Manjoala*, descifrează poziția femeilor într-o societate patriarhală, ceea ce Simone de Beauvoir numește grațiile de temniță ale femininității înlănțuite de lege și obicei. Statutul marginal al hanului stabilește un spațiu coeziv vis-à-vis de hotelul New-Yorkez, gazda nefericitei aventuri a lui Dominique Strauss-Kahn. Într-un context literar comparatist, povestea și incidentul oferă un registru de voci feminine care vorbesc despre o identitate comună, experiențe împărtășite reciproc, și un trecut colectiv. Dintr-o țară îndepărtată de voci fără sunet sau dintr-un spațiu imediat, cele două personaje feminine invită cititorul să le descopere și să le readucă la viață încărcate de noi posibilități. Astfel, întrebările pe care intenționez să le explorez adresează atât identitatea acestor femei, cât și ceea ce ne spun nouă poveștile lor.

Cuvinte cheie: Caragiale, tacere, patriarhie, sexualitate, homosocialitate, vrajitorie, subaltern, femininitate

[1] Ileana Alexandra Orlich is Professor of Romanian Studies, English and Comparative Literature and Director of Romanian Studies, as well as Head of German, Romanian and Slavic Faculty at Arizona State University. Her scholarly books include *Silent Bodies: (Re)Discovering the Women of Romanian Short Fiction* (2002); *Articulating Gender, Narrating the Nation: Allegorical Femininity in Romanian Fiction* (2005); *Myth and Modernity in the Twentieth-Century Romanian Novel* (2009); and *Avantgardism, Politics, and the Limits of Interpretation: Reading Gellu Naum's Zenobia* (2010). Contact address: <orlich@asu.edu>.

Ion Luca Caragiale's novella, *Mânjoala's Inn*, tells the story of the age-old relationship between a younger man and an older woman. In the story, which is told by the youth, the unconventional pairing is seen as a liberating force for the narrator-protagonist because it enables him to discover his sexual identity. In the game of seduction, both the young man, who introduces himself only as "Conu Fănica"[2], and the woman, the beautiful innkeeper Marghioala, seem to submit humorously and with good grace to their natural inclinations. According to the youth, while teaching the youth obedience to the finest instincts, Marghioala appears at ease with her own mystery and strangely empowered by her insouciant role as a more mature lover and by what appears to be the spontaneous appropriateness of her behavior.

When the youth begins to tell the story, he is on his way to Colonel[3] Iordache's house, where he expects to be betrothed that evening to the Colonel's eldest daughter. But since the evening is cool and both traveler and horse are tired, cold and hungry, the youth decides to stop at Mânjoala's Inn, an establishment once in financial straights but now prosperous under the ownership of the late innkeeper's widow, Marghioala. Still youthful looking, "handsome, strapping and bright-eyed"[4], she is believed to have found a treasure (for how else could the old inn prosper?) and to use magic (because invisible forces struck down thieves trying to rob the inn).

At the inn the youth is greeted warmly and served with the best food in the house – warm bread, roast duck on cabbage, fried pork sausage, and wine. After eating his supper, the youth, who is according to his own admission "good-looking and impudent – more impudent than good-looking" (169), puts his arm around Marghioala's waist, pinches her right arm, takes her in his arms and kisses her. He is determined to get his way with her even though Marghioala scolds him and lets him know that the Colonel would not appreciate his behavior. Before the evening is over, however, they wind up in each other's arms, the climax of their contact ultimately obscured by a black cat (on whose tail the youth accidentally steps in the darkening room) and by an old servant (who walks in with matches to light up the candles). It is at this

[2] *Conu*, from *cucon*/*cuconi*, a polite form used when addressing a male from the upper classes. Also used in the form conul (the articulated form of conu) in the masculine, as opposed to *cucoana* (derived from the Neo-Greek *kukkona*) in the feminine, a polite form of addressing a married woman from the upper classes.

[3] In the original text in Romanian, Pocovnicu, the equivalent of today's Colonel, a military rank borrowed from the Russian *polkovnic*, and popular around the end of the Middle Ages in Wallahia and Moldova. The word is also related to polc (pilc), a military unit corresponding to the regiment (a body of soldiers).

[4] Manjoala's Inn, in *Stories,* trans. Fred Nădăban (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia Publishing House, 1987). All quotations from *Mânjoala's Inn* are from this edition, although I have made a few slight changes to the translation dictated by the currency of American English.

point that the youth, in spite of Marghioala's insistence that he spend the night at the inn, decides to continue his journey and bids her farewell despite the storm that is beginning to rage outside.

For the next four hours the youth circles around in stormy weather, with the horse stepping over Marghioala's little black goat, which springs miraculously in front of them. Cold to the bone and deserted by both the kid, which he had put in a bag to carry along, and by the horse, which "dashes off as though nipped by a gadfly" (181), the youth finally learns from a servant that he has been turning around in a circle for hours, never more than a mere few yards from the inn's stables. Too tired to continue his journey, he ends up sleeping at the inn, in Marghioala's clean room, where she had been waiting for him all along. The next day, the youth is unwilling to leave the inn, even when the Colonel sends his men to take him away "with a great hullabaloo" (185). Later on, even though he leaves the inn, the youth runs away from the Colonel's house three times before the betrothal to return to Marghioala. And finally, with the Colonel determined to make him his son-in-law at all costs, the youth is seized and taken, bound hand and foot, to a monastery in the mountains. After forty days of fasting, prostration and absolution, a process that observes the traditional Orthodox ritual of penance to obtain forgiveness, the youth comes back repentant, is betrothed, and then marries the Colonel's daughter.

Although the youth's account of his adventure ends at this point, the story continues with an unexpected ending that brings the narrative into the present and destabilizes the entire narration. Introduced by an abrupt "a long time after," this final scene brings together the youth, now a mature man, and the Colonel, now his longtime father-in-law. They are engaged in small talk over a pitcher of wine, when a servant brings the news that Mânjoala's Inn had burnt to the ground, with the once beautiful innkeeper Marghioala, now old and decrepit, buried under a gigantic mount of cinders. The Colonel's unexpected confession when the news is reported that he, too, in his time, had been involved erotically with Marghioala transforms the narrative process into a glaringly manipulative strategy that 1) records the social articulations of male homosociality (i.e., the spectrum of male bonds); 2) maps out the ground onto which power transactions other than the mere game of seduction are conducted in the story; and 3) reveals the silent heroine, Marghioala, who is the ghost in the story's subtext. It is this last dimension of the story, more likely to be taken as a confession intertwining passionate remembrance and guilt that heightens the sense of the story's narrative with the detour of male homosocial desire.

What is from the start most familiar to the reader of *Mânjoala's Inn* is the background image of the male narrator, an only child of a prosperous family, and the playfulness of his seductive rhetoric. Immediately apparent in the opening paragraph, the polarities of paternal omnipotence and nurturance

suggested in the figure of the authoritative Colonel Iordache, and of appealing naiveté about worldly ties embodied in the story's youth, spread the sinister aura of an intended glamour of familial pathos over a complicated male strategy for homosocial empowerment not so easily dissolved into irony:

> A quarter of an hour to Mânjoala's Inn .from there one more junction to Upper Popești...an hour and a half at a moderate amble. He's a good horse. If I give him corn at the inn and rest him for three quarters of an hour that'll do. In other words, one quarter plus three quarters, one hour; with an hour and a half to Popești, makes two and a half. It's past seven now; by ten at the latest I shall be at Colonel Iordache's. I'm rather late. I ought to have left earlier but anyway they'll wait for me all right. (165)

Seen as childlike, the youth is unqualified for any serious work, but ready for frolic at any hour of the day. In spite of being late already, he spends two and a half-hours at Mânjoala's Inn, instead of the forty-five minutes he had originally proposed, to eat and feed the horse. Like a child, he has a joyness of temper, which he displays as soon as he arrives at the inn and which makes everyone treat him as if he must be protected from worry. He knows his future is secure, as the marriage to the Colonel's daughter will guarantee a life of relative leisure. His decision to carry on at the inn with Marghioala, in spite of his tardiness and of his impending betrothal, reveals his manipulative potential and acknowledges early in the narrative not only how wavering and uncertain his own grasp of adult responsibilities really is, but also the dazzling superficiality of the surface of a text that, unbeknown to the storyteller, brings to the fore the absence of Marghioala as a silent but persuasive subtext.

No wonder it is necessary for the youth to belong -- not to but with -- someone who is an adult: the Colonel. Their bond, which is one that links male to male, and one by which a male enhances the status of another male, provides the continuum of the men-promoting-the-interests-of-men pattern. Built into this pattern of male kinship systems that include friendship, mentorship, and rivalry is the compulsory heterosexuality, which is the necessary condition of a patriarchal system, whose rules and relations control and define the lives of women. Suggested in the story by the youth's forthcoming marriage and further strengthened through his relationship with Marghioala, the component of heterosexuality is the only aspect in which the youth is more, or other than a child, and which turns the youth’s story into a sly attempt to cover his tracks or a tacit admission to his concealing the abusive relationship he has with Marghioala: she is a ghostly presence nicely tucked into the story’s subtext.

If the youth's bond with the Colonel is the most sustained element of the plot throughout the story, its finest articulation is through the sexual conquest and exchange of Marghioala, which is in essence the story’s theme of the woman’s brutal victimization. To have the assignment of sexual initiation

and acting out in relation to a more experienced woman is a usual topos. In this regard, all that is unusual in *Mânjoala's Inn* is perhaps the dense, humorous texture of the story, the specificity with which the youth's part of the relationship with Marghioala is rendered and rationalized. The youth's puppyish eagerness to capture the woman he desires begins when he approaches the inn. Submitting to the erotic attraction for Marghioala, whom he had known to be a beautiful woman since his childhood, when he would stop at the inn with his late father, the youth is succumbing to temptation by taking refuge within the highly eroticized space of her room where she invites him:

> I have seen many clean, comfortable rooms in my time, but never one like that...What a bed! What curtains! What walls! What a ceiling! All white as milk. And the lampshade and all, crocheted in all sorts of colors...and as warm as underneath a mother hen's wing...and a smell of apples and quinces. (169)

Clearly, the older woman's sexual involvement with a younger man, an encounter which by traditional, patriarchal standards is considered an abusive relationship, is perpetuated by a woman at the critical point of her midlife crisis. The underlying moral issue involved in such a relationship focuses on the more general issue as to whether the youth's seduction by Marghioala can excuse his brutal victimization of her. Far from admitting to being a frivolous firebird, the youth projects himself as embodying the best essence of a manly man, fully entitled to live out this sexual fantasies regardless of the cost to others.

This attitude of male entitlement in sexual encounters is nothing new. More recently, the International Monetary Fund head, Dominique Strauss-Kahn, known in France as DSK, dragged down the hallway of a bathroom in the $3,000-a-night suite at the luxury hotel Sofitel on West 44th Street in Manhattan, a 32-year-old housekeeper named Nafissatou Diallo. The hedonistic businessman was no different from the youth in Caragiale's story in terms of being pushy and of possessing a certain free spirit, an overconfidence in his power of seduction, and a frenzied desire to pursue sexual gratification, in spite of being married and of having just had lunch with his daughter and her boyfriend in the hour prior to the incident. As DSK declared nonchalantly to the staff of *Libération*, "Yes, I love women…So what?"

Afflicted by the same weakness, Conu Fanica regrets his departure after leaving the inn. While thoughts of the room dominate his mind, the youth's projection of the woman's room as a sacred enclosure leaking over its magical power is a rather shrewd device that offers him the justification for reorienting his understanding of time and space, and of his own sense of identity as well: with Marghiola's magic turned on him, is the youth himself anymore? Supporting the youth's claim, and coupled with the country people's belief that Marghioala

uses magic, narrative evidence of witchcraft surfaces earlier in the story in the account of an incident at the inn, which commingles the magical and the real with the magic growing almost imperceptibly out of reality:

> Once the robbers had tried to burglarize her [Marghioala]...They started to break down her door. One of them, the heftiest, a man as big as a bull, raised his axe and struck with all his might. He dropped down. They lifted him up quickly -- he was dead. His brother tried to speak, but couldn't -- he had gone dumb. There were four of them. They put the dead man on his brother's back, and the other two took him by the legs to bury him somewhere away...After that, the lads lost their desire to burglarize the inn. (167)

Importantly, too, the youth's narrative makes a strong case for connecting Marghioala's powers of seduction with the references to the black cat (which Marghioala lets out the door when the youth leaves the inn and she is waving goodbye to him) and with the little black goat (which the youth rescues in the stormy weather by putting it in his traveling bag). Their presence at critical points in the story and their connection with Marghioala indicate that the black cat and kid are inseparable aspects of one figure – a patriarchal metaphor for the concept of a bestial woman who can take various shapes to better seduce men and to inject sexual vitality, either into a young man barely out of childhood or into the aged body of 62-year-old DSK.

In a grotesque parody of erotic union, a merging of human and beast, what occurs at Mânjoala's Inn suggests not so much an erotic coupling between the youth and Marghioala, but a transformation. Rather than suggesting intercourse, the cat and the kid usurp Marghioala's identity and insinuate that throughout the sexual encounter the youth has been seduced by a bestial woman, or that since the black cat and kid may be agents of sorcery customarily on hand to assist their mistress, the youth has been bewitched. The crux of these two options -- woman as a corrupting presence revealing an uncanny bestiality or as a fantastical and magically powered appearance -- lies in the tension between the hegemonic male desire for (and hence oppression of) the woman, seen as a deviant of subaltern subjectivity and desire living in the shadow of patriarchal control.

Without releasing the youth from his infantilized role of lover, the free crossing between the narrator's propria-persona sexual conquest and the triangulated conquest of Marghioala between the two men is a much more interesting approach. Focused on sexuality and homosocial bonding, such an approach recommends the story as a text that is transgressive in ways that are both liberating, in terms of sexuality, and mystifying, particularly in terms of its constructs of gender and gender power.

The split view of the youth as both a feckless, dependent child and an ardent seducer, forms a complicity that permits both the youth and the

Colonel to make double use of Marghioala. The Colonel's bond with her is a guarantee of his right to condescend to the youth who wants her for his own sexual exploits. Their ability to relegate Marghioala to a position between them through "universal" male wisdom about how to deal with women places her firmly in the category of those whom both the youth and the Colonel deserve to master.

This aspect of mastery, which is linked to the traffic in women and which helps men achieve masculine selfhood, also reveals how thoroughly gender divides class. A lower order of being than a man, the female innkeeper Marghioala is also a member of the working class with the function of waiting on men when they are around and waiting for them when they are not. With her irresistible combination of sexual allure and sexual appetite, she is also a vendor of sexual services. Perhaps the implication of the youth's story is that all working women are always sexually ready, a thought that DSK too may have entertained, especially in the light of his self-justification and total lack of regrets or remorse.

Like Nafissatou Diallo, Marghioala is a woman whose personality is produced by a patriarchal society and a capitalist economy, and an immediate reflection of the ways in which society has deformed her. As Elizabeth Ammons notes, "the system is designed to keep women in divisive and relentless competition" for the favor and money controlled by men[5]. The treasure that rescues the inn from insolvency, or saves Diallo from her native Sudan, is their body, Marghioala's body, which is effectively prostituted. Their personal submission and bewitching seductiveness are the appropriate female traits for dealing upward across class difference to satisfy the desires of the leisured gentlemen: Conu Fanica, Colonel Iordache or DSK.

The fact that *Mânjoala's Inn* is a story of travel is quite relevant in permitting it to present, from a male homosocial standpoint, a wishful, seductive historical, cultural and social map, covering the time span of a century and a half, from Caragiale's country inn in nineteenth-century Romania to a luxurious New York hotel in the second decade of the third millennium. For the privileged youth to travel to Mânjoala's Inn is to requisition the whole community in the service of his fantasies and sexual initiation. Similarly, for DSK, the complicit Socialist Party and his close friends and advisers consistently defend his flaunted sexual frivolity and reputation of being a seducer; they also allow DSK to remain a major political player thanks to this very network he has established within his own party and social circles. The insinuating view of a literary reification of sexual desire takes on the story's readiness to represent every form of male claim to power, then and now.

[5] Elizabeth Ammons, *Edith Wharton's Argument with America* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1980) 39.

Further, the brutal seduction of Marghioala or of Diallo, begs to be seen as restoring sexual vitality to Marghioala's womanhood, while depending on an outdated notion of the innkeeper as being remote from virginal purity. This sort of logic triggers the notion that the youth is not a scoundrel because Marghioala is not an angel. Similarly, DSK is not a ruthless seducer because the woman he abused has lied to the immigration officials in order to gain entry into the United States. All told, the Colonel's confession of his past dalliances with the innkeeper places Marghioala in the lurid category of a female slut, just like Diallo's past incriminates her as a deceitful and reprehensible illegal, stooping at no compromise to achieve her illicit goals.

In the first few paragraphs of the story, some important terms of the youth's class-gender strategy are set. He is alone, but his effusiveness conjures up for him a female presence, that comes to him in order to facilitate, define, absorb the anxiety and excitement aroused in him by the train of homosocial reflections -- his thoughts of the Colonel, of starting a new life as a married man, of establishing himself in the community. These emotions, characteristic in male youths, take the physical form of an intensely heightened sensation manifested as sexual desire. It comes as no surprise then when, at the first sight of Marghioala, he exclaims after pinching her, "[What] wonderful eyes you have, Marghioala!" What is established is the pattern of overt male dominance and female subservience and of the woman's availability and extreme vulnerability, especially when she is without a husband. Marghioala is powerless in her encounters with men who can afford to be cynically flirtatious with her and DSK forces himself on Diallo ambushing her in the narrow hallway of a luxurious suite.

For the youth in the story the route from male child to man is to overcome a woman and then pull out his purse and give her money. Thus, after eating dinner and fondling her, the youth asks Marghioala how much he owes her for the meal. And when he kisses her beautiful eyes in farewell, she lets him know that he can pay on his way back. She cannot afford to be mercenary with her aggressor, not any more than Diallo could expect DSK to price the special sexual favors he forced on her. (Based on subsequent DNA, she spit his sperm on the carpet.)

The presence of the woman is already at work in silently shaping the youth's consciousness and actions, for on his way back to her he never lets go of the currency of sexual desire. He and Marghioala tumble in bed together, giving some sort of reality to his sexual fantasy. And in this the story projects a large-scale sociology of class and gender onto a private narrative of individual development. The spitting is missing from the youth's account, but it would not be too much of a stretch to assume that Marghioala's disgust was similar to Diallo's, and that both women were utterly helpless in the encounters.

The claim for universality made by the youth's inviting narrative voice rests in the specificity of his gender and class. His eros makes it especially difficult to isolate homosocial elements as distinct from heterosexual ones. His life and concerns loom large in the story. The image of the family is not dissipated – in fact, it is far more powerful – but it is, so to speak, diffuse. In place of the clear, literal generational layers of parents or grandparents, the youth uses the charged name of the Colonel, as a ready and enabling representative of patriarchal family, delegitimizing from the start his sexual exploits with Marghioala in the same way in which DSK flaunts his daughter and wealthy wife, Anne Sinclair, who is also a huge television star. Influential, and at the same time shifting, the image of the family presides over the youth's story and the DSK affair presenting in both cases gender concerns that intersect narrative accounts of homosocial desire.

That the blossoming of a nascent consciousness of sexuality in the youth was also concomitant with an increasingly eroticized and family-dominated public discourse is what makes this nineteenth-century narrative something close to our times. The detour of male homosocial desire through women is simply assumed as the obligatory norm, however risky, for the traveling youth or DSK. To women, the heterosexual detour of male homosocial desire is potentially damaging. Although Marghioala has an illusion of power that is expressed in her dalliances with men, such emotions do not free her so much as circulate her within a network of male power. Similarly, Diallo, who is said to have a boyfriend on the outs with the law, can earn a living and support her children. It is, however, a mistake to imagine these women as social equals to men who exploit them sexually and who are far more powerful than these women. As innkeeper and hotel maid, Marghioala and Diallo exist only by their hard work and sufferance, and their protection derives from sharing their bodies in sordid tales of seduction. *Mânjoala's Inn* ultimately shows Marghioala, the ostensibly emancipated woman, to be a mere cultural fiction, a pawn in the hands of male players. This is a cautionary tale which prepares us for Diallo's story today, in an age when silhouette feminism[6] is increasingly popular and when a woman may trade countries but cannot escape her subaltern status.

The story ends with the Colonel's attempt at humor in a homosocial context. His exclamation, at the news that the inn has burnt to the ground burying Marghioala – "So they put the old witch on the fire in the end" – reiterates that to become the object of male discourse is almost always as bad as to become the victim of male lust. The Colonel's cynical remark crudely communicates his desire to be one of the boys by sharing his sexual exploits with his son in law and his prizing above all the cause of a manhood confirmed

[6] This phrase was introduced into the culture by Naomi Wolf in her study *Fire with Fire*: *The New Female Power and How It Will Change the 21st Century* (New York: Random House, 1993).

by male bonding. But the youth's and the Colonel's implicit desire to seduce the reader into reading *Mânjoala's Inn* as an episode of indoctrination into a male ethos reveals precisely the heartless hypocrisies and inconsistencies of their game of seduction that the story unwittingly exposes and prompts us to consider. Marghioala's silence compels the reader to acknowledge the plea of the ghost in the subtext and thus glean a different understanding of the news relating to Diallo's encounter with DSK at the Sofitel.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ammons, Elizabeth. *Edith Wharton's Argument with America*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1980.

Bakhtin, Mikhail Mikhailovich. *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays.* Trans. V. W. McGee. Ed. C. Emerson and M. Holmquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986.

Baym Nina. *Women's Fiction*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1979.

Beauvoir, Simone de. *The Second Sex*. New York: Vintage Books, 1989.

Bell, Alan P., Martin S. Weinberg, and Sue Kiefer Hammersmith. *Sexual Preference: Its Development in Men and Women*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981.

Bhaba, Homi. *Nation and Narration*. New York: Routledge, 1995.

Călinescu, George *Istoria literaturii române de la orgini pîna în present.* Bucharest, 1941. *The History of Romanian Literature.* Bucureşti: Editura pentru Literatură, 1945.

Dubbert, Joe L. "Progressivism and the Masculinity Crisis." *The American Man*. Eds. Elizabeth H. Pleck and Joseph H. Pleck. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1980.

Giraud, René. *Deceit, Desire and the Novel*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1965.

Hartman, Heidi. "The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union." *Women and Revolution: A Discussion of the Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism.* Ed. Lydia Sargent. Boston: South End Press, 1981.

Jameson, Fredric. "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism." *Social Text* (Fall 1986) 15: 65-88.

MacKinnon, Catherine A. "Feminism, Marxism, Method and State: An Agenda for Theory." *Signs* 7, 3. (Spring 1982): 515-44.

Ricoeur, Paul. *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences.* Trans. and Ed. John B. Thompson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981. *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus Meanin*g. Fortworth: Texas University Press, 1976).

Schwab, Gabriele. *The Mirror and the Killer Queen: Otherness in Literary Language.* Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1996.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1985.

Showalter, Elaine. *The Sister's Choice: Tradition and Change in American Women's Writing.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991.

Manjoala's Inn, in *Stories,* trans. Fred Nădăban (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia Publishing House, 1987). in *Stories*. Trans. Fred Nădăban. Cluj-Napoca: Dacia Publishing House, 1987.

Wolf, Naomi. *Fire with Fire: The New Female Power and How it Will Change the 21st Century*. New York: Random House, 1993.

STUDIA UBB PHILOLOGIA, LVIII, 3, 2013, p. 43 - 55
(RECOMMENDED CITATION)

CULTURAL DIALOGISM AND THE OUTSIDER-WITHIN IN TAKASHIMA SHIZUE'S *A CHILD IN PRISON CAMP*

OANA-MEDA PĂLOŞANU[1]

ABSTRACT. ***Cultural Dialogism and the Outsider-Within in Takashima Shizue's A Child in Prison Camp.*** Takashima Shizue's "A child in prison camp" is a statement of how identity is constructed and assumed in a multi-cultural, but prejudiced, environment. The article explores Shichan's outsider-within perspective on the dialogue between two cultures during the episode of the internment of Japanese Canadians following the incident at Pearl Harbor.

Keywords: Issei**,** Nisei, Japanese Canadians, multicultural identity, racism, outsider-within, Wabi, Sabi.

REZUMAT. ***Dialogism cultural şi perspectiva exclusului-inclus în volumul „Un copil în lagăr" de Takashima Shizue.*** „Un Copil in Lagăr" de Takashima Shizue este o afirmare a modului în care identitatea este construită şi asumată într-un mediu multicultural, dar afectat de prejudecăţi. Articolul explorează perspectiva exclusului-inclus în dialogul dintre două culturi în timpul episodului internării japonezilor-canadieni în urma incidentului de la Pearl Harbor.

Cuvinte cheie: issei, nisei, japonezi canadieni, identitate multiculturală, rasism, exclusul-inclus, Wabi, Sabi.

Takashima Shizue's "A child in prison camp"(1971), focuses on the events surrounding the internment of the Japanese diaspora in Canada as perceived by the protagonist, still a child at the time. She depicts in a simple and unprejudiced manner the story of how the people of Japanese descent were forced to disperse from the West Coast after 1941, were gradually stripped of their fundamental civil liberties and how, through effort and determination, managed to become once again a part of the multi-cultural and polyglossic environment represented by Canada. The autobiographical narrative

[1] Oana-Meda Păloşanu is a Ph.D. student at Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca and an Assistant Professor at the Department of Asian Languages of the same university. She is interested in the study of Japanese culture and literature, gender studies, cultural relativism, borderline representations of identity, intercultural communication and the dynamics of cultural representations. Contact addresss: palosanuoanameda@yahoo.com.

brings to focus the close relationship between memory, multiculturalism, racism and identity in the development of characters with a heightened sense of cultural awareness. It illustrates how the repeated experiences of racism and abuse have led to the emergence of a level of self-awareness which coagulated the image of the internment into a pivotal event in the personal history of the Japanese diaspora in North America.

The episode of the Japanese Internment had, for the most part, been ignored by the government post-factum. At the same time, their moral code stated that one had to endure fate unflinchingly. This is why they remain perceived in the collective memory of Canada as a silent group. This also resulted in a relatively reduced literary output on the internment from within the Japanese community which has been largely ignored by literary critics. In this respect, this article will rely on my reception of the narrative.

"A child in prison camp" published for the first time in Canada in 1971 records the injustices suffered by Japanese Canadians during World War II from the perspective of a child Shichan, the protagonist, is doubly-impaired when confronted with the politics of discrimination, because of her age and the cultural constructs of her community. In this respect, she cannot but consign the events in a non-judgmental manner. This transforms her both into an ideal objective narrator and into an example of how a heightened cultural awareness fostered by a multi-cultural identity can resist the overarching homogenizing tendencies of a prejudiced society.

The narrative focuses on events from 1942 to 1945, which roughly delimitates the years of the internment. Shichan is eleven years old in December 1941, when the Pearl Harbor incident threw the Canadian public opinion into an uproar. The attack, aimed to come as a surprise and weaken the enemy morale, violated the rules of warfare to such a degree that it generated the opposite effect. Retribution for the act was not directed solely towards Japan, but also towards Japanese immigrants. It became a wide-spread belief that the Japanese communities would act as spies and saboteurs, and in the panic and hysteria of Pearl Harbor's aftermath, they became increasingly likely enemies. The solution found was that of internment, which began with the isolation of the *Issei*[2]. Their lifestyle choices and obvious difficulty in acquiring the language had already placed them in a cone of marginality. However, under current circumstances, their perceived markers of difference fueled public discontent: "The older people are very frightened. Mother is so upset;/ so are all her friends. I, being only eleven, seem to be on the outside" (Takashima, 5).

Shichan acts as an observer, having a privileged outsider-within perspective, both from a racial and a cultural point of view. Thus, as a member

[2] The term refers to the first generation of Japanese immigrants, particularly to North America.

of the *Nisei* community, that is, born from Japanese immigrants and educated according to Anglo-Saxon principles, she is able to perceive the subtle differences in interacting patterns and mentalities evincing the differences between the two constitutive elements of her identity. Initially, her family was not interned, except for her brother, David. All Japanese males were to be confined in prison camps, lest they should engage in activities which would be detrimental to the interests of Canada. One such a camp is described by Shichan as a plunge into a dystopia: "The music, the rollercoasters, the hawkers/ with their bright balloons and sugar candy are not there./ Instead, tension and crying children greet us/ as we approach the grounds"(Takashima, 8).

The Japanese were herded like cattle in confinements which seemed to have earlier served that very purpose. The conditions provided enforce the idea that this is not only a prison, but a place aimed to deprive its inhabitants of their dignity. "Strong chemicals" (Takashima, 9) were used to take away the "smell of cattle" (Takashima, 8), without considering the effects they may have on the health of the inhabitants. For the protagonist, the camp resembled: "the hell-hole my Sunday school/ teacher spoke of with such earnestness" (Takashima, 9) with its lack of privacy and squalid conditions: "White, thin sheets are strung up/ carelessly to block the view of prying eyes./ Steel bunkbeds, a few metal chairs, suitcases,/ boxes, clothes hanging all over the place/to dry in the hot sour air, greet our eyes" (Takashima, 9).

In spite of witnessing this blatant impingement of human rights, individual citizens were not sympathetic towards what was to be called the "Japanese problem"(Sunahara, 32). This was to be dealt with on 8 January 1942 in a conference at Ottawa presided by British Columbia cabinet minister Ian Mackenzie (http://www.law.ualberta.ca/centres/ccs/issues/japaneseinternment.php) which brought together both those against and the supporters of the internment. The conference concluded with a compromise to only intern aliens (Sunahara, 33) On 14 January 1942 an Order-in-Council was issued designating the entire area from the Pacific Coast to a hundred miles inland as a "protected area" from which all foreigners who were perceived as threatening national interests were to be removed either by means of internment or by returning them to the country of origin (Roy, 22).

This order was aimed to discriminate some citizens of foreign extraction more than others and on 25 December 1942 a new Order-in-Council was issued which allowed the Minister of Justice to choose which foreigners were to be relocated. It would soon become obvious that this policy was aimed strictly at the Japanese. It was a violation of the democratic principles of the country and rendered their citizenship void. Although the then National Defence Minister' J. L. Ralston declared that the Japanese immigrants in the area could not be considered a threat for national or local security, his opinions would not have sufficient weight to prevent the passing of the Act (Sunahara, 48).

This resulted in a series of regulations to disperse the Japanese population which, consisted mostly of the *Issei* who were handicapped by their poor knowledge of English, and the *Nisei* who at the time were mostly children or young adults. Their bewilderment at the increasingly strict regulations is not surprising. They initially manifest themselves as curfews: "Now we have curfew. All Japanese have to be indoors by ten P.M. The war / with Japan is fierce. People in the streets look at us with anger" (Takashima, 11). Later, large segments of the Japanese communities are relocated to prison camps. The stigma on the Japanese people led to their impossibility to hold a job or vote: "British Columbia won't let orientals/ vote- veteran, citizen or police-spy"(Takashima, 24). Japanese children were prohibited to attend school outside the area designed as work camp (Roberts-Moore, 66) or were denied access to basic or higher education: "The Japanese people do not need, nor do/ they deserve, higher education" (Takashima, 26), despite having to pay taxes: "The Provincial Government of B.C. claims that the Japanese/ people do not deserve an education. Yet, father says, they are/ taking tax money for education" (Takashima, 26). Their property could be searched or confiscated at any time (Ward, 14): "Now our house is empty. What we can sell, we do for very/ little money. Our radio, the police came and took away. Our cousins who have acres of berry farm had to leave everything. Trucks, tractors, land, it was all taken from them. They were/ Moved with only a few days notice to Vancouver" (Takashima, 7). Shichan only understands the situation when her family is also dispossessed and forced to relocate: "Strange rumors are flying. We are not supposed to own any-/ thing! The government takes our home" (Takashima, 7).

The confiscated items were never returned to the Japanese. They were not protected under the Bill of Rights and therefore most of their belongings were sold for only fractions of their worth, the income being used to fund the maintenance of internment camps (Ward, 14). Not having rights in a country in which they were ostracized meant that the narrator's experiential memory was shaped by elements similar to those one would find in a dystopic society: constant surveillance, fear of being forced to move at any moment and, above all, the mounting fear of the Canadian authorities: "I stare at/ the words, 'R.C.M.P. Office' all in red. They seem/ to grow larger before my eyes. Yuki continues,/ 'We even have to watch what we say or do.' I look at/ the closed door. Their power seems to come/ through the very walls. We walk quietly past" (Takashima, 17). Even as a child Shichan understands that if stripped of her rights the local authorities are no longer there to protect her and she perceives their antagonism both physically and psychologically: "I feel really bad now" (Takashima, 18). Not understanding the premises of ostracism makes the situation more difficult for the protagonist to cope with: "I feel confused and mad" (Takashima, 18).

The previous patterns of interaction between the Japanese and the white communities had cast former under the incidence of much prejudice. Because they maintained some of their cultural characteristics, institutions and customs, attended Japanese classes after their regular ones etc., the Japanese had always been perceived as the element of defferance in the community. When accusations were formed against them, justifying the internment as necessary it became obvious that:

> most of these racist lies contained a grossly distorted kernel of truth. It was true that Asians worked longer hours for lower wages than whites; it was equally true that the choice of equal pay for equal work was not theirs to make. It was true that the Asian minorities retained their own institutions and many of their customs; it was equally true that the institutions of the larger society were closed to Asians, necessitating the establishment of parallel social and economic arrangements. It was true that the Nisei attended Japanese-language school after regular classes and that they used textbooks from Japan; it was equally true that as long as they were restricted to employment within the Japanese community, the Nisei needed what little Japanese language they learned in those schools in order to earn a living. (Sunahara, 8)

The Japanese diaspora was visible against the larger Canadian mainframe at an economic, institutional, cultural and linguistic level. Due to circumstances, they formed a self-reliant community within the preexistent hegemony. It was because of their ability to assert their religious, national and cultural particularities in spite of social ostracism that the Japanese were perceived as autonomous, independent, unassimilable, and therefore, a threat to the community. At the same time, their military prowess and discipline, their choice to uphold practices which, for Occidentals, were beyond comprehension, embittered the Canadian population: "'You know, this war may last/ for a long time. The Japanese are stubborn/and fierce fighters. They have that old samurai/ tradition which the western people cannot understand'" (Takashima, 43). Fueled by the hysteria of the war, public mistrust developed into racism and disregard for constitutional rights.

In Shichan's recount there are many instances which would suggest that the Japanese maintained, to a certain degree, their native forms of religious organization. By combining elements of Buddhism and Shintoism with the local religious practices they achieved a system of beliefs which was largely determined by social circumstances. For example she sees: "A bent old woman breaks out/ into a Buddhist prayer, moves her orange beads/ in her wrinkled hands, prays aloud to her God" (Takashima, 7). At the same time, the protagonist attends the Christmas celebration at church and her older sister, Yuki, goes to a Catholic school.

However, the practice of Japanese religious rituals is to be kept private from the eyes of outsiders. It was believed that overt religious expression would posit further alienation. Therefore, the community condemns the neighbor who attends his ceremonial purification every morning. The ritual symbolizes the revitalization of the body and the spirit which is considered to be a very important practice in the Buddhist religion. However, in a community which attempts to draw as little attention to its markers of difference as possible, the ritual becomes a matter of rebuke, and is treated by the rest of the neighborhood as obscene. Shichan does not even know the meaning of the ritual and therefore she describes what she sees in a decontextualized manner, like a traveler witnessing an unusual practice: "He has a small bucket and is splashing/ water over his head. Yoko-san's eyes are closed tightly./ His thick lips move without stopping. He's praying.../ Then...splash, splash. The cold water pours over him./ His thick, heavy body is shiny and wet" (Takashima, 53). She is unable to attach meaning to the actions. Her education had been very little impacted upon by her Japanese ancestry and she knows little of the Buddhist rites code of morals. In Japan a person performing the ritual would have been considered pious. In Canada, it is ostentatious. Therefore, it is not surprising to see that the ceremony produced consternation among the locals: "My husband and I are Buddhist but we don't believe in/ displaying our religion, and in such a manner!" (Takashima, 53). They all pretend to be asleep until the man leaves the water pump.

However, many elements of Buddhism are preserved by the Japanese diaspora and are practiced within the confines of the home or are discernible in the people's mentalities. One such element is *karma*. When Shichan wondered why she was ostracized and why her neighbor's house caught fire, she remembered her mother's reflection regarding life: "I wonder about God. What causes tragedy? /Mother always says, 'It's karma. He must have done/ something to earn it.' I do not quite understand./ The Japanese always say this, 'Karma, karma'"(Takashima, 85). The term is deeply rooted in the Japanese perception of life, which is seen primarily as impermanence. The theodicy of *Karma* rests on the notions of determinism, impermanence and karmic retribution, therefore when a fire broke out in the community, the charred ashes are regarded with detachment, almost resignation: "We stare. 'It's like a dream, isn't it, Mary?/ Yesterday, the house was here. Now it's gone.'/ I feel strange. Nothing is permanent" (Takashima, 84). In this respect, human struggle would seem meaningless, as it is rendered fruitless by: "The silent God (who) seems so far away" (Takashima, 7)

Within the Japanese community there is also a strong belief in a plethora of gods, which, according to the *Shinto* creed, inhabit all forms of existence and non-existence. It is not surprising, therefore, that references are repeatedly being

made to the Goddess Quan-Non[3] when something good happens in the community: "'We must thank Quan-Non San. /God is merciful, after all. We are grateful'" (Takashima, 51) or '"Thank God! I couldn't read at night./ My eyes. Now with proper light....'/'We must thank Goddess Quan-Non'" (Takashima, 79). The Japanese always remember to honor the Gods and their ancestors, by making them small offerings: "'A blessing/ from Heaven.' I see Mrs. Kono place a small/ bit of *miso*[4] paste in a tiny dish and a few drops of/ soya sauce in a round Japanese sake cup and place them/ on her Buddhist altar. She always does this before dinner,/ offers part of the food to Lord Buddha as a gesture/ of thanks. I think it is very nice to have a little/ altar like that and pray to one's God" (Takashima, 50).

The themes of preconception and prejudice represent an isochronous element in Takashima Shizue's account. Shichan has never seen Japan but she is able to develop her own vision of it by listening to the stories of the *Issei* and observing the customs in her community. The collage she makes reference to represents a metonymy of everyday life in Japan: "I see Japan,/ The snow is gone. I see the happy rice planters/ with their bright kimonos, their black hair tied/ with printed towels, the gentle wind,/ with lovely Mount Fuji, Fuji-san itself, in the distance" (Takashima, 37). The elements invoked: rice planters, Mount Fuji, kimonos, etc., represent sources of national pride and markers of identity for the Japanese. However, it is not difficult to see that Shichan's depiction does not belong to a native Japanese child, but rather to a privileged outsider-within. As a child belonging to two cultures and bringing together two sets of mentalities she is surprised at the amount of prejudice directed towards the Japanese community. Her brother describes the surprise of the whites upon actually meeting a Japanese Canadian: "'But what about/ all the stories about your people being ignorant, not/ speaking the language and not living like Canadians?'/ Well, they look at me and are amazed that I don't wear samurai/ clothes. Can you believe it? This is what propaganda does!.." (Takashima, 75). Shichan, too, has a similar experience: "Yuki and I see some villagers. They stare. We do/ not speak. Later, I learn they were amazed we could/ speak English so well, and even wore shoes" (Takashima, 18-19).

The protagonist becomes increasingly aware that the ostracism directed against her is the result of an acute perception of otherness. However, she does is unable to perceive this difference. Her naive perceptions, which preface many of the episodes of the book, seem to indicate a very ordinary

[3] Quan-Non is the Bodhisattva associated with compassion as venerated by East Asian Buddhists, usually as a female. Her original name, Guanyin is short for Guanshiyin, which means "Observing the Sounds (or Cries) of the World". In Japanese her name is Pronounced Kuan Non and sometimes it is written as Quan-Non.

[4] Miso is a traditional Japanese seasoning produced by fermenting rice, barley, and/or soybeans with salt and the fungus *kōjikin*, the most typical miso being made with soy.

community with its flaws: "for Japanese are allowed to make a lot of noise/ when they eat; especially when they drink tea/ or eat soup)" (Takashima, 36), or "Father, like other Japanese people, loves to drink" (Takashima, 69), its strong points: "The Japanese people are indeed very creative" (Takashima, 78), or "My people, the Japanese, are very creative people. Many are/ carpenters, gardeners, landscape-gardeners, like my father, and/ amateur dancers and actors" (Takashima, 58), and in which the important moments in the life of the community are respected and celebrated: "we have many concerts and /plays, and many festival celebrations. The one held in August/ is called 'O-bon'- a festival for the dead, to wish joy for their/souls and to remember them..." (Takashima, 58), etc. Her depictions give the impression of a well-organized community in which individuals: "bow to each other and greet each other politely" (Takashima, 79) They appease the dead during the O-bon festival and celebrate life by means of a strong connection with the natural element. The latter is most obvious in the way in which the author chooses to contextualize each episode. They are contextualized not only temporarily, but there are also references to the natural element, a recurring motif in Japanese literature.

On rare occasions, the Japanese break the daily routine by going to a *kabuki*[5] play. Shichan observes it from the perspective of an Occidental, which becomes obvious from the collage of aesthetic elements she draws attention to. They are indicative that the specific artistic sensibility needed to appreciate this type of theatrical performance had not been cultivated in her. Her observations again, elaborate on the impact the play has on her senses, not being able to reach its authentic meaning. Therefore, although unable to appreciate it with the enthusiasm of the older spectators, she contended to point out elements which she found unusual, such as: the way in which the play opened: "We hear the familiar starting sound of the Kabuki plays;/ the hollow clop, clop, clop of two blocks of wood banged/ together by a man dressed in a kimono. He kneels/ before the drawn curtain as he does so" (Takashima, 79) or the manner in which the performance was executed: "All his movements are slow and exaggerated./ Then he rolls his dark eyes, beneath the white/ chalk make-up.(...)/ His painted red mouth" (Takashima, 79-80). She also focused on traditional elements, perceived as exotic and, because of lack of previous contact, demanding the assignment of a definition: "The string Japanese/ banjo-like instrument twangs, two men kneeling beside/ the musician close their eyes, are chanting" (Takashima, 79).

The Japanese diaspora refused to accept that their loss of rights, and condemned the Canadian authorities both for their unjustified level of suspicion

[5] Kabuki is a classical Japanese dance-drama. Kabuki theatre is known for the stylization of its drama and for the elaborate make-up worn by some of its performers.

and the refractivity with which they treated their demands for civilized conditions: "'(...)None of us ever hurt Canada./ I'm a naturalized citizen, so are many of us./ You even charge us taxes. It's wrong to treat us/ like enemies. It's unjust. We're only asking/ for our rights.' You know what Mr. Baldwin answered?/ He said: 'You are in camps. Therefore you are all/ considered enemies. You have no rights'" (Takashima, 65). The extreme measures taken against the Japanese were not only the result of Pearl Harbor but were also due to the history of frictions between the two populations as a result of cultural and racial differences. These became elements around which mistrust could easily gravitate and became justifications for the retractile tendencies of later governments when asked to take responsibility for the Internment.

The Japanese were known for their willingness to work longer hours for lower wages, thus becoming ideal candidates for hire and indirectly contributing to local unemployment problems. Their ability to organize well-oiled communities and efficient businesses within the previously established white communities indicated adaptability and resilience. Therefore the Japanese community was not denied its rights because of its unassimilability, as it had been claimed, but rather due to national and racial prejudice. When Shichan asks why she is regarded as an enemy, these reasons become more obvious: "I ask father, 'Why are we fighting?' 'For land and/ other things,' father replies. 'This is why we are here.'/ 'But I'm not Japanese, like you. I was born here./ So were you.' I look at Yuki. She says,/ 'That's nothing – a Jap is a Jap, whether you're born here/ or not!' 'Even if I change my name?'/ 'Yes, you look oriental, you're a threat.' 'A threat? Why?'/ 'God only knows!' Yuki replies. 'It's mostly/ racial prejudice, and jealousy. Remember we had/ cleared the best land all along the Fraser Valley./ Good fisherman. This causes envy, so better to/ kick us out. The damn war is just an excuse./ Dad knows. The West Coast people never liked/ the orientals. 'Yellow Peril' is what they call us. I look at father. 'Yuki is speaking the truth,' he says./ 'This is why we had better return to Japan when we can.'/ Yuki looks surprised. 'Return to Japan?/ I don't want to go. What would I do there?'"(Takashima, 46).

The Pearl Harbor incident threw the Japanese diaspora in a state of conflict, too. Different attitudes were postulated regarding both Canada and Japan, and people made various choices, each with their apparently justified arguments. Yuki sums up the situation of the *Nisei*, who, although belonging to two different cultures, were rejected by both: "'Sure we're Japanese. But we think like Canadians./ We won't be accepted in Japan if we go there'" (Takashima, 75). They could either continue enduring the injustice of the government: "Calling us 'enemies of Canada' for no reason/ but to justify taking our property, houses,/ belongings, our children and our *dignity*" (Takashima, 65), or return to Japan, where the idealists believed they would

find a country awaiting for them with open arms. The more pessimist feared the possibility of going back to a country devastated by war and need. Some wished to stay in Canada and demand for their rights as free citizens: "Is this what you want? To be always/ a third-class citizen? I mind. I didn't come to this country/ for this kind of treatment. Democracy! I'm a Canadian" (Takashima, 47). Others believed that they had no future in Canada, that, in spite of their efforts to blend in with the local culture, their perceived markers of difference and the recent series of socio-political events would make this impossible: "I have to pay all the taxes, but I have never been/ allowed to vote. Even now, here, they took our land,/ our houses, our children, everything./ We are their enemies. Don't you understand?/ I have no desire to be part of this country./There is no future for you here either" (Takashima, 47).

At the same time, the members of the diaspora had to reconcile their feelings regarding Japan, whether to support or condemn its belligerence, to see it as friend or foe: "I often wonder about this war. The Japanese my father's/ and mother's people. Strange to be fighting them. My father's/ nephews are all in the army. We do not receive any letters from/ our uncles and aunts in Japan and we do not know if they are/ alive or not. Father does not speak of them much" (Takashima, 46). Shichan's family is torn between the father's wish to build a life in Canada and the mother's desire to return to Japan, regardless the risk of their defeat:"' Japan is your parents' country./ All our relatives are there. There at least we will be free.'/ 'Free? I wonder, what if they lose the war?/ Anyway, I don't care if they do lose.'/ Yuki is angry now, 'I refuse to go. That's all.'/ She stands up, walks into the house, slams the door./ Father wipes his hands on his pants. He, too, is angry now./ He stares at me, 'One day, Shichan, you'll understand/ all this. You must do as I say'" (Takashima, 47). When food is sent from Japan to the diaspora the community is again unable to act unanimously, and while some consider it: "'Food from the enemy!' Others say, ` We are treated as traitors and enemies/ of Canada, so we should take it with thanks.'/ Finally, the food is accepted and distributed carefully/ to each family. Father says with a bitter smile,/ 'The Canadian Government treats us like dogs,/ but the country we left to come here still cares about us'" (Takashima, 50).

However Shichan was not tantalized by any of the political, cultural or economic reasons postulated, but rather, she desired to remain in Canada because she perceived her identity as inextricably linked to it. She had grown accustomed to a constant level of animosity and, while not able to comprehend her parents' economic and political arguments, was content with the inertia of her existence. She was no longer offended or surprised that the people treated them coldly: "As we leave, a few people in the church nod/ and wish us 'Merry Christmas.' Many do not,/ for they are not supposed to be too

friendly/ towards us. But I'm used to it now, or like to/ think I am" (Takashima, 35). She also doesn't identify with the Japanese overseas at all, going to a point of absolute disidentification by referring to them 'Japs'. Employing the word 'Jap' clearly indicates Shichan's affiliation to white Canada and rejection of her ancestry, much to her father's anger: "All of a sudden I hate that country for having started/ the war. I say aloud, "Damn Japs! Why don't they/ stop fighting?" Father glares. "What do you mean 'Japs'?/ You think you're not a Jap? If I hear you say that again/ I'll throttle you." I see anger and hatred in his eyes" (Takashima, 74-75). Shichan perceives her Japanese identity as the focal point of ostracism and wishes to discard it in an attempt to escape her marginal status.

The discourse is streamlined with elements specific to Japanese literature and culture. Linguistically, one can observe multiple instantiations of the Japanese specific economy of speech which translates as not giving voice to things which can easily be inferred from the context: "I couldn't read at night./ My eyes. Now with proper light...." (Takashima, 79). This also applies to things which are perceived as embarrassing or uncomfortable for the interlocutor: "'I'm sorry. I couldn't help it./ Her crying and the smell...'"(Takashima, 10), or for the speaker: "' I try to be. We must try not to/ be sad or angry. It would not help things. Mother,,,. Her voice trails off. I understand. I nod" (Takashima, 20). These specific types of sentences are characterized by a falling intonation and are marked with ellipses in the text.

Other linguistic elements indicate also indicate affiliation with the Japanese culture. For example, Shichan was called "Big sister" (Takashima, 21) by the younger child in the household, although they were not related. This derives from the appellative "*Oneesan*" which in Japanese is the word by which a younger member of a group addresses an older female of the same group, thus establishing a symbolic hierarchy. The "*chan*" in Shichan is a suffix employed by the Japanese when addressing a young girl.

Other important cultural elements illustrate the incorporation of principles such as *wabi-sabi* or the *mottainai* principle. *Wabi-sabi* is a concept illustrating a very specific Japanese perception of beauty and of life. It stands for an intuitive way of living which emphasizes the idea that the greatest beauty is to be found in imperfection and that the natural processes of growth and aging are to be accepted and embraced. The invisible, the absent, the lack, and the imperfect are the basic elements which combine to create the natural simplicity and the atypical beauty appreciated in Japanese art. To define something as *wabi,* is to perceive it as purposefully created or allowed to look humble and in harmony with nature. If a thing is defined as *sabi*, it means that the passing of time has been allowed to leave its authentic mark on it. It has an under-running implication that things and people naturally age, becoming less

"aesthetic" according to conventional standards of beauty. Processes of age and change are authentic and natural phenomena affecting the individual, which according to *sabi*, must be accepted with dignity and grace. Shichan was raised to appreciate a Eurocentric idea of beauty, which emphasizes perfection, harmony, fullness. Therefore, she is unable to comprehend, for example, how her neighbor can be so nonchalant about speaking in public without her false teeth on: "Our neighbor from across the street comes/ swinging her buckets. Mrs. Nishimura has lost all/ her teeth, but she always smiles. I wonder why/ she doesn't wear her false teeth" (Takashima, 51-52). The principle of *wabi-sabi* is also present in the choice for simple, purposefully unembellished short sentences and in the author's employment of free verse. The *mottainai* principle refers to living life in such a way as not to generate waste of time or resources. Even unproductive trains of thought can be chastised as *mottainai*, as they go against the deeply ingrained attitude of the Japanese. Therefore, it is not surprising that Shichan's sister was extremely critical of the women who spend their evenings at the bath house doing nothing but gossiping and spreading rumors: "Don't look at them./ They are evil. To sit like that and just speak terrible/ things about their neighbors. And to think,/ they waste so much time" (Takashima, 60-61).

Other references present throughout the text help us construe the cultural identity and everyday life of the protagonist, and by extension, of the Japanese Canadian community. The close relation the individual has with the natural element is indicative of the influence of *Shinto,* one of Japan's indigenous system of belief : "'Yes, we may not have luxury,/ but we sure have nature" (Takashima, 66). They take baths in the traditional Japanese way: "Only a thin wall separates the two sections. It is a/ community bath. We all wash outside the tub, rinse ourselves/ well before going into the hot water..." (Takashima, 59). Most Japanese women uphold the values of silence and submission inculcated in their mentalities by a Buddhist upbringing which constantly places them under the incidence of the authority of a male figure. The protagonist's mother cannot therefore chastise her husband's behavior: "Mother sighs and nods,/ but does not say anything. She has learned not to" (Takashima, 69). However, given the current social circumstances, some incipient traces of feminist activism become discernible in the actions of some of the female protagonists. For instance women speak their minds to the representatives of the Red Cross, about the difficulties of internment: "Mrs. Kono/ is all smiles. 'We must always fight for our rights/ as women too'"(Takashima, 52).

The last episode of the book takes place nineteen years after the end of the internment. Upon being released from the prison camps, the Japanese community dispersed once again. Some have returned to Japan and faced tremendous difficulties after the war while others tried to rebuild their lives in

Canada, still facing prejudice and discrimination. Shichan's family remained in Canada and today, they gather to celebrate the opening of the Japanese Canadian Cultural Center. They have all, more or less been able to rise above their marginal status and integrate in the mainframe of Canadian society. The Prime Minister's official apology for the incidents surrounding the internment of the Japanese in Canada offers some closure to those unjustifiably wronged. The fragment reproduced confirms their innocence and admits to the unconstitutionality of the way in which Japanese Canadians were treated.

The writer uses the simple language of a child to depict the three years of the internment of the Japanese in Canada and the quantifiable, perceived results of the political acts and social measures targeting them in that period. Takashima does not present the events from the vantage point of adulthood. The anxiety and fear experienced by Shichan was authentically perceived both by the *Issei* who were impaired by a poor knowledge of English and by the *Nisei*, who at the time were too young to understand why the system they grew into turned against them. Takashima's writing style immixes both Eurocentric and Japanese elements thus transforming "A child in prison camp" from a biographical recording of political and racial injustice into an important statement of cultural dialogism and of Canada's polyglossic and multicultural literary development.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Miki Roy, Justice in Our Time: *The Japanese Canadian Redress Settlement* , Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1991.

Roberts-Moore, Judith. "Establishing Recognition of Past Injustices: Uses of Archival Records in Documenting the Experience of Japanese Canadians During the Second World War" (2002) 53, *Archivaria* pp. 64-68.

Sunahara, Ann Gomer. *The politics of racism. The uprooting of Japanese-Canadians during the Second World War*, Toronto: Lorimer, 1981.

Takashima, Shizue. *A child in prison camp,* Toronto: Tundra Books, 1971.

Ward, W. Peter. *The Japanese in Canada*, Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 1982.

http://www.law.ualberta.ca/centres/ccs/issues/japaneseinternment.php, accesed 2 June, 2013 15:42.

STUDIA UBB PHILOLOGIA, LVIII, 3, 2013, p. 57 - 73
(RECOMMENDED CITATION)

„DIE LIEBE ALTE HEIMAT, DIE LIEBE NEUE HEIMAT“: RUMÄNIEN UND DEUTSCHLAND IM VERGLEICH BEI KARIN GÜNDISCH

SILVANA POP[1]

ABSTRACT. ***“Dear old home, dear new home”: Romania and Germany compared in the texts of Karin Gündisch.*** This paper aims to show how Germany and Romania are explicitly compared in the literary texts of Karin Gündisch, a children’s book author from Romania who immigrated to Germany in the 1980s. We also analyze how geographic notions denoting countries are linked to terms with a rather individual quality such ‘home’, ‘homeland’/‚hometown’ in the context of emigration and adjustment.

Keywords: children’s literature, Karin Gündisch, emigration, adjustment, comparison, home, homeland, hometown.

REZUMAT. ***„Dulcea patrie veche, dulcea patrie nouă: Comparațiile între România și Germania la Karin Gündisch”***. Lucrarea de față își propune să evidențieze comparațiile explicite între Germania și România din textele autoarei de cărți pentru copii Karin Gündisch, reprezentantă a minorității germane din Romania și care a emigrat în Germania în anii ’80. De asemenea se analizează relația dintre termenii geografici nume de țări, precum ‘Germania’ și ‘România’, și termeni cu o calitate mai degrabă individuală precum ‘Heimat’ [pământ natal, patrie], ‚Heimatland’/‘Heimatort’ [țară/loc de baștină] în contextul emigrării și al adaptării.

Cuvinte cheie: literatură pentru copii, Karin Gündisch, emigrare, adaptare, comparație, acasă, patrie, oraş natal.

Eines der Themen, die die aus Siebenbürgen stammende Kinderbuchautorin Karin Gündisch in ihren Büchern behandelt ist Auswanderung und die damit verbundene Anpassung an die neue Umgebung und Gesellschaft. In diese Kategorie gehören die Texte: *Im Land der Schokolade und Bananen. Zwei Kinder kommen in ein fremdes Land* erschienen 1987, *In der Fremde und andere Geschichten* erschienen 1993, *Das Paradies*

[1] Silvana Pop is a PhD Student in the German Department of Babeș-Bolyai University. She works on a thesis about the intercultural aspects in the work of Karin Gündisch. Interests: the literature of the German minority from Romania, children‘s literature, intercultural studies. Contact address: <silvanaluciapop@gmail.com>.

liegt in Amerika. Eine Auswanderergeschichte aus dem Jahre 2000 und *Lili findet einen Zwilling* erschienen 2007. Dieser Beitrag behandelt die ersten beiden Texte, die sich auf die Auswanderung aus Rumänien nach Deutschland beziehen. Der als Dritte angeführte Text handelt, wie der Titel schon angibt, von der Auswanderung aus Rumänien nach Amerika, während das letzte angegebene Buch die Auswanderung aus Russland nach Deutschland thematisiert. Die Auswahl der Texte wird dadurch begründet, dass sich der vorliegende Artikel vornimmt zum einen die direkten Vergleiche zwischen Rumänien und Deutschland herauszuarbeiten und zum anderen zu untersuchen wie die geographisch geprägten Begriffe ‚Rumänien' und ‚Deutschland' in Beziehung zu komplexeren und eher individuell gebrauchten Begriffen wie ‚Heimat' und ‚Heimatland'/‚Heimatort' in Verbindung gesetzt werden.

Direkte Vergleiche Rumänien – Deutschland

Es sollen in diesem Teil des Beitrages diejenigen Textstellen herausgearbeitet werden, die eine direkte Gegenüberstellung von Rumänien als Land, aus dem ausgewandert wird und Deutschland als Land, in dem eingewandert wird, enthalten.

Das Buch *Im Land der Schokolade und Bananen. Zwei Kinder kommen in ein fremdes Land*[2] enthält, wie die Autorin im Vorwort angibt, „Geschichten", die sie während ihres eigenen Aufenthaltes in einem Übergangswohnheim aus Deutschland geschrieben hat. Jede Geschichte erzählt eine Erfahrung, die eine Aussiedlerfamilie – Vater, Mutter und 2 Kinder – ab dem Moment des Abschiedes aus Rumänien und während der ersten Monate in Deutschland macht. *In der Fremde und andere Geschichten*[3] ist hingegen eine Sammlung von individuellen Erzählungen zum Thema Auswanderung und Anpassung an die neue Umgebung. Verschiedene Alltagssituationen und die Erfahrungen, die die Aussiedlerfamilie des ersten Buches bzw. die Personen in den Geschichten aus dem zweiten Buch machen, bieten der Autorin Gelegenheit direkte Vergleiche zwischen Rumänien und Deutschland zu ziehen. Für die Vergleiche, die in diesem Beitrag herausgearbeitet und diskutiert werden sollen, die natürlich nicht in ihrer Vollständigkeit angeführt werden können, wird eine thematische Einteilung vorgeschlagen.

Der Staat und seine Vertreter: Ämter und Beamte

Die Einbürgerungsprozedur sieht einen Sprachtest vor, zu dem auch die Aussiedler „müssen" (SCHB 13). Während die Familie wartet um an die Reihe zu kommen, vertreiben sich die Kinder die Zeit mit Rätselraten. Bei

[2] Für die im Folgenden aus diesem Buch angeführten Zitate wird die Abkürzung SCHB verwendet.
[3] Zitate aus diesem Buch werden mit der Abkürzung FRD angeführt.

dieser Gelegenheit bemerkt ein „alter Mann“ (SCHB 13): „Ihre Kinder sprechen aber gut Deutsch“ (SCHB 13). Die Mutter antwortet erklärender Weise „wir sprechen zu Hause Deutsch und die Kinder waren in einer deutschen Schule“ (SCHB 13). Es ist der Sohn der Familie, Uwe, der den Vergleich zieht: „Komisch, sagt Uwe. In Rumänien hat man sich gewundert, dass ich gut Rumänisch kann. Hier wundert man sich, dass ich gut Deutsch kann“ (SCHB 13). Wenn es in Rumänien für einen Vertreter einer Minderheit – besonders für ein Kind, das die meiste Zeit in der Familie verbringt und nicht unbedingt engen Kontakt zu den Vertretern der Mehrheit hat – eine Besonderheit darstellte, gut die Landessprache zu beherrschen, so wundert man sich in dem Einwanderungsland darüber, dass die Landessprache des Einwanderungslandes gut gesprochen wird. Vom deutschen Standpunkt aus ist Deutsch für die Einwanderer eine Fremdsprache, nicht jedoch von dem Standpunkt der Einwanderer, für die es die Muttersprache darstellt. Für die Kinder ist es auch natürlich, dass sie sogar in ihrer Muttersprache unterrichtet wurden. Betrachtet man jedoch die ganze Situation vom Erwachsenenstandpunkt, so versteht man die Verwunderung der „alten Mannes“: es war nicht üblich, dass es in einem nationalen Staat Schulen in der Minderheitensprache gab, weswegen Aussiedler aus anderen Ländern als Rumänien, wie zum Beispiel Polen oder Russland, „müssen sehr oft die Sprache [also Deutsch] erst lernen“ (SCHB 14). Rumänien stellte da, besonders aus historischen Gründen, aber auch aus politischen, eine Ausnahme dar.

Bei dem Sprachtest schaut sich der Beamte, der diesen durchführt, die mitgebrachte Fibel der Tochter der Familie an. Als erster Text erscheint die rumänische Staatshymne, die die Schüler jeden Tag am „Anfang und am Ende des Unterrichtes“ (SCHB 13) singen müssen. Was von rumänischen Lehrern als lästig und „nicht gut“ (SCHB 13) empfunden und nicht unbedingt strikt eingehalten wurde, findet der deutsche Beamte ansprechend: „Der Beamte sagt, das wäre sehr gut so und auch in der Bundesrepublik sollte das Deutschlandlied vor und nach dem Unterricht gesungen werden“ (SCHB 13). Es werden hier zwei entgegengesetzte Meinungen zum Singen der Staatshymne durch die Schüler vertreten: in Rumänien, wo dies Pflicht ist, wird es als unsinnig betrachtet und man versucht dem zu entgehen. Dahingegen wird es von dem deutschen Beamten gutgeheißen. Die vertretenen Meinungen haben weniger mit der Tatsache des Vortragens der Staatshymen an sich zu tun, sondern sie zeugen eher von dem Kontext aus dem die Personen, die diese Meinungen vertreten, stammen: die Mutter der Kinder findet als Lehrerin, die in einem autoritären Staat gelebt und unterrichtet hat, dass man nicht verpflichtet sein sollte ein bestimmtes Lied zu singen. Es handelt sich eher um eine Missbilligung des Zwanges, der dahinter steht, während der Beamte als Teil einer freien, demokratischen Gesellschaft und besonders als Vertreter des Staates derartige Vortragungen von staatlichen Symbolen gutheißt.

Die Notwendigkeit sich mit verschiedenen Ämtern und damit mit Beamten auseinanderzusetzen bietet eine weitere Gelegenheit für einen Rumänien – Deutschland Vergleich: „Die Beamtin ist sehr freundlich zu ihnen, obwohl sie von den Eltern nichts bekommen hat" (SCHB 24) Ein Leser, der die Gewohnheiten im kommunistischen Rumänien nicht kennt, wird diesen Satz erst nach der weiteren Lektüre verstehen: „In Rumänien ist es gut, wenn man den Beamten ausländische Zigaretten, Seife, Schokolade oder Geld gibt. Dann sind sie freundlicher und alles geht in Ordnung" (SCHB 25). Die Tatsache, dass im weiteren Text das Kind nachfragt: „Muss man hier nichts geben?" (SCHB 25) beweist wie tief verwurzelt und allgemein bekannt dieser Usus war. Die Mutter antwortet ohne jede Bewertung: „das ist hier nicht üblich" (SCHB 25) und fügt hinzu „Daran muss ich mich erst gewöhnen" (SCHB 25).

Bei einem Stadtbummel werden die Mutter und die Kinder, Ingrid und Uwe, Zeugen einer Demonstration, bei der die Polizei für Ordnung sorgt. Die Kinder erschrecken sich vor den Polizisten, die gefährlich aussehen, Helme, Schilder und Gummiknüppel tragen: „Ingrid und Uwe haben auch in Rumänien Angst vor den Polizisten gehabt, obwohl sie dort nicht bewaffnet waren" (SCHB 94). In diesem konzessiven Nebensatz, schlicht und einfach eingeleitet durch *obwohl,* unscheinbar und durch nichts auffallend, konzentriert die Autorin eine ganze Facette des rumänischen kommunistischen Regimes: die Vertreter der Staatsmacht, die nicht unbedingt „gefährlich aussahen" (SCHB 93), die aber durch die Tatsache, dass sie Vertreter eines Staates waren, in dem Repressalien, Schikane und Terror Gang und Gäbe waren, flössen nicht nur den Kindern Angst ein, sondern auch den Erwachsenen. Dies ist auch der Grund aus dem

> „In Rumänien gehen unzufriedene Leute nicht auf die Straţe und demonstrieren. In Rumänien bleiben unzufriedene Leute zu Hause und schweigen." (SCHB 94)

Dieses symmetrische Satzpaar beschreibt erneut das gesamte Bild eines Landes, in dem die Bevölkerung durch systematische Angsteinflöţung derart gelähmt ist, dass es nicht einmal seine Rechte laut fordert, geschweige denn öffentlich eine Meinung ausspricht.

Wie tief diese Angst vor dem Staat, und besonders vor der Polizei verwurzelt war, zeigt die gleichnamige Erzählung aus dem Sammelband *In der Fremde und andere Geschichten*. Ein Mädchen, das in Deutschland aus einem Dorf mit dem Bus in ein anderes in die Schule muss, steigt auf dem Rückweg an der falschen Haltestelle aus und verirrt sich dadurch. Da die Mutter die Schule über das Wegbleiben ihrer Tochter benachrichtigt, sucht die Lehrerschaft und die Polizei nach dem Mädchen auf ihrem gewohnten Schulweg. Da das Kind jedoch Angst vor der Polizei hat, duckt es sich im Straţengraben, als es das Polizeiauto sieht. Auch beim zweiten Vorbeifahren des Wagens versteckt sich das

Mädchen, obwohl sie sogar hört, dass ihr Name durch Lautsprecher gerufen wird. Die Erklärung: „Sie lieț sich aber nicht täuschen und hervorlocken“ (SCHB 24), denn „mit Polizei wollte sie nichts zu tun haben. Die Menschen in Rumänien fürchteten sich vor der Polizei“ (SCHB 23). Sie zieht es sogar vor in den Wagen eines fremden Mannes einzusteigen. Diese Geste, die in Deutschland vollkommen unverständlich ist und die Lehrerin des Mädchens „ganz blass“ (SCHB 25) werden lässt, kann nur vom rumänischen Standpunkt aus verstanden werden: man traut seinen Mitmenschen eher als der Polizei.

Grundbedürfnisse: Wohnen und Nahrung

Die Wohnsituation in der ersten Zeit als Aussiedler wird mit der Wohnsituation in Rumänien während der letzten zwei dort verbrachten Jahre verglichen:

> „Ingrid, Uwe und die Eltern wohnen im staatlichen Übergangswohnheim von F. Sie wohnen mit noch zwei Familien in einer Dreizimmerwohnung, die kleiner ist als die Wohnung, in der sie bis jetzt allein gewohnt haben. Ihr Zimmer ist klein, aber es ist warm. In Rumänien mussten sie sich im Winter auch in der Wohnung dick anziehen. Seit zwei Wintern wurden die Heizkörper nicht mehr richtig warm. Der Winter in Rumänien ist hart und der Brennstoff ist knapp. Im Übergangswohnheim werden die Heizkörper heiț, wenn man die Heizung andreht.“ (SCHB 15)

Zwar war die Wohnung in Rumänien geräumiger, und die Familie musste sie mit niemandem teilen, jedoch fehlte es im Winter an Wärme und auch an Möglichkeiten, sich irgendwie zu behelfen „Der Winter in Rumänien ist hart und der Brennstoff ist knapp“ (SCHB 15). Vier der insgesamt sechs Sätze dieses Abschnittes beziehen sich auf die Kälte, die in den Wohnungen in Rumänien im Winter herrschte, was darauf hindeutet, dass die Situation schwer auszuhalten war. Es wird nichts überspitzt formuliert, jedoch zeugt die Häufigkeit der Benennung des Zustandes davon, wie schwer er auf die Bürger dieses Landes lastete.

Die Entbehrungen, die die Menschen in Rumänien während des Kommunismus erdulden mussten, werden konkret am Beispiel der Nahrung und des Beschaffens bzw. Einkaufens von Nahrung thematisiert. Die Aussiedlerfamilie, die aus einer rumänischen Groțstadt kommt, wurde oft mit der Situation konfrontiert, keine Nahrungsmittel – besonders kein Fleisch – kaufen zu können: „Die Mutter sagt, dass ihr Schweinefleisch, das man kaufen kann, viel lieber ist als das Schweinefleisch aus der alten Heimat, das es nicht zu kaufen gibt“ (SCHB 19). Die Reaktion der Mutter wird durch eine schwäbische Familie ausgelöst, mit der sie sich eine Wohnung im Übergangswohnheim teilt, genauer gesagt durch die Mutter dieser Familie, die mit Schmalz kocht, das aus

der alten Heimat mitgebracht wurde: „Die Frau Klein sagt nämlich, dass das Schweinefleisch aus der alten Heimat besser schmeckt als das aus der neuen“ (SCHB 18,19).

Unterschiede beim Einkaufen von Nahrungsmitteln werden erneut thematisiert, als neue Nachbarn ins Übergangswohnheim kommen, die begleitet durch die Aussiedlerfamilie, ihre ersten Erfahrungen machen:

> „Ingrid, Uwe und der Vater gehen einkaufen. Sie nehmen auch den Herrn Schuster und die Christine mit und zeigen ihnen wie man einkauft. [...] Als sie nach Hause kommen, wundert sich die Frau Schuster über die schön verpackten Einkäufe. [...] In Rumänien, sagt die Frau Schuster, haben wir gekauft, was es gab. Gab es nichts, haben wir nichts gekauft.“ (SCHB 71, 72)

Durch diesen letzten Satz spricht Frau Schuster ein Paradoxon der kommunistischen rumänischen Gesellschaft aus: man kauft nicht das, was man braucht, sondern das, was es gibt.

Ein weiterer Gesichtspunkt der rumänischen kommunistischen Gesellschaft wenn es um das Thema ‚Einkaufen‘ geht ist das Schlange stehen, das die Kinder zur Genüge kannten:

> „Auch Ingrid und Uwe mussten oft Schlange stehen, um Milch oder Butter zu kaufen.
> Beim Schlangestehen um Fleisch war das Gedränge im Geschäft so groţ, dass es für Kinder gefährlich wurde. Ingrid und Uwe mussten darum nie um Fleisch anstehen. Nur manchmal um Hähnchen, wenn sie drauţen verkauft wurden.“ (SCHB 82)

Dieser Erfahrung widmet die Autorin eine eigene Geschichte mit dem Titel *Das Käserad* im Sammelband *In der Fremde und andere Geschichten*. Die Klasse soll einen Aufsatz über einen groţen Wunsch schreiben und Ina, das Aussiedlerkind, kann nicht nachvollziehen warum sich ihre Mitschülerinnen Barbiepuppen oder „Kleider mit dem Markenzeichen bekannter Modefirmen“ (FRD 40) wünschen. Sie ist sich unschlüssig, ob sie über das Käserad schreiben soll, dass sie sich wünscht. Der Wunsch wird durch ein Erlebnis des Mädchens aus der Zeit, als sie in Rumänien lebte, begründet. Einmal ist sie mit ihrer Mutter angestanden um Käse, sie haben jedoch nach langem Warten keinen mehr bekommen. Das Mädchen erinnert sich an den Frust und Ärger der Mutter und wünscht sich ein ganzes Käserad, „ohne Schlangestehen in der Kälte oder in der Hitze, eines, das man einfach kaufen kann, ohne sich aufzuregen, damit die Mama nicht mehr so müde und traurig aussieht“ (FRD 46). Die Geschichte schildert eindrucksvoll die Erlebnisse beim Schlage stehen durch Kinderaugen: die Hoffnung etwas Gutes kaufen zu können, die Geduld in der Schlange, die steigende Anspannung, sobald man merkt, dass der Käse weniger wird, der Streit zwischen den Menschen in der Schlange, wenn jemand versucht sich vorzudrängeln, das Zählen der Personen, die in der Schlange vor einem stehen und schlieţlich der Frust, wenn man nichts mehr bekommt.

Schule, Arbeit, Freizeit

Gelegenheit zur Gegenüberstellung der rumänischen und deutschen Schulen bieten die Erfahrungen der Kinder: die Schülerzahlen in einer Klasse sind sehr unterschiedlich. In Uwes neuer Klasse sind dreiundzwanzig Schüler, „Früher war er in einer Klasse mit dreiundvierzig Schülern. Seine Lehrerin war streng. [...] Uwe hatte seine Lehrerin in Rumänien gern. Auch die neue Lehrerin hat er gern“ (SCHB 30). Bei Ingrid waren es früher vierzig, „jetzt sind in Ingrids Klasse nur siebenundzwanzig Schüler“ (SCHB 48). Der Unterricht mit so vielen Schülern in Rumänien gestaltete sich natürlich schwierig. Ingrid gefällt es, dass die Lehrerin in Deutschland während der Unterrichts Spiele mit den Schülern spielt: „In Rumänien hat die Lehrerin nur in der Turnstunde mit den Kindern gespielt“ (SCHB 48).

Bei dieser Gelegenheit wird auch die Schuluniform beschrieben, die alle Schulkinder in Rumänien tragen mussten: „die Mädchen ein blau und weiț kariertes Kleid mit blauer Schürze, die Jungen einen dunkelblauen Anzug und ein weiț und blau kariertes Hemd“ (SCHB 30). Es wird keine Debatte um die Notwendigkeit einer Schuluniform angezettelt, sondern lediglich zu verstehen gegeben, dass die Qualität der Schuldkleidung in Rumänien minderwertig war, und dadurch unbequem: „An heiţen Tagen klebte Uwes Hose an den Beinen. Wenn die Lehrerin mit dem Gesicht zur Tafel stand, bewegte er rasch die Beine unter der Bank, um ein bisschen Kühlung zu bekommen. Es nützte aber nichts“ (SCHB 30) Im Vergleich dazu „geht Uwe [jetzt] in einer kurzen Hose und in einem T-Shirt zur Schule“ (SCHB 30).

Weder Ingrid – die gerne in die Schule geht und der der Unterricht gefällt – noch Uwe haben Schwierigkeiten in der Schule in Deutschland. Zur Verwunderung der Lehrerin, schreibt Uwe am dritten Schultag ein fehlerfreies Diktat. Sie hat damit nicht gerechnet, „weil er ja aus einem anderen Land kommt, wo Deutsch eine Fremdsprache ist“ (SCHB 31). Als Antwort darauf erklärt Uwe: „Ich war aber in Rumänien in einer deutschen Schule, [...], und unsere Lehrerin hat sehr viele Diktate mit uns gemacht. Wir mussten auch täglich einen Abschnitt aus dem Lesebuch abschreiben“ (SCHB 31). Durch diesen Dialog kommen mehrere Aspekte zum Ausdruck: einerseits die Unkenntnis der Lehrerin aus Deutschland betreffend die Möglichkeit der Minderheiten in Rumänien in ihrer Muttersprache zu lernen und andererseits der Stolz auf die deutschen Schulen in Rumänien, die sich – auch heute noch – eines guten Rufes erfreuen.

Während es den Kindern nicht schwer fällt sich an das Schulleben in Deutschland anzupassen, gestaltet sich der Einstieg der Eltern in den Beruf umso schwieriger. Die Eltern sitzen „den ganzen Tag zu Hause und schreiben Bewerbungen“ (SCHB 82). In Rumänien hingegen „hat der Vater eine Arbeit gehabt. Er hat als Forstingenieur in einem Büro gearbeitet. Die Mutter hat auch ihre Arbeit gehabt“ (SCHB 82). Wie problematisch dieser Aspekt der

Integration ist, wird im Text öfters angedeutet: „Die Frau Schuster hat gesagt, der Herr Schuster muss arbeiten, sonst wird er krank“ (SCHB 91), „Ich hätte auch umsonst gearbeitet, sagt der Herr Schuster, ob Sie es mit glauben oder nicht“ (SCHB 92), „Der Herr Schuster sitzt im Dunkeln auf dem Klo. Der Herr Schuster ist ein groţer, stattlicher Mann. Er sitzt aufrecht auf dem Klo. [...] Ich hab gedacht, ihr lasst mich schon in Ruhm wenn ich nichts sag“ (SCHB 100, 101), „Ich muss aus dem Haus, sagt die Mutter, die Wände fallen auf mich“ (SCHB 105), „Als Deutschlehrerin habe ich keine Chance, eine Stelle zu finden“ (SCHB 115). Trotzdem blieben die Aussiedler optimistisch: „Mach dir keine Sorgen, sagt der Vater, irgendwann finde ich bestimmt eine Stelle“ (SCHB 83), „Wenn euer Vater eine Stelle bekommt und wir aus dem Übergangswohnheim wegziehen werden, dann ist unsere Geschichte trotzdem eine Geschichte mit gutem Ende“ (SCHB 115).

Als Pendant zur Arbeit gilt die Freizeit, die jedoch nur dann als solche genossen werden kann, wenn die Arbeitsstelle gegeben ist: im Gegensatz zu Rumänien, wo „es nur einmal im Monat einen freien Samstag“ (SCHB 102) gab und „viele Leute auch am Sonntag zur Arbeit gehen“ (SCHB 102) mussten, sind die Samstage in Deutschland arbeitsfreie Tage. Die Krimitante, eine neue Freundin der Mutter, deren Mann eine Anstellung als Tierarzt in einem Schlachthaus bekommen hat, und die somit aus dem Übergangswohnheim ausziehen kann, „freut sich auf die freien Wochenenden. Die Eltern von Ingrid und Uwe können sich nicht auf die freien Wochenenden freuen. Für sie sind alle Tage frei und ein Tag ist wie der andere“ (SCHB 102). Besonders durch den letzten Ausdruck wird der Frust angedeutet keine Arbeit zu haben und deswegen auch die Freizeit nicht schätzen zu können. In Rumänien gibt es „nur drei Feiertage im Jahr“ (SCHB 75), in Deutschland „kommen viele andere Feiertage dazu“ (SCHB 75). Jedoch, wie im Falle der Wochenenden, können sich die Mitglieder der Aussiedlerfamilie nicht recht darauf freuen. Ein Beispiel hierfür ist der 1. Mai, ein Feiertag, der in Gegensatz zu Rumänien auch „ohne Marschieren und ohne Durcharbeiten“ (SCHB 75) gefeiert werden kann. Eigentlich hat keiner Lust zu feiern, jedoch „Feiern ist besser als im Wohnheim zu sitzen“ (SCHB 75) und so entschlieţt sich die Aussiedlerfamilie, gemeinsam mit den neu gewonnenen Freunden aus dem Übergangswohnheim den Feiertag im Freien zu verbringen. Am Ende des Tages zieht Ingrid den Schluss: „Das waren schöne Pfingsten“ (SCHB 77), um prompt von ihrem älteren Bruder korrigiert zu werden: „Das war doch nicht Pfingsten, sagt Uwe, das war doch der 1. Mai“ (SCHB 77).

Fortschritt

Von Erfahrungen mit der Benutzung von fortschrittlicherer Technik als im Herkunftsland wird im Kapitel *Bei den Ämtern* berichtet. Um von einem Amt zum anderen zu gelangen fährt die Familie mit der Straţenbahn. Sie sind

alleine an der Haltestelle, als die Straţenbahn ankommt, anhält und schlieţlich, sehr zum Erstaunen der Familie, ohne die Türen zu öffnen wieder weiterfährt. „Warum hat der Schaffner die Türen nicht aufgemacht?, fragt Uwe. Die Straţenbahn war ja leer“ (SCHB 22). Hier setzt der direkte Vergleich mit den Gepflogenheiten in Rumänien ein, durch die Stimme der Autorin, die erklärt: „In Rumänien sind die Straţenbahnen oft durchgefahren, ohne die Türen zu öffnen, aber nur dann, wenn sie so voll waren, dass keiner mehr hineinging“ (SCHB 22,23). So versteht man als Leser, dem die Situation in Rumänien nicht vertraut ist, auch die Verdutztheit der Auswanderer-Familie. Das Missverständnis löst sich auf, als andere Fahrgäste zur Haltestelle kommen und bei der nächsten Straţenbahn den Knopf für das Öffnen der Tür drücken. Die Familie ist somit um eine Erfahrung reicher.

Eine neue Erfahrung ist es auch ein Konto zu besitzen. Was in Deutschland der Regelfall ist, kennt in Rumänien niemand: „In Rumänien haben die Eltern ihr Gehalt immer in die Hand ausgezahlt bekommen“ (SCHB 22). Das Verfahren den Lohn auszuhändigen, wurde teilweise auch missbraucht um noch einmal die Hierarchien innerhalb einer Institution oder eines Betriebes deutlich zu machen: besonders in Fabriken bekam der oder die Vorgesetzte den Lohn für die Mitarbeiter, die ihm oder ihr unterstanden. Dabei wurde ein Abhängigkeitsverhältnis geschaffen und den Menschen wurde klar gemacht, wer über ihnen steht. Die eigentliche Vertraulichkeit derartiger Informationen galt in der kommunistischen Gesellschaft als belanglos. Hingegen ermöglicht das scheinbar unpersönlichere Überweisen auch die Wahrung der Vertraulichkeit.

Besondere Ereignisse: Krankenhaus, Rollstuhl, Tod

Die Geschichte *Im Krankenhaus* aus der Geschichtensammlung *In der Fremde und andere Geschichten* thematisiert die unterschiedliche Handhabung einer durch Viren übertragener - also ansteckender – Gelbsucht jeweils in einem „noblen Krankenhaus“ (FRD 15) in Deutschland und in einem Krankenhaus in Rumänien. Die kürzlich ausgewanderte Brita hat sich noch in Rumänien bei ihrer Cousine Vicky angesteckt, die jetzt „zweitausend Kilometer weiter östlich im Krankenhaus“ liegt, „wo sie einen Monat lang keinen Besuch bekommen darf“ (FRD 14). Zu Brita hingegen kommen die Eltern „jeden Tag“ (FRD 15) zu Besuch, auţerdem liegt ihr Bruder Bernd auch im Krankenhaus, „weil er die Krankheit bestimmt auch kriegt“ (FRD 15). Diesem zwanglosen Miteinander wird der Zustand in Rumänien gegenübergestellt, gesehen durch Kinderaugen, denen die Bilder jedoch „vertraut“ sind:

> „Vickys Mutter geht abends ins Krankenhaus, klopft an die verschlossene Tür, schenkt der Krankenschwester, die sie in die verbotene Abteilung einlässt, eine Tafel Schokolade und eine deutsche Seife, bekommt einen weiţen Kittel und geht als Krankenschwester getarnt in Vickys Zimmer.“ (FRD 19)

Die Krankenschwester muss bestochen werden, damit Vickys Mutter ihre Tochter besuchen darf, wobei die Autorin diesen Sachverhalt für Kinder angepasst mit dem Wort ‚schenkt' umschreibt. Diese Episode erinnert an eine andere Geschichte aus Karin Gündisch *Groţvaters Hähne*, als ein Familienvater einem Polizisten ausländische Zigaretten ‚schenkt' um weiterfahren zu dürfen. Da sie die Bedingungen in den rumänischen Krankenhäusern kennt, bringt Vickys Mutter natürlich etwas mit: „Sie hat Margarinebrot, Vanillecreme, Kekse und Äpfel mitgebracht, verteilt Kekse und Äpfel an alle Kinder" (FRD 19). Auţerdem ist es im rumänischen Krankenhaus kalt, denn „das Zimmer ist nicht geheizt, und die Kinder tragen Pullover und Jacken über den Pyjamas. Vicky liegt unter zwei dicken Decken" (FRD 19). Diesen spartanischen Verhältnissen, in denen die Eltern sich in das Krankenhaus hineinschleichen, um ihren Kindern Essen mitzubringen, stehen die im Vergleich nahezu luxuriösen Verhältnisse in der deutschen Uniklinik gegenüber: „Zum Frühstück gibt es frische Semmeln, die hier Brötchen heiţen, Kakao, Milch oder Tee zur Auswahl, dazu Butter, Käse und Nutella. [...] Mittags kann man zwischen drei und abends zwischen zwei verschiedenen Menüs wählen" (FRD 15). Solches sind die Kinder aus Rumänien nicht gewohnt, da es zu Hause „zum Frühstück nur Marmeladenbrot und Milch, am Sonntag Kakao" (FRD 15) gibt und sie gewohnt sind „alles zu essen, was auf den Teller kommt" (FRD 15). Was gleich ist, sind die Symptome der Mädchen. Sie fühlen sich schwach und schlapp und sie wollen beide nach Hause.

Eine andere besondere Erfahrung ist der Tod eines Heimbewohners, des Herrn Fleischer „aus dem ersten Stock" (SCHB 59), der „schon seit langem gelähmt" (SCHB 59) war: „In Rumänien musste er deshalb immer im Zimmer bleiben. Er ist fast den ganzen Tag am Fenster gesessen und hat auf die Straţe geschaut" (SCHB 59). Wer diese Zeilen liest und das Leben von Menschen mit Behinderung in Rumänien kennt, weiţ auch, dass die fehlenden Möglichkeiten aus dem Haus zu gehen und sich zu bewegen, die gröţte Belastung darstellt. „In Deutschland hat er einen Rollstuhl bekommen. Der war sein einziges Glück. Die Frau Fleischer hat ihn jeden Tag mit dem Rollstuhl spazieren geführt" (SCHB 59). Dieses Glück währt jedoch nicht sehr lange, denn „an einem Morgen war der Herr Fleischer plötzlich tot" (SCHB 59). Hier bietet sich die Gelegenheit eines der wichtigsten Ereignisse im Leben eines Menschen darzustellen und zu vergleichen. In Deutschland bekommt der Verstorbene „ein Begräbnis dritter Klasse. Das ist billig" (SCHB 59). Dass die Menschen auch nach dem Tod in Klassen eingeteilt werden, ist für die Aussiedler aus Rumänien, neu, denn „zu Hause in der Gemeinde, wo die Groţeltern vom Ingrid und Uwe leben, werden alle Menschen ausf die gleiche Art begraben" (SCHB 59) und „Ein Grab kauft man nicht. Ein Grab hat man" (SCHB 60). In der Gemeinde in Rumänien spielte Geld bei dem Begräbnis eines Menschen keine

Rolle. Hingegen ist in Deutschland ein „anständiges Begräbnis“ (SCHB 60), wie sich die Witwe des Verstorbenen ausdrückt, teuer und die Aussiedler können es sich nicht leisten.

Schlussfolgernd kann man sagen, dass Karin Gündisch in ihren Kinderbüchern mit Thema Auswanderung ein nüchternes Bild vom kommunistischen Rumänien zeichnet. Es ist ein Rumänien, in dem es sich leben lässt, wenn man sich jedoch irgendwie mit den Leuten arrangiert[4] und in dem man „meistens nach der Arbeit unterwegs, auf der Suche nach Lebensmitteln“ (SCHB 82) ist, die man nicht ehrlich kauft, sondern irgendwie hinterrücks beschafft. Die Autorin zeigt in vielen kleinen Episoden die Gründe, die einzeln nicht ausreichen würden, damit eine Familie sich zum Auswandern entschließt – Mangel an Lebensmitteln, Kraftstoff und Wärme, Angst vor dem Staat – jedoch in der Summe genau diesen Umstand zur Folge haben.

Von Deutschland wird im Großen und Ganzen ein positives Bild gezeigt, jedoch werden auch die unangenehmen und gewöhnungebedürftigen Seiten beschrieben: als die Mutter zum Beispiel mit den Kindern einen Spaziergang durch den Park macht, springt ein großer Hund Ingrid an. Ingrid hat Angst und klammert sich an die Mutter, die das Kind beruhigt und dann den Hundebesitzer höflich bittet den Hund an die Leine zu nehmen. Die Antwort: „Fällt mir gar nicht ein. Für Ihre Göre kriegen Sie vom Staat Geld, ich aber muss für meinen Hund Steuern zahlen“ (SCHB 35) Besonders das Wort „Göre“ zeugt von dem Frust des Hundebesitzers und von dem beleidigenden Verhalten einer Mutter mit Kind gegenüber. An einer anderen Stelle wird erzählt wie die Tante der Kinder die Katze mit Schinken füttert. Im Hinblick auf die Situation, dass in dem Land aus dem die Familie stammt besonders in Punkto Lebensmitteln einiges entbehrt werden musste, sieht die Mutter dieses Verhalten sehr kritisch: „Ich habe etwas gegen Menschen, die Katzen mit Schinken füttern“ (SCHB 38).

Durch diese wenigen Beispiele wird klar, dass Deutschland durchaus kritisch betrachtet wird. Was geschätzt wird ist jedoch, dass in Deutschland die Grundbedürfnisse gedeckt sind. Problematisch sind in der ersten Zeit als Auswanderer besonders zwei Punkte: das Finden einer Arbeit und die Sehnsucht nach „zu Hause“. Es bleibt die Frage, welcher dieser Aspekte – Grundbedürfnisse oder Arbeit und mit der Familie Zusammensein – wichtiger ist. Ingrid formuliert diese Frage an ihren Vater: „Geht es uns hier besser als in Rumänien?“ (SCHB 83). Der Vater ist ehrlich: „Im Augenblick geht es uns nicht besonders gut. Wenn ich eine Arbeitsstelle finde, wird es uns aber gut gehen“ (SCHB 83). In diesem Punkt ist der Optimismus gegeben, was jedoch nicht wiederzuerlangen ist, ist die Gemeinschaft, die man verlassen hat. Zwar lebt

[4] Gündisch, Karin: *Großvaters Hähne*. Schiller Verlag Hermannstadt Bonn 2011.

„die Hälfte der Rumäniendeutschen heute in Deutschland“ (SCHB 83), jedoch verstreut und nicht in denselben Gemeinschaften wie in Rumänien. Wichtige Bezugspersonen, besonders für die Kinder, fehlen: „Gefällt es dir eigentlich in Deutschland?“ (SCHB 47) wird Ingrid von einer Mitschülerin gefragt. „Ja, sagt Ingrid, aber am schönsten ist es doch bei meinen Groţeltern“ (SCHB 47). Ingrid gibt nicht den Ort an, sondern die Lieben, die ihr fehlen.

Objektiv betrachtet ist es in Deutschland besser, man muss jedoch einen Weg voller Frust gehen: „Die Frau Prochazka will einen Mercedes kaufen, sagt die Mutter und dann beginnt sie zu weinen. Sie ist fix und fertig mit den Nerven“ (SCHB 107), Anpassungsschwierigkeiten: „Ich werde meine Tochter zur Schule bringen und auch wieder abholen, bis sie sich an das viele Neue gewöhnt hat“ (FRD 28), „Es gibt vieles Neues und Ungewohntes in Deutschland“ (SCHB 19) und Lernen: dass man z.B. in der Straţenbahn einen Knopf drücken muss, damit sich die Türen öffnen, um eine Geschichte mit gutem Ende zu erleben und von einer „neuen Heimat“ sprechen zu können.

Bezüge zwischen Rumänien oder Deutschland und dem Begriff ‚Heimat‘

Im folgenden Teil der Arbeit soll untersucht werden in welcher Verbindung Rumänien, als das Land aus dem ausgewandert wird, bzw. Deutschland, als das Land in dem eingewandert wird, zu den Begriffen ‚Heimat‘ und ‚Heimatland‘ bzw. ‚Heimatort‘ stehen. Zu diesem Zwecke erscheint ein theoretischer Exkurs notwendig.

Zu den Begriffen ‚Heimat’ und ‚Heimatland‘/‚Heimatort‘

Im Kontext eines vereinten Europas und der stetig steigenden Globalisierung, sowie der damit verbundenen Flexibilität der Menschen scheint eine Diskussion über ‚Heimat‘, besonders in Verbindung mit Ortsgebundenheit von besonderem Interesse. Davon zeugt die Tatsache, dass in den verschiedensten Bereichen derartige Diskussionen stattfinden: sei es zwischen Fachleuten, oder im öffentlichen Diskurs[5].

Das Wort *Heimat* kann als Ausgangspunkt für den Versuch gelten, den Begriff ‚Heimat’ näher zu erläutern. Es stammt vom ahd. *heimuoti*, eine Ableitung des Wortes *heim* – ursprünglich: *Ort, Lager an dem man sich niederlässt*[6], das es heute (auch) noch in der Bedeutung *jemandes Zuhause*[7] gibt. Mhd. erscheint das Wort als *heim(u)ot(e)*. Die Tatsache, dass es sich hierbei um ein Wort

[5] Um nur ein lesenswertes Beispiel zu nennen: Im Dezember 2004 erschien in der Online-Ausgabe der Zeitschrift *Stern* ein Artikel mit dem Titel *Grundbedürfnis: Was ist Heimat?*

[6] Duden – Deutsches Universalwörterbuch, 5. Auflage Mannheim 2003 (CD-ROM).

[7] Ebd.

handelt, dass schon im Althochdeutschen vorhanden war, zeugt einerseits von seiner Wichtigkeit für den Menschen, andererseits ermöglichte die lange Zeitspanne die Veränderung, besonders im Sinne von Ausweitung, der Bedeutung und besonders des Gebrauches dieses Wortes.

Um diese Veränderung zu klären wird vorgeschlagen die Bedeutungen, die in einem historischen Wörterbuch mit denen in einem zeitgenössischen zu vergleichen. Wenn im Grimm'schen Wörterbuch drei Bedeutungen des Wortes angegeben sind:

> „1. heimat, das land oder auch nur der landstrich, in dem man geboren ist oder bleibenden aufenthalt hat
> 2. heimat, der geburtsort oder ständige wohnort:
> 3. selbst das elterliche haus und besitzthum heiszt so, in Baiern“[8]

die alle noch die Komponente *Ort* gemein haben, kommt im zeitgenössischen Wörterbuch eine wichtige Bedeutungsfacette hinzu:

> „1. Land, Landesteil od. Ort, in dem man [geboren u.] aufgewachsen ist od. sich durch ständigen Aufenthalt zu Hause fühlt (oft als gefühlsbetonter Ausdruck enger Verbundenheit gegenüber einer bestimmten Gegend)“[9]

Die erste Bedeutungsvariante zeugt jedoch besonders durch die Komponenten „fühlt“ und „gefühlsbetont“ davon, dass Heimat nichts Objektives oder Fassbares, ja sogar vielleicht gar nicht mehr eindeutig ist.

Die beiden als Eckpunkte angegebene Erklärungen – Grimm'sches Wörterbuch und zeitgenössisches Wörterbuch – zeugen davon, dass es sich bei *Heimat* um ein Wort handelt, das mit der Zeit gegangen ist. Als Konstante der Wortbedeutung erscheint die Verbindung Mensch – Raum, Mensch – Ort, jedoch zeugt der Gebrauch des Wortes unleugbar von einer starken individuellen Komponente, die nicht nur lokalen Charakter hat, sondern eher gefühlsmäțigen[10]. Dieser Gedanke ist auch in Fachlexika zu finden: Heimat ist „subjektiv von einzelnen Menschen oder kollektiv von Gruppen, Stämmen, Völkern, Nationen erlebte territoriale Einheit, zu der ein Gefühl besonders enger Verbundenheit besteht.“[11]

---

[8] Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jakob und Wilhelm Grimm, Onlineversion: http://woerterbuchnetz.de/cgi-bin/WBNetz/wbgui_py?sigle=DWB&mainmode (aufgerufen am 29.03.2012).

[9] Duden – Deutsches Universalwörterbuch, 5. Auflage Mannheim 2003 (CD-ROM).

[10] Beispielhaft sei nur Kurt Tucholskys Essay *Heimat* genannt, in dem es heißt: „Der Staat schere sich fort, wenn wir unsere *Heimat* lieben. Warum grade sie – warum nicht eins von den andern Ländern –? Es gibt so schöne. […]es gibt ein Gefühl jenseits aller Politik, und aus diesem Gefühl heraus lieben wir dieses Land. Wir lieben es, weil die Luft so durch die Gassen fließt und nicht anders, der uns gewohnten Lichtwirkung wegen – aus tausend Gründen, die man nicht aufzählen kann, die uns nicht einmal bewußt sind und die doch tief im Blut sitzen.“

[11] Der Brockhaus in 10 Bänden. Bd. 4. G-O. Verlag Brockhaus Leipzig Mannheim 2005. S. 2496.

Jede Sprache rühmt sich mit unübersetzbaren, bzw. schwer transponierbaren Wörtern und Begriffen. ‚Heimat' ist eindeutig ein Wort, ein Begriff, bei dessen jede mögliche Übertragung in eine andere Sprache zu mindestens eine Facette zu leiden hat. Sowohl den englischen Begriffen *home*, *homeland*, *home country*, als auch dem französischen *pays d'origine* fehlt der individuelle und gefühlsmäţige Charakter, oder die Möglichkeit der Loslösung von dem Ort, während bei den möglichen französischen Übersetzung *patrie* oder dem Rumänischen *partie* die patriotische Komponente hinzukommt, die eher dem Deutschen *Vaterland* entspricht.

Etwas leichter gestaltet es sich bei dem Terminus ‚Heimatland', eine Lehnübersetzung des Englischen *homeland*, da hier die Verbindung mit dem Raum eindeutig durch das Grundwort spezifiziert wird. ‚Heimatort' wäre dann lediglich eine nicht so flächenbreite Variante. Weiter unten im Beitrag wird jedoch gezeigt, dass auch diese Begriffe im Kontext einer Minderheit, sowie im Kontext der Auswanderung kompliziertere Züge annehmen.

Die Verbindung von Auswanderung und Heimat

Auswanderung bedeutet „seine Heimat für immer verlassen [und in einem anderen Land eine neue Heimat suchen]"[12]. Möglicherweise wäre es treffender formuliert „sein Heimat*land* verlassen", da vielleicht genau die Tatsache, dass man sein Heimatland nicht (mehr) als Heimat betrachtet – aus äuţeren oder inneren Gründen – den Grund darstellen kann, warum man auswandert. Die im Wörterbuch in Klammern gefasste Ergänzung liefert einen weiteren wichtigen Aspekt: man sucht eine neue Heimat, ob man sie findet sei dahingestellt und erneut individuell zu betrachten.

Im Anschluss an die Auswanderung ergeben sich dann folgende Möglichkeiten: man stellt fest, dass man zwei Heimaten hat, man tauscht die eine Heimat gegen die andere, oder man bleibt (gefühlsmäţig) ohne Heimat[13]. Es wird im Folgenden gezeigt in welcher Relation die beiden Länder – einerseits das Land, aus dem ausgewandert wird (Rumänien), andererseits das Land, in dem eingewandert wird (Deutschland) – zu dem Begriff ‚Heimat' stehen.

Explizite Bezüge

Explizite Bezüge finden sich sowohl zwischen Rumänien als auch zwischen Deutschland und dem Begriff ‚Heimat': „Die Mutter sagt, die Frau Klein lässt das Fenster im Klo offen in Erinnerung an den Lokus hinterm Haus

[12] Duden – Deutsches Universalwörterbuch, 5. Auflage Mannheim 2003 (CD-ROM).

[13] Franz Hodjak in einem Interview der Zeitschrift *Germanistik im Europäischen Kontext. Zeitschrift des Departements für deutsche Sprache und Literatur Klausenburg*. Bd. III 1/2011, S. 146: „Denn in meinem Fall ist es so, dass ich nicht nur nicht zwei Heimaten habe, sondern überhaupt keine."

in ihrer alten Heimat. Gegen solche Heimatserinnerungen könne man nichts tun“ (SCHB 17) oder „Wie schön war es, sagt er, als Arbeitgeber und Arbeitnehmer in unserer alten Heimat zusammen gearbeitet und zusammen gefeiert haben“ (SCHB 109). Hier ist mit der „alten Heimat“ das verlassene Rumänien gemeint.

Oft erscheinen sogar beide Länder (Rumänien und Deutschland) mit dem Bezug zu ‚Heimat‘ nebeneinander im Vergleich:

> „Das Schmalz ist noch vom eigenen Schwein, das sie nicht in der alten Heimat lassen wollte und von dem sie ein groţes Glas Schmalz und die beiden Hinterbeine in die neue Heimat mitgebracht hat. Die Frau Klein sagt nämlich, dass das Schweinefleisch in der alten Heimat besser schmeckt als das aus der neuen.“ (SCHB 18)

oder „Ein anderer Mann liest Gedichte vor, die er selbst geschrieben hat. Sie handeln von der lieben alten und von der lieben neuen Heimat“ (108).

Ein weiterer Bezug erscheint mit den Komposita *Heimatort* und *Heimatorttreffen*. Der Heimatort ist hier genau ermittelt, es handelt sich um den Ort „von Ingrids und Uwes Groţeltern“ (108) und alle Menschen, die an dem Heimatorttreffen teilnehmen, haben „früher“ dort gelebt. Der Heimatort liegt somit in Rumänien und die Tatsache, dass derartige Treffen stattfanden, zeugen davon, dass die Aussiedler sich in ihrer „neuen Heimat“ um das Beisammensein mit Menschen sehnen, die aus derselben „alten Heimat“ stammen. Davon sind besonders die „alten Leute“ (108) betroffen, die zahlreich teilnehmen, wohingegen Kinder nur „ganz wenige“ (108) da sind. Kinder passen sich schneller an und finden leichter Anschluss in der neuen Umgebung, Erwachsene dagegen sind sich ihrer Herkunft und der Gemeinschaft, die sie verlassen haben, viel stärker bewusst und sehnen sich nach ihr.

Bezeichnend im Falle der expliziten Bezüge ist die Tatsache, dass der Begriff ‚Heimat‘ nie ohne ein Adjektiv erscheint: es handelt sich entweder um die „alte Heimat“, und damit ist Rumänien gemeint, oder um die „neue Heimat“, also um Deutschland. Da die Bezüge immer symmetrisch sind und sogar beide Heimaten mit dem Attribut „lieb“ erscheinen, kann angenommen werden, dass beide denselben Stellenwert für die Aussiedler haben.

Bezüge mittels Paraphrasen

Die häufigste Paraphrase für ‚Heimat‘ ist ‚zu Hause’ und sie erscheint ausschlieţlich mit Bezug auf Rumänien: „Ingrid und Uwe haben eine solche Kirche noch nie gesehen. Zu Hause gab es nur alte Kirchen. Es werden keine neuen gebaut“ (SCHB 54) oder „Zu Hause haben wir nicht viel einkaufen müssen. Wir haben zwei Kühe, eine Büffelkuh und zwei Schweine gehabt, auch Hühner und einen groţen Garten mit Gemüse und mit Kukuruz...Jetzt ist zu Hause die Zeit zum Kukuruzhacken“ (SCHB 72).

An einer Stelle wird „zu Hause“ genauer spezifiziert, und zwar „in der Gemeinde, wo die Groțeltern von Ingrid und Uwe leben“ (59). Es handelt sich also genau um den „Heimatort“, der weiter oben beschrieben wurde und der sich in Rumänien[14] befindet.

Es sticht heraus, dass mit „zu Hause“ niemals Deutschland als Land gemeint ist. Es werden zwar mit dieser Wendung verschiedene Orte in Deutschland gemeint, jedoch handelt es sich hierbei immer um ganz kleinflächige und genau bestimmte Orte, wie zum Beispiel das Übergangswohnheim, die Gaststätte oder das Hotel, die oder das den Aussiedlern als zeitweiliger Wohnsitz dient: „Wir gehen zu Fuț nach Haus. […] Als sie endlich zu Hause sind […]“ (SCHB 25), „Deine Mutter hat uns benachrichtigt, dass du nicht nach Hause gekommen bist […]“ (FRD 25). Der Grund dafür ist, dass die Aussiedler noch keinen Bezug zu dem Einwanderungs*land* als solches aufbauen konnten, dieser Bezug vollzieht sich zuerst im Kleinen: Wohnung – Stadt – Gebiet und erst nachher kann man von einem ganzen Land als „Zuhause“ sprechen.

Eine Paraphrase, die sich abhebt ist: „Bei uns in Rumänien, sagt Ingrid, füttert man die Katzen nicht mit Schinken“ (SCHB 38). Es erscheint bezeichnend, dass Ingrid als jüngstes Familienmitglied diese Wendung benutzt. Das Kind fühlt sich noch der „alten Heimat“ zugehörig und verdeutlicht dieses durch das Pronomen der ersten Person Plural „uns“. Somit wird (noch) eine klare Abgrenzung gezogen zwischen „uns“, die in Rumänien Lebenden und „euch“, die in Deutschland Lebenden gezogen. Wenn man in Deutschland alles hat, macht man sich nicht darüber Gedanken, dass Menschen anderswo auf der Welt Hunger und Entbehrungen leiden müssen auch wenn es sich hierbei um Angehörige derselben Minderheit und sogar derselben Familie handelt: Ingrid richtet diesen Satz an ihre Tante. Diese nüchterne und doch so scharfe Kritik des Kindes an der Erwachsenen löst bei Letzterer schlieţlich doch Verlegenheit aus und bewirkt den Versuch einer Erklärung für ihr Verhalten: „Ja, mein Kind, sagt die Tante etwas verlegen, das ist ja auch bei uns nicht die Regel. Aber in Deutschland lebt man eben besser und da leben auch die Katzen besser“ (SCHB 38).

In der Begegnung mit der Fremde ist es nur natürlich die Differenzen zu dem Vertrauten und Bekannten zu erkennen und sich damit auseinanderzusetzen. Aus diesen Differenzen ergeben sich in den ausgewählten Texten von Karin Gündisch die vorgeführten direkten Rumänien – Deutschland Vergleiche. Es wird sowohl von Deutschland als auch von Rumänien ein objektives und nüchternes Bild gezeichnet, es werden sowohl die negativen Aspekte im kommunistischen Rumänien, die die Gründe für die Auswanderung darstellen, angeführt: Entbehrungen, die die Bevölkerung zu leiden hatte, besonders

[14] Es lohnt sich darüber nachzudenken, ob es sich hierbei nicht eher um Siebenbürgen als um Rumänien handelt. Dieses Thema kann jedoch bei einer anderen Gelegenheit detailliert behandelt werden.

hinsichtlich der Nahrung, die Kälte in den Wohnungen im Winter, die Angst vor den Vertretern der Staatsmacht, als auch die positiven: die Gemeinschaft, in der alle gleich waren, das Zusammensein mit den Liebsten (besonders Groţeltern und Freunde). Im Vergleich dazu sind in Deutschland die Grundbedürfnisse gedeckt, es fehlt einem jedoch an Nähe (wie in der Gemeinschaft), die Eltern haben keine Arbeit und es wird die Verschwendung kritisiert (Katzen werden mit Schinken gefüttert, man findet brauchbare Sachen auf dem Sperrmüll). Die Verwendung der Ländernamen Rumänien bzw. Deutschland geschieht dort, wo eher objektive Vergleiche gezogen werden. Kommen Gefühle ins Spiel wird ‚Heimat' oder es werden die Paraphrasen ‚zu Hause', ‚bei uns in Rumänien' verwendet. Heimat bezieht sich dabei auf Rumänien mit dem Adjektiv „alte" und Verben in der Vergangenheit, während es sich mit dem Adjektiv „neu" und Verben der Gegenwart auf Deutschland bezieht. Die Tatsache, dass der Begriff ‚Heimat' für beide Länder verwendet wird, zeigt die Komplexität des Phänomens Auswanderung: man kommt aus einer Heimat in eine neue, die man vielleicht eher so nennt in der Hoffnung, dass sie dazu entwickeln wird.

BIBLIOGRAPHIE

Gündisch, Karin: *Im Land der Schokolade und Bananen. Zwei Kinder kommen in ein fremdes Land*. Weinheim, Basel, Berlin: Beltz & Gelberg, 1987.

Gündisch, Karin: *In der Fremde und andere Geschichten*. Bukarest: ADZ Verlag, 2003.

Gündisch, Karin: *Groţvaters Hähne*. Bonn Hermannstadt: Schiller Verlag, 2011.

Der Brockhaus in 10 Bänden. Bd. 4. G-O. Leipzig Mannheim: Verlag Brockhaus, 2005, S. 2496.

Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jakob und Wilhelm Grimm, Onlineversion: http://woerterbuchnetz.de/cgi-bin/WBNetz/wbgui_py?sigle=DWB&mainmode (aufgerufen am 29.03.2012).

Duden – Deutsches Universalwörterbuch, Mannheim: Dudenverlag 2003 (CD-ROM, 5. Auflage).

Sánta-Jakabházi, Réka: *„'Ich bin frei, wenn ich schreibe'. Gespräch mit Franz Hodjak".* Lucia Gorgoi, Daniela Vladu, Réka Sánta-Jakabházi: *Germanistik im Europäischen Kontext. Zeitschrift des Departements für deutsche Sprache und Literatur Klausenburg*. Bd. III 1/2011. Cluj-Napoca: Editura Mega, 2011.

STUDIA UBB PHILOLOGIA, LVIII, 3, 2013, p. 75 - 84
(RECOMMENDED CITATION)

ART REFERENCES IN GABRIELA MELINESCU'S *SWEDISH DIARIES*

CRISTINA SĂRĂCUŢ[1]

ABSTRACT. ***Art References in Gabriela Melinescu's Swedish Diaries*.** The main focus of my article is the analysis of the relationship between literature and art that informs the five volumes of the *Swedish Diaries*. First, my intention is to examine the types and the role of art references that the writer introduced in her literary diary. Second, my article investigates the imagery that Gabriela Melinescu evokes by means of her own book illustrations.

Keywords: literature, diary, ekphrasis, image, illustration, description, text-image interferences, autobiography

REZUMAT. ***Referinţa picturală în Jurnalele suedeze ale Gabrielei Melinescu*.** Miza acestui articol este analiza relaţiei dintre literatură şi artă, relaţie ce structurează cele cinci volume ale *Jurnalelor suedeze*. O primă intenţie constă în revelarea tipurilor şi a rolului referinţelor la opere de artă pe care le introduce autoarea în jurnalul său. În al doilea rând, articolul investighează imaginarul pe care Gabriela Melinescu îl evocă în jurnal cu ajutorul propriilor ilustraţii.

Cuvinte-cheie: literatură, jurnal, ekphrasis, imagine, ilustraţie, descriere, interferenţe text-imagine, autobiografie

The *Swedish Diary* translated into Romanian by Polirom Publishing House reflects more than thirty years of Gabriela Melinescu's life (1975-2008), and is a landmark in the history of this literary genre. The dialogue between word and image develops here in two directions. On the one hand, we can easily notice the great number of art references. The diarist turns her personal experience into literary facts by alluding to art works, such as drawings, pictures or engravings. On the other hand, the *Swedish Diary* reveals Gabriela Melinescu as a skillful book illustrator: she combines notes with her own illustrations. Before analyzing several excerpts that clearly and consistently refer to art works I will call into discussion the relationship between the diary literary conventions and the use of art references.

[1]Cristina Sărăcuţ is assistant professor in the Department of Didactics of Humanities and Social Sciences at Babeş Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca. Her academic interests are: the ekphrastic theory, Romanian literature, children's literature, and the didactics of Romanian literature and language. Contact address: cristacia@yahoo.com.

The Diaristic Literary Conventions

One of the well-known researchers in autobiographical literature, Philippe Lejeune, defines this genre as a retrospective narration: « récit rétrospectif en prose qu'une personne réelle fait de sa propre existence, lorsqu'elle met l'accent sur sa vie individuelle, en particulier sur l'histoire de sa personnalité »[2]. This type of literature develops into autobiography, biography, intimate diary or autobiographic journal. According to Philippe Lejeune, there are four main rules of the autobiographical writing: a formal rule that makes the autobiography a species of narration; a thematic rule by which the personal life history develops into a literary topic, a rule of enunciation that establishes an identity between the author and the narrator, respectively between the narrator and the main character; last but not least, a rule that enforces the retrospective perspective through which the events are narrated[3].

In this context, the reference to a work of art should be considered in relation to one of these specific schemas for autobiographic literature. As far as the *Swedish Diaries* are concerned, the notes are more likely to rely on the thematic rule. Describing a painting, a drawing, or an engraving, as well as naming an artist or his works represent strategies of constructing the diarist's personality as a cultural subject.

Types of art references

Text-image interferences in the *Swedish Diary* fall into two categories. The first category happens in the discourse level and there are two types of references that fit into it: mention of the title of the work of art or of the artist and, respectively, the ekphrastic description of some art works (drawings or engravings).

Citing the names of artists or their works of art often develops into a comparison or a comment. All the five volumes contain such examples. For instance, in the first volume, the note from Saturday, October 31st (1981) records a comparison to Anders Zorn's pictures[4]. The diarist starts by confessing the reading of *Jude the Obscure,* a novel based on the theme of the woman that seduces and finally destroys man. The topic is then explored in world culture. Gabriela Melinescu finds this theme is a major one in Swedish culture and she recalls two artistic figures, a writer (Strindberg) and a painter (Anders Zorn) that tried to illustrate it:

---

[2] Philippe Lejeune, *Le Pacte autobiographique*, Seuil, Paris, 1975, p. 14.

[3] There is a detailed survey on the pattern of autobiographical writing in the book *Le Pacte autobiographique* and on the website http://www2.cndp.fr/themadoc/autobiographie/contraintes.htm

[4] Gabriela Melinescu , *Jurnal suedez,* Iaşi, Polirom, 2002, vol. I, p. 243.

> With Strindberg, we find the same theme like a cry full of pain. In the Sswedish culture the theme is dominant: the woman has a knife when she teaches her child, a boy, how to swim, as one can obviously see in many of Anders Zorn's paintings. [La Strindberg regăsim aceeaşi temă ca un urlet maxim, plin de durere. În cultura suedeză această temă e dominantă: femeia poartă un cuţit când în învaţă pe copilul ei, băiat, să înoate, cum se poate vedea clar în multe din tablourile lui Anders Zorn.]

Pollock appears in a comparison in the note from the 15th of January 1982[5]. While in Milan, Gabriela Melinescu and her husband visit Sante Bagnoli. The paintings that they see in the Italian editor's office resemble those signed by Pollock: *"He invites me in his office, where he shows me his paintings that resemble to those by Pollock."* [*Mă invită în biroul lui, unde îmi arată picturile lui care seamănă cu cele ale lui Pollock.]*

An entry (August 1985) in the second volume refers to Edvard Munch's drawings. The Norwegian artist is twice mentioned. The former mention refers to his confession the about impulses for art creation that consist of emotions and suffering. Then the painter records one of his landscapes. Gabriela Melinescu describes the central element of the drawing (the pines) and her reaction when contemplating it (*a landscape where I like to sink)*, but without naming the picture's title:

> Today, the 4th of August, together with René, I visited the Kunstmuseum in Basel to see Edvard Munch, paintings and graphics from the Swiss collections, most of them belonging to the banks. Even our friend Bengt Uggla from Nord Finans Bank in Zürich has a painting by Munch with tormenting pines and a landscape where I like to sink. [Azi, 4 august, am fost cu René la Kunstmuseum din Basel pentru a vedea Edvard Munch, pictură şi grafică din colecţiile elveţiene, în mare parte aparţinând băncilor. Chiar şi prietenul nostru Bengt Uggla de la Nord Finans Bank din Zurich are un tablou de Munch cu pini ameţitori şi un peisaj în care îmi place să mă scufund.][6]

Following the same pattern of confession inspired by contemplation, a note from January 1988 refers to Piranesi's engravings. The diarist underlines the engraving technique and considers the lines as the central element. At the same time, Gabriela Melinescu uses this note to interpret the image that represents *a virtual space of real magic:*

> I did my room to send away a thought maybe too negative. I undid the Christmas tree, what melancholia! I framed Piranesi's etching, following the lines and reflecting upon the movements that Piranesi's engraving needle made, the divine calmness with which he had built, out of lines, the image where I can enter

[5] Idem, p.262.
[6] Gabriela Melinescu, *Jurnal suedez,* Iaşi, Polirom, 2002, vol. II, p.86.

> like in a space of real magic. [Am făcut ordine în casă, ca să alung o impresie poate prea negativă, am desfăcut bradul de Crăciun, ce melancolie! (...) Am înrămat gravura lui Piranesi cu Palatul Papilor meditând pe linii la mişcările pe care acul de gravat al lui Piranesi le-a făcut, la acea divină răbdare cu care a construit din linii imaginea în care pot intra ca într-un spaţiu de curată magie.][7]

An oneiric note from January 1991 (Volume III) contains the name of Ulisse Aldrovandi, an encyclopedic personality, and refers to his illustrations with animals and birds, without mentioning an exact title:

> In my dream, someone was teaching me drawing lessons. I was looking at illustrations with different birds and animals made by Ulisse Aldrovandi. My oneiric life is intense and laborious. [În somn, cineva îmi dădea lecţii de desen, priveam planşele lui Ulisse Aldrovandi, cu păsări şi animale de tot felul. Viaţa mea onirică e intensă şi laborioasă.] [8]

The second type of interferences between the verbal and the visual discourse consists of the ekphrastic description. Remembering the journey to Milan that she made together with her husband, Gabriela Melinescu records their meeting with a notary. It is this man's house that she sees copies of Goya's engravings:

> Again, together with Rene in Milan. This time we are obliged, because of the incompetence of the Italian editors, who were industrious and interested in their work at the beginning, to shut down the Italian company we had created two years ago. The notary looks like a villain and he wants a fee twice the official one, which is enormous anyhow. But on the walls of the waiting room I discovered marvelous etchings by Goya, maybe some copies artistically made. It is about **The Rein of the Game**, **Different Rules for the People**, **What a Warrior!** and others on the bullfight theme. I follow the lines of those movements that the Magister did at the time when he suffered in his heart and in the world: a ruthless war was coming. [Din nou cu René la Milano, de data asta pentru a desfiinţa societatea italiană creată acum doi ani din cauza incompetenţei redactorilor italieni care la început erau foarte harnici şi interesaţi de rolul lor. Notarul are aerul unui escroc cerând o sumă de câteva ori mai mare decât cea legală, care oricum e imensă. Dar pe pereţii sălii de aşteptare am descoperit gravuri sublime, de Goya, poate nişte facsimile făcute cu artă. E vorba de **Regina jocului**, **Alte legi pentru popor, Ce războinic!** şi altele cu tema coridei. Urmăresc liniile acelor mişcări pe care maestrul le-a făcut într-un timp când suferea în inima lui şi în lume: se apropia un război necruţător.] [9]

[7] Idem, p.183.
[8] Gabriela Melinescu, *Jurnal suedez,* Iaşi, Polirom, 2004, vol. III, p.104.
[9] Gabriela Melinescu, *op.cit.*, vol. II, p.61.

The reference to the Spanish artist's etchings is built on the contrapunctal principle of the image of the avaricious notary whose house the diarist visited. This is opposed to the image of the Spanish artist who is preoccupied by creation even though he has a miserable life.

The three engravings mentioned in this note are included in the series *Los Disparates,* which Goya created between 1815 and 1824. The series had 32 plates, some of them with a surprising destiny. 28 of them were edited in Madrid, in 1864 and were known as *Proverbs* (*Los Proverbos*). Other four plate remained unknown to the general public until 1877, when the Parisian magazine *L'Art* edited them with subtitles translated into Spanish and French: *What a warrior* (*Que Guerero !*, *Quel guerrier* !), *The Rein of the Circus* (*Una Reina del Circo*, *Une Reine du cirque*), *Other Rules for the People Otras Leyes por el Pueblo* (*Autres Lois pour le Peuple*) and *Rain of Bulls* (*Lluvia de toros*, *Pluie de taureaux*)[10]. The short ekphrastic excerpt in Melinescu's *Swedish Diaries* mentions only three of them: *The Rein of the Circus*, *Other Rules for the People, Rain of Bulls*. The title of one of the engravings is changed and *The Rein of the Circus* becomes *The Rein of the Game*.

The excerpt reveals several characteristics of ekphrasis in the autobiographical writing. First, the pair *descriptor/descriptaire* that is specific to the descriptive pattern is not implied in a narration. Consequently, the problem of the difference between the time of discourse and the time of narration cannot be questioned. In relation with the time of discourse the ekphrasis does not have any functionality in the autobiographical writing. In Gabriela Melinescu's *Swedish Diaries* the ekphrastic fragment is likely to resemble art criticism. One of the first types of ekphrasis appeared in Diderot's *Salons*. *The Salons* have a dual structure that combines the mimetic discourse on the pictorial scene with the metacritic discourse created in its background (the image's background). For instance, in the text dedicated to Amédée van Loo, Diderot begins by confessing: *En revanche, les* Deux familles de satyres *me font un vrai plaisir*[11]*.* Then, he enumerates and describes the figures that raised his attention, "*J'aime ce satyre à moitié ivre qui semble avec ses lèvres humer et savourer encore le vin* (…)"[12]. In the end he draws a comparison between literature and painting from the point of view of the presence of a structural elements: colour vs. style: "*La couleur est dans un tableau ce que le style est dans un morceau de literature*"[13].

[10] http://www.latribunedelart.com/les-amis-du-louvre-offrent-au-musee-des-plaques-de-cuivre-de-goya-article003249.html

[11] Denis Diderot, *Œuvres choisies,* introduction, commentaires et notes explicatives par Roland Desné, tome IV, Paris, Éditions Sociales, 1955, p.74.

[12] Idem.

[13] Idem.

The ekphrastic fragment in the second volume of Melinescu's *Swedish Diary* has a structure similar to that from Diderot's text. It begins with an epithet that refers to Goya's etchings: *marvelous etchings* (*I discovered marvelous etchings*). Then the diarist mentions the title of the three images and the theme of the series followed by a comment on the artistic composition technique and not on the message: *I follow the lines of those movements.* The final sentence reveals that the etchings are a mere pretext to introduce another character that the diarist meets during the journey to Milan (the typographer) and to essentialize the message of Goya's paintings:

> Goya didn't renounce his passion for painting when life overwhelmed him like an avalanche. Goya immortalized the Janus-face of time, grimaces, grin, everything, and the infinite grace of nature and of the beings that compose the dark full of light. [Goya nu s-a clintit din pasiunea artei când viaţa a trecut cu tăvălugul peste el. Goya a imortalizat faţa de Ianus a timpului, grimasele, rânjetul, totul, ca şi graţia infinită a naturii şi a fiinţelor care compun întunericul plin de lumină.][14]

We can note that the role of ekphrasis in the diary can be shaped not at the level of construction of narrative, but at the level of constructing the history of the diarist. While the diary is defined in terms of narration and personal history, as I have already noted in Ph. Lejeune's definition, the presence of an ekphrastic description has the function of transforming the history of the diarist's personality into the history of a cultural metamorphosis.

The second type of text-image interferences occurs strictly at the typographic level. It is the case of the illustrations of the five volumes of *Swedish Diaries* made by the author herself. In Volume III, for instance, the illustrations reveal several central themes of the personal mythology that Gabriela Melinescu invented in her books: women, mermaids, animal monsters, twins. The drawings take the shape of vignettes and are disposed in plates. From the thematic point of view, the illustrations share affinities with the imagery that runs through the cabinets of curiosities. This type of art collection is best represented by Ulisse Aldrovandi's work that the diarist mentions in a note from the volume III[15]. Invented by Renaissance, the cabinets of curiosities are the precursors of museums. During the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries this type of collection is well known in art history. In the nineteenth century cabinets are replaced by official collections either particular or public (as a collection in a museum). The objects displayed in a cabinet of curiosities are classified into four classic types: *artificialia* includes objects created by human beings (antiquities, art objects), *naturalia* collects natural objects (animals, birds, especially monsters), *exotica* shows rare animals and birds,

[14] Gabriela Melinescu, *op.cit.*, vol. II, p. 61.
[15] Gabriela Melinescu, *op.cit.*, vol. III, p. 104.

and *scientifica* comprises scientific instruments[16].

One of the most important personalities of this art field is Ulisse Aldrovandi, a doctor and philosopher, one of the most important personalities of this art field. The Collection of Monsters (*Monstrum Historia*, Bologna, 1642) exhibits tens of human beings whose appearances are pathologically deformed: sea monsters with human appearance and siren body, cyclops, human beings with bird necks and animal legs. In Volume III the illustrations and their spatial display on the page are inspired by the Italian artist's imagery. Moreover, the diarist confesses to this intimate interference between the two imageries in the note from above.

While the illustrations in Volume III are inspired by the images in Ulisse Aldrovandi's Renaissance collection, the pictures from Volume IV reveal the similitude to the graphic by Louis Soutter. As in the case of Ulisse Aldrovandi, the diarist describes the personality of the Swiss painter in the notes of her diary. In the first volume, there are two notes that refer to line point technique in Louis Soutter's drawings:

> In Vladimir's house, again do I study Louis Soutter's drawings, which are highly praised in his whole villa. **The Vase Phantom** really impresses me, and so do **Les Jardin d'Éden**. I studied the lines. How far you can reach using only the line and the point. It is only necessary that every day you should make yourself able to draw and write, and then, of course, everything happens by itself. [Acasă la Vladimir, studiez din nou desenele lui Louis Soutter, care sunt puse la loc de cinste în toată vila. **Vasul fantomă** îmi face o impresie puternică, la fel ca și **grădinile paradisului**. Am studiat liniile, cât de departe se poate ajunge numai cu linia și punctul. Trebuie numai ca, în fiecare zi să te pui în starea de a desena sau de a scrie, apoi totul se desfășoară de la sine.][17]

In another note, the diarist adds,

> Again, I contemplate Louis Soutter's drawings which are exhibited everywhere, framed in a simple way as if they were some visions of a world experienced only for art's sake. [Admir din nou desenele sublime ale lui Louis Soutter, expuse peste tot, puse în rame simple, ca un fel de viziuni ale unei lumi trăite numai pentru artă.] [18]

In Volume IV the illustrations focus on the self portrait theme. We can note that there are four variants of the feminine figure and that these drawings are entirely constructed by combining the line and the point[19]. What is worth

[16] For more information about cabinets of curiosities, see the websites http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cabinet_de_curiosit%C3%A9s; http://pages.infinit.net/cabinet/definition.html and http://www.erudit.org/culture/etc1073425/etc1136971/34855ac.pdf

[17] Gabriela Melinescu, *op.cit.*, vol. I, p. 255.

[18] Gabriela Melinescu, *op.cit.*, vol. I, p. 296.

[19] Gabriela Melinescu, *op.cit.*, vol. IV, p. 211, p. 221, p. 263, p. 281.

mentioning is that the illustrations reveal the diarist's pictorial taste: the line and the point. These two elements of plastic composition that Gabriela Melinescu practices as illustrator are the technical details that the diarist Gabriela Melinescu records in the two previous notes.

As I have already mentioned, the similitude to Louis Soutter's art is obvious. At the level of the content, the similitude consists in the preference for the portrait theme. The series of the Swiss artist's drawings comprises a lot of drawings entitled "*portrait*": *Deuil. Portrait* (1904), *Portrait de jeune fille* (1906), *Tête de femme au grand chapeau*[20] or *Femme assise*[21]. But we can reveal the visible likeness at the level of technique as well.

Conclusions

I have highlighted two types of interferences between image and text in Gabriela Melinescu's *Swedish Diaries*: the pictorial reference (the citation and the ekphrastic description) and the graphics – illustration. The analysis has also led to several conclusions that focus on the particularities of the interferences between the verbal and the visual code in autobiographical writing:

a. If the autobiography tends to shape the history of a personality, as Phillipe Lejeune's definition underlines it, then the particularity of the pictorial reference in a diary consists of the fact that it shapes the new status of a diarist. An (auto) biographer introduces us into the world of universal painting values. Both the citation and the ekphrastic description, as types of pictorial references, build the history of the diarist's personality. What is particular about the pictorial reference in a diary is that the diarist's personality changes into a cultural subject.

b. According to Ph. Lejeune, a diary is defined both as a mode of reading and as a mode of writing. At the reading level, the pictorial reference causes a feeling of frustration. The reader confronts a text that cites the title of a painting, engraving or drawing without really describing it, or a text that describes the work of art mentioning its title or not. Both cases imply the physical absence of the image that is evoked and, consequently, the fact that the reader cannot see it. The absence of the real image should be counterbalanced by the reader's imagination. On the other hand, the absence of the real image creates the effect of a double representation: a representation of the real image which is listed in the art history catalogues and, secondly, a personal representation that is in the reader's mind.

[20] Position 38 in Soutter's catalogue.
[21] Position 838 in Soutter's catalogue.

On the contrary, at the writing level, the ekphrastic description and quotation have no function. The pictorial reference does not have any function at the discursive level because it does not imply any changes in the time of narration, as analepses or prolepses. However, the structure of the *Swedish Diary* shows a similitude to the structure of a pictorial species that is the cabinets of curiosities. Both are based on the principle of mixture. While the cabinets of curiosities mix different objects, the diary mixes events, feelings, revelations, dreams.

As I have already noted, *The Swedish Diaries* follow up a tradition in the literary history – illustrating a book by one's own drawings. Henry Michaux, William Blake, Marin Sorescu or Gelu Naum are several good examples. Illustrations can accomplish several functions: the decorative role, the completing role, the translation role, and the hermeneutic role[22]. In the case of Gabriela Melinescu's diary the function of illustrations is quite particular. The images do not complete the diary's text, so they do not translate the story. The illustrations in Volumes III, IV, and V have an intratextual role. They represent the esthetical belief of the illustrator Gabriela Melinescu. Their major particularity is that they have a *mirror potential.* First, the illustrations mirror the affinities between two drawing techniques: the illustrations in the Volume IV are influenced by the art of Louis Soutter, the artist that masters the line point method. At the same time, the illustrations in Volume III are connected to the images created by Ulisse Aldrovandi in his collection of monsters. Finally, the illustrations highlight the leitmotifs of the illustrator Gabriela Melinescu, which are equally valorized through the diary's notes.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Diderot, Denis, *Oeuvres choisies,* introduction, commentaires et notes explicatives par Roland Desné, tome IV, Paris, Éditions Sociales, 1955.
Lejeune, Philippe, *Le Pacte autobiographique*, Seuil, Paris, 1975.
Melinescu, Gabriela, *Jurnal Suedez* (*Swedish Diary),* Volume I, Iaşi, Polirom, 2002.
Melinescu, Gabriela, *Jurnal Suedez* (*Swedish Diary),* Volume II, Iaşi, Polirom, 2002.
Melinescu, Gabriela, *Jurnal Suedez* (*Swedish Diary),* Volume III, Iaşi, Polirom, 2004.
Melinescu, Gabriela, *Jurnal Suedez* (*Swedish Diary),* Volume IV, Iaşi, Polirom, 2008.
Melinescu, Gabriela, *Jurnal Suedez* (*Swedish Diary),* Volume V, Iaşi, Polirom, 2010.
Vrânceanu, Alexandra, *Modele literare în narațiunea vizuală* (*Literary Patterns in the Visual narration*), Bucureşti, Cavallioti, 2002.

[22] Alexandra Vrânceanu, *Modele literare în narațiunea vizuală*, Bucureşti, Cavallioti, 2002, p. 65.

ELECTRONIC REFERENCES:

Soutter's Catalogue - http://books.google.ro/books?id=R3K0hjpAP1kC&pg=PA18&dq=louis+soutter+Portrait+de+jeune+fille+(1906&hl=ro&sa=X&ei=zFY1UsGqF4_AswbXkIHQAQ&ved=0CDIQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=louis%20soutter%20Portrait%20de%20jeune%20fille%20(1906&f=false. Accesssed on 30 March 2012.

http://www2.cndp.fr/themadoc/autobiographie/contraintes.htm. Accessed on 30 March 2012.

http://www.latribunedelart.com/les-amis-du-louvre-offrent-au-musee-des-plaques-de-cuivre-de-goya-article003249.html. Accessed on 30 March 2012.

http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cabinet_de_curiosit%C3%A9s. Accessed on 30 March 2012.

http://pages.infinit.net/cabinet/definition.html. Accessed on 30 March 2012.

http://www.erudit.org/culture/etc1073425/etc1136971/34855ac.pdf. Accessed on 30 March 2012.

STUDIA UBB PHILOLOGIA, LVIII, 3, 2013, p. 85 - 92
(RECOMMENDED CITATION)

LANDSCAPES OF SEDUCTION IN ELIZA HAYWOOD'S *LOVE IN EXCESS* AND *FANTOMINA*

CAMELIA TEGLAŞ[1]

ABSTRACT. ***"Landscapes of Seduction in Eliza Haywood's* Love in Excess *and* Fantomina***". The aim of the present paper is to analyse comparatively the indoor and outdoor landscapes of seduction as they appear in Eliza Haywood's *Love in Excess* and *Fantomina*. The approach investigates the role they play in the construction of feminine identity.

Keywords: landscape, identity, garden, chamber, attraction, seduction, self, behaviour

REZUMAT. ***„Peisajele seducţiei în* Love in Excess *şi* Fantomina *de Eliza Haywood"***. Scopul prezentei lucrări este de a analiza comparativ peisajele interioare şi cele exterioare ca locuri ale seducţiei, aşa cum apar în *Love in Excess* şi în *Fantomina* de Eliza Haywood, urmărind rolul pe care-l joacă acestea în construirea identităţii feminine.

Cuvinte cheie: peisaj, identitate, grădină, odaie, atracţie, seducţie, sine, comportament

Introduction

Populated or not, tamed or wild, human-designed or natural, belonging to our culture or to a complete different one, landscapes exert a certain fatal attraction, tempting and seducing us into observation, perception, analysis, exploration, becoming a part of who we are.

The *landscape* might be given a multitude of synonyms, such as scenery, countryside, land, site, scene, setting, background, environment, surroundings, view, panorama, terrain, or geography. No matter for which of the words we opt, we need to bare in mind that as "a medium of exchange between the human and the natural, the self and the other" the landscape "is constructed and itself constructs an identity" (Mitchell. 2002), facilitating communication. Landscape is not only a form of art, but a "multisensory medium" where cultural meanings and values are encoded, "a process by which social and subjective identities are formed" (Mitchell. 2002).

[1] Camelia Teglaş is lecturer in the Department of Modern Languages for Specific Purposes at Babeş-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca, Romania. Her fields of interest are: Eliza Haywood, eighteenth-century British authors, modern teaching methods, psychology, culture and civilisation. Contact address: <cameliateglas@yahoo.com>.

The present paper aims to investigate two types of landscape of seduction, the garden and the room, where Eliza Haywood chooses to place her characters in order to educate the audience on the way the social constructs influence the development of feminine identity in a patriarchal environment. Based on the influence the two different types of landscape exert on the feminine characters, I will present the garden and the chamber in *Love in Excess* and only the room in *Fantomina*.

Gardens and chambers

Gardens, as we all know, possess a long and direct relationship to symbolism and mythology and have been associated with the Biblical Garden of Eden, as an original paradise, with temptation, fall and knowledge. Writers of all times and cultures have dedicated their pen to the description of these public spaces, architects and gardeners imagined and designed them, people have populated, decorated, and admired them for ages, for purely aesthetic purposes or because they served their various interests. Gardens may also be regarded as the symbol of the soul and the qualities cultivated in it of tamed and ordered nature. Gardens, which have been an image of the female body at least since the *Song of Songs*, may be attributed feminine features, being often depicted as "the body of a woman in a passive condition, waiting to be enjoyed" (Lutwack. 1984).

Regarding the indoor landscape, the symbolism of the house is associated with an enclosed and protected space similar to the mother's womb. In fact it is the first place in each person's life. As an enclosed space it serves to shelter and protect from the outside world. Gaston Bachelard in *The Poetics of Space* notes that "[…] the house is one of the greatest powers of integration of thoughts, memories and dreams of mankind. […] Without it, the man would be a dispersed being. […] It is a body and soul. It is the human being's first world".[2] The house, the rooms are those intimate places where we can express a private and unguarded self as compared to the public world, or as sociologists observe, the home provides a backstage and private set to our public performances. The chamber is a place that allows the private self to develop by escaping from the public world. The houses have a life that resonates with that of the humans and stand as a symbol for the intimate lives of their inhabitants.

Gardens as landscapes of seduction in *Love in Excess*

Any place or space that belongs to an individual bears the mark of that certain someone and most certainly we can notice a mutual influence that the two exert on each other.

[2] Bachelard, Gaston; Jolas, Maria (tr.). *The Poetics of Space*. Beacon Press. 1994. pp. 6-7

The French formal gardens that became very famous in the seventeenth century, when the Gardens of Versailles were designed for Louis XIV, were based on symmetry and order. They became the symbol of French grandeur and rationality and the style was copied by most courts of Europe. In such ordered, tamed, and "rational" landscapes places Eliza Haywood some of the garden seduction scenes of her first novel *Love in Excess*. Their walled structures offered privacy and shelter, rendering the ones in the garden a certain feeling of comfort and ease, but their public nature attracts, undoubtedly, the public scrutiny. Gardens and rooms prove to have a great importance in the development of the love affairs that the author investigates in both her writings. Even from the debut of *Love in Excess* we find the lovers in the garden. D'elmont courts the beautiful and innocent Amena, whose name may have its origins in the Latin *amoena* (pleasant, charming), in an enclosed garden, which is the garden of her father's house. That is the landscape where the naïve young woman may preserve her virtue, but she meets her disgrace in the famous, fashionable palace gardens of Tuilleries:

> "[…] the young Amena (little versed in the art of dissimulation, so necessary to her sex,) could not conceal the pleasure she took in his addresses and without even a seeming reluctancy had given him a promise of meeting him the next day in the Tuilleries". [3]

Poor Amena, unaware of the consequences of what she sees as an innocent gesture, did not know that, for a woman, the sole act of retreating to a garden with a man equates with her social ruin. Count D'elmont himself mentions that: "'Tis beter for you, madam," said he, "whatsoever has happened, to be found in your own garden, than in any place with me". [4] Amena's choice to act transgressively and step out of her father's protection will bring her and her family dishonour.

Almost all love affairs start in a garden in *Love in Excess*: Chevallier Brillian woos Ansellina in a garden, D'elmont courts Melliora too in an enclosed garden: "[…] going hastily through a gallery which had a large window that looked into the garden, he perceived Melliora lying on a green bank, in a melancholy but a charming posture, directly opposite to the place where he was;"[5] and young Frankville falls in love with Camilla in the same landscape of seduction:

> "I saw thro' a window which looked into a garden behind the study, tho' both belonging to one person, a woman, or rather angel, coming down a walk directly opposite to where I was; never did I see in one person such various perfections blended, never did any woman wear so much of her soul in her eyes, as did this charmer."[6]

[3] Haywood, Eliza. *Love in Excess: Or The Fatal Inquiry*. Broadview Press. 2002 (2nd ed.). p.16
[4] idem. p.24
[5] Haywood, Eliza. *Love in Excess: Or The Fatal Inquiry*. Broadview Press. 2002 (2nd ed.). p.41
[6] idem. p.81

Haywood's choice for the enclosed garden is intentional. This landscape, which suggests a certain degree of safety and protection, is a setting where the author feels she can allow her female characters to give way to the expression of passion and desire. The women in *Love in Excess* not only populate the garden, they transform it in a place of retreat for themselves, a place where they can meditate, a landscape that allows them to analyse their most intimate thoughts and aspirations. It becomes the landscape where they gain knowledge, seduced this time, not by a resistless charmer, but by the books: "Melliora was so intent on a book she had in her hand, that she saw not the Count 'till he was close enough to her to discern what was the subject of her entertainment, and finding it the works of Monsieur L'fontenelle, "Phylosophy madam at your age," said he to her with an air which exprest surprize, "is as wondrous as your other excellencies."[7]

The access to education, to knowledge, places Haywood's women closer to men. Only an educated young woman, like Melliora, who can find the balance between love and rationality, can manifest a free spirit and have the liberty to choose for herself, without suffering disgrace as a consequence of her decisions. Amena is too "dangerously naïve"[8], uneducated and unaware of her sexuality, and her decision to act against her father's will brings her social ruin. Violetta's gesture of running from her father's 'garden' finds her unprepared for the hardships of life, causing her misery and death. Melliora is the only feminine character who manages to re-establish a social order that complies with her desires. She is the maiden who preserves her virginity, in spite of the multiple instances of temptation in the garden or outside the garden. She declares her passion, but refrains herself from acting. The desire remains in the realm of thoughts and feelings where it is subject to change.

"O! D'elmont," said she, "cruel D'elmont! Will you then take advantage of my weakness? I confess I feel for you, a passion far beyond all, that yet, ever bore the name of love, that I no longer can withstand the too powerful magick of your eyes, nor deny any thing that charming tongue can ask, but now's the time to prove your self the heroe, subdue your self, as you have conquered me, be satisfied with vanquishing my soul, fix there your throne, but leave my honour free!"[9]

As a landscape of seduction, a garden is "adorned with fountains, statues, groves, and every ornament, that art, or nature, could produce for the delight of the owner".[10] It is a place that seduces and tempts, but an environment that Haywood's educated heroine learns to control.

---

[7] idem. p.41

[8] Backscheider, Paula R. —The Story of Eliza Haywood's Novels. *The Passionate Fictions of Eliza Haywood: Essays on Her Life and Work*. Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 2000.p.26

[9] Haywood, Eliza. *Love in Excess: Or The Fatal Inquiry*. Broadview Press. 2002 (2nd ed.). p.52

[10] idem. p.74

Chambers in *Love in Excess*

The other landscape of seduction where Eliza Haywood places her lovers is the room. Her heroines face, on one hand, a greater risk of losing their virtue, but on the other hand, a greater freedom to manifest desire. Eighteenth-century rules forbade a woman to manifest desire, or to address a man directly, in a man-like manner. This is the reason why Haywood opts for different forms of disguise that shelter the social identity of her characters, allowing the personal identity to reveal itself. The different masks that her women wear, in order to make public their passion, vary from a veil that covers the face to the attribution of another identity. Ciamara claims to be Camilla, Violetta chooses cross-dressing and assumes the role of the faithful page, Fidelio, Camilla sends a letter in Violetta's name, pretending, under the protection of the veil, to be the daughter of Citollini. An interesting evolution is to be noticed, again, in the case of Melliora. She, as her name tells us (the Latin *melior*, comparative of *bonus*), has to prove that she is better, that she can manage better than the other women. At first, Eliza Haywood places Melliora in her chamber, in a relaxed mode, meditating and abandoning herself to her thoughts and emotions, as if nothing could trouble the safety of her personal space:

> "He found her lying on a couch in a most charming dissabillee; […]. A book lay open by her on which she had reclined her head, as if been tired with reading; she blushed at sight of the Count, and rose from off the couch with a confusion which gave new lustre to her charms."[11]

It is the landscape where she can create her world and indulge herself into activities that cannot be sanctioned by the public eye, the environment where she can gain knowledge and grow. This landscape will become the place where she can manifest desire: "Oh D'elmont, cease, cease to charm, to such a height - Life cannot bear these raptures. - And then again, embracing him yet closer, - O! too, too lovely Count - extatick ruiner!"[12]. At first, this is performed at the shelter of her dream, for no virtuous young lady could have made public her innermost feelings in such a manner, and only later in the novel, the author gives her heroine the freedom to enter D'elmont's room at night, gaze at him and address him in a very masculine way:

> "As he was in bed, forming a thousand various idea's, tho' all tending to one object, he heard the chamber door unlock, and opening his curtains, perceived somebody come in; […] "Are you a sleep"; "No," answered he, a little surprized at this disturbance, "What would you have?" "I come," said she, "to talk to you, and I hope you are more a chevalier than to prefer a little sleep, to the

[11] Haywood, Eliza. *Love in Excess: Or The Fatal Inquiry*. Broadview Press. 2002 (2nd ed.). p.45
[12] idem. p.49

> conversation of a lady, tho' she visits you at midnight."[…] "Oh heavens!" said the lady, "Is this the courtly, the accomplished Count D'Elmont? So famed for complaisance and sweetness? Can it be he, who thus rudely repels a lady, when she comes to make him a present of her heart?""[13]

The room, the private sphere of the house, is the micro-universe of women, the landscape where women learn to feel autonomous and free. The indoor landscape provides Haywood with the appropriate background for the construction of a new feminine identity, that of the modern woman, an identity that is complexly developed in *Fantomina*.

Houses and rooms as landscapes of seduction in *Fantomina*

If in her debut novel, Eliza Haywood places her lovers both in gardens and chambers, in her 1724 novella *Fantomina*, the author opts only for indoor settings as landscapes of seduction – the Playhouse, the houses the noble lady rents in London, the house in Bath where she works as Celia, the carriage, the inn – places where the access of the others is limited, suggesting the idea of privacy, and control. One remarkable indoor scene in *Love in Excess* anticipates the author's choice for rooms as landscapes of seduction in *Fantomina*:

> "[…] where e'er he turned his eyes, he saw nothing but what was splendidly luxurious, and all the ornaments contrived in such a manner, as might fitly be a pattern, to paint the palace of the Queen of Love by. The ceiling was vastly high and beautified with most curious paintings, the walls were covered with tapestry, in which, most artificially were woven, in various coloured silk, intermixed with gold and silver, a great number of amorous stories; […] At the upper end of this magnificent chamber, there was a canopy of crimson velvet, richly embossed, and trimmed with silver, the corners of which were supported by two golden Cupids, with stretched out wings, as if prepared to fly; "[14]

The description of this chamber supports the idea that the room has a very strong feminine attribute. If public sphere dictates the inhibition, repression and manifestation of women's emotions, the indoor landscape gives them the freedom to act according to their desires. The chamber is the landscape where dreams are nourished, where hopes grow, where daydreaming is allowed, where letters and books are written and read, where desires breach the imaginary and take shape in reality. It becomes the landscape where the individuals can live their personal lives.

The double sexual standard is once more cornered by the author. As previously mentioned, the room should be the private sphere where humans can act, behave, expose the unmasked self. Unfortunately, in real life this

[13] idem. p.107
[14] Haywood, Eliza. *Love in Excess: Or The Fatal Inquiry*. Broadview Press. 2002 (2nd ed.). p.88

works for men only, but, with Haywood, the landscape of the novel, of the written text facilitates, sheltered by the mask women have to wear, their access to the world of men. The woman in mask can manifest her feelings, passions, thoughts, and sexual desires because this status grants her a certain degree of independence:

> "Beauplaisir was prodigiously charm'd, as well with her. Appearance, as with the Manner she entertain'd him: But though he was wild with Impatience for the Sight of a Face which belong'd to so exquisite a Body, yet he would not immediately press for it, believing before he left her he should easily obtain that Satisfaction. A noble Collation being over, he began to sue for the Performance of her Promise of granting every Thing he could ask, excepting the Sight of her Face, and Knowledge of her Name."[15]

Who is the person behind the mask? Who can be judged and blamed for the deeds? The disguise the heroines assume, the persona they choose, the identity they expose is that of someone else, of another, for they are not allowed to manifest the multitude of facets of the same identity just as men do. A woman was labelled according to her social status as either a wife or a whore. The first category implies several facets of feminine identity, while the second focuses on one only.

Haywood makes us aware of the normality that should exist in the status of a woman, constructing the identity of the woman who can manifest this quarto-folded identity without being cleaved. A woman can be someone's daughter, mother, wife and lover in the same time and there is no incompatibility in this status. They are just the layers of her identity. Haywood's heroine proves that this can happen. Wearing four different masks, claiming to be four different women, she is the same individual in a relationship with only one man. The author mocks again at the futility of the model generated by the patriarchal social order, where the identity of women is constructed in agreement with the choices of the others. From the outside it might be perceived as a life of rigour, dignity, and order but inwardly it is a life of unhappiness, lack of fulfilment, misery. Haywood does not encourage a life without rules that would lead to an abnormal, antisocial behaviour. The role of the society is to regulate behaviour, but as a follow up of education. Young women have to know how to behave and manage their independence, not to be let in ignorance and darkness and sanctioned for their deeds. With Haywood, consequences of libertine behaviour - ruin, shame, pregnancy are not sanctioned so harshly as there is always place for forgiveness, the author displaying a more mother-like attitude, and contributing to the construction of another feminine identity, that of the author.

---

[15] Haywood, Eliza. *Fantomina: Or Love in a Maze*. http://manybooks.net/titles/haywoodeother09Fantomina.html. p.21

Conclusion

The background, the landscape, influences the behaviour of the feminine character, which is a consequence of the social identity of the individual; even the actions of the others are different, as they act in agreement with the landscape. Consequently, the feminine identity that is constructed by Eliza Haywood in *Love in Excess* and *Fantomina* is in a close relationship with the landscape of seduction.

In the open space, the garden, we notice the public, exposed, passive seduction, which becomes known, observable, blameable and this leads to an identity shaped by the others. In the closed place, the room, we have a private, partially exposed, active seduction where the seductive role is bivalent openly and where the author presents a self-constructed feminine identity.

Britain is probably one of the most garden-loving countries in the world and the most famous period in the history of English gardens is the eighteenth century, when the English landscape garden replaced the "jardin à la française". The national identity encouraged the freedom of expression where the natural replaced the human-designed landscape, a landscape where the feminine attribute of the garden is free. The attitude of Haywood's women, who are free to choose, prefigures the more freely designed English gardens of the Enlightenment.

Haywood's merit is that, through her complex feminine characters, she brings to life the figure of the modern woman. The attitude and behaviour of Melliora who manages to act according to her desires, yet in agreement with the social rules, the identities that Haywood's heroine assumes in *Fantomina* are the natural elements which create one of the most complex landscapes of seduction that anyone would like to observe, perceive and explore, in a background of mutual response.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Haywood, Eliza. *Love in Excess: Or The Fatal Inquiry*. Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2002.

Haywood, Eliza. *Fantomina: Or Love in a Maze*. http://manybooks.net/titles/haywoodeother09Fantomina.html. Accessed on 28 March 2012.

*

Lutwack, Leonard. *The Role of Place in Literature*.Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press. 1984.

Mitchell, W.J.Thomas (author and editor). *Landscape and Power*.Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002.

Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics of Space*. Trans. Maria Jolas. Boston: Beacon Press. 1994

Backscheider, Paula R.*The Story of Eliza Haywood's Novels. The Passionate Fictions of Eliza Haywood: Essays on Her Life and Work*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky. 2000.

STUDIA UBB PHILOLOGIA, LVIII, 3, 2013, p. 93 - 98
(RECOMMENDED CITATION)

IMAGINING LOVE AS A WOMAN WRITER

MIHAELA URSA[1]

ABSTRACT. ***Imagining Love as a Woman Writer.*** The paper focuses on an exception from the 'rule' of representing love as passion in the love fiction of the eighteenth to the nineteenth century. After identifying the cultural sources of understanding love as deadly passion, the author analyzes how the literature written by women distances itself from the passionate representation of love in favor of a rational one. The case study is the novel *Pride and Prejudice*. The conclusion is that, in women-authored love literature, a new type of masculine-feminine couple and a different poetics of love emerge.

Keywords: Jane Austen, discourse of reason, love-passion, body codes, woman writer, theatre of seduction, *Eros* and *Agape*, the male character in romance, metaphors of love.

REZUMAT. ***Imaginând iubirea ca scriitoare***. Lucrarea se concentrează pe excepţia de la regula reprezentării iubirii ca pasiune în literatura amoroasă de secol optsprezece şi nouăsprezece. După identificarea surselor culturale ce promovează înţelegerea iubirii ca pasiune mortală, autoarea analizează modul în care literatura scrisă de femei se distanţează de reprezentarea pasională a iubirii, în favoarea unei reprezentări raţionale. Studiul de caz se bazează pe romanul *Mândrie şi prejudecată.* Concluzia este aceea că, în literatura amoroasă scrisă de femei, avem de-a face cu un nou tip de relaţie dintre masculin şi feminin şi cu o poetică a iubirii diferită.

Cuvinte cheie: Jane Austen, discursul raţiunii, iubirea-pasiune, coduri corporale, scriitoare, teatrul seducţiei, *eros* şi *agape*, personajul masculin în ficţiunea amoroasă, metafore ale iubirii.

Among its multiple configurations, the theme of romantic love associates itself, during the nineteenth century, with passion. The representation of love as

[1] Mihaela Ursa is a lecturer at the Faculty of Letters of Babes-Bolyai University and head of the Department of Comparative Literature. Since 1990 she has been publishing studies, articles, essays, and reviews in specialized journals and in peer reviewed collections. Her most important books are: *The Writers of the Eighties and the Promises of Postmodernism* [*Optzecismul si promisiunile postmodernismului]* (1999), *Gheorghe Craciun - a Monograph* [*Gheorghe Craciun - o monografie*] (2000), *Scriitopia* [*Writerlytopia*] (2005), and *Identity and Excentricity. Romanian Comparativism between Local Specificity and Globalization* [*Identitate şi excentricitate. Comparatismul românesc între specific local şi globalizare*] (2013). Contact address: <mihaelaursa@gmail.com>.

passion is far from being new or original: as Denis de Rougemont has shown in his seminal book dedicated to *amour passion*[2], the etymological lineage of "passion" points to both suffering and desire. In fact, he goes as far as to affirm that European culture has constantly associated romantic love with adultery, since *Eros* becomes possible only when conditioned by an obstacle (i.e. the interdiction of marriage). On one hand, *Eros* is passion, it implies a *forma mentis* in which the identities of the two lovers melt into one and favor any given obstacle as a guarantee of their mutual passion. On the other, *Eros* is death, because death is the ultimate obstacle and thus the ultimate fuel of passionate love. From The Middle Ages, Europe has learnt that marriage is not based on *Eros*, but on *Agape*, which defines the active communion model of conjugal partnership. To make a complex book really short, de Rougemont implies that there is an undeniable interest for unhappiness in the Western world. Consequently, there is an undeniable interest for death coming from romantic passion: the bigger the passion, the closer it gets to death. This way, it is easy to see that a happy-ending love story is implausible. What about all those books about love ending in happy marriage? Of course, to some extent, they reproduce a romantic matrix to be found in princess fairy tales. But there is more to it than meets the eye.

Since this is one of the most common definitions of passion, is there any kind of amorous fiction beyond the poetics of passion, before the twentieth century? In other words, is a literature in which one could speak of love, even identify love as the main theme, and still stay outside the limits of deadly passion possible? The question is rhetorical, since the answer is obvious and positive. In the nineteenth century novel, one can find many examples of romantic projections that are founded in the poetics of reason, rather than in the poetics of passion. One of the most interesting examples of this kind is to be found in the novels of Jane Austen.

It is my contention – not necessarily scientifically proven, but rather intuitive – that the idea of a type of love that is coded in minimalist terms, by which I understand a love outside the code of passion, while still romantic, is a metaphor specific to feminine writing[3]. To be more precise, such a representation of romantic love characterizes the affirmation of the woman writer in the nineteenth century, and not only then. Jane Austen is not the only one who represents love in terms of reason, of admiration for rational qualities. The same model can be recognized in Charlotte Brontë's gothic novel *Jane Eyre*, where Rochester's love confession comes as a surprise to modest Jane Eyre, who is appreciated for her wisdom, human empathy, and intelligence above

[2] Denis de Rougemont, *Love in the Western World,* New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1983.

[3] As a counterpoint, the introduction of a principle of violence in the design of the love relationship could represent a phantasm of predilection of male writing (see the violence of taking over the beloved one's body and life in, for example, *Lolita,* by Vladimir Nabokov).

all. It is also detectable in novels of women writers from the nineteenth to the twentieth century[4], from Georges Sand to Margaret Mitchell.

The metaphor of the dependable lover, giving the kind of love that flows with the stability and the expressive silence of a very deep river is the answer these women writers – and not only them – give to the question regarding the nature of love. In this definition, the truth of love comes from denying the language of passion in favor of the language of commitment or rational communication. The seed of such an intuition is in the very dissociation from the paradigm of passionate irrationality. Being „swept away" by man's passion, by the energy of his adoration does not exactly represent, in the above mentioned examples, a goal of the woman in love, nor her ideal wish. The meta-textual project at work here is the affirmation of a creative identity which the woman writer needs to fulfill herself. The character of the woman in love is also the character of the woman who writes, reads, and meditates, who shows at least one side of discursive creativity. The observation cannot be generalized, but it statistically represents a result that is impossible to ignore during the following centuries, when writing as a woman no longer stays a notable exception.

Critics and monographers have implied that Jane Austen's novels should be seen as metaphoric compensations for the frustrations of a life lacking emotional and matrimonial fulfillment. I think it is more likely that, in her consistent refusal of the poetics of passion or even of romantic love, we should rather read Jane Austen's own feminist project, in which women are recognized as partners in a complicated sentimental dialectics. There is a clear anti-feminist stand in the Romantic vision of a goddess-woman, one who is either an angel or a demon. The erotic rapture of the goddess-woman implies that the respective woman is not entirely human or that, at best, she is a complete stranger. Or, in *Pride and Prejudice, Sense and Sensibility* or *Emma*, we are confronted with a project where the magic of absolute strangeness is replaced by the relief of recognizing an equal and a partner. A significant detail in this respect is the fact that the main feminine character of the novels and stories of many women writers is no longer "the fairest of them all": sometimes she even appears as a companion of the fairest one, as it happens to Elizabeth in *Pride and Prejudice*, whose beauty does not even compare to Jane's. In most cases, her charm comes from a mélange of spontaneity, ingenuity, rationality, discursive fluidity, that is, from the attractiveness of her spirit and intellectual presence, rather than from her sex-appeal.

What kind of male character should respond to this configuration of the desirable woman? To begin with, let us admit that the male lover of the

[4] Women erotographers of the twentieth century go back to the metaphor of the sexually and emotionally savage lover in order to build a new sensual feminine identity. For instance, Anaïs Nin tries to persuade the reader of her own sexual freedom when she uses wild male characters. Cf. Anaïs Nin, *Incest.*

passionate romantic paradigm is quite instinctual in his enthusiastic gratification of erotic desire. Or, this attractive savage man, moved by desire, cannot take into account the woman's wishes, since love is for him a matter of violence, of here and now. Unlike him, the most attractive man in Jane Austen's novels is the self-possessed, calm, intelligent, and dependable one. This self-possessed man, completely in control of his emotions and with a good knowledge of how to internalize them, while, at the same time, desperately in love, this man is the only desirable partner of the woman who wants to be loved in her own terms, without sacrificing her independent spirit.

Descriptions of interiors and of exterior spaces are extremely frequent and detailed, thus supplementing the immediate explanations of the author herself: instead of saying that a certain character *feels* a certain way, the author describes his or her surroundings as if it were an indication of what remains unexpressed. Just as important are the body movements and language, especially dance moves, secret gestures, or caresses. The simplest movement itself seems, in a final analysis, just as complicated as a dance figure: position, posture, facial expression and gestural language are precise stage directions and opportunities to fall in love.

More clearly than anywhere else, dancing becomes a metaphor for love. One of the novels where this is perfectly clear is *Pride and Prejudice,* where – after announcing in the third chapter that loving to dance was the first step of falling in love – the author uses the same paradigm to speak of the unconscious feelings of the characters. Critics are generally concerned with the dancing scene of Darcy and Elizabeth, but I should say that there is another place where this metaphoric equivalence between choreography and eroticism is better represented. It is in Lydia's letter to her family, after the shameful and disgraceful Wickham affair, when dancing most clearly meant erotic encounter. It is where the younger sister believes it is most amusing to announce her parents that she had married the insolent officer. Even more, she does not forget to make excuses to a second officer that she cannot keep her promise to dance with him the same night, but that she intends, by all means, to dance with him at the next ball. This way, Lydia already predicts her future matrimonial conduct, that is, she makes sure everybody interested knows that being married is not going to prevent her from dancing along.

Love is coded, in Jane Austen's novels, according to a deeply anti-sentimentalist and rationalist poetics, even in emotional contexts. *Pride and Prejudice* associates the visible code of behavior to the invisible life of emotions. The entire sentimental turmoil in Austen's novel comes from the lack of adherence or adjustment of code to content and message. In a way, love suffering has no other cause here than it had for Lancelot and Guinevere: in the novel of Chrétien de Troyes, suffering comes from errors in reading and

interpreting the signs of the invisible world, while in Jane Austen's it comes from errors in reading and interpreting the signs of the invisible world of emotions. Here, reading the code of behavior too formally means failing to understand the meaning of the signs that form it: communication between lovers gets jammed when a certain attitude or behavior is given the wrong meaning out of carelessness in regard to the subtle turmoil of the emotional life that colors the life of reason. At the end of *Pride and Prejudice,* Elizabeth asks Mr. Darcy directly what made him fall in love with her. In a previous discussion with Jane, she told her sister that she had fallen in love with her future fiancé so gradually and so unaware, that she was not able to point to a certain moment in time or space when love had begun. Similarly, Mr. Darcy notices that he cannot indicate a starting point for love, either.

There is a huge difference from the sparkle of a single decisive look that is responsible, in the romantic paradigm, for the beginning of the "love at first sight". Instead of the ravishing passion stirred by looking in each other eyes, romance builds up with extreme caution here. As a lover's joke, Elizabeth reproaches Mr. Darcy his arrogance from their first encounters. A mask for shyness, his so-called arrogance is understood as a sign of carelessness and lack of interest. Darcy explains that she herself was serious and quiet and did not encourage him at all. When Elizabeth suggests that he could have spoken to her more, when he joined them for dinner, Darcy insists that he was embarrassed but, most importantly, that only a man who felt less could have spoken more.[5] With this last answer, Darcy seals the meaning he is willing to give to love, as well as the understanding he gives to feelings: the more you feel or, the deeper the emotion, the less you can express or confess. In Jane Austen's novels, lovers are like some old mechanisms of figurines moving on iron tracks when the clock strikes the given hour. Too much emotion breaks them as if they were jammed.

The original style of Austen's novels comes from ironically and amusingly exposing the moment of malfunction of the conventional man. Disarticulate and then paralyzed by the intervention of romantic speech, Austen's character adopts *action* as an escape from the prison of verbal expression: *doing* something the loved woman wants or needs to have done becomes the ultimate emotional guarantee and the most appropriate behavior, the only infallible one. The loved one has to notice the action, to take it into account and to reach the right conclusion and interpretation. As a matter of fact, Mr. Darcy explicitly refers – when he finally admits his love to Elizabeth – to the fact that he wanted to make sure she is not simply grateful for his grand gesture, but actually in love. In other words, he wants to make sure she understood his action was a love confession before anything else. Although he is far from feeling comfortable inside the act that social life makes him play, the male character of Austen's novel must be a

[5] Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, Dover Publications, 1995.

great actor, in a sense. He has to live, at the same time, *inside* his passion and *outside* his emotions, thriving on scene sets and rituals. In a sense, passion becomes a matter of aesthetics. The lover has to learn how to refuse giving in to passion. He is in control of his emotional expression and this control only delays his „victory" for the sake of the „fight". Just as well, the loved woman learns how to refuse herself, because this way she holds the attention of the one who loves her. One more time, discourse plays a crucial role.

In a way, rather than looking at each other as romantic lovers do in love fiction, Austen's lovers look away and only glimpse at one another when the other one is not looking. It is as if they were inside a theatre scene, where they look at the props in order to understand where they are and what kind of relationship they entertain with each other, as well as how the loved one feels about them. At times, scenery or interior design becomes a real message transmitter: lovers accurately remember details rendered by their flawless visual memory. Witty and well-trained in conversation, they live inside a discourse in which mutual contemplation, numbed by love, would be entirely detrimental. During their famous walk together, Darcy and Elizabeth confirm their mutual love. Contemplating the face of the beloved becomes an obstacle, rather than some kind of erotic fuel, as it was during the Renaissance or even Romanticism. Elizabeth cannot look at Darcy, because this would mean that she would get lost, incapable to understand the discourse of reason, which is, for the moment, a messenger of love itself. She misses the "sheer joy" on Darcy's face but, while she cannot look at him, she takes the greatest pleasure in listening to him. Of all the bodily messages, the ones that most frequently populate love fiction in the eighteenth and nineteenth century are those related to the eyes and the blushing, both of them communicating an attitude and an emotional reaction, an affective message. Even in novels where one could only improperly speak of seduction, falling in love is conditioned by the presence of a scene, a discourse, and a ritual scenario. Even more, the ritual has the fixed form of a double-function code: of attachment to a social community and to its conventions, on one hand, and of paradigmatic communication of the stage and evolution of love, on the other.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

De Rougemont, Denis. *Love in the Western World.* New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1983.

Nin, Anaïs. *Incest. From a Journal of Love*. Houghton Mifflin: Harcourt Press, 1992.

Austen, Jane. *Pride and Prejudice*. Dover Publications, 1995.

Nabokov, Vladimir. *Lolita.* Second Vintage International Edition, 1997.

Luhmann, Niklas. *Love as Passion.* The Codification of Intimacy. Translated by Jeremy Ganes and Doris L. Jones. Stanford University Press, 1998.

STUDIA UBB PHILOLOGIA, LVIII, 3, 2013, p. 99 - 112
(RECOMMENDED CITATION)

THE SENSITIVE BACHELOR AND THE TRIANGLE OF INCEST. GOUVERNAIL IN KATE CHOPIN'S "ATHÉNAÏSE" AND *THE AWAKENING*

ZÉNÓ VERNYIK[1]

ABSTRACT. ***The Sensitive Bachelor and the Triangle of Incest. Gouvernail in Kate Chopin's "Athénaïse" and The Awakening.*** This paper proposes a queer re-reading of Gouvernail in "Athénaïse" and in *The Awakening*. In doing so, it contests Joyce Dyer's understanding in "Gouvernail, Kate Chopin's Sensitive Bachelor." While it agrees with her that "Athénaïse" is based on a love triangle, and Gouvernail's recitation in *The Awakening* is of key importance, it claims that the said triangle veils another, incestuous one, and the recitation comments on Gouvernail's sexual preferences, not the morals of the people around the table.

Keywords: love triangle, incest, homosociality, bisexuality, family, marriage, taboos, homographesis

REZUMAT. ***Burlacul sensibil şi triunghiul incestului. Gouvernail din "Athénaïse" şi The Awakening de Kate Chopin.*** Lucrarea de faţă propune reinterpretarea personajului Gouvernail din "Athénaïse" şi *The Awakening* prin contestarea tezei argumentate de Joyce Dyer în "Gouvernail, Kate Chopin's Sensitive Bachelor." Deşi suntem de acord că "Athénaïse" se bazează pe un triunghi amoros şi că declamaţia lui Gouvernail din *The Awakening* are o importanţă majoră, în opinia noastră, triunghiul amoros amintit mai sus ascunde, de fapt, unul incestuos, iar declamaţia se referă la preferinţele sexuale ale lui Gouvernail şi nu la moravurile celorlalţi meseni.

Cuvinte cheie: triunghi amoros, incest, homosocialitate, bisexualitate, familie, căsătorie, tabuuri, homographesis

It seems one could never quote Pearl L. Brown's statement often enough: "[m]uch has been written about Kate Chopin's defiant women, […] [but] very little has been written about Chopin's defiant men" (69); nor Winfried

[1] Zénó Vernyik has graduated from the University of Szeged and Masaryk University and holds a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature. He is an Assistant Professor in the English Department of the Technical University of Liberec, Czech Republic.His primary research interests are modern and contemporary American and British literature, spatial theory, and the representation of cities in literature. He has also published articles on Australian cinema and Belgian literature. Contact address: <zeno.vernyik@tul.cz>.

Fluck's claim that if "something remains unsatisfactory about the many useful readings of Chopin's texts so far, it is a tendency to ignore their 'experimental' character" (152). In fact, weirdly enough, although sentences similar to Janet Beer's, claiming that "Chopin's fiction, and particularly her short stories are subversive documents" (28) are repeatedly printed, in very few cases do such thoughts drive the actual analyses that follow. As an example of the conservative nature of most readings, one could mention the case of the character Gouvernail in "A Respectable Woman." This issue is dealt with in detail by Zénó Vernyik in an article in which the author shows that the heterosexual love triangle identified by existing readings of the story veil a sexually more controversial one, and Mrs. Baroda's "respectability" may not refer to her marital faithfulness, but her willingness to keep silent about her husband's and Gouvernail's past and the mutual attraction of these two men (158).

The present essay is an attempt at taking that thought further, and focusing on the remaining two stories where the same character appears. It aims at reading those texts against the backdrop of "A Respectable Woman" and its queer re-reading, and showing that the character's further appearances are consistent with those in the already analyzed story, and there are good reasons to consider Gouvernail as a character with ambiguous, but subversive sexuality. In particular, I claim that in "Athénaïse" the heterosexual love triangles identified by existing readings of the stories veil sexually more controversial ones, while in *The Awakening*, the short scene in which Gouvernail appears offers a comment not so much on the relationships of the people around the dinner table, but rather on Gouvernail himself, and his position.

To start with, one can roughly summarize the plot of "Athénaïse" in the following way: Athénaïse Miché, the wife of Cazeau, is unhappy in her marriage and at the beginning of the story stays at her parents' place and refuses to go home. Cazeau, her husband, brings her back, but later on she escapes with the help of her brother, Montéclin, to the city, where she resides in a modest inn. There she meets and gets acquainted with Gouvernail. When she finds out that she is pregnant, she goes home, however, and stays with Cazeau. It is important to stop for the time being at this highly basic summary, as any further specifics could already imply some interpretation of the events.

As for the existing reading, Joyce Dyer calls Gouvernail a "disappointed lover" (48) and she recognizes his attraction towards the protagonist, Athénaïse Miché. Dyer talks about desire and temptation: "Gouvernail wants to embrace her, to strain her body against his own, to seek her lips. Desire and temptation grow fierce" (51). She implicitly attributes a heterosexual character to Gouvernail and she interprets the story itself based on his longing and unfulfilled desire, as she writes only about this topic. Athénaïse could have found her happiness with Gouvernail and vice-versa, yet she returns to her husband, Cazeau.

This reading, however, similarly to the one pointed out in connection with "A Respectable Woman" (Vernyik), is a narrowing down of the space of interpretation that can be considered as the idealization of heterosexual marriage (Rich 234), which is part of the patriarchal ideology that Adrienne Rich calls *compulsory heterosexuality* (232). Yet, for the purposes of this analysis, it is also worth noting that, in addition to this, Rich's article also implicitly contains a "standard" way of life, a narrative idealized by society: two persons of different gender meet, they fall in love, get married, procreate, then die.[2] In the following paragraphs, this kind of storyline is referred to as the *compulsory story*.[3] These ideological constructs are liable for the general hostility towards all erotic desires and sexual behaviors that fail to conform to them, and they try to present heterosexuality, as well as monogamous marriage, as *the normative,* what is more, *the natural* way of behaving socially and sexually.

That is to say, if one uses these two concepts, the line of narration implicit in Dyer's analysis in terms of societal compulsion is the following: *compulsory story – compulsory heterosexuality – compulsory story.* In such a reading, the story does not try to subvert the norms of society or the myth of marriage. Contrarily: it confirms and reinforces them. If one revisits Dyer's analysis of "A Respectable Woman," then she is likely to find that this reading fits harmonically into the mental image one might form of Dyer's expectations.[4] It does not conform, however, with the idea that Kate Chopin's fiction is controversial: such a conventional reading of the story does not subvert or rebel; it does not provide "ecstatic self-realization" (Bender 259).

Noticeably, similarly to Dyer's reading of "A Respectable Woman," it is again the notion of *compulsory heterosexuality* that appears, just as the *triangle* does. Adrienne Rich emphasizes that compulsory heterosexuality is a construction of society, that is, it is ideological in nature. What it means in terms of our interpretation is that it determines how one sees reality, how one wants and is able to do that (cf. Althusser 294-304). That is, compulsory heterosexuality is an *ideological construct*, just like one's reading of a text. Thus, it follows that other readings are possible and one might expect another reading, the reading of *otherness*: besides the one given by Dyer, another triangle is expected to lie veiled behind the "normative" one. Summarily, there is ample ground to expect a much more complex story than the one suggested by Joyce Dyer.

The servant of Cazeau is called Félicité, that is, happiness. Symbolically, therefore, in this marriage, happiness is the husband's slave, it is his, not

[2] Cf. "heterosexuality is presumed the 'sexual preference' of 'most women'," "motherhood […] needs to be studied as a political institution," "women have been convinced that marriage and sexual orientation toward men are inevitable" (Rich 229-234).

[3] Thanks are due to Réka M. Cristian who pointed this out to me, and whose term I am using here.

[4] For a critical analysis of this, cf. Vernyik.

anyone else's, not that of the wife, for example. The happiness of others is possible only subject to his own one, in relation to it. A wife can become happy only by seeing her man glad. This model can be generalized to cover the whole patriarchal society, but it is much rather the other way round: the working of society is represented in its operation on this micro level of the family. Family is an ideological construct, or apparatus, it serves the purposes of the larger unit, those of the state or societal ideology (Althusser 302).

Athénaïse knows that by instinct: she experiences it every day. The institution of marriage or that of the family (these two are interchangeable in the present, rather special case) is that which makes her sad and unhappy. It is that which she would like to leave: she escapes from that. In her own words: "It's jus' being married that I detes' an' despise" (Chopin, *Night in Acadie* 50). During her days with Cazeau she experienced day by day how the great mechanism of society deprives her of her identity and her existence as an ideological subject: a person gets his or her identity together with his or her name (Althusser 302), and Cazeau deprives Athénaïse right of her name. "I hate being Mrs. Cazeau, an' would want to be Athénaïse Miché again," says she (Chopin, *Night in Acadie* 50).

Cazeau knows the situation well enough, he is aware of the fact that their marriage does not bring happiness to Athénaïse: he is regularly "visited by […] a vision of her […] face with its drooping lips and sullen and averted eyes" (42-43). Yet, he does not intend to change anything in order to improve the situation. It seems that he is content with such a state that means that his wife is subordinated to his feelings. He knows that she suffers, yet he does not want to do away with this rather unbalanced relationship: it is true that "[t]he marriage had been a blunder […] [b]ut it was a thing not by any possibility to be undone" (43).

While he loves Athénaïse, he cannot face that she does not feel the same: *his desires*, *his emotions* are those that count, what that means to the loved one does not matter at all. When he tries to recount the reasons he had for marrying her, he does not mention anything about her intentions: "I married you because *I* loved you; because you were the woman *I* wanted to marry, an' the only one" (60, emphasis mine).

However, Cazeau mentions one more reason for marriage and this might be the only one for Athénaïse: in marriage the husband brings protection and comfort for the wife. This idea is explicitly linked in the text to both of them. Cazeau expresses this in the following manner: "I did think that I might make you happy in making things easier and more comfortable for you" (60), and Athénaïse basically agrees with him: "Cazeau, she knew, would make life more comfortable for her" (49). His reasoning conforms shockingly to Susan Brownmiller's notions about the roots of marriage: "Female fear of an open

season of rape […] was probably the most important key to her historic dependence, her domestication by protective mating" (Weitz 118). There is just one further factor that makes Athénaïse marry Cazeau, and that is nothing but the power of customs, the influence of societal expectations: "it was customary for girls to marry when the right opportunity came" (Chopin, *Night in Acadie* 49). What one is dealing with then, is again the *compulsory story,* an ideological construct, but not the limited, class-bound type of it, but a more general one that reaches far beyond class, race or gender. In this case, "ideology constitutes not only the subject, but the world, and […] the latter is as much an imaginary construction as the former" (Silverman 24).

Athénaïse flies from home twice, in order to break free from the chains of marriage, in order not to live her life under compulsion with someone whom she does not love. She is driven by her desires, or rather the lack of them. "The nucleus of the [unconscious] consists of […] wishful impulses" says Freud (190), of which the opposite is equally true: ideas representing wishes have their origins in the unconscious. However, unconscious wishes have to cease being unconscious in order to achieve anything. Yet one has to stress here that even a manifest wish does not necessarily mean a conscious one. It is not the conscious, but the preconscious that controls "access to the release of affect and to action" (181). While in the preconscious, the wish has the potentiality to become conscious, but has not achieved it yet (175), even though it already controls one's acts. What it means in terms of the story is that just because Athénaïse is not conscious of the reasons behind her actions does not make these claims invalid.

It is far from evident to think of a prospective childbirth as something that would radically alter the situation. Even if one supposes that Cazeau is the father of Athénaïse's child, which does not necessarily have to be true, this situation will not make her fall in love with him. Furthermore, even if it is true that Cazeau can provide the future child with the necessary material support, in both of the two meanings of the word, it is still not enough to make her return. Gouvernail, a famous and prosperous journalist, could equally well provide for them. What is more, she would necessarily get more: while Cazeau is terribly busy all the time and lives only for his estates, Gouvernail shares all his free moments with her. Whereas "Cazeau had many things to attend to before bed-time; so many things that there was not left to him a moment in which to think of Athénaïse" (Chopin, *Night in Acadie* 42), in a huge contrast, "every moment that [Gouvernail] could spare from his work he devoted to her entertainment" (91).

However, Athénaïse does not feel the way Gouvernail feels, either. "[S]he did not want him" (94). At this point, it is hard to resist the temptation to try and see what role the name of the protagonist, as another speaking name, would play in this. Athénaïse could be taken to mean the woman from

or of Athens, and thus be a possible reference to Athena. Athena "remained virtually unapproachable sexually" (Morford and Lenardon 113), and was a Goddess who did not know love (Szabó), while it has already been pointed out above that Athénaïse did not really love either Gouvernail or Cazeau, and furthermore, she seemed to have "a constitutional disinclination for marriage" (Chopin, *Night in Acadie* 51). They are both beautiful, though not exactly womanly: the "masculinity of [Athena's] virgin nature" (Morford and Lenardon 108), her somewhat androgynous character, is well-known, while Athénaïse is not yet a woman, merely a girl, "about her features and expression lurked a softness, a prettiness, a dewiness, that were perhaps too childlike, that savored of immaturity" (Chopin, *Night in Acadie* 53).

Athena is, of course, a virgin goddess, Athena Parthenos (Kerényi 97) and we find out by the end of Chopin's story, even if only implicitly, that Athénaïse got pregnant. This, however, is not such a huge contradiction as it seems at first sight. Her attire constantly symbolizes innocence and purity, as she hardly wears anything else but white (Chopin, *Night in Acadie* 53, 58, 76, 83, 86). Likewise, she openly considers twice (though in the end rejects) the possibility of becoming a nun in a convent (50, 76). Furthermore, she does not want either of the two men interested in her, and after her fleeing away, she does not even consider herself married (81). But most importantly, the text directly compares her to "Eve after losing her ignorance" (101) and talks of "a wave of ecstasy" (96) and the "first purely sensuous tremor of her life" (97) in the moment she finds out about her pregnancy. That is to say, regardless of what has happened between her and Cazeau (if it was him) and when, symbolically and mentally Athénaïse only loses her virginity and gets sexually aroused towards the very end of the story, and she is not actually experiencing any kind of sexual encounter with a man at that time.

Likewise, Athena herself is not as unambiguous as she might seem at first sight. As Kerényi points out, other than Parthenos, or virgin, one of her other names is Métér, that is, mother (97). In addition, she herself had an enigmatic sexual encounter with Hephaestus, who found the bed empty next to himself when he wanted to lie down next to her (97), just as "[w]hen Cazeau awoke, one morning at his usual very early hour, it was to find the place at his side vacant" (Chopin, *Night in Acadie* 66). And though Athena did not give birth or lose her virginity, she did become a mother, too (Kerényi 97), just as Athénaïse is wont to become.

However, beyond the idea that Athénaïse behaves the way she behaves because she is a virginal, asexual character, there may be alternative explanations, as well. It might seem, for example, that the reason Athénaïse does not want Gouvernail is that he does not want her either. There is some evidence, as shown by Zénó Vernyik, in "A Respectable Woman" for his

possible sexual preference for men. The text in question ("Athénaïse") accords quite well with this reading: when Gouvernail found out that he has to eat his breakfast together with Athénaïse, "[h]e felt annoyed at finding his cherished privacy invaded" (Chopin, *Night in Acadie* 77). His hands are "remarkably white and soft for a man's" (78), and it is widely held and generally acknowledged, though not necessarily true, that "[t]he shape and texture of hands and fingers is supposed to denote the character […] of the owner" (Radford). And thus one could link the inversion hypothesis here: in the late nineteenth century, one of the influential models of thinking and discussing same sex attraction was that of the *invert*, or "in German sexologist Karl Heinrich Ulrich's famous 1869 phrase, 'a female soul trapped in a man's body'; and, in the case of lesbian women, 'a male soul trapped in a woman's body'" (Edwards 27). So in this framework, which was commonly used in Chopin's time, a man attracted to men is indeed expected to be a feminine man.

And there is more corresponding textual evidence that would support such a reading. One finds out that "nothing is sacred" (Chopin, *Night in Acadie* 80) for Gouvernail, and he states that not only a woman, but also a "man […] lost nothing of his respect by being married" (80). Besides, "[h]e was not one who deliberately sought the society of women" (83) and the way Athénaïse carried her parasol, lifted her skirts and used her fan he found worthy not just of study, but also of *imitation.* The expression almost disappears in the long and detailed sentence: "she carried her parasol and lifted her skirts and used her fan in ways that seemed quite unique and peculiar to herself, and which he considered almost worthy of study and imitation" (86). He tries to make her aware of the potential misunderstanding, just as he has done in case of Mrs. Baroda: he would like to quote, presumably from Whitman, but Athénaïse does not "give him the opportunity" (84).

In fact, all these seem to be even more revelatory if one considers them further in the context of 19th century thinking about people of differing sexual interests. In addition to the already mentioned inversion hypothesis, one of the older, but nevertheless, still current concepts of the period is that of the sodomite. These people "were [...] imagined to be individuals with indiscriminate [...] appetites whose desires might include a wide range of sexual acts irrespective of the [...] gender [...] of the participants involved" (Edwards 20). Exactly this seems to be mirrored in Gouvernail's already mentioned statement about his indifference as to whether a man or a woman was married or not, and his characterization as a person to whom "nothing is sacred" (Chopin, *Night in Acadie* 80).

Extending this historical perspective to the analysis of Gouvernail's lifestyle can bring even more fruitful results. Unlike the relatively wealthy Gaston Baroda of "A Respectable Woman," and Cazeau, Gouvernail, though

self-independent, is obviously living on a lower level of luxury and affluence. In other words, one could imagine the difference between Gaston Baroda/Cazeau and Gouvernail as that between upper and lower middle class existence. And if one indeed accepts him as a lower middle class male of the 19th century, his idiosyncratic behavior gains a new light. Paraphrasing Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Jason Edwards points out that "lacking […] legal and cultural immunity, [...] lower-middle-class men inclined towards same-sex eroticism tended to be more marked by denials, rationalisations, fears, guilts and sublimations, as well as by an improvisatory resourcefulness valued in other contexts by their entrepreneurial class" (24). This might explain Gouvernail's loner behavior, his not being "a society man" (Chopin, *Night in Acadie* 389), his "reserve in which he had unconsciously enveloped himself" (390), his "philosophic acquiescence to the existing order" (394), his only desire "to be permitted to exist, with now and then a little whiff of genuine life" (394-5). Likewise, it seems to be explaining rather well, why he had an "unobtrusive manner which seemed to ask that he be let alone" (78), and also his association with people "whose opinions would startle even the traditional 'sapeur,' for whom 'nothing is sacred'" (80) and yet, "whose lives were irreproachable" (80).

Yet, it would be an oversimplification to reduce Gouvernail's sexual identity to that of a homosexual by excluding the possibility of love and sexual attraction towards women. This way the present reading would conform just as well to the framework of *compulsory heterosexuality* as that of Dyer's. This ideological construct is the one that dictates dichotomization in the field of sexual identities; that does not tolerate any kind of contradiction. However, the sexual identity of people does not fit at all into dichotomies (Blumstein and Schwartz 340). Thus, by deeming Gouvernail homosexual, while criticizing the heteronormativity of Dyer's reading, I would fall into the same trap. Not to mention that exactly because at the period the concepts of the *sodomite*, the *invert*, and the *homosexual* were all in current usage, it may be more "helpful to […] find out from [the] texts, archives and contexts in what ways they might have experienced, imagined and described their own or their protagonists' eroticisms" (Edwards 20), rather than try and squeeze those very same characters into categories of hetero- or homosexual existence.

To postulate that Gouvernail has "some degree of erotic responsiveness to members of both genders" (Blumstein and Schwartz 340) seems to be both the only possible reading that is able to undermine the normative standing of heterosexuality, as it points out that one cannot rigidly divide the world into two, into us and them, and one that is sufficiently flexible to account for the complexity of Gouvernail's character and its various aspects.

Taking a close look at the text, one can find a great number of pieces of evidence for Gouvernail's attraction towards the woman. Most of these have

sexual connotations, of course. He "thought her the most beautiful woman he had ever seen" (Chopin, *Night in Acadie* 86), he "was reluctant to part from her when she bade him good-night" (87), and "every moment he could spare from his work he devoted to her entertainment" (91). When she was homesick he "put his arms around her […] The impulse was powerful to strain her to him; the temptation was fierce to seek her lips" (93). What is more, "[h]e hoped some day to hold her with a lover's arms" (93-94).

He really felt the power of desire, yet, he did not do a thing, because he knew that he is only a substitute for someone Athénaïse really loves. The object of her desire is not him, he is rather a substitute object, or to put it in another way, the vehicle of desire, in the Girardian sense. Girard claims that in certain cases the attraction cannot come forth directly between the desiring and the desired, there is a need for a third person, a vehicle. If one is about to represent this model visually, she will come up with a triangle where above the line connecting desiring and desired she finds the vehicle sending one ray to both of them, this way connecting them (Girard 225, cf. Figure 1).

Gouvernail knows who the object of desire is, and the reader would also know it if he had not been blinded by the taboos of patriarchal society: one is unable to notice even the most explicit allusions to incest. That is, except for Bert Bender who spoke of "incestuous overtones" already in 1974 (262). And rightly so, since there is ample evidence in favor of it in the text. Athénaïse "had a great *desire* to see her brother" (Chopin, *Night in Acadie* 62, my emphasis). It is remarkable that the same expression is used here as in the case of Gaston and Gouvernail in "A Respectable Woman". For Athénaïse, Montéclin is "the embodiment of kindness, of bravery, of chivalry, even of wisdom" (64), in other words, the charming prince of fairy tales, who arrives on his horse, even though, in this case, it is not necessarily a white one: "it appeared too tall for Montéclin, but that was because he was riding a large horse" (63-64). As further evidence, one can list that Montéclin "had kissed her *affectionately*" (64), just the way a lover would do, plus when they promenaded together, "[s]he took Montéclin's arm" (64). Furthermore, "she was filled with admiration for Montéclin's resources and wonderful talent" (65-66), while for Montéclin, too, "[e]loping with his sister was only a little less engaging than eloping with someone else's sister" (74). Not only is there ample evidence for a more than brotherly love here, but their relationship is also much more affectionate and heated than that of Gaston Baroda and his wife in "A Respectable Woman."

Gouvernail knew that Athénaïse "adored Montéclin" (84), and it is not the only place where it appears in the text: for example, "[h]e understood a thousand times better than she herself understood it that he was acting as substitute for Montéclin" (93). That is why he tried to behave as a substitute,

that is why "[h]e tried to think what Montéclin would have said and done, and to act accordingly" (94). Of course, it was not too hard for him to recognize her longing, as it was explicitly stated by Athénaïse's amorous sigh: "Ah, my dear Montéclin!" (89). What is more, when it turns out that she is expecting a baby, it is Montéclin whom she wants to inform right after her mother: "Her mother must know at once, and her mother must tell Montéclin" (96).

To some extent, even their names carry their belonging to each other as binary opposites, as Montéclin in French means an upward glance, while Cazeau thinks of Athénaïse with a downward glance. Otherwise, the behavior and attitude that her "sullen and averted eyes" (43) connote humility and humbleness, both usually thought of as feminine or womanly in character (Weitz 94), while a "clin monté" naturally designates values like decisiveness, braveness, and so on, all of them generally considered as masculine or manly. And whenever a character functions in a story as *the* man and another as *the* woman, then love and longing should evolve between them, in accordance with the *compulsory story,* regardless of the fact that these might be radically subverted.

Even though we still deal with a love triangle, it is radically different from the one drawn up by Dyer, which is just veiling the other one. Her surface-triangle can be summarized as Cazeau-Gouvernail-Athénaïse while the deeper one as Montéclin-Gouvernail-Athénaïse (cf. Figure 2). Gouvernail remains the vehicle of desire even in this construction, but the nature of it is radically different. Although the core still remains based on heterosexuality, it clearly contradicts the *compulsory story*, although it is precisely that which makes it work, at least to some extent. The reason for the contradiction is that patriarchal society accepts incest even less than ambiguous sexuality.[5]

As it is deducible from "A Respectable Woman," Gouvernail may have once had a long lasting relationship with Gaston (Vernyik). In addition, he admits to Athénaïse that he has never loved a woman before. (Even though what he explicitly says is that he has not loved anyone,[6] it would contradict his possible affair with Gaston during their college year.) It is most likely that he simply keeps silent about his male lover (or lovers) and considers the question as referring solely to women.

Based on these, as well as on Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's reinterpretation of Girard's article (478-479), one might come up with right another understanding of the desires operating in the textual universe. Behind Gouvernail's thoroughly embodied, real and sensual attraction towards Athénaïse, there lies his adoration for Montéclin, of which Athénaïse is the vehicle. After all, "Gouvernail preferred to talk of Montéclin" (Chopin, *Night in*

[5] At least on the surface. What goes on behind the curtains, so to say, is another question.

[6] "Once she was so naive as to ask him outright if he had ever been in love, and he assured her promptly that he had not" (Chopin, *Night in Acadie* 92).

Acadie 90). His triangular configuration is right the other way round than that of Athénaïse. For Athénaïse, he is the vehicle to Montéclin, whereas for him, Athénaïse is the one for Montéclin. That is to say, the story has a third triangle that can be grasped as Montéclin-Athénaïse-Gouvernail (cf. Figure 2). Without knowing it, the journalist also longs for the woman's brother through her.

Noticeably, the unearthed deep structure reveals a much more complex understanding, even though it still and really is about desire as Joyce Dyer has rightly recognized it, and as all narratives are in Peter Brooks' opinion (36-40). Instead of a cliché-like, dull narrative theme, another lets itself open up through the close analysis of the text's homographs.[7] It entails incest and hidden homosocial desire, while none of these two gets fulfilled in the end. In the case of Montéclin and Athénaïse there might still arrive a happy ending, probably that is why she has gone home, but Gouvernail has been torn away from his vehicle of desire and through her from his desired object. This means that he has also lost the possibility for his story to end the way he desired it to do.

In *The Awakening*, the last story in which Gouvernail appears, he has only a minor role from the point of view of its plot. He is simply one of the guests present at the protagonist's, Edna Pontéllier's, extraordinary dinner.

In her essay, Joyce Dyer makes one aware that even though Gouvernail's appearance in the novel is brief, and he plays the role only of a guest for dinner, bearing the context of the two other stories in mind, his importance is still enormous. She writes the following: "Gouvernail's appearance […] is brief: he is merely one of nine guests […] But the reader who knows Gouvernail immediately recognizes the full importance of his attendance" (47). According to her, his "understanding of sex, women, and passion […] adds to the significance of his presence at Edna's round mahogany table." She claims that "we know that Gouvernail is a good-looking man who admires beautiful women" (47), and that he "relies on poetic omissions to supply truths inappropriate to utter" (47).

Based on this, she attributes enormous importance to the following two lines that Gouvernail murmurs at the table:

> There was a graven image of Desire
> Painted with red blood on a ground of gold. (Chopin, *Awakening* 234)

She points out how perfectly these lines convey the feelings and colors of the night, while at the same time they are able to show that desire can also be destructive and repulsive (Dyer 52). She claims that this quotation is to reflect the unhealthy relationships that are evolving between some of those sitting around the table (52).

[7] For more information on the reading strategy of homographesis, see Edelman or the relevant paragraphs of Vernyik.

Just like in case of that Whitman quotation in "A Respectable Woman," it is important to bear in mind that a text always brings its context with itself. This can turn out to be of key importance, as two lines are rarely, if ever, complete without all the others, torn out of the original body of text. Focusing on the context, one would first of all take a look at the whole poem and the line(s) following the excerpt. By adding just one line, the whole quotation gains a totally new meaning:

> There was a graven image of *Desire*
> Painted with red blood on a ground of gold
> *Passing between the young men and the old,* (Swinburne 130, emphasis mine)

Of course his murmur remains unheard, just as the reader's glance usually passes over the *other,* hidden *meaning,* over the *other discourse* that is veiled by the surface. This one is perhaps the most direct and shocking homograph*,* but at the same time it is the most difficult to notice, as it is not repeating in its nature and it is accessible only after the looking up of the original poem.

With this quotation, Gouvernail acknowledges, even declares his *otherness.* The gist of his recitation, therefore, is not that he considers certain relationships as unhealthy,[8] but rather that he does not really fit into the tableau of the dinner: he himself is an odd man out, who does not belong. Amongst the lot of heterosexual guests, he either does not find his place, or watches the happenings with the detachment and calmness of an outsider and comments on his *otherness* as an unbiased spectator. In this scene, he is most probably just that, and not someone "whose past history and characterization becomes truly significant to the thematic, emotional, and imaginative experience of Chopin's second novel" (Dyer 47), unless his presence is to suggest the outsider position of some other character(s) at the table.

Thus, one can see that, as proposed, these two remaining stories where Gouvernail appears also prove that it is indeed worth investigating Kate Chopin's texts from a queer perspective, and that Gouvernail's character is much more complex than how it is usually understood. While the two short stories indeed deal with love triangles, just as claimed by Dyer and Hopkins Lattin, those triangles are much more controversial and subversive than postulated by either of them, and Gouvernail's comment at the dinner table can be understood in a self-reflective way, as well, not only in the judgmental one they proposed.

It is also worth noting that this experiment in a queer reading of some of Kate Chopin's texts might again be taken as an indicator for the general

[8] Considering certain (any kinds of) relationships as unhealthy might alone refer to a conservative, perhaps heterosexist and reductionist point of view.

possibility of such a venture, and might therefore serve as a proof-of-concept. In fact, it might underline that there can be much more to the short fiction of the author than it is generally acknowledged in the criticism that is focusing primarily, and maybe somewhat unduly, on *The Awakening.*

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Althusser, Louis. 1971. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses." *Literary Theory: An Anthology.* Eds. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan. Oxford: Blackwell, 2001: 294-304. Print.

Bender, Bert. "Kate Chopin's Lyrical Short Stories." *Studies in Short Fiction* 11.3 (1974): 257-266. Print.

Brooks, Peter. *Reading for the Plot.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992. Print.

Brown, Pearl L. "Awakened Men in Kate Chopin's Creole Stories." *American Transcendental Quaterly* 13.1 (1999): 69-82. *Proquest*. Web. January 31, 2012.

Blumstein, Philip W. and Pepper Schwartz. "Bisexuality in Men." *Urban Life* 5.3 (1976): 339-358. Print.

Chopin, Kate. *A Night in Acadie. Electronic Edition.* Eds. Ji-Hae Yoon et al. *Library of Southern Literature.* Web. June 29, 2010. (http://docsouth.unc.edu/southlit/chopinnight/chopin.html)

--------. [1899] 1998. *The Awakening. Electronic Edition.* Eds. Melanie Polutta et al. *Library of Southern Literature.* Web. June 29, 2010. (http://docsouth.unc.edu/southlit/chopinawake/chopin.html)

Dyer, Joyce. "Gouvernail, Kate Chopin's Sensitive Bachelor." *Southern Literary Journal* 14.1 (1981): 47-55. Print.

Edelman, Lee. *Homographesis. Essays in Gay Literary and Cultural Theory.* London: Routledge, 1994. Print.

Edwards, Jason. *Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick.* New York: Routledge, 2009. Print.

Fluck, Winfried. "Tentative Transgressions: Kate Chopin's Fiction as a Mode of Symbolic Action." *Studies in American Fiction* 10.2 (1982): 151-171. Print.

Freud, Sigmund. "The Unconscious." Trans. James Strachey. *The Penguin Freud Library. Vol. 11. On Metapsychology. The Theory of Psychoanalysis.* Ed. Angela Richards. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991, 159-210. Print.

Girard, René. 1966. "Triangular Desire." *Literary Theory: An Anthology.* Eds. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan. Oxford: Blackwell, 2001: 225-230. Print.

Hopkins Lattin, Patricia. "Kate Chopin's Repeating Characters." *Mississippi Quarterly* 33.1 (1980): 19-37. Print.

Kerényi, Karl. 1951. [*Die Mythologie der Griechen*] *Mytologie Řeků.* Praha: Oikoymenh, 1996. Print.

Morford, Mark P. O. and Robert J. Lenardon. *Classical Mythology.* New York: Longman, 1985.

Radford, Edwin and Mona A., eds. *Encyclopedia of Superstitions.* London: Hutchinson, 1980. Print.

Rich, Adrienne. "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence." *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader.* Eds. Henry Abelove et al. New York: Routledge, 1993: 227-254. Print.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. "Gender Assymetry and Erotic Triangles." *Feminisms. An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism.* Eds. Robyn R. Warhol and Diane Price Herndl. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1991: 478-486. Print.

Silverman, Kaja. *Male Subjectivity at the Margins.* New York: Routledge, 1992. Print.

Swinburne, Algernon Charles. *Poems and Ballads.* London: John Camden Hotten, 1868. Print.

Szabó, György. 1973. *Mitológiai kislexikon.* Budapest: Trezor Kiadó, 1992. Print.

Vernyik, Zénó. "Un célibataire aux sensibilités différentes : Une re-lecture queer de Gouvernail dans « A Respectable Woman » par Kate Chopin." *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai Philologia* 56.4 (2011): 157-72. Print.

Weitz, Shirley. *Sex Roles.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1977. Print.

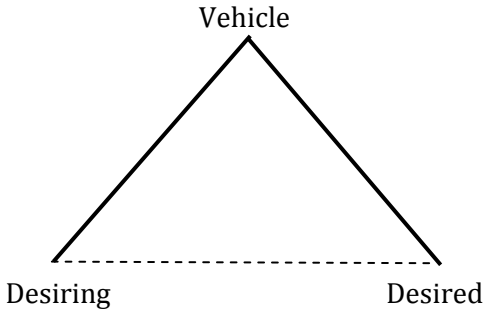


Figure 1. *The general framework of the Girardian love-triangle*

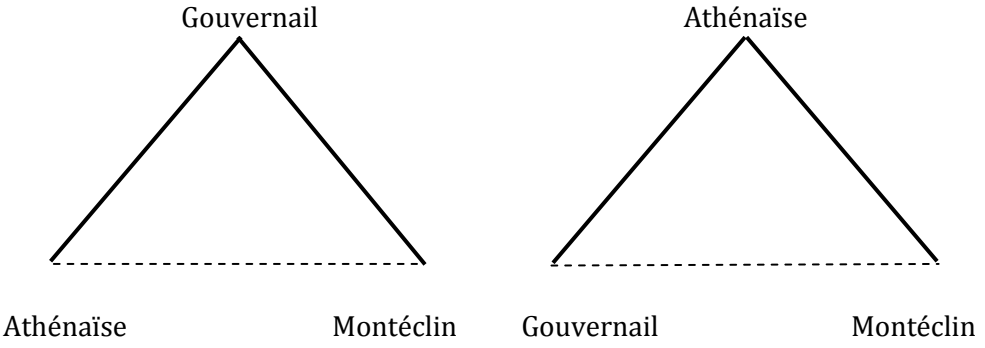


Figure 2. *Girardian triangles of the story "Athénaïse"*

STUDIA UBB PHILOLOGIA, LVIII, 3, 2013, p. 113 - 118
(RECOMMENDED CITATION)

A TOTALITARIAN ANTI-UTOPIA

MAGDA WÄCHTER[1]

ABSTRACT. *A Totalitarian Anti-Utopia*. This paper investigates one of the strands of totalitarian anti-utopia, which is illustrated in Monica Lovinescu's novel entitled *The Word in Words* [*Cuvântul din cuvinte*],[2] targeting several specific trends of contemporary literature in general, such as the comingling of literary species and the return to the primary reflexive function of fictionality.

Keywords: Monica Lovinescu, anti-utopia, parabolic, modernism, totalitarian, communism, negative, evil, novel.

REZUMAT. *O anti-utopie totalitară*. Această lucrare analizează o tendinţă a anti-utopiei totalitare ilustrată de către Monica Lovinescu în romanul ei *Cuvântul din cuvinte*. Se au în vedere o serie de caracteristici ale literaturii contemporane, cum ar fi combinarea speciilor literare şi revenirea la funcţia primară, reflexivă a ficţiunii.

Cuvinte cheie: Monica Lovinescu, anti-utopia, parabolic, modernism, totalitar, comunism, negative, rău, roman.

Studies on negative utopia in Romanian literature have highlighted the absence of utopia as a literary species in our culture, which is nonetheless counterbalanced by the abundant presence of counter-utopia, especially during the second half of the twentieth century. The phenomenon is part of a broader context that takes into account both the evolution of literary ideas in Europe and various specific characteristics of the Romanian cultural space.

---

[1] Magda Wächter is a researcher at "Sextil Puşcariu" Institute of Linguistics and Literary History of the Romanian Academy, Cluj-Napoca. She has a BA in Romanian and English from "Babeş-Bolyai" University, Cluj-Napoca (2000) and a PhD in Romanian literature from the University of Bucharest (2006). She has contributed with studies and literary reviews to the following journals: *Contemporanul, Caiete critice, Tribuna, Steaua,* etc. The books she has published are: *A. E. Baconsky. Scriitorul şi măştile [A.E. Baconsky. The Writer and His Masks]*. Cluj-Napoca: Casa Cărţii de Ştiinţă, 2007, 363 pp. (author); *Dicţionarul General al Literaturii Române [The General Dictionary of Romanian Literature],* vols. I-VII. Bucharest: Univers Enciclopedic, 2004-2009 (co-author); *Dicţionarul cronologic al romanului tradus în România de la origini până în 1989 [The Chronological Dictionary of the Translated Novel in Romania from Origins to 1989]. Bucharest: Editura Academiei,* 2005 (co-author). Contact address: <magdawachter@yahoo.com>.

[2] Monica Lovinescu, *Cuvântul din cuvinte*. Translated from the French by Emanoil Marcu, Foreword by Ioana Pârvulescu. Bucharest: Humanitas, 2007.

Bogdan Crețu, one of the researchers of this genre, has noticed the tendency of our literature to adopt the "anti-form" with greater ease than the original model (Crețu, 54). Ion Budai-Deleanu, for instance, parodied the epic without this type of narrative poem having existed in Romanian literature as such; the same holds true for the realistic novel, which was deconstructed by Urmuz, or for avant-garde poetry, which waged virulent attacks against a tradition that had been illustrated rather scantily: "There is a tendency which is particularly noticeable at several moments in the history of Romanian literature: that of parodying a non-existent aesthetic formula; sensing, perhaps, the 'thrills of future literature,' spirits of a more playful disposition rose above their age. This is a symptom not of precociousness, but of extravagance, which may be accounted for by the inexperience of a culture setting off on an admittedly tardy pursuit of its own path" (Crețu, 55).

The same propensity towards privileging a negative model may, in fact, also be detected in other related species, such as parable and allegory, this time not only within the perimeter of Romanian culture, but in contemporary creation in general. Notwithstanding the polemical undertones of modernism and postmodernism, with their strong deconstructivist urge, the causes of this orientation largely reside in the political alignments of the time. As Alexandru Zotta, one of the few analysts of parable in our literature, contends, this artistic path is usually adopted especially at critical moments in the existence of individuals and societies, in times of change, when values tend to be refashioned (Zotta, 12).

Such dislocations occurred naturally in cultural spaces that were subjected to the communist regime, where the new modernism sometimes adopted "anti-form" in response to the simultaneously real and fictional "form" imposed by the regime, through certain species that were structured as existential meditations in a mediated manner, such as counter-utopia or parable itself. Unable to engage in outright rebellion, literature tends to return to myths, symbols and metaphors in order to express a content that is prevalently social and political. Thus, fiction retrieves its origins, its primary reflexive function, recuperating, throughout this course, the specific modalities of older modernisms, like the avant-garde or the literature of the absurd. In turn, criticism supports this revival through modern myth-criticism or archetypal criticism.

All these features are illustrated by the totalitarian anti-utopias of the second half of the twentieth century, with their elements of parable, allegory and poetic prose, representing a possible alternative not only to socialist realist literature, but also to the formalist tendencies of postmodernity. Given its mythic, symbolical character and its meanings which transcend social reflection, totalitarian anti-utopia proposes a "surrealism" that may be interpreted from a twofold perspective: as "anti-realism," in relation to socialist realism, and as "arch-realism," in relation to postmodern experimentalism.

Utopia itself has a "meta-empirical" character (Achim, 13) and represents, in Northrop Frye's terms, a "speculative myth," which proposes an implicit teleology (Achim, 25). As George Achim remarks in a study dedicated to utopia, "[t]he profound determinations, of tremendous depth, underlying utopian consciousness could be related to the desire for recuperating the primordial history, in other words, the absolute beginning" (Achim, 32).

At the same time, the totalitarian character of utopian fiction has been highlighted (Ciorănescu, 29-31) in close connection with their teleological substrate. The transformation of utopia into anti-utopia during the latter half of the twentieth century, after the emergence of totalitarianism, amounted to a mutation of the imaginary onto the real, maintaining, however, the mythical, meta-empirical core, specific to the genre, intact. The realization of utopias shifted the fictional emphasis onto dystopias, the latter assuming, by a reverse logic, the structure and the reflexive finality of the former.

Monica Lovinescu's novel *The Word in Words* may be read against this background, very briefly overviewed above. Written in 1955 and rejected by the Parisian publishing house Denoël on account of its excessive "modernism," the novel was published by Humanitas in Romanian translation only in 2007. In fact, this book shared the fate of many subversive writings that were critical of the totalitarian regime. Having been banned by communist censorship, they were published, in Romania at least, only after the fall of the Iron Curtain, at a time when their message of protest had, inevitably, considerably subsided in terms of the echoes it could generate. Monica Lovinescu, an illustrious representative of Romanian dissidence, was not, however, confronted with communist censorship, but with another type of suppression, of a purely artistic nature, which did not adhere to the surreal, parabolic edge of her writing. The novel has proved to be too modern both as regards its social significance, in a possible communist context, and its expression and overall design, in a space that is culturally less responsive to the symbolical apparatus targeting a reality of an entirely outlandish structure.

Original in concept, the book derives from the negative utopias written by Orwell, Huxley, or Zamyatin, but may also be read as "a realistic novel, cloaked in Aesopic language,"[3] as a parable, with all the characteristics of the species, and, last but not least, as a symbolical, allegorical novel. Through a narrative formula inspired, at times, from the literature of the absurd and avant-garde writing, the text proposes an innovative interpretation of totalitarianism, not only as "the world upside down" that is peculiar to anti-utopias, but also as a paradigm of nothingness, comparable to anti-genesis. The novel is a meditation on the word, seen as a primordial act and as a

[3] Ioana Pârvulescu, "Poveşti pentru adulţi," in Monica Lovinescu, *Cuvântul din cuvinte*. Bucharest: Humanitas, 2007, p. 5.

product of historical reality, against the horizon of the relation between ideality and reality, which, by the logic of any anti-utopia or of parable (with its lodging of symbols in dual registers), is antithetical. The novel also features possible textualist suggestions, the metaphor of the world as text, grounded in the coherence and unity of discourse.

The twenty-one chapters that make up the book are instances of world deconstruction, structured around the central symbol of the word. The novelistic universe is a world of absurdity, from which naturalness gradually disappears in the name of an unknowable "Ideal." The characters lose their identity and vanish in a uniform, amorphous collectivity, things are given other names, in Orwellian manner, the alphabet itself is indicted, and communication occurs *via* the Morse code. While in the first chapter, the narrator is the "scribe from the fifth brigade - the third section - of the criminal prosecution against letters," he gradually dissipates into an indeterminate plurality. Lacking a unified narrative backbone, a novelistic structure in the classical sense, and even characters, the novel presents in a symbolical manner many seemingly disparate facets of the communist "anti-world," which are rendered through successive negations. In a bland style, devoid of artistic colour, the text merges, in a symbolical key, a series of tableaux, of outright aberrant scenes played by characters without any identity, who surrealistically utter words with obscure meanings in order to convey a reality without any substance. In fact, nothing happens in the novel because nothing really exists, no one communicates naturally and no one seems to understand the meaning of the few actions that are relentlessly performed on behalf of the only real character who is, paradoxically, the Ideal.

The method of preference is the accruing of elements specific to the risibly absurd, whose significances are flawlessly consistent. In accordance with the principle of atopia and achrony, this is an unknown land, in the so-called "Age of gynanders," which is in full hegemony. The people are terrified and they feed exclusively on air; they are forced to change their identity, heredity, faces, to lose various body parts, to reinvent another life for themselves, with a different past. The prohibitions imposed by the new regime include the ban on drinking water, travelling, dying, looking into one another's face, and spending intimate moments unsupervised. Both otherness and identity are strictly forbidden: the county residents file requests, at the inquiry offices, that they should have their heads replaced and their memories erased. The oppressive forces are designed to free the citizens from themselves, to designate a single name for all, namely "So-and-So," and to introduce the "martial law of words." Fantastic elements, such as the emergence of new creatures like the "wolftile" (*luptilul*), alternate with transparent social symbols, rendered in scenes of Kafkaesque extraction: a character is forced to navigate

continuously and goes through various stages of initiation, which amount to his losing various parts of his body. Another one is subjected to torture, which "only lasts fifteen days, of which only the first fifteen are unbearable," by virtue of an ideological experiment of unfathomable purposes. Two characters who are isolated in a tower maintain the illusion of existence and go over their corporeal details, eagerly awaiting death. Symbolically, the most wanted drug is called "The End of the World": "In general, it is said that the end of the world will solve everything. That we will sit down, that we will be able to talk freely. That we will start making plans again, and building things."

In a manner reminiscent of Tudor Arghezi's *The Graveyard of the Annunciation* [*Cimitirul Buna-Vestire*] or A. E. Baconsky's *The Black Church* [*Biserica Neagră*], Monica Lovinescu describes grotesquely macabre scenes to suggest an atmosphere of universal dissolution. Because of the ban on dying, a genuine "passion for demise" is born, especially among the foreigners, who rush into the houses of the dead, attend all the funerals, wail with great zeal, and lower themselves into the graves alongside with the coffins.

Although the impression of *dégringolade* is overwhelming, the allusions to the reality of communist Romania are obvious. Mention is made, for instance, of the "time before the decree," of a conspiracy for "liberating the country," of an upheaval, identical with the socialist revolution, achieved through a series of decrees. Still, the elements of political fiction are subordinated to a significance that transcends the realistic level of the text itself, through the agency of the central symbol, which is the word. According to novelistic conventions, the separation between word and world, as an effect of abolishing the freedom of expression, metaphysically entails the annihilation of all creation. With words, nature itself disappears or becomes unrecognizable, and with it, all natural activities undergo major transformations. The new creation, refashioned on grounds that go against subjectivity, individuality and free will, is an alternative to the human itself. The disappearance of the *Logos* is the equivalent of a reconfiguration of matter through de-spiritualization, with an anti-creation, therefore, which no longer preserves anything of the original model but the reality of death, of the end. The new world becomes a space of the "Ideal," which replaces the phenomenality that has become, by inversion, a prohibited ideology: "I lived in fear of any phenomenon. I learned about it in elementary school, swotting it up at the same time with the first letters; I therefore knew that repeating the original phenomenon would entail reinstating all the other phenomena, the important ones, the tertiary ones, the dissonant ones." Existence itself, which is accessible only in anamnestic manner, mediated through graphs and signs, becomes a mere idea, a purely fictional, surreal idea.

Features that are specific to utopian and dystopian fiction may be found in Monica Lovinescu's novel: such are, for instance, spatial indeterminacy,

the lack of a real plot, of flesh- and-blood characters and of plausible causality, a certain ambiguity, stereotypy and monotony, inherent to the characterization process, and description (Constantinescu, 14-15). There are also obvious similarities with classical anti-utopian novels, such as Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We* or George Orwell's *1984*, as well as with the first illustration of this genre in Romanian literature, the story entitled *Prefrontal Lobe Coagulation* [*Lobocoagularea prefrontală*], written by Vasile Voiculescu in 1948. Other totalitarian anti-utopias appeared later in Romanian literature, starting from the seventh decade, and were focused on the social problem of individual alienation in a carceral society. Monica Lovinescu's book, however, is more than a social utopia: it is a philosophical interrogation into the idea of freedom, which is elevated to the rank of a creative principle. It is, thus, a comingling of the political realist novel with symbolical, mythical and parabolic fiction. Given the suggestion of anti-genesis, the book appears to anticipate E. M. Cioran's conception of utopia from the volume entitled *History and Utopia*, published in France in 1960, as the counterpart of Genesis and as a "cosmogonic dream on the scale of history" (Cioran, 127). As a discourse on discourse, totalitarian anti-utopia uses this implicit conceptual scheme to reveal its mythical substrate and its primary metaphysical function[4].

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Achim, George. *Iluzia ipostaziată. Utopie şi distopie în cultura română*. Cluj-Napoca: Limes, 2002.

Cioran, E. M. *Istorie şi utopie*. Translated by Emanoil Marcu. Bucharest: Humanitas, 1992.

Ciorănescu, Alexandru. *Viitorul trecutului. Utopie şi literature*. Translated from the French by Ileana Cantuniari. Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1996.

Constantinescu, Cătălin. *Paradigme literare ale utopiei*. Iaşi: "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University Press, 2004.

Creţu, Bogdan. *Utopia negativă în literatura română*. Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 2008.

Zotta, Alexandru. *Parabola literară. O definire a conceptului.* Cluj-Napoca: Risoprint, 2007.

[4] Translated into English by Carmen-Veronica Borbély.

STUDIA UBB PHILOLOGIA, LVIII, 3, 2013, p. 119 - 125
(RECOMMENDED CITATION)

ENGAGER LA POÉSIE ? HORIZONS ROUGES. ESSORS DE L'IRONIE DANS LA POÉSIE ROUMAINE D'APRÈS-GUERRE

CORINA BOLDEANU[1]

ABSTRACT. ***Engaging poetry? Red Horizons. The Emergence of Irony in Romanian Post-war Poetry.*** Starting from the Sartrean prejudice according to which the notion of poetry is inconsistent with that of engagement, this study explores how the instauration of the Communist regime after World War II determines the engagement of poetry in relation to reality. Unlike militant engagement, this is a type of engagement through irony, a concept seemingly incompatible with poetry, at first glance.

Keywords: irony, poetry, ethics, engagement, communism, Geo Dumitrescu, Eugen Jebeleanu, Nina Cassian

REZUMAT. ***Angajarea poeziei? Orizonturi roşii. Apariţia ironiei în poezia românească postbelică.*** Pornind de la prejudecata sartriană conform căreia noţiunea de poezie ar fi incompatibilă cu cea de angajament, lucrarea de faţă urmăreşte modul în care instaurarea regimului comunist în România la ieşirea din cel de-al Doilea Război Mondial determină o angajare a poeziei în raport cu realitatea, altfel decât cea de tip militant. Este vorba de o angajare prin ironie, concept cu care, la prima vedere, poezia se anunţă la fel de puţin compatibilă.

Cuvinte cheie: ironie, poezie, angajament, comunism, Geo Dumitrescu, Eugen Jebeleanu, Nina Cassian

« *[…] la poésie résiste à l'engagement,*
dont elle constitue le point aveugle […] »
Benoît Denis, *Littérature et Engagement*

Que la poésie soit un « point aveugle » de la littérature d'engagement est, depuis Sartre[2] et l'opposition qu'il a établi entre l'utilité de la prose et la noble futilité de la poésie, une opinion largement répandue qui ne peut toutefois s'avérer à présent que partiellement valable. Non seulement parce qu'elle repose sur une certaine vision essentialiste de la poésie qui, longtemps souveraine, n'est

[1] Corina Boldeanu is currently studying for her PhD thesis at Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca. Her subject is the politics of poetical irony in Romanian poetry during the communist period. Contact address : <corina.boldeanu@yahoo.com>.

[2] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Qu'est-ce que la littérature ?*, Gallimard, Paris, 1948.

pourtant pas unique, mais aussi parce que la notion même d'engagement a reçu dernièrement de nouveaux éclaircissements. Il revient à Benoît Denis d'avoir tracé, dans son livre *Littérature et Engagement*[3], une ligne de séparation entre l'acception *historique* de la notion – comprise comme moment de l'histoire de la littérature française marqué par le désir des écrivains de participer à l'édification du monde nouveau annoncé déjà à l'Est de l'Europe par la révolution russe de 1917 – et l'acception *transhistorique* du terme – défini dans un sens plus large comme préoccupation pour la vie sociale et politique manifestée d'une manière ou d'une autre dans l'écriture. Or, de ce dernier point de vue, « toute œuvre littéraire est à quelque degré engagée, au sens où elle propose une certaine vision du monde et qu'elle donne forme et sens au réel »[4], ce qui, pour une conception libérée de préjugés « intransitifs » sur la poésie, légitime de nouvelles réflexions autour du syntagme de poésie engagée.

Bien qu'il s'agisse d'une approche transhistorique de l'engagement, c'est toujours la littérature, en particulier la poésie, du XX^e^ siècle qui peut en tirer le plus de profit, dans la mesure où celle-ci propose dans la période d'après-guerre un rapport sensiblement modifié avec le réel. Il y a d'abord une descente dans la rue de la poésie européenne, suite au renversement des critères de la représentation artistique que les avant-gardes opèrent à la fin de la Première Guerre Mondiale, et, ensuite, une tendance d'évolution de cette poésie vers un langage « transitif » pleinement assumé après la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale. Même si, en ce qui concerne la poésie écrite durant la guerre, les interprétations continuent à porter sur le devoir du poète « de conférer à l'événement historique la qualité d'événement intérieur, de l'exprimer dans la langue lyrique du sentiment plutôt que dans celle du jugement et de l'exhortation »[5], la plupart des démarches critiques n'ignorent pas non plus l'incompatibilité qui s'instaure depuis lors entre le langage poétique de facture métaphysique (héritage de la grande poésie lyrique) et la trivialité du vécu qu'il devient incapable d'exprimer.

Conçue sous cet angle, la poésie « transitive », de la dénotation et du référentiel quotidien[6], vient justement réduire cet écart et traduire dans une formule nouvelle la nouvelle relation que le sujet et son œuvre entretiennent avec la réalité. Et puisque à « l'idiosyncrasie de l'esprit lyrique contre la toute puissance des choses »[7] s'oppose dès maintenant « l'acte même de nommer les

[3] Benoît Denis, *Littérature et engagement de Pascal à Sartre*, Seuil, Paris, 2000.
[4] *Ibidem*, p. 10.
[5] Jean Starobinski, *La poésie et la guerre. Chroniques 1942-1944*, postface de Jérôme Meizoz, Editions Zoe, Carouge-Genève, 1999, p. 15.
[6] Gheorghe Crăciun, *Aisbergul poeziei moderne*, Editura Paralela 45, Piteşti, 2009.
[7] Theodor W. Adorno, *Notes sur la littérature*, traduit de l'allemand par Sibylle Muller, Flammarion, Paris, 1984.

choses [qui] implique la foi en leur existence, donc en la réalité du monde »[8], le concept de poésie engagée semble avoir dépassé le paradoxe. D'ailleurs, mise à part la production militante qui reste engagée à un niveau (historique et politique) strictement défini, poésie et engagement riment sans grincement : qu'elle rejette ou qu'elle se penche vers la réalité, la poésie s'engage, car, semble-t-il, l'écrivain a toujours l'option du non-engagement (la forme la plus authentique d'engagement dans le sens barthésien) ou de l'engagement, mais jamais celle du dégagement.

Vers un engagement ironique

Si l'expérience des deux guerres mondiales entraîne la dissolution d'anciennes naïvetés, inaugurant une phase de la modernité où « les modes brisés de la conscience règnent d'une façon manifeste : l'ironie, le cynisme, le stoïcisme, la mélancolie, le sarcasme, la nostalgie, le volontarisme, le décisionnisme, la résignation au moindre mal, la dépression et l'engourdissement »[9], la poésie en porte témoignage. Surtout dans le cas des pays de l'Est qui, bon gré mal gré, se retrouvent immédiatement après la guerre piégés lors de la poursuite d'une autre naïveté – l'utopie communiste –, l'appel à quelques-uns de ces modes de conscience devient également un mode de vie[10] et de survie littéraire :

> « La poésie des pays qui, à la suite de la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale, se sont trouvés dans l'orbite soviétique, ne confirme pas non plus les promesses de lendemains joyeux. Au contraire, la poésie polonaise, par exemple, a su distiller au mieux l'ironie et le sarcasme, bien qu'il s'agisse, paradoxalement, d'une poésie révoltée, et c'est en cela qu'elle est vivante.»[11]

Il en va de même pour la poésie roumaine, qui connaît à l'époque, à part la direction militante obéissant au régime, le prolongement de deux autres tendances déjà manifestées au début des années '40, notamment celle du non-engagement (la poésie réfugiée dans l'esthétique, brillamment représentée par les membres du Cercle Littéraire de Sibiu) et celle de l'engagement, souvent ironique, par rapport au réel (la poésie anti-métaphysique des écrivains du groupement Albatros). Symptomatiques de deux attitudes fondamentales envers le monde, ces modèles littéraires qui auront trouvé chacun autant de partisans que de détracteurs, permettent pourtant de comprendre comment la poésie s'engage, d'un côté, tout en ne s'engageant pas et, de l'autre, en exhibant le concret de la vie jusqu'à la substitution de l'éthique à l'esthétique.

---

[8] Czeslaw Milosz, *Témoignage de la poésie*, traduit par Christophe Jeyewski et Dominique Autrand, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1987, p. 78.
[9] Peter Sloterdijk, *Critique de la raison cynique*, traduit de l'allemand par Hans Hildenbrand, Christian Bourgeois, Breteuil-sur-Iton, 1987, p. 164.
[10] Viloric Melor, *L'arme du rire. L'humour dans les pays de l'Est*, Editions Ramsay, Paris, 1979.
[11] Czeslaw Milosz, *Op. Cit.*, p. 31.

Mais l'orientation de la poésie vers le concret de l'existence se produit, effet de la mutation des sensibilités dont il a été question, dans un registre qui, loin d'être placide, se révèle comme foncièrement ironique. Les vers de Geo Dumitrescu, poète de la génération de la guerre, en fournissent nettement l'exemple : « […] On ne fait rien depuis deux mille ans, / vive la guerre ! – on est des gens de doctrine qui méprisent la mort ; / contre le « général pellagre » et pour un siècle meilleur, / hé, l'ingénieur, une conduite d'oxygène pour notre alliée Mars ! » (*Pellagre*[12]). D'ailleurs, tout le volume dont la poésie citée fait partie porte l'empreinte d'une ironie tournée contre la guerre et ses horreurs et, implicitement, contre le pouvoir fasciste qui les a rendues possibles. Cela explique aussi pourquoi l'ouvrage, initialement intitulé *Pellagre*, n'a pas pu paraître en 1943 pour des raisons de censure[13], mais seulement trois années plus tard sous le titre *Libertatea de a trage cu puşca* [*La liberté de tirer au fusil*][14]. A l'heure de sa parution, l'ordre communiste était déjà installé et, par conséquent, tout discours critique mené contre la guerre et contre un ancien ennemi ne pouvait que bénéficier d'une bienveillance, malgré sa charge ironique autrement suspecte pour un régime totalitaire qui ne peut approuver que l'univocité de la pensée et de l'expression. Que cette ironie tolérée au départ par le pouvoir communiste aille se retourner bientôt contre lui-même n'est, d'un certain point de vue, qu'une ironie plus grande, du sort. Victimes du nouveau système politique qui trahit toute attente, mais qu'ils avaient pourtant salué avec une ardeur naïvement militante, les poètes de la génération de la guerre tels que Geo Dumitrescu, Eugen Jebeleanu ou Nina Cassian sont, à de degrés différents, les premiers à découvrir dans quelle mesure l'ironie est « merveilleusement adaptée à une écriture sous contrainte, dans une situation de persécution ou de censure, car la subtilité de ses marques trie le public auquel on révèle le véritable sens du texte. »[15]

Même si la poésie qui thématise la guerre garde, sous la plume d'Eugen Jebeleanu ou de Nina Cassian, un ton plutôt solennel[16], n'ayant rien de la force ironique relevée par les poèmes de Geo Dumitrescu à ce sujet, parmi leurs créations ultérieures[17], celles qui visent les réalités du régime – dont ils se sont

[12] „[...] De două mii de ani nu facem nimic, / trăiască războiul! – suntem oameni cu doctrină şi cu dispreţ de moarte; / împotriva «generalului pelagră» şi pentru un veac mai bun, / hei, inginer, o conductă de oxigen pentru aliata noastră Marte! [...]" (*Pelagră*). [*n.t.*]

[13] A ce moment-là, la Roumanie était l'alliée des pouvoirs de l'Axe. La dictature profasciste du maréchal Antonescu allait être renversée en 1944 lors de l'entente entre la monarchie roumaine et la Russie communiste.

[14] Geo Dumitrescu, *Libertatea de a trage cu puşca*, Fundaţia Regală pentru Literatură şi Artă, Bucureşti, 1964.

[15] Florence Mercier-Leca, *L'ironie*, Hachette, Paris, 2003, p. 73.

[16] Voir les volumes *Ceea ce nu se uită* [*Ce que n'on oublie pas*] – 1945 et *Surâsul Hisroshimei* [*Le sourire d'Hiroshima*] – 1958 pour Eugen Jebeleanu et *Tinere□e* [*Jeunesse*] – 1953 pour Nina Cassian.

[17] Voir surtout les volumes Voir *Hanibal* [*Hannibal*] – 1973 et *Arma secretă* [*L'arme secrète*] – 1980 pour Eugen Jebeleanu et *Numărătoarea inversă* [*Compter à l'inverse*] – 1983 et *Jocuri de vacanţă* [*Jeux de vacances*] – 1983 pour Nina Cassian.

distanciés plus (Cassian) ou moins (Jebeleanu) explicitement – s'accordent bien avec l'ironie. Plusieurs poésies publiées par ces deux écrivains au début des années '80, d'ailleurs la plus difficile du point de vue des restrictions éprouvées, semblent partager le même désenchantement ironique : « Avoir toujours de moins en moins / est la meilleure des choses / Moins de jours et / Moins de tabac […] Ne pas penser, ne pas sortir/ ni « aïe», ni « oh », ni « ouf », / Et de toutes les grands nuages choisir / un petit nuage de patate » (Eugen Jebeleanu, *La patate dans les nuages*[18]) au alors : « La fin de l'été / ressemble à la fin du monde. / Tout est abandon et angoisse. / Le jour baisse / jusqu'à la perte de sa dignité. / Nos corps glissent dans des dalles de chiffon humides : / les manteaux déprimés. / Ensuite, accroupis, s'empêtrant, / dans les creux de la rue Hiver, / au coin de la rue Du Déclin …// Quel serait le but de vivre / avec l'idée de printemps / – dangereuse comme toutes les utopies ? » (Nina Cassian, *Vers la fin de l'été*[19]). Loin d'être la seule tonalité d'engagement ironique présente dans la poésie de la génération de la guerre, l'amertume que dégagent les vers de Jebeleanu et Cassian reste pourtant révélatrice pour un état d'esprit qui relève de l'ironie tragique. Dans l'acception hégélienne qui place la culpabilité tragique non pas dans la force de la nature, mais dans le choix de l'individu qui en subit le malheur[20], l'ironie de ces poètes serait également un moyen de faire amende honorable. Critique de l'événement historique et autocritique d'une histoire personnelle, l'ironie tragique de ces écrivains dévoile un désenchantement tutélaire impossible à ignorer sans préjudicier la complexité du phénomène ironique dans l'oeuvre de toute une génération de poètes.

Cependant, au-delà de cet aspect extrêmement intéressant, la poésie ironique d'Eugen Jebeleanu et de Nina Cassian revêt aussi des articulations risibles. Qu'il s'agisse d'une portée humoristique (« Du temps que David était roi, / Un tel vint devant lui: <Dis-moi, / Les raisins secs où sont-ils ? Dis! / Plus un seul grain dans ce pays ! / On les faisait de raisins doux: / C'était la joie alors chez nous !> / Le roi fit: <ils seraient bons, mais / Nous n'avons plus la chose ou les ... > / <Les quoi ?> s'enquit la pauvre cloche. / <Ou les fourrer: pas de brioche !> », Eugen Jebeleanu, *Le chapeau et la patère*[21]) ou bien d'un accent

[18] „Să ai mereu tot mai puțin / e lucrul cel mai bun / Tot mai puține zile și / tot mai puțin tutun [...] Să nu gândești, să nu mai spui / nici „au", nici „vai", nici „of", / și dintre norii mari s-alegi / un nor mic de cartof" (*Cartoful în nori*). [*n.t.*]

[19] „Și când vine sfârșitul verii, / parcă vine sfârșitul lumii. / Totul e pustiire și spaimă. / Ziua scade / până la pierderea demnității. / Pe trupurile noastre cad / lespezi ude, de postav: / paltoanele deprimate. / Și-apoi, zgribuliți, poticnindu-ne, / prin hârtoapele străzii Iarnă, / colț cu Declinului ... // Ce rost are să mai trăim / cu ideea de primăvară / – primejdioasă ca toate utopiile?" (*Și când vine sfârșitul verii*). [*n.t.*]

[20] Ernst Behler, *Ironie et modernité*, traduit de l'allemand par Olivier Mannoni, Presses Universitaires de France, 1997.

[21] „Pe vremea regelui David / veni la el un individ, / spunând: - Ascultă, măi Davide, / de ce în țară nu-s stafide, / că ele mi se fac din struguri / și când le ciugulești, te bucuri. / David răspunse : - Ehehe ! / Ce bune-ar fi, dar nu mai e. / - Ce nu mai e ? – făcu săracul. / - În ce le pune : cozonacul !" (*Pălăria și cuierul*). [traduit par Romulus Vulpescu]

cynique (« Bon bilan de l'année. / Il y a eu quelques morts / mais moi je suis vivant. / Un continent s'est effondré / mais ma ruelle / se trouve au pays de Cocagne. / Il paraît que la peste approche / Pour les autres peut-être – / pas pour moi. », Nina Cassian, *Ego*[22]), ce genre de matière poétique rejoint l'ironie de Geo Dumitrescu qui avait ouvert, on l'a vu, la route du procédé en démystifiant la guerre. Même si son ironie face au contexte politique communiste sera moins fréquente et moins aiguë que dans les poèmes ciblant la guerre (« –„Dumitrescu, va-t'en!"– / disait le prof de musique – tu ne vois pas que tu n'as pas d'oreille, / pourquoi donc montrer son nez ? … / „S'il vous plaît, monsieur le professeur, / je veux aussi chanter en choeur!"…» (*Sciure*[23]), elle aura été particulièrement édifiante pour la problématique en débat. Les incertitudes d'interprétation soulevées par certaines de ses créations, qui pourraient être vues également comme approches élogieuses et ironiques du progrès communiste[24], constituent à cet égard un véritable point de départ pour saisir le rôle que l'ironie accomplit en tant qu'«instrument qui permet de déjouer les censures […] de façon toute particulière : elle désamorce d'autant mieux toute sanction qu'en surface elle tient le discours même du pouvoir que représente l'instance censurante »[25]. En fin de compte, c'est dans la lumière de cette ultime observation que l'ironie se révèle comme stratégie discursive éminemment protectrice d'une position critique autrement condamné au silence. Et, puisque les poètes de la génération de la guerre sont, en ce qui concerne le paysage de la poésie roumaine contemporaine, les premiers à employer le mécanisme ironique dans son sens éthique[26] circonscrit par la littérature de spécialité, c'est avec eux que débute l'aventure de la poésie ironique en tant que poésie engagée.

Préjugés et présomptions

Que la Poésie doit être engagée n'a pas été dans l'intention de cette démarche de démontrer. Que, par contre, toute poésie puisse être lue comme telle dans la mesure où on conçoit la notion d'engagement dans des limites plus généreuses que celles auxquelles la tradition critique nous a habitués à le faire, ce n'est pas la conclusion de ce travail, mais sa prémisse essentielle. Une

[22] „A fost un an bun. / Au murit câțiva / dar eu sunt viu. / S-a prăbușit un continent / dar pe ulița mea / umblă câinii cu covrigi în coadă. / Se pare că vine o ciumă. / Poate pentru alții – / pentru mine, mumă." (*Ego*). [*t.n.*]

[23] „ – «Dumitrescule, du-te-acasă!» – / zicea Domnu' de Muzică – nu vezi că n-ai ureche,/ cu ce nas vii aici?.../ «Vă rog, domnu' profesor,/ vreau şi eu să cânt în cor!»... " (*Rumeguș*). [*t.n.*]

[24] Voir *Problema spinoasă a nopților* [*Le problème épineux des nuits*], *Macarale la marginea orașului* [*Des grues en marge de la ville*].

[25] Groupe µ, *Ironique et iconique*, dans «Poétique», no. 33-36, Seuil, Paris, 1978, p. 442.

[26] Selon Pierre Schoentjes, l'ironie esthétique et élitiste d'origine romantique aurait subit une démocratisation dans la période d'après-guerre, devenant accessible à tous grâce au même vécu et le rapport réflexif entretenu avec la création aurait été remplacé par une prise de position lucide face à la vie. V. Pierre Schoentjes, *Poétique de l'ironie*, Seuil, Paris, 2001.

prémisse qui – travaillée à l'aide des exemples que la poésie roumaine écrite sous le communisme fournit en commençant par l'œuvre de trois poètes appartenant à la génération de la guerre (Eugen Jebeleanu, Geo Dumitrescu, Nina Cassian) – a été vouée à un objectif scrupuleux : prouver que la poésie ironique en tant que poésie engagée acquiert, dans des circonstances historiques et littéraires bien précises, sa légitimité et sa valeur[27].

BIBLIOGRAPHIE

ŒUVRES :

CASSIAN, Nina, *Jocuri de vacanţă*, Cartea Românească, Bucureşti, 1983.
CASSIAN, Nina, *Numărătoarea inversă*, Editura Eminescu, Bucureşti, 1983.
CASSIAN, Nina, *Tinereţe*, Editura Tineretului, Bucureşti, 1953.
DUMITRESCU, Geo, *Libertatea de a trage cu puşca*, Fundaţia Regală pentru Literatură şi Artă, Bucureşti, 1964.
DUMITRESCU, Geo, *Poezii*, Curtea Veche, Bucureşti, 2000.
JEBELEANU, Eugen, *Arma secretă*, Editura Albatros, Bucureşti, 1980.
JEBELEANU, Eugen, *Poezii*, vol. I, Editura Minerva, Bucureşti, 1974.

REFERENCES CRITIQUES :

ADORNO, Theodor W., *Notes sur la littérature*, Flammarion, Paris, 1984.
BEHLER, Ernst, *Ironie et modernité*, Presses Universitaires de France, 1997.
CRĂCIUN, Gheorghe, *Aisbergul poeziei moderne*, Editura Paralela 45, Piteşti, 2009.
DENIS, Benoît, *Littérature et engagement*, Seuil, Paris, 2000.
MELOR, Viloric, *L'arme du rire. L'humour dans les pays de l'Est*, Editions Ramsay, Paris, 1979.
MERCIER-LECA, Florence, *L'ironie*, Hachette, Paris, 2003.
MILOSZ, Czeslaw, *Témoignage de la poésie*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1987.
SARTRE, Jean-Paul, *Qu'est-ce que la littérature ?*, Gallimard, Paris, 1948.
SCHOENTJES, Pierre, *Poétique de l'ironie*, Seuil, Paris, 2001.
SLOTERDIJK, Peter, *Critique de la raison cynique*, Christian Bourgeois, Breteuil-sur-Iton, 1987.
STAROBINSKI, Jean, *La poésie et la guerre. Chroniques 1942-1944*, Editions Zoe, Carouge-Genève, 1999.

REVUES :

« Poétique », no. 33-36, février 1978.

[27] Ce travail a été possible grâce à l'aide financière offerte par le Progamme Opérationnel Sectoriel Développement des Ressources Humaines 2007-2013, co-financé par le Fond Social Européen, dans le cadre du projet POSDRU/107/1.5/S/76841, intitulé „Etudes doctorales modernes : internationalisation et interdisciplinarité".

STUDIA UBB PHILOLOGIA, LVIII, 3, 2013, p. 127 - 139
(RECOMMENDED CITATION)

HOME AND EXILE IN CARYL PHILLIPS' *THE FINAL PASSAGE*

ANCA-IOANA MAIER[1]

ABSTRACT. ***Home and Exile in Caryl Phillips' The Final Passage.*** The article presents Leila, a young woman from the Caribbean and the consequences of her decision to migrate to England in search of a better future. The focus of the paper is on the way in which she strives to negotiate her place in the new location and the reasons why she fails to find a home there. However, it is precisely her failure that teaches her what a real home means. Her realisation triggers her final decision to return to the small island of her birth which, following her experience as an exile in England, Leila has come to conceive as her home.

Key Words: home, exile, the Caribbean, migration, new location, confusion, racism, home.

REZUMAT. ***Cămin şi exil în romanul The Final Passage de Caryl Phillips.*** Articolul este o prezentare a personajului Leila, o tânără din Caraibe şi a consecinţelor deciziei ei de a emigra în Anglia în căutarea unei vieţi mai bune. Articolul analizează felul în care personajul încearcă să-şi găsească propriul spaţiu în noua locaţie precum şi motivele pentru care această încercare eşuează. Totuşi, eşecul este cel care o învaţă pe Leila ce înseamnă „acasă". Ca urmare a ceea ce învaţă din experienţa exilului, Leila decide să se întoarcă pe insula unde s-a născut pe care numai acum ajunge să o perceapă ca adevăratul ei cămin.

Cuvinte cheie: cămin, exil, Caraibe, migraţie, noua locaţie, derută, rasism, acasă.

In an interview that he gave to Maya Jaggi in 1996, Caryl Phillips states that "[m]igration from former colonies has transformed Britain in the past fifty years. Caribbean migration has made a phenomenal impact"(157). The mass migration from the colonies to the English metropolis began with the arrival of Empire Windrush at Dover in 1948. It is estimated that over one hundred thousand people from the Caribbean migrated to England during the first decade after the Windrush.

Caryl Phillips's first novel, "The Final Passage", is set in the 1950s. Its main protagonist is Leila, a nineteen year old girl from the Caribbean who

[1] Anca-Ioana Maier is currently studying for her PhD thesis at Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca. Her subject is Ben Okri's prose. Contact address: <frodo2305@yahoo.com>.

decides to migrate to England in order to start afresh. The novel is divided into five parts: The End, Home, England, The Passage and Winter. Each of them focuses on several aspects of Leila's life and the consequences of the decisions she makes.

The novel begins with an end: Leila's resolution to leave for England following her mother who is there for medical treatment. There are other reasons behind her decision, too. One of them is her marriage to Michael which proves a failure from the beginning and which she hopes to revive. Inexperienced and without her mother's guidance, Leila believes naively that going to England "was going to be a new start after the pain of the last year" (Phillips 15) caused by her unhappy marriage. Another reason why she wants to leave is hidden in the breadfruit trees that she looks back at from the ship that is drifting away from the island's shore: "[a]gainst the deep blue-black sky the African breadfruit trees towered…They were brought here to feed the slaves…They were still feeding them. They would not feed Calvin" (Phillips 20). Leila is aware that the island of her birth offers limited opportunities to its inhabitants. They are still subjects of the British Empire who have not been allowed to break free and to progress. The islanders' main occupation is still cane-cutting, the same for which slaves had been brought from Africa by the white colonizers of the Caribbean. Those who want to improve their life standard, to earn more or to take a degree are forced to migrate. Arthur, Leila's former suitor, is such an example. He left for the United States to get a qualification there. This complex situation that Phillips encapsulates in the metaphor of the breadfruit trees is a literary translation of his own view with regard to the Caribbean people's migration. In the same interview with Maya Jaggi he states the following: "[t]here's nothing glamorous about immigration, it's usually made by people under duress…you leave because there's something wrong with where you are, and it's usually something painful for you to digest and deal with, politically or economically or both" (Phillips 166-7).

Leila is determined to offer Calvin, her son, a better future in the English metropolis, far from the island doomed to remain a periphery of the British Empire. With her mind set upon departure and starting a new life, Leila decides to sever all her connections with the island and the past. While packing her bags she becomes aware that if she wants to forget, "she must take as little as possible with her to remind her of the island" (Phillips 15). Despite her determination to make a life elsewhere, Leila cannot deny that something inside her links her to the island. When, from the deck of the ship she takes a last look at the shore, Leila "[felt] sorry for those satisfied enough to stay. Then she stiffened, ashamed of what she had just thought" (Phillips 20). Her contradictory feelings define her "ambiguous relation with her home country" (Weedon 77).

"The Final Passage" gravitates around the effects of a female character's migration to the metropolis and is less concerned with the political and economic reasons that set such a journey in motion. The writer carefully handles Leila's various emotions: ignorance, strong determination, confusion, suffering and alienation in order to offer the reader a comprehensive picture of the experiences of the first generation of the Caribbean immigrants to England. Situated at the opposite end in what his migration experience is concerned, Michael, Leila's husband, stands for a different facet of the same phenomenon. If Leila epitomizes those who could not adjust and consequently, decided to return to their home countries, Michael is the immigrant who, once in the promised land, breaks all the links with his old life and location and settles comfortably in the new one whatever hostile this is. With respect to Phillips's treatment of his characters as individuals rather than communities in "The Final Passage", Ledent contends that,

> [a] characteristic of "The Final Passage" is that exile in England is no longer viewed as an essentially communal experience…Even if it still carries allegorical implications for the whole Caribbean community, migration in this novel is lived very much on the intimist mode…By concentrating on an individual experience, Phillips challenges the monolithic nature of History, showing that it is actually made up of individual histories. (32)

In the 1996 interview, Phillips argues that "[h]ome, and different conceptions of it, is really what…all my work- is about" (167). "The Final Passage" is a novel that deals with several categories of home as conceived by Leila and the other characters directly connected with her: Michael, Millie, her best friend, and Bradeth, Millie's husband.

Of all four of them, Leila is the one who is nowhere at home. On the small island in the Caribbean, she is simply "the white girl" whom everybody avoids. During her short stay in England, Leila is unable to adapt to the new milieu. Her inability comes, on one hand, from her fears and prejudices about the white people instilled in her by her mother. On the other hand, racism ruins any possibility of communication between the black immigrants and the majority white population of England.

Leila is a hybrid. She is the daughter of a black woman and a white man. Until late in the 20th century, the offspring of an interracial couple were seen as "the moral marker of contamination, failure, or regression" (qtd. in Buchanan 174) as it was believed that misgenation resulted in the dissolution of the superior races' blood (Smith 250). According to Brad Buchanan, "Caryl Phillips's fiction takes us into the world of commonplace, underprivileged cultural 'hybrid', caught in an unglamorous triangle between England, the United States and the Caribbean" (175). This is the reason why, "it seems to present a pessimistic vision of the notion of hybridity itself" (Buchanan 175).

Leila's initial sense of unbelonging springs from the shame of not knowing anything about her white father. As her mother never mentions him to her, Leila has no idea whether he is dead or alive although she prefers to presume that he is dead, maybe as a defense mechanism against the others' possible derision: "her mind blundered upon her father, and her head turned slightly as if avoiding derisive eyes…though Leila had always presumed him dead there was no reason for this to be so…Perhaps he was still alive?" (Phillips 64). Her friends' malicious allusions at her mixed blood (they call her "Mulatto girl") and her mother's blunt refusal to share with her daughter the mystery of her birth deepen Leila's feelings of alienation. Her mixed parentage sets her apart on the island whose majority population is black. Instead of conferring her a privileged status, her light skin isolates her. Except for Millie and Bradeth who accept her unquestioningly, the rest of those who know her, Michael included, consider her white skin a mark of superiority. Her colour transforms her into the Other whom the rest do not accept too easily. Referring to Leila's status on the island, Ledent argues that "[e]ven in the Caribbean [Leila] is withdrawn…Called 'the white girl' by Michael's grandmother, she seems to be excluded by the predominantly black community because of her mixed parentage and her alleged social superiority…" (32). Part of Michael's attitude towards her might come from his false acknowledgement that she is superior to him because of her white skin. It is also fueled by those who consider that he is not a good match for her: "[m]ost people thought Leila too good for Michael. But he felt that to talk of this with anyone,…,was admission to his alleged inferiority. Therefore he kept his anger locked up. This frustrated him" (Phillips 42).

Mother-daughter tense relationship does not help Leila find stability or equilibrium. For her, her own mother is a stranger and one of the reasons she travels to England is her desire to reconnect with her mother in a desperate attempt to find her roots and so, to be able to make a fresh start. But fate is against her once more. By the time she gets to England, her mother is very ill in hospital. She dies soon after Leila's arrival. The frustration that Leila feels at her mother's death , though she never voices, emphasizes her alienation and her need to root herself in a past that had always slipped through her fingers: "she barely new her mother,…everything up until now had been a preparation for knowing, not the knowing itself. Her mother was almost a stranger, and even after four months in England Leila had never given up hope that she might still get to know her" (Phillips 132). Only after her arrival in England, Leila realizes that she cannot build a future for herself and her son without a solid foundation. Instead of breaking up with the past completely as she initially intended, Leila feels compelled to return to it for stability. When her mother dies, all her hopes of reconnecting with the past are shattered. For Leila, a new life in a foreign land would have made sense only "if she

could…share it with her mother" (Phillips 138). Hence, her impossibility to start afresh after her mother's death.

Leila's marriage to Michael is another source of frustration and distress for her. Their relationship is shaky from the onset and is a source of tension between Leila and her mother who warns her about Michael before their marriage: "the boy from Sandy Bay is no good. He loves himself too much and he will use you. He don't even have a job" (Phillips 34). Her mother reads Michael like an open book and her words are prophecies that come true. For Ledent, Michael is a parasite (23). Raised by his grandparents, he is forced to abandon school when his grandfather dies. He was only thirteen at that time. He has no qualifications and makes a living out of selling country fruit in the town and weeding the fields. His girlfriend, Beverly, has given him a son but he decides to leave her for Leila. However, he treats Leila like a pastime and never commits to her seriously. He constantly hovers between the two women, according to his whims. In the 1996 interview, Phillips explains his male character's oscillating behavior as a normal one in the Caribbean world:

> [i]n the Caribbean context that's not a big deal…There's a certain honesty to island societies where the place is so small everybody knows what's going on-but nobody wants to know. In a society like that, if you're going to have a mistress, or another woman, there's no point trying to be clandestine about it…Michael's behavior there would have been unquestioned. (Phillips 164)

He takes advantage by both women and offers nothing in exchange. Commenting on Leila and Michael's relationship, Ledent observes that "Leila and Michael seem to be instrumental in repeating patterns of domination" (23). These patterns are a continuation of the colonizer-colonized relationship and entail abusive attitudes of the colonizer towards the colonized. They are present even in the private sphere where they regulate man's relationship with his woman or women. Michael moves in with Beverly when he does no longer want to stay in his grandmother's house. When she buys him a second hand bike, instead of showing gratitude, Michael despises her for her alleged servility. He gets on the bike and rides away to St. Patrick to collect Leila, his future wife: "every time he looked from [Beverly] to the bike, and back again to her, he became increasingly angry, for in her eyes, in every line of her face he could see the full confession of her servility. He had finally looked away, wanting to see neither woman nor bike" (Phillips 88-9). His attitude shows that he considers himself superior to her because he is a man. Michael considers that he deserves everything and treats women as agents whose only role is to fulfill his desires.

His treatment of Leila is even worse. He deserts her on their wedding day and returns to Beverly. He is not present when his son, Calvin, is born. When he makes up his mind to leave Beverly and go back to his wife, he does it out of sheer selfishness not out of consideration for Calvin as Leila first

believes. He wants to accompany Leila to England which is for him the promised land. He gives her false hopes that he may make a good father and husband but his real reasons are obvious: "Michael turned to face [Leila] and he held her hand tightly. Maybe as a family it was what they needed? There was work there, wasn't there? And there was opportunity?" (Phillips 95). Leila has got to know him by now but she lies to herself once again hoping that in England she will be able to save her marriage: "she saw him still as both a destroyer and a partner, but she knew that he too would come to England because Calvin needed a father" (Phillips 95).

Michael is not the man to fulfill Leila's dreams. He leaves for England to fulfill his own ambitions that are grounded in his grandfather's advice to him when he was still a child: "West Indian man always have to leave his islands for there don't be nothing here for him, but when you leave, boy, don't be like we. Bring back a piece of the place with you. A big piece" (Phillips 42). His grandfather instills in him the love for material possessions and the desire to accumulate as much as he can. As soon as he sets his foot on English soil, Michael's selfishness shows its teeth again. Once more he shuts Leila out and decides "to give her nothing in return, except for his anger or his all too familiar silence" (Phillips 164). Leila painfully realizes that "her marriage was again to be tolerated, not shared" (Phillips 164) while "Michael came to admit that his future might not include Leila, in the same way that his present did not include Beverly" (Phillips 169). Shortly after they set in their new house, Michael turns into a visitor to their new place. He grows more and more distant. In the end, Leila and Michael become again the two strangers they had always been and instead of reviving, their marriage breaks for good: "[Michael] failed not only to see her but to speak to her. His mind, though obviously burdened, was something she was now denied access to…Her marriage was dead, …His footsteps became more distant, the echoing of his shoes lighter, missing first one beat and then another, until they finally faded altogether" (Phillips 197-8). Michael decides that, if he wants to make a fresh start, he has to put his past and the Caribbean behind him. He starts a relationship with a blonde woman, presumably an English native, takes up a job and deserts Leila. Again, Phillips explains Michael's behavior as follows: "[t]he problem is when you come to England, it's a different set of rules. There is anonymity, but paradoxically, that means you've got to come clean; because there's the potential to hide, there's more pressure on you to be open. In London, Michael makes a clean break, packs his bags and goes, because he can't do the same, 'here I am, there I am', thing that worked in the Caribbean" (164). Phillips further argues that when someone like Michael moves to a new country, one cannot and must not expect the respective country to accommodate the newcomer's values. Rather, it is the other way round: it is the newcomer who has to adjust and adopt the new location with its set of rules (165). Michael

understands quickly that Leila and Calvin become burdens for him in England. A relationship with an English woman would help him find a place in the new milieu and open new opportunities for him. As Phillips explains, Michael cannot apply the Caribbean patterns of behavior in England and have two women. As a consequence, he renounces the one who cannot bring any benefits to him: Leila. He also severs all his links with the past and rushes ahead without looking back.

Leila does not succeed in England because she has too many expectations: she expects to reconnect with her mother and find stability and to make her marriage work. She fails because she relies too much on those she loves. And both of them abandon her. Her mother dies before they get the chance to try at least to understand each other. In one of her rare confessions to Leila, she says, "Leila, child, London is not my home…And I don't want you to forget that either" (Phillips 124). It is a recognition by a first generation immigrant who fails to find a home in the metropolis and who, rejected by it, desires to return to her mother country. Her mother's words add to Leila's already troubled consciousness and confusion about the new location. Michael abandons her because he has never had genuine feelings for her. As her mother warned her, Michael used her for a new start in life, far from the Caribbean.

As in most diasporic writings, in "The Final Passage" the main character permanently compares the new location with the one she left behind. In Weedon's opinion, "[o]ne of the most striking features of the text is the contrast that it offers between life in the Caribbean and in London. This recurrent theme in black writing is evoked by images of colour versus greyness and warmth of human relations versus cold indifference" (77).

Leila finds London a depressing sight that frightens her: "[a]s they got off the bus she looked up in momentary alarm. The sky hung so low it covered the street like a dark coffin lid. The cars that passed by were just blurry colours, and the people rushed homeward, images of isolation, fighting umbrellas and winds that buffeted their bodies"(Phillips 160). The sky that looks like a coffin lid may be a premonition of her mother's death and of Leila's failure to make a living in England. The low sky that covers the street oppresses her. The English people's isolation and rush to get home is contrasted with the warm relationships that people develop in the Caribbean. When Michael leaves her for Beverly, people are supportive and sympathetic. They are ready to help her: "those in the village looked upon her with sympathy and made it clear they knew she was in no way to blame for what had happened. If she ever wanted for anything she only had to ask" (Phillips 83). Whereas in the Caribbean people know each other and develop close relationships based on friendship and mutual help, in London relationships are impersonal. London is a big place where people have no time to socialize and to form close connections. They cannot get to know everybody around and are always in a rush. This situation is best rendered in

the scene with the Christmas card that someone had pushed through the front door of Leila's house while she and Calvin were at the graveyard. Leila picks it up and reads it but to her surprise, "it was from nobody" (Phillips 205).

In the Caribbean, people and landscape alike are welcoming. Leila notices the difference between the two places as soon as she arrives in the new country. In England, "[t]here were no green mountains, there were no colourful women with baskets on their heads selling peanuts or bananas or mangoes, there were no trees, no white houses on the hills, no hills, no wooden houses by the shoreline, and the sea was not blue and there was no beach, and there were no clouds, just one big cloud…" (Phillips 142). As Ledent observes, in London nature is almost absent and people are as much divorced from it as they are connected to it in the Caribbean where "nature is omnipresent, almost like a character that bears the traces of the history of the island" (30).

The writer's focus in "The Final Passage" is the relationship of the immigrant with his/her new location. What he examines and criticizes is the white Britons' attitude in the 1950s towards the immigrants from the Caribbean. Leila's drama unfolds in the early 1950s when large numbers of immigrants from the Caribbean islands went to England invited by the British government to supplement the local labour force in a time of overemployment. The British Nationality Act of 1948 opened the doors of the metropolis for the citizens of the Empire. However, in England, the new arrivals were given a cold reception. They found out that England was not the country they had expected to find and had been taught to love. They soon discovered that England had turned them into the Other, isolated and excluded by the majority white population. In spite of speaking English and holding a British passport, the immigrants were not recognized as British because they were black. In his collection of essays, "A New World Order", Caryl Phillips comments on the situation of the Caribbean immigrants as follows:

> …to many white Britons these Caribbean migrants were uncomfortably and surprisingly British, and in order properly to exclude them and reinforce their alien status white Britons needed to accentuate the one aspect of their identity which these people could do nothing about- their race…Despite the evidence of the British passport in the hand of the Caribbean migrant, the nation could certainly agree on one thing. A black man could never be a British man. (273)

The widespread conception was that these people were there to take the white Britons' jobs, women/men, their houses and to undercut their salaries.

The colour of her skin is a permanent source of anxiety for Leila. In the Caribbean it isolates her because it is too light in comparison with that of the rest of the population. It also functions as a reminder of her mother's sin and of her missing white father. In England it does not help adjust because it is not white enough. In both places, the colour of her skin is a trouble maker: "[i]n

England Leila had suddenly found herself, her light skin starved of the sun, growing paler by the day. But she was more coloured than she had ever been before, and not shame exactly, but feelings of inadequacy prevented her from looking back into the mirror" (Phillips 195). She realizes again that she is the one who stands out in the crowd against her will.

Phillips emphasizes the exacerbated importance given by the white British to the colour of the skin in Miss Gordon's (the social worker in charge with Leila and Calvin) treatment of Calvin. Her impossibility to hide her discriminatory feelings is obvious in the way she handles the word "coloured":

> …when she touched Calvin…Leila was sure that it was done to see if his skin colour was invented or real, to see if his blood was cold…she always swallowed either just before or just after the word coloured, as if ashamed of it, and Leila felt sure that when she spoke to her parents about her work she steeled her face when she reached the word coloured. (Phillips 199)

Leila is at odds with the new location and feels like a stranger there from the moment she sees how bleak England is. Upon setting her foot on the English soil, she "quickly realized she would have to learn a new word: overcast" (Phillips 142). Their new status of foreigners, the Other and freaks is highlighted by the presence of the television and cameras at the docks on their arrival. The English are curious to see who these aliens who landed at their door are. From the very beginning, the migrants are curiosities for the natives. The writer anticipates their fate of outcasts in the image of the suitcases that line the deck and which look like houses on a slum street (139). The house-like suitcases are also an anticipation of the house where Leila, Michael and Calvin have to live first. It is the same house where Leila's mother had lived before she went to hospital. The conditions are appalling and contrast strikingly with Leila's expectations. She is so shocked by what she finds that she wonders "what else her mother had left unsaid. It made her wonder if tomorrow would throw up some discovery more awful than this one" (Phillips 151). The decrepit house is the shelter of numerous immigrants who live there in despicable conditions. During the first night, Leila and Calvin have to sleep in the bath which Ledent characterizes as "the ultimate symbol of Western comfort" (20) while Michael and Earl, the West Indian landlord, are forced to sleep in the same bed, "head to foot", a position in which slaves used to sleep on board of slave ships (Ledent 20).

When they start looking for a house to move in, Leila and Michael are faced with blatant discrimination. The advertisements at the window are obviously and intently racial. "No Coloureds", "No vacancies for coloureds", "No blacks" they read as if black people were a plague to be avoided. Again, the Caribbean and England are presented as two opposing realities: "[w]hereas in the Caribbean black people constitute all social strata, in London they are restricted to particular areas of the city and particular jobs" (Weedon 78).

When Leila finally manages to find a house for them, it is far from making a home. It is filthy and cold comes in through the empty frames that once held the window pane.

According to Phillips, in 1985 when he wrote the book, black people were still not given access to key jobs or to key positions in any field: there were no black MPs or black footballers in the English national team. There were hardly one or two blacks in the cricket team (167). Back in the 1950s, the situation was much worse. Black people were forced to take up menial jobs in which they were exploited and treated worse than animals. At work, Edwin, Michael's colleague, tells him about the English way of dealing with the blacks: "all you need to remember is that they treat us worse than their dogs…you going to behave like a kettle for without knowing it you going to boil. It's how the white man in this country kills off the coloured man. He makes you heat up and blow yourself away" (Phillips 168). It is the English way of despising and defying the newcomers, of showing them that they do not belong. It is a way of marginalizing them.

Leila's impossibility to adapt to the new milieu has several causes: her feelings of shame and unbelongimg, the result of the absence of her father and of the tense relationship with her mother; the colour of her skin that proves an obstacle to her integration in the society of the island and in England; her intense desire to strengthen her connections with her mother and the latter's death before they have the chance to get to know each other better; her naiveté regarding Michael and his real intentions of joining her to England. Her alienation is deepened by her impossibility to socialize with white people. When she comes to England she already has a deep-seated fear of them instilled in her by her mother who had always advised her to keep away from the white people. She also fears them because of the dysfunctional relationships between the whites and the black population in the Caribbean. These relationships perpetuated the colonial pattern of domination and instilled in the two parties a fear of trespassing each other's territory. Thus, the doctor who looks after her mother reminds Leila of "the white men [in the Caribbean], who spoke to her with a smile on their face as if afraid that to release it might be interpreted as sexual aggression, or colonial bullying or both. And so the sugary smile became part of their uniform" (Phillips 152). Leila fails to establish a viable relationship with her good-hearted white neighbor Mary, because she cannot trust her. She is puzzled by the white Britons' aloofness, their lack of affectivity and their learnt politeness. She feels that there is something false behind that amiable behavior which translates into the sugary smile that they all display. She is also suspicious of "the typically English reserve she encounters" (Buchanan 178) which is so far from the welcoming nature of her Caribbean fellows.

The death of Leila's mother "can be equated with the loss of the homeland" (Ledent 25). For Leila, she represents her past which she had to

reconnect with in order to be able to start a new life far from the Caribbean. Her mother is the anchor that would have enabled Leila to root herself in the new location. When she dies, Leila becomes adrift. She loses her hopes of finding stability and the proper direction that could lead her to establish a home in England. Her mother was the only person whom she trusted, hence, her decision to follow her in England. According to Ledent, for Phillips, the past is "something that cannot be escaped but might turn into an anchorage point for the migrant" (25). It is something that Leila becomes aware of only when she arrives in England and loses her mother.

The mother's grave is a common one which contains two more occupants. If for Leila "[h]er mother was more than mere scratching on soft English stone" (Phillips 203), for the English authorities who put her in a common grave, she is nobody. In their opinion, even in death, she is an alien for the English society, one who does not count in any statistics. She cannot be British because she is black and as a marginal, she does not deserve an honorable burial place. England's relationship with its immigrants is a perfect copy on a larger scale of Leila's marriage to Michael. Like their relationship, that of the metropolis with the inhabitants of its peripheries in tolerated and not shared. By placing the mother in a common grave, the authorities also attempt an erasure of her identity. Hers is one more name added to the other two above it. She is not important as a citizen because she is not recognized as a British one.

Ledent argues that, "the loss of self-esteem…often marked the early life of Caribbean immigrants in England" (20). It is my opinion that it was robbed rather than lost. England treated the immigrants with contempt although it was the British authorities who called them to the metropolis in the first place. The inhuman treatment that the immigrants had to put up with paralleled by their wish to offer their descendents a better life forced them to accept humiliations, the most degrading jobs, intolerance and insults. The majority white population and the English authorities trampled over their pride in an attempt to turn them into something less than objects. The strongest of them remained in England and tailored a life for themselves and for their children. Others, like Leila, decided to return to their homelands, unable to adapt.

Leila also fails because she is aimless (Ledent 24) and passive. She is so confused by the unfortunate circumstances of her life that she does not know how to deal with them. She is overwhelmed with fear of the white people and apart from her decision to join her mother to England in an attempt to get closer to her and to provide Calvin with a better future, she has no idea what to do with her life. She is unable to make a way for herself and Calvin in the new location. Although she knows that Michael has another woman, she still marries him. When he leaves her for Beverly during their wedding party and later, in England, for a blonde woman, she does not do

anything about it, neither does she confront him. Instead of reacting, she indulges in complacency and takes destiny as something that cannot be changed. Her passivity and her refusal to change are made clear in a dialogue between her and her former suitor, Arthur. He, who knows her potential, urges her to be more determined and to better her life: "[y]ou, the brightest girl in the High School, you shouldn't be doing a clerical job, you should be studying, you should be coming to America, too. You must be more forceful and make them realize how determined you are" (Phillips 80). Instead of approving and following his well-meant advice, Leila wishes him to go away and leave her alone, considering him a dreamer: "she knew she would never wait for him, never think of him again…for simple dreams cluttered his mind" (Phillips 81). She declines his marriage proposal and accepts Michael in his place, disregarding her mother's warnings. Leila is defeated by her own aimlessness, passivity, wrong decisions and ultimately, by the British racism.

The oak tree which towers over the grave of Leila's mother symbolizes the British Empire that rejects her as a lesser being. The oak is a strong lofty tree with a thick crown. It denotes power. As such, it may be interpreted as a symbol of the British Empire which dominates its former and present colonies. The oak's towering over the grave can represent the Empire's recklessness to grant freedom to those whose lives once depended on it.

With its roots deeply buried in the ground where her mother lies, the oak may also stand for a sense of stability and rootedness that Leila is only now beginning to acquire and which accounts for her final decision to return to the Caribbean.

Leila's decision to return to the island of her birth is based on her realization that England will remain a stranger to her in the absence of her mother: "England, in whom she had placed so much of her hope, no longer held for her the attraction of her mother and new challenges" (Phillips 203). After her English experience, she has reached the conclusion that the small island in the Caribbean is her real home. There she feels safe and welcome because as Millie, her friend, says, "home is where you feel a welcome" (Phillips 115).

Phillips allows Leila to go back to the Caribbean but her return does not mean a defeat. It is an achievement based on a realization. The exilic experience teaches her what home means: a small island, away from the English racism, isolation and oppressive skies and two friends who are always there for her. It also provides Leila with a new identity and a sense of belonging. Throughout the novel Leila fails to develop a hybrid identity that would enable her to adjust to the new *environment. But her decision to return to the Caribbean shows that she is beginning to overcome her passivity and hesitations and there is hope that finally she will find stability there and integrate completely eventually.*

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Phillips, Caryl. *The Final Passage*. London: Faber and Faber, 1985. Print.

*

Buchanan, Brad. "Caryl Phillips: Colonialism, Cultural Hybridity and Racial Difference". *Contemporary British Fiction*. Eds. Lane, Richard, J., Rod Mengham, and Phillip Tew. Polity Press, 2003. 174-188. Print.

Jaggi, Maya. "The Final Passage. An Interview with Writer Caryl Phillips". *Black British Culture and Society*. A Reader. Ed. Kwesi Owusu. London: Routledge, 2000. 157-169. Print.

Ledent, Bénédicte. "The Early Ficiton". *Caryl Phillips*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002. 17-45. Print.

Phillips, Caryl. "The Pioneers: Fifty Years of Caribbean Migration to Britain". *A New World Order*. London: Secker& Warburg, 2001. 264-282. Print.

Smith, Andrew. "Migrancy, Hybridity and postcolonial studies". *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies*. Ed. Neil Lazarus. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008. 241-261. Print.

Weedon, Chris. "Identity and Belonging in Contemporary Black British Writing". *Black British Writing*. Eds. Arana, Victoria, and Lauri Ramey. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004. 73-95. Print.

STUDIA UBB PHILOLOGIA, LVIII, 3, 2013, p. 141 - 163
(RECOMMENDED CITATION)

THE CULTURAL POETICS OF DESIRE OR THE FEMININE PRINCIPLE IN AYI KWEI ARMAH'S NOVELS

FOUAD MAMI[1]

ABSTRACT. ***The Cultural Poetics of Desire or the Feminine Principle in Ayi Kwei Armah's Novels.*** **Ayi.** Kwei Armah (1939-) is a Ghanaian novelist who thinks that African individuals and communities, with no awareness of the diametrically opposed essences of Europe and Africa, remain doomed to experience loss and confusion. What feeds Africa's present cultural malaise, according to the writer, is the history of the continent's unconscious exposure to Greek perceptions of desire.

Keywords: patriarchal, mindset, matriarchal, vision, society, Greek desire, violence, Africa.

REZUMAT. ***Poetica culturală a dorinţei sau principiul feminin în romanele lui Ayi Kwei Armah*****.** Ayi Kwei Armah (1939-) este un romancier ganez care consideră că indivizii şi comunităţile din Africa, care nu au conştiinţa esenţelor diametric opuse ale Europei şi Africii, sunt condamnaţi să sufere pierderi şi să facă confuzii. Ceea ce contribuie la prezenta indispoziţie culturală africană este istoria expunerii inconştiente a continentului la percepţiile de tip grecesc ale dorinţei.

Cuvinte cheie: patriarhal, mentalitate, matriarhal, viziune, societate, dorinţa grecească, violenţă, Africa.

1. Introduction

In this article, the thesis of African matriarchy shown as the core of Africa's glorious past and which Ayi Kwei Armah champions as his project for a redemptive egalitarian society is investigated. The present study attempts to underscore the details of Armah's understanding of the ways in which a coherent and morally sound civilization was lost following the dramatic and violent events which characterized the slave trade and colonisation. By tracing desire as a central issue in Armah's *imaginaire*, readers can be in a position to

[1] Dr. Fouad Mami is a senior lecturer (Maitre de Conference, Class 'A') at the department of English, "Colonel Ahmed Draia" University, Adrar (Algeria). He is interested in contemporary African Literature, mainly Nigerian novels and short stories. He has published articles on several African Anglophone writers and his work in progress is a monograph on Theodore Adorno's *Negative Dialectics*. Contact address: <fouad.english2010@gmail.com>.

signal the presuppositions that underlie his vision for a major African renaissance. This concern runs parallel to the author's attempt at stripping bare the misconceptions of cultural imperialism on Africa. Much of his prose fiction reflects the opinion that the intellectual dependency of Africa on foreign sources continues, even after decades of political independence. And unless this intellectual dependency is countered, Africa will remain short of any mechanisms that can bring about a positive change. In *Two Thousand Seasons* (1973), Armah evokes the 'rule of women', which according to him, was marked by peace and prosperity when compared to the rule of men, that which had been swallowed in violence and chaos. In *The Healers* (1979), Ajoa and Araba Jesiwa seem to have some magical and lasting impact on Densu. Astw in *KMT* (2002) raises some queries: "[W]hy some men can have four wives, meaning each wife has to make do with just a piece of a man. Why women can't lead prayers…" (*KMT*, p.167) While Ast saves Jacqueline from the fate of being a fourth wife in *Osiris Rising* (1995), the boisterous Ras Jomo Cinque Equiano says "[W]hy do you want each woman to have a man all to herself? Africans have always been polygamous." (*Osiris Rising*, p.153)

Ode Ogede aptly detects the primacy of desire as a theme in Armah's novels by noting that the context of this fiction is aggravated by "[T]he hardship suffered by women in Africa [that] predated colonialism and yet, despite the fact that many women fought alongside their male counterparts in the decolonization struggle, their marginalization has continued in many independent African countries." Therefore, any liberating ideology has to include and celebrate women as real partners and this is exactly what Ogede praises Armah for: "[S]ince the tradition of African women's active participation in liberation movements goes back to the time when the first shots were fired, it would have been authentically inappropriate if Armah had failed to give it due recognition in a novel whose agenda is to trace the roots of African resistance to colonial rule."[2] Ogede's focus was on *The Healers* but given the fact that *Osiris Rising* and *KMT* were still unpublished by the time Ogede raised this point, the same remark can be extended to these last two novels.

In short, the thrust of the argument in the present article amounts to identifying and discussing the far-reaching implications of Armah's cultural choices through an examination of his cultural poetics of desire. Indeed, can desire trace a constructive ideology instead of the blind alley that characterizes Africa's present condition? Such cultural choices are shown in his experimentation with the interplay between matriarchal and patriarchal schemes for a future African society. Back in 1990 and in a lecture at the University of Berkeley

[2] Ode Ogede, "The Rhetoric of Revolution in Armah's *The Healers*: Form as Experience", *African Studies Review*, Vol. 36, N° 1 (Apr., 1993), p. 52.

entitled "Our Awakening", Armah views that one condition before Africa's revival is the "need to cultivate healing values that could help remake ourselves and then remake the universe." As to how this can be achieved, Armah considers "analyzing and seeing through the false values directed against us. After that, we also need to identify the generative patterns and put them at the center of our conversations, behaviour and institutions."[3] This statement illustrates how articulate Armah is when it comes to identifying the problems inherent in African cultures today and, similarly, the possible ways with which they can be effectively remedied. For the sake of consistency, the objective at this stage is, only identifying that desire and the way Armah deals with it in all his seven novels, to disclose certain ideological perspectives.

2. Orientalism, Gender and Politics

Armah is not the first one to refer to the primacy of desire as a concern. In this connection, theoretical references are already ripe. In his seminal work, *The Idea of Africa* (1994), often approached as a sequel to The *Invention of Africa* (1988), V. Y. Mudimbe, in a section entitled, "The Power of the Greek Paradigm," refers to the origins of the negative approaches of the early Greek geographers and travelers to the land of 'Libyans', 'Ethiopians' and other black Africans. Mudimbe quotes from, and reports on, Herodotus saying that "[T]he inhabitants [meaning African groups] do have some curious practices, such as burning the veins of the scalps or temples of their four-year-old children with grease of sheep's wool. They also use goat's urine to heal burns." [4] These strange manners, casually observed by Herodotus and a circle of geographers like him, were to feed the modern European *imaginaire* on the communities inhabiting these non-European territories. According to the same source, this inaccurate *imaginaire* was duplicated and widely circulated in the literature about the inferiority and superiority of races. In other words, the Greeks' early negative perceptions of Africa and Africans, in Mudimbe's opinion, have been digested as scientific truth and were uncritically reproduced by major Enlightenment thinkers justifying an assumed superiority. Likewise, Mudimbe notes that the Greeks' celebration of their own superiority was accompanied by a denigration of their southern neighbours, particularly those who have dark skins or their manners look unfamiliar. For Mudimbe, such an attitude constitutes an overconfident perspective of the world. He names the enduring legacy of such a perspective: "the power of the Greek paradigm". The cultural manifestations such worldview were heralded as scientific truths by European explorers during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries as these opinions paved the way for imperialism.

[3] Ayi Kwei Armah, "Our Awakening". Video Lecture at Berkeley University (1990), http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0wrTdqlBHK&feature-related

[4] V. Y. Mudimbe, *The Idea of Africa*. Indiana University Press, (1994), p. 76.

Similarly, Molefi Kete Asante, the founder of the Afrocentric School, has been motivated with founding an interpretive apparatus that is both scientific and unbiased to European stereotypical representations of Africa and Africans. For Asante, Afrocentrism as a research method is valid because of the Eurocentric racial and unscientific attitudes. Such attitudes can be traced all the way back to ancient Greece. For Greek negative notions *vis-à-vis* Africa and Africans laid the foundations for a distinguished cultural paradigm that ethically justifies European exploitations of African resources. In this line, Asante warns against uncritically subscribing to the European critical agenda:

> Casting Greece or what European writers have done as the categorical standard is assuming a pre-eminence in the interpretation and history that has neither been properly earned nor is rightly deserved given the numerous self serving and racist explanations of ancient history that one finds in Eurocentric histories.[5]

This study evokes the method of Mudimbe and Asante's works. The argument here holds that, in most of his fiction beginning with *Why Are We So Blest?* (1972) onwards, Armah compares between Greek notions relating to desire under patriarchal social structures with what he presumes as the healing African matriarchal structures. The comparison argues that African values of reciprocity and *Ma'at* can be deployed to form the nemesis of a just and egalitarian community. Armah sees Africa as essentially different from capitalistic Europe in the sense that the Greek heritage of violence and maximum profit forms the eternal rift between Africa and Europe. And in carrying this opinion, Armah is not alone. Molefi Kete Asante and W. Abraham are but two names that concur with the same Afro-centric vision and worldview that Armah carries.

In this connection, the love scenes between Modin and Aimée cannot make sense without being contrasted with those between Isanusi and Abena in *Two Thousand Seasons*, Densu and Ajoa in *The Healers*, Ast and Asar in *Osiris Rising* and finally, Astw and Djiely Hor in *KMT*. Attributing cultural dimensions through seemingly casual and sometimes even daring love scenes by Armah seems to have occurred in his earlier works. In *Fragments* (1970), Baako's love-making with the Puerto Rican Juana holds him intact, that is in full control of his mental capacities, if only for a while. For it is in Juana's absence that Baako finally succumbs to the shattering vertigo he used to complain of. Differently put, Armah's literary expression of desire aims at attributing an ideological background to love and love-making. Such a background is as central as to constitute the foundations of the writer's imaginative blueprints for the African society he foresees. The Greek paradigm of love together with

[5] Molefi Kete Asante, "Locating the Eurocentric Assumptions about African History" in: Molefi Kete Asante and Ama Mazama (eds.) *Egypt Vs Greece and the American Academy.* Images, Chicago, Illinois (2002), pp. 17-18

its accompanying approach to the relationship between man and woman and the role of each sex in society at large, Armah seems to imply, lies at the heart of his novelistic project for Africa.

3. The Greco-Roman Paradigm or Desire Perverted

It is quite interesting in this regard to observe that Ast's and Lindella's rediscovery of ancient Egyptians scripts in Armah's last two novels translates the writer's purpose to acquaint the reader with the principle of ancient Egyptian justice or *Ma'at*. Pharaonic Egyptians had a goddess whose function was to instruct people with the love of justice[6]. The principle of *Ma'at* can be encapsulated, for the sake of review, in the maxim of loving one's neighour! Contrary to kemetic (ancient Egyptian) understanding and according to one scholar, Biko Agozino, "[…] the ancient Greeks chose to de-emphasize love because they saw it only in terms of erotic love or Eros, ignoring the love of justice and the love in justice which the Egyptians saw as natural and divine." [7] The narrator of *Two Thousand Seasons* praises African women for being the guarding pillars of society. "The women were maintainers, the women were their own protectresses, finders and growers both." (*Two Thousand Seasons*, p.10) Only the mere appearance of Nandi could have stopped the fratricidal waste issuing from the cruel end of the Arabs' dynasty, a rule which had been marked by their sexual ogres. Armah never misses that "[O]ur women the predators from the desert turned them into playthings, for their decayed pleasure. And our women, they endured, acquiesced in the predators' orgies so uncomplainingly…" (*Two Thousand Seasons*, p.19) Ironically it is in the midst of their incestuous pleasure that the likes of Hussein, Faisal, Mohammed and Hassan find their 'just' retribution. While lustily devouring Azania's, Sekela's, and other pleasure-giving African women's bodies, the so called predators meet their cruel ends. The rule of women that followed was more humane and prosperous. "Fertile had been the rule of women…" (*Two Thousand Seasons*, p. 26), the narrator judges it.

The Healers, too, marks Armah's concerns with love as a resource base capable of shaping results of much wider and positive significance. Without Densu's longing and desire for Ajoa, Damfo's own daughter, the drama cannot shield the captivating course it takes. It would have been too dull and consequently too abstract and idealistic without what can be termed as the 'Ajoa factor' in *The Healers*. The narrator leaves little doubt as to the impact of Ajoa on Densu:

---

[6] Maulana Karenga, *Maat, The Moral Ideal in Ancient Egypt*. Routledge, New York & London (2004)

[7] Biko Agozino also adds that "The only thing the Greeks learned was the love of wisdom while they dismissed the wisdom of loving people as sentimental madness. They borrowed the idea that justice is a goddess from the Egyptians but due to their sexism, they insisted on blindfolding the goddess." Biko Agozino, "Criminology as Lovemaking: An African Centered Theory of Justice", *African Journal of Criminology and Justice Studies*, Vol. 1, N° 1: April, 2005, p. 14.

> [I]t was this power of Ajoa's over his spirit, this attraction against which he neither needed nor wanted to struggle, that had brought Densu close to Ajoa's father, Damfo. The more Densu tried to understand this the more he found it strange—that his relationship with Damfo had begun through Ajoa, and in such an accidental way. Yet sometimes he could see the accident was only on the surface. Deeper than the surface he could see connections; he could see natural links between his love for Ajoa and his long search for understanding and knowledge, the search that brought him all alive with conscious purpose, to Damfo. (*The Healers*, p. 66)

What looks like as a casual or immature fondness at first turns out to be a life vocation for the understanding and healing vocation. Ajoa's feminine radiance, beauty and good humour, exceeds physical attraction or erotic desire to display serious commitments. It is indeed Ajoa who helps Densu embrace certain ethical choices he would have found difficult or impossible to adopt otherwise. For it is partly her support that induces Densu to turn down Ababio's offer to him to join a political faction campaigning for Esuano's principality. In other words, Densu declines the possibility of being a king as a result of his love connection with Ajoa, the healer's daughter. In the same vein, Araba Jesiwa's first barrenness and subsequent suffering could not have taken place without favouring (one form of desire) at first Prince Bedu Addo over the craftsman Kofi Entsua. The fact of neglecting Kofi Entusa, her first and genuine love, had had disastrous effects on her sense of who she is as a woman (because of desire impaired). In the end only her rejection of the prince and her reunion (desire amended) with a life-long lover can make her want to beget a child. Her determination and ultimate ability to secure divorce from the prince, despite all odds and hazards, marks the end of her initial dysfunctionality. She later recalls to Densu that what she had to do was "… to accept *the desires of my own* soul and to know they were not wrong just because others might disagree with them. I had to do what was natural to me, and leave others to do what was natural to them." (*The Healers*, p. 79 Emphasis added). The rediscovery of her authentic self, as implicated in the novel's drama, is again an act not totally devoid of political implications. "…, Araba Jesiwa's soul began to dread annihilation, to fear the reduction of herself to nothingness equal to her husband's royal emptiness." (*The Healers*, p. 75) Here one cannot miss Armah's fusing of a woman's barrenness with political barrenness and failure; the first sterility implies the second. Such carefully detailed readings can be squarely called: the poetics of desire. For after Jesiwa's implied rejection and subsequent divorce, Bedu Addo soon leaves royalty for good, suggesting power vacuum. Feeling impotent, or undesired, as he cannot give Jesiwa the child she desperately desires, he finds no reason to stay at Esuano! And here love, or better still, desire, like its absence, makes and unmakes certain political choices. Indeed, it is the murder of Araba's much desired child, prince Appiah, that actually triggers radical

alterations in Esuano's, and the Gold Coast's entire social and political mapping, a fact which no reader can deny. [8]

Similarly, and by making their way through the hieroglyphic texts, the heroines in *Osiris Rising* and *KMT* find it logical to reconnect their own personal love and passions for the dead Asar and Biko respectively with the deep wish to rid modern day Africa of its pitiable state of affair. If Osiris' mythical vigour can be of any practical use, then it is none but his lover's collective regenerating task of unearthing, reconnecting and knowing that disproves Seth Spencer Soja's malicious claims. For at the deeper level, the drama in *Osiris Rising*, the way Armah structures it, can be said to be centered only on Ast. Ast's physical beauty is but one side of her superior moral character and elevated ideals. Seth, like the mythical Seth, that is, Osiris' jealous bother, is driven towards vile crimes simply as a result of unsolicited desire. His sexual impotency (inability to raise her attention while she was his classmate back in America and unsuccessful attempt at raping her later in Hapa) can be another way of tracing the roots to his hatred for Asar. The Nigerian critic, Gbemisola Adeoti, observes that in the novel "Seth is made to be sexually inadequate. In his failed bid to rape Ast, his sexual organ is deformed and impotent. In fact, the "thick yellow pus" oozing from the Deputy Director's limp organ inspires as much disgust in the reader,…" [9]

The shift from private commitment on the part of Ast, or the modern Isis, (desire even with the cost of a tragically lost lover) to the public stage in the two dramas of both stories is very convincing. Had there been no political instability (despotic military regime in Ast's case and the nefarious apartheid in Lindela's), the two women would not have lost their dear and much cherished lovers! The loss of the ethics of the *Ma'at*, equivalent in many ways to the love of one's neighbour, is then made responsible for the discord among Africans; some are in the paid service of foreign masters while others are trying to readjust and awaken the rest of the people to the need for self-

[8] In a careful reading of *The Healers,* Boutheldja Riche observes that Armah's portrayal of the advance of the British Army on Kumasi and the Ashanti resistance uncovers his approach to African identity in terms of the poetics of desire of Africa versus Europe. Such a portrayal "…personifies Africa and its people as essentially female deserving protection when they are obedient, and repression when they are rebellious, and the European conquerors as virile males…" Hence "T[he advance of Wolseley's army is depicted in highly sexual terms. The words 'press on', 'push on', and 'penetrate' verbs implying physical force recur when Armah describes Wolsely's incursion to Kumasi. Even Asamoa Nkwanta's defensive strategy is suggestively called 'the net'… however, by making Wolseley a cripple, Armah satirizes the colonial virility myth, and endows the white conquerors with sexual vacuity which triggers off their compensatory aggressiveness on the African people." Boutheldja Riche, *Myth in Ayi Kwei Armah's Novels: Use and Abuse*. Unpublished Magister Dissertation. University of Algiers, (1988), pp. 230-1

[9] Gbemisola Adeoti, "The Re-making of Africa: Ayi Kwei Armah and the Narrative of an (Alter) Native Route to Development." *Africa Media Review*, Volume 13, Number 2, (2005) p.10

respect. As with Abena and Nandi in *Two Thousand Seasons* and Ajoa and Araba Jesiwa in *The Healers*, Ast, Lindela and Astw hold the promise of an Africa regenerated principally by dedicated women. Their love or attachment to the ideals of their respective lovers keeps politics and political contests a heated arena between the well-wishing and malicious forces in Africa. After all it is their love (desire) or its absence that shapes the struggle in these dramas.

However provocative, the idea of desire having political implications is neither original nor ground-breaking. Ways and guidelines in sexual practices are part and parcel of all human cultures. Their manifestations and functions, though they vary from one cultural community to another, are indicative of people's perceptions of their own identities. Specializing in sexual habits in cultures, the historian, Gordon Rattray Taylor sees that people's sexual attitudes reflect their own notions about themselves, both at the personal and collective levels. The way any culture approaches sex, through religious laws, symbols or taboos, can be a rich source of examining gender relationship ordering their lives and the exactions of power within them as either healthy or not[10]. In terms of cultural politics, the late Edward Said in *Culture and Imperialism* (1994) discusses the relationship between the Orient and the Occident in terms of over-use and abuse of sex that recalls the post-modernist theories relating to sexual politics. With the triumph of western values and ethics, Africa and the Orient in general have been treated as a subdued feminine body at the mercy of its aggressor, Greek masculinity. The issuing violence of imperial conquests and colonial wars has been only a perpetuation of a certain male paradigm that believes in domination and subjugation over all that is feminine, womanly in a sense that can easily be pacified, underprivileged and almost perpetually kept in *statu pupillari.*

In fact, these same cultural sensibilities, with implications reflecting undesirable African realities, are voiced by the Nigerian feminist scholar, Nkiru Nzegwu. With direct reference to her Igbo background, she observes that "…the emergence of a healthy Igbo culture and political philosophy will require breaking down reactionary dogmas that have arisen in response to the colonially imposed patriarchal structure." For her the postcolonial experiment has been a failure because models of perceptions of gender roles have barely changed since colonial times. Therefore, at the level of power structure little progress is expected before:

[10] Gordon Taylor observes that: "[B]ut no type of attitude is more fundamental and more indicative of the trend of Personality than are attitudes to sexual matters**...**Hence the study of the changes in sexual attitudes is the very first step, the 'sine qua non', of all coherent historical research." Gordon Rattary Taylor, *Sex in History*. (1954), <http://www.ourcivilization.com/smartboard/shop/taylor/sexhst/foreword/htm> In a first chapter entitled: "Eros and Thanatos" Gordon Taylor emphasizes the role of sexual attitudes in cultural identity constructions. He says: "[E]ros and Thanatos permeate every compartment of human activity, and a history which attempts to ignore this fact is not merely emasculated but unintelligible. The first purpose of this book is to demonstrate how closely attitudes to sexual matters interlock with other social attitudes and even dictate them."

> …an imaginatively rethinking of the very foundations of society, and ridding it of fictive traditions and ideologies that forced women to adopt a diminished worldview. [O]nce we know that fictive traditions reinforced the prevailing anti-female ideology in the culture, we need not hold onto reactionary principles and specious traditions. [11]

Nzegwu acknowledges the setbacks of African tradition; a conclusion which Armah rarely reaches since he seems to frequently blame the negative part of tradition on some non-Africans' coercions and desire for exploitation of Africans. Armah, at least with the publications of his last two novels, seems determined to give African women the central place Nzegwu and her class of feminist activists' claims to have existed in Africa's millennial past. Kwame Ayivor, in his reading of *Osiris Rising*, notes that Armah's choice of *kemetic* names for his principal characters (Isis/Ast and Osiris/Asar) indicates his "ideological fleshing out of the whitewashed Greek influence from African classical civilizations and African-traditionalizing the Greek-imposed version of Isis-Osiris myth…"[12] And debunking the Greek myth and its ideological matrix implies debunking the epistemological foundations upon which this matrix is based. The kind of male-female relationship determines, as explained below, which matrix one ascribes to and identifies with. Seeking truly egalitarian ends with both sexes can be said to be Armah's main emphasis about what best distinguishes the African matrix from its Greek counterpart.

Armah validates Cheikh Anta Diop's thesis; the one that translates that Africa has always been predisposed to matriarchy, whereas Europe has been more in favor of patriarchy[13]. But Armah's narratives are more ambitious than just providing illustrations. He seems to advocate that multicultural dialogues and approaches are too constraining since people across the colonial divide cannot contradict the essences of the cultures to which they belong. While Europe and the west in general is bent on standardizing its Greek patriarchal

---

[11] Nkiru Uwechia Nzegwu, *Family Matters: Feminist Concepts in African Philosophy of Culture*. State University of New York Press, (2006), pp. 20-21.

[12] Kwame Ayivor, "'The Beautyful Ones Were Born and Murdered': Armah's Visionary Reconstruction of African History and the Pan-Africanist Dream in *Osiris Rising*", *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 2003; 38; 37, p. 54

[13] Diop maintains: "Negro matriarchy is as alive today as it was during antiquity. In regions where the matriarchal system has not been altered by external influences (Islam, etc.) it is the woman who transmits political rights. This derives from the general idea that heredity is effective only through matrilineally" Chiekh Anta Diop, *The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality*. Trans. Mercer Cook. Laurence Hill Books, (1974) p.143 Furthermore, he adds "… the dichotomy between the patriarchal North and the matriarchal South. The Osiris-Isis-Horus myth reflects the virtues of familial harmony and of fertility in which the woman enjoys due respect and pride of place. But Indo-European culture as a culture which had systematically subjugated womanhood, had troubles coming to terms with that positive image of the myth." Reported by Isidore Okpewho in: Isidore Okpewho, *Myth in Africa*. Cambridge University Press, (1983), p. 241.

notions of beauty and pleasure, Africans ascribing to the same notions are only defeating their purposes in seeking European approval. Carrying on along Diop's idea, Greg Thomas opines that "…it is merely 'masculine imperialism' which claims superiority for patriarchy while assigning a wild erotic inferiority to matriarchy." Greg follows: "This sexual imperialism is fundamentally racial, for matriarchy is not viewed as a conscious systematic choice by a given society; it is pictured as an uncivilized precursor of today's modern, white patriarchal west." [14]

In order to explain the idea of sexual imperialism as firmly anchored to the Greek paradigm, Armah suggests that Modin's matriarchal dispositions make him easily abused by the more patriarchally-predisposed Aimée. Thus Modin is warned by his African American friend: "Blue eyes gon eat you, brother. Blue eyes gon eat you for soul food. That's all she is looking for. Soul food. Things her people threw and wouldn't eat." (*Why Are We So Blest?*, p. 200) Consequently, Modin keeps only subserviently tied, unaware of the schemes 'his American girl-friend' is capable of. Modin's impetuous and brutal death at the end of the novel reflects Armah's thesis about the cost of cross cultural rhetoric. Armah at the end of drama shows how Aimée has been right from the start ready, because, predisposed, if not actually trained, to perpetuate violence. For her the pain she suffers at the hands of colonial French soldiers in the Algerian desert is processed and taken as part of some 'necessary catharsis'. Life for her, the author successfully implies, is more like a Greek tragedy where tears and inflicted pain are part of the ordinary and the norm. Meanwhile, Modin bleeds to death, that is, not reaching any possible redemption, because culturally speaking he never processes pain as catharsis, as there is no African catharsis according to Armah. Likewise, captured slaves in the infamous triangular trade are victims of an alien culture that is ready to thingify human beings and no amounts of catharsis can minimize or hide such atrocities.

Indeed, it is until the final scene in *Why Are We So Blest?* where the author brings the understanding that modern-day colonial soldiers, like the Christian fathers of yore, do lead a double life that is the result of false postulations. In the same scene, we see violence and pain being processed as inescapable. In order to desire some perverse pleasure, both Aimée and her tormentors have had to maim Modin and sacrifice him as a useless bull. Perhaps Aristotle does not mention catharsis directly in relation to desire or the pain inflicted from desire. It is true that he keeps on the subject of pain in very general and abstract manner. Eurydice, American novelist and author of

[14] Thomas Greg, *The Sexual Demon of Colonial Power*. Indiana University Press, (2007), p. 16 Greg similarly maintains: "Engaging Cheikh Anta Diop and Ifi Amadiume's writing s on matriarchy and patriarchy enables a radical, categorical challenge to sexual imperialism in the name of Pan-Africanism, grassroots Pan-Africansim worldwide.", p. 22

the bestseller *F/32* (1992), refers to catharsis in the context of pain inflicted from sexual abuse[15]. Her comments draw excellent parallels with Aimée in Armah's third novel:

> I think that violence is cathartic and I think it has been so since the time Medea killed her children, and Clytemnestra killed her husband. There's something very cleansing about it, and clarifying. It creates a density and a lucidity that life, in its tepid dailyness does not provide. Violence provides intensity, and I think that balance in written or reproduced form is very sexy...I think that there's something liberating in the fantasy of violence. Actually, rape is the most common fantasy among women….It's my understanding that it's not because women want to be raped at all, but it provides them with a freedom from responsibility. [16]

For catharsis, she seems to articulate, preserves the sense of who this abused woman want to be but without caring to focus on who she actually is. This initial contradiction is what keeps people uneasy about catharsis as a regenerating and reinventing force in the Greek paradigm of desire. For this woman writer, there is no trouble in tracing such a history of violence in catharsis up to ancient Greece. Violence, according to Eurydice's male-dominated (patriarchal) culture, is constitutional of identity. Once more, violence, and as Eurydice conceives of it, feeds into the main current of what ancient Greeks and today's Westerners actively perceive about themselves as 'balanced' individuals and productive members in society. Violence, particularly sexual violence which goes initially with little respect of feminity, becomes constitutional to modern day Westerners. Without the purging impact that is subsequent to violence, so the argument runs, man or woman cannot function constructively. Eurydice does not hide it that she is for rape since women, according to her, do appreciate the violent way in which rape is carried out. This violence is presumed to immune raped women from complaining about its adverse consequences. Fantasy, which could be a little variation from a surrender to irrational forgetfulness, provides a little balance and assures avenues for satisfying inadequate desire. Therefore, women as well as men are supposed to integrate their identity along cathartic lines where violence is not only frequent and intrusive but actually the norm and the law.

The same level fantasy and absence of a sustainable sense of logic in catharsis is observed by Tommie Lee Jackson when he says:

> Modin had been made aware through Aimée herself of the perverse nature of their relationship. In a moment of passion, Aimée has made it clear that her

[15] Eurydice, *F/32*. Fiction Collective 1992.

[16] Alexander Laurence, "An Interview with Eurydice", (1994) (Emphasis added) <http://www.altx.com/int2/eurudice.html>

> responses to Modin were predicated on Fantasy, on whether she could sustain the illusion of Modin as the slave boy Nwangi caught up in a web of deceit, desire and danger manipulated by her and her settler husband. [17]

Fantasy, as it issues from catharsis, comes with the need for justification. Aimée's justifies taking Modin for herself in terms other than partnership and mutual sexual gratification. For her, Modin is less artificial than the stimulating machine she used to test when they first met in the research lab. Jackson draws the parallel between Aimée and her relative Kapitan Reitsch, where conquered people are valued only in as far as they gratify the need of the presumedly superior settlers. This leaves the impression that desire for Aimée and her likes has been severely perverted.

In order to account for such perverted desire characteristic of western societies, Armah prefers to delve into sources prevailing before the rise of the Judeo-Christian restrictions. In order to do so, he has had first to explore the character of Aimée in her relationship with Modin. After that, and through Aimée's domineering attitude vis-à-vis Modin, Armah looks ready to go on with netting his thesis which amounts in the end to the idea that human races function constructively when they keep apart. The claim of a multicultural community with peaceful and harmonious attachments to one another is simply refuted in *Why Are We So Blest?* Although provocative and sometimes downright shocking, Armah's stand on the subject is not at all unjustified. Modin dies simply because as an African he cannot go on in life and live, like Aimée or the French soldiers. If Aimée actually extends her love only because she comes at odds (becoming sexually frigid) with the mechanistic drives of her society and its freezing and emotionally repressive regulations, then that extension cannot be genuine. Catharsis makes her an egoist. She is caught up in a vertigo of contradictions about self, love and sex that leave her psychologically unsettled, if not totally shattered, to the extent that in the end one wonders how she can pretend to offer honest care and love. In fact the reason why reference is made to Eurudice's *F/32* is that its heroine shows a lot of affinities with Aimée in Armah's *Why Are We So Blest?* While all by herself and without being obliged to share her narrative with other characters as well, Ela uncovers a lot about her conscious life. Like Aimée, the name Ela is richly suggestive; it is "a pseudonym meaning orgasm". The blurb of the book reads: "[T]he sight of Ela stops all hearts. Ela is an expert on love. No matter how many people love her, she daily inspires more. She spends half her life avoiding the people who love her, and the other half making them love her. She is mind-blowing." [18]

---

[17] Tommie Lee Jackson, *Ayi Kwei Armah and French Existentialism*. PhD Thesis, University of Nebraska (1985), p.124

[18] <http://nupress.northwestern.edu/title_f/32?ISBN=0-932511-38-4>

4. The African Feminine: Myth and Metaphor

Armah wraps his enquiry for the lost African matriarchy in a plethora of symbols carrying his philosophy of desire as a healing force. In Armah's last two novels, the ankh, the symbol unearthed by Lindela in her search for authenticity is actually the very one chosen by Armah to be the logo and the name of his publishing company, *Per Ankh*. Ast informs the cynical Afro-American Artist, Bailey, that Ankh is the "Sign of life. That was the ancient Egyptian word. *Ankh*. Life. Regeneration." (*Osiris Rising*, p. 131) According to the Dictionary of the Tarot, the Ankh stands for "[the] symbol of life, associated with the Phallus… Formed from the male (Osiris) and female (Isis) symbols. Union of heaven and earth, masculine and feminine [and] a key for unlocking the mysteries of life and death." [19] In Kemetic mythology, the goddess Isis casts all human females with divine attributions rendering them life-givers and therefore, sacred. Learning this detail helps Lindela and Ast to be more conscious with who they are; that is about their continental identity. They project their single efforts with Isis' efforts to rescue Osiris, searching for his body, giving him a proper burial and later searching again and recovering his mutilated parts just to honor him and preserve his creative life passion. In mythology, Isis breathed life into the dead Osiris' body long enough to conceive the hawk-headed, mangod of courage, Horus. However, notwithstanding Asar's and Biko's fate that varies only in factual details from that of mythical Osiris, still the analogy of Osiris' metaphor holds firm. Both of them are assassinated because of the loving ideals they stand for. Like Osiris' duel with Seth, Asar and Biko simply refuse to play modest about what they regard as necessary for self-definition, their dire wish to find their authentic identity and genuine self-esteem. The two heroines conceive of their late lovers not just in terms of individual desire and limited commitment. Rather, it is Asar's and Jengo's enduring regenerative task of commitment and activism for Africa that keep Ast's and Lindela's fire (desire) alive for their late companions. Ast, for one, passionately informs Asar in their first reunion:

> […] there are things I know about you. They attract me. I'm not talking infatuation. And I'm not interested in infallibility. What drew me when we met was what you were about. The direction you were giving your life. That's the key to your attraction: the clean sense of direction. It is the way I plan to live…" (*Osiris Rising*, p. 111, Italics added)

Here desire transcends individual and seemingly ordinary attachment into a force aiming for the regeneration of an entire continent. In another intimate instance, Ast does not miss to voice her burning desire for Asar, for she proclaims: "Sometimes, even as I hold you, Asar, I miss you." (*Osiris Rising*, p.166)

[19] Bill Butler, *Dictionary of the Tarot.* http://www.themysticeye.com/info/tarotsymbols.htm .

Interestingly, such a forceful passion inside the two heroines' hearts could not germinate into life without a similar passion going in parallel. Once warned by Ast to the SSS's capital threats against his life, Asar's passion for social change does not weaken. His answer is more reasonable than just rhetorical:

> I can't structure my life around the paranoid fears of a security boss. What we are doing is only a beginning. I'm not indispensable. There are several of us working toward the future. We can leave personal security obsessions to the other side. (*Osiris Rising*, p.165)

It is Isis (a female figure) that defines Osiris and makes his work on earth known to the rest of the world. Equally valid, however, it is Osiris who defines Isis and offers her the possibility for healing work. Without his exemplariness in striving to set the egalitarian basis for his community, the wife would neither feel obliged to leave his memory to posterity, nor desire a child from him. There is a kind of mutual self definition in the mythology of Isis—Osiris. Only by exteriorizing themselves (getting out of themselves or freeing themselves from the egotism and pettiness of their little individual selves) by leaving to work for the well-being of others can any of them win the identity and knowledge still cast on them today. Important, though, is the element of mutual completion and need for the other. It is easy to observe that without anyone of the two, none would be possible. Neither Osiris would be known to ancient Egyptians and modern readers, nor Isis would be found serviceable to any high and worthy aim. In the end, the didactics of the myth aims at the following objectives. First, he wins Osiris' status and glamour only he who has in his feminine companion Isis' qualities of love, reverence and commitment. Second, without Isis' unassailable will power, dedication and patience, Osiris' first task, though splendid and outstanding, would be easily forgotten. Hence why the need for intellectuals—healers and pathfinders to join forces and forget about petty battles over prestige. Only in this way can Osiris keep alive by being born again and again thanks to Isis, Ast and Lindela. Searching in her late companion's study, Ast finds an article written long ago by Asar entitled: "Who We Are and Why" Without passion, one cannot imagine the reason that fuels Ast to leave for good her prestigious teaching position at Emerson University (back in the United States), to settle down in Hapa despite all the risks and hardships. It is interesting to notice that Asar's message and example helps her to trust in herself and to set about with a mission that would promote her accomplishment. Asar's physical elimination by Seth cannot obscure his achievements. Meantime, Ast's desire for him keeps him born and reborn ever after. In fact, she already bears his baby, which is the promise of a new Asar—Osiris and she, too, is part of the group of intellectuals that work for the same objective.

In her grieving over Asar, Ast demonstrates her feminine potential. She is to perpetuate Asar's solidarity with his fellow citizens and to carry on his task on

earth, so that Armah bases the couple's militancy on their mutual love. The salt in Ast's tears, as she cries over her dead lover, evokes the salt of seawater all over Asar's drowned body. Salty water then ushers in the new identity each of the two lovers is forced to embrace. After the pain and the despairing dread of the moment, Asar becomes a life-generating symbol while Ast, the woman, works for the fulfillment of that symbol by providing credence and authenticity so that symbol can genuinely stand. But without feminine tears, a result of compassion and genuine love, the symbol cannot endure. This is the reason why African women are, in Armah's eyes, sacred. While learning to live without Asar, (the reason for her coming to Hapa state in the first place), she adequately switches to the next phase of her quest for identity. She makes Asar occupy a permanent place in her memory, so that he becomes a symbol and moral guide. This quality in Ast seems to reflect Armah's admiration for women's resilience. In this regard, one ought to recall Netta's warning of Ast from the consequences of uniting with Asar, even before meeting him: "You're asking to have your heart to be smashed if you fall for a fellow so busy working for justice in the future he's started at the odds of his getting killed in the present…" (*Osiris Rising*, p.72) Ast's passion in this context is understood as the element that echoes the flowing of water. For Armah, it is clear that African women's passion for social unity makes the matriarchal factor a viable option for the construction of modern day Africa.

5. African Desire as Healing, a Transcending Force

Regardless of what takes place at the end of the novel, one should again not miss the role of women in Densu's self-engineering. It is true that the hero was born with natural inclinations for unity and peace. He dismisses competition and ritualistic celebrations as ends in themselves. He prefers to consider instead practical remembrances preserving knowledge about the African self. But despite all the inclinations and the goodwill he starts with, he could not have made it to the eastern forest and with such aptitudes without Araba Jesiwa's narrative. By scrutinizing the image of the water inside the bowl, Densu discovers that it is this woman's relaxed, open and intimate character that helps him understanding who he really is. It is true that without his inner curiosity for knowledge he should find Araba's story of 'gaping emptiness' and subsequent fertility and later feminine 'fullness' one more boring fairy tale he used to hear all around him as a child. But it is also Araba's flowing spirit and ensuing success (love and fruitful reunion with Kofi Entusa) that solidifies Densu's belief in the morality of his childhood aspirations and gives him faith in order to insist on healing as his choice and vocation. The reader should not downplay the alternation of the events in the novel; for while Araba used to narrate, Ababio used to seduce. Ode Ogede agrees to this marking distinction of Araba Jesiwa and her lasting impact on the boy. He aptly observes:

> Once the healers recover her, Araba Jesiwa is ready to participate in propagating their ministry, thus, disclosing the community-centeredness of the healers' work. She can then be viewed as a figurative representation of the African woman-battered, long-suffering, and debased—whose retrieval by the healers from her tormentors and the killers of her son Prince Appiah can also be viewed in allegorical terms as representing the much needed act of regeneration – social, political, moral, and spiritual – that Armah envisages. [20]

If we accept what Ogede advances afterwards, that Araba has that magical influence of ''anchor[ing] Armah's idea of re-Africanization", already launched in the ideology of 'our way, the way' of *Two Thousand Seasons*, then Densu's success and glamour is due to this woman's influence. Because she has been able to get over two dire catastrophes – her initial barrenness and her only son's subsequent and brutal murder – Araba stands as a symbol for an ever-enduring Africa. Her capacity to process mentally the full weight of the tragedy lies principally in her ability to define herself and her status. She is finally healed because she is able to cut the umbilical cord that defines her in the eyes of the world solely as Prince Appiah's mother. Besides she knows that she cannot contradict the playful spirit that marked her childhood days. She remembers she has been Kofu Entusa's unthoughtful admirer, as well as Prince Bedu Addo's despaired princess. Later she succeeds in becoming Kofu Entusa's companion and Appiah's mother. And it is those different roles involving as many identities that can make her recover from the loss of her only son. That knowledge involves the necessity to use those roles alternately, depending on circumstances. Thus, Araba's knowledge of oneself indeed comes from her natural readiness to face challenges. Because it stimulates reflection and understanding, this attitude shapes Densu's authenticating and healing attributes and defines him to the world as such. Furthermore, one should mention that what triggers Densu’s acquaintance with Araba is Ajoa. Ajoa's physical beauty transcends Araba Jesiwa's mind-blowing journey of search and discovery of the authentic self. These two women are again a reflection of Damfo's ability to appreciate and preserve beauty:

> The second day of Ajoa's stay in Esuano Densu had gone to her and offered her a gift. It was a guava nearing ripeness, a little thing quite perfect in its oval shape. Ajoa had not accepted Densu's offering of the fruit. She had run away from him, not like one afraid, but like a veritable woman-child overwhelmed by her own shyness. She had run till she reached her father. Then hiding behind him as if he were no mortal man but some huge, safe wall, she had peered from between his legs at the uncertain Densu holding his gift in silence. Those eyes of hers had such strong clarity. Whether for rejection or for pulling the admiring onlooker, those were always powerful eyes. She had run from him, but a power in her eyes beckoned to him with a strength whose source he felt within himself. (*The Healers*, p.63)

[20] Ode Ogede, "Opcit.,", p. 54

Ironically, the eastern forest where Ajoa fled from Densu as a child is the very one that defines Densu and marks him for ever afterwards as a true and dedicated healer. If we keep in mind Ababio's promises and declared intentions *vis-à-vis* Esuano's principality, Densu's choice of the eastern forest is nothing short of attempting suicide. But up to then still, the eastern forest for him is only the place where Ajoa, the child, fled from him and from where Damfo brought her home after the third morning. For, as a matter of fact, "the child had gone off alone, into the eastern forest, searching for her father." (*The Healers*, p.64) Her natural inclinations that led her to the eastern forest involve a twisted search for the genuine father, away from the stepfather, Esuman the manipulator, and an early quest for a true and lasting identity. When Densu chooses Ajoa's companionship, therefore, he naturally seeks Ajoa's father for fulfilling that companionship. Densu takes Ajoa's father as his own father, if only by vocation. Perhaps this is just his inarticulate way of saying that he wishes to be identified with the healer more than with his own guardian. One can witness how his identity is assailed by his being pointed at as Appiah's murderer by Ababio. He for his part considers himself as Damfo's disciple; another complication is his assessment by Damfo as a would-be healer, but in need of more wisdom and experience before reaching the status of healer.

Through this searching time, Ajoa's love for him is primordial and enlightening for his pursuits and aspirations. To Damfo's experienced mind, Densu, though zealous and honest, has just youth and unchecked energy for an asset, not knowing how best to go about his future healing activities. Only the help of a woman (Ajoa), supported by another woman (Araba Jesiwa) can ensure that he is saved from a mental breakdown. On his way back to Esuano, which he never longs for, and from the eastern forest which is still denied to him, and when he seems to have lost it all, he is finally given the opportunity to define himself in the only way that is befitting him. Both as a captive and runner inside the water with Anan, and then again riding on unusual roads to the eastern forest, Densu is ultimately able to discover who he really is. He wins both Ajoa's heart and Damfo's respect but without being slavishly tied to anyone.

In *KMT*, the sentence "In the House of Life" serves as a subtitle. The term refers to an institution or a healing place similar to the eastern forest in *The Healers*[21]. Knowledge in this context is most often approached as secret. Secret societies along Africa's millennial past, as Armah shows, build a fascinating world all to themselves. The rationale for this forced secrecy is that

[21] According to Michal Brass: "The House of Life was a scriptorium annexed to a temple". More or less it is a place similar to a library where scribes are stored and trusted but also where investigators, often approached as some dedicated priests in ancient Egyptian civilization performed their search and secret missions." Michael Brass, "How can we Attempt to Assess what Real Power the Scribes of Ancient Egypt Wielded?", pp. 11-12.

the dangers of dispersing knowledge unwisely would be detrimental to the well-being of the African self. The choice of the name Asar for Ast's companion instead of the well-known, Osiris, derives from this background of secrecy. [22] Similarly, we read in *KMT*, Mamadou Kouyate's cautioning Djiely Hor about the oath of secrecy. Both people are griots but they have opposing goals since they are originally loyal to different schools: Niani's versus Yarw's. In fact, Niani and Yarw are two different traditionalist villages: the former siding with the royalists for they are court traditionalists, whereas the latter are, as Astw explains to Lindela, "traditionalists who refuse to live at the royal court." (*KMT*, p.147) In the end and as Djiely Hor clarifies, these two schools are but modern manifestations of the old schools standing for the people of the pyramid against the people of the sphere: "The people of the pyramid were for setting up a kingdom, with nobles and priests and commoners and slaves. The people of the sphere said the system of royalty had brought us incalculable ruin and would bring us more in the future if we did not bury it." (*KMT*, p.154)

In *Two Thousand Seasons* we have pathfinders instead of healers. Right from the choice of the word, we detect an inability to trace the correct path, and Armah makes certain that this loss is indicative of spiritual loss, too. Lost among many and conflicting definitions, the community keeps oscillating between different identities. Each definition is a projection of a society with direct political, economic and strategic implications. What makes Armah's Africans deserve their Africanity is how they commit their efforts to the preservation of "our way, the way." This philosophy of "our way, the way" is defined first and foremost with its mark of respect and regard for the feminine gender. Two of four main pathfinders during the crossing of the bog land were women, and after the doubt eating over pathfinders' hearts and minds and the subsequent fratricide, Noliwe and Ningome, two women, rise as new pathfinders. They lead the community out to safety and just after making it to a welcome harbour, Noliwe pronounces her warning:

> The violence we had left behind… The fraud of the white predators from the desert, this was not all. The sand had brought us woe. Water, this same living, flowing water of the river itself, water would bring worse deaths to us. We who had fallen victim to our own abundant generosity even in their drier land close to the desert, now we had reached this new place that itself gave us surroundings answering the generosity within, the inner abundance we had found no way to curb. Such uncanny unison—the effortless flowing together, of inner and surrounding generosity—would in time put to sleep even the wariest of minds, and it was not our nature to beware our giving: a fatal, headless generosity. (*Two Thousand Seasons*, p.58)

[22] For some scholars, at least, the name Asar is the occult name for Osiris. Jacq Christian & Cathrine Berthier, *Fascinating Heliographics: Discovering, Decoding and Understanding the Ancient Art*. Sterling Pub Co. Inc. (1997)

Here again, water stands as a frontier line that marks the African community shift from one identity to the next. Here there is warning from what the abundance of water, as its absence before, may hide and bring forth. Water here refers to the sea from where the white predators first appeared. It also stands for that kind of abundance that can seduce the community to slip into 'headless generosity'. This 'headless generosity' does not match the requirement of 'our way, the way' simply because it tries to anticipate the warning of Noliwe, the woman pathfinder. Noliwe's word of alarm, as the violators of her word very well understand, is a whole and consistent ideology and course of action. That is why the violators start merely by "[t]he suppression of women first, in the reduction of all the females to things—things for pleasure, things for use, things in the hands of men—the admirers of the white predators' road saw a potent source of strength for men." These violators know that the reciprocity which Noliwe preaches must be broken by the reduction of women to mere possessions in order to pursue their individually short-sighted, not communal aims. Their achievement, as the drama reveals, is in obtaining prominent positions rather than just ousting women's privileged positions of caretakers. Their eyes turned to gaining political power for mean and selfish purposes. The narrator adds:

> In the subjugation of producers to the parasites—amazing senseless somersaults—those fascinated with the white destroyers' road heard the promise of power unlimited. And at the peak of their enthusiasm, they urged on us the setting up of a king from among the parasites, producers, women, children in the condescension of the white destroyers' road—would be bound in unthinking, unquestioning allegiance. In such arrangements the admirers saw the roots of the white predators' power. Along that road they urged our going (*Two Thousand Seasons*, p.59)

The suppression of women as caretakers, as it is understood here is not just an isolated incident devoid of any further significance. On the contrary, the thingification of women is but a preparation for the thingification of the whole African community, as it was illustrated in the experience of three centuries of slave trade. In this way, Ngugi's remark in the epigraph to this chapter becomes pertinent. Indeed, reducing African women to the role of pleasure toys was right from the start a major incentive of those who undertook to deny the humanity of Africans. This reduction implies the replacement of matriarchy with patriarchy with all that patriarchy suggests in terms of centuries of slave trade, decades of colonial muddle and hopeless state collapse status in the neo-colonial condition. In this context, Armah's concern about the consequences issuing from this substitution drives him to project each as having contradictory views over political mapping, social structure, economic regulations and further still, the cosmic balance and

spiritual harmony of the African Man. By historicizing *Two Thousand Seasons* through providing two different approaches of societal organizations, Armah outlines his blueprints for his future African society, that is, a society one he perceives as essentially matriarchal, hence peaceful, and ethically sound.

6. Conclusion

Armah has meticulously woven symbols related to women into his three other novels to express his reverence towards African women. In the same line of thought, he regards Western women as reactionary Amazons and the logical victims of centuries of patriarchal conditioning. Therefore, any relationship that involves an African man with an American woman, like that of Modin and Aimée, is doomed and cannot be other than destructive. All the likes of Aimée can do is to smoke out the dignity of this African man and rob him of what defines him as an African. By introducing his readers into the intricacies enfolded in the symbols of the African past and the meaning they carry up to the present, Armah introduces us to what can be approximated as Africa's ancestral epistemology competing with the orthodoxy and polemics of Orientalism. Meanwhile Armah comes with his own answer to the roots behind the negative western perceptions of Africa. Lindela's search and subsequent translation of the lost papyrus scrolls testifies to the emphasis Armah puts on the balance between masculine and feminine, the good and evil in mankind and Isis' importance as the emissary of Africa. As with Ast, Densu, Abena, Isanusi and Noliwe, seeking inner knowledge and self development, bear the fruits of facing a more constructive African identity than what Africans traditionally understand themselves to be.

Egyptian hieroglyphs, like the griots' memory, seem to hold out the promise of offering a different story that would help Africans to come to terms with their present needs and by learning about who they really are. The scripts also promise to attend to the intellectuals' necessity of keeping vigilante in order to accompany that self-absorption to changing times. By knowing that they are conceived out of the struggle between the forces of good and evil, Osiris and Seth, Africans can simply free themselves from Orientalism and from the obsessive feeling that they ought to get Americanized in order to feel being part of the modern world. Goodness prevails and Osiris rises when Africans allow harmony to flow freely between their masculine and feminine attributions. Characteristically, Armah's heroes and heroines seem to incite Africans to lay the emphasis on the 'spirit within' and the strongly anti-authoritarian, pro-feminine that existed and was purposefully marginalized and shoved aside as heresy by history's 'winners'. In this sense, the reader still can notice that Armah's politics of desire is more in tune with Molife Asante's plea for an Afrocentric perspective; that kind of

"analysis [that] reestablishes the centrality of ancient *Kemetic* (Egyptian) civilization and the Nile Valley cultural complex as points of reference for an African perspective in much the same way that Greece and Rome serve as reference points for the European world." [23]

Unlike the western duality of sin and repentance that produced later the formula of civilized and barbaric, Armah advances the point that the African duality of illusion and enlightenment is much more constructive and helpful for the achievement of balanced identities. Like Densu, one strives and suffers, both physically and mentally, to make sense of one's life and to be serviceable to the world at large. Densu's confusion and subsequent knowledge is carefully mapped out in order to suggest that the metaphoric value of Densu's career is valid for every well-wishing and would-be healer. Instead of a redeemer with a mission to root out sin, but leaves his subjects in the dirt, Armah's healer is someone who guides would-be healers towards constructive understanding. The healing influence implies that both the healer and the one subject to healing are engaged in a mutual cognitive journey to clarity and enlightenment. Once that disciple is finally initiated, the two have become equally ready to heal other souls.

There is no fixed formula detailing on how healing should be conducted. But still there is a warning that "It will take ages for the kind of power healers want to grow against what is there now. The worst kinds of power grow most easily." (1979:94) All of Damfo's visions are trusted to the future. Like Armah's other protagonists, including Asar and Lindela, a healer provides a role model for fellow Africans: peace-loving, zealous, active and ever ready to start new venture however the odds of history. These are indeed the main qualities that would define this African man. It is important to realise that by insisting on the destructive drive of the Greek matrix, Armah seeks to (re-)construct his own, based primarily on intellectuals that are conscious about the nature of the adverse system they oppose. In other words, what defines Africa and its people can be said to be not some elements from the inside, but initially the combined qualities of non-Africans.

That is, perhaps, why Armah's identity is always futuristic, that is, anticipating the positive. Aggressive forms in today's cultural imperialism justify for Armah the categorical separation between what is African and what is not. Armah does not adhere to the idea that the African social vision is essentially composed of "a cohesive understanding of irreducible truths." Unlike the European worldview, "whose creative impulses are directed by period dialects"[24], and as a result generates violence and profit, the African

[23] Molefi Kofi Asanti, *The Afrocentric Idea*. Temple University Press, (1998), p. 10.
[24] Wole Soyinka, *Myth, Literature and the African World*. Cambridge University Press, (1976), p. 38

one knows only reciprocity, egalitarianism and order. Knowing that this latter is not the one that runs the world today, nevertheless both Armah and Soyinka, along with many others, argue that this beautiful and just worldview had existed at some point(s) in the African past and are worth recalling. Working for its recovery is what justifies the identity of the people claiming to be conscious with its need. Nevertheless, recovering the beautiful past does not imply that there were no other negative aspects of that past, as Soyinka carefully details and Armah seems determined to downplay.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adeoti, Gbemisola. "The Re-making of Africa: Ayi Kwei Armah and the Narrative of an (Alter) Native Route to Development." *Africa Media Review*, Volume 13, Number 2, (2005)

Agozino, Biko. "Criminology as Lovemaking: An African Centered Theory of Justice", *African Journal of Criminology and Justice Studies*, Vol. 1, N° 1: April, 2005

Armah, Ayi Kwei. *Fragments*. Heinemann Educational Publishers, London. (1970)

---. *KMT: In The House of Life*. Per Ankh Publishing Cooperative. Popenguine, Senegal (2002)

---. *Osiris Rising*. Per Ankh Publishing Cooperative. Popenguine, Senegal. (1995)

---. "Our Awakening". Video Lecture at Berkeley University (1990), http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0wrTdqlBHK&feature-related

---.*The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born.* Heinemann Educational Publishers. (1968)

---. *The Healers.* Heinemann Educational Publishers, London. (1978)

---. *Two Thousand Seasons*. Heinemann Educational Publishers, London (1973)

---. *Why Are We So Blest?* Heinemann Educational Books Lt. London. (1972)

Asante, Molefi Kete. "Locating the Eurocentric Assumptions about African History" in: Molefi Kete Asante and Ama Mazama (eds.) *Egypt Vs Greece and the American Academy.* Images, Chicago, Illinois (2002)

---. *The Afrocentric Idea*. Temple University Press, (1998)

Ayivor, Kwame. "'The Beautyful Ones Were Born and Murdered': Armah's Visionary Reconstruction of African History and the Pan-Africanist Dream in *Osiris Rising*", *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 2003; 38; 37.

Butler, Bill. *Dictionary of the Tarot.* http://www.themysticeye.com/info/ tarotsymbols.htm

Christian, Jacq. & Berthier, Cathrine. *Fascinating Heliographics: Discovering, Decoding and Understanding the Ancient Art*. Sterling Pub Co. Inc. (1997)

Diop, Chiekh Anta. *The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality*. Trans. Mercer Cook. Laurence Hill Books, (1974)

Eurydice, *F/32*. Fiction Collective 1992.

Greg, Thomas. *The Sexual Demon of Colonial Power*. Indiana University Press, (2007) .

Jackson,Tommie Lee. *Ayi Kwei Armah and French Existentialism*. PhD Thesis, University of Nebraska (1985)

Karenga, Maulana. *Maat, The Moral Ideal in Ancient Egypt*. Routledge, New York & London (2004) Laurence, Alexander. "An Interview with Eurydice", (1994) (Emphasis added) <http://www.altx.com/int2/eurudice.html>

Mudimbe, V. Y. *The Idea of Africa*. Indiana University Press, (1994)

Riche, Boutheldja. *Myth in Ayi Kwei Armah's Novels: Use and Abuse*. Unpublished Magister Dissertation. University of Algiers, (1988)

Nzegwu, Nkiru Uwechia. *Family Matters: Feminist Concepts in African Philosophy of Culture*. State University of New York Press, (2006)

Okpewho, Isidore. *Myth in Africa*. Cambridge University Press, (1983)

Ogede, Ode. "The Rhetoric of Revolution in Armah's *The Healers*: Form as Experience", *African Studies Review*, Vol. 36, N° 1 (Apr., 1993)

Soyinka, Wole. *Myth, Literature and the African World*. Cambridge University Press, (1976)

Taylor, Gordon Rattary. *Sex in History*. (1954), http://www.ourcivilization.com/smartboard/shop/taylor/sexhst/foreword/htm

STUDIA UBB PHILOLOGIA, LVIII, 3, 2013, p. 165 - 182
(RECOMMENDED CITATION)

CARIBBEAN POETRY IN BRITAIN, A LITERARY SITE OF CULTURAL CHANGE

MONICA MANOLACHI[1]

ABSTRACT. ***Caribbean Poetry in Britain, A Literary Site of Cultural Change.*** As the Caribbean literature published on both sides of the Atlantic shows, literary language and style can work in parallel with contemporary theoretical debates in expressing cultural change. This essay focuses on works of several Caribbean poets, who published and were awarded prestigious prizes in Britain and in the Caribbean. It delineates some of their inherent performative attributes, which proved effective in addressing various stages of postcolonial cultural transformation and in modifying aspects of the British literary canon.

Keywords: Caribbean British poetry, E. K. Brathwaite, Derek Walcott, David Dabydeen, Grace Nichols, John Agard, E. A. Markham, Fred D'Aguiar, Dorothea Smartt.

REZUMAT. ***Poezia caraibiană în Marea Britanie, spațiu literar de schimbare culturală.*** După cum arată literatura caraibiană publicată pe ambele maluri ale Oceanului Atlantic, limbajul și stilul literar se pot îmbina cu dezbaterile teoretice contemporane pentru a reflecta schimbarea culturală. Acest eseu se centrează pe operele mai multor poeți caraibieni, care au publicat și au primit prestigioase premii în Marea Britanie și în Caraibe. Sunt evidențiate o parte dintre atributele performative specifice, a căror valoare reiese din modul de abordare a diverselor stadii de transformare culturală postcolonială și din modificarea unor aspecte privind canonul literar britanic.

Cuvinte cheie: poezie caraibo-britanică, Edward Brathwaite, E. K. Brathwaite, Derek Walcott, David Dabydeen, Grace Nichols, John Agard, E. A. Markham, Fred D'Aguiar, Dorothea Smartt.

As well as other postcolonial types of literature, Caribbean British poetry has proved to be highly performative. The notion of the performative,

[1] Monica Manolachi has been a teaching assistant at the University of Bucharest since 2005. She defended her doctoral thesis *Performative Identities in Contemporary Caribbean British Poetry* in September 2011. Manolachi has done research on African American literature, contemporary British literature and culture, Caribbean identity and culture, postcolonial studies and contemporary Romanian literature. She is a literary translator and a poet. Contact address: <monicamanolachi@yahoo.com>.

introduced by the British philosopher of language J. L. Austin in 1963, when he discussed the differences between ordinary and figurative speech acts, can shed further light on the modes in which the literary British canon began to colour itself over the second half of the twentieth century. What follows does not address the history of the concept among other philosophers of language, but some of the shapes it has taken in contemporary poetry, with a focus on the Caribbean poetry initially published in Britain. Briefly, the theory of performativity states that the distinction between speech and act is not absolute, but their tight relationship invites us to explore "the circumstances of 'issuing an utterance'" (92), which reminds us that literature is always related to its cultural, socio-political and historical context and it is not simply the product of an individual. However, the agency of the postcolonial writer has been inseparable from the creativity process and its manifestation has contributed to a greater awareness of cultural transformation. What follows is a parallel between several stages of postcolonial cultural change and the inherent performative attributes of the poetic texts, a relation that has led to a specific Caribbean aesthetics of cultural distinction and syncretism. It is both a concise diachronic outline of the Caribbean poetry in Britain, with several examples, and a review of the cultural positions taken by a number of poets who have been migrant subjects themselves or have a history of international migration in their family.

Although some literary critics agree that Caribbean poetry began in the 1920s and considering that many of the Caribbean writers emigrated in Europe beginning with the Empire Windrush generation of the 1950s, Caribbean British poetry as a literary phenomenon gained momentum and maturity beginning with the 1970s, according to L. A. Breiner (1998) and I. Dieffenthaller (2009). The Jamaican poet Louise Bennett in the Second World War years, the Barbadian poet Edward Brathwaite, the Nobel Prize winner Derek Walcott in the 1960s and the Jamaican dub poet Linton Kwesi Johnson in the 1970s had already had their voice heard in England. To a certain extent, their literary work and performances were the echo of the American Harlem Renaissance and of the American Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. But together with the emergence of the cultural studies as an academic field in Great Britain in the 1970s, their fame has paved the way to many other writers of Caribbean origin who could subsequently make their debut in England.

Three stages of postcolonial cultural transformation are evident in the works of these migrant poets, which are sustained by specific literary techniques, reflecting the condition of the people they represent. A first stage is that of claiming an origin, a location and a past and is meant to delineate a traditionalist and nationalist perspective on identity, specific to the 1960s. This is usually accompanied by an adjustment of the English language, so that poets can better

express the situation in the former colonies. The use of the Creole English and other forms of the so-called "broken English"[2], the free indirect speech combined with lyricism, specific vocabulary and the extensive use of the enjambement are some of the techniques that transmit the existence of an experience type completely different than that usually perceived by the British. Due to the effects of migration, a second stage of cultural transformation is transnational: the poets compare their place of origin and their new place of residence, attempting to find points of belonging, which has led to both nihilistic attitudes and forms of double belonging, to split literary identities and schizoid forms of expression. In this case, the poetic discourse often becomes winged, more balanced, intense, based on double codification, with subtle spelling and phonetic games. At this stage, cultural identity is more and more described in terms of cultural hybridity (Hall, 1990; Bhabha, 1994; Young, 1995). A third stage is to address the multiplicity of belonging, with many of its intricacies and potentialities, and craft syncretic multicultural or cosmopolite modes of imagination, in which the voice of the Other is formulated in a very complex style, so that to reach various audiences. Technically, this is translated through a very sophisticated construction of the speaking subject, in which various cultural strands and linguistic registers mingle. Of course, these three stages often overlap from one decade to the other, from one volume to another, and this staging itself is an exploratory instrument rather than a rigid temporal distinction.

After the Second World War, many of the Caribbean countries struggled to gain their independence. Jamaica in 1962. Guyana and Barbados in 1966. It is the epoch when internationally renown poets Derek Walcott and Edward Brathwaite published their first collections, with an eye always open to the United States, England and the West in general. The majority of the Caribbean British poets chosen for this paper were born or come from these countries and they have built a sense of origin and belonging to the Caribbean by initially and partially ignoring Britain, either altogether or only in style, and by focusing on self-definition based on personal past experience in the Caribbean and as migrants. In the contact zone between several cultures, many of the Caribbean poets have been determined to revise myths and stereotypes related to racial and ethnic aspects. In most of their early poems, the background is often a rural, tropical setting, a sign of deep nostalgia or at least constant search for the past.

In the postwar decades, choosing between staying and leaving the islands was an act not only related to personal matters but one with a larger, cultural and political scope. For instance, in *The Star-Apple Kingdom* (1980),

[2] According to Rob Jackaman (2003), "breaking English" is both an "act of cultural vandalism" and "an act of liberating iconoclasm", while "broken English" is a label applied to "forms of language spoken by the disadvantaged and colonized" or "vital new pidgins and kriols asserting equal rights" (12).

Walcott subtly articulates the importance and the difficulties of the national discourse in the region, when giving voice to one of his characters, Shabine:

> I'm just a red nigger who love the sea,
> I had a sound colonial education,
> I have Dutch, nigger, and English in me
> and either I'm nobody, or I'm a nation. (114)

Dropping the verb ending "-s" in the first line of the fragment linguistically signals another type of experience, outside the boundaries of Standard English. The opposition "nobody" versus "nation" is not made for the sake of separating personal and national identity, but in order to connect them and to demonstrate that there is room for action and creativity, there are stages of existence, nuances and degrees of consciousness and that discourse and action are the opposing poles of a strategic continuum.

One mode of active discourse is to address various stereotypes regarding the Caribbeans, as John Agard does in his collections from the 1980s. For example, the exotic symbol of the limbo dancer from the cycle *Limbo Dancer in Dark Glasses* (1983) becomes a vehicle of reinforcing the DuBoisean idea of the "double consciousness". If Edward Brathwaite had written in *Islands* (1969) that the "limbo stick is silence in front of me" (194), Agard offers a healthier view on the concept when he replaces the rigidity of the limbo stick with the flexibility and immateriality of the rainbow. Hence the limbo is not just a Christian symbol of transformation, a place where the sinners wait before they are sent to Heaven or Hell, but a positive sign of survival, hope, new beginning, pregnancy and rebirth.

A poem entitled "Stereotype" from *Mango and Bullets* (1985) shows Agard's committment to deconstructing such stereotypes: "I'm a fullblooded / West Indian stereotype / See me straw hat? / Watch it good" (38). Differently than in Walcott's poetry, where stereotypes are often dealt with more profoundly, Agard's perspective is less belligerent, as he prefers to adopt a humorous discourse, so specific to his work in general and closer to the African American minstrelsy tradition. The reality of living among the British may have been a reason for Agard's choice, while the detachment of Walcott's stance may have been the result of contemplating the huge gap between the former colonial power and the socio-economic situation in the former colonies. The immigrants' positions in the adopting postcolonial British society have been translated into a permanent and urgent social renegotiation. Being assigned the role of "a palm tree king", the author does not feel caught between the two seemingly incompatible worlds, but adopts a reasonable and positive attitude that allows him to weave an in-between world, based on preserving the Caribbean traditions and language and interpreting the British lifestyle:

Because I come from the West Indies
certain people in England seem to think
I is a expert on palm trees
So not wanting to sever this link
with me native roots (know what ah mean?)
or to disappoint dese culture vulture
I does smile cool as seabreeze (36)

In 1983, the Guyanese poet Grace Nichols made her debut with an acclaimed volume entitled *I Is A Long-Memoried Woman*, which reviews and rewrites many of the former respresentations of postcolonial geography and culture related to the Caribbean, the Atlantic Middle Passage and Africa. Her several-century-old black feminine character is meant to reassemble a shattered archipelagic colonial consciousness and proposes instead a powerful feminine figure, whose central and defining characteristics are her memory, her story and her body. The last poem of the cycle, entitled "Holding My Beads", reveals an almost religious determination to the act of writing as a way of self-definition and as a means of projecting creativity from the domain of reality and history to the domain of imagination and memory:

Unforgiving as the course of justice
Inerasable as my scars and fate
I am here a woman... with all my lives
strung out like beads
before me
It isn't privilege or pity that I seek
It isn't reverence or safety
quick happiness or purity
but
the power to be what I am / a woman
charting my own futures / a woman
holding my beads in my hand

The comparison "all my lives / strung out like beads / before me" is an expression of trauma ambivalence: the lost lives can eventually reach spiritual and aesthetic meaning through the figure of the "long memoried woman", whose culturally constructed consciousness places her between history and memory. The painful revisitation of the colonial past eventually proves to bring fruitful wisdom and is in line with Frantz Fanon's (1963) observation that:

> colonized intellectuals have been unable to come to loving terms with the present history of their oppressed people, since there is little to marvel at in its current state of barbarity, they have decided to go further, to delve deeper, and they must have been overjoyed to discover that the past was not branded with shame, but dignity, glory, and sobriety (148)

Confronted with nightmares and agonizing memories of the past, the poet continuously reframes her self, so that it can capture the essence of a superior being. The poem invokes such a superior entity, whom the long-memoried woman addresses, without naming it. She focuses on a self outside life and death. The prayer transmits neither submission nor pride, but flows along the line of historical truth and of the present capacity of the self to heal and flourish. As a metonymy of mnemonic religious rituals, colonial trade and feminine beauty, the trope of the beads engenders a hierophany of black feminine self-determination. This is in line with the formulation made by Henry Paget (2000) that African philosophy calls for "each individual ego to recognize its unique spirituality" (37), which differs from "the radical separation between matter and spirit that we have in many Western and Indian idealists" (31). After constructing a mythical feminine character in her debut volume, Nichols approaches stereotypes such as fatness in *The Fat Black Woman's Poems* (1984) or laziness in *Lazy Thoughts of a Lazy Woman* (1989), with the purpose of presenting a black woman's point of view on the Western world and on the world in general. Thus, she valorizes traits that with the power of their abjection can deconstruct normative discourses regarding race and gender and construct a dialogic frame for intercultural exchange.

In his first collection entitled *Slave Song* (1984), David Dabydeen writes poems in Creole, provides translations in Standard English and adds spoof translation notes in an attempt to resist the Western habit of digesting Third World literature. While he opens what Bill Ashcroft (2009) calls the "metonymic gap"[3], he also provides a type of content readers may not be very used to. He portrays characters of the slavery era—slaves, servants, indentured workers, masters and mistresses, old survivors—and delves into a history usually left unchronicled, in order to conceive the past from the perspective of the colonized. The poems are accompanied by several engravings from the eighteenth and the nineteenth century, which gives an exphrastic note to his work and raises a legitimate question regarding the relation between ethics and aesthetics. Equipped with an appealing linguistic and visual apparatus, Dabydeen's attitude towards the stereotyping of the West Indian personage is to denounce its one-way perspective or blindness regarding the existence of the Other and to reveal sites of resistance such as hybrid religious feelings, folkloric wisdom, problematic interracial love or the incontestable reality of what Edward

[3] Drawing on Brathwaite's poetry, Bill Ashcroft explains: "the language is metonymic of the culture, that is, linguistic variation stands for cultural difference. This sets up what can be called 'the metonymic gap' – the cultural gap formed when writers (in particular) transform English according to the needs of their source culture" (174). Although writers may have dilemmas when choosing one point or another on the Creole continuum, Ashcroft believes it is a strategy of transformation generated by "a *refusal* to translate" (175).

Brathwaite (1984) called "nation language". A fragment that sustains the purpose of this section is a poem entitled "For Ma", which refers to the daily activities of the women who toil from dawn to dusk, endure poverty and the cruelties of their men:

> Is wha da maan a stretch e haan an yaan foh!
> Hear a cow baal in de yaad how dem swell wid milk-fraff
> Goat a groan dem want go graze an sheep a caff-caff –
> Ayuh wake up time na deh foh cry time na deh foh laff
> Hen a lay an cow a drap time na deh foh stap! (33)

Its translation, provided by the author himself in the second half of the book, introduces a distance between two types of experience:

> What's that man stretching his hand and yawning for!
> Hear how the cows bawl in the yard, they're swollen with milk
> The goats groan, they want to graze, and sheep keep coughing.
> Wake up you lot, wake up, there's no time to cry, there's no time to laugh
> Hens are laying, cows are bearing, there's no time to stop! (60)

One could argue that such poems have more anthropological than aesthetic value. Dabydeen began his literary career by measuring the gap between the image of those who emigrated and became more educated and those who remained in their Caribbean home country. The rhetoric devices—exclamations, enumeration, imperatives—show the important position of the, otherwise, voiceless mothers in their families. The translation and the notes, indirectly suggesting possibly poor translation, provide further insights into what is lost: the women's endurance hides humour, vision and musicality. The role of the Creole is multiple here: to express a less known reality, to protect a familiar lifestyle that enables continuity and to support opposition as fundamental to the configuration of subjectivity. In an interview with Binder (1989), the poet compares the meaning of his own art to that of other important British poets:

> My folk is not like their folk [Heaney's Irish folk, Tony Harrison's folk from the north of England] and there is nothing romantic or snug about my folk; they don't wear cloth caps and don't smoke clay pipes. There is nothing I could romanticize about. I cannot have nostalgia about my folk because they were born in poverty. (77)

Such an essentialist and radical attitude to cultural differentiation has had a significantly supportive effect regarding the place of the Caribbean British poetry in the British literary canon.

An exception among these authors, the Montserratean poet E. A. Markham published his first volumes under several pseudonyms in the 1970s. In his poetry, the disturbing feeling of not really belonging to England and of coming to terms with the fact of actually belonging to it has created a double-winged

perspective upon the Caribbean identity, later described by Stuart Hall (1990) in the context of diaspora. Two such pseudonyms are Sally Goodman, a Welsh divorced woman, and Paul St. Vincent, an emigrant born in Antigua. He uses them to reinforce the figure of the trickster, so specific to the Caribbean, and to show a complex strategy adopted against the stereotyping practice, which includes publishing houses, literary magazines, spoof reviews and gender, class and race play. Markham cultivated an enigmatic style that created confusion among his critics, who expected more unequivocal black British subjects. One of the reasons that informed his highly performative choice may be his "unwillingness to be defined by other people's take on history, as a key concept in his work" (205), as literary critic Dieffenthaller (2009) observes. However, when he writes about his home country, he does not create positive and powerful figures, but prefers to depict people's lives closer to as they are, with a focus on personal histories and language play. He rarely uses Creole in his texts. The volume *Human Rites* (1984), a meaningful title that can be read in two more ways, as "human rights" and "human writes", which adds a subtle militant consciousness to the act of writing, includes both poems from volumes previously published under pseudonyms and new poems that deal specifically with his own view on the West Indian lifestyle. One fragment from a poem entitled "Roots, Roots" is constructed around the figure of the donkey as a symbol of drudgery and oppression which seems to haunt family members. It bears an unsettling feeling of disruption, triggered by double meanings, unexpected thematic switches and the open-ended question:

> My grandmother's donkey had a name
> I can't recall. It's not important
> for the donkey, a beast of burden
> like my grandmother, is dead.
> And I am in a different place.
> Perhaps the donkey was a horse, a status symbol
> or a man, married to my grandmother;
> and he lives on with my name.
> But then, suppose there was no donkey,
> no grandmother, no other place? (20)

According to his memoir, Markham (2008) lived mainly with his black grandmother until he was eleven, because his mother was away with the rest of his family, and came home only at weekends. Of the former, he remembers: "my grandmother was dubbed 'Queen Victoria', sitting there on her 'throne', even though the throne was a box on the floor of her room, looking down on the backyard" (59). Of the latter, he writes after many years of living in the United Kingdom: "my mother was the most mentally-clued in of all of us" (163). Markham had not seen his father until late, in the 1970s, when they met only

for a cold interview in Canada, where the father was a priest. Although the poem above does not mention anything about parents, it manages to skillfully mould a specific tragic spirit of family life. However, he finds resources to go over the irony of associating his grandfather, who fought in the Second World War, with a donkey. In fact, he subtly states and mocks his own essentialist view on race relations if one considers that the origin of the term *mulatto*, as a symbol of biologic and cultural hybridity, comes from *mule*, a combination of a donkey and a horse. Eventually, he wraps up the story in a tenderly humorous tone that envisages further loss, had his grandparents not existed at all and had immigration not been a choice.

Starting with the late 1980s and the 1990s, the expression of belonging based on an openly nationalist, nostalgic and traditionalist attitude begins to fade and the double or, increasingly, multiple belonging becomes the central issue. Self-definition based on past individual or collective experiences is replaced with a twofold tendency. On the one hand, the usually exotic view that the British have had on the region and the canonic cultural images of the colonial Other are subjects to deconstruction. On the other hand, there is an increasing tendency which aims at a third way of being. Dealing with stereotypes and mythmaking became more and more sophisticated and generated rich texts and a clear poetic strategy for a Caribbean British rennaissance. To still dwell on Western values or not was one of the hottest sources of creative tension.

If in the 1980s linguistic specificity of using Creole English still represented a fashionable strategy of asserting national identity, the 1990s showed a clear distinction among Caribbean British poets. The position on what postcolonial theorist Bill Ashcroft calls "the Creole continuum" toward one end or another became adamant in expressing belonging. From then on, the poets who maintained the use of Creole, such as Linton Kwesi Johnson, Jean Binta Breeze or Benjamin Zephaniah tended to show their belonging more to their own ethnic groups, whom they represented as artists. In their view, Creole has become a type of aesthetic hallmark. Those who distanced from the use of Creole, such as John Agard, Edward Brathwaite, David Dabydeen, Fred D'Aguiar, E. A. Markham, Grace Nichols, Derek Walcott, have elaborated transcultural and transtemporal modes of attachment by adopting Standard English as the language of their late productions. While the former group have been using Creole to show their belonging to the Caribbean and their difference from the British, the second group has used it to show their difference to both the Caribbean and the British. The result has been that while the former group are more popular in anthropological and sociological literary studies, the second group is more popular in literary criticism focused on postcolonial literature as an aesthetic source. Most of these poets have often addressed Britishness as a second site of belonging, by aiming with their Standard English or the strategic use of the

Creole at British sources of authority, in order to transcend the problem of belonging and express the need for recognition.

As far as belonging is concerned, chronotopes such as the home or the ship are often employed when identity configuration is at stake. For instance, in "Home", a poem by D'Aguiar included in *British Subjects* (1993), the author attempts to redefine home by evoking several common aspects related to the airport atmosphere, using a discourse that questions the sense of location:

> These days whenever I stay away too long,
> Anything I happen to clap eyes on,
> (that red telephone box) somehow makes me
> miss here more than anything I can name.
> My heart performs a jazzy drum solo
> when the crow's feet on the 747
> scrape down at Heathrow. H.M. Customs...
> I resign to the usual inquisition,
> telling me with Surrey loam caked
> on the tongue, home is always elsewhere. (14)

The opposition between "here" and "elsewhere", along with mixing a Caribbean "jazzy drum solo" with the airport atmosphere, renders the chronotope of home as a mutable configuration, which the poetic self is committed to make the best of. The effect of landing or arrival reads like the Proustean eating of a madeleine: it activates recollection. The surprise comes when the poet remembers that home is not simply a site defined by spatiality or territoriality, but a present tense and an "always elsewhere", which adds motion to what is usually considered a fixed entity.

A similar alluring and yet troubling indeterminacy is suggested by Grace Nichols in "Wherever I Hang" (10), a poem from *Lazy Thoughts of a Lazy Woman* (1989). She compares life in the Caribbean and life in England, as well as her expectations and the reality of the English social habits. Written in the form of a monologue and using Creole English, the poet confesses: "I leave me people, me land, me home / For reasons, I not too sure / I forsake de sun / And de humming-bird splendour" or "I begin to change my calypso ways / Never visiting nobody / Before giving them clear warning" or "Now, after all this time / I get accustom to de English life / But still miss back-home side". Caught between an abandoned world and the exteriority of her new identity, "me new-world-self", the author is doomed to vacillate and find unexpected stability in instability, as she concludes:

> I don't know really where I belaang
> Yes, divided to de ocean
> Divided to de bone
> Wherever I hang me knickers – that's my home. (10)

The indentation of the two lines expresses the importance of associating geography and body as sites of concurrent outer and internal struggle. Although the humorous and very British ending implies an attachment to the new world, the poet prefers the specificity of body as she often demonstrates throughout her poetry, by constructing feminine figures that break stereotypes and spatio-temporal limitations.

Yet not all of these poets conceive belonging as indeterminate. Dabydeen's second volume, entitled *Coolie Odyssey* (1988), envisages almost two centuries of migration from the East Indies to England via the Caribbean. Of East Indian background, Dabydeen includes vocabulary and figurative speech connected with Hindu religious rituals and the Caribbean cultural context, with the purpose of readjusting the exotic image of the West Indies. At linguistic level, Creole is used here moderately, only as a local colour. At cultural level, the author proposes anti-canonical characters: a Caliban in love, working the land as a slave, rebelling against the colonial rule or going to study in England; a Miranda who is not necessarily a white representative of Europe, but has a mixed racial background, more suitable to the Caribbean experience; and a visible Sycorax, whose European origin is replaced with that of a generic Caribbean grandmother called Ma, a local wise feminine figure who doubts about her grandson's future after his emigration to England, but offers him support whenever necessary.

The need for recognition is a recurrent theme too. Poems such as "Listen, Mr Oxford don" from *Mango and Bullets* (1985) by John Agard, "I Poet" from *Spring Cleaning* (1992) by Jean Binta Breeze, "A Gift of a Rose" from *British Subjects* (1993) by Fred D'Aguiar or "De Queen an I" from *Propa Propaganda* (1996) by Benjamin Zephaniah are forms of protest and Althusserian interpellation, more or less direct, addressed to various sources of authority, which evoke the critical moment of the postmodern condition. Agard plays upon language from the perspective of "a man on de run" and uses Creole to tilt the balance in favour of the less educated (according to Western standards) and against the sometimes indifferent highly educated or the academics. Breeze expresses a change in self-awareness when she is confronted with literary critics' impressions regarding her work. In his poem, D'Aguiar evokes the feelings of blacks in the conditions of the Anti-Suspicion legislation[4]. Some of the public clichés regarding black men in Britain are also interrogated by Benjamin Zephaniah in "De Queen an I", which relies on mocking at the objectification of the blacks in the news.

Some poets approach the often contentious issue of religious denominations and its relation with (neo)colonialism. For the postcolonial author, it is a bond often prone to caricature, satire and witty commentary, with the

[4] The Vagrancy Act was a revived piece of ninetheenth-century legislation that led to disproportionate arrests of black youths. It was repealed in 2000.

purpose of generating a second reality regarding the sacred, less superficial and less ritualistic. For example, in a volume entitled *From the Devil's Pulpit* (1997), John Agard adopts the devil's perspective, in order to parody Western values that are not appropriate to the postcolonial reality. He adopts an ironic stance aiming to undermine divine works and respectable figures of Christianity, to interrogate their plenitude and gravity, trying to create a brisure for the stubborn infiltration of the unexpected, be it danger or miracle. In contrast but still in a tenderly critical tone, the second volume of Jean Binta Breeze, entitled *Spring Cleaning* (1992), extracts its discursive energy from the experience of black female characters from the Third World, who ponder on their destiny of being born in disadvantageous conditions, and from the spiritual strategies they adopt to cope with the various difficulties such as poverty, loss of faith or madness. By adding an Asian tonality to the subject, David Dabydeen has also been interested in religious aspects. In all his poetic works, he explores extensively how the main religious denominations interact, their roles and history of profit and loss, and proposes new hybrid and dialogic aesthetic forms of articulating faith at the confluence of Hindu religion, Christianity and African beliefs.

These views on the Caribbean presence in Britain are in line with what Evans Braziel and Mannur (2003) affirm about diaspora studies: they "will need to move beyond theorizing how diasporic identities are constructed and consolidated and must ask, how are these diasporic identities practiced, lived and experienced?" (9). This type of poetic discourse that defines belonging and the sites of recognition as deterritorialized, mobile and practical entities casts further light on the "imaginary homelands", to borrow Salman Rushdie's metaphor. It indicates a clear separation from the country of origin and yet not simple opposition, but transposition, because it happens in the mind, as the ultimate conceivable place, but also in a "not yet" temporal frame, waiting to be materialized as home: "elsewhere" and "wherever" suggest places of hope, therefore located in the future, in a time of rebirth and awakening, where memory, selective or not, plays a significant role. Thus, if more and more aware of the in-between space they inhabit, migrants gain agency, and they can simultaneously act as transitional subjects for their home countries, symbolically better able to negotiate their place in the world.

The awareness of these transnational cultural connections, conceptualized by Paul Gilroy in *The Black Atlantic* (1993), produced a type of visionary poetry that, although it deals with the drama of immigration and dispossession in depth, it succeeds in going beyond what could be called the poetry of wailing. Longer narrative poems such as *Omeros* (1990) by Derek Walcott, *Turner* (1995) by David Dabydeen or *Bill of Rights* (1998) by Fred D'Aguiar approach the trauma of the Middle Passage, the colonial wars, the contemporary transcontinental migration and unexpected forms of cultural hybridity, in order to address more profound aspects of the social psyche that subtly have influenced the perception of

the contemporary multiculturalist project. Their main common trait is that they connect individual subjectivity, collective history and human nature concerns with a remarkable intensity accompanied by aesthetic novelty. Cultural hybridity is not treated only as a joyful mixture of different sources, but it is considered in its most hubristic manifestations.

The turn of the millennium and its first decade have brought more recognition to the Caribbean poetry in Britain. Because it has been celebrated in various ways and many individual and collective volumes have been reedited, its audience has become more and more internationally diverse. One consequence was that these poets have adopted more sophisticated syncretic modes of writing and managed to create pluri-voiced characters in a very performative fashion. In contrast with the socially oriented discourse of the 1960s, 1970s and even the 1980s, the discourse of the Caribbean British poetry beginning with the late 1990s has tended to become more intimate by dealing introspectively with issues related to family and community, individual destiny or psychoanalysis. This trend is in line with recent works on cross-cultural psychoanalysis[5], which studies the connections between the biological, the psychological and the cultural at the confluence of apparently incompatible cultures.

As an effect of the multicultural turn, Caribbean poets often deal with the cultural history of white figures in constructing their own identity. For instance, John Agard proposes a reconsideration of Britishness in the context of what could be called internalized belonging. One of the poems from *We Brits* (2006), entitled "Newton's Amazing Grace", is a double voice monologue: John Newton, the author of the well-known religious song "Amazing Grace", speaks along with the Guyanese author himself. If the former addresses God and asks for forgiveness, the latter addresses his wife, poet Grace Nichols, with the same purpose. The poet interweaves the two voices belonging to different races and the two modes of introspection, choosing one of the most English poetic forms, the Shakespearean sonnet. The effect is an invisible third discourse that shapes itself between two obvious discourses: colonial and postcolonial. The poem begins with Newton's regret of forgetting about moral values in his tumultuous youth and Agard's self-reproach of not calling his wife by her first name, a subtle reiteration of the Shakespearean question "what's in a name?":

> Grace is not a word for which I had much use.
> And I skippered ships that did more than bruise
> the face of the Atlantic. I carved my name
> in human cargo without a thought of shame.
> But the sea's big enough for a man to lose
> his conscience, if not his puny neck.

[5] See L. J. Kirmayer; R. Lamelson; M. Barad (eds.) *Understanding Trauma. Integrating Biological, Clinical, and Cultural Perspectives*. Cambridge: CUP, 2007.

In the sea's eye, who is this upstart speck
that calls himself a maker of history?
It took a storm to save the dumb wretch in me.
On a night the winds weighed heavy as my sins,
I spared a thought for those poor souls below deck.
Terror made rough waters my Damascus road.
Amazing grace began to lead me home.
Lord, let my soul's scum be measured by a hymn. (25)

The chronotope of the ship at sea signifies here the multiple facets of violence which freedom may entail, either in cultural or personal relationships, political or individual, racially determined or based on gender difference.

Grace Nichols has approached the color line beginning with her first volume, in which it is often disclosed in its most intimate hypostases, in the context of Middle Passage slave trade and colonial slavery. In her last volume, however, the black poet has a significantly different view on race and gender relationship, placing it in the context of artistic production. In *Picasso, I Want My Face Back* (2009), she borrows the Spanish painter's fame and adopts the voice of his lover, Dora Maar, to tackle aspects related to intimacy in the world of artists, racial and gender issues and the condition of a black woman writer in the Western world. This ekphrastic composition is a sequence of dramatic monologues written by Nichols in what could be described as a cubistic poetic style if one considers the different postmodern facets of the subject's emotional life. In Nichols's view, Dora addresses her lover directly, in an attempt of recovering her less known self. She calls the painter not on his given name, Pablo, but on the name of his public persona, cultural capital to which she contributed with her photographic skills and social relationships. She ironically claims it back in Nichols's poem, where repossession is possible in the artistic reality of the future:

Picasso, I want my face back
the unbroken photography of it
Once I lived to be stroked
by the fingers of your brushes
Now I see I was more an accomplice
to my own unrooting
Watching the pundits gaze
open-mouthed at your masterpieces
While I hovered like a battered muse
my private grief made public (16)

These lines also claim a reconfiguration of the colonial past, by conceiving a third party agent, a white mask in Fanonian terms. Nichols paraphrases the activist black feminist bell hooks (1989) and transforms the reluctant and submissive muse into one who is used to "talking back" to the male artist, when confronted with his ruthlessness or with her own weaknesses. Such an approach

makes sense if one takes into account that Picasso was influenced by African art. However, given Nichols's experience as a poet's wife, she presents the two artists' love affair not just as a unilateral bond, in which one steals the other's identity, but as a fruitful creative experience of mutual suffering, based on passion and agreement. With this empowerment strategy, Nichols states her own role as a black woman poet and a black poet's wife, able to represent herself without waiting for future artists to refer to her own art. She appropriates the symbolism of Dora Maar's photographic art by evoking one of her famous surreal photos, "Père Ubu" (1936), an armadillo that resembles a foetus, which has been interpreted as a critical commentary on man's primitivism. However, the black poet proposes a positive view on primitivism: "to turn my negatives into positives / my floating foetuses into life" (17). The imagined Dora Maar is finally able to separate herself from the distorting vision that so cruelly exposed her pain: "Picasso's art is Picasso's art. / Not one is Dora Maar" (19). This statement can be read as a revisioning of Dora Maar's image, within the context of Western white feminist theories, especially that of Luce Irigaray, which challenges phallogocentrism and encourages two equally positive and autonomous sexes.

Black women poets often conceive identity reconfiguration outside the gender limits as well. Women poets such as Dorothea Smartt, who is a second generation immigrant from Barbados, identify their persona with male figures, which casts further light on the socio-cultural constructedness of gender relations. In her first two volumes, entitled *Connecting Medium* (2001) and *Ship Shape* (2008), she approaches the theme of silence as the immigrants' main behaviour and as an expression of assimilation. In her former volume, she explores silence among family members, focuses on the father figure, the mother figure and the symbolism of the black Medusa as an alter ego of a poet living at the heart of the former British empire. In comparison with her first volume, the latter has a wider scope and is centered on the inescapable silence of a black young slave, brought by sailors to Lancaster in the nineteenth century and who dies within days after his arrival for lack of physical adaptation and despair. Although "reluctant to reconnect" (24), the poet reimagines his journey from Africa to Barbados and to England and the atmosphere in each location, his resonant palette of feelings when he attempts to make sense of events, the sailors and their wives' lives, his encounters with white people in England, the Fanonian unbearable shocks he has when his race is rejected and, eventually, his sudden death. The half narrative and half lyrical poems vary in shape and style, but some of those dealing with aspects of renaming and personal identity consist of short-line stanzas, no more than three or four syllables, meant to signal an essentialist message and the relation between particular words and the significance of punctuation. In the poem "my calling", the author uses Creole English to project her character at the confluence between his own probable perception of himself, her attitude and the others' mentality on a young black foreigner:

I tell dem
my name is
Bil'...
Bill, they reply,
Right you are,
young Samboo,
Bill it is.
Dey laugh at
me. And I
keep de source
of m'smile
hidden as I
whisper to
m'self – yes
yes I is my
father, the muezzin, son; I is
Bilal. (35)

The in-betweenness is supplied by several binaries: there are two concessive distances between Bilal and Bill and Bill and Samboo[6], the former as an interruption that awakens memories, the latter as a sign of adoption, as if the sailors said "you are one of us now"; the opposition between Creole English and the quoted words in Standard English plays in reverse the technique of Creole quotations which poets belonging to previous generations used in order to introduce exotic flavour in their texts; the parallel between the sailors' manifest laughter and Bilal's hidden smile opens space for wisdom, which the reader is subtly reminded to attach to the black man; then there is a tension between objectification and subjectification implied by the line "me. And I", in which the full stop partially interrupts the objectification and the "I" gains more space in the boy's consciousness, until he remembers his "father, the muezzin", whom he identifies with in the longest line of the fragment; finally, the use of the apostrophe signals disruption and reconnection, both in linguistic and discursive terms. With the interrupted name "Bil' [...] / Bill", Smartt makes an analysis of hybridization by delving into some of its stages and suggests that living near a multiply different individual always involves negotiation, and that negotiation is not always manifest, but it involves thoughts left unspoken and not simply unconscious drives. With poems dealing with the same theme, Smartt cogently reconstructs the lost spirit of the Middle Passage from a black man's point of view.

[6] The name Sambo has a long controversial history in Anglophone literature and culture. In 1899, Helen Bannerman, a children's writer of Scottish origin, published *The Story of Little Black Sambo* among other titles inspired by her experience in India. Beginning with the interwar period, the story began to be criticized as being racist. Many of its versions were withdrawn from the American market and its title suffered many alterations.

Sharing the poetic "I" through gender inflection seems to be one of the key artistic tactics of bringing to light unmapped psychic realms and unspeakable depths of the Caribbean British self. It proves the hypothesis of E. K. Sedgwick (1994) that queer "can signify only *when attached to the first person*" (8) and the statement of Judith Butler (1990) that gender "is a practice of improvisation within a scene of constraint" (1). As Butler further points out, gender performativity is a means rather than an aim:

> through the practice of gender performativity, we not only see how the norms that govern reality are cited but grasp one of the mechanisms by which reality is reproduced *and* altered in the course of that reproduction. The point about drag is not simply to produce a pleasurable and subversive spectacle but to allegorize the spectacular and consequential ways in which reality is both reproduced and contested. (218)

With these samples, one can argue that contemporary Caribbean British poets have become highly aware that resignification is not only a variety of repetition and that queering gender suggests a transgressive act, which, in fact, may be the source and the aim of poetry. In the context of international migration, a possible metamorphic pattern of cultural progress can be configured. It begins with the split self, unaware of its potentialities in the new cultural environment and still focused on the nostalgy of its wholeness. Then it continues with admitting the division and the inherent gaps between unequal cultures, and with locating home where one is able to manage anxieties. Eventually, there is a new stage in which one can play and master the conflicting facets of identity, by artistically replacing them with other agencies and discursive masks.

The correlation between the personal and the cultural, which this essay is focused on, has been meant to better grasp how Caribbean British poets have been able to undo with words what more than four centuries of colonial rule has done with swords. The various types of border crossing which they undergo cannot be explained only through the internationally acclaimed concept of cultural hybridity. The Ancient Greek cultural history reminds us that hybridity of any type always involves a certain degree of hubris and that it is the role of the artists to discover and master its creative potential.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Agard, J. *Limbo Dancer in Dark Glasses*. London: Greenheart, 1983.
---. *Mangoes and Bullets*. London: Pluto Press, 1985.
---. *From the Devil's Pulpit*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe, 1997.
---. *We Brits*. London: Bloodaxe Books, 2006.

Ashcroft, B. *Caliban's Voice. The Transformation of English in Post-Colonial Literatures*. London and New York: Routledge, 2009.
Austin, J. L. *How to Do Things With Words*, J. O. Urmson and M. Sbisa (eds). Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975 (1963).
Bhabha, H. K. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994.
Binder, W. "Interview with David Dabydeen." *Journal of West Indian Literature.* Vol. 3(1989): 67-80.
Brathwaite, E. *The Arrivants. A New World Trylogy. Rights of Passage. Islands. Masks*. Oxford: OUP, 1973.
Breeze, J. B. *Spring Cleaning*. London: Virago Press, 1992.
Breiner, L. A. *An Introduction to West Indian Poetry.* Cambridge: CUP, 1998.
Butler, J. *Gender Trouble*. 3rd ed. New York and London: Routledge, 1990.
D'Aguiar, F. *British Subjects.* Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1993.
-----. *Bill of Rights.* London: Chatto & Windus, 1998.
Dabydeen, D. *Slave Song*. 2nd ed. Leeds: Peepal Tree, 1984.
---. *Coolie Odyssey*. London: Hansib Publishing / Dangaroo Press, 1988.
---. *Turner*. 2nd ed. Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, 1995.
Dieffenthaller, I. *Snow on Sugarcane: The Evolution of West Indian Poetry in Britain*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009.
Evans Braziel, J. and A. Mannur (eds). *Theorizing Diaspora: A Reader.* Oxford: Blackwell, 2003.
Fanon, F. *The Wretched of the World*. 2nd ed. New York: Grove Press, 1963.
Gilroy, P. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness.* Cambridge, MA: HUP, 1993.
Hall, S. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" in *Theorising Diaspora*, edited by J. Evans Braziel and A. Mannur. Bodwin: Blackwell Publishing, 2003 (1990), p. 233-246.
hooks, b. *Talking Back. Thinking Feminist. Thinking Black*. Boston: South End Press, 1989.
Jackaman, R. *Broken English/Breaking English: A Study of Contemporary Poetries in English*. London: Associated University Press, 2003.
Johnson, L. K. *Mi Revalueshanary Fren: Selected Poems*. New York: Ausable Press, 2006.
Markham, E. A. *Human Rites*. London: Anvil Press, 1984.
---. *Against the Grain. A 1950s Memoir*. Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, 2008.
Nichols, G. *I Is A Long-Memoried Woman*. London: Karnak House, 1983.
---. *The Fat Black Woman's Poems.* London: Virago Press, 1984.
---. *Lazy Thoughts of a Lazy Woman.* London: Virago Press, 1989.
---. *Picasso, I Want My Face Back.* Highgreen: Bloodaxe, 2000.
Paget, H. *Caliban's Reason: Introducing Afro-Caribbean Philosophy*. London and New York: Routledge, 2000.
Sedgwick, E. K. *Novel Gazing. Queer Readings in Fiction*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1997.
Smartt, D. *Connecting Medium*. Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, 2001.
---. *Ship Shape*. Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, 2008.
Walcott, D. *Omeros*. New York: The Noonday Press, 1990.
---. *Selected Poems,* Edward Baugh (ed). London: Faber and Faber, 2007.
Young, R. J. C. *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race.* London: Routledge, 1995.
Zephaniah, B. *Propa Propaganda*. London: Bloodaxe, 1996.

STUDIA UBB PHILOLOGIA, LVIII, 3, 2013, p. 183 - 191
(RECOMMENDED CITATION)

THEORIZING ON LADYBIRDS AND CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

MIHAELA MUDURE[1]

This essay is dedicated to Prof. Odette Blumenfeld as a sign of respect for a lifetime dedicated to scholarship and education.

ABSTRACT. ***Theorizing on Ladybirds and Children's Literature.*** This paper is meant to be a close reading of Hanif Kureishi's children's story *Ladybirds for Lunch.* After exploring the symbolic and the narrative structures embedded into the text-ure of this story, the author will extrapolate her conclusions and place this text in the context of Hanif Kureishi's work and in postcolonial children's literature. Starting from Kureishi's short story and analyzing the relation between children's literature and postcolonial literature we shall offer a new term "infantible" that, hopefully, is able to catch the essence of a cultural situation.

Keywords: children's literature, childhood, adult, postcolonial, Kureishi, infantible, symbolic, satire

REZUMAT. ***Teoretizând despre buburuze şi literatura pentru copii.*** Această lucrare este un exerciţiu de „close reading" a povestirii pentru copii intitulate „Buburuze pentru prânz" de Hanif Kureishi. După examinarea structurilor simbolice şi narative din text-ura povestirii, autoarea îşi va extrapola concluziile şi va plasa textul în contextul operei lui Hanif Kureishi şi al literaturii pentru copii postcoloniale. Pornind de la povestirea lui Kureishi şi de la analiza legăturii dintre literatura pentru copii şi literatura postcolonială vom oferi un nou termen, „infantibil" care, sperăm, va putea prinde esenţa unei situaţii culturale.

Cuvinte cheie: literatura pentru copii, copilărie, adult, postcolonial, Kureishi, infantibil, simbolic, satiră

Ladybirds for Lunch, one of the most recent writings of Hanif Kureishi – actually, it only appears on his site as recent publication – is, apparently a simple story with children and about children. From the narrative point of

[1] Mihaela Mudure is professor in the English Department of the Faculty of Letters of Babeş-Bolyai University. Her publications deal mostly with the intersection between gender and ethnic studies. She has read or published papers in several countries from Europe, Asia, and North America. Contact address: <mmudure@yahoo.com>.

view, it is a traditional text with an omniscient author. It is interesting that this author is very sympathetic to children and he had obvious reluctance to justify parental authority, on whatever grounds. The text can be classified as children's literature not only because it deals with children and gives special emphasis to the children's perspective but also because the children lead the action and the adults seem ridiculous and even helpless.

The story can be compared with a very well known text by Kureishi, the novel *Gabriel's Gift* which many consider to be a children's book. In our opinion, *Gabriel's Gift* is just a book with a child title hero and not a book for children which would presuppose that the the reader Kureishi had in mind when writing the text was a child. Or any analysis of the text would prove that this is not the case. The child title hero lives in a world of adults and acts among adults and for adults. By his intelligent manoevres he succeeds in manipulating his parents to reconciliation and restores the integrity of his family. The main difference between *Gabriel's Gift* and *Ladybirds for Lunch* is the imaginary. Gabriel's story has a very realistic background. Gabriel parents experience a sort of regression movement into their childhood. They are intricately linked to the sixties and cannot get rid of this period which meant their youth and glory. In a way, Gabriel's story is a fiction about the revistation of the sixties from the perspective of the twentieth century. What remains of the famous decade if submitted to the merciless dissection of contemporaneity? A group of adults addicted to their youth and a child who tries to save his parents in spite of themselves. In *Gabriel's Gift*, the author is, certainly, sympathetic to the children. Adults are helpless, even ridiculous, the action is led by a child. Still, some elements, which are fundamental for the condition of children's literature, are missing in this text. Namely, I am referring to the imaginary and the fundamental role of children in the power game which makes the core of the text. A comparison with *Ladybirds for Lunch* will point to the presence, in both texts, of a realistic component: the satire of a contemporary middle class family, conventional and shallow. Still the main element in the latter text is the intrusion of the imaginary with the help of the well-known insects that populate so many children's rhymes and stories.

If we follow this analytical trend, two questions follow normally. Can Kureishi write children? Or does Kureishi actually want to write children? I do not think that Kureishi's foremost concern is to investigate children's psychological frame. The child is of interest to Kureishi as part of his postcolonial frame of mind. The connection between the children's literature and post-colonial literature[2]

[2] This paper does not give me the respite to clarify another problem which shows the infantibility (propensity for the infantile condition) of the postcolonial condition. I just want to mention it briefly because its clarification would need further and extended research. Looking for Romanian women writers till 1900, for another project, I was surprised to find out that children's literature was a

needs to be explained and analyzed carefully. The propensity of post-colonial writers for childhood and children is well known. The cause of this preference is, however, less clarified. These unsettling narratives are the literary product of a wavering, unstable, unsteadfast cultural frame, the consequence of painful historical impositions which have left cultural traumas discernable even today. The child in his incomplete development pointing to a potential that has yet to become stolid reality is both a painful *figura* and a symbol of great potential. He is a painful *figura* because he is in development and development is not without effort and pain. On the other hand, the child is never stagnant, his great potential implies growth and the overpassing of whatever present means.

Another proof that the *Ladybirds* text belongs to children's literature is its literary connections. Deep down, at the level of signification, the children's story which is *Ladybirds for Lunch* combines very deftly a poignant satire against middle class conformity and petty aspirations with intertextual references to Pied Piper, the saviour of the city of Hamlin.

In the center of Hanif Kureishi's narrative construction is, therefore, a middle class family made up of the Father, the Mother, and the twins (Theo and Jake). The twins, alike in everything, reinforce and amplify the children's reactions and point of view. They form a balance with the parental reactions and point of view, family life being divided into two equal battlefields.

The story begins with an event that breaks the family routine. Frazer and Sabina Brinswanger "very important people who helped decide on the programmes which appeared on television"[3] will come and visit. There are two important reasons which justify turning this visit into *an event.* "Mother hadn't had a job for a year, she was very keen to have Mr. Binswanger employ her. And secondly, "the Binswangers had a villa in France with a swimming pool and servants"[4] where the family would like to be invited.

The routine of family life is humorously disrupted, „immediately after breakfast their mother scurbbed the remains of all baked beans, bits of egg, and pieces of toast from their hair" and Father was helping in the kitchen. It

favourite genre of many women writers till 1900. I mention just a few names: Veronica Micle, Maria Rosetti, Smara, Constanta Dunca Schiau etc. All this has to do with the belated entrance into modernity of the cultures from the Balkans and/or Central Europe and with their partial modernization. These cultures belonged to imperial spaces and are post-colonial in their effort to enter modernity, Western style and build a new and supposedly independent culture. Building a modern national culture, in the Western sense of the notion, also implies constructing the readers of these new national literatures. In these post-colonial areas, the infantible comes from the unsettling historicity of these cultures that have to continuously reinvent themselves in order to get rid of the memories of their former submission and oppression.

[3] KUREISHI, H., *Ladybirds for Lunch.* http://www.hanifkureishi.com/ladybirds.html. Accessed on 5 July, p. 1.

[4] Ibidem.

was most unusual for him to wander that far from the television, particularly in the morning“. As for the Mother taking care of the cleanliness of the children and of the kitchen this is also highly unusual for this selfish parent.

The *Ladybirds* text focuses on "a party day“. The knowledgeable reader will remember another family partying in the work of another postcolonial writer. I am referring to Katherine Mansfield’s Sheridans and their garden party. In both texts it is a lovely day for a party in the garden but the moment differs. "And after all the weather was ideal. They could not have had a more perfect day for a garden-party if they had ordered it. Windless, warm, the sky without a cloud. Only the blue was veiled with a haze of light gold, as it is sometimes in early summer“[5].

The chosen timing is perfect for the melancholic message of the Mansfieldian text. The end of the afternoon is the end of the fullness of the day, the end of the fullness of life. In Katherine Mansfield’s nostalgia New Zealand story the late afternoon party which goes on in an extremely beautiful natural environment suggests the transience of time and the impossiblity to keep time in place. The late afternoon is the end of the warm and light part of the day. The imminence of the dark suggests the imminence of the end of life.

"And the perfect afternoon slowly ripened, slowly faded, slowly its petals closed“[6].

The end of the party will also clarify what the end of life means in the epiphanic final moment when Laura tries to explain her emotional excitement to her brother, Laurie. "She stopped, she looked at her brother. 'Isn't life,‘ she stammered, 'isn't life—' But what life was she couldn't explain. No matter. He quite understood.

'Isn't it, darling?' said Laurie“[7].

In Kureishi’s story we have the postmodern satirical pinch, even the authorial grin, nothing of the Mansfieldian post-romatic emphasis on the ego. The lunch party resembles a business lunch where "the boys had to be on their best behaviour ... and must allow themselves to be kissed, tickled and tossed in the air“[8]. Nothing of the vegetal profusion from the New Zealand story. In the yard of the family to be visited in Kureishi’s story survive only the few flowers which were not flattened down by the boys "with their football“[9]. To this one must add the destructive effects brought about by Mrs. Binswanger’s high heels. They "will juncture the new lawn and destroy some of the remaining

[5] MANSFIELD, K., *The Short Stories of Katherine Mansfield.* ed. John Middleton Murry, New York, Knopf, 1937, p. 247.
[6] Ibidem, p. 248.
[7] Ibidem, p. 256.
[8] Ibidem, p. 2
[9] Ibidem.

nature"[10]. In the postmodern text nature is only re-presented by tame and destructible scarce elements. In the modernist text, nature seen by the egotistic eye is part of the plot.

Like Mansfield, Kureishi focuses on the social relations between the characters but with much more mythical depth and sarcasm. The unusual event, i.e. the Biswangers' visit disturbs the routine of the day and Kureishi's satire is impossible to resist. "Father frantically searched the house for an item of clothing unstained by crushed biscuit. Mother hunted for her curlers. This involved her glaring at the probably culprits Jake and Theo: she had to enter the mind of the criminal before foraging in the obvious places. One curler was in the fridge, embedded in butter, another was installed in front of the video recorder and the last one had been neatly placed in the watering can"[11]. The essence of the satire and the reason for laughter comes from unsuitability that had been tolerated by the Father and the Mother till the expected visit. Father did not use to care about hs clothes. Mother did not use to care about her hair and totally neglected any styling.

In Mansfield's story you have Laura's famous hat that helps the adolescent realize that she is on the threshold of femininity. "There, quite by chance, the first thing she saw was this charming girl in the mirror, in her black hat trimmed with gold daisies, and a long black velvet ribbon. Never had she imagined she could look like that"[12].

In Kureishi's story you have Mother and her curlers, and her head "looking like a bowl of pasta"[13]. The intense emotion from Mansfield's text turns into domesticity and household references associated with "the head", the part of the body which refers to the intellect and the mind. Kureishi refuses idealization and prefers the low tone of domestic comedy (with great tradition in the English literature), something which Mansfield only suggests in the narrative background.

Kureishi's family live in a very urbanized environment where cat droppings are not used as a fertilizer but hurled "over the fence into the next garden"[14] with neighbours doing, probably, the same thing in a very original ping-pong game. "The cats were practically the only wildlife in Shepherd's Bush, apart from the people on the street, and, of course, the beautiful ladybirds, hundreds of which congregated around the garden bench to compare spots and talk about what was happening"[15]. This is the moment when the fantastic erupts into the narrative. Sympathetic to nature, Theo and Jake decide the ladybirds should party as well. Consequently, they hunt them and "place them, for the afternoon, in a

[10] Ibidem, p. 3.
[11] Ibidem, p. 4.
[12] Ibidem, p. 250.
[13] Ibidem.
[14] Ibidem.
[15] Ibidem, p. 5.

card box ... Once the lady birds were gathered in the concert hall of the box, the boys – who loved to play mad jigs on their numerous instruments – would make music and watch the dance“[16].

But the guests arrive and the children do not have time to finish their ladybirds manoeuvres. The adults are, all of them, observed with utmost comical severity. The father’s sideburns make him look as though two hairy slugs had settled on the side of his face“[17]. The visitor’s perfume is so sharp that it causes all flies in the vicinity to become unconscious immediately. However, the ladybirds – "sung in the warm booth of Jake’s and Theo’s hands – were not affected“[18]. The world of the adults is in contradiction with nature.Adults can’t understand nature and everything they do is on the brink of the comical. Laughter is needed in order to release the reader from the tension of his unfulfilled desire for nature. Even the children become victims because of the adults‘ inability to grasp the right nuances of a situation. A top moment is the realization that Sabina’s Binswanger’s "lipstick kisses imprinted on their cheeks and forehead“ make them look like "pink butterflies“[19]. The children’s bodies become imprinted texts which tell us something about middle class conformity and shallowness. The body becomes text and the meaning of this text relies on the meaning of these bodies.

The guests‘ sudden arrival obliges the boys to hide the ladybirds into "a crusty pie with a hole in the top“. But the unavoidable happens. The guests taste the ladybird pie. Soon, the ladybirds hurry "out of the pie, rushing away like dodgem cars propelled by silent electricity. Some of them flew into the air, but many others, drawn by the heat of Mr. Binswanger’s face, merely crawled over his soft, sticky cheeks and settled down in a swoon, having swallowed the alcohol he was sweating. Others ran about in a panic, not knowing where they were“[20]. Mr. Binswanger’s face seemed to be "spotted with moving dots ... one of these ladybirds then trotted up his nostril like an explorer in the rain forest. Other lady birds lined up to run into the mysterious and winding caverns of his lars, clambering over bits of lod potato and carrot lodged there, until a battalion of them entered the spacious of his mind“[21]. The acme is when Frazer Binswanger himself realized that "the living room of his mind was alive with ladybirds“[22]. Consequently, "every dream of the past that Binswanger now had, would be sprinkled with ladybirds, like pepper on an omlette“[23].

[16] Ibidem, p. 6.
[17] Ibidem.
[18] Ibidem, p. 7.
[19] Ibidem.
[20] Ibidem.
[21] Ibidem.
[22] Ibidem.
[23] Ibidem.

This invasion by insects - a kind of vermin - of Mr. Binswanger's inner space can remind the reader of the invasion of another vermin – rats – of the town of Hamlin. In both cases, the infantile will give the solution. In both cases the invading animals will be enticed to leave the new territory they had just invaded with music. "Theo and Jack knew that all insects, like all children, could be moved by music. The boys' sweet voices rose like doves into the air, and across West London the ears of shoppers pricked up. People dropped their bags to feel the delicious rhythm working through them"[24]. In the myth of Pied Piper, the child who mesmerizes the intruding animals with his music is an outsider. Nobody knows who he is and where he came from. The old mistrust and suspicion towards the foreigner combined with such a commmon feeling – ingratitude – makes the people of Hamlin refuse to pay the piper as promised. The punishment of the town of Hamlin will be terrible. The town will lose not only its rats but also its children.

In Kureishi's story, the infantile saviour is represented by the twins. They reinforce their role and actions by their duality but they also turn them into something more common than in the Pied Piper's story. Only uniqueness is exceptional. Also if the myth is constructed, on the one hand, upon the traditionally very clear separation between "us" and the alien, on the other hand, upon the implacable traditional Old Testament consequence: do good and you will have good, do evil and you will have evil, respect thy word and promises, the Kureishi narrative invokes a world with different rules. Here the infantile saviour is not only dual but also a member of the family, an insider to the whole trama which unfolds in a domesticized time and space. In the myth, the adults of Hamlin break the positive effect of music when they break their promise. In Kureishi's narrative, Mr. Binswanger, another troublesome adult, is about to squash a ladybird "between his thumb and finger"[25]. Fortunately, Mr. Binswanger, unlike the adults from Hamelin, heed to the children. He gives up his killing intentions. "And as the rhythm of the music built, the ladybirds began to emerge from his ears and nose into the sunshine shaking their bottoms and waving their legs. Some of them look a little dazed, as anyone would, had they spent time within the foggy labyrinth of Mr. Binswanger's brain. But most were dancing, and many gathered on Mr. Binswanger's forehead, where they hopped and capered like a line of animated billiard balls"[26].

Irony and humour replace the gloomy mystery from the traditional tale. Kureishi's fantastic imaginary is tamed, the happy end of his narration contrasts with the final tragedy in the warning story about the town of Hamlin and its rats. In a postmodern key, the children will save both the situation and the adults. The family will be invited to France and hopefully, the Mother will get a job but not

[24] Ibidem, p. 8.
[25] Ibidem.
[26] Ibidem.

because of the lunch party thrown by the adults but because of the music played by the children and which is highly appreciated by the Binswangers. Middle class ideals will be fulfilled but adults are still not able to understand that it was the children who led the game. As it often occurs in children's literature, adults appear helpless and ridiculous because they cannot save themselves.

Like many other postcolonials, Hanif Kureish uses children as a *figura* with symbolic potential. Why this preference? The evidence is clear. Less clear is the cause of this preference. What makes the postcolonial condition infantible? Childable? Namely, what makes it prone to take delight in using young age as one of its favourite metaphors, transmitters, guardians of truth? Firstly, I think that I should come back to the term "children's literature". Children's literature proper should be texts authored by children and for children. Actually, we call children's literature, texts authored by adults but whom we consider to be very adequate for yourng readers. This adequacy is decided by adults, according to their perspective on how infants should be raised and educated and what infants adults want to raise. Children's literature appeared at the beginning of modernity and it is a consequence of the appearance of the child as a notion[27]. At the end of the seventeenth century and beginning of the eighteenth century, in Western Europe, children's death rate started to decline. More and more children survived early childhood. Parenting changed. Parents could dare to invest more affection into their children because more children had good chances to reach maturity. Before this historical moment, children were considered to be miniature adults. Only now did adults start to realize the peculiarity of childhood. Hence the necessity to create texts that would correspond to these new educational necessities. Children and their mothers, their governesses, their teachers formed new readerships with new concerns and interests. This is how children's literature appeared. Renowned literary historians have noticed that the history of children's literature coincides more or less with the history of the novel[28]. The new child was often the child of a middle class family and he or she should meet the exigencies of these adults. The invention of this new literature was influenced by the power games that have always shaped history and society. In our case the rise of the middle class led to the appearance of new feelings, new emotions, a new sensitivity.

According to reader response theories, children's literature tries to respond to the exigencies of these new readers. The critic and the literary historian should, therefore, wonder what in literature engages the young readers. From a contemporary perspective, however, it is advisable, according to Rogers[29], to wonder what and why young characters engage literature, more particularly post-colonial literature. Why are post-colonial writers, be they Mansfield or

[27] Cf. MAUSE, L. De, *The History of Childhood*, New York, Jason Aronson, Inc., 1995.
[28] Cf. HUGHES, F., «Children's Literature: Theory and Practice» *ELH*, vol. 45, no. 3, Autumn 1978, pp. 542-561.
[29] ROGERS, Th., «Literary Theory and Children's Literature: Interpreting Ourselves and Our Worlds» *Theory into Practice*, volume 38, no. 3, Summer 1999, pp. 138-146.

Kureishi, interested in children? The answer lies in the peculiarities of literature as power. If reading reinforces the power of the author over the reader, then we can truly say that in this power game children are colonized by adults[30]. Like the postcolonial subaltern, children are talked about, they are represented and cannot represent themselves constructed. Children's identities are created, as constructs, by adults according to how they think childhood should be.

The postcolonial condition implies a certain connection with historical time. The colonial imposition "infantilized" countries, zones, cultures in the sense that it obliged them to enter some kind of political dependence and, then, some kind of cultural dependence which they still can't get rid of completely even nowadawys. The postcolonial condition is infantible because the normal course of history in these areas has been disrupted and the result was a dependency complex never to be done away with.

And what is very interesting is the theoretical lesson we can draw from *Ladybirds for Lunch*. Even if the author lives in one of places of power, still his condition is for ever marked by the rich ambiguities of postcolonial condition if he identies with these proud subaltern areas.Theorizing about ladybirds is theorizing about the postcolonial condition and its cultural youth. Reductive in its representation of the child, children's literature makes adults appear ridiculous and helpless. In its deep structures it implies a revolt against hierarchies and conventions. For the moment it is important that starting from texts that we can classify as children's literature, we are able to construct new theories of children's literature. The present paper is such an attempt. Hopefully convincing!

BIBLIOGRAPHY

KUREICHI, H., *Darul lui Gabriel,* tr. Elena Ciocoiu, Bucharest, Humanitas, 2005.
---. *Ladybirds for Lunch.* http://www.hanifkureishi.com/ladybirds.html, accessed on 5 July.

*

BLAIR, E., *The Pied Piper of Hamlin, a*Accessed via google books on 7 July 2012.
HUGHES, F., «Children's Literature: Theory and Practice» *ELH*, vol. 45, no. 3, Autumn 1978, pp. 542-561.
MANSFIELD, K., *The Short Stories of Katherine Mansfield,* ed. John Middleton Murry, New York, Knopf, 1937.
MAUSE, L. De, *The History of Childhood*, New York, Jason Aronson, Inc.,1995.
ROGERS, Th., «Literary Theory and Children's Literature: Interpreting Ourselves and Our Worlds» *Theory into Practice*, volume 38, no. 3, Summer 1999, pp. 138-146.

[30] Nowadays the problem of children's freedom is changing the status of children's literature. The adults try to combine the freedom they are more and more willing to give to the children and the need to protect the children. Children's literature tends to be, more and more, the texts authored by children for children. In this case, childhood is defined by children for the children. On the other hand, freedom also means confrontation. Or children are too fragile to protect themselves. Freedom and the necessity to protect children come into some kind of contradiction.

STUDIA UBB PHILOLOGIA, LVIII, 3, 2013, p. 193 - 202
(RECOMMENDED CITATION)

BOVARISM AND CONSUMERISM IN WOODY ALLEN'S "THE KUGELMASS EPISODE"

AMELIA NAN[1]

ABSTRACT. ***Bovarism and Consumerism in Woody Allen's "The Kugelmass Episode".*** This study analyses the narrative technique engaged by Woody Allen in his short story "The Kugelmass Episode", focusing on the 'transvaluation' (as G. Genette puts it) of Flaubert's character, Mme. Bovary, as she is displaced from her own fictional world and introduced into a world governed by the logic of consumerism, in order to identify the reasons behind the migration of the character.

Keywords: Bovarism, consumerism, hypertextuality, postmodernist narrative techniques, transworld indentity, Woody Allen, Gustave Flaubert.

REZUMAT. ***Bovarism și consumerism în „Episodul Kugelmass" de Woody Allen.*** Acest studiu investighează tehnica narativă utilizată de Woody Allen în povestirea „Episodul Kugelmass", acordând o atenție deosebită procesului de „transvalorizare" (G. Genette) suferit de personajul lui Flaubert, Doamna Bovary, datorită faptului că este strămutată din propria-i lume ficțională și transpusă într-o lume guvernată de o logică a consumerismului. Scopul acestei abordări este de a identifica motivele ce stau la baza migrației personajului.

Cuvinte cheie: bovarism, consumerism, tehnici narrative postmoderne, identitate transmundană, Woody Allen.

"The Kugelmass Episode" is the short story which brought Woody Allen the O. Henry Award in 1978. It was first published in *The New Yorker* on 2 May 1977 and, three years later, it was included in the volume *Side Effects*, together with sixteen more other short stories. It tells the story of Mr. Kugelmass, "a professor of humanities at City College, […] unhappily married for the second time" (W. Allen 245) to an "oaf" called Daphne, and suffocated

[1] Doctoral student in Philology, Babeș-Bolyai University, Faculty of Letters, Department of English Language and Literature. Interests: American Literature, Jewish studies, gender studies. Contact: amelia.nan@gmail.com. This work was possible with the financial support of the Sectoral Operational Programme for Human Resources Development 2007-2013, co-financed by the European Social Fund, under the project number POSDRU/107/1.5/S/77946 with the title „Doctorate: an Attractive Research Career ".

by the alimony and child support from his first marriage. The dreariness of his existence pushes Mr. Kugelmass towards seeking for alternatives which could provide him at least some temporary relief. His psychoanalyst is unable to help, but where psychoanalysis fails, wizardry comes to rescue and, by means of a magic trick, he is transported into the fictional world of Mme. Bovary. What follows is a series of hypertextual loops and adventures which shall be analyzed in this study.

In "The Kugelmass Episode", Woody Allen toys with overlapping fictional worlds and breaking ontological boundaries, a technique which seems to be particularly appealing to him since he also uses it in his films. The "Allen character" in *Annie Hall* or Boris Yellnikoff from one of his more recent films, *Whatever Works*, shake ontological boundaries and break the fourth wall[2] by addressing the audience directly, while Tom Baxter, a fictional character from *The Purple Rose of Cairo*, completely trespasses the diegetic barriers and migrates to a superior (yet still fictional) ontological level. However, the case of Mr. Kugelmass is different both because here the main character "descend(s) into the world of Flaubert's novel *Madame Bovary*" (McHale 123), he goes 'down' one ontological level, and because the reason behind his ontological leap is different than in the case of the above mentioned films, and goes beyond its immediate estrangement effect.

"The Kugelmass Episode" is yet another instance of hypertextuality, a type of transtextual relationship, defined by G. Genette in *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree* as "any relationship uniting a text B (which I shall call the hypertext) to an earlier text A (I shall, of course, call it the hypotext), upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not that of the commentary." (5) The story of Mr. Kugelmass is built around the same scheme of interplaying texts, permeable fictional realms, and nested worlds which proved quite popular among postmodernist writers. It is a 'borrower' text which features transworld characters that preserve the same coordinates as their initial model. The hypertextual endeavour in this case consists not in quoting or alluding to the story's hypotext, but in literally entering the fictional world of Flaubert's novel, *Madame Bovary*, and even extracting the main character from there.

Mr. Kugelmass' world is interposed between the *real* world of the reader and that of the fictional world of *Madame Bovary* over which it seems to be able to exercise an impressive amount of control. Although he cannot interfere with Flaubert's narrative, Persky, the magician who facilitates boundary transgression, can transport characters into and out of the fictional world of *Madame Bovary*, while none of Flaubert's characters has the power to influence "The Kugelmass Episode" in this specific manner. From this

[2] The forth wall is a concept developed by Denis Diderot in his writings about theatre. It represents an imaginary boundary set between the audience and a fictional work.

perspective, the two fictional worlds seem to be interconnected based on a subordination relationship, which can be easily understood as residing in diachronic considerations. The Great Persky claims to be capable to exert his magic in the same way over any book written until that moment. He tells Mr. Kugelmass: "If I throw any novel into this cabinet with you, shut the doors, and tap it three times, you will find yourself projected into that book." (W. Allen "The Kugelmass Episode" 248)

Persky's magic trick renders permeable the membrane separating fictional worlds. The first instance of transgression occurs when Mr. Kugelmass is projected into Charles and Emma Bovary's bedroom, where she was folding linen. Although this could be qualified as quite an extraordinary experience, it does not seem to disturb Mr. Kugelmass to a great extent. He does perceive the peculiarity of the situation and confesses a certain surprise: "I can't believe this, thought Kugelmass, staring at the doctor's ravishing wife. This is uncanny. I'm here. It's her." (249). However, the uncanny situation is not attributed as much to the ontological transgression as it is related to the fact that he finally finds himself in the presence of a beautiful woman, and not with "the troglodyte who shared his bed." (249) On the other hand, Emma Bovary's reaction does not show any sign of bewilderment, nothing more than a slight surprise that there's someone else in the room, and a natural curiosity regarding the identity of the man who just appeared in her bedroom: "Emma turned in surprise. 'Goodness, you startled me,' she said. 'Who are you?'" (249). After Mr. Kugelmass introduces himself, the scene continues in the most familiar manner: "Emma Bovary smiled flirtatiously and said, 'Would you like a drink? A glass of wine, perhaps?'" (249) The normality of the dialog transforms this entire ontological leap into a rather familiar experience, thus effacing any kind of estrangement which could otherwise be easily associated with such an incident. There seems to be nothing strange about transgressing fictional boundaries, at least not for fictional characters whose world is visited by other fictional characters that belong to a different diegetic realm. On the other hand, given the dominant traits of Mme. Bovary as she was conceived by Flaubert, such a reaction to an unexpected visit from a male stranger in a modern leisure suit is rather plausible.

What follows is a series of transtextual rendezvous which culminate with Mme Bovary's being extracted from her own world and brought into that of Mr. Kugelmass. However, the fictional disturbances are noticed by students belonging to the same fictional world as Mr. Kugelmass, who were reading Flaubert's novel at that very moment. They perceive the uncanny of the experience: "students in various classrooms across the country were saying to their teachers, 'Who is this character on page 100? A bald Jew is kissing Madame Bovary?' A teacher in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, sighed and thought, Jesus, these kids, with their pot and acid. What goes through their minds!" (251)

These readers function like a Greek chorus, like a dramatic voice commenting on the action, but their attempt to emphasize the uncanny of the narrative is actually turned into a humoristic device. Woody Allen goes even further and uses this opportunity to tease theoretical perspectives which conceive the literary work as an organic, ever-changing entity:

> "I cannot get my mind around this," a Stanford professor said. "First a strange character named Kugelmass, and now she's gone from the book. Well, I guess the mark of a classic is that you can read it thousand times and always find something new." (255)

The same mechanism of pointing out the uncanny of the situation with the purpose of achieving a comical effect is also used in the scene when Mr. Kugelmass asks Persky to extract Emma Bovary from her own fictional world and project it into the 'real' world of Mr. Kugelmass:

> That night, safely returned to Persky's flat, Kugelmass brought up the idea of having Emma visit him in the big city.
> "Let me think about it," Persky said. "Maybe I could work it. Stranger things have happened." Of course, neither of them could think of one. (253)

Emma Bovary's presence in "The Kugelmass Episode" turns her in what Umberto Eco calls *transworld identities*, that is, identities which trespass from one possible world to another. Although Mr. Kugelmass is literally projected into another fictional world, he cannot be included into the same category because he is a resident of his own story which frames the entire series of transgressions, and his identity cannot be contested based on his ontological leap. However, Emma Bovary has been created as part of a completely different text. She was only borrowed by Woody Allen for "The Kugelmass Episode" and her identity can be questioned.

In *Lector in Fabula*, Umberto Eco claims that all possible worlds are *furnished*, not *empty*, and in each world individuals are endowed with specific attributes which generally manifest through their actions, thus creating a potential succession of events which actuate that specific world. In the case of fictional worlds, the individuals who populate them have a limited amount of properties, and Eco defines and distinguishes between them as *essential* and *accidental* properties. The *essential properties* of an object in a possible or fictional world are those particular properties which allow the object to fulfil its purpose, while the *accidental properties* are variable and lack relevance. According to Brian McHale, this distinction can help establish the identity or the degree of similitude between borrowed characters and their initial models:

> If an entity in one world differs from its "prototype" in another world only in accidental properties, not in essentials, and if there is a one-to-one correspondence between the prototype and its other-world variant, then the two entities can be considered identical even though they exist in distinct worlds. (35)

In "The Kugelmass Episode", Woody Allen parodically emphasizes the fact that we have the exact same Emma Bovary as in Flaubert's novel: "She spoke in the same fine English translation as the paperback" (249) and the pattern of her behaviour tends to respect as much as possible the traits of the Mme. Bovary we know from Flaubert's novel, thus increasing the plausibility of her identity. Apparently, the novel called *Madame Bovary*, which can be read in Mr. Kugelmass' world is the same novel that we, the readers of "The Kugelmass Episode" can read, with the only difference that the former has a rather permeable fictional membrane which allows intruders.

Obviously, Emma *Bovary's essential property* is what came to be known as Bovarism, a term developed by Jules de Gaultier in his work *Le Bovarysme*. Bovarism describes a phenomenon which can be encountered both in normal psychology and pathology. The term developed around a delusive enchantment based on a misrepresentation of oneself and of the role that one has in society. In severe pathological cases, Bovarism can result in creating fictitious alternative personalities. Jules de Gaultier emphasizes the fact that this projective representation of oneself comes hand in hand with the incapacity of actually changing one's life and getting any closer to the idealized version of oneself: "the weakness of their personality is always accompanied by an impotence and, if they see themselves as others whom they are not, they will not be able to become the model they chose."[3] (14) Woody Allen insists that the reader identifies both the character (Mme. Bovary) and the symptoms of her *essential* trait, the escapist day dreaming which dominates her character, by pointing them out in a parodical manner. During her first encounter with Mr. Kugelmass, she admits: "I've always dreamed that some mysterious stranger would appear and rescue me from the monotony of this crass rural existence.'" (W. Allen, "The Kugelmass Episode" 250) The way in which she presents herself alludes to the most cliché-istic phrases used to refer to Flaubert's novel and also emphasizes the romantic overtones of Bovarism, as it manifests in the specific case of Emma Bovary.

After being extracted from her own world, Mme Bovary reaches into a society described by Fredric Jameson as built on "the frantic economic urgency of producing fresh waves of ever more novel-seeming goods" (5), a world dominated by "commodity fetishism of a transition to late capital" (9) from which emerged "a new kind of flatness or depthlessness, a new kind of superficiality in the most literal sense" (9), so she converts and starts acting accordingly. Her appetite for luxury goods and the Hollywood mirage was stimulated even before she left her own world: "Emma, to be sure, was just as happy as Kugelmass. She had been starved for excitement, and his tales of

[3] In original: « Mais cette défaillance de la personnalité est toujours accompagnée chez eux d'une impuissance, et, s'ils se conçoivent autres qu'ils ne sont, ils ne parviennent point a s'égaler au modèle qu'ils se sont proposé.»

Broadway night life, of fast cars and Hollywood and TV stars, enthralled the young French beauty." (W. Allen "The Kugelmass Episode" 252). Given her predisposition, when she is brought into the world which functions by the 'logic of late capitalism', Mme Bovary easily assimilates the behaviour of the times and turns into a consumerist by the book:

> "I love it! It's everything I dreamed it would be," Emma said as she swirled joyously around the bedroom, surveying the city from their window. "There's F. A. O. Schwarz. And there's Central Park, and the Sherry is which one? Oh, there – I see. It's too divine."
> On the bed there were boxes from Halston and Saint Laurent. Emma unwrapped a package and held up a pair of black velvet pants against her perfect body.
> "The slacks suit is by Ralph Lauren," Kugelmass said."You'll look like a million bucks in it." (254)

The transformation of Flaubert's character, as depicted by Woody Allen, shows the interplay between the dominant and latent attributes of the character which are actually part of the same *essential properties* of the character as described above. Mme. Bovary undergoes a process of 'transvaluation', in Genette's words. Her initial *essential property*, Bovarism, the tendency of projecting unrealistic images of oneself, is revaluated and transformed by the consumerist culture around her, but the transformation occurs only at a surface level, while the fundamental coordinate remains the same. As consumerism is engrafted on Bovarism, it modifies the ways in which Bovarism manifests, but, at the same time, it enhances its very essence by promoting projections and consumption of images. The romantic dimension of Bovarism is also emphasized by pointing towards the superficial and utilitarian perspectives that Emma Bovary has on love. While her love for Mr. Kugelmass turns into an ultimatum: "'Get me back into the novel or marry me,' Emma told Kugelmass" (257), her ceaseless search for a male saviour continues, but her tendency of creating romantic illusions is now directed towards creating illusions of fame:

> "I met an Off Broadway producer in Central Park yesterday, and he said I might be right for a project he's doing," Emma said.
> "Who is this clown?" Kugelmass asked.
> "He's not a clown. He's sensitive and kind and cute. His name's Jeff Something-or-Other, and he's up for a Tony." (257)

Mme Bovary's consumerism is not an *accidental* property activated by the new environment which acts upon her, but an inherent characteristic of Bovarism. The tendency of projecting misrepresentations of the self has probably never been more promoted and facilitated in any other period than it was in the second half of the twentieth century, the period of late capitalism, as referred to by Fredric Jameson.

In *Essais de psychologie contemporaine*, published in 1891, before Jules de Gaultier's *Le Bovarysme,* Paul Bourget makes a very interesting case for the cause of this condition which, in his opinion, seems to affect most of Flaubert's characters. He claims that the misrepresentation of the self in these characters is caused by "Thought which precedes the experience instead of being subject to it"[4] (148) and by "the misfortune of having known the representation of reality before that reality, the representation of sensations and feelings, before those sensations and feelings."[5] (149) Thus, the tendency of continuously constructing unrealistic images of oneself and mistaking idealized versions of one's existence for real is attributed to the reversed logic of perception which leads to the incapacity of the consciousness to discern between reality and simulation. This outlook bears considerable similitude with Baudrillard's perspective on the late twentieth century world. According to Baudrillard, in current times, the substitution of reality by images and the inverted sequence between the real and the simulated reached a point where the very concept of reality is contested:

> Today abstraction is no longer that of the map, the double, the mirror, or the concept. Simulation is no longer that of the territory, a referential being, or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal. The territory no longer precedes the map, not does it survive it. It is nevertheless the map that precedes the territory – *procession of simulacra* – that engenders the territory and [...] today is the territory whose shreds slowly rot across the extent of the map. (1)

Emma Bovary is thus introduced to a world which is "transformed into sheer images of itself" (Jameson 18). Apparently, her symptomatology reverberates through the entire society and reveals a well-nigh universal condition which consists in a perversion of the sense of self and reality.

As the product of a world which exists through projections and simulations of itself, Mr. Kugelmass suffers of Bovarism himself. He is desperately trying to escape from a barren, unsatisfactory existence. He is looking for easy gratification and ends up in literally embodying the fictional projection of himself. The 'bold Jew' who is trapped into an unhappy marriage which he sees like his "ball and chains", who yearns for romance, music, love and beauty, suddenly finds himself in the position of the saviour-lover. He is one of Woody Allen's *schlemiel* figures, with considerable intellectual abilities, but romantically challenged and overwhelmed by the misfortunes of everyday life. His life, caught between appointments with his psychoanalyst and sterile conversations with his wife, is now spiced with rendezvous in Yonville or at the Plaza. He is aware of his limits and he realizes he cannot compete with the sophisticated seducer stereotype embodied by Rodolphe:

[4] In original: « la Pensée qui précède l'expérience au lieu de s'y assujettir.»

[5] In original: « le mal d'avoir connu l'image de la réalité avant la réalité, l'image des sensations et des sentiments avant les sensations et les sentiments. »

> "Make sure and always get me into the book before page 120," Kugelmass said to the magician one day. "I always have to meet her before she hooks up with this Rodolphe character."
> "Why?" Persky asked. "You can't beat his time?"
> "Beat his time. He's landed gentry. Those guys have nothing better to do than flirt and ride horses. To me, he's one of those faces you see in the pages of *Women's Wear Daily.* With the Helmut Berger hairdo. But to her he's hot stuff." (W. Allen, The Kugelmass Episode 253)

However, because of the relationship with Emma Bovary, his attitude changes from that of the insecure schlemiel to that of the lover, the 'sugar daddy' who ceaselessly spoils his mistress. In the beginning he still finds it hard to believe that he is finally in the presence of "the kind of woman he had dreamed of all his life" (149), but, as the relationship evolves, he sets himself up as the manly seducer, the real macho, who turns the woman of his dreams into the object of his desire and addresses her accordingly: "Come on, sugar, give us a kiss" (254). His manliness is not achieved through some complex inner evolutionary process, but simply bought and fed on the artificial value which society associates with consumption. He builds his new persona entirely on providing luxury goods and overwhelming Emma Bovary with the image of a sophisticated way of life. Mr. Kugelmass' manliness is artificially empowered by this perverted sense of self. Moreover, this projection of himself does not hold outside his relationship with Emma; he is still the same anxious person who panics at the thought that his wife might find out about his affair at the point that he even contemplates suicide.

Following the same logic of consumerism and commodification, Emma Bovary herself gets to be perceived as commodity. She reaches a point where she costs more than she is worth and "the hotel tab that reads like the defense budget" (258) makes it imperative that she be transferred back into her own fictional world. When the magic cabinet breaks down and Mme. Bovary is stuck into Mr. Kugelmass' world, Mr. Kugelmass urges Persky to solve the problem, emphasizing what Emma Bovary's consumerist drives are causing to him: "Nuance, my foot. I'm pouring Dom Pérignon and black eggs into this little mouse, plus her wardrobe, plus she's enrolled at the Neighborhood Playhouse and suddenly needs professional photos." (258) What seemed in the beginning as an easy and inexpensive escapist mechanism, recoiled upon Mr. Kugelmass affecting exactly the thing he worried about the most: his budget. His concern regarding his wife finding out about the relationship is also related to the financial implications of yet another divorce, without having anything to do with love or with the sanctity of marriage.

The tragic-comic end of the story has a didactical overtone which points both towards the consequences of disturbing ontological boundaries, and the danger of continuously seeking refuge in imaginary worlds and building imaginary versions of oneself. While Mr. Kugelmass was being

transported into *Portnoy's Complaint*, looking for "sex and romance" (260), an explosion occurs. The Great Persky dies of a heart attack, thus receiving the death penalty for interfering with fictional boundaries and facilitating escapist behaviours. Mr. Kugelmass also gets his punishment which is very much in consonance with his possessive drives:

> Kugelmass, unaware of this catastrophe, had his own problems. He had not been thrust into *Portnoy's Complaint,* or into any other novel, for that matter. He had been projected into an old textbook, *Remedial Spanish,* and was running for his life over a barren, rocky terrain as the word *tener* ("to have") – a large and hairy irregular verb-raced after him on its spindly legs. (260)

In his case, the recoil of consumerism receives hyperbolic amplitude through the symbolic value of being chased by the verb *to have* on a *barren* terrain, as part of a *remedial* process which is intended both to provide remedy and to correct and improve deficiencies.

Although Mr. Kugelmass' transtextual adventures can be read as seeking for refuge in art – a topos which can be encountered is several of Woody Allen's films as well – I argue that, in his case, it is not necessarily art which is supposed to provide relief, but whatever fictional, simulated realities. From this perspective, the ready-made alternative realities, already created by the "world's best writers" (248) provide the most appropriate context for one's delusion to manifest. Not only that it does not cost much money, but it does not even require the effort of creating an own fictional reality in which to find refuge. Moreover, he is not looking for any artistic expression, nor is he depending on some idealized redemptory power of art. Although he is a professor of humanities, he does not seem to be as passionate about his career as he is about his intimate relationship with Mme. Bovary (or any other fictional beauty, for that matter): "Before Kugelmass left, they made love. 'My God, I'm doing it with Madame Bovary!' Kugelmass whispered to himself. 'Me, who failed freshman English'" (251). Probably the most important thing about his being a professor of humanities is the fact that he knows what choice of fictional women he has. The same objectification of female characters can be read in a more recent short story by Woody Allen, "On a Bad Day You Can See Forever", published in the volume *Mere Anarchy*, where the narrator overtly claims that the role of the female characters is that of stimulating the male reader's sexual drive:

> "I hunkered down with a paperback of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, hoping to revel in tableaux of raven-tressed sinners looking like they'd come directly from the pages of Victoria's Secret catalogue as they undulated, seminude, in sulfur and chains. Unfortunately, the author, a stickler for the big questions, quickly dislodged me from that gauzy dream of erotica, and I found myself gadding about the nether regions with no steamier a persona than Virgil to broadcast the local color." (108)

In the case of "The Kugelmass Episode", the choice of this particular hypotext is not random. I argue that Woody Allen chose Mme. Bovary not only because she belongs to that typology of characters which tempts writers to continuously multiply their destiny, but because she bears an implicit trait which is symptomatic for the consumerist self: constructing one's identity through projecting fictitious images of oneself, while being completely incapable of achieving this idealized version. These symptoms manifest in Mr. Kugelmass' behaviour and testify for an axiological homogeneity between the hypotext and the hypertext, thus increasing the accessibility of the two fictional worlds and facilitating the obliteration of the boundaries between them. The fact that the schizoid postmodern – consumerist identity is defined as an amalgam of 'self' and 'projected other' is but the logical consequence of a world in which individual consciousness can no longer discern between the real and the simulated. The individual self is fragmented in a world constructed on simulacra, simulation and stimulation, a world which creates desires without being able to fulfill them, which turns everything into images and commodity, even art and emotions. Bovarism, no longer exclusively the attribute of the character after which it was named, proves a dominant feature of the postmodern consumerist society, a symptom of the 'postmodern condition', to pun the lyotardian syntagm.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Allen, Woody. "The Kugelmass Episode." *The Insanity Defense. The Complete Prose*. New York: Random House, 2007. 245-260.

•

Allen, Graham. *Intertextuality*. London & New York: Routledge, 2000.

Allen, Woody. "On A Bad Day You Can See Forever." *Mere Anarchy.* New York: Edbury Press, 2007. 107-116.

Baudrillard, Jean. *Simulacra and Simulations.* 1981. Trans. Sheila Faria Glaser. Michigan: Ann Arbor : University of Michigan Press, 1994.

Bourget, Paul. *Essais de psychologie contemporaine. Baudelaire - m. Renan - Flaubert - m. Taine - Stendhal.* 7th Edition. Paris: Alphonse Lemerre, 1891.

Eco, Umberto. *Lector in fabula: cooperarea interpretativă în sursele narative.* 1979. Trans. Marina Spalas. București: Editura Univers, 1991.

Flaubert, Gustave. *Doamna Bovary: Moravuri de provincie*. Trans. Aurelia Ulici. București: Adevărul, 2009.

Gaultier, Jules de. *Le Bovarysme.* Paris: Mercure de France, 1930.

Genette, Gerard. *Palimpsest: Literature in the Second Degree.* Trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky. Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1997.

Jameson, Fredric. *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism.* London & New York: Verso, 1991.

McHale, Brian. *Postmodernist Fiction.* 1987. London & New York: Routledge, 2004.

STUDIA UBB PHILOLOGIA, LVIII, 3, 2013, p. 203 - 217
(RECOMMENDED CITATION)

THE PREGNANT BODY AND THE BODY POLITIC: CULTURAL REPRESENTATIONS IN TUDOR AND STUART DRAMA

DANA PERCEC[1]

ABSTRACT. ***The Pregnant Body and the Body Politic: Cultural Representations in Tudor and Stuart Drama.*** The paper brings together the early modern ideology of the King's two bodies and the embodied experience of pregnancy and birth. Starting from the metaphor of 'doubling', which defines both the political concept of the two bodies and the physiological reality of the pregnant body, the paper looks at some representations of pregnancy on the Elizabethan and Jacobean stage.

Keywords: doubling, maternity, king, body politic, pregnancy, birth, Tudor and Stuart drama, cultural representation.

REZUMAT. ***Corpul gestant şi corpul politic: Reprezentări culturale pe scena elisabetană şi iacobină.*** Studiul porneşte de la simbolul medieval şi renascentist al celor două trupuri ale Regelui pentru a ajunge la experienţa maternităţii. Utilizând metafora "dublului", care defineşte deopotrivă conceptul politic al celor două trupuri ale Regelui şi realitatea fiziologică a sarcinii, studiul se opreşte asupra câtorva reprezentări ale sarcinii pe scena elizabetană şi iacobină.

Cuvinte cheie: dublul, maternitate, cele două trupuri ale regelui, graviditate, naştere, teatrul renascentist, reprezentare culturală

Introduction

The medieval doctrine of the King's two bodies and the mysteries of pregnancy and childbirth are two segments of early western societies separated by religious and political imperatives, as well as by day-to-day practices and beliefs. Every now and then, though, they converged. The realm

[1] Dana Percec is associate professor in the English Department of the University of the West, Timişoara, Romania. Her doctoral thesis deals with the experience of embodiment in William Shakespeare's plays. Her most important publications are: *The Body's Tale. Some Ado about Shakespearean Identities* (2006), *Shakespeare and the Theatre. An Introduction* (2008), a cultural history guide (*Anglia elisabetană. Ghid de istorie culturală*, 2011, main author), and a collection of essays on contemporary Romanian culture and society (*Teologia albinoşilor*, 2010, co-author). She has also edited several collections of articles on literary theory. Her interests include cultural studies, gender studies and cultural anthropology. Contact address: <danachetri@email.com>

of the early modern English stage offers a series of examples of how shortcuts to both themes mentioned above could be taken. Tudor and Stuart drama is a unique display of how the discourses of maternity and authority could merge, processing data from the domestic and the public sphere.

The ideology of the King's two bodies

Historians have given careful consideration to Queen Elizabeth's agency both in exercising her own idea of (feminocentric) statecraft and in offering the world a polyvalent image of herself. While some see her as a genuine new Jezebel, with a mind of her own, with a personality and temperament similar to those of her father, a stubborn woman who took no man's orders (Duchein 2001), others argue that her policy and image were actually dictated by the statesmen who surrounded her – the Privy Council, her ministers, the most influential peers of the kingdom, her favourite courtiers and lovers (Berry 1994). According to the latter opinion, though she was a good orator and a vain woman, who enjoyed being admired and flattered, neither her famous speeches nor the portraits she commissioned were concocted by herself, but by those in charge of her public image.

One of Queen Elizabeth I's constant preoccupations throughout her reign was her legitimacy as a ruler, a concern reflected in the laws she passed and in the art she commissioned. Elizabeth's ascension to the throne took place not only in a period when all her European counterparts were male, but also in a domestic climate of hostility towards feminine rule (in Chedgzoy, Hansen, Trill 1998:16). Elizabeth had to face a double challenge: being a female monarch, as well as being the often denied heiress of Henry VIII. The most efficient concept Elizabeth juggled with in order to legitimate a woman's presence on the throne was the metaphor, fashionable in the Middle Ages and during the Renaissance, of the sovereign's two bodies. A common analogy related to the hierarchical organization of the world, coming from the Greek philosophy and filtered by the medieval religious thinking, this implicit comparison is one between society or the state and the individual – the body politic. A "natural" society – given the organic structure of the state – is one which functions in a manner similar to the human body. Later in the Middle Ages, the metaphor of the body politic, serving the purposes of the feudal state, developed substantially. The Church becomes the *corpus mysticum et politicum* of which the Pope is the head, while kings and emperors are only members, in the traditional dispute between these two juridical powers that limit and influence each other successively (Romanato, Lombardo and Culianu 2005). Saint Thomas Aquinas finds four points of identity which unify both natural and mystical bodies, and asserts that the supremacy of the spiritual authority corresponds to the soul's rule of the body (1993). When Henry VIII

adopted the title "Supreme Head of the Church of England", he took a personal position towards this doctrine, while rulers in other European countries were still disputing the title "head" with the papacy in Rome.

The doctrine of the body politic is intimately connected with that of the kings' "two bodies" (Moreau 1991:54, Kantorowicz 1997): his physical body, subject to natural laws, and his political one, symbol of an immortal power. In England, the first text about the analogy between the state and the human body was signed in 1159 by John of Salisbury (Moreau 1991:56). After identifying the soul with the clergy, the author discusses in detail the other members of the body: head-prince, heart-senate, hands-soldiers, stomach-treasury, and feet-farmers. He emphasizes the need for spiritual unity in the state and proposes cures for various political diseases, including tyranny. At the beginning of the 17th century, another Englishman – Edward Forset, in 1606 – defined monarchy as "the best regime for the maintenance of health in the body" (in Moreau 1991:57). The unifying principle is the perfect balance between the different parts of the whole ("the due proportion of the same parts together"), because a body is not only a mere gathering of organs, but a series of well-defined functions supported by simple principles, such as the predominance of unequal, but complementary roles. As each organ must stay in its proper place, so must each member of the society keep their degree. Those inferior in rank should not wish to have more important positions, nor should those in important positions abuse the members below them, so tyranny is unanimously condemned as bad and dangerous for the life of the organism. The consensus among the social orders must be similar to the correct dosage of the four humours and the presence of the four main elements in a human organism. When the quantities are modified, the equilibrium is broken and the political regime changes. Similarly, Sir Thomas Smith in his *De Republica Anglorum* (1565) writes that, if the four humours coexist in the living organism, it is desirable that various types of government should also combine with one another in a percentage that would avoid despotism because, although the prince is the head and the authority, the Parliament "hath the power of the whole realm, both the head and the body" (in Moreau 1991:62). Even Robert Burton (2004), in his well-known and influential 1621 *Anatomy of Melancholy*, preserves the correspondences between the physical and the social body, considering that, in the evolution of melancholy, the body's instability reflects the general disease of the human society, the sickly body producing an incoherent discourse about the decline of the social organizations.

Starting from this doctrine, Elizabeth had her physical, feminine body obscured by the public, masculine body, her political travesty remaining a landmark of her rule. There is an impressive number of portraits that Queen Elizabeth ordered and approved in her lifetime, which contribute to a better

understanding of the way in which she made use of official ideologies. A first example would be a portrait by Nicholas Hilliard, one of the Queen's official painters, *The Ermine Portrait* (1585), where Elizabeth combines, in her typical manner, insignia of royalty, masculinity and femininity. The sword and the ermine, dual symbols, depict the Queen as a unique combination between feminine physical traits (purity, virginity, beauty) and masculine intellectual features (influence, wisdom, authority, moral conduct). A much earlier painting, *The Plimpton Sieve Portrait* by George Gower (1579), speculates on the Queen's virginal status. The sieve, which appears in a series of portraits that Elizabeth ordered while she was still young, reminds the watcher of the monarch's self-sacrifice for the sake of her country and her generosity (as the sieve suggests the gods' kindness as to spread countless gifts for mortals on earth, according to the number of prayers and personal merits). Elizabeth's being married (only) to England implies the fact that she gave up her personal life and remained a virgin in order to devote herself to state affairs. The sieve is a symbol of choice (selecting and separating what is good from what is bad or useless), in this case the Queen's choice for the public sphere and her renunciation to the domestic one. Her virginity is, therefore, political, but also religious, as she used to represent herself as "the second maiden in Heaven", replacing the Catholic cult of Virgin Mary with the Anglican cult of the Virgin Queen (Duchein 2001).

Philippa Berry (1994:61) explains Elizabeth's success: "Because she was always uniquely herself, Elizabeth's rule was not intended to undermine the male hegemony of her culture. Indeed, the emphasis upon her *difference* from other women may have helped to reinforce it". Forty-four years of a woman's reign did not end the patriarchal structure of the English society, but it changed it radically. This radical change was perceived even more dramatically at the level of contemporary literature. Examined through the lens of patriarchal attitudes, which define history as the sum of actions performed by men, Elizabeth's refusal to marry was perceived as something more than a woman's refusal of the subordination to a husband. In Elizabethan literature and visual arts, her unmarried state was idealized, the Queen becoming the unattainable object of male desire.

Critics have defined and explained Elizabeth's cult in different manners. If some see it rooted in religious matters, others link it to the search of European absolute monarchies for a glamorous, imperial image. The idealization of Elizabeth was clearly linked with her role as a restorer of the 'true', Protestant religion. The cult dwells massively upon Elizabeth's joint rule, as head of both State and Church. The connection between a mythical Golden Age (or the biblical Eden) and Protestant Reformation is not accidental. In this context, Elizabeth is compared with Astraea, the imperial virgin – a cult which was applied to other European rulers, but much less successfully, as only Elizabeth

combined the feminine gender and the unmarried status (Yates 1993). The figure of Astraea is also a signifier of Renaissance absolutism, regarded in imperial terms. Elizabeth's reign is, after all, the age of the prosperous English navy and of the establishment of British colonies in the newly-discovered America.

Elizabeth's cult manages to displace the initial fundamental problem of the ruler's gender. The Queen is perceived at the same time as more and less than a woman. She is not a mere woman, but a goddess; at the same time, she is unfeminine because she denies herself the major role women were traditionally attributed – that of a wife and, especially, mother. Her role as Head of the Church was even more unsettling. This role opposes her not just to the conventional figure of the male ruler, but also to the figure of Christ. Sensitive to the Protestant clergy's restlessness about her position, Elizabeth decides to nuance her position a little, choosing to call herself "supreme governor", rather than "supreme head" of the English church, as her father, Henry VIII, used to (Berry 1994:66). She employs a neutral noun, a mere denominator of a function, giving up, the "head", a part of the body heavily gendered masculine, connoting with reason, spirituality, equilibrium, etc. At the same time, Elizabeth made great use of religious imagery to justify her private life:

> I have made choice of such state [remaining unmarried] as is freest from the incumbrance of secular pursuits and gives me the most leisure for the service of God: and could the applications of the most potent princes, or the very hazard of my life, have diverted me from this purpose, I had long ago worn the honours of a bride… I have long since made choice of a husband, the kingdom of England, … charge me not with the want of children, forasmuch as everyone of you, and every Englishman besides, are my children and relations… (in Berry 1994:66)

The fact that she assigns the male gender to the kingdom – her symbolic husband – is also an interesting point, as both spheres of activity in which Elizabeth was involved (the secular and the religious) were traditionally not *gendered* masculine. The concept of the two bodies of a monarchy featured the mystical and immortal body of the church (*ecclesia* – feminine) and the lay institutional apparatus of the state (*respublica* – feminine). In this spirit, only the union between a male monarch and these feminine institutions could be claimed to be a natural marriage. Therefore, Elizabeth's famous marriage to England is ambiguous. At the same time, however, it may also mean that the Queen's personality, just like her sexuality, is self-contained and the feminine rule is seen in a mystical or symbolic relationship with itself. Dual in terms of being more and less than a woman, Elizabeth is also dual in terms of being male and female at the same time.

The moment of Tilbury 1588 pushes the Queen's sexual duality even further. On a grey day, Elizabeth, surrounded by bright colours (silver helmet and armour, white feathers, skirt and horse, red tunics for the guards, and

gold for her noble attendants, as an anonymous 16th century painting shows her) raises the sceptre in front of an awe-stricken army:

> My loving people, we have been persuaded by some, that are so careful of our safety, to take heed how we commit our self to armed multitudes for fear of treachery; […] I know I have the body but of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a king of England too, and think foul scorn that Parma or Spain, or any Prince of Europe should dare to invade the borders of my realm, to which rather than any dishonour shall grow by me, I myself will take up arms, I myself will be your General, Judge, and rewarder of every one of your virtues in the field. (in Hodgson-Wright 2002:1)

Elizabeth wants to be regarded as the monarch *par excellence*, a sacred ruler and a fatherly authority for his/her people at the same time. But the antithesis she insists upon ("I know I have the body but of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king") for rhetorical purposes is not the traditional one, woman vs. man, but woman vs. king. Also, the body parts she picks are heart and stomach – both used on a strictly metaphorical level, the former for courage, and the latter for stamina. She places herself at the very heart of a discourse that exploits imagery related to a masculine anatomy and a physical and psychological profile traditionally associated with the most typical masculine profession, that of the soldier. The offices she evokes are masculine (General, Judge, Prince, king) as well as the moral qualities. The valour and the other "virtues in the field" call for an ideal of martial masculinity. Elizabeth I supported the development of the Tudor myth as an ideology of absolute kingly power, social and political commitment, popularity of the monarch as the embodiment of human and even divine perfection.

The grandeur of representation is a characteristic of all Elizabethan public processions. The beauty of the spectacle, with the monarch present in person – usually as performer – gives the impression of social and political harmony. Bristol, addressing the notion of social spectacle during the Renaissance, quotes a Renaissance author describing Queen Elizabeth I's public processions as follows:

> She passed the streets first […] Likewise Squires, Knights, Barons, and Baronets, Knights of the Bath […] Then following: The Judges of the Law, the Abbots… And then followed Bishops, two and two; and the Archbishops of York and Canterbury; the Ambassadors of France and Venice, the Lord Mayor with a mace; Master Garter the King of Heralds […] In all her passage [the Queen] did not only shew her most gracious love towards the people in general; but also privately, if the baser personages had either offered Her grace any flowers or such like, as a signification of their good will; or moved her to any suit, she most gently (to the common rejoicings of all lookers on, and private comfort of the party) stayed her chariot, and heard their requests. (J. Nichols in Bristol 1985:60)

From political to biological legitimacy – the pregnant body

Tudor and Stuart drama distils political and social elements, adapting them for the purposes of the stage. The desideratum of legitimacy and authority is richly displayed in the plays of the late 16th and the 17th century, whether it is related to domestic customs, or social and political prescriptions. Shakespeare and his contemporaries comment on these dictates with the help of a peculiar type of female embodiment – the pregnant body.

Pregnancy is rarely displayed explicitly of the early modern English stage. At the same time, the female body itself is rather marginal, two of the handiest instances being the absence of women actresses from the stage and the subordination of gender roles in the lists of characters accompanying the plays' scripts. Consequently, theatrical maternity is an exotic phenomenon, drawing special public attention to itself and eliciting the kind of emotional response that novelties and oddities provoked throughout the age. Any condition of pregnancy and birth would have been wondrous in the eyes of early modern communities, given the impenetrable privacy of childbearing. As shown by Gail McMurray Gibson (1999:8-9), "neither the private parts of the female childbearing body nor the domestic space in which an intimate community of women presided at the labour of childbirth and the ritual postpartum confinement or lying-in was fit object for the male gaze". Secret and hermetically closed, this space was entirely gendered feminine, the consequence of this being, among others, that most people in early modern England knew very little about birthing practices. A taboo subject, it is rarely described in works of fiction or lore, in visual arts or devotional pieces, and just as seldom tackled in early scientific literature. What little information has survived, however, indicates that childbirth practices and pregnancy customs were very consistent from the Middle Ages to the 19th century, in later periods with some intervention from (male) professional obstetrics.

Evidence comes from folklore and religious writings about the huge demand for reproduction, in times of dramatic demographic variations, low life expectancy at birth, and the ever-present spectre of death. As social historians have proved (Gélis 1991:15-16), the woman, unique bearer of the family's hopes, was held responsible for the presence or absence of babies. Sterility, unnatural, aberrant and shameful, was the most formidable guilt a woman could face. Predominantly agrarian, early modern societies thought there was an intimate connection between the mineral, vegetal, animal, and human realms in terms of fertility cycles. These rhythms once disturbed, the very fabric of the community was at risk, so any break in the family descent was perceived as disastrous. In a natural cycle, the belief was, pregnancy occurred regularly, bearing out the "quality of the vessel" (Gélis 1991:45), so that being with child was a desired state of normality. Once the anxieties

about the ability to conceive were put aside, other anxieties occurred: pregnancy required great care, as any minor imprudence could have fatal results; childbirth was an unpredictable area not only for inexperienced mothers having their first baby, but even for veterans; infant morbidity was so frequent that the first two years of a child's life were often regarded as a trial period, rather than a time of parental smugness.

The perils of pregnancy were doubled by the insecurity of medical evidence for pregnancy until the late months. Early modern doctors and midwives, still tributary to the ancient theories of Hippocrates and Galen, committed numerous errors in their observations and reports, errors which, given the often strategic importance of birth and certainty of the baby's sex, could be fatal. Consequently, the scholars would advise caution, since "it is difficult to discern a true pregnancy at the very beginning" (Cosme Viardel, 1674, in Gélis 1991:46). Still, diaries and reports offer some guidance in reading the woman's body signs: swellings, closures, fluids, movements, colours and textures are consistently evoked. Early foetal movements are a potentially felicitous portent of male progeny, for example, since men were expected to be more advanced than women from their life in the womb.

Pregnancy and birth were oddities in themselves, but the concern with curiosities and monstrous happenings, so common throughout early modernity, was climactic when it came to these great events in a woman's life. Early illustrations of life in the womb signal the fact that embryos were given human shapes and features from the earliest stages: from the moment when pregnancy was confirmed beyond any doubt, the unborn baby was expected to look like a completed, perfectly healthy infant. A minimal deviation from this norm was regarded as monstrous and the mother was typically held responsible for everything that had to do with the miracle of birth gone wrong. Monster reports and illustrations were abundant in Western Europe throughout the 16th and the 17th century, and the explanations that sought the causes in the process of childbearing were just as numerous (Wilson 1993:39).

Early performances display the huge interest in, even obsession with, the secrets of conception and birth in the form of dramatic Nativity narratives. Late medieval English religious drama "stages the secrets of Mary's body with [an] insistence" (McMurray Gibson 1999:16), making "the theological gynaecology of Mary recurrent spectacle" (17). The limits of gender decorum or the silence and privacy surrounding childbirth are often transgressed by such performances, which speak more convincingly of the time's culture of reproduction than of biblical imagery and teaching. Young and pregnant Mary longs for sweet fruits, the space of Christ's birth is separated from the rest of the world by a curtain, midwives wonder at the miracle of the mother's intact body, Joseph is forbidden to offer his assistance until the delivery has been safely concluded, etc.

Lay Tudor and Stuart drama makes the physicality of the pregnant body even more overwhelming on the stage. This female body is subject to a process of amplification, just like the body of public personae were made conspicuous in ritualized events, processions, and official portraits. Studies about the body as a social entity (Nanu 2001), for example, enumerate strategies of augmentation by means of body language (kinesics, proxemics), clothes, and accessories. In public processions or in group paintings, the main character dominates the crowd either by a higher position (on a platform, on horseback, under a canopy) or by means of elaborate accessories and headgear (wigs, long feathers, crowns). Following the same logic, Queen Elizabeth I is wearing, in her official portraits, the most impressive wigs, collars and amply embroidered dresses on large hoops. Pillars are numerous in Elizabeth's portraits, their vertical line indicating the upward movement of the British monarchy and of the Protestant faith, as well as the Queen's own Atlas-like stamina. Thrones serve the same purpose, and so do the canopies carried for the monarch during official processions. *Elizabeth in Procession to Blackfriars*, an anonymous painting of 1600, in the style of Peake, portrays a hieratic sovereign almost literally floating above ground level, as the lords accompanying her carry the platform. The painting showing Queen Elizabeth dancing the Volta with Robert Dudley (c. 1581) places the monarch in the middle of a stage, with courtiers and musicians surrounding her. Lifted above ground level by Dudley, Elizabeth indicates her centrality and superiority to the rest of the court. In the anonymous painting representing *Queen Elizabeth at Tilbury*, probably dating from 1559, the sovereign is portrayed in the middle of the troops, men framing her symmetrically on both sides, her white horse standing out among dark-coloured horses and uniforms.

If amplification was such a popular political strategy in the day's visual arts, it can be assumed that the enhancement implied by the pregnant body displayed on the early modern stage serves similar converging purposes. The reference to pregnancy accounts for the privileged position held by this physiological process in the early modern imaginary, or by mothers in family and private hierarchies. The optical element, combined with its specific background of cultural history, is coined "doubling" by Kathryn M. Moncrief and Kathryn R. McPherson (2007). The term catches both the temporary presence of two bodies in one (the mother and the foetus), during the pregnancy, and the amplification of the character's role in the economy of the play (with pregnant female characters, such as the Duchess of Malfi in the homonymous play, holding leading parts).

The connection between the political-ideological notion of the monarch's two bodies and the prenatal phenomenon of "doubling" is illustrated convincingly in John Webster's *Duchess of Malfi* (1996). The Duchess is the female character

of the highest rank, who gives birth three times during the play, a record for early modern drama. The number of pregnancies and her great belly are emphatic elements, constantly reminding the spectator that the Duchess (who already had a son by her late husband, the Duke) holds authority, though sometimes undercut by male characters. Mother of the still young heir, she is the regent, an empowered position desirable for anyone, let alone a female. Successful maternity (giving birth to healthy male babies), so problematic and hazardous in an age of high mortality rate in both mothers and infants, is presented as a political advantage: it is this very motherhood that gives the Duchess access (even if only a temporary one) to privileges. Her reign, unlike that of male sovereigns, Webster's argument seems to go, is alive, creative, resourceful, continual, and the symbols of this plenitude are the babies she conceives. The Duchess regnant, who is visibly pregnant in the second act, is the perfect embodiment of the monarch's two bodies – a body physic and a body politic, which complete each other, the physiology of the former intermingled with (and ultimately undermining) the stability of the latter, the nurture of the former issuing the latter, the royal mother bringing an into the world. The woman, with her undisputable virtues, is a more viable ruler than the male alternatives (a dead husband, a melancholy, passive brother, or a lover of low birth and rank), despite her pregnancies which weaken her competitiveness and potential leadership skills.

The pregnant body is given political valences in Shakespeare's problem play *Measure for Measure* (2007). Here, the pregnant body also occupies a privileged position, given the number of female characters who are with child. Pregnancy appears of utmost importance for the development of the plot and hastens its denouement. This play, heavy with social commentary, features three pregnant women: Juliet, Claudio's mistress, Lucio's whore, and Mistress Elbow. The moral of the comedy is that social and domestic misrule in the realm is caused by a flawed political order, the excesses of an entire community being encouraged by the deputy ruler's own duplicity. "The groaning" Juliet's hour is near (II.2, 23-4), the lovers' sin being written in gross letters on the woman's body, which becomes, in Angelo's eyes, a sign of the state in which the legal system had been kept: dormant, lurking, waiting to come out, to be delivered. Not accidentally, he employs the vocabulary of obstetrics, to offer a diagnosis both for Claudio's individual case and for all the unapplied laws in Vienna:

> The law hath not been dead, though it hath slept:
> Those many had not dared to do that evil,
> If the first that did the edict infringe
> Had answer'd for his deed: now 'tis awake
> Takes note of what is done; and, like a prophet,
> Looks in a glass, that shows what future evils,

> Either new, or by remissness new-conceived,
> And so in progress to be hatch'd and born,
> Are now to have no successive degrees,
> But, ere they live, to end. (II, 2, 115-24)

A few moments before this speech is delivered, the bawdy conversation of drunkards has already set the scene for the meditation on immorality and the critical view on manners Angelo offers Isabella. Fornication, the chief sin in Vienna, seems to be always written on the body, as with the pregnant Juliet. But Pompey and Elbow widen the scope of the narrative, offering a vulgar monograph of Vienna, as the city of debauchery. Mistress Overdone, her very name being ripe with salacious imagery, is said to have had no fewer than nine husbands: "Nine, sir; Overdone by the last" (II, 1, 124). "Overdone", as a proper name, is contrasted with "undone", an adjective characterizing untouched virgins, employed both in *Measure for Measure* and in *All's Well that Ends Well*. Mistress Elbow is evoked in an ambiguous speech, which opposes respectable houses to "hot-houses", as a wife who sinned and was sinned against:

> *Escal.* Now, sir, come on: what was done to Elbow's wife, once more?
> *Pom.* Once, sir? there was nothing done to her once (II, 1, 92-3) […]
> *Elb*: First, an' it like you, the house is a respected house; next, this is a respected fellow, and his mistress is a respected woman.
> *Pom*: By this hand, sir, his wife is a more respected person than any of us all.
> *Elb*: Varlet, thou liest: thou liest, wicked varlet. The time is yet to come that she was ever respected with man, woman, or child.
> *Pom.* Sir, she was respected with him before he married with her. (II, 1, 105-108)

The visible result of her doubtful respectability is her pregnancy, sketched in caricature touches:

> Sir, she came in, great with child, and longing,—saving your honour's reverence,—for stewed prunes. Sir, we had but two in the house, which at that very distant time stood, as it were, in a fruit-dish, a dish of some three-pence; your honours have seen such dishes; they are not China dishes, but very good dishes. (II, 1, 70-73)

Mistress Elbow's uncontrolled greed points to her lack of will power, also responsible for her condition, the intensity of her instincts acquiring grotesque features. In fact, it would be interesting to note here that, in Webster's play, the Duchess's appetite for fruit is also a milestone in her physical evolution: her greedy devouring is directly connected to the onset of labour. Irrational yearning in pregnant women, indulged though it was until quite recently, on the grounds that any refusal would result in foetal deformity or miscarriage, was, in the 1600s, feared and loathed, as something monstrous and impossible to account for. Early reports of such cravings go as far as to associate their uncontrolled nature with cannibalism, the ultimate form of

savagery: a 17th century Frenchwoman, desirous of fresh human flesh, is said to have chopped and salted her own husband (Gélis 1991:57). Another Shakespearean play reports odd cravings to be organically connected with monstrous births (*The Winter's Tale*):

> *Mopsa:* Pray now, buy some. I love a ballad in print alife, for then we are sure they are true.
> *Autolycus*: Here's one to a very doleful tune, how a usurer's wife was brought to bed of twenty money-bags at a burthen, and how she longed to eat adders' heads and toads carbanadoed.
> *Mopsa*: Is it true, think you?
> *Autolycus*: Very true, and but a month old […] Here's the midwife's name to it, one Mistress Tale-porter, and five or six honest wives that were present." (IV, 4, 259-70)

In *Measure for Measure*, pregnant Mistress Elbow is joined by Lucio's bawd, whose very profession brought her to this state. The two women with child, despite their marginal position in the play, emphasize the inadequacy of conception, unless it is backed by family priorities and duties. But the bigness of the pregnant body, constantly brought to the public's attention – like in Webster's tragedy – also suggests the early modern anxieties about the public consequences of the private, self-contained act.

These consequences are open-ended: they may bring benefits (temporarily, at least) to the mother, as in the case of the Duchess, they may work as the exhibited evidence in a trial against sins which were kept secret, as in Juliet's case, or they may be both benefits and exhibited evidence, as it happens in Shakespeare's *All's Well that Ends Well* (2007). Pregnancy is not a visible, bodily display, and does not weigh very much in the economy of the play, as it is only announced at the very end. However, the theatre-goers may assume Helena's pregnancy does weigh heavily for or against the security of her marriage. Also, the detail that she is expected to give birth in an aristocratic family, so as to secure lineage, brings the domestic comedy closer to political comment than imaginable at a first glance. A wife's ability to conceive and deliver safely was vital in all periods, given the society's minimal medical knowledge, social pressures, economic or strategic priorities. Especially in women of high rank, fertility was a matter of life and death, because it entailed the stability and continuity of the family name and the husband's honour. Pregnancy and birth were viewed as dangerous journeys, whose destination could not be controlled even by the most powerful royal families or the wealthiest of spouses (Rogers and Smith 1991). In Helena's case, her fertility is all the more important because of her husband's reluctance to wed and bed her. She is, thus, faced with an almost impossible task, that of proving to the family that she can do her duty admirably, as a young and healthy woman and as a loving wife, qualities which are independent of her modest

social origin. But the King of France himself, who ordered his vassal to marry the woman who saved his life, is powerless here, and Helena is all by herself.

Announcing her pregnancy officially, at the end of the play, is risky business for the heroine. Wives who mistook their bodies' signs often put their husbands under a lot of stress and embarrassment, early modern social history shows (Rogers and Smith 1991). As Kathryn M. Moncrief (2007:38) points out, the ending of Shakespeare's play is not clearly happy, as a more superficial reading of the comedy may indicate, but open-ended. Only *if* Helena is with child (which, until later months of pregnancy, is unexhibited evidence), *if* this child is Bertram's (paternity was potentially doubtful even after the birth, when resemblances could be looked for but not always spotted), *if* the child is delivered safely (a risk no midwife or experienced woman could deny), *if* the child is an heir (a wife's respectability comes with the birth of a baby boy), will the Count of Rousillon fully accept his spouse. Given that the young peer is himself the living proof of his mother's success and virtue ("Youth, thou bear'st thy father's face", I, 2, 25, exclaims the King, upon seeing him, confirming the Dowager Countess' own words: "Be thou blest, Bertram, and succeed thy father/In manners, as in shape!", I, 1, 58-9), the Count demands no less of his unwanted wife: "If she, my liege, can make me know this clearly" (V, 3, 3036). Helena's rushed conclusion upon reading Bertram's letter ("This is done", V, 3, 3034), referring to her husband's demand that she shows him a child he fathered, is only partially satisfactory. It is so to the King and the Countess (who may value a woman's ability to acquit herself successfully of her procreative duties), or to Diana (who presents herself as Helena's witness, reporting the occurrence of foetal movements: "And at that time he got his wife with child: Dead though she be, she feels her young one kick", V, 3, 3018-9), but not to the Count, more cautious and more realistic, as he is aware of how many steps before the end of the lengthy and complicated process of giving birth Helena is.

"This", in Helena's speech, is an optimistic promise, rather than an accomplishment. Bertram swears to make the safely delivered son with his father's face the heir of his father's title, but his "if-" clause reminds the happy assembly that only half of the journey has been made. It is the easier half, despite Helena's and Diana's efforts to prove otherwise (early modern medical observation admitted foetal movement as evidence of pregnancy starting from the fourth month). If pregnancy offers the woman an adequate horizon of expectation, the man's paternity may remain an endlessly open issue.

Early modern English history offers a most telling example of the huge difference giving birth to a living baby boy could make, in King Henry VIII's biography. The sovereign's six wives and only one male heir (who did not live to become an adult king) are proof of the strategic importance of conception, successful delivery and safe patrilineal descent. Going further, maternity was

the province of religion, gender, economy and folklore, just as it was the province of medicine and domestic life. Conferring upon women a finally certain status, in a culture of female marginalization, mystical guilt and financial subjection, motherhood was not a mere physiological process, but the ultimate social event. Early modern women writers of gentle birth (Kenyon 1995) draw an intimate image of maternity, made up of difficult pregnancies and births, child loss, anxiety and relief, or constant frustration, in letters, diaries, and narratives not meant for publication, though not entirely private in terms of the envisaged target readers. In their writings, these mothers examine and censor themselves, transform themselves into objects of observation and study, in order to offer models for future generations of women, a precious emotional and spiritual heirloom that could be passed on by matrilineal descent.

Conclusion

The stage was definitely not the province of women during the Renaissance. Male playwrights and actors were inclined to voice and embody the mainstream expectations and (mis)conceptions of maternity. The pregnant body on the stage collated the desires and anxieties of the fathers, by bringing together submissive, successful, monitored maternity, on the one hand, and unruly, promiscuous, feigned maternity, on the other. The traditional binary pairs were acted out: motherhood was subject to the laws of fatherhood and found itself at the service of the latter. Still, given the important part played by the body in early modern political discourse and imagery, more specifically, in the English context, with the authoritative presence of a female monarch on the throne, maternity on the stage was the literal translation of the power guaranteed by the sovereign's two bodies, or double body. Similar to Queen Elizabeth's rhetorical and symbolic metamorphosis into a male institution (the King, the Prince, the Head, etc.), the performed pregnant body may suggest the fortunate cohabitation (however temporal) of the two genders in one body: the man's seed in the woman's womb, or the nurturing mother and her unborn son. Returning to the metaphor of "doubling", employed by Katheryn M. Moncrief and Kathryn R. McPhreson (2007), the pregnant body can be regarded as an over-body, generously hosting both individual flesh and collective authority, a private and a public discourse converging happily.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Aquinas, St. Thomas. *The summa theologica*. Chicago, Auckland, Geneva: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1993. Print.

Berry, Philippa. *Of Chastity and Power. Elizabethan Literature and the Unmarried Queen*. London and New York: Routledge. 1994. Print

Bevington, David, ed. *Shakespeare's Comedies*. London and New York: Pearson Longman. 2007. Print.

Bristol, Michael D. *Carnival and Theater. Plebeian Culture and the Structure of Authority in Renaissance England,* New York, London: Routledge. 1985. Print.

Burton, Robert. *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, 2004, accessed 20 May 2011, on www.gutenberg.org/etext/10800

Chedgzoy, Kate, Melanie Hansen, and Suzanne Trill. *Voicing Women. Gender and Sexuality in Early Modern Writing*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. 1998. Print.

Darlington Rogers, Colin.. *Local Family History in England, 1538-1914.* Manchester: Manchester University Press. 1991. Print.

Duchein, Michel. *Elisabeta I a Angliei. Putere şi seducţie*. Bucureşti: Artemis. 2001. Print.

Gélis, Jacques. *History of Childbirth. Fertility, Pregnancy and Birth in Early Modern Europe*. Boston: Northeastern University Press. 1991. Print.

Hodgson-Wright, Sarah. ed. *Women's Writing of the Early Modern Period, 1588-1688: An Anthology.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. 2002. Print.

Kantorowicz, Ernst H. *The King's Two Bodies*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1997. Print.

Kenyon, Olga. *Women's Voices: Their Lives and Loves Through Two Thousand Years of Letters (History & Politics).* London: Constable. 1995. Print.

Kinney, Arthur F.. *Shakespeare and Cognition*. New York: Routledge. 2006. Print.

McMurray Gibson, Gail. "Scene and obscene: seeing and performing late medieval childbirth", in *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies,* Winter, 29, 1, Platinum Periodicals, pp. 7-24, 1999. Print.

Moncrief, Kathryn M., Kathryn R. McPherson, eds. *Performing Maternity in Early Modern England (Studies in Performance and Early Modern Drama).* Hampshire: Ashgate. 2007. Print.

Moreau, J.P. 'Le "corps politique" au XVI et VII siècles: avatars d'une métaphore', in M.T. Jouss-Davies (Ed.), *Shakespeare et le corps de la Renaissance*. Paris: Les Belles Lettres. 1991. Print.

Nanu, Adina. *Arta pe om. Look-ul şi înţelesul semnelor vestimentare*. Bucuresti: Compania. 2001. Print.

Romanato, Gianpaolo., Mario G. Lombardo, and Ioan Petru Culianu. *Religie şi putere*. Iaşi: Polirom. 2005. Print.

Webster, John. *The Duchess of Malfi*. London: Nick Hern Books. 1996.. Print.

Wilson, Dudley. *Signs and Portents. Monstrous Births from the Middle Ages to the Enlightenment*. London and New York: Routledge. 1993. Print.

Yates, Frances Amelia. *Les dernières pièces de Shakespeare. Une approche nouvelle*. Paris: Editions Belin. 1993. Print.

STUDIA UBB PHILOLOGIA, LVIII, 3, 2013, p. 219 - 225
(RECOMMENDED CITATION)

GEORGE ORWELL'S *1984*: THE DANGERS OF TOTALITARIANISM

SABAH A. SHAKURY[1]

ABSTRACT. ***George Orwell's 1984: The Dangers of Totalitarianism.*** This essay analyzes the problem of totalitarianism as presented by George Orwell in his famous dystopia *1984*. Attention is paid to the control of language and body. The author considers that Orwell's pessimism is not justified and historical reality shows that people can fight totalitarian regimes and they can resist tortures if they have powerful ideals.

Keywords: dystopia, Orwell, totalitarianism, control, dictatorial, police, manipulate, Big Brother

REZUMAT. ***1984 de George Orwell: pericolele totalitarismului.*** Acest eseu analizează problema totalitarismului aşa cum este ea prezentată in celebra distopie a lui George Orwell *1984*. Se insistă asupra controlului limbii şi trupului. Autorul consideră că pesimismul lui Orwell nu este justificat şi realitatea istorică ne arată că oamenii pot lupta contra regimurilor totalitare şi că pot rezista torturilor dacă au idealuri puternice.

Cuvinte cheie: distopie, Orwell, totalitarism, control, dictatorial, poliție, a manipula, Fratele cel Mare

George Orwell (1903 – 1950) was profoundly interested in social injustice and the intense opposition to totalitarianism. Orwell felt oppressed by and outraged at the dictatorial control that the schools he attended exercised over the students' lives. After graduating from Eton, Orwell decided to forego college in order to work as British Imperial Policeman in Burma. He came to hate his duties in Burma, where he was required to enforce the strict laws of a political regime he despised. He quit his job and dedicated himself to writing.

In *1984,* Orwell uses *utopia* for his own purposes and creates a technologically advanced world in which fear is used as a tool for manipulating and controlling individuals who do not conform to the

[1] Dr. Sabah A. Shakury is associate professor in the Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Literary and Linguistic Studies from Jadara University in Irbid, Jordan. He is interested in modern British Literature. Contact address: <dr_shakury@yahoo.com>.

prevailing political orthodoxy. Orwell tries to warn the reader about the dangers of totalitarianism. He manipulates the utopian tradition and creates a *dystopia*, a fictional world in which life is extremely bad out of deprivation, oppression, or terror.

Orwell wrote *1984* just after World War II ended and he wanted to be certain that the kind of future presented in the novel should never turn true. Orwell used this writing in order to express his powerful political feelings.

The setting of *1984* is Oceania, a giant country made of the Americas, the Atlantic Islands, including the British Isles, Australia, and the southern portion of Africa. The story itself takes place in London in the year 1984, a terrifying place and time where and when the human spirit and freedom are all but crushed. In the novel, war is constant. The main character, Winston Smith, was born before World War II. He grew up knowing only hunger and political instability. Mand many of the things that he experiences are hyperboles of real activities in wartime Germany and the Soviet Union.

It is important to remember that Orwell based *1984* on facts as he knew them; hunger, shortages, and repression actually happened as a result of the extreme governmental policies of these countries. The war hysteria, the destruction of the family unit, the persecution of the "free thinkers" or of those who were "different" or did not easily assimilate the party doctrine, the changing of history to suit the party's agenda, were all too real. Orwell's speculation about the future is actually a creative extension of how the masses were treated under Franco, Hitler, and Stalin.

The world of *1984* is led by 'Big Brother'. He is depicted on posters pasted on walls with the caption 'Big Brother Is Watching You'. The posters represent a fierce attack against privacy. This task is carried out by the Thought Police. In every home telescreens keep a strict watch over every movement of the occupants. If anyone is suspected of having thoughts which are not in accordance to those accepted by the government those people may be taken into custody by the Thought Police. "You had to live – did live, from habit that became instinct – in the assumption that every sound you made was overheard, and, except in darkness, every movement scrutinized."[2]

In the society depicted in *1984* there is only one supreme Party. The government has a hold over every aspect of the lives of the people. Everyone must take part in mandatory exercises; sex is not supposed to be for pleasure but only for procreation. Marriages between individuals who seem to have a liking for each other are prohibited. 'Newspeak', the official language is undergoing the procedure of being rewritten to erase not only synonyms and antonyms, but even any words for the banned notions.

[2] George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) (London: Everyman Library, 1992), p. 5.

In a world where eavesdropping and lack of physical intimacy are the standard, the intrusion of the state into the individual minds is the ultimate, horrifying prospect. Surely, in such a cruel totalitarian state, maintaining an intact mind is the sole form of individual privacy. "For all practical purposes, that probability is sufficient to convince us at the novel's end that the Ministry of Love and Room 101 must contain some utterly inconceivable and inhumane means of mental torture and control."[3] In this fictional world of *1984* sensitivities are cruelly suppressed. The physical inconveniences and displeasures are unremitting: bad odors, bad food, rough clothes, and repulsive surroundings.

'Big Brother', 'War Is Peace', 'Freedom is Slavery', 'Ignorance Is Strength', 'Thought Police', 'Enemy of the People', 'The Brotherhood', 'The Book', 'Room 101', 'Miniluv' are set of phrases that pervade the narrative. Winston hears a woman singing about the past and he develops a mystical regard for her. He imagines that she sings particularly for him and for Julia and he views her as the incarnation of a "prole" spirit that "would stay alive against all the odds, like birds, passing on from body to body the vitality which the Party did not share and could not kill"[4]. Winston's associations then transfer to birds themselves. He fancies that the thrush which he and Julia heard on their first afternoon of love-making sang to them. Julia is less romantic and brings into discussion much more prosaic arguments. "He wasn't singing to us. … He was singing to please himself. Not even that. He was just singing."[5] She is correct. Winston is so used to the skillfully orchestrated 'Two-Minute Hate' sessions chanted to Big Brother and to the vapid state hymns intoned by intoxicated Party members under strict check in local bars that he can only think of singing as performed for an audience and with a logical aim. "Unmediated desire and raw instinct have been purged from his view of the "proles" by his social experience, which, analogically 'chained out,' has become what Veblen called a 'trained incapacity'."[6]

Whereas all Oceania public gatherings, news bulletins, and official Party activities are set according to the military time, this is not applicable to the ideal world of Winston and Julia's room above Mr. Charrington's store. Winston's perceiving the world of the room by the norms of Oceania leads him to confuse the two worlds.

Syme, Winston's colleague, warns him that "[t]he Revolution will be complete when the language is perfect."[7] In spite of being skilled in Newspeak,

[3] John Rodden, *How Do Stories Convince Us? Note Towards A Rhetoric of Narrative* (College Literature, Winter 2008, Vol .35, Issue 1, p. 164.
[4] George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 229.
[5] Ibid., p. 230.
[6] John Rodden, *How Do Stories Convince Us? Note Towards A Rhetoric of Narrative*, p. 168.
[7] George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 55.

Winston is misled. He considers O`Brien and Charrington as honest persons as they are very well familiar with the past, specifically with the Oldspeak vocabulary of his childhood nursery rhymes. Winston's facility with Newspeak does not let him see the double countenances of these Thought Police agents. This is a matter of analogy between our world and the world of the novel and we, the readers, unlike Syme , perceive in Newspeak the impoverishment and manipulation of language, not the charm of its 'rigid definition,' pristine economy, and greater 'self- discipline'.

Syme, who is the compiler of the Newspeak dictionary, shows the real purpose of this new language. "Don't you see that the whole aim of Newspeak is to narrow the range of thought? In the end we shall make thought-crime literally impossible, because there will be no words in which to express it."[8] These very strict ways first apply to Party members and not to the 'proles' or commoners who are not regarded to be of any risk to the authority. The children of Winston's neighbor are eager to witness the spectacle of capital punishment given to Eurasian prisoners and play games which indicate that they would be very eager to report their parents or neighbors as thought criminals. Winston broods over the fact how relatively normal it is for parents to be afraid of their own kids.

The Party intensifies the significance and effectiveness of Party-crafted experiences like the group ecstasy of the Two Minutes' Hate. The sole love permitted is for Big Brother. It is also the sole pleasure permitted except we do not count the sadistic pleasures of hatred. Any unapproved sentiment or impulse is to be be rejected. "A Party member is required to have not only the right opinions, but the right instincts."[9]

When Winston refers to "the mute protest in your own bones"[10] as a source of knowledge that things were better in the past than they are now, he is going through what Alison Tagger terms as 'outlaw emotions' - those emotions not at terms with what we expect to feel or presume we ought to feel . Such sentiments can "provide the first indications that something is wrong"[11]. It is prompting such outlaw feelings that makes Winston pen 'Down with Big Brother' in his diary, his hand moving without the direction or even the alertness of his mind.

The protagonist's task at Minitrue, the government's propaganda wing which creates news and culture, is the embodiment of the Party's philosophy. He rewrites history on everyday basis, incinerating any proof of the empirical

[8] Ibid., p. 55.
[9] Ibid., p. 55.
[10] Ibid., 76.
[11] Alison M. Jaggar, "Love And Know: Emotion in Feminist Epistemology." *Gender / Body / Knowledge.* Eds. Alison M. Jaggar and Susan Bordo. (New Bruncwick: Rutgers UP, 1989), p.161.

truth. His consciousness of the existing opposition drives him to question and then despise the Party. Eleven years before the beginning of the action in the novel the protagonist, by chance, comes across a photograph of three persons: Jones, Aronson, and Rutherford. The 'party' had conspired to prove them guilty of treason. But the photograph due to its actual location and date, reveals that the party's conspiracy and proves the men's innocence. The photograph provides Winston with "concrete, unmistakable evidence of falsification"[12] of the past. He realizes eleven years later that he had a document that could "blow the party to atoms"[13]. For thirteen seconds prior to sending the picture into the memory chamber, Winston had, in his hands, the destiny of Oceania. He latently craves for that authority again and *1984* is triggered by that craving.

As O'Brien was conscious of Winston's motives, his optimism for the future and his feelings for Julia seems to be useless. When the paperweight hits the ground, Winston ponders "how small it always was"[14], as if becoming aware that even his greatest dream -- to be released from the party's domination -- is not sufficient. "We as readers … care less about the characters' fates or development and more about how the characters figure in the narrative's central argument. We care less about Winston Smith and Julia in*1984* than about where Oceania is headed, whether 'The Brotherhood' exists, whether Goldstein and the underground can possibly launch a true revolt, and what *the book* (the bible of the revolutionary Brotherhood) contains"[15]

Winston's initial moves of opposition to the authority are threatening. "Your worst enemy was your own nervous system"[16], he ponders, in relation to persons who are notable to control their facial gestures and as a result make their unorthodoxy apparent as "facecrime" to the Thought Police. Even when the face is well controlled, "you could not control the beating of your heart."[17] Hence, instinct is stronger than intention, leading the body to act against logic. This is the body's quality as well as its final vulnerability. Winston's bond with Julia drives him toward what he will presume to be his systematic social resistance-joining the Brotherhood. Julia has long indulged her physical instincts to no political end. Both Winston and Julia just have fruitless discussions about the chances of active opposition. Actually, Julia supposes the Brotherhood to be a propaganda fiction and Winston has no authentic reason to think any other way. If the "summons" had never come from O'Brien, it seems that the couple's manifestation of their basic instincts

[12] George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 78.
[13] Ibid., p. 73.
[14] Ibid., p. 232.
[15] John Rodden, *How Do Stories Convince Us? Note Towards A Rhetoric of Narrative*, p. 155.
[16] George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 67.
[17] Ibid., p. 83.

would have served no purpose more dramatic than any of Julia's other exploits: a personal rebellion with no ramifications transcending joy. Conversely, given Winston's unjustified faith in O'Brien and his liking towards him, he might conveniently have accepted such a summons even if he had never been acquainted with Julia.

When Winston imagines a revolution carried out by the commoners, his hope relies on an unsustainable idealization of the body for he presumes that the proles' embodiment of human decencies is based in blind, instinctual physicality. "If there is hope, it lies in proles,"[18] Winston had noted in his diary, "They needed only to rise up and shake themselves like a horse shaking off flies."[19] His own class, he fancies, will keep alive the mind like the commoners will "keep alive the body."[20] They are "people who had never learned to think but were storing up in their hearts and bellies and muscles the power that would one day overturn the world"[21], and who pass on "from body to body the vitality which the Party did not share and could not kill."[22]

These confusions are in tune with the novelist's own perplexed and conflicted opinions about the working class. According to Connelly, the novelist "saw the majority of the lower class as an enervated species unable to participate in social reform or revolt"[23] and he presumed that "[t]he squalid meanness of their environments dulls their senses, rendering them less able to think and behave rationally."[24]

After being captured, Winston realizes first-hand that the capacity of the body to contradict the mind's will to resistance is more powerful than the body's capacity to contradict the mind's will to surrender. In the concluding chapter, although the Victory Gin makes him "retch slightly"[25], Winston pours it down and when he encounters Julia again, "his flesh freezes in horror"[26] at the thought of having had sex with her.

The goal of the government in *1984* is to win over souls. Jacobs notices the duplicity of the political system depicted by Orwell. "To the public is exhibited only the benevolent face of Big Brother, the penitent faces of the reformed rebels – never the destroyed body itself. Publicly, this regime exhibits its power to reform and to forgive, rather than its power to destroy.

[18] Ibid., p. 72.
[19] Ibid., p. 73.
[20] Ibid., p. 230.
[21] Ibid., p. 229.
[22] Ibid., p. 229.
[23] Mark Connelly, *The Diminished Self: Orwell and the Loss of Freedom* (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesue UP, 1987), p. 97.
[24] Ibid., p. 109.
[25] George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 301.
[26] Ibid., p. 304.

Privately, the regime exhibits the effects of torture only to the subject of that torture."[27] On the other hand, we know that in reality things are much more complicated in spite of the pressure of the totalitarian systems. "In this is the great failing of Orwell's great novel. For we know - as, of course, did Orwell himself – that minds do not always break under torture, that some people suffer appalling pain and fear and yet refuse to betray their loved ones and their comrades in arms."[28]

The novel ends on a highly pessimistic note. Ultimately, Winston is shattered in his conflict with his society. The totalitarian regime sustains without real opposition. The Party members will live in a state of ignorance, fear, and joylessness. In a way, this is the danger that the novelist warns against: not only will such a state arise, but once it fixes its roots, it would be almost impossible to overthrow it. The totalitarian regime represents a loss of liberty, individuality, and pleasure in life that is in straight contradiction with the values of a democratic society where all are equal and have right to life, independence, and search of happiness.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Orwell, George. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949). London: Everyman Library, 1992.

*

Connelly, Mark. *The Diminished Self*: *Orwell and the Loss of Freedom.* Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesue UP, 1987.

Jaggar, Alison M. "Love And Know: Emotion in Feminist Epistemology." *Gender / Body / Knowledge.* Eds. Alison M. Jaggar and Susan Bordo. New Bruncwick: Rutgers UP, 1989.

Naomi, Jacobs. *Dissent, Assent, and the Body in Nineteen Eighty-Four* Utopian Studies, 2007, Vol.18, Issue 1, pp.3-20.

Rodden, John. *How Do Stories Convince Us? Note Towards A Rhetoric of Narrative.* College Literature, Winter 2008, Vol.35, Issue 1, pp. 148-173.

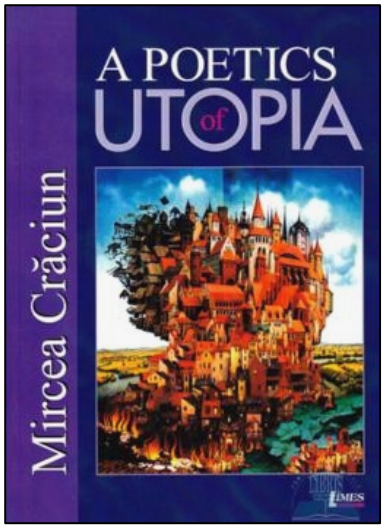
[27] Jacobs Naomi, *Dissent, Assent, and the Body in Nineteen Eighty-Four* (Utopian Studies, 2007, Vol. 18, Issue 1), pp. 11-12.

[28] Ibid., p. 14.

STUDIA UBB PHILOLOGIA, LVIII, 3, 2013, p. 227 - 235
(RECOMMENDED CITATION)

BOOK REVIEWS

MIRCEA CRĂCIUN. *A Poetics of Utopia.* Cluj-Napoca: Limes, 2011, 235 pp.



The domain of utopia is a vast, a rather limitless domain that has been the point of focus for many cultural and literary personalities of the world. Born out of the imperfections of a certain society, utopia, as a work of literature, can be considered the answer to the wish, or better say the need, to escape the disappointing reality. It brings into discussion the real and the imaginary, the latter is used to create a parallel world as a solution to the problems that reality deals with. The profuse literature that has been written on this subject is a proof of its complexity.

There are many Romanian critics and authors who tackled this problem. The cultural theorist, Sorin Antohi analyzes this genre in his work *Civitas imaginalis. Istorie și utopie în cultura română* [*Civitas imaginalis. History and Utopia in Romanian Culture*] (1994). According to him, utopia is an imagined world that doesn't belong either to the intellect or the sensible perception, but only to the imaginative perception. The essence of utopia is the imaginary city. This urban representation of the utopian ideal does not relate to history or myth, it is simultaneously very close and very far. In 2004 Cătălin Constantinescu published another study on utopia entitled *Paradigme literare ale utopiei* [*The Literary Paradigms of Utopia*]. Constantinescu contends that utopia is the literary description of an imaginary society and the critique of a real society. Consequently, society is the basis of the utopia. Utopia doesn't look for causes but offers solutions. Cătălin Constantinescu also considers that utopia and ideology are expressions of the social imaginary and it has the responsibility to emphasize the flaws of the imperfect society. Utopia converts ideology into a literary subject.

While Antohi's work is centered on the analysis of utopia in the Romanian culture and Constantinescu insists on the connection between literature and ideology, *A Poetics of Utopia,* by Mircea Crăciun, lecturer at the Faculty of Letters of Babeș-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca, is a complex and comprehensive work that manages to encompass the intricate and vast domain of utopia in English literature. Rather well established in the obscure world of the imaginary, utopia is an inexhaustible domain posing many difficulties when it comes to its analysis and study.

A Poetics of Utopia is structured into three chapters. They are preceded by an introduction entitled *When is Utopia* and followed by conclusions. Each chapter has several subchapters. In the introduction the author sets the basis crucial for the

study and analysis of utopia. The author manages to create a comprehensive presentation of the meanings this concept has acquired in time. At the same time, the author also manages to offer his readers the evolution and the development of the human imagination: "The huge library of Utopia will direct towards apparently diverging domains as the protean discourse or impulse, fiction or propensity, myth or alternative to an actual social situation. It can always be traced in the most unexpected nook of the human mind or of the literary text." (Crăciun 8). According to Mircea Crăciun, it is very important for the reader to realize the difference between *utopia* as a form of the social imaginary and Utopia as a verbal construct. Crăciun also insists on utopia as an alternative.

In the first chapter entitled *Utopia and the Social Imaginary* Mircea Crăciun approaches utopia from the perspective of the socio-human sciences. The author is interested in the analysis of this concept as an element of the utopia-ideology-myth triad. Presenting the ideas of Karl Marx, Karl Manheim, Paul Ricoeur, Louis Althusser and others, Mircea Crăciun outlines the complex relationship between utopia and ideology. In the subchapter *Utopia and Myth* the author goes back to myth and its archetypal imagery which are considered to be constitutive for the "utopian landscapes". When discussing "the placing" of this concept, the author explains the utopian dichotomy "nowhere"–"somewhere" by resorting to myth. In order to give a thorough analysis of the manner in which the utopian tendency adjusts to the mythical consciousness the author turns to Mircea Eliade and his theory on mythical and historical temporality.

The second chapter is entitled *From Politeia to Res-publica* and it offers the reader a perspective of utopia in relation to the city, to satire, and stage. Considered to be the redundant manifestation of the dichotomy "is"- "ought to be", the concept under discussion is analyzed from the point of view of its historical becoming. Admitting that "Plato operates with the Absolute, More, Campanella, W. Morris and the other utopians renovate the present by metaphorically destroying it" (Crăciun 118), In this chapter Mircea Crăciun explores the Platonic model, considering it the basis of his approach, along with Thomas More's work, *Utopia.* The author presents the avatars of the ideal paradisiacal utopian city. In order to emphasize the acknowledged compatibility between satire and utopia, the author analyzes Swift's *Gulliver's Travels.* Crăciun also discusses Utopia as a stage and he contends that the starting point for the *theatralicalisation* of this genre is the exchange of social roles that took place during Saturnalia, the medieval feasts and carnivals.

In the last chapter entitled *Utopia as Forma Mentis* the author provides the reader with a presentation of this concept both as a single and also as a dual intellectual pattern. Bakhtin's principles and ideas are given a thorough presentation as they are used for the analysis of Thomas More's perfect world. Bakhtin's notion of "carnivalistic literature", whose prototype is the Mennipean satire, is analyzed along with the spatio–temporal configuration of utopia. The author also focuses on Aldous Huxley, as he considers him "a writer deeply concerned with man's existential status" (Crăciun 224). Consequently, utopia can be discovered in the most surprising contexts as a literal materialization of an aspiration. The author presents Aldous Huxley as the prototype of the modern intellectual striving to "reconcile the diverging tendencies that overwhelm him" (Crăciun 224). Mircea Crăciun emphasizes the idea that not only the three novels

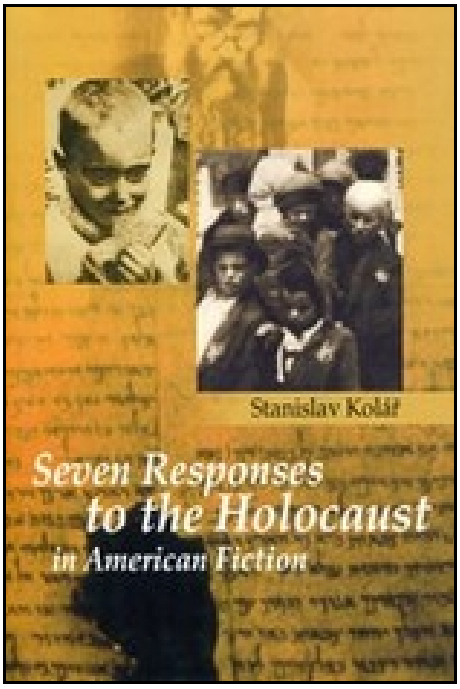
Brave New World, Ape and Essence and *Island* known to belong to the utopian genre have utopian predilection but others also include such elements.

A Poetics of Utopia provides its readers with a comprehensive presentation of the diffusions and changes the utopian genre has undergone in time. Thomas More's *Utopia* is considered the paradigmatic utopian work. Being highly edifying and having a concise and objective discourse, Mircea Crăciun's critical essay manages to encompass the complexity of "utopia" and to offer a Romanian perspective on a genre that is both ideology and literature.

ANDREEA GIANINA BERA
(beraandreea@yahoo.com)

MIHAI MÂNDRA, *Strategists of Assimilation*, Bucharest: The Romanian Academy, National Science and Art Foundation, The "George Calinescu" Literary History and Theory Institute, 2003.
STANISLAV KOLAR, *Seven Responses to the Holocaust in American Fiction*, Ostrava: University of Ostrava and Tilia Publishers, 2004.

Jewish American fiction has increasingly become a matter of interest for literary scholars after 1990. The explanation of this growing focus can be found in the circumstances of literary and intellectual life in the former Communist countries. Freedom of expression and research gets limited only by funding. Jewish Studies programs have been founded in many of these countries enthusiasts and usually with international support. Paradoxically, there is a growing scholarly interest in Jewish culture in the absence of the former numerous Jewish communities that were dwindled by the Holocaust as well as by intense immigration during the Communist regime. A more or less vague sense of guilt combined with genuine curiosity about a culture that should not become a museum exibit are the psychological factors that partly explain the development of Jewish Studies in this part of the world. The result is that several Eastern European scholars, whether of Jewish



extraction or not, pay increasing attention to the literature created by the most dynamic and the most influential segment of Jewish diaspora: the Jews of the United States. Situated at the intersection of Jewish Studies and American Studies, such scholarly works give authors rewarding experiences of high aesthetic quality and intense moral questioning.

Mihai Mândra, associate professor at the English Department of the University of Bucharest, investigates, in his collection of essays *Strategists of Assimilation*, three cases of integration into American society: Abraham Cahan, Mary Antin, and Anzia Yezierska. Unfortunately, none of these Jewish-American writers have been translated into Romanian yet, which makes Mândra's book even more important. Mândra's collection is one of the first efforts to "integrate" these writers into Romanian culture. Beyond the specificity of the three cases (all of them connected by their roots to the space of the former Tsarist Empire), the book subliminally tries to answer a very poignant question: is assimilation really possible? As we live in an increasingly globalizing world, the answer is of great interest to all of us. The author's approach is primarily textual. He insists upon the influence of the editor upon the writer (the case of Mary Antin) or upon the negotiations of the Jewish creative self with mainstream American culture (the case of Anzia Yezierska). Although Mihai Mândra is not interested in overtly adding a gendered component to his case studies, his literary analyses are pertinent and extremely sagacious. One can only hope that other Jewish American writers will be subjected to his inquisitive literary scrutiny and we shall have the opportunity of reading other Romanian readings of Jewish American literature.

Stanislav Kolar is professor at the University of Ostrava in the Czech Republic. His collection of essays, *Seven Responses to the Holocaust in American Fiction*, introduces the reader to the universe of several authors of great literary relevance: Edward Lewis Wallant, Jerzy Kosinsky, Saul Bellow, Susan Fromberg, Leslie Epstein, Cynthia Ozick, and Art Spigelman. With the exception of Saul Bellow, a Jewish American writer with intense and various links with Romania, the other writers are mostly known only in specialized circles in Romania, which increases the importance of Kolar's book. The literary analyses are preceded by an introduction where the author discusses the historicity of the Holocaust memory, compares the specificity of the Holocaust with other genocides, and clarifies some terminological issues (i.e. the term Holocaust vs. Shoah). All essays rely on solid and topical bibliography. Although a serious and meticulous scholar, Kolar rejects any bookish temptation and offers us a text written with conviction and love for the word.

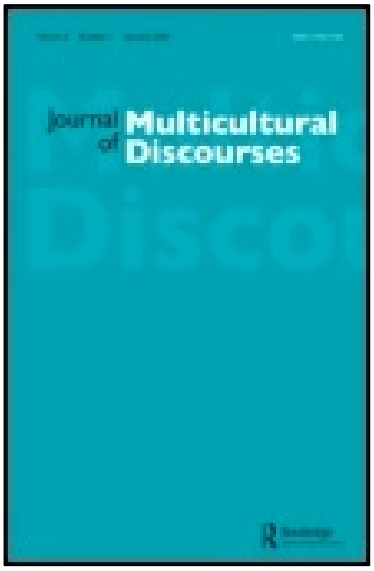
One of the most interesting essays is dedicated to Art Spigelman's controversial comic book *Maus.* Kolar sees this book as "a modern secularized bestiary" (152) and insists upon the postmodern skepticism that imbues it "for this book is not only about the Holocaust but also about writing about the Holocaust, about the artist's (in)ability to convey the terror of this historical event that is so beyond our understanding" (168).

Stanislav Kolar's analysis of the seven Jewish American responses to the Holocaust insists upon the writers' specificity. The use of animal imagery as well as the effectiveness of the tropes playing upon the literal and the figurative meanings of such words as fire, heat, smoke, ash, chimney, bones, barbed wire, are among the most successful analytical exercises of the Czech scholar.

Mihai Mândra's and Stanislav Kolar's books have an interesting commonality. Both scholars prefer to submit fiction to their critical perusal. It is to be hoped that Jewish American poetry and theatre will also attract Eastern European readings. On the other hand, it is clear that the scholarly and the critical exchange between America and Eastern/Central Europe can offer the (specialized) reader moments of intense intellectual challenge and delight. Bouncing back and forth between two areas of intense symbolic power for the Jewish community, the evolution of this kind of scholarship should be followed with great interest and recorded in reviews and critical surveys. Our present review is part of this larger interest that should be pursued with more coherence and commitment.

MIHAELA MUDURE
(mmudure@yahoo.com)

KWESI KWAA PRAH (guest ed.), *African Realities of Language and Communication in Multicultural Settings,* Special Issue of *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*, Routlege, Vol. 5, No. 2, July 2010, 103 p.



The *Journal of Multicultural Discourses* is a cultural studies project meant to facilitate interaction and communication within the context of the multicultural contemporary society. The attempt to give a voice to the voiceless was carried out in several special issues dedicated to Asian, African, Latin American discourses which were published within the past five years. The special issue published in 2010, *African Realities of Language and Communication in Multicultural Settings*, focuses on the discourse realities of the African multicultural and multilingual space. It contains the editorial, *African languages and their usages in multicultural landscapes*, written by Kwesi Kwaa Prah, the guest editor of the volume, and six more articles dealing with the cultural discourse particularities of South Africa, Zambia, Botswana and Zimbabwe: *The Khoisan in Botswana - Can multicultural discourses redeem them? by* Andy Chebanne, *Style, repertoire, and identities in Zambian multilingual discourses* by Felix Banda and Basirat Olayemi Bellononjengele, *Promoting multiculturalism and intercultural dialogue through institutions and initiatives of civil society organizations in Botswana* by John Lubinda, *The discourse of "call boys" and minibus conductors in Zambia: a hybrid sociolect of identity* by Mildred Nkolola Wakumelo, *Revisiting the language question in Zimbabwe: a multilingual ap-*

proach to the language in education policy by Wiseman Magwa and *Multilingualism in Urban Africa: bane or blessing* by Kwesi Kwaa Prah.

Understanding cultural differences and their discursive expression on African ground is important both from the African and from the outsider's perspective. Given the multitude of cultural interferences, multilingualism and the cultural dynamics, Africa is "a geographically and culturally incommodious world" (Prah 83) confronted with cultural syncretism. Therefore, understanding and accepting differences are essential for interaction and coexistence, as the editorial points out. Moreover, explaining African realities to the rest of the world facilitates cultural dialogue within the context of globalization.

The Khoisan in Botswana - Can multicultural discourses redeem them? by Andy Chebanne is focused on the hardships which the Khoisan ethnic group has to confront in Botswana in order to preserve their cultural identity. 'Khoisan' does not refer to an ethnic group formed by linguistic identity, but to a collectivity which shares the same vision on reality and the same modes of existence. The article calls for more concrete political and educational measures meant to empower ethnic groups endangered to fall under the dominant culture and exposed to cultural and linguistic annihilation.

Linguistic dynamics within the Zambian multilingual context is the main topic of *Style, repertoire, and identities in Zambian multilingual discourses* by Felix Banda and Basirat Olayemi Bellononjengele. The article analyses the functioning hybrid linguistic codes and stylistic plurality rooted in the bipolar dimensions of rural/ urban and traditional/modern traditions. These linguistic codes are in use in Zambia and state for Zambian multicultural experiences. The Zambian linguistic dynamics is a result of the interaction among the 7 official languages (of 72 tribal languages and dialects) and English, to which researches add the mobility of the Zambians who carry linguistic and cultural particularities along the country. This interaction manifests in code-switching and style-shifting discourses.

The evolution of cultural differences in Bostwana within the past few years is the focus of John Lubinda's article, *Promoting multiculturalism and intercultural dialogue through institutions and initiatives of civil society organizations in Botswana*. Political practices regarding cultural homogeneity inherited from the colonial period delayed the assertion of multicultural policies. Botswana is inhabited by more than 30 distinct ethnic groups which were subject to an assimilation process due to fear of tribal segregation. Understanding the difference between tribalism and multiculturalism made it possible to promote cultural diversity both by the government and by non-governmental institutions.

The discourse of "call boys" and minibus conductors in Zambia: a hybrid sociolect of identity by Mildred Nkolola Wakumelo analyzes a socio-linguistic phenomenon which consists of the development of a professional slang used by Zambian call boys and minibus conductors. The vocabulary they use is made of words coming from different Zambian languages and dialects whose meaning has generally been altered or adapted to professional requirements. The study of the discourse, of its lexicon and functionality, was based on interviews conducted incognito by normal visits to bus stations. In order to enlarge the perspective, 20 more interviews with the public and 10 more interviews with academicians were added to the study. The results of the study concluded that the discourse of the 'call boys' and minibus conductors is

not mixed language, argot nor code switching, but a "hybrid sociolect of identity" (153).

Revisiting the language question in Zimbabwe: a multilingual approach to the language in education policy by Wiseman Magwa calls for the necessity of a multilingual approach in the education system in Zimbabwe. Given its colonial heritage in Zimbabwe, English is still the dominant language, as is the case of most former British colonies in Africa. Even though there are more than 20 ethnic groups with specific languages living in Zimbabwe, the educational system only promotes English and two other indigenous languages. The need of preserving cultural particularities and consolidating cultural identity calls for respecting and encouraging education in the mother tongue of every individual. Therefore, education should be made possible in all languages used on the territory of Zimbabwe.

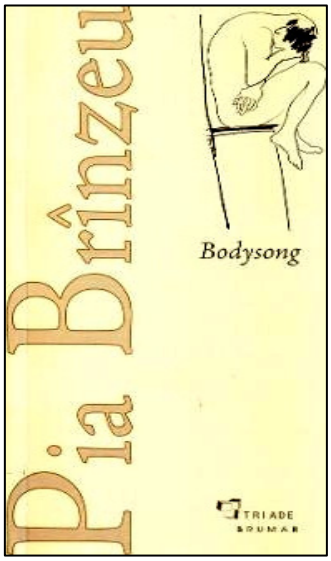
Multilingualism in Urban Africa: bane or blessing by Kwesi Kwaa Prah brings to attention the expansion of multilingualism in African urban areas within the past three decades. Individual interaction in urban settings makes them learn each other's language. The article investigates whether this is benefic for the African society and how it can be organized to facilitate the development of a healthy multilingual society.

This issue of *Journal of Multicultural Discourses* can prove a valuable reading for scholars interested in cultural studies, pragmatics of linguistics. Given the interesting topics it debates and the clear and explicit discourse of the articles, it might be an interesting reading for all interested parties, not only to specialists.

AMELIA NAN
(amelia.nan@gmail.com)

PIA BRÎNZEU, *Bodysong,* Timişoara: Fundaţia Interart Triade şi Editura BrumaR, 2010, 148 p.

Undoubtedly, the entire human culture is built around the architecture of the human body, even though the ways in which it is perceived and represented bear considerable differences throughout the world and throughout history. Pia Brînzeu's *Bodysong* is a tribute to the body as an inexhaustible metaphor for every instance of human experience.



Well-known for her research in British literature, semiotics, narratology, as well as for the invaluable help the textbooks she contributed to offer to students of English, Professor Pia Brînzeu changes the inquisitive pen of the critic for the writer's quill. Published in 2010 by Interart Triade Foundation and BrumaR publishing house, *Bodysong* is a collection of over sixty essays which were initially published in *Orizont* cultural magazine. The series of essays collected in *Bodysong* is interspersed with beautiful and highly suggestive drawings by Andrei Medinski and ends with a postface by Adriana Babeţi. The

book itself is designed for visual and tactile joy. The atypical format of the page, the pale cream-coloured covers, the nostalgic texture of the paper, and the elegance of the font, everything in the material body of the book predicts a unique reading experience.

Bodysong explores the encounter between the aesthetic, mythological, and functional representations of the human body, ranging from physiology to high art. Each essay is configured as the narrative of a body part or of the body as a whole, built on unexpected associations which actually emphasize the immanence of corporality in the entire human culture. For instance, the essay dedicated to the heart, follows its representations from the very well known *I ♥New York* logo, designed by Milton Glaser in the 1970s to promote tourism in New York, to the (unfortunately) less known poem *In the Desert*, by the nineteenth century American writer, Stephen Crane. The association between this pop-culture icon, the popularity of which exceeded its initial purpose, and Stephen Crane's poem of a man eating his own bitter heart, testifies for more than the effacement of the boundaries between high art and popular culture. It does not emphasize the sense of postmodernist decadence, but rather emphasizes the infinite potential of the human body to generate metaphors and stimulate imaginative representations. In a similar way, the essay dedicated to the eyes, directs William Golding's novel, *Martin Pincher*, towards a larger exploration of how we view things and how biased and perverted our perspective is because of our education and our beliefs, because of the influences exerted by our culture upon us. In an indirect self-referential manner, the essay exploring the relationship between language and the body, emphasizes the acts of producing and reading texts as metaphors for corporality. The author states that the shift from the "vegetal" perception of the written page to an organic, physiological representation of writing occurred as early as the thirteen century. The idea is elaborated beginning with Richard de Bury's phallic view of the quill, going through the Joycean perspective on language as a continuously evolving living organism, and ending in a series of questions which open new directions for exploring the communication between bodies, with the body, and through the language of the body.

Most essays in the collection continue in the same way, as reflections supported by literature, philosophy, art or history, interlaced with personal history and personal experience. The Vitruvian Man and the Vitruvian Woman, the surgeon's hands that fix damaged bodies or Escher's hands that draw themselves, archetypal characters or the heroes of modern Western myths, they are all used as pretexts for profound meditations on the corporeal dimension of human expression and, in the same time, reveal the author's impressive erudition. The author's fluid, sincere, almost confessional discourse is highly poetic and, at times, slightly ironical or deeply nostalgic.

The apparently random sequence of essays stimulates different reading approaches. Beyond their meditative, poetic and confessional dimensions, the texts can easily stir the readers' curiosity, almost like a detective story: *what is going to happen in the next piece? which body part or which representation of the body will be the main protagonist of next our mediation? where will our thoughts be directed?* Besides their indisputable aesthetic value, the essays collected in *Bodysong* are also extremely informative. For instance, did you know that Mongolian medicine men can heal broken bones in only a few days, by massaging that specific anatomic region?

In *Bodysong*, Pia Brînzeu bridges cultures (be they 'high' and 'low' or Eastern and Western) and centuries, although the structure of the texts and their sequence in the volume seem devoid of any programmatic intention. The meditations are triggered by personal memories, photographs, artistic happenings, latest findings in medicine, magazine articles, or short films on youtube, and are used as opportunities to celebrate life through the metaphors of the body. They all challenge the readers to engage with their own meditative incursion into the rich symbolism of corporality, turning the reading of *Bodysong* into an extremely enjoyable and highly informative experience.

AMELIA NAN
(amelia.nan@gmail.com)