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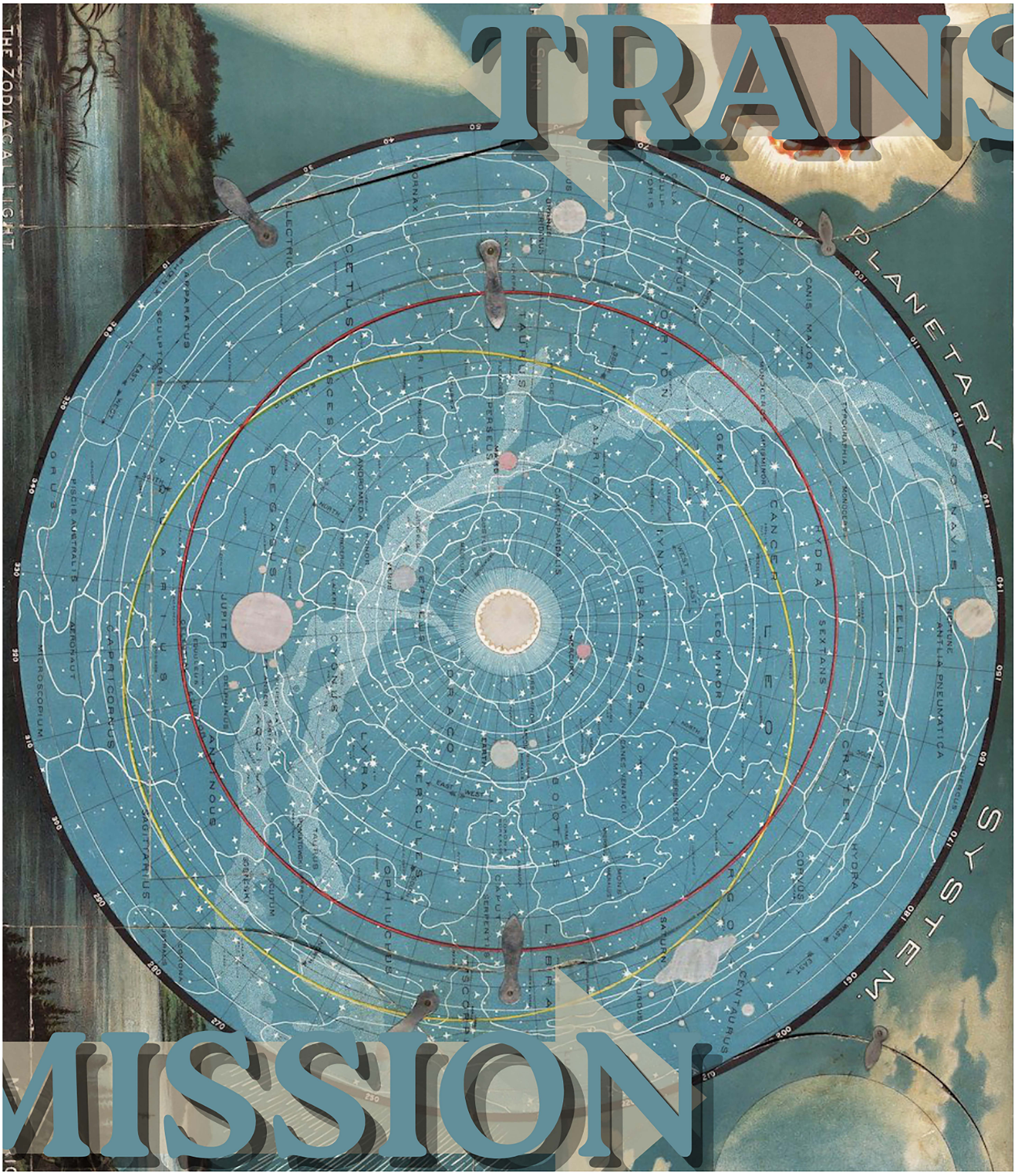

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S T U D I A
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3

SUMAR – CONTENTS – INDICE – INHALT

SPECIAL ISSUE: TRANSMISSION

Guest editors: Nóra Séllei and Petronia Popa-Petrar

VARIA

REVIEWS

STUDIA UBB PHILOLOGIA, LXIX, 3, 2024, p. 9 - 12
(RECOMMENDED CITATION)

INTRODUCTION

In a book published in English in 2015, the German media theorist and philosopher Sybille Krämer attempts to provide a model for transmission that preserves the possibility of community without succumbing to notions of communication as the imposition of sameness. As Krämer insists, it is essential to safeguard the difference that emerges during the process of transmission, defined as "an external, corporeal, and material process that can be conceived as a kind of embodiment" which is "also associated with a 'disembodiment'—namely, the way in which media 'become invisible' in their (interference-free) usage" (75). Transmission "lets appear", or makes difference perceptible, and as such renders culture and community possible, in Nancean terms, as loci of both connection and separation. According to Krämer (and many others), transmission does not amount to neutral repetition of information, but implies "creativity," distortion and noise, which means transformation is just as important as reiteration. Krämer's model successfully reminds us that transmission, through the persistence of the medium—whose materiality, even if self-effacing, never ceases to intrude—makes the world manifest. As contemporary novelist Tom McCarthy put it in his essay titled *Transmission and the Individual Remix*, "[i]n the beginning is the signal," and literature's work is to fix our attention to it, encouraging us to "listen in on listening itself" (McCarthy 2012, section ii).

In its most capacious understanding, transmission comprises everything, from the circulation of information to the endless exchanges of matter and energy making up the substance of the universe, from the reproduction of genetic material to the replication of historical memory. In the narrower acceptation imposed by our approach, it has to do with the flow of cultural discourses that give rise to the meanings we attach to the world. Not least, narrative transmission, especially in its literary instantiations, can also point to the capacity to better grasp the ethics of difference that should guide our way across the predicaments of today's world.

The inescapability of transmission may have never been so clear as at the time of the Covid pandemic, of social media, fake news, generalized

dissensus and, importantly, climate crisis. The essays collected in the present volume self-consciously act as both transmitters and as spaces for the close examination of transmission's processes and mechanisms. They allow transmission to thematize itself, staging the multiplication and propagation of conduits, messages, senders and addressees across histories, geographies, and media. Aware of their own embeddedness in space and time, they simultaneously perform and investigate the work of cultural production by traversing forms and genres, modes of narrative, poetic or visual representation, attesting to literature as a privileged site for the "wordling" of the world.

The opening part of the collection foregrounds the medium and its message-producing functions. To use the words of the authors of the now classic study of remediation, Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin, the essays gathered here inspect the "double logic" of "immediacy"—the illusion of transparency—and "hypermediacy"—the "fascination of media" (2000, 31). Ros Ballaster's paper investigates the ways in which contemporary filmic remediations of eighteenth-century "scenes of writing" reconnect us to a lost practice and forgotten forms of embodied communication (manuscripts) while performing a gendered critique of history which simultaneously highlights affective distance and purports to give rise to new forms of political, ethical and emotional commitment. In Ballaster's view, the tensions inherent in the "screening" process, encapsulated in the semantic ambiguity of the term itself (as either 'cinematic adaptation' or 'concealing'), remain unresolved, as the progressive representation of formerly marginalized identities may amount to nothing more than the affirmation of the medium's power to signify and therefore to (re-)produce reality. The concomitant potentials and perils of transposing narrative from text to screen are also tackled by Veronica Popescu's analysis of Ramin Bahrani's *Fahrenheit 451*; the film's "appropriation" of Ray Bradbury's classic dystopia is shown to participate in the dynamics of the consumerism it is supposed to undermine by turning current popular political ideals into visual spectacle, insufficiently concerned with salvaging the possibility of ethical and affective connection.

A second section of the volume is more overtly concerned with novelistic transmission. Focusing on Anna Burn's *Milkman* as a vector of contemporary Northern Irish writing in the wake of the 1998 Good Friday peace accord, Eve Patten's essay discusses fiction as an agent of "political and cultural memory" that critiques and mobilizes community-building energies by emulating the work of interpretation, forensic inquiry, negotiation, integration or exclusion staged by the protocols of "agreement." Through its voracious assimilation of

discursive forms, the novel becomes a crucial vehicle for the construction and transmission of values across generations, and for the emergence of (competing) versions of history. The novel's contribution to nationhood is also examined by Dragoș Ivana, who looks at the ways in which the dissemination and revision of English models in early American writing allowed for the rehearsal, assessment and crystallization of forms of societal consensus and dissensus. The ethical and political effects of the act of reading turn out to be a predilect focus of our collection, as confirmed by Andreea Paris-Popa's meticulous scrutiny of the metafictional devices in Virginia Woolf's short stories, which project "transactional" modes of interpretation, actively creating textual and readerly identities. Cristina Chevereşan closes off the segment by once again shifting attention to contemporary fiction's critical capabilities in her study of the polarizing dimensions of the 'American dream' as depicted in Philip Roth's *American Pastoral.*

Finally, the volume's conclusion section brings to the fore the generic diversity and the multiplicity of transmission, approached through the discursive conventions of poetry, drama, science and translation. Octavian More reminds us of the points of contact between the poetic and the scientific via an analysis of Canadian astrophysicist and poet Rebecca Elson's sense of "awe" at the ecstatic and the rational experiences of the cosmos alike. Andreea Şerban and Dana Percec examine the production of ambiguous social ("third-")spaces through the propagation of magic in two Shakespearean plays. Magic's capacity to disturb hierarchies and the order of the world performs power relations, especially gendered identities, informed by the crisis in worldview that manifested itself at the end of the seventeenth century. Last, but not least, Ira Torresi discusses what is perhaps the prototypical mode of linguistic transmission and its hurdles, the work of translation, via its practitioners' framing of their profession through metaphors of purity and contamination. There is hardly a better way to end our collection than with such a reminder of the inevitable intrusion of the medium in the meaning-making process.

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STUDIA UBB PHILOLOGIA, LXIX, 3, 2024, p. 13 - 28
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A WOMAN'S TOUCH: QUEERIOD DRAMA AND THE SCENE OF WRITING

Ros BALLASTER[1]

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ABSTRACT. ***A Woman's Touch: Queeriod Drama and the Scene of Writing***. This paper addresses the representation of women of the long eighteenth century as writers on the contemporary screen. It focuses on the experimentation with time in such representations, the seeking out of closeness and distance in the past through relationships with 'lost' texts or scenarios. This in two respects: first, the sense of a lost relationship to manuscript and manuscript 'hands' in letters and diaries in the new mediations visual and verbal of the screen; second, the sense of what has been helpfully termed by Elizabeth Freeman 'temporal drag' in the representation of same-sex relationships of the past in our media present. I focus in particular on a recent 'queeriod' drama about the life of Anne Lister, landowner and lesbian: the series *Gentleman Jack* developed and directed from her screenplay by Sally Wainwright (BBC /HBO TV series 1, 2019 and series 2, 2022). I look closely at a scene designed to illustrate intense affect formed in and through writing: a moment when we are invited to feel with, or to be touched by, the feeling of the protagonist. A turning away is also a turning toward, a perception of affect. What is transmitted is feeling itself. Writing itself 'makes' affect rather than representing it.

Keywords: *screen, adaptation, eighteenth century, Anne Lister, queer, mediation, affect*

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REZUMAT. ***O mână de femeie: ecranizările istorice queer şi scena scrierii.*** Articolul examinează modurile în care producţiile mediatice contemporane reprezintă femeile scriitoare din „lungul secol al XVIII-lea." El analizează experimentele temporale din astfel de reprezentări, apropierea şi distanţarea trecutului prin punerea în relaţie cu texte sau scenarii „pierdute". Sunt urmate două direcţii principale: în primul rând, sentimentul de estompare a relaţiei cu manuscrisul şi cu „mâna care scrie" scrisori şi jurnale în noile medieri vizuale şi verbale de pe ecran; în al doilea rând, utila idee propusă de Elizabeth Freeman a unui „glisaj temporal" în reprezentarea relaţiilor dintre personaje de acelaşi sex din trecut în prezentul mediatic. Mă concentrez în special asupra unei recente ecranizări „queeriod" despre viaţa lui Anne Lister, moşieră şi lesbiană: serialul *Gentleman Jack*, creat şi regizat de Sally Wainwright pe baza unui scenariu propriu (BBC/HBO, sezonul 1, 2019; sezonul 2, 2022). Analizez în detaliu o scenă menită să ilustreze afectul intens produs în şi prin scris: un moment care ne invită să simţim împreună cu protagonista, sau să ne lăsăm atinşi de sentimentele ei. Îndepărtarea devine în acelaşi timp apropiere, o percepţie a afectului. Ceea ce se transmite este însuşi actul de a simţi. Scrisul „produce" afectul, nu doar îl reprezintă.

Cuvinte-cheie: *ecran, adaptare, secolul al XVIII-lea, Anne Lister, queer, mediere, afect*

This paper addresses the representation of women of the long eighteenth century as writers on the contemporary screen. It focuses on the experimentation with time in such representations, the seeking out of closeness and distance in the past through relationships with 'lost' texts or scenarios. This in two respects: first, the sense of a lost relationship to manuscript and manuscript 'hands' in letters and diaries in the new mediations visual and verbal of the screen; second, the sense of what has been helpfully termed by Elizabeth Freeman 'temporal drag' in the representation of same-sex relationships of the past in our media present. Freeman describes this as a process of "retrogression, relay, and the pull of the past on the present" as we both distantiate from and identify with historical 'queer desire' (Freeman 2010, 8).

I consider a recent 'queeriod' drama about the life of Anne Lister (1791-1840), landowner and lesbian: the series *Gentleman Jack* developed and directed from her own screenplay by British screenwriter Sally Wainwright for two series, the first screened on British and American television in 2019 and the second in 2022). Anne was a prolific letter-writer and diarist, recording her business dealings, wide-ranging reading in philosophy, science and classical literature, her extensive travels, alongside her sexual and romantic liaisons. I look closely

at a scene from the first series designed to illustrate intense affect formed in and through writing: a moment when we are invited to feel with, or to be touched by, the feeling of the queer protagonist.

The act of writing is an act of touch – hand on pen, pen to paper. This representation of haptic experience has an oddly distancing effect. When we watch a writer writing on screen we are reminded of a medium that we are *not* experiencing and the protagonist here turns away from their intersubjective relationship with *us* as their screen recipients and the other bodies who perform with them on screen to a different form of mediation. This is especially true of the diary—in which the 'postal principle' as Sybille Krämer terms it is entirely circular: the message remediates a self to the self. The absorptive process of reading letters and writing diaries involves a visible turning away from one form of mediation to another which appears to exclude an audience.

Paradoxically, these moments of writing in which hand touches another surface are also moments of display usually of intense feeling, moments in which we are invited to feel with, or to be touched by, the feeling of the protagonist. A turning away is also a turning toward, a perception of affect. What is transmitted is feeling itself. The medium of feeling becomes the writing body and, according to Sybille Krämer's thinking, the medium becomes the "generative and hence conditional mechanism" (35) of that message. Writing itself makes affect rather than representing it.

Anne Lister is one example among many of women of the long eighteenth century who are mediated to us on screen through their representation as writers, writers who speak to an audience across time from the past in their manuscript writings. Anne Lister was born in Halifax, England, in 1791 and died at the age of 49 in Georgia, Eastern Europe, in 1840. Anne wrote a detailed diary of her daily life and left behind twenty-six volumes of 7,722 pages. The diaries give a great insight into Anne's life as a landowner, business woman, intrepid traveller, mountaineer and lesbian. These diaries, travel notes and letters are held by West Yorkshire Archives. In 2018 the diaries and travel notes of Anne Lister were conserved and digitized by Calderdale Museums in conjunction with West Yorkshire Joint Archive Services, who house them, funded by Sally Wainwright, screenwriter and director, from the Wellcome Trust Screenwriters Fellowship." Over five million words in Lister's manuscript hand are being transcribed by a team of volunteer code breakers and these are being added to the catalogues of West Yorkshire Archive Service and are freely available to view as they appear.[2]

[2] See West Yorkshire Archive Service. (https://www.catalogue.wyjs.org.uk). And 'Packed with Potential' website for researchers of Anne Lister and her circle launched in 2019. https://www.packedwithpotential.org. Both accessed 13 March 2024.

The diaries from the early 1830s and Anne Lister's romance with neighbouring heiress in Halifax, Ann Walker, provide the basis for Wainwright's two series, along with books about her life by Anne Choma, Jill Liddington and published collections of some of her diary writing by Helena Whitbread.

Wainwright's series is based on Anne's actual writings—it is a form of 'adaptation'. Critic Linda Hutcheon provides a helpful inclusive and expansive definition of 'adaptation': "Adaptation is a form of intertextuality: we experience adaptations (*as adaptations*) as palimpsests through our memory of other works that resonate through repetition with variation" (Hutcheon, 7-8). So between every new treatment of a historical moment and our historical present there will be a number of intertexts (visual and verbal) that overwrite and are potential reference points (like a time-traveller's sense of multiple alternative worlds).

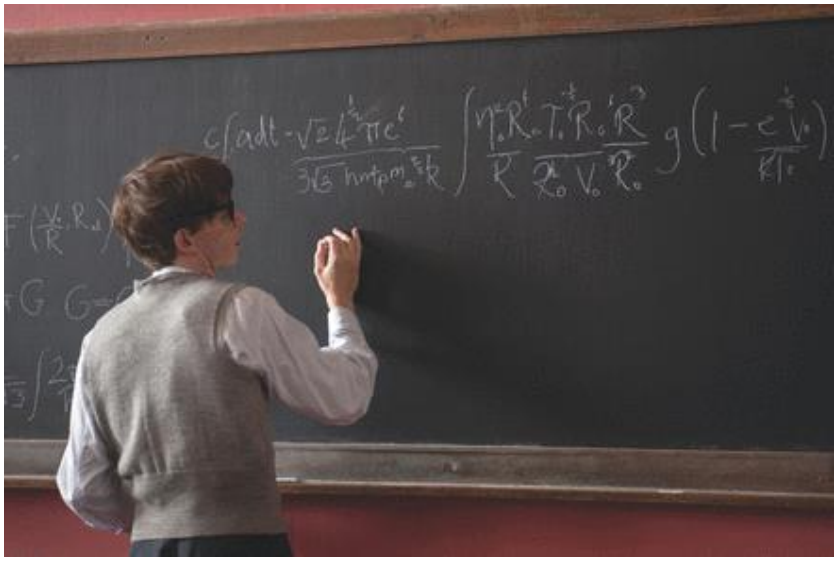
To what extent does the past have a potentiality to adapt itself? What hidden futures does it carry that it might not – in its own moment – have recognised? Our consumption of any art form is not an attempt to return to the actual moment of its production but an aesthetic experience put together by a mixture of intertexts, allusions and references publicly and privately known.

We might more properly call the screen treatment of Anne Lister a historiographical metafiction (a phrase coined by the same theorist Linda Hutcheon)—historiographical metafictions are works that speculate on their own adaptation of the historical past as they represent it. And they draw on a variety of materials and expertise in their making. So, there are often textual 'sources' behind such works, especially modern or less modern biographies but also primary texts. However, they are not 'adapted' for the screen so much as texts with which these often self-consciously anachronistic or asynchronous fictions are in dialogue. For example, screen writer and director Sally Wainwright describes her series as 'inspired by' Anne Lister's diaries pointing us to the aesthetic autonomy of the screen fiction from its 'sources'.

Writing might seem to be a difficult thing to treat in a form that is mainly visual and spoken. When we watch characters write they seem to withdraw from us as viewers, to enter their own private worlds. How do women writing women writing overcome this sense of the written text as the least amenable to the screen of any form of text? Painting, gesture, music, speech, all promote connection and communication with an audience where 'writing' often seems to promote separation and apartness.

Turning points: the gendered touch of the equation and the manuscript

I have been repeatedly struck by the similarity and the difference between the representation of forms of knowing traditionally associated with men and women. Put simply, men of genius are frequently depicted immersively preoccupied in figuring out equations in classrooms and women of genius are equally frequently depicted immersively preoccupied in writing at their desks or in their rooms. Some of this has to do with men's access to institutions of learning in the past by comparison with women's experience of being educated, if at all, in homes. Compare for instance two film treatments of gendered genius: inspired physicist Steven Hawking works out his equations in *The Theory of Everything* on a blackboard, while author Jo in Greta Gerwig's adaptation of Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* spreads out her handwritten pages on the floor of an attic. In both cases, brilliant minds build order from multiple elements.



The Theory of Everything. 2014. Directed by James Marsh, screenplay Anthony McCarten, Working Title Films.

Little Women. 2019. Directed and screenplay by Greta Gerwig. Columbia Pictures

Such screen moments are also usually narrative 'turning points'—the point of the pen and the end of the chalk mark a moment of self-actualisation, when the genius of the protagonist becomes apparent to them and to us as audience.

This is not an absolute rule (nothing is), and indeed film makers like to play with disturbing those conventions. Two films provide example that self-consciously want to upend those conventions of class, sex and race privilege: *Hidden Figures* (2016) giving us the black women who served as 'computers' in the early days of NASA for space travel proving their genius in figuring equations at the blackboard and Lin Manuel Miranda's presentation of immigrant male creatives composing letters and pamphlets through casting black and mixed race actors in the roles of the white founding fathers of America in his *Hamilton* (2015). In both these cases, however, film-makers point out the *unusualness* of such behaviour or casting in relation to the task or script: we know that the invisible labour of black women often underpins economic advance and goes unacknowledged and that literacy was a contested issue in the emancipation of slave populations in America.

These acts of writing and scribing (whether the equation or the poem or the novel) often have a difficult or unwarranted effect for the viewers of screen drama. They seem to turn the character away from an intersubjective relationship

with other characters and with the screen audience and make them peculiarly opaque and introspective. They are so preoccupied with the mechanics and the affect of these outdated technologies—the blackboard and the notebook—that they don't seem to be in our time and with us. And of course 'reading' text is not an especially popular or attractive or experimental element in screen representation. Those summaries of 'what happened next' at the end of a biographical drama, or the introductory text that rolls over the screen as we start a film rarely attract our attention or stick in our memory. Sybille Krämer explains that the aim of media is to promote its own disappearance from the view of its audience in order to fulfil the postal principle of its transmission:

> A medium's success thus depends on its disappearance, and mediation is designed to make what is mediated appear unmediated. The perceptibility of the message, or the appearance of what is mediated, is thus inversely proportional to the imperceptibility of the messenger, or the disappearance of the mediator. (31)

The presence of explicatory text, the presence of writing, is more obtrusive and less likely to build a relationship in screen drama than the use of voice. Hence, voiceover in which a narrator tells us where we are and intervenes to move narrative on or speculate on it is a longstanding (but still perceptible) device. Preference often lies in giving the voice of the narrator found in a written source to characters; this is a particularly common technique in adaptations of Jane Austen's novels for the screen. Patricia Rozema, for example, in her adaptation of *Mansfield Park* (1999) gave much of Austen's narrative voice to her protagonist, Fanny Price.

In any choice, however, what remains is the metafictional reminder of the presence of the medium itself and the introduction of distance from the haptic 'touch' of affect built between character and audience, as the 'writer' turns away from us and from their physical proximity to other bodies on screen to another surface than the screen, the page or the blackboard/whiteboard.

So how and in what ways can we see screen drama 'adaptations' overcoming the resistant retrogressive implications of 'writing' in their treatment of writing women? Not only in terms of the representation of an outworn medium or a medium that seems somehow antithetical to screen treatment, but also in terms of a sense of the conventionality of the woman writing: an act of domestic privacy and withdrawal that is too often understood as a 'hidden' form of resistance to inequality, a technique of release or 'expression' only to the self rather than an act of performance or public expression?

Conspiracy, Conspiring, Courting: Queen Anne and *The Favourite*

These hidden 'turned away' aspects of writing (especially in letters and diaries) often feature in screen treatments as forms of partisan political alongside or as well as mediators of erotic experience. This is especially true for screen treatments of the eighteenth century where screen 'adaptations' of writing by women of the period invites us to think (differently) about their hidden agency in history. Think of Catherine the Great's prolific letter writing as a form of political collaboration and ally-building in the recent television series *The Great* (2020-2024), or the letters of the conspirators in Choderlos de Laclos' *Liaisons Dangereuses* (1782) working together to seduce and corrupt a complacent bourgeoisie in pre-Revolutionary France, adapted into a stage play and later a film with great success.

To illustrate this presentation of women's writing as a form of political agency in period drama, let us consider a recent queeriod screen treatment of the eighteenth century and women who wrote (letters) and, coincidentally perhaps, another Anne. I had long thought that Queen Anne (monarch of England 1701-1714) was an impossible subject for biographical representation on stage, page and screen: profoundly dull, difficult, a pawn in high court politics and a sad story of a failed maternity that also put the future of government at risk. However, Frances Harris' magnificent biography *A Passion for Government. The Life of Sarah Duchess of Marlborough* (1991) shed new light on Anne's court as a place of female influence and intrigue. Helen Edmundsen wrote a successful play performed at Stratford: *Queen Anne* presented by the Royal Shakespeare Company in 2015 and directed by Natalie Abrahami. The play was a riot of energy and focussed on the close relationship between Anne and her childhood friend, Sarah Churchill, who became the wife of the Duke of Marlborough and wielded huge influence and wealth as leading mover behind the Whig party in the early decades of the eighteenth century. Powerful women win powerful enemies and one way that Sarah's political enemies sought to undermine her was by suggesting that she and Anne were lesbian lovers. Equally Sarah's major rival and the tool of the Tory opposition against her influence, Abigail Masham, was accused of seducing Anne from her Whig loyalties through sexual pleasure. That Sarah and Anne maintained a long correspondence under the suggestive pet-names of Mrs Morgan (Sarah) and Mrs Freeman (Anne) before they fell out in 1710 only helps to add to the salacious interest or possibility. All of this comes together in a rich cocktail of a film, profoundly ambivalent about whether it celebrates lesbianism or participates in the toxic lesbian slur against powerful women: *The Favourite*, co-produced and directed by Yorgos Lanthimos, from a screenplay by Deborah Davis and Tony McNamara, 2018. A gun-toting,

breeches- and eye-patch-wearing hard-as-nails performance by attractive actress Rachel Weisz does plenty to foster the kind of sapphic gaze that has had equal attractions in the butch treatment of Anne Lister in *Gentleman Jack*. Sarah Churchill gathers the letters that Anne sent her in their correspondence as Mrs Morley (Anne) and Mrs Freeman (Sarah) having threatened to publish them if Anne does not comply with her request to remove her new favourite Abigail Masham from office. She chooses to burn rather than publish them but is still dismissed from court with no more cards to play.

The Favourite still, co-produced and directed by Yorgos Lanthimos, from a screenplay by Deborah Davis and Tony McNamara, 2018

The presence of writing as witness of court intrigue and women's part in it is an important element in historical drama. Think of the related drama, the television series of *The Great* spinning fiction around another powerful eighteenth-century Queen known to be a prolific letter writer who attracted sexual gossip. Australian playwright Tony McNamara was commissioned by the Greek director Lanthimos to co-write the script for *The Favourite* with Deborah Davis because Lanthimos admired McNamara's play about Catherine the Great based on Catherine's witty, learned correspondence. After *The Favourite's* release, McNamara built on his play to produce the script for the series titled *The Great.* The circulation of letters as a means of connecting women in

gynocentric resistance to predatory environments acquires additional valence in the context of 'queeriod' drama in which powerful women are seen as deploying letters and their circulation in order to gain control of, and access to, the bodies of other women for their pleasure or power. It also generates a measure of discomfort about the complicity that is built between intradiegetic letter writer and extradiegetic audience. The direct-to-camera address of Anne Lister in *Gentleman Jack* fosters this sense of viewing from the main protagonist's point of view and participating in her enjoyment in flirtation. What happens though when we find her writing in her diaries or writing letters where we are excluded from the content of the message and do not share in its circulation? Such writing is designed for others, or serves as a means of self-reflection, to neither of which we are privy. Her audience is invited to adopt a position of distance, potentially irony, or to recognise the inaccessibility of the interior lives of figures in the past precisely at the point that they are represented as setting down an intimate record of them.

Gentleman Jack still, 2019 season 1, Written and directed Sally Wainwright. BBC/HBO.

Cool and hot: Gentleman Jack's queer theatricality

In this section I want to return to that question of whether the past secretes potentialities that modern adaptation or treatments might 'mobilise'. And also relate it to the sense that 'writing' needs to be re-mediated in screen representation and to be translated into the terms and codes of a screen

economy which is a mixture of the visual and the verbal, and largely spoken. Writing, I have argued, has proved a strangely resistant form or mode for the communication of affect and intersubjective connection on film. I concentrate on the representation of the secreted potentiality to 'show' lesbian connection that women in the eighteenth century knew full well was only protected legally and ideologically by its apparent *illegibility* and hence *invisibility.* Anne Lister's sexual life was enabled it appears—even or despite her public eccentricities as a woman who adopted characteristics of male dress—because of the impossibility of thinking lesbian sexuality for the majority of her contemporaries.

Ilia Ryzhenko speaks of 'hot' theatricality as a vehicle for productive anachronism in a 2022 essay about *The Favourite.* Hot theatricality is for Rynchenko a moment of asynchrony that is confrontational and purposely jarring for its audience.

> It makes sense to speak of instances of cinematic theatricality as 'hot' or 'cool' […]. Hot theatricality refers to the kind of flashy theatricality that disrupts the barrier between the diegetic world of the film and the spatio-temporal conditions of its audience (direct address of fictional characters to the audience is an obvious example), leaving no ambiguity about the fact that the film is aware of both its artificiality and the presence of its viewers. Cool theatricality, by contrast, produces complex signs that may reveal themselves as acknowledging the audience vaguely, or upon interpretation against the grain of the text, and are generally less aggressive and obtrusive. (359)

There is plenty of 'cool' theatricality in *Gentleman Jack*. An obvious example occurs in series 2, episode 5 where Anne Lister, over the dinner table at Shibden, pontificating on political unrest, gives a wonderful impersonation of Margaret Thatcher's voice, intonation and demotic tone in her first public address as prime minister on 4 May 1979. The line 'where there is discord, may we bring harmony' spoken by a woman seems anachronistic (Anne Lister could not of course have known Margaret Thatcher). Anne though turns to the camera and reminds us that these lines are taken from a prayer by St Francis of Assisi, just the kind of pious voice Anne Lister would have known well. By a comical reversal, the audience might now speculate that Margaret Thatcher might be comically impersonating Anne Lister, or Suranne Jones the actress' portrayal of her.

But hot theatricality takes the self-reflexive awareness of the queer attractions of past lesbian lives to an audience alert to secret meaning a step further: hot theatricality purposely invites us as viewers to both distantiate and identify with a historical past in which lesbianism is apparently 'invisible' to the social world in which it is happening right under everyone's eyes. These moments of hot theatricality invite us to sympathise with a character otherwise

unsympathetic in their autocratic treatment of social inferiors (Queen Anne or Anne Lister) because they allow us to witness them potentially witnessing a future where lesbianism would be visible.

Episode 4 of the first series of *Gentleman Jack* gave us one of the earliest occasions of Anne Lister's voiceover, ostensibly taken from her diary itself. This might seem to be the most traditional of moments for a period adaptation: music and narrative voiceover traditionally orient the affect and point of view of audience in period drama. We have so far largely 'heard' Anne through her address to us through the camera. Now we see her in conflict with herself as the voiceover of her diary struggles to perform an act of will to overcome feelings that have become too difficult for her. This is I suggest a scene of 'hot theatricality' because it breaks that sense of our own confidence that we 'know' Anne's game, as she confides in us about her tactics in winning over Ann Walker and her fortune.

The sequence of scenes begins in Ann Walker's bedchamber where we find her hesitating over whether to accept a likely proposal from the widower of her best friend after a night of pleasure with her lover Anne Lister. Anne Lister tells Ann Walker that she will give her the weekend to decide and to let her know by Monday April 3 (the actual date of Anne Lister's birthday). Ann Walker is full of anxiety and hopes their friendship could continue after marriage but Anne Lister is clear it must be a clean break or none at all. As Anne Lister collects her clothes scattered around the room, we hear her voiceover from her diary. " 'Well', said I to myself as I walked off, 'a pretty scene we've had' and 'I will be easily reconciled either way'." However, she is crying, her hand trembling and her shirt is loose. These lines are indeed Anne Lister's although in Lister's account it was Ann Walker who asked for the weekend to be alone and consider after the two spent an unhappy night together on Thursday night, the pair parting on the Friday morning. On 2 November 1832, Anne Lister wrote in her journal: "Well said I to myself as I walked off a pretty scene we have had but surely I care not much and shall take my time of suspense very quietly and be easily reconciled either way" (*Diary* full transcript, vol. 15, p. 268).

Having delivered this ultimatum we see Anne Lister back at her desk scribbling her account of the exchange at her writing desk, her hand trembling and her hair disordered. She rushes from her writing desk to a chamber pot under the table to vomit and she rages (presumably at her God whom she has earlier insisted does not judge her innate lesbian instincts) "Don't do this to me" "Don't you dare do this to me again". Here, Anne recalls earlier losses (Vere Talbot is recalled in earlier episodes) of lesbian partners to heterosexual marriage. But we are also asked to recognise that writing is not merely 'expressive', that the screen may allow us to 'see' what writing tries to screen. If Anne insists this

is a 'pretty scene' and she can live with her lover's decision quite easily in her *writing*, her bodily performance on screen contradicts those claims: the hand that writes visibly shakes, she finds herself vomiting uncontrollably. Now it seems a screen representation invites us to see a 'truth' that writing is designed to screen. Or—for a literalist concerned with truth to record or to what seems to be a reasonable interpretation of the source material in adaptation—*Gentleman Jack* misinterprets the evidence that Anne Lister was keen to be rid of Ann Walker whose attachment to her had become a burden. Or—and perhaps more reasonably—*Gentleman Jack* offers its own interpretation that Anne Lister may not have indeed known her *own* feelings and may have represented her feelings to herself in her own writing—a journal supposedly revealing those truths—strategically in order to manage her feelings (or try to conceal them from herself). The screen version offers an ironic perspective—it reads between the lines. So this too is an instance of what we can call 'hot theatricality'—the 'adaptation' of the past which invites our present reflection on what it is to 'know' our own and another's shifts of attachment and identification. Anne Lister's assertion 'I know my own heart' is here put under pressure. Some ten years before this incident on 20 August 1823 Anne quoted Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Confessions* in her journal: "I know my own heart and understand my fellow man. But I am made unlike anyone I have ever met. I dare to say that I am like no one in the whole world" (*Diary*, vol. 7 full transcript, p. 101). Anne may have 'known' that she was exclusively attracted to other women, but a narrative dramatic treatment can remind us that any person of any sexuality may not always succeed in being entirely 'honest' with themselves: especially, indeed, in the scene of their most intimate writing, the place of confessional composition of the self.

I return to this issue of what is screened and what is shown in queeriod drama to conclude. The 'screen' is a term much used in the eighteenth century. In our modern parlance 'screen' refers to the screened works of both television and film. But is also and still something which stands in front of something else. A screen both protects (from the heat of the fire) and hides (from public exposure). We might think of the film of *Emma* (2020) which concludes with Emma and Knightley 'screened' from Mr Woodhouse who is attempting to get warm beside the fire as they plan for their future together. The queeriod drama makes more complex this sense of providing access to interior lives, lives lived secretly in the interior of the historical moment, in period drama. Think of the recent adaptation by Sara Collins of her own novel, *The Confessions of Frannie Langton* for ITV. The actress Karla Simone-Spence playing Frannie, a queer and black character, frequently moves into the light (toward a window, toward the camera) to reveal her crying face—and she is a remarkable and moving weeper. This both marks or signifies this moment now in screen history where non-white actors can take

the 'lead' role and be the bearer of affect, but it also often seems also to signify the requirement that this affect be comfortable and familiar to the audience (Frannie is educated, literate, a servant not a slave, teller of her own tale).

Should we recognise these screen experiments in the capacity of the black or queer protagonist to take the place of the traditionally white feeling figure of heritage screen drama—as forms of metatextual representation of the kind of racial 'experiments' that the drama (and its source text) indict: experiments that are explicitly recognised as performed by those seeking to secure white privilege even in the process of advocating for and implementing abolition? The liberal turn to the present in these screen and stage treatments may also be a way of wilfully obscuring or screening the more uncomfortable stories of this formative period in history. Here, multi-culturalism, trans and queer identities feel like 'new' or 'additional' presences in a familiar structure, defusing the 'heat' of their asynchrony.

So the traditional close up of the white, heterosexual woman on screen who 'transmits' affect for a willing and waiting audience is self-consciously and theatrically reworked in modern screen adaptations. The faces of women of colour, women who love other women, women who were assigned male sexual identities at birth, take the place of those figures and become the agents of writing and the mediators of affect. Sybille Krämer's media philosophy though might make us think a little more sceptically about this apparently progressive move. In the end, we might ask, is this about democratising a medium or simply shoring up its capacity to mediate, securing its power as what she terms 'a quasi-sovereign actor' and its authority in forming 'constitutive conditional relationship'. Here the 'erotic' principle is revealed to screen a postal one: the medium's transmission of its constitutive command of 'affect' itself. The medium is both then, and always, as Krämer so deftly demonstrates, both parasite (occupying and feeding off the bodies that are its host) and angel (the body that disappears in the act of transmission): "The angel and the parasite not only complement each other; rather, to be more precise, it is necessary to recognize that one-sidedness and non-reciprocity are inherent to two-sidedness and reciprocity" (Krämer 2015, 62).

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A PALIMPSESTUOUS INTERPRETATION OF RAMIN BAHRANI'S *FAHRENHEIT 451*

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ABSTRACT. ***A Palimpsestuous Interpretation of Ramin Bahrani's*** **Fahrenheit 451.** Drawing on a poststructuralist approach to adaptation as an instance of intertextuality (Stam 2000) and Linda Hutcheon's metaphorical description of adaptations as palimpsests (2006), this paper will analyse the ways in which Ramin Bahrani, director and co-writer of the script of *Fahrenheit 451* (2018, HBO), rewrote Ray Bradbury's dystopian novel by the same name, leaving only traces of the source text visible in his appropriation. Supposedly reimagining Bradbury's text for a new generation of viewers, digital natives of the online virtual worlds, the film reads more like a heavy-handed filmic palimpsest that allows only some of the book's ideas and memorable lines to resurface from underneath the new writing. Relying mostly on visual spectacle and the screenwriter-director's own concerns about the fragility of civil rights, democracy and humaneness in a world increasingly controlled by certain interest groups through the internet and social media, the film leaves audiences wondering about the appropriateness of the title—an anchoring device promising a straightforward adaptation of the text—and the film's actual relation with Bradbury's novel.

Keywords*: palimpsestuous interpretation, appropriation,* Fahrenheit 451*, Ramin Bahrani, Ray Bradbury, dystopia, technology*

REZUMAT. ***Interpretarea filmului lui Ramin Bahrani*** **Fahrenheit 451** ***ca palimpsest.*** Pornind de la abordarea poststructuralistă a adaptării ca manifestare a intertextualității (Stam 2000) și descrierea metaforică a adaptării ca palimpsest

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pe care o face Linda Hutcheon (2006), această lucrare va analiza modalitățile prin care Ramin Bahrani, regizorul și coscenaristul filmului *Fahrenheit 451* (2018, HBO), a rescris romanul distopic cu același titlu al lui Ray Bradbury păstrând în ecranizarea sa doar urme ale textului sursă. Anunţat ca o reimaginare a textului lui Bradbury pentru o nouă generație de spectatori, nativi digitali ai realităților virtuale online, filmul se prezintă mai degrabă ca un palimpsest cinematografic stângaci care permite ca doar o parte dintre ideile și pasajele binecunoscute ale romanului să fie vizibile în noul text. Bazându-se preponderent pe spectacolul vizual și pe preocuparea regizorului-scenarist pentru fragilitatea drepturilor civile, a democrației și umanității într-o lume controlată din ce în ce mai mult de către grupuri de interese prin internet și platforme sociale, filmul îi face pe spectatori să se întrebe dacă păstrarea titlului romanului—care promite o adaptare cinematografică convențională—este potrivită și care este de fapt natura relației dintre film și romanul lui Bradbury.

Cuvinte-cheie: *interpretare palimpsestică, apropriere,* Fahrenheit 451*, Ramin Bahrani, Ray Bradbury, distopie, tehnologie*

Introduction

In 2023, Ray Bradbury's groundbreaking dystopian science fiction novel about a book-burning society of the future, *Fahrenheit 451*, celebrated its 70th anniversary and it continues to be a classic of the genre. Today the novel feels relevant and old in equal measure because it is a piece of speculative fiction in which we recognise various technological, social and cultural realities of our time, and in which Bradbury indirectly comments on social, political, cultural and technoscientific realities of the 1950s displaying the same kind of scepticism about the benefits of technological development, especially when controlled by governments and politicians, and in an ideology-saturated Cold War context, that other 1950s and 1960s science fiction writers did (Csicsery-Ronay 2005, 48, 49).

Set in a future America that is difficult to anchor in a particular historical moment, the novel does what dystopian fiction does so well: it reflects on the present by envisioning a future reflecting the writer's fears about the course humanity might take if the "liberal humanist 'civilization'" falls victim to mass consumption, television and a sense of paranoia resulting from the menace of a nuclear war (Baker, 2005 490; 492). Two of the most visible concerns of the author are the effects of McCarthyism and the gripping power of television in the 1950s, which the novelist felt were linked and contributing to a perverse kind of totalitarianism. In a 1956 interview, the author described his novel as a cautionary tale: "I wanted to do some sort of story where I could comment on

what would happen to a country if we let ourselves go too far in this direction, where all thinking stops, and the dragon swallows his tail, and we sort of vanish into a limbo and we destroy ourselves by this sort of action" (Bradbury 1956, 27:10—27:57). The novel may not be as "overtly *political*" as George Orwell's *1984*, but it nevertheless strikes a chord in generations of readers through its exploration of "the essence of humanity, about that which makes life worth living … a life of the mind and a life of humanity" (Smolla 2009, 906).

Reflecting on the successful marriage of dystopia and science fiction and the increasing cultural status of this type of fiction after World War Two, Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, Jr. writes that "SF had [by then] acquired a reputation for correctly prophesying technological innovations (well earned) and social transformations (much less so)" (2005, 49). Bradbury was one of the few mainstream science fiction writers at the time and his critical stance on "Cold War politics of science, mass-destruction technology, and simplistic morality" served as an example for subsequent writers (49).

The novel's cultural impact was also reflected in cinema. It was first adapted for the screen in 1966, by French New Wave auteur François Truffaut. The film is a highly personal interpretation of the novel, in which the director read his own love for and appreciation of books and his humanist values, yet it was neither a critical nor a public success at the time. Being absent from all streaming platforms, it is now beyond the reach of many young viewers, though the scores and reviews on both IMDb and the leading online aggregator of film and TV shows reviews, *Rotten Tomatoes,* suggest an increased interest in the film in the past decades. The latest adaptation of the novel, the 2018 HBO production, directed and co-written by Iranian-American indie director, Ramin Bahrani, is different from Truffaut's film on multiple levels, but perhaps the most obvious ones would be the recent production's extensive rewriting of the novel and its more pronounced political quality.

Working on the screenplay in the tense atmosphere of the presidential campaign of 2016, when the line between news and fake news was so volatile, Ramin Bahrani reread Bradbury's novel as a text that could speak to his contemporaries about one possible route that America might take (Bahrani 2018a), and decided to rewrite the story by anchoring it more clearly in the realities of his time and in a contemporary visual language appropriate for young audiences in particular. "With Bradbury as my guide, and a vow to stay true to his ideas," he wrote in a *New York Times* piece, "I began working on the script" (2018a).

Although the film recontextualises the story, reinterprets the novel's themes, and significantly rewrites the central characters, Ramin Bahrani and the HBO producers decided to release it with the same title as the novel, implicitly

advertising it as a straightforward adaptation by foregrounding its literary source and capitalising on its fame and position within the canon of dystopian fiction. In reality, more appropriate laymen's terms would be *reimagining,* or *rewriting* (both signalling a more radical process of intervention on the adapted text), or the more specialised term *appropriation*. *Appropriation*, as defined by Julie Sanders, refers to a form of adaptation that uses fidelity strictly as a metrics assessing the distance from the original that the adaptation reflects, the interrelation between the two texts being primarily political (2006, 8), based on the reinterpretation of the literary text through present-day values and a contemporary sensibility. Sanders's perspective was based on a poststructuralist understanding of all texts as intertexts, as posited by Julia Kristeva (1967) and Roland Barthes (1973), which makes adaptation a form of intertextuality as well.

In her groundbreaking *The Theory of Adaptation* (2006), Linda Hutcheon is similarly interested in adaptation as an intertextual phenomenon in which there are countless possibilities of meaning creation and reinterpretation as a consequence of this co-presence of texts (regardless of the medium), insisting on the fact that adaptations need to be discussed *as adaptations* even in the absence of some universal criteria for their evaluation (such as fidelity). When all adaptations (including appropriations) are democratically explored as instances of intertextuality, existing in a cultural context, the adaptation critic's task is to focus on what and how is interpreted, added, creatively transformed, also looking at the politics of adaption.

An appropriation such as *Fahrenheit 451* (2018) poses some interesting questions as to the nature of its relationship to the adapted text and the extent to which the filmic text allows the literary one to be "seen" in the adaptation and how the two create meaning together. In what follows these questions will be addressed from a perspective that reflects one of the several current tendencies in adaptation studies, harmonising theory and criticism, starting from Linda Hutcheon's definition of adaptation as a complex interplay of intertextual material and as a palimpsest (8; 9), a site of textual dynamics. As a comparative analysis, it will also include some comments on the creative transformations resulting from the bringing together of literary, filmic and cultural texts in a filmic palimpsest, with some recognisable features of the novel faintly resurfacing, like the old writing on a recycled, parchment, from underneath the fresh filmic text.

The palimpsest metaphor, first used by Linda Hutcheon to directly refer to adaptations (2006, 8), is a much older one, revived and theorised in poststructuralist narratology by Gérard Genette (1982), part of the larger theoretical framework of intertextuality, describing texts as part of a "tissue," a "polysemic space where the paths of several possible meanings intersect" (Barthes [1973]1981, 37), a site of textual co-presence and play of signification.

Not all instances of intertextuality are also adaptations, but adaptations are special instances of intertextuality, as Sarah Cardwell (2018) aptly demonstrates, as they openly state (or imply, as many appropriations do) their engagement with other texts. Adaptations require a relational reading, the source, the adapted text and the adaption being interpreted as inextricably linked. Moreover, they both carry traces of other texts as well which may or may not be identified by the interpreter. In *Palimpsestes. La littérature au second degré* ([1982] 1997, 339), Gérard Genette uses the term 'palimpsest' instead of 'intertext,' making the idea of textual co-presence more visual and, for the purpose of this paper, more appropriate to use in an analysis of a film adaptation, where the visual aspects of the filmic text often outweigh the linguistic. Phillip Lejeune, whose yet unpublished work was referenced by Gérard Genette (339), speaks of the need to perform a "palimpsestuous reading," a relational reading that the nature of the hypertext (the adaptation) dictates. As Sarah Dillon explains, "palimpsestuous" is an adjective that replaces Tomas De Quincey's older term, "involuted," which he used to describe the nature of the palimpsest as "an involuted phenomenon where … texts are involved and entangled, intricately interwoven, interrupting and inhabiting each other" (2007, 1; 3-4). "Palimpsestuous" presents us with a visual image for this type of relationship whereby the words and phrases on the piece of recycled parchment or tablet—the palimpsest—are intertextually engaged and together they create meanings that emerge precisely from that engagement in/on the palimpsest.

The key to fully understanding the implications of such textual relationships is being aware of them and performing a palimpsestuous interpretation: "we experience adaptations (*as adaptations*) as palimpsests," Linda Hutcheon writes, "through our memory of other works that resonate through repetition with variation" (2006, 8). A palimpsestuous interpretation is a reading together, an appreciation and interpretation of the hypo- and the hypertext, a hermeneutic process that cannot take place outside the interpreter's awareness of this togetherness of, in this case, the novel and the film *Fahrenheit 451*. Instead of focusing on fidelity, however, the interpretation will highlight the "creative transformation" rather than a "vain and simple-minded matching" (Dudley 2011, 38) at work in the adaptation, assessing whether the adaptor's promise of "staying true to [Bradbury's] ideas" (2018a) was indeed fulfilled.

The hypotext: Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*

"If someone tells you what a story is about, they are probably right. If they tell you that that is all the story is about, they are probably wrong" (Gaiman 2013, xvi). One of the difficulties faced by any adapter is deciding on a timely or

novel interpretation of the literary text considered for adaptation. Speculative fiction texts resist conventional adaptations because they age quickly. The film adapter of a science fiction novel with old technology must consider a significant reimagining of the context and realities of the fictional future according to genre norms. *Fahrenheit 451* is a novel about an America where books and reading have become illegal, being replaced by simplified content on television, the radio and in schools. Any form of intellectualism or high culture is no longer tolerated by the people or the state (McGiveron, 1996; Kagle 2008, 29), censorship being enforced with the implicit (and careless) approval of the majority of the population, technology playing a significant role in controlling people's minds through the elimination of alternative truths and critical thought and a good surveillance system that helps the identification and elimination of any form of dissent. All books must be traced and burnt by firemen, whose duty now is to ensure that streets and minds are kept safe from the rebels, surviving intellectuals who may cause confusion and panic in society with the dangerous ideas found in books. The government can enforce this type of control because people themselves willingly gave up their freedom when they stopped reading and caring, their ignorance and propensity for a comfortable life with no dilemmas or the responsibility of making choices, their hedonism and addiction to mind-numbing drugs, allowing the state to take control of all aspects of their lives, banning books and stifling any form of individuality or expression of freedom in the name of the greater good: people's "happiness."

Bradbury avoids being very precise about other aspects of the government, focusing on its ability to control people through a well-functioning surveillance system that is supported by the citizens themselves, afraid that the few surviving intellectuals might endanger a lifestyle that allows everyone to be equal in their (sub)mediocrity. With the constant menace of a nuclear war further instilling fear in people glued to their wall-size televisors—the main government-approved source of information—there is little hope for change or improvement, unless the resistance groups living in rural areas manage to survive and rescue books by memorising them. One day, they hope, the war will end and they will be able to save humanity by returning to it the knowledge and intellectual treasures that they have been storing in their memory.

The protagonist of the novel, young fireman Guy Montag, leads a perfectly dull life with his wife Mildred, a young housewife who spends her days watching television on the three wall-TVs in their home, listening to the radio and sleeping, occasionally taking too many sleeping pills, like so many other people who have to be saved by special operators and their blood-recycling machines. The evening Mildred overdoses for the first time—forcing her husband to witness a dark reality he has never seen before—Montag has just had a most

disturbing conversation with Clarisse, a teenager who is very different from anyone he has ever met: bold, articulate, happy, inquisitive and lovely at the same time. She seems to see right into his soul and mind and asks him questions he has never dared to even consider. Bradbury modelled Clarisse on himself it seems, making her "the essence of life and the essence of love [who] educates Montag without knowing she's an educator … [or] teacher who inspires" (Bradbury 2010, 16:52-17:22). She is a symbol of what is still pure and beautiful in Montag, who sees himself in her eyes and is able to access memories of childhood love and connection in his mother's presence—a past he has long forgotten. Clarisse's warm presence and eccentricity present Montag with the possibility of a life very different from his own, one of genuine questions and unexpected answers, so he starts looking critically at his marriage, his drug and TV-addicted wife, and his job as a fireman. When he witnesses a woman setting herself on fire together with her books after her house is invaded by firemen, Montag's awakening takes a more accelerated turn. It is her courage and self-empowerment that Montag finds astounding, her "defiance unto death [being] a kind of martyrdom that is entirely at odds with, and therefore throws into stark relief, the powerlessness of the model citizen" (Bloom 2007, 23).

Captain Beatty, Montag's superior and former role model, is quick to notice Montag's hesitation and budding moral crisis. In one of the most enlightening scenes of the novel, Beatty visits Montag, concerned that the young man might start reading books he should be burning and join the resistance. He tries to dissuade Montag from becoming too interested in books and their contents, so he gives him a lecture on the country's recent past and how the current regime is simply enacting the public desire for a guilt-free, simplified, pleasure-seeking lifestyle, relieved of any moral pressure or intellectual standards. First people started to prefer watching movies, then they showed a preference for the classics in Reader's Digest form, cut and simplified to the maximum. And then, as the population increased, intellectualism had to give way to mass culture, the oversimplifying tendencies of the past becoming the new norm: "Books cut shorter. Condensations. Digests, Tabloids. Everything boils down to the gag, the snap ending" (Bradbury [1953] 2008, 72). There was really no need for people to know more than what they would use at the work place, simple, mechanical gestures, Beatty explains: "Life is immediate, the job counts, pleasure lies all about after work. Why learn anything save pressing buttons, pulling switches, fitting nuts and bolts?" (73)

There is a strange matter-of-factness about how the captain shares his knowledge—all apparently coming from the official rule book that firemen in key positions like himself must read—almost a cheerful, dutiful appropriation of the official truth, but at the same time there is something about the way he communicates that truth that also suggests a critical distancing from the

masses, a quiet, barely repressed contempt for people's choice for a dumbing down of the entire society: "Out of the nursery into the college and back to the nursery; there's your intellectual pattern for the past five centuries or more" (72). Here and elsewhere, it is as if Beatty were voicing Bradbury's critical perspective on this dystopian future. The captain's neutral tone and his disassociation from the controlled masses also suggest that he mirrors the attitudes of the ones in charge, who know how to control not only people's lives, but also their minds; only some have access to information, but even they seem to lack the ability to think for themselves becoming, like Beatty, transmitters of official information and enforcers of state policy. The captain repeats what he was trained to, making one wonder, however, how much of it he actually believes:

> It didn't come from the Government down. There was no dictum, no declaration, no censorship, to start with, no! Technology, mass exploitation, and minority pressure carried the trick, thank God. Today, thanks to them, you can stay happy all the time … we're the Happiness Boys, the Dixie Duo, you and I and the others. We stand against the small tide of those who want to make everyone unhappy with conflicting theory and thought. … I don't think you realize how important you are, we are, to our happy world as it stands now. (Bradbury [1953] 2008, 76;81)

There is one idea to which the captain obsessively returns in his account, and which several interpreters of the book (Eller and Touponce [2004] 2008; Kagle [1992] 2008; McGiveron 1996; Smolla 2009; Zipes 1983) consider central to *Fahrenheit 451*, namely that the undoing of the world, the emergence of a radically dehumanizing totalitarian state were caused by mass culture and minority pressure eliminating independent, rational, profound thought in return for easy gratification, by a flattening of all differences among people, making them all equal in ignorance, by a low tolerance for pain, suffering, controversy and difference, and by the illusion of happiness and control. The America of the future described in the novel is modelled on Bradbury's apprehension of an already changing America, making passionate and avid readers like himself ridiculous and the cultural legacy of human thought, creativity and a quest for knowledge, beauty and truth superfluous.

In the novel the solution is both individual and communal. Montag undergoes a "process of rehumanization" (Zipes 2008, 10), distancing himself from the totalitarian state mentally and physically. He begins to think independently and later, as a runaway, learns to experience nature through his senses and acquires a higher understanding of what makes him human, part of a natural environment beyond the state's control. He then joins the resistance, a community of intellectuals who survive outside society waiting for the nuclear war to destroy the totalitarian state, enabling them to return to the cities and

rebuild society on correct moral principles and the wisdom of earlier thinkers, whose ideas they have been storing in their memories. The novel ends with the promise of regeneration, rebirth, redemption. Even without the guidance of professor Faber or of Granger—who both contribute to the awakening of Montag's conscience and his freedom—Montag is now ready for the promises of a meaningful life, in which he will play a part in "the healing of the nations" (Bradbury [1953] 2008, 211), because Bradbury believes that humanity can, like a Phoenix bird (an important symbol in the novel), emerge from its own ashes through a "rebirth of man's intellect" (Sisario 205).

The novel is also the writer's declaration of his love for books. As Peter Sisario (1970, 201-205;212) aptly demonstrates in his exploration of literary allusions in Bradbury's novel, it is a book about books directly or indirectly "present" in the text through allusions, references and even quotations, a palimpsest itself inviting readers to decipher its underlying texts and, in the process, experience glimpses of human knowledge as Montag does. Readers accompany young, naive Guy Montag on his quest, as he, like a modern version of the fairytale hero, overcomes obstacles and vanquishes his enemies (captain Beatty, other firemen, the uncanny Mechanical Hound—part robot, part animal of prey sniffing weakness and betrayal—all symbols of the totalitarian state), and gradually reaches a higher understanding of the world by learning to think for himself with the assistance of three helpers: Clarisse, a symbol of his dormant humanity, his true self buried for so long by layers of conformity and complacency; professor Faber, whose voice will become Montag's conscience as the fireman turns into an undercover rebel; and Granger, the leader of the book people, who presents him with the plan and the path to fulfil his destiny as one of the saviours of humanity. The novel is a love letter to writing and reading modelled on childhood fairytales, tapping into the readers' warm memories of a time when reading was a time of connection, of safety and of happy endings, an important aspect of the novel that is barely visible in the film.

A palimpsestuous interpretation of Ramin Bahrani's *Fahrenheit 451*

If the palimpsestuous quality of Ray Bradbury's novel reflects the writer's understanding of the interconnectedness of authors and texts across spatial and temporal boundaries (Bradbury 2010), with an implicit recognition of the fact that books can only emerge in a space of pre-existent texts, that of Ramin Bahrani's *Fahrenheit 451* (2018) is the result of an intentional overwriting of the original text designed to drive the adapter's own political agenda across. The overwriting is so extensive that, had the film been titled differently, it could have easily been experienced by the general public as an independent artefact,

just like *Equilibrium* (2002), written and directed by Kurt Wimmer, which borrows extensively from *Fahrenheit 451* and other major dystopian novels that inspired Bradbury, such as Orwell's *1984* and Huxley's *Brave New World*. Seen as a film promoted as an adaptation, however, its rapport with the novel is important and needs to be addressed. Consequently, this palimpsestuous reading of the HBO adaptation will focus on exploring the ways in which the novel's themes and characters were woven into the fabric of the film, analysing the adapter's ability to create meaningful relations among textual elements of the hypo- and the hypertext and, last but not least, commenting on the film's artistic qualities, as an adaptation is also an artefact with a cultural life that is also independent from that of its source. The metaphor of the palimpsest is appropriate for Bahrani's film because two texts are co-present in the palimpsestuous work, but the new text is so different from that of the novel (the recontextualization of the story causing the dialogue, the setting and even the characters to suffer dramatic changes as well), that the act of scraping, rubbing off, aggressively removing the underlying writing—part of the process of making a palimpsest - becomes a fitting visual metaphor for the equally aggressive act of rewriting the text to the extent that the dialogue in the screenplay only echoes that in the novel, sounding more contemporary and reflecting the social and political atmosphere of the presidential elections of 2016, the anti-immigrant rhetoric and policies of the Trump administration, and the anxiety caused by tech industry's involvement in politics.

In Bahrani's dystopian world, the Ministry is completely in command of the United States after a Second Civil War, which Bahrani sets in a not-so-distant future that feels like an "alternate tomorrow" (Bahrani 2018b). The Ministry is a mysterious government that, according to the film's Clarisse, could be a cross between tech companies that used artificial intelligence to seize control of people's minds and lives and some form of traditional government. The society is a divided one, citizens being grouped on the basis of their relationship to the Ministry. The Natives are the obedient, thoughtless masses controlled through the official internet network, The Nine. The Eels, or the outcasts, are people with criminal records for having committed crimes against the state (including the use and ownership of graffiti—the official term for books and art stored on any medium), whose online identities and travel rights are electronically erased for as long as their sentence lasts, and who struggle to survive in slums. The same term is used to refer to any rebel working to destabilise the social order by hacking The Nine and/or storing graffiti. Everything that happens in the city is broadcast live on gigantic screens across the city, the interactive medium allowing people to instantly react through emoticons to the sensational nocturnal incursions of the firemen into the Eel dens across the city,

burning not only books, but also computers, servers, art works—any manifestation of complex human thought, creativity, or art. The firemen are genuine internet celebrities, especially rising star Master Trooper Montag, a narcissist feeding on the enthusiasm of his followers, hooked on his looks, passion and screen charisma.

Bahrani's dystopia is noticeably more political than Bradbury's novel. The writer was concerned with the danger of politicians exploiting the masses and taking advantage of people's thoughtlessness and search for comfort at all costs, but he felt equally menaced by the guardians of political correctness policing writers' works (Bradbury 1979, 175-179) and criticised people's complacency and intolerance for anything or anyone that could mirror back their ignorance, mediocrity and passivity. In Bahrani's film, people are also responsible for the country's totalitarian rule, but the director shifts the emphasis from the irresponsible behaviour of weak-minded people to opportunistic politicians' perverse tactics of gradually taking control of people's lives, using or teaming up with powerful media and tech companies to take control of people's essential information about their private and professional lives, making them completely vulnerable to manipulation and thought control, practically owning their lives and filling their minds with propaganda and fake news. The sophisticated surveillance systems with AI software and the daily drug doses that they must all take, the omnipresence of audio-visual content—mostly live-streamed tabloid news programmes designed as the ultimate form of participatory entertainment, people instantly reacting to the news through emoticons—create a media-controlled society where people react emotionally to the version of reality that they are being offered 24/7. And it is messages of hatred and fear of the Other that the state obsessively broadcasts through The Nine, creating a sense of paranoia in a state in crisis, which Ramin Bahrani and co-writer Amir Naderi link to the rhetoric of Donald Trump's presidential campaign and of his administration. It may not be "Time to make America great again!" that the crowds scream in the film, but their attitude is a reflection of the same kind of inflammatory (pun intended) rhetoric that American extremists and self-titled patriots displayed in public discourse when the film was in production:

> MONTAG: Eels don't deserve freedom, now, do they?
> ALL: No!
> MONTAG: We won't let 'em take our jobs and steal our tax money, now, will we?
> WOMAN: Hell, no! Self is strength! Happiness is truth!
> MONTAG: Guess what time it is?
> ALL: **Time to burn for America again**! [Bahrani 2018c, 9:30-9:44; added emphasis]

In 2018, American viewers could easily recognise Trump's slogan paraphrased in the Natives' scripted reply part of the fire show, and his references to immigrants as threats to the country's economy were easy to see in Master Trooper Montag's attacks on the Eels, the anti-socials accused of posing a real threat to the well-being of the Natives.

There is a certain sensibility to the cause of the underdog, the experience of the immigrant at the core of Ramin Bahrani's films prior to his *Fahrenheit 451*, especially after the 9/11 events and the subsequent noticeable rise in xenophobia and islamophobia in the United States, acutely felt by the second-generation Iranian immigrant director, so it is hardly surprising that he chose to address in the film the question of racial and ethnic friction at the heart of the presidential campaign going on in 2016, when he was working on the script. For Bahrani it is the irresponsible, greedy politicians and interest groups that pose the greatest threat to individual freedom and democracy, although people's mindless consumption of internet content—so easily configurable to create the illusion of truth—is also implied as a reason for people's inability to escape the state's grasp of their minds and lives. Ultimately, it is the perversion of American democracy and the paranoia artificially induced by the state that enslave and dehumanize, as visually conveyed through the presence of predator animal imagery on The Nine, the virtual space people seem to inhabit more than their homes.

If in Bradbury's novel the possibility of humanity's regeneration is paradoxically linked to the disappearance of the totalitarian state and its mindless model citizens during a nuclear war, in the film the only threat to the state is artificially created and domestic (the Eels) rather than foreign. If democratic values are lost, Bahrani suggests, if the American Dream (an immigrants' dream after all) becomes impossible because dreamers no longer have a place in American society, then the country heads towards self-destruction—a pessimistic outlook that overwrites the novel's trust in the possibility of regeneration and rebirth. Even if the Eels are successful, with Montag's help, to save a digital version of world literature and art encoded in a strand of DNA called Omnis, which an Eel scientist has managed to implant in a bird that will eventually reach the free world, it is hard to believe this will have any impact on the country, that it will enable the free world to successfully remove the country's totalitarian government and allow American society to heal.

There are quite a few loose ends in the script apart from the ending, which is simply not thought through. There are references to the characters' past that lead nowhere, or implausible situations like the Eels being able to survive in the slums with no jobs or money or hacking into The Nine, maintaining illegal servers and using scientific labs to transfer cloud data on a strand of DNA

bypassing the well-designed and efficient system of (online) monitoring and surveillance. The geopolitical context is so imprecise and questionable, that it is hard to understand how the future of human culture can only depend on the American Eels' ability to scan and digitally store books from across the world, especially as we also learn from them that Omnis—that encoded DNA cloud of digitalised cultural production—is supposed to reach scientists in Canada who will extract the information from the DNA strand, implying that Canada is part of the free world but somehow only the Americans can save the world's cultural heritage from destruction.

The film also reinterprets the main characters undermining precisely what makes them special, their symbolic value consistent with Bradbury's understanding of their role in this tale of redemption. The novel's Montag, for instance, is an unexceptional young fireman who experiences a series of life-changing events that expand his vision and turn him into an agent of change, of redemption for humanity. Captain Beatty, Montag's superior, is the embodiment of the perverse system of control of the masses through censorship, fear, and punishment. Clarisse, Montag's neighbour, is a symbol of freedom, individualism, and humanity; she acts as Montag's conscience, helping him rediscover his true self and triggers in him the desire to escape the oppressive regime in which he has lived most of his life. Mildred, Montag's wife (absent in the film), represents the result of years of brainwashing and overexposure to the mind-numbing wall-TVs. Ramin Bahrani's Montag, Clarisse and Beatty are in themselves palimpsests, only glimpses of the original characters' traits being visible in the film, a consequence of the recontextualization of the story and the adapter's understanding of their function in the appropriation.

In the words of Michael B. Jordan, who plays Montag in the film, his character is "the poster boy of the Fire Department" (2018), being captain Beatty's protegee and his future replacement. Jordan plays a surprisingly weak man, a marionette that Beatty dominates, intimidates and uses because he is young, charismatic and makes the firemen popular on The Nine. There is also a more personal connection between them, one that the film fails to properly address. From a series of flashbacks from Montag's childhood, memories of a past deeply buried in his mind, the viewers can understand that as a little boy, Montag witnessed his father's arrest in the presence of Beatty, who may have orchestrated the arrest and who, out of guilt, decided to become a father substitute for him.

Montag's inner revolution is ignited not by young Clarisse, as in the novel, but by the woman who chose to set herself aflame with her books during a raid. In her house Montag sees an extensive library of physical books for the first time, their texture, smell, and concreteness, in spite of what Beatty has just

told him about them being dangerous to people's peace of mind and to their racial sensitivities, make the young fireman reconsider what he knows about the Eels and graffiti. It is almost as if it had finally dawned on Montag that the relationship between books and people (authors, readers) is something real, more real and certainly more meaningful than his connection with his fans or with the Ministry. He crosses from the world of virtual reality, a post-print world of social media and internet communication, to the actual world of people who have chosen to safeguard their humanity through reading and art, and are willing to die for what they believe makes them human.

Michael B. Jordan's Montag is not the hero type. He is mostly reactive, allowing both Beatty and Clarisse to control him, the former through fear and an elusive sense of a complicity of sorts, Beatty posing as a paternal figure, and the latter through seductiveness, both as a beautiful woman and as a knowledgeable Eel survivor, who will guide him on his path to a higher understanding of reality and his final sacrifice for the Eel's noble cause: saving human knowledge from destruction. Having failed to kill Beatty when he had the chance, unlike the book Montag, he creates an opportunity for the captain to eliminate him later on, but not before releasing the bird that carries Omnis and watching it fly way, hoping that his sacrifice was not in vain. Beatty not only ignores the significance of Montag's refusal to kill him, but he feels compelled to eliminate the malfunctioning young cadet, the image of his failure as a mentor.

If the novel's captain Beatty was more than willing to accept the new social order and help enforce its laws, Michael Shannon's Beatty is elusive and duplicitous. Bahrani and his co-writer leave us wondering about Beatty's true nature, carefully disguised under the mask of flawless authority and unquestionable dedication to the Ministry. In the middle of the night, he struggles to remember passages from the books he must have read, writing them on cigarette paper—the only kind of paper available to the Natives in this highly digitalised world. It is an act of memorisation similar in kind to the Eels' salvaging and storing of cultural artefacts on illicit hard drives and servers. His motivation for doing that and his apparent knowledge of canonical works of world literature remain unexplained and without any visible influence on his behaviour, which makes the character even more baffling than the novel's captain. His character development in the screenplay is incomplete, almost as if the film had rushed into production before Bahrani could decide how to explain the captain's contradictory behaviour in a compelling way.

Clarisse, played by Sophia Boutella, is nothing like the sweet, innocent teenager in the book. She is modelled on the *femme fatale* type, sensual and amoral, spying on fellow Eels to reduce her own sentence and luring Montag on the side of the resistance, where his help is much needed. She is a spiritual guide for Montag to whom she offers an alternative history, unavailable on The Nine,

and the possibility to make his life meaningful. By aging her and making her a deeply flawed character, Bahrani reimagines Clarisse as a woman of her time, a survivor who waits for an opportunity to find her way back to the resistance as a form of atonement. Lost are the charming quirkiness and irresistible innocence of her literary counterpart and, with them, her character's symbolism. She is, however, reimagined as a hero type, active, strong, initiating rather than responding and bravely accepting her fate, knowing she has no future after the Eels' hiding place is discovered by the captain's men and set on fire. Seeing that the bird carrying Omnis is on its way to the free world makes her sacrifice worthwhile, just like Montag's, or so the film's ending suggests.

The relationship between Montag and Clarisse is fleetingly addressed as a romantic one, instrumental in Montag's awakening, part of his process of self-discovery and understanding of the world through the discussions he has with Clarisse—more experienced and with access to both worlds, Montag's and that of the resistance. Initially reading together is their love language and their act of resistance, but there is nothing in this brief love story to suggest that their love can save the world. On the contrary, the literary passages Bahrani chose to include in the text of the script, lines from Albert Camus's *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays* and Fyodor Dostoyevsky's novella *Notes from the Underground*, speak of death, sorrow, and the impossibility of saving mankind from its own self-destructive impulses.

It is difficult to see optimism in Bahrani's adaptation, his world being darker and more sinister than the one in the novel. Affection, love have no place in this world, and the stolen moments of intimacy, of meaningful connection cannot last, making the viewer wonder about the possibility of change, of the rehumanization of the world that Bradbury's novel offered as a real possibility. Moreover, the fact that, in the final shots of the film, the bird carrying Omnis in its DNA is shown flying free, disappearing into a huge flock of birds possibly heading for Canada, where its DNA cloud might be extracted, multiplied and then spread around the world via animal DNA (rather than human DNA, for some unexplained reason) further confuses viewers, especially those who remember Bradbury's humanism and trust in man's ability to save humanity from self-destruction, a beautiful idea on which Bahrani superimposed his more sceptical view of the world.

Conclusion

The present palimpsestuous reading started from the idea that a film adaptation can be "read" and interpreted as a palimpsest with traceable inter-textual dynamics that can be explored to identify the interpretative possibilities

opened up by the co-presence of literary, filmic and cultural texts. This was done by analysing the ways in which this palimpsestic work reinterpreted Bradbury's novel focussing on its themes and key characters, pointing out that some of the creative decisions of the adapter were motivated by his desire to stay true to Bradbury's ideas while pushing his own political agenda, which he did in a very personal manner.

Ramin Bahrani's *Fahrenheit 451* (2018) is certainly a film of our time in its reliance on visual spectacle, a contemporary aesthetics and its recontextualization of the story. With the exception of relatively brief and neutral pieces in online publications published around the time of its screening at the Cannes Festival on 12 May 2018, viewers and film critics alike have been less than enthusiastic about it, as indicated by the 5/10 rating on IMDb, a 31% Tomatometer [critics'] score and a 22% audience score on *rottentomatoes.com*, reviews only reinforcing the low scores. Professional reviewers such as John Lui, for instance, deplored the reduction of the dystopian novel to an "action flick" where the themes of censorship and conformity are insufficiently explored (2018), while BBC reviewer Nicholas Barber pointed to its lack of depth and insufficient exploration of the themes it introduces: "There is no time for nuance, or depth or anything else" (2018).

Oversimplifying the novel's themes and undermining the hopeful message of the novel, using a filmic discourse attuned to the sensibility and visual practices of young viewers, digital natives more used to scrolling than reading, and prioritising the visually spectacular, the film sacrificed precisely what Bradbury feared visual media would eventually destroy: the complexity of discourse and of the philosophical message. This palimpsest may be vibrant, colourful and contemporary, but one cannot help but wonder if the film is simply not strong enough to generate a meaningful conversation about the course humanity is already taking in the age of internet supreme and artificial intelligence, topics that this adaptation flashes before our eyes but feels unprepared to properly address with the depth and commitment a compelling dystopia should.

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TRANSMISSION AND AGREEMENT: READING AND THE CONTEMPORARY NORTHERN IRISH NOVEL

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ABSTRACT. ***Transmission and Agreement: Reading and the Contemporary Northern Irish Novel.*** This paper evaluates the capacity of the contemporary Northern Irish novel to act as an agent of transmission for a 'post-Troubles' readership, one distanced by a generation from the 1998 Good Friday Agreement that symbolised the partial end of sectarian violence. The critic Liam Harte suggests that "no part of modern Europe (if not the world) has greater claim than Northern Ireland to the mantle of most-narrativized region", but the transmissive function of fictional works in this context remain under-critiqued. Here, I assess the aspirations of novelistic narrative to cater for what Premesh Lalu has described, in the context of post-apartheid South African art forms, as 'psychic repair' (*Undoing Apartheid*, 2023). The essay engages the 2018 novel *Milkman*, by Northern Irish author Anna Burns, to ask how fictional narrative transmits the detail of the past across a generation first, in parallel to other literary and artistic genres, and second, in relation to an expanding archive of ongoing legal tribunals and government incentives directed towards the production of an 'official history' for Northern Ireland. Through attention to the self-conscious foregrounding of forensic reading practice by Burns and fellow writers, I show the necessary place of fictional recovery in the field of political and cultural memory.

Keywords: *Troubles, Northern Irish fiction, transmission, memory, generation*

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REZUMAT. ***Transmisie și acord: actul lecturii și romanul nord-irlandez contemporan***. Prezentul articol evaluează capacitatea romanului nord-irlandez contemporan de a acționa ca agent de transmisie pentru publicul cititor în perioada de după „Troubles" („Conflictul" din Irlanda de Nord), la distanță de o generație față de Acordul de la Belfast din 1998, care a reprezentat sfârșitul parțial al violenței sectare. Criticul Liam Harte arată că „nicio parte din Europa modernă (dacă nu chiar din lume) nu este mai îndreptățită decât Irlanda de Nord să primească titlul de cea mai narativizată regiune," dar funcția de transmitere deținută în acest context de operele de ficțiune rămâne insuficient studiată. Prezentul demers analizează aspirațiile narațiunii românești de a furniza ceea ce Premesh Lalu a descris, cu referire la formele artistice sud-africane din era post-apartheid, drept „reparații psihice" (*Undoing Apartheid*, 2023). Voi discuta romanul *Milkman* al autoarei nord-irlandeze Anna Burns, publicat în 2018, cu scopul de a afla cum transmite ficțiunea detaliile trecutului generației următoare, în primul rând împreună cu alte genuri artistice și literare și în al doilea rând în relație cu o arhivă din ce în ce mai cuprinzătoare creată de tribunalele legale încă active și de stimulentele guvernamentale menite să producă o „istorie oficială" a Irlandei de Nord. Examinând modurile autoreflexive în care Burns și alți scriitori aduc în prim-plan practicile de lectură investigative, demonstrez necesitatea actelor de recuperare ficțională pentru domeniul memoriei politice și culturale.

Cuvinte-cheie*: Conflictul nord-irlandez ('Troubles'), proza nord-irlandeză, transmisie, memorie, generație*

Introduction: genre, generation, and the novel in transmission

Recent critical discussion of Irish literary culture has concentrated attention on the question of how the experience of the Northern Ireland 'Troubles', the period of violence that lasted (roughly) from the civil rights protests of 1969 to the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, has been transmitted to a generation born after the violence itself receded. How does a contemporary society become familiar with the events and atrocities that took place in the 'remembered time' of the previous generation? And how is that experience not only transmitted but mediated? These questions align with broader incentives in Irish academic culture towards defining and critiquing processes of historical memory, a task re-animated by the recently concluded Irish government-sponsored 'decade of centenaries' initiative, a project that intensified scrutiny of commemorative practices, historiographic revisionism, and protocols surrounding the island's

cultural and political heritage.[2] Questions about the transmission of a 'Troubles memory' dovetail too with the strained frequencies of protracted legal processes—the official commissions, court tribunals, and judicial enquiries—through which the violence of the past is carried into the present and which continue to force a traumatic revisiting of that inheritance and its consequences.

The experience of Northern Ireland also brings into focus the shaping role of creative reconstructions and re-imaginings in the relaying of memories of the Troubles era, in painting, photography and film, or in poetry, prose fiction, memoir and theatre. And in this respect it prompts us to consider why certain artistic and literary genres rise to pre-eminence in carrying forward the knowledge of political violence. This question calls for speculation across a wider frame of reference than Ireland itself, inevitably, and spotlights the creative turn of international cultures in comparable conditions of 'aftermath'. One thinks here of Romania post-1989, for example, and the emergence of a vibrant 'new wave' cinema, spearheaded by writer-directors such as Christian Miungiu and Cristi Puiu and charting, often, the transitions following the end of the dictatorship of Nicolae Ceauşescu. Similarly, looking to contemporary South Africa, it is clear that genres associated with the kinetic arts, and in particular, with theatrical puppetry and stage biotechnics, have led the creative field of what Premesh Lalu terms the 'psychic repair' of apartheid trauma (Lalu 2023, 173). While cultural production as a whole may be stimulated by violent social disturbance, some art forms seem to grip harder than others on the material patterns of transmission.

The lived history of the Northern Ireland Troubles has been carried across to a new generation through diverse creative routes and genres. Though never simply determined by context, literature, drama, and the visual arts have all navigated the fall-out of political events, producing the distinctive haunted aesthetic or 'spectral' culture described by Declan Long in defining the artistic imagination of a Troubles aftermath (Long 2017, 4).[3] The role played by different genres in this evolution has fluctuated: public attention was drawn in the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s to the poetry of Seamus Heaney, Michael Longley and a circle of Ulster poets; by the late 1980s and early 1990s the political theatre of the Field Day Company, reinforced by a persuasive and theoretically astute academic wing, emerged to dominate the articulation of

[2] For a valuable overview of the decade of centenaries process see Caoimhe Nic Dháibhéid, 2023. "Historians and the Decade of Centenaries in Modern Ireland," *Contemporary European History* 32, no. 1: 21–26. (https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777322000522.)

[3] Long's study remains one of the best accounts of the visual arts/politics interface in contemporary Northern Irish culture; for comparison with the parallel literary response see Caroline Magennis, 2021, *Northern Irish Writing after the Troubles*.

Northern Ireland's disturbed condition. Since the millennium, however, it is arguably the novel that has moved to the foreground in the self-conscious embodiment of a Troubles memory. This was not a given: prose fiction did not always command authority in Northern Ireland's cultural landscape and in Ireland generally the novel was frequently viewed as the poor relation to its companions in poetry and theatre. (Indeed, some Northern Irish novelists have even conducted a metafictional protest against 'higher-profile' literary genres, with comic novels such as Robert McLiam Wilson's *Eureka Street* (Secker 1996) and Kevin Smith's *Jammy Dodger* (Sandstone, 2012) including cameo satires of the 'Troubles poet' and 'Troubles playwright' in their plots.) But prose fiction now leads the contemporary creative field, taking pole position in what *Irish Times* literary editor Martin Doyle describes as a current 'golden age' of Northern Irish writing (Doyle 2024).

This claim for the novel's rise to prominence is on one level, simply quantitative, the product of increased publishing interest in Northern Irish writing as a saleable commodity. A still-expanding body of both commercial and 'literary' novels reinforces Liam Harte's suggestion that "no part of modern Europe (if not the world) has greater claim than Northern Ireland to the mantle of most-narrativized region" (Harte 2019). At another level, however, it is attributive, reflecting the fundamental 'close fit' of the realist novel to a Northern Irish political reality: its space for Bakhtinian *heteroglossia* and multiple or diverse viewpoints; its conventional drive towards harmonising narrative resolution; its long-standing service (defined and largely inaugurated by Walter Scott, of whom more below) as a form of historiography, whether of individuals or of nations. And arguably, the genre's capacity for the transmission of experience has bolstered a critical alignment, in recent Northern Irish literary culture, between the mnemonic impulses of novelistic narrative and the guided retrospection of the political peace process.

That alignment has become yet closer, I want to argue here, in the tacit alliance that suggests itself between creative literature in Northern Ireland and the landmark document that attempted to resolve the crisis, the Good Friday Agreement of 1998. Forged from a fraught process of multi-party talks and complex background diplomatic deals, the Belfast Agreement—usually known as the Good Friday Agreement—was itself the end result of a kind of novelistic narrative, full of twists and turns, and tense to its dramatic conclusion on 10 April 1998, when those cross-party delegates who remained present at the lengthy negotiations finally agreed to sign the accord. The text authorised by Northern Ireland's political and paramilitary representatives (and a large cast of diplomats and civil servants) was the product, essentially, of a creative process; of endless drafts and redrafts, forensic reading and rereading, imaginative will

and necessarily flexible interpretation. In this regard the document was a textual as much as a political triumph, and perhaps a kind of literary achievement in itself. In her survey of Irish literature and the peace process Marilyn Richtarik notes that the political columnist Fintan O'Toole observed at the time that the government representatives involved in the drafting were required "to act more like poets and novelists than like politicians: massaging fixed meanings so that they become supple and fluid; complicating the definitions of words so that they become open and ambiguous" (Richtarik 2023, 5). The Agreement emerged as a creative prose work that flexed to accommodate different voices in a kind of narrative holding pattern, nudging these towards a fragile compromise only just strong enough to suspend, for the most part, the ugly momentum of Northern Ireland's sectarian conflict.

Agreement and 'dissensus': reading Anna Burns' *Milkman*

While some individual novels have addressed the Good Friday Agreement directly—Colum McCann's *Transatlantic* (Bloomsbury, 2013), for example, relates the events of Easter 1998 from the imagined perspective of US special envoy to Northern Ireland, Senator George Mitchell—the relation is best seen in a looser contingency. In the context of transmission outlined above, fiction might be seen as a conduit for the emotional and behavioural legacies that run in parallel to the difficult political legacies filtered by the mechanisms of the Agreement. In this respect the novel can be seen as mimetic of 'agreement' itself, its narrative form driven by the momentum of proposition, challenge, revision and attempted resolution that characterises political negotiation and the attempt to find consensus, or to reintegrate individual voices in a communal chorus.

Writing on Northern Irish fiction Fiona McCann engages the terms of Jacques Rancière's *Dissensus* (2010) to argue for the capacity of the Northern Irish novel, which she reads through writers such as Glenn Patterson, Jan Carson, and Anna Burns, to facilitate what Rancière terms '*le partage du sensible*'—the recognised distribution of sensibilities in the interests of forging consensus—and at the same time to register 'dissensus'; that disturbance caused in society "by the inscription of a part of those who have no part". The gloss is particularly useful in identifying that the constructive momentum of human interaction necessarily allows for agreements to consist of both understanding and, simultaneously, the failure or refusal to understand. The creative tension that emerges in between has driven varied aesthetic responses and helped shape the contemporary novel in its rendering of a still-ruffled social landscape. As McCann continues: "In some cases, this discourse serves a conservative agenda of consensus at all costs; in others, it supports a more radical agenda of dissensus

in which the uncomfortable questions (and not always those we might expect) are enshrined as central to narrative aesthetics" (McCann 2022, 551). McCann's insightful reading not only nuances a novel-writing process that replicates the fraught tactics of the 1998 political negotiation but also recalls the sardonic terms in which the Good Friday Agreement, with its hinterland of collapsed deals, breakdowns, stalemates and walk-outs, was frequently presented in popular account as 'an agreement to disagree'.

Reading communities: the peace process and *Milkman*

In the dovetailing of peace process and narrative protocol, the rationale for the novel's pre-eminence in the creative transmission of Northern Irish experience gains weight. I want to develop this approach to the question of transmission by exploring one of the most lauded Northern Irish novels of recent years, *Milkman* (Faber, 2018), by Anna Burns. This novel assembled many *pro forma* elements of Troubles-set realism: a visceral scenery of sectarian and (para)military atrocity, a traumatised community in a closely policed district of Belfast, and an atmosphere characterised by impending threat and the constant presence of different forms of surveillance, both political and sexual. However it is largely the distinctive narrative style of the book that has attracted critical distinction since its publication.[4] Related in the first-person by the anonymous 'middle sister' of a Belfast family, and in a stream-of-consciousness impressionism that initially challenged many readers, *Milkman* appeared to break new ground, stylistically, and to demand a mode of forensic reading that set the novel itself in parallel with the interpretative and quasi-legalistic protocols of the peace process and the guided historical retrospectives of a post-Good Friday Agreement Northern Irish culture.

This positioning can be read into the surface styling of the novel as much as its narrative format: *Milkman* is literally a book to be judged by its cover. The dustjacket image chosen for the UK and European publication of the work is a stock photograph of a sunset-silhouetted figure standing on the southern shore of Belfast Lough and looking back across the water towards the city itself (two figures appear in photographer Patrick Cullen's original shot but for *Milkman* one has been removed, presumably to signal the existential isolation of the unnamed protagonist of the story). Following Burns' winning of the Man-Booker Prize for fiction and the 25th International Dublin Literary Award, the striated lines of sunset orange and rose blazed across bookshops and bookshelves as the novel

[4] For recent overview of *Milkman's* narrative style in the context of postmodernism see Paige Reynolds. 2023. *Modernism in Irish Women's Contemporary Writing: The Stubborn Mode*, 165-194.

gained both popular and academic attention. The image ties in with internal textual detail; specifically, the narrative's motif observations of the sunset sky, when properly apprehended, revealing itself stranded multicolour:

> As for this sky it was now a mix of pink and lemon with a glow of mauve behind it. It had changed colours during our short trip along the corridor and before our eyes was changing colours yet. An emerging gold above the mauve was moving towards a slip of silver, with a different mauve in the corner drifting in from the side. Then there was further pinking. Then more lilac (Burns 2018, 73).

The recognition supplies an accessible metaphor for the necessity of close attention, to seeing how things really are, and for accepting at the same time the multiplicity and diversity of viewpoints, admitting to the impossibility of resolving the plural in the terms of the singular.

In terms of external reference however, the dustjacket image chosen for *Milkman* subliminally recalls another famous sunset and silhouette photograph—that used for the cover of the UK government's public information booklet that presented the terms of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement to the voting citizens of Northern Ireland. The A4-size booklet, which was distributed to every household, laid out the specifics of the Agreement's proposals for democratic power sharing, for policing, and (in the most contentious area of suggested legislation) the early release of convicted prisoners sentenced because of Troubles-related crimes. Its full-colour cover page presented the silhouette of a nuclear family—mother, father, and two children—looking towards a flaming orange and pink sunset sky, with the headline 'The Agreement' presented in block capitals as if a book title, and the words 'It's your decision' below. On its publication this cover image was widely satirised and parodied, with jokes prompted not least by the misfit of a sun-blushed horizon with the reality of Northern Ireland's perennially overcast and rainy skies. Nonetheless the image became iconic. The brochure was placed in all public institutions and its defining sunset image enlarged for a major television and poster public information campaign. It has since been reproduced regularly in school textbooks covering the history of the Good Friday Agreement, and it featured again recently in the concluding episode of the Channel 4 television comedy drama *Derry Girls*, with the posters and brochures depicting the sunset image forming a visual hinterland to the story of a young generation preparing to vote on whether to accept the terms of the accord.

This visual connection between *Milkman* and the Good Friday Agreement sets certain aspects of the novel in relief. Examining the reception of Burns' novel, Clare Hutton suggests that the atmospheric cover photograph—which, Hutton confirms, Burns herself approved—is a strategic means of locating the work as a definitively *Belfast* fiction and that "for those who recognise this landscape, the

paratextual detail of this image has the effect of specifying and confirming the setting at an early stage in the reading process" (Hutton 2019, 362). I would elaborate here that the composition of the image is also crucial in defining *Milkman* as a *historical* fiction. The positioning of the figure looking back from a distance towards the city engages a spatial dimension to stand in for a temporal axis, signalling the importance of this work as an account of times past; an act of memory governed and controlled by cautious retrospective. Again, the outer signal is supported by internal textual detail: while several of the events and atrocities described in *Milkman* speak to the circumstances of the late 1970s—some of the worst years of sectarian violence in Northern Ireland—the recounting of this era takes place in more recent time, with the narrator referring to writing down her thoughts 'twenty years later' (Burns 2018, 6). In thus fixing the narration at mid-to-late 1990s, this minor detail allows the inscription of the protagonist's story to be aligned not only with the violence that occurred two decades earlier but the with subsequent processes of its transmission and attempted resolution, in the protocols of the peace process, and even perhaps with the year—1998—of the Belfast Agreement itself.

Burns' narrative diligence in this speaks to the broader theme of transmission, underlining the value not only of record but of distanced reflection in the response to, and understanding of, 'what happened'. In this she approaches a core aspect of the classic historical novel as defined by Lukács; that it is prompted by a historic frame-shift from individual to social, and concurrently by the fracturing of a civilian peacetime with the disruptions of large-scale violence and war. In a less scrupulous writer this might be coincidental but with Burns, the historical perspectivism is made explicit by the novel's prefatory allusion to Walter Scott. The first literary work (of many) which the narrator-protagonist reads in the course of *Milkman* is *Ivanhoe*, Scott's 1819 historical novel about a knight returned from the crusades to then battle at home in England for the hand of his beloved and his reintegration in society. As with *Milkman* itself, plot is less significant here than genre: *Ivanhoe* is one of the *Waverley* novels and therefore implicitly gestures to Scott's tradition-defining historical method, with *Milkman*'s 'twenty years later' perhaps a subtle echo of the deictic title of Scott's 1814 account of the Jacobite rebellion: '*Waverley*—or—'tis sixty years since'. The choice of internal signal is well considered, harnessing Scott's legacy for the historical novel genre to guide the reader towards an understanding of where, and how, the *Milkman* narrative is positioned first in relation to the Troubles themselves and secondly, to the manoeuvres that led to their cessation.

Bringing further definition to this alignment requires attention to the protocols of *reading* in this landscape. Again, Scott offers a model here in his practice of prefatory instruction to his anticipated readers on the decoding,

interpretation and reception of the ensuing narrative. Likewise, Burns addresses the reading process directly and immediately in *Milkman*, in effect as a kind of prefatory declaration of interest. Before we know anything else about the novel's protagonist we learn that that she is a reader, and a peripatetic one: "Often I would walk along reading books" (Burns 2018, 3). This is less the pose of the *flâneur*, more a pre-emptive strike against potential aggression on the streets. In her valuable discussion of *Milkman* in the context of totalitarian resistance Lyndsey Stonebridge has identified 'middle sister' as a figure of eighteenth-century female enlightenment whose reading habit serves as an act of defiance against control (Stonebridge 2023). Indeed the physical form of the book becomes a *literal* barrier against masculine aggression: the narrator recalls how her historical novel provided a defensive block against the sexual predator (the eponymous 'Milkman') who attempts to coerce her to get into his car:

> I did not want to get in the car with this man. I did not know how to say so though, as he wasn't being rude and he knew my family for he'd named the credentials, the male people of my family, and I couldn't be rude because he wasn't being rude. So I hesitated, or froze, which was rude. 'I'm walking,', I said. 'I'm reading,', and I held up the book, as if *Ivanhoe* should explain the walking, and the necessity for walking. 'You can read in the car,' he said, and I don't remember how I responded to that. Eventually he laughed and said, 'No bother. Don't you be worryin'. Enjoy your book there,' and he closed the car door and drove away (Burns 2018, 3-4).

Reading, then, is given priority and indeed urgency in *Milkman,* with emphasis placed in particular on the reading of novels. In extended narrative form the world can be given shape and meaning, and, if necessary, kept at arm's length.

In her 'walking while reading' protagonist Burns hails the act of reading as deliberative and instructive; active rather than passive; ultimately protective. She foregrounds reading as a critical practice in the ordering of a society and the comprehension of its condition. Moreover the reading process provides the bedrock for effective decision making. *Milkman*'s narrator is a careful reader: we see her in the process not only of absorbing a series of literary works but attempting to analyse and interpret them. Again, the content of these works, which are listed frequently—*The Brothers Karamazov*, *Tristram Shandy*, *Vanity Fair* or *Madame Bovary*—is less significant than the dramatised patterns of interpretation, misinterpretation, understanding and failure to understand; the connection is made from peripatetic pastime to intellectual judgement: "I liked walking—walking and reading, walking and thinking" (Burns 2018, 17). That 'middle sister' will in turn 'read' the traces of violence on her community confirms her as the internal vehicle for the representation of these events and registers an act of faith

in text as a reliable form of transmission. Perhaps unknowingly here, Burns sounds a further echo of the Good Friday Agreement public information booklet referenced above, which gave on its cover the specific instruction: "This is your document: read it carefully". Knowingly, meanwhile, she illustrates the place and importance of attentive, disciplined, purposeful reading in the context of communal and political understanding.

The directive towards 'careful reading' points finally to a distinctive narrative feature of *Milkman*: anonymity. If the cover of the novel seems to promise a specificity of place, Burns undercuts this with deliberate tactics of namelessness and placelessness. While we know that the novel is set in Belfast we are given very few geographical co-ordinates or topographical details, and the narrator-protagonist 'middle sister' remains, like almost all the characters, unnamed to the reader, though references are made to the use of her given name by her community. The de-naming tactic enforces the radical uncertainty with which the reader must navigate the text, with characters reduced to their relative functions only ('eldest sister'; 'brother-in-law'; 'longest friend'). Hutton comments on the twinned effects of this strategy as a means of allowing the setting to be read as universal and yet remain heavily localised. Burns, she suggests, operates a sustained defamiliarisation by 'making strange' what is to many readers, a familiar Northern Irish landscape, while at the same time allowing the terms of the story to apply beyond the Troubles context. "Neither of these readings excludes the other," she argues, "and the lexicon of the work has a role to play here, with the narrator's tactic of 'not naming' suggesting the work's universality, and the Hiberno-English of phrases such as 'over the water' and 'beyond the pale' seeming to insist on its cultural specificity" (Hutton 2019, 361). Careful reading, in this regard, must allow for both local and universal interpretations to exist simultaneously.

The anonymising of both persons and place serves this dual function then, but additionally—and once again in respect of the novel's provenance in a post-Agreement culture—the strategy can also be understood to refer to and mimic the management of Northern Ireland's epoch of violence and its legacy. Burns describes a society embedded in practices of surveillance and also in the exercise of silencing, censorship, and the cautious policing of information. From the opening line of the novel with its place-holding reference to 'Somebody McSomebody', the text suggestively conveys a Troubles-era culture in which anonymity had a necessary protective function within a fraught civic protocol. During the worst years of the Troubles the police authorities advertised a 'confidential telephone number' for individuals to pass on information without identifying themselves by name; anonymous bomb warnings were telephoned to media offices with the use of a confirmation codename; and paramilitaries

carried out punishment beatings—including the brutal practice of kneecapping, a disabling bullet through the leg—on those suspected of being informers or 'touts'. Northern Ireland's citizens were bound by the edict aptly summarised by Seamus Heaney in observing 'the famous Northern reticence' in a 1975 poem:

> …the tight gag of place
> And times: yes, yes. Of the 'wee six' I sing
> Where to be saved you only must save face
> And whatever you say, you say nothing (Heaney 1975, 59).

In conveying the anonymising protocols of twenty-five years ago to the contemporary reader, *Milkman* transmits the atmosphere of Belfast during the Troubles to vivid effect: 'all that repertoire of gossip, secrecy, and communal policing, plus the rules of what was allowed and not allowed that featured heavily in this place' (Burns 2018, 59).

A distinction can be drawn however between 'anonymity' and a coded, protective *pseudonymity*. In Burns' novel the latter is more frequently the convention or practice: the eponymous 'Milkman' is the moniker for a known but never named paramilitary, and characters are all distinguished by relative coded names. The long chronological time frame of the novel is important here, with Burns reflecting not only the Troubles era itself but the protracted post-Agreement climate against which the work was drafted. In maintaining pseudonymous characterisation in the relation of events 'all those years ago', *Milkman*'s narrator offers lateral allusions to the continuation of an anonymising and pseudonymising protocol, post Agreement, through legacy enquiries and tribunals. Of these, the most notorious was the Saville Inquiry, established in 1998 to investigate the events of Bloody Sunday in Derry, January 1972, when 13 unarmed civilians were shot dead by the British Army Parachute Regiment. The Inquiry did not produce its findings until 2010, delayed not only by the vast scale of documentary and forensic reading which it required, but also—crucially—by legal wrangling over the permission given to those soldiers implicated to remain anonymous, and to give their evidence under labels of convenience or alphabetical pseudonyms: 'Solder A', or 'Solder B', and so on. The Saville Inquiry illustrates perfectly the nature of the 'tribunal culture' through which Northern Ireland's most violent epoch has been transmitted, managed, and 'read' across time, while setting the pattern for the legalistic cautions and restraints that *Milkman*'s narrative deftly imitates.[5]

[5] On the Saville Inquiry, which ran 1998- 2010, see Eamonn McCann, ed, 2005, *The Bloody Sunday Inquiry*, particularly chapter 6: 'Soldiers'. Tom Herron and John Lynch's 2007 study *After Bloody Sunday: Ethics, Representation, Justice* offers a useful account of the portrayal of Bloody Sunday in various forms of arts, including literature.

Belfast *noir* and the role of forensic reading

The theme of 'careful reading' in the case of a Northern Irish history speaks to broader intellectual interests in the recovery or transmission of the past. To turn to this briefly, I want to place *Milkman* beside a body of writing that might be described as 'forensic' in its treatment of the Troubles. I take the term 'forensic' here with acknowledgement first, of the Forensic Architecture movement and its influence on a creative arts initiative to assemble narratives from 'traces'—including sensory, emotional and aesthetic traces—of the recent past. In their 2021 study *Investigative Aesthetics*, Matthew Fuller and Eyal Weizman speak to a forensic accounting that looks to artistic forms in order to read against the grain of media and history texts, and to propose instead "a counter-reading, a counter narrative that gathers all these different kinds of trace, and is attuned to their erasure" (Fuller 2021, 2). Their focus raises the primary question of what we consider to be 'evidence' in understanding the past and gestures towards a field of research that looks beyond objective or factual detail to secure memories of Northern Ireland's experience.[6]

The second sense of 'forensic' here relates to the idea that *Milkman* can be considered not only a historical novel but a detective thriller. The backdrop presence of the thriller genre heightens Burns' practices of anonymity, speculation, ambiguity and 'evidential' narration; at the same time it aligns her text with a large array of detective novels and thrillers that have come to constitute the sub-genre of 'Belfast *noir*', as showcased by writers such as Anthony Quinn, Stuart Neville and Eoin McNamee. This category, comprehensively outlined in Aaron Kelly's pioneering 2005 study *The Thriller and Northern Ireland since 1969*, has proliferated since the end of the Troubles in an arc that speaks to commercial opportunity, admittedly, but also to the compelling post-Agreement momentum of narrative dissensus, discovery, retribution and resolution. The flourishing of Belfast *noir* since 1998 reflects a renewed commitment to narrative forms invested in the exposure of what is hidden, the recovery of bodies, the tracking down of the criminal, the sentencing of the guilty and the symbolic restoration of social and civic order. In many such novels (as in a long history of British and North American wartime detective fiction) the single body—murdered or mutilated or disappeared—becomes allegorical for the traumatised body politic.

[6] See for example, the Leverhulme-funded project *Sensing the Troubles* (PI Roisin Higgins, 2021-2), which recovers witness experience of the violence through sensory record: https://sensingthetroubles.com. In this vein see also a valuable discussion by Maria-Adriana Deiana, 2022, "'Feel the Trouble(s) around you:' Sensing the Everyday Politics of Conflict through Anna Burns' *Milkman'*, *Political Anthropological Research on International Social Sciences* 3, no.1, 29-39.

In this regard the practice of careful or forensic reading, intrinsic to the detective genre, links *Milkman* to other works that transmit the material of the Northern Ireland Troubles through the long-term processes of its decoding and deciphering. This is the strategic directive of Eoin McNamee's *Blue Trilogy*, for example, a set of three linked novels in which crimes committed decades apart are connected through the drawn-out processes of their respective criminal investigations. The middle item in the series, *Orchid Blue* (Faber, 2010), reconstructs the real-life murder of a young woman for which a local man, Robert McGladdery, is arrested. Desperate to improve his chances of a fair court hearing, Robert works on his own defence while in prison, reading the assembled paperwork in penetrating detail:

> Legal documents were served on him every day, the story of his life opening into new dimensions. Robert felt as if he had access to whole new languages. His solicitor brought him writs and affidavits, laid them out on the bare prison table. You thought of them as being written on archaic materials, parchments and vellums, the scribed wisdom of ages. Robert loved the sound of the Latin terms in his mouth. *Habeas Corpus*. He hadn't thought the bare events of that night could be told in such a way… He read the documents late into the night. The warders who checked on him saw him as scholarly, hunched over (McNamee 2010, 137).

For NcNamee, whose writing practice is consistently legalistic in method and indebted to 'true-crime' antecedents, the novel approaches the territory of criminal forensics, with Northern Ireland's experience carried forward not in grand narratives but through discrete and small telling traces, the past read and interpreted as carefully as if it were laid out in a courtroom document. Again, this emphasis self-consciously aligns the novel genre here with a post-Agreement paper trail in which the legacies of a violent past must be 'read carefully', with the huge responsibility this implies. Across the *Blue Trilogy* as a whole, the casting of procedural functionaries—solicitors, journalists, detectives—elevates a cohort of professional 'interpreters' over and above their gunman counterparts, the mundane displacing the sensational, while the text endorses the essential protocols of careful reading in the painstaking restoration of the civic order.

Fact, fiction, and the problem of 'official history'

This discussion suggested earlier that the Northern Irish novel has had to 'negotiate' a territorial claim to the material of the Troubles with other creative genres such as poetry and theatre. Its most important negotiation,

however, has been not with other literary forms but with the concept of an 'official' history. The problem of how the experience of violence in the past can be appropriately contained in some kind of formal narrative in the present day remains intractable, despite the emergence of several academic accounts and treatments. There is a sense that the complex and conflicting nature of that experience defies any singular narrativization. Not surprisingly, this question has been tracked from public debate into the pages of the novel itself, with David Park's novel *The Truth Commissioner* (Bloomsbury, 2008) exploring late 1990s South African parallels in imagining, through the experiences of four diverse participants, the difficult fate of a Northern Irish attempt to establish a version of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

This is not to suggest that individual stories of the Troubles period remain untold. The varied accounts of 'what happened' during three decades of intense political and sectarian violence have worked through different routes and at different levels, from community-based 'story telling' in organisations such as *An Crann*, established in 1994, to academic initiatives such as the University of Ulster's digital archive, 'Accounts of the Conflict'.[7] These ventures, often funded through government or philanthropic sources, are dedicated to the recovery of experiences endured by those who suffered or witnessed Troubles-era atrocities. They rely—rightly—on the instincts of oral history or so-called 'history-from-below' methodologies in order to handle what is often traumatic material in appropriate form and in safe contexts detached from political directives of any kind.

Since the Good Friday Agreement, however, pressure has steadily intensified at governmental level for the production of a centralised 'official' history of the Troubles. Among these incentives, the Stormont House Agreement (December 2014), which was a UK government policy paper directed primarily to the orchestration of fiscal, welfare and legislative arrangements under the new Northern Ireland Assembly, included a section entitled 'The Past'. Here, terms were laid out for the management of the many complex legacies of the Troubles, such as provision for acknowledging the suffering of victims and survivors and the pursuit of justice for still-unsettled murders and assaults. Further to this, Article 22 of the Stormont House agenda proposed the establishment of an Oral History Archive 'to provide a central place for people

[7] Founded in 1994, *An Crann* (the Irish word for 'tree') was a charitable organisation providing a forum for ordinary citizens to relate their experiences of the Troubles in story-form. The organisation produced a collection of these narratives, *Bear in Mind: Stories of the Troubles* (Belfast: Lagan Press/An Crann, 2000). Further details of initiatives for the narrative recovery of Troubles experience are archived at the INCORE International Conflict Resolution Institute, University of Ulster https://www.ulster.ac.uk/incore.

from all backgrounds (and from throughout the UK and Ireland) to share experiences and narratives related to the Troubles.' It added that an academic research project was to be established as part of the Archive, 'to produce a factual historical timeline and statistical analysis of the Troubles' within a 12-month period.[8]

University-based historians were not surprisingly, deeply uncertain about this directive, with leading Irish historian Ian McBride pointing out that his fellow academics would "cringe at the suggestion that their role involves producing a 'timeline'" (McBride 2018, 220). His sentiments reflect an understandable concern that any move towards a comprehensive and official or government-sponsored macro-view of Northern Ireland's experience is premature while the legacies of violence remain 'live' in the tribunals, enquiries, justice campaigns and compensation cases that form a prominent discourse in Northern Irish life. Is an 'authorised' historiography of the Troubles feasible, even in the longer term? Against the backdrop of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement the arguments for and against the evolution of an 'official history' of the Troubles have rumbled on, mired in the difficulty of sectioning off a genuinely independent academic task from the ongoing legislative management of a violent inheritance.

In this context, the adjacent work of Northern Ireland's fiction writers comes into view once more. With an official history held in abeyance, it seems timely to ask how novels such as *Milkman* can supply, in the interim, default versions of a truth commission or proxy histories of the conflict. The idea raises a broad epistemological (and generic) complexity but is worth considering briefly here, in conclusion, not least in order to justify the *retrospective* insistence of contemporary writing that some commentators have seen as a failing. Writing in Northern Ireland's *Fortnight Magazine* in 2021, the author Rosemary Jenkinson lamented the apparent unwillingness of Northern Irish writers to move forward from the material of the conflict in their subject matter. "Why is Northern Irish literature feasting on the dead corpse of the Troubles more than ever?" she asked, continuing "We writers seem to have no more ability than our politicians to move on from the past […]" (Jenkinson 2021). Her question contains its own answer in the necessary positioning of writers alongside their political counterparts. The alignment of the two roles exposes not the indulgence of literature in some kind of trauma-nostalgia, but the still urgent responsibility of the novelist to attend to the transmission of experiences which elude compromised political narratives or vexed official histories, and which might otherwise be lost from account.

[8] Full text at https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-stormont-house-agreement.

Conclusion

In his poem "Lunch with Pancho Villa", poet Paul Muldoon riffs—no doubt with his own Northern Irish homeland in mind—on the impossibility, and yet simultaneous possibility, of writing an official history of a revolution:

> 'When are you going to tell the truth?'
> For there's no such book, so far as I know,
> As *How it Happened Here,*
> Though there may be. There may (Muldoon 1977, 12-3)

Can the Northern Irish novel provide such a book? What is suggested by Anna Burns in *Milkman* is not that fiction can somehow solidify the slipperiness of historical fact but that it can propose an ethics of reading—in the terms of forensic detail discussed above—that fits the still uneasy conditions of the post-Good Friday Agreement era. The novel remains the form most "adequate to our predicament", to adapt Heaney's words once more, even if *Milkman* itself displays a society riven with the fractures that show the Agreement to be desperately fragile (Heaney 1980, 56). In *Milkman*, the internal reader—the unnamed protagonist—hails the external reader in a series of subliminal prompts towards the detail of Belfast's Troubles landscape and asks us to 'read carefully' before making judgement. Here Anna Burns shares the defining claim of many post-Good Friday Agreement novels to a contingent relationship with the rippled trails of consensus and dissensus that have contextualised Northern Ireland's public arena since 1998. Through its forensic acuity the novel, with its full repertoire of metaphoric devices, retrospective capacity, and intertextual signalling, transmits to the current generation the essence of that volatile, cross-party compromise, based on 'careful reading' and necessarily flexible interpretations, that brought the Troubles nearer to a point of resolution.

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TRANSMISSION, IMITATION AND THE QUESTION OF EARLY AMERICAN LITERARY NATIONALISM

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ABSTRACT. ***Transmission, Imitation and the Question of Early American Literary Nationalism***. This article seeks to revalue early American literature and concurrently to clarify to what extent one can talk about American literary nationalism during the formative post-revolutionary years. Although many anthologies of American literature as well as critical studies devoted to American literary historiography have underlined the national unity of American literature as a whole, they have consistently ignored this particular period in which the transmission and imitation of English models and their alteration or transformation by American booksellers and publishers, corroborated with generic instability and the absence of central publishing hubs, fail to attest to a homogenous—and, implicitly, wholly national—development of literature. In doing so, special attention will be paid to the early American novel as a site for probing the ideals of the early Republic, for appraising its historical accomplishments, and, ultimately, for lambasting its democratic failure. At the same time, despite the misleading name of "novel" attributed to various literary genres, and its hybrid form, the early American

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novel was instrumental in reflecting transnational concerns and cultural exchanges that were highly suggestive of the unstable cultural identity of America at the time.

Keywords: *the early American Republic, transatlantic exchanges, English imitations, generic instability, common property, the early American novel*

REZUMAT. ***Transmitere, imitaţie şi problema naţionalismului literar american timpuriu***. Prezentul articol îşi propune să reevalueze literatura americană timpurie şi, totodată, să clarifice în ce măsură putem vorbi despre un naţionalism literar american în anii formatori postrevoluţionari. Deşi multe antologii de literatură americană, precum şi studii critice dedicate istoriografiei literare americane au scos în evidenţă unitatea naţională a literaturii americane în ansamblul ei, ele au ignorat în mod consecvent această perioadă în care transmiterea şi imitarea modelelor engleze şi alterarea sau transformarea lor de către vânzătorii de carte şi editorii americani, coroborate cu instabilitatea genurilor literare şi absenţa unor reţele principale de edituri nu atestă o dezvoltare omogenă şi, implicit, eminamente naţională a literaturii. Astfel, vom acorda o atenţie specială romanului american timpuriu ca spaţiu de validare a idealurilor Republicii timpurii, al evaluării realizărilor istorice ale acesteia şi, în esenţă, al criticilor legate de eşecul democraţiei. Totodată, în ciuda denumirii înşelătoare de „roman" atribuită diverselor genuri literare şi a formei sale hibride, romanul american timpuriu a jucat un rol crucial în reflectarea problemelor şi schimburilor culturale transnaţionale, ambele extrem de sugestive pentru instabilitatea identităţii culturale americane a acelor timpuri.

Cuvinte cheie: *Republica americană timpurie, schimburi transatlantice, imitaţii ale modelelor engleze, instabilitate generică, proprietate comună, romanul american timpuriu*

In an essay entitled "It would baffle the strength of a giant," James Fenimore Cooper deplores the ailing condition of American literature provoked by a broad swathe of English reprints that prevent American readers from exercising their literary taste:

> A capital American publisher has assured me that there are not a dozen writers in this country whose works he should feel confidence in publishing at all, while he reprints hundreds of English books without the least hesitation [...] The general taste of the reading world in this country is better than that of England. The fact is both proved and explained by the circumstances that thousands of works that are printed and read in the mother country are not printed and read here. (Cooper 1961, 3)

Concurrently, and paradoxically, he foregrounds the want of compelling materials that ought to become the subject matter of American literature, history and moral philosophy, acknowledging that the United States is still a nation in the making:

> The second obstacle against which American literature has to contend is in the poverty of materials. There is scarcely an ore which contributes to the wealth of the author that is found here in veins as rich as in Europe […] There are no annals for the historian; no follies (beyond the most vulgar and commonplace) for the satirist; no manners for the dramatist; no obscure fictions for the writer of romance; no gross and hardy offenses against decorum for the moralist; nor any of the rich artificial auxiliaries of poetry. (Cooper 1961, 4)

Although such remarks emphasize the urge to create an imaginative literature in the New World, they are not devoid of irony, since Cooper, one of the first well-established American novelists, was highly conversant with Walter Scott's novels and penned most of his novels while he was living in England. He was, therefore, deeply engaged in a "network of exchanges" (Tennenhouse 2006, 16), as was the early American novel which, before being neglected by many anthologies of American literature and contemporary American literary historiography, had already been completely dismissed by the American Romantic authors of the 1830s and 1840s, with Ralph Waldo Emerson as their main critical mouthpiece. Michael T. Gilmore (1994, 541) has convincingly shown that "until the 1980s, academic criticism accepted and elaborated this pejorative assessment of postrevolutionary culture" on the grounds that it lacked originality and individual expression, relied on English imitations and had a strikingly pedagogical function. This unanimous consent "concurred with the Emersonian judgment that *no* literary art existed in this country until the awakening of the Romantic spirit" (Gilmore 1994, 541; original emphasis).

In contemporary critical terms, Jeffrey Rubin-Dorsky (1991, 9) has vehemently denied the existence of the early American novel, arguing that

> the America in the term 'the American novel' is a place, with hard outlines and a traceable landscape, but it is also, as it has been from the outset, an idea—often an ideal—imagined first in the minds of enlightened European thinkers, reimagined, and then shaped and configured, in the consciousness of Thomas Jefferson and the other founders of the Republic.

Notwithstanding the veracity of his statement, Rubin-Dorsky fails to consider the bidirectional exchange of cultural goods, insisting instead on America's sheer dependence on England, on the absence of any support for arts and

letters—"the American Dr Johnson did not exist" (Rubin-Dorsky 1991, 12)—which was also accountable for the New World's authors lack of experimentation and authenticity and, finally, on the instability of the novelistic genre that echoed the unsettled character of society. For Rubin-Dorsky (1991, 14), novels are neither "shapers of public opinion," nor "agents of the liberation of the democratic mind" because the socio-political background of the time was prone to ever-increasing factionalism fuelled by the rise of the press that was likely to be conducive to the waning of civil and religious authority or oppressive laws like the Alien and Sedition Acts passed in 1798, when America was preparing for war against France. The *status quo* of the postrevolutionary years allowed the English-American clergyman John Bristed (1818, 310) to observe that literature was far from being a financially satisfactory occupation in a country where "the means of subsistence are so abundant and so easy of attainment, and the sources of personal revenue so numerous, that nearly all the active talent in the nation is employed in prosecuting some commercial, or agricultural, or professional pursuit." Consequently, in such a culturally harsh climate, it was impossible for Americans to reject the English legacy only to proclaim their full independence and to refuse to accept that the British literary models were superior to their own. As Stephen Shapiro (2008, 99) has shown, "the political independence of the United States from Great Britain did not translate into actual increased autonomy due to the uninterrupted continuation of its economic subordination." Although my argument is informed by Henri Petter's suggestion that "what the new country inherited or borrowed from the older one could make up for the lack in America of features considered essential to a national literature," (1971, 10) in what follows I claim that such features were actually established and reinforced by transnational cultural exchanges and mobility of various authors on both sides of the Atlantic. Ultimately, it is this two-way circulation of books and authors that testifies to the heterogeneity of American culture and society whose national identity was still a desideratum.

In their seminal study *Transatlantic Literary Studies, 1660-1830*, Eve Tavor Bannet and Susan Manning (2011, 1) have highlighted the transnational significance of cultural exchanges, arguing that "transatlantic relations were so central to Britons' and Americans' everyday lives, literary imaginations, and histories, and that so much primary recovery work of sources and contacts remains to be done." The myth of America had already been ingrained in people's mind in the seventeenth century, when the English Puritans were the first to set foot in the Promised Land, and continued to be represented and reconfigured by both British and American politicians. On the one hand, in the eighteenth century, Americans travelled to England to deal with trade, get an education or act as permanent envoys of the New Republic whereas slaves were

brought to England by American or West Indian owners. On the other hand, English missionaries, politicians, seamen, soldiers, actors and servants either visited or spent time in America where, after 1790, the new waves of immigrants, such as Germans, Dutch, Irish and Scotch-Irish, settled in. Apart from being connected "by the ocean and its ships" or "by the letter post" (Bannet and Manning 2011, 2), Britons and Americans were linked by a highly productive print culture that primarily consisted of a variety of English imported genres. However, some American writers published their work in London, as was the case of Cotton Mather's *Magnalia Christi Americana*. Also, while Royall Tyler's captivity tales, James Fenimore Cooper's works about the American frontier and Washington Irving's *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon* were successfully reprinted in England, British iconic literary figures such as Robert Burns and Walter Scott were successfully reprinted in America. Such exchanges reveal that the literary independence of the former American colonies "was not so much a severing of ties as the renegotiation of a relationship" (Bannet and Manning 2011, 3) upheld by other authors, such as Susannah Rowson, Charlotte Lennox, Edward Bancroft, Olaudah Equiano, Tobias Smollett or John Davis, to mention just a few, whose experience lived either across the Atlantic or in Britain was cast in the mould of histories of fact.

In spite of the huge variety of travelling genres, the early Republic's lack of a centralised book industry made the development of a national literature impossible. With few exceptions, i.e. New York, Boston and Philadelphia, the unequal dissemination of print materials led to the creation of regional, or "imagined" (Anderson, 1983), communities which imposed their local culture and history as allegedly national. James Russell Lowell (qtd. in Kennedy and Person 2014, 2) decries the poor book production conditions as follows:

> Our capital city [Washington], unlike London or Paris, is not a great central heart, from which life and vigor radiate to the extremities, but resembles more an isolated umbilicus, stuck down as near as may be to the centre of the land, and seeming rather to tell a legend of former usefulness than to serve any present need.

As "an isolated umbilicus," Washington is synecdochally the expression of an incoherent and culturally immature nation deprived of printing hubs and reputed literary and critical magazines and journals meant to form and cultivate the reader's taste in much the same manner as Joseph Addison's *The Spectator* did in England. Yet, such an unpropitious cultural context was a fertile ground for experimenting with both fictional and non-fictional material, especially in what regards the later independent status of the American novel.

Similar to Bannet and Manning, J. Gerald Kennedy and Leland S. Person (2014, 3) write that "this provincialism paradoxically existed alongside a pervasive consciousness of transatlantic cultural currents and revolutionary events unfolding in Europe as well as elsewhere in the Americas." Undoubtedly, British literary models ruled supreme and were a consistent source of imitation in the early Republic, thus raising alarming questions not only about the advent of a national culture and literature, but also about an authentic literary tradition and literary language. Although in fierce competition with their British counterparts, American publishers were dependent on the reprinting of British or other European books for financial reasons at a time when there was no copyright law. Thus, publishers could popularize British authoritative writers without paying royalties, a fact which "placed American authors at some disadvantage in negotiating payments for original manuscripts" (Kennedy and Person 2014, 4). However, Bannet's reference to Robert Bell, a Scottish publisher and printer who moved to Philadelphia in 1768, enables her to question the practice of piracy, arguing in favour of national appropriation or what Bell called "native fabrication of books," since the transatlantic stories consumed by American readers were not simple reproductions of British or other European originals but texts that were "re-presented, re-told, re-interpreted, re-applied, re-cycled and reused" (Bannet 2011, 3). Under these circumstances, such adulterated productions were relocated in a new cultural context in which they were adapted in the process of reprinting. Importantly enough, American publishers and booksellers, along with printer-editors, acted as writers, interpreters and translators of the text, in that they "left traces of their readings, and records of their re-applications of their readings, in the text or paratext" (Bannet 2011, 7). These typical eighteenth-century writing practices speak volumes of the way in which texts were reshaped not only in terms of content, but also in terms of language and genre, since their different versions, much like their variations caused by multiple retellings, were read by ordinary Americans from different regions at different times. Yet again, this circumstance shows how fragmented and un-national American literature was in the post-revolutionary years.

Whether rewritten, reinterpreted, abridged, serialized or reused in various textual or paratextual combinations, transatlantic texts were circumscribed to a wide array of genres whereby Britons and Americans were able to share their different social, historical, economic, ethnic, linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Ranging from tales of ordinary or poor people, migration, the perils of the ocean, captivity, war, dislocation and relocation to sermons, psalm books, travel memoirs, letter manuals, diaries and novels, the genres that circulated on both sides of the Atlantic attest to British readers' fascination with the transatlantic world, on the one hand, and to Americans' desire to be updated

on British best-sellers, on the other. The nation was as fluid as genres whose fixed conventions were altered not only by semantic and socio-linguistic aspects deeply rooted in history, but also by geography and the common beliefs held by a particular community. For instance, Willian Rufus Chetwood's *Voyages and Adventures of Captain Boyle*, published in London in 1726, proves how the reception of texts changes over time and in various geographical regions. Intended as a response to Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, the work is a collection of travel stories that was transplanted on American soil in the 1790s and, most notably, was completely detached from Defoe's novel so as to emphasize Americans' contemporary concern with, and critique of, captivity in Barbary. Its relevance was endorsed by Royall Tyler's *The Algerine Captive* (1797), a novel reprinted in London that "was read by British reviewers as a far more politically radical novel than we are inclined to think it today" (Bannet 2011, 6). The American captivity tale—an avatar of the early English Barbary captivity fiction—morphed into the genre of captivity romance which the hybrid form of the novel incorporated in Britain and America alike. Charlotte Lennox's celebrated novel *The Female Quixote* (1752) zooms in on Arabella, the female heroine who comically puts to test the marital norms prescribed by French romances until she is cured by a doctor, yet not before their reflective dialogue allows her to understand the epistemological problems raised by the genre she quixotically imitates in her daily life. The same theme is tackled by the American female novelist Tabitha Gilman Tenney in her 1801 novel entitled *Female Quixotism: Exhibited in the Romantic Opinions and Extravagant Adventures of Dorcasina Sheldon*. Although Tenney uses the Cervantean mode of parody to highlight Dorcasina's misinterpretation of reality, she satirically denounces women's inferiority and the injustice of slavery under Thomas Jefferson's administration. The socio-political undertones in Tenney's book show that the early Republic's ideals are mere quixotic fictions distilled by the discourse of the novel whose novelty actually stems from "its self-reflective engagement with its own fictionality" (Schweighauser 2021, 734). Read in this light, *Female Quixotism* is highly indicative of the early American novel "as a rhetorical site for the mediation of contrasting positions" (Giles 2011, 26) fomented by the revolutionary years.

Drama was a means of actuating ideas and experiences both in the Old and the New World. British performances staged colonial stories with American and West Indian characters whereas British and Irish actors and managers brought plays to the New Republic. Analogous to literary texts, the message of certain plays was altered in America because "they were performed and read by colonial collegians, cited in newspapers, or used as pseudonyms by patriot writers" while some British plays were "adapted *in situ* by their British-born

managers or actors to accommodate the political culture or values of the American audiences" (Bannet and Manning 2011, 6). Last but not least, poetry in the early Republic—particularly the literary club founded at Yale known as the Connecticut Wits, a name echoing the Augustan Wits—advocated the nation's literary creativity and independence, excoriating at the same time the morally and politically corrupt Old World. Therefore, these cultural exchanges aimed at problematizing contemporary topical issues and facilitating the understanding of literary artefacts produced in a foreign culture—be it British or American—which, however, used English as a vernacular language. Concurrently, they unravel the dynamicity and heterogeneity of transnational cultural perspectives that were employed to question the identity of the early American nation. But the predilect genre able to successfully complete this task was the novel which, in the words of Cathy Davidson (1986, vii), "constituted a definition of America different from the official one that was being worked out after the end of the Revolutionary War."

Fenimore Cooper's critique of the New Republic's reliance on British reprints and the scarcity of its literary materials seems to be refuted by the miscellaneous subject matter of the texts that flowed back and forth across the Atlantic. His position was in line with the spirit of American Romanticism that militated for imagination, originality, private self, personal merit and literary independence from Britain, which determined other authors such as Emerson to declare that there had been no literature before and, by extension, that all these transatlantic narratives "fell out of favor less for aesthetic reasons, than because they fit so poorly into later nationalist master-narratives and reminded us of experiences that we preferred to forget" (Bannet 2011, 1). Cooper, like Emerson, were ardent supporters of the establishment of a genuine American literary tradition capable of reflecting the idea of nationhood. Seen in this context, this tradition had to be contingent upon artistic imagination rather than didactic, religious, moral or civic values. Notwithstanding such drastic revisionism, I suggest that the early American novel managed to project, portray, question and even criticize both the nation's character and its achievements and failures at a time of political and cultural unrest. Walter Scott, for example, became a model for those American writers who wished to make America's past, myths, symbols and identity construction as meaningful as were "the Puritan past, the Indian wars, the American Revolution, and the exploration of the West" that "inspired fictions of American struggle and self-discovery" (Kennedy and Person 2014, 4). In fact, the early American novel imaginatively scrutinized the ups and downs of exceptionalism, since "the rise of the American novel was inextricably tied to critical and political fixations on American difference from the Old World, or a set of distinctly 'American' social, political,

and literary codes" (Hanlon 2014, 154). However, until this nationalist drive came true once with the advent of Romanticism, the early novel had weighed heavily on all of its facets in an effort to provide an answer, incoherent as it was, to what a homogenous national identity really meant.

Published for the first time after the Revolution, novels were new in a young culture that was trying to define and shape itself. Unlike most of the early American novelists, Cooper "was fortunate enough to begin his career right at a time when the book industry was undergoing the dramatic alternations that made his success possible and even, to a degree, predictable" (Davidson 1986, 17). Updike Underhill, the main character of Royall Tyler's *The Algerine Captive*, returns from captivity after seven years and is surprised to notice that American readers' taste for, and consumption of, novels is unprecedented:

> On his return from captivity, he found a surprising alteration in the public taste. In our inland towns of consequence, social libraries had been instituted, composed of books designed to amuse rather than to instruct; and country booksellers, fostering the new-born taste of the people, had filled the whole land with modern travels and novels almost as incredible. (Tyler 1802, vii)

As the critical mouthpiece of Tyler, Underhill stresses the pedagogical dimension of reading in the Republic, concurrently rejecting English imports, for, he says, "being the picture of the times, the New England reader is insensibly taught to admire the levity, and often the vices, of the parent country" (Tyler 1802, ix). Although he is an unstinting advocator of native fiction, Tylor subtly blends various genres, such as travel books, romances and captivity tales in a novel that inevitably points to its transnational theme. His cross-cultural perspective is strengthened by accounts of the inhuman practice of slavery in Barbary, dwelling at the same time on the political, religious and racial difference between Algerians and Americans. In doing so, he transgresses the borders of the American nation whose building—"BY UNITING WE STAND, BY DIVIDING WE FALL" (Tyler 1802, 228; original capitals)—is based on a cosmopolitan experience that may substantially contribute to the improvement of the isolationist policy enforced by Federalism during the John Adams government.

Even if, according to Romantic precepts, Underhill's voyage becomes a quest for self-fulfillment as an American citizen, Tyler's novel, just like all the others written between approximately 1790 and 1800, were regarded as public property, a Republican prerequisite which cultivated the common good rather than a subjective or individualistic experience and, along with it, people's access to public culture. William Hill Brown's *The Power of Sympathy* (1789)—generally considered the first American novel written in the manner of Samuel

Richardson—is a telling example. Based on real events, it is a seduction novel that deals with women's moral instruction, drawing attention to the deleterious effects of novel reading. The tragic love story between the influential Bostonian lawyer Perez Morton and his sister-in-law Fanny Apthorp, who commits suicide, was a well-known scandalous case when the novel was being written. Michael T. Gilmore (1994, 545) has interpreted this popular incident and others of this kind presented, for instance, in Hannah Webster Foster's *The Coquette* (1797) as "public knowledge" or "common inheritance" which "firmly situated American novels in the social and political context of an agrarian republic still shaped largely by communitarian and civic humanist priorities." Also, the novelists' insistence on facts and truth was an imperative dictated by the Puritanical doctrine that abhorred "any fanciful embellishment" or "suspicion of fictionality" (Gilmore 1994, 545). Early literature's mission, therefore, was to teach moral values and, as a whole, to be a useful instrument for society.

Although the novel was the crucible in which multifarious fictional experiments and other generic conventions overlapped, its emergence in tandem with the founding of the Republic did anticipate the shaping of national consciousness. Nonetheless, it was a public threat because its powerful narrative was perceived to endanger the polity by transmitting a specific message, be it allegorically disguised or overtly formulated, against the contemporary state of affairs. According to Davidson (1986, 40), "had the novel not been deemed a potent proponent of certain threatening changes, there would have been little reason to attack it." On the other hand, the novel threatened the elites because, as a demotic genre, it not only portrayed low-class or disadvantaged personages that elicited the reader's sympathetic response, but also empowered the poor to make their voice heard in society. As Davidson (1986, 44) cogently explains,

> the emergence of the novel was part of a movement in the late eighteenth century toward a reassessment of the role of the 'average' American and a concomitant questioning of political, ministerial, legal, and even medical authorities on the part of the citizens of the new nation who, having already accepted the egalitarian rhetoric of the Revolution, increasingly believed that the Republic belonged as much to them as to the gentry.

"The egalitarian rhetoric of the Revolution" was perfectly reflected by writers too, since the communalism of the Republic prevented professional authorship. Some of them approached both poetry and fiction, as was the case of Phillip Freneau, an American polemicist who inveighed against George Washington's ruling system. Others were statesmen, judges or lawyers who posed as "versatile" (Gilmore 1994, 551) male or female authors. Finally, in an age when

the copyright law was non-existent, early eighteenth-century authors were driven by a civic humanist spirit which upheld their belief in collective property. This was the ultimate expression of literature understood in non-lucrative terms, as "native authors commonly produced one or perhaps two books and saw themselves as amateurs who were not dependent on their pens for money" (Gilmore 1994, 552).

Early novelists, and authors in general, continued to look beyond their national boundaries, despite the ideals of civic virtue and common good imposed by the Republicans. The nationalist master-narratives fail to tell us that only few traits of the early American novels "overtly fix them to a geographical location within North America" (Tennenhouse 2006, 10), but they do tell us that the vast corpus of early texts is only superficially treated or mentioned in passing either by anthologies or by American literary historiography which recommend Fenimore Cooper as the father of the American novel. Attempting to establish the early American novel as a literary-critical field, Leonard Tennenhouse extolls Cathy Davidson's monumental work *Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America* (1986), written through the lens of Foucault's archive theory, but he cannot fail to notice that it is not on a par with Ian Watt's famous *Rise of the Novel* (1957), which "shows how certain narratives of individual development both accompanied and reflected the emergence and development of the genre, the readership, and ultimately Great Britain" (Tennenhouse 2006, 9). However, unlike Watt's Anglocentric and male-centred model, Davidson's analysis factors in women's history and the history of the poor and déclassé, let alone her minute accounts of book industry predicated on American reprints of British novelists, book production and buying. As she makes clear (1986, ix), "authors and books exist within historical moments, as junctures of ideas, controversies, and tensions in a society", and this is exactly what the early novel as well as other genres record in the New Republic. The "junctures of ideas" at the time stood for intersectional points between the Old and the New World as well as for the porosity of national boundaries. These junctures or cultural confluences clearly suggest that early American authors borrowed, shared among themselves and sought to crystallize motives, themes and genres, especially the novel, coming from Western Europe. Contrary to Cooper's harsh critique, these authors experimented with a breadth of literary materials, interrogating the *status quo* of the nation marked by socio-political tensions and disputes. Theirs was a different type of art which, in spite of being mostly imitative, evinced a typically eighteenth-century cosmopolitan nature which contemporary critics still tends to ignore, for they argue, in a reductionist way, the same old story that

> the new nation began in New England, consolidated its identity during the eighteenth century, sought political independence from Great Britain, and emerged from the Revolution with a richly diverse, yet somehow coherent national culture that developed strictly and uniquely within the specific geographical boundaries of the United States. (Tennenhouse 2006, 10)

Until creative uniqueness, subjectivity and individual talent became the hallmark of Romantic literature, one must understand that early American literature—often dismissed as "sub- or extraliterary" (Gilmore 1994, 557) even by the American Romantic generation primarily interested in aesthetic value—played a significant role in the formation of the American nation and the shaping of its cultural identity. Concurrently, one must not forget that imitation, compilation, alteration, reinterpretation, rewriting, reframing, recycling, etc., were techniques and practices that prevailed in the eighteenth century and they help us understand the ongoing dynamicity and mobility of texts and writers on both sides of the Atlantic. Ultimately, they make us understand why early American literature is a relevant chapter in the history of American culture and civilization, which should not be neglected merely for its lack of coherence and alleged artistic immaturity.

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"I'VE READ YOU RIGHT—I'M WITH YOU NOW": AESTHETIC READING IN VIRGINIA WOOLF'S METAFICTIONAL SHORT STORIES

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ABSTRACT. ***"I've read you right—I'm with you now": Aesthetic Reading in Virginia Woolf's Metafictional Short Stories***. Despite critical interest in Virginia Woolf's intense preoccupation with the imaginative process at the root of literary creation, little attention has been paid to the manner in which, through metafiction, the writer turns her short stories into reflections upon the nature of reading. In works such as "An Unwritten Novel" (1921) and "The Lady in the Looking-Glass. A Reflection" (1926), the boundaries between literature and criticism, between fiction and reality, take center stage and it is precisely this point of convergence that metafictional works take as subject matter. Thus, Virginia Woolf's 'character-reading' makes its way into her stories and the author's critical stance upon the act of reading, revealed primarily in her essays, is now transmitted thematically through characters who appropriate the readers' active construction of meaning while living in the same textual world inhabited by the fictitious characters they ardently wish to interpret. Through the advancement of a specific type of reading: active, emotive, empathetic, fluid, inquisitive, intimate and indeterminate, yet always close to the text it is engaged with, Virginia Woolf may be said to prefigure the type of transactional reader-response criticism underpinned by Louise Rosenblatt,

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whose insistence upon aesthetic reading calls for a two-way transmission of meaning that is simultaneously constitutive of the literary work and of the reader's self.

***Keywords**: Virginia Woolf, metafiction, aesthetic reading, short story, reader-response criticism, Louise Rosenblatt*

REZUMAT. ***„Te-am citit bine—sunt cu tine acum": lectură estetică în povestirile metaficționale ale Virginiei Woolf.*** În ciuda interesului critic față de preocuparea intensă a Virginiei Woolf pentru procesul imaginativ care stă la baza creației literare, s-a acordat puțină atenție modului în care, prin metaficțiune, scriitoarea își transformă povestirile în reflecții asupra naturii lecturii. În opere precum „Un roman nescris" (1921) și „Doamna din oglindă". O reflecție" (1926), în centrul atenției se află granițele dintre literatură și critică, dintre ficțiune și realitate. Pentru Mark Currie, tocmai acest punct de convergență este subiectul abordat în operele metaficționale. Astfel, ceea ce Virginia Woolf numește „citirea personajului" își face loc în povestirile sale, iar poziția critică a autoarei asupra actului lecturii, dezvăluită în primul rând în eseurile sale, este transmisă tematic prin personaje care își însușesc construcția activă a cititorilor în timp ce trăiesc în aceeași lume textuală populată de personajele fictive pe care doresc cu ardoare să le interpreteze. Prin avansarea unui anumit tip de lectură: activă, emotivă, empatică, fluidă, curioasă, intimă și nedeterminată, dar întotdeauna apropiată de textul-bază, se poate spune că Virginia Woolf prefigurează tipul de critică tranzacțională a cititorului susținută de Louise Rosenblatt, a cărei insistență asupra lecturii estetice încurajează o transmitere bidirecțională a sensului, în același timp constitutivă operei literare și sinelui cititorului.

***Cuvinte cheie**: Virginia Woolf, metaficțiune, lectură estetică, povestire, critica cititorului, Louise Rosenblatt*

Introduction

Virginia Woolf's short stories have often been considered in light of their aesthetic freedom, their experimental form and their role in connection to Woolf's shift from a traditional type of fiction to the unconventional, quintessentially modernist writing that became intrinsic to her novelistic style. The flexibility, lack of constraints in terms of plot development and the potential for generic hybridity that the short story allows proved to be inspirational for the genesis of her experimental style (Goldman 2006, 88, Prudente 2008, 1), while also providing her with 'wild outbursts of freedom',

pleasurable 'treats'. Yet seldom have her short stories, much less her metafictional stories received full-length critical attention in their own right. In this sense, Dean R. Baldwin's *Virginia Woolf. A Study of the Short Fiction* (1989), Kathryn N. Benzel and Ruth Hoberman's *Trespassing Boundaries. Virginia Woolf's Short Fiction* (2004), Nena Skrbic's *Wild Outbursts of Freedom. Reading Virginia Woolf's Short Fiction* (2004) and Christine Reynier's *Virginia Woolf's Ethics of the Short Story* (2009) are noteworthy studies. Out of these four volumes, it is only Reynier that gives specific consideration to metafiction, but in similar vein to the majority of the analyses that focus on Woolf's metafictional engagement with short fiction (notably Laura Maria Lojo Rodriguez, Peter Hühn, Elke D'hoker and Nóra Séllei), what lies at the center of the interpretation seems to be the universe of the *writer*. Instead, the present paper aims to offer an alternative interpretation of Virginia Woolf's metafictional short stories "An Unwritten Novel" (1921) and "The Lady in the Looking-Glass. A Reflection" (1929), by focusing on the *reader*'s transaction with the printed text, the type of reading that the encounter prompts and the necessary imaginative abilities that are called upon in the molding of a symbolic set of words into a literary work.

Firstly, I am going to tackle Virginia Woolf's critical stance on reading, as revealed in her essays, so as to underline the role that she assigned to the reader, in particular to the 'common reader' and the perspective upon the act of reading as endowed with (almost) the same creative powers as the process of writing. This will provide a foundation for the reading of her metafictional short stories through the lens of their association with the principles of reader-response criticism and, in particular, Louise Rosenblatt's critical theory. Virginia Woolf's "An Unwritten Novel" (1921) focuses on a highly subjective type of character-interpretation that is based on empathy and identification, foregrounding the fragmented thoughts and selective attention of the reader, her aesthetic *living through* of the literary work and its effects upon the self, while "The Lady in the Looking-Glass. A Reflection." (1929) presupposes a distant, calculated and information-driven reader who is forced to reconsider their approach to literature.

Virginia Woolf's Critical Stance on Reading

In her essays, Virginia Woolf recognizes the importance of the active role of the reader in the evocation of the literary work, prefiguring later reader-response theories, among which the *transactional theory* developed by Louise Rosenblatt. In turn, Rosenblatt was among the first promoters of a reader-oriented attitude in the study of literature, albeit she advanced it in a critical

context dominated by the objectivist stance of New Criticism.[2] Both Woolf and Rosenblatt were concerned with writing about reading, as the post-war period and the 1920s and 1930s in particular witnessed a rise in public consciousness with regard to the act of reading as a cultural issue and an educational tool (Cuddy-Keane 2003, 59-62).

As Kate Flint points out, Woolf imagined the meeting point between the reader and the text in sexual terms, as *a pleasurable encounter* that is free of "assertive masculine participation" and gives way instead to "a reciprocal transaction rather than a process of establishing dominance" (187). If the writer is the one who "lay[s] an egg in the reader's mind from which springs the thing itself" (Woolf 2014, "Fishing" 348),[3] it is up to the reader to ensure its development into a literary work. The stress on equality as the basis for literary pleasure prevents the reading experience from becoming self-absorbed and solipsistic and would *not* resonate with later, highly subjective reader-response theories such as those put forth by David Bleach and Norman Holland. Instead, reciprocity falls in line with the conceptualization of an act of transaction that marks the imaginative process of creation. Provided that the reader "is willing to be creative, as Mrs. Woolf so often insists in her essays he must be, the transaction can be *rewarding* indeed" (Richter 1970, 11, my emphasis).

Although Woolf makes reference to the term 'transaction' in an essay titled "Robinson Crusoe", in which she maintains that "there is a piece of business to be transacted between writer and reader before any further dealings are possible" (2669), she does not envision it as Rosenblatt would, just in terms of a coming together of the reader and "what he senses the words as pointing to" (1994, 21), but rather as a congress between the reader and, through the text, the writer. However, in both instances, readers are conceptualized as co-creators of meaning and equal literary "partners in this business of writing books, as companions in the railway carriage, as fellow travellers with Mrs. Brown" (Woolf 1924, 23), whose independent thinking prevents the process of writing fiction from becoming an authoritative one by opening it towards multiplicity and liberating it from oppressive dominance: "To admit authorities into our

[2] As the editor of *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism*, Jane P. Tompkins places Louise Rosenblatt at the foundation of reader-response criticism (1980, x), acknowledging her role as a pioneer in the development of a reader-centered teaching and analyzing of literature. Although her first volume, *Literature as Exploration*, was published in 1936, it did not receive much critical attention until decades later, when the emphasis on formalist principles began to wane. Thus, it was in the 1970s that Rosenblatt's elevation of the status of the reader was developed into a fully-fledged literary approach described in her work *The Text, the Reader, the Poem: The Transactional Theory of the Literary Work* (1978).

[3] All of Woolf's essays, apart from "Mr. Bennet and Mrs. Brown" and "The Reader", are cited from the Delphi Classics *Complete Works of Virginia Woolf* (2014).

libraries and let them tell us how to read, what to read, what value to place upon what we read, is to destroy the spirit of freedom" (Woolf 2014, "How Should One Read a Book?" 2833).

The close connection between reader and writer mirrors "the inseparability of reading and writing as processes" (Flint 1996, 192) and is insisted upon in particular in Woolf's 1925 essay "How Should One Read a Book?". The reader is advised to be open-minded, creative, active and strive to work closely with the writer, consider the latter a contemporary, identify with them and appropriate their compositional abilities: "Do not dictate to your author; try to become him. Be his fellow-worker and accomplice. When you attempt to reconstruct it [an event] into words, you will find that it breaks into a thousand conflicting impressions. Some must be subdued; others emphasized" (2834). Thus, the act of reading is depicted as a complex art that requires *finesse* of perception, a bold imagination and insight on learning, which permits readers to simultaneously be actors and spectators (2835-7). The encouragement is to organize one's thoughts in reading as one does in writing, which is in tune with Louise Rosenblatt's statement that, since literary creation is about making choices, "the analogy with the author's creative process does provide a baseline from which to proceed in defining the reader's task"—the latter is no less immersed in such an activity (1994, 50-52). Without the reader's creative powers and active involvement, the literary work could not come into existence and would remain a mere text.

Similarly, in "Mr. Bennet and Mrs. Brown" (1924), Woolf highlights the necessity to eliminate the gap between reader and writer and strengthen their connection by recognizing their equal status and input. Readerly modesty and writerly arrogance may lead to thinking that "writers are of a different blood and bone from yourselves; that they know more of Mrs. Brown than you do. Never was there a more fatal mistake." (23). Instead, books should be the result of a healthy and equal alliance between the two parties, "between *us*" (23, my emphasis). Woolf's insistence on collaboration is also confirmed through the common use of the first-person plural pronoun 'we', which stands as "the equivalent to the team of essayist and reader" and offers a sense of the involvement of the reader, marking the latter's *cooperative identity* (Ferebee 1987, 349).

Out of the multiple types of readers that Woolf theorizes about—from the specialized reader, the scholar that is fixated on certain aspects of the text, to the pretend reader who owns a lot of books but never really reads them, to critics who merely wish to correct others and value their opinion above all others (Woolf 1979, 428 and 2014, "The Common Reader" 2437)—Virginia Woolf is most interested in common readers. Borrowed from Dr. Johnson and

foreshadowing Rosenblatt's 'ordinary reader', the name does not entail an inferior type of reader, but rather someone who does not aim to use literature as an academic tool, but only as a source of personal pleasure.

> Woolf's common reading was fundamentally an advocacy for broad, generalist reading as opposed to academic study, and it was a defense of reading for such personally directed goals as pleasure and intellectual stimulation rather than such professional purposes as publication and accreditation. (Cuddy-Keane 2003, 89)

> The common reader reads for his own pleasure Above all, he is guided by an instinct to create for himself, out of whatever odds and ends he can come by, some kind of whole—a portrait of a man, a sketch of an age, a theory of the art of writing. (Woolf 2014, "The Common Reader" 2437)

Without the desire to carry anything away out of the reading and without a practical purpose in mind, *the experience itself* becomes the main focus and the reading shifts away from what Louise Rosenblatt calls 'efferent reading' towards 'aesthetic reading'. While the former is primarily based on solution-finding and accumulating practical information, on *efferre* (carrying away), the latter is a mode in which "the reader's primary concern is with what happens *during* the actual reading event" (1994, 24). It is this aesthetic approach of *living through* the literary work (1994, 184) that reveals how the process rather than the product leads to meaning-creation. Thus, regarded as a creator, the reader is ascribed a quality which places him/her in a similar position to that of the writer: "what the reader has in common with the writer, though much more feebly: the desire to create." (Woolf 2014, "Phases of Fiction" 3393). Seen through this lens, the term 'common' may also be indicative of the "common meeting-place" of cooperation (Woolf 1924, 17) that enables not only a channel for communication and the sharing of emotions (Richter 1970, 235), but also a sense of intimacy between reader and writer (Högberg 2020, 31).

Part of the responsibility of the common reader lies in acknowledging the importance of a subjective approach to literature and engaging with books as one does with life, in an empathetic manner that encourages feeling: "the 'book itself' is not form which you see, but emotion which *you feel*" (Woolf 2014, "On Re-reading Novels" 3438, my emphasis) and "A novel 'is an impression, not an argument'" (Woolf 2014, "The Novels of Thomas Hardy" 2830). It follows that *living through* instead of *thinking about* the literary work is the approach that the reader should have. This imaginative *reading as living* is strongly supported by Virginia Woolf, who turns it into a key element in her approach to the art of reading (Abeshaus 9). For instance, in her "Phases of Fiction" (1929),

the author stresses that "novels make us live imaginatively, with the whole of the body as well as the mind" (3406), they draw us in and require emotional involvement and identification with characters whom we develop secret sympathies for (4032), all while bringing out impressions, reactions and sensations that vary depending on our times. The recurrent advice is not to suppress these idiosyncrasies, lest we impoverish reading (Woolf 2014, "How Should One Read a Book?" 2837).

However, it is not sufficient for the reader to be a mere recipient of feelings and impressions. Great literature "will not suffer itself to be read passively" (Woolf 2014, "Notes on an Elizabethan Play" 2476), so the reader's active pursuit of the creation of meaning takes center stage in Woolf's perspective. Many of the authors that she praises in her essays, from Chaucer, to Austen, to Hardy and Peacock, among others, allow and encourage the reader's involvement.

> instead of being solemnly exhorted [by Chaucer's works] we are left to stray and stare and make out a meaning for ourselves" (Woolf 2014, "The Pastons and Chaucer" 2451)
> What she [Jane Austen] offers is, apparently, a trifle, yet is composed of something that expands in the reader's mind and endows with the most enduring form of life scenes which are outwardly trivial. (Woolf 2014, "Jane Austen" 2543)
> It is as if Hardy himself left it for his readers to make out his full meaning and to supplement it from their own experience. (Woolf 2014, "The Novels of Thomas Hardy" 2825)
> Peacock['s] reticence is not empty but suggestive so that the reader can make it out for himself. (Woolf 2014, "Phases of Fiction" 4023-4024)

Consequently, it is of utmost importance that the reader be given space to reflect and create their own stories and meanings out of personal inclinations and experiences, without dealing with strict impositions and factual, conclusive remarks on the part of the writer. For instance, it is the inconclusive nature of Russian stories in which nothing is finished that attracts Woolf's admiration and praise. In this context, multiple and equally valid readings may develop in accordance to the different conditions that the reading transaction is situated in (Rosenblatt 1994, 75), as Virginia Woolf also asserted: **"**Each [reader] has read differently, with the insight and the blindness of his own generation" (2014, "The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia" 2659).

Although in "Robinson Crusoe" (1925), Woolf prompts the reader to seek the author's intention and view the work through their eyes, she then insists on the difficulties of this task, since each person has their own vision upon the world, forged out of their own experiences and prejudices (2669). So,

it is up to the readers "steeped in the impression to supply the comment" (Woolf 2014, "The Novels of Thomas Hardy" 2830) and afterwards "go on to test it and riddle it with questions." (Woolf 2014 "On Re-Reading Novels" 3439).

"An Unwritten Novel"

The 1921 short story "An Unwritten Novel" starts, as the author herself claims all novels should, with an elderly woman sitting on the opposite side of a train compartment. The similarity with the imagined situation of the critical essay "Mr. Bennet and Mrs. Brown" (published three years later) is evident. In both works, the train ride is symbolistic of a literary journey that mixes together fiction and criticism and brings actants from different levels of existence into a shared common space. As both a fiction writer and a critic, Woolf blends the two domains and dramatizes their intersection, exemplifying what Mark Currie identifies as the very definition of metafiction: "a borderline discourse a kind of writing which places itself on the border between fiction and criticism, and which takes that border as its subject" (2). This mutual assimilation brings about self-consciousness on both sides, making criticism more literary and bringing critical insight to literature (2).

Thus, in order to exemplify the importance of characters and their *reading*, Woolf "chooses the language of metaphor" (Lojo Rodriguez 2001, 77)[4] and imagines a fictional story within her critical essay, bringing real authors (Mr. Bennet, Mr. Galsworthy and Mr. Wells) and actual readers alongside a fictional character[5] (Mrs. Brown), as they all travel from Richmond to Waterloo. This mixture of criticism and fiction is framed by a critical inquiry which dominates the essay, yet allows for a blurring of the line between fiction and reality. In terms of the metafictional counterpart to this literary type criticism, the protagonist of "An Unwritten Novel", Minnie Marsh, is used to advance a critical perspective upon the creation of a fictional story. Yet, instead of all three 'actors' (writer, character, reader) being present in the train compartment, the short story seems to allow for only two, so the arguments that follow will be centered around the interpretation that it is the creative reader who accompanies the character in her journey.

The unnamed narrator does not shy away from the fact that what she experiences is fiction, so references to concealment, illusion, story, game, pretenses, paper, the threading of wool and the spinning of a web all indicate the artificiality of the story being told, as well as the understanding that its main

[4] "Woolf was one of the last practitioners of impressionistic criticism (in line with Walter Pater and Robert Louis Stevenson), also labeled aesthetic or subjective criticism" (Popa 2016, 153).

concern revolves around the inner workings of the fiction-making mind. Paradoxically, this is coupled with her responsibility to evoke a subjective meaning through the co-creation of the literary work.

After addressing the woman in her own thoughts and encouraging her to "play the game" and "conceal it" (15), the narrator underlines that she knows the whole business and all people know, although they prefer to pretend that they do not. In this key, the *business* is reflective of the reader's imminent transaction and negotiation of meaning, while the *pretense* becomes representative of what Samuel Taylor Coleridge called 'the willing suspension of disbelief'. The foreshadowing of metaleptical border-crossing is revealed through the narrative voice often peering at her companion "above the paper's edge" and "over the paper's rim" (15), as the word may be understood as the paper on which the text is printed. This is confirmed towards the end of the story, when she admits that she is "threading the grey wool, running it in and out. Running it in and out, across and over, spinning a web" (20).

Another overt indication of the metafictional aspect of the short story is its very title. Not only is this a fictional tale, a potential novel, but it is "an unwritten" one, an epithet which anticipates and negates from the beginning an interpretation which revolves around writing. The focus seems to be not on the words, but on what is *not* there on the page and may thus be supplemented through the act of reading. This, according to Woolf, is the mark of great writers and the unwritten nature of the novel indicates its perpetual openness: "What really matters [for Woolf] is the unwritten and unspoken part. This part stimulates the reader to be involved in the generative process of the text" (Hashimoto 340). So valuable is the reader's ability to read the unwritten elements of a text, that Virginia Woolf considered it constitutive of the reader's being: "Now the reader is completely in being. He can pause; he can ponder; he can compare. He can read directly what is on the page, or, drawing aside, can read *what is not written.* We are in a world where *nothing is concluded*" (1979, 429, my emphasis).

What attracts the narrator to the woman sitting across her in the train compartment is her expression of unhappiness and her quiet invitation to explore life through her eyes. Soon, the pull that she feels towards the character turns into captivation and immersion and results in the molding of a story that is based both on the text that is read and on the free-flowing imagination of the reader. The description of Minnie Marsh's life and her familial situation appears to be rooted in the reader's interior monologue as she processes the text and fills it with expectations, inventions, revisions, hopes and disillusionment, seamlessly fusing the printed words with her own thoughts and impressions

and turning the story into a self-begetting narrative that contains *within it* the process of its own creation.

Although the narrator-reader is hesitant at the beginning of the story, she quickly notices that the strange woman returns her gaze and disarms her: "She pierced through my shield, she gazed into my eyes" (15) and then later "She saw me" (16). This reciprocal interest marks the beginning of the transaction and proves that it is not solely the reader who acts upon the text, but also the other way round (Rosenblatt 1994, 16). This is also in tune with Woolf's own beliefs that literature reads us back.

> the body of a literature takes us and *reads us* making us, even as we enjoy, yield our ground or stick to our guns. (Woolf 2014, "Notes on an Elizabethan Play" 2476, my emphasis)

Yielding, the narrator readily embraces the unspoken alliance that is formed between her and the other woman and they are immediately referred to by means of the first-person plural pronoun *we*: "So we rattled through Surrey we were alone together" (15). So great is the immersion that the narrator identifies with the woman, invents the name Minnie for her (which includes the pronoun *me*), mirrors her gestures and becomes fully invested, reading herself into the story[6] and placing herself, quite literally, on the same page as the character (when Minnie looks out the window, the narrator gazes through her eyes: "I, too, see roofs. I see sky" (27)). In aesthetic reading, empathy and identification are key factors which encourage the living-through of the literary work: "In some instances, the reader feels himself at one with the attitudes or experiences called up. The 'I' of a lyric may seem to be himself, the images and feelings aroused may occupy the whole span of attention, as though he himself were uttering the words" (Rosenblatt 1994, 67). In fact, this is exactly what the narrator experiences: "who was saying that eggs were cheaper? You or I?" (18). Immersed in self-reflection, the reader realizes that when she is addressing the characters, she is addressing facets of herself, erasing the line between self and other: "But when the self speaks to the self, who is speaking" (20).

While Minnie communicates through gazing, speaking and moving her body, the narrator describes her own responses through references to *looking* and *reading*, that is engaging with the text and with one's own imagination, being both a spectator and an actor. Therefore, watching Minnie is not enough; the narrator feels the need to *act* and reveal her active participation and alignment with the character through the imitation of her movements. It is then

[6] See Virginia Woolf's statement: "Yet we have read ourselves into the book" (2014, "Phases of Fiction" 3401).

that she realizes that a transfer has occurred: the character communicated something to her and she was able to interpret the message: "But she had communicated, shared her secret, passed her poison, she would speak no more. I read her message, deciphered her secret, reading it beneath her gaze" (16). Interpreting Minnie while metafictionally placing herself in the same space as her becomes of utmost importance to the reader who becomes a surrogate for the actual reader who, similarly, follows Minnie's story and interprets it.

The story within the story foregrounds Minnie's relationship to her sister-in-law, her visit to her brother's house, her past crime and her present introspection. The fragmentary style, the frequent narratorial interventions, the innumerable questions, uncertainties, repetitions, vague and unfinished descriptions, as well as frequent switches from the direct address to the third person highlight the reader's freedom in interpretation, her free association of ideas and her mark as an artistic creator, while the story is in progress.

> Hilda's the sister-in-law. Hilda? what are you thinking so what would she think about sitting at the window at three o'clock in the afternoon? Health, money, hills, her God? but what God does she see? (17)

It is evident that the reader is riddled with questions, as Virginia Woolf believed they should be; however, it is important to recognize that it is the words of the text that prompt these musings and as such, they provide a fixed point of stability, helping to ground the reader's stream of thoughts. As Rosenblatt also stresses, this is the quintessential difference between writers and readers: "We should not forget that the writer encounters a blank page and the reader an already inscribed text" (1993, 384). Thus, the narrator of "An Unwritten Novel" repeatedly mentions that she peeps at the character (that is, *looks* at the text) for information that would aid her in the interpretation: "what are you thinking? (Let me peep across her opposite", "since one has a choice of crimes, but then so many (let me peep across again)" (17) and "Let me look at her" (20). This necessary and recurrent return to the subject's visualization of Minnie's body balances her interpretation and does not let her wander too far off track—a tendency that she is aware of: "But I'm off the track" (27), "But to return" (18).

The understanding of the literary text as a guide that the reader has to make sense of is also a critical perspective that is alluded to in the diegesis of "An Unwritten Novel", bringing about metafictional reflections upon the literary connection between author, text and reader. As Minnie eats eggs on the train, she places the shells onto a handkerchief that becomes the reader's map: "And now you lay across your knees a pocket-handkerchief into which drop little angular fragments of eggshell—fragments of a map—a puzzle. I wish I could

piece them together! If you would only sit still. She's moved her knees—the map's in bits again." (18). The puzzle pieces are also rendered stylistically through the sometimes radical fragmentation of the text: "Neighbours—the doctor—baby brother—the kettle—scalded—hospital—dead—or only the shock of it, the blame?" (17). The reader's responsibility lies in choosing how to fit the pieces together and endow them with meaning; it is a choice that the narrator is highly aware of, albeit she never loses sight of the transactional nature of her encounter with the character. In thinking about the possible unconscious source of guilt betrayed by Minnie's twitch, she states: "I have my choice of crimes" (17), yet the character has to agree: "she seems to nod to me, 'it's the thing I did.' so many crimes aren't *your* crime" (17).

Just when the reader thinks she has figured Minnie out, the character moves and she is forced to revise her interpretation. Minnie moves her knees and disturbs the eggshells, she twitches, "she turns the other way and runs through my [the reader's] fingers" (18), despite the narrator wanting her to be still: "Minnie, you must promise not to twitch till I've got this straight" (19). This underlines the fluidity of the interpretive process and the futility of the reader's hope that she will ever reach a final, conclusive and static meaning. What she is faced with instead is a sea of rhetorical questions, a labyrinth of possibilities: "the words have meaning Have I read you right?" (18). All of these elements constitute markers of the necessary uncertainty that accompanies readers.

Since the reader is interested in certain aspects of the text above others, she is willing to skip over passages that she considers decorative, but as a fellow character inside her own imagined story, she may also see herself physically skipping in the room, until she reaches the 'landing' on the same floor as her character: "[But this we'll skip; ornaments, curtains, trefoil china plate, yellow oblongs of cheese, white squares of biscuit—skip—oh, but wait! Halfway through luncheon one of those shivers 'Why *should* she twitch?' Skip, skip, till we reach the landing on the upper floor" (16). The same principle is shown through the representation of ellipses: "the whiff of beef from the basement; dot, dot, dot. But what I cannot thus eliminate the figures behind the ferns There I've hidden them all this time in the hope that somehow they'd disappear" (18), but also through the urge to 'dodge' certain characters in favor of others: "Let's dodge to the Moggridge household" (19). What the reader seems to be experiencing is selective attention, which is an especially useful tool in Rosenblatt's theory of aesthetically *living through* a work of art (1994, 42). Thus, readers bestow their attention selectively and choose what is most fruitful to the weaving of their meaning (43).

It is important to note that not only does the surrogate reader envision the fictional account of "An Unwritten Novel", but she also has a subjective

approach to literature, commenting upon it, threading her own opinions into the story and confirming that feelings and impressions are part and parcel of her approach. Consequently, she points towards what she considers "interesting", openly and actively negotiates with the author— "for God's sake let me have one woman with a name I like! But no" —compares her reading with other literary works— "How many die in every novel that's written—the best, the dearest, while Moggridge lives" —inserts her personal preferences— "Marsh's sister, Hilda's more my sort" (19), "Not for me—not for me" (20) —cheers for the character— "Courage, courage! Face it, be it! For God's sake don't wait on the mat now" (21) - affirms her allegiance— "I'm on your side" (21) - confronts her expectations against the text - "Not what *I* said? Dear, dear, dear!" (19), "I've read you right" —and also expresses empathy and intimacy— "I'm with you now" (21). This active emotional involvement proves that the reader does not just receive the information that she reads about, but becomes part of the story.

Upon knowing that the end is near, the narrator-reader is curious, excited, but also nervous to find out what is going to happen to her character: "Here's the crisis! Heaven be with you! Down she goes" (21). Minnie gets off the train and the narrator watches her, only to find out that her son was waiting for her at the train station. This means that her expectation of Minnie being unmarried and childless is bluntly contradicted by the text, which brings about intense feelings of disappointment and disbelief, but also confusion that is extended towards the self as well: "Well, but I'm confounded Oh, but it's untrue, it's indecent Well, my world's done for! What do I stand on? What do I know? That's not Minnie. There never was Moggerige. Who am I? Who are you? (21). Through these inquiries, the reader questions the stability of both the story-world and her own world, since the two have become inseparable, "overlapping reality and unreality which suggests how the borders between the two can be understood as thin and not precisely definable" (Prudente 2008, 5). As Louis Rosenblatt acknowledges, the transactional view "reveals the individual consciousness as a continuing self-ordering, self-creating process" (1994, 172). It follows that, while reading, the narrator had also been creating and shaping herself through toppled expectations and the embrace of pleasurable uncertain readings that confirm her love for the mysterious and unknown figures of the world.

"The Lady in the Looking-Glass. A Reflection"

Another Woolfian short story that deals with reflection in its multiple understandings—from physical mirroring to contemplations upon fiction to self-reflection and the projection of oneself into literature—is "The Lady in the Looking-Glass. A Reflection", first published in 1929. Like "An Unwritten Novel",

the story reveals an unnamed narrator who is fascinated and completely absorbed by the image of a woman, except this time the space they share is no longer neutral, but owned by the character, turning the narrator into a visiting guest. Since the host, Isabella Tyson, is not in the same room as the narrator, she is only reachable through the mediation of the room's mirror. Once again, the narrator's engagement with the woman's reflection will be considered in light of their undergoing a creative reading process, as their mind enters, negotiates, reflects upon and co-creates the story world whose contour is provided by the text. Throughout their descriptions, the reader generalizes their experience through the use of the impersonal pronoun *one*, albeit it is evident that the latter is employed in relation to themselves: "one was the only person in the drawing-room" (75). Considering this self-conscious choice to renounce their gendered identity, I will refer to them by means of the third-person plural pronoun. In addition, this generalization points towards a broader look upon the nature of fiction and allows Virginia Woolf to use this metafictional short story to theorize about fiction through the process of writing it and thus relocate an extradiegetic, critical concern (how literature is constructed) into the diegesis, turning it into the main device that drives the plot forward.

Alone, sunk in "the depths of the sofa" (75), lying down and watching carefully while remaining invisible, the narrator mirrors the actual reader who could be in a similar position while reading Woolf's text: "What makes the game intriguing is the way in which the reader is implicated in this voyeurism. It is a calculated beginning that teases the reader into solidarity with the observer" (Skrbic 2004, 74). The surrogate reader is initially depicted as a spectator who, despite an uneasy feeling of invading someone's private space, cannot help but notice a mirror in the room, whose presence is interpreted as an invitation to explore the secrets and intimacy of the host's life. Thus, in the presence of a literary text, the reader cannot help but keep looking and piercing though the words. In this sense, the writer plays with the meanings of the words 'letters' (the character's correspondence, but also the symbols that make up the text) and 'drawing' (the drawing-room, but also the artistic work that is being drawn (Skrbic 2004, 78)).

Compelled to look at both the spectacle in the mirror and the darkness of their own surroundings, the narrator repeatedly relies upon visual imagery: "One could not help looking, that summer afternoon", "one could see reflected", "one could see a long grass path", "like one of those naturalists who lie watching themselves unseen" (75). Taking voyeuristic pleasure in observing episodes of life was considered part of the reading process by Virginia Woolf, whose essay "How Should One Read a Book?" compared readers to neighbours whose curiosity leads them to peep into other people's houses.

However, it becomes evident that the narrator's attention is captured by two contrasting spaces. The mirror's reality is a solid and static one, akin to that of a painting in which the reflected images are neatly ordered and pinned down "so accurately and so fixedly that they seemed held there in their reality unescapably" (75). As such, they may be associated with the permeance of the author's words whose publication renders them immutable and enduring. Like the mirror, the text is a concrete object that encourages reflection, but also circumscribes it within the boundaries of its own selective frame that only allows for certain fragments of life to be represented, so Virginia Woolf underlines that the mirror's rim *slices* and *cuts* its images, blocking the voyeur from taking in the entire view "like a surrogate author [who] decides what goes where in the story" (Skrbic 2004, 75). This is a metafictional marker that shows the artificiality of the fictional form and proves that the mirrored reflections should not be taken to represent objective reality, despite their persuasive form.

Consequently, the narrator is not merely interested in the mirror, but also in a space that grants them more freedom of movement: the playful pirouetting of the nocturnal creatures of the room as they momentarily step into the light may be interpreted as the reader "open[ing] the mind wide to the fast flocking of innumerable impressions" (Woolf 2014, "How Should One Read a Book?" 2837), whose agitation infuses the text with subjective responses[7]: "and the room had its own passions and rages and envies and sorrows coming over it and clouding it, like a human being. Nothing stayed the same for two seconds or longer" (75). In contrast to the immortal, breathless image in the mirror, the room is characterized by sounds that are transient and perishing, "coming and going like human breath" (76). Prepared to be not fully distracted by either of the two sights independently, the narrator-reader implicitly announces that they will construct the story in accordance to both, elements relying on their transaction: "It was a strange contrast—all changing here, all stillness there. One could not help looking from one to another" (75).

What seemed to have been an initial commitment to a type of reading that is polyphonous, transactional and constructive was actually a mere recognition of the inevitability of one's reaction without the acknowledgement of the necessity to follow the nocturnal entities of the mind towards the evocation of the literary work from the text. Instead of empathizing with the character, the reader places her at a distance and, as opposed to the narrator of "An Unwritten Novel", they never appear to 'forget' that they and their character are positioned on two different sides of the mirror. As such, there is never direct engagement between them and the balance of power gives way to

[7] In the essay "Reading", Woolf evoked a similar image: "Standing at the window and looking out into the garden, the lives of all these books filled the room behind with a soft murmur" (2014, 3861).

a unidirectional gaze that wants to fully expose Isabella, while maintaining its own anonymity, to shed as much light as possible on the character, while remaining in the dark and observing her from a safe distance.

Moreover, the principal concern of the reader seems to be not to mold meaning into existence, but to *know* the character for what she already is, not to generate personal interpretations, but to search the text for *the truth* about Isabella: "how very little, after all these years, one knew about her", "there must be truth; there must be a wall", "one could not say what the truth about Isabella was", (76). This one-sided, obsessive quest leads the reader into an *efferent* type of reading. It follows that the narrator's attention is directed towards what they consider *facts* about Isabella, "As for fact, it was a fact…", "For it was another fact—if facts is what one wanted…" (76): that she was a spinster, that she was rich, that she had many connections, appointments, passionate letter exchanges and tumultuous past relationships. Paradoxically, the more they see/ read Isabella's face, the less they know about her, since "Under the stress of thinking about Isabella", the room that is symbolistic of the reader's mind becomes more shadowy, darker and its objects lose their shape (77).

Isabella's letters are brought into the story by a new character whose unexpected presence disturbs, disorients and confuses the reader, putting a violent end to their reflections. The extent to which the narrator is uncomfortable with unclear and indeterminate turns of event is made explicit through their radical reaction: "A large black form loomed into the looking-glass; blotted out everything. But the picture was entirely altered. For a moment it was unrecognizable and irrational and entirely out of focus. One could not relate these tablets to any human purpose" (77). It is only after they find a logical explanation for these objects, after the text identifies the figure as the postman and integrates it into the monolithic "stillness and immortality which the looking-glass conferred" (77) that the narrator regains their confidence and re-establishes their equilibrium. However, according to Rosenblatt, this attitude misses the point, since "the [literary] text is not to be read as a simple report, as a statement of 'facts,' the reader must accord attention to the private, the qualitative or affective, the experiential, aspects of consciousness (1994, 185). This is also reflective of Virginia Woolf's opinion that approaching literature in a factual manner, with a view to what is true or false should not be part of the readers' concern: "Most commonly we come to books with blurred and divided minds, asking of fiction that it shall be true, of poetry that it shall be false If we could banish all such preconceptions when we read, that would be an admirable beginning." (Woolf 2014, "How Should One Read a Book?" 2834).

Turning again towards Isabella, the reader is tantalized by her resistance, perceives it as "a challenge" (78) and comes to be convinced that truth and meaning are to be found in her letters, if only the text would cease to conceal it

and the character would no longer lock her drawers. Since this is not the case, the narrator attempts to violently extract this meaning from Isabella by using their imagination as a tool to pin the character into place.

> Isabella did not wish to be known—but she should no longer escape one must prise her open with the first tool that came to hand—the imagination. One must fix one's mind upon her at that very moment. One must fasten her down there One must put oneself in her shoes. (78)

Such aggressiveness stands in opposition to the peaceful, pleasurable and reciprocal sexual encounter that Woolf imagined as an analogy for reading, since it establishes a hierarchy of power that is harmful to the reading process: "The common reader is, moreover, suspicious of fixed labels and settled hierarchies." (Woolf 2014, "Phases of Fiction" 3393). In this case, the reader's attitude is one of establishing dominance and the imagined physical act gains definite masculine energy in its quest to establish absolute control: "surely one could penetrate a little further into her being" (78).

However, it is odd that the narrator should add the empathetic remark about imagining themselves in the character's shoes, since this stance goes against the forceful nature of their intended act. It is, perhaps, in anticipation of the realization that this approach is futile. If the reader wants to reach Isabella's profound self, then they must tolerate and come to embrace the obscurity, unknowingness and fragmentariness of the text.

> The sun would beat down on her face, into her eyes; but no, at the critical moment a veil of cloud covered the sun, making the expression of her eyes doubtful One could only see the indeterminate outline of her rather faded, fine face at the sky. (78)

Doubt creeps in and the reader starts to reconsider their reliance on sight and their static approach to reading. It is possible that Isabella was not happy, yet the text offered merely an unfilled contour of the character. At this crucial moment, the narrator of "The Lady in the Looking-Glass. A Reflection" remembers the nocturnal animals that roamed free and rebellious through their mind at the beginning of the story and this creates a bond with the character whose mind is also depicted through the resemblance of a room filled with lights and shadows that intertwine, advance, retreat and pirouette as she is immersed in her thoughts. The rapport that is established, brings about a change in perspective, which proves that the reading process is far from being a linear and progressive one: "As the text unrolls [t]here is sometimes a backward flow, a revision of earlier understandings, emphases, or attitudes; there may even be the emergence of a completely altered framework or principle of organization" (Rosenblatt

1994, 60-61). The acknowledgement of the fluidity of the act of reading and the multiple revisions it necessarily entails, as well as the impact that expectations and reappraisals have on the formation of literary meaning lie at the core of reader-response theories.

Equally important is the easiness with which the narrator of Woolf's short story shifts from one stance to another, as this may be illustrative of a shift in a spectrum, rather than an abrupt leap between categories of reading perspectives. Indeed, during their reading, the narrator of "The Lady in the Looking-Glass. A Reflection" changes the proportion of the public and private terms of their reading transaction. Paying predominant attention to the character's private feelings rather than public facts brings about a more creative disposition that encourage the envisioning of the text as a starting point, an invitation for further reflection rather than a recipient of truth. This does not mean that the rational side of the reader is utterly rejected, but that the prevalent use of efferent tools is deemed inappropriate in the context of literary interpretation: "To talk of 'prising her open' as if she were an oyster, to use any but the finest and subtlest and most pliable tools upon her was impious and absurd. One must *imagine*—here was she in the looking-glass. It made one start" (79, my emphasis).

As the reader's experience draws closer to an end, they are ironically presented with what they have wished for all along and Isabella's body grows ever larger until it is fully absorbed into the mirror, until the light fixes her and the text crystalizes the naked *truth* that virtually kills the character and makes a mockery of the so-called facts imagined by the reader: "She stopped dead Here was the hard wall beneath. Here was the woman herself. She stood naked in that pitiless light. And there was nothing. Isabella was perfectly empty. She had no thoughts. She had no friends. She cared for nobody. As for her letters, they were all bills She did not even trouble to open them" (79-80). Just when the reader had changed their perspective, shifted their focus, the text would not leave any room for interpretation, closing in upon itself by ending with the same sentence it had begun, thus underlining the futility of reaching a conclusive ending and deriding the goal-oriented focus of the efferent reader. Examined under the pitiless scrutiny of the excessive light that denies her the ability to resist categorization, Isabella is stripped of her literariness and remains constitutive solely of negations, proving that without the reader's imaginative and creative intervention, the text itself is empty of meaning.

Conclusion

The present paper has provided an exploration into Virginia Woolf's critical perspective upon the act of reading and its prefiguration of transactional

reader-response criticism, while also offering an analysis of her two metafictional short stories "An Unwritten Novel" (1921) and "The Lady in the Looking-Glass. A Reflection" (1929), with a focus on the reader's ability to aesthetically evoke a literary work. Although Woolf never loses sight of the importance of the writer, she anticipates key features of Louise Rosenblatt's theory by assigning a crucial role to the reader in the process of interpretation and regarding him as a co-creator, a close alliance member, an accomplice, a business partner and a fellow traveler of Mrs. Brown's that ensures the shaping of a collaborative type of literature, free of oppressive dominance. As an independent thinker, the reader is encouraged to be active and imaginative, imitating the writer's own creative powers and assuming the role of both spectator and actor. Just as importantly, Virginia Woolf's common reader approaches literature for their own pleasure and uses their creativity in the process of reading, which leads to an acknowledgement of their feelings, impressions, indeterminate responses and subjective constructions of multiple meanings. This stance is revealed through Woolf's metafictional short stories that enable readerly reflections to become part of the subject of the literary text.

Woolf's breaking of the distinction between creation and criticism takes center stage in "An Unwritten Novel", as the story reflects upon the genesis of a literary work and its own coming into being. In this light, the narrator is interpreted as a diegetic surrogate reader whose willing suspension of disbelief allows her to metaleptically travel in the same train compartment as her character, Minnie Marsh, journeying by her side and intensely observing her, while imaginatively constructing her life and identity. Immersed and emotionally invested in her reading, the narrator silently communicates and identifies with Minnie, forges both of their identities to the point of physical and psychological alignment and intimately lives though her experiences without losing *sight* of the printed text in front of her. Thus, what is established is a reciprocal, aesthetic transaction in which the reader's input is closely connected to the textual guide left by the author, imagined as a map made up of puzzle pieces that are constantly disturbed by the characters' movement and although the reader's expectations are ultimately contradicted, she heartily embraces the mysterious nature of literature.

Albeit placed in a similar context and also providing a metafictional mirroring of the reader, the unknown and ungendered narrator of "The Lady in the Looking-Glass. A Reflection" assumes a different reading stance than that of "An Unwritten Novel" and imagines themselves in the same house, but not in the same room as their character, Isabella Tyson. Not only is the latter solely reachable through the specular mediation of a text that gives the illusion of permanence and immutability, but the reader distances themselves from the

work, seeks to engage with it efferently through factual accumulation and ultimately desires to exercise their authoritative power through a symbolic act of sexual aggression against the character that would result in the extraction of the text's 'true' meaning. In an ironic twist, it is only after the reader starts to empathize with the character and reconsider their position, that *the truth* about Isabella's emptiness is revealed and the reader is shown how conclusiveness and singleness of meaning are conducive to the death of the literary work and how rigidity in interpretation denies the possibility of *aesthetic* inventiveness.

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"GOODBYE, AMERICANA, HELLO REAL TIME": THE DEATH OF IDEALISM IN PHILIP ROTH'S *AMERICAN PASTORAL*

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ABSTRACT. ***"Goodbye, Americana, Hello Real Time": The Death of Idealism in Philip Roth's* American Pastoral.** Philip Roth's 1997 *American Pastoral* is a textbook illustration of failed cultural transmission: the transference and transformation of values, idea(l)s and information in the lives of Seymour Levov, his family, his community prove to be governed by loss, misrepresentation and gradual decline into disorder. Far from delivering the romanticized version of life in the Jewish neighborhood that the title implies, the novel captures a disenchanted Americana, wherein idealism and radicalism clash against the background of the ideologically fractured 1960s. While 'the Swede' apparently initially embodies the (super)hero, middle-class American Dream, *American Pastoral* chronicles America's evolution after World War II, which is captured as a mixture of convention and rebellion, both stemming from clashing political ideologies. This paper examines the book's polarizing discourses, keeping an emblematic passage in mind: "Maybe the best thing would be to forget being right or wrong about people and just go along for the ride."

Keywords: *Americana, community, discourse, ideology, identity, myth, trauma*

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REZUMAT. ***"Goodbye, Americana, Hello Real Time": moartea idealismului în* Pastorala americană *de Philip Roth.*** *Pastorala americană* a lui Philip Roth (1997) constituie un exemplu tipic de transmitere culturală eşuată. Transferul şi transformarea valorilor, ide(alur)ilor şi informaţiei în vieţile lui Seymour Levov, familiei şi comunităţii sale se dovedesc guvernate de pierderi, reprezentări eronate şi, în cele din urmă, entropie. Departe de a oferi o versiune romanţată asupra vieţii în vecinătatea evreiască, aşa cum sugerează titlul, romanul surprinde o imagine dezvrăjită a Americii, unde idealismul şi radicalismul se ciocnesc pe fundalul unor ani 1960 scindaţi ideologic. În timp ce „Suedezul" pare că întruchipează iniţial (super)eroul Visului American al clasei de mijloc, *Pastorala americană* înregistrează evoluţia Americii după cel de Al Doilea Război Mondial, redată drept un amestec de convenţionalism şi rebeliune, ambele rezultate din diferite tipuri de îndoctrinare. Lucrarea examinează discursurile polarizante ale cărţii, luând în considerare un pasaj emblematic: „Poate cel mai bine ar fi să uităm de a avea sau nu dreptate despre oameni şi să ne bucurăm doar de călătorie".

Cuvinte-cheie: *Americana, comunitate, discurs, ideologie, identitate, mit, traumă*

American Dream, American Rage. An Introduction.

Ever since its initial 1997 publication, in the turbulent quarter-century that followed, *American Pastoral* has been increasingly acknowledged as an unquestionable *pièce de résistance* in Philip Roth's oeuvre. Elaine B. Safer's *Mocking the Age. The Later Novels of Philip Roth*[2], Timothy Parrish' edited *Cambridge Companion to Philip Roth*[3], Debra Shostak's edited collection *Philip Roth.* American Pastoral, The Human Stain, The Plot Against America[4], David Gooblar's *The Major Phases of Philip Roth*[5], Brett Ashley Kaplan's *Jewish Anxiety and the Novels of Philip Roth*[6], Andy Connolly's *Philip Roth and the American Liberal Tradition*[7], the very recent *Bloomsbury Handbook on Philip Roth*, edited

2 State University of New York Press, 2006. Includes the chapter "*American Pastoral*: The Tragicomic Fall of Newark and the House of Levov".

3 Cambridge University Press, 2007. Includes Mark Shechner's analysis on "Roth's *American Trilogy*".

4 Bloomsbury Academic, 2011. Includes studies on *American Pastoral* by David Brauner, Andrew Gordon, Jennifer Glaser.

5 Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011. Includes a chapter on "The American Experience: *American Pastoral*, *I Married a Communist*, and *The Human Stain*".

6 Bloomsbury Academic, 2015. Includes a chapter on "The American Berserk: *Sabbath's Theater* and *American Pastoral*".

7 Lexington Books, 2017. Includes a chapter on "Shattering the Liberal Consensus in *American Pastoral*".

by Aimee Pozorski and Maren Scheurer[8] are but a few of the seminal critical works which have contributed to this growing reputation.

This selection illustrates the variety of theoretical angles from which the novel has been and continues to be read, via constant additions to the existing body of work on *American Pastoral*. They prove the book's topicality and relevance throughout the decades, the proposed interpretations revolving primarily around Roth's approaches to issues of U.S. history, politics, class, race, ethnicity, and even gender relations, or investigating his authorial engagement with postmodern discourse, narrative and experiment. Among the reasons for the book's appeal to various types of readers, what stands out at first sight, as well as in retrospect, is its relentless portrayal of the socio-political dissolution of American values. *American Pastoral*'s inherent critique of the American Dream is projected against the sociopolitical turmoil that characterized America in the late-1960s and early-70s.

At the end of the 1990s, as the United States and the entire world were preparing for the arrival of a much-anticipated New Millennium, warning signs appeared to multiply in the public sphere, as well as in the private circles of individuals confronted with seemingly abrupt transformations. It was such a symbolical moment that prompted Philip Roth to focus on one of the crucial decades in American history. *American Pastoral* inaugurates the *American Trilogy* series[9] with a plot that captures the political radicalization and unrest of America in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and the perverse effects of the noble idea of freedom of speech whenever it is misused or ideologized. The novel also addresses the disconcerting entitlement of concurrent truths, the growth of anti-war sentiments, and the seeming proliferation of threats to until-then quintessential definitions of success, stability, and structure.

In short, the novel is the story of Seymour 'the Swede' Levov, a Jewish son, husband and father who exemplifies the notion of the American Dream for his community by his almost enviable example of integration, and of his daughter, Merry, who chooses to eschew the so-called American values that her father embraces and becomes a domestic terrorist. My claim is that, while Swede Levov's undeterred commitment to the accomplishment of upward mobility, his personal history and beliefs are representative of Newark's Jewish-American aspirations, Merry's shocking and violent downfall ultimately reveals the disintegration of many of America's romanticized historical and sociopolitical ideals. At a time when extremist ideologies seem to be yet again

[8] Bloomsbury Academic, 2024. Includes Eric Leonidas' contribution, "Countering Pastoral: Philip Roth and Ecology".

[9] Which also includes *I Married a Communist* (1998) and *The Human Stain* (2000).

on the rise throughout the world, I aim to continue and complement the already rich scholarly literature in the field of Roth Studies[10], as well as potentially shed new light on some lesser discussed passages in *American Pastoral*, via a series of close (con)textual readings.

From Riches to Rags: A Brief Summary of a Long Tragedy

The American Dream myth of modern and contemporary United States is undermined by the historical context in which the *American Pastoral* plot unfolds. Crucial to the novel are the Vietnam War and the ensuing protests against the United States' involvement, as well as the multiple equal rights and opportunities (including women's) movements, all of which polarized America. In the Levovs' immediate proximity, the emblematic mid-20th century Newark, New Jersey urban pauperization and race riots spark chaos, which destabilizes communal and individual selves alike. As a multilayered fictional illustration of several of the above-mentioned rebellions, Merry Levov's evolution from the offspring of America's Sweetheart[11] to a wanted enemy of the state encapsulates the riches-to-rags destiny of a Jewish family whose dreams are shattered by the dissolution of an entire way of life and thinking.

It is important to note that Roth's real-life existential and philosophical concerns frequently made their way into his writings. In the case of *American Pastoral*, his exasperation with U.S. political incoherence and the dangerous ideological exaggerations resulting from it well into the 1990s fueled his investigation of previous paradoxical times and reactions, in search of roots and reasons. As revealed by Claudia Roth-Pierpont (2013, 206), the kernel of this novel had existed since the beginning of the 1970s, when Roth had drafted a piece he never developed until two decades later.

Going against his often commented upon image as a writer of predominantly white male protagonists, he was fascinated with the possibility of closely observing a female character unlike any he had created before, one who was highly representative of an era that grew to preoccupy him.

> The pages were about a politically radicalized young woman who blows up a building to protest against the Vietnam War. Why a woman? Because, unlike the angry young men of the anti-war movement, Roth explains today, the

[10] While Terry Gifford offers a most useful, comprehensive overview of the evolving meanings and uses of the term 'pastoral' in *Pastoral*, Routledge, 2019, further essential contributions to investigating Roth's oeuvre apart from the already mentioned ones can be found, for instance, in Matthew A. Shipe's *Understanding Philip Roth*, University of South Carolina Press, 2022 or Derek Parker Royal's *Philip Roth: New Perspectives on an American Author*, Praeger Publishers, 2005.

[11] Meredith's mother, Dawn Dwyer, is a former Miss New Jersey and a Miss America contestant.

> women acted without the threat of being drafted and becoming cannon fodder. There was a 'purity to their rage,' he says, which made them less immediately explicable and more compelling as a subject […] 'Young, college-educated women not afraid of violence—this was extraordinary in the history of American politics and American women'. (Roth-Pierpont 2013, 206-7)

This exceptional—yet not necessarily positive—fluidization or even reversal of gender roles, the proliferation and acceptability of violence as argument and solution, feed a literary version of the American 1960s that reignites and revisits the decade's major social and political debates. Not only does *American Pastoral* put forth one of the most memorable Rothian male protagonists, but it also proposes one of the fiercest antiheroes: Merry Levov. The heart wrenching conundrum resides in the fact that the Vietnam War proved excruciatingly divisive for the American people. The ensuing state of perplexity is illustrated by the nexus between father and daughter, separated by an unprecedented and insurmountable ideological abyss. As Roth-Pierpont observes:

> The Swede's tragedy derives from the fact that his daughter hates America. […] The loving little girl has grown up to hate her parents, too—for being bourgeois capitalists, for continuing to live their superficial lives while Vietnamese suffer. At sixteen, she can hardly tell her parents and her country apart. Among the most affecting scenes in the book are the face-offs between father and daughter: she, arguing with all the outraged moralism of youth; he, trying desperately to protect her from the potential consequences of her idealism. Neither seems completely right or wrong; the author's understanding enfolds them both. (Roth-Pierpont 2013, 214)

Philip Roth's balanced, melancholic, yet relentless satire of the American pastoral gone awry incorporates the ironies and inequalities of middle-class life in 1960s America, as he illustrates the multiple sides of the social and political conundrum that leads to implosion in the novel. A legitimate and long-functioning paradigm includes the Levov family tradition in the leather industry. Their creed is working for wealth and rising by industriousness, which they have practiced for decades. On the one hand, Roth skillfully incorporates the nostalgic though painful process of Jewish immigration and settlement in the Newark, New Jersey community: "Swede Levov's grandfather had come to Newark from the old country in the 1890s and found work fleshing sheepskins fresh from the lime vat, the lone Jew alongside the roughest of Newark's Slav, Irish, and Italian immigrants in the Nuttman Street tannery of the patent-leather tycoon T. P. Howell" (Roth 1998, 11).

On the other hand, while, in the Swede's youth, the Protestant ethic of hard work as the basis of American capitalist welfare still seemed to apply to Newark's "big breweries, big tanneries, and, for the immigrant, lots of wet, smelly, crushing work" (Roth 1998, 11), the 1960s' political upheavals and changes of public discourse bring about the fierce militantism against exploitation that Merry Levov comes to embrace. The Protestant work ethic, that once was the bedrock of the American Dream, is now perceived by some members of the younger generation as self-serving capitulation to bourgeois greed. Roth's novel illustrates contending ideological and psychological patterns alongside the impossibility of finding a reasonable middle ground. The bluntest indictments against American capitalism and the Protestant work ethic come from Rita Cohen, the unscrupulous propagandizing guru who allegedly inspires Seymour's daughter's fanaticism. The mysterious young woman pretends to visit Levov's factory on a research assignment. In terms of her plausibility as a character, Roth plays with the protagonist's and the reader's minds alike: after the tour, she discloses her connection to the Swede's fugitive daughter and starts antagonizing him with alleged revelations about his missing child's radicalized beliefs and violent actions.

Resorting to activist jargon and bellicose shaming strategies, Rita draws calumnious parallels and compares Merry's father to a profiteering plantation owner ("You take good care of your niggers. Of course you do. It's called paternal capitalism" (Roth 1998, 135)). Such resonant provocations encapsulate a misguided type of militantism via the misrepresentation of the history of race relations in America, alongside an oversimplified approach to the nuanced business models and policies of prosperity and welfare. The accusations foreground the Swede's own bitterness, disappointment, and revolt as he defends his version of the American Dream, though oblivious to the fact that there might be other versions, not shored up by bourgeois capitalism. Seymour tells Rita:

> You have no idea what *work* is. You've never held a job in your life, and if you even cared to find one, you wouldn't last a single day, not as a worker, not as a manager, not as an owner. Enough nonsense. I want you to tell me where my daughter is. That is all I want to hear from you. She needs […] serious help, not ridiculous cliches! (Roth 1998, 135)

Such harsh exchanges showcase the growing conflicts and traumatic confrontations between illusion, reality and alternative ideas about the American 1960s, which Roth marks as a turning point in recent U.S. history.

Conflating Family and Nation: A Dystopian Pursuit

The recurrent notion that being ideologically completely right or completely wrong is no longer essential or even possible in a complex, complicated, fluid contemporary world, informs Roth's novel. The tensions it portrays are, consequently, multi-faceted: the war between nations is echoed by the ones between classes and generations. Aversion, rejection, and polarization shape a narrative that alternatively gives legitimate credence, at least in part, to all sociopolitical voices vying for agency and power. Roth emphasizes seemingly irreconcilable differences in which mutual respect and understanding become near-impossible to achieve. No one is perfect, no one is infallible, yet no one relents or repents. Anti-war, pro-violence: this intriguing mix underlies the Levovs' drama. Public discourses incorporating narratives and counternarratives of the American Dream have perverted the individuals' capacity for dialogue and acceptance.

To prove the ontological and epistemological dissonances that he decides to explore, Roth resorts to an entire arsenal of narrative voices and methods. Description, dialogue, interior monologue, flashbacks and flashforwards are parts of the construction of the text's fictional universe. The Swede's story is pieced together in retrospect by one of Roth's favorite alter-egos, Nathan Zuckerman, witness, narrator and commentator throughout the entire *American Trilogy* and a steady presence in a number of other Rothian novels. Due to his reputation as an inquisitive writer, he is asked by the Swede to help him deliver a minute account of the Levovs' major life events (including his own, perhaps surprising, unhappiness). Seymour's brother, Jerry, former friend and valedictorian of Zuckerman's class, is one of the most sarcastic and, simultaneously, accurate inside narrators the latter encounters. His brief account of trauma is precise in terms of the grand allegory of decay projected by the Swede's and his daughter's essential discrepancies.

> The 'Rimrock Bomber' was Seymour's daughter. The high school kid who blew up the post office and killed the doctor. The kid who stopped the war in Vietnam by blowing up somebody out mailing a letter at five A.M. A doctor on his way to the hospital. […] Quaint Americana. Seymour was into quaint Americana. But the kid wasn't. He took the kid out of real time and she put him right back in. […] Good-bye, Americana; hello, real time. (Roth 1998, 68-69).

Via multiple voices and a carefully curated, multifocal lens on the 1960s and Seymour and Merry's love/hate relationship with the idea of the American Dream, Roth brings into the conversation different ways of relating to and

thinking of America as a country and as an idea. His protagonists' inability to understand nuances and accommodate other opinions and choices than their own makes them incapable of distinguishing between private priorities and communal or national prerequisites. The comprehension and transmission of compatible values proves impossible when the individuals' definitions of the self in context vary drastically. Roth suggests that Levov and his daughter provide case studies that might seem exaggerated, but not implausible.

For the Swede, the only possible way of relating to America is through unconditional love and respect of its values. His idyllic vision integrates elements of the conservative version of American success. He perceives the obstacles he encounters as mere ways of reaffirming his belonging and loyalty to the homeland of his choice and making. After becoming a United States Marine upon graduation at the end of World War II, which he sees as a tremendous opportunity, he goes back to civilian life and continues building an edifice of personal satisfaction he never even questions, let alone criticizes or rejects.

> Got to marry a beautiful girl named Dwyer. Got to run a business my father built, a man whose own father couldn't speak English. Got to live in the prettiest spot in the world. Hate America? Why, he lived in America the way he lived inside his own skin. All the pleasures of his younger years were American pleasures, all that success and happiness had been American, and he need no longer keep his mouth shut about it just to defuse her ignorant hatred. […] Everything that gave meaning to his accomplishments had been American. Everything he loved was here. (Roth 1998, 213)

Such passages, wherein private history is revisited and reinterpreted in retrospect, emphasize Levov's identification with Americanness as an earned distinction, the ultimate step on his upward mobility ladder. Marrying into U.S. respectability, claiming ownership of what he considers an estate built on hard work and meritocracy, inheriting and growing a business, like the exemplary American entrepreneurs he has always admired, enjoying the rewards for overcoming the myriad challenges his immigrant background imposed and which he embraced as incentive: in Levov's mind, these are ingredients of a simple recipe for instant happiness, promised to and cherished by generations.

His belief in these values makes the fall even harder for the Swede, as his recollections of his steps fail to provide a clear explanation for his daughter's estrangement and transformation into an enemy of himself, the family, and the nation. Despite his attempts at self-analysis, the man's confrontations with his decisions and his overall evolution as an individual, a husband, a father, and a citizen confirm his allegiance to the moral code he associates with the privilege of living in America and his family's accomplished aspirations. Much like the

nation, he is frustrated about not having foreseen failure, while always striving to do what he genuinely believed to be the right thing.

Shockingly to him, his own flesh and blood, Merry, rejects, despises, and radically dissociates herself from the America that supports his view of himself and the world. Her resistance to any connection to her father's world, her ingrained fury, and her radicalized political views are oftentimes described by contrast with her father's beliefs and experiences, which deepens the division between Levov and his daughter and reflects deep generational and national ruptures in 1960s America. Merry's expressed abhorrence of what she believes to be the essence of the United States contributes to keeping the Swede's non-excessive, disciplined, reasonable version of socio-cultural cohabitation viable. Her definition of Americanness is strikingly different from his. Roth captures Merry's extremist vision through her father's eyes as follows:

> How could a child of his be so blind as to revile the 'rotten system' that had given her own family every opportunity to succeed? To revile her 'capitalist' parents as though their wealth were the product of anything other than the unstinting industry of three generations. […] There wasn't much difference, *and she knew it,* between hating America and hating them. He loved the America she hated and blamed for everything that was imperfect in life and wanted violently to overturn, he loved the 'bourgeois values' she hated and ridiculed and wanted to subvert. (Roth 1998, 214)

Seymour's dismay is predicated precisely on the blurring of the lines between public and private, political and personal, love and hate. He fails to grasp his daughter's furious attacks towards a system that has molded and validated himself and his positive views about the American Dream. He feels betrayed and wronged by accusations that he suspects do not echo Merry's realistic, well-informed beliefs, but rather insidious, brainwashing propaganda. Having slipped entirely into the Protestant rather than the Jewish skin of America's immigrant forebears, thus enjoying the benefits that his community craves, Seymour Levov is fully enveloped in the myth of the American Dream.

However, when his daughter is outed as a terrorist, he finds himself plunged into the chaos that defies what he has always relied on: order and stability, values that the American majority still abides by. As Timothy Parrish points out,

> What seems to be a family narrative—the story of how descendants of immigrant Jews achieve the American dream—is also a national one. […] To Merry, her father embodies that mixture of American exceptionalism and cultural imperialism that made the war against Viet Nam possible. Not only is

> Swede an example of the American dream that this generation will be better off than the previous one, but as the owner of glove factories in Newark and Puerto Rico his success story is built on the exploitation of African Americans and Puerto Ricans. (Parrish 2000, 97)

Parrish picks up on the oftentimes misconstrued connections and hardly justified appropriations that feed Merry's rage, as she begins to obsess about herself as a representative and defender of all those she believes are persecuted. It is also interesting to note Roth's sensitivity to the nuances of forced conflations of race, ethnicity, class, status, and gender issues. By resorting to overall umbrella-notions such as "minority issues", "exploitation", "discrimination", and "marginalization" in ways that vilify and denounce as evil what used to be standard, unquestionable behaviors, with no chance of atonement or reconciliation, Roth's generational conflicts also illustrate a battle of sociopolitical ideologies, opposing discourses and representations that turns literally explosive in the absence of moderation and mediation.

American Pastoral tracks polarizing contexts of the Vietnam War to illustrate the dramatic consequences of History upon histories. Merry's encounter with anti-war activists, whose indignation seems legitimate and resonant with many people's cravings for stability, predictability, and peace, marks the beginning of a downward spiral leading to her transformation into a cold-blooded terrorist. As scholar Leslie Oster points out,

> Levov's shock, his painful awareness of his daughter as a murderer, crackles on the page. […] Beautifully written and compelling, *American Pastoral* is sometimes difficult to read because of what it asks us to confront. Most of us believe ourselves to be caring, decent people with good values who, at the very least, "do no harm". We are much like the Swede. As we read, we wonder: have our goals as a society and the lifestyle we've evolved been a mere self-delusion leading to disaster? (Oster 2001, 148)

Apart from indicating anew Roth's tapping into some of America's most painful ruptures, *American Pastoral* shows us how national division often can foment family division. In the above quotation, Oster makes a convincing point about the book's impact. The destruction of the Swede's innocence, his consternation about the U-turn from the American pastoral to the apocalyptic aptly anticipate many Third Millennium conundrums: Has idealism bred monsters? Has American democracy, alongside its interpretations, annotations, manifestations in time, veered distractingly towards desideratum, rather than status quo? Have the large-scale symbols of grandeur and projected images of the American Dream-like perfection made Americans vulnerable to a flawed reality?

By echoing passionate viewpoints via the opinions of major and minor characters alike, Roth exposes the tragic inconsistencies of the American Dream, its constant transformations and mutability, its permeability to class, ethnicity, status, race, religion, gender issues, the sociopolitical pressures that it creates, and its often divisive, rather than unifying effects. In the novel, Roth captures the devastating discontinuities inherent in the turbulent sociopolitical landscape of the 1960s via multiple, oftentimes conflicting perceptions. Advantaged by his appearance and diligence, Levov enjoys opportunities hardly accessible to others, being able to exert agency and build on his family legacy steadily and honestly, he believes, until proven otherwise. His heartbreak and disappointment are genuine.

> Three generations. All of them growing. The working. The saving. The success. Three generations in raptures over America. Three generations of becoming one with a people. And now with the fourth it had all come to nothing. The total vandalization of their world. (Roth 1998, 237)

Middle-Class Americana and Identity Crises: An Implosion

Published at the end of the 1990s, after Roth had witnessed the hesitations and transformations of post-1960s America, alongside the exposure of the flawed idea of sociopolitical unity in America, *American Pastoral* looks at a nation buffeted between political and generational counter currents: the greater good versus the smaller comfort, generalizations versus particularizations, devotion to grand causes versus the suburban, middle-class well-being, promised after the Second World War as a return to a long-lost normalcy.

Featuring dramatic transformations of U.S. public discourse, policies, and actions throughout the '60s and '70s, Roth's novel

> exposes the shallowness and inadequacy of those decades. Security is derailed by the actions of a young girl who chooses to protest the order of her life by physical violence, first in protest against the Vietnam War and President Johnson, then against society at large. […] As the novel progresses […] we learn that her protest is deeper: it is against the greed and self-corruption she believes drives all those who seek middle-class life in America. […] Among the larger themes of *American Pastoral* is the undermining of the American Dream of success measured only by material wealth. (Nadel 2011, 29)

As the novel unfolds, it becomes increasingly obvious that, in extremist circles, protesting war marks the beginning of a rather perilous age of dissent for which

justice and equality are, in fact, populist pretexts. The humane predisposition to plead for negotiation, peaceful solutions, reasonable socio-political interactions, impartiality, and equal opportunity for all, is cannibalized by radical groups who exploit naivete and rebelliousness for militant agendas. Merry falls prey to alleged revolutionary promises and becomes angrier, bitterer, and further disconnected from everyday life in her immediate Jewish community. Moreover, she embraces the very violence she presumably objects to, and she assumes a self-proclaimed justiciary role, disregarding its blatant incongruity with her background, status, and upbringing.

To defend her radical(ized) views, Merry would instigate as much destruction and chaos as possible. This lack of boundaries and filters creates a tragic rift not only within her family, but from reality as well. Not incidentally, Roth includes Cuba in her radical trajectory: her revolt is larger than its apparent roots and goes beyond the borders of 1960s America. Indeed, Merry envisions herself as the imaginary spokesperson for the oppressed of the world. She believes that her crusade is just as fierce and hypothetically heroic as her father's conventionalism:

> She believed that in Cuba she could live among workers without having to worry about their violence. […] She had concluded by this time that there could never be a revolution in America to uproot the forces of racism and reaction and greed. Urban guerrilla warfare was futile against a thermonuclear superstate that would stop at nothing to defend the profit principle. Since she could not help to bring about a revolution in America, her only hope was to give herself to the revolution that was. (Roth 1998, 260)

Roth suggests, thus, that both the Swede's and Merry's highly idealistic ideological beliefs, as well as their opposing views on America, might in fact feed on similarly idyllic representations. In direct or indirect renditions of Merry's obsessive hate-and-elation speeches, as well as in her father's and the entire community's search for an explanation for her violence and subsequent downfall, one can easily detect the general(ized) type of challenge Roth responds to: mounting identity crises. Individuals, professionals, social groups, and parts of the nation as a whole are subject to turmoil and transformation due to reconfigurations of the American Dream. Since America's inception, the American Dream has been about immigrant success through integration and acculturation to an American way of life. The era captured by Roth, however, unveils the flaws in the design.

Underneath Roth's protagonists' vision of the American Dream there lie the hopes, illusions, and endeavors of an entire segment of the Jewish community to which Seymour and Merry Levov belong—one that has struggled

for legitimacy and respect among Gentiles and America's multicultural structure. Or so the Swede thinks. Instead, Roth's novel provides a nuanced analysis of the different iterations over the years of what constitutes Jewish-Americanness. While the professed ideal of cultural transformation and assimilation falters significantly throughout the '60s and '70s, the American pastoral dissipates into a dramatically romanticized and antiquated view of the United States and its history of immigration.

In terms of the parallels between disfavored groups that Merry and her collaborators draw, based on rather misplaced identification and false empathy, Roth might have had a number of real-life sources of inspiration. In the novel, Seymour becomes very interested in the well-known African American Marxist activist, Angela Davis, in his quest to understand Merry's motivations. Angela Davis was "a communist professor at UCLA who is against the war, [and who is subsequently] tried in San Francisco for kidnapping, murder, and conspiracy" (Roth 1998, 157). Seymour learns that Davis was an inspiration to Merry. Yet, the shortcomings of misinformed mimicry are evident.

> This […] is fascinating because it links Jews and African Americans (this is something Roth has done in novels such as *The Human Stain*). In this novel, one needs to look into this relationship because, in it, the Jewish-American women take an African-American woman as their model. And this mimicry is, in some ways, comical. […] It has the element of radical chic. (Feuer 2014)

Superficial as it may sound, the idea of 'radical-chic' points to the inherent shallowness of discourses that are embraced fanatically and the limits of their applicability and relevance to real world sociopolitical nuances. Radicalism as a fashionable trend is suggested throughout Merry's evolution, which moves from rebelliousness and dissent to recklessness and murder. The exploration of similarities and dissimilarities between ethnic minorities in the United States is an important topic, which lends itself to in-depth research and discussion. So are, however, its underlying limitations and the dangers of generalizations it formulates: the significance of nuanced critical thinking is crucial. Artificially appropriating stories to strengthen theoretical and sociopolitical positions, Roth suggests, highlights the paradoxical nature of identification with and affiliation to causes that do not necessarily justify either the means or the execution of said positions.

The novel's connection to 'real time' has also been emphasized by Claudia Roth-Pierpont, who brings to the readers' attention yet another interesting case study:

> He was particularly inspired by the case of Kathy Boudin, a young woman who became a prominent member of the violent anti-war group the Weather Underground. […] Roth was acquainted with Boudin's parents—he says that Kathy "couldn't have had a more terrific childhood"—and he had been friendly with a family who lived across the street from the Greenwich Village town house that the so-called Weathermen accidentally blew up. […] Back in 1970, Roth tells me, he was so frustrated with the war that—however figuratively—"I was pretty ready to set off a bomb myself". (Roth Pierpont 2013, 207)

Thus, starting from a mix of his own dilemmas and observation of the appalling realities around him, the author primarily focuses on the effect of radical ideologies upon social, communal, and family interactions. The novel functions as a manifesto against extremism by illustrating the destructive power of public discourses that shape private actions and imagination in hardly controllable or reasonable ways. Anticipating the era of fake news, conspiracy theories, and large-scale social media manipulation, Roth describes Merry as the offspring of generations of hard-working, hyphenated American-Jews, whose idealistic representations of the United States and sustained efforts to claim full belonging to the nation are ironically blown up from within. The one to do so is the all-American child whose mother is Miss America and whose father is the epitome of Jewish Americanization.

This indicates the indisputable decline of idols and ideals and the transformation of the pastoral into its opposite. Through Merry's violent actions, the once triumphant narrative of endless opportunity turns into a denunciation of stratification, opportunism, class, race, gender divisions long obliterated from the mainstream national mindset. The Levovs' tragedy resides in the lack of genuine communication between increasingly different perspectives on Americanness and its (dis)contents. Individual protest gestures jeopardize the ingrained confidence in adaptation and assimilation towards the common goal of democratic inclusiveness. Once that statuesque ideal is shaken off its pedestal, the dilemmas and backlashes are unavoidable:

> When Merry becomes a revolutionary and detonates a bomb in the local post office that kills an 'innocent' bystander, she also explodes her father's happy success story into the American berserk. In this moment national history becomes family narrative to the extent that the Viet Nam War and the American unrest of the sixties is caused not by American foreign policy or Communist Revolutionaries but by our American belief in cultural transformation as an inherent social good. […] The novel ultimately mourns the inevitable disappearance of the Jewish identity experienced by Swede and Zuckerman and Philip Roth as boys. (Parrish 2000, 97)

Jewish Immigrants and The Goy[12] Ideal

One of Roth's main avenues of exploration in *American Pastoral*, as in most of his fiction, is the aforementioned issue of Jewish-American identity and how a history shaped by immigration connects to preconceived notions of happiness and the American Dream. While seeing these elements grow further and further apart, Roth intertwines the individual, the communal and the national ideal by having the reader watch the seeds of Jewish discontent grow roots in the soil of WASP American ideals. The neighborhood stories in which the writing abounds feature successful members of the (once) immigrant community who embrace and replicate the American Dream. The characters' recollections of their historical neighborhood's evolution are inevitably marked by both admiration towards and mimetic representation/ (re)enactment of goy behavior.

For example, while meditating on the fate of the Levovs, Zuckerman presents memorable passages, which sound nostalgic and premonitory alike.

> The first postimmigrant generation of Newark's Jews had regrouped into a community that took its inspiration more from the mainstream of American life than from the Polish shtetl their Yiddish-speaking parents had recreated around Prince Street in the impoverished Third Ward. The Keer Avenue Jews, with their […] flagstone front steps, seemed to be at the forefront, laying claim like audacious pioneers to the normalizing American amenities. And at the vanguard of the vanguard were the Levovs, who had bestowed upon us our very own Swede, a boy as close to a goy as we were going to get. (Roth 1998, 10)

The questioning of 'mainstream', 'normalizing' middle-class values in the United States during the 1960s is a leitmotif in this novel that showcases the dissolution of trust and truth as bases for generative social interaction. As such, it inevitably affects the afore-described pioneers of Jewish-American integration and goy-like sophistication. For dramatic and empathic effect, Roth resorts to the family drama framework, yet the issues he addresses are vaster. Making Merry the militant embodiment of the counter-pastoral impulse, "Roth examines the assault against both historical and literary metanarratives that constitute the American mythic ideal, interrogating a consensus ideology reflected in a modernist vision of history and literary theory" […] (Stanley 2005, 3).

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[12] Plural *goyim* ['gȯi-əm]: a non-Jewish person. *Gentile*, sense 1. (a person of a non-Jewish nation or of non-Jewish faith especially: a Christian as distinguished from a Jew) Etymology. Yiddish, from Hebrew *gōy* people, nation. 'Goy.' Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, *Merriam-Webster*, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/goy. Accessed 21 May 2024.

Although attention is drawn to the protagonists and many analyses of the novel focus almost exclusively on them, the picture is further complicated and nuanced by the secondary characters. Representative of Newark's shared mentalities and patterns is the Levov father figure, for instance, with his undeterred determination to accomplish the highly motivational American Dream. Roth's narrative showcases the Swede's inherited commitment to his family's well-being, which is predicated on an unflinching devotion to his and the nation's heritage:

> Mr. Levov was one of those slum-reared Jewish fathers whose rough-hewn, undereducated perspective goaded a whole generation of striving, college educated Jewish sons: a father for whom everything is an unshakable duty, for whom there is a right way and a wrong way and nothing in between […] Limited men with limitless energy; men quick to be friendly and quick to be fed up; men for whom the most serious thing in life is *to keep going despite everything.* And we were their sons. It was our job to love them. (Roth 1998, 11)

Such descriptions of the neighborhood spirit capture the transmission of communal and national ideals to and among individuals in Newark's Jewish community, alongside the literalness of America's forebearers' understanding of it. If, at the beginning of Seymour's own education, this seemed the natural, proper, and recommendable way to act for full integration into the American cultural framework, in retrospect, the newly realized flaws in its design haunt the narrator who tries to untangle the Levovs' apparently inexplicable drama, a metonymical version of the then national drama. Roth does not avoid an interrogation of the cracks in the ideas of individual success and the American Dream: "Fifty years later, I ask you: has the immersion ever again been so complete as it was in those streets, where every block, every backyard, every house, every *floor* of every house—the walls, ceilings, doors, and windows of every last friend's family apartment—came to be so absolutely individualized?" (Roth 1998, 43)

The reader is exposed to a layered perspective on the alienation and disenfranchisement brought about by the abrupt transformation of individual, communal, and national status quos. The author's position and the narrator's commentaries encapsulate both denunciation & sympathy, as

> Roth portrays the members of the 'greatest generation' who were baffled by the demythologizing decade of the sixties with sympathy, but he also critiques the myths by which they lived and exposes their refusal to acknowledge how that very mythology might propagate the social and economic injustices that sixties radicals battled. (Stanley 2005, 3)

In this light, one of the novel's accomplishments is Seymour Levov's portrayal through multiple lenses, as either heroic figure for the postwar generation or demonic exploiter to the Vietnam-war protesters. He is torn between these hypostases: victim or perpetrator according to context, circumstances, and beholders. Born, bred, and reared as the sensible school and neighborhood hero, he must meet the community's expectations of him as a model and a savior. Roth suggests that the pressure and normativity of responsibility become crushing for the younger generation once twentieth-century history poses unprecedented national and international challenges. The Swede's always appropriate modesty, care, and selflessness turn him from an exemplary member of the Jewish community and a worthy American citizen into the victim of his own good intentions. Never a dissenter and a protester himself, he is not just confronted with the physical decay of his increasingly ailing body, but he is also confronted by the moral and ethical challenges of his shattered idealism, from which there seems to be no rescue or redemption.

> It all began—this heroically idealistic maneuver, this strategic, strange spiritual desire to be a bulwark of duty and ethical obligation—because of the war, because of all the terrible uncertainties bred by the war, because of how strongly an emotional community whose beloved sons were far away facing death had been drawn to a lean and muscular, austere boy whose talent it was to be able to catch anything anybody threw anywhere near him. It all began for the Swede—as what doesn't?—in a circumstantial absurdity. And ended in another one. A bomb. (Roth 1998, 79-80)

Roth's subtle understanding of causes, effects, and the crucial emotional influence of the Jewish community becomes evident in such passages as above. He dives deep into the Levovs complicated family dynamics, as the successive generations prove increasingly different and distant from those of the Greatest Generation in terms of actions and expectations. Seymour's ideal of universal, cardinal, essential kindness is countered by his father's warning that choosing emotionally will not reasonably support his American Dream (in this respect, there are multiple parallels between Roth's *American Pastoral* and Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*).

When the Swede decides to marry for love—of wife and Americanness alike, it seems—, he is baffled by his father's warnings:

> What is 'in love' going to do for you when you have a child? How are you going to raise a child? As a Catholic? As a Jew? […] They raised a child who was neither Catholic nor Jew, who instead was first a stutterer, then a killer, then a Jain. He had tried all his life never to do the wrong thing, and that was what he had done.

> […] The most serious thing in his life, seemingly from the time he was *born,* was to prevent the suffering of those he loved, to be kind to people. (Roth 1998, 386)

Seymour Levov's evolution, his embrace of the American Dream, shows that marrying Miss America does not instantly integrate one in the WASP body of the nation, and affiliation does not equal assimilation; neither should it do so, Roth suggests. As the Swede's fate is reconstructed, reread, and reinterpreted, strong signals surface to indicate that appearance and essence do not coincide, that the projected utopia he envisions for himself, his daughter, and Newark's Jewish community does not incorporate or acknowledge all the nuances that come with living in America. The Swede only apprehends in retrospect the power and ubiquitous presence of the everlasting immigrant hyphen, as he mentally revisits his conversation with his parents while he struggles to cope with the trauma of Merry's radical transformation.

The entire construal and deconstruction of Seymour Levov's myth, by himself and others, moves between self-mystification in the initial stages and self-examination once everything falls apart. His, his daughter's, his wife's (yet another character worthy of further exploration), his family's confusion, and the reshuffling of values are caused by essential shifts in perspective, expectations, civic attitudes, and interpretations of exemplariness associated with American society and its concomitant American Dream: its layers from inclusive education to financial opportunity, success patterns and accessibility and, above all, as in many of Roth's works, the increasingly forgotten art of constructive conversation.

Conclusion

As Halio points out, the initial implausibility of the Swede's and Merry's drama and its gradual sinking into the narrator's, the characters', and the community's consciousness as an awareness-raising episode, trigger essential questions as to the reconfigurations of mentalities and reactions imposed by socio-historical events and evolutions.

> Roth's title, *American Pastoral*, is deeply ironic, and his irony is pervasive. How could the events he describes through his fictive surrogate Zuckerman have happened? Why did they happen? What insidious disease so infected American middle-class culture that it could and—if the Levov family tragedy is representative—did cause such terrible destruction? Roth does not directly answer these questions. On the contrary, his novel ends with them: What is wrong with the Levovs' life? What life could be less reprehensible than theirs? (Halio 1999, 137)

Like most postmodern works of fiction, Roth's *American Pastoral* leaves the moral of the story for the readers to determine for themselves. The book launches a provocative and complex interrogation of ethics and idealism in contemporary life, alongside their darker counterparts: opportunism and radicalism. Presenting itself as a fictional mélange of tragic comedy with docudrama[13], it encapsulates Roth's cautionary tales against extremism and miscommunication in private and public spheres alike. It also emphasizes the importance of affect in social interactions and demonstrates that sensitivity to individual needs, fears, desires can hardly be encompassed by stereotypical discourses, no matter which side of the political and ideological spectrum they stem from.

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"SHINING WITH SOUND IN THE UNTRANSLATABLE DARK"—REBECCA ELSON'S POETRY OF COSMIC WISDOM

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ABSTRACT. ***"Shining with sound in the untranslatable dark"—Rebecca Elson's Poetry of Cosmic Wisdom.*** Despite having left us only a small body of verse, collected in the posthumously published *A Responsibility to Awe* (2001), Montreal-born astrophysicist and poet Rebecca Elson impresses through a particular sensibility resulting from the unlikely union of positivist certitude and existential angst informed by an acute sense of one's biological finitude. In this paper, intended both as a recuperative effort and an interpretive exercise, we will try to shed light on how poetry, as Elson's case demonstrates, can be a fundamentally ecological effort and a disciplined quest for belonging, reminding us that even the most unremarkable aspects of our everyday existence are irrevocably linked to our profound connections with the universe.

Keywords: *Rebecca Elson, fragmentation, wholeness, unselfing, awe.*

REZUMAT. ***"Strălucind de sunet în întunericul intraductibil"—poezia de înțelepciune cosmică a Rebeccăi Elson*****.** În ciuda faptului că ne-a lăsat un număr restrâns de versuri, adunate în volumul postum *A Responsibility to Awe* (2001), astrofiziciana și poeta Rebecca Elson, născută la Montreal, impresionează printr-o sensibilitate deosebită, rezultată din contopirea neobișnuită a certitudinii pozitiviste și a angoasei existențiale inspirate de un sentiment acut al propriei finitudini biologice. În această lucrare, concepută atât ca efort de recuperare, cât și ca exercițiu de interpretare, vom încerca să punem în lumină modul în care poezia, așa cum demonstrează cazul lui Elson, poate fi un demers esențialmente ecologic și o căutare disciplinată a apartenenței, amintindu-ne că până și cele mai banale aspecte ale existenței noastre cotidiene sunt irevocabil legate de conexiunile noastre profunde cu universul.

Cuvinte cheie: *Rebecca Elson, fragmentare, integralitate, uitare de sine, venerație.*

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1. Introduction: the nomad in search for answers

In section 276 of *The Gay Science,* Friedrich Nietzsche provides one of the most compelling arguments for stoicism as an ultimate expression of intellectual discipline, introducing the notion of *amor fati*, or joyful acceptance of necessity, as a form of spiritual liberation from suffering, the inescapable mark of the human condition:

> I want to learn more and more to see as beautiful what is necessary in things; then I shall be one of those who makes things beautiful. *Amor fati:* let that be my love henceforth! I do not want to wage war against what is ugly. I do not want to accuse; I do not even want to accuse those who accuse. *Looking away* shall be my only negation. And all in all and on the whole: some day I wish to be only a Yes-sayer. (1974, 223)

Formulated at a moment when the Western mind had started to doubt the almighty edifice of rationalist-positivist thought, which had been the letter of the law since the dawn of the Enlightenment, Nietzsche's proposal has remained to this date an enthusiastic assertion of the realist creed: the world is what it is, and one must take on all the load it carries, making the best of it. Challenges are not obstacles, but forces that shape us, while adversities are opportunities for increasing our potential. Saying yes to all facets of life is a radical effort, but, Nietzsche suggests, it is the sign of greatness.

Published more than a century after Nietzsche's seminal work, *A Responsibility to Awe* (2001) is the only book by Montreal-born astronomer and writer Rebecca Elson (1960-1999). Comprising finished poems ("Poems"), a large section of drafts and notes, many of them intended as journal entries ("Extracts from the Notebook"), as well as an autobiographical essay ("From Stones to Stars"), the book is a testimony, albeit in an undeclared form, to a vision akin to the Nietzschean *amor fati*. In one of the unfinished pieces from the notebook section ("Transumanza"), Elson, who had been diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma at the age of 29, wonders:

> Is there any language, logic
> Any algebra where death is not
> The tragedy it seems
> A geometry that makes it look
> Alright to die
> Where can it [sic] be proved
> Some theorem

These verses contain the essence of Elson's vision—a vision marked by the existential angst occasioned by the acute sense of her impending death and the fierce determination to find answers even to the most vexing questions. Her destiny, wrote Pierre Barthélémy upon the publication of the first French translation of her book, was of a shooting star or of the supernovae, the giant stars which remain invisible until they explode in a flash, gracing us only with their long-gone light (2021, 22). While her poems do not provide an answer to the question put forth in the above lines (partly due to the premature end of her journey), they reveal, indeed, an energy not unlike that of such celestial bodies, one that amazes and unsettles at the same time. If, as Skelton argues, one of the primary tasks of literature is "to impose a structure on life and death, giving meaning to both", sharing with science the noble goal to help us "interpret our own role as participants in the human condition" (2003, 213), Elson's poems exhibit all the qualities of great literature. Elson's own version of *amor fati* is the "responsibility to awe", as she confesses in the poem that opens the volume, "We, Astronomers".[2] In their search for answers, astronomers are "nomads,/Merchants, circus people", they are "industrious" and "breed enthusiasms". Yet, this is not a mere *pro domo*, for Elson's words provide more than a poetic introduction of the members of her guild—they uncover that which both bonds us as a species and binds us to our destinies: the dogged pursuit of the mysteries of the universe and the intimidating knowledge of the immensity of the task. Like Nietzsche, Elson embraces fate lovingly, but she is not enthusiastic about the inherent duality of our condition. There are moments when "[s]tarlight seems too sharp", so we seek solace in "the small patch where each foot falls". "We Astronomers" is indeed a key-text, as it informs us about the two central forces that govern her outlook: the scientist's unstoppable impulse to enlarge her vision (the inquisitive subject's response to an ever expanding universe), and the complementary drive to remain grounded in something solid (the same subject's search for a familiar communal space). And thus, Elson's astronomers are fated to be nomads because the theories they develop as well as the methods and instruments they use are continuously evolving, since the universe itself is a boundless, endlessly unfolding structure. Their homes are everywhere, yet nowhere, at once.

Building on these preliminary observations, in this paper I propose a discussion of Elson's poetry from the perspective of this double engagement with complementary forces, also having in view the aforementioned equivalent

[2] All quotations from Elson's poems included in this paper are from the e-Book version of *A Responsibility to Awe* (Carcanet Classics, 2018). For this reason, the references do not include page numbers, mentioning instead, in each case, the title of the poem from which the quoted passage has been excerpted.

of the Nietzschean concept of *amor fati*, the "responsibility to awe", the shared ideal of both science and art. Furthermore, along this interpretive and recuperative exercise, we will see how the particular fusion of positivist certainty and poetic sensibility represents for Elson a way to come to terms and cope with her own mortality. Due to the constraints of space specific to such a paper, my approach will be, principally, monographic, aiming at highlighting both the author's general thematic preferences and the common thread that runs through her works. At the same time, I will also try to align Elson's scientifically-informed poetic vision with David Bohm's concept of "undivided wholeness", which I will present in the following section of my paper, as part of the theoretical grounding of my argument. Through this endeavour, I intend to add to the meagre body of criticism available on Elson and suggest a perspective that both complements and diverges from previous scholarship, which has seen her poetry either as a means of popularising scientific concepts through a more accessible transmission medium (Howard, 2002; Bell Burnell, 2006; Crossland, 2017) or as an alternative space in which scientific concepts could be tackled imaginatively and intuitively (Heuschling, 2019).

2. Fragmentation and wholeness—from "two cultures" to "flowing movement"

In her meticulously argued discussion of the relationship between Elson's professional and artistic endeavours, Sophie Heuschling states that for Elson science and poetry were complementary. Through her "astronomical poetry", Elson found a medium to address the limitations of science by means of metaphors, similes and analogies, devices frequently employed in cosmological and astronomical research for developing alternative models to test out various scientific hypotheses (2019, 43-44). While she mentions a number of critics who have looked at Elson's poetry as a complementary activity whereby science could be "communicated" to the general public (44), Heuschling offers a more nuanced interpretation. With Elson, poetry and science are "closely intertwined, in that her poems visualize her astronomical research." (45) Poetry also gave the astronomer "the licence to free speculation" and its specific mechanisms and devices (imagery, metaphor) made it possible for her to think outside the box (47). In addition to the apt analysis of a short but relevant selection of Elson's poems which address such key scientific concepts as the dark matter ("Dark Matter"), Einstein's cosmological constant ("Constellations") or the age of the universe ("Girl with a Balloon"), Heuschling's merit consists in reminding us that Elson's case also brings into question the age-old dialectic between positivist (scientific) and non-positivist (humanistic) disciplines. Given that my

own discussion of Elson's poems will also try to shed light on her "situatedness", in what follows, I will present a number of key-points associated with this dialectic.

As Crawford points out, invoking studies conducted by several scholars (Bell, 1981; Beer, 1996; Albright, 1997), there is incontestable evidence that, since the end of the nineteenth century, literature has become increasingly engaged with science. For instance, it is a well-documented fact that modernist poets were keen on finding ways to incorporate scientific ideas and metaphors in their works, such as relativity, perspectivism, information revolution, quantum physics—as demonstrated by the works of Eliot, Pound or Stevens. However, the corollary aspect, the scientists' interest in poetry, literature or philosophy is more difficult to uncover, despite evidence that a number of important names (for example, Clerk Maxwell, Albert Einstein or Norbert Wiener) were fascinated with the "patternings and imaginative investigations" of poetry (Crawford 2006, 1-3). Yet, despite proof of the "intertwining" of early twentieth century poetry and science, for half a century there has been a debate among journalists, scientists and philosophers regarding "the opposition of the poetic and the scientific" (3)—a statement which would make Elson the odd exception, at the same time casting doubt on the validity of Heuschling's arguments. The most relevant example in this sense is that of C. P. Snow and his famous 1959 Rede lecture *The Two Cultures*, which, according to Crawford, promoted an "eccentric" and "stereotyping" view of the incompatibility of poetry and science that remained influential in many circles for a long time (5). The main points of this lecture are worth summarising here. As Snow claims, by the middle of the 20th century the "intellectual life of the whole western society" (but also its "practical life") had become "split into two polar groups"—the "literary intellectuals" and the "physical scientists" (Snow 1998, 4). Between these groups, there is "a gulf of mutual incomprehension", even "hostility and dislike" and, above all, "lack of understanding" (4). Despite historical evidence that such tensions might in fact prove productive, in Snow's view this was not possible at the time due to the lack of a common language for the members of these "two cultures" (17) and to the fact that "[i]ntellectuals, in particular literary intellectuals, are natural Luddites" (23).

While Snow argued that both parties had to find ways to bridge this gap, he also assigned responsibility for the situation to the British educational system, which had favoured a traditional view on culture that placed greater emphasis on humanistic training, giving it an "unscientific flavour" that could easily turn even "anti-scientific" (11-12). Naturally, Snow's opinions further polarised the world of intellectuals, and many of the debates over the decades that have elapsed since the publication of his work have tried to tip the scales in one or the other direction. Given the limits of this article, in what follows I

will refer to only a few of them, so as to illustrate perspectives that could be associated with either of these "cultures". Thus, in his influential book *Consilience* (1999), Edward Wilson invokes the concept of "Ionian Enchantment", a term coined by historian and physicist Gerald Holton to describe the belief in the unity of all sciences, "a search for objective reality over revelation", whose aim is "to save the spirit not by surrender but by liberation of the human mind" (Wilson 1999, 7). Grounding his own argument in Holton's concept, Wilson states that the "fragmentation of knowledge" which appears to characterise the current state of philosophy is not real, but a product of scholarship. As a response and solution, he proposes the notion of "consilience", which he defines as "a 'jumping together' of knowledge by the linking of facts and fact-based theory across disciplines", with a view to setting up "a common ground of explanation" (8). Consilience, Wilson further explains, should not be understood as another form of hybridisation, but as "fluency across boundaries" (13-14). While this does suggest a conciliatory and productive perspective akin to Snow's own plea, the basis of Wilson's proposal remains reductionist, since consilience implies the belief that all phenomena "are ultimately reducible, however long and tortuous the sequences, to the laws of physics" (291). Thus, with all its merits, consilience can be regarded as another expression of what Mary Midgley, in her book *Science and Poetry*, claims to be the dominant contemporary attitude toward science, which professes the extension of "impersonal, reductive, atomistic methods" of physical science into other fields, such as sociology or psychology, where they often prove inadequate (Midgley 2006, 1-2). Midgley calls this attitude "imperialistic" (1) and "monarchical" (x), largely indebted to the Enlightenment belief in the independence of the human world from the physical one, which also makes the latter subservient to our goals. What we need instead is an approach rooted in the understanding that we are merely a minuscule part, "organically situated within a far greater whole, a biosphere that we can easily damage, but which we could never direct or replace" (xii). A similar opinion is expressed by Wendell Berry, who argues that the "corporate" logic and the "cult of innovation" underpinning contemporary scientific research, especially in the academia, removes the scientist from "the ecological circumstances in which the work will have effect" (Berry 2001, 63-64). In fact, science is fraught with two dangers: on the one hand, sustained questioning or curiosity may sometimes be harmful (as it may involve unethical action) and, on the other, the application of science "is generally crude". In this context, consilience has its own limitations, just as any other perspective, including the religious one. However, unlike religion, science "concedes nothing to mystery", eliminating anything that does not fit its framework or formulas (66).

In truth, the concern for the limited abilities and applicability of science is not a novel thing. Many of the great scientific minds of the previous century were aware of the need to reconcile the positivistic and the humanistic perspectives wherever required and possible. Thus, in a conversation with Werner Heisenberg, during the fifth Solvay Conference on Physics (24-29 October 1927), Niels Bohr argued that the difference between science and religion is only apparent. Religion is closer to poetry in its use of language (being reliant on images, parables and paradoxes), because it deals with a reality that cannot be grasped otherwise, but the reality it addresses is as genuine a reality as that which represents the central interest of science. Thus, Bohr suggests, the division of reality into "objective" and "subjective" is "much too arbitrary", hence, counterproductive (Heisenberg 1972, 87-88). More recently, another major name in the world of physics, David Bohm, expressed similar ideas. In *On Creativity*, he argues that artists and scientists "feel the need to create something new that is whole and total, harmonious and beautiful" (Bohm 2004, 3). Bohm believes in the deeply "aesthetic" quality of modern scientific thought. In fact, he further argues, the problem with post-Copernican science is that it has generally regarded the universe as a lifeless mechanism. However, science does not necessarily imply such a mechanistic understanding of the world. For example, many of the most "creative" scientists have considered that the laws of the universe have a distinct kind of beauty, which is a perspective that brings science close to the arts, since the latter is primarily concerned with beauty (38-39). It is therefore possible to engage all fields of culture in a dialogue, which should not represent an "exchange" (as in a game of ping pong), but a "flowing through". Ultimately, through dialogue, if something new is discovered, every party wins, concludes Bohm (144). Elsewhere, in *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*, Bohm formulates a coherent theory whose implications reach beyond the sphere of physics. He starts by acknowledging that "fragmentation" is widespread in the current world, affecting both society and the individual, which leads to "a general confusion of the mind" and muddles perception (Bohm 2002, 1). Akin to Bohr's view on the merely apparent separation of "objective" and "subjective" realities, he states that the notion of these fragments having an independent existence is purely illusory, creating "endless conflict and confusion" (2). What is more, such a fragmentary worldview determines humans to develop intellectual frameworks that are themselves based on fragmentation, thereby increasing the existing fragmentation (i. e. creating a self-perpetuating system), since "every form of theoretical insight introduces its own essential differences and distinctions" (8). To counter this, Bohm argues that "wholeness" is not some abstract ideal toward which one should tend, but what *is* actually real, while fragmentation is merely a response to "man's action, guided by illusory

perception, which is shaped by fragmentary thought" (9). Therefore, in order to eliminate fragmentation, we should also embrace a different understanding of thought, as a "form of insight, a way of looking, rather than as a 'true copy of reality as it is'" (9). Bohm calls this new form of insight "Undivided Wholeness in Flowing Movement", based on the notion that everything is in a state of continuous flux, impossible to conceptualise directly but nonetheless knowable "implicitly", through the stable and unstable "explicitly definable forms and shapes" which can be "abstracted from the universal flux". In line with this view, there is no distinction between mind and matter, both being merely "different aspects of one whole and unbroken movement" (14).

In my opinion, Bohm's concept of "undivided wholeness" is particularly useful for approaching Elson's poetry. As I will try to illustrate in the following section, rather than seeing poetry as complementary to astronomy, with Elson, science and art are occasioned by the same inquisitive impulse—merely different idioms for the same unbroken movement of the whole. Indeed, whether Elson was an "astrophysicist who rhymed" or a "poetess who counted stars" (Barthélémy 2021, 22)[3], in the final analysis, does not matter.

3. Of stars and stones and the antidotes

Although the poems in *A Responsibility to Awe* cannot be subsumed to a single common theme, we can notice certain similarities between them based on the topics they address, which makes it possible to group them along broad lines. Thus, for the purpose of this discussion, I shall distinguish between three main groups. The first of them includes poems in which Elson explores various scientific concepts and ideas, such as cosmology, astronomical phenomena or the laws of physics. The second comprises poems which tackle the more prosaic complementary space of ordinary things, people and relationships. The third category consists of pieces in which emotion is at its most intense, as they deal with Elson's illness, her deteriorating physical condition, the awareness of death, as well as her fears and hopes regarding the future. In what follows, I will provide an overview of the characteristics of each group, illustrating them through relevant passages from a selection of poems that I consider representative for each case. I will also complement my observations with further theoretical references wherever necessary.

Generally, through their choice of title, the poems in the first group signal their thematic focus quite clearly: "The Expanding Universe", "Explaining Relativity", "Dark Matter", "Theories of Everything", "Constellations", "Some

[3] In the French original: "On ne saurait trop dire si Rebecca Elson était une astrophysicienne qui rimait ou une poétesse qui comptait les étoiles, et peu importe dans le fond" (my translation).

Thoughts about the Ocean and the Universe", etc. The editors of the volume decided to give these pieces prominence by placing them at the beginning of the book, in homage to Elson's professional efforts. Yet, contrary to what one might expect in such a case, these are not mere translations of scientific concepts by means of poetic language and devices. As Fritz notes, there is "no altruistic, popularising intent" in these pieces so as to make science more accessible to the general audiences (2002, 71). Furthermore, as already demonstrated by the volume's opening poem ("We Astronomers"), even in her approach to astronomical concepts, Elson exhibits a curiosity for what lies beyond the immediate subject. Fiske argues in this sense that Elson is not interested in stars in an abstract, detached way. Instead, with her, "[m]eticulous attention is transformed into wonder" (2001, 846). Elson creates here what we may call a "poetry of contact"—a goal already announced in the same poem's reference to the face that bends to the ground, toward "the small patch where each foot falls". We become aware of the need to establish or reveal connections which transcend the physical realm, as in "The Expanding Universe", in which a seven-year-old's curiosity, channelled not on the incomprehensible scientific explanation of the concept announced in the title but on the empirical evidence that could support it, becomes an occasion for making analogies:

> How do they know, he is asking,
> He is seven, maybe,
> I am telling him how light
> Comes to us like water,
> Long red waves across the universe,
> Everything, all of us,
> Flying out from our origins.

However, as indicated by the last stanza of this poem, Elson's real interest is in fact in the living element that is integral to the observed phenomena. Here, the lasting impression is that of the distracted child's ingenuous concern for the "pink blossoms" he is collecting "[i]n his father's empty shoe." Elsewhere, as in the imagistic poems "Dark Matter"[4] and "Notte di San Giovanni", biological structures (a spider, respectively, mosquitoes, surprised in their natural environment) translate the abstract scientific concept into a visible form, reminding us also that beneath all matter there is vital energy.

[4] For a detailed discussion of this poem, see Heuschling. The author focuses on Elson's analogy between dark matter and the spider's web, convincingly arguing that the poem is "an exercise in defamiliarization by turning the popular anthropic principle on its head": dark matter is seen here as a trap, rather than a force that ensures the growth of galaxies and galaxy clusters, as it is commonly presented to the general public (2019, 51-52).

This interdependence of all things visible and invisible is a notion that sends us back to Bohm's distinction between the "implicate" (deep) and "explicate" (surface) orders that constitute the foundation of reality. The implicate order is a holographic structure in which everything contains everything else, being, at the same time, contained by and related to everything else. Moreover, "[t]he implicate order implies the participation of everything with everything", as nothing is complete in itself, being realized fully "only in that participation" (2004, 129-130). Elson propounds the same idea in "The Last of the Animists", a poem in which "the chill of reason" and the "perfect teeth" of mathematics seem to be incapable of leaving an impression upon the "bones of matter" and the "flesh of space." However, as with Bohm, behind this "unknowing" and "insensitive" reality, there lies an invisible realm in which each thing implies and is implied by others:

> We say the dreams of night
> Are within us
> As blood within flesh
> As spirit within substance
> As the oneness of things
> As from a dust of pigeons
> The white light of wings.

That awe is the central feeling in Elson's poetic space is demonstrated by the fact that even the imperfect can be fascinating for her, as it, too, has the potential to reveal a mystery. This is the case of "Aberration", a poem inspired by the malfunctioning of the Hubble Space Telescope, with which Elson worked in the early 1990s. The distortion caused by the improperly ground-down mirror of the telescope initiates a series of connections which take us first to the common analogy used to explain the physical phenomenon responsible for the distortion of the image in the optical instrument, only to send us, almost instantaneously, to the frenzied migration of birds:

> The sky so full of wings
> There is no sky
> And just for a moment
> You forget
> The error and the crimped
> Paths of light
> And you see it
> The immense migration
> And you hear the rush
> The beating

"Aberration" illustrates the double function of awe—to transform and to connect. As Keltner explains, the feeling of awe we experience in front of something that inspires and astounds leads, on the one hand, to the "quieting" of the self, enabling us to "collaborate, to open our minds to wonders, and to see deep patterns of life" (2023, xx). On the other hand, awe also deepens our relations with "the wonders of life", making us "marvel at the vast mysteries that are part of our fleeting time here" (xxvi).

This overarching concern for connections is also reflected by the other two groups of poems. The poems dedicated to ordinary things, people or relationships can be considered complementary to the ones discussed so far, being motivated by what Elson perceives as "the unreasonable neutrality of the sky" ("February, Rue Labat"). The recurring motifs in these pieces are mostly associated with motion (or the lack of it), both in the concrete and abstract sense—rushing, growth, change, floating, swelling, rising, falling, weight, weightlessness, stillness. We also note the stronger presence of the organic, primarily the human, element. Sometimes, it becomes so pervasive that it suffuses the whole fabric of the universe. Thus, in "Constellations", Elson proposes an alternative interpretation in which lambada dancers become substitutes for the "minor gods" and the animals that are associated with these celestial objects. In other words, a mundane image takes the place of myth, in a gesture that both questions and validates the role of (human) agency in the cosmic scheme, while also highlighting the idea of perspectivism and the tenuous nature of scientific constructs:

> Imagine they were lambada dancers
> Practising their slow seductions
> On the manifolds of space.
>
> Then in the name of science
> We might ride their studded thighs
> To the edge of our hypotheses,
> Discover there the real constants
> Of the universe:
>
> The quick pulse,
> The long look,
> The one natural law.

However, Elson never slips into metaphysical solipsism, reminding us repeatedly of our biological and cosmic allegiances. As she declares in "Evolution", we are made of the same substance and energy as all the things that predate us. Hence,

we are creatures of hazard and circumstance, "small, wet miracles without instructions, // Only the imperative of change." Even the poems which address highly subjective or personal themes like love, desire or sex capture energies in flux, bespeaking a sense of proximity of bodies in a process of metamorphosis overseen by natural or planetary forces, as in "Like Eels to the Sargasso Sea":

> We are not what we were
> When we began
> In river mud.
>
> It seems all voyage now
> Between the poles
> Of love
> And breeding
>
> And something
> We may never know:
> Beneath us
> Continents are slipping.

Thus, we may argue that the poems in this group, by insisting on the symbiotic relation between the human and the natural as well as the biological and the material, illustrate what Annie Murphy Paul described as "thinking with our surroundings"—a form of "situated cognition" that implies the power of place to influence our thinking by means of "environmental cues that convey a sense of belonging, or a sense of personal control", facilitating our "performance" in that place (2021, x). This form of cognition may arise after the fact, since the impact of such environmental cues is not always immediately apparent. Illustrative of this is the poem "Devonian Days", in which the original erotic energy between two lovers is transformed by force of memory into an allegorical interpretation of geological evolution. Re-actualising the intimate moment from the past reveals, once again, our common biological inheritance that dates back to prehistoric times:

> […] we just stayed there
> By the window, watching,
> So aloof from our amphibious desires
> That we didn't recognise
> The heaviness we took to be
> Dissatisfaction with the weather
> To be, in fact, the memory
> After buoyancy, of weight,

Of belly scraping over beach.
We didn't notice, in our restlessness,
The webbed toes twitching in our socks,
The itch of evolution,
Or its possibilities.

The poem's scenario echoes the Biblical story of the Fall, occasioned here not by disobedience, but by environmental factors. However, the initial melancholy pining for the paradisiacal condition of buoyancy is replaced in the closing lines by the urgency and inevitability of evolution. The environmental cues (the rain, the window) initiate the learning process that ends in a revelation about the potential of the biological legacy.

The poems in the third group are centred upon the problematic of Elson's own degrading condition, the imminence of death and the subject's search for coping mechanisms. These are expressed, as before, through a number of common motifs, most frequently, symbiosis, fusion, light and darkness. The emphasis is on fragile organicity, but the poems do not turn elegiac in tone. In fact, the prospect of death provides Elson with another opportunity to reveal the unbroken unity of everything. Thus, in "OncoMouse, Kitchen Mouse", death anxiety is counterbalanced by the communion of supplicant bodies, testifying to the redeeming power of sacrifice: the tiny kitchen mouse is seen not as vermin, but as the representative of the species that have given their lives, "[u]nder the needle and the knife, / The awful antiseptic smells" to provide a cure for deadly diseases. As a token of gratitude, Elson makes an offering to these fellow sufferers, sharing with them her home and victuals: "Here is my kitchen. / Make it yours. / Eat all my crumbs." This act of hospitality comes with a warning, however. We are reminded that there is no logical reason for why bad things (here, cancer) happen, and the search for it can only lead to more suffering:

Cozy up behind my fridge
But watch out for the trap,
The why-me box.

Once you've started in
It snaps you shut.

Like Nietzsche, Elson chooses to embrace and love fate. Even this terrible condition can be turned into something positive, as many of the poems in this group suggest. For instance, in "Radiology South" the harrowing sense of ending is counterbalanced by an intense meaning-making activity through which the

fragmentary images of a damaged body are made to recohere in a whole that can survive the plain brutality of individual existence. As with a modernist painting, the human condition may not be fathomable rationally or scientifically, but it is possible to find transcendental beauty even in decay and death:

> In the dim room
> He adjusts the beam,
> Projecting squares of light,
> Like window panes,
> A bit Magritte:
>
> Blue and white flower field
> Of the hospital robe,
> And all my living bones.

Recurrent in these poems are the various symbols of creative power. In nature, as in art, the fragments become material for new things while dying is perceived not as an end but as the beginning of a new cycle. An example of this is provided by the aptly-titled "Futura Vecchia, New Year's Eve", where death is portrayed as a cauldron in which a primeval soup is being prepared:

> A shiver of sparks sweeps round
> The dark shoulder of the Earth,
> Frisson of recognition,
> Preparation for another voyage,
>
> And our own gentle bubbles
> Float curious and mute
> Towards the black lake
> Boiling with light,
> Towards the sharp night
> Whistling with sound.

As elsewhere, the allusion to natural evolution is a reassurance of our belonging to the cosmic family. We are not flotsam aimlessly drifting in the sea, but tiny containers of light, suspended between an old future ("Futura Vecchia") and a not yet gone past ("New Year's Eve").

Elson's "antidotes to fear of death", as shown in the eponymous poem that closes the cycle, is to absorb as much of the universe as possible in the limited course of our existence ("eat the stars") and lose oneself in the universal ("lie down here on earth / Beside our long ancestral bones"). This graceful but difficult act is what Iris Murdoch has called "unselfing". Much of our dissatisfaction

with life, Murdoch explains, comes from the mind, whose incessant activity creates a "self-preoccupied, often falsifying veil which partially conceals the world." In order to increase the "quality of consciousness", we should try to rid ourselves of this subjective veil (1985, 84). This is a humbling effort, involving the "disciplined overcoming of the self" and "selfless respect for reality". In the end though, by removing the filter of the subjective ego, we are able to see things as they are. Indeed, liberated from ourselves, we *are* the undivided whole, as Elson herself admits in the same "Antidotes to Fear of Death":

> No outer space, just space,
> The light of all the not yet stars
> Drifting like a bright mist,
>
> And all of us, and everything
> Already there
> But unconstrained by form.

4. Conclusions—beyond *amor fati*

At the end of this brief interpretive exercise, we can formulate a number of conclusions. Thus, if the essence of the scientific method is to "measure" the world, the function of art is to make us "resonate" with it (Armitage 2006, 117). Yet, we should not see this as the failure of the one and, implicitly, the need for the other, since "measuring" and "resonating" are neither mutually exclusive nor complementary. Rather, they represent two concurrent and contiguous facets of the same human experience, or two manifest forms of "insight", as Bohm would put it. In other words, Elson's case reminds us that "[b]oth imagination and a competent sense of reality are necessary to our life" because they inevitably "discipline" each other (Berry 2001, 85)—that is to say, they lend meaning to our lives.

We can call this a poetry of spontaneous totalising experience, conducive to "unselfing" and reintegration in the cosmic order. There is no conflict between inner and outer realms, as they are not acknowledged to be separate in the first place. When Elson is looking for an anchor in the earthly, the quotidian, the transitory bit, it is not because of a dissatisfaction with the instruments and methods of her profession in face of the impenetrable, awe-inspiring vastness of the cosmos, but because she recognizes the ephemerality of her existence, which makes her crave not so much a theory of everything as the chance to be exposed to every small and big thing at once. Thus, while poetry may indeed represent an environment in which the mind can transcend the limits imposed

by scientific thought and practice (Heuschling 58), as I have tried to suggest in this paper, with Elson it acquires several other valences. For one thing, it provides a mythical perspective on the universe, a revelatory experience which fuses past and present, life and death, organic and inorganic in a spectacular, unbroken whole. In other words, poetry is the answer to the wish expressed in the aptly titled "Myth":

> What I want is a mythology so huge
> That settling on its grassy bank
> (Which may at first seem ordinary)
> You catch the sight of the frog, the stone,
> The dead minnow jewelled with flies,
> And remember all at once
> The things you had forgotten to imagine.

In addition, as illustrated by many of the titles mentioned this paper, poetry also enriches our understanding of "awe" and clarifies our "responsibility" to it. Awe begins where awe ends, since the mystery of the universe can never be contained or fully comprehended. Burnside has eloquently explained this, drawing our attention to another essential "duty":

> [...] while science at its best seeks to reduce our ignorance, it cannot—and should not seek to—eliminate mystery. The more we know, the more the mystery deepens. If poetry has a role in relation to science, it is to remind science of that universal truth. In this, it is also an *essentially ecological discipline*. It teaches us part of the *duty of dwelling*, it teaches us a *necessary awe*. This awe is central, is vitally necessary, to any description of the world. A description that lacks this awe is, in truth, a lie.
>
> (2006, 95, my emphasis)

Rather than being simply a joyous acceptance of our fate (thus, another instance of *amor fati*), it is also a *fearsome* responsibility, as it forces us to accept the delicate position of dwelling in the immense whole.

Since dwelling implies active engagement with our habitat, it leads to changing it and being changed by it in our turn. In this sense, Fiske notes (in reference to the earlier-mentioned "Notte Di San Giovanni"), that Elson's poems attempt to "penetrate 'the untranslatable dark'" by relying on imagery and rhythm (2001, 845). Put differently, poetry, with its specific aesthetic and formal devices, is an answer—sometimes even an "antidote"—to the inescapable cosmic rhythms that confine and liberate us. This is an almost Promethean effort, carrying with itself the prospect of a tragic but ennobling destiny and, equally

important, the hope of renewal and resurrection. As Elson puts it in "Let There Always Be Light (Searching for Dark Matter)", one of her most sincere odes to our duty and vulnerability, we search for the "dimmest stars" and "signs of unseen things" in order to stop the universe from exhausting its own fire through incessant expansion:

> Let there be swarms of them,
> Enough for immortality,
> Always a star where we can warm ourselves.
>
> Let there even be enough to bring it back
> From its own edges,
> To bring us all so close that we ignite
> The bright spark of resurrection.

Eventually, this is Elson's way to prove herself as a "Yes-sayer"—the testimony of hope in face of adversity, the acceptance of our fragile but meaningful destiny.

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"THE STRENGTH OF THE(IR) ILLUSION" (*MACBETH* 3.5.27): TRANSMISSION OF MAGIC AND THE AMBIGUITY OF MAGICAL SPACES IN *MACBETH* AND *THE TEMPEST*

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ABSTRACT. ***"The strength of the(ir) illusion" (*Macbeth *3.5.27): Transmission of Magic and the Ambiguity of Magical Spaces in* Macbeth *and* The Tempest*.** Starting from Ina Habermann and Michelle Witen's 2016 taxonomy of space in Shakespearean drama, our paper focuses on setting and social/ gendered space. What we aim to discuss is how two of Shakespeare's plays involving magic—namely *Macbeth* and *The Tempest*—associate various settings with witchcraft and magic, while also constructing space simultaneously as magical and political, a topophrenic "thirdspace" (cf. Tally, 2019; Soja, 1996), where disorder rules and where power relations in general, and gender

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relations in particular, are negotiated between ordinary characters and magic-wielding ones (the witches and Hecate vs. Prospero and Ariel, as well as Sycorax). The paper also discusses what "rough" magic is in these plays (a term used in *The Tempest,* first addressed critically by Robert Egan, 1972), roughness being, on the one hand, a reference to the impurity of the art employed, and, on the other, a nod to the transgression(s) implied by magic practices.

Keywords: *gender, performance, magic, thirdspace, transgression, transmission*

REZUMAT. *„Puterea iluziei (lor)" (*Macbeth *3.5.27, t.n.): Transmiterea magiei şi ambiguitatea spaţiilor magice în* Macbeth *şi* Furtuna*. Pornind de la cartea editată în 2016 de Ina Habermann şi Michelle Witen despre clasificarea spaţiilor în dramaturgia shakespeariană, lucrarea de faţă se concentrează asupra spaţiului scenic şi a celui social/de gen. Ceea ce ne propunem să discutăm este modul în care două dintre piesele lui Shakespeare unde apare magia—şi anume, *Macbeth* şi *Furtuna*—asociază diferite locaţii cu vrăjitoria sau magia, construind în acelaşi timp spaţiul ca magic şi politic deopotrivă, un „spaţiu terţ" şi topofrenic (sau „thirdspace", cf. Soja, 1996; Tally, 2019) în care domină neorânduiala, iar relaţiile de putere în general, şi relaţiile de gen în special, sunt negociate între personajele obişnuite şi cele care practică magia (vrăjitoarele şi Hecate vs. Prospero şi Ariel, precum şi Sycorax). Lucrarea discută, de asemenea, ce înseamnă magia „aspră" în aceste piese (un termen folosit în *Furtuna*, abordat pentru prima dată în mod critic de Robert Egan, 1972), „asprimea" fiind, pe de o parte, o referire la impuritatea artei folosite iar, pe de altă parte, o aluzie la transgresiunea (sau transgresiunile) pe care le implică practicile magice.

Cuvinte-cheie: *gen, magie, scenă, spaţiu terţ, transgresiune, transmitere*

Introduction

At the crossroads of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the study of space has undergone a profound transformation across the disciplines, including the humanities. Place and space, mapping and geographical imagination have brought new perspectives on a variety of analytical fields and affected, for instance, the study of early modern drama and its relationship with spaces, leading to the investigation of a relational spatial system which connects the stage, the playhouse, and the city. This interdisciplinary 'spatial turn', as it became widely known, was prompted by the theories of several French philosophers like Michel Foucault and his heterotopias, Henri Lefebvre's production of space, Michel de Certeau's distinction between "lieu" and "espace," and Gaston Bachelard's phenomenological poetics of space, as well as other scholars such as Edward Soja's "thirdspace", Bertrand Westphal's geocriticism, with its focus

on "spatiotemporality", "transgressivity" and "referentiality" (2011, 9, 37, 75), or Robert Tally Jr.'s spatiality and literary cartography. In brief, such theories convincingly demonstrate that "literature functions as a form of mapping […], situating [readers] in a kind of imaginary space", helping them to "get a sense of the worlds in which others have lived, currently live, or will live in times to come" (Tally 2012, 2). In other words, spaces are cultural and political, as well as historical, imaginative and representative entities for the communities that create them, while people's interactions with such spaces are subjective and culture-bound, influencing not only social practices, but also ideologies. As Tally (2012, 5) explains, "space and place are indeed historical, and the changing spaces and perceptions of space over time are crucial to the understanding of the importance of spatiality in literary and cultural studies today".

Adding to the existing scholarship on the 'spatial turn' in Shakespeare, Ina Habermann and Michelle Witen's edited collection *Shakespeare and Space: Theatrical Explorations of the Spatial Paradigm* (2016), offers an interpretation of the early modern stage "as a topological 'node', an interface linking different times and spaces in a multidimensional theatrical experience." (Habermann and Witen 2016, 2-3) The scholars identify seven types of space, which are particularly significant for Shakespearean drama: "(1) structural/topological space, (2) stage space/setting/locality, (3) linguistic/poetic space, (4) social/ gendered space, (5) early modern geographies, (6) cultural spaces/contact zones, and (7) the material world/ cultural imaginary." (Habermann and Witen 2016, 3)

Combining geocriticism and close-text analysis as methodological approaches, this study aims to explore how two of Shakespeare's plays involving magic—namely, *Macbeth* (1605) and *The Tempest* (1611)– build magical spaces as dual and ambiguous. In these plays, space is simultaneously magical and political, a "thirdspace" (cf. Soja 1996) where power relations are negotiated between practitioners and non-practitioners of magic. Therefore, especially relevant to our purpose here are the stage/setting and social spaces, according to Habermann and Witen's hierarchy. Stage space is concerned with performance, with how specific places are evoked/ represented on stage. The theatre combines the physical space with virtual reality, "staging in material form fictions and fantasies" (Habermann and Witen 2016, 5). Further complementing Habermann and Witen's definition of stage space is Edward Soja's revolutionary concept of "thirdspace" by which the scholar sought to transform the divide between physical and mental spaces. Primarily a social or "directly lived" space (Soja 1996, 67), "thirdspace" is also hybrid, in-between, "simultaneously real and imagined, concrete and abstract, material and metaphorical" (Soja 1996, 65). It is a space where "*everything* comes together", "the knowable and the unimaginable, […] the disciplined and the transdisciplinary, everyday life and unending history." (Soja, 1996, 56, emphasis in original). In the case of theatre, "thirdspace"

results from the interplay between the material stage and the places represented on it. According to Soja, most of our lived spaces are constructed socially, with individuals, artists included, impacting other individuals and "actively transform[ing] the worlds we live in" (1996, 67). As a result, "thirdspace" can always be reimagined and recreated and is thus fertile ground for "counterspaces".

Furthermore, we link our reading of Soja's "thirdspace" to Robert Tally's "topophrenia", defined as "a constant and uneasy 'placemindedness' that characterizes a subject's interactions with his or her environment" (2019, 1). In Tally's view (2019, 9), although 'placemindedness' is fundamental to human thought and experience, an affective geography of place involves "a condition of disorder or 'dis-ease'", i.e. "the less salutary or utopian visions of place, such as places of fear or loathing that nevertheless condition our approaches to space and place in narrative."

On the other hand, social/gendered space conceives the world as a set of social connections, the result of political, cultural and power-based relations. Enabling the interaction between the actors on the stage and the audience in the stalls or ground, the theatre "dramatizes and displays social practice", and provides images and symbols of representational space through which space is lived and also gendered (Habermann and Witen 2016, 6). The latter aspect is all the more important when we consider that the stage was dominated by men, given that all characters in Elizabethan and Jacobean drama were played by male actors, whereas the audience was a mixed gender and social group.

In light of this, magical space in the two Shakespearean plays we discuss here may be read as an illustration of Soja's "thirdspace", simultaneously real and imagined, while also being socially and politically produced by the people who inhabit it or pass through it and who rely on various social practices, be they ritualised or not. Moreover, magical space is the result of the interactions between characters who wield magic—and therefore have the upper hand in negotiating power relations—and those who do not. Since in early modernity magic was an ambiguous art at best, we will explore how spaces where magic was practiced create a sense of 'dis-ease' and ultimately cause chaos and disorder.

Transmission of magic

In an exciting and well-documented book on witchcraft and popular magic in the sixteenth-century Duchy of Württemberg, Germany, Edward Bever (2008, 11-20) investigates, among others, the psychological and neurophysiological implications of *maleficium*, including "assault, poisoning, ritual spell-casting, and curses" (2008, 21), on the bodily health of people who thought themselves at the receiving end. Bever aptly observes that, in early modernity, people were concerned with the material/physical consequences of the spoken word, and

"[t]he tongue was widely regarded […] as a powerful source of evil because of its power to curse" (2008, 23). By contrast, in modernity, people focus more on abstract notions, "on the *ideas* conveyed by the words used in verbal expression, both because of our cultural orientation toward language and because, in the case of early modern witchcraft, words are mostly what the documents record" (Bever 2008, 23, emphasis added). However, he further notes that there is another, crucial, dimension to the uttered words, namely the tone of voice—or prosody (timing, pitch and stress)—which carries emotional information that completes, or even contradicts, the meaning of the spoken words. Interestingly enough, the two emotions most easily recognizable in the tone of voice are anger and fear, thus seriously impacting interpersonal interactions, alongside other such forms of nonverbal communication as "facial expression, bodily contact, gestures (including posture), and spatial behaviour" (Bever 2008, 24).

As the quote in our title suggests, magic is transmitted and perceived as a form of attack especially through ritualised spells or cursing (cf. Bever 2008, 22-23). Both spells and curses are uttered as a string of words, which create a strong illusion in those at the receiving end, impacting their psychological wellbeing and bodily health. A commonly held belief, especially in early modern Protestantism, was that language—and implicitly the tongue used as a 'tool' to utter it—was regarded as a medium for evil and the supernatural to seep into the human mind and impact human behaviour. It is words that can create powerful bonds, or *vinculi*, between the materiality of the world and the power of imagination.

In one of his studies about what he considers the supreme art of Renaissance, magic, the Romanian historian Ioan Petru Culianu evokes two important intellectuals and practitioners of the art of magic, Giordano Bruno and Marsilio Ficino, who had the intuition of a psychic revolution when they defined the invisible connections among humans and between humans and the universe as *rete* (networks, in Ficino) or *vincula* (chains, in Bruno). In *Iocari serio*, Culianu defines magic as an act of transmission, a process which applies the Neoplatonic theories of sensible knowledge . In the links and networks laid out by the magic 'operator', a transfer of influence takes place, manipulating the human cognitive apparatus. (Culianu 2003, 110) Of the senses, sight and hearing are essential for the performance of the magical act, which triggers immediate, strong reactions of attraction or revulsion. Extrapolating this Neoplatonic theory and employing a metatheatrical perspective, similarly to Shakespeare's operators of magic who bewitch and manipulate other characters on stage through their spells, so too is the audience in the theatre hall subject to the magic of the play's plot and atmosphere. A Shakespearean example which brings these two aspects together is Puck's concluding monologue in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, when the play is paralleled to a dream ("you but have slumbered here", 5.1.421) or an

enchantment, in which both Athenian characters and fairies were "visions" who "did appear" (5.1.422) on stage, holding the audience under their sway for the duration of the performance. The end of the play coincides with the lifting of the magic spell.

Considering the magic on the stage, it can be argued that, in an age when the prestige of the powerful art started to be questioned, the aura (whether positive or negative) of this practice and its practitioners starts to vanish as a result of overexposure. Magic, visualized by the masses on the stage and behind the scene, with its *modi operandi* exposed as special effects, gives way to mechanics and the performance of feats which are perceived as "wonders of nature" (Butterworth 2005, 42). The atmosphere of gloom sustained by the scholarly fashion of demonology studies, encouraged by the general ignorance of the common people, is replaced in the seventeenth century by the farce. The practitioner of magic is now a conjurer performing tricks and the invisible connections created by the art of magic have by now turned into the pleasant effects of entertainment, or a business, unspecialized and unritualized.

Attitudes towards magic around 1600

Magic is wielded ambiguously in Shakespeare's Jacobean plays, which are projected against a very specific Zeitgeist, explained by Frances Yates (1999) in the context of King James' ascension to the English throne, and by Ioan Petru Culianu (2003) in the context of the radical transformations of mentality brought about by the Reformation. Both factors deal a significant blow to the way the theme of magic is presented in literature and on the stage. The much darker mode of *Macbeth* and the more nuanced depiction in *The Tempest* are important deviations from both earlier Elizabethan interpretations, and from contemporary or later directions. The literature encouraged at the court of the Virgin Queen was clearly influenced by the Neoplatonic philosophy. Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene* (1590), for example, displays an idealized perception of 'good' magic, processing sophisticated astrological and numerological patterns, and embracing an original prophetic and imperial vision. The poem demonstrates that Elizabethan literature and philosophy, especially the hermetic poetry, employed occult language and imagery in order to undermine continental religious messages and to oppose theological pressures and threats. If this direction featured magic in a positive, as well as important, superior light, another direction downplayed it, depicting it as unimportant, but harmless. The Elizabethan stage presented comedies featuring sorcerers, tricksters, and conjurers, and consequently signalled a relaxation of taboos about how magic was perceived. On the stage, the human practitioners of magic and the (imaginary) demons or familiars are presented as a good joke. Robert Greene's *Friar Bacon*

and Friar Bungay (1594), for instance, aims to prove that the occult recipe is not successful when all hidden forces are undermined by human stupidity and incompetence. As learned as the magicians may be, as efficient as their equipment may be (a magic glass and a brazen head), as much political support they may have (from the king), the magic experiment is a failure: Friar Bacon misses the astral moment because he falls asleep and his servant rides to hell on a demon's back.

But, once King James I ascended to the throne of England, a mutation can be observed in the literary imaginary. The problem of occultism (and witchcraft) became more acute than ever because the monarch was against the English disciples of Neoplatonism, all former favourites of the Virgin Queen, and also had strong opinions on demonology. He expressed these views in a manner that was fashionably scholarly at that moment—a treatise on this subject, *Daemonologie*, *in the Form of a Dialogue, Divided into Three Books, etc.*, written in 1597. The king, who believed himself to be a rationalist, put a great deal of effort to demonstrate scientifically and with practical examples how witchcraft worked and, very importantly, what punishment should be applied to the devil's accomplices. It is important to remember that the king had first-hand experience of witch trials, which he had ordered and conducted himself, against alleged maleficent agents (Thurston 2013, 162; Greenwood 2013, 141). The North Berwick witch trials, in 1590, were the first of this kind on the British Isles, judging the potential involvement of witches in a plot against the king and his Danish bride. Against this backdrop, King James wrote a dialogue between the rationalist Philomathes and the wise theologian Epistemon, expert in magic. With philosophical arguments doubled by details collected from the experience of the trials, King James sought the "natural" causes of the devil's manifestation in everyday life and the practical measures to be taken against it. It is easy to recognize, in Shakespeare's description of the witches' appearance, lodgings, potions, incantations and declared purposes, in *Macbeth*, a summary of the academic debate laid out by King James in his *Daemonologie.*

If *Macbeth* is a gloomy tragedy of witchcraft and demonic influences, a while later, when the monarch's children reached adulthood, the official attitude towards magic became more nuanced, as Frances Yates argues (1999, 187). Prince Henry embraced Queen Elizabeth's Protestantism, her anti-Spanish attitudes, and her imperial imagery. Princess Elizabeth became the bride of Frederick V, the Elector Palatine, an alliance that was regarded on the Continent as clear evidence of the anti-Catholic feelings of England. Alongside *The Tempest*, during the wedding festivities, other plays were staged, among which *The Merry Devil of Edmonton* (1604?), attributed to Thomas Heywood and Thomas Dekker. In this very light comedy, Peter Fabell is a magician called to use his powers in order to reunite two lovers against their families' plans. A "merry" devil is a long shot, compared to the weird sisters in the Scottish tragedy, but also to the

enlightened magus in *The Tempest*. But this playful depiction of magic *modi operandi* is a spirit that becomes dominant on the seventeenth-century stage. Ben Jonson's *The Devil Is an Ass* (1616) portrays demons as clownish creatures who are easily outwitted by humans. There is neither mystery nor maleficence in the spirits from hell, whose agenda to corrupt the human race is doomed to fail since humanity has reached a degree of sophistication and decadence that even the devil finds difficult to counter. The ultimate punishment for the demon is very mundane indeed—he is thrown into Newgate Prison like a common thief.

If we paraphrase Ioan Petru Culianu's study on Renaissance magic, *Iocari serio*, "playing the game seriously" (2003), we can argue that the ambiguous attitude towards magic displayed in the Jacobean theatre is part of a game which is played quite seriously at the end of the Renaissance. According to the Romanian scholar's original thesis, first presented in his seminal study *Eros and Magic in the Renaissance* (1999), the culture of magic—as art and science—was inhibited by the Reformation, which stifled the movement with its rationalizing and moralizing agenda. This inhibition worked powerfully on the imagination, operating "a phantasmatic censorship" (Culianu 2003, 24). As a result, practitioners of magic were annihilated or hid behind other, more harmless, or more mundane activities. But the magic game was 'serious' because, far from being a mere practice, it was a vision of the world and an epistemology. Discussing Marsilio Ficino's and Giordano Bruno's Neoplatonic ideas, Culianu argues that these two 'magicians' demonstrated that the minds connected with the help of networks (*rete*) and chains (*vincula*) can generate the most efficient forms of manipulation. The art of magic consists of bringing together two minds or two objects, by means of a pneumo-phantasmatic operation (Culianu 2003, 110). When comparing this theory with the history of witch hunts and the witches' persecution, Culianu dismantles the latter as oversimplifying and monodimensional, though harmful and resilient as a vision of the world, which dominated western mentalities for many centuries. It is not a coincidence that the English plays about magic 'operators' are contemporary with the surge of witch hunts in Western Europe and, therefore, with what Culianu calls a mutation in the collective imaginary (2003, 68).

As for the representation of the operators of magic, Charles Zika (2003) writes that, in sixteenth-century Europe, witches were often visually portrayed as women seeking to appropriate male power and sexuality, leading to a disruption in the proper gender, social, and moral order, which resulted in the creation of a new term to designate them—"*siemann* or She-man" (2003, 270). Zika further shows how witchcraft was often conceived of in association with sexualised practices and rituals (2003, 274), on the one hand, and on the other, with female practitioners as a group that was "separate from mainstream society, and especially separate from the mastery of men" (2003, 281). Witches thus challenged any form of male definition, control or dominance.

Nonetheless, although witchcraft has usually been associated with deviant, marginalised female practitioners, there have been cases of men accused, too. In a thoroughly researched chapter about male witches in the south-east of England in the seventeenth century, Malcolm Gaskill looks at "witchcraft as a power that caused suspects to be identified as witches" (2009, 173). In the religiously troubled context leading to the Civil War, in Suffolk, for example, men who became victims of such accusations were not only associated with witchcraft as a feminised practice/ ritual but were also suspects of religious and sexual deviance (as Catholics and homosexuals), thus challenging their own masculinity: "A real man, it was felt, had no need of magical power to make his way in the world." (Gaskill 2009, 176) It was generally believed—the scholar goes on to argue—that those men who resorted to magic for whatever reason (be it to advance socially, to get rich or to seduce women) had actually "failed as members of a divinely ordained natural world and Christian community", and "had also failed the test of manhood" (Gaskill 2009, 178), by not abiding by the standards which early modern masculinity defined itself against. Gaskill pertinently concludes that the main reason for the public censure of male witches was their perceived masculine alterity; they were othered "less because they aped female values than because they failed to measure up to male ones" (2009, 184). In short, male practitioners of magic replicated feminine behaviour and were failures as men by not effectively exercising the attributes of patriarchy.

Shakespeare's magical space(s)

The three witches of *Macbeth*, whose conversation opens the play, inhabit natural but peripheral spaces, which are deserted, barren and dim. For example, the uncanny space where we first encounter them is barren, while the witches themselves are associated with the elements (thunder, lightning, rain, fog, and air), which they are able to control. The dimness that surrounds the witches indicates danger that is even further emphasised by the mentioning of the sun setting, which limits vision even more, creating a feeling of anxiety and foreshadowing several types of deaths: from the symbolic end of the day to the loss of human lives in battle or as a result of murder.

1 Witch: When shall we three meet again?
In *thunder*, *lightning*, or in *rain*?
2 Witch: When the hurly-burly's done,
When the battle's lost, and won.
3 Witch: That will be ere *the set of sun*.
1 Witch: Where the place?
2 Witch: Upon the heath.

3 Witch: There to meet with Macbeth. […]
ALL: Fair is foul, and foul is fair,
Hover through the *fog* and filthy air. (1.1.1-10, emphasis added)[3]

This peripheral, topophrenic space is characterised by disorder and dis-ease (cf. Tally 2019, 9), and governed by the logic of inversion, according to which "Fair is foul and foul is fair". This topsy-turviness foreshadows the social and political chaos about to be unleashed, as well as the disintegration of the protagonist's morals, integrity and life. This uncanny space in the first scene is later replaced by the heath, where the witches meet Macbeth and Banquo. The heath indirectly connotes aggression since the men return from the battlefield covered in the blood of slaughtered enemies. Slightly later, when upset by the witches' imperfect predictions, Macbeth refers to the place as "this blasted heath" (1.3.77), further associating the space with anger, usually a masculine-coded emotion.

That the three witches can manipulate weather also indicates their ability to use the elements, especially the wind, to physically harm ordinary humans, who become victims of magic. In Act 1, scene 3, the first witch is particularly vindictive of a sailor's wife who did not want to share her chestnuts; as a result, the witch plans to cause the woman's husband to lose sleep, mental sanity and life, securing in this respect the support of the other two witches. By showing the others "a pilot's thumb/ Wrecked as homeward he did come" (1.3.28-29), which she keeps in her handkerchief, the witch reveals that she has already been successful in such exploits.

Later on, in Act 4, scene 1, lines 12-34, we find the witches together with Hecate in a cave, where they actually perform a ritualised form of magic around a cauldron. Similarly to the heath, yet away from daylight and ordinary people's view, the cave also connotes barrenness and darkness, but above all death, particularly emphasised by the ingredients used in spell-casting. What is significant is that here the trio itself is associated not so much with plants (e.g. "root of hemlock", "slips of yew") but rather with sacrificial animals (e.g. "brinded cat", "hedge-pig", "a baboon's blood"), and especially with animal body parts (e.g. "fillet of fenny snake", "eye of newt", "toe of frog", "tongue of dog", etc.), or even human ones ("liver of blaspheming Jew", "nose of Turk", "Tartar's lips", or "finger of birth-strangled babe"). Two things must be noted here. The first has to do with the choice of ethnicities mentioned in the witches' ritual—Jews, Turks and Tartars. At the time, they were considered especially inferior because of their main occupation (the Jews were best known for their practice of usury, an aspect approached by Shakespeare himself in *The Merchant of Venice*), or because of the threat they posed to the European geographical and political status quo (a topic Shakespeare explores in *Othello*). The second issue

[3] All quotations from *Macbeth* are from *Arden Shakespeare. Third Series. Complete Works*.

worth mentioning is that two out of the four references to human body parts are connected to speaking and indirectly with a form of rebellion or cursing: the Jew is linked to blasphemy, i.e. speaking against God and thus proving himself un-Christian, whereas the "lips" of the Tartar are singled out most likely because of associations with paganism and the occult. At the same time, the lips are an important 'tool' when cursing or uttering spells; therefore, the fact that the witches use the lips as a physical ingredient in the horrible broth gives even more strength to the vile potion. Overall, the ritual not only evokes dark, life-threatening magic but also suggests a perverted form of cooking emphasised through the mentioning of "hell-broth" (4.1.19) and "gruel" (4.1.32). Moreover, considering that all the things thrown in the cauldron are mere body parts, the cave may also be read as a symbolic altar, where animals and humans are ritualistically sacrificed for the ingredients necessary to the witches' spells.

By contrast, in *The Tempest*, the island where the plot is set is represented like a geographical and social bubble, a topophrenic space of 'dis-ease', where anger and revenge dominate, and where most characters have their bodily and mental integrity threatened. It is not just a peripheral space in relation to the civilised Naples and Milan, but also an uncanny one, as it boasts unusual fertility through its luxurious vegetation and musicality, through the harmonious instrumental sounds and voice hums it seems able to create—as it emerges, for instance, from Caliban's speech about the isle being "full of noises,/ Sounds and sweet airs,/ that give delight and hurt not" (3.2.1533-34).

Furthermore, the island is a space where social relationships are renegotiated especially between those who wield magic and those who do not. In particular, the isle bears connotations of banishment, symbolic imprisonment (a wall-less cell) and punishment, but also of revenge, forgiveness and reconciliation. The first to be abandoned on the island is Sycorax the witch, banished from Argier/Algiers because of her witchcraft. Her trial seems to have ended not in death but in a life sentence, most likely because she was pregnant with Caliban. The sentence, given as a result of her being found guilty of witchcraft and sexual practices, is carried out by a group of all men, the sailors, and it entails Sycorax's anger and her thirst for revenge. The pattern is repeated when Prospero and his daughter Miranda are shipwrecked on the island, although in their case, this happens following an act of divine intervention rather than punishment for wrongdoing since they are the ones wronged against.

Shakespeare's practitioners of magic

As mentioned earlier, Zika (2003, 270, 274, 281) writes about witches being often visualised in relation to sexualised practises and rituals, as a group of women separate from the control of men, seeking to disrupt the strictly

ordered early modern world. Consequently, witches—Shakespeare's included—resist all forms of masculine identification and control, as we shall see below.

It is essential to note here a terminological aspect in relation to the practitioners of magic in *Macbeth*, namely that Shakespeare's trio of magical characters often referred to as "witches" are actually designated as "weird sisters" in most editions of the play. Margreta de Grazia and Peter Stallybrass observe that it is now common practice for editors to include a footnote connecting the word "weird" with the Old English "wyrd" or "fate" but, interestingly enough, the Folio version records three times "weyward Sisters" and another three times "wayard Sisters" (de Grazia and Stallybrass, 1993, 263-64). Pia Brînzeu (2022, 195) further explains that it was Lewis Theobald who, in 1733, modernized the "weyward sisters" into "Weïrd sisters" in order to be consistent with Shakespeare's main source of inspiration for the Scottish play, namely Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland*, where the "weird sisters" appear once only. Furthermore, it was Theobald who made the explicit connection between the trio and the Norse Norns or Fates. The eighteenth-century scholar's opinion was later shared by other Shakespearean scholars such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge, George Kitteridge or Kenneth Muir. However, apart from this possible modernization in the spelling of "weyward", de Grazia and Stallybrass (1993, 263) draw attention to the fact that the Folio's adjective "weyward" could be modernized into "wayward" and that a minor change such as a vowel can, in fact, produce a remarkable semantic shift, moving the sisterly trio from the world of witchcraft to a world of perversion and vagabondism. What is more, Ayanna Thompson (2010, 4) persuasively argues that the sisters' "weywardness" derives in part from their ethnic alterity as Scottish.

When Macbeth and Banquo meet the witches in Act 1, scene 3, they each ask "*what* are you?" (1.3.148, emphasis added) and "*what* are these…?" (1.3.139, emphasis added) respectively. The pronoun used indicates that the two war heroes see the witches as not entirely human but rather monstrous, otherworldly creatures, inspiring disgust and fear:

> So wither'd and so wild in their attire,
> That look not like the inhabitants o' the earth,
> And yet are on't […] You should be women,
> And yet your beards forbid me to interpret
> That you are so. (1.3.40-42, 45-47)

The witches' ugliness is rather graphically described: they are wrinkled and dishevelled; they have beards, "chappy fingers", and "skinny lips", while later in the play, they are referred to as "secret, black and midnight hags" (4.1.47), or as "filthy hags" (4.1.114), where "hags" clearly links them to old age and physical

unattractiveness. Taking his cue from the weird sisters' repulsive physical aspect, Walter Clyde Curry convincingly argues (2015, 413-415) that, in a medieval Christian taxonomy, the sisters would be categorized as demons and even their speech is an illusion given that "their forms clothe the demonic powers which inform them." (Curry 2015, 215) In a more modern reading and from a visual point of view, the witches can be read as examples of androgynous she-men, posing threats not only to the gender order and patriarchal power constructed in phallic terms, but also to the integrity of the male body, raising fears of emasculation and castration (cf. Zika 2003, 302-303).

However, in Act 4, scene 1, when Macbeth seeks the witches' help once more, we see them gathered around a bubbling cauldron, an object that clearly identifies the witches as female, "for it link[s] witchcraft with the female activities of the hearth and distribution of food" (Zika 2003, 274). The cauldron, where ingredients are mixed and over which spells are openly cast, is a means by and around which social relations are both made and broken. It must be mentioned here that, although the witches look masculine (particularly because of their beards) and inhabit rather masculine-coded, topophrenic spaces (barren, aggressive, bloody, dark), they seem feminised if we consider their motherly attitude towards Macbeth, as they do their best to make him happy and fulfil his demands.

Significantly, while the three witches and Hecate do appear as embodied characters in *Macbeth*, Sycorax, the witch of *The Tempest*, is 'present' in name only, always described by the words of other people like Prospero and Caliban. She seems to haunt the entire play, silenced for ever by Prospero who colonised her island and imposed his learned version of magic as an art. Sycorax and, implicitly, her witchcraft, receive attributes of ugliness, foulness, old age and damnation. Only in Act 1, scene 2, when Prospero recalls his arrival on the island, the magus refers to her in an accumulation of angry, offensive terms as "foul witch" (1.2.259), "damn'd witch" (1.2.265), and "hag" (1.2.271)[4].

Prospero's anger may well be a sign of his envy, jealousy, or fear. The only structure that seems to combine a positive and a negative attribute is "this blue-eyed hag" (1.2.271), which brings together, as if in an oxymoron, the seductive appeal of the witch's blue eyes and the unattractiveness of "hag". On the one hand, he may be envious that her magic was a natural talent and stronger than his "art" learned from books. On the other hand, he might be jealous since she may have refused his advances; while, for Prospero, she may have been the only adult woman available and within reach, Sycorax saw herself first of all as a single mother who needed to protect herself and her son.

[4] All quotations from *The Tempest* are from Shakespeare's *Romances and Poems*, edited by David Bevington.

Additionally, Prospero's mention of the witch's eyes, singled out from all possible references to her body characteristics, may suggest her special ability of casting the evil eye and the popular superstitions surrounding the power of the angry stare (cf. Bever 2008, 25). That he ultimately does away with Sycorax may also be the end result of his fear of catching the evil eye and being contaminated with her base witchcraft.

In Prospero's view, the magic practised by Sycorax has very negative connotations of evil and abhorrence—"her earthy and abhorr'd commands" (1.2.275), "her grand hests" (1.2.276)—as well as of vindictive, destructive anger—"her most unmitigable rage" (1.2.278). Her rage in particular sets her apart as a she-man, a threat to male power, all the more so since Prospero values his own unmitigated rage positively, seeing it as a validation of his vengeful plan and ability to wield magic.

Even if Prospero discursively sets himself apart from the female witch in terms of the ways and purposes for practising magic, they both operate on the same pattern, using and abusing someone else—Ariel and Caliban—to achieve their goals. Moreover, much like the witches in *Macbeth* who can control the elements, Prospero too can manipulate the weather: he is the one who stirs the initial tempest (Act 1, scene 1) that causes his usurping brother and his entourage to shipwreck on the island, just as he can create fog at will, separating Ferdinand and Miranda from the rest of the people on the island (Act 5, scene 1).

Returning now to witchcraft as a form of gendered social practice, if *Macbeth*'s witches are linked to waywardness as gender deviance and ethnic alterity, we argue that, Sycorax too may be read as wayward, particularly through her association with anger and motherhood. In stark contrast to the trio of witches, Sycorax is unambiguously feminine. It is precisely her sexualised body with its abilities to seduce and to give birth that places her at the other extreme in relation to the witches of *Macbeth*.

The relation between witchcraft and gender is further explored by Shakespeare through the ambiguity of Prospero's character. Whereas the witches and Sycorax are masculinised through looks and/or behaviour, Prospero seems to construct himself as asexual; the only woman he has a relationship with is his daughter Miranda, whom he uses as a pawn in his plan for revenge. What is most intriguing about him is that, unlike the female witches, he needs a lot of objects (the robe, the book, the staff) in order to verbally transmit his magic into materialising. Prospero defines his magic as an art, i.e. the product of culture. He has learnt it from books, whereas the witches seem to have been born with knowledge of it. In addition, considering Gaskill's (2009) perspective on male practitioners of magic in the former half of the seventeenth century, we can safely argue that, by resorting to magic in order to plot and achieve his revenge, Prospero fails to measure up to the idealised early modern virtues and

standards of masculinity. This may well be why he ultimately identifies his magic as "rough"—a performance of feminised rituals and of femininity—and has to abjure it so that he can be fully reintegrated, as a man, into civilised, patriarchal society. Despite being benign, restorative in purpose, Prospero's magic is rough also because it is strictly associated with the uncanny, uncivilised space of the island, the geographical and social bubble, and disallowed in civilised European society. In this respect, he seems to have internalised the lesson in the tale of Sycorax, who had been banished to the island precisely as a result of practising her witchcraft in a cultured environment.

Magic, rough but white

As mentioned earlier, it is significant to observe that the two plays involving the supreme art were written in an age of crisis and transition, when the Reformation brought about a suppression of the Renaissance imagination, dominated by the witch hunts. In this context, the serene mode in which traditional criticism reads *The Tempest* and Prospero's magic can call for reconsideration. Let us take Prospero's abjuration scene in Act 5, scene 1, in which he announces his plan to drown his book, commonly interpreted as the Bard's own farewell to the stage:

> But this rough magic
> I here abjure, and, when I have required
> Some heavenly music, which even now I do,
> To work mine end upon their senses that
> This airy charm is for, I'll break my staff,
> Bury it certain fathoms in the earth,
> And deeper than did ever plummet sound
> I'll drown my book. (5.1.50-57)

What is most striking and unnerving in this passage (but is also a legitimate explanation for the abjuration of his "rough magic") is Prospero's mention of his command of the dead ("graves at my command/ Have waked their sleepers, oped, and let 'em forth") by his "so potent art" (5.1.48-50). This clearly casts Prospero not only as a demiurge but as a practitioner of black magic, much like Sycorax. When, in the next line, he renounces his project, it is precisely this dark aspect of necromancy, anger and revenge that he intends to distance himself from, and not the entire art, all the while embracing a Christian attitude of enemy forgiveness.

On another note, Prospero is almost universally described as a magus and enlightened monarch. If we apply Culianu's theory about the Neoplatonic definition of the "total magician", we can describe Prospero's role in *The Tempest* as follows:

> The science of the Renaissance attempts to capture, by means of deciphering the arcane writings of the world, the celestial forces which respond to the structures of these writings. In other words, the scientist—that is, the magician—finds in the writings of the world those figures and formulas which correspond to the visible and invisible entities above him. These formulas have coercive power over the entities and enable the magician to appropriate their prestigious service. This may be, indeed, the 'total magician', who has appropriated all the 'ciphers' in the writings of the world. (Culianu 2003, 33, our translation)

But Prospero's theurgical project seems flawed, judging by the quote above. Before he evokes the "heavenly music" and the "airy charm", which suggest the harmonious workings of 'good' magic, he describes an apocalyptic scene, full of destruction and violence, that affects nature ("bedinn'd the noonshine sun", "mutinous winds", made the promontory "shake" and "pluck'd up the pine and cedar"). We know it is also meant to affect humans, as this is the vengeance prepared to punish "the three men of sin", Antonio, Alonso, and Sebastian. No wonder, then, that Prospero assesses his own project, once it reaches its climax, as "rough", and decides to "abjure" it. There is a dark side to his "potent art", dangerous and harmful, the maleficent agency clearly stated: "elves", "demi-puppets", and "weak masters" "whose pastime is to make midnight mushrooms" and other unnatural actions. Criticism of *The Tempest* has struggled to demonstrate this is not proof that Prospero has been contaminated by Sycorax's evil practices, or that Prospero bears, after all, some resemblance to the weird sisters in *Macbeth*. Wondering about the 'roughness' of his magic, Cosmo Corfield concludes that Prospero's project is ill-timed and therefore brought to fruition after a certain "auspicious star" has disappeared (1985, 38). Duke Pesta argues that a literal interpretation of the "rough magic" risks breaking the spell of the play with its "benevolent, other-world-centered ontology" (2004, 50), of early modernity, where witches, elves, angels, and monsters had their place. In other words, like in a fairy tale, no moral condemnation of Prospero is necessary because "the role of magic, illusion, and enchantment" should be interpreted "from the perspective of those societies that produced them", a perspective on a "dreamy and unattainable other world" (Pesta 2004, 49).

In the light of the arguments made above, though, we could advance other possible justifications. On the one hand, there is a wistfulness in Prospero's interrogation of Ariel's perception of the suffering inflicted on the men of sin. He may realize that, if Ariel, who is not human, feels sorry for humans, Prospero, a fellow human being, prone to imperfection, impurity and sin, should also give them a second chance, forgive all and return to Milan:

> Hast thou, which art but air, a touch, a feeling
> Of their afflictions, and shall not myself,
> One of their kind, that relish all as sharply,
> Passion as they, be kindlier moved than thou art?
> Though with their high wrongs I am struck to the quick,
> Yet with my nobler reason 'gaitist my fury
> Do I take part: the rarer action is
> In virtue than in vengeance: they being penitent,
> The sole drift of my purpose doth extend
> Not a frown further. Go release them, Ariel:
> My charms I'll break, their senses I'll restore,
> And they shall be themselves. (5.1.21-32)

Prospero loves Ariel for his airiness ("thou, which art but air") and loathes Caliban's basic physicality, but, eventually, he releases the former and embraces the latter, acknowledged as "mine", albeit as a "thing of darkness". He may therefore realize that, despite his science and, even more so, despite the severe chastity he imposes on himself, his daughter, and her future husband, he still is part of the world he aims to reject, just as he cannot fully embrace the world he aspires to. So he goes back to Milan, a political and sinful place, and leaves the magic behind on the island, where it belongs. His magic project may not be, therefore, fully attained, but, at least, it remains pure and unspoiled. We may imagine there is a continuum between the masque of chastity presented in Act 4 and the magician's assessment of the (im)purity of his art in Act 5. While, in anticipation of his return to the political world of Milan, Prospero's insistence on Ferdinand's and Miranda's virtue is based on dynastic calculations, the explanation for the constant emphasis on chastity may also lie with his fear of contamination. Human intervention, ignorant and sinful by definition in relation with the theurgical aspirations of the "potent art", may instantly make it "rough" and ruin its superior goal. In this logic, Prospero's plan to use magic in order to take revenge against the men of sin would suffice to corrupt the art and bring him closer to Caliban than to Ariel. He becomes aware of this when Ariel declares his sympathy for the enemies of his master, concluding, unequivocally, "the rarer action is in virtue than in vengeance".

The imperfection of the art lies in Prospero's failed ambition to improve nature, human or otherwise. According to Adrian Papahagi, "although he is able to control delicate spirits like Ariel and vile natures like Caliban, to rend trees and to stir tempests, Prospero fails miserably to improve human nature." (2020, 205) Caliban cannot be converted to civilization through magic, just as the potent art cannot lead to the moral conversion of the treacherous Milanese. It

is only providence and grace, the same scholar argues, that rescues all the villains in the play.

On the other hand, after twelve years of exile on the charmed island, when Prospero's magic is expected to reach its zenith, the magus (and the spectators of the play) realize he is an old man, absent-minded or senile, who no longer has full control—of the creatures under his command, and of magic practices. His "old brain is troubled" and his temper, in contradiction with the wise serenity of white, intellectual magic, betrays a "beating mind" (4.1.163). The protagonist's portrayal as an old man reveals a universe on the verge of disenchantment, where the workings of magic are exposed as imperfect speculations or even as selfish machinations. This shift foretells the transformations operated by the farcical mode of Restoration drama, where magic moves completely into the province of deception and fraud, on the one hand, or of failed experimentation, on the other. This brings us to a comedy from 1675 by Thomas Duffet, entitled *The Mock-Tempest*, whose protagonist is an old and decrepit Prospero. The magus is a performer who has not kept up with the latest developments in theatrical special effects. Ariel, the sorcerer's young assistant, criticizes his mentor's tricks as outdated and less convincing than those used by competing playhouses. The original serenity is turned into derision, while the potency of the art is robbed of its original aura of mystery. It is equally significant that the intellectual quality of Prospero's magic in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* is treated as a mere technicality, sprinkled, for good measure, with the sordid details of demonic practices.

Conclusions

Written five years apart, *Macbeth* and *The Tempest* explore spaces and attitudes linked to witchcraft and magic in Shakespeare's lifetime. There seems to be a broad distinction between witchcraft—associated with evil, the supernatural/ devil, femininity and ritualised practises—and magic, a more benign form of manipulating the elements and ethereal creatures for a higher purpose. As a result, spaces related to witchcraft and inhabited by female witches are topophrenic, bearing masculine connotations of gloom, infertility, negativity and aggression to the senses, whereas spaces related to magic and male magicians are associated—as if by compensation—with femininity and fertility, enabling miracles (of forgiveness and reconciliation) to happen.

Despite the difference in the type and connotations of spaces related to witchcraft and magic respectively, there is a convergence in the *modi operandi* in which the practitioners wield their magic, with only slight differences in the details, which can also be gender-based. Most importantly, these wielders of

magic can all manipulate the elements; yet, while the trio of witches in *Macbeth* are connected to domesticity and cooking as ritualised practise, both Sycorax and Prospero in *The Tempest* exploit other individuals to achieve their goals. Whether the depiction of magical practices is clearly negative (as in *Macbeth*) or gives the impression that it has more positive connotations (as in *The Tempest*), Shakespeare casts the 'operators' of magic as deviant, in the sense that they undermine the seemingly safe and strict order of the early modern world. Moreover, the power and influence the operators transmit is ultimately corrupted, one way or another. Witchcraft, as *maleficium*, represents a form of moral and religious corruption, while the potent art turns rough when it fails to convince participants of its potential for perfection.

Shakespeare's portrayal of magic as both serene and gloomy, white and black, potent and rough, intellectual art and conjuration, is proof of an eclectic perception of magic that is transmitted throughout the seventeenth century, which is very much in line with the spirit of the age. The epistemological crisis of the time may be the main reason why the occult practices are rendered as experimental or borderline. At the crossroads between the waning religious faith and the growing power of reason, the attitudes towards magic undergo a transformation that permeates both literature and every-day life.

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THE HYGIENICS OF TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETING: METAPHORS OF PURITY AND CONTAMINATION, AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF TRANSLATOR AND INTERPRETER IDENTITY

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ABSTRACT. ***The Hygienics of Translation and Interpreting: Metaphors of Purity and Contamination, and the Construction of Translator and Interpreter Identity.*** Rooted in Critical Discourse Analysis and Pragmatics, and using metaphors as a heuristic tool, this essay will look at public and academic discourses on the practices of translation and interpreting associated with notions of cleanliness/purity vs uncleanliness/contamination. Such discourses may appear abstract and speculative in nature, but have a practical impact on normative (self) perceptions of translators' and interpreters' professional behaviour and habitus. They also seem to run through the academic and theoretical understandings of translation and interpreting along the axes of fidelity/infidelity and translator's invisibility/visibility, but also, by extension, in terms of respecting/trespassing boundaries (notions of norms of translation, or the interpreter as a conduit or gatekeeper). Real-life examples will be discussed to illustrate and deconstruct such metaphorical devices and highlight their connection with underlying value judgements attached to purity vs contamination. Existing metaphorical alternatives, which allow for the construction of more nuanced translators'/interpreters' identities, will also be discussed.

Keywords*: metaphors of interpreting and translation, conduit metaphor, vessel metaphor, translator's/interpreter's invisibility, 'pristine' translation*

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REZUMAT. ***Igiena traducerii şi a interpretării: metaforele purităţii şi ale contaminării şi construcţia identităţii traducătorului şi interpretului*.** Bazându-se pe instrumentele analizei critice a discursului şi ale pragmaticii şi folosind metaforele ca instrument euristic, prezentul articol va analiza discursurile publice şi academice privind practicile de traducere şi interpretare asociate cu noţiunile de curăţenie/puritate vs. necurăţenie/contaminare. Astfel de discursuri pot părea abstracte şi speculative prin natura lor, dar au un impact practic asupra percepţiilor normative (de sine stătătoare) ale comportamentului şi habitusului profesional al traducătorilor şi interpreţilor. De asemenea, ele par să direcţioneze abordările academice şi teoretice ale traducerii şi interpretării de-a lungul axelor fidelitate/infidelitate şi invizibilitate/vizibilitate a traducătorului, dar şi, prin extensie, în ceea ce priveşte respectarea/traversarea graniţelor (noţiunile de norme de traducere sau interpretul ca un conducător sau gardian). Vor fi discutate exemple din viaţa reală pentru a ilustra şi deconstrui astfel de dispozitive metaforice şi pentru a evidenţia legătura acestora cu judecăţile de valoare implicite despre puritate vs. contaminare. De asemenea, vor fi discutate alternativele metaforice existente, care permit construirea unor identităţi mai nuanţate ale traducătorilor/interpreţilor.

Cuvinte-cheie: *metafore ale interpretării şi traducerii, metafora conductei, metafora vasului, invizibilitatea traducătorului/interpretului, traducere "curată"*

Metaphors are powerful means of meaning-making. They are also translations of sorts. They map one conceptual domain onto another, so that the first domain can be conceptualized by means of the second (Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Kövecses 2002, 4). Which is another way of saying that they *translate* a concept we do not quite grasp into another concept that we already know.

Just as something gets inevitably lost (and found) in translation, however, metaphors, too, lead us to focus more on certain aspects of the target domain—the ones that bear some affinity with the source domain—and leave others in the shadows. In other words, metaphors tend to act as discursive frames (Ritchie 2012, 106 and following). In fields such as Discourse Analysis and Pragmatics, the framing effects of metaphors have been vastly analysed with reference to real-life public, political and media discourses, mostly with a view to exposing how metaphors influence recipients' way of thinking about a certain issue (by way of example see Semino 2021; Garzone 2021; Semino, Demjén, and Demmen 2018).

Curiously, in Translation Studies, the use of metaphors seems to be more widely advocated as a proactive tool to conceptualize translation and interpreting (from now on, T&I). Several authors have used existing metaphors

or offered new ones as *heuristic* tools that are capable of shedding new light on the practices or products or actors of T&I, thus contributing to the advancement of our understanding of T&I in ways that may be unattainable through other, perhaps more rational, methods of investigation (Martín de León 2022; Guldin 2016, 32-33; Guldin 2020, 326-28; St André 2010 and essays within; Hermans 2007, chapter 4; Bollettieri Bosinelli and Torresi, 2016).

Other works have focused more critically on popular or literary discourses of T&I and the metaphors they contain, which most frequently point to T&I as subservient to the original text and author. For instance, good translations (and translators) have long been described as invisible screens or clear mirrors that carry the meaning across, add or subtract nothing—a metaphorical view opposed most famously by Lawrence Venuti (1995). Similarly, drawing on the metaphor of communication as a conduit, by which language is a vessel that transfers concepts from the sender's to the receiver's mind without modification (Reddy 1979), interpreters have traditionally been encouraged to identify as mere conduits who convey the original message from one person's mouth to another person's ears, neutrally transposing it into another language. The conduit metaphor of interpreting has been denounced as delusionary in interpreting studies ever since the 1990s, by scholars like Roy (1993), Wadensjö (1998), Angelelli (2004, 7-11) and Diriker (2004), who have also argued that the interpreter's neutrality is an abstraction and does not appear to find much application if you look at the actual socio-linguistic behaviour of interpreters in real-life interpreted encounters.[2]

Ça va sans dire, popular metaphors of T&I that rely on the notion of invisibility, such as T&I as a mirror or clear screen, carry with them the quality of absolute spotlessness, lest the mirror or screen become visible, thus revealing itself as something standing between the sender and the receiver. Similarly, well-functioning conduits and vessels are visualized as empty and with clean insides, otherwise they might not fulfil their function of carrying the original content (and only that) across languages. As a result, the conduit and vessel metaphors imply that a good translation or interpretation is *clean*, *pristine*, *pure*.

It is easy to understand why this kind of metaphors is popular with users of T&I. Images of unproblematic and "hygienic" transfer from a source to a target do away with the possibility of *betraying* the original or its spirit—betrayal being another long-standing metaphor for T&I, this time unequivocally

[2] Arguably, the very conduit metaphor of communication, by which language is a vessel that transfers concepts from the sender's mind to the receiver's without modification (Reddy 1979), is an oversimplification that does not account for interferences in the channel, the variability of the sender's and receiver's capabilities and subjectivities that influence their coding and decoding of the message, and the human-made and embodied nature of language itself—imperfect and opaque by definition.

imbued with negative overtones that are washed away by the positive connotation attached to cleanliness, purity, pristineness. When advertising for T&I services, then, guaranteeing clean, pure or pristine translation seems a good marketing idea and it is not surprising to find similar claims in agencies' or professionals' commercial literature and websites, such as those that will be found in the following section.

It is much less obvious, however, that after all the research in T&I that has long and convincingly argued against the translator's invisibility and the interpreter's neutrality, metaphors like the vessel or conduit or others that rely on pristineness should still circulate today within in-profession discourse, such as the examples of professional associations' Codes of Ethics that we will see in the section following the next.

In the following two sections, I will group together a few examples of real-life descriptions of T&I taken from the web in 2023-24 that entail notions of purity and pristineness, either explicitly mentioned or subsumed in references to translators and interpreters as conduits or vessels. Such descriptions have not been systematically collected and therefore have no ambition of constituting a representative sample of T&I promotional or professional discourses. My purpose here is twofold: firstly, I intend to show that such representations of T&I do persist after decades of academic debate have shown that they are inaccurate as well as damaging for translators' and interpreters' professional image. Secondly, I will try and deconstruct the discourses that rely on such metaphors in the proposed examples, with the help of pragmatics and critical discourse analysis (e.g. Verschueren and Blommaert 1991, Blommaert and Verschueren 1998).

Pristine translation and the interpreter as conduit in professionals' promotional discourses

In English-language public discourses of T&I service providers reaching out to perspective clients, metaphors of purity and cleanliness are so common that the entire material for the first part of this section was found with a simple Google query of the phrase 'pristine translation', run in April 2023. 'Pristine', meaning "still pure; uncorrupted; unspoiled"[3], is an absolute adjective that further boosts notions of accuracy, precision, fidelity and clarity—all cognates of pristineness in the field of T&I, which explicitly co-occur in some of the examples below (my emphasis):

[3] https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/pristine. The semantic connection between pristineness and judgments of moral integrity, hence trustworthiness, has been studied in anthropology and sociology (Douglas 1966; Zhong and House 2014) as well as psychology, especially in connection with OCDs (Zhong and Liljenquist 2006; Rozin, Haidt, and McCauley 2009; McKay and Carp 2017, 342-43).

> We provide the best interpreters and translators for *precise* interpreting, *pristine* translation [...] *Clear* communication across languages and cultures proves a challenge. Key decisions depend on *accuracy*, *precision*, and *clarity*. (LinkedIn profile, Capital Linguists, Silver Spring, Maryland)

Language Connections helps provide solutions for a few of this client's needs: *Precise*, *accurate* translations of complicated medical and legal documents [...] We always ensure that the translator we hire for this client isn't just a native speaker of their target language, but also has the medical or life sciences background so they can provide a *pristine* translation of even the most difficult and demanding material. (https://www.languageconnections.com/pharmaceutical-translation-for-a-biotech-pharma-and-medtech-consultancy/)

> Relying on just one person to deliver a *pristine* translation that is consistent with your original text and also reads correctly in the target language is a very risky strategy. (http://www.cgb-translations.com/services/proofreading-editing/)

> We transformed and directed our efforts towards establishing a platform that allows rendering *pristine* translation services (https://www.tridindia.com/blog/translation-services-for-ngo-and-survey-companies/)

> You see, proofreading is the bedrock of error free English, to spot and correct any mistakes before the text is released in to the public domain. Exactly the same principles apply to translations. But there's more to it for leading edge agencies specialising in *pristine* translation (https://accutranslate.co.uk/heres-the-real-reason-why-your-translations-arent-error-free/)

The phrase seems to be so ingrained in T&I promotional discourse that it recurs even in reviews of literary translations in the publishing trade press—despite the argument for good translations to be far from invisible or pristine being most sustained within literary translation studies (Venuti 1995, 1998):

> Hacker's prose, aided by Atkins's *pristine* translation, soars, particularly in her treatment of city and bourgeois life [...]. (*Publishers Weekly* review of K. Hacker's *The Have Nots*, https://www.europaeditions.com/book/9781933372419/the-have-nots)

> The Haydars' *pristine* translation captures Rashid's conflictedness and leaves *intact* al-Daif's wordplay (*Publishers Weekly* review of R. al-Daif's *Learning English*, https://www.interlinkbooks.com/product/learning-english/)

> Yoshimoto's marvelously light touch is perfectly captured by Emmerich's *pristine* translation. (*Publishers Weekly* review of B. Yoshimoto's *The Lake*, https://www.amazon.it/Lake-Banana-Yoshimoto/dp/1612190898)

Curiously, the phrase 'pristine interpreting' does not appear to enjoy the same popularity, and a Google search for this exact wording does not retrieve any results at the time of writing (March 2024). However, as argued in the previous section, the notion of pristine, unspoilt T&I is closely collected to the (empty and clean) vessel and conduit imagery that instead recur abundantly in the promotional discourse of T&I service providers:

> A professional translator is a *vessel* of your message. Although he or she might use different words to communicate, there shouldn't be any personal opinion, emotion or judgement. (https://lighthouseonline.com/blog-en/5-traits-to-look-for-in-a-professional-translator/)

> An interpreter is a *conduit* of information. They will interpret everything that is said in both languages. (https://www.georgefox.edu/diversity/interpreter-policy.html)

> The interpreter is a *conduit* for the communication that you are providing to [...] the person to whom you are communicating (https://www.hopealaska.org/deaf-supports/working-with-an-interpreter)

In line with the findings of Hale (2014, 321) and Crezee and Jülich (2020, 225), the conduit cliché appears unsurprisingly appealing for professional categories that routinely work with interpreters or, as the inanimate metaphor suggest, *use* interpreters, especially in sensitive domains of community or public service interpreting such as the judicial or healthcare settings:

> The interpreter is a *conduit* for information exchange, and not a direct participant in the proceeding. (Supreme Court of Georgia Commission on Interpreters, "Working with Limited English Proficient persons and foreign-language interpreters in the courtroom: A bench card for judges" https://www.ncsc.org/__data/assets/pdf_file/0017/19250/georgia-lep-benchard.pdf)

It is perhaps less understandable that the same imagery seeps into the discourse of interpreters that is purportedly aimed at other interpreters, suggesting that the authors do not only *sell* the inanimate, empty, clean-sided conduit metaphor to perspective clients, but also *identify* with it, and encourage other colleagues or trainees to do the same, as happens in the following entries from the same blog:

> Our role as interpreters is to act as *conduits* and help make communication possible between people who speak different languages (https://shenyunwu.wordpress.com/tag/medical-interpreting/)

> Sometimes you think you know better. You hear and understand what's going on, but when messages are transmitted between the source and target languages, the receiver doesn't always understand the message. […] Whether the misunderstanding came from your rendition of the message, the speaker's ambiguity, or the receiver's own misunderstanding, an interpreter shall not respond on behalf of a speaker nor get involved in side conversations. We must stay within our role as *conduits*, and only interpret. As an interpreter, you know that your role is simply to interpret. This means rendering what is said and not what isn't said. Any omission, addition, or distortion of the original intention of the message should be avoided at all cost. […] In sum, as an interpreter, *you do not have your own voice*, and may not speak on behalf of any speaker. Your role is to act as a *conduit* and pass on whatever is said (https://shenyunwu.wordpress.com/tag/interpreter-as-conduit/, entry titled "Hold Your Tongue (the Role of an Interpreter)")

This view contrasts with what other professional interpreters do voice over the Internet or social networks, echoing the academic debate over the impossibility, and undesirability, of absolute neutrality:

> Interpreting will never be respected as a profession while its practitioners cling to the idea that they are invisible *conduits*. (https://twitter.com/integlangsbiz/status/714363922971803649)

However, the very fact that there is an urge to detach oneself and the profession from the conduit metaphor (a parallel of the vessel metaphor for written translation), which is actually still championed as the only paradigm of interpreting by other practising professionals such as the one who authored the blog above, bears witness to the persistence of the conduit metaphor and its implications analysed here—emptiness, pristineness, objectification and invisibility.

Identification with the conduit or vessel metaphors and their implied qualities, however, is not just a matter of one or the other individual practitioner's opinion. It is also still rooted in the Codes of Ethics of some of the leading international and national T&I professional associations, as we will see in the following section.

The translator as vessel and the interpreter as conduit in professional associations' Codes of Ethics

A T&I professional association's Code of Ethics (CoE) may be argued to be halfway between in-profession discourse and public promotional discourse

aimed at perspective clients. On the one hand, upon joining the association, its members accept to follow the CoE in their professional conduct, therefore the CoE should describe a type of conduct that is attainable in real-life practice and that its members can ethically subscribe to. On the other hand, the CoE is made public on the association's website, for all members' perspective clients to peruse. It should therefore describe a type of conduct that is desirable from the clients' perspective, otherwise being a member of the association might damage one's professional career rather than advancing it.

In this context, professional associations may choose to describe a type of good conduct that acknowledges the impossibility of neutrality and invisibility in the real, embodied practice of T&I, in line with the academic reflections mentioned in the first section of this paper. Or alternatively, they may put on a more client-friendly face and choose to replicate the metaphors of the vessel and conduit, with their implications of invisibility, pristineness, emptiness. A third alternative might be to try and strike a balance between the two, perhaps by explaining why absolute neutrality and invisibility cannot be attained and are not even desirable for clients, because they are incompatible with human products such as language, and with human processes such as communication and T&I. Let us have a look at a few of real-life CoEs to see how they frame good T&I.

Article 10 of the CoE of the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC) states:

> Fidelity of Interpretation—Interpreters shall strive to translate the message to be interpreted faithfully and precisely. They shall endeavour to render the message without embellishment, omission, or alteration.
> (https://aiic.org/document/10277/CODE_2022_E&F_final.pdf)

This CoE article does not contain any explicit mention of the conduit metaphor, or even its implied qualities of emptiness, pristineness, invisibility. It does, however, gloss 'fidelity' and 'precision' to the original (discursively framed as good) as a *lack* of something else: "*without* embellishment, omission, or alteration". In this wording, embellishment, omission, or alteration are clearly presented as bad or wrong, or out of place in a good (i.e, faithful and precise) rendition[4]. Therefore, good interpreting should be devoid of such 'contaminants' of the original message—which reminds of the qualities of emptiness and cleanliness associated with the conduit metaphor. Another implication of this article is that good interpreters will *refrain from* using embellishment, omission, or alteration;

[4] It seems appropriate here to remind that the quality of being "out of place" is the root constituent of the categories of "dirt" and contamination (Douglas 1966, 36; Campkin 2007, 69; Connor 2011; Baccolini and Torresi 2019, 26).

in other words, they will "hold their tongues", as per the title of the last blog entry in the previous section.

In this CoE, there is a mediation between the absolute ideal of "translat[ing] faithfully and precisely" and human imperfection, in the form of the verb "strive to". The same applies to the verb "endeavour" in the second sentence, which seems to acknowledge that there will be occasions in which embellishment, omission, or alteration will happen anyway, as hard as the interpreter tries.

Nevertheless, this concession to human fallibility does not frame alterations to the original in a less negative way. Embellishment, omission, or alteration continue to be presented as inherently wrong regardless of the context, which appears to runs counter the entire theory of functional translation (Nord 2017; Martín de León 2020). Functional approaches to T&I advocate *for* alterations when they are necessary to preserve the effectiveness, purpose and communicative intention of the original text and to adjust them to the receiving audience and context.

The wording adopted in AIIC's CoE also denies the fact that conference interpreting is a highly constrained type of translation (Mayoral, Kelly and Gallardo 1988), which means that alterations are not so much a necessary *evil* but actually *desirable* in order to manage as effectively as possible the multiple constraints posed by the interpreting task—time constraints, the constraints imposed by the different structure of the source and target oral languages, and also subjective constraints such as the interpreter's linguistic and cognitive resources being limited, as Gile's effort models teach us (Gile 1985, 2015).

Although sketching out absolute ideals conflicting with both academic thought and real-life professional practice, AIIC's acknowledgement that interpreters should "strive" (not "adhere") to such ideals keeps the CoE safe from any accusation of claiming the unattainable. Nonetheless, the framing employed in the text above seems to point to a client's, rather than a professional's, perspective. As documented by Zwischenberger (2009, 246-48) in her survey of AIIC members, individual professionals hold more diverse images of their professional role, although not all of them are more interpreter-centred than their association's[5].

The second CoE that I will discuss here is that of the the American Translators' Association, whose Article 6 states:

[5] Only 6.5% of respondents to Zwischenberger's survey, run in late 2008 among AIIC members worldwide, volunteered the conduit or other instrumental metaphors. However, another 9.6% mentioned they identified professionally as "conveyors of the message" (including faithfulness to the original text), 12.6% mentioned "serving either the speaker or the listener, and 3.8% felt "invisible".

> We the members of the American Translators Association accept as our ethical and professional duty [...] to convey meaning between people, organizations, and cultures accurately, appropriately, and without bias, depending on the context of the source, purpose, readership or audience, and medium. (https://www.atanet.org/about-us/code-of-ethics/)

The first part of the article refers to accuracy and appropriateness, two notions that seem to carry less absolutistic undertones, and to be more consumer-oriented (rather than source text-oriented) than the ones mentioned by AIIC, i.e. precision and faithfulness. The following "*without* bias" once again defines a translator's good conduct *a negativo*, on the grounds of a lack or absence (a concept cognate to emptiness and cleanliness, which are also specific kinds of absence) rather than an affirmation. However, this lack is immediately hedged as a non-absolute by a concession to functionalist views, as its very possibility "depend[s] on the context of the source, purpose, readership or audience, and medium". This concession also appears to cushion the friction between the mention of translating without bias and the long tradition of translation studies influenced by postcolonial, cultural, critical discursive and gender studies, which have all pointed to the inevitability of bias in T&I and language use in general.

It is perhaps in the light of all such academic reflections, as well as of real-life T&I work, that other associations have acknowledged more explicitly the impossibility and injustice of acting as (empty, clean, inhuman) vessels or conduits of meanings.

For instance, under article 5 of the CoE and Code of Conduct of Australia's AUSIT (2012 version, rewritten in association with Monash University), while vowing to translate accurately, *without* omissions or distortions, interpreters and translators are still entitled to mistakes and misunderstandings, as implied by points 5.3 and 5.4:

> 5.3 Interpreters and translators acknowledge and promptly rectify any interpreting or translation mistakes.
> 5.4 Where circumstances permit, interpreters and translators ask for repetition, rephrasing or explanation if anything is unclear. (https://ausit.org/code-of-ethics/)

Perhaps more tellingly, article 5.2 of the CoE of the Italian Translators' and Interpreters' association AITI reads:

> Translators and interpreters must not knowingly alter the content of an original text for ideological or personal reasons. Any personal opinions must be expressed with moderation and must be clearly separated from the original message. (https://aiti.org/en/code-professional-ethics-and-conduct)

In AITI's wording, the translator or interpreter *is* entitled to expressing personal opinions, which are not called 'bias', and are not presented as something to do *without*. Rather, the article affirmatively states the ways in which such opinions must be expressed. The translator's or interpreter's voice is no longer something wrong, or dirty, or inevitable but evil—provided that it stays put within its boundaries, hygienically and "clearly separated" from the original message. Also, the specification of "knowingly" in the first sentence is an admission that alterations *may* happen unknowingly (but in that case, if they are not known to the translator or interpreter, the implication is that they do not even fall within the scope of this code of ethics).

Making room for mistakes and misunderstandings (as in AUSLIT's CoE) or for translators' and interpreters' personal opinions, even tolerating the possibility of their unknowingly altering the original text (as in AITI's code), may not necessarily disrupt the conduit and vessel metaphors, but does run counter to their implied qualities. The conduit is no longer pristine, the vessel no longer empty; it becomes possible, or even inevitable, for something else to be transmitted alongside (or instead of) the original message, and contaminate it.

Towards an acceptance of the not-so-pristine side of translation and interpreting: a metaphorical political act

After so much theoretical reflection on the impossibility and injustice of translators having to stay invisible and interpreters having to "hold their tongues", why do the images of the conduit and the vessel, and the qualities of pristineness, emptiness and invisibility or neutrality that come with such metaphors still recur today in professional promotional discourse and in some of the leading professional associations' CoEs, as we have seen above?

One possible explanation is that metaphors are more powerful discursive devices than well-spun and well-informed arguments. Their tendency to reduce complex concepts to few, clear-cut elements allows for easier conceptualization and memorization (Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Kövecses 2002). For this reason, if we want to effectively move away from the utopia of absolute faithfulness to the original that the conduit and vessel metaphors imply, then perhaps we should seek for and actively circulate alternative metaphors that—equally effectively—acknowledge that T&I preserve the original message *as much as possible*, *depending on the context*. It would also be wholesome for translators' and interpreters' identity if that *as much as possible* could be framed not necessarily as a loss, and if that *depending on the context* could be presented not necessarily as sloppy approximation, but as added value that T&I bring to the original, contributing to its meaning in a generative way, something to be acknowledged and cherished rather than despised and swept under the carpet.

If we reflect on the metaphors of the vessel and of the conduit, we realize that they both refer to artefacts, artificial things which exist only to fulfil a purpose. The smoother, the more mechanical, the less imperfect (the less human? the less *organic*, even?), the better. In the era of machine translation and AI, it is easy to see the trap in this kind of image: if being mechanical and acting as *automata* is the golden standard, then human translators and interpreters cannot compete. Still, the idea of carrying across or transmitting meanings originated by somebody else, also foregrounded in such metaphors, seems to be very catchy and effective. So, can we preserve the successful idea of transmission, of carrying something across the waters, and get rid of the idea of artificially clean perfection that is also implied by the conduit and vessel metaphors?

I believe we can. In an essay published in 2016, Rosa Maria Bollettieri Bosinelli and myself proposed one such metaphor. Translation (meant broadly as T&I), we argued, can be conceptualized as a bottle carrying the text across the sea of linguistic and cultural differences, and also across time. A vessel in all respects, except that when we visualize a message in a bottle, we tend to acknowledge that the seas it traversed did leave a trace on it and its content:

> [the] bottle [...] contains more than one message. The degree of yellowing of the paper, the weathering and opacity of the bottle, the shells and concretions that accumulate on the bottle, the shape, colour and material of the cork, the very air trapped inside the bottle, also become carriers of meaning. (Bollettieri Bosinelli and Torresi 2016, n.p.)

The message in a bottle metaphor couples the inorganic (the originally clear glass of the vessel) with the organic (the bacteria that cause the paper to yellow, the paper itself, the shells and concretions that accumulate on the bottle). However, in hindsight, one further step appears necessary to move both linguistically closer to, and at the same time semantically further from, the vessel and conduit metaphors and their implied qualities of emptiness, cleanliness and invisibility or neutrality.

So I propose to introduce the image of the *blood* vessel in T&I—for instance in our teaching materials and in-profession discourses. A blood vessel is both a vessel, and a conduit. But it is organic; it carries organic fluid (the message being translated or interpreted, which is a product of human activity and takes the form of human-made language). A blood vessel may become infected or cluttered, and even when it does work properly, it can hardly be referred to as clean or pristine. It is widely accepted that blood vessels, and the blood they contain, interact constantly with the surrounding tissues. The flow of blood through blood vessels is not smooth and constant, but it goes in waves, in time with the heartbeat. Also, a blood vessel does not function on its own, but is a stretch of the circulatory system and ultimately, part of the body.

The function of a blood vessel is to provide oxygen and nutrients to sustain the body, or to take waste out of it. In either case, its work is messy and complicated, but it makes life happen. As for alterations, it is through blood vessels that the gas exchange in the lungs is possible. Oxygen and nutrients are not just carried around, they are exchanged for waste carbon dioxide and toxins at some point, which are all part of life-sustaining processes.

The image of T&I as a blood vessel is an intentional reappropriation of the vessel and conduit metaphors. It is aimed at exploiting the popularity that these metaphors still enjoy today, after decades of critical deconstruction, in promotional and professional language. It is also a way of acknowledging that when meaning is transferred from one language to another, from one culture to another, the transfer inevitably carries some kind of transformation or contamination, because translations is, as all human activities, an embodied process that depends on (inter)subjectivity (Ivancic and Zepter 2022). Arguably, even machine T&I or the AI tools used for text generation or translation cannot escape this rule, as they operate using natural (i.e., human-made) languages, and their recipients are humans whose cognitive experiences and processes are also embodied and (inter)subjective. Machine T&I, then, is also a blood vessel—the conduit may be artificial, but the content is not, neither is the organic model the conduit is shaped after.

Realising the abstract and oversimplifying nature of non-human, non-organic metaphors of T&I such as the mirror, the conduit or the vessel is important for professional practice. It helps interpreters, translators, and those who train them professionally to be at peace with the fact that T&I or communication at large can never be a fully transparent and invisible screen, but inevitably carries some alteration of the original message—including some embarrassingly organic traces from all the very real, very human, participants of the embodied practice of meaning-making and meaning-sharing. It seems that the "third space" where T&I become possible (Bhabha 1990, 1994; House 2010) is never pristine to the point of sterility, and that signification does not go well with sanification.

It is also my contention that with this realization must come action, or a metaphorical political act—that of affirming the complexities and human nature of T&I by using metaphors that foreground the organic over the inorganic, the generative over the pristine, such as the message in a bottle or the blood vessel. Other similar metaphors, equally or more effective than these, may be waiting for future research to unveil or revamp them and bring them into the T&I discourse, and they will be very much welcome. Without such affirmative metaphorical action, we risk being unable to resist the popular and even professional discourses that continue to frame good T&I as an empty vessel, an uncluttered and pristine conduit, or an invisible glass screen or mirror.

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LES *METAMORPHOSES* D'APULEE. 2. DESTRUCTURATION ANARCHÉTYPALE DU ROMAN

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ABSTRACT. *Apuleius'* Metamorphoses. *2. Anarchetypal Freedom of the Novel*. In this paper I apply a concept I have coined and defined—the anarchetype—to the ancient Greek and Latin novel, more specifically to Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*. The text suffers, in my view, from the tension between two contrary formal tendencies, one which is archetypal, another which is anarchetypal. In a paper published in the previous issue of this journal, I have analyzed the first structural constraint, the archetypal one. In the present paper I focus on the anarchetypal tendency of the novel. Apuleius' assumed intention of writing an entertaining text, in the wake of the "Milesian tales", offers him the opportunity to treat freely the epic material, with no regards to Aristotle's principles and to the canon of high literature. The haphazard fragmentation of the linear narrative and the plethora of additional stories give the text the aspect of an anarchetypal rhizome-like domino game.

Keywords: *Greek and Latin novel, Apuleius, The Metamorphoses, mystery cults, initiation travel, archetype, anarchetype*

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REZUMAT. **Metamorfozele *lui Apuleius*. *2. Destructurarea anarhetipală a romanului.*** Doresc în acest studiu să aplic un concept pe care l-am creat şi l-am definit—cel de anarhetip—romanului grec şi latin antic, cu precădere *Metamorfozelor* lui Apuleius. În opinia mea, textul suferă tensiunea dintre două tendinţe formale contrare, una arhetipală cealaltă anarhetipală. Într-o lucrare publicată în numărul precedent al *Studia UBB*, am analizat tendinţa structurală arhetipală. În această lucrare mă voi apleca asupra tendinţei contrare, de factură anarhetipală. Intenţia declarată a lui Apuleius de a scrie un text plăcut cititorilor, din seria "povestirilor milesiene", îi oferă posibilitatea de a trata liber materia epică, fără să ţină cont de principiile lui Aristotel şi de canonul literaturii înalte. Fragmentarea aleatorie a liniei narative şi pletora de poveşti adiţionale îi dau textului aspectul unui joc de domino rizomic, de tip anarhetipic.

Cuvinte-cheie*: romanul antic grec şi latin, Apuleius,* Metamorfozele*, culte de mistere, călătorie iniţiatică, arhetip, anarhetip*

Dans un travail publié dans le volume précédent de *Studia UBB* j'ai analysé le rite de passage qui donne la structure et le sens du roman *Les Métamorphoses* d'Apulée. Le scénario initiatique confère au texte une colonne vertébrale narrative, c'est-à-dire une configuration archétypale. Le sens global est si serré et vigoureux qu'il regroupe toute la matière épique, pour exubérante qu'elle soit, et la tient dans les cadres bien tracés d'une *dianoia*, d'un *cogito* de l'œuvre (comme dirait Georges Poulet). Le personnage-narrateur peut bien s'embrouiller dans des incidents grotesques et autres hasards amusants, le lecteur peut bien avoir le sentiment de perdre le fil des péripéties et la direction de l'aventure, au final tout ce qui a été raconté est rattrapé et tressé en un fil d'Ariane solide, capable de retrouver une direction dans le « labyrinthe » et de dessiner un trajet ferme dans la « forêt » (pour évoquer les métaphores d'Umberto Eco). Même si elles n'arrivent pas à respecter les unités de temps et d'espace, *Les Métamorphoses* infèrent toutefois d'une signification unique, qui leur donne la structure d'une sorte de *Bildungsroman* mystique.

Mais que se passerait-il si, en faisant une « expérience de pensée », on retirait le schéma initiatique du roman, comme on enlève la grande arête d'un poisson servi dans l'assiette ? Poussant un peu plus loin cette comparaison, on se rend vite compte que les arêtes représentent, statistiquement parlant, un pourcentage minimal par rapport à la chair, les écailles et autres parties, comestibles ou pas, du poisson. Manquant de support, le corps moelleux se défait en fragments libres, délicieux sans doute, mais qui ne ressemblent point au poisson vivant. Évidemment, on ne risque pas de perdre le goût de ce qu'on

mange, mais la forme organique initiale se défait dans un amas de bouchées de viande.

Alors, que reste-t-il des *Métamorphoses* si on leur enlève la colonne vertébrale narrative de l'initiation ? En fait, la réponse est simple : *L'Âne d'or* d'Apulée, à défaut d'un scénario initiatique, semble se réduire au récit *Lucius ou l'âne*, indifféremment de son possible auteur (anonyme appartenant au milieu des conteurs « milésiens », Lucius de Patras selon Photius, Lucien de Samosate selon Perry et Anderson). De manière qu'on devrait plutôt renverser la question, et se demander : Qu'est-ce qu'Apulée a ajouté au récit original ? D'un côté, comme les commentateurs l'ont bien marqué et comme j'ai essayé de le démontrer moi-même, Apulée lui a injecté un *logos* organisateur, combinant plusieurs pratiques religieuses et cultes à mystères dans un schéma sotériologique médio-platonicien. De plus, pour renforcer le sens téléologique du texte, Apulée a « mis en abyme », par le conte *Amour et Psyché*, une sorte d'aide-mémoire, de récapitulatif allégorique du vecteur mystique qui pousse Lucius.

D'un autre côté, bénéficiant de la liberté du genre narratif de l'original, Apulée a brodé sur une ligne épique assez simple force épisodes nouveaux, de sorte que, face aux quelques 25 pages du *Lucius ou l'âne*, l'*Âne d'or* est environ dix fois plus long. En effet, aux dires de l'auteur lui-même, Apulée se montre plus intéressé par les charmes des contes milésiens, par leur emprise sur le public, que par la réinterprétation du genre et par sa propre originalité dans la (re)création. Ce qu'il propose au lecteur c'est de lui « conter toute une série d'histoires variées » (Apulée 1958, 371), d'emboîter sur une ligne rouge un amas de récits bariolés, un peu comme les lettres de l'écriture hindoue qui s'accrochent à une ligne unique. Dans l'absence de la force ordonnatrice du scenario initiatique, laissé au gré du simple plaisir d'invention, le roman deviendrait un corpus bouillonnant d'épisodes zigzaguant de manière brownienne selon les caprices associatifs d'un auteur qui n'assume pas les responsabilités aristotéliques de la littérature culte et se range volontiers dans le genre populaire du « roman grec ».

Graham Anderson a dégagé un schéma du conte *Lucius ou l'âne*, mettant en relief une structure circulaire : arrivée de Lucius à Hypata, métamorphose, quatre aventures en tant qu'âne disposées symétriquement autour de l'épisode avec les prêtres galles, re-transformation, départ d'Hypata (Anderson 1976). Dans son étude introductive à la traduction de *Lucius ou l'âne*, Michel Dubuisson fait une comparaison thématique entre la structure du conte populaire (il ne retient pas l'hypothèse de Lucien en tant qu'auteur) et le roman d'Apulée (Pseudo-Lucien de Samosate 1999). Suivant cette synopsis je vais à mon tour diviser le(s) texte(s) en plusieurs parties, pour mieux saisir les éléments nouveaux apportés par les *Métamorphoses*.

Les chapitres 1-16 de *Lucius ou l'âne* correspondent aux trois premiers livres de l'*Âne d'or*. Dans le conte, Lucius se rend en Thessalie, à Hypata, et y trouve hébergement, grâce à une lettre de recommandation, chez Hipparque et sa femme magicienne. Dans la ville, il rencontre Abroia, une amie de sa mère, qui le prévient contre cette « mangeuse d'hommes ; elle jette son dévolu sur tous les jeunes gens. Et celui qui ne cède pas à ses désirs, elle le punit grâce à son art : nombreux sont ceux qu'elle a changés en animal ou dont elle s'est définitivement débarrassée. » (Pseudo-Lucien 1999, 4) Ce qui ne fait qu'aviver la curiosité de Lucius, qui se propose de séduire à cette fin Palaistra, l'esclave d'Hipparque. La plupart de cette partie est dédiée aux jeux et prouesses amoureuses des deux jeunes gens et finit par la métamorphose imprévue de Lucius en âne et son rapt par les voleurs.

En comparaison, les trois premiers livres du roman d'Apulée sont construits sur la même fable narrative, cependant les noms des personnages changent : le narrateur commence par se présenter biographiquement, puis exposer la raison de son voyage en Thessalie, l'arrivée à Hypata, l'hébergement chez Milon et Pamphile, l'idylle avec Photis, l'espionnage de la transformation de Pamphile et sa propre métamorphose en âne, l'attaque de la maison de Milon et la fuite des brigands avec Lucius en tant que porteur des richesses volées. Apulée retient aussi du conte la rencontre avec dame Byrrhène, l'amie de la mère de Lucius, et introduit deux épisodes secondaires, à savoir la rencontre avec l'ancien collègue Pythias devenu édile et la « mise-à-mort » des trois gourdes suivie du « jugement » de Lucius lors du festival du Rire.

Or, sur cette histoire linéaire, voilà que viennent se greffer divers petits récits qui appartiennent tous à l'horizon de la sorcellerie et créent une atmosphère magique sulfureuse, qui donne l'encadrement de l'intrigue—la métamorphose de Lucius. Sur son chemin vers Hypata, le protagoniste s'attarde à écouter l'histoire de deux compagnons de voyage : Aristomène raconte sa rencontre avec un ami Socrate, qui relate son aventure amoureuse avec une sorcière Méroé, puis partage avec celui-ci l'horreur d'une nuit quand deux sorcières tuent Socrate mais le gardent horriblement en vie pour quelques heures de plus. Pour témoigner de sa propre ouverture au merveilleux, que le compagnon d'Aristomène conteste, Lucius introduit à son tour la brève histoire d'un bateleur qui avale un sabre et fait ressortir un enfant-serpent. Le développement du texte pourrait être comparé à une branche d'arbre (le voyage de Lucius) sur laquelle bourgeonne un rameau (le récit d'Aristomène), sur lequel fleurissent deux ramilles encore plus petites (les récits de Lucius et celui de Socrate).

Plus tard, en dinant avec Milon et observant Pamphile qui fait des prédictions à l'aide d'une lampe, Lucius raconte l'histoire d'un mage chaldéen à Corinthe, sur lequel Milon a aussi une histoire à rapporter ; le dîner continue

avec toute « une série d'histoires inopportunes » que Lucius lui-même est las de suivre. Pendant un autre dîner, chez Byrrhène, bien plus luxueux, un des hôtes, Thélyphron raconte sa tragique aventure en tant que gardien d'un mort, à la fin de laquelle les sorcières lui arrachent le nez et les oreilles et le laissent défiguré pour toujours. Au cours de la péripétie, l'âme du mort est appelée du Hadès par un nécromancien égyptien pour témoigner qu'il est la victime d'un crime. La narration principale semble souffrir d'une sorte d'indétermination, d'une fuite d'idées (d'histoires plutôt), s'arrêtant à chaque détour pour recueillir un développement collatéral. Elle souffre d'une sorte d'acromégalie, son tronc se charge d'accrescences, de polypes, qui forment des grappes.

Le roman est immergé dans une atmosphère de symposium (dans le sens de Platon) continu, dans un « océan d'histoires », dont celle de Lucius semble n'être que le sommet d'un iceberg. Les autres narrateurs comme Thélyphron ou Aristomène sont pleinement conscients de leur rôle, utilisant à fond les techniques de *captatio* des rhéteurs de la « deuxième sophistique ». De ce fait, « l'arbre » linéaire de la narration s'épanouit dans une floraison de récits secondaires, qui surgissent l'un de l'autre. Dans les termes de la narratologie, c'est un roman « à tiroirs », où chaque case ouverte déploie un épisode parallèle, qui ne contribue pas à l'avancée du fil narratif, mais le charge toutefois d'exemples parfois annonciateurs, prémonitoires, parfois allégoriques, moraux, et toujours riches de significations complémentaires qui composent un horizon de réception.

Le deuxième segment narratif important comprend l'histoire de Lucius chez les brigands. Dans *Lucius ou l'âne*, le protagoniste échoue à manger les roses salvatrices chez le jardinier qui abrite les voleurs, arrive dans leur gite prise en soin par la vielle Dircé, il essaye de fuir avec la jeune fille prisonnière mais ils sont pris, finalement ils sont libérés par le fiancé de celle-ci et Lucius est assigné à une ferme à la campagne, où il souffre mille tourments à cause d'un ânier et d'un enfant sadiques, jusqu'à la mort par noyade de la jeune femme et de son mari, et la fuite des fermiers (chapitres 17-34).

Dans *L'âne d'or* (Livres IV-VII), les deux jeunes amoureux reçoivent les noms de Charité et Tlépolémus. Les péripéties du narrateur restent tout aussi succinctes : son rapt par les pillards de Milon, le séjour dans la caverne des brigands où est prisonnière Charité, la tentative échouée de fuite avec celle-ci, leur libération par Tlépolémus, le fiancé de la fille déguisé en bandit, la période, avec des heurs et malheurs, passée dans la ferme du jeune couple, jusqu'à la mort en traître de Tlépolémus et le suicide de Charité, quand commence un pèlerinage chaotique pour le héros.

De même que dans le cas des trois premiers livres, cette séquence épique agglutine à son tour sur l'histoire linéaire de Lucius une pléthore de

récits secondaires. Et si l'horizon du premier segment était celui de la magie, dont l'auteur importait des fables et des légendes liées à la sorcellerie, l'horizon de ce deuxième segment est celui d'un autre genre à la mode à l'époque, celui du roman érotique et d'aventures. Les protagonistes en sont évidemment Charité et Tlépolémus, dont le destin influence indirectement celui de Lucius aussi. Couple d'amoureux et bandits, pillages et rapts, confrontations armées, fuites et poursuites, déguisements et retournements de situation, trahison et suicide, tout l'arsenal du roman grec d'amour est mis en œuvre par Apulée, qui semble ne rien omettre dans le souci de capter l'attention et de susciter le plaisir de ses lecteurs.

L'âne Lucius est un témoin peu habituel de ces récits parallèles, sa condition animale lui permettant d'écouter des relations ou d'assister à des scènes parfois inaccessibles à un observateur humain. Ainsi, dans la caverne, a-t-il l'occasion d'entendre les rapports sur la mort de trois chefs des bandits : celle de Lamachus, pris au piège par le banquier Chryséros ; celle d'Alcimus, trompé par la ruse d'une vieille femme ; celle de Thrasyléon, qui s'était fait tuer en se déguisant en ours pour piller Démocharès. Toujours dans la caverne, Lucius assiste aux lamentations de Charité et écoute la triste histoire de son abduction par les bandits, et aussi la légende par laquelle la vieille femme de la bande essaye de la consoler, et qui n'est rien d'autre que le conte d'Amour et Psyché. Charmé, Lucius se désole « de ne pas avoir de tablettes ni de stylet pour prendre note d'une si belle histoire » (Apulée 1958, 255), en oubliant, de façon comique, que mis à part les instruments pour écrire il aurait de plus besoin de mains à la place de sabots ; stratagème qui permet à l'auteur de faire un clin d'œil aux lecteurs pour se vanter de l'excellence de son choix des histoires et de la manière dont il les récite.

De retour dans la caverne après la tentative d'évasion, Lucius écoute le rapport d'un des observateurs laissé sur place à Hypata, qui relate que le vol de la fortune de Milon est mis à son compte, à cause de sa disparition avec les brigands. Le fiancé de Charité rejoint la bande en se faisant passer pour le célèbre truand Haemus de Thrace et invente devant l'assemblée une histoire si convaincante que les bandits le désignent comme chef et lui offrent ainsi l'occasion de les prendre au piège et les faire arrêter ou tuer. Plus tard, emmené par les pâtres et les esclaves fuyant le manoir après la mort de Charité, Lucius apprend la triste histoire du crime commis contre Tlépolémos par Thrasylle pour lui ravir sa belle fiancée, ainsi que les suicides de celle-ci et de son ravisseur.

Le troisième segment narratif rassemble dans *Lucius ou l'âne* plusieurs épisodes picaresques : achat de l'âne par « un vieux cochon, l'un de ceux qui suivent, dans les bourgs et les champs, les processions de la déesse syrienne et qui poussent cette divinité à demander l'aumône » (Pseudo-Lucien 1999, 35) ;

risque de se faire tuer par un maître de maison qui pense qu'il est enragé ; autres peines chez le boulanger, le jardinier et le soldat ; petit paradis culinaire chez le cuisinier et son adoption par Ménéclès (qui devient Thiasus chez Apulée), le maître du cuisinier, en tant qu'« âne savant » au comportement humain ; services sexuelles qu'il est obligé de fournir en privé et puis dans un théâtre public ; jusqu'au moment final, libérateur, de la transformation en homme (chapitres 35-54).

Les *Métamorphoses* reprennent tous ces épisodes, mais y ajoutent plusieurs contes, attribués aux divers maîtres ou aux gens rencontrés par Lucius (Livres VIII-X). Presque à chaque fois qu'il a un nouveau patron, Lucius a aussi une histoire à rapporter à ses lecteurs, telle celle de l'épouse trompée qui, pour se venger, détruit les registres des affaires de son mari et se suicide avec son enfant en se jetant dans un puits ; ou celle « joyeuse de certain pauvre qui fut cocu », entendue dans une auberge lors de ses pérégrinations avec les prêtres galles ; ou celle du décurion Barbarus cocufié par sa femme Myrmex avec la galant Philésithère ; ou les deux histoires encastrées du foulon qui réussit à surprendre et à punir sa femme adultérine, et celle du boulanger qui, renvoyant sa femme pour infidélité, se fait tuer par les sortilèges de celle-ci ; ou celle de l'ami du jardinier qui, après une suite de trois présages tragiques, perd dans une confrontation ses trois fils ; ou encore celle de la belle-mère éprise du fils de son mari, qui la rejette, et dont elle se venge en l'empoisonnant ; ou finalement celle de la femme criminelle qui, ayant cinq crimes à son compte, est condamnée à mort justement par l'accouplement bestial avec Lucius l'âne.

Apulée ne manque pas d'avertir, par la voix de son personnage narrateur, le fait qu'il va intercaler des histoires parallèles. Le récit du suicide de l'épouse trompée, il l'introduit ainsi : « Là s'était passé un évènement fort mémorable, que je pense vous raconter » (Apulée 1958, 292) ; en entendant l'histoire du « pauvre cocu », Lucius veut que, « vous aussi, vous la connaissiez » (Apulée 1958, 302) ; du meurtre du boulanger par sa femme, il dit « Bref, il y a une histoire excellente entre toutes, et fort jolie, que j'ai résolu de vous faire entendre » (Apulée 1958, 308) ; l'empoisonnement du jeune homme par sa belle-mère est glissé dans le roman avec ces mots : « Quelques jours plus tard, fut commis en cet endroit, je m'en souviens, un crime abominable et, pour vous permettre d'en lire le récit, je l'insère dans mon livre » (Apulée 1958, 329) ; les méfaits de la femme criminelle sont présentés ainsi : « Voici, telle que je l'ai apprise, l'histoire de sa condamnation » (Apulée 1958, 344). La promesse faite par l'auteur au lecteur de « flatter ton oreille bienveillante d'un murmure caressant », celui des histoires milésiennes, est bien tenue, par un usage expert des dispositifs rhétoriques de la « deuxième sophistique ».

La fait qu'Apulée est parfaitement conscient de la façon dont il joue avec les mécanismes narratifs est évident dans son souci de certifier la possibilité que son protagoniste soit au courant des histoires rapportées. Quand l'épouse du boulanger concocte avec une sorcière la manière de tuer son mari, comme ces délibérations sont censées se passer dans le plus grand secret, Lucius s'empresse de prévenir l'incrédulité et les possibles reproches de son public : « Mais peut-être, lecteur trop exact, critiqueras-tu mon récit, en me faisant observer ceci : Comment donc, âne plein d'astuce, enfermé comme tu l'étais à l'intérieur de la boulangerie, as-tu pu connaître, comme tu le prétends, les agissements secrets de ces femmes ? » (Apulée 1958, 318). L'explication que Lucius arrive à produire est moins importante, ce qui est significatif c'est l'effort de l'auteur de mimer la vraisemblance de l'acte narratif dans un contexte le plus souvent fantastique.

Plus intéressant encore, surtout dans le cadre de ce troisième segment narratif, lors des déambulations chaotiques de Lucius entre plusieurs maîtres, c'est le fait que chaque épisode est à son tour introduit par un petit *incipit*, comme s'il ne s'agissait plus d'une narration sur soi, d'une auto-fiction, mais des aventures d'un autre dont le narrateur parle toutefois à la première personne. On pourra citer par exemple : quand un cuisinier fait le plan de sacrifier Lucius, le narrateur introduit l'épisode de cette manière : « c'est en cet endroit que, autant qu'il m'en souvienne, j'ai couru le plus grand danger de perdre la vie » (Apulée 1958, 299) ; après s'être sauvé en feignant une furie, Lucius est à nouveau en péril d'être exterminé en tant qu'atteint de rage : « Ainsi pour moi, le stratagème qui semblant, un instant, avoir assuré mon salut entraîna par ailleurs un danger considérable, que dis-je, me mit presque au point de périr » (Apulée 1958, 300) ; acheté par le jardinier, Lucius confesse : « Il me paraît nécessaire d'exposer, comme tout à l'heure, le mode de vie que comportait mon nouveau service » (Apulée 1958, 320) ; quand il est acheté par Thiasus, il apprécie qu'« il convient d'abord—j'aurais dû le faire en commençant—il convient au moins de vous dire qui il était et d'où il venait » (Apulée 1958, 341).

Ces commentaires témoignent du fait que Lucius est conscient qu'il est personnage d'un roman, qu'il est un narrateur homodiégetique. D'ailleurs, un mage chaldéen, Diophane, lui avait prédit « que, d'une part, j'aurais une gloire très brillante, que, d'autre part, on raconterait de moi une longue histoire, une histoire incroyable, et que je deviendrais le héros d'un livre » (Apulée 1958, 170). C'est une façon astucieuse de transformer des notions qui sont du domaine de la théorie narrative dans des éléments de la narration elle-même. Des considérations théoriques deviennent le sujet d'un oracle et le rôle d'un critique littéraire est attribué à un mage chaldéen !

Mais en plus du jeu (presque postmoderne, dirait-on) entre fiction et théorie de la fiction, le cadrage narratif de chaque péripétie de Lucius répond à une autre nécessité. Dans ce que j'ai appelé les deux premiers segments du roman, l'étape à Hypata (imbibée par l'univers de la sorcellerie) et celle dans la caverne des brigands (nourrie par la prose érotique), l'implication active du protagoniste est assez pauvre, sur le fil narratif se greffant des séries de contes et de récits rhizomiques. Dans le troisième segment, c'est Lucius qui devient le héros des (mes)aventures, dûment introduites chacune, en tant que captif successivement des bergers fuyant la mansion de Charité, des prêtres galles, du cuisinier qui veut le sacrifier à la place du cuissot de cerf, du meunier-boulanger tué par sa femme, du jardinier, du soldat, des deux esclaves pâtissier et cuisinier, enfin de Thiasus.

Cette fois, il ne s'agit plus de contes complémentaires, ce sont les péripéties mêmes de Lucius qui sont présentées comme des récits à peu près distincts, articulés d'une manière aléatoire. J'ai essayé de démontrer que le « *mythos* » du roman suit un trajet ferme, en biffant les « points fixes » d'une suite de cultes religieux : sorcellerie, christianisme, Dea Syria, Cybèle, Dionysos, néo-pythagorisme et médio-platonisme, Isis et Osiris. On pourrait représenter cette itinéraire spirituel par une ligne qui commence sur le plan de l'humain, descend dans celui de l'animalité et des ténèbres morales, puis remonte jusqu'à la condition humaine, et finalement s'envole vers le plan divin. Mais ces lignes, et surtout la dernière qui unit le point le plus bas de la sorcellerie avec celui des mystères isiaques, ne sont pas droites, elles sont fracturées, tremblantes, avec des surprises et des ruptures.

La cause de tous ces accidents impromptus et fortuits est la force d'un destin imprévisible et implacable. Le monde antique disposait de toute une panoplie de personnifications du sort, les Moïrai, les Parques, Heimarméné, Némesis, Ananké, etc., mais l'avatar qui domine dans le roman d'Apulée est Tyché (en grec), Fortuna (en latin), le destin en tant que hasard. Il n'y a pas de péripétie qui ne soit attribuée par Lucius à un sort changeant et aveugle. En voici quelques exemples. Quand il est acheté par les prêtres galles, le protagoniste se lamente : « Mais mon impitoyable mauvaise Fortune, que n'avait pu encore fuir ma fuite à travers tant de pays ni apaiser tous les malheurs que j'avais soufferts jusqu'ici, tourna une fois de plus dans ma direction ses yeux aveugles » (Apulée 1958, 294). Lorsqu'il échappe au péril d'être sacrifié pour compenser la disparition d'un gibier en feignant une crise de furie, et se voit ensuite soupçonné de rage contagieuse, Lucius commente : « Mais nous savons bien que, lorsque la Fortune s'y oppose, il n'est pas un homme sur terre qui puisse rien obtenir de bon, et que ni la sagesse des calculs, ni la prudence des remèdes ne peuvent ni transformer ni corriger l'ordre immuable établi par la divine providence »

(Apulée 1958, 300). Les tragédies des autres personnages sont elles aussi provoquées par des détours inattendus d'un destin capricieux. Par exemple, le comportement irréprochable du beau-fils ne saurait empêcher les crimes de la femme assassine condamnée à l'exécution publique : « Mais ces dispositions si excellentes, si louables, prises en toute pureté du cœur, ne purent échapper à la volonté mauvaise de la Fortune » (Apulée 1958, 345).

On y reconnaît tous les traits que la mentalité antique attribuait au Destin. Toutefois, le rôle du sort semble beaucoup plus vigoureux dans le roman que dans la vie publique courante, au point de devenir une simple figure rhétorique, un stéréotype. En fait, si Fortuna joue un rôle si important chez Apulée, mais aussi dans tous les romans grecs et latins de l'Empire, c'est parce qu'elle sert de dispositif narratif. Elle est le mécanisme textuel qui préside au roman d'aventures, elle est le principe de rupture qui permet et justifie les départs libres d'une ligne fixe qui est spécifique des genres canoniques comme la tragédie. Si dans les romans d'aventures modernes, qui ont pour arrière-plan une mentalité laïque, les incidents et accidents sont attribuables à ce qu'on appelle un hasard objectif, dans le roman antique ils sont affectés à un hasard personnifié, à une divinité de l'aléatoire.

Or, en tant que perturbateur de la ligne droite qui devrait mener Lucius de l'état animal à celui humain et puis divin, Fortuna agit de manière an-archétypale. Elle transforme la vie du personnage en une déambulation dont on n'entrevoit pas la fin. Le zig-zag narratif des péripéties de l'âne est soumis à des aléas imprévisibles, que l'auteur utilise à souhait pour inciter et maintenir, par la surprise et l'imprévu, la curiosité du lecteur. Si on a recours à la théorie du chaos, on pourrait dire que les ruptures narratives constituent des « bifurcations », des moments quand le mouvement prend une direction nouvelle, inopinée et imprédictible. Ces points d'inflexion transforment un fil narratif linéaire en une ligne fracturée, que je classifierais dans le schéma anarchétypal du jeu de domino.

Mais si les *Métamorphose*s, ainsi que les romans érotiques grecs et latins, finissent toutefois par sortir du labyrinthe du hasard, c'est que, à l'action incontrôlable de la Tyché s'oppose une divinité qui symbolise l'ordre face au hasard, le panthéon olympien à l'encontre des anciennes divinités du chaos. Ces divinités de la *nomos* peuvent être, dans le roman antique, Apollon, Artémis, Aphrodite, Zeus, et dans le cas d'Apulée Isis et Osiris. Les dieux ont le pouvoir de soustraire leurs protégés aux errements continuels et de les mener à bon port. C'est leur présence qui assure une finalité et une fin aux textes construits sur un scénario initiatique. Grâce à eux le héros atteint un centre sacré où ses péripéties, contingentes à sa condition humaine, peuvent cesser par son ascension à une condition divine. Dans l'esprit de la philosophie médio-platonicienne, on

pourrait dire que l'accomplissement de la quête, ainsi que du roman qui la raconte, implique la sortie du monde sous-lunaire des métamorphoses et de l'imperfection pour accéder au monde supra-céleste des essences immuables.

Et pour clore aussi bien la comparaison entre *Lucius ou l'âne* et *L'âne d'or*, les deux derniers chapitres du conte, racontant l'acceptation de Lucius par le gouverneur et son retour dans sa patrie avec son frère venu le secourir, n'apportent, comme nous l'avons noté, rien de plus au statut humain du protagoniste, sinon une leçon morale malicieuse. Revenu pour une nuit chez la dame qui l'avait aimé en tant qu'âne, il se fait rejeter honteusement : « Ce n'est pardieu pas toi que j'aimais, mais l'âne que tu étais, et c'est avec lui qu'alors j'ai couché, pas avec toi » (chapitre 56). L'ironie de cette « histoire de sexe » se réfère, par un biais psychanalytique, à la double nature, instinctuelle et rationnelle, de l'être humain, et souligne, d'une manière plutôt grossière et machiste, la domination de l'animal en nous. En revanche, le onzième livre du roman d'Apulée, celui de l'initiation isiaque, renverse complètement cette morale, en pointant dans la direction anthropologique opposée, celle de l'abstinence, de la sublimation de la libido animale en spiritualité mystique.

Dans le roman d'Apulée se confrontent donc, sous le symbolisme des divinités du chaos et de l'Olympe, deux principes de construction épique, celui anarchétypal et celui archétypal. La liberté anarchétypique fait appel à deux mécanismes dé-constructifs, le roman à tiroirs et le roman d'aventures. Le premier mécanisme encombre le « mythe » ou le sujet de l'œuvre d'une pléthore d'épisodes parallèles, qui chargent l'intrigue d'une sorte d'« atmosphère » visuelle et émotionnelle ; le texte se comporte comme un rhizome qui, au lieu de suivre le trajet ascendant d'un tronc unique, développe à chaque pas des efflorescences, des polypes, des grappes, des ramages divergents. Le deuxième mécanisme brise la ligne droite de l'intrigue en plusieurs nœuds de bifurcation et d'inflexion, selon le schéma de la succession aléatoire des pièces dans une partie de domino.

Si toutefois les aventures de Lucius ne s'enlisent pas dans un vagabondage sans fin, comme dans l'histoire milésienne de *Lucius ou l'âne*, si *L'Âne d'Or* aboutit à une forme unifiée et à un sens totalisateur, à la *dianoia* d'Aristote, c'est parce l'initiation dans le culte d'une divinité du *logos* libère le protagoniste de sous l'emprise de Tyché, la divinité du hasard. Le scénario archétypal de la quête rassemble dans une structure ferme, avec un « poing de fer », les épisodes divagants et les bifurcations narratives et les oblige à se soumettre à une signification finale, à se « récapituler » dans un « point suprême », dans un *cogito* de l'œuvre. Que ce jeu ingénieux entre la liberté anarchétypique et la contrainte archétypale n'ait pas pu rehausser le roman d'Apulée au rang de littérature canonique, tient à l'évidence, mais au moins il en a fait un chef-d'œuvre de la « pop culture » de l'Antiquité.

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THE CONCEPT OF THE THREE ORDERS OF SOCIETY IN LATE OLD ENGLISH PROSE

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ABSTRACT. ***The Concept of the Three Orders of Society in Late Old English Prose.*** Between the years 991 and 1012, the English suffered one of the worst Viking onslaughts in history. The relentless invasions coupled with an ineffective administration which was crumbling from within almost brought England to its knees. There was dire need for reformation. The first step in this process was a clear assessment of the situation. To this end, Archbishop Wulfstan of York and Abbot Ælfric of Eynsham rediscover and use the concept of the tripartite society to show the desperate need for all three social orders of England (*laboratores, oratores, bellatores)* to unite in support of the office of kingship, lest everything be lost. The present paper aims to present the evolution of the concept of a tripartite society in Anglo-Saxon England from its (pseudo)Alfredian origins to its integration into the political tracts, law codes, sermons and homilies of late Anglo-Saxon England.

Keywords*: Wulfstan of York,* Institutes of Polity*, Ælfric, secular law, ecclesiastical law, tripartite society, laboratores, oratores, bellatores*

REZUMAT. ***Conceptul societății tripartite în proza engleză veche târzie*****.** Perioada cuprinsă între 991 și 1012 reprezintă un moment de răscruce în istoria Angliei. Marcată de una dintre cele mai grave invazii vikinge din istorie,

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precum și de o administrație dezastruoasă, măcinată de lupte interne, țara a fost adusă în pragul colapsului. Nevoia unei reforme a devenit evidentă și urgentă, iar primul pas în această direcție a fost o evaluare clară a situației. Astfel, arhiepiscopul Wulfstan de York (d. 1023) și abatele Ælfric de Eynsham (d. c. 1010) au readus la lumină conceptul societății tripartite, pentru a arăta nevoia disperată a celor trei ordine sociale (laboratores, oratores, bellatores) de a se coordona în susținerea coroanei. Prezenta lucrare își propune să urmărească evoluția acestui concept în Anglia anglo-saxonă, de la originea lui (pseudo)alfredianăpână la integrarea acestuia în coduri legislative, tratate politice, omilii și predici, în ultimele decenii înainte de cucerirea normandă.

Cuvinte-cheie: *Wulfstan de York,* Rânduiala Lumii*, Ælfric, lege seculară, lege ecleziastică, societate tripartită, laboratores, oratores, bellatores*

In his extensive study of the three orders of society (those who pray, those who fight, and those who labour), Georges Duby pays little attention to the development of this concept in Anglo-Saxon England (1980, 5-6). In England, this political-theological concept first appears in the translation and adaptation of Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* attributed to King Alfred the Great (r. 871-899)[2], which mentions the three "tools with which to work" (*tol mid to ricsianne*): praying men (*gebedmen*), fighting men (*fyrdmen*), and working men (*weorcmen*). The sources of the Alfredian translator are still subject to debate; while they may be found in Francia (Ortigues 1986), in the works of Haymo (active 840s-860s) and Heiric of Auxerre (841-876), Powell (1994, 109) is right to remark that the Alfredian version stands out by placing the king at the centre and omitting Christian references. Against this background, the present paper aims to discuss the rediscovery of the tripartite order of society in the late Anglo-Saxon period, and how it differs from its Alfredian background.

More than a century after the (pseudo)Alfredian translation of Boethius, the idea of a tripartite society resurfaces in the works of Ælfric, abbot of Eynsham (d. *c*. 1010), and Wulfstan, archbishop of York (d. 1023). It is unclear whether the metaphor of the three pillars was commonly known at the turn of the first millennium and the sources were lost, or if it became widespread only later. It was at least familiar in late Anglo-Saxon England, as can be seen in Ælfric's letter to Wulfstan, where the author assumes that the archbishop would be familiarised

[2] King Alfred's authorship of the Old English *Boethius* is a vexed question. Godden 2007 and 2013 argues against it, whilst Pratt 2007, and Bately 2009 defend it. For a recent appraisal of the Old English *Boethius*, see Papahagi 2024 (this author regards Alfred as the patron, rather than the translator of Booethius's *De Consolatione Philosophiae*).

with it.[3] In any case, we know that Wulfstan was familiar with some of the works attributed to Alfred, including his Preface to Gregory's *Cura Pastoralis,* so it seems safe to assume he knew the Alfredian reference to the tripartite system.[4]

The circumstances of Wulfstan's and Ælfric's works are important in order to understand the concept of the tripartite society in its Anglo-Saxon context. In 980, merely two years after Æthelred's ascension to power, his reign was already being threatened by Viking raids. Granted, the scale of the raids was considerably smaller and only began to escalate towards the last decade of the millennium. However, from 991 to 1012, the English suffered through one of the worst Viking onslaughts in history and, as Simon Keynes remarks, the direness of the situation was reflected in the desperation of the measures taken (2007, 153).[5] Following the disastrous battle of Maldon in 991, and the death of a prominent military leader, the system of tribute-money was implemented, among other drastic measures. Political dissent in the higher ranks of nobility was growing, which further weakened the English. Æthelred's marriage to Emma of Normandy seems to support this theory. An Anglo-Norman alliance deprived the Vikings of precious coastline access. All these measures point towards the inability of Æthelred's regime to cope with the mounting crises. By the turn of the millennium, there was little hope for the English. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle entry for 998 paints a grim picture:

> Her gewende se here eft eastweard into Frommuðan 7 þær æghwær up eodon swa wide swa hi woldon into Dorsætan, 7 man oft fyrde ongean hi gegaderode, ac sona swa hi togædere gan sceoldan, þonne wearð þær æfre þurh sum þing fleam astiht, 7 æfre hi æt ende sige ahton 7 þonne oðre hwile lagen heom on Wihtlande 7 eoton heom þa hwile of Hamtunscire 7 of Suðseaxum.
>
> At this time the army turned eastward towards the mouth of the Frome, and there they went everywhere as they wanted into Dorset, and often an army was gathered against them, but as soon as they should go against each other, there was always some reason for flight, and the enemy always had victory in the end, and then at other times they stayed in Wight in supplied themselves from Hampshire and Sussex (Irvine 2002, 62-63).[6]

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[3] Whitelock, Brett, and Brooke eds. 1981, I, 252; Molainen 2016, 1332. Ælfric was definitely familiarized with *The Consolation of Philosophy*. See Godden and Irvine eds. 2009, I, 48-49. For further discussion of Wulfstan's sources, see Elliot 2012 and 2013.

[4] Wulfstan's interest in Alfred's works can be seen firsthand in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Hatton MS 20, in the form of various glosses. The archbishop changes words and spellings, and can generally be seen fussing over editoral minutiae in his trademark manner. For a full discussion of Wulfstan's glossing of the Preface, see Ker ed. 1956; Dance 2004, 29-61; Wormald 2000, 193.

[5] On England's dramatic situation at the end of the tenth century, see also John 1977, 173-195.

[6] Translations from Old English are mine unless otherwise specified.

The situation deteriorated in the following years, with successive assaults on London by Thorkell's army, repeated payments (*gafol*), and culminated between 1011 and 1012 in the capture and death of Archbishop Ælfheah, the first archbishop of Canterbury to die a violent death.[7] From a social point of view, things were starting to change as well. In the tenth and eleventh centuries, English kings saw a steady increase in their powers, which in turn led to the rapid expansion of the nobility; retainers were more often rewarded with small estates, while inheritance issues sometimes caused the division of the larger ones. This increase in the ranks of small estate-owners put pressure on the peasants, who found themselves confronted with more intermediaries and more taxation in the otherwise simple process of paying their dues to king and Church.[8] Complexity brings with itself the risk of failure or, in other words, corruption. The speed with which these changes took place was too much for the old system and the new king to handle. Such were the times in which Wulfstan and Ælfric wrote.

Wulfstan's *Institutes of Polity* remains one of the most developed treatments of the tripartite order. The text can be seen as one of Wulfstan's attempts to reduce the tension between secular and ecclesiastic law. The lack of exegesis has been corrected only recently. One possible explanation may be the problematic structure of the work itself: the *Institutes of Polity* never existed as a finished product, but consists of a series of untitled chapters scattered through various manuscripts. *Institutes of Polity* in its present form is the product of Karl Jost's editorial work. Jost distinguished between two versions of the text, which he terms *I Polity* (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 201, pp. 77-93) and *II Polity* (this includes additional material from Oxford, Bodleian Library, Junius MS 121 and London, British Library, Cotton Nero MS A. i). Jost's vision was challenged recently.[9]

In this tract, the archbishop is unyielding in his denunciation of widespread corruption and dissent. All the members of the body politic are linked. A wicked king cannot rule over a prosperous land or protect the Church, just as a righteous king can fail in his task if unaided by a devout people and

[7] Æthelred's byname is perhaps not entirely merited. At least some of his decisions deserve praise: he filled episcopal and abbatial seats with firm supporters of the Benedictine reform, including Ælfric and Wulfstan. Furthermore, he chose Wulfstan to elaborate laws in his name, and also conducted extensive military reforms. See Abels 2018.

[8] Taxation in Anglo-Saxon England reached a climax during the reign of Æthelred II, when £240,500 were paid to the Danes as tribute. This is without considering church tithes, a further 10 percent tax on the empoverished peasants' wealth: Baxter 2011, 98-114.

[9] Henceforth, the present article will use *Nero, Corpus* or *Junius Polity,* depending on the version cited, instead of the more confusing I or II *Polity*. See Crișan 2024. For further discussion on the issues with Jost's *Polity* see Reinhard 2020, and Reinhard 2021.

strong warriors. In the works of Ælfric, the three functions are listed in the order *laboratores, oratores*, *bellatores,* while Wulfstan brings to the front Alfred's *gebedmen* ('praying men').

The Corpus *Polity* chapter concerning the throne (*Be cynestole)* runs as follows:

> Ælc cynestol stent on þrim stapelum þe fullice ariht stent. An is oratores, and oðer is laboratores, and þridde is bellatores. Oratores syndon gebedmen, þe Gode sculon þeowian, 7 dæges 7 nihtes for ealne þeodscipe þingian georne. Laboratores sindon weorcmen þe tilian sculon, þæs þe eal þeodscipe big sceal libban. Bellatores syndon wigmen þe eard sculon werian wiglice mid wæpnum. On þisum þrim stapelum sceal ælc cynestol standan mid rihte, 7 aracige heora ænig sona se stol scilfð 7 forberste heora ænig þonne rist se stol nyðer 7 þæt wurð þare þeode eal to unþearfe.[10]
>
> Each throne that stands firmly stands on three pillars: One is *oratores*, the second *laboratores,* and the third is *bellatores*. *Oratores* are the clergy, who must serve God, and eagerly intercede for all the people day and night. *Laboratores* are the workers who must labour, so that the nation may thrive. *Bellatores* are the warriors who must protect the land with weapons. On these three pillars shall each throne stand rightly, and should any of them falter, the throne will crumble, and the nation with it.

In his *Lives of Saints, Æ*lfric writes:

> Is swaðeah to witene þæt on þysre worulde synd þreo ende-byrdnysse, on annysse gesette. Þæt synd laboratores, oratores, bellatores. Laboratores synd þe þe urne bigleafan beswincað, oratores synd þa ðe us to Gode geðingiað, bellatores synd þa ðe ure burga healdað and urne eard beweriað wið onwinnende here. Nu swincð se yrðlincg embe urne bigleofan, and se woruld-cempa sceal winnan wið ure fynd, and se Godes þeowa sceall symle for us gebiddan and feohtan gastlice wið þa ungesewenlican fynd.
>
> Nevertheless let it be known that in this world there are three orders, established together. They are *workers, those that pray,* and *warriors. Workers* are those who labor for our food; *those that pray* are those who intercede with God for us; *warriors* are those who protect our towns and defend our land against an attacking army. Now the plowman works to produce our food, and the worldly warrior must fight against our enemies, and the servant of God must pray for us always and fight spiritually against invisible enemies. (Clayton and Mullins 2019, II 335)

[10] For editions and translations of *Polity* see Jost 1959; Rabin 2015; Wulfstan (ed. Rabin) 2020. All quotes from *Polity* follow Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 201, fols 77-93, unless otherwise specified. Fragment here at fol. 87.

The different sequence of the orders may not be random, at least not in the case of Wulfstan, who emphasizes the greater responsibility of the clergy. Some of Wulfstan's law codes seem to follow the tripartite model: V Atr 4-10.2 elaborates on the duties of the clergy. The following clauses concern dues, tithes, feasts and fasts, namely the duties of labourers. Lastly, provisions 26.1-28.1 deal with military obligations. VI Atr presents a similar structure: 2-6 are clauses concerning clerical and episcopal duties, the vast majority are concerned with all Christian men, especially freemen, and only clauses 33-35 deal with military obligations.[11]

Meanwhile, Ælfric employs the tripartite scheme to address the issue of clergymen bearing arms and taking part in earthly warfare. This is more limited in scope, and thus the king and the kingdom are not mentioned (Powell 1994, 112). Even if Ælfric does contextualize his idea, his emphasis is on the spiritual aspect of the fight. The blame is split between those members of the clergy who willingly take up arms, and those who would compel priests to fight earthly wars—Ælfric thought worse of the former. The clergy was morally responsible for the laity, therefore their errors and sins weighed more heavily. As far as the *oratores* are concerned, Wulfstan and Ælfric seem to agree on their vital role. However, Wulfstan specifically states that the clergy need to properly fulfil their duties for the state and country to prosper. Ælfric makes no such claim: *praying men* have a duty they must not forsake, no matter the consequences; the state goes unmentioned.

Furthermore, Ælfric barely makes any mention of the many Viking incursions, even though their activity often targeted his immediate surroundings of Eynsham or Cerne. His general attitude is that of virtuous suffering (Earl 1999, 133-35). His view on the matter is clear: the duty of the clergy is to fight against the spiritual enemies of Christendom, not against military foes—that duty befalls warriors. The other two orders, warriors and labourers, are described in relation to clergy only when there is a conflict between their responsibilities. There is no suggestion of social hierarchy, and Ælfric does not attempt to equalize the importance of the three orders: while mutually dependent, they are not equivalent in terms of duties and responsibilities. In this regard, Ælfric differs from the Alfredian translator of Boethius, who considered that, though unequal in rank, the three orders were equally important to the king.

Conversely, Wulfstan was deeply concerned about the Viking incursions. They are mentioned in almost all the archbishop's law codes, and they form a cause and effect narrative with the sinfulness of the English. *7 Æthelred* is virtually a nationwide admonition, a "deeply moving document, symbolic not of

[11] Law-codes titles follow Liebermann 1903, I, ix-x, unless otherwise specified.

the futility, but of the desperation and despair which the English felt when faced yet again by a hostile force, and of their perfectly natural appeal for divine help" (Keynes 2007, 181).[12]

In one of his last works, a letter to Sigeweard, Ælfric mentions again the three orders of society, but this time he seems to place it more clearly in the political context of the time:

> Witan sceoldan smeagan mid wislicum geþ[eah]te, þonne on mancinne to micel yfel bið, hwilc [þæra] stelenna þaes cinestoles wære tobrocen, and betan ðone sona. Se cinestol stynt on þisum þrim stelum: Laboratores, bellatores, oratores. Laboratores sind þe us bigleofan tiliað, yrðlingas and æhtemen to þam anum betæhte. Oratores syndon þe us þingiað to Gode and cristendom fyrðriað on cristenum folcum on Godes þeowdome, to ðam gastlican gewinne, to þam anum betæhte, us eallum to þearfe. Bellatores sindon þe ure burga healdað and eac urne eard wið [þ]on[e] sigendne here, feohtende mid wæmnum, swa swa Paulus sæde, se þeoda lareow, on his lareowdome: "Non sine causa portat miles gladium", et cetera. "Ne byrð na se cniht butan intingan his swurd. He ys Godes þen, þe sylfum to þearfe, on ðam yfelum wyrcendum to wræce gesett". On þisum þrim stelum stynt se cynestol and gif an bið forud, he fylð adun sona, þam oðrum stelum to unþearfe gewiss.
>
> Counsellors ought to think wisely, since there is too much evil now among mankind, which of the supports of the throne is broken and should be immediately repaired. The throne stands on these three legs: *laboratores, bellatores, oratores. Laboratores* are those that feed us, farmers and ploughmen, dedicated to one purpose. *Oratores* are those who intercede with God in our stead and promote Christendom among Christian people through their spiritual labour, dedicated to this purpose, dear to us all. *Bellatores* are those who protect with weapons our towns and lands against armies, just as Paul, the teacher of people, said in his teaching: "Non sine causa portat miles gladium", *et cetera*. "The warrior carries not his sword without cause. He is God's thegn who, for our good, must punish those who commit evil". On these three legs stands the king's throne and if one weakens, it at once crumbles, undoubtedly bringing the other two to ruin as well (Marsden 2008, 228).

The first two orders receive little attention from Ælfric. On the other hand, the *bellatores,* those who fight, are now placed at the front. The issue of the clergy engaging in earthly warfare is not the point here. Instead, Ælfric emphasises the warrior's duty. By extension, through the warrior's dedication to his true purpose, those who pray can focus on their spiritual war. This remark becomes a subtle two-pronged reproach to the nobility. Their inability to fulfil their duty

[12] See further Jones 2004.

of defending the land against earthly foes has weakened the other two orders as well. The representation of the three orders as legs of the kingly chair is new. By writing in the vernacular, Ælfric intended his lines for an audience extending beyond the clergy: he presumably targeted the nobles, and urged them to better organize in defending the country. The categorical statement that each of the legs must be as strong as possible lest it should fail the other two was picked up by Wulfstan in the *Institutes of Polity*.

Ælfric's complaints were not unfounded. Clerics were occasionally expected to take part in the defence of the country. Even if combat experience and actual fighting were perhaps not required, some involvement in the process was, as numerous wills show. Bishop Theodred of London, for example, gives his lord "four horses, the best that I have, and two swords, the best that I have, and four shields and four spears…" (Whitelock 1981, 76-7). Craig Nakashian argues that the possession of such weaponry does not imply direct involvement in warfare, but it does demonstrate two equally important things: firstly, the bishop clearly owned more such items, as evidenced by the phrase "the best that I have"; secondly, he was aware of their quality and value, which implies a knowledge of weaponry (Nakashian 2016, 49-51). This is not an isolated case. Bishop Ælfwold of Crediton left in his will a considerable amount of military gear, including horses, shields, spears and various pieces of armour, not to mention a ship (Whitelock 1981, 385). This proves that Ælfric's dissatisfaction was somewhat founded. Moreover, Ælfric also had to deal with the nobility who saw nothing wrong in having powerful members of the clergy aid them in their war efforts, as well as with members of the clergy who actively engaged in warfare of their own will, in order to protect their flock (Nakashian 2016, 50). It is difficult to say how successful Ælfric's calls for reform were. In 1016, a few years after his death, both bishop Eadnoth of Dorchester and abbot Wulfsige of Ramsey participated and were killed in the battle of Assandun (Lapidge 2009, xxvii).

Ælfric's concerns about clerical involvement in warfare is only vaguely echoed by Wulfstan. Indeed, the archbishop seemed to have other priorities, and mentions the issue only twice: in the *Canons of Edgar* 68b, one of his earliest political writings, written somewhere between 1002 and 1004, and in 8 Atr 30, a law code he elaborated roughly a decade later, around 1014, during some of the most tumultous times England had seen. Furthermore, of the four extant versions of the *Canons* only that found in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Junius MS 121 (a manuscript intended for episcopal use) adds the provision.[13] In any case, members of the clergy were often present on the battlefield, and while clearly stating that priests were forbidden to wear arms inside a church, the archbishop makes little further mention of Ælfric's concerns.

[13] For *Canons,* see Rabin 2015, 85.

Powell's comparison between the two Anglo-Saxon writers is not entirely fair (1994, 115). While Ælfric was indeed more versatile and productive, his circumstances were considerably different from Wulfstan's; aside from his many ecclesiastical responsibilities, the archbishop spent a great part of his life as a statesman of foremost importance and influence. His efforts were dedicated mainly to the reformation of ecclesiastical and secular law, to advising two kings, and to drafting their legislation to the best of his abilities.[14] Furthermore, with Cnut's accession, which Ælfric did not live to witness, Wulfstan had other priorities, as well as doubts regarding the conqueror's ability to keep the order and peace in England. Wulfstan's pragmatic goals are substantiated by the offices he held in plurality. As already said, he surrendered Worcester to Leofsige, or appointed him as his proxy only in 1016, when the country was unified under Cnut.[15] Moreover, because the *Institutes of Polity* was written at the height of Æthelred's disastrous reign, Wulfstan used the text to accuse treachery, corruption and disloyalty as the main causes of turmoil (as he also does in the *Sermo Lupi*). This repetitiveness should not be considered a lack of versatility; rather, these pressing political issues were constantly at the forefront of the archbishop's mind. Wulfstan's *Polity* lacks eulogies of the (secular) ruler, and is mainly prescriptive. The rigidity with which Wulfstan insists upon the wisdom and righteousness that befit a Christian king signals his dissatisfaction with Æthelred's faults. Wulfstan was not under the illusion that Æthelred and Cnut were similar to Charlemagne. Thus, while the Carolingians saw the monarch as the source of the kingdom's health, Wulfstan replaces the king with the Church. When the monarch fails to uphold his duties, responsibility for the people falls on the Church.

[14] Relevant scolarship on Wulfstan's law codes and Anglo-Saxon legislation is too vast to be quoted exhaustively. Important titles include Jurasinski, Oliver, and Rabin eds. 2010; Jurasinski and Rabin eds. 2019; Roach 2013b, Rabin and Adair 2023.

[15] There is no indication that Wulfstan was forced to surrender Worcerster, and this is hardly the only example of pluralism. Indeed, there is ample evidence to suggest that the poorer diocese of York often came accompanied by a richer southern one. Eadwulf and Oswald, Wulfstan's predecessors at York, both held Worcester as well. Oscytel, archbishop of York from 958 to 971, held Dorchester in plurality with his northern see. There are a couple of reasons for this: northern archbishops often needed additional income, and offering them a southern diocese brought them under the king's direct supervision and tied them to the more loyal south. Furthermore, the north had previously switched alliances between the West Saxon kings and the invaders, during the tenure of another Wulfstan. After the unification of the country under Cnut in 1016, Wulfstan might have had no further reason (financial or otherwise) to hold Worcester. There does not seem to be a more valid reason for his surrender of Worcester other than the archbishop's concerns about pluralism. If Leofsige was indeed more a proxy than a fully fledged bishop, then all the more reason to suspect it. For the full argument, see Whitelock 1959, 72-76; Hill 2011; Pickles 2018. For the economic situation of the see of York in the eleventh century, see Brooke 1977. For Wulfstan's administrative habits, see Baxter 2004.

This was, in the words of Dorothy Bethurum, "revolutionary [...], for it is in implication both anti-royalist and anti-papal" (Bethurum 1971, 139-40). Obviously, terms such as *anti-royalist* and *anti-papal* seem misplaced when discussing eleventh-century England. Yet there is truth behind Bethurum's claim: Rome was far away, and its welfare, although desired, had little implications for an island at the end of the known world. Canterbury, on the other hand, was within easy reach. The state of the English Church translated into the decay or prosperity of the English people. Wulfstan's letter of protest, found in London, British Library, Cotton Vespasian MS A.xiv, fols 178r-179r, disapproves of some obligations of English archbishops to the papacy, and extensively cites Bede, Alcuin and Pope Honorius. Wulfstan argues that the archbishop of Canterbury or York should be ordained by his English peers. He disagrees with the obligation to travel to Rome in order to receive the pallium, and warns about the financial costs of such a journey, but he does not shy away from sending sinners to Rome in order to seek penance.[16] Although the letter was never sent, Wulfstan's protest can be seen as veiled criticism of the papal greed that distracted bishops from conducting their duties (Bethurum 1949, 99-104).

> Tunc temporis impleverunt sancti et apostolici viri illud laudabile preceptum Salvatoris nostri, dicentis: *Gratis accepistis, gratis date*. Tunc sine viribus elanguit simoniaca hereses, quia non pecunia emebatur donum Dei, sed gratis, sicut ipse iusserat, donabatur. Timendum est tamen vendentibus gratiam Dei hoc quod Petrus apostolus Simoni dicebat: *Pecunia tua tecum sit in perditione; non est tibi pars, neque sors in sermone hoc*. (London, Cotton Vespasian MS A.xiv, fols 178v-179r)
>
> At that time, the holy men and the apostles fulfilled that praiseworthy precept of our Saviour, who said: *You have received freely; give freely*. Then the Simoniac heresy weakened, because the gift of God was not bought with money, but was given freely, as he himself commanded. However, those who sell the grace of God should fear what the Apostle Peter said to Simon: *May your money perish with you. You have neither part nor portion in this matter*.[17]

Unlike the Alfredian translator of Boethius, who considers it the duty of the king to put the three classes to good use, Wulfstan does not lay the responsibility on the monarch. According to the archbishop, the three functions must work harmoniously together to support the throne. In other words, it is not the duty of the monarch to bring together those who pray, those who fight and those

[16] For a discussion on Wulfstan's papal letter, and punitive pilgrimages to Rome see Mann 2004, and Aronstam 1975.

[17] For a discussion on Wulfstan's letters of protest see Bethurum 1949 I, 441-447.

who work, but rather it is their own responsibility to actively come together in supporting the throne, so that the king may better work towards the prosperity of the land and its people. Should one pillar fail, the throne also crumbles, no matter how great the ruler.

Wulfstan's purpose is governance according to Christian principles. *Polity* is the representation of an ideal society, ruled according to God's will, and the responsibilities of each rank are clearly explained. The position occupied by Wulfstan himself is of vital importance: the bishop acts as mediator between secular and Christian law, and it falls on him to bring together the authorities of *regnum* and *sacerdotium*. Before the eleventh century, and for much of the rule of the House of Wessex (*Cerdicingas*), the authority of the Church was firmly grounded in the temporal power of the Crown, with the king lending weight to ecclesiastical authority. Royal legislation enforced secular power, even though most Anglo-Saxon kings who worked for the betterment of the legal system avoided taking full responsibility for the newly created laws, and referred to their bishops for advice and assistance. The intricacy of legal spheres of influences and their jurisdiction is one of the reasons why "pre-conquest English legislation has come to be recognized as among the most sophisticated in medieval Europe and as exerting a major influence on the development of the Common Law" (Rabin and Adair 2023, 3).[18] In the political theology of Wulfstan and his contemporaries, the institution of kingship was firmly based on the divine.[19] The source of the king's sovereign power originates in the divine right to rule. In the opening of the Junius *Polity*, Wulfstan writes:

> An is ece cyning wealdend 7 wyrhta ealra gesceafta. He is on riht cyning 7 cyninga wuldor 7 ealra cyninga betst þearfe gewurde oððe geweorðe. Him symble sy lof 7 wuldor 7 ece wyrðmynt a to worulde. Amen. (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Junius MS 121, fol. 9r.)
>
> One is the eternal king, lord and creator of everything. He is by right king, and the glory of kings, and foremost amongst all kings who were or will be. His be the praise, and the glory, and eternal praise forever. Amen.

Wulfstan emphasizes the irrefutability of God's rule and supremacy, as well as the dues mankind must pay him, the *Godes gerihta.* It is worth noting that the

[18] This can also be seen in King Alfred's laws, where the king abstains from single-handedly adapting new legislation, and resorts to the advice of various counsellors (bishops), which implies the weight that their vocation granted their opinion: *Then I, King Alfred, king of the West Saxons showed these to all my councillors, and they then said that pleased them all to observe them*: Keynes and Lapidge 2004, 231.

[19] Scolarship on Old English legislation is too vast to be quoted here. Important titles include Jurasinski, Oliver, and Rabin eds. 2010; Jurasinski and Rabin eds. 2019; Roach 2013b.

consecration of kings had been practised only once before Edgar's coronation in 973. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle uses the word *gehalgod* (ordained, consecrated) in that context: "Here Edgar, lord of the Angles, was consecrated king with great pomp in the ancient city of Bath (?)[20]" ("Her Eadgar wæs, Engla waldend, corðre micelre to cyninge gehalgod on ðære ealdan byrig, Acemannesceastre", Irvine 2004, 59).

It is important to note how the *ordo* differed from the ones of Edgar's forebears. The precepts were placed at the forefront of the ceremony: kings were supposed to follow the ways of justice, and the wisdom of their bishops. In this regard, Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastics were not immune to continental influence; by the time of Æthelred, the English church already had a long "history of exhortation behind it" (Lawson 1992, 567). Through the rite of consecration, the king is invested with divine authority, has the right to rule over all, and transcends the role of a mere defender of the people, a lord or a *þegn*, becoming a guardian of the Church and of the Christian faith, and thus true *hlaford*—warden of both physical and spiritual bread. Robert Deshman argues that the concept of *Christus Rex* is an Anglo-Saxon product, stemming from the Benedictional of bishop Æthelwold (1976, 378). Edgar's coronation rite was used for most of his successors, and even spread across the continent, with some alterations. The role of the king as an active defender, not just a passive leader, is emphasized in Wulfstan's *Polity.* The monarch must be of extraordinary character—prudent and moderate in action, wise and just in judgement, and unyielding in faith:

> Cristenum cyninge gebyrað swiðe rihte þæt he sy on fæder stæle cristenra þeode 7 on ware 7 on wearde Cristes gespeliga ealswa he geteald is. And him gebirað eac þæt he eallum his afole cristendom lufige 7 hæðendom ascunige 7 þæt he godes cyrcan æghwar georne weorðige 7 werige 7 eal cristen folc sibbige and rehte mid rihtre lage, swa he georнost mæge. And þurh þæt he sceal geþeon Gode þe he riht lufige 7 unriht ascunige (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 201, p. 87).
>
> It rightly befits a Christian king to act as a father to the Christian people, to protect and guard them as Christ's representative, as he is required. And it befits him to love the Christian faith with all his strength, and to abhor heathenism, and to honour and support God's Church everywhere, and to reconcile and rule all Christian people with just laws, as eagerly as he can. And through these things he shall prosper before God, if he loves justice and shuns injustice.

[20] On this passage, and on the identification of *Acemannesceastre* with Bath, see Carroll 2007, 123-124.

The king is seen by Wulfstan as a protector of the Church, who can contribute to the salvation of the people. Moreover, the king must actively pursue the wisdom of his advisers, and of the clergy. Churchmen would often admonish the monarchs on their wrongdoings, since their failure to promote Christian values was seen as the main cause of social decay. This was especially the case with Charlemagne's successors, and with the early Ottonian rulers of Germany. The clergy intervened "because many rulers, from the Church's point of view, at least, left a great deal to be desired" (Lawson 1992, 566). Instructions for the monarch were by no means novel or uncommon. Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* was, at least to some degree, dedicated to instructing secular rulers, Oda of Canterbury wrote *Constitutions* for King Edmund to heed, Wulfstan counselled two kings etc. No matter how virtuous the rulers, political pressures, bad counsel, or simply misfortune can cause them to make poor decisions. For all his might, we are told that the legendary Beowulf failed as a king because he put heroism above kingship, the individual before the collective. Even Alfred the Great, who took great interest in his role as protector and promoter of Christianity, found himself more than once in conflict with the Church, while Æthelstan seemed unconcerned by the severity of some secular laws.

Wulfstan's king must correct and save, rather than punish: the sentence is not in itself a final act, but serves as a means to to deter the criminal from further breaking of the law. This falls nicely within Wulfstan's efforts to offer alternatives to the capital punishment during his time as chief legislator (Marafioti 2008, 50-57). Through their advice, bishops can suggest a more merciful punishment, allowing criminals to repent. If death is unavoidable, priests offer confession, a provision upon which Wulfstan insisted in many of his codes.[21] This is also the case of *Polity:* in his chapter on nobles, for example, Wulfstan urges them to act preemptively. As a good Christian, it is not enough to uphold the law; one must act so as to please God above all. In other words, man must strive to actively please God, not just to avoid incurring the Creator's wrath.

[21] Wulfstan introduced mutilation and compensation as alternatives to capital punishment. For a complete list of offences punishable by death, see *V Atr 28*, 29, 30, *VI Atr* 36, 37, *VIII Atr* 34, 42, *I Cnut* 2.3, *II Cnut 8.1*, 32, 33, 39, 57, 59, 66.1. Many of these clauses tackle offences that are also present in older law codes, where the punishment was exclusively capital. Wulfstan expanded on most punishments, providing them with clauses on the possibility of payment, trial by ordeal or mutilation. The archbishop struggled his entire career to reform the legal system. Even though bishops were at the forefront of many if not most English courts, it is difficult to assess their direct involvement in courts, or to prove that legal codices were used in actual criminal cases. For instance, Giandrea believes that bishops played an active role in mundane pastoral care, while Blair argues for minimal involvement. For further reading, see Giandrea 2007, 169 and Blair 2005, 422.

Wulfstan's distinction between secular and ecclesiastical law is also present in his fragment about the three orders of society, where he states that the pillars are to be reinforced with "God's wise teachings and with just wordly law; in that they will bring lasting guidance to the people" ("wislicre Godes lare und mit rihtlicre woruldlage; þæt wyrð þam þeodscype to langsuman ræde").

Wulfstan's vision of an ideal justice system included both the separation and the cooperation of powers. His attempt to distinguish between secular and ecclesiastical influence is rare in Anglo-Saxon legislation.[22] Generally, criminal and sinful offences were addressed and punished together (Hyams 2000, 109-10). In other words, the underlying idea of unity is the most important of all.

(Pseudo)Alfred, Ælfric and Wulfstan all seemed to understand this, which is precisely what allowed them to adapt and use the concept of the tripartite order of society in various ways. Despite differences in thought and emphasis, all three authors appear to believe that only through coordinated unity can the three orders support the king in saving a crumbling and desperate England.

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[22] It is difficult to assess the efficacy of Wulfstan's reforms. Pre-conquest England did not possess a consistent mechanism of recording and safekeeping legal documents. Few manuscripts were destined exclusively to legal purposes, and the mainly juridical manuscripts contain other texts as well. Æthelbert's law code, for example, was written with an ideological purpose in mind: to bring the newly converted ruler closer to the continental Roman-Christian model of kingship, as it was one of the duties of the king to commit laws to writing. Yet, there is little evidence that this was integrated in the legal procedures themselves. Much the same can be said about Wulfstan's law-codes, especially as some of the provisions in them seem rather difficult to enforce. For further reading see Hough 2014 and Wormald 2005.

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CREATING COMMUNICATIVE CONTEXT THROUGH THE USE OF EMOJI AND POLITENESS IN ONLINE ACADEMIC WRITTEN INTERACTIONS

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ABSTRACT. ***Creating Communicative Context Through the Use of Emoji and Politeness in Online Academic Written Interactions.*** The current study aims to provide a glimpse into the way higher education students and language instructors establish rapports in the academic written communication framework through the use of emoji and online face-work strategies. Contextualisation cues are created in order to regulate transaction based communicative exchanges that result in positive outcomes, subsequently fostering an inclusive culture. Linguistic display of online discourse is fraught with perils that may impede on appropriate written academic interactions occurring between instructors and students. Negotiation of identity becomes a main objective, as there are differences in status, power and various degrees of communicative achievement between interactants.

The study shares results obtained from a questionnaire administered to 92 Romanian undergraduate students offering a framework for embedding

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emoji and face-work in online identity negotiation via written communication. It aims to offer a digital pedagogical competence approach to cater for the emotional needs of learners whose identities as digital natives take additional effort to create in the context of using transversal skills. The main findings of the study suggest that emoji and face work enable foreign language students to better manipulate their self-image when communicating online.

Keywords: *identity negotiation, online linguistic discourse, emoji, pragmatic politeness, face-work strategies, written communication, context, social and emotional learning.*

REZUMAT. ***Crearea contextului comunicativ prin folosirea emoji și a politeții în interacțiuni scrise în mediul online academic*****.** Studiul de față își propune să ofere o analiză a modului în care studenții și instructorii de limbă modernă din mediul academic stabilesc conexiuni în cadrul secvențelor de comunicare scrisă prin recurgerea la emoji și strategii de gestionare a imaginii de sine online (Engl. *Face-work*). Indiciile de contextualizare sunt folosite cu scopul de a regla secvențele comunicative tranzacționale asociate cu soluționări discursive pozitive, contribuind implicit la crearea unei culturi de tip inclusiv. Manifestările lingvistice ale discursului online sunt adeseori pline de substraturi potențial problematice care pot influența negativ comunicarea scrisă dintre profesori și studenți. Negocierea identității devine un obiectiv principal în contextul în care se conturează diferențe de status academic, putere decizională precum și niveluri diferite de performanță comunicativă din partea participanților.

Studiul de față prezintă rezultatele obținute în urma administrării unui chestionar online studenților din învățământul academic (92 de participanți dintr-o universitate românească, nivel licență), sugerându-se un cadru în care negocierea identității online în registrul scris include emoji și strategii de gestionare a imaginii de sine. Propunerea autorilor este aceea de a oferi o abordare pedagogică a competenței digitale care sprijină nevoile emoționale ale studenților ale căror identități de nativi digitali se conturează cu un efort suplimentar în contextul folosirii competențelor transversale.

Cuvinte-cheie: *negocierea identității, discurs online, emoji, politețe pragmatică, strategii de gestionare a imaginii de sine, comunicare scrisă, context, învățare socio-emoțională*.

Introduction

Communicative exchanges in the form of online written interaction between language instructors and learners are often subject to a variety of contextual cues, mindset induced communicative decisions, and trends that define students' identity as part of a class culture. Identity building and identity

negotiation are core features of this transactional encounter, in which instructors set the formality level and contextual framework of the interaction, whereas learners modulate their persona identities using filters of politeness and digital communication markers. Contextualisation cues consequently become a dynamic representation of an internal emotion-driven repertoire that attempts to further support and nuance the expected communicative academic achievement through nonverbal markers that may point to informed use of face management and face negotiation strategies. Written discourse exchanges consequently become a two-way multi-dimensional and multimodal display of resources used to invite collaborative interactions.

In order to regulate transaction based on communicative exchanges, various contextualisation cues are used with the interactional intention to facilitate an inclusive culture within the framework of social-emotional learning (SEL). In foreign language instruction, SEL can be a mechanism of fostering the participatory culture in class. (Jenkins et. al. 2006, 4) and building an affinity space. Additionally, studies have shown that students are bound to develop their cognitive ability in its association with physical, social, and emotional systems towards integration of both thinking and feeling patterns while activating in a group. (Zins et al. 2004)

Such inclusion can come via the Netspeak tools (emoji) and politeness management in building and adapting discourse that allows students to shape an identity matching their e-face and netizen sense of belonging in an otherwise impersonal environment that is devoid of in-real-time physical presence and reactions. More than constructing a sense of identity in the online and hybrid academic interaction framework, what makes the difference is the actual negotiation of identity, with marring differences in status, power and various degrees of communicative achievement between interactants.

Digitally maintaining and saving *face* is a complex process as it involves heightened awareness of one's intended impact, informed acknowledgement of interactants' needs and wants, as well as successfully compensating for the varied range of nonverbal/paralinguistic features that naturally occur in face-to-face communication (FtF). Repair discourse strategies become essential in providing much needed contextual information and cues in order to avoid miscommunication. In this context, one relevant direction of analysis is to identify how these features occur in CMC (*Computer Mediated Communication*), given that users do not find themselves in the physical proximity that would enable them to use the nonverbal cues toolkit. Research rooted in compensation strategies within a CMC context has analysed the use of digital cues such as emoticons and emoji documenting the particular ways in which they support rapports (Sampietro 2019, 110).

The present paper focuses on the pragmatic use of emoji within foreign language instruction connecting it with the face saving politeness strategies.

Blending the two elements may require an additional marked communicative effort on behalf of students to be both accepted and autonomous. An additional focus lies on illustrating how the embedding of emoji alongside CMC cues may enhance online communication serving a face-management function.

Theoretical Framework

Emoji and their linguistic functions

Student engagement in academic education is heavily dependent on creating a class culture that is conducive to a safe representation of *self* through language use and context appropriation by factoring in cognitive, socio-cultural, affective as well as behavioural elements that have become increasingly connected to generational and distinctive cultural markers. This reality, in turn, has been connected to students' need and strive for interconnectedness as a collective within academic settings. (Kahn, Everington, Kelm, Reid, and Watkins 2017, 216-218).

Digital media are rapidly reconfigured whereas academic content tends to be negotiated and critically processed rather than merely intermediated to university students who are more empowered to include their nonformal education into the academic equation than ever before. Consequently, students' face-work practices are changing (Virtanen, Tuija, and Lee 2018) an aspect that may be perceived as a generation Z unique representation of communicative priorities and dismissive efficiency regarding discursive acts completion. Our contention is that *emerging changes* such as the ones listed above may be successfully incorporated into a pedagogical framework that includes on the one hand *emoji-the digital counterparts of nonverbal cues*- that shelter affective, inferential and social responses in CMC (Erle, Schmid, Goslar, and Martin 2022). On the other hand, attention is given to *face-work politeness* (i.e. at awareness and practice level) for the complete reinforcement of learners' online identity and presence.

Communicative exchanges in written digital contexts stem from a recognition and, more importantly, a constant negotiation of personas' identities. Given that "people construct and negotiate their identity each time when they communicate using a new language" (Herzuah 2018, 99-119), in the context of such interactions mediated by the higher education framework and more particularly, in the realm of a teacher-student type of interaction, identity negotiations may be molded by the integration of emoji and face management strategies. Language use, as the "form of self-presentation" (Miller 2004, 293)

by which it is not merely information that is transmitted in a communicative exchange, but also an identity attachment occurs, thus pertains to sketching a negotiation of identities and to contextualising such interaction.

Extensive body of research (as shown below) has claimed that the basic feature of emoji (and emoticons) is to carefully construct and express affective meaning. Being used as substitute for facial expressions or face-to-face nonverbal cues (Sarkar et al. 2017, 28-30) these digital affective meaning driven symbols enable communicators to express emotional engagement and overall communicative interest, which in itself is a major gain irrespective of the transmitted positive or negative nuances. Emoji and "emoticons are text-based representations of *face* in text based CMC" (Togans, Holtgraves, Kwon et al. 2021, 278), functioning as textual utterances in CMC (Danesi 2016; Ge and Herring 2018). Moreover, "users select and use emoji as linguistic elements to express their 'textual voice' and community recognized personality and also to encourage their audiences for being discourse participants" (Ge-Stadnyk and Jing 2019, 428).

Encompassing various forms such as email, instant messaging, social media, and video conferencing, computer-mediated communication (CMC) serves as a crucial tool for interpersonal communication, in synchronous and asynchronous communication modes. CMC cues include a variety of elements, ranging from textual cues (words, punctuation, emoji, emoticons, capitalisation) to visual cues (avatars, profile pictures, graphics), auditory and temporal cues (auditory notifications that can enhance the sense of immediacy, as well as response latency and timestamps). Additionally, CMC also encompasses a series of cues meant to facilitate interaction, stemming from feedback mechanisms, to social cues such as greetings and politeness markers to nonverbal cues, including memes, GIFs, audio-video clips with the intent of assigning layers of meaning. All these cues impact interpersonal affinity in text-based interactions. They influence conversation duration, perceived affinity, and reciprocity, especially when interlocutors can see each other's cues, allowing users to convey emotions, reactions, and nuances in their messages.

Miscommunication avoidance, status recognition and identity building become core features of a communicative exchange in which emoji are embedded, particularly when the interlocutor is a student, striving to account for both language use and communicative purpose achievement. Serving a "prescriptive purpose, indicating intentions for interpretation" emoji (and emoticons) "are frequently used as a semiotic tactic to refine the meaning and tenor that a sender would like to convey with a word or message, seeking to calibrate the word in order to reduce the possibility of its being misinterpreted" (Ge-Stadnyk and Jing 2019, 430).

Referring to Paivio's dual coding theory (1971), according to which better information processing occurs when multiple codes of representation are embedded in the message, the blend of of visual elements and Netspeak characteristics, "as a blend between speech, writing and electronically-mediated features" (Crystal 2006, 48) in written interaction favours visual support via emoji. The dual coding of information via the written interaction among actors of the language class micro-community relies on the rationale that the language class may be sketched according to participatory culture principles, "in which members believe their contributions matter, and feel some degree of social connection with one another. […] Participatory culture shifts the focus of literacy from one of individual expression to community involvement" (Jenkins et al. 2006, 4).

Li (2019) makes reference to a set of linguistic functions of emoji, which vary from expressing certain feelings during online interactions, to taking on the role of pictorial cues, to conveying tone and strength in writing, as politicons (10) or as modes of artistic expression.

> "In the field of communication, research on emoji mainly focuses on two aspects: one is emoji's emotional and linguistic functions in CMC, the other is how different factors, such as individual characteristics, cultural background and system platform, influence users' preferences for emoji use" (Bai et. al. 2019).

In the educational framework and particularly in language learning and teaching, studies have analysed and confirmed the effective impact of using emoji in education-focused interactions. Bai (et. al.)'s (2019) review referred to the scarcity of research related to emoji use effectiveness in language teaching and language learning. Nonetheless, the studies that do analyse this impact mention the "potential of emoji for language classes as a means of overcoming language barriers [...] as a mechanism of facilitating more genuine communication in online interactions and as awareness triggers regarding the non-verbal features of communication" (Mudure-Iacob 2022, 279).

Contextualising communication rapport building in written interactions among language instructors and students, two positionings must be mentioned. On the one hand, the camp positioned against recurrent use of emoji in communication mirrors the embedding of emoji in written communication to dark age illiteracy. This perspective indicates that emoji, along with humour and sarcasm, are viewed as negative cues in the politeness filter and therefore alter the meaning of the message. Moreover, emoji are often blamed for causing difficulty in discourse participants attempt to *put feelings into words*. On the other hand, a positive perspective on the use of emoji in written communication claims that emoji bring along various linguistic functions and enhance the expression of interlocutors' emotional selves (Evans 2017, 67).

Employed as carriers of linguistic utterance features, emoji are considered to be filling a slot in written communication, by providing substitutes for the lack of intonation and pitch and enhancing the phatic communication function. Given that "language learners are multiliterate actors whose interaction in an online environment is improved if the participatory culture is built" (Mudure-Iacob 2022, 281), discursive membership paired with contextualisation cues becomes a core feature of written interactions. Phatic communication "in interaction, constitutes the use of language and/or paralanguage to create ties of union, where this purpose takes precedence over transmitting information" (Aull 2019, 210). The tailoring of online identities in written communication as an extended framework of the language class is illustrative for building an inclusive culture, as certain facets of one's *face* can be substituted for emoji in online instruction-led platforms.

Furthermore, the relevance of emoji in written interactions is highly related to the concept of code-switching (Duah and Marije 2013, 3-5), a core element of language proficiency also emphasized in the new CEFR. Emphasis is now placed not on native speech, but rather on code-switching as a cue of communicative and linguistic skills. Code-switching can further be explored by how emoji occur along written communication in formal and semi-formal communication in academic interaction via platforms, emails and posts both among learners and teacher-learners.

Politeness as Face-work

There is extensive research to date on the manifestations and applications of the construct of *face* undertaken by communication experts within the field of interpersonal communication and rapport management theories with a focus on improving the quality of communicative exchanges that have a mutually beneficial transactional value. (Spencer-Oatey 2000, 2008, 2013, 2015; Arundale 2020; Locher 2014, Culpeper 2011; House, Kadar 2023).

In order to better serve the purpose of the present study, we intend to connect *face* and face-work to the interconnectedness that arises from knowledgeable awareness and applications of *face* and pragmatic politeness strategies in students' written language production in foreign language instruction via emoji use as a compensation tool for lending a textual voice and nonverbal tonality to language production.

As stated before, CMC has influenced face-work practices to an important extent (Virtanen, Tuija, and Lee 2018). Foreign language instruction and communication courses inherently invite context appropriate, conscious decisions that are made in order to digitally project, maintain, save, and enhance one's (e)-face/projected self-image. Consequently, it has become increasingly important

to acknowledge that pragmatic politeness applications can improve one's online identity and presence as it brings into focus the need for a mutual negotiation and consideration of participants' discursive wants and needs.

Pragmatic politeness owes its conceptualisations and various applications within the field of foreign language instruction to Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theoretical framework, which shaped the science and art of linguistic politeness theory by putting forward a series of politeness principles and strategies for maintaining and enhancing one's face (i.e. public self-image) during social encounters. At the very core of politeness research lies the construct of *face* which is famously defined as "the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself" (Brown and Levinson 1987, 61). Brown and Levinson's definition of the intricate construct of face and its multifaceted manifestations in collaborative communication has emerged and developed from sociologist Erving Goffman (1955, 1967) for whom *face-work* refers to "the actions taken by a person to make whatever he is doing consistent with face" (1967, 12). *Face* -according to Goffman- is *the "positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact."(*Goffman 1967, 5*).* Goffman analysed the construct of face adapting it from the world of dramaturgy and theatre, having been interested in the nuances it contributes to human interactions and exchanges whose interlocutors negotiate communicative needs for gaining leverage in accomplishing mutually beneficial transactions.

Face is a construct that is fundamental in pragmatics encompassing a variety of glocal practices and manifestations that received increased attention from scholars as a pillar in identity construction and impression management theories in computer-mediated communication (Locher et al. 2015). *E-face* has become the currency for projecting and maintaining one's self-image and self-worth in communication exchanges that are devoid of face-to-face contexts. There are two interrelated aspects of face that are essential to highlight as they are relevant to the present study. One is the *positive face* (Brown and Levinson 1987, 101). Positive face is rooted in individuals' fundamental strive for involvement, overall connection, and acceptance from others, the so-called *solidarity face* (Scollon and Scollon 2014) that primarily informs discourse participants need for being approved of in interactions. The other is the *negative face*, the facet associated with one's autonomy and freedom from imposition (Brown and Levinson 1987, 61). As in face-to-face interactions, participants pose questions, asking for clarifications and instructions, negotiating misunderstandings, displaying agreement and disagreement. Such interaction may consequently pose a threat to discourse participants' face, or public self-image. Discourse participants therefore communicate and share communicative meaning while engaging in face-work (i.e. showing a marked interest in the development, preservation and enhancement of self-image) based on a cognitive assessment of contextual and interpersonal variables such as power distance, degree of

imposition or social distance among discourse participants. Politeness strategies include verbal and nonverbal manifestations encompassing the claiming of common ground: shared interest and knowledge with other discourse participants, seeking agreement and avoiding overt disagreement, delivering compliments, showing interest and approval, etc. In online instruction, face-work is a tool students have in projecting a self-image that they work on constantly, it is their storytelling approach to academic stance and identity (Micle, 2020, 21). Within the realm of technologically enhanced and mediated communication, in recent years in particular, emphasis has been placed on the newly emerged need to understand how new affordances of online media impact face-work and politeness norms (Locher et al. 2015).

> 'One of the reasons to foreground pragmatic (im)politeness in CMC is to establish in what ways forms of computer-mediated communication differ from face-to-face interaction with respect to the restrictions that the medium imposes on relational work/face-work and the consequences of these restrictions on linguistic choices.'(Locher, 2010, 27)

Face-work is analysed in the broader sense of impression management, relational work as well as its direct manifestations through the use of emoji as a strategic move to replace nonverbal cues and nuances.

Research and Hypotheses

Participants and Procedure

A total of 92 undergraduate students in a Romanian university were involved in the study. They are in their B.A. and M.A. level of study with various majors (Pedagogy of Preschool and Primary School Education, Business Administration, International Business, Finance, E-Business, Auditing and Corporate Governance, Public Administration). The participants undergo undergraduate and graduate study programs in English such as: English applied to Economics, English applied to Public Administration or Intercultural Business Communication, while their language level of English was self-identified (based on DigComp testing as B1-B2 Independent user by 55.7%, C1-C2, Advanced level by 22.7 % and A1-A2 beginner level by 21.6% of respondents). 65.9% of participants were women, while the rest (34.1 %) identified as men.

Regarding the research procedure, the study is the result of the analysis conducted on a questionnaire including 19 questions, divided into four sections: demographic section, face/self-image management, emoji-based communication and message to the course instructor section, the last one being designed as a

practical task of showcasing the use of emoji in written messages directed at language instructors. The questionnaire was designed by the authors of the research for the purpose of the current study.

Participation was optional, personal data was confidential and the respondents gave their informed consent. Students' perceptions regarding use of emoji in written communication were observed with reference to exchanges that are complementary to their academic assignments as part of creation of collaborative CMC environments (i.e. online learning platforms/chat rooms, online forums put up for discussion of classroom materials and reflection handouts, online collaborative projects that require instructor-student interaction/feedback and peer-peer feedback sessions, apps, tools and e-resources used in order to communicate across traditional frontal teaching environments such as Padlet, Peardeck, Quizlet, Write & Improve, etc.). Content analysis was obtained from qualitative data, based on teachers' textual observation of students' emails and written interactions on educational platforms used during classes. Data from students' answers as well as their observed written interactions were analysed and visually transferred into graphs, pie charts and mindmaps designed by the authors and shown in section Results analysis.

Research hypotheses

Our research examined the following hypotheses:

1. Students' **sociointerpersonal stance** manifests itself through the use of emoji and politeness relational work strategies in online interactions.

2**. Emoji can be valid tools of contextualising online identity** in written semi-formal academic communication interactions both between language instructors and learners and among peers.

3. **Students' identity** is potentially created in CMC environments by impression management and relational work, fostering a participatory culture.

Results and Analysis

Hypothesis One: *Students' sociointerpersonal stance manifests itself through the use of emoji and politeness relational work strategies in online interactions*.

Sociointerpersonal stance in foreign language instruction and communication studies has taken a front seat in the context of SEL approaches to education, particularly with the emergence of a variety of tools and apps that support online/hybrid interactions. SEL (Social and Emotional Learning) focuses on enabling students to more effectively integrate skills/competences, communicative attitudes, and behaviours that would contribute to a sense of safety and overall wellbeing. According to the CASEL Model (Collaborative for

Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning 2012, 2015), there are five important elements that SEL consists of: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Considering such elements within the framework of academic education brings into focus the role affective factors play in language learning, as they constitute an essential predictor of student engagement and performance. According to Henter (2014), affective factors may include motivation, attitude, and anxiety and they affect language performance being also very much dependent on various opportunities for exposure.

There is not common agreement with reference to the definition of the construct of *stance* in communication although many researchers have analysed it within various fields of interest from sociology to social sciences and applied communication. Several researchers have significantly contributed to the sociointerpersonal dynamics study. Goffman (1967) was preoccupied with the way discourse participants present themselves in social interactions that occur daily with a focus on impression management whereas others such as Bandura (1977) primarily focused on how individuals develop certain social behaviours through modeling and observation. Consequently, Tannen (1990) further expanded her research interest on sociointerpersonal stance by highlighting the role gender plays in shaping one's interactional style. Within the present study, the construct of *socio interpersonal stance* refers to the way individuals approach communication while interacting with each other within various social and interpersonal contexts. This unique representation is influenced by such factors as communication style, behavioral and linguistic patterns as well as the communication skills set each participant possesses. Despite the above-mentioned lack of consensus to reach an encompassing definition of the construct, the majority of research approaches to stance do acknowledge one common core feature and that is the attempt to gain a more comprehensive grasp of both the social and pragmatic nature of language and the communicative functions served by language in interactions (Formentelli 2013).

This study has taken a look at students' sociointerpersonal stance through the lens of face-work strategies that language students resort to using in written interactions so as to have a positive impact. Politeness is an integral part of socionterpersonal stance. Factors such as the need to promote a positive face, the need to maintain autonomy in interactions and be accepted as part of the group, the necessity to counteract face-threatening acts (FTAs, Brown and Levinson 1987, 65) in order to relate better to peers and teachers encourage digital saving strategies through use of emoji. The visual icons take on some of the communicative weight by intermediating variables such as power, distance, and imposition (Brown and Levinson 1987).

Positive politeness strategies seek reaching overall agreement by deciding on common interests or shared interactional goals, by paying extra

attention to one's interlocutor, showing reciprocity and contributing to a mutually beneficial quid pro quo. Negative politeness strategies are connected to being indirect, to showing pessimism or lack of willingness to accept imposition while attempting to give deference. Off record strategies may resort to understatement or overstatement, playing with vagueness and ambiguity, hinting at possible issues or misinterpretations. Emoji alongside CMC cues may enhance online communication serving a face-management function.

Emoji fulfill an essential function as modalisers within politeness strategies (Beiswenger and Pappert 2019). Politeness manifests itself in written exchanges (in-real-time or carefully constructed interactions) through the conscious use of emoji not only when light-hearted comments are made but, most importantly perhaps as redressive action for providing constructive feedback in peer to peer interactions or instructor to student exchanges. Students' sociointerpersonal stance is supported by the use of emoji within politeness strategies as they mediate FTAs (face threatening acts) turning them into FSA (face saving acts). Positive face (one's need to be appreciated) as well as negative face (one's need to keep the status quo by maintaining autonomy and freedom from imposition) are both credited and validated by emoji use creating a communicative toolkit that is both useful and playful.

Study participants were asked to provide several adjectives that they think *the others* (*the other* students, their group peers) would associate with the student's face/self-image in order to assess the degree of awareness related to *face* perception as well as the existence of potential differences between the way one perceives himself/herself and how he/she is perceived by others. The adjectives are visibly split into positive ones (connected to such as aspects as appropriate/professional academic image, likability degree, creative skills, ability to be part of a team, coherence, academic conduct, degree of preparedness) and negative ones (personal flaws; CEFR language level of competence limitations-students with A1-A2 levels of competence resort more frequently to attaching negative adjectives in order to describe their e-face; inflexibility; unwillingness to participate, lack of sensitivity to turn taking, etc.). Identity construction is consequently built on either divergent or convergent interpretations one gets from others. Some of the positive adjectives associated with students' perception of their face via others' interpretation are the following: *polite, opinionated, present, aware, active listener, empathetic, kind, team focused, collaborative, considerate, helpful, competitive, intelligent, witty, data driven, talkative*. Conversely, some of the negative adjectives associated with weaknesses as face-ridden consequences and perceived as labels from the others are: *impulsive, arrogant, silent, shy, withdrawn, anxious, unfocussed, uninteresting, incoherent, unprepared, fearful, rambling, blunt, tired, boring, unhelpful or detached.* The conclusions show the relevance of compare-contrast approaches to face-work while subsequently

leading to a variety of applications that may challenge or invite negotiation such as discussions and reflection based image enhancement plans of action. Due to limited class time spent on providing feedback, there is a need to assign post-task reflection time in order for students to have a comprehensive perspective over practical applications of facework in professional communication and use customised enhancement plans of action .

Face/self-image is anchored in two fundamental twin pillars: the way one sees oneself and the way one is perceived based on impact, relational work and willingness to adapt and/or to remain independent from imposition.

Hypothesis Two: *Emoji can be valid tools of contextualising online identity in written semi-formal academic communication interactions both between language instructors and learners and among peers.*

This part in the survey was designed to analyse students' attitude towards using emoji in written communication both in academic and semi-formal contexts.

When asked about the frequency of using emoji in the context of communicating with their teachers within emails, posts on platforms and during online classes using Teams, Zoom, Moodle 54.5% of respondents mentioned they embed these Netspeak features to a high extent. As part of their Netizen identity, using such linguistic markers accounts for a tendency to build rapport while maintaining the participatory culture and boosting significance even if the formality context of writing may differ from that with peers. This communicative exchange relying on dual coding of information pertains to a blend between language in formal or semi-formal language and recurrent use of emoji to enhance phatic communication and substitute for the lack of paraverbal cues in written communication.

Another aspect under scrutiny in the current study was students' tendency to use emoji more frequently in communication related to language classes as compared to communication exchanges related to courses in which Romanian was the instruction language. The interest regarding this aspect stems from the need to investigate the way in which code-switching with emoji is perceived as more natural and easier to use when the communicative exchange is in English rather than in students' mother tongue.

When asked about the tendency to use emoji more in written communication within the language class context as compared to other classes (taught in Romanian), 53.4% answered they tend to do so more in their English class, whereas 17% claimed the opposite and 29.5% were not aware of such a tendency. This is an indicator of code-switching as a cue of communicative and linguistic skills. There are examples of the online code-switching based on the speech-based communication, i.e. Internet users do not consider the languages

they use as different entities and "draw variously on whichever languages are in their repertoires… whichever languages have currency in a particular digital situation" (Tagg 2015, 43). Code-switching enables users to manage relationships, perform multicultural identities and build communities. Likewise, code-switching can lead to change of tone and ease of expression, thus justifying the preference of using such approach in English-based communicative exchanges.

To investigate the functional connotations that students give when using emoji, students were asked to choose from a list of suggested functions and in a follow-up question, to exemplify the role that such functions carry. The analysis of their responses, as well as excerpts from their open answers were visually represented in the mindmap below. Respondents indicated various linguistic and communicative functions to cater for particular branches of building rapport within online communication (see Figure 1 below).

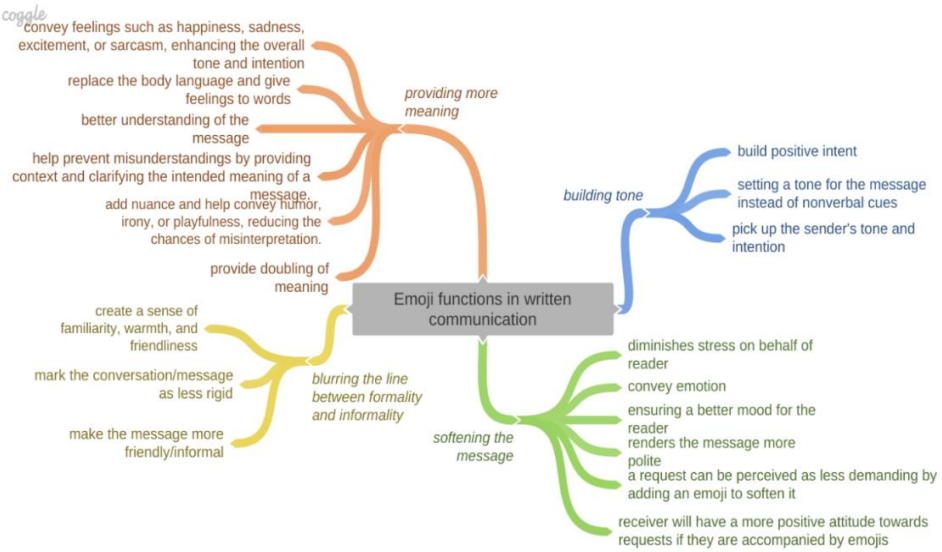

Figure 1. Representation of intended emoji functions in written communication

The answers can be categorised under the following sections: **providing more meaning** (in which situations emoji are perceived as facilitating a better understanding of the message, preventing misunderstanding, adding nuance, conveying feelings to words), **building tone** (with the aim to build positive intent, to set the tone for the message, or to pick up the sender's tone), **softening the message** and **blurring the line between formality and informality.** Beyond the stereotype that emoji are merely playful elements suitable for social media and peer interactions, they are seen by students as boosting cues that can

enhance more complex written communication with their teachers. What is highly relevant in this context is that one voluntarily chooses an emoji and in a faceless environment the message is given a face.

In addition to investigating what functions students allocate emoji in their communicative exchanges, we sought to analyse the conveyed intentions within these exchanges. Students were asked the question *Which of the following intentions do you tend to convey when using emoji in communication (with teachers and colleagues)?* They were also encouraged to visualise their recently used emoji by looking in their smartphone apps, to see what tendency they had when communicating (see Figure 2 below).

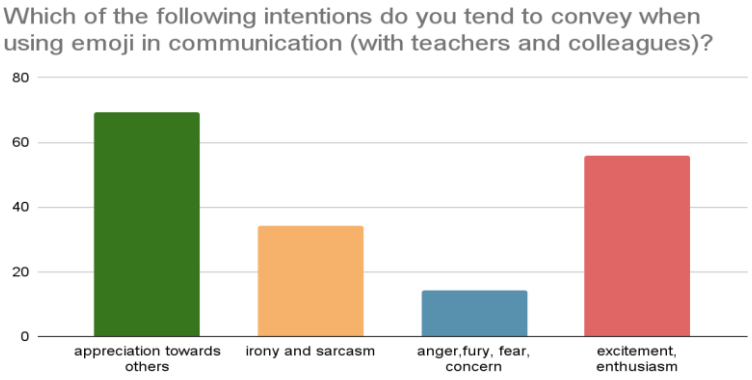

Figure 2. Conveying intentions with emoji in written communicative exchanges

There are particular correlations with rendering face-work in terms of substituting emotions for emoji use. 69.2% of respondents indicated that they use emoji to show appreciation towards others, which enhances peer assessment and collaboration in a participatory culture. Excitement and enthusiasm were likewise marked as recurring intentions (56%) to be correlated with their choice of emoji, indicative of positive face strategies. Moreover, the need for validation, which is an indicator specific for social media users and content creators is also present in this respect here, as well as reacting to messages with emoji.

The negative markers were also signalled by students, who mentioned that they use emoji to express irony, sarcasm (34.1% of respondents), as well as fear, concern or fury (14.3%), which are triggers for negative face-work. Nonetheless, regardless of the positive/negative intentional meaning carried by emoji, their use taps into the sense of belonging to an affinity space, which is built within the language classes.

Emoji can be valid tools of building identity and creating a participatory culture in written semi-formal academic communication

interactions both between language instructors and learners and between peers. The second hypothesis has been fully supported by our quantitative and qualitative research. In a (still) emerging field such as CMC, the use of emoji is one of the most noticeable features that can be embedded into utterances in a creative and context appropriate way. One's sense of identity is created and emotionally supported by emoji use. Study participants have validated the use of emoji as communicative devices that are at one's fingertips and are not limited to private and informal interactions.

Hypothesis three: *Students' identity is potentially created in CMC environments by impression management and relational work, fostering a participatory culture.*

When asked the question *Do you think that the image you want to show/project in class is the image the others (your peers, your teachers) have of you when you interact orally and in writing?,* 47.7% of the respondents perceive that there is an overlap between the two which suggests a degree of awareness related to one's communicative presence and impression management control within the academic language instruction context. Self-awareness and reflection associated with self-image/face as well as the existence of a perceived correspondence and alignment of one's projected values and the corresponding interpretation of these values by the communicative stakeholders.

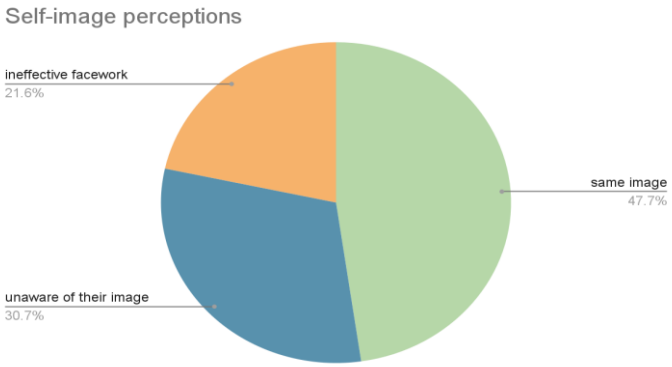

Figure 3. Self-image perceptions

Consequently, 21.6% respondents have answered the same question negatively indicating a more defective impression management as well as ineffective face-work applied to the respective communicative context. Additionally, 30.7% of respondents have stated that they are unable to decide whether such an overlap exists as they may be oblivious to the role of face-work strategies in

communication as well as the accountability one has in building, maintaining and marketing their self-image to good effect. The potential for academic instructors to tap into is both inviting and challenging, particularly because a significant share of respondents (30.7%) have claimed they are unaware as to what steps can be taken to project, maintain and enhance their self-image in communicative interactions.

In order to interpret the qualitative data we have obtained as response to the following face-work related question: *What are five to seven adjectives/nouns/verbs you would associate with the self-image/the face you want to project as a university student?*, we have chosen to provide a Coggle representation of some of the answers categorising information under 4 separate headings: *image projected for peers* (for creating rapports and engagement with colleagues), *image projected for teachers, image enhancement*, and *image built to match class culture*. Students were asked to provide open answers and the mind map below is a visual representation of how the raw data were categorised under the sections illustrated in Figure 4 below.

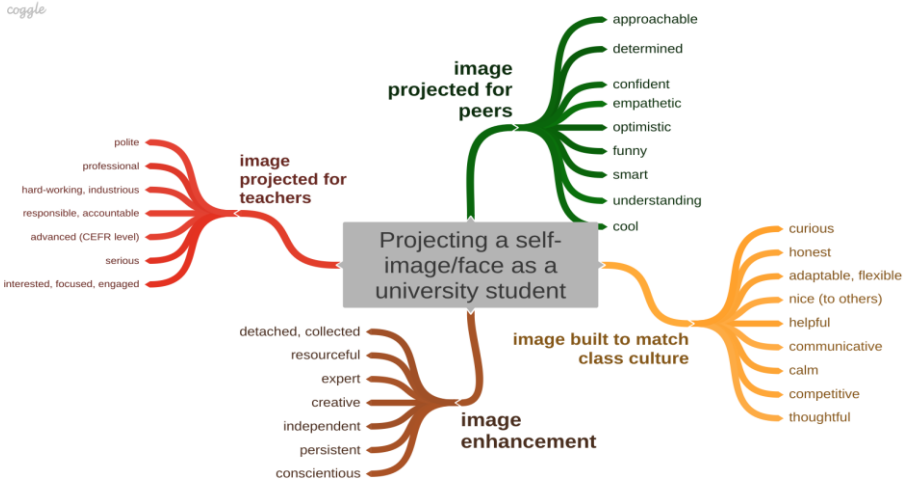

Figure 4. Projecting a self-image/*face* as a university student

While the words associated with the self- image/ face projected within the classroom environment tend to be mostly positive, there is a slight tendency to associate the wants and needs to construct a professional, academically valid face with the instructors rather than with peers. There is a more light-hearted approach in this respect proving a concern *to appear to be group appropriate*, to belong and adapt to the generational and group mindset. Class culture is another important issue as it lends itself to identifying a specific context which

is relevant to any research that focuses on interactional and relational analyses. By definition, foreign language instruction (whether FtF or CMC) is a medium where collaborative exchanges are requested and built on regularly, where the instructor's personal management style dictates the degree of willingness to participate as well as the students' engagement in developing language proficiency through adaptation to guidelines, participatory requests as well as the need to achieve a class culture-personal culture match.

When asked to appreciate *the level of difficulty relative to the projection of self-image in online/hybrid classes versus FtF classes*, 44.3% respondents have stated that this is fairly/very difficult in an online/hybrid medium as opposed to 55.7% who have identified the FtF medium as rendering more difficulty in effective self-image projection.

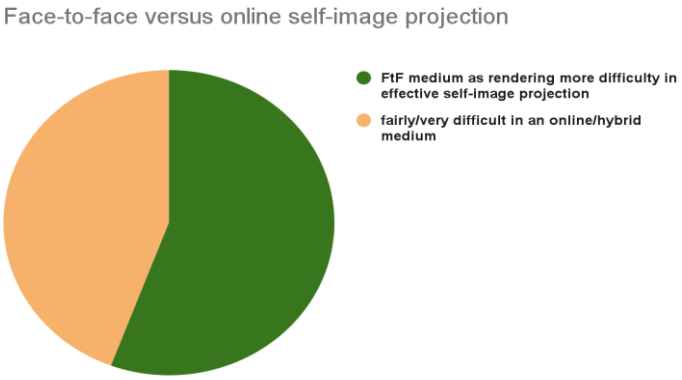

Figure 5. Face-to-face versus online self-image projection

There are several elements that contribute to the perceived level of difficulty in both respects: CEFR language competence levels and the associated self-confidence when called on to participate, awareness of existing face-work strategies that may enable learners to deal with (often anxiety-ridden) contexts, engagement level, perceived pressure on the part of both colleagues and course instructors.

Students' identity (both projected and perceived) is potentially created in CMC environments by face-work awareness and conceptualisations of face, impression management and relational work. Face as one's public self- image projected for the benefit of both the individual and the other discourse participants is a fundamental pragmatic concept that inluences students' engagement level and academic development. Our research has validated the fact that face-work is perceived by students as being split into two facets: the way one sees himself/

herself and the way one is perceived by the others. Furthermore, face is a relational and identity constructing notion that transcends cultures and communication media. By using emoji as semiotic devices that are essential in digital communication students are empowered to clarify, modulate, and support meaning.

Conclusions

Digital media and computer-mediated technology are changing and reconfiguring themselves at an alarmingly fast rate and so are university main stakeholders' approaches to accessing information, co-creating and sharing knowledge and manifesting their identity via foreign language and applied communication instruction.

Online learning environments and multimedia apps and tools are creating interactional practices that go beyond the traditional classroom environment that, by definition, tends to be more controlled and prone to formal and semi-formal discourse. CMC is an object of continuous development, with complementary technologies, genres, and linguistic practices (BeiSwenger and Pappert 2019, 1). In an intricate and culturally dependent way, *face-work practices* are inherently connected to interactants' pragmatic competence display fostering identity construction in a faceless medium that often invites one's creative employment of contextualisation features. In this study, we have shown how learners perceive the self-use of *emoji-one of the most symbolic features of CMS* in their less formal/informal written utterances towards impression management, relational engagement and manifestations of (im) politeness. This, in turn, contributes to fostering a collaborative learning environment that does not exclude visual representations of one's self through *modalisers* within positive/negative politeness strategies. Positive and negative face-interactants' needs for belonging and adaptation and their strive for autonomy and preservation of autonomy in discourse are located within a SEL pedagogical framework. This pedagogical framework acknowledges offline practices that may influence face-work representations as a means of balancing out one's academic face and their personal face by means of a communication code where emoji not only replace physicality related features but also support communication exchanges as a shortcut to transmission of messages in, for example, online platform discussions, reflection based feedback forms or learning management systems chat rooms.

The most significant takeaway from the present study is the contention that *identity construction* in foreign language learning is mediated and supported by face-work practices in written exchanges where emoji are validated by peers as meaningful and useful. Furthermore, subsequent studies will include university

teaching staff (not only foreign language instructors) in order to gauge their perceptions of face-work/emoji applications in their class dynamics.

Focusing on the use of language in teacher-student/ student-student interactions, we have collected data from university undergraduates and graduates whose inputs are analysed through the filter of emoji use and emoji driven communicative strategies as well as pragmatic politeness theory and the concept of relational work. The results show students' perception of the self-image construct as it contributes to identity construction and enhancement in CMC. This study offers a qualitative and quantitative analysis of strategies employed by university students in order to manage communicative instances effectively. The preference for these strategies indicates that instructors and students are concerned about constructing politeness via emoji use by considering both their positive and negative face.

Consequently, there are practical implications for using metalinguistic commentary and emoji to maintain politeness in the online academic community articulating a foreign language mediated identity. CMC interactions have (online and offline) point towards the annotation of emoji role and functions to support interactive communication, sensitivity to turn taking, emotional engagement and communicative achievement of nonacademic written texts. This aspect is worth the acknowledgement and recognition on the part of learning communities that are culturally and linguistically inclusive.

Our analysis allows for future directions of study in written discourse expanding on how emoji and face work practices can contribute to more meaningful interactions:

1. Their association with face threatening acts and face saving acts as part of the politeness theoretical framework put forward by Brown and Levinson (1987) and, most importantly, the regulation of rapport management (Spencer Oatey 2015).
2. The particular semiotic potential (positive, negative, and neutral meaning) of emoji in digital communication enable learners and instructors to convey and interpret emotions, suggest courses of action, compensate for using silence, suggest discourse alterations as well as encourage collaborative development of outputs.
3. Within the field of foreign language instruction and efficiency ridden professional communication, the analysis of the rationale behind the use of emoji as well as the impact they have on text based communication, may reveal the individual, cultural and group context while pinpointing to the preferences displayed by technologically savvy generations as they contribute to adding metalinguistic layers to our digital language and culture.

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INTERPRÉTATIONS DE LA PRÉSENCE DU FANTOME DU PÈRE DANS LE ROMAN *ULYSSE FROM BAGDAD* D'ÉRIC-EMMANUEL SCHMITT

Andreea-Gabriela STANCIU[1]

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ABSTRACT. ***Interpretations of the Presence of the Father's Ghost in the Novel* Ulysse from Bagdad *by Éric-Emmanuel Schmitt.*** By analyzing the shock caused by the death of a loved one, psychologists and psychiatrists have noticed the tendency among those who suffer to refuse to accept the loss, which often leads to the emergence of visions embodying the recently deceased person. Thus, grieving individuals continue to maintain contact with their departed loved ones through these supernatural images that represent them, which they not only see but also hear and actively interact with. This phenomenon of the reappearance of the dead in the form of ghosts is also represented in literature, being one of the key elements of the novel *Ulysse from Bagdad* by the Franco-Belgian author Éric-Emmanuel Schmitt. In this novel, young Iraqi Saad loses his father, who is shot by Americans in Iraq, but he does not sever the connection with him; instead, he continues to converse with his ghost. The father's ghost becomes his travel companion, offering him advice and even serving as an alter ego for both Saad and the reader.

Keywords: *Éric-Emmanuel Schmitt, Ulysse, ghost, journey, father*

REZUMAT. ***Interpretări ale prezenței fantomei tatălui în romanul* Ulysse from Bagdad *de Éric-Emmanuel Schmitt.*** Analizând șocul cauzat de moartea unei persoane apropiate, psihologii și psihiatrii au observat tendința celor

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îndureraţi de a refuza să accepte pierderea, ceea ce duce adesea la apariţia unor viziuni care înfăţişează persoana decedată. Astfel, cei aflaţi în doliu continuă să menţină legătura cu cei dragi care au părăsit lumea celor vii prin intermediul acestor viziuni, pe care nu numai că le văd, dar le şi aud şi cu care interacţionează în mod activ. Acest fenomen al reîntoarcerii morţilor sub formă de fantomă este reprezentat şi în literatură, fiind unul dintre elementele cheie ale romanului *Ulysse from Bagdad* al autorului franco-belgian Éric-Emmanuel Schmitt. În acest roman, tânărul irakian Saad îşi pierde tatăl, fiind împuşcat de americani în Irak, dar nu întrerupe legătura cu el, ci continuă să converseze cu fantoma acestuia. Astfel, imaginea tatălui devine tovarăşul său de călătorie, îi oferă sfaturi şi chiar reprezintă un alter ego al lui Saad, dar şi al cititorului.

Cuvinte-cheie: *Éric-Emmanuel Schmitt, Ulysse, fantomă, călătorie, tată*

1. Introduction. Théories de l'apparition des images spectrales chez les membres de la famille

L'apparition surnaturelle de personnes décédées, sous forme de fantômes que l'endeuillé peut entendre ou même voir, n'est pas un sujet évité par les études spécialisées en psychologie et en psychanalyse, ni par la littérature. Il y a plusieurs psychologues qui parlent des situations dans lesquelles le fantôme d'une personne proche apparaît dans la vie de celui qui subit la perte. Cette occurrence peut être basée sur le traumatisme psychologique de la perte d'un être cher et sur l'incapacité à traiter cette disparition, qui provoque souvent « des phénomènes de dépersonnalisation, de perte provisoire de l'image spéculaire » (Egry 2013, 29), comme l'affirme la psychanalyste Marie-Claude Egry.

L'une des principales causes de l'apparition d'images fantomatiques et de la dépersonnalisation est le deuil inachevé. Lorsque ce processus n'a pas lieu ou est incomplet, un blocage émotionnel peut apparaître chez la personne qui a souffert de la perte, ce qui permet l'émergence de différentes formes surnaturelles mimant la vie.

Les spécialistes considèrent qu'il y a trois facteurs qui expliquent l'apparition des représentations spectrales chez des personnes qui ont subi une perte, surtout en cas de mort d'un parent. Le premier facteur est la nature de la mort : elle devrait être « soudaine, inattendue et violente » (Cuendet and Grimaud de Vicenzi 2003, 164) et provoquer un fort traumatisme chez les personnes qui l'entourent. Un autre facteur qui facilite l'apparition des images fantomatiques est la structure psychique de la personne : si elle est considérée comme prédestinée à une telle expérience, elle « s'offre comme agneau sacrificiel du fait

d'une sensibilité psychologique singulière » (Cuendet and Grimaud de Vicenzi 2003, 164). Même si la personne qui souffre de la perte n'est pas toujours enfant, la mort d'un parent ou d'une personne qui joue un rôle majeur dans la vie de quelqu'un peut avoir un effet également fort sur l'adulte. La disparition des parents provoque un choc, signifiant non seulement la mort d'une personne qui exerce une influence importante dans l'évolution et la formation des personnalités, mais aussi la fin d'une étape dans la vie des gens. La mort d'un parent, spécialement d'un père, provoque, d'une part, une « infantilisation du vivant » (Morin 1970, 169) et, de l'autre part, la déification du mort, facilitant l'apparition des images spectrales comme des doubles, qui accompagnent le vivant pendant toute son existence. Selon Edgar Morin, le double peut agir d'une manière autonome et il peut avoir les mêmes besoins élémentaires que les vivants, les mêmes passions et sentiments. La « vie » des morts est donc, une image en miroir de la vie des (sur)vivants.

En ce qui concerne la littérature, le fantôme peut avoir différents rôles par rapport aux protagonistes : on peut parler d'un assistant qui aide le personnage, d'un conseiller, d'une projection extracorporelle de la conscience du protagoniste, d'un double de lui ou encore d'un double du lecteur.

Pour illustrer les différentes interprétations de la présence des fantômes dans la littérature et les rôles qu'ils jouent autour des protagonistes, nous avons choisi d'analyser l'image du fantôme du père de Saad, le protagoniste du roman *Ulysse from Bagdad* de l'écrivain franco-belge Éric-Emmanuel Schmitt. Saad Saad est un jeune Irakien né sous le régime de Saddam Hussein, qui passe par une longue série d'événements malheureux qui le conduisent à quitter son pays natal : la mort de son père, s'élançant par mégarde « vers un planton de soldats » (Schmitt 2008, 58) américains et déclenchant ainsi les détonations, la disparition de sa fiancée, Leila, victime d'une explosion et dont le corps n'a pas été retrouvé parmi les débris, la mort de ses beaux-frères sur le front et de ses neveux et nièces, succombés à des maladies graves et non soignés faute d'argent et de médicaments. Tout cela détermine Saad, le seul homme encore en vie dans sa famille, à penser que la seule solution qu'il puisse adopter pour subvenir aux besoins de sa mère et de ses sœurs est d'aller travailler en Angleterre. Ainsi commence le voyage plein d'aventures de Saad, « un Ulysse quittant Bagdad pour rejoindre Londres » (Rezvantalab, Haji Babaie 2018, 188).

2. Les premières apparitions du fantôme du père de Saad

Saad avait avec son père une relation affective particulière. Le nom du père n'est pas révélé dans le roman, fait qui confirme que sa relation de parenté avec le protagoniste est plus importante que son existence en tant qu'individu.

Cette relation continue même après la mort du père. Celui-ci revient, trois jours après la mort, sous la forme d'un fantôme et communique avec son fils comme une personne vivante. Il lui offre des conseils, lui pose des questions, l'aide à prendre des décisions et l'accompagne même pendant le long voyage vers l'Angleterre que le fils décide de faire. Ainsi, la vie du père de Saad semble continuer comme si rien n'avait changé et la mort ne les avait pas séparés.

La première apparition du fantôme du père a lieu à l'endroit où lui et Saad avaient l'habitude de passer du temps ensemble, « à l'aube, à l'heure où traditionnellement, dans la salle de bain, [ils] discutaient côte à côte en achevant [leur] toilette, […] son fantôme [lui] apparut » (Schmitt 2008, 60). La familiarité du lieu où se produit la première manifestation accentue l'idée que Saad n'a pas réussi à accepter la mort de son père, l'invoquant ainsi sans le vouloir consciemment. Le deuil causé par la mort de sa bien-aimée a été réactivé par le deuil plus récent du père. Le corps de la femme n'a pas été retrouvé après l'explosion et les psychologues insistent sur l'importance de voir le corps de la personne décédée, afin d'accepter plus facilement la mort de l'autre par cette preuve visuelle indubitable et de déclencher le processus du deuil. Si le psychisme ne perçoit pas les étapes dans leur ordre logique : la mort, la découverte du cadavre, le rituel spécifique de transition vers l'au-delà (enterrement, crémation, flottement sur le fleuve, etc.), le deuil ne peut donc pas commencer et, implicitement, il ne peut pas trouver sa fin. Selon les psychologues Cuendet & Grimaud de Vincenzi, pour surmonter un décès, il faut accomplir un « deuil originaire […] [qui] développe chez chaque individu une compétence plus ou moins grande à faire face aux deuils futurs, […] une "immunité relative" » (Cuendet and Grimaud de Vincenzi 2003, 169). Ce premier deuil causé par la mort de sa bien-aimée reste inachevé et provoque chez Saad l'impossibilité de commencer ce second processus du deuil après la mort de son père.

L'apparition de son père trois jours après sa mort, fait penser à la résurrection de Jésus-Christ dans la religion chrétienne. Éric-Emmanuel Schmitt est un écrivain dont l'œuvre se caractérise par un éclectisme religieux et une ouverture vers toute forme de spiritualité. Ainsi, tout comme le Sauveur du monde chrétien, le père de Saad « est ressuscité » pour devenir le sauveur de son fils, grâce à ses conseils. La voix du père sera pour le protagoniste comme la voix de Dieu le Père, que l'inconscient de Saad revêt d'un costume qu'il connaît mieux.

Un autre élément qui favorise l'apparition du père sous la forme d'un fantôme est le fait que le jeune homme « adorai[t] la compagnie de [son] père car il s'exprimait toujours de façon imagée » (Schmitt 2008, 19). Ce trait de caractère du père l'influence dans le choix qu'il fera plus tard, lorsqu'il décidera de se prénommer Ulysse. Au fil du temps et de l'action, le père fait d'innombrables

références à la vie du héros d'Homère dans l'*Odyssée*, présentant lui-même « [son] fils, comme le divin Ulysse » (Schmitt 2008, 19). Ces similitudes qu'il établit entre son fils et le héros homérique ne sont pas fortuites. Dès le début du roman, le père de Saad prouve son grand amour pour la littérature en risquant sa vie et sa liberté pour posséder une bibliothèque qui contient des livres interdits par le régime de Saddam Hussein et qu'il appelle sa « Babel de poche » (Schmitt 2008, 24) et qu'il considère comme l'un de ses plus grands trésors.

Ces premières apparitions du fantôme du père de Saad sont causées par le deuil inaccompli du fils après la mort de sa bien-aimée. Une autre cause de ces apparitions est la relation proche qu'il a eue avec son père et le choc provoqué par sa mort soudaine. À partir de ce moment, le fantôme de son père va le suivre pendant le voyage et va devenir la voix de son raisonnement.

3. L'alter ego : le fantôme du père comme double du fils

Le leitmotiv de la relation de Saad avec son père tourne autour de la question « Qu'est-ce que je dois faire, Papa ? » (Schmitt 2008, 212). Le sociologue Edgar Morin explique cette habitude d'interroger un mort en soutenant que « le mort-père […] va perpétuer par-delà la tombe l'ancienne autorité qu'il exerçait de son vivant, il va ressusciter l'omniprésence absolue que représente le père pour l'enfant » (Morin 1970, 169). Saad devient ainsi une représentation de l'idée d'infantilisation de l'adulte vivant après la mort du père, l'ancien chef de sa famille, tentant de transformer le mort en une divinité détentrice de tous les secrets et de toutes les solutions, à qui il demande aide et conseil. Le protagoniste ne se comporte plus comme un adulte, mais comme le fils d'un père décédé, comme un enfant laissé sans appui, qui cherche une nouvelle personne pour l'aider, un orphelin malgré son âge adulte.

Cependant, il s'avère que l'apparition du fantôme du père ne vient pas de l'extérieur, mais de l'intérieur de l'esprit de Saad, étant en fait une partie de lui-même, une projection intériorisée, un *alter ego* déguisé en l'homme en qui il avait le plus confiance : « Ce quelque part, c'est l'intérieur de toi, Saad. Je viens de ton corps, de ton cœur, de tes lubies. Tu es mon fils. Je suis inscrit en toi, dans tes souvenirs autant que dans tes gènes » (Schmitt 2008, 163). Ainsi Saad interagit avec une matérialisation de la voix de sa conscience, qui tantôt l'approuve, tantôt le désapprouve, mais ne se sépare jamais de son esprit. Saad crée ce fantôme dans son esprit sans s'en rendre compte, afin d'avoir à nouveau quelqu'un sur qui compter. Saad et le fantôme de son père sont les deux parties d'un tout, qui se complètent pour former l'esprit entier du jeune Irakien, fait souligné par le fantôme aussi : « Si je résume la différence entre nous deux, fils, moi je suis un optimiste qui dit "demain", toi tu es un optimiste qui dit "là-bas".

Tu as l'optimisme déployé dans l'espace, tandis que moi je l'ai planté dans le temps » (Schmitt 2008, 74).

L'apparition du fantôme est la manière de Saad de refuser l'introspection. Le père entend toutes les pensées de son fils et répond aux questions qu'il se pose, sans que son fils les exprime à haute voix. Quand Saad pose une question rhétorique au début de son voyage, à savoir « Comment parcourir des milliers de kilomètres lorsqu'on n'a pas un dinar ? » (Schmitt 2008, 73), son père lui offre la réponse : « On vend, fils. » (Schmitt 2008, 73) Ainsi, l'esprit et les pensées du fils sont souvent confondus avec ceux du père, la frontière entre les deux étant presque transparente. Cette façon de penser donne au protagoniste plus de confiance dans les actions qu'il entreprend, le soulageant du fardeau de décider par lui-même. On observe aussi une tendance à se dessaisir d'une partie des responsabilités qu'il a dû assumer après le décès du chef de sa famille, son père.

Lorsque l'esprit du protagoniste est assombri par la consommation d'opium sur la mer, le fantôme du père disparaît. Saad perd le contrôle de ses pensées, il ne peut donc plus faire apparaître le fantôme-alter ego. Saad et le fantôme de son père ont, tous les deux, des peurs similaires, ils voient et entendent les mêmes choses, ce qui prouve encore une fois qu'ils sont une seule et même personne : « Si tu es cinglé, fiston, nous le sommes tous les deux » (Schmitt 2008, 253). Son père le quitte une fois monté sur le bateau, invoquant sa peur de l'eau : « À plus tard, fils, je te retrouve de l'autre côté. […] Je n'ai pas le pied marin » (Schmitt 2008, 108). Ce détail montre que le père est seulement une projection de l'esprit du jeune Irakien.

Cette représentation spectrale du père du protagoniste apparaît, disparaît et réapparaît, influencée par les pensées de Saad, par ses états d'esprit et les différentes situations dans lesquelles le fils se trouve. On peut ainsi parler non seulement d'un fantôme du père, mais même d'une représentation extracorporelle de Saad, un *alter ego* qui agit selon les pensées du protagoniste, offrant des réponses à Saad, ou lui posant des questions pour l'aider à trouver la bonne réponse pour les obstacles qu'il trouve dans son voyage.

4. Valeurs narratologiques du fantôme du père de Saad

Du point de vue narratologique, on voit que la présence du fantôme du père de Saad remplit plusieurs fonctions dans le roman *Ulysse from Bagdad*. Le premier rôle joué par le fantôme est l'évitement de l'introspection, qui aurait créé une histoire statique et méditative. Ainsi, le monologue intérieur du protagoniste se transforme en dialogue entre le fils et son père. Cette intervention de l'image spectrale du père donne un dynamisme particulier à l'action, évitant la monotonie d'une discussion intérieure qu'aurait eue Saad avec lui-même tout au long de son voyage.

D'autre part, le fantôme du père devient aussi un compagnon de voyage pour son fils. Le voyage peut représenter une quête de la vérité, de la paix, de l'immortalité dans une recherche de l'ordre psychique et même mystique. On peut aussi parler d'un voyage symbolique, le plus souvent effectué *post mortem*, comme dans le cas du père de Saad, qui réalise cette pérégrination vers l'Angleterre en accompagnant son fils. Selon Jung, les voyageurs éprouvent une insatisfaction sur le plan psychique ou spirituel, essayant de s'échapper à leur propre personne en retrouvant dans cette « fuite de soi » (Chevalier et Gheerbrant 1982, 1028) un nouveau *je*, dans un voyage qui « n'aboutira jamais » (Chevalier et Gheerbrant 1982, 1028). Dans une interview portant sur ce roman, Éric-Emmanuel Schmitt soutient l'idée d'un voyage sans fin dans le cas de son protagoniste : « Saad est un Irakien qui fuit son pays et cherche une autre place sur terre : son voyage consiste en un aller simple qui ne se terminera peut-être jamais. » (Sudret 2020) Ainsi, le voyage devient le « signe et le symbole d'un perpétuel refus de soi-même » (Sudret 2020), le seul voyage véritable et celui qui fait l'homme à l'intérieur de lui-même. Ce voyage intérieur se manifeste chez Saad en raison de son statut d'émigré et d'apatride, le plaçant dans une perte profonde de repères spatiaux et identitaires.

Le protagoniste n'a pas à vivre seul toutes les aventures et les obstacles qu'il trouve dans son voyage vers l'Angleterre, mais il est constamment suivi et accompagné par son père quand il voyage par voie terrestre, qui se considère « une âme tourmentée incapable de quitter la Terre » (Schmitt 2008, 191) jusqu'au moment où son fils n'a plus besoin de son aide et de ses conseils. Le voyage se transforme d'un voyage solitaire en une aventure à deux, rendant la pérégrination possible à cause du rôle narratologique d'adjuvant du père. On peut aussi parler du fantôme du père comme d'un soutien moral par sa simple présence, faisant que son fils ne se sente pas seul et dépassé par la situation dans laquelle il se trouve. Le fantôme du père peut avoir aussi le rôle d'un guide, le voyage du jeune Irakien vers l'Angleterre pouvant être comparé à une pérégrination dans l'Enfer. Le père de Saad l'accompagne dans ce voyage, pour l'aider à surmonter tous les obstacles qu'il rencontre. Le voyage dans l'Enfer, symbolisant une « mort symbolique, […] représentée, au degré fort, comme transgression réelle du temps et de l'espace » (Madelénat 2005, 111), est une quête spirituelle ou une épreuve initiatique est souvent utilisé pour représenter une transition cruciale, une épreuve qui conduit à une transformation profonde, que ce soit pour l'individu ou pour l'humanité tout entière. Tout comme Ulysse dans *l'Odyssée* d'Homère Saad entreprend un voyage non seulement physique mais aussi spirituel. Son périple à travers des territoires hostiles et inconnus devient une quête de survie et de compréhension, un moyen de se confronter à sa propre existence et à son identité. Dans son voyage aux Enfers, *Nekuia*, Ulysse

est confronté aux âmes des morts, y compris celles de ses proches. De manière similaire, Saad est hanté par les souvenirs de sa famille et par la réalité de la mort qui l'entoure, que ce soit celle des autres réfugiés ou la sienne propre qu'il risque à chaque étape de son voyage.

Tout au long du roman, le lecteur peut remarquer une série de similitudes directes et indirectes à la fois entre le protagoniste d'Éric-Emmanuel Schmitt, l'Irakien Saad, et Ulysse, le héros de l'*Odyssée*, ainsi qu'entre le fantôme du père de Saad et les aides que le personnage d'Homère rencontre pendant son voyage : Athéna, qui lui offre des conseils et le protège, les Phéaciens qui lui fournissent des navires et des provisions pour pouvoir continuer son voyage, Hermès, qui lui donne le moly pour le protéger des enchantements de Circé et Tirésias, qui le guide pour pouvoir quitter l'Enfer et rentrer chez lui. Le fantôme du père dans *Ulysse from Bagdad* et la déesse Athéna dans l'*Odyssée* jouent le rôle de guide pour les protagonistes, mais leurs approches diffèrent. Tandis que le fantôme du père, plus personnel et émotionnel, influence indirectement par la mémoire, Athéna, en tant que déesse omnipotente, offre une assistance directe et pragmatique. Le fantôme du père de Saad Saad symbolise l'héritage familial, tandis qu'Athéna représente le pouvoir divin et la sagesse active dans le voyage d'Ulysse. En ce qui concerne les Phéaciens, Hermès et Tirésias, ils jouent un rôle important dans la résolution concrète du voyage d'Ulysse, tandis que le fantôme du père influence le cheminement intérieur et la réflexion personnelle du protagoniste de Schmitt.

Le père de Saad compare directement son fils à Ulysse, lui rappelant les aventures du héros homérique, comparant les trafiquants et consommateurs d'opium aux lotophages et faisant une parallèle entre sa bien-aimée à Pénélope, l'épouse d'Ulysse. « La présence burlesque du fantôme du père » (Cauville 2013, 18) offre à son fils des conseils pleins de sagesse comme ceux d'Athéna et d'Hermès et il est là quand il a besoin de nourriture et de vêtements, de la même façon que Nausicaa l'a été pour Ulysse. Ces détails font du roman contemporain une subtile réinterprétation de l'*Odyssée* homérique, « dans une logique de renversement du scénario mythique de base, [où] le protagoniste parti à la recherche d'un ailleurs salvateur […] devient Ulysse malgré lui et le héros d'une odyssée anti-nostalgique. » (Robova 2017, 223)

On pourrait voir aussi dans ce fantôme le double du lecteur, représentant les pensées et les réactions qu'il peut avoir tout au long du roman. En parcourant les pages du livre, le lecteur se pose des questions sur la manière dont Saad choisit d'agir. Ainsi, le fantôme du père facilite un dialogue entre le protagoniste et le lecteur, lui posant des questions et répondant aux questions de Saad, ce que le lecteur ferait également s'il avait la possibilité. Cette implication active du lecteur dans l'action et sa transformation dans un personnage du roman, contribue à renforcer la dynamique et l'originalité de l'œuvre.

Ces valeurs narratologiques que le fantôme du père de Saad présente au cours du développement de l'action soutiennent la complexité du personnage et du fil narratif. En même temps, ces nuances ajoutées à l'écriture transforment la figure paternelle du fantôme en un élément indispensable à l'évolution du protagoniste et de son périple, même après la mort.

5. Conclusions

Nous avons essayé de démontrer dans ce travail, le rôle que les personnages-fantômes ont dans la littérature, spécialement le fantôme du père de Saad dans le roman *Ulysse from Bagdad* d'Éric-Emmanuel Schmitt. Son apparition est liée au travail du deuil, comme une réaction de l'esprit lorsqu'il refuse d'accepter la perte tragique d'un être cher.

On a analysé les causes de l'apparition de ce personnage-fantôme chez Schmitt en faisant un parallèle avec les découvertes des spécialistes, les différents rôles qu'il joue dans le roman et l'influence que le fantôme du père a sur le fils survivant. Dans le cas de Saad, les causes de la formation de cette image spectrale de son père sont multiples : le choc causé par la perte de sa bien-aimée dans une explosion et dont le corps n'a pas été retrouvé, évènement suivi par la mort inattendue du père.

Même si le fantôme a le rôle d'un assistant qui aide le jeune Irakien, d'un conseiller, d'une projection extracorporelle de la conscience du protagoniste, d'un double de lui ou d'un double du lecteur, chaque interprétation s'avère indispensable pour l'évolution du personnage principal et pour le développement du fil narratif.

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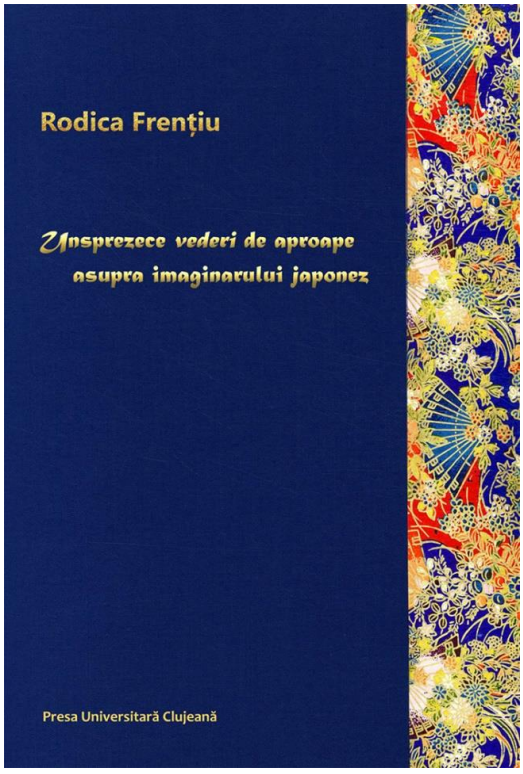
Rodica Frenţiu, *Unsprezece vederi de aproape asupra imaginarului japonez* ['Eleven Close-Up Views on the Japanese Imaginary'], Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2024, 325p.



Coming both as a continuation and a departure from her previous book, which focused on Yasunari Kawabata (*Yasunari Kawabata: Dreams of the Floating World,* 2023), Rodica Frenţiu's latest work is a thorough addition to the relatively small collection of works relating to Japanology in Romania. While not abandoning depth, this volume draws the reader's perspective back and forth, inviting them to alternate between synchronous views of important Japanese cultural landmarks and resulting larger shifts in paradigm, thus taking effective advantage of a format (the compiling of essays) that facilitates the double value that Florina Ilis points towards in her preface to *Eleven close-up* views *on the Japanese imaginary* (2024): each component study has value on its own and can be read as such, but, taken together, they form a greater sculpture with at least eleven recognisable sides, each revealing a different part of the same whole (Ilis 2024, 7-8). As such, much like reconstructing a specific author's artistic inclinations by analysing his works, Japan's imaginary, its idiosyncratic way to view and (re)imagine the world is here being put together by looking at its different manifestations in literary works of art or other cultural

phenomena. In that, this book presents an apparently similar, fragmented, but chronologically linear methodology that looks at significant authors throughout different ages, showing how their works are representative for their individual literary and cultural views while also being the product of larger cultural currents.

However, some structural and mainly thematic particularities give this book a unicity in methodology. To start, the title and this rather abstract introductory description are enough to show that the scope of this volume is simply much wider. When faced with tracing the imaginary of an entire culture rather than one person, one must admit and address the matter of undecidable breadth of possibilities when it comes to deciding what is 'essential,' matter addressed through a second chapter that looks at how the cultural contact necessary for such an assessment even takes place. Moreover, of course, this volume does not even try to be comprehensive, but rather, as the title suggests, to formulate 11 coherent, self-sufficient, but compatible with each other in the sense of outlining a narrative, perspectives on the Japanese imaginary. Dealing with such matters of perspective already provides a slight subjective aspect, which is further reinforced by the presence of a highly personal post-scriptum that can serve as a key of interpretation towards both the structural choices and the basic idea behind the volume.

After having established a general direction and purpose for this volume, it is time to delve more concretely into the chapters and their sub-chapters, getting rid of the previous layer of abstraction in order to highlight the research methodologies used, typology of arguments made and to appreciate the author's perspective on what it even means to understand another culture. The first chapter is entitled "Within the limits of close and distant interpretation," a name that highlights the previously mentioned methodology of a perspective moving back and forth between close reading and distant reading (Ilis 2024, 7). The contained sub-chapters will follow a relatively consistent pattern: a work, and, most importantly, an author that are significant to the Japanese cultural evolution are selected and analysed from a variety of different points of view, showing how they innovated, revolutionised, but also continue a time-honoured tradition of cultural refinement. The author herself points to the fields of poetics, semiotics, hermeneutics, zoopoetics in the 'Argument' (Frenţiu 2024, 18), but it is not to be disregarded that the work also benefits from perspectives informed by general linguistics and literary theory.

First amongst the sub-chapters is an essay on Sei Shōnagon's *Makura no sōshi* (*The Pillow Book*, as it has been translated). The author shows how this 11th century book is revolutionary in its own way, using historic-biographical details related to Sei Shōnagon's milieu, appreciations of ties that link, but do not bind the work to the Japanese literary tradition, linguistic and hermeneutical considerations that demonstrate an exquisite attention to detail during a period some would call 'primitive' and even semiotic revelations beyond the original authorial (conscious) intent that elevate the work's value towards immediate relevance in today's studies. This first outlier is only one instance of a break in form and content as will be shown with writers of much later, first a period of renewed effervescence which will bubble over into skepticism, the famed Meiji period.

Thus, next up is Mori Ōgai, 'one of the "giants"' of the Meiji period (Frenţiu 2024, 47). As before, the author delves into what kind of socio-cultural environment shaped his views, later manifested into his intellectual, literary life. He is shown to have been, chronologically, at the border between a more traditional society and Japanese modernity, being one of the forces that reshaped the possibilities of literary thought under the influence of Western models, whilst not simply copying them. As such, his novel *Seinen* (*Youth*) is analysed from the perspective of an adaptation of the bildungsroman model with its own particularities that combine objectivity and subjectivity into a shifting narratorial perspective that benefits from the author's own experiences (Frenţiu 2024, 54-55). To further its individuality, a semiotic interest is shown to have resurfaced in his meditations upon the relationship between writing and reality (Frenţiu 2024, 53).

Another step in assimilating aspects of Western culture is shown to be made by Osamu Dazai in the next sub-chapter, dedicated to his *No Longer Human*. This is a point where the perspective shifts, creating a contrast between Mori Ōgai, who was deeply entrenched and looked up to as a cultural 'torch' (Frenţiu 2024, 47) and Osamu Dazai, a person who rejected and was rejected by society (85). Writing after the Meiji period and representing an even bigger break from Japanese tradition, his work is shown to be even more closely tied to his personal life (86-87) and thus aiming for completely different aesthetic values, hard to encompass by describing the "political and moral situation of the society within which the characters move," becoming relevant but not all-encompassing to contextualise his writing in the aftermath of the Second World War (87).

The following 2 chapters discuss another interesting break in tradition with Kenzaburō Ōe. Yet again, the reader is faced with an author deeply inspired by personal experience, as demonstrated by his writings that harken back to the birth of his own disabled son (Frenţiu 2024, 118). His work is more socially engaged and optimistic, however, since it has less to do with a judgement of society and more with how to evolve and move past its faults by finding a different meaning for being 'human' (119-122). Delving into what society represents and what it truly means to be human will become a running theme, leading to interesting developments from other revolutionary authors.

To showcase the creativity and uniqueness that succeeded that period of tumult, the next sub-chapter looks at an extremely famous representative of Japanese postmodernism, Haruki Murakami and his poetic, musical design for literature. Not only is he shown to carry the typical postmodern cynicism for the capacity of the word to serve as an accurate means of expression (Frenţiu 2024, 166), but he is argued to believe in a rather unique alternative, that of musical expression (166-167). Moreover, the philosophical aspects that combine this view relating music with the effects on the perception of time within Murakami's works are also brought to the forefront with an analysis of the '*time-as-river*' (174). Combining statements from the renowned author himself and hermeneutical studies of his novel to show a penchant for musical themes, this essay makes apparent another way to perceive, understand and express reality as part of the Japanese imaginary.

Last, but not least of the studies found within the first chapter is a sub-chapter entitled "Zoopoetics at the intersection between postmodernism and posthuman. Case study: the cat and contemporary Japanese literature," where Rodica Frenţiu notices and analyses a trend in Japanese literature, starting most prominently with Natsume Sōseki's *I Am a Cat*, but actually originating from the earliest novelistic writings (Frenţiu 2024, 187-188) that of utilising the image of the cat for literary purposes. The study brings into discussion a large number of writings that take inspiration from Sōseki's satirical work in order to give sentience or narrative focus to feline main characters, creating a unique brand of zoopoetics (192-193). This is all argued to be part of a larger, posthuman cultural movement that would point out the fallacies of anthropocentrism towards a better understanding of what it means to be human, what it means to be an animal and how giving the latter the same courtesy people are given, that of having an individuality and identity, would lead to a better understanding of both human and animal nature (225-228).

To follow these sub-chapters on what one finds when looking at the evolution of the Japanese imaginary and to constitute the second and final chapter of the book, there are 4 perspectives on how and what it means for that process of 'getting to know' to take place: context, manner, difficulties and an actual glimpse into the 'other'. To start, the reader is introduced to Yukio Mishima, with a focus on one of his works which speaks of a position significant to the general purposes of this volume, namely that of the *Star*. A unique and infamous biography paints a picture of what it means to be in the position of the observed. The study delves deeper, associating the writer's life and death with the concept of 'thymos' (Frenţiu 2024, 240), here in a way weaponizing the desire to be recognised in a specific way towards serving Mishima's purpose of promoting conservative ideas that criticise modern and postmodern developments in favour of the traditional '*bushidō*' ethos, for example (240-241).

Next is a chapter that deals with the complexities of translation and what it means to have two cultures interact in this way. She uses Yuri Lotman's concept of the 'semiosphere' in order to first establish what it is exactly that is being spoken of as 'interacting' with another 'something' that may influence it (Frenţiu 2024 244). This leads to addressing the difficulties of translation as an approximation at best according to important scholars, with Frenţiu supporting the idea of a fidelity limited by the resources available to the receiving culture's semiosphere, thus requiring the reader's "meaning-creating initiative" (247). It is interesting to note that she also admits the interpretative, thus creative, nature of translation. In her conception this gives the translator the purpose of guiding the reader towards the deeper meaning of the text, seeking not to domesticate it, but to facilitate a dialogue with the target culture (250).

After having established the context, part of the manner and the difficulties associated with cross-cultural interactions, the author provides a glimpse into the specificity of Japanese culture and its imaginary by analysing its culinary tradition. This essay details the philosophy behind the Japanese culinary mentality, showcasing the symbolism behind and the significance of a cultural practice that must 'activate all 5 senses' (Frenţiu 2024, 264) and relates food with specific seasons in an aesthetic display that turns it into what could be considered an art form (269). To create a full circle, the

next and final sub-chapter returns to an outside perspective, pointing out the state of trying to penetrate that cross-cultural barrier through language and the literature that speaks on that experience. She notes two works in particular that testify to the presence of such a barrier in both directions by relating the experiences of a Westerner learning Japanese and a Japanese person learning French. The conclusions to be drawn from both experiences is that cultural differences may be great, but the barriers are not insurmountable. These ideas very aptly tie to the aforementioned post-scriptum that tells of the author's own adventures of learning a foreign language and discovering a foreign culture, thus returning to the moments that made this very volume possible.

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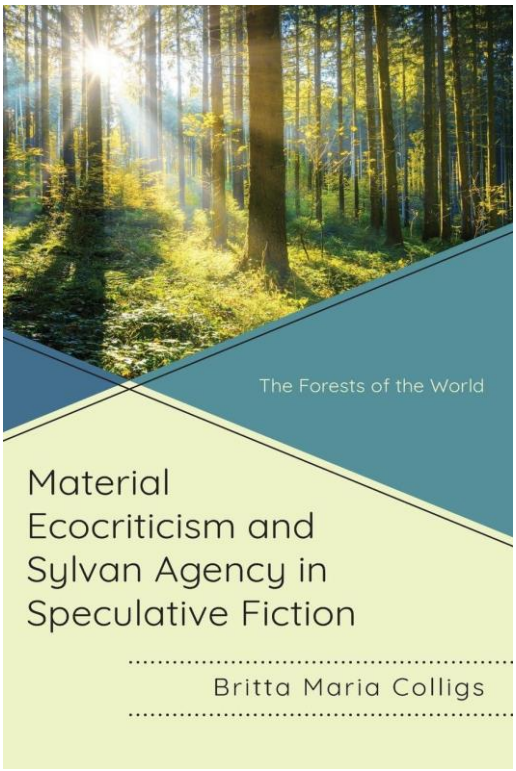
BOOKS

Britta Maria Colligs, *Material Ecocriticism and Sylvan Agency in Speculative Fiction: The Forests of the World*, Lexington Books, 2023, 218 p.



Our understanding of ecocritical issues often tends to revolve around the preservation of various ecosystems affected by disasters such as pollution or climate change—and for good reason. In many aspects, papers have shown that human intervention has been a double-sided sword in the ecological development of the world, as conservation efforts remain high in the face of decades of sylvan exploitation at the hands of the Northern hemisphere, is what Britta Marie Colligs points out in her study, *Material Ecocriticism and Sylvan Agency in Speculative Fiction*. By taking a look at the literature of the past century, Colligs manages to reconfigure our understanding of ecocriticism not from an Anthropocene perspective as has often been the case, but rather by proposing that we dispel portrayals of the environment as an object to be saved, but rather as an entity that expresses its own agency.

Published in 2024, the book is an incursion into man's literary relationship with the environment, specifically forest areas and how its portrayal affected our own understanding of humanity along with that of the post-Anthropocene. In order to achieve this, Colligs set out to analyse arboreal characters and realms

belonging to the speculative fiction genre through the lens of ecocriticism, ranging from works such as those of J.R.R. Tolkien, Ursula K. Le Guin to those of George R.R. Martin, J.K. Rowling and Christopher Paolini. By offering such a comprehensive look at many classics of this particular genre, she seeks to define what contemporary fiction's relationship with the sylvan environment means in the current climate, as well as the many aspects that tend to be shared among these works.

Divided into seven chapters, Colligs' study provides a fascinating insight into fantastical depictions of forests focusing on the ecocritical reading of these environments and deconstructing many of the typical portrayals as being remnants of an Anthropocene understanding of the world at large. Among her most important observations is the romanticization of the forest—a tendency which she remarks dates back to much older literature—and various authors' insistence to reinvent it as a healing space, or a vast wilderness offering refuge from the cacophony of society. By drawing on examples such as the works of Le Guin, she posits the image of the forest as being intrinsically linked to that of humanity as well: "The single tree and its life cycle have long been used to illuminate various aspects of life, such as the cycle of birth, death and rebirth as well as history, which uncovers a close connection between the human and the arboreal sign" (73).

Symbols of the sylvan realm thus become innately connected to our perception of humanity as well, she argues, given that tree symbols are to be found all around the globe and the portrayal of their state can be a "potent symbol of an ecological degradation caused by human's neglect and abuse of nature" (86). The loss of the 'vast wilderness' thus represents a loss of humanity as well and acts as criticism regarding the state of human society nowadays in Colligs' perception. Images of decayed or dead trees are thus representative of ecological degradation at the hands of human intervention, a theme all too often present in many speculative fiction works. It is for this reason that Colligs considers an ecocritical approach as crucial for truly understanding such literature, departing from "the consensus reality and shift away from an anthropocentric point of view by including non-human characters" (97) and introducing "an animistic language in which they acknowledge nature's own form of articulation and intrinsic value" (97). Nature is no longer an object, she argues, but rather an entity with its own distinctive voice. To further expand upon this, Colligs approaches the inherent Otherness of natural environments by remarking that the shared consciousness of natural environments opens up an entirely different conversation regarding agency and Humanity in the speculative fiction genre.

Portrayals of nature sharing a consciousness are not only rooted in reality, but Colligs argues that the fictional depictions of the vast root and intricate fungal network serve the function of presenting an alternative view of nature as alien yet still connected to humanity to a certain degree. Such interspecies exchanges help highlight the spiritual dimension that a connection to nature can confer on a character. To be able to tap into this network and communicate with the forest environment of which it is part, allows them to experience an ecocritical awareness of the environment which had not been possible before. Colligs uses the Ents of Tolkien as an example of the complexity that ecocritical awareness can bring, pointing out that the Entish language's complexity

supersedes all others within the universe of Tolkien's Middle-Earth, situating it as far too advanced for the humanoid characters' understanding. As a result, it is implied to the reader as well that the value of the natural environment is not something which ought to be dismissed on the basis of Otherness, but rather understood on its own merits.

This, in itself, can be even further simplified into an environmentally aware message typical of the Dr. Seuss formula, in which the impact of humanity's interference upon the ecological setting can be devastating and that humans need to start establishing themselves not as disconnected from nature, but rather as allies which are aware of the precarious relationship between the two. This is an important position to occupy, Colligs remarks given that much of the speculative fiction genre seeks to establish "an emotional link between humans/humanoid characters and the wider natural environment" (133). If in the past, the role of the forest was a passive one, then in the literature of today the same sylvan environment manages to function more akin to its own individual whose perception of humanity tends to be informed by the same relationships humans have with their environment in reality: pollution, deforestation, wildfires and various other issues which tend to plague real-world forests become precursors to the animosity towards humanity and the environment which need to be addressed should characters desire to open a dialogue with nature.

Thus, what Colligs' study very aptly manages to convey is that with many works in the speculative fiction genre adopting an environmentally friendly approach towards the forest and sylvan realms in general, the overall worldview which had been dominated by the Anthropocene has now shifted away towards a recognition of the human individual's position within the forest world. As a result, the genre in itself becomes an advocate of ecological alertness and acknowledgement of sylvan agency in the face of humanity's tendency towards human superiority. By recognizing the Otherness of nature, Colligs' study manages to expand our understanding of humanity and its portrayal within the realm of literature.

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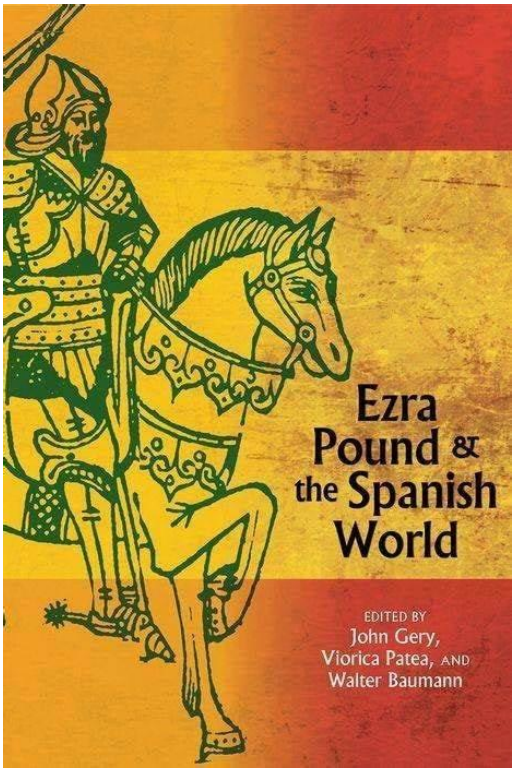
BOOKS

Viorica Patea, John Gery, and Walter Baumann (eds.), *Ezra Pound & the Spanish World*, Clemson: Clemson University Press, 2024, 512 p.



The legacy of the American poet Ezra Pound has been extensively researched for decades, but his life and work still offer food for thought to historians, critics and writers. A notable relatively recent international endeavour is the *Ezra Pound Center for Literature Series* by Clemson University Press, which encompasses critical monographs, scholarly studies, collections of essays, volumes of original poetry, reprints, translations and more. *Ezra Pound & the Spanish World* (2024) edited by Viorica Patea, John Gery and Walter Baumann is a significant contribution within this series.

As noted in the "Preface," Ezra Pound (1885-1972) travelled to Spain on three occasions during his youth: first at 17 in 1902, accompanying his aunt to Granada and Seville; then at 21 in 1906, as a young PhD researcher funded by the University of Pennsylvania, studying Lope de Vega's theatre; and again at 23 in 1908, revisiting Granada and Seville en route to Italy. Although his poetry was inspired by Spanish literature and the arts, and his work and life influenced a number of Spanish-speaking writers, the studies on Pound's two-way relationship to the Spanish world are scarce. Therefore, the aim of this edited collection is to survey these dynamic connections in more detail.

The book has two main parts: a set of essays and a reader of unpublished materials. The first part, which is three times bigger than the second, contains a set of seventeen academic chapters on Ezra Pound's interest in and influence on the Spanish world and

a three-fold chapter containing three memoirs, all chapters grouped in five sections. The essays and the reader are complemented by visual elements: drawings, paintings, photographs, poems, letters, and postcards. The project has a multicultural approach as the contributors are experienced researchers from France, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Romania, Switzerland and the USA, and it covers transnational and transhistorical topics.

The introductory essay in the first section, "'A Dream Spain': The Legacy of Spain in Pound's Œuvre" by Viorica Patea highlights the early Spanish reverberation on Pound's approach to literature, interpreted as a "first love": forgotten, but indelible. The critic covers elements of Spanish culture in *The Spirit of Romance*, Pound's letters and *The Cantos*. Published in London, his first collection of essays on the literary European tradition, *The Spirit of Romance* (2010) is described as "a substitute for the doctoral dissertation Pound never completed" (xvii). His view on *El Cantar de Mio Cid*, his essay on Lope de Vega and the translation of some of the latter's works into English constitute early testimonies of his interest in Spanish literature. Patea documents his stays in Spain and shows how his experiences, letters and the people he met emerged in his later works. Light is shed on his travels around Europe, which made him give up his ambition of becoming an American academic and follow his creative instinct and quest for originality, rooted in old traditions like that of the troubadours. Although he gives limited space to Spanish culture in his work, in comparison with other cultures, even though he sometimes supports the stereotype of Spanish "barbarism", and in spite of his lack of knowledge regarding modern Spanish letters, Patea highlights his importance for Spanish poets like Jorge Guillén and the *novísimos* (poets of the 1970s), and reminds us that Spanish was the first language in which a complete edition of *The Cantos* was published, translated by José Vázquez Amaral in 1975.

The second section is focused on "Spanish beginnings from Averroes to the Baroque", with four essays about Pound's interest in the philosopher Averroes, the first troubadours, Lope de Vega and the Spanish Baroque epoch. Firstly, researcher Maria Luisa Ardizzone gives evidence that, when commenting on Guido Cavalcanti's poem *Donna me prega*, Pound was already acquainted with the philosophical writings of Arabic authors such as Averroes. These works stemmed from a medieval discursive tradition distinct from the mainstream and introduced to a modern readership by historians like Ernest Renan. Secondly, Giuliana Ferreccio explores the genealogy of the alba as a genre of Old Occitan lyric poetry and the love cult of the troubadours in Pound's poetry, tracing its illustrations from his early translations to his later poetry. The critic demonstrates how the meaning of the alba evolved from a traditional "poetic of absence" to a "Dantean *vita nuova*". Thirdly, Natalia Carbajosa revisits Pound's perspective on Lope de Vega's drama, identifying some of the reasons why he found it brilliant and comparable to Shakespeare's. To provide an example, she assesses his familiarity with de Vega's work and illustrates his translation choices and poetic strategy in the play *El desprecio agradecido*. Fourthly, Paula Barba Guerrero reflects on Pound's ambivalence regarding the Spanish Baroque and shows how *The Cantos* echo his modernist sensibilities, diverging from nostalgia by reimagining poetic discourse and the representation of time. While influenced by Baroque aesthetics, he rejected its artificiality and scepticism, opting for aesthetic austerity and a dynamic view of history that connects past and present, avoiding melancholy and highlighting hope and action.

The five essays in the third section, "Spain and/in *The Cantos*", analyse how Pound incorporated diverse themes like Camões, Menippean satire, Spanish and Japanese drama, and Velázquez's art in his epic poem. Firstly, Stephen Wilson's "Re-Reading Pound and Camões" explores Luís Vaz de Camões's epic, *Os Lusiadas*, which Pound admired alongside primary epics like Homer's. Wilson notes that Pound valued Camões's depiction of the "real" and linked literature with economics, and highlights that Pound's interest in Portuguese literature is significant due to shared histories with Spanish culture. Secondly, in "Menippean Satire and Carnivalism in Ezra Pound's Pisan Canto 74," J. Rhett Forman argues that recognizing Menippean satire, with its mix of genres, provides a new perspective on Pound's work. Forman highlights how this meta-genre, characterized by mixing high and low elements, digressive structure, and rhetorical effects, creates a carnivalesque atmosphere in "Canto 74". Thirdly, Yoshiko Kita, in "The Congruence of Lope de Vega's Plays and Noh in *The Pisan Cantos*," examines how Pound's poetry blends strategies from Spanish drama and Japanese Noh dance-drama. Kita highlights the presence of Noh in *The Cantos* and notes the contrast between elegiac and comic elements in *The Pisan Cantos*, showcasing Pound's interest in individual multiplicity over tragic unity. Caterina Ricciardi's "Washington Irving's Alhambra in *The Cantos*" discusses Pound's incorporation of Spanish culture through American literature, focusing on his 1902 visit to Granada with Aunt Frank and the influence of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Ricciardi connects Irving's descriptions of the Alhambra with Pound's references in *The Cantos*, exploring their visual and historical significance, notably in relation to Queen Elisabetta Farnese and the heraldic lion of Castile and Leon. John Gery's "Pound's Prado and the Glimpse of Velázquez" explores Ezra Pound's transformative experience in Madrid in 1906 at the Museo del Prado, particularly encountering Velázquez's paintings, which profoundly shaped his poetic development. Gery discusses how Pound's reflections in *Guide to Kulchur* and "Canto 80" capture the lasting impact of Velázquez's art on his poetic vision and concept of "paideuma" as the intricate web of deeply rooted ideas of any era.

The four articles in the fourth section, titled "Pound's Modernist Iberian Connections," transition from literary exploration to historical inquiry, emphasizing Pound's interactions with other modernist writers associated with Spain. Firstly, in "Pound and Unamuno: The History of a Collaboration," Miriam Borham-Puyal considers the American poet's correspondence with the Spanish existentialist philosopher. Starting in 1920, Pound aimed to introduce Spanish literature to *The Dial*. Borham-Puyal explores their shared literary tastes and the mutual influence reflected in unpublished archival material. Secondly, Santiago Rodríguez Guerrero-Strachan's "Juan Ramón and the Imagists: A Reappraisal of '*Modernism(o)*'" chronicles the literary friendship between Pound and Nobel laureate Juan Ramón Jiménez. The critic argues that, despite misinterpreting Pound and Imagism, Jiménez created his unique modernism, emphasizing exact language and everyday topics. His idiosyncratic translations of Pound highlight this poetic revolution. Thirdly, Jennifer Kilgore-Caradec's "Lines of Division: Nancy Cunard, Ezra Pound, Langston Hughes, and the Spanish Civil War" scans Cunard's and Pound's conflicting views on the Spanish Civil War, while highlighting their collaborative efforts. The critic researches Pound's influence on Cunard's poetry and publishing, her role in connecting Pound with Hughes's poetry, and her diverse, impactful literary and humanitarian endeavours. Fourthly, Massimo Bacigalupo's "Discovering the Mediterranean Sanity: Pound and Hemingway" explores how the two American authors found in Spain and

Italy a blend of nature and culture. Despite differing political allegiances, both celebrated Mediterranean life as a model for modern man, reacting against American provincialism and embracing the region's genuine contemplation of life and death.

The fifth section, entitled "Echoes of Pound in the Postmodern Spanish World", contains three academic essays and a three-fold memoir collection. Firstly, Emanuele Zoppellari Perale's "Pound's Amulet in Roberto Bolaño's Novels" highlights Ezra Pound's significant influence on Chilean author Roberto Bolaño, arguing that Pound serves not just as inspiration but as a model for the exiled poet's life. This impact is evident in Bolaño's work, which shares formal and narrative elements with *The Cantos*. Zoppellari argues that Pound's concept of the poet in exile profoundly shaped Bolaño's understanding of modern poetry. Secondly, in "Science and Silence: Reading Antonio Colinas in the Light of Pound's Theory of the Image," Melania Stancu argues that silence is crucial in both Pound's and Colinas's poetics. Stancu examines Colinas's poetry, highlighting its symbolic language and unity, influenced by Pound's ideogrammic method, which uses imagery as an epistemological tool, presenting the poetic image as a sacred revelation embodying harmony. Thirdly, Leonor María Martínez Serrano's "*The Cantos* in Translation: The Spanish Variations" reviews major Spanish translations of Ezra Pound's *The Cantos*. Highlighting José Vázquez Amaral's pioneering full translation and subsequent scholarly editions, Martínez contrasts it with newer translations like Jan de Jager's non-bilingual edition, offering insights into the diverse approaches in conveying Pound's complex masterpiece to a Spanish-speaking audience. The last part in this section, "Pound and the Novísimo Poets: Three Memoirs," includes essays by Antonio Colinas, Jaime Siles, and Luis Alberto de Cuenca, key figures of the Novísimo movement in 1970s Spain. They recount Ezra Pound's significant influence, inspiring a shift from socially conscious Spanish poetry to a more cosmopolitan and learned approach. Colinas reflects on his personal encounter with Pound, while Siles considers Pound's reception in Spain, and de Cuenca pays tribute to Pound's transformative impact on his poetic career.

"Part Two: Ezra Pound and The Spanish World: A Reader" compiles rare Pound material in chronological order, including letters from his Madrid stay, negotiations with the Palacio Real Library, correspondence with Viola Baxter, postcards from Burgos and Madrid, essays on Burgos and Francisco de Quevedo, essays not collected in his various prose volumes, an unpublished letter to his Spanish translator Vázquez Amaral, translations of Amaral's essays, and letters by Pound and his wife Dorothy from St. Elizabeths Hospital to Nobel Prize winner Juan Ramón Jiménez and his wife Zenobia Camprubí. Most of this material is supplemented by explanatory notes and detailed commentaries provided by the editors, showing the circumstances in which they were produced, their circulation throughout the years and their relevance today.

In conclusion, *Ezra Pound & the Spanish World* edited by Viorica Patea, John Gery, and Walter Baumann is a volume useful for researchers and scholars who study Ezra Pound's literary and cultural legacy, with a focus on his relationship with the Spanish letters, and a source of inspiration for literary historians and writers.

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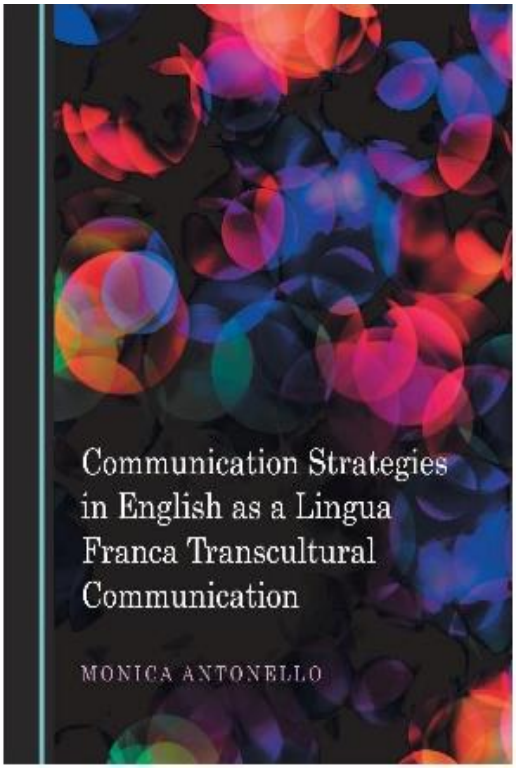
BOOKS

Monica Antonello, *Communication Strategies in English as a Lingua Franca Transcultural Communication*, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2023, 330 p.



In an increasingly globalized economy and cosmopolitan society, teaching and training tomorrow's specialists brings new challenges for the (foreign) language teachers. ESP (English for Specialized Purposes) tutors in particular need to pay attention to the way they prepare their students and improve upon their foreign language skills, so that young graduates can easily find insertion in the labor market. In some specific domains, such as Tourism, where interaction with both natives and foreign speakers of English can be a regular if not daily occurrence, mastering an average level of English and demonstrating some degree of intercultural communication competency may no longer be enough.

Which specific variety of English should students today know and be expected to use? Is the Native Speaker standard still the golden model foreign users of English are supposed to emulate? What is the difference between having ICC (Intercultural Communication Competence) training and mastering Transcultural Competence? Should English tutors focus on teaching ELF (English as a Lingua Franca) or ESL (English as a Second Language)? What methodological and didactic implications will this have for the ELT (English Language Teaching) modules future teachers are to follow? Monica Antonello's 2023 book, *Communication*

Strategies in English as a Lingua Franca Transcultural Communication, provides ample and well-informed answers to these questions, bringing forth a new perspective on the specific nature of the (verbal) interaction between speakers when English is just a mere medium of communication. The author also proposes English teachers a revaluation of the role traditional Standard English model and Native Speaker proficiency goal should play nowadays in a world where most of the time, and in most contexts, interlocutors do not share the same linguistic or cultural background, nonetheless they still use English as a common currency for communication and mediation.

Divided into five chapters, the book opens the first one with an ample discussion of the role English has today as a lingua franca and its mediatory role in Intercultural Communication. The key word ELT or even ESP teachers should have in mind today, from a linguistic perspective, should be a paradoxically sounding *fluid normativity* regarding the type of English they should teach and encourage their students to use. According to Monica Antonello, we could consider accepting and using nowadays, in a globalized and increasingly heterogenous world, a spectrum of English varieties. Language and even culture cannot possibly be conceived any longer as monolithic, immutable entities. On the contrary, everyday practice and the need for efficient transcultural communication leads us to viewing English as a continuum ranging from the traditional (and outdated in Antonello's view) Standard English model, passing by ENL (English as a Native Language), and moving on toward 'World Englishes' (varieties of English as spoken in countries where it is the second language).

From a pragmatic point of view, (that of a Tourism ESP teacher in this case), demanding that for example a future Romanian tour guide or travel agent still insist on Standard English with a RP (Received Pronunciation) inflection as a target for efficient communication with a Japanese or Argentinian tourist, will be highly unrealistic. The reason for this is that the interlocutors do not share the same ethnic identity, the same cultural and linguistic baggage which will allow them the possibility to identify with or appropriate what an ideal, but imaginary "Native Speaker" model would produce in a typical English context.

This above-mentioned example is given from the perspective of an ESP teacher preparing students for a job in the hospitality industry (the author of this review); it nonetheless illustrates Monica Antonello's theory that nowadays the internationalization of English as a means of communication between interlocutors who do not share it as a mother tongue or even the same cultural background, comes with substantial consequences and changes that create the necessity for a new pedagogical framework for teaching both English and intercultural communication, the latter being ideally transformed into transcultural competence.

This particular use of English "as a common means of communication between people who do not share the same linguistic and cultural background, and thus negotiate meaning in order to co-construct mutual understanding" (Antonello 2023, p.11) constitutes the definition of English as a Lingua Franca and renders is intrinsically intercultural. Serving the communicative needs of various communities around the world, English should also be allowed to be diverse, thus rendering the (British) national Standard English model obsolete, since it cannot reflect a global reality. We cannot speak any longer of a singular, clear-cut, both geographically and linguistically, 'speech community'. The a priori categories set aside, the new ELT community will have to base its

communication on in situ meaning-negotiation and construction of mutual understanding through interaction.

"ELF communication creates a space where practices and meanings are negotiated, combined and merged, by continuously constructing, de-constructing and negotiating language norms and cultural practices." (Antonello 2023, pp. 27-28)

Taking these points into consideration, the first chapter ends on a reiteration of the paradigm changes going from the Intercultural Communication's functional (post-positivist) approach in the 1980s to the 1990s' interpretative (constructivist) framework, then the critical paradigm, ending by the realist approach. The author has delineated each stage noting how the notion of 'culture' was interpreted and the consequences this had on language learning. Very useful for new students of this domain is also the distinction drawn by Monica Antonello between *cross-cultural communication* (which views culture as a fixed and homogenous system that in shared within a single community, still being separate from others), *intercultural communication* (which sees culture in interaction, negotiated by the interactants of the communicative act), and last but not least, *transcultural communication* (where culture and communication are perceived as fluid, ever-evolving, encouraging an analysis across cultures and communities).

From our point of view, the second chapter carries the heaviest load in terms of the theoretical construction of ELF Transcultural (Communication) Competence. With a focus on meaning-negotiation and co-constructing mutual understanding between interlocutors set in diverse or even divergent linguistic and cultural frames, the chapter emphasizes the need for mastering communication strategies and mediation skills. Monica Antonello goes beyond the normative descriptions of Communicative Competence and Intercultural Communicative Competence as these no longer satisfy the requirement of modern-day communication in a transcultural context. In this novel situation, where language is always dynamic, mutable and complex due to compartimentalized cultures, the new framework she proposes is a four-dimensional one. The four pillars of her ELF Transcultural Competence are: 1) *Translingual & Transcultural Awareness* that language and culture are fluid, dynamic systems; 2) *Comprehension and Production skills* (developed around the ability to use one's own linguistic resources); 3) *Strategic Communicative Interaction Management* (referring to the active use of communicative strategies to negotiate meaning), 4) *Creativity* (meaning the ability to use one's linguistic and cultural resources in an imaginative and novel way to create meaning by going beyond normative descriptions of language).

The third and fourth chapters address mostly linguists interested in analyzing the precise way communicative strategies (defined as tools that actively co-construct mutual understanding and negotiate meaning) are used by speakers to reach successful communication. The methodology applied to analyzing two corpora data (the VOICE-Leisure sub-corpus and the ViMELF corpus) is presented in the 3rd chapter. A mixed method approach, both a qualitative one (based on Conversation Analysis) and a quantitative one (based on descriptive statistics of the use of communication strategies in ELF transcultural contexts) has highlighted how ELF speakers use the following strategies to maximize communication: backchannels, lexical anticipation, lexical suggestion and correction, overt multilingual resources, reformulation, repetition, spelling to clarify meaning.

Chapter five brings forth the applied pedagogical perspective to these theoretical considerations, being of most interest to ELT and ESP teachers. In order to have

students that are well-prepared and adjusted to a global economy and cosmopolitan society, teachers should be aware of the need to develop ELF Transcultural Competence in their ELT practices. Ideally this awareness should start in Teacher Training programs, and then trickle down to students' teaching. To accomplish this, ELF pedagogy should center first around developing awareness-rising activities regarding linguistic and cultural variability, underlining the way communication is heavily influenced by the interdependence between language and culture. The students' receptive and productive skills should be measured not only by Standard English, but teachers should also accept 'World Englishes' and ELF, thus admitting a fluid normativity. ELT teachers should also emphasize the role communicative strategies have in developing interaction, mutual negotiation and construction of mutual understanding, which are the hallmarks of ELF Transcultural Communication Competence. The students' creative use of English should no longer be frowned upon but embraced as a necessary step in fostering efficient communication, with diversified multilingual forms and repertoires in multicultural, diverse speech contexts.

The exact means used to achieve all these can revolve for example around telecollaboration in classrooms where students from authentic transcultural contexts can learn about and practice intercultural communication, observing how language and culture moderate each other. Projects like *eTwinning* - online platform collaborations in European schools are given as examples. Students from various countries exchanging emails, working on common projects or just chatting, might be a simple but efficient step-up from the more traditional, old-school pen pals and classroom role play. Taking class trips abroad would encourage students to note unfamiliar pronunciations, expressions, varieties of English and give them a chance to practice various communicative strategies. Role plays, debates, interviews (guided by the teacher) would also encourage practicing meaning-negotiation and mediation techniques so much needed in intercultural / transcultural communication. The creative use of English should allow students to overcome the biased 'native' / 'non-native' speaker binomial, because after all, language is not monolithic but flexible, and its ultimate goal is efficient communication, irrespective of unrealistic, bookish standards.

From theory to linguistic corpora data analysis, passing by classroom practice that would help both teacher and students' training, Monica Antonello's book offers a well-rounded approach to understanding the role of English today in a globalized and cosmopolitan world. Addressed mostly to linguists and language teachers, her study sees English on a continuum, focusing on a spectrum of varieties of 'Englishes' to be used in efficient transcultural communication where meaning is mutually created and negotiated by speakers coming from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds. This particular approach to what learning and speaking English should be like nowadays is very useful and supportive, encouraging both ELT / ELF teachers and students alike. More efficient communication and understanding is just what our diverse world needs today!

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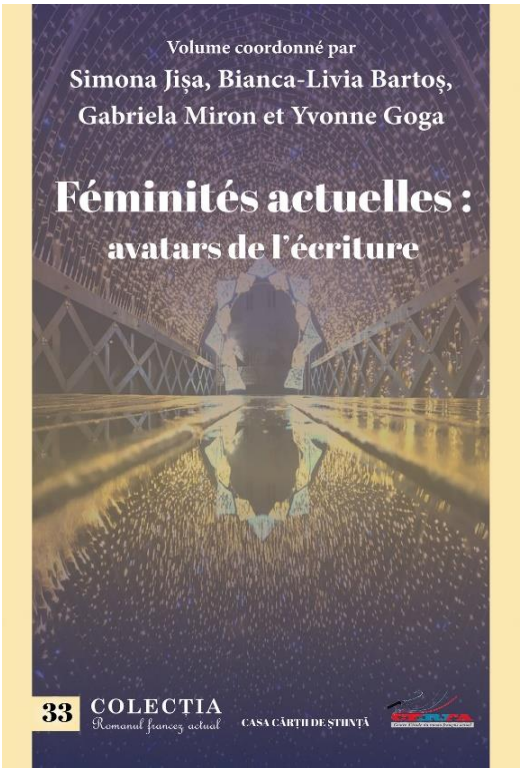
BOOKS

Simona Jișa, Bianca-Livia Bartoș, Gabriela Miron et Yvonne Goga, *Féminités actuelles : avatars de l'écriture*, Cluj-Napoca, Casa Cărții de Știință, coll. « Le Roman français actuel », 2022, 104 p.



En tant que spécialistes dans le domaine des littératures française et francophones, Simona Jișa, Bianca-Livia Bartoș, Gabriela Miron et Yvonne Goga, membres du Centre d'Étude du Roman Français Actuel (CERFA) de l'Université Babeș-Bolyai de Cluj-Napoca (Roumanie) se sont intéressées, au fil du temps, à des thématiques littéraires qui visaient la famille avec ses aspects intragénérationnels et intragénérationnels, l'identité personnelle et régionale, les mythes et leur réécriture, les rapports entre les arts et la littérature.

Le volume coordonné, *Féminités actuelles : avatars de l'écriture,* comprend les contributions de Gabriela Miron, Chandra Feupeussi, Teodora Maria Pop, Roxana Maximilean, Alina Aluaș, Abdel Fatah Nadjloudine et Bianca-Livia Bartoș. Publié en 2022, l'année commémorative de Molière, auteur entre autres aussi de la pièce *L'École des femmes* et un des premiers « féministes », ce volume propose, une réflexion détaillée sur la condition féminine. Les personnages féminins analysés appartiennent à divers époques et espaces culturels, à commencer par la femme inaccessible, en passant par la femme idéalisée par l'esprit romantique ou la femme diabolique, jusqu'au XX^{e} siècle, où le personnage féminin est abordé par une grande diversité de moyens et de typologies. En

bref, ce volume explore les multiples facettes de l'écriture des femmes et sur les femmes.

La première étude, intitulée « Sous le signe de la fascination : Emma Van A., *La Rêveuse d'Ostande* d'Éric-Emmanuel Schmitt » de Gabriela Miron, nous présente un personnage féminin à la fois complexe et ambigu, vu par les yeux d'un narrateur subjectif. Il s'agit d'Emma Van A., une femme riche qui rencontre un écrivain anonyme auquel elle va raconter son histoire d'amour. La démarche pour laquelle opte l'autrice s'enquiert des représentations de la féminité, des stéréotypes et de la re-sémantisation des topoï associés aux personnages féminins. Premièrement, Gabriela Miron observe le stéréotype de la femme âgée avec des connotations négatives, le vieillissement étant « associé à la perte à la fois de la beauté et du pouvoir séducteur » (p. 11). De plus, l'auteure présente d'autres avatars comme la femme en tant qu'incarnation de la fidélité absolue ou de la passion amoureuse et de la perversité féminine.

La deuxième étude, « L'égalité au prisme de l'inégalité chez Nadine Bismuth : une autre façon de revendiquer » réalisée par Chandra Feupeussi propose un questionnement très pertinent pour notre époque en ce qui concerne l'égalité au prisme (paradoxal et réel) de l'inégalité : « est-ce que le montrer ainsi est suffisant pour faire sauter les derniers leviers d'assujettissement de la femme ? Et aussi, est-ce suffisant pour faire comprendre à la société et aux hommes qu'avant d'être femme, la femme justement est avant tout un être humain qui mérite, au même titre qu'eux, toutes les considérations ? » (p. 30). L'autrice répond à ces questions en analysant deux romans de l'écrivaine canadienne Nadine Bismuth (*Un lien familial* et *Scrapbook*) et y décèle une nouvelle forme de revendication de l'écriture féminine de cette génération, de plus en plus nombreuse, des *femmes écrivaines*.

« De ma non-mère à mon a-mère et à Moi : le cas de Shayna (*Arbre de l'oubli* de Nancy Huston) » de Teodora Maria Pop parle de la figure maternelle qui « domine l'univers obsessionnel de Nancy Huston » (p. 31) et de la construction de l'identité de Shayna sous l'influence de ses deux mères, en fait, deux mères fautives, en reconstituant un génosociogramme. On y observe également une investigation sur le psychique, sur la transmission intergénérationnelle et transgénérationnelle et, à la fin, sur la reconstruction identitaire. En tenant compte de ces aspects, Shayna est un personnage *cryptophore*, attribut qui empêche l'épanouissement de soi. Les deux cryptes (« d'une part, la maladie psychosomatique […] d'autre part, la figure maternelle biologique avec l'obsession pour la mémoire collective des Afro-Américaines » (p. 46)) révèlent une vie qui fonctionne sous les auspices des affects fantomatiques, qui sont atténués par *l'introjection*.

« La femme face au Coronavirus dans *Brèves de solitude* de Sylvie Germain » de Roxana Maximilean a comme point de départ la pandémie de Coronavirus, évènement qui est synthétisé par la littérature devenant le thème des plusieurs récits inspirés par le vécu des écrivains : « Pour le lecteur contemporain l'atmosphère coronavirienne est devenue habituelle, fait qui assure la vraisemblance de la narration. » (p. 50), affirme Roxana Maximilean. Elle parle du *visage de l'Autre* (les rapports avec l'altérité et préjugés), *la séparation mère-enfant* (par exemple, la séparation de Fénia de son enfant, en remarquant des similitudes avec *La Peste* d'Albert Camus ou avec la métaphore des poupées russes), de *la femme-victime,* et du *corps de la solitude* (le trauma de l'isolement).

L'autrice conclut qu'en ce roman, *Brèves de solitude*, « la pandémie n'est que le décor sur lequel se dresse une galerie de portraits fragiles, les femmes y occupant une place privilégiée. » (p. 63).

Alina Aluaș, dans « Portrait de la femme artiste en être marginal dans le roman C*harlotte* de David Foenkinos », refait la biographie de l'artiste allemande Charlotte Salomon, qui subit les effets de la marginalisation psychologique causée par la désintégration de son milieu familial. Charlotte souffre également à cause de la marginalisation historique qui se matérialise par la haine des nazis envers les Juifs. Le deuil permanent de l'héroïne est atténué par l'art et par son talent pour la peinture, car, « La résistance à travers l'art est la seule arme de Charlotte contre les histoires sombres de sa famille. » (p. 73) Pourtant, les résultats de la marginalisation historique mènent à la mort de la jeune femme ; donc, la plus grave de ces marginalisations, c'est la marginalisation historique, explique Alina Aluaș.

Abdel Fatah Nadjloudine met en évidence, dans son étude portant sur « L'image de la femme dans le roman comorien : de l'effacement à la révolte », la pratique littéraire comorienne où, jusque dans les années 2000, les voix féminines restaient inaudibles, la femme étant vue seulement par les yeux d'un homme, ce qui conduisait à ce que *la voix* autour de laquelle se tissait le récit entier reste également celle la perspective dominante masculine. Selon l'auteur, au début du XXI^{e} siècle, on remarque un écart par rapport à ce paradigme, car les présences féminines deviennent de plus en plus fréquentes. Le roman donné comme exemple, *Mon mari est plus qu'un fou : c'est un homme* de Nassur Attoumani, surprend la nécessité qui s'impose à la femme de s'exprimer, d'avoir *une voix indépendante* de celle de son mari. En plus, le critique remarque les changements de langage, comme, par exemple « le recours à un type de langage briseur de tabous » (p. 87), tel l'érotisme.

La dernière analyse, celle de Bianca-Livia Bartoș intitulée « Indiana *et* Madame Bovary *: du spleen à la neurasthénie ou la féminité contre le mal du siècle* », nous porte dans un voyage au XIX^{e} siècle par l'intermédiaire d'une approche psychanalytique appliquée à deux héroïnes romanesques célèbres, Indiana et Madame Bovary, car, justifie l'autrice, « Féminité et mélancolie semblent, en fin de compte, aller de pair à travers les temps et les mouvements littéraires. » (p. 103). Les histoires de ces deux héroïnes sont suivies de près afin d'identifier la fine ligne qui fait virer le psychologique en pathologique ou fait advenir un comportement somatisant à la suite de l'adultère, jusqu'au climax fatal où la vie perd tout sens. La conclusion de cette analyse reste sous le signe du spleen, qui est à la base de l'inaccomplissement sentimental et du bovarysme d'où provient, en termes modernes, le syndrome de neurasthénie.

En conclusion, *Féminités actuelles : avatars de l'écriture* est un recueil qui mêle des œuvres écrites par des femmes à celles écrites par des hommes, mais se focalisant sur des personnages féminins appartenant à des espace-temps divers. L'importance de ce volume s'explique dans le contexte actuel visant les mouvements féministes et la nécessité de revendication des droits et de *la voix* dans la société contemporaine qui doit être homogène du point de vue de l'identité et du sexe, et respectueuse des options de chacun. Ce volume s'adresse, en fait, à chacun d'entre nous, femmes et hommes ensemble, « Parce que les douleurs ne connaissent pas le genre ! » (p. 30), comme

l'affirme Chandra Feupeussi, et la problématique du statut de la femme dans la société contemporaine est *une douleur* collective, globale, qui doit être résolue. En outre, ce recueil met en évidence le fait que, même dans les sociétés fermées, traditionnelles et patriarcales, les femmes ont des problèmes réels et que leur importance dans la société est incontestable et incommensurable. L'épithète « actuelles », partie composante du titre du volume, suggère l'importance de cette analyse diachronique de la féminité qui relève des inquiétudes contemporaines, aspect qui constitue l'originalité du volume et reflète la nécessité d'une lecture attentive et consciente.

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