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9 - 2004

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Introductory Note

The present monographic issue of *Interlitteraria* gathers the fruits of one of the most successful conferences of the Estonian Association of Comparative Literature, "Genre of the Novel in World Literature: A Leap or a Standstill?", held in Tartu, Sept. 28 – Oct. 1, 2003. In fact, it was our fifth international conference. Thus, some experience has been gained. Some initial stumbling could be avoided in the organization of the conference. Estonia itself has meanwhile gathered experience as a democratic society and state. It is better prepared than before to receive visitors from other parts of the world. It looks nicer than before. While we were preparing *Interlitteraria* 9 for publication, Estonia became a member of the European Union.

Yet we can hardly take things for granted in this world. The unpredictable is part and parcel of our existence. The keynote speaker of our conference, the Canadian professor Jonathan Hart arrived in the autumnal Tartu with only some slight clothes on, as his luggage had been sent to London or some other airport of the world. However, he valiantly adapted to the circumstances and not only delivered his keynote address but also read his poems at the House of Literature of Tartu. That latter event spread a special aura over the conference: we were not only scrutinizing the poetics of the novel, but became, at least to some extent, ourselves involved in the poetic flux, the object of our research.

On the negative side of the unpredictable, the Estonian Science Foundation, the long-time supporter of our conferences and *Interlitteraria*, unexpectedly let us down at the start of 2004, leaving us without its further subsidy. Instead, we will now have to look for support from other, more generous and less bureaucratized institutions, like the Estonian Cultural Endowment and the Estonian science target-financing scheme. We are determined to continue publishing and spreading *Interlitteraria*, as an international forum for literary science and cultural philosophy. We shall also do our

best to go on with our international conferences. Our next scholarly target will be the reception process of world literature.

As the participants correctly inferred, the title of our last conference on the novel genre was a rhetorical provocation. Most probably hundreds if not thousands of novels are being launched every day or week over the entire world — in the postmodern, post-realistic or whatever canon. No conference can hope to grasp the content of all of them. However, if we can seriously enlighten at least some parts of the generic process, the effort has not been in vain. The more comparative we are in our reports, the greater the likelihood that the intersection areas of our research may reveal some fundamental features in the historical dynamic of the phenomenon.

The basic literary genres have not disappeared. They continue as magisterial discourse vehicles, to which every epoch adds its shades and ornaments. To assert that the novel is a pluriform genre is hardly more correct than to admit that the novel can also be extremely uniform (maybe the bulk of the novels produced in the world just conveys a realistic or postmodern uniformity?). Even if postmodernism may consciously elude any "big narratives", can we really believe that an individual postmodern creator as such would still not, at least in private, dream of writing something that is completely new, a starting-point for something entirely different, like Cervantes's *Don Quixote* or Joyce's *Ulysses* were in the past?

The discussion started at our conference will, no doubt, follow throughout the following issues of *Interlitteraria*. Although our next thematic focus will shift to the reception of world literature in different parts of the world, the *miscellanea*-issues of *Interlitteraria* will remain open to discussion and scholarly polemics about the fate of the novel and other literary and cultural-philosophic issues close to our hearts and the pulse of our time.

Jüri Talvet,
Editor

Novels, Almost Novels and Not Novels: Fiction, History, European Colonial Expansion and After

JONATHAN HART

The death of the novel is something that has been proclaimed from time to time, but I do not think that the novel is in any danger of expiring. By "death" perhaps people mean change, transformation, shifts from what we know and where we have been to where we are going. The novel as it developed from epic and romance and grew from the Renaissance until it flowered in western Europe from the eighteenth century onward has been a remarkably flexible genre that has allowed novelists and those who might be writing something different but related to the novel to explore what Gottfried Wilhelm Leibnitz (1646–1716) called possible worlds (Hart 1988).[1] The world is not enough, as the family motto that James Bond's coat of arms took up from a much more ancient source — non sufficit orbis — attests. The insufficiency of this life means in the case of fiction that it supplements the world as well as reflecting and refracting it.[2] In Satura or Satire 10, Juvenal

[1] In 1710 Leibniz published *Théodicée,* a philosophical work on good, evil and possible worlds. In 1714 Leibniz wrote *Monadologia,* which built on *Théodicée.*

[2] For the motto, see the Bond film, 'On Her Majesty's Secret Service', 1969. This phrase is used in other contexts; see Hansen 2000/2001, which is about the overreach or overextension of the Spanish Empire. In a review of Geoffrey Parker's *The Grand Strategy of Philip II* (1998), Robin G. Macpherson says of Philip: "In spite of the seemingly insurmountable difficulties, Philip can truly be said to have ruled the first

writes, 'Unus Pellaeo inveni non sufficit orbis;/ aestuat infelix angusto limite mundi/ ut Gyarae clausus scopulis parvaque Seripho' or 'One globe is all too little for the youth of Pella; he chafes uneasily within the narrow limits of the world, as though he were cooped up within the rocks of Gyara or the diminutive Seriphos' (Juvenal, 10:168–70; 1990: 206–207). Juvenal is talking about Alexander the Great — the youth of Pella, where is was born in 356 B.C. and who died in Bablyon in 323 B.C. He entered this latter city only to end in a sarcophagus. There are limits to empire. Alexander found that the world was not enough, but with some irony in this tenth satire about the vanity of human wishes. In literature we can see that the world is not enough or, as Ramsey renders it, the globe is too little, but the desire of literature is, like desire in life, not enough before death. The character might be a little more immortal than the author and reader. This ongoingness for the character has its limits. Sometimes we might wish for seven lives to live because one life is not enough.

Reading and writing provide those multiple lives even if only as a possibility. The possible worlds of the novel, whether of Henry Fieldings's *Tom Jones* or Milan Kundera's *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, whether ancient or contemporary, allow us to think, imagine, empathize, recoil from life, sometimes in parallel and almost simultaneous lives. In the world of imagination we do not bleed, but these worlds made of words permit catharsis, addition, subtraction and other relations to our lived experience of flesh and bone. These books are part of our mental and spiritual worlds and have a material and physical dimension. The life of the book, like the technology of the book, is a wonder that is always under threat from those who might banish imagination. Even the ever-imaginative Plato and the master of word and argument — Socrates — wanted poets to sing hymns to the republic (Plato, book 10). If novelists had been a bigger force then, they, too, as

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empire on which the sun never set and, long before James Bond, used the motto *Non Sufficit Orbis* — the World is not Enough!"; see Reviews on the Home Page of the Institute of Historical Research, University of London.

poets in a wider sense, would have suffered that banishment from Plato's possible and utopian world of philosophy as the guide to life and good government. The serious and real forces of economic production, science and technology threaten to push aside the contemporary novel as a traditional book. In a time when the medium becomes the message, as Marshall McLuhan argued, the very texture and changeability of the technology becomes a mark of meaning and importance (McLuhan 1962, 1964). To look back at a world before planes, trains and automobiles is hard enough, but one before computers and the almost-world of nanotechnology makes the world seem primitive even within our own culture. The virtual and e-book, the film that is no longer on film, the remixed music of technologies beyond the DVD presents the illusion of progress. The arts are not science, so that Shakespeare does not really make gains on Sophocles, or Virginia Woolf on Sappho, but in the empire of technology, of a political and economic imperium based on the technological, this equation of technical prowess with moral wisdom and aesthetic power might even be made unconsciously or without adequate examination. Games are faster, special effects more gruesome, so that anything that went before was something lesser and not different. A silent film becomes the absence of words as if it were a movie that was always moving towards words but could not. Novels in such a world need to assimilate to television, film, video, perhaps even to write for them rather than for readers in and of themselves.

Novels, in a realm like this, can be blamed for not having been born in the world of motion pictures. They were hatched from narrative, romance, history and many other oral and written "texts" that extend back into the barely historical and the apparently primitive. Certainly, there is no denying, even for those who read poetry and prose in the putative world of fiction, that novels, so much a product of the rise of the middle classes, have to jostle in that bourgeois marketplace with a thousand technological entertainments and by-ways that flesh is heir to. This competition and cross-fertilization can become debasement but can also spur innovation. Nothing is good or bad but in the execution.

Imagination, as Plato well knew and as the Romantics insisted on, helps to distinguish the work of the poets, and, by extension, that of its less aristocratic bards — the novelists.[3] It is a verbal art that might well be translated into scenes from painters or film-makers, but only through translation. The novel translates and is translated: experience and various vernaculars — some verbal and some not — are involved in an economy of translation. This carrying across fields, cultures and modes of expression is effective for many reasons, but one is the mutual transport of actual and fictional worlds. The one carries the other. To imagine is to dream in another dimension. However precarious the novel is (and poetry is even more so), as education continues its move from the historical, humanistic and literary to the contemporary, efficient and scientific, the novel and the literary will survive and flourish. The possible real death of the novel would be that the imaginative realm would have shrunk so much that there was no economic, political or poetic space for the literary. I am more optimistic.

The power of the mythological is part of the motivation of poetry and all literature. The literary moves people. Part of that power to move can be negative and positive, so that literature is neither good nor bad but thinking and acting makes it so. It depends on how we embody the literary as writer, reader and

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[3] Plato shows some scepticism about the power of poets and imagination rather than about the reason of philosophers. The importance of the imagination has been long discussed in relation to Samuel Taylor Coleridge and other Romantics in Britain and the Continent. The Wordsworth Trust lists on its website, under themes, the section "Wordsworth and Imagination", which is as follows: "Wordsworth saw imagination as a powerful, active force that works alongside our senses, interpreting the way we view the world and influencing how we react to events. He believed that a strong imaginative life is essential for our well-being. Often in Wordsworth's poetry, his intense imaginative effort translates into the great visionary moments of his poetry". See http://www.wordsworth.org.uk/poetry/ww.htm. Much has been written on Romanticism, which often includes discussions of fancy and imagination. Two sources that are especially suggestive are Northrop Frye (1963) and Isaiah Berlin (2001).

audience. There is a multiplicity to literature as it reflects, refracts, denies the world with alternative worlds. There is an ethical as well as an aesthetic imperative in what novelists do. Characters are so much at the heart of novels even as they are eaten, obscured or denied in avant-garde or postmodern novels that also work against the story-world of conventional plots and structure. In *Poetics*, Aristotle had made plot the driving force of poetry, which included drama, giving structure primacy over character, but the novel, while building on that world, also, as if it could make Hamlet writ large, developed the psychological motivations of characters (Aristotle 1997: 3). Flaubert, Henry James, James Joyce and Virginia Woolf — and even Chekhov in the drama — use the language of displaced soliloquy, associative and extended anecdote or stream-of-consciousness to explore the human mind and personality. This might be an amplification on Homer, Aeschylus, Sappho and Plautus, but the degree of the elaboration is so great that it is as though it had shifted the very ground of literature from structure to character. In fact, the interplay of plot and character through language and gesture (action) was where the creative tension of literature lay. It is not a matter of deciding between what is done and who is doing it: both are important in the rhetorical relation between the person and those about him or her. What is said and done in relation to what others say and do is the basic connection in literature and, most probably, in the world. That world and the world of literature are full of illusions because writers, as much as philosophers and historians and the religious have warned. In the story, which is a parallel world with its own version of the true or false or not, there is and is not mortality. That Jack and Jill went up the hill is neither true nor false as it is when Jack and Jill are people and not characters. The novel, like other forms of art and of theory, give an alternative way of seeing or speaking about the world that cannot compete with science, but that can represent that part of us that does not make progress. Perhaps the primitive is primary and cannot be repudiated so readily. The ethical and aesthetic may lack the power of scientific explanation and experiment, but without human values as expressed in novels as well as in religious, philosophical and other

texts, then science could be used — without debate — for whatever ends were expedient.

The rootedness of fiction, even if it involves innovation as well as perdurable convention, is a kind of unconscious, a store of values or even a return of the repressed. This latter alternative would arise from the novel as the embarrassment of history or the eruption of the primitive or the time when science was not born in the increasing fullness of its power and prestige. The novel is rooted in many things, including the wanderings of Odysseus and Aeneas, and in the historical travels of those visiting other cultures. In this brief space I would like to discuss texts from this European expansion in connection with a few modern, postmodern and contemporary novels. The expansion of Europe and the travel narratives that came before and after contributed indirectly and directly to the growth of the novel, which developed with capitalism and the industrial revolution. Such travel and narratives are now driven by a technological revolution based on air travel, computers, miniaturization and other techniques. The desire for otherness in fictional or possible worlds is closely related to historical descriptions of other cultures far away in time and space. Sometimes, the fictional and the historical shared techniques in narrative, rhetoric and even imagination. The word 'history" in English meant story and story about the past, so that the blurring of the historical and the fiction was something implied in the language just as the relation between romance and the novel was expressed in other languages. In French, for instance, *roman* represents that connection. More specifically, I wish to talk about the European expansion of empire and travel in connection with these historical and fictional texts.

I

The problem of representation (mimesis or imitation) of the world found a new critical point when the western European countries, starting with Portugal, began to expand in earnest in the fifteenth

century. Although Russia also expanded from the sixteenth century, the western European countries did sooner and faced cultures, on a large scale, that were neither Jewish, Christian or Islamic, so that, while the Russian experience is important, it will not be included in the confines of this essay.[4] Many travels accounts — with their mix of ethnology, history and narrative (sometimes bordering on fiction) — and essays represent cultural contact and colonial relations. Satires, like Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, which calls colonialism and the ethnocentrism of the English up short, are novels and are not. Gulliver, after his journey to Brobdingnag, reports on how Captain Thomas Wilcocks, his rescuer, takes Gulliver's report of his life among giants: 'The Captain was very well satisfied with this plain Relation I had given him; and said, he hoped when we returned to *England*, I would oblige the World by putting it in Paper, and making it publick'. Gulliver is a naïf who is not. His response builds on that ambiguity: 'My Answer was, that I thought we were already overstocked with Books of Travels: That nothing could now pass which was not extraordinary; wherein I doubted, some Authors less consulted Truth than their own Vanity or Interest, or the Diversion of ignorant Readers'. Having told a tale that was as fantastic as anything on the market in travel literature, or, for that matter, in the novel, Gulliver — unaware of this situation while the author, Swift, is fully aware of its ramifications — continued: 'That my Story could contain little besides common Events, without those ornamental Descriptions of strange Plants, Trees, Birds, and other Animals; or the barbarous Customs and Idolatry of savage People, with which most Writers abound'. Swift gives to Gulliver other kinds of fantastical detail. Gulliver, who wavers between politeness and a frank annoyance or even repugnance in regard to his fellow humans, especially after his journey among the rational horses, concludes: 'However, I thanked him for his good Opinion, and promised to take the Matter into my Thoughts' (Swift 1968: 141–42). Swift, to be sure, has already recorded the

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[4] On Russian culture, expansion and empire, see, for instance, Geoffrey Hosking (1997) and Orlando Figes, (2002, rpt. 2003).

book that Gulliver might write if he could. Like Swift, Defoe also played with the mixing of genre, in this case more specifically blending the literature and historiography of British and European expansion. *Robinson Crusoe* has romance elements but it is also a novel about culture and empire.

What I am most interested in this essay is translation — literally — as well as the translation of study and empire. Columbus extended the earlier European tradition, which Marco Polo and others represented, of travel writing using romance elements. In Columbus's *Letter*, he came to represent a new situation and peoples unknown to the Europeans. Such writing, through recognition and misrecognition, attempted to come to terms with new experience or to tame it. In a sense, while the phrase "voyages of discovery" has fallen out of favour because of political sensitivities — indigenous peoples insist, quite aptly, that they were not discovered from their own point of view — the notion of discovery has to do with anagnorisis, or recognition, that is sometimes called discovery. As in a play, in which the protagonist, like Oedipus in *Oedipus Rex*, comes to some knowledge, clarity or self-knowledge, the write of travel narratives or the explorer can also arrive at this understanding. This recognition or discovery often applies to novels, and is particularly a part of the *Bildungsroman*, or novel of education or coming of age, or the adventures of the hero on travels or in an exotic locale. Some recognitions are tragic and others are comic (*cognitio*), although many seem to have elements of tragedy and comedy.[5] How much Columbus recognized early on that he had not reached Asia is a matter of debate. He sought help to gain the knowledge he needed through the mediation of the Native peoples. Sometimes these explorers were author and character both in their writing even as they struggled with the shapes of fiction and history in recording or having the events recorded. After having said how timid the Natives were, Columbus admitted that he had taken some of them by force "in order that they might learn and give me information of that which there is in those parts, and so it was that they soon understood us, and we them, either by

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[5] The authoritative study of this topic is Terence Cave (1988, rpt. 1990).

speech or signs, and they have been very serviceable".[6] Although Columbus then reiterated that the Natives still treated him like a god and said that they inclined to Christianity, he did not stress why he had thought it necessary to use force to take potential Indian interpreters as captives. Almost like Swift or Borges, Columbus mixed with fantastic descriptions precise measurements and details of the land. For example, after having given the measurements of the island Juana, which he said is larger than England and Scotland, Columbus stated that one of its provinces, Avan, contained people that were born with tails (Columbus 12). Whether Columbus, or those who brought the Columbian texts into print, possessed the irony of Swift or Borges is an open question. The stakes beyond Columbus's text were matters of life and death, especially for the Natives. When in his first letter Columbus referred to the speech and signs he must interpret in the new lands in the Western Atlantic, he was not the first to do so among peoples beyond the pale of the Western European world-view.

One example will provide an illustration of this point of translation of culture and empire. Alvise Cadamosto's narrative — which has a complex textual history and seems to have been begun in 1463 and completed by 1468 and first appeared in the collection, *Paesi*, in 1507 and translated into Latin in Milan and into German in Nuremburg both in 1508 and into French in Paris in 1515 — claimed that he sighted the Cape Verde Islands in 1456, which led to their colonization, although many authorities credit Antonio da Noli with the discovery in 1458 or 1459. Cadamosto seems to have left Portugal for his native Venice in 1463 or 1464.[7]

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[6] *The Four Voyages of Columbus* , 1: 10. The original reads:
Y luego que llegué á las Indias, en la primera isla que hallé tomé por fuerça algunos d'ellos, para que deprendiesen y me diesen noticia de lo que avía en aquellas partes, é así fué que luego entendieron, y nos á ellos, quando por lengua ó señas; y estos han aprovechado mucho. (11)

[7] G. R. Crone, "Introduction," *The Voyages of Cadamosto* xxx–xlv. It is possible that Cadamosto wrote some parts before 1460. The apparently late-fourteenth century manuscript is in a cursive semi-Gothic hand,

The popularity of Cadamosto, who described the Atlantic islands and West Africa, derived from Giovanni Ramusio's *Navigazioni* in Venice in 1550. In English, neither Richard Hakluyt the Younger nor Samuel Purchas included Cadamosto's voyages in their collections: Hakluyt had asked John Pory to translate Leo Africanus, and this translation and amplification was supposed to appear in Hakluyt's compilation, *Principall Navigations*, but a translation of Cadamosto into English, an abridged version of the text in Ramusio, did not appear until 1745 in the first volume of Thomas Astley's *New General Collection of Voyages* (Crone, xliii–iv).[8] This text, like others concerning travel, exploration and geography, had distinct histories of translation and transmission in each country in Western Europe. Cadamosto's work is of particular interest because it is earlier than the 'travel' texts that are better-known today — those of Columbus and Vespucci — but he describes before they do a sense of wonder and strangeness over a world new to Europeans and because he represented Black Africa, a region that was so crucial in the slave trade for Islamic North Africa, for Europe and for the Americas. His *Voyages* began with a chapter that appears in *Paesi* but not in the two earlier manuscripts, so that some ideological or interpretive editing or amplification might well have occurred here.

So when we approach colonial and post-colonial novels, we can see that Cadamosto, Columbus and others have provided narratives of travel and ethnology beforehand. The multicultural and multilingual nature of the spreading out of Portugal, and of other European powers, is something that is readily noticed when examining the early texts. In 1508 there appeared, for instance, a Dutch edition of an influential work by Amerigo Vespucci — an Italian, who sailed for Portugal and encountered Natives in Brazil, including Guanabara Bay and the site of what is now Rio de Janeiro — that was full of woodcuts: Vespucci's narrative told of the good health and long lives of the Natives as well as their

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probably that of a copyist and not in Cadamosto's autograph. See *Paesi novamente retrovati* (1507).

[8] Crone's translation is based on the *Paesi*.

incest, polygamy and anthropophagy (Vespucci 1508). Later, the Netherlands would take a direct political and economic interest in the Portuguese colonies in Asia, Africa and America. In Venice in 1534 Benedetto Bordone gave an account of the charting and settlement of the islands to the south and west of Portugal and Spain, including Madeira (from circa 1425), the Azores (from about 1427) and the Cape Verdes (from 1455–56) (Bordone 1534).[9] A German soldier in the service of Portugal, Hans Staden, was among the Tupinambá, who had captured him in 1554 and kept him prisoner for nine months, just before Jean de Léry, who, owing to the circumstances of his travels and the French Wars of Religion, was unable to publish his work until years later. Both Staden and Léry, whose books contained illustrative woodcuts, described the customs and manners of the Tupinambá and did not shy away from the question of cannibalism (Staden 1557; Léry 1578). These works show affinities to those of well-known figures like Michel de Montaigne — whose essays on cannibals and coaches concentrated on the typology of Old World and New World, European and Native — and Shakespeare (whose play *The Tempest* was so seminal in early colonial and post-colonial representations), and those exotic narratives by writers like Aphra Behn, Swift and Defoe (Montaigne 1906–31).[10] In John Florio's translation of Montaigne (1603, 2nd ed 1613) the Natives visiting France became a way of contrasting their innocence with European decadence. Montaigne describes "Three of that nation, ignorant how deare the knowledge of our corruptions will one day cost their repose, securitie, and hapinesse, and how their ruine shall proceed from this commerce, which I imagine is already well advanced' (Montaigne 1613: 106, see 107). Further, Montaigne had the Natives question being subject to a king who was a boy and observe how the poor should rise up, take the rich by the throats and burn down their houses. Behn's *Oroonoko* also used this familiar turning of the tables in order to enact a critique of Euro-

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[9] For an early account of the settlement of Madeira, the Canaries, the Azores and Cape Verde, see Edgar Prestage (1933, rpt. 1966), 35–75.

[10] For the earliest English translation, see Montaigne (1603).

pean culture through representatives of the cultures with which it comes into contact. For instance, like Bartolomé de Las Casas, Léry, Montaigne and others before her, Behn turned the ethnographical and critical lens back on Europeans. Behn's narrator tells of an English governor who did not keep his word: he teaches the Natives the term '*Lyar*', when they describe behavior similar to his without naming him, only to have it thrown back in his face: 'Then one of 'em reply'd, *Governor, you are a Lyar, and guilty of that Infamy'*. Behn has insisted that this entire story about the royal slave, Oroonoko, whom an English captain kidnaps from Africa to their colony of Guiana, is true and not a fiction. The author wants this narrator to be her in a history and expresses her own opposition from within. This scene shows the innocence and superiority of the Natives vis-à-vis Europeans long before Jean-Jacques Rousseau's "noble savage": "They have a Native Justice, which knows no Fraud; and they understand, no Vice, or Cunning, but when they are taught by the *White Men*" (Behn 1688: 10). A blurring occurs, in a text published in 1688 as much as in 1493 (as in Columbus's *Letter*) or 1726/1735 (as is the case of the different versions of *Gulliver's Travels*), among eyewitness account, true 'history', travel narrative and fiction. The novel can express a critique of European society as much as representing its contradictions and ambivalence.

The colonial text has epic affiliations as in Homer and Virgil, but wanderings also occur in narratives with romance elements like the travels of Marco Polo (Polo 1579).[11] While in prison Polo is said to have dictated his account of his journeys to the East to a

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[11] The entry on Marco Polo in *The Catholic Encylopedia* gives a good account of the early textual circumstances: '"The "Book of Marco Polo" dictated to Rusticiano was compiled in French. A more correct version, revised by Marco Polo, was sent by him in 1307 to Thibaud of Cepoy, the agent of Charles of Valois at Venice, to be presented to that prince, who was a candidate for the Crown of Constantinople and the promoter of a crusading movement. The Latin, Venetian, and Tuscan versions are merely translations which are often faulty, or abridgments of the first two texts". See the classic edition of 1914 at www.newadvent.org/cathen.

French writer of romance. Centuries later, adventures still marked important travel texts and novels that make use of this genre and its wanderings. *The Life and strange and surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1719), perhaps a late English prose romance or one of the first English novels, was based on the experiences of Alexander Selkirk. Crusoe ends up on an island where cannibals live and where he saves a Native, who becomes his servant, Man Friday. This novel had two sequels: *The Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and *The Serious Reflections of Robinson Crusoe* (1720), a collection of essays. These novels, almost novels and not novels are "histories" in both senses of the word (stories and stories about the past). When we encounter post-colonial novels about conflict between what is Native and what is European, in the cultural tensions, mediations and mixing in former colonies, we can go to these narratives or accounts, written in the colonial period, which provide a suggestive framework with which to understand them. In *Imaginary Homelands*, when Salman Rushdie speaks about translation and the translation of people, he says he clings, "obstinately, to the notion that something can also be gained" in translation (Rushdie 1991). The post-colonial and colonial read each other. The translation of empire is full of ambiguities and while the travelling histories of colonization have their mobile tropes and contiguities, they never quite repeat themselves with exactitude.

II

Expansion and movement do not have to be directly imperial or colonial. Fictions can also question or render uncomfortable the metropolitan centres. The novel has interior and psychological aspects as well as political elements. The reworking of classicism and the remaking of the past often occurs even in the most groundbreaking novels. James Joyce reworked the myth of Ulysses into the everyday life of Dublin: the wanderings became less physical and more mental, less exalted and more domestic, less sweeping

and more quotidian. Virginia Woolf used stream of consciousness as Henry James turned to psychology to represent the inner life of outward events — the mental muddle and progress and motivation that history could not address or at least to the same extent. *Hamlet* was an important text for Goethe and its motivation through soliloquy might well have contributed to birth of Young Werther. The novel can go on for pages about a moment or a day. History, and even drama and poetry, does not usually have that kind of scope. The novel and its wanderings have their own niche that should encourage the survival of this genre.

The journey can also be one of satire and political outrage in the face of dystopias and totalitarian states, like George Orwell's *Nineteen-Eighty Four* and *Animal Farm* and Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Heart of a Dog*. Kurt Vonnegut, a favourite author of my early youth, was able to write satiric postmodern exposés and, in *Slaughterhouse Five*, about the spiritual and actual journey of Billy Pilgrim, the quintessential American but also the essential man who had to come to terms with the bombing of Dresden during the Second World War. The assault on Dresden is an exploration of revenge, violence, war and the desecration of humanity and art. The spirit of Juvenal's savage indignation and Jonathan Swift's questioning of the anti-human in the human continued well into the twentieth century. The English morality plays of the fourteenth century, like *Everyman* and *Mankind*, showed long ago the lonely course of the individual before the temptations of life. In the same century Geoffrey Chaucer used satire to represent his pilgrims on the way to Canterbury, but in our age similar moral problems are amplified by the great changes to machinery and the technology of war and destruction. Recognizing the human in such a world becomes an immense challenge.

Exile, travel and spirit are some aspects that surround the trauma of the world wars for Europe and beyond. Bernard Shaw wrote his great play, *Heartbreak House*, as a kind of requiem for Europe over its collapse in the First World War. Solzhenitsyn has explored the ravages of these traumatic wars and of the Gulag (see *August 1914*, *The Gulag Archipelago*). This is the wound at the

heart of the twentieth century and of European civilization. This is the wound, like the abuses of imperialism, that contemporary novelists must face or flee from like the blood of a ghost. If Umberto Eco in *The Name of the Rose* (1980, Eng. trans. 1983) writes about murder in the quest to secure Aristotle's lost treatise on comedy, Bartolomé de Las Casas in the sixteenth century had to argue against Aristotle's theory of natural slavery. Las Casas defended the humanity of the American Native peoples in the face of extermination by the Spaniards (Las Casas 1992; see Hanke 1959 and Pagden 1982, rev. 1986). The death wish, the will to power and genocide are old and tragic matters almost beyond speech as hard as historians, religious writers, philosophers, poets, filmmakers, novelists and others try to represent them. French and English pamphleteers and others used Las Casas's account to warn Europe that Spain would do to Holland what it did to the Natives in the Indies (see Hart 2001).[12] The murderous exploitation of the human whether in the first years of European expansion to the Americas through the holocaust and prison camps spawned by Germany and the Soviet Union to massacres in Cambodia, Rwanda, the former Yugoslavia and beyond is still with us and with contemporary novelists and audiences. Novelists still report, refract and warn.

In *A History of the World in 10 1/2 Chapters* (1989) Julian Barnes uses legal cases and travel narratives to help in his writing of a fictional history of the world that is touched by the tone and fragmentation of satire. This novel begins with an unofficial version of the story of Noah's ark. Timothy Findleys' *Not Wanted on the Voyage* provides another interpretation of the story surrounding Noah. Fictional worlds can be a different kind of voyage. They can be a secular scripture that reinterprets the Bible or a rediscovery of the epic specifically or the classical past generally. The journey and the exploration are never over.

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[12] See also various versions of Las Casas' *Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*, such as M.M.S., *The Spanish Colonie* (1583) and *Le Miroir* (1620). See Maltby, (1971).

The different ways to express the expansion of the human positively can be measured in the multiplying voices of men and women of all countries and backgrounds that have come into a global literary world. Smaller or poorer countries and languages with a small group of speakers can find this expansion or world literature problematic. The development of human consciousness has had difficult material conditions. Still, more variety among writers means more points of view. Writers and novelists like Simone de Beauvoir, Marilyn French and Margaret Atwood have taken up with their own gendered names where two great women novelists, George Sand and George Eliot left off. Atwood's *Handmaid's Tale* has its share of dystopian elements, but its satire calls attention to cultural trends that would subjugate, efface or obliterate women. Novelists and writers who have called attention to issues of skin colour, alternative cultures and racism vary as much in ideology as do Frantz Fanon, V. S. Naipaul, and Toni Morrison. Louise Erdrich and Jeanette Armstrong are Natives from North America who write contemporary novels about a world from a different point of view from that the Europeans brought to their shores.

I would like to end with Thomas Mann commenting on a novel that was a favourite of my youth: *The Magic Mountain*. The end of that novel is the narrator's farewell to Hans Castorp, which finished with a question about whether love will rise out of and above "this universal feast of death" (Mann 716). At the end of his essay, "The Making of the Magic Mountain," Mann speaks about Castorp's "dream of humanity ... before he is snatched downwards from his heights into the European catastrophe" (Mann 727). All this returns us to what might be in the quest or journey that the epic, the romance and the novel have pursued for hundreds and thousands of years. It is not to succumb to slavery, torture, violence and death but to seek out something much more positive and much greater in humans. According to Mann's commentary, Castorp's dream "is the idea of the human being, the conception of a future humanity that has passed through and survived the profoundest knowledge of disease and death. The Grail is a mystery, but humanity is a mystery too. For man himself is a

mystery, and all humanity rests upon reverence before the mystery that is man" (Mann 727). It is not surprising that Mann uses the language of the Arthurian romance to describe the dream at the heart of his great novel written so many years after. For novelists today, the task of preserving humanity while representing it might sound too grand, but there is a heroism in words and imagination. To survive we must make a true beauty and beautiful truth, however ravaged in the world of death and disease, that crosses cultures and thinks of the human being made whole across the world, a human with a local habitation and a name but one that is of the entire world. The novelist might shore up fragments in the waste land and make a garden that is at once then, now and to come, something familiar and strange, something that heals through the exile of its art.

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The Novel and its Terrain(s) of Reinterpreted Identities in the Age of Globalization

JOLA SKULJ

> ... The novel is in the vanguard of change. The novel may thus serve as a document for gauging the lofty and still distant destinies of literature's future unfolding. (Bakhtin, *Epic and Novel*, in Holquist 1981: 33)

The ideas of multilingualism and of multicultural interests strongly absorb the critical attention in times of globalization. Our involved concerns on such issues certainly have ground in concrete encounters with world events and in the changing position of our thought at the turn of the century. Views on multiculturalism and multilingualism, reactualized through postmodern concepts of identity of difference and through a postpositivist epistemological position, have not only been theorized in the last two decades, but thematized in the novel genre as well. The multicultural settings were elaborated also as a narrative theme in several highly regarded literary texts. Claudio Magris, himself a citizen of the multicultural city of Trieste, thematized such views in his *Danubio* (1986), Predrag Matvejević, born in another border zone city (Mostar), in the *Mediterranean Breviary* (1987) and the distinguished Slovenian prose writer, Lojze Kovačič, born and raised in Switzerland but later moving to Slovenia, in his novel *Basle* (1989). Another awarded novel of a Slovene woman writer can be

referred to in this regard: Brina Svit's *Moreno* (Paris 2003), which is the first book of hers written directly in French. Why did they find it necessary to locate their narratives in a plurilingual climate and how did it affect the strategies of their novels? As meeting points of ongoing cultural contradictions, locations in an act of confronting incongruent traditions, places where different views are in a state of confrontation as a result of a multiformity of language traces, sites of an open conflict between opposing ideas and historical forces, the four narratives dramatize not only instances of multilinguality but of contemporary views on pluralism and so examine the theme of pluralist ontology.

The intricacy of historical footprints and the interrelatedness of cultural facets around the Danube, the Mediterranean, Basle or the Santa Maddalena writers' estate in Tuscany (of Beatrice Monti della Corte von Rezzori) contribute to a gripping idea of multifocal reality and have a powerful and irresistible effect easily grasped by contemporary artistic methods. The complex layers of the factual and open-ended reality of the Danube, the Mediterranean, Basle or Santa Maddalena offer a suitable and provoking theme for the actual interests of the novelists at the turn of the millennium. The great challenge facing the European mind experiencing globalization echoes in narratives articulating the Self in the intersection with others. The novel constituted in its primordial sense of modernity focuses on the co-existence of differences. In the effort to conceptualize the cultural reality of globalized processes, a totalizing mode of thinking constitutes a problem, not a solution. Today we are able to agree that the open reality of cultural processes, with its inherent logic of *conflicts and contradictions*, cannot be founded on a single source, just as we recognize that the existence, truth, or facts of history cannot be defined in accordance with a single meaning any longer.

The novel as an artistic prose discourse which — according to well-explained theoretical insights into its verbal complexity by Bakhtin — resists the pressures of canonization, which is demonstrated by its distinct vitality throughout the 20th century. The modernist break-through, with its innovative and far-reaching interventions into the narrative form of the novel, appeared to be

radical but actually only re-accentuated the qualities inherent to the principles of this genre. The modernist novel with its structural impediments in the representations and apparent deformities in narrative construction, of course, could not be perceived here only as an experiment in form, but as a representative form of dialogism (a form manifestly addressing otherness) which inscribed in itself the instances of the response — the instances of the reader. The modernist narrative invention introducing the inscription of the reader into the text had considerable consequences for further modes of transforming the genre. However, in the 20th century, one can find an endless chain of traditional narratives as well, but such cases of the conventional novel have merely demonstrated the compulsion to repeat the genre patterns. Implications in the postmodernist practices of narratives have proved the tacit evolution of the novel and its interests.

At the same time, postmodernist proclamations of the *literature of exhaustion* (cf. John Barth in *Atlantic*, Aug. 1967: 33) and of the *literature of replenishment* (cf. John Barth in *Atlantic*, Jan. 1980: 70–71) have testified to the genre concerns. At this point one cannot disregard that the novelistic form implies its own unequivocal interpretation of the world — set forth by the earliest traces of democracy and by the first traces of consciousness of the heteroglot reality. According to Kundera, the art of the novel issued as "an echo of God's laughter" (cf. Kundera 1988: 168). As a verbal art form it was established when the language hierarchy disintegrated and when an open exchange of languages was initiated. Being a heteroglot genre, the novel in principle has no canon. Bakhtin finds it "the sole genre that continues to develop, that is as yet uncompleted" and is "still far from having hardened" (1981: 3). As a genre of democratic and polyphone interests it cannot fade away in the time of globalization. Its generic skeleton affirms that the contemporary novel thus could be the novel *par excellence*. Bakhtin's views on the novel as an — according to its self imposed regulations — unconcluded, ever-renewed genre, i. e. a genre of *becoming*, were launched at the same time when Lukàcs and even Ortega y Gasset (who under other circumstances fostered

the idea of perspectivism) set forth their thoughts about the end of the novel.

Could in such a frame legitimate questions asked by the organizer of the conference on "a leap or a standstill" concerning the contemporary novel be approached easily or should we open the issues of the intricate form of the novel genre more in detail?

Another set of questions seems pertinent here to discuss the novel's possibilities at the turn of the millennium. Is it still a novel if the protagonists possess no characteristics of an extraordinary human being or if the narrative has even no leading character at all? And what about the narratives where even the role of the individual (a living person) is not the focal point any more and is submerged under the layers of narrative representations of other segments of our everyday reality, of our uneventful actuality, of our prosaic existence or of events gone by? Bakhtin's elaboration on the word in the novel enables us to comprehend such narratives as Claudio Magris's *Danubio* (1986) or Predrag Matvejević's *Mediterranean Breviary* (1987) as the legitimate examples of the novelist genre as well because one can identify manifest dialogism in both discourses addressing all kinds and degrees of otherness. Explaining the very grounds of the novel Bakhtin argues: "The dialogic orientation of a word among other words (of all kinds and degrees of otherness) creates new and significant artistic potential in discourse, creates the potential for a distinctive art of prose, which has found its fullest and deepest expression in the novel" (1981: 275). If the novel — as argued by Bakhtin — "speculates in what is unknown" (ib. 32) and is, by his own words, defined as a "form of *ignorance*", a form of a quest or of pursuit, exploration, crusade, pilgrimage, mission, voyage, journey, enterprise, adventure etc. then the novel can find its formal contours (and its plot interest) also when crossing "the boundary of what we strictly call fictional literature" (ib. 33). Since the novel is "constructed in a zone of contact with the incomplete events of a particular present" (ib.) its special relationship with the extraliterary genres, with the genres of everyday life can be anticipated. The history of the novel testifies that memorials, diaries, autobiographies, historical records or geographical reports serve well the requirements of the genre.

Non-fictional entities were constituent elements in novelistic frames and from its earliest stages the novel has relied firmly upon "extraliterary forms of personal and social reality" (ib.). *Danubio* of Magris, as well as *Mediterranean Breviary* of Matvejević, relate to an implicit vision of the history of the novel and both restrain the idea of what the novel is.

The novel as a genre invests its interests in the inconclusive reality of life itself or, to be more precise, in the very core of being. Thus it can be understood as a *form of substantial irony of existence* and as a form that dwells upon the identity problem throughout the history of the genre. In Kundera's words "the novel is a fictitious paradise of the individual. The novel is a terrain, where no one possesses the truth [...] but everyone has his own right to comprehend it..." (1988: 169). Hence the very essential ground of the novel genre enables the contemporary novel to address readers from other cultures and from not closely related national traditions and to share the experience of its own pursuits with others.

Holquist in his comments of Bakhtin's technical vocabulary asserts that "the novel is that literary art form most indebted to *otherness* (Rus. *čuždost'*)" (Holquist 1981: 423). Elaborating the origins of the novel as form, Bakhtin argues that the awareness of otherness is grounded in the human coming-to-consciousness, which is, in his view, "a constant struggle" between the authoritative discourse and the internally-persuasive discourse: "an attempt to assimilate more into *one's own* system, and the simultaneous freeing of *one's own* discourse from the authoritative word, or from previous earlier persuasive words that have ceased to mean" (ib. 424–5). As a genre it was advanced through realizing that *one's own* conceptual system or horizon [Rus. *krugozor*] is not identical or agreeing exactly with *someone else's*, that there is a gap between one's own intentions and words and someone else's words. That gap was made evident through the growing *consciousness of self*, through the rudimentary traces of men's individuation or through the earliest stages of our self-understanding as *animal rationale*. This initial process of being individuated and of sensing the split in the identity of interests enabled the birth of dialogue.

"Being *čužoj* makes dialogue possible" (ib. 423) and this fact represents the threshold of the novelistic discourse.

The birth of the novel as a genre coincided with a new way of conceptualizing time. The novel as form is shaped on the ground of the human reorientation to the *present*, to the "contemporary *reality in all its inconclusiveness*" (Bakhtin 1981: 31; my italics). A formative process of novelistic patterns is started when contemporaneity becomes "the centre of human orientation in time and in the world" and when "time and world lose their completeness as a whole as well as in each of their parts" (ib. 30). A new way of conceptualizing time, which is from the very beginning at the core of the artistic-ideological consciousness behind the novelistic interests, involves as a necessary circumstance the *inconclusiveness of novelistic forms* and their *representational strategies of open-ended presentness*. Through the very structure of the genre and through its distinctive "images" and "language" certain ideas not actualized earlier than in the current critical debates have been shaped and promoted (e.g. dialogism, narrativization, the hermeneutics of narrative identity as a replacement of the hermeneutics of selfhood, intertextuality, multilingualism, etc.). The preeminent frame of the novel genre involved the overpowering force of heteroglossia.

> The novel took shape precisely at the point when epic distance was disintegrating, when both the world and the man were assuming a degree of comic familiarity, when the object of artistic representation was being degraded to the level of a contemporary reality that was inconclusive and fluid. From the very beginning the novel was structured not in the distanced image of the absolute past but *in the zone of direct contact with inconclusive present-day reality*. At its core lay personal experience and free creative imagination. Thus a new, *sober* artistic-prose novelistic image and a new critical scientific perception came into being simultaneously. From the very beginning, then, the novel was made of a different clay than the other already completed genres; it is a different breed, and

> with it and in it is born the future of all literature. (Bakhtin 1981: 39, my italics)

Implications of contemporary novelistic tendencies in experimenting with focalization in the narrative can be traced back to its genre characteristics.

The novel, as Bakhtin argues, is a *denormatizing* and therefore centrifugal force. This is why the novelists who are non-native speakers of the language and have power over the conceptual horizons of another language can participate in producing renewed forms of narratives. In the evolution of the novel in the 20th century one can find a long list of deterritorialized authors[1] if we employ here a concept coined by Deleuze and Guattari. Their inherent polyglossia — with its immediately accessible internal multiple standpoint or at least a doubled frame of reference in communicating ideas — can interactively open new registers of voices in the art of the novel and enable to refract the narrator's intention at another angle which considerably extends the possibilities of the novel. A dialogized word can never be finalized or conclusive: through an exchange "the resonance or oscillation of possible meanings within it is not only not resolved, but must increase in complexity as it continues to live". (Holquist 1981: 426) The novel forming its artistically represented world in *direct contact with the incomplete present* is a complex genre, accessible to the ever-changing readership and never grasped definitely or finalized. As a genre of denormatizing forces, the novel is capable, through its artistic procedures, to grasp and communicate the interstices that cannot be grasped in wording and outside narrative representations. Modernism took maximum advantage of the artistic exploitation of the narrative procedures. The best novels of the early 20th century represent an exemplary case of communicating their narrative significance through their structure.

When, in mid-thirties, Bakhtin stated his unique views on "the novel, [that it] after all, has no canon of its own" and argued that

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[1] Joyce, Kafka, Beckett, Conrad, Nabokov, Gombrowitz, Kundera, Cioran etc.

"it is, by its very nature, not canonic" and "plasticity itself" (1981: 39), the first wave of modernist prose experiments was over and the so-called wave of antimodernism (to use David Lodge's terminology) was at work. The exploitation of the technique was not that much at the front. But decades later the authors still excelled at writing novels. Bakhtin's theoretical advocacy of the novel, founded on a set of his own philosophies — on a philosophy of concreteness, a philosophy of openness and inconclusiveness, and on a philosophy of event and becoming — was reassuringly predictive of the novel of the future: "It is a genre that is ever questing, ever examining itself and subjecting its established forms open to review. Such, indeed, is the only possibility open to a genre that structures itself in a zone of direct contact with developing reality." (ib.) Bakhtin's view is close to Kundera who argues that the novel is about man's being and that it is concerned with what it means to *be* in the world. There is also the comment made by Kundera in *The Art and the Novel* that "every novelist's work contains an implicit vision of the history of the novel, an idea of what the novel is." (http://bookstore.mywebartcenter.com).

At this point we can turn to a very logical question as to what transformations did the novel "that structures itself in a zone of direct contact with developing reality" undergo in the 20th century? What remodelling of the genre can be observed in the span of one hundred years? How did it in fact alter in its structure or form? Was it capable of undergoing any definite changes in form or nature? How did the "developing reality" change itself and how did the changes affect the "direct contact" with it as grasped in the novelistic practices? What can be said about the metamorphoses of the novel since the first two or three decades of the 20th century, when the best modernist texts were written, and later through the middle of the century somewhere to the 1980s, when postmodernist metanarrative interests and the rereading of earlier narratives dominated in prose-writing, to the closing decades of the century when magic realism came to the fore and we came face to face as well with the novels thematizing multilingualism or asserting their open interest in narrativization (to employ Hayden

White's concept) frequently through an apparently autobiographical matrix?

The beginning of the 20th century was discussed as a set of several crises. Kermode considered the new literature of paleomodernism and neomodernism "equally devoted to the theme of crisis" (1971: 46) and claimed that a "sense of crisis" behind new ideas of modernist art was a stimulating one (ib. 40). The changes encouraging the transformation of the traditional novel into its modernist form were interpreted as a crisis of language, a crisis of culture (Beebe 1973, Bradbury-McFarlane 1976, Calinescu 1977, Luft 1980), a crisis of the (human) self or a crisis of identity (Le Rider 1990, 1993). In some of my previous articles I have discussed the issue in the context of Husserl's comments on the crisis of consciousness[2] (Skulj 2003, Skulj 1998). Modernism was, no doubt, a manifest crisis in representational modes. The modernist narrative form, with the inscription of the reader into its structuring, made clear its awareness of the role of a constructive act through the reading process. At this point we have moved back to the view that the novel is a genre that dwells upon the identity problem. Narrative inventions introduced into the poetics of the modernist novel touch upon the very terrain(s) of reinterpreted identities.

Proust overtly approached the issue. In *Time Regained* one can find his precise position stated on the relation between text and reader when he indirectly qualified his judgment of the self, viewed as empirical but at the same time as something elusive, though representing a possible point of fixation. The view — very modernist in its essence and echoing Nietzschean ideas on facts and on truth about them as interpretations — is certainly still vital for the actual debates in literary criticism, attesting that "there has never been a phenomenology of temporality free of every aporia" (Ricoeur 1988: 3; also quoted in Makaryk 1993: 455).

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[2] Husserl elaborated the problem in the 1930s in his well-known Vienna lectures on the crisis of European existence.

> But to return to myself, I thought more modestly of my book, and one could not exactly say that I thought of those who would read it, of my readers. Because they would not according to me be my readers. but the real readers of themselves, my book being only like one of those magnifying glasses offered to a customer by the optician at Combray. It was my book, and thanks to it I enabled them to read what lay within themselves. (Proust, in Wood 1991: 199)

The narrative of modernity was capable of touching upon the coexistence of differences as the modernist poetics unmasked the problem[3]. The modernist self — as Proust reveals in his novel —

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[3] The crisis of consciousness as the background of establishing modernist literary phenomena enables the approach to the features of the lyrical, narrative and dramatic genres and their basic logic of inconclusiveness through Husserlian comments on the issue. Following his views on the problem going back to the turn of the century, the discussion of the complex and contradictory reality in modernist forms, and of their fundamental strategy of self-reflexivity, can consider not only the formal level of the subject of investigation, but also assign a meaning to it from a very different angle. The self-reflexiveness of form can be identified as a serious response of modernist literature to the essential historical encounter with existence hitherto being a thwarted question of the Western mind. The view actually points out the proposition about the implicitly engaged nature of the modernist art forms. In Husserlian viewpoint modernist forms can be recognized as a "heroic" re-engagement with "genuine rationality" — hence their cerebral dimension — and in addition his explanations make it evident why the topic of existence and its authenticity is the key theme of the period. Modernism as self-consciousness of style, as a movement of movements concentrating on the possibilities of art and through its complexity of poetics selfquestioning their creative potentialities, is a period bringing into focus the very being and its ever-elusive quality. The significance of modernist forms can open up their own creative process, grasp their form in its unconcluded status and communicate their logic of inconclusiveness. Confronting the consciousness of the never-ending contradictions of reality and truth about it, modernism with its Baudelairian sense of the immediacy of life, of its fleeting instant, of the present in its presentness, in its purely

is an entity with an inscribed will to differ in itself. The modernist self is defined through dialogism. The Cartesian ego, as well as Western logocentric ways of thinking, is subverted by the art of modernism. Both the logic of dialogism and the overcoming of logocentrism open doors to a more pluralistic view on reality. Multilingualism becomes an acceptable experience and openness to the views of other, fairly distant cultures a welcome circumstance. Modernist art exhibits a de-centered logic or, to put it differently, truth, the self, and the factual, as modernist methods testify, are not apprehended as something identical to themselves, but as non-finalized or inconclusive entities open to otherness, always in a dialogic relation. The modernist position — as the quoted lines from Proust remind us — is also unconditionally aware of "the interstice occurring between the primal text and the infinity of interpretation" (Foucault 1973: 40; also quoted in Ihde 1991: 125).

The passage from Proust indicates that only through the knowledge of us the represented reality foreshadowed or prefigured in an indistinct or formless way by the text should be (re)constructed. In the perspective of modernist aesthetics *alterity* represents an

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instantaneous quality, i.e. quality of contingency, demonstrates through the features of fortuitousness and fragmentariness in Imagist, Futurist, Expressionist, Constructivist, Dadaist or Surrealist forms its unique ability to grasp the openness and uncertainty in the process of producing. Laying open to view its only available immediacy, the art of modernism unfolds its own truth of becoming. The fragmentary method of collage and abstraction in poetry or the interior monologue, the stream of consciousness and the *acte gratuit* of the "hero" in the modern narrative or the A — effect (in German Verfremdungseffekt) in Brechtian epic theater conceptualize one of key dimensions modernist innovative literature had been opening as its central topic, i.e., groundlessness of ground or "the incertitude of the void" (Joyce). Exhibiting through its intervention in the form the very moment of forming, modernist art is in essence conceptual. Modernist forms disclose the action of conceiving. Hence one can explain the modernist distinctive constructive qualities, its stress on the predicament of inferential, its quality of suggestive meaning and of an open-ended interpretation.

evident *factor in understanding* (i.e. reading). The remark indicate-show we come to knowledge. The view quoted in Proust is to some extent in agreement with the one Derrida put forth in an interview in 1971, when he argued that any reading, even his "rereading of Hegel", is "in a certain way [...] nothing other than an attempt to explain [him]self on this point" (Derrida 1981: 77). Why Proust as a modernist novelist brings forward such issues? Why are we in any act of acquiring knowledge, not only in the process of reading books, "readers of ourselves"? How could it be that even the factual — as the twentieth century poetics approached the problem — is given to us not alike? What enables this multitudinousness? How could facts, deeds, events, acts, circumstances, particular occurrences, certain incidents, actualities, that is, the domain of the factual be manifold, diversified, varied and many-sided? Why could information or knowledge preserved in texts be set down as a range plentiful, ample, multitudinous and infinite? Are there only different ways of our "relatedness to the real" (Ricoeur 1988: 5, quoted in Makaryk 1993: 455), of our own available contacts or communications with reality and truth? Or is the acquisition of knowledge through the process of reading attainable only within the province of one's own experience, personal involvement? (If it is true that the subject's access to language and his ability to enunciate is crucial for the *subject's participation in signification* (Lacan), then in the act of any decoding process the participation of the subject should be decisive as well.) In the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant already "maintains that the knowledge is the product of the synthetic activity of the *knowing subject*. Through apriori forms of intuition (space and time) and categories of understanding (unity, plurality, totality, reality, negation, limitation, substance/accident, cause/effect, action/patience, possibility/impossibility, existence/non-existence, and necessity/contingency), the subject bestows unity and coherence upon the confusing manifold sense data. Though always dependent on sense experience, the *object of knowledge*, in the strict sense of the term, *is posited* or *constructed by the creative activity of the subject*. Like Plato's demiurge, the *knowing self* gives form to matter." (Taylor 1986: 5; my italics) To

introduce the deconstructive shift, Taylor, following Kant's argument, continues that, "in the practical domain of experience, reason brings unity to the personality by subjecting multiple and conflicting sense inclinations to the directives of the apriori moral law. Reason, therefore, in both its theoretical and practical capacities, functions to create unity out of plurality and to reduce manyness to oneness." (ib.) As the passage quoted from Proust shows, the modernist position was quite aware of the role of the constructive act of the reader as a different subject of experience. For the modernist scheme the implementation of the reading self is unavoidable. But the comment asserts as well that in modernist view (well in concord with the views stated already by Nietzschean philosophy) its privileged Cartesian oneness is clearly subverted. Modernism — as the multitude of its poetics testifies — is able to undertake the "impossible task" of bringing forth "the unthought" (to use Heidegger's vocabulary) and to grasp the floating and transitory state of being. Modernism, no doubt, initiates views of constructivism in its aesthetics. The idea is well corroborated by the position found in Apollinaire that contemporary art is not an art of imitation representing "the reality of sight"[4], but an "art of conception" or an art representing "conceptualized reality or creative reality", the "reality of insight" (Apollinaire 1912, in Harrison and Wood 1997: 82).

Through the passage from Proust we come upon the problem Ricoeur's view of "the self, narratively interpreted" (1991[b]: 199) or, in other words, we encounter the problematics of narrative mediation. Ricoeur argues: "Narrative mediation underlines this remarkable characteristic of self-knowledge — that is self-interpretation." (1991[b]: 198) He initially introduces the term narrative identity, as a "fundamental experience that could integrate [the] two major types of narrative" (1991[b]: 188) he discussed previously, the historical narrative and the fictional narrative. Ricoeur finds

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[4] Apollinaire in fact strictly argued that "the new painters [...] have not [...] abandoned nature, and [that] they examine it patiently." (Apollinaire 1912, in Harrison and Wood 1997: 180)

> plausible to endorse the following chain of assertions: self-knowledge is an interpretation, self interpretation, in its turn, finds in narrative, among other signs and symbols, a privileged mediation: this mediation draws on history as much as it does on fiction, turning a story of a life into a fictional story or a historical fiction, comparable to those biographies of great men in which history and fiction are intertwined (ib.).

Insisting upon the role of plots, upon the role of the narrative function in the mediation, that is, of narrative identity, Ricoeur is "aware of the considerable difficulties attached to the question of identity as such" (ib. 189). Actually, he suggests that "the concept of narrative identity offers a solution to the aporias of personal identity" (ib. 192). To resolve difficulties obscuring the notion of personal identity, the conceptual framework should be submitted "to analytical scrutiny [that] rests on the fundamental distinction [...] between two main uses of the concept of identity: *identity as sameness* (Latin: *idem*, English: *same*, German: *Gleich*) and *identity as selfhood* (Latin: *ipse*, English: *self*, German: *Selbst*)". (ib. 189) The main issue, however, is that "*selfhood is not sameness*" (ib. my italics). But Ricoeur claims that "the confusion is not without cause, to the extent that these two problematics overlap at a certain point" (ib.). He insists that the break which separates *idem* and *ipse* is "frankly" ontological, not just grammatical, or even epistemological and logical (ib. 191). Following Heidegger, Ricoeur asserts that "selfhood is one of the existentials which belong to the mode of being of Dasein", and he did not forget to mention that "to the same sphere of problems belong such concepts as being-in-the-world, care, being-with, etc." (Cf. ib.) Basing his argument on Heideggerian discriminations he claims that "the break between self (*ipse*) and same (*idem*) ultimately expresses that more fundamental break between Dasein and ready-to-hand /present-at-hand. Only Dasein is *mine*, and more generally self. Things, all given and manipulable, can be said to be the same, in the sense of sameness-identity." (ib. 191–2)

> What [Ricoeur] essentially dispute[s] is the claim that hermeneutic of selfhood can be reduced to the position of a Cartesian ego, which is itself identified with a 'supplementary fact' distinct from mental states and from bodily facts. It is because mental states and bodily facts have at the outset been reduced to impersonal events that the self appears to be a supplementary fact. The self, [Ricoeur] claim[s], simply does not belong to the category of events and facts. (Ib, 193)

Through "the hermeneutics of narrative identity" (cf. ib. 197), Ricoeur reminds us of "the level of narrative configuration", with its "dialectic of the self and the same" in the reader's identification in the reading process of literature and "the purgative virtue of the thought-experiments deployed by literature [...] at the level [...] of existence", or as he puts it, the dialectic of the self and the same "in the course of the application of literature to life, what we carry over and transpose into the exegesis of ourselves" (ib. 198). Ricoeur elaborates the aporetic nature of personal identity saying that "the self intersects with the same at one precise point: permanence in time." (ib. 192) Ricoeur is aware that "to analyze temporality is to multiply aporias, while to configure it in narrative is to claim aporia *for dénouement*" (Findlay, in Makaryk 1993: 455).

Proust, opening the theme of self and sameness, as detailed above through Ricoeur's concept of narrative identity, actually epitomizes the modernist turn in redefining Cartesian views on self and on the concept of truth. The very idea of certainty cannot be but a repeated refiguration. Proust reminds us in his novel of the "process of presencing" that is at work in art and points to the idea that *one is always already addressing the other topoi in the kinetic field: always and necessary discovering their affiliative relationship*. (Cf. Spanos 1993: 90–91; my italics) Manifestly bringing to light the issues of reinterpreted identity, modernism introduced a

new comprehension of the historical and of reality.[5] Proust's remark unmistakably manifests the argumentation on the nature of ongoing reinterpretations of the (historical and human) self in the tales of Mnemosyne. Through its explicit form the modernist novel was capable of conveying its awareness of the (historical) materiality of language. The modernist novel unambiguously elaborated the form as (part of) content and anticipated new modes of the novel genre.

Palimpsest rewritings and renderings of stories in postmodern narrative practices exemplify a step further. Echoing Descartes, the manifest statement of double meaning "I doubt I am" in John Barth's conclusion of his short narrative *Autobiography* touches upon the very idea of narrative identity. Echoing and rendering the most notorious Cartesian statement Barth not only questioned the issues of certainty but effaced its very meaning. The postmodernist use of metanarrative procedures, the exploitation of the methods of citations and overt strategies of intertextuality in the novel un-

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[5] Here we can "recall Auerbach's well-known summary of the characteristic features of the modernist style in his exegesis of a passage from Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*. Among the 'distinguishing stylistic characteristics' of that modernism which the passage has been chosen to exemplify, Auerbach lists: (1) the disappearance of the 'writer as narrator of objective facts; almost everything stated appears by way of reflection in the consciousness of the dramatis personae'; (2) the dissolution of any 'viewpoint [...] outside the novel from which the people and events within it are observed, [...]'; (3) the predominance of a 'tone of doubt and questioning' in the narrator's interpretation of those events seemingly described in an objective manner; (4) the employment of such devices as '*erlebte Rede*, stream of consciousness, *monologue intérieur*' for 'aesthetic purposes' that 'obscure and obliterate the impression of an objective reality completely known to the author [...]'; (5) The use of new techniques for the representation of the experience of time and temporality, for example, the use of the 'chance occasion' to release 'processes of consciousness' which remain unconnected to a 'specific subject of thought'; the obliteration of the distinction between exterior and interior time; and the representation of events not as 'successive episodes of [a] story' but as random occurrences." (Auerbach 1968: 534-38; quoted in White 1999: 40)

ambiguously expose the hypothetical nature of truth. The post-modernist application of metanarrative procedures in the novel emphasizes the very idea of narrativism[6] or the idea of narrative identity. The postmodern novel is a legacy from earlier modernist views on constructivism; its storytelling consciously presupposes the narrative interpretation of events and of the ideas it conveys. The story in the novel after modernism is much more optional. Cognizant of the difficulties (and advantages) of narration,[7] and aware of the procedures to be employed when representing the most serious or most banal topics, the novels beyond modernism exhibit their interest in relating the stories of reinterpreted identities. The return of the story and the manifest narrative interest in the novels at the end of the 20th century is definitely not naive, but very declarative. It shows that *any view is inevitably given in narrativization and thus delineates that representations (views about facts) can only be grasped through a tropological account.*

In conclusion, we shall take a brief look at the well-received and award-winning novel *Moreno* (Paris 2003), written by a Slovenian woman writer in French. Brina Svit, well acculturated in France, but still an exemplary deterritorialized writer, speaks of her novel as a book of "doubts" (Svit 2003: 36). She openly discusses her position as a minority writer in the text and touches upon the theme of her own self as *extracommunitaria*. She compares her writing in French to "desperate new outfits" (ib. 16) but her novel, set at the writers' resort in Tuscany, with its

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[6] Though Ankersmit offers his comments as a theoretician of history, his insights concern the issues if narrativism as such. "Narrativism is a constructivism [...]" (Ankersmit 1994: 37). "Narrative interpretation is thesis, not hypotheses. [...] Since narrative interpretations only apply and do not refer (cf. the point of view from which a painter paints a landscape), there is no fixity [...]" (Ib. 36). "Narrative interpretations cross the familiar border between the domain of things and the domain of language — as does metaphor." (Ib. 38)

[7] "Narrative interpretations are not necessarily of a sequential nature; [...] narratives are only contingently stories with a beginning, middle, and an end." (Ib. 33)

naturally multilingual atmosphere, utilizes a well-chosen situation by turning it into a well-wrought story. *Moreno* overtly calls in question a troublesome idea of identity (and of its ever new faces) and examines it as a theme through a serio-comic approach. But it is a painful novel in its tone: the first person narrator finds "no trust in a good fortune of bilingualism" (Svit 2003: 17), though she cannot deny that she is always attracted to reading novelists who had shifted from one language to another. She adores Cioran, Kundera and Nabokov, but not so much Beckett. The painful mood detectable in her writing when pondering on the Self is nothing but *groundlessness of ground* or Joyce's "incertitude of the void". Encountering her Self after constant shifting from one language to another, she is metaphorically lost in a maze and experiences her own being to losing her past, she finds it impossible to play her role of a gifted and successful writer at the flamboyant von Rezzori estate. She does not mingle with the Baroness's circle of writers there but mixes with the hired hands at the castle and lets herself be emotionally drawn to their distressing lives and miserable past. The drama of her language identity pulls her down into the "prison house" of questioning her own Self and facing the gaps between the losing and re-establishing her ever new Self in the ongoing interactions with others. *Moreno* is a tiny novel yet it brings to the reader a multitude of stories which are not told but only evoked as hypothetical in the background. Stories need not be written down; they can be unfolding while only implied in fragmentary comments. Brina Svit's novel shows well that the novel genre today is like the painter's canvas: the spatial arrangement of fragments, a mass of very small bits, only aspects of facts or phases of events. But the given, when set into the text, is always given in narrativization. Focusing on the multicultural and multilingual uncertainty as a narrative theme, *Moreno* points out how the Self and the given reality are ongoing events, ever re-interpreting facts, continuously intertextualized through the passage of time. The factual and reality are something circumstantial, not something stated forever within the fixed boundaries. The novel reminds us that it is in a state of flux, transmuting its character, ever transgressing the given edges. Reality is the given

in its literal sense: given to us to grasp it and to respond to it in the ongoing chain of responses.

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Some Notes on the American Novel at the Turn of the 21st century

ELVIRA OSIPOVA

> There are only two kinds of books in the world <...> There are books that desperately struggle to prove there's some holy, miraculous meaning to it all and desperately deny that everything in the world's mere belts and gears <...> and there are books that say the opposite. (John Gardner)

The above quotation from *October Light* (Gardner 1989: 273) reflects in a way the contemporary literary scene in the US. In the last few years there have appeared several novels which deserve to be discussed at some length. They can be cited as belonging to the former group in Gardner's classification. Among them are "novels of upbringing", fictional biographies, and war novels (as a variant of historical novels). The underlying feature, which characterizes them all, is a Romantic idea of interconnectedness — of past and present, of people and events — rather than the idea of detachment and alienation.

The traditional genre of *Bildungsroman* has been undergoing changes to allow for the depiction of a greater complexity of life and sophistication in methods of cognition. Cynthia Shearer's *The Wonder Book of the Air* (1996) may serve an excellent example of this. Her book is an argument in the polemics, which has been going on in American literature and critique for decades, on issues of being and faith, on the role of the artist in society. Shearer

continues the tradition of Thornton Wilder and Jerome Salinger, John Gardner and Saul Bellow with their emphasis on affirmation rather than negation. Her book betrays genuine originality, innovative techniques, combined with profound meanings and a perceptible moral message.

The Wonder Book of the Air is a novel of epic dimensions. Its action encompasses the history of the US of the last century — from events of World War I (the battle on the Somme) to the beginning of the 1990s, when the traumas of Vietnam were still acutely felt. It is written as a series of confessions of characters belonging to four generations of the Durrence family. Their voices overlap each other, describing the same events from different vantage points. The heroes' spiritual evolution adds another dimension to the process. It enlarges their vision of life, changing previous sensibilities and judgments. This device helps to emphasize the relativity of truth, or its multiplicity. Thus, the author achieves sincerity of tone and her book produces a very poignant impression of veracity.

The characters confess to us, readers, or to some of their imagined friends, or to themselves. Each of the twelve chapters is written in the first person singular, and we have to guess, who is speaking now. The first four out of five chapters are, in fact, interlacing reminiscences of Harrison Durrence and his wife Marjory (born Maddox). A connecting chapter is narrated by Harrison's friend at West Point. The following seven chapters make the confessions of Marjory's sister Adrienne (who speaks twice — in 1962 and 1985), Harrison's second wife Olivia, his daughter Ally, son Field, junior daughter Phoebe and granddaughter Tory Durrence. The composition is hinged on a succession of their stories, and the idea of continuity is overtly emphasized. The interconnectedness is expressed in many subtle ways: features, words, ideas and thoughts are repeated in each generation, they are like threads holding the fabric of human relationships together.

All the characters fall into two groups — destroyers and victims. The reader realizes it in an afterthought, while reflecting on the book and its message. The author goes against the grain of

contemporary American sensibilities, showing, as she does, that it is women who can embody a destructive force. Among them are representatives of all four generations — Harrison's and Marjory's mothers, Marjory herself, her daughter-in-law Madeira Webster and granddaughter Tory. One of the victims of family violence was Harrison's uncle Artemus Elliott. Broken by the tragic experience of the First World War and the heartless practicality of his wife he gradually withdraws from life (which reminds us of Melville's Bartleby), and finally kills himself on the self-designed electric chair. Harrison, who happened to witness the scene, experienced a shock, which left a deep imprint on his soul. Uncle Artie, with his kindness and bitter wisdom, always remained an ideal for him.

Germs of destruction inherited from her mother determine Marjory's life and make the life of Harrison hell. At first we think that it was she who was a victim of the family violence. The author makes us pity her and forgive her inadequate behavior. From her confessions we learn that Harrison returned from the war broken and aggressive. Having made twenty-eight successful air raids, he was hit by a kamikaze pilot. Incidentally, he turned out to be the only survivor of the crew. The episode is deeply suggestive, for it hints of some mystery, a wound in his soul incurred by survival under such circumstances. This may have been one of the reasons of his unmotivated aggressiveness towards his wife and children, which was aggravated by alcohol addiction.

A unique psychologist, Cynthia Shearer shows the process of the disintegration of personality under the influence of both outer and inner factors. Thus, Marjory is gradually losing interest in life, in her children, showing a surprising indifference to them, which affects the fates of the next generations of the Durrences. The theme of heredity is quite prominent in the book but it is devoid of the fatality typical of the naturalist novels of the 19th century. Marjory's daughter-in-law Madeira turns her family life into a torture by bondage and revengefulness. Her failure in life is obvious for her daughter Tory, whose grim confession completes the book. Her despair and disillusionment are expressed in symbolic acts. She throws into the lake the old Leika camera, which was so dear to her grandfather. The act carries a negative

symbolism, since the line of continuity is broken: Harrison received it as a gift from his uncle Artie. And what is more significant, she burns the boat "Alapaha Star", another gift of her grandfather, and a symbol of a beautiful dream.

Differently from these heroines, three other women-characters embody a creative force. One of them is Phoebe, whose name may have been borrowed from *The Catcher in the Rye*. Shearer's Phoebe finds strength after a failure of her first marriage to survive and start a new life full of love and caring. But the main image for the understanding of the philosophic import of the book is Adrienne. She left home at fifteen, escaping from the tyranny of her mother, gave birth to a son at sixteen, and soon lost her husband who had been stolen from her by her cousin Toy Elliott. Adrienne knew very little happiness: her son was killed in Vietnam, the man she loved did not dare leave his wife for her. But hardships steeled her character and made her susceptible to other people's grief.

Adrienne's life philosophy is based on love "for every living thing", on tolerance and sympathy to the miserable. She expressed it aphoristically: "The only way not to end up as somebody else's missionary work is to pitch in there and do some yourself" (Shearer 1997: 269). "The wall of human misery', as she puts it, 'is like a slow tidal wave you can never quite outrun, like in one of those old Japanese horror movies" (ib.). The tsunami of human unhappiness was something she had to deal with all her life. She saw herself as an advocate of the lowly and humiliated and constantly helped people: saved the nephew of their former black servant from persecution of racists and sent him to Canada, cared for an orphan, whose parents had perished while trying to flee from a country with a tyrannical regime. Adrienne taught people to believe, not in God (for she did not have such kind of faith), but in high moral verities. She wished she could "teach a childbirth class" or, to put it differently, teach girls the wisdom of life, save them from falling into the abyss of hatred. In her eyes, wisdom was in quietly accepting what she, and before her Harrison and her uncle Artemus Elliott, termed "the so-called abundance of life".

"You give a gift that may not be returned to you. It's the only way to survive" (ib. 277).

Adrienne embodies the author's moral ideal. She is somewhat of a maverick, acting and thinking as she did, irrespective of what is accepted, and practicing the religion of love. In this she reminds us of Henry Soames from Gardner's *Nickel Mountain* and many other "absurd" characters in American fiction: Henderson from Bellow's *Henderson the Rain King,* James Chandler from another novel by Gardner, *Resurrection*, or Vonnegut's Mr. Rosewater. Their authors deliberately grounded these heroes to avoid pathetic intonations.

The most complicated image in the book is that of Harrison Durrence. From the monologues of other characters we learn that he was a man who had a fine feeling for music, art, poetry, had a sense of justice and integrity, tried to be true to the dictates of the Cadet Prayer, an oath given at graduation from West Point: *O God our Father, Thou Searcher of men's hearts, / Help us to draw near to Thee / Suffer not our hatred of hypocrisy and pretense ever to diminish, / Make us choose the harder right instead of the easier wrong" (*ib. 120).

In books and children's encyclopedias about flying (hence the title of the book) the life of pilots is romanticized. The reality, as shown by Shearer, is brutal and depressing. Harrison's disillusionment in the army, the Air Force was caused by terrible corruption he saw around. In his words, "Honor is a language incomprehensible. They walk around it, scratching their heads as if it is some old wrecked fuselage encrusted with vines" (ib. 106). Being a commander at an airbase in Florida, he set out uprooting corruption, but fell victim to his enemies. During the alarm planes could not take off, for his fellow officers had had fuel pumped out. As a result Harrison was court-martialled and retired a colonel. The destruction of personality, which began after his return from the war, increased after his dismissal from the army, and made his family life unbearable for all. But it was not only his guilt, as is subtly shown by the author. Marjory reproached him for not having served till a position of a general, she even confessed having prayed for his death in the skies. Her moral degradation, as

different from Harrison's, became obvious to the children only much later. Harrison, however, could recover some of his former identity, due to a devoted love of another woman, Olivia, who later became his second wife.

One of Shearer's artistic features consists in juxtaposing different planes, which interlace each other. The author appears to imply that there is a correlation between war and peace (i.e. family life). In both these spheres violence breeds violence, and aggressiveness is liable to destroy families as well as peoples.

Though there is no description of wars in the book, they stand as metaphors of other conflicts — family, social, civil. The First World War and war with Japan, the Cold War and the Korean War, the destruction of Jews in gas chambers of Auschwitz and killing children with napalm in Vietnam, the Ku-Klux-Klan pogroms and pogroms of Germans in America in 1917 (!) — all these indications of violence and hatred create a picture of ontological chaos, a world without God and without sense. Still, there is no ontological despair in the book, for the author professes what can be called the religion of "responsible love". Its embodiments are Phoebe, Olivia, Adrienne and Harrison Durrence, in a sense. The true meaning of his image opens up only at the end of the book, in Phoebe's chapter. She recalls her father's words uttered before death: "Man. Woman. Baby. Winter. Fire. There is probably nothing else, sweetheart. Nothing else but love" (ib. 254). These words remind us of the final lines of Salinger's *Frannie and Zooey*, and the end of Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon*. The last words of Morrison's heroine Pilate were: "I wish I'd a knowed more people. I would of loved 'em all. If I'd a knowed more, I would a loved more" (Morrison 1980: 334). Significantly, the epigraph of Shearer's book is borrowed from Charles Simic. It reads, "Orphans that we are, we make our siblings kin out of anything we can find... We are fragments of an unutterable whole". The pathos of affirmation in the book is unmistakable. This, together with an outstanding artistic mastery, imparts power and originality to the first novel of Cynthia Shearer.

An American author of Hindu origin, Vijay Lakshmi has written what she calls a "novella" about the life of the Hindu

community in the USA. The American dream, as newcomers to America visualize it, is interwoven with the dreams of the culture left behind. Juhi, the heroine of *Pomegranate Dreams*, relates the story of her childhood and adolescence with candor and simplicity. In her inner monologues she argues with her rich Hindu acquaintance, contrasting their values. "What could I tell her about myself? ... I could have told her about our grandmother in India. I could have described the parrots in the guava trees and jasmine blooming in the garden in summer. I could have told her the stories that my grandmother had read from the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata.* But nothing I told her would have equaled her glamorous tales. I had neither birds-of-paradise nor orchids in my house, nor even a dog bouncing at my feet" (Lakshmi 2002: 92). In the process of growing up, Juhi realized that "happiness, which [she] had taken to be such a simple affair, wasn't so simple, after all. Life was getting to be more like a complex algebraic problem with many equations and infinite relationships" (ib. 99–100).

The novella, narrating about the richness and persistence of ethnic traditions and values of the Hindu community in America, deserves to have a sequel: the experience of the family in a wider context of the American reality of today. In fact, Lakshmi's stories published in the same volume may be viewed as fragments of such a novel.

A representative example of fictional biography is Adria Bernardi's *The Day Laid on the Altar* (2000), a book about the passions of artists, slightly reminiscent of Irving Stone's *Agony and Ecstasy,* which describes the life of Michael Angelo. Bernardi's novel focuses on another giant of Renaissance, Titian. The book is also a historical novel about Italy in the 16th century, blighted with wars and pestilences, a land where heretics were persecuted and burnt at the stake. It is also a philosophical commentary on an "endless stream of development", in which opposites meet (the concept propagated by Giordano Bruno, a philosopher, who was a contemporary of Titian). All the characters in the book are intricately connected: Cimabue, a painter of the early Renaissance discovered Giotto; Giotto was for several years his apprentice and later created his famous frescoes in the Scrovegni Chapel in Padua in 1305. He inspired Bartolomeo di

Bartolai, another shepherd-to-become-painter who lived 250 years later. He is a fictional character, whom Bernardi made, for her artistic purposes, a contemporary of Titian.

Titian's life is a subject of four central chapters. One of the main ideas of the novel is the veracity of his motto: "Natura Potentior Ars" (Art is more Powerful than Nature). Titian's daughter Lavinia expresses the idea in the following words: "We will be overcome and buried by nature. These gardens will disappear, and no one will be able to say for certain which one was our house, which were our living quarters and how they were configured. As for Titian? Let landslides cover whole towns, the gaze of his portraits will take away the breath of viewers five hundred years from now" (Bernardi 2000: 66).

Indeed, "Pieta", "Noli me tangere", the altar piece in the Church of the Frari, showing Titian's wife and son, survived ravages of time and destruction caused by man. Love and passion are still living in his "Venus of Urbino" and "Venus with a mirror". Suffering and devotion are represented in "Repentant Magdalen", for which his daughter Lavinia sat, and "St. Sebastian", depicted as an image of stoical forbearance. Some of Titian's pictures show a characteristic mountainous landscape, near Cadore, his native village in northern Italy. The author makes Bartolomeo di Bartolai dwell near this place, in Ardonla, where in a hidden cave he creates his frescoes and mosaics.

Titian's pictures are described as if they were reflected in a series of mirrors: through the eyes of Titian's daughter and sons, in whose name central chapters are written; through the eyes of Martin de Martinelli, Bartolomeo's friend in youth, who could see them in museums and churches of Florence and Venice; through the eyes of Giovanna da Malborghetto, who saw them in his studio after his house had been ravaged.

The book is built on the juxtaposition of opposites. Bernardi contrasts Titian and his sons, Orazio and Pomponio, who are also contrasted to each other; Titian and Giovanna da Malborghetto, a beautiful model, who later became a servant in his house, but was expelled by Titian's elder son Pomponio after his father's death. Bartolomeo di Bartolai is quite different from Martin de Martinelli

(his friend in youth), by both character and talent. Incidentally, the latter worked as an apprentice with Pontormo and imbued some of the ideas of Renaissance (Petrarch, Erasmus). He was convicted for heresy and finally ended up collecting corpses in the streets of Venice during the epidemics of influenza. It was he who found on the body of the dead Giovanna a precious jar with pigment — ultramarine from Titian's studio — and passed it on to Bartolomeo di Bartolai. Without it the latter would have never created his chef-d'oeuvre.

The structure of the book is intricately balanced, reflecting these juxtapositions. Chapters devoted to these two fictional characters frame the novel, Bartolomeo di Bartolai beginning and finishing the narrative, while Martin de Martinelli's parts following the first chapter and precede the last one. Slowly unwinding from the descriptions of a plain life of a peasant, the plot culminates in the depiction of ecstatic creation of an inspired artist, working in an obscure cave turned into a chapel.

A recurring image appearing in Bartolomeo di Bartolai's work is a scene reminiscent of Giotto's "San Giaocchino and the shepherds" (in the Scrovegni Chapel in Padua). The saint is sleeping, and the angel is giving a sign of a new age, pointing to a cave. Bartolomeo di Bartolai "dreams that night like San Giaocchino, with an angel appearing to him, who says the new century will begin in war. There will be fighting on the mule path above and massacre at a pilgrimage site over who will possess a saint's shinbone <...> He dreams of a winged barge that cuts the sky into two, of a heretic being burned alive. A man dies, burned at the stake, in a piazza in a city on the plains, the orpiment in his alms purse exploding yellow against the blue" (ib. 209). The artist as a seer and art as prediction — this is again the motif of Romantic aesthetics.

Bernardi's characters — Giotto, Titian, Bartolomeo di Bartolai — are people who laid their lives on the altar of Art and Love. Glorification of devotion and artistic dedication is another message of the book.

In her second book, a collection of short stories, *In the Gathering Woods* (2000), the Italy of the sixteenth century is

linked with the Chicago of the 1990s. The bridge is built with the help of parallels, tiny signs of events, which took place centuries ago. Lettizia Mattei, a second generation Italian immigrant to the US, is a neurologist, who studies communication of cells. Her research analysis is unexpectedly actualized — on a personal level — when she faces Titian's picture "Noli me tangere" in London's National Gallery. She experiences a shock of recognition of something she had never seen — a stone house in the mountains, and a lanky man going down. She undertook a pilgrimage to her ancestors' home in Ardonla to visit the grave of her grandmother. There she learnt that she was a distant relative (many times removed) of Bartolomeo di Bartolai. Her mother's name was Giovanna Bartolai and her grandfather's home was the same one inhabited by Bartolomeo di Bartolai — La Gruccia. Seeing his masterpiece in the cave, she recognizes it as a part of her own cultural legacy.

This link with the country of her grandparents is what the American critic Frank Conroy termed, "a connective thread between the narratives". In a very subtle and profound way the author proclaims universal connectedness as an important principle of life. It is substantiated aesthetically — as an undying chain of tradition and artistic creation. The power of ethnic identity continues to shape the characters of people and determine their ways of life, however far from their ancestral homes they may have wandered — in time and space. Thus, Bernardi stresses the idea of interconnectedness — of cultures, epochs, continents and people.

Another group of novels includes Howard Bahr's *The Black Flower*, Charles Frazier's *Cold Mountain* and Thomas Dyja's *Play for a Kingdom*. These books, devoted to the Civil War in the USA, appeared simultaneously in 1997. They belong to the tradition laid down by Leo Tolstoy and continued by Stephen Crane, Ambrose Bierce, and Ernest Hemingway, who showed the carnage of war without sentimentality or heroics.

In *The Black Flower* Howard Bahr describes the aftermath of one battle of the Civil War — the Battle of Franklin. The scenes of devastation remind us of pictures of Otto Dix. "The dead

possessed the violated earth. They were draped all over the parapet [of the breastworks], festooned in the [osage] orange hedges, blown back from the embrasures in meaty fragments..." (Bahr 1997: 98). The novel's characters Bushrod Carter and his friends from the university of Mississippi joined the Confederate army to defend "their Southern Cause". Two of them fell in the terrible slaughter, Bushrod died of a wound later. "The battle had jarred him loose, as if he'd stepped into a blast of double-shotted canister and been scattered in fragments across the night" (ib. 146). It dawned on him that a noble aim couldn't be achieved by inhuman means, at the cost of thousands of lives and utter physical suffering. Loss of sensitivity, near insanity, caused by the horror he had witnessed, made him opt out. "He did know one thing, however: this was his last battle. He was finished, he had acted well his part and now he was through. He had discharged himself, sent himself on permanent furlough. The boys were dead, and the Bonnie Blue Flag was their winding sheet, and Bushrod Carter was done with soldiering forevermore" (ib. 147). Echoes of Hemingway's *Farewell to Arms* are quite audible here. The feeling of the end, though, is set off by the epilogue, where a boy and a pony move "across the warm, sunlit fields, while the blue jays laughed in the woods" (ib. 267).

Surprisingly similar motifs appear in Charles Frazier's novel *Cold Mountain*. It describes an odyssey of Inman, a Confederate solider, who "was done with soldiering", just as Bushrod Carter, and very much for the same reasons. He was returning home to meet his beloved, Ada Monroe. After a series of horrible events he did reach Cold Mountain and was united with Ada, but the very next morning he was killed by the outliers. The two planes — peaceful life on the farm and the world of war — are skillfully opposed to each other, thus stressing the inhumanity of the latter. The message of the author is expressed by Ada, who found that the war exhibited "anything but the fine characteristics of tragedy and nobility. She found it, even at a great distance, brutal and benighted on both sides about equally. Degrading to all" (Frazier 1997: 141).

The psychology of war is also the theme of Dyja's novel *Play For a Kingdom*. It pictures a clash of Union soldiers and the rebels in the Battle of the Wilderness, near Spotsylvania on May 5, 1864. Murder on a colossal scale does not come with impunity, the author reasons. It causes insanity, even if temporal. "Like drones, the men accomplished their individual murders methodically under the eyes of pitiless foremen; insanity was necessary to perform the job" (Dyja 1997: 260). "This is madness! This is madness!" — an outcry of one of the soldiers characterizes the scene. The image of Hell is evoked, when one of the soldiers realized that "what he had lauded as a necessary act of man was nothing but the foul core of Dante's journey" (ib. 263).

A series of pictorial descriptions to that effect do not leave the reader indifferent. To experience a shock now, a century and a half after the conflict, might be a means to heal the still searing wounds. We may agree with William Shakespeare — and Thomas Dyja — that "the gentler gamester is the soonest winner". The epigraph, which explains the title and the message of the book, is taken from "Henry V" (Act III). It reads: "... for when lenity and cruelty play for a kingdom, the gentler gamester is the soonest winner".

A new theme raised in this novel is that of brotherhood ACROSS the lines. To preserve humanity amid the horrors of war the soldiers of the opposing armies met after battle and played baseball — Brooklyn versus Alabama. The enemy-friend ties were thus reversed: John Burridge (of the Rebels) defended with his body Lyman, a Union soldier, from the bullet of a Union commander Lieutenant Linden Stewart. The description of Burridge's death sounds as a paean to courage and dignity. The book is obviously meant, in the words of a critic, to "help a nation struggling to become whole again".

However different in form and content, the novels discussed here betray some common features. They may be said to contain "a cultural genetic code", which "acts much like DNK" (Schultz 1994: 485). Their authors emphasize affirmation and belief in fundamental moral values.

The genre of the novel, as these examples show, is well adapted to reflect psychological, moral and even political issues at the turn of the 21st century.

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Forms of Fiction: Themes in the African American Novel at the End of the Century. "The Long Road" and "The Difficult Journey" in the Works of Ralph Ellison, John Wideman and Toni Morrison

JOHN MOE

When considering the question concerning the vitality of the contemporary novel form, it is serendipitous that Ralph Ellison's long-awaited novel was published in 1999, at the very end of the century. It is even more intriguing that the novel, *Juneteenth,* is the product of Ellison's constant work from the publication of *Invisible Man*, published in 1952, to his death in 1994. In the opening pages of his novel, Ellison is describing the group of "southern Negroes" who come to see the racist prodigal son "Bliss". Ellison notes in the very beginning of the novel that the southern Negroes "seemed resigned, like people embarked on a difficult journey who were already far beyond the point of no return" (1999: 5). Ellison brings forth the cultural and iconic image of African American folk culture when he speaks about "a difficult journey." The image of the journey harkens back to the combined metaphors of Black America of the journey and "the long road" that Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke of so often. "The long road" and "the difficult journey" are central themes inherent in Black folk culture reaching back to the struggle for freedom during the period of slavery, the road to freedom and following the North Star, the use of these metaphors in African America churches, and the use of the themes during the post-1950 freedom struggle for desegregation in the United States.

Juneteenth provides new evidence that the novel form is alive and well, but in the hands of authors who are writing from and about the edges of American society. It is not surprising that the novel form has gained vitality from women and minority authors in American culture. African American, Hispanic, Asian, and American Indian writers have contributed greatly to the recent rise and growth of the novel form in American writing. It is also not surprising that women writers have contributed greatly to the ongoing strength of the form of the novel. Minority and women writers have provided the most innovative pieces of literature in the United States in the recent past. Indeed, the themes of "The Long Road" and "The Difficult Journey" are at the very heart of the fictional work of Ellison, Toni Morrison and John Wideman. Of these fictional works, perhaps *Beloved* most encapsulates the themes of journey and the long road. Although not an African American, one of the best short pieces of American fiction that addresses the twin themes of journey and road is the splendid short story by Eudora Welty, "The Worn Path". The story, which is a metaphor for the African American journey for freedom and equality, tells the story of the long journey of an old Black woman named Phoenix who literally rises from the dead or forgotten to successfully complete her journey down a long and worn path.

I want to summarize some of the thoughts and ideas that provide an historical background to the literature of the late-twentieth century. At this point in time we are aware of the range of African American literature from the earliest beginnings, in the African narratives written during the Colonial period of American history, to Frederick Douglass and the slave narratives written during the nineteenth century, through the anxious moments of the debate between W. E. B. Dubois and Booker T. Washington at the turn of the twentieth century, and, finally, to the flowering of Black literature during the flush of the Harlem Renaissance.

Our collaborative study moved us, the reader, closer to the mid-part of the twentieth century. Ralph Ellison, Lorraine Hansberry and James Baldwin spoke to us from the 1950s and the 1960s with concerns about the development of an integrated American society replete with the problems of housing, employment, and the

military service. Finally, we read about the movement for political equality in the words of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X. We have travelled far not only in terms of our thematic notions of "the Long Road" and "the Difficult Journey."

Our investigation into the study of Afro-American literature has taken us through fiction and nonfiction. We have studied the different genres: the oral narrative, the letter form of expression, artistic expression in the form of poetry, the essay, and the classic form of the public address, or the speech. We have also studied the traditional fictional genres of the novel, the short story, and the dramatic form, or the play. We have made this exploration not only to study the range of African American literature but also to examine the influence of the words themselves. We have endeavored to study the introduction to the art of writing. We ask, as readers and students of literature and culture, what is the influence of writing on literature itself? What is the impact of the art of writing and the invocation of words on our understanding of what an author intends in the literature that is written? Finally, how do we combine the study of the art of writing with the study of African American literature? What information does literature yield that might help us live our own lives more fruitfully and with more moral conviction? These are questions that we, as readers and students, require of the literature itself.

Now, we find ourselves at the end of the twentieth century and some three hundred and eighty years from the arrival of the first Africans on the shores of the Americas. During the past quarter of a century, since approximately 1975, we have witnessed another flowering of Black literature, another renaissance, through the works of authors such as Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, John Wideman, Maya Angelou, and August Wilson, only to name a few Black authors who are contributing to this recent renaissance.

Indeed, this year, in itself, has witnessed a remarkable step forward in the growth of African American literature. We have witnessed a step in the direction of discovering new historic literature and a step in the direction of witnessing the emergence of a new important Black writer in the area of drama. Both "finds"

contribute to the area of Black literature and the study of the field of African American literature.

In the area of historic literature, Professor Henry Louis Gates, Jr. of the Department of Afro-American Studies at Harvard University has discovered and will publish a new slave narrative written approximately 150 years ago, *The Bondwoman's Narrative: A Novel* by Hannah Crafts. Gates argues that it could be the first American novel written by a Black woman. It is a melodramatic and sentimental autobiographical novel by a self-educated young woman describing her life as a house slave in North Carolina and her escape to freedom in New Jersey. Scholars have dated the novel at pre-1860 due to the use of a special paper and ink. The ink, called "iron-gall," was used only until about 1860. The novel was originally a 300-page manuscript that belonged to a Howard University librarian who bought it in 1948 for $85.00 from a New York book dealer who got it from a "book scout" who found it somewhere in New Jersey.

The finding of this novel is exciting. The novel gives us the opportunity to explore the early connections between history and literature, between fact and metaphor. Though we cannot entirely know about the origin of the novel, we have certain definite clues as to its origin and meaning. It is perhaps one of the early American novels by a woman and is certainly a candidate for the earliest novel written by a Black woman. The big question is: who is Hannah Crafts? Among the clues to the identity of Crafts is the fact that the narrator's final owner in the novel is one slave master by the name of Mr. Wheeler. Using the Census data, Henry Louis Gates linked Wheeler possibly to a John Hill Wheeler, a North Carolina state legislator. The real-life Wheeler was an ardent defender of slavery. He was involved in a celebrated 1855 court case in which he tried to regain a fugitive slave by the name of Jane Johnson. In Crafts's novel, the fictional Mrs. Wheeler, not to be confused with the real Mrs. Wheeler, laments that a slave named Jane had run away.

Among other things, all of this means that there are still great finds in the antique world. To find a historical novel of this nature, naming a slave and a slave owner, and being able to connect these

historical identities with fictional historical identities means that we will be able to piece together another piece of the historical and cultural puzzle. The connection between the Wheelers and a runaway slave narrator and an author named Hannah Crafts enables us to understand the life and culture of antebellum African Americans particularly because the record comes in the words, presumably, of a Black woman from the period. Again, we witness and understand the invocation of words.

In addition, this year we witnessed the emergence of a major new Black woman playwright. Suzan-Lori Parks won the 2002 Pulitzer Prize for drama with her play *Topdog/Underdog*. At thirty-eight years old, she has been writing plays for more than twenty years. According to one reviewer, even five years ago, people familiar with her work would not have selected Ms. Parks as a playwright likely to land on Broadway, much less with such an entertaining effort as her current play. As we discussed before, *Topdog/Underdog* is an audacious and ambitious play that draws upon the primary and basic idioms of American culture. There are only two characters in the play and they are named, audaciously enough, Lincoln and Booth. They may stand for Cain and Abel. The characters draw upon the soul of American cultural history in their invocation of Lincoln and Booth, Abraham Lincoln and John Wilkes Booth. Who but a contemporary playwright could be so bold as to invoke the names of these famous combatants from the Civil War period and place them, so ironically, in the middle of a street game on a city street in the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Suzan-Lori Parks has emerged as a powerful new force in the field of American drama and contributes to our study of African American literature. A writer who can call on such a central dramatic tension in American society can go far to explain the central problems of American society. And, that, after all, is the central role of literature and the study of literature — to find ourselves and our society.

Nearly four hundred years have passed since the African Diaspora reached the North American continent. In that time, the record of the history and the history of the culture of African

Americans has been made in the words of Black people who have written and recorded the events. Lastly, we examine three pieces of literature that each reach back into the record of Black people in our society and offer us, the readers, insights into the outcome of that Diaspora. John Wideman through his novel, *Sent for You Yesterday*, Toni Morrison through her novel, *Beloved*, and August Wilson through his play, *The Piano Lesson*, address the difficult problems in African American culture and history of the thematic concerns of "the Long Road" and "the Difficult Journey." In each of these works of literature, the author reaches back into American history to arrive at conclusions about our current historical dilemma. August Wilson and Toni Morrison go back to the period of slavery to present contemporary realities. Wilson describes the historical Sutter Plantation as Morrison describes the ironically named "Sweet Home" Plantation in Kentucky. In both cases, the action of the novel describes the end result of the period of slavery and the strife to deliver oneself from the time and historical reality of slavery.

Slavery becomes the operative symbol for the literature itself. In *Beloved*, Sethe describes her twenty-eight days of freedom from what she called an "unslaved life." Sethe remembers her past for the sake of sanity. "From the pure clear stream of spit that the little girl dribbled into her face to her oily blood was twenty-eight days. Days of healing, ease, and real-talk. Days of company: knowing the names of forty, fifty other Negroes, their view, habits; where they had been and what done; of feeling their fun and sorrow along with her own, which made it better. One taught her the alphabet; another a stitch. All taught her how it felt to wake up at dawn and decide what to do with the day. That's how she got through the waiting for Hale. Bit by bit, at 124 and in the Clearing, along with the others, she had claimed herself. Freeing yourself was one thing; claiming ownership of that freed self was another" (Morrison 1987: 95). The story of *Beloved* is the story of a "beloved" that is left behind. It is the story of the soul that wants to be remembered in the course of history.

George Santayana has addressed the question of form and aesthetics in his book-length essay entitled *The Sense of Beauty*.

The question of form and writing is inextricably bound to our appreciation of literature. Furthermore, understanding form and writing enables us as readers to increase our ability to comprehend what the words of literature are trying to tell us. In other words, we cannot fully grasp literature unless we begin to comprehend from whence literature comes.

Santayana argues that "the main effect of language consists in its meaning, in the ideas which it expresses. But no expression is possible without a presentation, and this presentation must have a form /.../ This form of the instrument of expression is itself an element of effect, although in practical life we may overlook it in our haste to attend to the meaning it conveys" (1955: 165). What Santayana points out to us is that it is in the combination of form and expression that we can derive meaning. He argues that we adopt a gestalt in order to derive the greatest meaning for the piece of art in the form of literature.

Through the time period from 1619, and the arrival of the first Africans in Jamestown in North America, until 2002, and the awarding of a Pulitzer Prize to Suzan-Lori Parks for her play *Topdog/Underdog*, the growth of a body of African American artistic expression in literature, music and art has provided an insight into the history of Black people on this continent. The main effect of language, as Santayana puts it in his essay *The Sense of Beauty*, is to establish and derive beauty from the expression of a people.

To end with then, let us look at John Wideman. I was fortunate to spend some time talking about life and shooting some baskets with Wideman in the early 1980s while he was in Wyoming. Much of my insight comes from a few conversations then. I have remained a great admirer of his work. Wideman was born in Washington, D.C., but spent most of his early years in Homewood, a Black section of Pittsburgh. Homewood is the place where he locates much of his fiction. Pittsburgh is also the place where "A Piano Lesson" by August Wilson takes place, making Pittsburgh an unusual focus for recent Black American fiction. He began his academic career as a basketball star. He was recruited by the University of Pennsylvania and earned a place in the Philadelphia

Big Five Basketball Hall of Fame. In 1963, when it became clear that his basketball talents would not take him to the NBA, he accepted a Rhodes Scholarship to attend Oxford University, where he earned a degree in eighteenth-century literature. Wideman wrote his most recent book on the role of basketball in his life and the life of others in his work called, *Hoop Dreams*. Wideman later accepted a Kent Fellowship at the University of Iowa Writer's Workshop. He left Iowa to become the first tenured Black professor at the University of Pennsylvania.

Wideman's early novels, *A Glance Away* (1967) and *Hurry Home* (1970), echo the aesthetic practices of traditional white writers, yet they display Wideman's mastery and originality with the language. He, perhaps, echoes James Joyce and William Faulkner the most, in part, because of his attention to the sense of place. In his third novel, *The Lynchers* (1973), Wideman began to incorporate Black vernacular dialect, Black historical tradition, and Black racial sentiment to create a more powerful narrative.

Wideman's fiction began to turn with *Hiding Places* (1981), the first volume of his Homewood Trilogy, which also includes *Damballah* (1981) and *Sent for You Yesterday* (1983). Still utilizing modernist techniques, Wideman incorporates myths and traditions of his own family and the Homewood community. Throughout the Homewood Trilogy, the reliance on place and community has been compared with Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha County. Of course, and this is part of the secret of understanding literature, as we know from Santayana's observation, Wideman also knew that we would compare his series on one place with Faulkner. Therefore, we know that the comparison is fair. Wideman's other works include his memoir *Brothers and Keepers* (1984), *Reuben* (1987), *Philadelphia Fire* (1990), and one of his most recent memoirs, *Fatheralong* (about his relationship with his father).

John Wideman brings African American fiction to a post-modernist conclusion in his Homewood Trilogy. The first two books in the trilogy, *Sent for You Yesterday* and *Hiding Place* resist synopsis. An audible echo of voices, sounds, and silences moves through the crevices of memory-jumbled time, recalling Home-

wood in a narrative style that defies conventional constructs of plot and chronology. In both of the books, there is no clear beginning or finite end. Rather, the stories are cyclical, looping back around themselves and filling in the gaps until the vivid world of Wideman's youth and ancestry unfolds.

Sent for you Yesterday is the story of story-telling. Stories are stacked upon one another, removed and reconfigured, and then added once again to the stack. It is the concurrent tale of two generations, the 1940's of Wideman's Uncle Carl, and the 1920's of his grandfather John French as heard through the 1970 ears of John Wideman. The story pivots around Brother Tate, his Uncle Carl's albino best friend who has been speechless for sixteen years. *Sent for You Yesterday* follows Brother Tate and Carl through the adventures of childhood, Carl's adolescent love for Brother's sister Lucy, and Brother's adult pain of losing his son.

An inseparable part of this narrative is the story of the return of Albert Wilkes, John French's best friend who has disappeared for seven years because he killed a white policeman. Wilkes is eventually murdered, but Brother Tate proves his living legacy through his phenomenal piano playing that defines the thriving, black Homewood culture.

The book's title announces both the tone and the action. "Sent for you yesterday, and here you come today." The elegiac outcry of this old Jimmy Rushing blues suggests the urgent need, apparent loss and ironic recovery that characterizes the novel's beautiful first-person narrative. The narrator, his speech laden with news and the blues, is a character who has appeared in Wideman's fiction before. He appeared as the voice in a story called "Across the Wide Missouri," one of the stories in *Damballah*. Like Wideman, he is a young black writer who has moved to Wyoming and spends only vacation time in his native Pittsburgh. In *Fatheralong*, we also see this character who returns East from Wyoming to visit his father and his mother who lived separately. He returns to Homewood to take on the roles of both son and father in mind and feelings. The narration here makes it clear that both as a molder of language and a builder of plots, Wideman has come into his full

powers. He is a literary artist with whom any reader who admires ambitious fiction must reckon.

Wideman himself asks the question about why writers write about a place. He asks, "Why do writers write about the same place over and over again? There are probably as many answers to this questions as there are writers...I'll focus my thoughts on the turn my own work has taken, my excursions home again, home again in fiction and nonfiction, to Homewood, a black neighborhood in Pittsburgh." (Wideman 1999)

Wideman offers us an insight into the writer's mind. "The trick," he says, "is to borrow, to internalize for a few quiet instants, the peace of the elements at play. Whatever mood or scene I'm attempting to capture, the first condition is inner calm, a simultaneous grasping and letting go that allows me to be a witness, a mirror. This state has gradually become more accessible to me only after fighting for years to believe again in my primal perceptions, my primal language, the words, gesture and feeling of my earliest memories. At some point I taught myself to stop translating from one language to another. I've learned I can say the things I want to say using the words and telling the stories of Homewood people. The blackness of my writing inheres in its history, its bilingual, Creole, maroon, bastardized, miscegenated, cross-cultural acceptance of itself in the mirror only it can manufacture." (Ib.)

Wideman's words provide a suitable and appropriate conclusion to our excursion into the world of African American literature. In some ways, Wideman offers us the honesty of a position that argues that literature, in its own words, is the truest expression of writing and answers best the sentiment of George Santayana in his notion of the sense of beauty as portrayed in the combination of expression and form to provide meaning. Wideman articulates his own sense of meaning through the sense of expression garnered from a sense of place as the best possible point of departure for an artist today.

In both personal and literary ways, the African American authors discussed here articulate the thematic notions of "the Long Road" and "the Difficult Journey" inherent in the struggle of the

Black community in the United States. As it was presented by Ralph Ellison at both ends of a fifty year cycle beginning with *Invisible Man* in 1952 and ending with *Juneteenth* in 1999, Black literature has dealt with a cultural journey of a people "embarked on a difficult journey who were already far beyond the point of no return." It is appropriate somehow that Ralph Ellison would have somewhat of a final say to the literature produced by African Americans through the publication of his novel in 1999, six years after his death for it was Ellison, more than any other author, who woke up the rest of America to the struggle, journey and long road of African Americans. Through the humor and poignancy of the *Invisible Man*, America was able to view another reality in the midst of the consensus world of the 1950s.

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The Current State of American Fiction: A Minority Report

THEODORE PELTON

Innovative contemporary literature — particularly unconventional works which challenge the prevailing notions of form, and even more particularly if their authors do not enjoy name recognition as bankable commodities — is very hard to publish in the United States today. Contemporary literature must fight against the many various products of publishing companies, even as publishing companies themselves fight for resources against other subsidiaries within the multifaceted entertainment conglomerates. If you were to receive all of your news about American culture from large, corporate, mainstream sources, you may not be aware of this state of affairs: representations of literary culture are almost entirely absent from the mainstream media. Television ignores literary culture entirely, but even book review weeklies in the large urban newspapers focus on the output of the largest US publishing houses, with reviews timed for when the bookstore chains receive shipments from distributors, a system which, intentionally or unintentionally, keeps audiences in the dark about non-mainstream works. Seven multinational conglomerates control dozens of publishing imprints, conveying the illusion of variety in the marketplace.[1]

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[1] In 1997, Mark Crispin Miller was critical of eight corporations controlling the vast majority of trade publishing (11). Mergers and acquisitions have altered this list slightly and brought it to seven. Two independent, mainstream publishers remain in the US market: Norton and

Works "too formally and stylistically experimental for commercial publication" (McLaughlin 2001: 1), in the words of Robert L. McLaughlin, a senior editor at *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, may not simply suffer neglect from the reading public; they may not reach readers and students of literature at all, remaining unpublished or hidden from view by a distribution system that favors the large corporations, all because they are perceived "too intelligent, daring, demanding for the commercial marketplace" (ib. 4).[2]

Nonetheless, spurred on by increasingly affordable technology and a greater need than ever to fill these literary voids, small not-for-profit presses, whose special tax status hinges on existing for the public good, have become more significant than ever as venues for bringing to light important new works of fiction. To some extent, this imitates a practice that has long been influential in poetry: "During the 1990s, nonprofit presses published six of the ten National Book Critic Circle Award-winning poetry books" (Harris 2001: 1). The money stakes have always been higher in fiction publishing, which has made authors resist going to presses less likely to generate large sales. But it is these same stakes that have made publishers streamline their fiction offerings by offering only what they see as proven products. Just as American movie studios may test-market different endings to find the ones that will please paying audiences, so American publishers seek to reduce their investment risks by emphasizing sure things, and taking few chances on unusual products. While economics have always figured largely in American publishing, this is a departure from the

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Houghton-Mifflin. The seven media multinationals who share up the rest of the mainstream marketplace, collectively comprising in the neighborhood of 100 imprints, are Bertelsmann AG, Holtzbrinck, News Corporation (Rupert Murdoch), Pearson, Reed Elsevier, Time-Warner, and Viacom. Lists of the holdings of these media giants, with the exception of Holtzbrinck, can be browsed at the Columbia Journalism Review website, www.cjr.org/tools/owners.

[2] Wallace links the dominance of realism in mainstream contemporary American fiction with the desire of large corporate publishers to suppress voices of cultural critique, using the phrase "capitalist realism" to identify this trend (2003: 1).

days when publishers like Bennett Cerf (Random House) and Alfred Knopf would use the profit generated by popular titles to finance forward-looking literary works. "They did the high-yield trash so as to subsidize the books they loved," writes Miller. "This is the all-important difference between then and now" (1997: 14).

David Markson is an example of a challenging, innovative novelist whose work has appeared almost exclusively in small press editions, despite critical acclaim and the accolades of his artistic contemporaries.[3] His two most recent novels, published by Dalkey Archive and Counterpoint, respectively, are particularly worth noting. *Reader's Block* (1996) introduced the form in which Markson works in his most recent book, which I will for the moment refrain from calling a novel in deference to its title, *This is Not a Novel* (2001). The form adopted in these two books is to create narrative out of quotation and paraphrase from texts of world-wide literary, cultural, and intellectual traditions, as well as commentary on these texts. Obsessions figuring predominantly in the imaginations of his protagonists are identified not by directly linking them to the protagonists, who are rarely referred to directly, but by implied themes in the subject matter of appropriated materials, as in this excerpt from *This is Not a Novel*, which incorporates a quotation from the Francis Ford Coppola movie *Apocalypse Now*, biblical lore, examples commenting on American Catholicism and French anti-Semitism, and names of a number of semi-obscure figures from the histories of painting, literature, philosophy, and music, all in the course of less than a page:

> I love the smell of napalm in the morning.
>
> Josquin des Prez.
>
> It took ten years after her suicide for Jeanne Hébuterne's family to allow her remains to be reburied beside Modigliani's in the Jewish section of Père Lechaise.

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[3] Highly regarded American writers who have praised Markson include David Foster Wallace, Ann Beattie, and Kurt Vonnegut, among others.

> Adelaide Proctor. Mrs. Henry Wood.
> Gericault died after a fall from a horse.
> Hindemith died of a stroke.
> Nebuchadnezzar. Who ruled Jerusalem.
> And went mad.
> And ate grass.
>
> Cardinal Spellman of New York once sent Pope Pius XII a Cadillac automobile with solid gold door handles.
>
> Wyatt Earp died of chronic cystitis. (2001: 110)

In this excerpt, the mind of the protagonist, identified in the book only as "Writer", is shown as a field of received texts through which he has nonetheless himself become defined, for the reader finds out little more of him than through these. "Writer's" experiences have become entirely subsumed within textual referents. Evidently fearing death, he is awash in textual examples of and reflections on death and dying; his adult life having been consumed by making up characters and plots, he now cannot think but in received plots, characters, and names of characters, the act of naming one of the most creatively original activities an author of fiction performs. But "Writer", we are told at the beginning of the so-called non-novel, is "pretty much tempted to quit writing", "weary unto death of making up stories", "inventing characters" (1). Markson manages to create character and plot by their absence, which in the mind of the blocked but well-read and intellectually curious writer (interested in "seducing the reader to turn pages nonetheless", 3), cannot but become the greater absences evoked by the signs all around him, within him, invisibly webbing him from all directions. His non-novel or anti-novel, of course, is a novel precisely because its absences create a dialogue with "The Novel", this genre so obsessed with self-definition, so amorphous and changeable, so continually worried about its own problems.

Markson is certainly a cerebral writer. But he is hardly incomprehensible. Indeed, one need not follow all the references to find intellectual entertainment in *This is Not a Novel*. Nonetheless, it was not Markson who chose not to partake of commercial literary success; the commercial marketplace chose not to partake of him. In an interview with Joseph Tabbi, Markson speaks at first sheepishly, then angrily, of the number of rejections his novel *Wittgenstein's Mistress* received before it was published by Dalkey Archive, fifty-four (Tabbi 1989: 5). About a third of these rejections came not from editors but from the sales divisions of publishing companies, which has made Markson understandably bitter about the selection processes employed by American publishers, ruled by salespeople: "those semiliterates don't simply participate in the editorial process, but dictate its decisions."

To be sure, Markson's works are not what the average reader expects when he or she picks up a novel. The question is whether these readerly expectations have created the types of novels corporate publishers will and will not take chances publishing, or if the tastes have been created by publishers who refuse to take risks. However one answers this chicken and egg problem, clearly US publishers of the novel favor a certain mode of fiction-making: the straightforward, verisimilitudinous tale, told with a minimum of self-reflexive reflection on the operations of its telling. For if there is any notion that divides contemporary practitioners of innovative fiction whose work is mostly located in the small presses from the mainstream publishing establishment, it is the notion that narrative operations should be seamless and invisible in the service of telling a story, versus the recognition on the part of more experimental authors and presses, consistent with contemporary narrative theory, that fiction-making is a complex process. As Paul Cobley points out:

> [E]ven the most 'simple' of stories is embedded in a network of relations that are sometimes astounding in their complexity.
>
> [...] The most familiar, most primitive, most ancient and seemingly most straightforward of stories reveals

> depths that we might hitherto have failed to anticipate. That we do not anticipate them is usually because we do not attend to the network of relations in which a story resides. (Cobley 2001: 2)

Cobley quotes historian David Carr on the difference between lived reality and stories: "real events do not have the character of those we find in stories, and if we treat them as if they did have such a character, we are not being true to them" (quoted in Cobley 2001: 9). Creating narrative is an operation of selecting and ordering signs; a story based on lived experience emphasizes representation of certain aspects of that experience, elects to leave other parts out, emphasizes and de-emphasizes events, perspectives, causations, implications, decides which other experiences are connected and which are not, etc. The verisimilitudinous or mimetic in narrative fiction is that quality which makes it seem virtually the same as narratives of lived experience. But the novel is not simply a recording of lived experience; indeed, the complex act of making narrative, which may exist even prior to the formal act of fiction-making, is that quality to which many innovative, US small press-based fiction writers are most drawn, find intriguing, integral to the story rather than the aspect that must be submerged.[4] This is in keeping with a certain tradition of the novel that foregrounds narrative operations instead of being pledged to their invisibility in the service of verisimilitude, a centuries-old, international tradition that includes writers like Cervantes, Sterne, Melville, Gogol, Joyce, Stein, Woolf, Kundera, Soyinka, and numerous others.

If "form is never more than an extension of content", as Charles Olson wrote over fifty years ago, quoting his fellow poet Robert Creeley, then a work that may seem on the surface to be drawing

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[4] The contemporary American small-press writers I think of are Walter Abish, Kenneth Bernard, Lydia Davis, Nicolette de Csipkay, Jeffrey DeShell, Marianne Hauser, Harold Jaffe, Kevin Killian, Mark Leyner, Gary Lutz, Clarence Major, Carole Maso, Ben Marcus, Cris Mazza, Ursule Molinaro, Elisabeth Sheffield, Robert Steiner, Ronald Sukenick, and Curtis White. I admit this is a very personal and idiosyncratic list.

undue attention to its form may actually belie the fact that it is chocked with content, content which has given rise to this form (Olson 1997: 240). The narrator of Raymond Federman's *The Voice in the Closet* insists, due to the necessary evasions and elisions of narrative construction, that his story cannot be told. What Federman does give us, in place of a neat story about experience (which, though autobiographically based, is insisted upon as fiction by its author), is complex: an unpunctuated narrative of two characters who are part of one "self". The author of the text, in the text, is seen as antagonistic by the younger child-self of the author who years before lived the experience described. "[N]o," says the voice, here in the position of the child, "I cannot resign myself to being the inventory of his miscalculations I am not ready for my summation nor do I wish to participate any longer willy nilly in the fiasco of his fabrication" (Federman 2001)[5]. What makes the stakes even higher in this already complicated narration is that the boy's experience has to do with a historical atrocity that affected him directly. A French Jew growing up in Paris, Federman himself was fourteen years old in June 1942, when the French police under the authority of the Gestapo entered the family's apartment for the purpose of ultimately deporting the family to Auschwitz. Federman was pushed into a closet by his mother and escaped detection. His father, mother, and two sisters were deported and died at Auschwitz.

Referring to this "unutterable event" in Federman's own lived experience, Gerard Bucher writes, "It is impossible to tell this story and the author refuses to do so" (Bucher 2001: viii). For

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[5] A citation note: Federman is an author for whom every convention of a literary work is fair game. Thus, *The Voice in the Closet* does not have page numbers in either the Coda Press edition, published in 1979, nor the current Starcherone Books edition. Instead, each page of the narrative adds a line to constructed boxes within boxes, appearing on each new page. Counting these lines, the quotation from the text here indicated occurs where three completed four-sided boxes are joined by an extra line, or page 13 of the text. Conventional numbering, while not part of the text, is utilized in identifying quotations from this text that follow, to make identification of passages easier for the reader.

Federman, the incomprehensible horror is comprised of having been caught up in and dismantled by history, criminal authorities, and the accident of birth or of continuing to live — a story humanistically incomprehensible, to be sure. The conditions involved in every act of narrative construction are suspect because every narrative by its very nature is a construction. Throughout the text, the "voice" implicates the act of narrative telling: it is "plagiarizing" (2), "lies" (5), "cheating" (8), "nonsense" (9), "babblings" (10), "fraudulence" (11), "counterfeit," "false" (13), "futile" (14), "hollow" (18), "distortions" (21), despite the fact that the voice in its older incarnation speaks of his desire at the outset of the text to "speak say I the real story" (1). It is only in the text's last lines that the telling seems allowed any truth value — "to speak no more my truth to say" (20) — as if the only way to tell a story truly is to be constantly aware of the limitations implicit in the act of telling. Telling always ultimately fails, but to remark upon this failure is to do something true and noble in fiction.

Federman has published a total of nineteen books, six of which are novels (in addition to *The Voice in the Closet*, probably best described as a novella, these include poetry, essays and lectures, and three critical works on Samuel Beckett); none of these have appeared through mainstream, US, for-profit publishers. Starcherone Books, Inc., a non-profit press I direct, reprinted *The Voice in the Closet* from an edition that had gone out-of-print after its original publisher, Coda Press, went out of business in the 1980s. While out-of-print, it remained a unique book in Federman's ouevre, as the place where he had confronted the most formative event in his personal history most directly. All of Federman's books borrow details from his life; at the same time, Federman also invents, showman-like, wild retellings and restagings of his personal history, so as to create a type of Proustian legend from his own experiences, albeit in different books employing different formal strategies. For an enterprising commercial publisher, there might have been the possibility to profitably publish this series of interrelated works, but no such courageous publisher exited in the mainstream US publishing world. (Federman actually sells much better in Germany, Romania, and elsewhere in Europe.) In the US,

Federman has published most of his novels with Fiction Collective and its second-generation imprint, FC2, but that press has never enjoyed the widespread distribution networks enjoyed by established publishers. A story, rich and complex, was there to be told, but the profit-driven, for-profit presses were too impatient to look for it.

* *

The news then from this quarter is that the contemporary American novel is more interesting an experiment than most reports would indicate, but that the reader who wishes to discover this for her- or himself may face difficulties in finding some of the most challenging and thoughtful works of the present moment. It will remain to be seen whether cheap new electronic means for publicizing and marketing small-budget works can compete with established corporate distribution channels, chain bookstore shelf-life policies, and the infotainment-for-profit-driven American media's never-ending discourse about itself. But as they say about the lottery in my native state of New York, "Ya gotta be in it to win it." The very presence of small presses, motivated by commitment to the art of the novel rather than money that can be made by it — and the presence of the products they produce — opens the game to more players, creates more spaces in which written arts can flourish.

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The Language of Things: A Search for a New Subjectivity in the Texts by Italo Calvino and Tõnu Õnnepalu

ENEKEN LAANES

Italo Calvino's two essayistic writings *Lezioni americane* (1988, Six Memos for the Next Millennium, 1988) and *Mondo scritto e mondo non scritto* (1985, The Written and the Unwritten World, 1983) raise once again a question so urgent in the literature of the 20th century — the question of the relationship between the language and the world. In choosing Calvino's essayistic writing, rather than some properly theoretical texts by literary scholars, as the starting point for discussing this question as a problem of contemporary literature in the fiction by Calvino and Tõnu Õnnepalu, I have two justifications.

Firstly, Calvino's *Lezioni americane*, written to be given as Charles Eliot Norton Lectures at Harvard University during the academic year 1985/86, can in an important sense be considered his literary Last Will. In these lectures he offers his vision of the values one ought to take from the past to the next — for us already the present — millennium. Calvino has a special position both in Italian and world literature. It gives added weight to his essayistic writings that his fiction embodies and reflects all the major philosophical and formal investigations and pursuits of the literature of the second half of the 20th century. Calvino was a writer who was constantly searching for adequate themes and forms through which to execute his writer's mission and this makes his vision of the future even more valuable for us.

Furthermore, *Lezioni americane* allow us to glance behind the scenes of Calvino's fictional oeuvre. They bear witness to the fact that current philosophical, scientific and literary considerations never enter into fiction in a pure and direct form. They are mixed freely and used inconsistently to raise and solve the problems of literary practice, of those of the existence of a human being, and of their interrelationship.

Secondly, the comparison of texts by Calvino and by Õnnepalu on the basis of themes discussed in *Lezioni americane* enables to consider contemporary Estonian literature in a completely new light. It makes it possible to ask the provocative question — is the contemporary Estonian literature actually contemporary? Does it reflect the changes and pursuits that are taking place in world literature?

The background of this question is formed by the influential article series by Tiit Hennoste with the title "Hüpped modernismi poole: eesti 20. sajandi kirjandusest Euroopa modernismi taustal" (1993–1997), which has strongly shaped the discussion of the canon of Estonian literature and the trends of its development during the last decade. Hennoste argues that the current paradigm of Estonian culture and literature is, in its relation to world literature, in a phase displacement (Hennoste 1997: 158). Estonian literature has not responded to all the major trends in world literature, and when it has done so, then very often years or even decades later. Thus, any attempt to consider the canon of Estonian literature in the context of world literature would show that the former is full of gaps and outdated.

Sometimes it seems that Estonian literature is suffering from an inferiority complex. The writers themselves complain about the narrowness of the Estonian cultural tradition and express heavy doubts whether Estonian literature has anything valuable to offer to the wider world. In general, one sees the main role of Estonian literature in contributing to the reproduction of Estonian culture.

In my opinion one should consider the relations between Estonian and world literature not on the basis of forms, categorizations and movements, but on the basis of their respective dominant topics, on the basis of the central questions that they

raise and try to answer. It is exactly for this that I find Calvino's discussion of the relation of literature to the world and of the writer's mission for the new millennium very useful.

In his *Lezioni americane* Calvino dedicates each of his five lectures to one abstract value he would like to preserve for the literature of the future: Lightness, Quickness, Exactitude, Visibility, and Multiplicity. However, these values can be realised in very different formal and linguistic embodiments. Reading the lectures, one notices that although every lecture has a different topic, Calvino's main ideas, ideals and the writers representing different values keep recurring. His text indicates clearly that they are closely interlinked with each other. Lightness, for example, demands quickness and exactitude (Calvino 1996: 16), exactitude, in its turn, implies visibility (ib. 55), multiplicity cannot function without tightness and exactitude (ib. 118), etc. Calvino's remark that he does not consider the opposites of his values negative is also informative in this context (ib. 3). In some different framework, these could be as important and as valuable as the categories foregrounded by him. This leads to the thought that the categories of lightness, quickness, exactitude, visibility and multiplicity are not ideals simply for their own sake, but means in the service of a higher purpose.

In my view, the central issue of the *Lezioni americane* is the question that became especially problematic in the literature of 20th century: the question of the relationship between the world and language, or the world and literature or, as Calvino puts it in his earlier article, between the written and the unwritten world (Calvino 1999). Directly connected to this issue is also the question of a writer's mission. Alberto Asor Rosa has noted that because of Calvino's reputation as an author of formal experiments, the issue of the ethics of writing, which is very important both in his essays and in his fiction, has not been deeply considered (Asor Rosa 1996: 956). The essays *Lezioni americane* and *Mondo scritto e mondo non scritto* leave no doubt about Calvino's convictions. Even if he does not live with he the illusion, as he had done in his younger years, that "the written and the unwritten

world would illuminate each other"[1] (Calvino 1999: 1866), he still believes in the possibility of some contact or correspondence between the two. He thinks that it is, at least, a writer's mission to work in this direction and the central question is actually, how to do it. His five lectures represent an attempt of an answer: through lightness, quickness, exactitude, visibility and multiplicity and their many different forms of appearance in literature, all pursuing the aim of presenting what is in the world in a literary form.

One of the central thoughts of Calvino in this context is that language and literature, in order to be in touch with the world, have to remain differentiated from it, avoiding mimesis and direct contact. He names Perseus as his symbol for the relationship between the poet and the world (Calvino 1996: 5). Perseus can slay the head of Medusa and use it later for his own purposes only because he is able to avoid Medusa's direct petrifying gaze and looks only at her reflection on the bronze shield. Perseus is not avoiding the reality of the world of monsters, in which he lives, as he is carrying the head of Medusa with him in his sack; what he is avoiding, however, is her direct gaze.

Thus, to transmit the world, which is characterized by heaviness, one needs literary lightness, and in order to measure the freedom of the world in literary texts, one has to create them according to strict combinatory rules (ib. 123). In the pursuit of unbiased truth, one has to present the multiplicity of truths (ib. 117). Different interpretational methods, habits of thought and ways of expression should not be melted into a harmonious whole; rather they should flow, carried by the centrifugal force created by their bursting together and colliding (ib. 116).

The background of Calvino's views on the role of literature is formed by a deep sense of crisis that he associates with the development of science and technology in the modern society. Fast and efficient media that work on a wide level flatten and homogenise communication (ib. 45), increase the flood of prefabricated images and create image-pollution (ib. 92). It makes difficult to distinguish between direct experience and bits and pieces of

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[1] All translations from *Mondo scritto e mondo non scritto* are mine.

images without inner inevitability. Calvino also notes that the use of language is becoming ever more abstract, anonymous, superficial, inexact, and automatized (ib. 56). This all weakens the possibility of immediate cognition. The task of literature, according to Calvino, is to preserve and cultivate the aspects of directness, immediacy, concreteness and freshness in language, and to develop people's sense of imagination.

In speaking about the "heavy shell of discourses" (Calvino 1999: 1869), laying on the world always already conquered and colonised by the words, and the need to "destroy the screen of words and concepts and see the world as if for the first time" (ib. 1871), to read it anew, Calvino, on the one hand, seems to share the postmodernist distaste for ready-made, fixed meanings. On the other hand, for Calvino, an equally urgent problem seems to be the lack of meaning, rather than its abundance. He detects loss of form, randomness and confusion not only in language and images but also in the lives of human beings and in the histories of nations (Calvino 1996: 57). Thus he attributes to literary text the status of "one of these minimal portions in which the existent crystallizes into a form, acquires a meaning — not fixed, not definitive, not hardened into a mineral immobility, but alive as an organism" (ib. 69–70).

Considering Calvino's ideas about the relationship between the written and the unwritten world, one inevitably comes to ask about their status in the contemporary discussions of the issue. He seems to support the idea of referentiality of language. This impression is strengthened by his explicit rejection of the ideas about language one could call postmodernist. He says that he does not consider "Writing as a model for every process of reality ... indeed the only reality we can know, indeed the only reality *tout court*" (ib. 26). Elsewhere he rejects "the word that knows only itself, and no other knowledge of the world is possible" (ib. 76–77). In his essay *Mondo scritto e mondo non scritto* Calvino attributes these ideas very loosely to two philosophical trends in the 20th century, associating one with the Paris of the 1960s and fixing the starting point of the other in Vienna at the beginning of the 20th century (Calvino 1999: 1868). Calvino clearly distances himself from these

ideas. However, his own thoughts on the relationship between the world and language are not of a naive kind and, in my view, do not represent neither a return to a realist misapprehension nor a modernist preoccupation with the problem as an epistemological question.

Calvino repeatedly refers to the incompatibility of the language with the world and the impossibility of direct mimesis (Calvino 1996: 75). However, he opposes the postmodernist self-referential word, the word as "a perpetual pursuit of things" (ib. 26), which, touching on their inexhaustibly multiform surface, adjusts itself not to their substance, but to their infinite variety. Calvino stresses the importance of the surface of things as a visible trace leading to the invisible thing, the absent thing, the thing that is desired or feared. He holds that literary language enables us to approach things with discretion, attention, and caution, with respect for what things "communicate without words" (ib. 77).

Calvino maintains that one opportunity literature has, to come into contact with the world, is to make its language the language of things (ib. 76), and thus "give speech to that which has no language, to the bird perching on the edge of the gutter, to the tree in spring and the tree in fall, to stone, to cement, to plastic" (ib. 124). He feels that "at the other side of the words there is something that tries to come out of the silence, to signify through language, as if knocking on a wall of a prison" (Calvino 1999: 1875).

The attempt to speak the language of things is represented by one of Calvino's last texts *Palomar* (1983, *Mr Palomar*, 1985). The text consists of descriptions that develop into a narrative in as much as they represent Mr Palomar's continuing attempts to relate to the world and solve the problems of perception and knowledge of the world. Looking at things, Palomar tries to adopt, one after another, every possible approach to perception and to the relation between the world and the subject worked out in the philosophy and phenomenology of the 20th century, but gives them up one after another. He knows only doubt and irony. Thus, at first sight, *Palomar* seems to represent a pessimistic view on the themes discussed in *Lezioni americane* and *Mondo scritto e mondo non*

scritto. Although Calvino does not specify this thought, he claims that this kind of literature presupposes abandoning the limited perspective of an individual ego and is somehow connected to a new kind of subjectivity (Calvino 1996: 124).

It may seem strange, that at a time when the idea of the language-dependency of meaning has become a commonplace in philosophy and in literary studies, Calvino wants to represent through language something that is in the world. Before considering more thoroughly what Calvino might have had in mind, I would like to discuss the way Tõnu Õnnepalu raises similar problems in his fiction.

One of Õnnepalu's recent texts, *Harjutused* (2002, 'Excercises'), investigates the relationship between the language and the world from a number of quite different perspectives. *Harjutused* is written in the form of an essayistic diary and records the everyday life of someone called Anton Nigov during his two months stay in Paris. Nigov is not only the narrator and a character, but also the author of the text. However, the narrated events and facts seem to be taken over almost directly from the life of Tõnu Õnnepalu. Thus, *Harjutused* is an attempt to write a fictional text, based on factual material.

Its reception's confusion about the genre of the text and the continuing debate, whether it is a novel or a novelist's essayistic diary, illuminate the complexity of the text's strategies of meaning-making, which become the quintessence of the book.

Harjutused is made fictional by the fact that its aim is not to narrate the life-story of Tõnu Õnnepalu, but rather, to study the mechanisms and aims of autobiographical narration and to foreground the textual and narrative nature of every autobiographical self. In this case Õnnepalu discusses the relationship of the language and the world on the level of the subject. His account of the latter is quite ambivalent.

On the one hand, Õnnepalu points to the inevitable role the language plays in the formation of the subject, particularly on the level of the ego. Autobiographical narration and recording one's life in a diary has the function of creating a shell, or as Nigov puts it, a bubble (Nigov 2002: 65), with which a subject could identify

and so protect itself from dissolution. A life-narrative renders life whole and meaningful. In so far as Nigov is a subject in crisis, a self who has lost himself (ib. 231), the diary illuminates its attempt to find itself by creating it through narration.

Miller has pointed out that one of the functions of the novel genre throughout its history has been to confirm and to undermine the myth of the wholeness of the self, both at the same time (Miller 1992: 34). Creating a self, who is creating a self, Õnnepalu highlights the role of the language in the formation of identity.

On the other hand, there are other moments when Nigov perceives this language-constructed self as a frustratingly tight shell that not only does not correspond to who he really is, but also starts to guide his existence, live in his place (Nigov 2002: 242). That is why he tries to "write himself through and out of the forest of words, to reach a clearing"[2] (ib. 86). The feeling leads to the recognition that although the subject can only exist within language, there is still something that remains outside it, something unsayable. Nigov does not know what its nature is, or if it has one at all.

A similar ambivalence is characteristic of Nigov's account of his feelings towards language as a vehicle of representation and towards his own writing. At times it seems to him that life does not have any meaning and it can acquire it in the eyes that are not human (ib. 13–14). He shows awareness of the fact that it is the function of cultural practices including literature to make the repetitive and otherwise meaningless everyday existence, which for Nigov is exemplified by using up the toothpaste's tube and filling the rubbish bin (ib. 79–80), meaningful, to explain it. At one point he defines truth as a hostage of words, in so far as it is created in and through language and narration (ib. 14). Elsewhere he says that it is not possible to tell the truth, because it is so forked and complicated, and because it has nothing to do with language (ib. 24).

At the same time Nigov is not convinced of the capacity of language to give coherence and to construct meaning. He sees

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[2] All translations from *Harjutused* are mine.

language as a "creepy substance" (ib. 266) that does not help to grasp things or fix their meanings. He is constantly threatened by the meaninglessness and relativity of the world and his own existence. Then again Nigov feels that language has its influence on his thoughts and in a certain sense does not permit him to say anything new. He is like a bird who can sing only "in the way his beak allows him" (ib 93). The feeling that language is too heavy, angular and helpless (ib. 270) in rendering what one wants to say, leads Nigov to the thought that there is something outside the language, which tries to make its way into it, in some way to govern it. By the end of his diary he has started to think that events do exist and are not simply brought about by narrative structures (ib. 241). He confesses that, despite everything, his own writing is an attempt to put into words something that is in the world but does not show itself, an attempt to find a correspondence between the written and unwritten world (ib. 82).

On many occasions Nigov perceives the world as a text written in some other than human language and sees his mission in rewriting or translating it. Studying the map of Estonia, he sees the pattern of roads as a "translation of landscape into human language" (ib. 113). As a biology student he spends his summer on the island of Saaremaa, in order to map the vegetation of the region. He sees the landscape of the island as a text written by people, animals, plants, sun, rain, and wind (ib. 167). He wishes to be able to read it and to write it down. He does it using scientific language, the Latin plant names, but his attempt is doomed to failure. He understands that in trying to represent this landscape, what matters is not the species of plants, but the impression they make on him in all their visual and olfactory expressions. The true meaning of the landscape lies in a strange mixture of the scent of the plants, the seaweeds and the sea in the burning sunlight.

The constant elements of Nigov's diary are the descriptions of the woods, the parks and other natural environments or objects he encounters on his walks in Paris. They draw the attention of the reader with their repetitiveness and abundance. What is the function of these descriptions? What they do, is showing us Nigov's gaze. He likes to look at things in order to get attached to

them. He looks at and loves things that remind him of other things he has loved before (ib. 9). He is attached to, and likes to look at, the riverboat that has captivated him with its scent of the smoke of a log fire (ib. 13). He complains that he is not able to get attached to the houses of Paris because they are too big and heavy, too pompously decorated. Finally he finds an old house door with old blue paint and feels he can get attached to it when the evening sun shines on it through the leaves (ib. 18). His favourite place, however, is a clearing in the woods near Paris, which he constantly returns to. It is one of the few things, he says, he will be able to remember from his stay in Paris (ib. 276) and these aimless walks are the only things he is sorry to have to leave behind (ib. 53).

Nigov compares his way of looking at the forest clearing with the way a religious person might look at an icon (ib. 87). He also says that the best work of art in an art gallery is always the view from the gallery's window. These thoughts indicate not only Nigov's preference of natural objects to religious and artistic ones, but also the specificity of his way of looking at things. In the art gallery we view the objects in a special aesthetic way, and it is by looking out of its window that we are reminded to look at the world outside with the same eyes. It is a necessary frame for acquiring a special way of looking at things.

These moments of gazing are the moments of epiphany for Nigov, the only ones he knows as happiness, when there is only radiance and peace. Then he comes to think that God has created the things so "that I would gaze at them, has given me the gaze for that purpose" (ib.). In these moments he also perceives that the only freedom there is for a human being in his looking and writing is "the freedom to see this or that" (ib. 215).

Nigov dreams about being able to transmit these moments of epiphany without the deforming filter of the language. For that one needs a special kind of language, it should not be empty words (ib. 61), they should be light and singing, amounting almost to nothing (ib. 270).

The discussion of the relationship between the subject and the world and the role of the language in it by Calvino and Õnnepalu seems very similar to the treatment of the problem by Kaja

Silverman in her exciting book *World Spectators* (2000). She maintains that although the world exists independently of the human mind, it is only human beings who can bring other human beings and things into being, into the more-than-reality. Hers is an attempt to account existentially and psychoanalytically for the possibility of contact between the world and the subject.

Silverman starts her argument with a radical reinterpretation of Plato's parable of the cave, and referring to Heidegger's existential philosophy, rehabilitates the mundane world of phenomenal forms and appearances as "the only domain where Being can emerge" (Silverman 2000: 3). She attributes to the phenomenal forms a kind of aspiration towards being seen (ib. 129). Rock patterns and animals represent a kind of signification, they resemble aesthetic production. Silverman claims that human subjectivity is objectively intended (ib. 133): "We communicate with the world only when we enable its forms to signify — only when we provide the meaning they lack [---] They are "pregnant" with a beauty to which only a very special kind of human signification can give birth. And only by becoming "ourselves" can we provide that signification" (ib. 145).

Human beings can bring other human beings and things into being by looking at them and looking in a way which not only stubbornly adheres to phenomenal forms, but also augments and enriches them (ib. 2–3). The particular kind of looking, rather than involving pure receptivity, is itself creative of beauty and value (ib. 92), and amounts to what Silverman calls the world spectatorship.

Silverman specifies that the look the world solicits from human beings is not an objective one, but rather a very subjective look: "it is in the *particularity* of the human eye that its transfigurative properties reside. It is only by assuming its utmost "ownness" that the look can make the world shine — only by becoming *itself* that it can deliver other creatures and things into *their* Being" (ib. 10).

In order to understand what Silverman means by assuming one's utmost ownness and becoming oneself, one has to keep in mind that her concept of subjectivity is quite different from the traditional one. The subject capable of this kind of transfiguration

of the world is not the modern Cartesian subject who makes itself the centre of the world and tries to master it by objectification. In her understanding of subjectivity, she rather refers to Lacan's concept of the desiring subject, which is defined as a no-thing, a void, concealed by the mirage of an ego (ib. 166). The capacity of human beings to look at things in a particular way, light them up and bring them into being generates from this void.

When an infant enters into language, she chooses between being and meaning, and she chooses the latter, because it is the precondition of subjectivity. She suffers thenceforth from a *manque-à-être*, from a lack of being (ib. 36). The experience of being within here and now that defies every kind of symbolization, retrospectively assumes a status it does not have before, the status of lost fullness (ib. 39). It is what Lacan calls *das Ding*, the impossible nonobject of desire (ib. 15). Prior to its loss, *das Ding* is unspecifiable, it becomes itself only through its incarnation and reincarnation in the form of subsequent actual objects of desire. In obliging us to surrender the one we love for a series of substitute love objects, it makes room in our psyche, and thus in the world, for other people and things (ib. 38). This is how Silverman connects the becoming ourselves and being able to light up the world: "We confer this gift of beauty when we allow other people and things to incarnate the impossible nonobject of desire — when we permit them to embody what is itself without body, to make visible what is itself invisible" (ib. 17), we bring it from the darkness of invisibility into the radiance of appearance (ib. 43). This is what we do according to Silverman when we speak the language of desire.

Thus, the human imperative is not to try to close down that void the opening of which is synonymous with subjectivity, not to look back, but to accept the only way of being in the world as a subject, to take pleasure in one's own insatiability (ib. 11), to exercise one's creative potentiality and confer Being to the world by looking at it lovingly (ib. 17).

Only by speaking actively the language of desire the subject truly individuates itself, becomes different from others. Individuation has to do with how we symbolise the world (ib. 37), which objects we choose to reincarnate our impossible non-object of

desire. This displacement of desire has two aspects. On the one hand, it is an insistence upon a return, to what-has-been, but on the other hand, it is also the valorization of each new form it will take in its particularity (ib. 49). The world spectator is consequently not just someone to whom the past returns, but someone who holds himself open to the new forms it will take (ib. 25).

Silverman stresses the new in displacement, firstly, because it is the only way the subject can truly communicate with the world. The subject is stimulated not only by her own psyche, which yearns to see in the new something which has been, but also by the world, in registering differences which distinguish that thing from what it represents (ib. 119–120). Silverman believes that "We only give the gift of Being to something when we permit it *inaccurately* to replicate what was" (ib. 144).

Secondly, to be open to the new is important because the language of desire is a language where every new speech act not only refers back to the previous one, but also changes its meaning. Subjectivity is a long speech, the meaning of which will be determined only at the moment of death. It should be clear that subjectivity for Silverman is rather an action than an entity, always in the mobility of becoming (ib. 31).

The individuation takes place with the drawing of this trajectory of desire, which is unique for every subject. The individuation through the choice of love objects is the freedom to see this or that Nigov talks about, the freedom to speak one's unique language of desire. However, as Silverman stresses: to be able to light up the world, one has to renounce the claim to be the master of one's language of desire and to choose consciously the love objects, rather one is to "become the space within which the world itself speaks" (ib. 145). The freedom lies rather in the decision to speak this language in the first place, in the decision to look.

With the help of Silverman's ideas, it is possible to try to explain the sense and status of Calvino's and Nigov's concept of the language of things. It is an attempt to draw different conclusions from the idea of the separatedness of the language and the real and with a new concept of subjectivity show a hope after and beyond the hopelessness. Furthermore, Silverman's ideas enable to

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account for the function of Nigov's diary writing and Palomar's looking and describing in yet another way.

For Silverman the language of desire is first of all visual and we speak it mainly by looking. However, she does not underestimate the importance of the human language, and that is my focus of interest in this context. The translation of the look into language provides a vehicle for showing our look to others, and enables to look at other people's looks (ib. 23). Others see not only what we see, but also how we see. The language that shows the look is thus finally as disclosive of the specificity of our particular perceptual passion as it is of the world (ib. 125). The language of showing is responsible for the social dimension of productive looking.

Further, it is even more important for Silverman that language provides the perspective through which we ourselves too can look at our own look: "when we exteriorize our language of desire in the form of an address to other subjects, it also becomes intelligible to us. We thus find ourselves in a position to do something we could not otherwise do: to claim our disclosive powers" (ib. 52). Only in addressing our libidinal speech to another we can hear what we are saying. In this sense language can be the agency whereby the look becomes itself and starts to speak the language of desire actively.

Nigov says more than once that he does not know what he wants to say. He tries to write it down, so that others could read it and would understand what he wants to say, and then tell him too. He writes to become aware of what he wants to say (Nigov 2002: 82). Thus, *Harjutused* is not only a narration through which a self is creating itself but one through which one reaches the clearing, becomes aware of one's language of desire.

Many critics read Palomar's epistemological misadventures as an expression of Calvino's belief in the incompatibility of the written and the unwritten world (e.g. Botta 2002: 10) and consider *Palomar* a literary blind alley. This interpretation does not take into account that *Palomar* is a very autobiographical text and the protagonist's epistemological sufferings are those of Calvino himself. I think that the text should be considered more as a quest, the positive results of which lie exactly in its processual aspects.

In *Mondo scritto e mondo non scritto* Calvino claims that the greatest authors give us not the sense of gained experience, but the sense of getting close to it (Calvino 1999: 1874). They know how to keep alive the power of desire. *Palomar* starts with Mr Palomar's attempt to free himself from his limited self and to know the world as it really is. At the end of the book he comes to think that in order to know the world one has to know oneself (Calvino 1983: 120), assume his ownness.

Silverman sees the world's being as a perpetual becoming in the looks of human eyes and human subjectivity as a becoming in this activity of looking. But she maintains the same about a work of art. It is also a becoming — it "build[s] a garden around the house of Being, and — in so doing — make[s] it what it could not otherwise be: a site to which other men and women may journey to look" (Silverman 2000: 74). Nigov's diary is a space where his place of epiphany, the clearing in the woods near Paris, can become the Heideggerian clearing through which he can write himself out of the wood of words.

Yet, *Palomar* and *Harjutused* make visible the fact Silverman's optimism is inclined to pass over — that the speaking of the language of desire is not so easy at all. Silverman is conscious of the fact that her concept of looking as showing runs counter to the concept of the possessive look, much more prevalent in psychoanalysis (ib. 95). She also points out that it is not so easy to account for such a joyful, liberating and discursive notion of return (ib. 62). This is exemplified by Nigov's wish to return and by his distaste for the continuing displacement of desire. He laments the circumstance that he, instead of being attentive to the stream of life and accepting the moments it washes to the shore, remains preoccupied with listening only to his own stream of consciousness (Nigov 2002: 204). Palomar too only knows doubt and irony. Palomar does not believe in the power of his look and his every new hope becomes a delusion. But as Calvino himself notes, there is something that remains and that is the obstinacy (Calvino 2002: 21).

Silverman's idea of speaking the language of desire seems to be modelled according to Heidegger's imperative of the *Dasein* to

become authentic, and thus carries the same perplexities connected to the realisation of the latter. However, it still remains a possibility — the "language of things, [starts] from things and [returns] to us changed, with all the humanity that we have invested in things" (Calvino 1996: 76).

I would like to conclude this discussion of the relationship between the language and the world in the texts by Calvino and Õnnepalu with a somewhat vague and artificial figure, rather in the style of Calvino. I hope it will be contemplated in the spirit induced by Silverman's argument.

In his novel *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore* (1979, If on a Winter's Night a Traveler, 1981) a male and a female reader start reading some new novels. Among those ten or so novels, of which one can for some reason only find their beginnings, is also a text in the language of the Cimbri by an author called Vorts Viljandi, and another text in a language related to Cimbrian, Cimmerian, by an author called Ukko Ahti. Calvino's notes and the name Ukko Ahti show that the latter novel was meant to be in Finnish (Falcetto 1992: 1384), and the first novel, thus, probably in Estonian. Calvino must have studied the map of Estonia to find a suitable authorial name for the Estonian novel and finally he compiled the name Vorts Viljandi, based on an Estonian lake name Võrtsjärv, and a town nearby, Viljandi. For an unknown reason Calvino replaced Estonian and Finnish later with Cimbrian and Cimmerian — the languages of two peoples described by Homer as tribes from the dark and nebulous North.

Calvino's text speaks about a country which was independent during the inter-war period and that was incorporated into a People's Republic. But I do not want to look for any direct equivalent, because Calvino does not have it. More than by anything else, I am fascinated by the comments on the literatures of those countries, made by the Professor of Botni-Ugrian languages, who the readers in Calvino's novel consult about Vorts Viljandi. He says: "Books are thresholds ... All the Cimmerian authors have crossed them [---] All Cimmerian books are without endings [---] because they continue elsewhere ... in another language, in the

language of silence, to which all the words in the books that we think we read refer to. [---] Reading [---] always means this: there is a thing that is present, made of written substance, a solid material object that cannot be changed; and through that one meets something different that is not present, something that is part of the world, that is immaterial, invisible, either because it is only thinkable, imaginable, or because it was but is not anymore, is now passed, lost, unreachable in the land of the dead ..."[3] (ib. 70–71).

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[3] My translation.

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"*Transglobal destroy*"? Zapping Female Italian Novelists at the Turn of the Millennium

KATHARINA PIECHOCKI

> "Fu in effetti il *romanzo* che storicamente accompagnò l'evolversi delle nazioni" (Timothy Brennan, *La ricerca di una forma nazionale*)

If, historically, the novel accompanied the development of the Nation, what happens, then, in a *transglobal* — or post-national — world? What is destroyed in a *transglobal* world — as the subtitle quoted above, *Transglobal destroy* (Santacroce 2003[5]), suggests? The novel? The Nation? As Homi Bhabha has pointed out in his book *Nation and Narration* (1990), it is not always easy to find appropriate definitions — neither for *Nation* nor for *Narration*. This paper deals with the difficulties in defining a novel nowadays, in a globalized world, and discusses the *strata* of regional, national, transnational/globalized identity in contemporary Italian literature. The main concern, though, is to analyse how female Italian writers asses the tension existing between regionalism, nation/alism and transnationalism and what meanings these spatial contructions and entities have in their texts.

The in/existing writer in an in/existing nation?

I would like to begin with a quotation from a recent essay written by an Italian fiction writer and critic, Antonio Moresco:

> Perché nelle altre letterature gli scrittori grandi si spostano in branchi (i Russi, i Francesi, i Tedeschi, gli Americani...) mentre in quella italiana c'è solo qualche isolato qua e là, condannato a pagare il prezzo, combattuto oppure ignorato [...]? Nessuna credibile tradizione, nessuna credibile avanguardia. Solo questa piccola storia del labirinto spacciata per modernità. Da una parte il colesterolo stilistico, dall'altra la cucina internazionale *light*. Marmellata romantica oppure liofilizzato. Immediatismo vitalistico o epigonalità. Così da secoli, in questo paese della merda e del galateo. (Moresco 1999: 22, 15)

Moresco regrets the absence of a significant Italian national literature and the absence of particular highlights in this very literature. He furthermore divides literature into mainly two currents, the one, *light*, saturated with rhetorics and stylistics taken from publicity and mass media and the other, the academic one that belongs to the "maniera colta", the "refined" manner of writing fiction. For Moresco these trends that he synthetically and cynically names "shit" and "Galateo" are inextricably linked with, on the one hand, the new generation of authors who expose in their works products and communication strategies proposed by mass media (above all TV). On the other hand, "Galateo" is a hint at Italo Calvino and his still great dominance and normative influence (cf. ib.17). According to Antonio Moresco the book industry is interested merely in these two opposite, but complementary, literary trends: low commercial fiction and copies / cloning of erudite literature (cf. ib. 24).

Also Alberto Arbasino, an important contemporary Italian novelist and author of the nearly 1400-page novel *Fratelli d'Italia* (1963), comments rather ironically on the lack of a great Italian novelistic tradition:

> Un intero genere letterario che produce al massimo *I promessi sposi* potrebbe classificarsi fra i "marginali" e i "minori" [...]. Niente di male e *no problem*: anche la Spagna e la Grecia producono scarsa musica da camera, e l'Olanda pochissima alta moda. E come con gli orologi e i computer e i film: non sarà piuttosto conveniente acquistare i prodotti nei paesi e nelle culture più specializzate? Oppure insistere a produrre whisky in Liguria e televisori in Calabria? (Arbasino 1998: 383).

The fact that Moresco and Arbasino regret the absence of national literature and claim its need might surprise in a time when national literature is deconstructed and considered, as Timothy Brennan — in his article *La ricerca di una forma nazionale* — argued, a concept "di stampo romantico" (Brennan 1997:95).

The situation becomes more wicked, if we take into account the Italian *nation*. Alberto Arbasino starts his book entitled *Paesaggi italiani con zombi* with the words: "<Oggi c'è l'Italia!> significa, per i più, che stasera gioca la squadra omonima. Preparare le birre e le bandiere. (Le vendono gli extracomunitari ai semafori)" (Arbasino 1998: 11). This is as much as to state that Italy as a nation does not simply exist. And, indeed, this "non-existence" of Italy as a nation is stressed by Antonio Moresco:

> È così dappertutto, in ogni campo, in questo paese nato male o addirittura mai nato, in questo paese affetto da rachitismo fin dalla nascita, e che pare non potere far altro che evidenziare sempre più questo suo difetto di partenza, perché dopo un po' bisogna pure alzarsi dal passeggino, e poi camminare, e poi addirittura correre, e pio andare persino in bicicletta... e ad ogni nuovo passaggio non può che evidenziarsi sempre più questa sua tara scheletrica d'origine. (Moresco 1999: 21–22)

Moresco claims an independent Italian national literature within a proclaimed national state. In a postmodern view his claim for national literature may appear strange and his claim for a nation

state, in the post-colonial perspective of a globalized world, has maybe even a more bizarre touch.

For writers and intellectuals like Moresco and Arbasino it must be saddening to see that among contemporary fiction produced there are no novels that could be regarded as a further milestone in a national literary production and that there is no tendency and no will among young writers to conceive such novels.

The authors I want to concentrate on, Isabella Santacroce, Rossana Campo and Silvia Ballestra, are not recognizable as novelists by the length of their novels, as is, for example, the Roman novelist Melania Mazzucco, whose 400-page-novel entitled *Vita* won the *Premio Strega* in 2003. Nor by their style: they represent the *nuova narrativa italiana* (La Porta 1999) and belong in the eyes of contemporary critics (Brolli, 1996; Pezzarossa, 1999) to *pulp* narrators or to the so-called *gioventù cannibale*, the *young cannibals*, a generation of narrators and novelists like Niccolò Ammaniti or Aldo Nove. The *cannibals'* narrative plays with *possible literature*, with the extension of the meaning of *literature* and *narrative*. Their *delectare* does not lie in an exquisite, elaborated and "academic" style — as does, for example, the stylistically great narrative of the young Florentine writer Giada Ceri whose *novella* entitled *L'uno. O l'altro* (2003) evokes texts written by Luigi Pintor and Michael Ende. The *young cannibals* prefer palimpsests, transpositions, and contaminations of (mass) media, as for instance Aldo Nove's short short stories that finish in the middle of the word. Nove's stories are created analogously to a TV-zapping attitude, leaving the impression that not the whole story has been told, but that it would be, on the other hand, just too boring to hear it to the end.

These writers are *novelists* "on the edge". Formally, stylistically and as to the content. Their formal belonging — or not — to *novelists* is sometimes marked explicitly in the text or often regulated by external criteria like publishers, reader's expectations, etc. According to the critic Filippo La Porta, the *young cannibals* are *story-tellers* who missed the medium, the means of expression and who should not narrate at all. They should, instead, use other media, for instance cinema, comics or publicity slang to express

themselves (La Porta 1999: 264). The *young cannibals*' literature is, La Porta argues, an average literature made for an average, semi-literate public:

> Inoltre queste opere non appaiono in alternativa al cosidetto prodotto medio (altra ossessione degli ex neoavanguardisti), perché semplicemente sono loro, conformisticamente, il prodotte medio, per un pubblico medio, per il lettore medio alfabetizzato, che desidera e richiede quelle cose lì, che si nutre di *pulp* ma volendosi sentire tanto sofisticato, che aspira a trasgressioni colorate e alla moda. (La Porta 1999: 264).

What are "quelle cose lì"? In what does their transgression consist? The *young cannibals* tend to combine cruelty, brutality and lapidarity. Just an example from Aldo Nove's book entitled *Superwoobinda* — in which the author in the "famous" (Arvigo 2001: 330) phrase exposes the *imaginary of blood* (Brolli 1996: VI): "Ho ammazzato i miei genitori perché usavano un bagnoschiuma assurdo, Pure & Vegetal. [...] La testa di mio padre mi sembrava piú molle oppure avevo semplicemente dato il colpo giusto. Misi i cervelli dentro il lavandino e pulii bene l'interno delle loro teste con lo Scottex. Ci versai dentro il Pure & Vegetal [...]" (Nove 1998: 7). The writer Ali Tariq coined the expression *market realism*. For him the aesthetics of "market realism", in opposition to "socialist realism", is a quite alarming development: "Trivia reigns supreme and literature becomes a branch of the entertainment industry. Instead of "socialist realism" we have "market realism". The difference being that it is a self-imposed straitjacket" (quoted by Nak Chung 1998: 225). For the Corean writer and scholar Paik Nak-Chung globalization and "cosmopolitan cultural market" are more dangerous than nationalism: "[T]oday, global capital and its cosmopolitan cultural market, rather than "national one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness", represent the chief danger" (Nak-Chung 1998: 228).

The writer and essayist Daniele Brolli's anthology entitled *Gioventù cannibale* (1996), considered — with the exception of

Alda Teodorani — exclusively male narrators. The critic Fulvio Pezzarossa in his book *C'era una volta il pulp. Corpo e letteratura nella tradizione italiana* (1999) scanned through many more writers — including the narrators discussed in this article: Santacroce, Campo and Ballestra.

The novelists (or *edge*-novelists) I will consider below belong to a literary tradition developed in Italy in the second half of the 1980s, within the generation of Pier Vittorio Tondelli. They express themselves, according to La Porta, in apolitical and ambiguous ways and tend to combine opposite concepts — rebellion and conformism, the need for stability and transgression, neo-romanticism and strong realism (La Porta 1999: 9). Another characteristic of these writers is the absence of the father (ib.) that does not only represent a generation gap, but refers also to further themes that have to be seen in the context of the perception of nation/nationality, on the one hand, and the small-scale and large-scale patterns, like regionalism and transnationalism, on the other.

From nation to transnationalism and regionalism

Santacroce, Campo and Ballestra treat the *stratum* "nation/alism", implicitly or explicitly, and reorganize, reconstruct or avoid it. The absence of the father, and often of the mother, is taken to expose the power of childhood, its potential: like in Niccolò Ammaniti's book *Io non ho paura*, where a ten-year-old hero saves from death another child who has been kidnapped — among others by the hero's father. In our female authors we encounter young heroines who try to organize their lives without their parents' help — or without male help at all. They refer to icons like the independent Pippi Longstockings or Lara Croft or to feminist or deconstructionist writers: Virginia Woolf, Simone de Beauvoir (Campo 2002[10]: 104) or Deleuze and Derrida (Ballestra 1996[2]: 24)

Virginia Woolf argued: "as a woman I have no country. As a woman I want no country. As a woman my country is the whole world" (quoted by Stanford Friedman 2001: 112). Susan Stanford Friedman commented on Woolf's attitude to nationhood and

stated: "Disloyalty to the nation, [Woolf] implies, is a necessity for feminism because state power in patriarchal societies is based upon the disempowerment of women" (Stanford Friedman 2001: 113). What becomes evident here is, on the one hand, the significance of the category of *gender* for state formation and for the concept of nation and, on the other hand, the tendency to a political attitude without particular commitment. Santacroce, Campo and Ballestra shift the concept of *nation*. Santacroce avoids *nation* and policy. In her works the apolitical self is constructed merely through economy and is perceived as an artificial being owing its existence to consumption. In Campo and Ballestra identity is embedded in a small-scale or large-scale topography. The *strata* of "region" and "transnationalism" seem possible alternatives to "nation". We could argue that in searching alternatives to "nation" these writers do nothing else than reflect tendencies having been analyzed in our globalized world for years: on the one hand, the increasing importance of economy overlapping policy and, on the other hand, the growing importance of regional and international entities (Bauman 1998; D'Andrea and Pulcini 2001). But what becomes evident in Santacroce's, Campo's and Ballestra's narrative is that these *strata* and spaces are not gender-neutral.

Homi Bhabha argues that "[i]n the production of the nation as narration there is a split between the continuist, accumulative temporality of the pedagogical, and the repetitious, recursive strategy of the performative. It is through this process of splitting that the conceptual ambivalence of modern society becomes the site of *writing the nation*" (Bhabha 1990: 297).

Taking Homi Bhabha's notions of *pedagogy* and *performative* as related to nation and narration, we can argue that *pedagogy* in the narration analyzed in the present article is linked with *nation*, tradition and history, whereas *performative* is free from those paradigms: free from nation, tradition and history. The *pedagogical* as *nation* and the *performative* as the "Other" (other than *nation*) are gender-bound. Homi Bhabha continues that "[t]he pedagogical founds its narrative authority in a tradition of the people, encapsulated in a succession of historical moments that

represents an eternity produced by self-generation. The performative intervenes in the sovereignty of the nation's *self-generation* by casting a shadow between the people as "image" and its signification as a differentiating sign of Self [...]" (ib. 299). There is, according to Bhabha, a tension between the *pedagogical* and the *performative*.

Authority, a succession of historical moments, shortly the *pedagogical*, is constructed and rejected as such in our writers. Institutions producing pedagogy and education, schools and universities, are either rejected or negatively connotated. All three authors reject hierarchy and patriarchal order perpetuated by pedagogical institutions. The female protagonists either leave school without finishing it or refer to it as a traumatic experience. Pedagogical institutions are linked with paternal authority.

Another moment of rejection of the *pedagogical* is the rejection of the "succession of historical moments", the rejection of history itself. History emerges in its most negative, dramatic and traumatic moments: in the representation of the Nazi-regime. For these writers the Nazi-regime has not the function of a *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (as these novelists have never experienced that regime), but the term *Nazi* is used as a synonym for authority, hierarchy and patriarchy. The link is often straight and the father — but also the mother — are directly compared to Nazis (Campo, Ballestra). The heroines feel oppressed by education and history. They seem to ask the same questions Susan Stanford Friedman formulated in the context of feminism and transnationalism: "Put simply, the basic contradiction of feminism and geopolitics is this: how can a woman feel "at home" when her home nation is built upon gender oppression?" (Stanford Friedman 2001: 114). There has to be an "alternative home", the *performative* moment that intervenes, where a female subject can emerge and where a female identity can be constructed.

What is *performative* like? What kind of worlds do Santacroce, Campo and Ballestra expose and propose as alternatives?

ISABELLA SANTACROCE

Isabella Santacroce, the youngest of the three authors, is definitely the most transgressive one as to style and content. If we had to define her work in some key-words, those words could be: *masquerade*, *consumption* and *vision*.

Santacroce's heroines are constructed by the detailed, mannerist — even obsessive — description of their exterior, of their surface. They are made up of make up. Make up, clothes and other expensive proprietary articles. As La Porta argues, the relationship with reality is concentrated almost exclusively on *seeing*, on describing the surface, it is "un inesausto catalogare e classificare [...]" (La Porta 1999: 30). Constructing the surface is not only an aesthetic experience, but becomes the essence of being. To *see* and to *be seen* is the central moment in creating the imaginary. Santacroce's protagonists do not only reject pedagogical institutions, but also institutionalized work. They never work. They steal and scrounge.

The *performative* develops in two ways: on the one hand, in particular, obsessive bodily practices and on the other, in a union of female friendship and homosexual love. Filippo La Porta described this homosocial union in the works of Pier Vittorio Tondelli as *eros* and *agape* (ib.). In the works of Santacroce (as well as in those of Campo and Ballestra) we encounter this relationship of a "friend-lover" in the female version (although obsessively sexualized in Santacroce).

As far as bodily practices are concerned, it should be stressed with Appadurai that "[t]he techniques of the body, however peculiar, innovative, and antisocial, need to become social disciplines [...], parts of some habitus [...] in order to take on their full power. The core of consumption practices being the body [...] will always tend to repetition [...]" (Appadurai 1998[4]: 67). Consumption patterns recur in Santacroce's works and structure it. "In any socially regulated set of consumption practices, those that center around the body, and especially around the feeding of the body, take on the function of structuring temporal rhythm, of setting the minimum temporal measure [...]"(ib. 68).

In the book *Destroy* (2003[5]), consumption practices of the heroine alter the structuring of the temporal measure: she lives according to a subjective time pattern. Instead of 3.30 a.m., the telephone rings at "27.30":

> Spero che stanotte qualcuno chiamerà, magari alle 27.30, orario che adoro in maniera assolutamente ultradivina. [...] Ultimamente soffro di insonnia, alle 26 regolarmente mi sveglio e tutte le benzo del mondo non riescono a ipnotizzare la mia frenesia. [...] Il telefono squilla alle 27.30 precise. (ib.23).

The consumer's microcosm obeys the subject's rules, "consumption creates time and does not simply respond to it" (Appadurai 1998[4]: 68). The "socially regulated set of consumption practices", like feeding the body, is of great importance in the book entitled *Luminal* (2002[3]). The body of the heroine, called Demon, is exclusively fed by "Luminal", a tranquilizer. This feeding rite recurring all along the book emphasizes, on the one hand, the "artificiality" as the essence of the subject and influences, on the other hand, periodization, creating an inverted day-night-relation. The protagonist lives during nighttime and sleeps during daytime. She argues that, in the places she has lived, she has never seen the sun — neither in Zurich, nor in Berlin or Hamburg. The subjective time pattern and periodization of the heroine, the shifting and altering of the traditional time and space experiences, could create a place for the emerging subject, for female *eros* and *agape*. But the narrations of Santacroce are far from presenting a strong, "thinking" subject able to assess critically the world she lives in: the "consumer has been transformed through commodity flows (and the mediascapes)" — to speak with Appadurai — "in a sign, [...] in Baudrillard's sense of a simulacrum that only asymptotically approaches the form of a real social agent [...]" (Appadurai 1998[4]: 42). The Self is not a social agent, but a fetish: "[T]he consumer is consistently helped to believe that he or she is an actor, where in fact he or she is at best a chooser" (ib.). The subject, once free from "pedagogy", steps into the "trap of the

performative", where the Self merely becomes a "chooser" of prefabricated consumptive patterns.

ROSSANA CAMPO

Rossana Campo deals with regional conflicts existing within Italy, with "domestic racism" (Mancini 2000: 28) — or, as some Italian historians call it, Italy's tendency to "balcanization" (Giovagnoli 2003: 96) — resulting above all from the cleavage between the North and the South. The existing conflicts can hardly ever be resolved within the nation, though. Campo's heroines escape to other countries, to Spain, to France, to create alternative spaces. In her latest novel *L'uomo che non ho sposato* (2003), Rossana Campo combines "domestic racism" with educational institutions. The heroine, Rosi, a woman from South Italy, tells about her traumatic experiences when she was a school girl, and the headmaster's inappropriate racist remarks regarding her provenience from southern Italy and the virtues of Italy's "civilized" North:

> E fra una settimana voglio vederti arrivare a scuola in perfetto orario, devi spaccare il minuto. E poi voglio che ti tagli un po' i capelli, tu ne hai troppi di capelli, ne avete troppi di capelli voialtri, siete come gli africani. [...] [A]scoltami bene, io capisco che voialtri meridionali siete... un po' diversi, diciamo, lo so che per voi è difficile... insomma che non avete il senso del rispetto delle regole, è vero, lo so che siete così, però ricordati che qui siete ospiti, qui siete al nord Italia. Qui le cose vanno diversamente, e le regole dovete imparare a rispettarle prima o poi, se volete vivere in un posto civile. (Campo 2003: 33–34).

Campo refers indirectly to the increasing role of the Northern League led by Umberto Bossi and its racism that can be felt in pedagogical institutions. Federico Mancini, a scholar of contemporary Italian history, argues that

> in [the Po Valley], the Northern League [...] polls 20 per cent of the popular vote, controls a host of provincial capitals and has created institutions (even

> a parliament and a militia!) coextensive with, and aloof from, those of the central State. As a daily nourishment for its constituents' animosity, the league proposes to cut all state aid to the South and demands that judges, prosecutors and school teachers of Southern origin be removed from the posts they occupy in the North. (Mancini 2000: 27).

The novel *L'uomo che non ho sposato* oscillates between the *pedagogical* and the *performative*. Rosi, the heroine, meets — in Paris — her ex-boyfriend coming also from South Italy. They are both doubly marked as strangers, as a minority: as Italians in France and, within Italy, as southern Italians living in northern Italy. The forty-years-old Rosi, living her independent, autonomous, but lonesome and depressing life in Paris, has the possibility to rejoin Salvatore, her ex-boyfriend, who could become, *nomen est omen*, her "saver". The novel's open end does not reveal Rosi's decision, though, but its title, *L'uomo che* ***non*** *ho sposato*, could be a signal for Rosi's choice of independence.

The negative experiences lived throughduring school time, institutionalized racism and authority lead to the creation of a performed female "world". The novel, *Mai sentita così bene* (2002[10]), is structured like Boccaccio's *Decameron* or the *Arabian Nights*: the frame narrative introduces seven women, friends (the number "7" recalls Marguerite de Navarre's *Heptameron*) spending an evening in a Parisian apartment and telling each other stories. Stories about their liberating sexual experiences. The function of the story-telling could be seen, in analogy to Sheherazade's "telling to survive", as a "telling to subvert". And indeed, the embedded text exposes a possible construction of an "anarchical" female subjectivity free from the male-centred and hierarchical way of constructing one's existence. The women are unfaithful to their boyfriends and husbands, cheat and swindle to gain liberty. The frame narrative, where these young women live their lives as girlfriends of male partners or as married women, is in contrast with the narrative in the second degree, where a new liberating space is created through story-telling. The novel ends by

introducing a topos of the medieval farce, the *trompeur trompé* — or, in our case, the *trompeuse trompée*: the female protagonists turn out to be the victims of their unfaithfulness, as their husbands have chosen exactly their girlfriends as lovers. The two worlds of the frame narrative and the embedded narrative clash together and the hierarchical *pedagogical* world invades the liberated and liberating one. With the latter collapses also female friendship and solidarity.

In another narrative of Rossana Campo we witness the transformation of the performed homosocial and homoerotic pleasure and male-free "freedom" into the "safer" shelter of the patriarchal order. The heroine in Campo's book entitled *In principio erano le mutande* (1992) who, after some wild years spent with her female friends, is happy to await a baby from an older man looking just like her idol Luciano Pavarotti (probably there are few men looking more patriarchal than this famous singer does). We could argue with Gayatri Spivak that

> [a]s in all instituting, however unsystematic, the subject of feminism is produced by the performative of a declaration of independence, which must necessarily state itself as already given, in a constative statement of women's identity and/or solidarity, natural, historical, social, psychological. When such solidarity is in the triumphalist mode, it must want "to celebrate the female rather than deconstruct the male." But what female is the subject of such a celebration, such a declaration of independence? If it entails an unacknowledged complicity with the very males we refuse to deconstruct [...]" (Spivak 1999: 113).

Returing to the "old" patriarchal system, the heroine's *performative moment* is too weak to establish itself as a lasting *performativity* in Butler's sense (Butler 1993).

From transnationalism back to nation

SILVIA BALLESTRA

Silvia Ballestra's reflections on nationhood are more explicit and her conclusions and proposed alternatives are based on theoretical deconstructive knowledge, above all in her short stories entitled *Gli orsi* (1996[2]) — stylistically an extraordinary book. On the one hand, Ballestra reflects national/ist pedagogy. In the story entitled *1974* the protagonist remembers the time she attended kindergarten and submitted to the educative methods and political activity of her fascist father and fascist surroundings (Ballestra 1996[2]: 132). On the other hand, Ballestra focuses on rootlessness, deterritorialization and identity crises by exposing, in the short story entitled *Paraguay*, a disjunctive temporality representing residual and emergent meanings and practices. The residual is the Italian *hic et nunc*: The protagonists feel like snails sticking to territory, moving slowly and leaving a slimy trace: "Dopo una settimana di sregolatezze alimentari senza nome, [...] eravamo ridotti a due vampiri: pallidi, smorti, butterati. [...] [Mi trascinavo] sui gomiti, con l'orriblie sensazione di lasciare dietro me, nel corridoio, una bava lenta e viscosa di lumaca" (ib. 107). The emergent, the *performance*, is dislocated and presented as an embedded text about a fax from Paraguay. It not clear whether the fax was written in 1939 or 1993. However, it tells a completely disconnected story about a woman making love, in a Paraguayan hotel, to a dancer from Manchuria. The dancer changes his corporal appearance four times during that night — once he becomes a young Bohemian, another time an older American — so that the female protagonist actually makes love to four different persons:

> La rete del letto cigolava, e dopo aver fatto l'amore, normalmente, una prima volta — voglio dire: il mio amante tartaro si presentava ai miei occhi come tale, come un tartaro — nelle due copule successive ha voluto esibirsi per forza prima coi tratti e gli atteggiamenti di un giovane boemo trentenne leggermente più basso di lui e con un po' di pancetta, e la scopata

> è venuta così così; poi con il fisico e la personalità di un americanone forse quarantacinquenne ancora del tutto integro e asciutto.
>
> Dopo, parlandone sempre a gesti [...] abbiamo convenuto [...] che il personaggio dell'americano era sicuramente il migliore, almeno al letto. (ib. 92)

The next morning the protagonist discovers that her lover is in a process of complete disintegration: cubistically, first his nose divides, than his whole body — before disappearing altogether. Only the eyes of the multiform Manchurian dancer remain on the floor, staring at and speaking with the female protagonist:

> Sollevando gli occhi verso di lui, ho colto con angoscia gli ultimi spasmi d'una trasformazione genetica in atto, [...] con due nasi perfettamente disgiunti. [...] In ogni caso, continuava a cambiare personalità in modo impetuoso: una vecchia molto più che mutilata; un povero americano privo di fronte e mento; forse uno svedese non ancora mai prodotto e di cui restavano solo gli occhi, azzurri come due laghi di primavera. [...] "È finita, è finita," fecero quegli occhi svedesi [...]. (ib. 96–97).

"The "double"" — as argues Sigmund Freud — "is the figure most frequently associated with this uncanny process of "the doubling, dividing and interchanging of the self" (quoted by Bhabha 1990: 295). The *double*, the uncanny, the *rhizomic*. Appadurai argued that "the world we live in now seems rhizomic (Deleuze and Guattari 1987), even schizophrenic, calling for theories of rootlessness, alienation, and psychological distance between individuals and groups on the one hand, and fantasies (or nightmares) [...] on the other" (Appadurai 1998[4]: 29). The image of the snail introduced in the frame narrative forms a contrast to the transformation and the disappearance of the uncanny Manchurian dancer. The topographic indication "Manchuria" is also present in the Chinese writer Xiao Hong's who situates her novel *The Field of Life and Death* (1935) in the "context of the Japanese invasion of Manchuria and the common trope of the raped woman in anti-

Japanese propaganda [...]" (Stanford Friedman 2001: 115). Xiao Hong's novel challenges, according to Susan Stanford Friedman, the "appropriation of the female body by nationalist discourse" (ib.). Manchuria recurs in Ballestra's as well as in Campo's texts. It stands for the bodily experience of nation and nationalism. In Ballestra's text the male falls apart and disappears. Only the eyes in the decomposed body, underlining the importance of vision — and here is the parallel to Isabella Santacroce — remain.

Ballestra tries to give an answer to the already quoted question by Susan Stanford Friedman, namely : "how can a woman feel « at home » when her home nation is built upon gender oppression ?" (ib. 114). "The nation as a symbolic denominator is, according to Kristeva, a powerful repository of cultural knowledge that erases the rationalist and progressivist logics of the "canonical" nation" (Bhabha 1990: 303).

Ballestra is searching for a nation beyond the hierarchic, patriarchal *pedagogy*, reshuffling "progressivist logics of the "canonical" nation". In the short story entitled *La fidanzata di Hendrix da piccolo* Ballestra uses the metaphor of a train and the interactions of the people travelling on it in order to propose an alternative nation: before the train leaves the station, two old people, representing the old generation and the old "hierarchical" order, symbolically get off the train:

> Il vecchio un po' rideva e un po' sembrava spaventato. Stringeva la maniglia dello sportello con tutte le forze. Tenendosi aggrappato a quel modo, provava a mettere avanti un piede, con cautela [...] Dietro al vecchio in difficoltà erano comparsi un paio di carabinieri di leva, partecipi e gentili, pronti a dargli una mano. (ib. 139)

The people remaining in the compartment, the female protagonist, a young black man and some small — black and white — kids, symbolize a new power for nation-building not based on traditional *pedagogy*. The young female protagonist and the young black man, "those peoples whose histories of marginality have been most profoundly enmeshed in the antinomies of law and order — the

colonized and women" (ib. 302) — seem to explore *possible* nations. The initial distance of the travelling people changes into profound sympathy during the travel. Their relationship is strengthened through the exchange of small gifts. Together they perform and shape an alternative nation, based on other criteria than the hierarchic and patriarchal ones.

The train connects all different parts of Italy. On the one hand, Ballestra highlights the importance of nation by uniting and connecting symbolically regional fragments of the country. On the other, she brings up the theory of the gift (that has a wide reception among Italian philosophers of globalization like Elena Pulcini, 2001 or Giacomo Marramao, 2003). The gift seems to be a new form of solidarity in the globalized world and has to be applied on the national level.

Ballestra seems to underline Adrienne Rich's statements: "As a woman [...] I have a country; as a woman I cannot divest myself of that country merely by condemning its government [...]. Tribal loyalities aside and even if nation-states are now just pretexts used by multinational conglomerates to serve their interests, I need to understand how a place on the map is also a place in history within which as a woman [...] I am created and trying to create" (quoted by Stanford Friedman 2001: 113).

The nation and national literature in Ballestra's view is an important entity that persists. However, it is not written and dictated by traditional, pedagogical criteria, but re-written, re-interpreted — and *performed*.

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The Changing of the Traditional Role of the Slovene Novel since Independence

TOMO VIRK

In his famous *Theory of the Novel,* György Lukács already wrote that the novel is characterized by an insuppressible attachment to existing and concrete reality. According to Philippe Sollers (*Logiques*), the novel is the way society speaks of itself, and for Jonathan Culler (*Structuralist Poetics*) it is, among other things, a medium for establishing the identity of society. In this article I will attempt to illustrate these findings on the example of the Slovene novel, and at the same time show how such attachment to a concrete social reality can decisively influence the esthetic form of athenovel.

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The Slovene novel has a relatively short history. The first Slovene novel, *Tenth Brother* by Josip Jurčič, was not written until 1866, i.e. in the same year as Dostoievski's *Crime and Punishment* and a decade later than Flaubert's *Madame Bovary.* The Slovene novel was therefore only coming into existence when the modern European novel was already taking shape. Perhaps its late birth is one of the reasons why the Slovene novel did not, for quite some time, make use of the Protean nature which, according to Bakhtin, is characteristic of this literary genre. Instead, for more than a century the Slovene novel, especially in its canonized specimens, was ranked by literary historians primarily in a single novelistic type. The majority of canonized Slovene novels reveal characte-

ristics the beginnings of which can already be traced in Jurčič's *Tenth Brother* (c.f. Kos 1991: 50).

Owing to this homogeneity, it naturally comes as no surprise that Slovene literary historians, in particular the comparativists who studied the theory of the novel, were also particularly interested in the theory of the Slovene novel and its specific characteristics. After 1970, exhaustive studies were devoted to this subject primarily by Dušan Pirjevec and Janko Kos. Although their theoretical discourse differs, their views on the specific nature of the Slovene novel are harmonious to a considerable extent. I shall briefly summarize their findings.

In the 1960s and 1970s, Pirjevec developed an extremely interesting theory of the "traditional European novel", as he calls it, which stems from Lukács' *Theory of the Novel* and Heidegger's *Seinsgeschichte*. In his opinion, the novel originated in the modern era, "when the gods have abandoned the world", to quote Lukács, when man and the world are separated and when man becomes an *active* subject. In Heideggerian terms, this is a time of modern metaphysics, when the oblivion of being is experiencing its peak. Similarly to Lukács, for Pirjevec the esthetic structure of the novel is actually conditioned by this active subject. At the beginning of the novel, this subject has an idea of the essence and being of the world, which it then attempts to realize through its actions, but meets with its downfall in the end. And at the moment of its downfall it experiences a catharsis; it discovers the real truth, the *ontological difference* — and here Pirjevec draws from Heidegger, namely, that the idea as something existing is not being, and that its idea-based actions were condemned to failure from the very beginning, that its downfall was necessary. According to Pirjevec, in this discovery or recognition, which is in reality a Heideggerian *disclosure of being*, is simultaneously concealed the artistic quality of the novel. The best example of this model is, of course, the first modern novel, Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, and Pirjevec understands the traditional European novel — to employ a term of Lukács' typology, which Pirjevec does not explicitly do — as a novel of abstract idealism.

With such an understanding of the esthetic structure of the novel, Pirjevec is then confronted with the particularity of the Slovene novel, which, in his opinion, prevents it from being a true esthetic creation for the following reason: the Slovene novel in reality has no active hero; because there is no action, there can also be no principal downfall of the hero, and hence no perception of the truth of being nor of artistic quality. The traditional Slovene novel — as Pirjevec concludes — is not art, but ideology.

Pirjevec attributes this fact to the specific political-historical circumstances in which the Slovene novel has developed as a genre which, according to Lukács, most fully expresses the totality of a certain historical world. Upon the birth of the Slovene novel, the Slovenes were not an independent nation with the legal status of a national subject, but merely one of the national communities in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. Each nation is inclined, by its very nature, towards gaining recognition as a state with all its national institutions. But the Slovenes, owing to their smallness and weakness, were unable to strive for this goal by military means; and so they compensated for or sublimed this desire by making literature, and not social-historical action, the bearer of the Slovene national idea. Literature was the only place where the national idea could adequately express itself without limitations.[1] For literature, explains Pirjevec, this means that nationality has priority over esthetics. And in the light of Pirjevec's understanding of the esthetic structure of the novel, it is also clear why the hero of the Slovene novel is passive. Had he been active, he would have attempted to put his idea into action and — as in the novels of abstract idealism — would then have met with his downfall, and his idea would have proved to be wrong. But as this idea in the Slovene novel (for the above-mentioned reasons) is a national idea, this would reveal the nullity of the national idea. And for a nation whose nationality is *merely* an idea, this would, of course, be fatal. The hero of a Slovene novel can only be a *passive* hero, marked by an undefined *yearning* and lyricism which, in Pirjevec's

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[1] For this reason Jurčič's friend and literary critic, Fran Levstik, advised Jurčič that the hero of a novel must be a Slovene.

words, has negative consequences for the esthetics of a novel. As Pirjevec himself says: "This leads to a contrast between a specific literary esthetic form and the nationality principle, or, in simplified terms: between literature and nationality ... the subject and the nation block one another, the nationality principle blocks the actions of literature, which consequently loses its literariness and becomes ideology" (Pirjevec 1991: 35).

I am unable to demonstrate in this short explication how exaggerated Pirjevec's judgment regarding the incapacity of the true Slovene novel really was. For the purpose of my contribution it is more important that we are able to understand the specificity of the Slovene novel and the reasons for it. The typical Slovene novel is characterized by a *passive* hero, endowed with *lyrical* attributes, in particular *yearning* and *a fruitless search for happiness*. The adequacy of this image is confirmed by the fact that the very same result, at least as regards Slovene specificity, was obtained by another Slovene comparativist who dealt intensively with this issue, Janko Kos. Kos also leans on Lukács, in particular in his typology, yet he does not apply Heidegger's philosophy, but explores the specificity of the Slovene novel empirically, sociologically and from a literary-historical aspect. His empirical analysis reveals that a large majority of canonized Slovene novels may be ranked in one of Lukács' types, that is, the novel of disillusive romanticism, which generally has a *passive* hero (Kos 1991: 50). In the Slovene novel, this passive hero has some other special characteristics, namely, he is marked by a distinctive yearning, a search for happiness, which is unattainable and consequently makes him feel like a *victim*. Therefore, Kos's definition of the specificity of the Slovene novel is that this is a *disillusive novel of a victim*. Like Pirjevec, Kos attributes this specificity to "the socio-cultural foundations of Slovenehood", or, more precisely: to the fact that upon the origin and development of the novel, Slovenes had a highly developed national awareness, but did not have their own independent state.

This diagnosis has been confirmed not only by other literary historians (c.f. Prijatelj 1921, Pogačnik 1988), but also by studies in other areas. In her book entitled *Slovenski avtoportret 1918–*

1991 (Slovene Self-Portrait 1918–1991), the sociologist Alenka Puhar analyzed the self-image of Slovenes as it appeared in this period in the caricatures of daily newspapers and magazines. In many aspects her analyses correspond to Kos' and Pirjevec's image of the typical Slovene novelistic hero. As regards the typical attitude of a Slovene, Puhar refers to the "existential attitude of a victim" (Puhar 1992: 13) and explicitly links it to the Slovene novel in general, and in particular to the novels of the most important, and in this respect also the most representative Slovene novelist, Ivan Cankar, famous for his lyrical novels full of yearning, passive, and dreaming heros. Like Pirjevec, Puhar attributes these characteristics to the lack of national sovereignty.

Such a development of the Slovene novel is instructive in several aspects. It reveals, for example, the boundness of a certain literary form to a (national) idea, ideology, and in this specific Slovene example it clearly points to the fundamental nation-preserving significance of literature. But it is interesting for yet another reason. It shows how the *esthetic form*, particularly when it is so distinctly conditioned by society and history, as it is in the traditional Slovene novel, can also be a *norm*. The dominant form of the Slovene novel has in reality become the *esthetic normative model of the novel* which, for more than a century, has not given this literary form enough immanent freedom in the national literary canon system. Through the complex canonization process, the Slovene literary system has developed a specific awareness of the artistic quality of the novel, which matched the characteristics of the typical Slovene novel. In the past, this homogenous, canonized image of the Slovene novel obstructed its "Protean nature" in several ways. The Slovene literary (and within it, also the novelistic) canon was formed according to this model of values: artistic quality, lyricism, the national idea, yearning. This model favoured the establishment of a particular genre of the novel, thus leaving very little space for extensive epical novels, and even less for novels with an active, nihilistic hero, not to mention popular genre literature, which was looked down on and considered trivial

and thus less artistic.[2] And because literature was the sanctuary of what was most sacred — the national idea —, it evidently could not be trivial. All the decision-making segments of the literary system, particularly literary historians, critics, editors, grantors of literary awards and the authors of school curriculums generally supported, through their activities, the dominant type of the Slovene novel.

This situation gradually began to change in the past two decades, following the radical political changes which decisively transformed the social-historical circumstances influencing the form of the Slovene novel in the 19th century and the greater part of the 20th century. Janko Kos already anticipated[3] that the change in the "sociocultural foundations of Slovenehood ... would also bring a change in the typical samples of the Slovene novel". And these sociocultural foundations changed essentially after Slovenia's attainment of independence.

The polemic attitude towards the traditional esthetic, the novelistic norm and the breaking of the traditional, relatively homogeneous image of the Slovene novel can perhaps best be demonstrated by a very illustrative example from literary practice itself, i.e. the most representative postmodernist Slovene novel, *Plamenice in solze* ('Torches and Tears') (1987) by Andrej Blatnik. This work was written in a period of rising national consciousness, when the minds of Slovenes were already turning towards national liberation, which became official and final four years after the novel was published. It is quite typical that such a strong polemics with the traditional esthetic norm should occur precisely in the postmodernist novel. One of the predominant

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[2] The sacral attitude towards literature in Slovenia is also apparent in the fact that streets, and even military units and barracks, were always massively named after Slovene authors; the national anthem was written by the greatest Slovene poet, whose birthday is a state holiday; the central cultural institution is named after the most important Slovene novelist, although it is intended primarily for other forms of art.

[3] An interesting detail: at a lecture presented on the evening before the beginning of the war for independent Slovenia.

forms of postmodernist intertextuality[4] is referring to canonized texts, genres or common-places of national literary history. For example, in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, John Fowles imitates the Victorian novel, Patrik Süskind in *Perfume* imitates the German romantic "Künstlernovelle", and Andrej Blatnik in his novel parodically imitates the very structure of the traditional Slovene novel with a passive, yearning hero searching for unattainable happiness. Through a story the novel relates to the work of the Strugacki brothers, *Picnic at the Edge of the Road* (and its film version, *Stalker,* by Tarkowski). The main hero, Konstantin Wojnovski, who is at all times extremely inactive, yearns for the Golden Ball, which fulfills one's most secret wish. His greatest wish is — in a completely postmodernist, Borgesian spirit —, to write a book that would encompass the entire world. Yet the Golden Ball does not fulfill his *spoken* wish, but the *secret* one. Konstantin is extremely unattractive to the gentler sex, but after meeting with the Golden Ball, all the most beautiful women are suddenly available to him without so much as lifting a finger. Thus, on the one side the novel is a typical Slovene novel, a dissillusive novel of a victim: Konstantin is a passive hero filled with a yearning for unattainable happiness. Yet at the same time the novel is actually a *parodic* imitation or citation of this structure: Konstantin's wish remains unfulfilled, but the Golden Ball fulfills his other, secret wish, his wish to be irresistibly sexually attractive, which is almost the sacrilegious equivalent of the secret desire of the traditional Slovene novelistic hero, that is, the desire for national independence.

Blatnik's novel parodies (and thus in a certain way destroys, eliminates and thwarts) the structure of the traditional Slovene novel of course in the spirit of postmodernist poetics, which typically demonstrates such an attitude towards literary tradition.[5] Yet at the same time it symptomatically indicates a change in a

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[4] Andrej Blatnik called attention to this in his literary-historical study on metafiction, *Labirinti iz papirja* ('Labyrinths of Paper').

[5] And — may I add — also completely in the spirit of Bakhtin's understanding of the true novel.

certain socially-conditioned esthetic form that had been dominant in Slovene literary culture since the birth of the Slovene novel. In the past two decades, this change can be observed on several levels: in literary production itself, in the school canon, in literary historical writing, and finally in the granting of literary awards. The changes (positive or negative) brought along by postmodern thinking, globalization and the desacralization of literature have widely opened the doors for the ascent of popular genres, e.g. fantastic, as well as detective stories and thrillers, which only began to flourish in Slovenia in the 1980s and reached their peak in the nineties (c.f. Zupan Sosič 2001). A good example of this is Blatnik's novel, which is written as an imitation of a detective story and science-fiction novel, but has already been successfully canonized on all levels of the literary system. Another example, which was unpresentable in the previous period, is the work of a female author (Maja Novak) who in the nineties received the most prestigious national award for her predominantly detective novels. Besides opening to popular genres, the Slovene literary system is at least in principle becoming more open to very untypically Slovene novels with an active, demonic, nihilistic hero. An illustrative example of this is the fate of Vladimir Bartol and his world-famous (and currently highly interesting) novel entitled *Alamut*. This novel with its Nietzchean hero and philosophy emphasizing the will to power, as well as certain elements of the adventurous (and thus trivial) genre, distinctively differs from the image of the specific Slovene novel. The novel was published in 1938, but was almost completely overlooked until the end of the 1980s when, after being translated into several major world languages, attained international acclaim. Owing to this resounding success and the endeavours of the younger postmodern generation of authors, Bartol is gradually becoming — despite some resistance which has remained — part of the national, literary-historical and, in recent times, also the school[6] canon.

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[6] In contrast to previous practice, this novel can be found in the most recent secondary school textbooks, and for the second consecutive year is included in the compulsory reading list for matriculation exams.

Of course, the disillusive novel of a victim continues to be a very important type of the Slovene novel (c.f. Fišer 2003), — particularly among the most distinguished authors of the middle and older generations. However, the changes in the national novelistic canon are evident. Perhaps they can most clearly be seen in the fact that, in the past decade, the highest and most prestigious national awards have been granted also to novels that would have been considered trivial several decades ago. Without some distance in time, as well as literary-cultural distance, these changes cannot be accurately evaluated. Most skeptical towards them are the academic, traditional literary-historical circles, above all the education system, while other segments of the literary system are more flexible. This skepticism is primarily due to the fear that, owing to these changes, the novel is experiencing the decline of its high esthetic form. Although this may be true in some cases — perhaps in numerous ones — the very example of the Slovene novel teaches a different lesson as well. The traditional esthetic form of the Slovene novel was in reality a *norm* that nevertheless limited the internal freedom of the novel. The novel *is* a Protean, polyphonic genre and — again in Bahtin's words — is open to the future. It is therefore reasonable to hope that the changes being brought into Slovene novel writing — through, e.g. the syncretism of genres — by the changing social-historical circumstances, globalization, and even the rush of mass culture, will only help the novel to most adequately put its essence into action, as Bakhtin attempts to define it, and that in the changing social circumstances — and in accordance with the quality mentioned at the beginning of this paper — it will continue to hold the mirror to a changed society.

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Traces of the Postmodern World in the 21st-Century Estonian Novel

PIRET VIIRES

It could be claimed that the societal prerequisite of the postmodern condition as defined by Fredric Jameson (cf. Jameson 1999), or late capitalism, is only emerging in the Estonian society and thus it would be too early to talk about Estonia as a postmodern society. Thus it seems feasible to assert that the late-20th/early-21st century Estonian society should be considered as a pre-late-capitalist society (which denotes the so-called "cowboy capitalism" phase in market economy) and has only recently started to become a contemporary consumerist society. In this case, according to Jameson, Estonian literature would lack the foundation for postmodernism. Despite that, postmodernism as a cultural practice does nevertheless exist in Estonian literature. Although by no means as a dominant trend, postmodernist patches do emerge in the work of some Estonian writers, including novelists.

For example, when Inguna Bekere wrote in 1997 in the collection of articles *International Postmodernism* edited by Hans Bertens and Douwe Fokkema, that in Latvia postmodernism is a marginal phenomenon, which lacks any wider resonance in theory or literary practice, except for just a few authors (Bekere 1997: 447–450), then in Estonia postmodernism has been relatively more prominent both as a theory and cultural practice. One could refer here, among other reasons, to a thorough introductory effort carried out by various Estonian cultural critics in the late 1980s–early 1990s, for instance, by Hasso Krull, Ants Juske, and Märt Väljataga. The term *postmodernism* was adopted by the Estonian

cultural scene quite easily. In the 1990s critics began to regard as postmodernist also works written in the earlier period and not referred to as such at the time, when the concept was still unknown to them. By now, they have labelled short stories by Arvo Valton and the novel *Sügisball* ('Autumn Ball') by Mati Unt from the mid-1970s as one of the first postmodernist works in Estonian fiction (cf. Annus 2000, Epner 2001). It might be relevant here to recall the claim by Ihab Hassan that in the postmodern period we are able to find postmodernism also in texts not discussed as such before, "because our eyes have learned to recognize postmodern features" (Cohen 2000: 293–294).

Since the 1990s, some Estonian writers have been prolific in producing both short stories and novels that may be defined postmodernist and encompass most features of postmodernist fiction — intertextuality, fragmentation, eclecticism, irony, scepticism, the obscuration of genre borders, the disappearance of the difference between mass culture and high literature, the growing significance of the image of the author. The Estonian postmodernist novel is also characterised by the "loss of innocence" in the sense of Umberto Eco. Estonian authors are well aware that "every story tells a story that has already been told" (Eco 1985: 19–20).

This article is focused on a few Estonian novelists representing the youngest generation, and on their novels, which may be labelled as novels of the 21st century. These authors matured in the newly independent republic, and therefore they do not carry the burden of memories from the Soviet period. And most of them do not consider themselves embedded just in the Estonian literary canon alone, but rather view the previous literary tradition from a certain distance. The following discussion involves writers Berk Vaher and Hiram in greater detail, with a shorter overview of Kadri Kõusaar, Kerttu Rakke, and Kaur Kender. In one way another, all of them may be categorised as postmodernist authors in Estonian literature. However, this list presented does not pretend to be an exhaustive one.

Obviously, postmodernism is a wide and ambivalent concept. It is not fixed by one textbook definition, nor does its carry any

unitary authority to confirm what is postmodernism, and what is not. Postmodernism is characterised by the plurality of meaning — we should rather speak of "postmodernisms" instead of any one and established postmodernism. Jean-Francois Lyotard has considered "postmodernism" to be a term referring to absolutely everything. Therefore we cannot provide just a single answer to a question what is postmodernism, what are its temporal limits or characteristic features. Postmodernism is usually described as the voice of a critic, not as a kind of literature or architecture or society. As Brian McHale puts it, "Postmodernism exists discursively, in the discourses we produce *about* it and *using* it" (McHale 1992: 1). Or quoting Fredric Jameson: "Postmodernism is not something we can settle once and for all and then use with a clear conscience. The concept, if there is one, has come at the end, and not at the beginning, of our discussions of it" (Jameson 1999: xxii).

While postmodernism renders freedom to see various "truths" simultaneously, the current article proposes a discussion which should also be received from a postmodern vantage point — it is just one "truth" among several others.

Broadly speaking, we may distinguish postmodern phenomena in Estonian novels on two levels:

1) The narrow intratextual level. Hereby I am referring to postmodern features that are directly related to the structure of the text and the use of language, and also experiments in form: for example, fragmentation, local intertextual allusions, temporal disorder, plurality of styles and images, eclecticism, parody, pastiche.
2) The wider level, provisionally entitled as postmodern depiction of the world. Hereby I am not referring to narrow intratextual features, but rather global components, which reflect the process of how the postmodern world or postmodern lifestyle according to this world have been expressed in works of literature. It denotes observations on how texts of global world culture, cultural conventions, manifestations of mass culture (pop music, commercial brands, TV, films, cosmopolitan glamour), as well as the obscuration of genre borders, the dis-

appearance of the difference between mass culture and high literature have entered into Estonian literature.

Turning now to the Estonian authors mentioned, I would like to point out the novel *Lugulaul* by Berk Vaher ('Epic Story', 2002), which most directly represents intratextual postmodernism, and *Mõru maik* by Hiram ('Bitter Taste', 1999) as a representational novel of the postmodern depiction of the world.

Vaher's *Lugulaul* is an experimental novel that was composed with a particular purpose. Its texture is quite complicated and at first glance far from attractive to read, but it is a generous object of analysis and the novel's multitude layers unfold especially through a postmodern approach. The Estonian critic Jaanus Adamson has drawn the conclusion from his reading of this novel that if one were to unfold all the different layers discernable in the novel, one would be left with a simple "puerile", that is, juvenile narrative (Adamson 2003: 63). *Lugulaul* presents a thick texture, linguistic experiments, and also typeset experiments (the whole novel is printed in alternating different fonts), constant intertextual allusions to other texts. For example, here is a reference to a pop song from the 1970s: *Taas on ta tippkutt, vabastaja, vägevam kui eales varem, sangar seiklusfilmis* ("He is again the top guy, the liberator, more powerful than ever before, the hero of an action movie") (Vaher 2002: 72). The narrative of the novel is fragmented; the text corresponds to one of the key concepts of postmodernism: it is like a Borgesian labyrinth. To quote Christopher Nash from *The Unravelling of the Postmodern Mind*: "With this come some of postmodern writing's other most characteristic images — the labyrinth.... /---/ One caught in this ultimate emblem of both issueless frivolity and ineluctable confinement, both character and reader feel trapped in a medium where the urgency of choosing (which 'turning' or 'meaning' to take?) and the utter absence of grounds for decision are the very condition of its meaning" (Nash 2001: 16).

Other postmodernism's key concepts highlighted by Barry Lewis are likewise relevant when analysing *Lugulaul*: the temporal disorder, the looseness of association, paranoia and vicious circles.

"Vicious circles arise in postmodernist fiction when both text and world are permeable, to the extent that we cannot separate one from the other" (Lewis 2002: 131). Also in reading *Lugulaul* we cannot always be sure whether the speaker is the author or the protagonist or whether they are one and the same. Vaher seems to contend together with Umberto Eco that "books always speak of other books" (Eco 1985: 19–20). Thus in *Lugulaul* we are actually dealing with different layers of a fairytale, a love story, an action story, a romance of chivalry, and a summer vacation story. Which reminds us of the detective novel as the main narrative of *The Name of the Rose*. Vaher, or his protagonist, knows that according to Eco it is no longer possible to speak innocently, all the texts written are in front of us and the protagonist admits that everything that happened "was just a fairytale... It was all just a movie one had watched. Just a rotten action movie" (Vaher 2002: 88). Berk Vaher's novel is large in scope and its experimental qualities render the author an outstanding position among younger generation of Estonian novelists.

Hiram's *Mõru maik* appears to be an opposite to *Lugulaul* from a certain point of view. The narrative of this novel is linear, alternating with just one other story from the past through flashbacks. The text is easy to read, the novel itself is complete in essence, there is no fragmentation, no plurality of styles, or eclecticism. However, I would still call it a postmodernist work, especially in regard to what this novel describes. When *Mõru maik* first appeared in Estonia, it caused a heated controversy, because in the Estonian literary scene it stood out with its unexpected cosmopolitan approach. There were critics who questioned the writer's identity and suspected the novel to be a translation. The main reason for this was the lack of the concept of place, or the dimension of space in Hiram's novel. The characters of the novel are not interested in naming places or mentioning street names, no effort is made to specify even the town or country. The story takes place in an anonymous Western city; the characters — pop-musicians and actors — have English-sounding personal names, but they could easily be of any nationality. The environment is an urban city, urban centres are places where people conduct their

lives according to certain rules and it does not really matter in which country they happen to be at the moment. Nor does the surroundings carry much weight, because the most important is whatever happens inside the people, in their personal relationships. Hiram describes problems that are common to humans in the late-20th century Western society, with no interest or reference to conditions in Estonia. The world that Hiram describes is a post-modern one, which is defined by pop music, commercial brands, TV, movies, and commercial glamour. The slogan of Hiram's world might be "I shop therefore I am" (Watson 2002: 63), it is a world where the "shift from substance to style" has already taken place. In order to understand Hiram's novel, one has to be familiar with the right codes, know the pop music groups referred to, the allusions created by naming certain movie stars, the brands mentioned, what is referred to by the clothing that different characters wear. The detailed description of clothing reminds us of Bret Easton Ellis' *The American Psycho* and *Glamorama*, where the endless list of brand names provide a code for entering into the New York yuppie world. Without any knowledge of these late-capitalist, postmodern consumer society signs, a good half of Hiram's novel remains opaque and becomes an insider story for only those members of the group who share these codes.

In its unidentified place of action, Hiram's book follows a principle observable in digital literature or cyberliterature on the Internet. The Internet-world is significant also to Hiram, and the rules valid in Internet communities are easily applicable also to *Mõru maik*. In cyberliterature the locality or nationality do not matter, but it is important that the target audience — that is, one's own community, a subculture understands the things discussed. We could draw the most obvious parallel between Hiram's *Mõru maik* and the sub-genre of Internet literature called "fanfiction", where fans of a pop or rock band write fictional stories with characters from their favourite bands. In essence, also Hiram is writing fanfiction — following all the genre rules that include strong emotions, deception, scenes from concerts and backstage. Yet Hiram's text is more hyperreal, in the sense of Jean Baudrillard, than conventional fanfiction, where the musicians

existing in real life function only as signs carrying a certain image, which then operate according to the fantasies of a particular inventor. Hiram, instead, envisions also an imaginary pop band, a simulacrum, "the identical copy for which no original has ever existed" (Jameson 1999: 18), with imaginary interviews and imaginary music videos that are described in the novel. In reference to Jean Baudrillard: "Signs are the reality and the imaginary and the real have become confused" (Watson 2002: 60).

If Vaher and Hiram could be considered representatives of two different interpretations of postmodernism, then Kadri Kõusaar is a writer who combines both levels, the intratextual approach and postmodern world in her novels. Her writer's debut, the novel named *Ego* (2001) carries postmodern qualities on the textual level: fragmentation, temporal disorder, linguistic experiments, eclecticism, a confusion of styles. From a wider perspective, Kõusaar proposes an intertextual variant of Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*, and weaves into it allusions to the realities of the postmodern world similarly to Hiram: movies, fiction, pop music, and hedonist lifestyle (drugs and sex).

Kõusaar's novel activates another postmodern feature: the blurring of boundaries between mass culture and elitist culture, and the transformation of the author into a media phenomenon. Fredric Jameson has noted that postmodernism is characterised by the incorporation of mass culture to such an extent that it becomes gradually harder to draw the line between high culture and commercial forms (Jameson 1999: 2). In the list of mass culture authors might be included also Kaur Kender anda Kerttu Rakke. All three writers have powerful and well-developed public images that are marketed according to commercial rules. For them, fiction and creative writing is no longer an elitist art of high modernism, but an ordinary commodity in a conventional consumer society.

Among the novels by pop-writer Kaur Kender, I would consider postmodernist his *Pangapettus* ('Bank Fraud', 2002), which is a parody on the life led by contemporary Estonian bankers and businessmen. The narrative is segmented, fragmentary, the prototypes of characters are easy to recognise, the border between fiction and reality is blurred. The text presents an alternation of

parenthetical comments by fictional and actually existing figures — we should recall here again one of the key concepts of postmodernism, "vicious circles", in which real people appear in fictional texts.

Among the mentioned authors, Kerttu Rakke makes another postmodernist experiment in addition to her easy-reading-novels, which she consciously labels as *"naistekad"* — "books for women"– already on the cover jacket. She has written also a novel called *Kalevipoeg* (2000) which presents a direct intertextual reference to the Estonian national epic. Rakke's *Kalevipoeg* is an interesting phenomenon in being a pure representation of postmodern parody. Let us recall here Linda Hutcheon: "Parody is a perfect postmodern form, in some sense, for it paradoxically both incorporates and challenges that which it parodies" (Hutcheon 1988: 11). Or perhaps according to Frederic Jameson we can define Rakke's *Kalevipoeg* more precisely as a pastiche: a pastiche is "neutral practice", "blank parody, a statue with blank eyeballs" (Jameson 1999: 17). Rakke's *Kalevipoeg* lacks satire or criticism, the writer's approach would rather seem neutral or indifferent. But postmodern intertextuality unfolds here in its most genuine form. The allusion to its reference text appears already in the title of the book, and provides the reader thus with a key for becoming aware of the double coding. Following Eco, we may see again "the loss of innocence" — behind the adventures of the protagonist Ädu and her friends hides constantly the reference to the national epic, so one cannot read the story as plain narrative. The whole text is punctured with hidden allusions and direct quotations, beginning with chapter numbers that refer to the cantos in the epic *Kalevipoeg*. Sometimes it is easy to trace these references (for instance, Ädu fetches a car called Seksmobiil from Finland, around which are woven her adventures later on, similarly to the cursed sword acquired from the Finnish Smith in the epic, which gives the hero might to conquer the enemy, but gets stolen and finally cuts off the hero's feet). In other cases the allusions are more hidden and, similarly to Eco's *The Name of the Rose*, require more specific knowledge. For example, chapter 16 refers to canto 16 in *Kalevipoeg*, which describes the journey to the end of the world.

But Kerttu Rakke makes her characters take a "trip" to the end of the world with the help of drugs, and the vicious beasts of the epic are replaced by visions induced by being high on drugs.

To conclude, I would like to point out that in the contemporary Estonian novel of the early 21st century, the young Estonian writer no longer stands rooted only in vernacular literature embedded in Estonian cultural canons, but draws — besides fiction in other languages — also from the clichés of Western pop culture, as well as from movies, pop music, and the postmodern lifestyle. Postmodern fragmentation has introduced also into younger Estonian fiction separate groups, subculture codes. Writers interact in their creative writing with other members of a particular group through intertextual allusions and stand oriented towards members of their own group, towards those who read the same code.

The problems of these different groups transcend the whole postmodern Western cultural discourse, regardless of their nationality or ethnicity. The only question remains, in what language one should write. For an Estonian author it is most natural and enabling to write in the Estonian language, and Estonian readers prefer to read about the current postmodern world from an Estonian perspective and in their mother tongue.

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Subjectivity and Survival: Postmodern Identity in Two Contemporary Estonian Novels

KADRI TÜÜR

Introduction

The novel as a genre is comparatively young, and not 'ready' yet, as Mikhail Bakhtin has indicated in his classical study of the genre (Bahtin 1987). The novel, in its still ongoing process of formation, is a phenomenon the different parts of which may well indeed develop at varying speeds. What seems a qualitative leap in one context may have no effect of novelty when regarded from a different point of view. If we are to ask what is the dynamics between the national and the international in the novel genre, one important aspect in that regard is the construction of identity in a novel's text. Whereas national identity traditionally has its foundation in a set of myths, closely related to the historical formation process of this particular nation, the contemporary, postmodern identity is more free in the selection of the elements that make up one's identity, not restricting itself to the level of national recognition. It has also been argued that a strong national identity acts as an impediment to the inveteracy of the postmodern self-cognition (see Viires 2002: 348). The differences in the nature of these identities can be described as a shift on the static–dynamic axis. Identity, which is in itself a rather generic term, is treated in the following more specifically as subjectivity; as its constitution and negotiation.

In Estonian literary studies, postmodern features in the texts of Estonian authors have thoroughly been discussed by Epp Annus (Annus 1999: 1238–1245; see also Annus 2002) and Piret Viires (Viires 2002: 347–356). The discussion of manifestations of postmodern features in literary texts focusing on the problems of identity and subjectivity, however, has been sparser. The problem of subjectivity in connection with narrative techniques is one of the focal points in Eneken Laanes's analysis of Kaplinski's and Õnnepalu's texts (Laanes 2003: 501–508; 585–598). Kivirähk has been treated as a postmodern author in Lindström (2002: 129–135).

The aim of the present article is to study the construction of postmodern identity in two contemporary Estonian novels. The specific question is how does a particular strategy of identity formation contribute to the 'survival' of, or the potential continuation of the effective interaction between the characters.

Sources

The article has three main sources. The two contemporary Estonian novels under discussion are Andrus Kivirähk's *Rehepapp ehk november* (2000, 'Threshing-Barn Man, or November') and Tõnu Õnnepalu's *Raadio* (2002, 'Radio'; published under the pseudonym Emil Tode). These novels are approached as national representatives of the postmodern period in the life of the novel genre. The main theoretical source here is Linda Hutcheon's classic *A Poetics of Postmodernism. History, Theory, Fiction* (1996). The novels are analysed as set against this particular theoretical work, in order to provide a common platform for their comparison.

Andrus Kivirähk and Tõnu Õnnepalu belong to the "middle" generation of Estonian writers. Both men have attained attention and popularity in Estonia as well as abroad. Whereas Õnnepalu has been praised as our first "new European" writer; Kivirähk's comic, sometimes parodying re-writings of Estonian history have evoked doubts that his works are so nation-specific that no one

else except Estonians themselves could see the point in his oeuvre. The national aspects of Kivirähk's *Rehepapp* have been discussed by Alekand (2002: 203–207). In case of Õnnepalu, it has been polemised (see Saariluoma et al 2003), whether he represents modernist writing, or could we consider him our first truly postmodern writer. After the publication of two of his most recent books, a problem has risen in their reception: should they be read as autobiographical non-fiction, as novels, or as yet something else (Laanes 2003: 501)? These features, among others, reveal the possibly postmodern nature of these texts.

According to Hutcheon, the consistently problematised issues that define the poetics of postmodernism, are the following: historical knowledge, subjectivity, narrativity, reference, textuality, discursive context (Hutcheon 1996: 106). She emphasises that the postmodern stance does not mean the denial of the existence of, for example, history or subjectivity, but that it is about questioning and playing the different possible answers against each other in an ironical manner; creating, what she calls 'productive contradictions' (Hutcheon 1996: 226).

Both *Rehepapp* and *Raadio* appear to be complex texts that question a number of the above-mentioned categories. As examples of the more fastidious section of the contemporary Estonian prose, they both provoke ontological questions, the answering of which already remains the responsibility of the reader. Ontological *versus* epistemological concern has been used as an indicator differentiating between postmodernist and modernist writing by some theorists (see Annus 1999: 1242). In the following discussion, the construction of the ontological positions in these two books is kept in the centre of attention.

Time and space

If we look at *Rehepapp* and *Raadio* in the context of their authors' other works, it is quite clear that they have more common features than a number of other works by the same writers. First, a

composition-related similarity becomes apparent: both books are set within very strictly defined chronological and spatial limits. *Rehepapp*, as its subtitle tells, describes a time span of exactly one month, namely November, probably somewhere around the last quarter of the 19th century, in a small Estonian village not far from the sea. *Raadio*'s time of narration also fits between two precisely indicated dates, from April 20 to June 24, 2002. The protagonist in Tode's book stays in Tartu most of the time, and finally flies to New York. Although in both cases the narrative progresses steadily day after day, Tode's text mainly recounts the events of past days; at the beginning of the book, even of the past centuries, within this framework. Most of the things told to the reader rely solely on the memory of the narrator and are set in the context of the narrator's daily private life. Both time and space in *Radio* are individual-centred, simultaneously very specific and very ambivalent in nature. Hutcheon's example of the Doctorow's *Book of Daniel* serves also well to explain the situation in *Raadio*, "The protagonist of a postmodern novel ... is overtly specific, individual, culturally and familially conditioned in his response to history, both public and private" (Hutcheon 1996: 114). Modifying Bakhtinian terminology, it could be called a 'personal chronotope'.

Time and space in *Rehepapp* represent the Bakhtinian 'chronotope of idyll' with the narrow localisation, descriptions of routine activities, and cyclical arrangement of time, with remarkably few pro- or analepsises. Each chapter is organised as one day, beginning with a weather report each morning, followed by the description of the villagers' daily routines and observation of holidays (St. Martin's Day, Thursday of the waning moon, etc.) The most distant break-out from the limits of the village is the quest of Imbi and Ärni for the fabulous blue sea cows to the sea shore, about one hour's walking distance from the village. None of the villagers leaves the place. From the outside, some intruders (Plague, Snow Man) appear, whom the village people receive rather passively. The narrator is seemingly in the omniscient position, able to voice the inner thoughts and feelings of almost all the characters. Significantly, the Snow Man, of all the characters remains outside the scope of his vision. This fact determines that

the village appears not to be a closed system, but is subject to transmutations.

Besides the formal similarities in the limitations of the time and space of the fiction, a number of content-wise analogies can be indicated in the two novels. Both fit Hutcheon's claim that "contemporary works do not try to escape, but indeed foreground the historical, social, ideological contexts in which they have existed and continue to exist" (Hutcheon 1996: 24–25). The foregrounding of the context of writing is especially evident in Tode's writing. The effect of such 'parallel awareness' is the reader's impression, as if the narrator's spatial and temporal perception was split and existing in a number of different chronotopes simultaneously. In *Raadio* this is explicit from the very first sentence where the price of a bus ticket is compared in Estonian kroons, euros, and francs, followed by the narrator's confession, "I have still not got used to thinking in euros, although I am used to counting (*computing*) in them". The mention of different currencies indicates that the narrator routinely divides himself between several monetary systems, several countries and cities. As he is moving between these systems, he does not seem to be inherently close to any of them. Unlike a modernist character who would probably feel a certain distress of non-belonging, the narrator of *Raadio* evidently regards such a situation as a regular one.

The peculiarity of adding translations in a foreign language, mostly in French, to various Estonian-specific cultural and historical phenomena is prevalent in Tode's text to the degree that has made some of the current critics ironically observe that the writer has evidently decided to volunteer in helping the future translators of the text. However, such acts of defamiliarisation on the level of vocabulary are carried out with consistency: the French translations have been added to concepts related with specifically Estonian culture (e.g. not cultivated — *en friche*, scythe — *faux*, harvesting — *moisson*, the Gun Powder Store Bar in Tartu — *Cave au poudre*, etc.). English words are used when the spreading of some cultural phenomenon is connected with globalisation (*second-hand*, *soap opera*, *drag queen*). Some Baltic-German heritage related words such as *Strafe* or *Schuld* are given in

German. Such 'europisms' in the Estonian text create an ironical distance between the narrator and the culture that he has been brought up in. The narrator tries to explain his native culture in his monologues as if to someone strange, an outsider. By doing so, the historical background, as well as the present socio-political context of the story, is brought to the fore; they get special attention because of the act of double naming. At the same time, such a stress serves the end of distancing the self from this context, but it is done in an ironical manner; the narrator is aware that the past cannot be eliminated. It inevitably forms a part of his identity, and continues to shape it.

History

As Hutcheon writes, the postmodernist approach does not deny the existence of the past, but it questions and parodies it in order to find answers to the question, *how, in which way* can we know the past, what is the best way to capture the past (Hutcheon 1996: 41). It is not the concern about the *right* knowledge, but rather about the ontology of humans as remembering subjects. As all forms of knowledge are unreliable one way or another, postmodern writing serves as a demonstration of no confidence in language, writing and speech (ib. 74–78). After the postmodern awareness, the innocent belief in the invincible power of art/literature is no longer possible.

The historical context presented in Kivirähk's novel is connected with the notions of postmodern textuality, historicity, and parody. Hutcheon defines parody as a repetition of the original with critical distancing that allows an ironic signalling of its difference from the source material (ib. 26). *Rehepapp* is in a great part based on the oral lore recorded in the Estonian Folklore Archives (see Kindel, Tüür 2001; Heinapuu, Kikas 2002). Reviving this folkloristic material in the creation of the pseudo-mythological world of the novel invites the drawing of a parallel with the postmodern idea that the past is accessible to us only in a

textual form: documents, eye-witness accounts, archives (Hutcheon 1996: 93). Even memory is textual in its principle. From the textuality of history it follows that fiction does not differ much from the historical narrative. It could even happen that the re-written history becomes perceived as that which has "always been true" (ib. 101). With the distanced attitude towards the past, "the postmodernist ironic rethinking of history is definitely not nostalgic," she writes (ib. 39). Kivirähk has parodied the nostalgic attitude to history in his earlier works (*Ivan Orava mälestused*, 'The Memoirs of Ivan Orav'). The heroic discourse traditionally used in recounting the past events is provided with ridiculous content; controversial facts and theories are innocently offered to the reader. These strategies are used not only in *Ivan Orav*, but we meet them also in *Rehepapp*. In this regard, Kivirähk represents excellent postmodernism in his realisation — and indication — that as we can never write *the* history, so why not just have fun with it. History in his writings is a source of ambivalence and comedy, it offers numerous possibilities for parody and irony in its diversity.

In the case of either of the novels, the aim of using historical material in the text is "to make us look to the past from the acknowledged distance of the present, a distance which inevitably conditions our ability to know that past. The ironies produced by that distancing are what prevent the postmodern from being nostalgic." (Hutcheon 1996: 230).

Subjectivity and networks

When history, and thereby national identity, are stripped of their innocent self-evidence, and exposed to several doubts, it is only logical then that the modernist expression of individual subjectivity be challenged in postmodernist writing, too.

Raadio is written in the first-person narrative with several indications of the unreliability of the narrator. In *Rehepapp* the focus of the third-person narrative freely shifts from one character

to another. These two cases are exemplary of the two types of subjectivity, or actually, the problematisation of the entire notion of subjectivity that Hutcheon points out as characteristic of postmodern novels. In the first case, the postmodern subversion of the point of view results in a narrator who is overtly, deliberately manipulative and over-assertive. In the latter case the pluralizing multivalency of points of view becomes manifest in a "myriad of voices, often not completely localizable in the textual universe. In both cases, the inscription of subjectivity is problematized, though in very different ways," Linda Hutcheon writes (1996: 160). Given these two alternative ways of expressing the postmodern situation of the 'world without a fixed centre', as Umberto Eco has suggested, it becomes understandable why the question of 'truth' is so ambivalent in postmodern writing. Both novels under examination here express an awareness of the relative nature of the textual universe. In regard to handling the subjectivity, these novels could be regarded as 'postmodern twins': they both problematise it, respectively by means of splitting (*Raadio*) or shifting (*Threshing-Barn Man*) the subject, the two principal parallel options.

Hutcheon writes that subjectivity (or the ability to express it) is a fundamental property of language. Language, or speech, more properly, presupposes a *subject*, the one who speaks. Therefore, no subject can be autonomous as it is constituted in and by language and open to multiple cultural codes (Hutcheon 1996: 168). Subjectivity is relational and processual by nature. On the basis of its characteristics of incoherence, its fragmentary and contradictory nature, Hutcheon regards the postmodern novel as a "public I" (ib. 84). Postmodern art can be characterised as a 'performance of the personal'.

Tode's book definitely makes use of such exhibitionist strategies, with its straightforward accounts of the narrator's most intimate moments. It must be admitted, though, that as the reception of his previous book, *Harjutused* (1002, 'Essays'; written under the pseudonym of Anton Nigov) showed, it was hard for the readers to distinguish between the first-person narrative and "factual", autobiographical narrative concerning the actual citizen Tõnu Õnnepalu (Laanes 2003: 501–520). In the case of *Raadio*,

the writer has made explicit attempts to indicate the difference between the narrator and the author — but, again not without irony. The narrator's self-introduction states that he is a film maker and a molecular biologist by training, whereas it is known that the "actual" Tõnu Õnnepalu is a poet and trained in botany. The seemingly diligent creation of fictionality takes on more postmodern taint as historical characters (or names) get mixed with fictional ones. One suspicious example is the description of the narrator's friend Martin (Tode 2002: 151–156). It is possible to guess similarities in the description with another contemporary Estonian author, Kaur Kender. But a hundred pages later, we are told that the narrator has been introduced to a sturdy young man with tattoos on his arms: "I thought he was some of the top criminals, but it turned out that he actually was a popular young writer Kaur Kender." (Ib. 287).

A more evident case appears some pages later, as the protagonist goes to visit someone named Tõnu, his wife Maire and their two kids who live on the island of Saaremaa. From the *Essays* a devoted reader has got the information that the character named Tõnu Õnnepalu has been married to a woman named Maire and has lived on the island of Hiiumaa for some time. Such an ironic juxtaposition of fictional characters with those with at least real names (to leave open the question of reference to real people bearing similar names) rests the reader in the hands of *agent provocateur*. "This is the postmodern ironic and problematizing play of enunciation and context," Hutcheon writes (1996: 78). The conclusions are left to the mercy of the reader's awareness of the context and the writing strategies of the novel. As Hutcheon (ib. 109) reminds us, there is rarely falseness as opposed to the truth in postmodern fiction; but fiction may always be partly 'true', i.e. correspond to the reality. The ironic mixing up of fiction and history, or fiction and reality does not empty one or another from the meaning but stresses the connections between the two.

In order to understand better the problem of subjectivity and the related survival strategies, an enlightening quotation from Jean-Francois Lyotard explains the situation, "A *self* does not amount to much, but no self is an island; each exists in a fabric of relations

that is now more complex and mobile than ever before. Young or old, man or woman, rich or poor, a person is always located at "nodal points" of specific communication circuits, however tiny these may be." (Ib. 83).

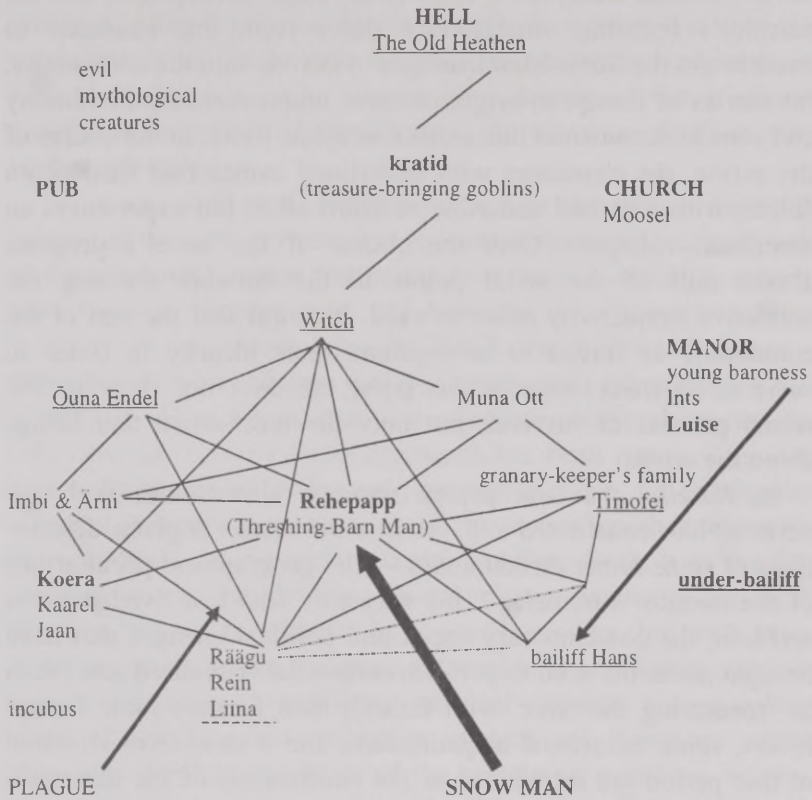

Figure 1. The network-structured subject of Threshing-Barn Man. Underlined are the lost nodes.

The model of the shifting, collective subject is represented in the web-like scheme depicting the interrelations in the village of *Rehepapp* (see Tüür 2002). The village has a strong 'we-identity' where outsiders are clearly designated and repelled. Each villager

shares and/or exchanges intellectual and material values with each other. One character alone could not survive in such conditions; the only possible option is to represent a part in such a collective subject. The principle of collective being is obvious already in the novel's formal features — there is no single protagonist, and the narrator's focusing omnisciently slides from one character to another. As the Snow Man manages to intrude into the community, his stories of European origin promote unquestioned individuality and start to deconstruct this collective subjectivity. In the course of the action, the characters with underlined names find their death (Liina, with a dashed underline, remains alive, but experiences an emotional collapse). Over the course of the novel's progress almost half of the nodal points in the network forming the collective subjectivity cease to exist. It means that the rest of the community is forced to re-negotiate their identity in order to survive. Kivirähk stops at this point; he does not show us the actual process of survival, but only the mechanism that brings about the crisis.

In *Raadio*, the first person narrator also tackles with the network-like constituted *self*. At first the reader is given descriptions of some rather distant nodes — the geographical peculiarities of the narrator's homeland; his ancestors who had lived there in serfdom; the contemporary social and political changes that have brought about the need to perform certain half-ritualised acts (such as 'measuring the river' with father); then France, some former lovers, some occasional acquaintances and a short-term affection of that period are introduced as the constituents of the narrator's subjectivity. However, in *Raadio* almost the whole book is devoted to the re-definition of one's subjectivity — for the occasion of having lost one of the most important nodal points, the narrator's long-time lover, called Liz Frantz and presented as a singer. In *Raadio*, the protagonist defines himself namely by means of the *missing* node in his split subjectivity. He ironically distances himself from the other constituents of his subjectivity, like his peasant roots, his life as a European, his other close relations. The most important aspect definitive of his subjectivity appears to be the fact of missing Liz Frantz.

Survival

In order to survive as a postmodern multiple subject, either collective or individual, the 'fabric of relations' must be sufficiently tight so that the focal point of the subjectivity would have the chance to shift freely, i.e. to be mobile, in accordance with the conditions set by the context in which the subject is embedded. In both cases discussed here, the original density of the relational network is disturbed and alterations in the structure of subjectivity are brought along.

As it was indicated, *Rehepapp* stops at the point where the balance of the collective subject is severely perturbed: almost half of the previously active characters have been eliminated, among them the Old Heathen who had been the main provider of the resources to the system. Also the Witch who had acted as a mediator between the villagers and the supernatural spheres around it, is missing. That means that one necessary buffer between the collective subject and its environment has been removed, and it makes the remaining nodes even more vulnerable. Of the regular villagers, two people connected with the manor (another important place for necessary resources) have found their death. It means that the vital connections to that direction have drastically lessened, too. The less active villagers have remained alive, but with practically no access to the resources external to the collective subject. Under such altered conditions, survival requires a tremendous effort. Evidently, the collective subject of *Rehepapp* starts redefining itself on the basis of the remaining members, but the success of this attempt is left untold. When the number of voices participating in such a collective subject is lessening, it is a threat to the existence of it as a whole.

The narrator of *Raadio* chooses to centre his subjectivity around the missing node, picking, so to say, a radically deconstructive 'survival strategy'. Whether it actually leads to survival or not, is again left open. The whole novel can be regarded as an attempt of therapy: when the missing constituent of the subjectivity is fixed in writing, along with all the other 'fulcra', their reciprocal

positions become clearer and the subject more definitive. However, it is only one possible fictional subject that can be constructed on the basis of these nodes. There are a number of other possible combinations and interpretations. Therefore, the whole attempt of narrating the subjectivity is only an 'exercise', or a pastime. The essential structure of the subject will remain indeterminate.

The recounting of the past is the major proposition of the novel, but the writing is not done with the purpose of overcoming it. The past will always remain a part of the narrator's subjectivity. However, the novel reaffirms that the past is re-writable at any moment; it can be modified according to the needs of the context. The novel *Raadio* represents a successful experiment in this regard: the narrator's personal history is re-written by him with an ironical distance, and from multiple points of view. One's own subjectivity can also be treated from a critical distance, it does not necessarily have an inviolable essence. In the case of *Raadio*, the relation with Liz Frants might appear as a suitable 'candidate' for such an essence of subjectivity, but as the relation has ceased, it makes the situation much more ambivalent.

This fits well into the poetics of postmodernism: this kind of art does not "emit clear signals", it even does not try to. "It tries to problematize and thereby, to make us question. But it does not offer answers. /---/ In their [the works'] contradictions we may find no answers, but the questions that will make any answering process even possible," as Hutcheon writes (1996: 231).

Conclusion

The problem of postmodernist traits and phenomena in Estonian literature is a theme where there is much to be studied yet. In the present article, two contemporary Estonian novels, *Rehepapp* by Andrus Kivirähk and *Raadio* by Emil Tode/Tõnu Õnnepalu have been analysed for their features characteristic of postmodern novels. Hutcheon's *A Poetics of Postmodernism* was used as the main reference book for this purpose. Both novels exhibit a

distanced attitude to the notions of history, authenticity, tradition. Whereas Kivirähk uses historical elements to create parody; Tode's narrative emphasises the distancing of oneself from the historical background that assumedly would constitute his self. Therefore, both novels also use the notion of nationality in a negating context. The possibility of constructing one's identity on the basis of national history is neglected.

In both novels, the notion of postmodern subjectivity is tried out. In *Rehepapp* it is a collective phenomena, a network of shared subjectivities, along which the narrator's focus can freely shift. In *Raadio*, the subjectivity also consists of several components, but the multitude is achieved by splitting the subjectivity of one character. The fact that one of the main layers of this subjectivity appears to be missing, makes the process of identity creation even more complicated. As to the perspectives of survival of these two subjectivities respectively, the collective subject appears to be more vulnerable. When a critical amount of its constituent nodes are gone, the further existence and re-definition of the network is seriously hindered. The character with a split subjectivity and an unconstrained attitude towards history and the historical narrative, including the autobiographical narrative, has no problems with re-defining oneself at any moment. The ambivalence and lack of simple answers, however, is characteristic of postmodern novels. The ones discussed here are no exceptions in this regard.

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Exploring Embodied Identities in Contemporary Estonian Fiction by Women

LEENA KURVET-KÄOSAAR

My article offers an insight into the representation of the female body, women's lived bodily experiences and the textual articulation of cultural meanings inscribed on the female body in Estonian fiction and drama by women in the 1990s. Rather than attempting to provide a general overview of the representation of the female body in the literature of the period, I would like to take a closer look at three authors whose work has placed the contained, vulnerable and frustrated female body at the heart of socio-cultural practices of Estonian society and history in various frameworks. The three texts I wish to discuss differ greatly in terms of genre, cultural context and the generation the authors belong to as well as in terms of what aspects of the body are highlighted and how these are formally executed. However, I believe that these texts highlight extremely relevant issues relating not only to the literary and artistic depiction of the female body in the post-Soviet era in general but, more importantly, to the much larger issues concerning the politics of the body in post-Soviet society in general.

First, I will analyse the depiction of the commodified and sexualized female body in the period of the emergence of capitalism in the Estonian society after the regaining of independence in Kärt Hellerma's (b. 1956) first novel *Alkeemia* ('Alchemy') (1997). Next, I will look at the issues of exile, war-related sexual violence, and the vulnerability of the female body in *Mineviku heli* ('The Sound of the Past') (1991), a semi-autobiographical novel by an exiled Estonian writer Käbi Laretei (b. 1922). Last, I will

explore the politics of the female body in Merle Karusoo's (b. 1944) documentary play *Kured läinud, kurjad ilmad* ('Snows of Sorrow')[1] (1997), based on Estonians' sexual life stories.

A stubborn and reluctant body

Alkeemia ('Alchemy'), the first novel of the well-known Estonian cultural journalist Kärt Hellerma, is centred around a middle-aged, frustrated and intimidated female protagonist called Sarah, whose life is recognisably located in the rough masculinist[2] world of early post-Soviet capitalist society (in Estonia). *Alkeemia* offers ample illustrative material for Peggy Watson's claim about the rise of masculinism as 'the primary characteristic of gender relations' in (post-socialist) Eastern Europe, offering men 'the opportunity of putting a greatly increased social distance between themselves and women' (Watson 1993: 71).

The story, told in the stream-of-consciousness mode by a third-person narrator focuses on the train of thought and flow of sensory impressions of the protagonist Sarah, slashing open a self struggling to cope with or even survive in the newly independent society. Sarah pleads guilty to the murder of her boyfriend whom she (she feels) did not love, although she had nothing to do with the murder. The act of pleading guilty can be interpreted as an act of self-punishment, enforced by the strictest of social norms — the law. Sarah's hope of getting capital punishment and her contemplation before her possible electrocution take up a considerable part of the novel and serve as a basis for probing the complex interrelationship between the private and the public sphere. Feeling displaced in the new society, Sarah sentences herself to the

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[1] From here on, I will use the English titles of the works. Translations of quoted excerpts of *Snows of Sorrow*, *Alkeemia*, and *Mineviku heli* are mine.

[2] Masculism is defined by Sheila Ruth as "the elevation of the masculine, conceptually and physically, to the level of universal and ideal" (Ruth 61).

confined space of the prison where she is gradually deprived of or gives up everything personal and private. She becomes an anonymous inmate subjected to a system that, in its treatment of the individual, is not unlike the Soviet regime her country has just left behind.

Sarah punishes herself for having been unfaithful in her mind to her murdered boyfriend. The object of Sarah's love is Henry, a considerably younger man who symbolises the key forces of the new society: professionalism, youthfulness, positivism, and rationalism. Sarah, by contrast, defines herself more or less through the opposites of the above-mentioned qualities, yet her acute sense of failure and resulting self-punishment are triggered by a momentary urge to become one of the motion-setting forces in society as well.

Sarah's depiction focuses on her middle-agedness, the so-called 'usual wear and tear of her body over the years: a stomach with slightly sloppy skin, thighs full of nasty uneven spots, big pinkish nipples and indecently lush pubic hair' (Hellerma 1997: 57). Sarah's body and soul are constantly at war, her soul being described as a bothersome addition to her body, whilst her soul and mind, on the other hand, constantly seek a way to rid themselves of the body. Sarah's body literally becomes "an intrusion on or interference with the operation of mind, a brute givenness which requires overcoming" (Grosz 1994: 4), as can be seen in various episodes. Most consistently, however, this duality is related to Sarah's sexual encounters with her lover:

> Sarah didn't love Leif; she only occasionally lent him her stubborn and reluctant body, this primordial force that she herself knew so little. During the nights when Sarah lay in bed next to Leif, her body and soul were quarrelling. The body couldn't care less about the soul and the soul fled deep into Sarah's bone marrow, melted into her throat (Hellerma 38).

This kind of divide also brings to mind the Platonic concept of the body as a 'betrayal of and prison for the soul, reason, or mind' (Grosz 1994: 5). As there is no exact colloquial equivalent in Estonian to the English word 'mind', it is sometimes difficult to

make out whether one end of the mutually hostile duality in Sarah rests on the notion of soul or mind. The novel opens with Sarah's contemplations in the prison where she has been taken after her arrest. The readers learn about her yearning to be air or wind, 'flowing as high as it pleased, arching elegantly and freely over clouds' (Hellerma 1997: 5). Turning into wind implies freedom of movement and, above all, a possibility of obtaining a new framework of self-definition transcending the materiality of the body. Sarah's body, as well as the bodies of all the other characters in the novel are explicitly socio-culturally defined material bodies, 'surface[s] on which the central rules, hierarchies and even metaphysical commitments of a culture are inscribed' (Douglas 1982, quoted in Bordo 1989: 3), bodies 'constructed through ideologies, discourses and practices' (Conboy, Medina, and Stanbury 1997: 8).

In Sarah's imagination, Henry is viewed as her younger double, a position that seems to originate from Sarah's desperate desire for identification rather than anything implied by the plot. When Sarah takes responsibility for her boyfriend Leif's murder, she finds herself guilty of having wished to have 'Henry's young moist skin, to forget her past, age and background' as well as having desired to be 'someone else, to belong to a world where there was no place for her' (Hellerma 1997: 167). Sarah's ultimate wish, therefore, is not to be <u>with</u> Henry but to be Henry, in particular to occupy the socio-cultural position he embodies. In the novel, Henry is clearly one of those young men metaphorically described by the narrator as 'carrying the lantern showing the society a way to a better and more prosperous future' (ib. 27). In a similar vein, Sarah's aging body is not so much opposed to those of younger women, (such, for example, that of Henry's girlfriend) but first and foremost to the young and able body of Henry. In one episode where Sarah weighs her chances of winning Henry's attention, she suddenly assumes the identity of a young Indian hunter barely out of boyhood, 'the fastest and ablest young man in the tribe with the highest promise for the future' (ib. 59). Although the cultural context of the image is different, the implication is largely identical with the lantern carrier image. In this episode Sarah's

desire for male identification also foregrounds socially regulated male sexuality as the young hunter is described as 'having freshly passed the rites of initiation' (ib.).

The position of the female protagonist of *Alkeemia* indicates a shift in the depiction of female characters in Estonian novels by women. For example, the gender characteristics of the female protagonists of two well-known Estonian novels depicting the Soviet era, *Seitsmes rahukevad* ('The Seventh Spring of Peace', 1985) by Viivi Luik and *Võlu ja vaim* ('Charm and Spirit', 1990) by Mari Saat, is extremely intriguing, deconstructing traditional gender roles and stereotypes from several aspects. Sarah, the protagonist of *Alkeemia*, fails in her search for a stronger and more independent identity that would enable her to survive in society. Noticeable for her wish to conform, to withdraw and to be subordinated, Sarah's character also seems to fail to provide an inspiring role model for women. However, the issues raised in the portrayal of her character are unique in the textual body of contemporary Estonian women authors and, as such, the text can be viewed as groundbreaking. Marked by an incessant struggle to lose her aged body in the dichotomy of the corporeal and the rational and/or spiritual on the one hand and a celebration of the female body and sexuality on the other, the creation of the character of Sarah is a courageous literary act. In my opinion, *Alkeemia* has created a landmark in Estonian fiction that few writers, both male and female, have as yet dared to approach.

'I am not dead'

Mineviku heli ('A Sound of the Past') (1992, second edition 1995), a semi-autobiographical novel by Käbi Laretei, an internationally renowned exiled Estonian concert pianist, focuses on high-society diplomatic life in the thirties[3] and life in exile in Sweden during

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[3] Käbi Laretei's father, a diplomat and a statesman, was a well-known public figure in Estonian political and diplomatic life. During the outbreak

World War II, interwoven with the wartime love affairs of the protagonist. Although Laretei belongs to the so-called second generation of exiled Estonian writers[4], in my opinion, it is justifiable to discuss *A Sound of the Past* in the current framework. By the time the novel was published, a translation of another taboo-breaking autobiographical work by Laretei, *Peotäis mulda, lapike maad* ('A Handful of Soil, A Patch of Land') (1989)[5] had been received warmly by the Estonian readership. With *Mineviku heli*, Laretei (as the exiled Latvian writer Agate Nesaule does four years later in the USA[6]) attempts to make visible the painful issues of the Baltic people's gendered experience of war and exile, often surrounded by many decades of painful silence.

Heli, the fictitious narrator/protagonist of the novel is recognisably autobiographical and moves in a world peopled with characters that the reader could easily trace back to the more overtly autobiographical *Peotäis mulda, lapike maad* (1980, 1995). Some events appear in both texts in a rather similar form, making the reader wonder about the motivation behind presenting one of the two texts based on similar events with a considerable likeness to the author's real life as factual and the other as fictional, thereby consciously making visible the balancing act that places the text on the borderland between fact and fiction.

The range of bodily issues I wish to discuss, relating to wartime sexual violence against women[7], come up in *Peotäis mulda, lapike maad* in one episode only, covering not more than ten pages of a two hundred-page work. However, what makes the episode

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of war he was the Estonian Ambassador to Sweden and was sentenced to death by the Soviet regime upon the occupation of Estonia.

[4] The authors of that generation, born in the the 1920-s and 1930-s, were children or adolescents during their emigration.

[5] He work was first published in Swedish in 1980.

[6] Nesaule, Agate, *A Woman in Amber*. New York and London: Penguin Books, 1995.

[7] I have discussed national identity and wartime sexual violence against women in greater detail in my article "'Other Things Happened to Women': Second World War, Violence, and National Identity" (*Journal of Baltic Studies,* Fall 2003, p 313–331).

unique is the fact that, although (semi)fictional, it is the only description I have come across in autobiographical narratives concerning the experience of war and its aftermath by Baltic women, narrated in thefirst person singular, where the narrator falls victim to war-related sexual violence[8]. The topic of sexual violence brings together a range of problems characteristic of women's experience of war and deportation.

Vesna Nikolić-Ristanović views wartime rape as 'a means for achieving aims which have nothing in common with sexuality' (1994: 197). The patriarchal value system sees women as the property of the male enemy who 'should be used as an instrument to defeat the enemy [whom] the victim symbolises' (ib. 201). Susan Brownmiller maintains that wartime rape is frequently seen as a 'manifestation of the heroic fighting man engaged in a good fight' (1975: 35). Wartime rape and the torture which often accompanies it serve different purposes: a means of indirect punishment to the husbands, fathers, and brothers of rape victims, an instrument of ethnic cleansing (Nikolić-Ristanović 1994: 200–202) and forced exile (McKinnon 1993: 88), as well as a means of extorting information after imprisonment (Jolluck 1995: 148). This clearly indicates that wartime sexual violence needs to be viewed as a type of hostility not directed solely against women, but rather belonging to a range of general measures taken to conquer a country during war. Being wounded in combat testifies to the bravery of man, being subject to war-related violence makes the position of woman ambivalent, often resulting in stigmatisation in the national or ethnic group the woman belongs to. Whilst being a male victim of violence is seen in a heroic light, this is not the case with women; at best, women are viewed as passive victims condemned for their lack of skills, resourcefulness, etc. in avoiding contacts with the enemy.

In one episode of *Mineviku heli*, the narrator describes a brief affair with the young Estonian poet Indrek, and the pregnancy and

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[8] However, my reading experience of autobiographical narratives of Latvian and Lithuanin women, concerning The Second World War and its aftermath has been limited to the narratives available in English.

illegal abortion following it. This, in turn, unleashes a nightmarish memory of being raped by a former Baltic German schoolmate, Helmut, who later joined the SS. It is interesting how the two encounters, one romantic, the other tense and violent, both of which lead to physically and mentally excruciating abortions, are woven together in the narration. Although the night that Heli spent with Indrek is certainly consensual, the narrator underlines his skill of seduction. They make love on a bearskin that symbolises for Heli the safety of childhood as well as the lost independence of the Baltic peoples. In the episode, Heli falls asleep on the bearskin and wakes up on a 'hard couch devoid of any childhood memories' (Laretei 1995: 373) with Indrek sound asleep on the bearskin. Here Indrek, although a compatriot becomes an intruder who takes into his possession something that belongs to Heli and which she is clearly unwilling to share in such a manner.

The gloomy episode involving Helmut opens with a metonymic description of the man as 'a voice on the telephone that has opened a carefully locked door' (ib. 376). The relationship between Heli and Helmut is characterised from the start by certain tensions along the lines of national identity. Regardless of the fact that 'Estonian girls didn't go out with German boys' (ib. 377), they have been briefly involved in the past. The relationship ends in a conflict with nationalist overtones: Heli learns that Helmut has had a fight with boys from the Estonian high school. Many years later when Helmut ends up in Estonia as part of the German army fighting the Russian troops he is overwhelmed by a 'strange feeling' (ib. 377). This strangeness conveys Helmut's mixed feelings toward his former home, implying either sadness or gloating satisfaction, a sense of returning home or a sense of alienation. Helmut's gory description of his service in the SS as if opens up in Heli 'a floodgate of war atrocities' (ib. 378). Helmut talks about women and children forced into barns that were then set on fire, babies trampled to death under soldiers' feet, mass graves that the condemned dug for themselves, soldiers shooting at each other as if drunk (ib. 378–379). Helmut suddenly adds that he only survived because Heli was always in his mind. Hearing this, Heli feels she is dragged into the events and made responsible for them.

She becomes paralysed with fear and horror and lies motionless even when Helmut throws himself at her and rapes her, afraid that otherwise the man will kill her. During the act, Helmut is described as a nonhuman hollow entity: he lets out a "squeal", drops on Heli with the "weight of a corpse", his "seemingly lifeless body" collapsing on the floor making a hollow sound (ib. 379).

There are several ways to interpret the textual implications of Helmut's crazed violent act. On the one hand, it is possible that Heli was a ray of hope for Helmut whilst he was in the SS and rape was an outlet for a mentally disturbed man for enabling him to share his nightmarish experience. On the other, this act could be triggered by nationalistic anger as a result of Heli ending their relationship during their schooldays[9]. Helmut drags Heli right into the heart of war, raping her to symbolically conquer her country and/or take his revenge on Heli because she has thus far not had to experience the atrocities of war. Although Helmut is in some sense Heli's former compatriot, the narrator draws a clear line between Helmut and other refugees: 'Later when I had the chance to speak my mother tongue again, even strangers became family, because they were my compatriots. But before all the others came Helmut' (ib. 375).

During an episode when Heli is being examined by a doctor performing illegal abortions, the doctor asks about the father of the child. Heli answers that she was raped, at the same time feeling guilty about using the word. Although Helmut now exists for Heli first and foremost as a monstrous embodiment of the war, the narrator cannot help being sympathetic about what has become of him. After the abortion, which is carried out without any anaesthetic on the kitchen table in Heli's living room. Heli writes 'I am not dead' (ib. 380) in capital letters on a piece of paper and places it on her chest before passing out, afraid that she might be buried alive. In her behaviour she juxtaposes herself symbolically with Helmut who has earlier been depicted through images related

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[9] Nikolić-Ristanović also mentions wartime rapes as a revenge for turning down a man's advances (1994: 200).

to death. In her refusal to give up, to become a victim of war by not surviving the abortion, she disengages herself from the burden that Helmut's story and act has placed on her. It is also important that the narrator brings the reader's attention to her position in terms of legal protection by the state. As an illegal refugee without a residence permit, she cannot turn to the police to report the rape; furthermore, she herself can be reported to the police for having an illegal abortion.

The right kind of words for talking about sex

Merle Karusoo, the creator and main practitioner of sociological or documentary drama in Estonia bases her *Kured läinud, kurjad ilmad* ('Snows of Sorrow') (1997) on a joint Finnish-Estonian sociological life-story project, focusing on Estonians' life-stories of love and sexuality. Those who wished to write their personal narratives were asked to respond to a series of questions concerning childhood and sexual matters: when they first learned about reproduction, games with sexual implications, knowledge of sexuality gained at school, occurrence of sexual violence, first sexual experience, current satisfaction with sexual life, most beautiful and most disappointing and/or emotionally and psychologically damaging sexual experience, etc.). The programme explains how the project has been set up to the audience. The stories that roughly follow the guidelines are presented in the production in a chronological order according to the decade of birth of the authors of the stories. Equal space is given to the stories of men and women; the production consists of seven narratives by women and another seven by men. There is no acting in traditional sense; the actors playing the authors simply narrate their life-stories to the audience and each actor tells several stories. The stories of the authors belonging to the same generation are presented together in one block, divided into snippets of monologues. This establishes a kind of communication between the stories, often creating a narrative tension between them.

The production aimed at providing an insight into some characteristic tendencies of the Estonians' experience and perception of sexuality through making multiple aspects of love and sexuality visible from diverse points of view. Restricted by the scope of the paper, I will only be able to offer a brief insight into two stories that best fit into my discussion of the frustrated body, an aspect that emerges less in the narratives of men. Karusoo recalls that one of the key moments in creating the production grew out of her involvement in the Association of Estonian Life-Stories and her realisation of 'the volume of misunderstandings and misconduct in intimate relationships' in Estonian society (Tonts 1998: 17). The Estonian title of the production, 'Kured läinud, kurjad ilmad', is a pun on a well-known proverb that in a approximate English translation would mean 'After the storks have gone (south), bad weather follows' — the reference being to a popular Estonian 'childbirth myth': that babies were brought by storks.

One story provides an almost hyperbolic illustration of the sad consequences for a child and adolescent for whom such stories have been the only sources of knowledge about sexuality and reproduction and the damage this has caused in adulthood. 'I believed in these stork-stories up to the age of 17–19' (Karusoo 1997: 16) says Imbi[10], a woman born in the 1930s, recalling how she cried all evening when, winning a ski competition, she had been kissed by a team mate and she thought that she 'was going to have a baby now' (ib.). At the age of 21 Imbi's mother felt 'it [was] not the right time yet to tell [her daughter] about sex' (ib. 17). Imbi's story never casts much light on the reasons for her mother's behaviour apart from recounting some snippets of conversations she overheard as a child where sexual relations were viewed as a source of stigmatisation for women due to the risk of pregnancy. In response to expression of love by a fellow skier, Imbi bit his arm so that he had to go to the doctor. However, as Imbi's mother considered it a good idea for Imbi to marry that man, she did and 'immediately after marriage, [Imbi's] husband forbade [her] to go in for sports' (ib. 19). In her marriage 'sex did

[10] The production did not use the real names of the authors.

not captivate' Imbi but her husband 'demanded it'. (Ib. 20). The story ends with a declaration of how she found happiness in taking care of her children and grandchildren and (after a divorce) never felt the need for another man in her life. Imbi's narrative is a hyperbolic story of multiple deprivations caused by the overt and covert effect of various social norms. Imbi's mother's exaggerated sense of morality results in the psychological as well as physical numbness of her daughter where intimate relations are concerned. Imbi's husband, in turn, deprives Imbi of her main means of self-realisation — sport — that provided Imbi both with bodily confidence and high self-esteem, because he considers it unsuitable for a wife.

While Imbi's story, although doubtless striking a familiar chord in many viewers of different generations, can be viewed as a phenomenon of the past, the narrative that ends the production brings the reader face to face with the present. It is the story of Helena, a 16-year-old girl who has been the victim of various forms of systematic gang rape and forced sex for approximately two years:

> Then Kaido told me they were offering me 'a roof' but were expecting a favour in return. In case I should refuse, they ... Five boys were standing in front of me. What began to happen then in the next period cannot be seen even in the worst nightmares. I was 14 (ib. 41).

A male actor participating in the production mentions a long conversation with his brother after the latter had seen *Kured läinud, kurjad ilmad*, in which they discussed Helena's story and the role and importance of parents and possible causes of parental failure[11] in contemporary Estonian society (Weidebaum 1997). Karusoo mentions in one interview that Helena's story served as a 'basis that created a common ground of understanding' during the tour of

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[11] In the story Helena mentions that her father had a high and demanding position at work, a fact she attributes to the tenseness of domestic atmosphere.

the show in London (Paaver 2000). Although school violence has recently been a recurrent theme in the Estonian press, the discussion (5 years after Karusoo's production) very seldom touches upon sexual abuse. As in 1996 when Helena's story was written, a girl or a boy suffering from sexual abuse today has practically no place to turn to if she or he does not want to go to the police and does not wish or cannot tell the parents.

Addressing — in a straightforward public manner — an area as delicate as sexuality in Estonian society is an undertaking that by its very nature can be looked upon as a subversive social act. It is therefore not surprising that the production drew an extremely varied critical response both in terms of the range of critics (letters from readers, columnists, theatre critics, writers) and the range of issues addressed (general satisfaction with such a type of production, main focus on aesthetic issues, charges of vulgarisation of the notion of love). One (male) writer and critic scolds the author/director for staging 'an endless repetition of cunt and dick stories' and, referring to the work of some Estonian poets and novelists, reminds her that 'already several generations ago Estonians have had access to much subtler and more cultivated forms of love and the erotic' (Langemets 1997: 51). However, the fact that not a single review addressed the aesthetic and social implications of the depiction of sexuality in the theatrical form in depth indicates the level of unease of the issues relating to everyday practices of sexuality in contemporary Estonian society. One actress participating in the production has pointed out a simple but extremely relevant issue: 'The Estonian language as if does not have the right kind of words for talking about sex: there are either medical terms or semi-vulgar words" (Palmiste 2000, quoted in Klaats 2000).

Conclusion

Kärt Hellerma's *Alkeemia* stands out among the post-Soviet Estonian women's writing for the depiction of the protagonist's

markedly (middle)-aged body, her incessant struggle to lose that body in the dichotomy of the corporeal and the mental and spiritual on the one hand and a celebration of the female body and sexuality on the other. *Mineviku heli* highlights the corporeal vulnerability of women in exile in terms of legal regulations and depicts sexual violence as a war-related means of manipulating women forming an extremely traumatic aspect of women's experience of war, necessarily also related to national identity. In her *Kured läinud, kurjad ilmad*, Merle Karusoo brings together aesthetic and socio-historical categories, constantly probing and contesting the boundaries between art and life, actors and audience, words and bodies, the public and the private sphere. All three texts make visible the ideological, political and social factors that are influential in the shaping of subjectivity by sexuality in women's texts. Furthermore, the texts also demonstrate how, in such matters, public consciousness and the (private) subconscious intermingle in the most complicated and nearly undetectable manner. It is therefore justified to view these three texts as courageous and unprecedented literary (and dramatic) acts in Estonian culture, creating a landmark that few writers, both male and female, have as yet dared to approach.

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The Constructions of Feminine Subjectivity in Gundega Repše's Novels

SANDRA MEŠKOVA

The period of the late 1980s and early 1990s initiated a radically new cultural paradigm in Latvia and the wider region of East-Central Europe. It was marked by the appearance of a young generation of writers whose work brought in much novelty and established clear breaking points from the Soviet tradition. In 1987 and 1988, three young authors — Andra Neiburga, Rudīte Kalpiņa and Gundega Repše published their first collections of stories. Acknowledging their radical novelty, critics named these writers 'angry young girls', by analogy with British 'angry young men' of the 1960s. Radicalism and destruction were probably more an effect of over-interpretation, reflecting the critics' expectations for a new tradition in Latvian literature that was due along with the general changes of socio-historical situation.

One of the most obvious features of these texts was the sense of general discontent and even rage that was specifically expressed through bodily representations: sickness, physical exhaustion and decay, monstrosity, diverse bodily symptoms and sensations, conveying the general mood of accumulated tension asking for discharge. Against the background of the Latvian literary tradition of the Soviet period, with its carefully filtered bodily representations and censored signs of human sexuality, the solid presence of the bodily, sexual, erotic in the literature of the post-Soviet generation is first of all constructed as a retreat beyond the scope of language and textuality that have been marred by ideology. This language had to be either discarded or radically transformed by

purification of the ideological. The sick, exhausted, dead body marks the decline of language, the mortifying effect of power, whose excess does not yet provide for thinking of a rebirth, rejuvenation, new-born corporeality. According to French post-structuralist theorist Julia Kristeva, bodily decay, waste, sickness, aversion, etc. are the markers of border states, crisis. She provides a psychoanalytical explanation of this in her theory of abjection in *Powers of Horror* (*Pouvoirs de l'horreur: essai sur l'abjection*, 1980). She defines abjection as a very early stage in the subject's formation, which is prior to the differentiation of the not-yet subject from the not-yet maternal object (abject). After the separation, the abject is kept safely away, however it echoes as the threatening beyond, actualizing in the states of crisis. As, according to Kristeva and French poststructuralist theories in general, subjectivity is inseparable from language and textuality, abjection leaves traces in these spheres as well. Due to its maternal, hence, feminine codification, it affects the representation of the female body, making it an especially sensitive realm that reflects the tensions, permeating the contemporary culture and literature. The displacement of cultural anxieties takes its most expressed form in the representation of the female body as traumatized and discarded. This is made obvious in the 'angry young girls'' writing and it remains a characteristic feature after the transient group ceased to exist, making room for somewhat scattered and fragmented tendencies of the Latvian literary process of the 1990s.

Notwithstanding the lack of clearly defined trends in the contemporary Latvian literature, it is possible to follow the tradition that grew out of the 'angry young girls'' generation and was carried on by Gundega Repše, followed by other women writers. This is not a homogeneous tradition, however it is united by a common perspective on femininity, feminine subjectivity, in relation to the historico-cultural context. Reflection of the feminine in their writing assumes dramatic, even tragic features. In their search for a new or stable identity, reliable integrity, sources of empowerment, heroines rather end up in a breakdown, collapse or frustration, their personal traumas often leading back through

family history to wider socio-historical contexts. Such an extreme manifestation of the feminine difference is a key line of Gundega Repše's writing, variating from exotic representations of the feminine in her early prose, to traumatic representations in her recent novels.

The exotic femininity

Gundega Repše's prose style in the early 1990s is characterized by Latvian literary critic Dace Dalbiņa as a specific version of post-modern mannerism (Dalbiņa 1998). Texts of this kind seem devoid of corporeality, providing relief from the solid presence of decay, sickness and tension. Heroes and heroines are weaved into the lyrical structure of the text, along with the poetic images, symbols, leitmotifs. Their bodies are ornamental, emblematic, they lack interiority, psychological dimensions, resembling the deleuzian baroque body as a surface, fold, protean, escaping language and rigid representational models. This is obvious, for instance, in the opening story of the collection *Septiņi stāsti par mīlu* ('Seven Tales of Love', 1992) which is titled 'Gone with the Wind'. It is produced as an interior monologue of the deceased narrator, addressed to his former beloved Gertrude who has remained beyond the border of life and death, crossed by the narrator. As the monologue proceeds, Gertrude gains more and more generalized features — those of the maternal, the feminine, life. This happens along with a gradual loss of embodiment: the initially recalled tone of her voice and swish of her dress get confused with the sounds of wind, rustle of leaves. Gertrude melts into the elemental world. The corporeality loses form and is transformed into disorganized substance.

Actually, death as such is the divorce of substance and form, each of them remaining on its side of the border. Gertrude — the feminine — represents substance, whereas the narrator — the masculine — represents form. Substance needs form to reach embodiment and proceed with further stages of getting orga-

nized — gaining soul, spirit, capabilities of self-expression, etc. Form needs substance to get rooted, to reach constancy and stability. Without that it is carried around by the wind which becomes the image of the senseless motion of the de-substantivized shell of the subject. The mystery of life remains with Gertrude, lost in her formlessness, unspeakable in her muteness. However, the amorphous realm of this corporeality is a promise of a new possible birth. It has the potential of rising in a multitude of forms and shapes. According to post-colonial feminist theorists, like Nira Yuval-Davis, the female body is a metonymy of the national body, and its cultural representations are marked by the collective imaginings of rebirth and continuity (Yuval-Davis 1997). Passing through historical stages, the body of the nation assumes shapes that arise and pass on; this process is mythologized as a continuous flow, the cycle of birth-growth-death. The disruptions in the flow of these cycles tend to be erased. Gertrude — the beloved, mother, life — has not been lost; the narrator's soliloquy contains the potential contact with her. His final words claim her as his life:

> Who are you, the one who is strolling along the beach and breathing the lives of so different ages at once? And where exactly do you stop, where do you take a breath and comfort? You are my life that is over and my death that is eternal! (...) Gertrude, I do not want to leave you who are my living, life and death, you everywhere. (Repše 1992: 11) [translation mine]

The possible re-uniting, suggested by the fact of keeping contact alive, is the brink of the new stage. No configuration has been found for it yet, but the vigorousness of the narrator's address suggests that it will or at least that it is desired. The formless body as the beyond of language in this case is a potentiality, waiting for the new forms of manifestation, for the new word.

A search for the new alternative language and models of self-expression is related to creativity. This theme is taken up in Repše's story 'Hilda's Identifications' (1994). However, the

feminine here reveals the traditional ambivalence of self and other. Hilda can write only at night when her daily self is asleep and the moon awakens in her unknown mysterious cravings and impulses that give rise to the text as the transcript of the beyond. The new language is mystified, so is the feminine body and sexuality. Similar tendencies are characteristic of the wave of North-American, British, German women's writing of late 1960–70s, inspired by feminist, psychoanalytical, and poststructuralist theories. E.g., in Margaret Atwood's novel *Surfacing* (1972) the process of the heroine's self-discovery leads to acknowledging that her feminine self can survive only outside the established sociality, marriage and maternity models. Hence, she remains on the island, outside the house, her pregnant body fusing with nature and tuning up to its rhythms that otherwise are suppressed by social mechanisms and the existing models of human relations and forms of self-expression from which she has broken free. Similar to Gertrude in 'Gone with the Wind', the female body is stripped of its form but substance remains keeping the potential of rebirth. In Atwood's novel it is maternity that has the promise of the new configuration of sociality through the transformed, naturalized mother–child relations, made possible by the transformation of the female body.

Creativity, as we know from the French écriture féminine theorists, is another. However, in Gundega Repše's writing it is revealed as the mysterious beyond, which brings out the 'otherness' of the woman, signified by the otherness of the female body that is alien for the woman herself. In the story 'Hilda's Identifications', Hilda acknowledges herself as a writer by discovering her bodily *terra incognita*. Yet, creativity does not produce the wholeness and the sense of personal integrity but divides her, separating her nocturnal part from her daily self. The line of division crosses her body. One part is the rational and controlled body of the wife and mother that has been appropriated by certain social mechanisms, measured against the ratio of roles and requirements she needs to address, contained in the public and semi-private space of the family, where she has to perform definite actions according to the established routine. Another part of her

body emerges by night as she creates her own private space that reaches beyond the established limits and sets of roles.

> This harvest moon again. The powerless argument of psychopaths, writers and unhappy women. White-blue phosphorescent forehead, no eyes, no mouth or ears, no expression. And yet this omniscient one is hollering at you, Hilda. You have locked yourself into your room to write. Mark, your husband, is asleep, little Alice is asleep, the telephone is switched off, and you will be sitting at the narrow black bureau, writing. (Repše 1994: 5) [translation mine]

This is the space of writing in which her body wakes to the deep and hidden rhythms that are reflected in the ebb and flow of words, birth of meanings — in the act of writing. Being separated from her daily rational, mechanized self, the writing self remains a strange supplement, with no useful application, even that of the self-expression, not even to mention the possibility of public recognition. In the best case it is considered waste of energy and effort, in the worst case the feminine space, body, creativity are demonized, claimed dangerous and destructive. How to appropriate the otherness of oneself? No answer is given so far.

On the verge of self-revelation

The novel *Ēnu apokrifs* ('Shadow Apocryph', 1996) initiates a new period in Gundega Repše's writing. She gives up the lyrical structure of prose and considerably reduces the symbolical means of expression. The novel creates a palpable atmosphere of the Latvia of the 1990s with easily recognizable attributes — the image of businessman Rauls and the urban entrepreneurial milieu, the ruined rural environment with separate small oases like Haldors's farm, a general wish to go abroad in search of stability and well-being, etc. The plot of the novel is constructed around the motif of the heroine's escape: Nina flees from the marriage with the businessman Rauls to a romantic love relationship with

Haldors, and finally to Norway, attracted by the traumatic past experience — the glassblower Erland's suicide who had hosted Nina on her previous trip to Norway and with whom she had a spontaneous love affair that became the tragic cause of his death.

Nina's way leads across the borders separating the urban and the rural world, homeland and abroad, marriage and free love. She belongs neither to the urban zone of the times of transition of the 1990s, nor to the mythical rural world, located outside the chaos of history and the turmoil of changes, sustaining the roots of the national identity in the monumental cosmos of the country farmhouse. She cannot accept the contemporary Western kind of marriage of convenience, with its clearly defined functions of the bread-winning husband and house-keeping wife. Neither can she accept the romantic relationship with the man who acts according to the natural rules of the powerful (men) protecting and caring for the weak (women). In search for a zone, free from the socially and culturally imposed models, she flees abroad and leaves both Rauls and Haldors, as well as the reader, at a loss — the questioning look of both men directed at the author, who knows about Nina's fate as much as they do, form the open end of the novel. The woman is gone. It is clear that she does not wish and cannot live in this environment. However, the new social contract that would be able to domesticate her destructive centrifugal desire has not been found, and the feminine image marks the destructive trajectory of the desire — to blow up the cosmos, destroy the unsatisfactory models of human and social relationships (the marriage with Rauls), get away from unattainable objects (the relationship with Haldors) that becomes analogous to destroying them (the love affair with Erland). What does the feminine represent, apart from destruction and rejection, what kind of a world does she prefer, what exactly is her shadow apocryph — this remains hidden. The interiority of the feminine subjectivity is not revealed, moreover, it seems nonexistent.

The desubjectivization of the heroine is partially balanced by the self-conscious image of the author. The author's voice provides a periodical commentary to the heroine's action, fills in pauses, verbalizes her supposed thoughts and feelings. However,

the author does not pretend to have the traditional omniscient point of view, but, on the contrary, emphasizes the subjectivity of her opinion. Thus, the author's commentary is not normative, it does not impose an additional pressure upon the heroine, to make her even more limited in her functions; it rather supplements and compensates for her silent voice.

At the end of the novel the heroine disappears from the author's scope of vision as well. The authorial image materializes in confrontation with the masculine look in the final episode at the airport, when Rauls and Haldors are waiting for Nina who does not return. Their reproaching and questioning look is directed at the author, blaming her for the heroine's disappearance and the failure of the plot. The authorial figure remains as the last visible barrier separating both frustrated men from the feminine space, supposedly found by the heroine, however not represented. Why so? A possible answer is, because it exists only in the author's imagination, betraying the wish of reaching a kind of authentic feminine territory which is characteristic of women's writing and which can be rejected as utopian or accepted as a serious alternative of radical transformations of patriarchal culture and society.

Relating the feminine difference to the process of regenerating culture that is suffering from crisis is characteristic of feminist theories. To denote it, Alice Jardine coins a special term *gynesis* or 'putting into discourse of "woman"' (Jardine 1989: 25). According to Jardine, this new valorization of the feminine is 'intrinsic to new and necessary modes of thinking, writing, speaking' (ib.). She regards *gynesis* as a vast process of the renewal and stabilization of discourse in which feminist theories, women's writing, the new awareness of gender play an essential part. Gundega Repše's writing from this perspective takes a rather moderate position, as it lacks both the positive ethical pathos, characteristic of writers, influenced by the ideas of liberal feminism (e.g. Margaret Atwood, Dorris Lessing, Alice Walker, Toni Morrison, etc.), and the radical political pathos of destroying the phallogocentric foundations of language and culture, characteristic of the advocates of French poststructuralist feminist thought (Hélène Cixous, Erica Jong, etc.)

Scar versus word

Gundega Repše's novel *Īkstīte* ('Thumbelina', 2000) is her first serious attempt at representing the interiority of the feminine subjectivity. Woman's self-revelation is reached by way of subjective genealogy or reconstructing her subjective identity in relation to paternal and maternal figures. The result is rather dramatic: the heroine Stella loses paternal identification and fails to reach the maternal one. The complete loss of her subject identity is manifested in her visions at the end of the novel, characterised from the psychoanalytical perspective by psychosis, traumatic regression from the Symbolical order to the Real, from language to silence. The instability of the feminine subjectivity is an important theoretical standpoint by Julia Kristeva, first elaborated in *The Revolution of Poetic Language* (*La Révolution du langage poétique,* 1974) where she accounts for it by the semiotic disposition of the feminine subjectivity and language (Kristeva 1986a).

Alluding to H. K. Andersen's fairy-tale that shows the long and hard, but finally successful way of the heroine towards love, happiness, experience, Stella, instead of gaining love, gets raped, instead of gaining experience and self-knowledge, loses her identity and is blinded by the rapist who hits her in the face. The successful flight of Thumbelina and the Swallow in Andersen's fairy-tale is transformed into the failed conversation of Stella and her imaginary addressee — the Bird, who never reacts and, by keeping silent, turns the supposed story into an agonizing self-reflection of Stella, leading to disintegration and silence. She needs to tell so much — about her painful alienation from her mother (who is a writer and a posh and sensuous woman) that is aggravated by the break of her emotional ties with her alcoholic father; about her granny who had been deported by the Soviets to Siberia and returned after many hard years to find another hardship of ostracism and hatred, cultivated by the Soviet regime for everybody who was considered its enemy; about her suffering after having learned from mother's notes that, when pregnant with Stella, she had considered an abortion. These lines get entangled

and, one by one, are dropped, leaving an overwhelming sense of life as an unbreakable traumatic knot, in the face of which all language resources are too fragile and too insufficient. It takes the solidity of the body, the muteness of a physical wound, the obviousness of the scar to express this. Alluding to Hélène Cixous' suggestion of castration or decapitation as two options for the feminine subject in the patriarchal Symbolic (Cixous 1981), Stella experiences both. Rape as an act of ultimate violence against the feminine is an extreme form of dramatizing the loss of personal integrity, leading to silence as a traditional sign of the fragility of the feminine language:

> The silence is swallowing up memories and the acid motionless water is gnawing through the arteries of the past. Profiles, statures, passion of motions, rush of expressions, acoustics of life lines have dissolved in continuous eternity. (..) Like acid rain, it is nagging my flesh that used to be a body and a source of words, songs, cries. It is taming me to d e a t h. *Sub silentio.* Finally it has reached its end. By stealing image from my sight, by becoming n o t h i n g, it has opened the door to itself. (..) High above floated occasional grim green and stern ash shadows, making hope kick me with sharp Alpinist boots. But after a while silence was back again and like a cool burr leaf took away this flashing pain to penetrate the brain fluid and paralyze the impersonal convulsions of my instincts. (Repše 2000: 177–78) [translation mine]

Stella, who begins the story by trying to live, to speak, to communicate, collapses into a beaten, blinded, violated, mute body. However, this is not the abjected body of a dead woman, but the body that is capable of producing the final sublime fantasy of being lifted into a carriage and driven to a place of — what? mercy or punishment? — this becomes clear only after Stella has visualized a radiant appearance of a God-like man who lifts his hand in a

gesture of mercy, and Stella falls before his feet with gratefulness and relief of somebody who is ready for baptism.

The invoked religious discourse compensates for language insufficiency, however the exaltation of the former betrays the weakness of the latter. The relief of the heroine's suffering, as well as the reader's catharsis are rendered by Stella's psychotic vision which, according Julia Kristeva, represents the return of the Real as the foreclosure of language and the Symbolical (Kristeva 1986b: 216). It is significant that the psychotic icon does not represent the repressed elements that could be alluded to the semiotic register materializing as the emblem of horror. According to Kristeva, the psychotic icon is produced by projection of fantasy, therefore it is not accompanied by affects (guilt, fear, shame, etc.) but is experienced as a purely liberating power and ecstatic sensation. In Stella's case it represents an authority figure — a radiant God-like man, empowered to endow Stella's suffering with the meaning of sacrifice, according to which suffering is a necessary prerequisite of purification or radical transformation, and relief from suffering is possible only as a gesture of mercy. This meaning is not produced by the feminine subject as situated in the order of language; it is powerfully pressed upon the female body, hallucinated through its psychotic vision. Hence, traumatization of the feminine in the novel becomes a gesture of humility, pleading for mercy. Both gestures — humility and mercy — escalate the awareness of violence which is transformed into humility and purified through invocation and prayer. Sense of persecution and the imperative of sacrifice become the major markers of the femininity in the novel. It recurs in the latest novel by Repše *Alvas kliedziens* ('Tin Shriek', 2002), as well as in other writers' works, just to mention Nora Ikstena's novel *Jaunavas mācība* ('The Maiden's Doctrine', 2001) and Inga Ābele's plays, leading to a conclusion that this is a prevailing cultural sensation, covering certain experiences of violence on the level of the collective awareness. Hopefully, new cultural fantasies and alternative constructs are yet to come, waiting for the 'new valorization' of the feminine, as suggested by Alice Jardine.

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Erzählen im Gestus des Beglaubigens. Beobachtungen zu einer Erzählstrategie in W. G. Sebalds Roman *Austerlitz*

BRIGITTE KRÜGER

I. Während die Literaturwissenschaft und die Literaturkritik im ewigen Streit um den Tod des Erzählens und dessen unverhoffte Wiederkehr (Förster1999) im Schlagabtausch sind, haben die Literaten den unfruchtbaren Disput durch ihre Texte längst entschieden: Das Erzählen als literarische Diskursform war nie gefährdet. Mit den veränderten Wahrnehmungen und Erwartungen und unter dem Einfluss einer audiovisuellen Medienpräsenz haben sich „nur" die Erzählkonzepte verändert. Wurde in den 70er Jahren die subjektive Befindlichkeit zum Erzählanlass, und waren es in den 80er Jahren das Experimentieren mit der Sprache und die Realitätssimulation, so sind es im Übergang zum neuen Jahrtausend der Wunsch nach sinnlich nachvollziehbaren Erzählstrukturen und die Sehnsucht nach dem authentischen Ort der Literatur. Die neue Generation der fiktiven Erzähler reist oder wandert bis ans Ende der Welt, um sich und den Leserinnen und Lesern die Wirklichkeit oder die Erinnerung an sie neu erschreiben und im Text beglaubigen zu können.

Der Schriftsteller W. G. Sebald, durch Hans Magnus Enzensbergers *Andere Bibliothek* 1990 entdeckt, hat mit seinem letzten Roman *Austerlitz*[1], „einem Prosabuch unbestimmter Art"

[1] Die in Klammern stehenden Seitenzahlen im Text beziehen sich auf folgende Ausgabe: Sebald, W. G. 2001. *Austerlitz*. München/Wien: Eichborn.

(Sebald 2001a), einen solchen Text vorgelegt, in dem ein Erzähler durch halb Europa reist, um eine Erinnerung glaubhaft zurückzuholen, die er eigentlich nicht besessen hat bzw. die er gewaltsam eskamotiert hat. Die Faszination des Textes liegt u. a. in seinem transistorischen Charakter zwischen Dokumentarischem und Fiktivem begründet. Er stellt eine „eigentümliche Mischform" aus literarischer Biografie, dokumentierter Zeitgeschichte, Reisetagebuch, Traumtagebuch und literarischem Essay dar. Der Text selbst präsentiert sich als Collage aus Erzähltem und Bildmaterial und scheint der These von der „Wiederkehr des Erzählens" in dieser Hinsicht energisch zu widersprechen. Mit dem Begriff des Transistorischen ist aber auch die schriftstellerische Existenz des Autors W(infried) G(georg) Sebald selbst charakterisiert: Als ein aus Deutschland freiwillig „Ausgewanderter"(Sebald 1992) lebte er bis zu seinem Unfalltod im Dezember 2001 mehr als 30 Jahre in England, ohne „heimisch" zu werden. An der University of East Anglia lehrte er Neuere österreichische, deutsche und schweizerische Literatur und war auf diese Weise in unterschiedliche Literaturen und Kulturen integriert. Bevor er mit etwa 40 Jahren begann, sich als erfolgreicher Schriftsteller zu etablieren, hatte er Aufsätze und literaturwissenschaftliche Essays, u.a. zu J. P. Hebel und A. Stifter, R. Walser und F. Kafka, Th. Bernhard und P. Handke, veröffentlicht. Nicht zufällig gehören die Autoren, die sein literaturwissenschaftliches Interesse finden, den beiden zurückliegenden Jahrhundertwenden an — einer „Zwischenzeit". Ausgedrückt in den literarischen Phänomenen der Moderne und Postmoderne werden sie als innovative ästhetische Übergangsphasen reflektiert, die in der Suche nach neuen literarischen Erzählmodellen ihren Niederschlag gefunden haben. Dieses professionelle Grenzgängertum zwischen Literaturwissenschaft und Schriftstellerei prägt die Eigenart seiner Texte, in denen die Grenzen zwischen kultur- und kunstwissenschaftlichem Essay, literaturwissenschaftlicher Abhandlung und poetischem Text nicht immer streng gezogen sind. Dieser kalkulierte Angriff auf die traditionelle Gattungspoetik mag einer der Gründe dafür sein, dass eine der renommiertesten Literaturzeitschriften der Welt, die New

York Book of Rewies, Sebalds Roman zu den wichtigsten des Jahres 2001 erklärt hat.

II. Im Zentrum steht die nach dem Setzkastenprinzip erzählte Lebensgeschichte des jüdischen Gelehrten Jacques Austerlitz, die sich als eine der vielen „lautlosen Katastrophen" des 20. Jahrhunderts offenbart, die ihre Ursachen, so Sebald, in den zivilisatorischen Katastrophen der beginnenden Moderne haben. Am Beginn seines vorzeitig angetretenen Ruhestandes, mitten in der Arbeit an einem Buch über europäische Architektur-, Bau- und Zivilisationsgeschichte im 19. Jahrhundert, gerät er in eine existentielle Krise, die der des Lord Chandos von Hofmannsthal bis in die Sprachgebung gleicht: So, wie sich die von ihm gesammelten Fakten und Dokumente über Repräsentations- und Repressionsbauten der europäischen Architektur des 19. Jahrhunderts (Festungen, Bahnhöfe, Justizpaläste, Bibliotheken u.a.) nicht mehr zusammenfügen lassen zu einer „Zivilisationsgeschichte", sich gar dem Zeichencharakter der Sprache verweigern, stellt sich auch bei ihm das Gefühl ein, „immer nur ausgelöscht" (178) gewesen zu sein. Der Vergleich zu Thomas Bernhards Roman *Auslöschung. Ein Zerfall.* (Bernhard 1986) stellt sich zwangsläufig ein. Es ist ihm zu Mute, als existiere er in einer in Auflösung begriffenen Welt voller zerbrochener Zeichen: „Das gesamte Gliederwerk der Sprache, die syntaktische Anordnung der einzelnen Teile, die Zeichensetzung, die Konjunktionen und zuletzt sogar die Namen der gewöhnlichen Dinge, alles war eingehüllt in einen undurchdringlichen Nebel." (179). Bereits im Alter von etwa 12 Jahren hatte der in einer walisischen Predigerfamilie aufgewachsene Junge erfahren, dass sein wirklicher Name nicht Dafydd Elias, sondern Jacques Austerlitz sei. In einer beispiellosen „Selbstzensur" des Denkens (202) verdrängt der spätere Architekturhistoriker durch eine rastlose Forscher- und Sammlertätigkeit fast ein halbes Jahrhundert die Angst um seine ungewisse Herkunft. Vom lebenslang anhaltenden Widerstand gegen das Aufkommen der Erinnerung geschwächt, begibt er sich auf die späte Suche nach „Fundstücken" seines verborgenen Lebens. Auf den Reisen quer durch Europa, die ihn u.a. nach Prag, Paris und Theresien-

stadt führen, erfährt er, dass er als Kind Prager Juden im Alter von fünf Jahren mit einem der letzten Kindertransporte aus seiner Heimatstadt nach England geschickt worden war und dass seine Mutter in Theresienstadt interniert und 1944 in den Tod deportiert wurde. Das Wissen um seine Herkunft bringt ihm keine Erlösung, sondern vielmehr die Gewissheit, dass Erinnerung nur zu haben ist um den Preis der Selbstzerstörung. Er muss erfahren, dass es „Abgründe gibt, in die kein Lichtstrahl hinanreicht" (416), dass es ein unwiederbringlich Vergangenes gibt, „das sich von dort drunten nicht mehr heraufholen läßt" (ebd.).

Mit dieser „Erinnerungsprosa", die in *Austerlitz* ihren Höhepunkt gefunden hat, erstellt er eine Poetik, deren literarisches Programm die Restitution der Erinnerung und deren Funktion die Nobilisierung der Literatur als Ort des kulturellen Gedächtnisses ist. Sein scheinbar unspektakuläres Beharren auf dieser Funktion beruht auf der Beobachtung, dass die Tendenz zur Institutionalisierung und Professionalisierung bei der Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit in der deutschen Nachkriegsgesellschaft durch die Historiker, die Politiker, ja, auch durch die Touristikbranche bis heute eher dem Vergessen zugearbeitet hat, indem sie musealisiert und im Faktischen aufgelöst wird. Hinzu komme, wie Sebald betont, ein existentielles Interesse der etablierten Gesellschaft an der Auslöschung der Vergangenheit, da sie „einen ja am Fortschritt hindere" (Siedenberg 1997: 148). Mit der „Erinnerungsprosa" ist also ein literarisches Genre im Entstehen, das den literarischen Text zum „Gedächtnisort" im o.g. Sinne macht. Es bewegt sich im Grenzbereich zur Mnemotechnik und partizipiert von ihr. In Korrespondenz zu interdisziplinären Modellen der Gedächtnisforschung werden zwei Dimensionen des Textes unterschieden: Die eine bezeichnet den „Text als Gedächtnis". Sie meint den mnemonischen Raum, in dem sich ein Dialog zwischen Texten bzw. zwischen Texten und anderen medialen Formen und gesellschaftlichen Diskursen entfalten kann. Die andere Dimension bezeichnet das „Gedächtnis im Text". Sie verweist darauf, dass sowohl Gedächtniskonzepte im Text thematisiert werden, vor allem aber, dass mnemonische Regeln und Techniken als den Erzähltext konstituierende Verfahren aktiviert werden, so dass der

Text selbst als Inszenierung einer „Gedächtnisarchitektur" angelegt ist, die auch die Lektüre bestimmt (Lachmann 1996: 11; vgl. auch Haverkamp/Lachmann 1991: 19 f.).[2] Die Ausführungen zu Sebalds Roman beziehen sich vor allem auf den zuletzt genannten Aspekt. Der Begriff des literarischen Textes als „Gedächtnisarchitektur" geht davon aus, dass Texte einen Vorrat an Gedächtnisorten nach architektonischen Prinzipien konstruieren, an denen sie Gedächtnisbilder deponieren. Um sich zu erinnern, muss man das Gedankengebäude durchwandern und all jene Orte streifen, „wo einen die vorher deponierten Bilder regelrecht anspringen"(Meyer 1986: 88 ff.). So wie die Lokalitäten fiktiv oder real sein können, so können sich auch die Gedächtnisbilder auf Worte, Dinge oder Personen beziehen. Das Bezugssystem, so heißt es, ist nicht am Prinzip der Nachahmung orientiert. Der literarische Text als Gedächtnisarchitektur hat non-repräsentativen Charakter. Er ist ein offenes Konstrukt, das durch den ständigen Transfer neuer Erinnerungsspuren — vergleichbar mit dem Freudschen Prinzip vom Wunderblock — überschrieben wird. Dieses Textverständnis, das auch Sebald teilt, korrespondiert mit einem Textbegriff, den Silvio Vietta im Rahmen seiner *Transzendentalen Texttheorie* zur Diskussion stellt. In seiner Unterscheidung unterschiedlicher Texttypologien gibt es u.a. auch eine „Textualität der Erinnerung". Er definiert sie als eine „Sprechform, in der die kognitive Funktion der Erinnerung die literarische Sprechform dominiert" (Vietta 2002: 233).

Sebalds Erinnerungspoetik konstituiert sich, wie an seinem Roman *Austerlitz* zu zeigen ist, als ein Erzählen (ein literarisches Sprechen) im **Gestus des Beglaubigens**. Es ist ein Erzählkonzept, das sich an den Grenzlinien von Zeugenschaft, Dokumentation und Fiktion entfaltet. Dabei werden literarische Diskursformen und Erzählverfahren praktiziert, die im Spiel mit traditionellen Genres und traditionellen Formen und Funktionen des Erzählens auf einen „Effekt des Realen" aus sind, einen auf die Spitze getriebenen

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[2] Wertvolle Anregungen dazu erhielt ich durch die Magisterarbeit von L.Subašić (2003): *Zerstöret das Letzte/ die Erinnerung nicht. Zur Erinnerungspoetik in W. G. Sebalds Roman Austerlitz.* Potsdam.

Realismus suggerieren. Im Rückgriff auf realistische Erzählmodelle des 19. Jahrhunderts (u. a. von Johann Peter Hebel, Gottfried Keller, Adalbert Stifter) wie auch in Anspielung auf Erzählkonzepte der klassischen Moderne (u. a. von Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin) und der Postmoderne (u. a. von Peter Handke, Thomas Bernhard, Sten Nadolny) erprobt Sebald Erzählstrategien, die die „Langsamkeit" neu entdecken. Eine Gegenbewegung zur Mobilisierung und Akzeleration der Wahrnehmung durch Erzählverfahren wie die Fragmentarisierung des Blicks und die Steigerung des Erzähltempos in der Moderne ist beabsichtigt. Das Erschweren der Wahrnehmung und die Verlangsamung des narrativen Vorgangs werden zu charakteristischen Merkmalen seiner Erinnerungsprosa: **Das Erzählen muss der Eile widerstehen, weil die Eile der Feind der Erinnerung ist.** Darum wird auch die "Macht der Zeit" (148) zu einem zentralen Topos im Text. Auf zwei gestalterische Besonderheiten, die die Strategie des Beglaubigens stützen, soll im Folgenden näher eingegangen werden. Es geht einmal um den eher traditionellen Umgang mit tradierten Erzählformen (Erzählsituationen), zum anderen um die Funktion der eher ungewöhnlichen Abbildungen im poetischen Text.

III. In Anlehnung an die Form der Oral History und an Erzählmodelle des 19. Jahrhunderts inszeniert Sebald im Text eine ursprüngliche orale Erzählsituation: Ein Ich-Erzähler, dessen Identität auf den ersten Blick im Ungefähren bleibt und der entgegen seiner traditionellen Bestimmung kaum eine Personalität entfaltet, trifft auf seinen Reisen durch halb Europa — scheinbar zufällig — auf Jacques Austerlitz, der ihm an „transistorischen Orten" — vorzugsweise auf Bahnhöfen und Friedhöfen — über einen Zeitraum von 30 Jahren ihrer Bekanntschaft seine Lebensgeschichte erzählt. Er ergänzt sie durch eine Sammlung von Dokumenten. Der Erzähler wird eigentlich zum Zuhörer, aber zu einem Zuhörer, der Austerlitz zum Erinnern und Sprechen motiviert, und er wird zu seinem Medium, zu seiner „Schreibmaschine". Das Gehörte und Dokumentierte fasst der Erzähler respektvoll zu einem Bericht zusammen, der die periskopische

Perspektive des Erinnerten durch einen aufwendigen Zitationsstil, wie er in Texten Bernhards zu beobachten ist, wiederholt kenntlich macht. So heißt es an einer Stelle:

> Maximilian erzählte gelegentlich, so erinnerte sich Věra, sagte Austerlitz, wie er einmal, im Frühsommer 1933 nach einer Gewerkschaftsversammlung in Teplitz, ein Stückweit in das Erzgebirge hineingefahren und dort in einem Wirtshausgarten auf einige Ausflügler gestoßen war, die in einem Dorf auf deutscher Seite allerhand eingekauft hatten, unter anderem eine Sorte Bonbons mit einem himbeerfarbenen, in Zuckermasse eingegossenen und einem tatsächlich auf der Zunge zergehenden Hakenkreuz. (241)

Es erscheint als „Erinnern aus zweiter Hand". Soweit ein kurzer Umriss der Erzählsituation. Einige „Merkwürdigkeiten" erscheinen erklärungsbedürftig: Warum wird eine Erzählsituation aus realistischen Erzählmodellen des 19. Jahrhunderts adaptiert? Wie authentisch ist das Material, auf das er sich beruft, und wie geht er damit um? „Werden da scheinrealistische Dokumente und Beweisstücke in den Text einmontiert, um eine Fiktion zu beglaubigen, oder ist das Material wirklich authentisch?" (Löffler 1997: 137). Wer ist der Ich-Erzähler, und welche Rolle spielt der Zufall in den Begegnungen zwischen ihm und Austerlitz?

In der Erzählforschung wird die Form der Ich-Erzählung als diejenige hervorgehoben, die — im Sinne der Beglaubigung — **den Anschein authentischer Erzählung von wirklicher Erfahrung** erweckt (vgl. Petersen 1993). Die realistischen Erzählmodelle operieren mit diesem Moment, indem sie, wie Sebald selbst betont, „dem Leser nahe legen, dass das, was sie schreiben, auf authentischen Dokumenten beruhe, die sie irgendwoher haben" und die suggerieren: „Was ich erzähle, ist wahr." (Sebald 2001 a). Dass das eine „Fiktionsironie", ein „Spiel mit dem Leser"(ebd.), ist, ist die eine Seite und obendrein eine Spielregel, die der Leser/die Leserin akzeptiert, zumal für die Erzählliteratur am Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts. Inwieweit aber gelten diese Spielregeln

andererseits im Zeitalter virtueller Wirklichkeitspräsenz noch? Die Anspielung an die Tradition ist ein Zeichen dafür, dass das Authentizitätsproblem der Literatur im Verständnis von Glaubwürdigkeit und Wahrhaftigkeit sich am Beginn dieses Jahrhunderts neu stellt. Es kann nicht allein an der in Aussicht gestellten Repräsentation von individueller Wirklichkeit und historischem Zeitgeschehen gemessen werden. Es ist aber auch ein Zeichen dafür, „dass sich der Autor bewusst war, dass Erfinden immer eine moralisch problematische Angelegenheit ist"(ebd.). Das ist eigentlich das moralische Dilemma jeder Literatur. Beim Thema Holocaust gewinnt es aber eine neue Dimension, weil angesichts des realen Grauens jede Fiktionalisierung immer auch die Gefahr der Verharmlosung und „Abwertung des Unvorstellbaren" (ebd.) in sich trägt. „Was ich erzähle, ist wahr" — dieser Anspruch des Ich-Erzählers darf also nicht in der „Fiktionsironie" stecken bleiben, sondern muss nach Sebald gedeckt sein durch genau recherchierte Lebensgeschichten:

> Man braucht möglichst genaues, möglichst authentisches Material, um eine gute Geschichte machen zu können. Ich sehe das fast wie das Schneidermetier. Das Fiktive ist der Zuschnitt des Kleides, aber der gute Schnitt nützt nichts, wenn der Stoff, das Material schäbig ist. Man kann nur mit solchem Material arbeiten, das selbst eine Legitimationsbasis hat (Löffler 1997: 137).

In der Lebensgeschichte der Hauptfigur Austerlitz, deren anspielungsreicher Name erfunden ist, stecken „zweieinhalb Lebensgeschichten" (Sebald 2001a), Biografien, denen er nachgegangen ist: In einem Fall handelt es sich um einen befreundeten Kollegen Sebalds, einen Baugeschichtler, der in London gelebt hat und mit 60 Jahren seine Herkunft zu erkunden beginnt. Dabei gerät er, wie Austerlitz, in eine existentielle Krise. Eine andere Lebensgeschichte, die einer Frau, ist mit den Kindertransporten verknüpft. Auf sie gestoßen ist er durch eine Dokumentation über Kindertransporte im englischen Fernsehen. Diese Frau ist mit ihrer Zwillingsschwester aus einem Münchner Waisenhaus nach

London gekommen. Spät hat sie von ihrer eigentlichen Identität erfahren. Sie hat ein normales Leben in London geführt und ihre Herkunft nie hinterfragen wollen. Die „halbe" Lebensgeschichte verweist in ironischer Untertreibung auf das „Überlebenden-Syndrom", an dem prominente Autoren wie Jean Améry und Primo Levi gelitten haben, denen Sebald in biografischen Porträts nachgegangen ist. Und selbst mit dem Namen „Austerlitz" verbindet sich Authentisches im Sinne der Historie. Er war, wie Sebald provokant behauptet, der „wesentliche Impuls", das Buch zu schreiben (ebd.).

Kommen wir zu der Frage, warum eine Verschiebung der Erzählfunktion vom eigentlichen „Erinnerungsträger" Austerlitz auf den namenlosen Zuhörer statt findet. Durch diese Verschiebung wird ja die traditionelle Bestimmung der Ich-Erzählung nicht nur modifiziert, sondern teilweise auch destruiert. Erzählen vom „Hörensagen" verweist zunächst — entgegen dem Wahrheitsgebot — auf die mögliche Unzuverlässigkeit des Erzählten und auf den langsamen, beschwerlichen Weg, den die Erinnerung zurücklegen muss, um an die folgende Generation weiter gegeben zu werden. Ebenso ist Erinnerung, so macht die Verschiebung deutlich, Ergebnis einer Konstruktion, und einer kunstvollen dazu. Sie ist ein Grenzphänomen zwischen Wahrheit und Fiktion und betont den „Unschärfebereich" der biographischen Wahrheit. Der Ich-Erzähler muss ein Material arrangieren, das aus „Fundstücken" besteht und nur z.T. durch Zeugenschaft beglaubigt ist, denn Erinnerungen wie mündliche Überlieferungen sind fragmentarisch. Vera, die Kinderfrau aus Prag, ist die einzige überlebende Zeitzeugin. Austerlitz leidet wie Figuren aus anderen Texten Sebalds (vgl. Sebald 1992) am „Überlebenden-Syndrom", das, so zeigt der Text, gekennzeichnet ist durch erratische Erinnerungsschübe, bei denen es, wie Sebald betont,

> kein ruhiges Kontinuum, sondern [...] zum einen die übertriebene Erinnerung (gibt), wo die Bilder immer mit dieser penetranten Klarheit, immer wieder dieselben Bilder einem durch den Kopf schießen. Und dann gibt es diese riesigen Langunen der Amne-

> sie, wo einer an überhaupt nichts mehr sich erinnern kann [...] (Schlodder 1997: 170).

Um das Erratische der Erinnerung erträglich zu machen, so zitiert Sebald die Gedächtnisforschung, treten — gleich Mechanismen der Traumbearbeitung — fiktionale Momente und phantastische Erfindungen in Kraft, die den Erinnerungsverlust kompensieren. Sebald nennt es das „Korsakowsche Syndrom" (Sebald 1992: 149). Dieses Verfahren der Erinnerung wird auf die Erzählform projiziert. Dem nicht personalisierten Ich-Erzähler kommt dabei eine Doppelfunktion zu: Er muss das Erratische dieser Erinnerung erträglich machen, indem er sie bearbeitet. Das indirekte Erzählen verweigert sich einer Darstellung, die das Grauen im Sinne einer „falschen Fiktionalisierung" und (vor allem filmischen) „Betroffenheitsästhetik" zum Gegenstand macht. Eine „falsche Form der Fiktionalisierung" sei zum Beispiel *Schindlers Liste* von Steven Spielberg. Glaubwürdig soll es vor allem durch das Aufzeigen der „Relikte des Grauens" und ihrer „gespenstischen Musealisierung" in der Gegenwart werden (vgl. Sebald 2001 a). Er muss aber gleichzeitig den „Unschärfebereich" der Erinnerung gestalterisch sichtbar machen. Deshalb tritt der Ich-Erzähler als Vermittler, als „Bastler" in Erscheinung. Dabei bedient er sich — gleich Sebald — der Methode des „wilden Denkens", die das Ineinandergreifen von Fiktivem und Dokumentarischem erklärt:

> Ich arbeite nach dem System der Bricolage — im Sinne von Levi-Strauss. Das ist eine Form von wildem Arbeiten, von vorrationalem Denken, wo man in zufällig akkumulierten Fundstücken so lange herumwühlt, bis sie sich irgendwie zusammenreimen (Löffler 1997: 136).

Es sei ein paradoxer Sachverhalt, sagt Sebald an anderer Stelle, „dass die Dokumente in ihrer unverstellten Form nicht zu Literatur werden können" (Sebald 2001a). Das Erinnerte wird darum auch nur zum Teil in der Literatur durch Fakten beglaubigt. Geordnet und beglaubigt wird hier durch den Ich-Erzähler etwas Anderes: Die Erfahrung eines unlebbaren individuellen Lebens, das das Signum einer historischen Epoche trägt. Und das geschieht durch

zahlreiche Koinzidenzen und Wiederholungen, durch die sich nicht nur Austerlitz und der Ich-Erzähler (nicht zufällig!) begegnen, sondern sich auch der Autor im Ich-Erzähler zu erkennen gibt. Sie sind Doppelgänger, „Wanderer zwischen den Welten". Sie haben im Sinne Benjamins eine „geheime Verabredung" (vgl. Benjamin 1984: 157); sie teilen die Erfahrung der Heimatlosigkeit und der transistorischen Existenz. Das Erzählen von Mund zu Mund (von Generation zu Generation) und die Fähigkeit des Zuhörens sind die kommunikativen Vorgänge, in denen Erinnerung auf erratische Weise überdauert. Leitmotivisch verknüpft werden sie durch die Figur des botanisierenden russischen Dichters und Exilanten Vladimir Nabokov und seine Autobiografie *Erinnerung, sprich!* (Nabokov1991).

Nachdrücklich zu erwähnen ist die Figur des Wanderers. Das Verfahren der Verlangsamung korrespondiert gerade auch mit der Re-Inszenierung des Erzählers als Reisender und Wanderer (Archäologe, Sammler), dessen bevorzugte Bewegungsform das Gehen ist und dessen verlangsamte Wahrnehmung den Blick für Details schärft. Dadurch wird nicht nur ein Erzählen möglich, das sich durch ein üppiges Wahrnehmen und Benennen von Details und deren sinnliche Repräsentation im Text kenntlich macht, sondern die Details sind es auch, die Markierungen in der Architektur des Gedächtnisses darstellen und zum „Innehalten" und „Eingedenken" im Sinne Benjamins (vgl. Benjamin 1984: 167) auffordern. Sebalds Wanderer, der gleich einem modernen Ahasver durch halb Europa reist, unterscheidet sich von dem Flaneur in der Literatur der 20er und 30er Jahre, dessen Wahrnehmung bestimmt ist durch das flüchtige Sehen und den marginalen, dezentrierten Blick im Verkehrsfluss der Großstadt, durch das „scharfe Sehen".

IV. Text — Bild(er)

Auf die Spitze getrieben wird der „Effekt des Realen" durch den Bild-Diskurs — eine Auffälligkeit fast aller Prosa-Texte Sebalds. Mehr als 80 Abbildungen — Fotos, Tabellen, Schriftbilder, Ansichtskarten, Reproduktionen von Gemälden und Faksimiles von persönlichen Dokumenten — durchziehen den gesamten Text.

Als mediale Formen der Präsenz und einer unmittelbaren Evidenz erwecken die in Schwarz-Weiß gehaltenen „Dokumente" den Eindruck, als würden sie das Erzählte illustrieren und die Glaubwürdigkeit der rekonstruierten Lebensgeschichte der Hauptfigur Austerlitz bekräftigen. Bei genauerer Betrachtung wird man als Leser/Leserin jedoch ent-täuscht, und zwar in doppelter Hinsicht: Nur die wenigsten dieser Abbildungen tragen auf den ersten Blick unmittelbar biografischen Charakter und belegen die Lebensgeschichte im dokumentarischen Sinne. Die Abbildungen sind — bis auf wenige Ausnahmen — dem Text auch nicht wie Illustrationen zugeordnet, sondern sie sind Bestandteil des fortlaufenden Textes, unterbrechen als Visualisierung die Narration oder führen den Text in visualisierter Form fort.

Auch auf andere Weise tritt der Bilddiskurs in Erscheinung: als (vertextete) Bildbeschreibung von Gemälden und als Reflexion über Techniken und Wahrnehmungsweisen der Fotografie, der Malerei und des Films. Um so mehr stellt sich auch hier die Frage, warum, wenn nicht in der Absicht von Dokumentation und Beglaubigung des Erinnerten, rivalisierende Medien in und mit der Schrift konzeptualisiert und simuliert werden. Auch die Abbildungen stehen, so meine These, im Dienste Sebald'scher Fiktionalisierungstechnik(vgl. Weber 2003: 65). Sie thematisieren die Perspektive des Erzählers für das Arrangement des Erinnerungsberichts. Einige Beispiele solcher Text-Bild-Konstruktionen sollen im Folgenden auf diese und andere Funktionen hin befragt werden.

Erstens: Das Bild als poetologische Metapher:

Die Exposition des Textes wird bestimmt durch einen Besuch des Erzählers im Nocturama von Antwerpen. Ihn faszinieren die „auffallend große(n) Augen", der „unverwandt forschende(n) Blick" (7) dieser unter ihrer Verglasung sitzenden Nachttiere (Uhus, Eulen, Fledermäuse, Marder, Springmäuse), denen ein „Dämmerleben" von Natur aus beschieden ist. In die Beschreibung des Erzählers eingelassen sind jeweils zwei aufeinander folgende Bildsequenzen, die Augenpartien zeigen: (Abb. 1)

a) vermutlich die Augenpartien eines nachtaktiven Halbaffen und einer Eule,

b) die Augenpartie aus einem von Jan Peter Tripp[3] geschaffenen fotorealistischen Gemälde und ein Augenpaar, von dem vermutet wird, dass es zu dem Philosophen Wittgenstein gehört, der auch als einsamer „Wanderer" und „Bruder im Geiste" im Text erinnert wird.

Die Konzentration dieser im waagerechten Format aufeinander folgenden Augenpartien stellt eine Stilisierung der Augen dar, macht sie zum „Platzhalter" für die Art und Weise, wie im Folgenden auf das Gehörte und auf die Fundstücke geschaut wird. Als „Botschaft" wird erkennbar: Der Erzähler ist in letzter Instanz derjenige, der das Material ordnet und kommentiert. Dieser wiederum setzt auf die „Suggestionskraft" des sprachlichen wie des visuellen Mediums, wie es im Textkommentar zur Bildsequenz heißt, auf den forschenden Blick, „wie man ihn findet bei bestimmten Malern und Philosophen, die vermittels der reinen Anschauung und des reinen Denkens versuchen, das Dunkel zu durchdringen, das uns umgibt" (7). Die visuelle Verortung der Erinnerung wiederum ist eine wichtige Strategie der Mnemotechnik, der sich der literarische Text bedienen will.

Die Bild-Text-Strategie wird immer wieder im laufenden Text erneuert und auf ihre Tauglichkeit geprüft. So ist zu erfahren, dass der Erzähler vorübergehend an einer Augenkrankheit leide, einer Erkrankung der Makula, die vorrangig bei Männern auftrete, die „zuviel mit Schreiben und Lesen beschäftigt seien" und die dazu führe, dass die Bilder der Wahrnehmung an ihren Rändern ins Ungefähre verschwimmen (55). Parallelen zur Aquarelltechnik tun sich angesichts eines Turner-Aquarells auf, bei der, wie der Erzähler kommentiert, „die Landschaft unter einem feinen Schleier" wahrgenommen wird, „wodurch die Farben verblaßten und das Gewicht der Welt einem vor den Augen zerging" (128). Eine Ästhetik der Wahrnehmung wird durch Sebald eingefordert, die an die Clair-obscur-Technik der Malerei erinnert und deren Strategie darauf aus ist, Klarheit dadurch zu gewinnen, dass sich der Blick „erst durch Nebel und Schleierhaftes" hindurcharbeiten

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[3] Jan Peter Tripp ist ein befreundeter Maler, dem Sebald ein Porträt gewidmet hat (Sebald 2000).

muss, um zum Wesentlichen vorzudringen (Boehncke 2003: 48). Das gelte besonders für den scharfen Blick, der sich auf die verdrängte Vergangenheit richte.

Auch die fotografische Technik wird in den Dienst genommen. Austerlitz erinnert sich, dass er als Schüler Mitglied in einem Fotozirkel war. Besonders habe ihn aber der Vorgang der Entwicklung der Filme interessiert, der Augenblick, „in dem man auf dem belichteten Papier die Schatten der Wirklichkeit sozusagen aus dem Nichts hervorkommen sieht, genau wie die Erinnerungen [...], die ja auch mitten in der Nacht in uns auftauchen und die sich dem, der sie festhalten will, so schnell wieder verdunkeln, nicht anders als ein photographischer Abzug, den man zu lange im Entwicklungsbad liegenläßt" (113). Unverkennbar ist der Bezug zu Walter Benjamin, der diese Metapher für den Erinnerungsvorgang auf die Geschichte überträgt, wenn es heißt, Geschichte sei wie ein Text, in den die Vergangenheit wie auf einer lichtempfindlichen Platte Bilder eingelagert habe, aber erst die Zukunft besitze die Chemikalien, die nötig seien, das Bild in scharfen Konturen entwickeln zu können (Benjamin 1972 ff.: 1238; Subašić 2003: 77f , 89).

Zweitens: Fotografien als Abbilder von Gedächtnisorten

Austerlitz erinnert sich, dass ihn bei seiner Fotoleidenschaft vor allem die „Form und Verschlossenheit der Dinge"(112) in den Bann gezogen habe. Dabei sei es ihm unstatthaft vorgekommen, den „Sucher der Kamera auf einzelne Personen zu richten"(113). Vielleicht ist das eine Erklärung dafür, dass zahlreiche Fotografien das Interesse des Architekturhistorikers Austerlitz an Festungsanlagen und Repräsentationsbauten des 19. und des beginnenden 20. Jahrhunderts in halb Europa dokumentieren: Den Justizpalast in Brüssel, die Festung Breendonk in der kleinen Ortschaft Willebroek in Belgien, das Stadtarchiv in Prag, das Great Eastern Hotel in London, den prächtigen Jugendstilbau des Prager Hauptbahnhofs, die Liverpool Street Station in London, um nur einige zu nennen. Und hinzu kommen immer wieder Aufnahmen von Friedhöfen. In ihrem Buch über Erinnerungsräume spricht Aleida Assmann von der Erinnerungskraft von Orten und

systematisiert analog zu dem o.g. Begriff der Gedächtnisarchitektur Gedächtnisorte in ihrer das kulturelle Gedächtnis konstituierenden und stabilisierenden Funktion (Assmann 1999: 299).

Diese Abbildungen einer „menschenfeindlichen Einschüchterungsarchitektur" erschließen sich einem nur aus der Gesamtkonzeption des Textes: Die Faszination, die für Austerlitz von diesen Bauwerken ausgeht, verweist ihn unbewusst auf den Zusammenhang von gesellschaftlicher und individueller Katastrophe und öffnet den Blick für die Ursachen der Verstörung. Der Leser/die Leserin stellt assoziativ die Verbindung her zwischen der Lebensgeschichte Austerlitz' und dem Machtbegehren und dem Vernichtungswillen der europäischen Großmächte, die sich eingeschrieben haben auch in die Architektur von Gebäuden und deren Nutzung. Sie stehen für eine sich selbst in Frage stellende Zivilisationsgeschichte. Der Name Austerlitz z.B. erinnert an die Schlacht der napoleonischen Eroberungskriege von 1805. Diese ist zum historischen Paradigma geworden für eine Europa-Idee, die mit hegemonialen Mitteln und auf brachiale Weise durchgesetzt wurde, wie es Deutschland 130 Jahre später im Weltherrschaftswahn mit noch brachialeren Mitteln versucht. Der Name dieser Schlacht überzieht die Pariser Stadtlandschaft (Straßen, Brücken, Plätze). Welche Assoziation mit diesem Namen beim heutigen Stadtgänger hergestellt wird, wenn er Gebäude und Plätze dieses Namens betritt, wäre zu fragen. Ein anderes Beispiel: Die 1905 in Betrieb genommene Antwerpener Centraal Station, aus Mitteln der äußerst erfolgreichen kolonialen Unternehmungen Belgiens auf dem afrikanischen Kontinent erbaut, wird 30 Jahre später vom Renommierobjekt zu einem Verkehrsknotenpunkt aus Deutschland flüchtender Juden. Das belgische Breendonk und die Festung Terezin werden im 20. Jahrhundert zum Gefangenenlager, zum Ghetto, zur Folterkammer im menschenvernichtenden Auftrag.

Im Zusammenhang mit den Textbeschreibungen werden sie auch zu gleitenden Metaphern einer labyrinthischen Gedächtnisarchitektur mit unzugänglichen Räumen und blinden Türen, abgelegenen Kasematten und offenen Lichthöfen. Um nur einige Beispiele zu nennen:

Die Festung Breendonk (Abb. 2) erscheint als der unzugängliche Gedächtnisraum. Dem Erzähler ist sie beim ersten Anblick unnahbar und rätselhaft. Er durchsetzt seine Beschreibung mit auffälligen psychoanalytischen Symbolen des labyrinthischen Inventars:

> Ich scheute mich, durch das schwarze Tor in die Festung selber zu treten und bin statt dessen zunächst außen um sie herumgegangen [...] sie ließ keinen Bauplan erkennen, verschob andauernd ihre Ausbuchtungen und Kehlen und wuchs weit über meine Begriffe hinaus, daß ich sie zuletzt mit keiner mir bekannten Ausformung der menschlichen Zivilisation [...]in irgendeinen Zusammenhang bringen konnte. Und je länger ich meinen Blick auf sie gerichtet hielt [...], desto unbegreiflicher wurde sie mir. Stellenweise von offenen Schwären überzogen, aus denen der rohe Schotter hervorbrach, und verkrustet von guanoartigen Tropfspuren und kalkigen Schlieren, war die Festung eine einzige Ausgeburt der Hässlichkeit und der blinden Gewalt. Auch als ich später den symmetrischen Grundriß des Forts studierte, mit den Auswüchsen seiner Glieder und Scheren, mit den an der Stirnseite des Haupttrakts gleich Augen hervortretenden halbrunden Bollwerken und dem Stummelfortsatz am Hinterleib, da konnte ich in ihm, trotz seiner nun offenbaren rationalen Struktur, allenfalls das Schema irgendeines krebsartigen Wesens, nicht aber dasjenige eines vom menschlichen Verstand entworfenen Bauwerks erkennen. (30ff.)

An einigen Abbildungen wird der Zusammenhang zwischen Individualbiografie und Gedächtnisarchitektur unmittelbar hergestellt: Die Liverpool Street Station war für Austerlitz schon immer ein Ort von magischer Anziehungskraft. Der unter dem Niveau der Straße befindliche Eingang erschien ihm wie „eine Art Eingang zur Unterwelt" (184) Die Abbildung zeigt eine morbide Halle, durch die nur bei Sonnenlicht durch das gläserne Hallendach ein diffuses Grau in die Düsternis einbricht, weil die Halle ein-

geschwärzt ist von Staub und Schmierölresten des Jahrhunderts. Beim Umbau wird der Blick auf den Jahrzehnte nicht genutzten Ladies Waiting Room frei. Der Anblick wird zur Initialzündung. Er gibt die Erinnerung an seine Ankunft mit dem Kindertransport auf diesem Bahnhof, in dieser Halle, die nicht abgebildet, aber beschrieben ist, frei. Er erblickt sich selbst als der Knabe, der er vor mehr als einem halben Jahrhundert war:

> Er saß für sich allein seitab auf einer Bank. Seine Beine, die in weißen Kniesocken steckten, reichten noch nicht bis an den Boden, und wäre das Rucksäckchen, das er auf seinem Schoß umfangen hielt, nicht gewesen, ich glaube, sagte Austerlitz, ich hätte ihn nicht erkannt. So aber erkannte ich ihn [...] und erinnerte mich zum erstenmal, soweit ich zurückdenken konnte, an mich selber in dem Augenblick, in dem ich begriff, daß es in diesem Wartesaal gewesen sein mußte, daß ich in England angelangt war [...]. (196 f.)

Drittens: Die Fotografie im Spannungsfeld von Dokumentation und Täuschung

Die Tragik in Austerlitz' Leben ist, dass er nur wenige Fotos und Gedächtnisbilder aus seiner Kindheit wie das oben genannte, „wiedererstellte", besitzt. Der walisische Pflegevater — so heißt es im Text — habe alle Spuren seiner Identität getilgt. Die „Fundstücke", auf die Austerlitz auf der Suche nach seiner Herkunft stößt, werden höchst fragwürdig, die „persönliche Biografie" zu re-konstruieren, und was viel wichtiger ist, sie annehmen zu können. Es zeigt sich einerseits, dass die „Fundstücke" gefunden werden wollen. Sie werden eingepasst in die reformulierte Lebensgeschichte. Sie werden zum Mittel der Fiktion, wo die eigene Erinnerung versagt. Sinnbild dafür wird die Fotografie der Auslagen eines Trödelladens in Terezín. Hier entdeckt der Erzähler gestrandete Zierstücke, Andenken, die ihre Besitzer auf rätselhafte Weise überdauerten und in der Komposition eine neue Séance eingegangen sind. Kaum erkennbar ist das Spiegelbild des

Erzählers auf der Scheibe des Schaufensters, der diese Séance kommentiert.

Es gibt aber auch den Gegenbefund: Autorisierte Dokumente verstören Austerlitz, weil ihm bewusst wird, dass er zu dem „Stück" dokumentierten Lebens keinen Zugang besitzt.

Zwei Beispiele sollen die o.g. Beobachtungen belegen: Ein Foto — es ist das Titelfoto von *Austerlitz* –zeigt ein Kind von etwa 4 Jahren im Kostüm eines Pagen der Rosenkönigin (Abb. 3). Seine Kinderfrau Věra hat es bei seinem Besuch in Prag „zufällig" zwischen den Seiten eines Balzac-Bandes entdeckt und erinnert sich, dass es auf einem Maskenball entstanden ist, auf den er die Mutter, die Schauspielerin war, begleiten durfte. Es ist das einzige Dokument, das Austerlitz mit seiner frühen Kindheit konfrontiert, ein halbes Jahr vor der beginnenden Katastrophe. Austerlitz betrachtet es distanziert, in einer Art und Weise, die Roland Barthes in seinem Essay über die Fotografie „studium" (Barthes 1989: 35) nennt. Das Foto entfaltet jedoch seine expressive Kraft, das Schockierende und Beunruhigende, durch den eindringlichen Blick des Knaben und das augenblickliche Gefühl des Betrachters Austerlitz, „keinen Platz in der Wirklichkeit" (265) zu haben. Barthes nennt dieses Gestaltungsmittel das „punctum" (Barthes 1989: 36). Austerlitz ist überwältigt von der plötzlichen Einsicht, dass es unmöglich ist, die eigene Biografie zurückzuholen, weil nicht wir, sondern die Bilder es sind, die die Rekonstruktion der Biografie sukzessive steuern. Das geschieht, wenn die gewöhnlich in der Familie erzählten und weitergegebenen Geschichten dazu fehlen. Dann erscheint es so, „als hätten die Bilder selbst ein Gedächtnis und erinnerten sich an uns." (262) In diesem Sinne, so gesteht Austerlitz, habe er sich die alten Familienfotos der Pflegefamilie aus Bali zum Fakt der eigenen Biografie gemacht. Er habe sie so lange angeschaut, bis er sich eingebildet habe, die Straßen des im See versunkenen Ortes entlanggegangen und dem Mädchen im Garten begegnet zu sein.

Auf der Suche nach einem Bild der Eltern wird diese Form der Fiktionalisierung auf die Spitze getrieben. Hier wird gezeigt, wie historisches Material zur Täuschung werden kann, wenn die „Befangenheit" des Sammlers die Perspektive vorgibt. Austerlitz stößt

auf der Suche nach einem Bild seiner Mutter, die Schauspielerin war und in Terezín interniert war, auf die NS-Propagandadokumentation *Der Führer schenkt den Juden eine Stadt.* In einer Zeitlupenkopie — so glaubt er — entdeckt er das Gesicht seiner Mutter. Es wäre wahrscheinlich. Die Annahme wird so lange zur Gewissheit („Gerade so wie ich nach meinen schwachen Erinnerungen und den wenigen übrigen Anhaltspunkten, die ich heute habe, die Schauspielerin Agáta mir vorstellte, gerade so, denke ich, sieht sie aus [...]" (354 f.)), bis ein altes Theaterfoto diese emphatische Wahrnehmung als Täuschung entlarvt. Paradoxerweise so, wie ja der ganze Dokumentarfilm in Anspielung auf die Auschwitz-Lüge einen perfiden Akt der Täuschung über das Leben der Juden in den Vernichtungslagern darstellt. „Je mehr Bilder aus der Vergangenheit ich versammle", heißt es in einem anderen Text Sebalds, „umso unwahrscheinlicher wird es mir, daß die Vergangenheit auf diese Weise sich abgespielt haben soll" (Sebald 1990: 241). Der Leser/die Leserin ist angehalten, der Belegkraft der Bilder zu misstrauen.

V. An zwei unterschiedlichen Gestaltungsweisen in Sebalds Prosa — an der Erzählform und an den Text-Bildern — sollte gezeigt werden, wie der Schwebezustand zwischen Fiktion und Dokumentation in den Dienst einer Prosa gestellt wird, die sich am ehesten als „dokumentarische Prosa" bezeichnen lässt. Der Text, dem Sebald die traditionelle Genrebezeichnung „Roman" verweigert, ist ein kalkulierter Angriff auf tradierte Formen der Gattungspoetik. Mit einer naiv verstandenen „Wiederkehr der Erzählens" (Förster 1999) ist er nicht adäquat beschrieben. Die dokumentarische Prosa sei den zeithistorischen Monografien nicht nur in der Frage der Popularisierung überlegen, sondern auch in der Möglichkeit, Metaphern bzw. Allegorien eines kollektiven Geschichtsverlaufes zu produzieren: „Erst in der Metaphorisierung wird uns Geschichte empathetisch zugänglich.", so Sebald im Gespräch mit Sigrid Löffler (Löffler 1997:137). Durch die Bilder im Text und die Textbilder wie auch durch die in den Text integrierten medialen Diskurse wird Sebalds Text zu einem vielschichtigen semiotischen Zeichensystem, das den traditionellen

literarischen Textbegriff in Frage stellt. Mit der „dokumentarischen Prosa" meint Sebald das authentische Medium einer zeitgemäßen Erinnerungspoetik gefunden zu haben. Der Begriff des „Authentischen" (Lange 1999: 5) im ästhetischen Sinne wird dabei vom 19. Jahrhundert über die klassische Moderne bis hin zur Postmoderne zu einem ambivalenten Kriterium der Bewertung. In der literarischen Gestaltung des Holocaust wird er aber zu einem Kriterium, in dem Ästhetik und Ethik sich unmittelbar berühren. Die ästhetische **Strategie des Beglaubigens** in Sebalds *Austerlitz*, die sich nicht nur der Zeitzeugenschaft, sondern auch der Erzählverfahren der Zeugenschaft bedient und sich auf Mittel wie die Fotografie beruft, wird daraufhin zu befragen sein, wie sie den Anspruch auf Authentizität einlöst: Will sie Evidenz im historischen Sinne? Will sie Illusionierung im Sinne der Einfühlungsästhetik? Oder stellt sie dem Leser/der Leserin „Repräsentationsfallen" auf, um eine Erinnerungsarbeit zu ermöglichen, für die Betroffenheit nur der Anfang sein kann?

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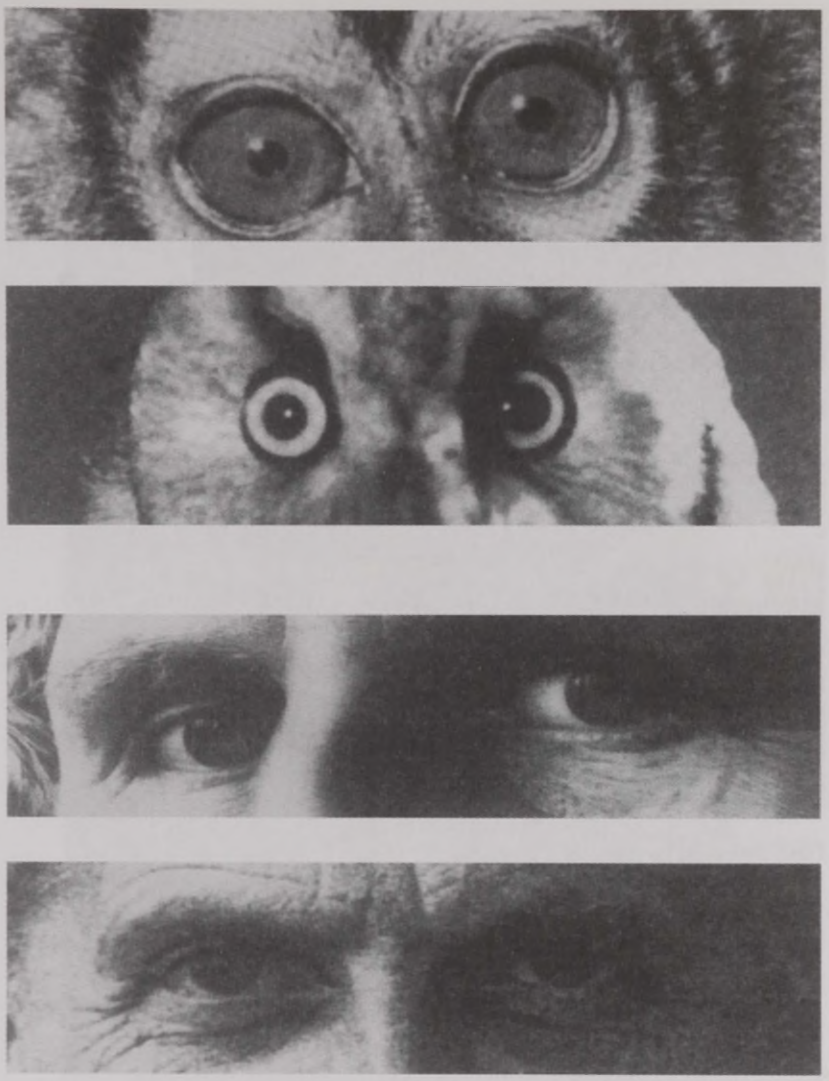
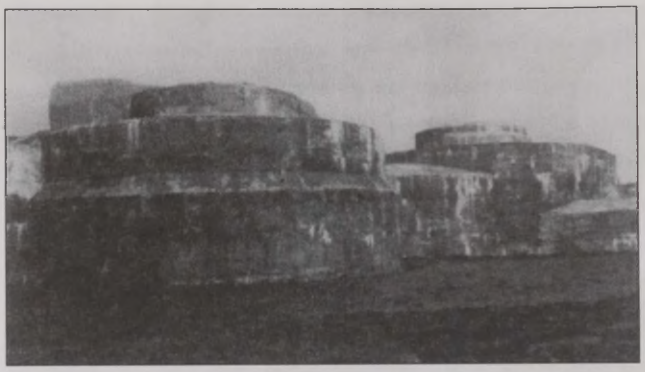


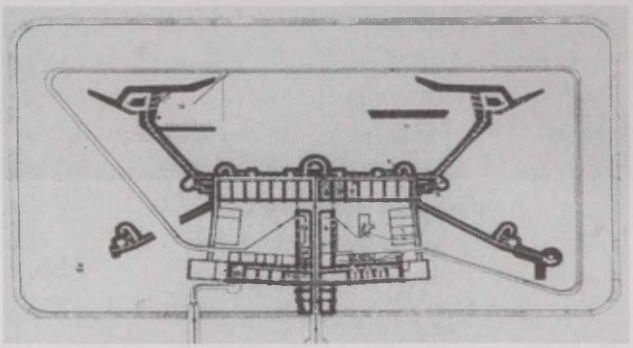
(Sebald 2001: 7)

Abb. 1



(Sebald 2001: 30)

(Sebald 2001: 7)



(Sebald 2001: 7)

Abb. 2

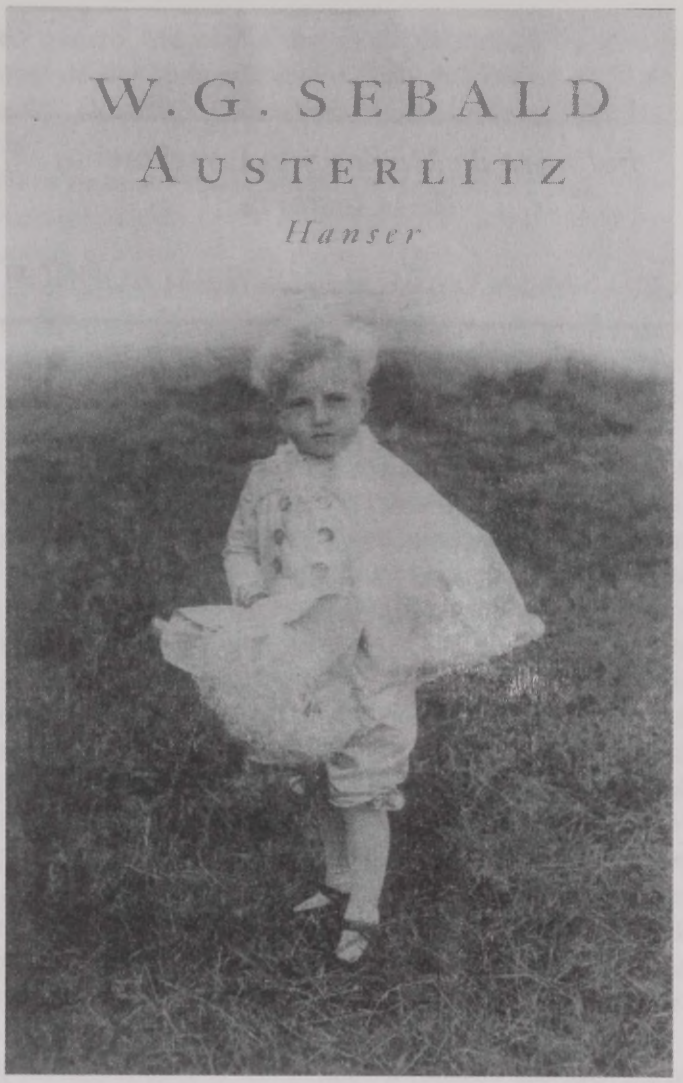


Abb. 3

Palinuro de México y la farseización de la historia

SAÏD SABIA Y ABDELMOUNEIM BOUNOU

En su primera novela *José Trigo* Fernando del Paso (1935), el novelista mexicano demostró tener, en paralelo con una profunda preocupación por la historia, una importante ambición en cuanto a la experimentación novelística (Portal 1981: 274). En efecto, en esta novela el autor hace del lenguaje mismo el tema axial (Caravajal 1966: 2–4) basándose en un constante juego imaginación/desimaginación, información /contrainformación, construcción/desconstrucción que acaba cuestionando el mismo género "novela". El trasfondo histórico, invocado y literariamente tratado, es múltiple e incluye varias facetas de la historia reciente de México, desde la misma Revolución ("La Cristiada") hasta la huelga de ferrocarrileros de Nonoalco-Tlatelolco en 1959, pero también incluye un remontarse a la historia precolombina de México a través del paralelismo establecido entre la destrucción del barrio (decretada por el Gobierno a raíz de los disturbios laborales) y la caída del mundo azteca que tuvo lugar precisamente en el mismo Tlatelolco. La primera novela de Fernando del Paso encierra, pues, una crítica política, social e histórica en la que se combinan símbolos del presente y del pasado para cancelar a la vez una actitud frente a la historia reciente (desmitificar la Revolución y el discurso político oficial en torno a la misma y llamar la atención sobre la actualidad) y otra actitud de tipo literario artístico, relacionada con los modos de expresión literaria de este mismo trasfondo histórico (Portal 1969: 284). El lenguaje neobarroco, la estructura laberíntica y el cuestionamiento del

mismo género "novela" a través de la mezcla de géneros, son algunos de los procedimientos más relevantes utilizados por Fernando Del Paso y que exigen una participación activa del lector.

Estas mismas preocupaciones e inquietudes, tanto en el plano temático-ideológico como en el formal y artístico-estético, están presentes, a través de un nuevo planteamiento, en la segunda novela de Fernando del Paso, *Palinuro de México*, publicada en 1976. Su publicación coincide con cierto auge de la novela latinoamericana basada en la historia. Pero esta obra resulta ser original en cuanto a su interés por la historia en particular porque, si bien el autor, al igual que otros novelistas, pone la vista en un hecho concreto de una época determinada para cuestionarlo en sus repercusiones y poner en tela de juicio las versiones formuladas del mismo (discursos tanto político como literario), el enfoque que nos ofrece *Palinuro de México* es novedoso: se trata de una individualización de la experiencia histórica colectiva,[1] tomada en su dimensión presente y en evolución (el punto de vista principal es el de un joven estudiante de Medicina), pero sobre todo expresada de modo simbólico y haciendo uso de las múltiples posibilidades de la novela y de la ficción literaria, una de las cuales es aquella que consiste en la integración y asimilación de varias disciplinas y ramas del saber.

Esta experiencia histórica colectiva que sirve como base o referencia del texto la constituyen los acontecimientos conocidos como la "matanza de Tlatelolco", protagonizados por los estudiantes mexicanos el día 2 de octubre de 1968 y que tuvieron,

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[1] El nombre de "Palinuro" es "uno" y "plural". Ver pp. 246–247 del capítulo 11: "Viaje de Palinuro por las Agencias de Publicidad y otras islas imaginarias". En este capítulo es evidente la referencia al mítico piloto de Eneas que, según *La Eneida* de Virgilio, se durmió estando al timón del barco, por lo que se cayó y las olas lo llevaron a un cabo de la costa donde fue matado por los habitantes. A partir de entonces, ese lugar lleva su nombre. Es, entonces, el prototipo del personaje que se deja llevar por sus sueños y acaba perdiendo la vida a causa de ellos. El paralelismo se establece temática y estructuralmente.

tras la intervención del ejército, un saldo de más de 300 muertos y varios miles de heridos, amén de los miles de personas aprehendidas. El mismo Fernando del Paso afirma (Graciela Gliemmo 1994):

> En *Palinuro de México* yo *narro cosas que ocurrieron en 1968* pero el escenario donde está situada toda la adolescencia de Palinuro y sus paseos por la Escuela de Santo Domingo, y todo, es un escenario que dejó de serlo.

Los acontecimientos del 68 inspiraron un número importante de novelas en México.[2] Tan importante que se ha empezado a hablar últimamente de una "*Novela del 68*", equiparable a la Novela de la Revolución Mexicana (Cynthia Palacios 1998). Pero entre todas ellas sobresale esta novela de Del Paso que, en opinión de José

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[2] Entre las más importantes se pueden citar, por orden cronológico de aparición: René Avilés Fabila: *El gran solitario de palacio*, Buenos Aires, Losada, 1970; Jorge Aguilar Mora: *Cadáver lleno de mundo*, México, Joaquín Mortiz, 1972; Armando Ramírez: *Chin Chin el teporocho*, México, Novaro, 1972; María Luisa Mendoza: *Con él, conmigo, con nosotros dos*, México, Joaquín Mortiz, 1972; Juan García Ponce: *La invitación*, México, Joaquín Mortiz, 1972; Gustavo Sainz: *Compadre Lobo*, México, Grijalbo, 1977 (y posteriormente *A la salud de la serpiente*, México, Grijalbo, 1992); David Martín del Campo: *Las rojas son las carreteras*, México, Joaquín Mortiz, 1977; Federico Arana: *Delgadina*, Barcelona, Plaza y Janés, 1978; Gonzalo Martré: *Los símbolos transparentes*, México, V Siglos, 1978; Federico Campbell: *Pretexta*, México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Letras Mexicanas, 1979; Arturo Azuela: *Manifestación de silencios*, México, Joaquín Mortiz, 1979; Agustín Ramos: *Al cielo por asalto*, México, Era, 1979; Salvador Castañeda: *¿Por qué no dijiste todo?*, México, Grijalbo, 1980; Jaime del Palacio: *Parejas*, México, Martín Casillas, 1980; Bernardo Ruiz: *Olvidar tu nombre*, México, Premiá, 1982; Marco Antonio Campos: *Que la carne es hierba*, México, Joaquín Mortiz, 1982; Paco Ignacio Taibo II: *Héroes convocados: manual para la toma del poder*, México, Grijalbo, 1982; Hernán Lara Zavala: *El mismo cielo*, México, Joaquín Mortiz, 1987 y Héctor Anaya: *El sentido del amor*, México, Agata, 1992.

Agustín, "representó la aproximación más original al tema" (Agustín 1998).

Sin embargo, la novela no se plantea sólo como una simple denuncia o testimonio, que también lo es como veremos a continuación, sobre un hecho histórico que sacudió y conmovió a México por las múltiples conexiones que tiene con otras realidades, sobre todo políticas, del país; *Palinuro de México* se afirma como una visión particular de la realidad, en el sentido de que se trata de una visión caleidoscópica, la misma con la que el personaje protagonista, Palinuro, desearía ver las cosas:

> "Sólo así valía la pena vivir: en un presente eterno y siempre nuevo donde no existieran ni los siguientes diez minutos ni los siguientes diez mil años, y donde fuera posible *ver las cosas a través de un caleidoscopio que cada vez que el mundo diera una vuelta, dibujara una fábula distinta*: ayer, podía haber sido un califa sabio y gordo como el abuelo; mañana, un laberinto habitado por pájaros roc y tamariscos rojos." (p. 331)[3]

A través de esta metáfora, el mundo que nos ofrece *Palinuro de México* es de una abrumadora variedad y riqueza. Abordar esta novela equivale a ingresar en un laberíntico mundo de imágenes visuales constituidas por múltiples fuentes del saber humano: la Medicina, la Pintura, la Música, la Literatura, la Historia, etc., todo ello unido por la percepción visual, móvil y fragmentada (Fernando del Paso 1994). Por esta novela desfilan un sinnúmero de autores y obras de las disciplinas mencionadas, así como personajes históricos reales de todas partes, y personajes ficticios de la literatura universal.[4] De modo que la novela se convierte en

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[3] La cursiva es nuestra.

[4] Aparte de los textos y autores citados por él en la "NOTA FINAL", el autor ha declarado en numerosas entrevistas su deuda con tres obras principales: *Las mil y una noches, La tumba sin sosiego* de Cyril Conolly y *Ulises* de James Joyce. A ellas habría que añadir, como presencias funcionales de primer orden, a Jorge Luis Borges y su intento de apropiación de la cultura universal en cada escrito o texto que produce, y

una obra abierta a las más variadas disciplinas y formas de expresión del hombre. Las 725 páginas de esta monumental novela nos transportan, de la mano del protagonista Palinuro y su doble,[5] y por medio de un hábil manejo de la intertextualidad,[6] al mundo de la Medicina (Palinuro es estudiante en la Escuela de Medicina), al del amor y del erotismo (representado por su relación con su prima y amada Estefanía), luego al mundo de las artes plásticas representado en la obra por decenas de pintores y cuadros famosos de numerosos países, épocas y tendencias, y después al mundo de la publicidad y del teatro, pasando por un escrutinio del gigantismo de la ciudad de México D.F. y una visión microscópica del cuerpo humano (anatomía y patología médicas). Todo ello tiene cabida en esta enciclopédica y neo-barroca novela que todo lo abarca con la vista, la memoria y la palabra:

> Estamos hechos de palabras y las cosas también [dice Walter]; porque nosotros somos tan sólo memoria y las cosas existen y son verdaderas cuando se dejan vestir, mansas, del mundo de palabras. (p. 214)

El lenguaje, al mismo tiempo que se usa para expresar y recrear literariamente estas referencias pre-textuales, sirve para poner en entredicho los fundamentos mismos de ciencias, como la Medicina o la Filosofía, tradicionalmente consideradas como discursos

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a François Rabelais y su característica burla de la erudición. Hay que señalar, por otra parte, que algunos capítulos son directamente inspirados de obras concretas. Tal es el caso, por ejemplo, del capítulo 2: "Estefanía en el país de las maravillas" (Lewis Carrol), el capítulo 12: "La erudición del primo Walter y las manzanas de Tristram Shandy" (Laurence Sterne) y el capítulo 22: "Del sentimiento tragicómico de la vida" (Miguel de Unamuno).

[5] En esta novela, uno de los ejes estructurantes es constituido por la relación de espejeo y duplicación que se establece entre el personaje protagonista Palinuro y el narrador doble.

[6] Quizás sea más correcto, en el caso de esta novela, hablar de "interdisciplinaridad" en lugar de "intertextualidad" porque uno de los planos de la interferencia y la retroalimentación mutua lo constituyen la Pintura y la Música.

constructores de la verdad. Al cuestionar estas ciencias, el lenguaje en *Palinuro de México* hace una parodia de la erudición y funciona a modo de vehículo para salir del mundo real marcado por múltiples tipos de opresión y, al mismo tiempo, se constituye como una alternativa placentera.

Nos ha parecido pertinente señalar estos aspectos de *Palinuro de México* antes de proceder al examen de algunas de las modalidades de expresión de la historia que aparecen en ella, debido a su, propia y figuradamente, fabulosa riqueza temática, artística y formal. Líneas arriba señalamos que la metáfora de la realidad vista a través de un caleidoscopio constituye una de las claves de comprensión e interpretación de esta novela y de los elementos históricos pre-textuales que la sustentan. Recogiendo uno de los términos de la cita, diremos que la novela va diseñando, conforme va avanzando la narración, una fábula distinta del pretexto constituido fundamentalmente por dos ejes temáticos: el primero referente a la crítica de la Revolución Mexicana y de la política del PRI, que encontramos diseminada en varios pasajes y capítulos de la novela, y el segundo conformado por los acontecimientos del 2 de octubre de 1968, para el estudio del cual nos basaremos principalmente en el penúltimo capítulo de la novela, "Palinuro en la escalera o el arte de la comedia" (pp. 629–696), que es donde se explicita la visión global que tiene Del Paso de estos acontecimientos y la especial formulación que ofrece de los mismos. Como base de comprensión e interpretación de las modalidades de expresión de estos ejes, proponemos el concepto de "farseización". Este concepto nos parece más amplio que –e inclusivo de- el de "estética de la deformidad y de lo grotesco", adoptado por otros investigadores que se han dedicado al estudio de *Palinuro de México*. Con este término se designa:

1) el procedimiento del que se vale Fernando del Paso para expresar la idea que, para nosotros, preside en la génesis del texto y subyace en él, y que es el engaño, la falsedad y la ficción que, para el autor, como para muchos novelistas mexicanos contemporáneos, caracterizan el discurso político mexicano y las versiones oficiales de los hechos históricos en México, tal y como dejamos asentado al inciar este artículo. A

este discurso y a estas versiones de la historia, y ante la pérdida de veridicción de los grandes sistemas contemporáneos de pensamiento (López González 1993: 678–679). Del Paso opone "las verdades profundas del ser y de la historia" que relativizan la comprensión de la realidad al ofrecer de ella una visión caleidoscópica y, por lo tanto, plural y

2) la adopción de la farsa, en su acepción primera de "pieza cómica breve" y obra teatral que se inserta en el relato novelesco, como una forma novedosa de expresión de los hechos históricos, e inclusiva, por su misma naturaleza histriónica, de una crítica pluridimensional y en varios planos del pre-texto histórico, en este caso la "matanza de Tlatelolco". Más adelante, veremos que el capítulo "Palinuro en la escalera o el arte de la comedia" que adopta la forma de la farsa, puede leerse como unidad textual independiente del resto,[7] pero también como parte de un todo más amplio que es la novela en su conjunto, y dentro del cual se inserta hábilmente ya que su aparición se va preparando de modo minucioso en capítulos anteriores. De este modo, la novela reivindica la polifonía como rasgo característico al abrirse no sólo a otras disciplinas, sino también a este otro género literario que es el teatro.

Sin embargo, antes de proceder al análisis, debemos señalar que, en esta novela, las conexiones con la historia son múltiples y variadas y se establecen tanto con hechos históricos de México, como la Revolución Mexicana y la forma de gobierno del PRI (especialmente el período de Gustavo Díaz Ordaz del que se hace una crítica mordaz), como con otros acontecimientos importantes a nivel internacional como, por ejemplo, las dos guerras mundiales o el neocolonialismo y el hegemonismo lingüístico y cultural de Estados Unidos. Pero la característica esencial de *Palinuro de México* es, así lo creemos, la subversión que aparece tanto en el plano temático como formal. Dicha subversión se efectúa, a nuestro modo de ver, a través de cuatro elementos principales: 1) la perspectiva desde la que se enfocan los elementos pre-textuales

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[7] De hecho, este capítulo será llevado al teatro en el año 1992, con el título *Palinuro en la escalera*.

(punto de vista de un joven estudiante), 2) la revalorización del individuo frente a la sociedad (inconformismo, crítica y creación de mundo alternativo), 3) la intensificación del uso del metalenguaje y la metaficción inclusivos de la parodia como instrumento de crítica y satirización de valores consagrados, teorías filosóficas y científicas, instituciones así como el mismo lenguaje como instrumento de expresión del mundo, y 4) la relativización de los conceptos de "Novela" e "Historia" y sus respectivos correlatos habituales "ficción" y "realidad", que se anuncia en la primera página, antes del inicio del texto, de la siguiente manera:

> Esta es una obra de ficción.
> La razón por la cual algunos
> de sus personajes podrían parecerse
> a las personas de la vida real,
> es la misma por la cual algunas
> personas de la vida real parecen
> personajes de novela.
> Nadie, por lo tanto, tiene derecho
> a sentirse incluido en este libro.
> Nadie, tampoco, a sentirse excluido. (p. 11)

En *Palinuro de México* la subversión se lleva simultáneamente en varios planos: el anecdótico, en oposición a las normas y valores tradicionales de la sociedad, a partir del individuo (Palinuro), el ideológico, en contra del gobierno represivo y los aparatos del PRI (la figura del estudiante: Palinuro, Molkas y Fabricio), y el plano lingüístico que desestabiliza la gramática y la misma lengua por medio de la inserción de numerosísimos neologismos y metáforas cuya característica esencial es la hilaridad.

Previo reordenamiento de los datos de la diégesis, el argumento de la novela aparece constituido por las peripecias del personaje protagonista, Palinuro, estudiante de Medicina, entregado plenamente a vivir, como si fuera una fiesta, cualquier situación por trivial que sea. Es rebelde e inconformista, opuesto a acatar las reglas que impone la sociedad y la moral. Vive en intensa relación amorosa con su prima Estefanía, que es otro personaje importante de la novela, satirizando las convenciones morales de su sociedad

y rechazando su sistema de valores. Como es de esperar en un personaje rebelde como él, a Palinuro no le interesa terminar la carrera ni casarse y tener esposa, hijos ni obligaciones, lo cual implicaría su inserción en una sociedad que rechaza. De esta manera, Fernando del Paso reactualiza el debate sobre el conformismo del hombre moderno — en México y en otras partes del mundo — con las correspondientes inquietudes e interrogaciones que conlleva: aceptar — y por lo tanto integrarse en- un mundo que se percibe como corrupto y represivo, o rebelarse contra el orden establecido y crearse otro, adaptado a los deseos propios, en cuyo caso se plantean nuevas inquietudes relacionadas, esta vez, con el precio que hay que pagar por esta actitud de rechazo. Palinuro, Estefanía y sus amigos Fabricio y Molkas, estudiantes como él y con él en la Escuela de Medicina, optan por el inconformismo y la insurrección contra la sociedad mexicana de los sesenta, esta misma cuya descripción, llevada humorística y satíricamente, ocupa muchísimas páginas de la novela. La alternativa que adopta Palinuro es el mundo paralelo creado gracias al mismo lenguaje que vehicula, a la par, su propia visión del mundo y su crítica mordaz a la sociedad en la que le ha tocado vivir. Palinuro pagará con su propia vida esta opción existencial al ser arrollado por un tanque durante la represión de la manifestación estudiantil de 1968.

Los 25 capítulos de la novela narran el nacimiento, la vida, la muerte y la "resurrección" de Palinuro. El primer párrafo de la novela deja constancia de la importancia que va a tener la Medicina en la vida del protagonista y en la misma novela:

> La ciencia de la medicina fue un fantasma que habitó toda la vida, en el corazón de Palinuro. A veces era un fantasma triste que arrastraba por los hospitales de la tierra una cauda de riñones flotantes y corpiños de acero. A veces era un fantasma sabio que se le aparecía en sueños para ofrecerle, como Atenea a Esculapio, dos redomas llenas de sangre: con una de ellas, podía resucitar a sus muertos queridos; con la otra, podía destruirlos y destruirse a sí mismo. (p. 15)

Para establecer el marco global en el cual se va a desarrollar la acción de la novela, el autor se remonta a principios del siglo XX europeo para situar la juventud del "tío Esteban" en la Hungría de la Primera Guerra Mundial en la que participa antes de trasladarse a Estados Unidos y posteriormente a México. En paralelo, se remonta a la misma época en la historia de México para situar la juventud del abuelo de Palinuro, Francisco, que luego sería suegro del tío Esteban, en plena Revolución Mexicana (p.18). A continuación, Palinuro y su prima Estefanía nacen y crecen en la mansión familiar e irán recibiendo paulatinamente las influencias simultáneas del tío Esteban, obsesionado por la Medicina, del abuelo Francisco que "sacaba del sombrero –por así decirlo-, a Pancho Villa y sus Dorados, o de abajo de la mesa y por las barbas a Venustiano Carranza" (p. 39) y de don Próspero, huésped de la mansión, pero sobre todo, vendedor de enciclopedias y asiduo lector de las mismas. De esta manera queda configurado el marco en el que crecerán Palinuro y Estefanía: el discurso sobre la Medicina por un lado, la historia y la Política por el otro y, como trasfondo, la Enciclopedia y las resonancias míticas de Bagdad,[8] donde había nacido el abuelo Francisco, alimentadas de "cuentos [que] poblaban nuestro mundo de califas que se ahogaban en aljibes verdes como bostezos, de puentes de puro brillo que mediaban entre dos tierras abismadas en negruras insolubles y de barcos en que toda la tripulación se había muerto de una peste milagrosa y navegaban por el mar y por las leyendas como cementerios lentos." (p. 43)

De esta manera, la infancia de Palinuro transcurre en este marco hasta que su "curiosidad por los escarceos eróticos de sus padres [...] fue sustituida por *el aprendizaje lento de la falsificación y del lenguaje de las inversiones*" (p. 43)[9], ese mismo que poco a poco irá sumiendo a Estefanía en un amor sin límites hacia Palinuro. Con ese mismo "*lenguaje de las inversiones*",

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[8] No se trata de la mítica capital árabe sino de una pequeña localidad cercana a Matamoros, en el estado de Tamaulipas, fronterizo con Estados Unidos.

[9] La cursiva es nuestra.

Palinuro y/o su doble irán contando, a lo largo de los capítulos siguientes, la vida de Palinuro con Estefanía en un cuarto de la Plaza de Santo Domingo, su experiencia como estudiante de la Escuela de Medicina y sus aventuras en compañía de sus amigos Molkas y Fabricio o con su primo Walter. A partir del capítulo 3, "Mi primer encuentro con Palinuro" (pp. 57–81), todas las narraciones, referencias, descripciones o discusiones en torno a las experiencias vividas por los protagonistas de la novela se harán por medio de ese lenguaje de las inversiones, alternando los discursos de y sobre la Medicina con discursos de y sobre la Política y la historia, pasando por el gigantismo de la ciudad de México, la sociedad de consumo y el mundo de la Publicidad. Todo ello narrado por Palinuro y/o su doble de una manera marcada por la erudición, el humor y la irreverencia: irreverencia ante la sociedad y ante el lenguaje mismo con el que se expresa.

Hacia el final de la novela, Palinuro es atrapado en la manifestación estudiantil reprimida por los militares y muere, víctima de sus heridas. En el último capítulo (pp. 697–725), titulado "Todas las rosas, todos los animales, todas las plazas, todos los planetas, todos los personajes del mundo", Del Paso lo resucita y convoca, para que asistan a esta resurrección, a numerosos personajes de la literatura universal, del cine y de las historietas cómicas más conocidas. De su relación, que se extiende a lo largo de las últimas seis páginas de la novela, ofrecemos los siguientes fragmentos para ilustrar el homenaje que Del Paso rinde, por un lado a la Literatura (Fernando del Paso 1994)[10], y por otro a la actitud coherente del estudiante Palinuro que vive, y muere, de acuerdo con sus propias convicciones:

> Y en eso estábamos, cuando nos avisaron, Palinuro, que estabas por nacer. A tu abuela Altagracia se lo dijo Robin Hood.

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[10] "Yo hago un homenaje a la literatura expresando un optimismo ya que los personajes vuelven a renacer, los personajes literarios asisten al nacimiento y de paso algunos de los personajes de las historietas cómicas que a todos nos marcaron de niños", *El arte de la fabulación*, *op. cit.*

A Robin Hood se lo dijo Lady Windermere.

A Lady Windermere se lo había dicho el Conde de Montecristo.

[...]

Y Corazón Leal le dijo a Cabeza de Águila que le dijo al grajo ambalsamado de su bastón que le dijo a Robinson Crusoe que le dijo a Viernes que le dijo al Hombre que fue Jueves.

Y llegaron para verte nacer, todos los personajes de Los Pardallán y de los Rougon-Macquart.

Y llegaron también, a caballo y levantando una gran polvareda El Llanero Solitario, Doña Bárbara, Los Lanceros de Bengala, Don Segundo Sombra, Artemio Cruz y Los Bandidos de Río Frío.

Llegó Phileas Fogg que tuvo que tomar un tren expreso desde Iowa City y perdió cinco días y recuperó cuatro, dando así la vuelta al mundo, en realidad, en ochenta y un días.

[...]

Y entonces Simbad el Marino le dijo al Capitán Veneno que le contó al Capitán Sangre que le dijo al señor K. [...] que le escribió a Sherazada que les dijo a Bertoldo Bertoldino y Cacaseno [...] a Ana Karenina [...] a Spiderman [...] a Sherlock Holmes [...] a Pantaleón y las visitadoras [...] al Alcalde de Zalamea [...] al Último de los Mohicanos [...] al doctor Jekyll que le contó a Mister Hyde que le dijo a José Trigo que le dijo a Pablo y Virginia que le dijeron a Romeo y Julieta [...] al Bachiller Trapaza y al Lazarillo de Tormes y a Guzmán de Alfarache y al Periquillo Sarniento [...].

Pídele a Remedios La Bella que baje envuelta en un rayo de luna.

Dile al teniente Gulliver que regrese de Marte en su alfombra mágica.

> Dile a Cyrano de Bergerac que te traiga un frasco para guardar las lágrimas de mamá.
>
> Y avísale al espíritu de Fausto que cabalga por los espacios. (pp. 719–725)

De los modos de aproximación a la historia que aparecen en *Palinuro de México*, resaltamos dos principales: uno es el relativo al inconformismo y a la rebeldía del personaje protagonista, y el otro viene constituido por las numerosas secuencias de la novela donde el discurso sobre la historia se evidencia y se hace explícito. Este segundo modo se explicita, a su vez, por medio de dos voces: la del abuelo Francisco y sus constantes referencias a la Revolución y sus protagonistas, por una parte, y por otra, la del Palinuro estudiante que opina sobre el movimiento estudiantil y la política del gobierno y, de modo general, sobre la situación de México en los sesenta.

En las páginas que siguen nos ocuparemos del tema de las huelgas estudiantiles y las protestas contra la política del gobierno priista y que aparecen en numerosos pasajes de la novela. Entre éstos merece especial atención el capítulo 9, titulado "La mitad alegre, la mitad triste, la mitad frágil del mundo" (pp. 187–217) donde comienza el texto con un fragmento de un poema de Jorge Guillén,[11] citado por el primo Walter (erudito con cultura enciclopédica) que inmediatamente después formula la pregunta: "¿Por qué no se olvidan de la política y se ponen a estudiar?" (p. 187). La respuesta del Gobierno a los movimientos estudiantiles la encontramos sintetizada en estas palabras que dirige Walter a su primo Palinuro:

> [...] déjate de huelgas y manifestaciones; el día que te salga una protuberancia en la zona de la politicidad, te saldrá tarde o temprano un policía o un granadero que te la va a sumir de un macanazo, y en ese

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[11] Con qué nobleza se revuelven
Todos juntos esos muchachos
Y claman por una justicia
Perturbando, vociferando... (p. 187)

> momento te vas a dar cuenta que la alternativa entre ver y entender al mundo como lo hacía don Próspero (con su lado alegre) o entenderlo como lo entiendo yo (con mi lado triste) deja de tener importancia. (p. 213)

Más adelante, el mismo Walter añade que "a los estudiantes los incineran en el Campo Marte para que no aparezcan nunca más" (p. 215).

Estos movimientos estudiantiles que culminaron en los acontecimientos del 2 de octubre de 1968, aparecen en dos versiones: la primera en un largo discurso explícito directo, uno de los poquísimos de este estilo que hay en toda la novela, en el capítulo 23, "La Cofradía del Pedo Flamígero" (pp. 611–628), y la segunda en el capítulo siguiente, "Palinuro en la escalera o el arte de la comedia" (pp. 629–697).

Las páginas 619 a 625 son un solo y largo discurso crítico, continuo, claro y directo sobre los fundamentos de la acción del gobierno "vendido" a Washington y de su reacción a las reuniones y manifestaciones estudiantiles que coincidieron con la celebración de las Olimpiadas en México. De esta crítica no se salva ningún estamento del poder en México. Lo original de de este discurso es la lengua utilizada y que se caracteriza por ser directa hasta más no poder, pero al mismo tiempo, tildada, por el narrador de "retórica" (p. 619), justo antes de su inicio. En ello vemos una estrategia de preparación y acondicionamiento del acto de la lectura. Cuando las 600 páginas anteriores están repletas de retórica bajo todas sus formas, manifestaciones, usos y dimensiones, aparece este "guiño" del autor para poner aún más el acento en la técnica de la inversión que líneas arriba apuntábamos. Nos parece, en efecto, que Del Paso, fiel a la noción de "farseización" de la historia, hace que sea contagiado –seguimos en el campo de la Medicina — el discurso explícito sobre los hechos, una de cuyas dimensiones fundamentales es el establecimiento de la verdad o, cuando menos, la producción del efecto de la verdad. Después de este párrafo de cinco páginas y media, reacciona el narrador de la siguiente manera: "Palinuro — le dije —,

no entendí una sola palabra." La réplica aparece, acto seguido, en dos planos:

> "Ese es el problema: que nadie entiende -me contestó-, pero ven a verme después de la manifestación y te contaré."
>
> Y es que Palinuro era así, siempre fue así: todo lo que decía en serio parecía de broma, y todo lo que decía de broma parecía en serio. (p. 624)

Este "después de la manifestación" es el clímax, momento culminante de la novela, donde el pre-texto principal, declarado por el mismo autor (la matanza de Tlatelolco), es textualizado y literaturizado según el procedimiento de la "farseización" en su acepción primera de la palabra "farsa".

En efecto, "Palinuro en la escalera o el arte de la comedia", el capítulo más extenso de la novela,[12] es una farsa en cuatro actos, llamados "pisos" porque la acción transcurre en el edificio (de cuatro pisos) donde se encuentra el cuarto de Palinuro, precedidos de un "PRÓLOGO"[13] en la planta baja, y cerrados con un "EPÍLOGO" en el desván. También hay dos intermedios: el primero es una "GRAN KERMES ESTUDIANTIL" que se intercala entre el segundo acto y el tercero, y el segundo es "LA MANIFESTACIÓN SILENCIOSA" que, a su vez, se intercala entre el tercer acto y el cuarto. Se cierra la función cuando uno de

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[12] Ocupa 66 páginas, seguido del capítulo 11: "Viaje de Palinuro por las Agencias de Publicidad y otras Islas Imaginarias" con 63 páginas y el 18: "La última de las Islas Imaginarias: esta casa de enfermos" con 54 páginas. La extensión del resto de los capítulos oscila entre 16 páginas el más corto y 32 el más largo.

[13] Reproducimos los títulos tal y como aparecen en la obra, debido a la importancia que tiene en ella este aspecto de la grafía. Los títulos del prólogo, el epílogo, los actos y los intermedios, así como de los actores excepto "Yo", aparecen en mayúscula, mientras las acotaciones aparecen en cursiva para marcar la distinción en relación con el texto de las intervenciones.

los actores "muestra al público *y a los lectores*"[14] un cartel "con letras rojas y doradas" (p. 696) que dice:

> "*ACTA EST FABULA*"
> (La comedia ha terminado). (p. 696)

Las intervenciones de los personajes-actores van precedidas o seguidas de las correspondientes acotaciones (en cursiva y entre paréntesis) que suelen aparecer en cualquier texto dramatúrgico escrito antes de ser llevado a la escena. Hay que señalar, también, que Fernando del Paso lleva hasta el límite la fidelidad al recurso a la farsa como género teatral, al respetar hasta la forma de la inscripción del texto en las páginas.

El tema de la pieza es la muerte de Palinuro que va a tener lugar en su cuarto de la Plaza de Santo Domingo al cual llega arrastrándose a duras penas por la escalera, tras haber sido arrollado por un tanque en el Zócalo durante la represión consecutiva a la manifestación estudiantil. En efecto, en la primera acotación, el autor explicita el contenido general de la farsa y, al mismo tiempo, establece la distinción entre los dos niveles que la componen: el de la realidad y el de la fantasía, con los respectivos personajes que las encarnan:

> (La realidad está allá, al fondo. La realidad es Palinuro, que *comenzó arrastrándose en la Cueva de Caronte y nunca más se levantó.* La realidad es Palinuro golpeado, en la escalera sucia. Es el burócrata, la portera, el médico borracho, el cartero, el policía, Estefanía y yo. El lugar que le corresponde a esta realidad es el segundo plano del escenario. Los sueños, los recuerdos, las ilusiones, las mentiras, los malos deseos y las imaginaciones, y junto con ellos los personajes de La Commedia dell'Arte: Arlequín,

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[14] P. 696. La cursiva es nuestra. Es una de las estrategias de inscripción e interpelación del lector en la novela, que indica que, aun cuando este capítulo adopta la forma del texto teatral, no deja de formar parte de la novela. Por ello es por lo que al referirnos a los personajes, utilizamos aquí la fórmula de "personaje-actor".

> Scaramouche, Pierrot, Colombina, Pantalone, etc.: todo esto constituye la fantasía. Esta fantasía, que congela a la realidad, que la recrea, que se burla y se duele de ella y que la imita o la prefigura, no ocurre en el tiempo, sólo en el espacio. Le corresponde el primer plano del escenario.) (p. 629)[15]

Entre estos dos niveles y sus respectivos grupos de personajes, se intercala, uniéndolos, la muerte misma como personaje-actor emblemático cuya característica esencial es la omnipresencia expresada por la multiplicidad de "caras" y funciones que va adoptando en sus sucesivas apariciones.[16] Por último, hay que señalar que se involucra al público de modo directo al hacerlo participar en la función.

A través del conjunto de personajes-actores, los de la realidad y los de la fantasía, emparentados por la agonía de Palinuro, se van representando y visualizando los acontecimientos que sacudieron

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[15] La cursiva es nuestra.

[16] Los nombres con los cuales aparece son, por orden de aparición e intervención: "LA-MUERTE-ROPAVEJERA", "LA-MUERTE-AUTOR", "LA-VOZ-DE-LA-MUERTE-DETECTIVE", "LA-MUERTE-VENDEDORA", "LA-MUERTE-BRUJA", "LA-MUERTE-PRESIDENTE", "LA-MUERTE-TOTEM", "LA-MUERTE-ALTÍSIMA", "LA-MUERTE-SERENÍSIMA", "LA-MUERTE-SU-ALTEZA-SERENÍSIMA-SEÑOR-PRESIDENTE", "LA-MUERTE-EN-ZANCOS", "LA-MUERTE-EDECÁN", "LA-MUERTE-LOCUTORA", "LA-MUERTE-VENDEDORA-DE-ESCALERAS", "LA-MUERTE-MUDA", "LA-MUERTE-SORDA", "LA-MUERTE-CIEGA", "LA-MUERTE-SIN-OLFATO", "LA-MUERTE-DESCARNADA", "LA-MUERTE-RICA", "LA-MUERTE-OBVIA", "LA-MUERTE-PERIODIQUERA", "LA-MUERTE-BROMISTA", "LA-MUERTE-AGRADECIDA", "LA-MUERTE-AUTORIDAD", "LA-MUERTE-PATRIA" y "LA-MUERTE-FINALERA". En su segunda intervención, como "MUERTE-AUTOR", dice: "Y lo que están viendo ustedes en este preciso momento, de cara a cara, es a LA MUERTE. Porque yo, señores, soy La-Muerte-de Todos (señala al público) soy La-Muerte-de-Usted. La-Muerte-de-un-Estudiante. La-Muerte-de-un-Coronel. La-Muerte-Calaca. La-Pálida-Enlutada. La-Putilla-del-Rubor-Helado que tarde o temprano me los voy a llevar, a TODOS al diablo (un escalofrío azul recorre el escenario)." (p. 631)

la vida de México en 1968 y que tuvieron su culminación en la matanza colectiva del 2 de octubre, parabólicamente expresada por la farsa. El discurso sobre los mismos va cambiando de boca en boca, entre los personajes-actores, y al hacerlo, se va mistificando y des-mistificando, según quien sea el personaje que lo asuma. El juego de las máscaras cambiantes expresa, en este contexto, la mutabilidad de las identidades y el proceso de deterioro de los valores supuestamente sagrados de la nación y del pueblo mexicano, consecuente a la manipulación por los órganos del PRI. Además de la multifacética muerte, Colombina, por ejemplo, aparece "disfrazada de Constitución", Arlequín de "Revolución Mexicana" y Scaramouche de "Partido Revolucionario Institucional" (p. 656):

> COLOMBINA: ¡Oigan ustedes cómo se des-
> morona la Constitución!
> SCARAMOUCHE: ¡Escuchen ustedes cómo se
> cuartea el Partido Revolucionario Institucional!
> ARLEQUÍN: ¡Oigan cómo se viene abajo la
> Revolución Mexicana!
> PIERROT: ¡Sí, oigan, oigan, para que des-
> pués no digan que no oyeron!
> (Sus disfraces se desmoronan en el suelo con
> gran escándalo. Salen. Deja de temblar. Entran Pantalo-
> ne, el Dottore y el Capitano disfrazados de barrenderos,
> con sendas escobas. El público comienza a regresar
> a sus asientos. Entra en seguida La-Muerte-Bruja montada
> en una escoba, y revolotea por el escenario.) (pp. 656–657)[17]

Tal como se hacía antiguamente en la farsa, por una parte, y en la comedia, por la otra, "Palinuro en la escalera o el arte de la comedia." presenta — de modo tragicómico — varias versiones del hecho histórico, focalizándolo así desde numerosos y variados puntos de vista que se retroalimentan mutuamente. El objetivo es, así lo creemos, ofrecer al lector la posibilidad de formular su

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[17] Reproducimos el texto en su disposición original en las páginas de la obra.

propio juicio sobre la historia, sin caer en el panfleto, aunque el lector conoce, desde el principio, la postura del autor. Los capítulos precedentes ofrecen, en efecto, suficiente información sobre el tema a través de las intervenciones sucesivas de Palinuro, Fabricio, Molkas y la ya referida intervención de Walter sobre el movimiento estudiantil. La originalidad, en este aspecto, no radica tanto en la visión del autor como en la forma subversiva que adopta para expresarla. Al fundir en un solo texto dos modalidades dramáticas tan diferentes la una de la otra como son la farsa y la comedia; y al insertar la fundición de ambas en el relato novelesco, Fernando del Paso consigue, en este aspecto de la aproximación a la historia, un doble objetivo: dejar constancia de una visión múltiple de la historia y cumplir con su propósito de rendir homenaje a la literatura y a la lengua, por medio de la literatura y la lengua.[18]

Para finalizar, queremos señalar que, en esta novela, aparecen todos los personajes de la *Commedia dell'arte* excepto uno: Pulchinela.[19] Esta ausencia se explica, a nuestro modo de ver, por dos motivos. El primero es que, de estos personajes, éste es el que tradicionalmente simboliza la rebeldía contra las normas por medio de la subversión del discurso.[20] En el conjunto de la novela, ésta es precisamente la característica principal de Palinuro. El

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[18] La preocupación de Fernando del Paso por la historia alcanzará, diez años más tarde, su punto culminante con la publicación de una de las novelas históricas más importantes no sólo de México, sino de toda América Latina: *Noticias del Imperio* (1987).

[19] Los personajes de la *Commedia dell'Arte* no aparecen todos en esta obra con los nombres originales italianos. Conservan su nombre original "Pantalone" (Pantaleón) y el "Capitano" (Capitán), mientras que "Arlecchino" aparece en español (Arlequín), "Pedrolino" y "Scaramosca" aparecen en francés ("Pierrot" y "Scaramouche" respectivamente), y no aparece "Pulcinella" (Pulchinela).

[20] Una de las razones principales de la decadencia de la *Commedia dell'Arte* en el siglo XIX fue el hecho de que los sucesivos actores que encarnaban el personaje de Pulchinela en los siglos XVIII y XIX tendían a insertar satíricamente las situaciones dramáticas en la actualidad, lo cual acarreó el descontento de las autoridades.

segundo motivo lo constituye la dimensión de Pulchinela como personaje arquetípico y simbólico de la perduración y la resurrección. El capítulo siguiente — y último- de la novela es precisamente consagrado a la resurrección de Palinuro, proceso en el cual, de la misma manera que se ha hecho para farseizar la historia, la pieza clave es la lengua.

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The Dimensions of the Contemporary Science Fiction Novel on the Basis of Examples from Estonian Literature

ANDRUS ORG

Reality is a crutch for people
who can't deal with science fiction
(Text from a T-shirt)

Novum and extrapolation in science fiction

The theoretical and scientific treatments of science fiction are based on the idea which says that a definition plays a key role in the theory and interpretation of SF. Therefore it is appropriate to ask: what are these specific logical-normative building blocks that are necessary for stipulating SF as a genre?

A more conventional (normative) definition would be: SF is the extrapolative description of scientific-technological expression and possibility with a future perspective in a fictional way. The topic of SF or the motives that develop the topic, have scientific-technological possibilities — proceeding from scientific achievements or playing with scientific and technological props — that as a rule call for future reference. In other words, one of the main characteristics of SF is the explication of "scientific" perception or knowledge, which means that the principle of scientific quality — involving various scientific hypotheses and pseudo-theories — is usually exaggerated and mystified in SF. Such exaggeration and mystification of the scientific background avoids speculative leaps

in principle and prefers extrapolative world building, basing itself on the linear and logical development of the current state of the empirical world. Extrapolation as a hypothetical continuation of a certain trend works as a two-stage model of imagination: when we presume this and that, the result is this or that. An author who takes a new principle or idea as a basis, accepts the presumptions he/she has created and develops them as logically and integrally as possible. A cognitive effect is created from linking the current state of the real world and the future perspective, which is a clear illusion, of course, but at the same truthfully unreal, possible as fiction.

According to Darko Suvin the basic building-block of SF is *novum* — a fictional image without actual reference, which causes cognitive estrangement in the reader. "A novum of cognitive innovation is a totalizing phenomenon or relationship deviating from the author's and implied reader's norm of reality" (Suvin 1979: 64). Novum that the writer tries to describe to catch the illusion of authenticity, points to hypothetical entities, which in current reality or "zero reality" do not exist yet, but in the future can become scientific reality. Therefore, novum as an empirically untestable "mental experiment" is a basis of extrapolation, which itself is the main world-building mode used in the creation of SF.

The previous normative scale of SF is a basis which helps to understand to which extent the SF novels of the beginning of the 21st century are guided by traditional canons of genre, what the thematic and conceptual dominants of the texts are like, and what kind of future worlds are depicted. One more explanation before we proceed.

The dissolution of science fiction as a genre

The inclination of a number of critics is to consider SF a "closed-system genre", with clear outlines, but at the same time with partial overlapping with other genres, like utopias and dystopias, detective and adventure stories, thrillers and cyberpunk, fantasy

literature and horror fiction, also documentary literature and essay. It is better to say that nowadays the texts that are considered SF form a colourful picture with rather a heterogenic continuum. Texts that are considered by critics as SF in the post-modern era tend to dissolve the clarity of the SF Golden Age, making the genre more of an amorphous and hybrid field, where segments of different genres have blended and dissolved.

Barbara Puschmann-Nalenz, who compares SF and post-modern literature in her study, points out similar changes: "Literary forms like detective novel, robinsonade, utopian novel, picaresque novel, historical novel or SF can only be empirically found out. They can only be defined as a series of characteristics, which are not only of a material and thematic but also of a structural kind [...]. Moreover these fictional forms are of an empirical nature; as it turned out [...] their genres conventions were subjected to such an important historical change that frequently the question was asked whether later works still belonged to the same genre at all." (Puschmann-Nalenz 1992: 223). The contemporary SF novel is not a "closed-system genre", but a form of fiction that is still expanding its poetic repertoire and crossing its own boundaries. It is a kind of spectrum where dissolution has become a norm. Universally specific characteristics, that would combine all this heterogeneity within the genre and at the same time would be *conditio sine qua non*, are rather hard to determine because these very same characteristics apply also to the texts that do not belong to SF. Since modernism, the internal transformation of literature has inevitably brought along the dissolution of the boundaries of genre and the crumbling of the genre canons. Therefore it is difficult from genre viewpoint to determine explicitly the outlines of post-modern SF.

In contemporary Estonian SF novel there are two opposite trends: on the one hand, the inner transformation of the genre indicates that the tendencies of trivial literature have taken root and deepened, the function of entertainment has increased and the consumer-oriented format has become fixed; on the other hand, the genre is not a stranger to elite and high literature attitudes that give rise to suspicions about the marginal position of the genre in the

context of Estonian literature. When the first trend, from the point of view of the genre, can be viewed as **mainstream**, then the second trend is **slipstream**. Both trends represent the mentality of post-modern society and the values of the readers.

Mainstream: extrapolative world-building, the adventurous-technological dominant

The so-called mainstream SF is mostly a popular and commercial trend, which follows the standards and canons of the genre in the most orthodox way. Jerry Palmer brings out that in addition to the commercial effect, the genre functions in three ways (Palmer 1991: 112–116): firstly, the genre is an element in the "horizon of expectations" that a reader will have as he/she follows a story; secondly, the genre establishes itself as a norm that exploits conventions and stereotypes developed during its existence. The last aspect indicates the variable "closure" of the genre, i.e. productive themes-motives are used in new combinations and transformations. The genre as a norm is also to be found in the readers' judgements. Thirdly, Jerry Palmer says, "the genre functions as a commercial device. Just as it is used as a labelling device in bookstores, it is available as a guide and a working method to those who create commercial fiction" (Palmer 1991: 116).

It must be said that also in Estonia the publishers have discovered the commercial potential of SF and fantasy — both translations and originals sell well. In Estonian literature the SF novel has made a remarkable quantitative leap and reached a wider range of readers and critics. The quantitative leap is only a sign of the external, i.e. reader-oriented adaptation, which does not prove a sensible shift in the SF poetics. Contemporary Estonian SF is largely influenced by the Anglo-American genre tradition, but its mimicry on different levels has led to a suffocation of innovation in Estonian SF novel.

Mainstream SF is a widespread trend in the local literary tradition, which exploits the normative poetics and variable

"closeness" typical of the genre. The description of the exotic background, the black-and-white confrontation of characters and the adventurous plot have been put into the focus of the narrative. Extrapolation as the main narrative strategy works logically and convincingly without inclining toward speculative imagination. At the same time the descriptions of future worlds and the scientific-technological progress are usually trammelled by numerous stereotypes (such as space battles and uncontrollable robots), which, on the one hand, confirms the conservatism of SF as a genre. On the other hand, it is a sign of the epistemological limits of literature or primarily, of the present world. Topical problems connected with human and world existence, also ontological questions are not forced or do not exist at all in mainstream SF. The construction of linear models and the adaptation of action poetics is a widespread feature, but the artistically unpretentious creation mode results in a somehow "lower" light literature. The conventionality of cognitive models and thematic determination indicates the status of popular and even literary trash. It would not be wrong to state that mainstream SF is an example of a type of fan-fiction.

SF as a specific genre-space can be described through dominants and their hierarchy. Roman Jakobson says: "Dominant can be determined as a focusing component of a work of art: it subordinates, defines and transforms other components. Dominant ensures the integration of structure." (Jakobson 1976: 56) Genre dominants (incl. typical motives) as poetical structural elements, diachronically developed and fixed in repertoire, do not only stipulate a text as a genre but are also its conceptual keys. Traditional dominant motives in mainstream SF novels are accidents with spaceships, interplanetary wars, military rescue operations on other planets, missions on space colonies and unknown civilisations, space battles with laser weapons, solving extraterrestrial crises, organising and discovering cosmic conspiracies, travelling in hyperspace, making incredible spatial-jumps, etc. Dangerous and unexpected powers are represented by hostile aliens, uncontrollable robots or man-made humans, monstrous evil-doers, space-pirates, interplanetary spies, ambitious scientists of genius, comical space couriers or other characters. All these motive

units — catalysts of plot development — belong to the repertoire of SF novels forming hierarchies within a text. Depending on dominants the described can be identified as a *space opera*, where the plot is spiced up with lots of adventure and action; or as an *alternative world*, where the author creates some "other world", which differs from "our world" by some physical or material characteristic; or as an *E-Type World* (*terraforming*), where the alien world is adjusted for humans; or as an *alternate history*, where visions of the evolution of society are projected into the future or the past; or as *zones*, which are "the most favoured "possible worlds" in post-modern SF" (Koskimaa 1994: 51).

The following is only a short list of Estonian authors and their novels from the beginning of the new century, which either more or less apply mainstream poetics: Indrek Hargla's *Excelsuse konkistadoorid* ('Conquistadors of Excelsus', 2000), *Baiita needus* ('Curse of Baiita', 2001) and *Palveränd uude maailma* ('Pilgrimage into a New World', 2003); Tiit Tarlap's *Kaduviku paladiinid* ('The Paladins of a Bygone Era', 2002) and *Vihkamise suund* ('Direction of Hate', 2002), Siim Veskimees's *Operatsioon "Ogaline Päike"* ('Operation *Spiky Sun*', 2001), Lew R. Berg's *Tants tulle* ('Dance into Fire', 2000) and *Tempel selvas* ('A Temple in the Rainforest', 2001) etc. Estonian SF writing, which is only one trend besides trend fantasy and horror fiction, finds itself mimicking the Anglo-American tradition.

Indrek Hargla (born in 1970), who is probably the most successful SF writer in Estonia, received the annual prize of the Estonian SF Society — The Stalker — for his stylish and adventurous short novel *Excelsuse konkistadoorid*. According to the critics at the website the Base of SF (http://193.40.240.76/sfbooks), it belongs to the higher-class of SF. The depiction of the scene, the planet Excelsus with its arctic climate, its human colony and local life forms is thoroughly thought through and brings to mind parallels with F. Herbert`s *Dune* or A. C. Clark's *The Third Odyssey*. It is a well-written narrative that follows the genre canons and uses scientific-technological devices for creating an exotic atmosphere and tension. A remarkable role in the creation of the atmosphere of the future is played by the biological

dominant: while creating the largest gallery with ice sculptures in space, humans come face to face with a Large Alien Race, ningos, who appear from the depths of the icefields, lurking and killing people. The humans' accounter with the members of an intelligent alien race leads to bloodshed after which the uninvited guests — humans — decide to leave the planet. Hargla's novels prove the ongoing popularity of the mainstream among the readers who appreciate the genre canons.

Slipstream: speculative world-building and metaphysical dominant

The so-called slipstream denotes a rather peculiar and marginal SF phenomenon, which concentrates on the metaphysical treatment of the human and world existence. The description of the relationship between the humans and the world, also the humans and God from a philosophical or theological viewpoint is a dominant, which puts the description of the plot and characters into the background. The narrative interest is reduced, foregrounding the metaphysical dimension of the text. The conceptuality of the text grows at the same time: the author raises conceptual questions, demonstrates his conception of the world and a high intellectual orientation unfamiliar to orthodox SF. Such abstract and general conceptualism can be described with the notion of the "idea SF" (on a broader scale "idea literature", as in some texts by Camus, Lem or Borges), which is a hybrid of metaphysical ideas and genre canons. So, slipstream denotes poetics where the speculative development of ideas and worlds prevails, which in principle differs from the extrapolative world-building.

The Estonian SF novels from the turn of the century have experienced this trend: Markus Vetemaa's *Valgelinnu maailm* ('The World of a White Bird', 1998), André Trinity's *Unenägude jumal* ('God of Dreams', 2002), but most of all in Jaan Kaplinski's *Silm* ('Eye', 2000) and *Hektor* ('Hektor', 2000). These are writers

who have a strong potential to separate from mainstream in order to discover new epistemological boundaries.

A unique loner in the list of post-modern SF authors is **Jaan Kaplinski** (born in 1941), who is one of the most influential thinkers and poets in Estonia — may be the only one whose ideas and message carry significance beyond the borders of Estonia. Kaplinski's short novels *Silm* and *Hektor* are an ambitious attempt to destroy the immunity of fiction worlds by crossing the line towards documentary literature and essayism, pulling down tight genre canons. His novels are the so-called *idea novels*, where a fictional world is merely used as a "serving tray" for the author's ideas. Philosophical and theological ideas, which come from Kaplinski's earlier essays (for example his essay *Usk ja uskmatus* ('Belief and Atheism')), have been combined with general rules of fiction and supplied with the obligatory elements of SF and fantasy in the novels. It turns out that *Silm* and *Hektor* have similar and multiple levels of the text which are linked with the story of finding the meaning of the world and being.

In the short novel ***Silm*** Kaplinski goes astray from the orthodox SF novel towards a philosophical and religious dialogue which follows the established rules of fiction (the dialogue has been the most appropriate genre for philosophising throughout centuries!). It includes discussions on the controversial nature and despotism of the Christian God Jahve or IHVH, and the intolerance so typical of Christianity. God's evil Eye which hauntingly follows the narrator and the entire mankind, is a central image, hinting at epistemologically different, alternative worlds — the transcendental experience. Kaplinski's high intellectual ideas are hypnotising, even paranoid. They activate the reader's mind, because the continuous wanderings through philosophy and ethics become an intriguing and crucial challenge. The illuminating ethical dialectics of good and evil, ironically criticising the bourgeois-Lutheran dictatorship, creates a strong conceptual axis in the novel. Getting used to its mentally stimulating and mystical atmosphere calls for a mental effort on the part of the reader. Sometimes more realistic, sometimes the more fairy-tale like world of metaphysical ideas comes to the reader through guesses and hints, but most of all

through *unknowing* which is programmatic in the *Silm* (Velsker 2000: 941). The ideas hidden in the unknowing lead to the stage where man starts to questions his own identity: "But which one is the real me, this one here, or that one over there?" (Kaplinski 2000: 109). The aspiration towards an enlightening message, finding the message and finally still missing the ultimate knowing — it is almost like a vicious circle, an indication of the epistemological crisis of the contemporary world. Metaphysical ideas, at least, have been cast in the SF format.

Kaplinski's ***Hektor*** (first published in the magazine of literature *Looming* 1998, No. 1) is a short monologue novel, in the form of a diary, like a confession or report. Although here are fewer genre levels, it seems paradoxically that the structure of the text is more complicated and the narration technique more surprising. The novel lacks a systematic narrative, different stories and topics are mixed in the diary and the lack of important limitations allows the text to develop more freely. The stories' metafantasy is balanced by different SF novums: intelligent animals, gene manipulations, scientific-philosophical confessions, modelling the future of the world etc. The narrative is not overwhelmed with peculiarities, it rather surprises the reader with its credibility and a composed mood.

Kaplinski's short novels *Silm* and *Hektor* prove the tendency of genre dissolution: instead of the technical background and adventurous plot, the author chooses to express metaphysical ideas. As is commonly known, most of the world SF — be it technological or technophobic — proceeds from the material, often technological standpoint, and does not involve discussions about God and the Devil. Kaplinski's philosophical and theological ideas are rather uncommon on the background of orthodox genre canons.

Joanna Russ has pointed out that SF conveys an enormous "religious spirituality" and "revelational value" (Russ 1995: 3–14). In addition she compares SF to the medieval sacral painting which was meant to be perceived with the mind and not with eyes because of its moral-sermon dominant. Medieval art as well as the modern SF reflect transcendental notions: the "divine sky" and the "hellish space" are largely equivalent worlds, both hiding deep

allegory. Jaan Kaplinski's *Silm* is a post-modern development of this parallel: the all-seeing Eye that rules the "divine sky" becomes evil, the text itself culminates with the denial of a widespread understanding of God. Kaplinski's phenomenon proves that SF is a device for great writers, enabling them to convey ideas with an ideological direction, including the philosophical-theological dominant.

The ethical dimension of SF novels

In general, the contemporary SF novel — both mainstream and slipstream — occupies itself with such problems and processes of the real world where certain danger and catastrophe is hidden. The global warning models of SF rise from the principle of the alarm question: what happens if nothing changes or, on the contrary, what happens if something totally changes? A warning function of SF allows us to speak of the genre as a peculiar medium that has a role of revealing the risks and dangers of human society. SF, to certain extent deriving from reality, turns not only the forbidden but also the dangerous into a possibility. This inevitably results in the problem of *ethics* (both conflict and evaluation): SF's desire for technology (the crime-dominant of detective literature) illustrates the material value orientation of the post-modern society and its moral crisis. The total grip of technology and its power over the contemporary man is like a Demon of modern times who is open to risks and straightens moral values. This demonic dilemma — is modern technology a triumph of the human mind or its destroyer — is evident in the problems of SF, emerging there as an apology for human morality.

Contemporary SF demonstrates metaphorically, through scientific failures and false doctrines, the possible development scenarios for mankind, predicting rifts, gaps, distances and differences. In this sense, SF is the conscience of the technology-blinded people and the era of technology-worshipping. Its moral core is the so-called technological conscience — proceeding from universal morality, we need to choose the ways that do not endanger the

existence of people and nature. I tend to believe that no other modern branch of literature is so moralising and didactical: we can probably consider SF as a successor of the medieval morality plays. The fundamentality of ethics allows an interpretation of the SF novel as a text model that aims at conveying ethical significance.

The role of the SF novel in Estonian literature has been rather marginal because its traditions are fragile and the creation of texts in the previous decades has been a "hobby" for fanatics. At present we can detect many signs of awakening in the Estonian SF community. SF as a genre has made a significant leap forward, Indrek Hargla and Jaan Kaplinski are only a few examples. Contemporary SF writing in Estonia functions as a kind of subliterature full of vitality; mainstream and slipstream are two possible dimensions of the local SF. The conventionality of mainstream and the novelty of slipstream point to the differences of their poetics. Where extrapolative i.e. world-building based on science and knowledge reaches its epistemological limits, the flood of speculative ideas continues its leaps over gaps and differences not even stopping at paradoxes. Speculation, entering the present world ontology, is a substitute of truth and being in SF. Truth is not discovered or extrapolated but established in a speculative way — it is the irrefutable message of the post-modern SF novel.

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The Cyberpunk Novel: Futurist Visions that Tell Us about the Present

JAAK TOMBERG

In Estonia, the groundwork for the theoretical or scientific observation of science fiction has only been established lately with a few surveys in the past few years. Maybe the absence of analytical texts in the field can be explained by the scholars' lack of interest and their conviction that science fiction is somehow "lower" or morally bad art. My following observations of the latest developments in cyberpunk poetics are meant to prove that the postmodern science fiction novel has made a significant leap forward.

Before I can properly describe the meaning of these developments, I should first give some explanation about cyberpunk and its relationship with postmodernist fiction. This subject has already been repeatedly addressed by a number of researchers. Summarizing their observations here will be worthwhile.

According to Brian McHale, the history of science fiction in the twentieth century can be described as an oscillation between two modes of science-fiction world-building, namely speculation and extrapolation. Extrapolative science-fiction begins with the current state of the empirical world and proceeds, in a logical and linear fashion, to construct a world which might be a future extension or consequence of the current state of affairs. Speculative world-building, by contrast, involves an imaginative leap, positing one or more disjunctions with the empirical world which cannot be linearly extrapolated from the current state of affairs (McHale 1992: 244). Cyberpunk science-fiction is the latest extrapolative

wave in a succession of waves which oscillate between the speculative and extrapolative world-building.

Cyberpunk's relation to so-called "mainstream" postmodernist fiction can be described in a rather peculiar way. The world today, in the words of McHale, is in an epistemological crisis. This means that epistemological questions — questions about the knowledge of one's self and character — are supressed by ontological questions — questions about the world, being, and modes of existence. According to poet and composer Dick Higgins, some of these ontological or postmodern questions are the following: "Which world is this? What is to be done in it? Which of my selves is to do it?" (McHale 1987: 10) But McHale brings out more: "What is a world? What kinds of worlds are there, how are they constituted and how do they differ? What happens when different worlds are set into confrontation and the borders of worlds are violated? What is the mode of existence of a text and what is the mode of existence of a world (or worlds) it projects?" and so on (ib. 10). McHale explains that these questions or their potential answers — which in postmodernist fiction typically appear as a configuration of narrative structure or a pattern of language — appear in cyberpunk science-fiction as elements of the fictional world. He says: "Cyberpunk translates these postmodernist motifs from the level of form (that is, the verbal continuum, narrative strategies) to the level of content or "world"" (McHale 1992: 246). In this way, for example, the postmodern motif of multiple selves — the question "Which of my selves..." — is in cyberpunk sometimes realized by clones or artificial intelligences, and the motif of multiple worlds — the question "Which world..." — is realized by cyberspaces or simstims.

Thematically, cyberpunk describes a future world and cultures in which the basis for progress lies in the advancement of scientific knowledge and technology. The main motifs here are the contradictions between the natural and the artificial, between the individual self and corporate society, and — more obviously — between cyber and punk. At the beginning of the 1980s, cyberpunk was brought about or supported by the rapid digital revolution.

Writers like Bruce Sterling, John Shirley, William Gibson, Pat Cadigan, Tom Maddox, Rudy Rucker and others were at the head of what could then be called a literary movement. Cyberpunk was then more a thematic than a formal genre. But at the beginning of 1990s, when computers, the internet and all the cognitive ideas and metaphors associated with them came to regular and common use and people became used to them, the cyberpunk novel became a vessel for a specific extrapolative cyberpunk poetics which has survived till the present day. In other words, at the beginning of the nineties, cyberpunk became less a thematic and more a formal genre which from that time onwards has been dominated by a characteristic poetics and a certain textual expression rather than being a well-defined generational "movement".

This specific kind of poetics — and the novel as its vessel — has only nowadays reached its true recognition, self-conciousness and fulfilment of its literary function. To explain the leap it has made forward, I shall have to observe it more closely.

The poetics of cyberpunk — its outcome and realization — is largely determined by the extrapolative method of world-building that I mentioned before. It is quite clear at the outset that an extrapolative text speaks as much or more about the moment it was written in than the future it is trying to envision. It is, in fact, a futurist vision that tells us about the present moment, because its roots or points of origin are situated in the cultural dominants of the present day. Therefore, as Dani Cavallaro points out (Cavallaro 2000: 6), cognition is a more important tool of extrapolation than scientific knowledge, because the writing and the achieving of an authentic extrapolative text is based on the cognition of today rather than some actual knowledge of tomorrow. As Damien Broderick quotes Samuel Delany, "Science fiction is not a metaphor for a given world, nor does the catch-all term metonymy exhaust the relation between the given and the science fiction's distortions of the given. Science fiction poises in a tense, dialogic, agonistic relation to the given" (Broderick 1995: 72).

Projecting a future world, a continuum which has not yet come into existence but which the writers try to describe with an illusion of authenticity, imposes some strict restrictions on the poetics that

this newly extrapolated world can be depicted with. As the aforementioned ontological questions suggest, the postmodern condition acknowledges the infinite multiplicity of worlds and selves, among which the absence of hierarchy creates a feeling of uncertainty and lack of stability in any projected world. All worlds — real or fictional — seem equally unstable, almost equally virtual. Keeping this in mind, it is no wonder McHale names cyberpunk science-fiction as the preferred literary expression of postmodernism (McHale 1992: 13). And it is almost symptomatic to the postmodern condition that a future world — a world that has not yet come into existence — is surrounded with the most believable illusion of authenticity. But this lack of stability in an established world and the writer's obligation to maintain an illusion of absolute authenticity around the depicted future severely restrict the poetics of cyberpunk to do little but project the world and continually affirm its existence and stability. In other words, should the depicted world's existence and stability be questioned, all the plots, narratives or characters in this world automatically seem unauthentic. Therefore, to maintain the necessary illusion of authenticity, extrapolative writing is forced to engage itself deeply with describing, with "making a world happen", with creating countless connections between the present moment of "this" real world and the future — the ficticious world that it is trying to project. As a result, most of cyberpunk science-fiction novels are so heavily and tensely overloaded with descriptions that narratives are forced to the background and are sometimes given almost no chance to develop. This is all because projecting and ensuring an extrapolative future world takes up so much space that the advancement of the story has to suffer and a relatively long novel may have a relatively short story. Sometimes, when the authenticity of the described world grows suspect, the story is literally stopped and the narrative is interwoven with a heavy load of descriptions and references from the depicted future world to the so-called "our real world". The authenticity of the future world is thereby re-established, or the sense of authenticity is reinforced, and the story may continue. Using McHale's aforementioned terms, dealing with the ontological questions —

namely, establishing a world — becomes so dominant in a cyberpunk extrapolation that it tends to suppress the possibility of discussing the epistemological questions of the depicted world — namely, the narrative.

Sometimes the story or the characters are merely forced to serve the ontological aspects of the imagined world or the written text. This is the case with William Gibson's novels *Idoru* and *All Tomorrow's Parties*, where the extrapolative method of writing is materialized into the written text through a character, Colin Laney, who has a mystical ability to sift through immense quantities of data on the internet and by cognition form certain mental patterns in his mind which enable him to somewhat predict the future.

In other cases — as in the case of Pat Cadigan's novel *Synners* — the story is quite fragmented and there is a very large number of story seeds which are undeveloped, because they only represent or signify the ontological aspects of the established world. They are too weak to delve deeper into the discussion over the epistemological questions which might constitute a more complex and developed narrative.

Sometimes the descriptive details are so densely stacked up on each other that the text becomes almost incomprehensible to read. To literalize things, cyberpunk is filled with trash, both on the level of text and in the depicted world. This is exactly why some theoreticians — and especially the critics who support the so-called "hard-line science-fiction" — treat cyberpunk science-fiction as something that is only engaged in the problematics of style rather than as something that produces actual extrapolation. The allegation is not completely unfounded. Cyberpunk's engagement with style is necessary only for keeping the depicted world in its authentic existence, but the question remains whether in addition the text is capable of any real extrapolating.

One might argue that every text depicting a world which is spacially or temporally distanced from ours has bigger problems trying to maintain the stability of that literary world than texts which speak of the present moment of "our world". But none have bigger problems than texts which are forced to create a temporal (and therefore spacial) distance with the here-and-now and at the

same time maintain authenticity which equals and is derived from our perception of the present world.

Until the past few years, the cyberpunk novel with its intricate poetics has avoided the true recognition of the fact that it is actually a futurist vision which tells us about right now. It has almost always projected a future world, and has had to bear the burden of required authenticity which largely determines its ontologically oriented poetics. Sometimes, such poetics has been used to describe a past world. Among others, William Gibson's and Bruce Sterling's novel *The Difference Engine*, a Victorian pastiche written in cyberpunk style, proves that the poetics of cyberpunk, normally oriented towards future continuums, can be used to extrapolate historical worlds and that in the postmodern era, extrapolation might be just about everything we can do to recreate history.

But it is evident that both the future and the past are temporally distanced from the present moment. Hence the question arises whether it is possible to relieve the poetics of cyberpunk from the burdens of this temporal distance and use it to project a present world; and whether the emphasized requirement of authenticity will then show us our present as if for the very first time? Is it possible to reach our here-and-now through extrapolation, thereby somewhat "virtualizing" the current world, and force the poetics to realize that it has always been about the present? Do we need cyberpunk's tense dialogue with the given world to decribe the present with an illusion of autheticity which earlier supported the futurist visions? Or do we just need its poetics?

William Gibson's latest novel *Pattern Recognition* realizes the latter, using the ontologically oriented poetics of cyberpunk to decribe or even establish our present world. As it was with cyberpunk before, the emphasis here is on descriptions and details, and on the characteristic cognition of these details. The story is not so much dependent on certain characters as it is on the current condition of the world; the characters are symptoms of the culture rather than someone who are trying to reform or reshape it. The author has felt obliged to take into account everything that we normally take for granted about the existence and ontological

condition of our present world. What Gibson attempts to do here is to establish and ensure the stability of our present world the same way he earlier established and ensured future worlds. As a result, we somehow see the present world which is shrouded in the illusion of complete ontological authenticity, the same authenticity which earlier made the depicted future worlds so believable.

We can only hope that in the near future we will see more novels which use the futurist cyberpunk poetics to get a glimpse of our present world. This way, a method of expression which was earlier almost exclusively associated with science fiction may interfere or break through to a more conventional or, as some still cathegorize, more "higher art" literature.

As a thematic genre or the expression of a generational school, the cyberpunk novel may be considered "dead", but its poetics has survived and made a leap towards its own recognition — that it was, in fact, earlier used to depict futurist visions that told us about right now. And now, even if the cyberpunk novel has developed into something else, its poetics still needs the novel as a vessel for its futher self-expression and development.

The question wheter a novel like *Pattern recognition* it merely a symptom of the postmodern condition or some true realization of its paradoxes remains largely unsolved. After all, we only get an illusory authentic description of the condition of the present world. But to define somehow or describe metaphorically our present situation, our current condition or ways of thinking — is this not what most people look for in any kind of fiction?

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The Splashy Comeback of the Fantasy Genre in Children's Literature — Reinventing the Myth of the 'Eve Woman'

LILIJANA BURCAR

The 1990s and the beginning of the 21st century have witnessed a massive resurgence of the fantasy genre in children's literature. At the same time there has also been a wide proliferation and re-utilization of the fantasy genre outside the boundaries of what is deemed to be the realm of children's literature, most notably in venues dominated by the popular entertainment (film) industry. The rise of the contemporary fantasy genre seems to be accompanied by and deeply enmeshed in a particular social construction of childhood whose roots can be traced back to the Romantic Movement. It is our contention that within the framework of the contemporary fantasy genre the resuscitation and redeployment of the romantic, highly sanitized, trope of childhood pivots upon the re-introduction and consolidation of a highly conservative, anti-feminist agenda of gender politics. This article therefore addresses the way gender politics today is brought in to help to prop up and congeal refurbished ideals of romantic childhood by taking a comparative look at the contemporary fantasy genre's two most renowned monoliths, the *Harry Potter* series and Philip Pullman's trilogy *His Dark Materials*. For the sake of clarity, however, it is important to shed light on some technicalities first, in particular those concerning the understanding of the fantasy genre and the kind of role usually assigned to its child protagonists.

The very attempt to draw any clear-cut demarcation line between fantasy and other genres such as realism is perceived

more and more to be a painstakingly utopian endeavour at best or a theoretical suicide at worst. As Peter Hunt succinctly points out "all fiction is in a sense fantasy — especially 'realistic' fiction, which, fantastically, makes sense of the random narratives of life — not because events described could not happen in some wise, but because fiction narrates and makes sense of things in a way that is unavailable in reality" (Hunt 2001: 10). Despite its shifting and unsteady definitional boundaries, the fantasy genre has been delineated primarily as a means of generating "alternative conceptual worlds" (ib. 13). An alternative world is understood either to exist in a different time sphere from the one considered to be the real world or — as is the case with Rowling's and Pullman's series — is itself understood to consist of parallel universes. Fantasy therefore is never escapist but by default always related to the external world it inevitably comments upon, either by reinforcing the premises of its social imaginary or by taking these apart. In this respect, far from being regressive or self-indulgent, fantasy is in fact "very knowing"; it stands for a specific "heightening of reality" (ib. 7, 10).

Within the parameters of the fantasy genre the child protagonists are cast in the role of quest seekers and thereby inadvertently also in the role of commentators, either promoting or denouncing particular sociocultural practices. It is in the capacity of these children to do so because they can easily travel back and forth in time or move between parallel worlds, slipping in and out of them, as they either find themselves in possession of a magical object or force or happen to be assisted by a magical helper. But most importantly, these young quest seekers, just like Lyra in Pullman's and Harry Potter in Rowling's series, are conveniently orphaned or at least officially declared to be temporarily parentless so that their struggles can be outlined against the background of larger moral dilemmas or pending apocalyptical shake-ups. Typically, the origin of their birth is shrouded in mystery, while the children themselves are singled out to fulfil a special destiny. Harry's seems to be that of warding off evil, while Lyra's is much more complex. It includes among other things the release of deceased people's ghosts from the Church's prison island of the dead into the all-

enveloping sphere of quantum existence so that they re-enter the world of the living as vibrant swirls of particles which constitute "the good soil, the night air, the stars" (AS: 287). The greatest appeal of the orphaned quest seekers who inhabit the worlds of Rowling's *Harry Potter* series and Pullman's *His Dark Materials* therefore lies in what Millicent Lenz, quoting Kimball (Lenz 2001: 152), has defined as a paradox: "[Orphans] are a manifestation of loneliness, but they also represent the possibility for humans to reinvent themselves." And it is in this respect that the *Harry Potter* series and *His Dark Materials* stand on the opposite banks of the very same waters of the fantasy genre.

It is common knowledge by now that in their weaving of the alternative conceptual world the *Harry Potter* books subscribe to a highly conservative and questionable gender patterning and equally conservative and questionable class and race-related stratifications, thereby consolidating rather than debunking the usual social hierarchical divisions. It is no wonder then that the *Harry Potter* books have been castigated, and rightly so, for legitimising and discursively sustaining "numerous forms of social inequalities and the related cultural norms, rituals and traditions" (Heilman and Gregory 2003: 242). Among these the entrenchment of masculine hegemony stands as one of many prime examples. Here in the world of wizards, just like in the outside Muggle world, only strong, competitive, and well-moneyed males can triumph. On the other hand, women who are presented as types rather than individuals and branded either as giggling, gossiping, fearful and bookish but not wise, are collectively shunted to the periphery. Similarly, effeminate boys and men, gay men (Professor Flitwick), or those not excelling at sports or coming from lower income backgrounds are depicted as puny-looking, weak and dismissively substandard in their levels of achievement (Heilman 2003). If the *Harry Potter* books are transparently formulaic and given to the perpetuation of the old humanist pattern of social division and hierarchical stratification, Pullman's trilogy is geared towards a serious interrogation of the Judeo-Christian religion and by extension all monotheistic religions. Pullman himself explicitly points out that "if you look at human history, and if you look at the

present day ... organized religion — especially those religions that have a monotheistic god — [sic] have been responsible for enormous amounts of persecution, of suffering and cruelty" (quoted in Metz 2001: 158). Accordingly *His Dark Materials* blasts apart the caveats of Christian monotheistic god-worship, replacing the wobbly notion of the omniscient he-god with quantum physics, where the intersubjective consciousness is the one entity that truly reigns. In the words of one of the characters, a former nun turned atheist, "[t]he Christian religion" is proclaimed to be "a very powerful and convincing mistake" (AS: 441)[1]. Similarly, the creature dubbed god is himself revealed to be a liar, rather than the creator of all things as stated in the Bible, for this self-appointed god turns out to be only the first in the line of angels formed of the mysterious Dust or quantum particles. And yet, Pullman's trilogy cannot be completely exempt from the kind of criticism levelled at the *Harry Potter* series, for in its pursuit to topple the fake Kingdom of Heaven it reinstitutes hegemonic male power and authority in the form of the Republic of Heaven, most notoriously embodied in Lyra's ruthless and powerful father Asriel. The two monoliths of contemporary fantasy genre indeed have a common denominator, although they may occupy two different ideological positions. And it is exactly by bringing these two works into this kind of aligned reading that we wish to show how gender politics, centred around the constitution and consolidation of masculine hegemony, is brought in to secure and hold in place the cultural fantasies of childhood and the figurations of the child itself. The recent resurgence of the fantasy genre embodies a particular cultural imagining of childhood, which is centred around processes of its simultaneous sanctification and sanitization. These fantasies of childhood, we argue, work towards the domestication and dispossession of the child itself, especially the girl child. Her

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[1] Page references to all the three books in Pullman's trilogy cite the US editions. The references to individual books in the series appear under the following abbreviations: NL stands for *Northern Lights* (1995), published as *The Golden Compass* in the USA (1996), SK stands for *The Subtle Knife* (1997) and AS for *The Amber Spyglass* (2000).

participation in the unravelling of the events in both series soon turns out to be increasingly a matter of token inclusion only. And as we turn our attention to the *Harry Potter* series first, here the token inclusion of the girl child is a matter of her constant edging in and out of the parameters of childhood in relation to which she comes to be constituted as present absence.

The popularity of the *Harry Potter* series seems to ride on the crest of a much broader cultural trend of the 1990s, a return to "a nostalgia for a romanticised version of childhood, or at least a childhood in retreat of [the so called] adult themes" (Murray 1998: xix). The appeal of the *Harry Potter* series lies in the fact that it offers a discursively sanitized image of childhood, which social realism of the 1960s and the 1970s and later postmodern children's literature had taken issue with. This is especially evident in the latter's treatment and matter-of-fact exploration of social inequalities, economic hardships, emotional instabilities and child sexual activities, which have been understood to constitute an integral part of childhood realities. Within these genres child protagonists have been posited as knowing children, neither sinful nor innocent, but survivors endowed with complex and evolving, multi-layered psychic and physical individualities. At the end of the 1990s, though, *Harry Potter* once again empties the child of its psychic and physical specificity, folding it instead under the empty signifier of romantic innocence. Collapsed under the mantle of this imposed emptiness, the child is cast in the magical role of the universal redeemer of humankind, the only force that can survive an encounter with evil and eventually ward it off[2]. Harry's power and limited agency originate in the mere fact that "he has been marked by something [...] good" (HP1: 216) and can therefore "never [go] over to the Dark Side". [HP1: 197] *Harry Potter* books dismantle, disenable and eradicate the figure of the knowing child in favour of restoring the collective fantasy of the idealized

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[2] This is best exemplified in the ongoing battles fought between Lord Voldermort, an incarnation of evil and Harry Potter, the elect child, guarded over by the omniscient and benevolent father figure, the headmaster Dumbledore.

Romantic child, a hollowed-out but pliable and malleable entity that has over the course of its two centuries functioned as a terrain of adult projections and demands made upon the real child.

Harry Potter's process of marginalisation and eventual ousting of the knowing child is mired in gender politics, for its rather flattened version of the knowing child is prototypically embodied in the figure of Hermione, the only girl child among the three core protagonists. Hermione first comes across as the all-knowing, extremely resourceful, self-reliant, thinking and learned child, but her knowledge is curtailed and also completely devalued and undermined in the process of her bonding with Harry, the epitome of the innocent child, and his companion Ron. Perhaps this is most explicitly encapsulated in the now famous troll scene where resourceful and knowledgeable Hermione is found crouching in fear against the wall, while Ron and Harry themselves take advantage of Hermione's knowledge to deal with the dangerous troll and in turn to "rescue" Hermione. It is Hermione who has taught them how to use the spell (see HP1: 127)[3], but she herself is denied the opportunity to apply this knowledge. In accordance with the requirements of culturally proscribed femininity, she must renounce it completely, adopting the pose of utter helplessness instead. Put simply, she must slide to the ground to let the boys take over the reigns and do their heroic deed: "Hermione had sunk to the floor in fright; Ron pulled out his own wand — not knowing what he was going to do he heard himself cry the very first spell that came to his head: *Wingardium Leviosa*!" (HP1: 130). Although Harry, together with his friend Ron, in fact depends on Hermione's wits, these get reconfigured as a temporary extension of himself. Yet this knowledge hardly or rarely matters and is never truly incorporated into his being, because, in addition to his

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[3] Abbreviations referring to the *Harry Potter* books follow their chronological appearance: HP1 stands for *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (1997), HP2 for *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (1998), HP3 for *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (1999), HP4 for *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (2000), HP5 for *Harry Potter and the Order of Phoenix* (2003).

bravery, Harry's prime virtue lies in his unspoiled, inherent goodness that also grants and guarantees him an inexhaustible source of power. In the long run, it is precisely on this inherent innocence that the outcome or the denouement of all the most important events in the series really hinges.

This pivotal troll scene is all about the transfer of power, whereby the independent stance of the knowing and vociferous child is quelled. From now on the knowing child, embodied in the figure of Hermione, finds itself merely pressed into the service of the trope of the innocent child where it is finally silenced or reduced to an insignificant background existence. Hermione can thus exercise her knowledge only to advance somebody else's cause. But to do so, she must operate in the wings, as in the case when she puts a spell on Professor Snape to prevent him from harming Harry, so that *he* can go on catching the snitch and winning the game for the team (see HP1: 140). Occasionally Hermione is allowed to detach herself from the background and claim some brief visibility, providing she is called forward to perform a spell at Ron and Harry's bidding, exactly where the two have previously failed, thus once again saving their skin or consolidating their position of power (see HP1: 198). But even when she is granted some token visibility, her ability to manipulate her knowledge is curtailed, as in the case when she is turned into a petrified person (see HP2: 190), so that it is ultimately Ron and Harry who are seen to be extracting and freely operating with the knowledge Hermione has to offer. Under no condition is Hermione allowed to benefit herself by utilizing her knowledge. In her efforts to do so she invariably fails, a fact most potently demonstrated when she is able to concoct a potion that works for Harry and Ron, but, significantly, not for her, turning her into a cat instead. Additionally, when not placed in the service of Harry and Ron's advancement or their personal needs, Hermione's knowledge is constantly mocked and reduced in the scope of its significance[4].

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[4] "Lucky you pay attention in Herbiology; Hermione", said Harry ... Yeah, said Ron, and "lucky Harry doesn't lose his head in a crisis " (HP1: 202).

And if Hermione is not derided or condemned for her exercise of knowledge, then she herself is given to practices of self-effacement and self-immolation, most glaringly demonstrated in the statement that also seals her status of an underdog: "Books and cleverness! There are more important things — friendship and bravery" (HP1: 208). All in all, the knowing child is not only kept in check, but gradually eroded and diminished in its significance, so that in the fourth instalment it can be suppressed and dismissed by being repeatedly cut short, simply disregarded or straightforwardly ordered to keep quiet[5]. In this, Hermione mirrors the fate of other female characters, who are likewise not only shorn of power and agency — like Hermione, they are also depicted as an irritating, disturbing element that imposes itself upon the goings-on of the wizard world. As stern guardians of tradition and sticklers for rules they are shown to be patrolling the premises of institutions and homes in a cat-like fashion, with a collective exclamation of prohibitive "NO" constantly on their lips. Branded as "interfering", the knowing child is depicted as getting in the way and meddling with the adventures pursued by the innocent child.

In the *Harry Potter* series the knowing child is completely eradicated or annihilated. She is belittled and devalued in her knowledge, so that she can be either pushed aside or employed in the service of the romantic — that is, innocent child. The *Harry Potter* books work towards the resuscitation and reinstalment of the Romantic child, divesting the child of its agency in the process. His wand, unlike Hermione's, is not so magic after all, but subject to school regulations, or perceived to be just "a mere strip of wood" (HP4: 289) and thereby ineffective in the eyes of the child himself. At times of crucial turnabouts it is laid aside or confiscated by Harry's adult opponents. In his battle against evil, Harry has to do instead with magic objects like "a glimmering, silver sword" (see HP2: 237), benevolently provided by distinctly paternal authority. What ultimately helps him and the humanity he

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[5] "Drop it", said Ron sharply to Hermione, as she opened her mouth; Hermione heeded him and fell silent" (HP4: 202).

invariably shields from the restoration of evil, is his purity and innocence, externalised in the form of the phoenix that lights the way and heals the wounds (see HP2: 242, 239). The child's most formidable weapon appears to be the ascribed quality of innocence and inherent goodness, which at the same time is also the element of the child's ultimate undoing. The innocent child is once again merely recast as a "contentless form which effects a transformation, but does not itself constitute an entity in its own right" (Castañeda 2002: 147). Innocence erases the complexities of childhood and divests the child of material specificity, turning the child into an empty copula, a vacuity so that, as Kincaid succinctly puts it, the child is all of a sudden there "waiting for us, defenceless and alluring, with no substance, no threatening history, no independent insistences. As a category created but not occupied, the (innocent) child could be a repository of cultural needs or fears not adequately disposed of elsewhere" (Kincaid 1992: 78–79). Accordingly, the romantic child is a truly dispossessed child. Once no longer needed as the agent of transcendence, Harry is thus dutifully deposited in the infirmary before he is again confined to schoolroom pranks and night-time corridor adventures[6].

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[6] This claim is valid for the first four books. The last book in the series, *Harry Potter and the Order of Phoenix*, came out at the time this paper had already been finished and it primarily works towards the rewriting of the myth of Harry's childhood innocence to pave the way for the rise of Harry Potter as a teenager standing on the brink of adulthood. Harry Potter thus traverses the path from a marked child whose innocence and allegiance to moral goodness shields the world from its own double-facedness by keeping its evil forces successfully at bay to a "marked man" (HP5: 754) posited as Voldermort's equal (HP5: 743). In a major revision on Rowling's part, Harry's powers are retrospectively depicted as no longer originate in his childhood innocence but the very fact that in attacking Harry as a child Voldermort has, unwittingly and unknowingly to him, transferred his power to Harry. In doing so, according to Rowling's reconfiguration of the preceding plots, Voldermort has not only given Harry, paradoxically, "a future", which has "fitted [Harry] to escape him not once, but four times so far" (HP5: 742). This transfer of power, which obviously originates in Voldermort's miscalculation, has also made

In the *Harry Potter* series the discourse of innocence serves a double purpose, on the one hand it divests the child of its agency and specificity, on the other it hides the processes of child sexualisation. As Walkerdine observes in relation to broader pop cultural phenomena, the discourse of innocence posits the child to be gender-neutral, but actually the innocent child is "always figured as a boy who is playful, creative, naughty, rule-breaking, rational. ... The figure of the girl, by contrast, suggests a negative pathology: she works to the child's play, she follows the rule to his breaking of them, she is good, well-behaved and irrational.

Harry strong and capable of fighting what will transpire to be a "man's fight" (HP5: 738). In this, Harry Potter, whom the last book also casts in the role of a teacher, and Dumbledore, the headmaster, come to stand on an equal footing and at times act as interchangeable entities. All in all, the last book is geared towards the reinstitution of paternal authority embodied in the all-powerful omniscient figure of Dumbledore. This kind of authority is constructed and depicted as the only kind of authority that can set the things right (HP5: 747). Female characters, if not exactly given to shrieking, screaming and giggling, are dismissed as insignificant, "speaking from the shadow" and patronized by the board of male decision-makers as is the case with Mrs. Weasley, Harry's substitute mother figure. If not harnessed to the process of helping to erect, maintain and consolidate homosocial relations and the accompanying law of the father as Hermione is, the remaining female characters are then without exception understood to be wreaking havoc and are accordingly referred to in terms of animality. They are branded either as toads speaking in deceptively sweet but babyish voices (Professor Umbridge), as insects (Divination teacher) or beetles (yellow press reporter), which are the descriptions those in the position of hegemonic masculine power never attract. In the end, it is only paternal rule that counts, while women at best occupy invisible subsidiary positions. More often than not they are cast as an incarnation of pure evil, as malicious, treacherous and unreliable interfering elements. "Whacked alternatively with a walking stick and a sock full of chalk" (HP5, 755), they get all the blame even though they act only as their masters' proxies (Professor Umbridge as Fudge's extension and Bellatrix as Voldermort's). Conservative gendering therefore continues to form the backbone of the Harry Potter phenomenon. Sadly, it is in fact what gives this phenomenon its consistency.

However, attempts to transform her into the model playful child often come up against a set of discursive barriers: a playful and assertive girl may be understood as forward, uppity, over-mature, too precocious" (Walkerdine 1998: 256). The *Harry Potter* dyad of the knowing child and the innocent one is premised upon the same kind of Child figuration. The *Harry Potter* books subscribe to the postulation of the innocent child whereby the knowing child, cast as a girl, is inadvertently featured to be uppity, needing to be silenced or eradicated altogether.

If *Harry Potter* books curtail and silence the knowing child by at best placing it in the service of the innocent child, Pullman's *His Dark Materials* seems to offer at first glance a much more variegated treatment of childhood, sharing in and propagating its multiple complexities that span over the trilogy's parallel universes. Some of these nuances are perhaps best captured in the opening description of Lyra, one of the two main child protagonists:

> In many ways Lyra was a barbarian. What she liked best was clambering over the College roofs with Roger, the kitchen boy who was her particular friend, to spit plum stones on the heads of passing Scholars or to hoot like owls outside a window where a tutorial was going on, or racing through the narrow streets, or stealing apples from the market, or waging war... alliances and enmities and feuds and treaties ... was a child's life in Oxford. Children playing together ...how pleasant to see! What could be more innocent and charming? In fact, of course, Lyra and her peers were engaged in deadly warfare! (NL: 32, 33)

Here, in Pullman's parallel universes that contain the childhoods of two main protagonists, Lyra and Will, as well as those of their counterparts from the third Mediterranean and medieval world of Cittàgazze, innocence, to adopt Henry James's formulation, truly "both dawns and dies in the morning twilight of childhood" (quoted in Ellen Pifer 2000: 31). The borderline between child-

hood innocence and supposedly exclusively adult experience is far from being only blurred or made impalpable but completely erased as if non-existent from the very start. For in the child's ongoing interaction with the surrounding world what should pass for the child's, and likewise the adult's, ignorance is always already "flushing into knowledge". Innocence or "bland and vacuous docility Lyra could command" (SK: 73) is rather a mask the child adopts to ensure a smooth passage in its dealings with the disinterested adult world. The child is physically and psychically vibrant, neither completely controllable nor available for adult scrutiny or possible exploitation[7]. Rather than implying innocent rupture then, the child here is always displaying "logic, intelligence, curiosity", subsumed under Keats's notion of "negative capability" (AS: 410). The child is fully steeped into consciousness, "both containing and being contained" (SK: 353), and it is actively engaged with the surrounding world, the world of elementary particles called Dust. The child's suffusion with consciousness and transactive engagement with the quantum environment is ultimately exemplified in Lyra's ability to read the aeliomether, or the truth-teller, and Will's ability to use the subtle knife, the god-destroyer[8].

And yet in the process of toppling the kingdom of heaven and replacing it with the republic of heaven Pullman's trilogy works towards the dilution, dissolution, negation and loss of the very

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[7] In fact, in Will's world, which is the world of modern Oxford and inhospitable, cold adults, the child is fully armoured with and brimming over with survival tricks, including such strategies as how to blend into the background to deflect unnecessary adult attention, or how not to tell the truth and at the same time avoid telling lies. But these children also show a propensity for conformity and cruelty directed especially against those who swim against the current, be it an adult or child. In Cittàgazze, children who are found milling around in packs once their parents' souls have been gnawed away by Specters, continue to demonstrate a capacity for evil, torture and murder.

[8] The latter instrument is understood to be the god-destroyer because by cutting openings into parallel quantum worlds, it undermines the Church's dogma of the universe being a single-layered and god-controlled entity.

same childhood complexities it starts out with. The dismantling of childhood complexities seems to be directly related to the central quest of the trilogy, which is the quest for the Dust, but behind which, in fact, lurks the thinly disguised quest for the "essence of the father" (SK: 98). In the process of toppling the metaphysical god, the trilogy simultaneously erects its replacement in the form of the male paternal authority so that the law of the father is reinstitutionalised as the ultimate, even though empty, signifier. This is exemplified in Will's and Lord Asriel's exclusive power to either build bridges between worlds or cut openings into parallel universes of quantum existence. In their orchestrating of the main activities, the two become unhindered in their hoarding and wielding of central power, while women are sidetracked so that they come to act merely as men's subsidiaries, enablers, caretakers or homekeepers. They are completely harnessed to their needs just like Lyra is eventually to Will's. If they refuse to comply with these prescribed roles and even dare to seek access to parallel universes of their own accord like Lyra's mother Mrs. Coulter, they are maligned, persecuted and destroyed. Powerful women, who are so unlike the subdued and segregated female Oxford Scholars, subservient 'gyptian' boat mothers or invisible college servants, are depicted as being "almost a new sex altogether"[9]. Their supposedly dangerous powers are further on compounded by

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[9] Witches constitute a group of female characters who fall in-between the two categories of subservient and invisible women on the one hand and powerful but maligned women on the other. Posited as a group of semi-powerful women, they can dabble in "natural knowledge" only (see SK: 36); but in order to maintain their diplomatic contacts with the rest of the world, for example, they must defer to their male ambassadors. However, their healing powers when rivalled by those of Will's father, a self-learned shaman, are depicted to be ineffective for it is understood that only "father's ointment" can salve and heal the wounds (AS: 99). Similarly, the witches' powers may be great but when compared to Will's knife, they are by rule proclaimed to be miniscule and invariably "outclassed" as Will's subtle knife can cut anything and destroy anything (SK: 46). It eventually does away with the metaphysical God himself, reinstituting a new human he-god.

such qualities as "elegance, charm and grace" (NL: 72) and what are perceived to be seductively intoxicating voices (SK: 175) that threaten to "unsettle" male heroes (AS: 123), leaving them either incapacitated or unfocused and "disturbed" (AS: 125) in the perpetuation of their homosocial bonding. The power women come to possess is constantly depicted as unnatural, gained through deceit, scheming and seduction, while men's power is marked and insistently iterated as their inherent characteristic. One need only look at for example the way all male characters are referred to without fail as "powerful", "strong", and "commanding", while Mrs. Coulter who ventures outside the parameters of the official institution of passive femininity is not only disparagingly described as a "monstrously clever woman", who wreaks "abomination" in her wake, but in a twisted interpretation of historical records, having to do with the Church's fondness of castrati, she is also aligned with and eventually cast as a modern-day castrator, a monstrous femme:

> ...your mother's always been a clever woman, ambitious for power. At first she tried to get it in the normal way, through marriage, but that didn't work, ... so she had to turn to the Church. Naturally, she couldn't take the route a man could have taken — priesthood and so on — it had to be unorthodox; she had to set up her own order, her own channels of influence, and work through that. It was a good move to specialize in Dust ...the Church was glad to have someone like your mother in charge. [It was her idea] to do that cutting... There was a precedent. Something like it happened before. Do you know what the word castration means? (NL: 328–9).

Ultimately, the motive of the powerful woman who presents a threat and therefore comes to be labelled as a castrator is replicated in the scene leading to Will's temporary loss of control over the god-destroying knife, a symbol of male privilege and homosocial bonding. Impaired by the look of the woman that "unsettles" and "disturbs" him, Will temporarily falters in his

wielding of the knife and the power it metaphorically bestows upon him.

The trilogy may thus interrogate and blast apart the dogmatic constrictions of a Judeo-Christian monotheistic god, but in the process of doing so, it engineers a return to the re-institutionalisation of the paternal figure as the fulcrum of power and agency. It is also the consolidation of the hegemonic power of this paternal figure that requires the child to be stripped of its consciousness and retrospectively reconfigured as a vessel of "unconscious grace" (AS: 461) — that is, as being merely imaginative, intuitive, spontaneous and free. This fate never befalls Will, for he is figured as having already crossed into the realm of male privilege and homosocial bonds. In relation to Lyra he comes to function as an extension and embodiment of the paternal authority itself, providing guidance to the ever more "lost" Lyra. The retrospectively constituted prelapsarian child in this text is the girl Lyra, a point we shall return to. Historically speaking, it suffices to say that the sentimentalisation of childhood the trilogy replays here goes back to the end of the 18th century when childhood accrued its sentimental value as a result of the industrial restructuration of society and the rise of the nuclear bourgeois family (Zelizer 1998). As McGavran writes, Romantic childhood sprang from a "notoriously masculine" agenda, linked to programs of discipline and surveillance, within which the romantic child seems to have been "deliberately formed to underwrite ...and disseminate an illusion of autonomous (masculine) individuality and an equally wishful evasion of the social and material world" (McGavran 1999: 28).

The process of entrenching the hegemonic power of the paternal figure and stripping the child of its consciousness is at the same time tied to the gradual reconfiguration of the multiple significance and meaning of the Dust, the quantum particles. Upon its opening the trilogy proceeds from the premise that the Dust is the basis of intersubjective existence where every particle is "a little fragment of conscious thought" (SK: 359), so that one "both contains and is contained" (SK: 353) by the surrounding universe. Even upon death one is still alive in "thousand blades of grass, and

a million leaves, ... falling in raindrops and blowing in the fresh breeze" (AS: 287), because our existence is a vibrant and interactive quantum existence regardless of the organic shape it takes. Lyra herself is the very embodiment of quantum intersubjectivity and transactional consciousness. In her ability to concentrate and interact with quantum particles when consulting her truth-reader, her agile mind is always racing "like a monkey in the trees" (AS: 460) Yet with the gradual re-entrenchment of paternal law and order the initial ideation of (child) consciousness acquires a new interpretative twist, undergoing a major transformation for the worse. The quantum existence or consciousness is literally culled from the realm of childhood. It comes to be understood that it is only adults who attract the dust, but not children, or "at least not much, and not until adolescence" (NL: 79). In the long run the Dust is translated from what surrounds and forms all of us, into what human beings make after passing into adolescence and adulthood. Only then is one understood to be a conscious being who can "make dust ... by thinking and feeling and reflecting, by gaining wisdom and passing it on" (NL: 441, 281). And most importantly, the trilogy's finale collapses and equates the emergence of consciousness with sexual awakening as if the children's arrival at the doorstep of adolescence should, to adopt Kincaid's wry commentary, unanimously spell "a sudden release of sexuality hitherto unknown" (Kincaid 1992). In the end and with the paternal authority firmly in saddle, the trilogy completely revises the idea of consciousness, so that the child is retrospectively divested of her consciousness and recast as a vessel of prelapsarian grace and site of utter blankness. In this, the trilogy also resonates with the old 19th century notion of developmentalism[10]. By divesting

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[10] The same ideological principle underlies the idea that children's daemons, which are understood to be external manifestations of their soul, settle into a fixed shape, once their principals have become adults: "As people became adult, their daemons lost the power to change and assumed one shape, keeping it permanently" (SK: 44). It is a highly essentialist notion to presume that adult subjectivity is a fixed, unchanging state of being.

childhood of its complexities, the trilogy seeks to recuperate it instead under the sign of immaturity, so that children come to be "understood in terms of what they will become, rather than in terms of what they are" (Castañeda 2002: 13). According to Castañeda, the trope of development ensures the secondary status of the child as compared to the adult, precisely by locking the chronologically contemporary but spatio-institutionally distant child into the realm of temporal distance.

How does gender politics then enter the picture here? The process of pushing the child into prelapsarian gracefulness, and stripping it of its consciousness, is reflected in the mounting restrictions imposed on Lyra's ability to read the truth-teller. She is allowed to consult it and therefore access her consciousness only at Will's prompting as a part of his and ever more her quest for "the essence of the father".[11] In fact it is Will who comes to mastermind their operations, while Lyra, drowning in uncertainties and indecisiveness, grows completely dependent on what is depicted as his better judgement. In the end, Will is the one who thinks, the one who carries out intellectual tasks, while Lyra as his assistant merely busies herself with domestic chores and manual tasks which are meant to benefit Will in his quest for the essence of the father[12], until she finally loses the agility of mind and ability

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[11] See one of the numerous reminders planted in Lyra's way: "You must concern yourself with the boy. Your task is to help him find his father. Put your mind to that" (SK: 71). In the process of looking for the essence of the father, Lyra, unlike Will who comes to be respected for his strength and vociferousness (see footnote 13), is taught the "value of silence and discretion" (AS: 462).

[12] Lyra's engagement with the truth-teller is reconstituted as another in the row of manual tasks. While Will draws logical conclusions, Lyra's ability to read the truth-teller is redefined as merely a deft movement of her eyes and fingers, the outcome of which helps Will to either revise his estimates or confirm him in his conjectures and assumptions. Lyra, on the other hand, is left powerless and if not exactly confined to the state of being transparently "frightened and bewildered" (AS: 317) then the constant refrain threading through her voice is that of "Oh, Will, what should I do" or "Will, what [sic] we going to do?" (SK: 167). In this, Lyra

to concentrate. Will, unlike Lyra, never sees his consciousness dissolve into prelapsarian grace and mere intuition, instead he functions as an extension of paternal authority so that "with every increase in his knowledge comes a gain in strength" (AS: 18)[13].

But the process of reconfiguring Lyra as a prelapsarian child also runs parallel to the process of destroying her mother as a "woman ambitious for power" (NL: 328). Since the re-establishment of the kingdom of heaven is all about consolidating the essence of the father, mothers in this scenario are either disregarded and featured as helpless, in need of looking after by their sons (Will's mother, e.g.), or, when seeking access to power and careers, proclaimed usurpers of male privilege. As such Mrs Coulter is branded as a child eater, a deceitful and scheming seductress and monstrous femme threatening with castration and "creating abomination" in her wake, until she is broken by Lord Asriel — that is, divested of her political clout and reconciled to having her intellectual acumen channelled exclusively into self-

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"lives up" to her name, which according to Metz, suggests "lyre", "an ancient musical instrument of Greece, used as an accompaniment to the recitation of heroic poetry" (Metz 2001: 152). As she is eventually turned into a mere standby witness to the heroic exploits of her male counterpart, Lyra recedes into the background, thus acquiring the status of non-entity which furthermore confines her to the role of a mere seducer. Here, and elsewhere, I obviously take issue with Metz's surface interpretation of the Lyra-Will partnership as that of "male and female sharing equally" (Metz 2001: 156).

[13] While the knife is depicted to sit "naturally in Will's hands" (SK: 162) with his consciousness firmly nestling in the folds of its atoms and Will's authority descending over it (SK: ibid), Lyra's portrayal becomes entangled in an ever more dubious form of gender politics. While Will is posited as the seat of authority, Lyra is increasingly depicted as not knowing and not being able to properly understand what the truth-reader is saying. Nor is she "pleased or proud to be able to read the aeliomether" (NL: 130). Instead she is afraid and depicted as being pleased to receive guidance and direction from one of the paternal authorities. Will, on the other hand, refuses to be ordered about, which is in the end interpreted as his very first step towards wisdom (AS: 317).

sacrificial mothering. On the other hand, Lord Asriel, who is deeply admired for his haughty and imperious nature, a "face to be dominated by", is applauded for his blasting the way to the other parallel universe by first sacrificing and killing a child. This is the very same act that brings Mrs Coulter condemnation and a virtual death sentence, while in Lord Asriel's case it passes for a ground-breaking scientific experiment, placing him at the centre of activities. While Lord Asriel, as the ultimate embodiment of the essence of the father, dies in the fight with the deputy of the old god as the defender of the new order, Mrs Coulter dies in the role of self-sacrificial mother and deceitful seductress. Seduction and betrayal remain her only available weapons, which seem to be the characteristics passed to her daughter, also known as a new Eve.

On the cusp of adolescence Lyra has thus undergone a double transformation — that of a child divested of consciousness but which, according to the trilogy, can be regained upon her entry into sexual experience. In this she must be her own engineer adopting and embracing the role of the Eve woman, for which, within the Republic of Heaven and its concern with the reinstitution of the so-called essence of the father, she has been destined from the very start. Lyra is thus reconfigured as a child and a woman at the same time, signalling infantilised femininity our culture promotes in adult females. The world *His Dark Materials* thus wishes to picture as "like ours, but different" is in fact still very much the same world of hegemonic masculinity and orbiting women satellites. Ending on the note of re-established paternal order, it forgets that the notion of paternal law and the father figure works by means of metaphoric-metonymic extensions. As Judith Roof (1996: 98) reminds us, "the 'reality' of biological genders cannot sustain the Symbolic roles into which they are cast". To feature the law of the father and patriarchal family grouping as a form of social repair is not only to forget but to deliberately turn a blind eye to the fact that the so lauded "presence of the father" does not at all allay such familial problems as "child abuse, the need for two incomes, the earning disparities of women, the lack of child care, the lack of affordable medical care and other problems" (ibid.) in reference to which the

reinstallation of the already imploded law of the father obviously stands as a falsely propagated remedy of neo-conservative movements.

The comeback of the fantasy genre at the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st centuries may be underlined by two seemingly clashing but in fact identical ideations of the childhood, both of which are heavily saturated with the gender politics of the day. Both monoliths give rise to childhood fantasies that seem to be deeply invested in the sentimentalisation of childhood, which in its own essence remains heavily riddled with the politics of hegemonic masculinity. *Harry Potter*'s sentimentalisation of childhood builds upon the eradication and annihilation of the knowing child, while Pullman's series offers a glimpse at the physically and psychically fully present child only to have it completely rewritten and recast as the embodiment of prelapsarian grace, once the inscription of the law of the father seemingly takes effect. And so it is precisely in this kind of shaping of the political landscape and collective imagination that the contemporary fantasy genre indeed finds itself at a very concrete standstill.

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On the Magic Border: Notes on Magic Realism and Tellurism in (Latin-American) Prose Fiction

JÜRI TALVET

Any ontology should desirably depart from the real existence of a phenomenon as a representativeness. There are elements of magic, for instance, in the medieval romances of chivalry, yet we can hardly take these romances as a basis for discussing "magic realism" in literature, as the notion of "realism" has seldom been applied to them. We cannot even trust in the first tentative presentation of the term as such, as it could have been arbitrary, depending on the individual perception of reading a text, without any wider transcendence. [1]

In fact, the re-presentativeness of the phenomenon of "magic realism" in literature does not emerge earlier than after WWII, with the most widely acknowledged phenomenon of Latin-Ame-

[1] Thus, the introduction of the term "magic realism" has been attributed to Franz Roh, a German art critic who in 1925 described as "magic realism" a new post-expressionistic form of art that despite being realistic was possessed by strange or dream-like quality. (Cf. http://www.qub.ac.uk/english/imperial/india/Magic.htm). Roh's invention of the term, however, is disputed by the Italian writer Massimo Bontempelli (1878–1960) who not only mentioned "realismo magico" in his work but has also been considered as one of the early (though, generally forgotten) representatives of magic-realistic novel. Cf. http://www.geocities.com/Athens/4824/magreal.htm .

rican *nueva novela*.[2] Yet even by the middle of the 1960s the use of the term looks rather hesitant.[3] The break-through in the widest possible application of the notion was probably marked by the publication, in 1967, of Gabriel García Márquez's by now world-famous novel *Cien años de soledad*. After that, not only the work of the Colombian Nobel prize winner has been labelled as "magic realism", but the term often came to be generously applied to nearly everything written in Latin American prose fiction starting from the 1960s. As compared to Latin American "magic realism", the German current, despite being somewhat earlier (the novels by Hermann Kasack, Hans Erich Nossack, and some others, published mostly in the aftermath of WWII), is much less known, at least outside Germany.

Thus García Márquez's undisputed *opus magnum* became the core of a paradigm, around which a circular "horizon of expectations" was constructed. The horizon was also retrospective, in the sense that it tried to (re)identify the narrative and perceptual elements of the past that most outstandingly coincided with those present in *Cien años de soledad*. After Mario Vargas Llosa had published his influential essay on García Máquez's novel (*García Márquez: historia de un deicidio*, Barcelona 1971), the expectation literally stretched far beyond the historical horizon, to another paradigm — of the late medieval and Renaissance books of chivalry — that had really little if anything to do with realism. Book editors revealed a new interest in the old books of chivalry, and a (post)modern English translation (1984) of the Catalan masterpiece *Tirant lo Blanc* (1490), written by Joanot Martorell and Martí de Galba, became a bestseller in the US.

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[2] One of the first systematic treateses of the Latin American *nueva novela* is Leo Pollmann's book, Pollmann 1968 (there is also a Spanish translation of it: *La "Nueva Novela" en Francia y en Iberoamerica*, Madrid: Gredos, 1971).

[3] Thus, in the admirable book by Benito Varela Jácome about the renewal of the novel genre in the 20th century (Varela Jácome 1967), the Latin American new novel does not yet appear in the focus, though the French *nouveau roman*, parallel in time, has been thoroughly dealt with.

This is fully understandable, as the application of the fine metaphor, launched by Hans Robert Jauss in the 1970s, could hardly be too narrowly generic. It is unlikely that an educated reader would have expected García Márquez to write, after *Cien años de soledad*, another family saga, with an even more abundant use of fantastic or supra-natural images. Borges has joked at such an "horizon of expectations": to meet it, Pierre Menard (in *Pierre Menard, autor del* Quijote) takes up the task of writing another *Don Quixote*, that is claimed to be even more perfect than Cervantes's original. In the story *Homenaje a César Paladión* (in *Crónicas de Bustos Domecq*, a book written conjointly by Borges and Bioy Casares), the main character becomes famous by rewriting a series of famous works of world literature, like *Émile*, of Rousseau, *Egmont*, of Goethe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, of Beecher-Stowe, among others.

The great charm of artistic creation is that its poetics works always *a posteriori*. Theoretical planning fails, as every truly original work itself proves to be its most authentic poetics — to paraphrase one of the aphoristic conclusions by Friedrich Schlegel. The same idea has been expressed by Yuri Lotman, who in his late work (especially in Lotman 1992) repeatedly stressed that cultural geniuses work "paradigmatically" rather than "syntagmatically" — i. e., by "explosions" that lead to "leaps" from one paradigm to another. It makes any "horizon of expectations", in the sense of radical artistic modification and renewal, a kind of a nonsense. Even outstanding critics, once they have fixed their aesthetic-perceptual ideal in the framework of a paradigm, mostly fail to grasp the contours of a new paradigm. (André Gide's well-known failure to understand the radical novelty of Marcel Proust's novels can fit as an example of the afore-said).

That is why the "horizon of expectations", whose point of departure is an outstanding work, like *Cien años de soledad*, can serve at its best to recognize well-made literature, in general, rather than to specify a generic evolution or modification of a genre. In fact, a closer look at the phenomenon of Latin American *nueva novela* in the 1960s and 1970s would reveal that the means of achieving "magic" flavour, as well as the degree of realism,

differs considerably from a novel to another. The unifying feature, in a series of outstanding Latin American novels of the period, is their general tendency towards the poetical-metaphoric and lyrical imagery, rather than creating fantastic images or synthesizing historical reality, as it is done in *Cien años de soledad*. That is why "magic-realistic narrative", as applied to the whole corpus of Latin American novels written after WWII, tends to be vague and exaggerated. In that meaning, a good number of outstanding Western modernist novels (like the work of Joyce, Faulkner, Hemingway, Woolf, and others) should likewise be qualified as representing "magic realism".

If we still would like to reach a more specified understanding of "magic realism", a further conceptualization of the notions of "magic" and "realism" would hardly do. (For instance, one could argue that all true poetic expression has a kind of a magic in it or, on the other hand, that all creation, as it expresses some a kind of reality, is realistic). I would rather advise to stick to the contours of "magic realism" as it emerges from the core group of novels that have overwhelmingly, by a general consensus, been qualified as belonging to the "magic-realistic" narrative. In fact, they are not as many in Latin American literature, as one might expect. Then, we could specify what "magic" and "realism" mean in these works and, once we have done so, proceed to observe to what extent the same could be applied to other narratives.

For myself, the core of the "magic-realistic" narrative paradigm in Latin American novel, besides *Cien años de soledad*, comprises the novel *Pedro Páramo* (1955), by the Mexican writer Juan Rulfo. Some ten years prior to the masterpiece of García Márquez, Rulfo created a powerful image in which the voices of the living and the dead merged into one and the cruel social-historical reality of Mexico at the start of the 20th century (the Mexican revolution that broke out in 1910) became humanized as well as mythicized in a love story that would recall the one in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*. Without any doubt, Rulfo followed modernist narrative poetics that had already been brilliantly employed by Joyce and Faulkner, in the sense that temporal planes become totally confused, reproducing, thus, not the outward features of the (social)

reality, but rather the states of the subconscious mind. However, the greatest novelty introduced by Rulfo is that he did not only make different temporal planes intermingle, but, to a larger extent than any fore-front Western novelist before him, constructed an ample "border zone" between the world of the living and the dead. Like in Mexican popular-religious traditions (cf. "Día de los Difuntos"), the dead make their re-appearance among the living, and the living talk with them with all naturalness. By such a fusion of all voices — the living speaking with the living, the dead with the dead, as well as with the living — Rulfo makes the reader of the novel enter into a totally magic world, in which rational laws and rules collapse. The magic illusion gains in power and spell, as the main narrator of the story, Juan Preciado, himself appears as dead, with his voice reaching us from the other world. He is an ambiguous, unreliable narrator who, instead of reassuring the reader with a sense of stability, drags him/ her directly into a suspicious border-zone of the most radical "otherness".

The objective of any magic in literature is to lead the reader into a realm in which rational laws and norms stop working, to be replaced, as tools of perception, by feeling, senses, intuition and faith. The same perception apparatus has historically supported the great myths created in the past of the humanity. That is why "magic" mostly works in an intimate union with the mythical. It is also the sphere in which lyrical images are likely to be produced. Magic, myth and lyrics have all their gravitation centre in nature, or the cosmic totality. It is the great "inside" of the world, of which those who reflect it, feel themselves a part. In any case, they predominantly share the philosophy emerging from the acceptance of life's cosmic unity. The borderline between the good and the evil is mostly blurred in the works of magic, mythic or lyric dimension. Juan Rulfo's main character, cruel and tyrant-like *casique* Pedro Páramo incarnates man's innate violence, but at the same time he mythicizes man's primeval yearning for a different love that, by its very ideal nature, remains unattainable.

At the same time the magic of Rulfo's novel could hardly have its genuine spell without a realistic *edaphos* — the concrete historical ground from which magic, myth and lyrics depart. In

Latin American cultural studies one can often come across the term *telurismo* (from the Latin *tellus* — earth, ground, soil), though I have not found a really satisfactory definition of its content beyond that it has been used to denote an immediate and close relatedness of the imagery of a work of art to a determined soil, with its characteristic nature. The hesitation in defining the content of the term can well be observed, for instance, in the fact that while the Spanish well-known encyclopaedic dictionary *El Pequeño Larousse Ilustrado* in its 1970 edition still defined *telurismo* as "the influence of the soil of a region on its inhabitants (habits, character, literature, etc.)", in the newest 2002 edition of the same dictionary the notion *telurismo* has been omitted altogether, while the adjective *telúrico*, which in 1970 was said to be related to *telurismo*, has been deprived of any metaphorical meaning.

Yet the phenomenon itself which calls for a name has not at all disappeared. Under the Internet "Google" explorer one could see the term *telurismo* applied in more than 400 cases. To give only a few examples, Rafael Rattia, a literary critic, defines (in 2000) Alejandro Bruznal's poetry book *Imágenes terrestres* (1957) as the expression of "nomadic *telurismo*". On another web-page under the general title "Feminismo, telurismo y satanismo" (feminism, tellurism, and satanism) one can read that "tellurism is, beyond doubt, the most accentuated and repetitive feature in the whole movement of the "New Age" [translation from Spanish and Portuguese, here and in the following, is mine — J. T.]. The creation of the Andalusian musician Gualberto has been characterized (in 2002) as *himno al telurismo* (a hymn to tellurism). In an article about the work of the renowned Portuguese poet Miguel Torga the author claims that "Tellus feeds and recomposes a cosmic dimension, a totality of man, and conditions a tellurism of moving purity". In other websites *telurismo* is associated with "black magic", eroticism, with Latin American indigenous rituals, etc.

In most cases, as could well be seen from these examples, *telurismo* is applied to denote a certain philosophy whose roots are deeply in the earth, or primeval nature. In that sense, one of the

short definitions of *telurismo* provided by the Spanish *Diccionario Enciclopédico Sopena* (Vol. 3, 1976) looks convincingly expressive. *Telurismo*, it says, is "magnetismo animal" (animal magnetism). In English dictionaries, one could hardly expect to find the term "tellurism", though it seems to be gradually infiltrating from Spanish and Portuguese. At least at the Internet website http://www.brainydictionary.com/words/te/tellurism228704.html I could find a definition of "tellurism" showing a striking similarity with the one found in *Diccionario Enciclopedico Sopena*: "An hypothesis of animal magnetism propounded by Dr. Keiser, in Germany, in which the phenomena are ascribed to the agency of telluric spirit or influence."

As can easily be seen, the definitions of "tellurism" as a philosophy contradict its definition as "the influence of the soil of a region on its inhabitants". Indeed, over the last decades the term has also been used almost synonymously with *costumbrismo* — another term that comes from Spanish, Portuguese and Latin-American culture, being an approximate equivalent of regionalism or regional realism in literature and arts. I have even noticed that in some critical polemics *telurismo* has been identified with a regionally restricted opposition to universalism. Some important Latin-American writers, like the Mexican poet and essayist Octavio Paz, have voiced their caution against *telurismo* as a locally orientated current in Latin American literature, devoid of philosophic perspectives. More recently, Mario Vargas Llosa has become known by his public attacks in Spanish newspapers against nationalisms as one of the "roots of evil" of our post-modern world.

My digression about *telurismo* is far from being arbitrary. My conviction is that the phenomenon has a lot to do with "magic realism", as well as with the complicated phenomenon of literary realism, in general. I think it is high time to admit that the widespread use of the term is nothing casual. On the contrary, there seems to be a vital need to define it as one of the important cultural signs of the contemporary world. There should be nothing wrong in applying it without quotation marks, as well as adapting it in other languages beyond Spanish and Portuguese. Thus, I will

speak here about tellurism as one of the basic philosophical support structures of the phenomenon of "magic realism" in Latin American literature.

Further, I definitely reject the tendency to limit the scope of tellurism to regional-circumstantial realism, or *costumbrismo*. Instead, I propose to adapt the term simultaneously and inclusively to both phenomena that until now have been designated by the notion of "tellurism". Tellurism should be viewed as a philosophy that fully recognizes the concrete and the irreducibly individual of an *edaphos*, and at the same time proclaims universal values (mythical dimension) emerging from it. In fact, a close unity of the historically individual and the materially concrete, on the one hand, and the universally mythical, on the other — i. e. tellurism in its integrity –, should be regarded as one of the decisive conditions from which the best-known works of magic realism have emerged. Cervantes in his *Don Quixote* achieved a magic blend of myth and historical reality. Franz Kafka, the greatest forerunner of modern magic realism, never defined in what country the mythical action of his narratives took place. Yet the magic spell of his novels could probably never have existed, had he deprived the surroundings of his characters moving like in dreams — i. e. on the border of the "known" and the "other" — of an unmistakably identifiable historical (Central-European, contemporary) dimension. In other words, magic is unlikely to work in an exclusive reign of the "known", as well as of the "other".

I could add that tellurism, with magic realism as one of its most powerful image textures, has worked in literature for the most part in a direct opposition to another kind of universalism, the one departing from the Enlightenment rationalism and expanded by the 19th-century positivism. Yet as ingredients of the "magic border", both rationalism and positivism have their share.

García Márquez's *Cien años de soledad* not only emitomizes "magic realism" in its highest degree of maturity, but is also a brilliant expression of tellurism, as a philosophical *edaphos* directly supporting the magic of the novel's imagery. Like Rulfo's *Pedro Páramo*, the masterpiece of the Colombian writer departs from a very concrete and individual historical-social and natural

reality. The natural background of Rulfo's novel is the Mexican province of Jalisco, with its desert-like landscapes, while García Márquez's Macondo is thoroughly Caribbean, with its rains that sometimes can pour down for several weeks, or with its implacable sun. The great majority of people that appear as characters in both novels have been directly influenced by the telluric factor. There are abundant images reflecting traditional poverty and an almost extreme social inequality, characteristic of both Mexico and Colombia, as well as any Latin-American country. In fact, nothing prevents us from reading the novels by Rulfo and García Márquez as reflections of the concrete historical reality of Mexico and Colombia. In the same way, anybody is free to enjoy the reproduction of the historical Spanish society of Cervantes's lifetime in *Don Quixote*. All these novels are supreme masterpieces of realism.

Yet at the same time they are much more than that. They also mean realism as a deep renewal and a radical vanguardism. All of them show at work a synthetic philosophy, of which tellurism is part. While naturalism, an off-shoot of positivism, mostly failed to grasp the interior spirituality of nature, and was generally limited to the description of reality's surface, tellurism enters deeper layers of man's nature, where the sexual and the spiritual closely intertwine — the magic border zone of life and death. Revealing unnumbered shades in the human psyche and historical experience, the fantastic images of *Cien años de soledad* build up a majestic myth of humankind's solitude in its lack and fear of love and solidarity. Nature, including man's nature, however, is shown at the same time as possessing a miraculous potentiality of revival, creativity, and a search for values yet undisclosed. Fatality, inherent in naturalism, is generally overcome in fiction relying on the philosophy of tellurism.

Magic realism, with its stressed mythic dimension, is saturated by symbols, yet differently from a good part of Western symbolism and avant-guard / modernist currents, the telluric *edaphos* provides symbols with an almost unparalleled vitality. Unlike in any exclusively sur-real art, the magic of "magic realism" resides in the "in(fra)-real". It resists to exhaust itself, just because it has its roots so deep in the reality. Within the same opposition of

surrealism / the sur-real and tellurism / the in-real I suspect that a sporadic use of fantastic imagery in the short stories of Julio Cortázar, even though brilliantly revealing psychological shades in human relations, does not necessarily belong to the domain of magic realism. And on the contrary, even though García Márquez's narrative action in his book of short stories *Doce cuentos peregrinos* (1992) is located very far from his native Colombia and no miracles take place in these stories, the wonderful spell of magic realism, known from the author's earlier fantastical narratives, is fully present. Once more, the established "horizon of expectations" is overcome by a "leap" of a truly creative genius.

As for Jorge Luis Borges, the question might be more complicated. On the one hand, Borges is an intellectual writer who employed in his stories a huge number of universal myths, revealing thus a fierce opposition to any kind of *costumbrismo*, or tellurism in its superficial and restricted sense (he was thus openly ironical about one of the peaks of Latin-American narrative *costumbrismo*, the novel *Don Segundo Sombra* by his compatriot Ricardo Güiraldes). As the core of Borges's philosophy was in the "return of the eternal spirit" whose re-incarnations he revealed by introducing fantastic images, in which the historical is veiled by a constant mystification, we could perhaps define his work as a kind of "magic idealism". However, a closer look at Borges's prose fiction would demonstrate that Borges was really never indifferent to the telluric, in its deeper sense. After all, following the philosophy of the Gnostics, Borges imagined the "otherness" in its very corporeal, identifiable forms, not as anything idealized or alien to the "known". Sexuality, the germ of tellurism, in its deeper sense, never lost its spell for Borges. It can be seen in Borges's meditations about the origin of the Argentine tango, about José Hernández's gaucho epic *Martín Fierro*, as well as in his life-long attraction by the contradictory philosophy and work of the Spanish Baroque genius Francisco de Quevedo.

Although "magic realism", with the philosophy of tellurism in its background, reveals a strong opposition to both rationalism and intellectualism, it is quite clear that the greatest works of "magic realism" do not exclude at all playfulness and a highly sophis-

ticated intellectual artistry in reflecting reality. Here lies their most prominent difference with the fiction operating in the framework of *costumbrismo*, realism in its traditional sense, as well as naturalism. Just in the same way as Cervantes in his *Don Quixote* genially and "magically" played with different layers of fictional and natural reality, history and myth, García Márquez creates in *Cien años de soledad* a magic illusion as if the whole story told by the book had already existed in a myth, in the secret scripts of the gipsy magician Melquíades. Like Kafka before him, Rulfo creates an utterly liberated fictional space, where one of the principal sources of magic is just the absence of the author and his unwillingness to provide any cues for the logic of events that does not correspond at all to any rational logic.

To follow Yuri Lotman's theory of "semiosphere", "magic realism" in literature is most likely to achieve brilliance on the "magic border" created by the large intersection area of biosphere and noo-sphere. A clash between the philosophy of tellurism and the fruits of (Western) man's rationally civilizing / dominating activities is unavoidable, but at the same time the liberation of the artistic-fictional space, in which man's creativity in correspondence with the philosophy of tellurism is revealed, can hardly be imagined beyond a positive integration of innovative artistic-aesthetic experience, of which creative intellect is an inseparable part.

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Artifacts from New Ashkenaz: Image, Performance, Post-Post-Modern Sublime

S. I. SALAMENSKY

In "Guidebook to a Land of Ghosts," a 1997 essay, Jewish-American novelist Michael Chabon elegizes "the saddest book I own." The book is entitled *Say It In Yiddish*, and provides Yiddish translations of everyday phrases such as "What is the flight number?" "How do I buy stamps?" and "Can you help me jack up the car?"

Say It in Yiddish, edited by Uriel and Beatrice Weinreich, was originally published in 1958, and remains in print today. In what postwar, let alone current-day, locale, Chabon asks, could such a book prove helpful?

By 1958, of course, the Europe where Jews coexisted with non-Jews was long gone. Today, very few people speak Yiddish — the language or dialect of the northern, eastern, and central European, or Ashkenazic, Jews — as a first language. Like Ladino, the language or dialect of southern European and northern African, or Sephardic, Jews, Yiddish is excluded from the three official languages of Israel, which are Hebrew, Arabic, and English.

Chabon, born in 1963, can experience the lost Europe of his forbears solely through the word; most of its images, and nearly all of its objects, have been destroyed. The narratives available as representation — from the colorful shtetl, or Jewish village, stories of Sholem Aleichem and Isaac Bashevis Singer to the chilling Holocaust testimonies of Primo Levi and Elie Wiesel — resemble tragicomic drama, even melodrama. Chabon, instead, years for the

prosaic: the small-scale, the uneventful, repetition — even the boredom, the comforting rhythms of what would be a home. The beauty of the phrasebook entries, for Chabon, lies in their banality. They regard as given what are, in fact, the impossibly quotidian scenario, the untouchably common object.

The volume, which Chabon came across in a random pile in a southern California bookshop, appears as if an uncanny object from an alternate universe that does not exist and yet nonetheless periodically issues material byproducts. "I couldn't believe it," Chabon writes. "It was like a Borges story." This artifact, Chabon fleetingly finds himself hoping, may be traced back to a source that will turn out to have been, all this time, awaiting him, a signifier with a signified to which it will prove re-bound.

> What were they thinking, the Weinreichs? Was the original 1958 Dover edition simply the reprint of some earlier, less heartbreakingly implausible book? At what time in the history of the world was there a place of the kind that the Weinreichs imply, a place where not only the doctors and waiters and trolley conductors spoke Yiddish, but also the airline clerks, travel agents, ferry captains, and casino employees?...It seems an entirely futile effort on the part of its authors, a gesture of embittered hope, of valedictory daydreaming, of a utopian impulse turned cruel and ironic.
>
> The Weinreichs have laid out, with numerical precision, the outlines of a world, of a fantastic land in which it would behoove you to know how to say, in Yiddish,
>
> 250. What is the flight number?
>
> 254. Can I go by boat/ferry to----?
>
> The blank in the last of those phrases, impossible to fill in, tantalizes me. Whither could I sail on that boat/ferry, in the solicitous company of Uriel and Beatrice Weinreich, and from what shore?

Chabon dreams of a land where there are

> Yiddish…commentators for soccer games, Yiddish-speaking cash machines, Yiddish tags on the collars of dogs….
>
> 112. They are bothering me.
>
> 113. Go away.
>
> 114. I will call a policeman….
>
> [Here] the millions of Jews who were never killed produced grand-children, and great-grandchildren, and great-great-grandchildren. The countryside retains large pockets of country people whose first language is still Yiddish, and in the cities there are many more for whom Yiddish is the language of kitchen and family, of theater and poetry and scholarship. A surprisingly large number of these people are my relations. I can go visit them, the way Irish-Americans I know are always visiting second and third cousins in Galway or Cork, sleeping in their strange beds, eating their strange food, and looking just like them. Imagine. … For my relatives, though they will doubtless know at least some English, I will want to trot out a few appropriate Yiddish phrases, more than anything as a way of reestablishing the tenuous connection between us; in this world Yiddish is not, as it is in ours, a tin can with no tin can on the other end of the string….
>
> What phrases would I need to know in order to speak to those millions of unborn phantoms to whom I belong?…

"Just what," Chabon finally demands, anguished, "am I supposed to do with this book?" (Chabon 1997).

Chabon's bestselling 2001 novel, *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay*, itself involves complex relations to materiality and the past. Its story takes shape through a dialectic between two levels of discourse, one detailing the misadventures of two Ashkenazic-American cousins, the other the triumphs of the Jewish comic-book characters they create. The boys are first inspired by "dreams of Harry

Houdini," the Ashkenazic escape artist whose feats seemed to defy the constraints of the body, and matter itself.

"To me," Chabon"s protagonist relates, "Clark Kent," the mild-mannered reporter who becomes Superman, "in a phone booth[,] and Houdini in a packing crate, they were one and the same thing.... Houdini's first magic act, you know, back when he was just getting started. It was called 'Metamorphosis.' It was never just a question of escape. It was also a question of *transformation*" (Chabon 2001: 3). The superhuman Ashkenazic hero compensates in the object realm from which the children of the diaspora are disinherited.

Chabon's tie of the Jew to the comic-book genre echoes that of two prominent contemporary Ashkenazic comic-book artists, Art Spiegelman (*Maus: A Survivor's Tale: My Father Bleeds History/ Here My Troubles Began*, 1991) and Ben Katchor (*The Jew of New York*, 1998; *Julius Knipl, Real-Estate Photographer: The Beauty Supply District*, 2000). In comic-book, or graphic, literature, narrative is dislocated, infinitely deferred and suspended between two competing genres, word and image, which compete and conjoin to re-present the object realm.

But the object itself is missing: eternally lost, a markedly present absence. Spiegelman and Katchor employ graphic narrative to explore, respectively, Jewish experience under the Nazis (fig. 1; Spiegelman 1991: 125) and modern, industrial and post-industrial reconfigurations of Jewish and other identities (fig. 2; Katchor 1998: 8). Adorno's dictum prohibiting poetry after Auschwitz — declaring art unfit to convey this inverse sublime of pain and horror — perhaps leaves a loophole for the comic book, an apparently naïve, clumsy, and retrograde genre.

In *The Fate of the Object: From Modern Object to Postmodern Sign*, performance theorist Jon Erickson positions dematerialization as the governing motif of the twentieth century. We are all traumatized, Erickson suggests, by the modern, then postmodern, loss of the object. The Jew, however, as at once subject with fractured object relations and fractured object him- or herself — persecuted on suspicion of excess material magicking, nearly made to disappear from the earth — may stand as the modernist experiment par excellence.

Figure 1.

Chabon's and Spiegelman's graphic fictions hint at wishes for re-materialization. Katchor's work explicitly engages this hope. A frequent theme in Katchor's works, including his 2004 rock-opera, *The Slug-Bearers of Kayrol Island*, is a group of characters who convene to share and contemplate instruction manuals from toasters, blenders, and other long-discarded small appliances. The appliance models from which the manuals hail — like the referents of Chabon's phrasebook — are missing, and in themselves patently unextraordinary. As in Chabon, it is less particular objects that are mourned than the dull, everyday object realm and the possibility of objective — fixed, and perhaps in that, safe, reality — itself.

Katchor further augments Chabon's and Spiegelman's variously imagistic texts by imbuing his with a sort of object status beyond what they re-present. An art-school graduate working as an office-supply printer, he began his publishing career somewhat late in life by surreptitiously posting his cartoons at a New York hot dog stand. As the cult status of his cartoons grew, he secured permission to mount them in a lighted box on an outside wall,

changing them in the middle of the night when the fewest people would be watching.

"It was," Katchor has remarked, "an incredibly romantic thing to do," (Fulford 2000), describing a romanticism in the classic sense as well as a love affair with the specific and concrete. Katchor's hardcover volumes are constructed from unusually textural printing materials, and designed with old-fashioned-looking fonts and styles that call attention to them as objects, with an antique, one-off, "curiosity" feel. Each one ordered from Katchor's petty-entrepreneurial website is inscribed with an impromptu pen-and-ink drawing of one of his characters.

Figure 2.

Katchor counters metaphysical loss, the leitmotif of Jewish historicity, by replacing Chabon's realist disapora and Spiegelman's expresssionist one with a new Ashkenaz — resembling the real-life 1830s attempt to establish a Jewish homeland near Canada fictionalized in his *Jew of New York* — completely. Katchor's works hover in a time between times, from the early industrial age through the present and future, and in a space between spaces: European, American, and other-worldly. It is, however, also an insistently workaday realm of small mercantilism and minute obsessions, in which change occurs only on the most picayune scale, and little happens.

In one "picture story," daily minutiae, including now-obscure Jewish foodstuffs, are honored with monuments; only a Katchor-like commercial artist recognizes their import (fig. 3; Katchor 2000: 1). In another, the provenance and engineering genius of a packaged cracker are contemplated by a rare admirer (fig. 4; Katchor 2000: 73). The inhabitants of Katchor's world speak English, when not bizarre invented languages, but often an English that is Yiddish-inflected. Though ethnic in appearance and manner, Katchor's figures generally also remain unmarked as Jewish per se. In an Ashkenaz, old or new, where the Jews are not always Other, they need not be.

Graphic representation defies Judaic law prohibiting the creation of graven images. God, however, in this literature appears, for reasons unknown, to have failed to keep the Jew and the Jew's objects together, a bond repeatedly sundered since the early Temple on. Katchor's new world thus stands as a strike not only against the victor's history, but against simple, passive approaches to Judaic fate and faith.

Like Katchor's *The Jew of New York*, Chabon's upcoming novel, working-titled *Alyeska*, posits an Israel established in a cold northern region of North America and bearing traits far more evocative of Ashkenaz than the Middle East. Despite the crucial presence of the Jewish state as a bulwark against genocidal history, the Ashkenazic Jew remains culturally homeless.

Figure 3.

Figure 4.

As Milan Kundera writes in his 2000 essayistic novel *Ignorance*,

> The Greek word for "return" is *nostos*. *Algos* means "suffering." So nostalgia is the suffering caused by the unappeased yearning to return. To express that fundamental notion most Europeans can utilize a word

> derived from the Greek (*nostalgia*, *nostalgie*) as well as other words with roots in their national languages.... In each language these words have a different semantic nuance. Often they mean only the sadness caused by the impossibility of returning to one's country: a longing for country, for home. What in English is called "homesickness." Or in German: *Heimweh*.... But this reduces that great notion to just its spatial element....In Spanish *añoranza* comes from the verb *añorar* (to feel nostalgic), which comes from the Catalan *enyorar*, itself derived from the Latin word *ignorare* (to be unaware of, not know, not experience; to lack or miss. In that etymological light nostalgia seems something like the pain of ignorance, of not knowing. You are far away, and I don't know what has become of you. My country is far away, and I don't know what is happening there. (Kundera 2000: 4–5).

Critic Svetlana Boym, echoing Bakhtin, dismisses nostalgia as a "hypochondria of the heart," a dangerous displacement of value from the present and future to the unknown, past, and impracticable (Boym 2002: 7). Kundera's characters can, at risk, return home. They do, with mixed results. Their homeland has changed, and/or stayed too much same. They have changed, and/or dislike who they have become, or re-become, there.

Yet for exiles of Ashkenaz, even faulty nostalgia cannot be achieved. More than the histories of most peoples, the Jews' is the Ashkenazic is a "one-way street" (Benjamin 1986: 61). Were there a truly compelling present or future — in Israel or America — for post-diasporic generations, the Ashkenazic tradition of literature of loss would by now have faded away. Still, rather, "grief haunts every mile" of the journey home to nowhere. "Grief hand-colors all the postcards, stamps the passports, sours the cooking, fills the luggage. It keens all night in the pipes of old hotels" (Chabon 1997). It is only upon the at-once abstract and concrete foundations of object creation and performance that Ashkenaz material history can progress, and the Ashkenaz "homeplace" — a site, in bell hooks' formulation, not only of shelter, peace, and renewal,

but of anger and resistance — be built. However, unlike the Jewish touchstone of the Western Wall, or Wailing Wall, this homeplace is mobile, and extends not only eons back but forward.

Fredric Jameson characterizes the condition of postmodernity as a mix of notalgia and irony, a conflict between a wish to return and a knowledge that, even if we will, we cannot (Jameson 1991: 18–19). As a result, we remain trapped in the prison-house — or, perhaps, garbage -dump — of history that is postmodern pastiche. New Ashkenazic oeuvres, instead, appear to reconfigure materiality, safety, closure, enclosure to effect post-post-modern shelter, momentary, transient, open-ended, jerry-rigged, for post-modernity's lost children — Jew and not, all of us — amid the wreckage, in a time beyond time, a placeless space.

Dedicated to remembrance of the slain Jews of Tartu.

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Hacia una retórica (post)contemporánea

CRISTINA OÑORO OTERO

A modo de introducción

Imagino que un título como el propuesto puede originar especulaciones y expectativas que no sé si se verán cumplidas a lo largo de las siguientes líneas. Por este motivo, he preferido imprimir al título "Hacia una retórica (post)contemporánea" cierta vocación de futuro, pues la mayoría de los planteamientos que propondré, así como las conclusiones a las que me conduzcan, hoy no son más que una *desiderata*. Pasadas ya las euforias que trajeron consigo los modernos estudios de Neorretórica en el ámbito de la Teoría y la Crítica literaria, sería conveniente hacer balance sobre sus aportaciones así como abrir un espacio de reflexión en el que sus límites sean cuestionados.

Antes de adentrarme en lo que será el núcleo de este artículo, esto es, insistir en la necesidad de elaborar una *inventio* (post)contemporánea, he creído adecuado recordar las causas por las que el modelo retórico cayó en desuso durante la época romántica, pues a partir de ellas será posible comprender por qué han existido — y siguen existiendo — prejuicios a la hora de aplicar el modelo crítico de la Retórica a los discursos contemporáneos. Por otra parte, el cuestionamiento de la Neorretórica también era una parada obligada ya que sólo desde tal enjuiciamiento es posible descubrir los espacios teóricos aún no transitados en profundidad por la crítica; reactivar antiguos paradigmas y crear nuevos conceptos a partir de ellos ayudará a completar los futuros trabajos sobre novela (post)contemporánea.

A su vez, estas páginas se proponen insistir especialmente en la necesidad de rescatar el modelo retórico para aplicarlo no ya a la lírica sino a la narrativa, pues aunque en la antigüedad aparecía más estrechamente vinculado a la poesía, sus planteamientos son igualmente adaptables a la ficción narrativa[1]. No hay que olvidar, por otra parte, que en la época en la que se escribieron los manuales de Retórica clásica aún no estaba plenamente configurado el género novela[2].

La decadencia de la Retórica

El ocaso de la Retórica coincide con un cambio de Paradigma cultural, pues con el paso de la literatura clásica al Romanticismo varía considerablemente la concepción del texto poético. Los historiadores de la Teoría Literaria moderna han remarcado constantemente el abismo diferencial que separaría ambos Paradigmas, para ello, y con las ostensibles limitaciones que supone observar un período artístico desde la miopía de los prejuicios presentes, se esfuerzan en abrir una brecha entre ambas cosmovisiones e intentan disuadir al estudioso de que aplique planteamientos procedentes de las poéticas clásicas a los textos literarios surgidos a partir del Romanticismo.

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[1] Cf. Pozuelo Yvancos (1988) ha estudiado profundamente las relaciones entre retórica antigua y narrativa; es especialmente interesante la lectura que hace de los textos canónicos de Cicerón, Aristóteles y Quintiliano, pues a través de ellos desvela la conexión entre la *narratio* retórica y la moderna narratología.

[2] García Berrio (1994: 208) ha reflexionado sobre las posibles causas de el vacío teórico al que aludimos: " El tratamiento de la ficción narrativa y de sus estructuras textuales, si constituyen efectivamente un vacío en la tradición de la Retórica, no lo eran en el mismo grado dentro de la Poética. La relativa modernidad del género narrativo novelesco, coincidiendo en buena parte con la decadencia de la Poética y la Retórica clasicistas a partir del siglo XVII, determinan seguramente el vacío analístico y preceptivo de la Poética y la Retórica".

El modelo retórico cae en desuso en un proceso de devaluación paralelo al cambio radical respecto a la orientación del texto poético, en este sentido, García Berrio ha señalado algunas causas que influyeron en el fracaso de la Retórica a partir del Romanticismo (García Berrio 1994: 206 y ss.).

1. *Amortización escolar de las enseñanzas retóricas*: "la Retórica pasó a ser una disciplina puramente histórica y monumentalista (...) perdiendo de vista la realidad de los discursos aptos para auditorios efectivos e históricos".
2. *Desvinculación del discurso contemporáneo*: "la ausencia de un sistema de ejemplificación nueva, que sometiera a tensión los paradigmas canónicos de la Retórica greco-latina, medieval y renacentista, fue sin duda una de las causas determinantes del anquilosamiento de aquellos paradigmas".
3. *Superación del paradigma retórico por los nuevos tipos de discurso moderno*: "la Retórica, al no presentar una evolución doctrinal paralela a la evolución de los discursos efectivos del lenguaje común y artístico de los nuevos tiempos, sufrió por primera vez un proceso de insuficiencia de categorías doctrinales, tanto sobre el plano descriptivo- interpretativo como sobre el normativo".
4. *Descrédito final de la Retórica como sinónimo de un tipo determinado de discurso ineficaz:* "un modo de hablar o un estilo retórico llegaron a ser en todas partes, a principios de siglo, sinónimos de un tipo de expresividad exagerada, enfática, grotesca".

Atendiendo a los objetivos que se ha marcado este artículo las razones que más me interesan son la segunda y la tercera, pues afectan directamente al discurso literario contemporáneo. La Retórica clásica, como modelo interpretativo, cayó en desuso por su anquilosamiento en las viejas formas del pasado, ya que no fue capaz de evolucionar al mismo ritmo que las producciones artísticas. Por otro lado, tal y como señala García Berrio (1994: 207), los textos literarios nacían con una clara vocación *antirretórica*, lo que no significa que no se estuviera fraguando una *nueva Retórica*; aún así, el modelo retórico siguió aplicándose a los textos clásicos en el ámbito escolar, lo que produjo una

desvinculación absoluta respecto a las realidades literarias del momento.

La Neorretórica

La década de los cincuenta del siglo pasado marca un nuevo período de esplendor para la Retórica, pues en esta época aparece lo que se ha llamado "Nueva Retórica", "Neorretórica" o "Nuevas Retóricas", movimiento interesando por recuperar planteamientos de la Retórica desde una metodología inductiva, descriptiva y científica (cf. Hernández Guerrero y García Tejera 1994: 172).

La Retórica resurgirá al menos en tres horizontes distintos[3]:

1. En el marco de una Teoría de la Argumentación (Perelman y Olbrechts-Tyteca).
2. En el horizonte de la Lingüística estructural (Grupo , Todorov, Genette).
3. Como una Retórica General (García Berrio).

Este proceso de revitalización de la doctrina retórica tradicional se dio, tal y como señala Mayoral, tanto en el ámbito de las disciplinas lingüístico-literarias como en el marco de otros campos del saber, como la filosofía, la psicología, o las ciencias de la imagen; al mismo tiempo se va a poner en marcha un proceso de recuperación del patrimonio histórico (a través de la traducción y edición de textos antiguos), así como una irrupción masiva de Revistas y Congresos dedicados a los distintos ámbitos de la Retórica (cf. Mayoral 1995: 91–123).

Además de estos estudios de clara orientación histórica, cabe hablar de investigaciones sobre el propio sistema retórico, aunque este apartado sea todavía hoy una *desiderata*. Esta línea de investigación se centraría en a) el estudio de la relación entre géneros retóricos y géneros poéticos, b) profundización en las tres operaciones retóricas: *inventio* poética-*inventio* retórica, *dispositio*

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[3] Pozuelo Yvancos (1988:182) coincide con Hernández Guerrero y García Tejera (1994:172) a la hora de señalar estos tres horizontes de la Nueva Retórica.

poética-*dispositio* retórica, *elocutio* poética-*elocutio* retórica (ibid.119 y ss.).

Hacia una *inventio* (post)contemporánea

Con el correr de los siglos, la devaluación de la Retórica también acarreó una clara limitación de sus planteamientos originales; la Retórica, vista hoy a la luz del siglo XXI, suponía un modelo operativo (con su correlato analítico-hermeneútico) completo, al abarcar tanto la construcción del *texto poético* (*Inventio*, *Dispositio*, *Elocutio*) como la dimensión pragmática del *hecho retórico* (*Actio*, *Memoria*); así mismo, incluía entre sus objetivos una formación *integral* del orador, una pedagogía y una instrucción en el arte de la argumentación eficaz.

El renacimiento de la Retórica en el siglo XX no ha supuesto una reactualización de estos planteamientos en toda su amplitud, sino que ha limitado la mayoría de sus esfuerzos al campo formal y técnico de la *elocutio*[4]. El siglo XX puede estar satisfecho de haber elaborado una completa teoría del lenguaje literario y una revisión sin parangón de los mecanismos del ornato elocutivo; sin embargo, a pesar de sus posibilidades analíticas infinitas, las investigaciones en torno a la *inventio* poética son escasas, pues parece ser un campo de estudio dramáticamente olvidado. A este respecto hay que mencionar los llamamientos de diferentes investigadores para desempolvar este rico concepto retórico (cf. Pozuelo Yvancos 1988: 206), así como la denuncia de las limitaciones de los trabajos elaborados bajo el signo de la Neorretórica: "No habría llegado a replantearse en profundidad las posibilidades de iluminación temático-estética desde la *inventio*" (Gracía Berrio 1994: 208). Por su parte, Hernández Guerrero y García Tejera (1994: 175) hacen balance sobre las contribuciones del Grupo con las siguientes palabras: "Su recuperación de la

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[4] También hay que decir que la Retórica ha vivido un nuevo esplendor al aplicar sus planteamientos a otras disciplinas, tales como la Publicidad, el Cine, el discurso político, etc.

Antigua Retórica es, debemos repetirlo, sólo parcial ya que, como hemos dicho, el Grupo prescinde de las otras dos partes fundamentales de la Retórica — *inventio* y *dispositio* — ."

Es necesario constatar la desaparición de la *inventio* de los horizontes teóricos modernos, pero se hace aún más necesario abrir un campo de reflexión urgente: ¿qué hemos perdido al exiliar a la *inventio* de los modelos hermenéuticos?, ¿en qué medida afecta este olvido a la novela *(post)contemporánea*? Para poder responder a estas cuestiones habría que preguntarse primero qué suponía la *inventio* y cuáles eran sus beneficios, para poder valorar después en qué medida se hace necesaria su recuperación.

La *inventio* consistía en la búsqueda de materiales susceptibles de ser convertidos en *discurso poético*, se trataba de una suerte de almacén de temas, fórmulas y tópicos. Estos almanaques temáticos estaban a disposición del poeta cuando se proponía elaborar un discurso poético, sin embargo, no se trataba de un almacén *físico* sino *imaginario*. Los materiales discursivos descansaban en la memoria del escritor y eran fruto de sus lecturas, de su educación y del poso que la tradición había dejado en él. La *inventio* conectaba al poeta con los modelos valorados para cada género: Sófocles para el teatro, Homero para la épica, Virgilio para el género bucólico y así sucesivamente. Esta especial relación con su tradición literaria obligaba al poeta — a lo largo de todo el Paradigma clásico — a ser un erudito, *rhetor et philologus*, pues de ello dependía su acierto a la hora de seleccionar los temas sobre los que pensaba componer sus poemas. En los manuales de Retórica, la *inventio* aparecía codificada en forma de tópicos, *lugares comunes* a los que recurrir en ese momento previo a la creación. Los materiales *inventivos* hacían referencia a un cierto "estado de cosas", donde aparecían implicados unos personajes, unas acciones y unas circunstancias (espacio, tiempo, causa, modo, instrumento). La diferencia entre los tópicos de la Retórica y los que pertenecían a la literatura consistía, básicamente, en que estos últimos remitían a un "estado de cosas" ficticio.

Los tópicos aparecen ya en Aristóteles (1990) y también en la obra de Cicerón (1997: I, 24–26); a este último pertenece la *Teoría de los atributos* (de personas y cosas), inventario de propiedades

"atribuibles" a personajes (*loci a persona*) y a hechos implicados (*loci a re*). Los tópicos eran, pues, posibilidades temáticas, inventivas, consagradas por la tradición y perfectamente codificadas. Siguiendo cada una de las opciones del inventario de la *teoría de los atributos de persona* podemos elaborar una teoría del héroe clásico, moderno, romántico, etc. Es decir, además de servir como guía para la construcción de un discurso, supone un modelo analítico-interpretativo.

Curtius ha estudiado ejemplarmente la noción de tópico[5] así como sus principales manifestaciones. El autor alemán entiende la Tópica como un almacén de provisiones que supone el fundamento de la Literatura europea; estos principios inventivos son materiales vinculados con el inconsciente colectivo, con el imaginario social, y es en este sentido en el que cabe hablar de una *Tópica histórica*. Su enfoque es evolutivo e histórico y explica la *preferencia* por unos y otros tópicos en función del contexto histórico en el que aparecen (cf. Curtius 1999).

El *decoro* era el principio operativo que conectaba la *inventio* con las otras dos operaciones retóricas — *elocutio* y *dispositio*- pues adecuaba el tema al género, al nivel lingüístico apropiado, al personaje, a la situación, al auditorio, etc. No hay que olvidar que durante el Paradigma clásico los tópicos estaban asociados a esquemas elocutivos concretos, por esa razón cabe encontrar, debajo de un tópico, una figura retórica específica. Los lugares comunes, regulados por el decoro, tenían una forma poética concreta que les correspondía, así como un género y una situación, digamos poética, en la que aparecer.

La *elocutio* ha sido entendida como una *técnica* capaz de demostrar el virtuosismo del poeta, como un mecanismo *formal* de renovación lingüística y como un arte *instrumental* (susceptible de

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[5] Algunos de los tópicos fundamentales que se revisan son: la tópica de la consolación, la falsa modestia, tópica del exordio, tópica de la conclusión, invocación a la naturaleza, el mundo al revés, el niño y el anciano, la anciana y la moza, tópica de lo indecible, sobrepujamiento, alabanza a los contemporáneos, tópica del héroe, panegírico de los soberanos, las armas y las letras, la nobleza del alma o la hermosura.

ser practicado) que obtiene su éxito a través de la *elaboración* feliz, adecuada y artificiosa del lenguaje. La *inventio* debería articularse como una suerte de *memoria* literaria que conecta al poeta, y a su obra, no ya con su lengua sino con su *tradición* poética, al poner a su disposición diferentes *topoi* ya consagrados por la historia literaria.

Bornscheuer (2002: 221–229), en un excelente artículo en el que revisa el concepto de "topos", reivindica la necesidad de recuperar "el horizonte de la conciencia tópica":

> La retórica histórica no ha sido un instrumento de comunicación simplemente formal o sistemáticamente organizado. Por ello sería inadecuada una concepción marcadamente tecnológica. Durante más de dos mil años la retórica fue más bien un medio de educación complejo y referido cualitativamente a un fundamento sociocultural determinado" (ib. 221).

La novena tesis del trabajo de Bornscheuer propone destacar cuatro factores funcionales que parecen ser "constituitivos de un concepto de topos plenamente válido (o de una tópica en su conjunto)" (ib. 227). Estos cuatro factores estructurales de los *topoi* serían:

a. Estar determinados socio-culturalmente.
b. Su potencialidad interpretativa.
c. Intencionalidad (capacidad para servir como punto de vista argumentativo concreto).
d. Simbolicidad.

El primer rasgo estructural insiste en que a través de los *topoi* se asumen e incorporan hábitos y patrones socioculturales, por eso podemos constatar la modificación de los mismos en la medida en la que patrones y hábitos socioculturales varían. Esta cuestión sería de vital importancia a la hora de elaborar una tópica histórica atenta al contexto sociocultural en el que se inserta.

Sin restar valor al resto de características estructurales, los rasgos que más me interesa rescatar son los llamados por

Bornscheuer "potencialidad interpretativa" y "simbolicidad". El primero de ellos remite a una cuestión de máximo interés:

> El principio de la "plétora" (...) requiere tanto una habilidad interpretativa, caracterizada por una gran capacidad de imaginación respecto de cada uno de los *topoi* en diferentes contextos problemáticos, como también la posibilidad de disponer de un gran tesoro de topoi diferentes para un mismo contexto problemático (ib. 227).

Es decir, los *topoi* no sólo se modifican socioculturalmente sino que su *adaptabilidad* a los distintos contextos discursivos los hace susceptibles de ser interpretados. Un mismo tópico variará de significado en función del contexto poético en el que aparezca, ofreciendo ricas posibilidades de interpretación desde una perspectiva comparativa.

Por último, el carácter simbólico de los *topoi* recuerda la dimensión no meramente tecnológica de la *inventio*:

> La esencia de un topos la constituye su contenido concentrado, y no necesariamente una fórmula lingüística fija. La formulación de los topoi (también de los mismos topoi) puede abarcar desde simples palabras clave o fórmulas simbólicas hasta sentencias completas o complejos de simbolización. En todos los casos los topoi son materiales elementales de la imaginación y, por su naturaleza, se encuentran con frecuencia en el límite entre lo lingüístico y lo simbólico (ib. 228).

Los *topoi*, dada su esencia simbólica, se convierten en *interpretaciones del mundo*, renovables cada vez por el poeta, al tiempo que conectan esa cosmovisión particular con todos los otros contextos poéticos en los que han aparecido. Los *topoi* poseen toda una historia *poética* que debe ser rescatada si se quiere rastrear cómo se construye el *significado* de una obra. Los tópicos abren el significado a la intertextualidad, pues son deudores de la tradición que los ha configurado; los tópicos, al fin y al cabo, son los

lugares comunes por los que ha transitado, con viajes de ida y vuelta, la literatura.

Ahora bien, los tópicos fueron olvidados, desterrados de la Poética romántica, como si con el cambio de Paradigma la literatura se quedara sin *lugares*. Para acentuar la pérdida, el renacer de la Retórica en el siglo XX limitó sus aportaciones, influida por los excesos del formalismo lingüístico propios del siglo pasado, al campo tecnológico e instrumental de la *elocutio*.

Es incuestionable que con el cambio de Paradigma -del clásico al romántico- se acabó con el principio del *decorum* que regulaba la adecuada relación entre la *inventio*, la *dispositio* y la *elocutio*, sin embargo, si no se ha puesto en duda la existencia de una *elocutio* contemporánea (y postcontemporánea), ¿por qué se tendrían que olvidar para siempre las otras operaciones de la Retórica? La renovación literaria propia del Romanticismo, acentuada por las vanguardias históricas, siguió siempre una trayectoria *indecorosa*, en el sentido de que rompió con las consagradas correspondencias entre la forma y el contenido, y , por lo tanto, los tópicos dejaron de tener un contexto adecuado de aparición; esto no significa, evidentemente, que desaparecieran.

No hay que olvidar otro motivo crucial que fomentó la disolución de la conciencia tópica: la aparición del genio. Los rasgos del poeta clásico se transformaron notablemente respecto a la época anterior, pues varió una relación fundamental que le unía a la tradición, esto es, la *mimesis* o *imitatio*. García Galiano (1991: 143–165) ha revisado las diferentes acepciones que la imitación tuvo en la antigüedad, al tiempo que reflexiona sobre el sentido profundo que la *imitatio* tuvo durante el Humanismo:

> Mientras que la poesía aparece exaltada (...) sus temas y sus formas — según qué doctrina la balanza se inclinará más del lado de éstas o de aquellos — se irán a buscar siempre en las fuentes de inspiración antigua. Por una parte, el Humanismo defiende el directo y espontáneo testimonio de una común humanidad, el esfuerzo de construirse a sí mismos, pregun-

> tando a los antiguos el camino para lograr esa anagnórisis (ib. 147).

El poeta clásico, ideal de hombre completo de Quintiliano, debía formarse y educarse a través de la tradición que le había sido legada, pues de ello dependía, entre otras cosas, el éxito de sus discursos. El concepto de imitación entronca directamente con el de la *inventio* y ésta vuelve a aparecer como la memoria literaria del poeta:

> La invención podía provenir de las lecturas y de la respectiva formación filosófica (..) Era por ello sumamente importante que su educación fuera la mejor posible, porque si la cultura filosófica (en ética, política y lógica) no ha sido en él profunda y rectamente aprendida, su *inventio* resultará, sin duda, reprobable" (ib. 159).

Al concepto de *imitatio* hay que vincular el mecanismo clasicista de la *Retractatio* (o repetición de modelos), pues es el encargado de regular ese fenómeno de "repetición-reelaboración" de lo ya escrito que da lugar, en la literatura clásica, a las infinitas versiones de cada fábula. La *Retractatio* se sirve de los tópicos (en su acepción de *motivos* literarios), entendidos como repertorios de erudición que proliferaron tanto en latín como en las lenguas vulgares; se trata de un almacén temático de mitologías, dichos, apotegmas, etc. Estos materiales son interpretados como un gran mecanismo de *intertextualidad*, pues cada texto posee un conjunto de resonancias temáticas que remiten a otros textos. La *retractatio* vuelve a ser un modelo o principio de composición pero también puede entenderse como una forma — intertextual — de lectura.

No hace falta insistir en que la concepción del poeta clásico se derrumbó con el advenimiento del genio romántico; la *mimesis* es sustituida por el principio de originalidad, los pilares *decorosos* del arte se tambalean y el escritor, lejos de desear la repetición (renovada) de fórmulas o temas, buscará decirlo todo *por primera vez*. Los clásicos dejan de ser un modelo para convertirse en centro de críticas, y es entonces cuando comienza todo un proceso de *inversión* de los valores clásicos tradicionales. Lo "feo" ocupará el

antiguo puesto reservado a la Belleza; Caín, Lucifer y Prometeo se alzarán como representaciones renovadas del poeta, que quedará convertido hasta nuestros días en un exiliado, un maldito. Con el surgimiento del genio parecería que los tópicos sobran, pues el poeta ya no es un imitador, sino un creador original. Sin embargo, la literatura no ha podido quedarse sin *lugares comunes*.

Pozuelo Yvancos (1988: 206–208) ha estudiado cuáles serían las posibles vías de investigación y desarrollo de una *inventio* conectada con los actuales planteamientos de la investigación retórica:

1. Como conjunto de *universales operacionales* de naturaleza semántico-hermeneútica.
2. Como depósito de temas o como memoria de una colectividad en determinados estratos de su propia evolución (siguiendo por tanto la acepción de Curtius).
3. Como el conjunto de ideologemas de que se nutren los textos, esto es, como el trazado de una reescritura de los textos en lo que éstos tienen de mecanismo portador de una ideología.

Creo que el futuro de una *inventio* literaria debe dirigirse en la segunda dirección señalada por Pozuelo Yvancos (ib. 208): "Una de las tareas mas urgentes, en efecto, de la Retórica textual es la realización de tipologías textuales que establezcan la *inventio* de ciertos géneros o especies poéticas y no poéticas".

Hacia una Retórica (post) contemporánea

La novela contemporánea — y postconteporánea — siempre ha sido entendida en términos de "revolución formal" respecto a la narrativa tradicional. Los juegos con el tiempo y el espacio, la problematización del narrador o las fronteras entre la ficción y la realidad son algunos de los temas más estudiados en narratología contemporánea.

Lo que este artículo pretendía era proponer la reactualización de un campo de estudio, la *inventio* poética, que iluminaría la lectura de los textos contemporáneos; en pocas palabras, se trataba

de recuperar una tradición de análisis para adecuarla a un objeto de estudio nuevo.

Esta línea de investigación se orientaría hacia dos direcciones complementarias:

a) Estudio de la evolución, tradición y re-elaboración de tópicos clásicos.

Para estos trabajos sería necesario adoptar ciertos planteamientos de los estudios de Tradición clásica y utilizar una metodología comparativa. Para que este artículo no se quede en meras elucubraciones teóricas, me atrevería a proponer algunos títulos que pueden ilustrar en qué sentido creo que debería desarrollarse esta línea de trabajo:

- El tópico del *Locus Amoenus*, o paisaje ideal, en la narrativa latinoamericana del siglo XX.
- El tópico del *mundo al revés* en la obra de autores mexicanos como J. J Arreola, A. Monterroso y J. Ibaruengoitia.
- El tópico del *Carpe Diem*, o su reverso *la pérdida del día*, en la narrativa de I. Calvino y A. Tabucchi.

b) Elaboración de un nuevo inventario de *lugares comunes* propio y original de la (Post)contemporaneidad.

Para esta otra dirección sería fundamental incorporar los trabajos sobre fenomenología de la imaginación, así como los estudios del imaginario antropológico. La metodología comparativa — y la intertextualidad — siguen siendo los dos pilares fundamentales del análisis. En esta línea de investigación sería necesario elaborar una nueva *Teoría de los atributos del héroe* que de cuenta de las características propias del héroe romántico, contemporáneo y postcontemporáneo.

Conclusión

Creo que una forma de concluir todo lo que se ha esbozado en los apartados anteriores podría ser la repetición de dos preguntas que planteaba al comienzo de estas páginas: ¿qué hemos perdido al exiliar a la *inventio* de los modelos analíticos modernos?, ¿en qué medida afecta este olvido a los estudios sobre narrativa

(post)contemporánea? Confío en que haya quedado claro que lo que se pierde es uno de los caminos posibles para conectar el imaginario de una obra con la tradición poética de la que procede, así como la oportunidad de elaborar un inventario de *nuevos lugares comunes* que nos permita trazar un mapa -tal vez una *Geopoética*- en el que podamos recorrer los itinerarios que enlazan unos tópicos con otros. Viajar a través de esa *topología* –de la Arcadia de Virgilio al Amazonas de Carpentier, por ejemplo- tendrá algo de aventura intertextual, como ocurre siempre con la literatura.

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Upon 'riverrun'

REET SOOL

Although the title of this conference offers a choice between 'a leap' and 'a standstill' for 'the genre of the novel in the contemporary world literature', I decided to opt for 'riverrun', this fascinating opening of James Joyce that opens and closes his great experiment, to quote Nabokov, "a tragic failure and a frightful bore" (Nabokov 1973: 151) which, incidentally, is also tragically and systematically misspelt in the Estonian press as *Finnegan' [apostrophe]s Wake.* Joyce's novels are protean, changing quickly and easily, like rivers that never stand still, and hardly ever leap, except in waterfalls, perhaps. Now Joyce's experiment was obviously too novel (in the dictionary meaning of 'strikingly new, unusual, or different'), of course, for novel lovers, even the most patient ones. Complains Ezra Pound to whom Joyce had sent some pages of his *Work in Progress* as the novel novel was known up to its publication in 1939: "up to the present I can make nothing of it whatever. Nothing so far as I can make out, nothing short of divine vision or a new cure for the clapp can possibly be worth all the circumambient peripherization" (quoted in Connor 1996: 79). Novelty, ethymology-wise, has much to do with the genre, the term *novel* being an English transliteration of the Italian *novella,* literally, a "little new thing, piece of news, chit-chat", which was a short, compact tale in prose best represented by Boccaccio's *Decameron.* Ultimately, of course, the term goes back to Latin *novus* with its diminutive *novellus.* However, in most European languages the respective word is *roman,* derived from the medieval term *romance* with its implications of the legendary, imaginative,

and the poetic. Its ethymology goes back to Latin again, *Romanicus, Romanus,* whereas in Late Latin the form *Romanice* denoted the Roman language, i.e. the vulgar language which sprang from Latin as spoken by Romans, and hence applied to fictitious compositions written in it (Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary 1996, 1998). Historically, as we know, the distinction between *novel* and *romance* was often made throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the *novel* associated with the actual present world and the laws of probability, and the *romance* with the distant past and the improbable.

Such distinctions exist no longer, the genre has proved to be truly dynamic, very resistant to various prognostications of its imminent death — to quote John Barth, the American novelist classified as postmodernist as early as in the 1970s, and author of the three important essays on this topic, "The Literature of Exhaustion" (1968), "The Literature of Replenishment" (1980), and "Postmodernism Revisited" (1988), who professed having "stopped worrying about the death of the novel (a Modernist worry) and begun worrying about the death of the reader — and the planet — instead." (Barth 1988: 22). Joyce's masterpieces have, over the decades, put the readers on their mettle. In Estonia, as it happens, the very name of Joyce stands for something hopelessly elitist, confused and confusing, above all, formless, and generally next to impossible to read. However, his major works have not been translated into our language (and I mean *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* here), apart from the opening chapter of *Ulysses* in a literary magazine, *Vikerkaar*, a somewhat wooden rendering. The standard difficulty about *Finnegans Wake* stems from the much-acclaimed inability of deciding what language it is in the first place at any given moment. There is, however, some agreement that contemporary computer technology might come in useful while sorting this out, as well as in reading and studying Joyce in general, with far-reaching analogies made between his work (particularly *Finnegans Wake*) and cyberspace. This may cause a kind of leap, come to think of it. As the inevitable Derrida has put it:

> ... this 1000th generation computer — *Ulysses, Finnegans Wake* — besides which the current technology of our computers and our microcomputerified archives and our translating machines remains a *bricolage* of a prehistoric child's toys. And above all its mechanisms are of a slowness incommensurable with the quasi-infinite speed of the movements on Joyce's cables. How could you calculate the speed with which a mark, a marked piece of information, is placed in contact with another in the same word or from one end of the book to another? (Derrida 1984: 147).

I must resort to less sophisticated means and I would like to return, modestly, to the image of flowing and fusion as it presents itself to us in the opening chapter of *Ulysses,* that novel of the 20th century, or, more vulgarly, the top novel of the century, as it is often hailed. Personally, I dislike such distinctions, and would definitely restrain from measuring the immeasurable, even though I am well aware of the technical nature of our era and the pressures entailed in it. While doing this, I hope not to lose track of the initial ethymological dichotomy presented in the introductory part of my paper.

Even though in popular parlance *Ulysses* serves as the very epitome of formlessness, the first chapter has a splendid and easily detectable structure. It begins with a lucid description of one of the minor characters of the novel, Buck Mulligan, emerging from the stairhead, ready for his morning shave. It is a typical beginning *in medias res*, without the preliminary specification of time and place, the historical circumstances, the personal backgrounds of the characters and the like, usually associated with the run-of-the-mill novels of the period. The syntax of the sentence is coherent, its rhythm well-measured and leisurely, phonetically predominated by the 'r' sounds in its second half, which successfully convey the sensation of sharpness:

> Stately, plump Buck Mulligan came from the stairhead, bearing a bowl of lather on which a mirror and a razor lay crossed. (Joyce 1986: 3; all further quotations come from this edition).

The very beginning of the sentence with repeated 'a' sounds as in 'plump Buck Mulligan' and the idea of roundness they convey, creates a balancing effect to the somewhat quicker tempo of the second half of the sentence. This is a peaceful, one would think, an ordinary morning scene, very prosy, and in every sense intelligible. The stray one-word evocation of Chrysostomos, "golden-mouthed", in connection with Mulligan's teeth, is the first inkling of the free-flowing associative style for which Joyce is so famous (and feared, at the same time) — stream of consciousness, or, to quote a slip of a critic, actually a befitting pun, 'dream of consciousness'. It does not, however, render reading difficult or blurred, even if one does not resort to comments and notes. Direct speech, as was Joyce's habit, is indicated with hyphens and not with inverted, or, as Joyce called them, 'perverted' commas, a rule that has sometimes been overlooked in foreign editions. It is also easy to detect at this stage who is speaking. As the novel progresses, this changes, however, with the introduction of a series of quickly shifting narrators, some of which remain impersonal. In fact, the conversation could be called 'chit chat', small gibing remarks exchanged, casually and inconsequentially, lulling the reader into a mood of false security. However, that mood is abruptly broken, when the topic of the death of Stephen's mother is brought up by Mulligan, the cynical medical student. The death of mother is the great underlying source of pain and remorse in Joyce's works, and it resurfices as early as on the third page of this novel:

> — Our mighty mother! Buck Mulligan said.
>
> He turned abruptly his grey searching eyes from the sea to Stephen's face.
>
> — The aunt thinks you killed your mother, he said. That's why she won't let me have anything to do with you. (Ib. 5)

Now a highly intense and poetic passage follows, displaying Joyce's sensitivity to sound and rhythm, a talented musician that he was. Note also the discrepancy between the subject addressed and the manner of rendering this:

> Stephen, an elbow rested on the jagged granite, leaned his palm against his brow and gazed at the fraying edge of his shiny black coatsleeve. Pain, that was not yet the pain of love, fretted his heart. Silently, in a dream she had come to him after her death, her wasted body within its loose brown graveclothes giving off an odour of wax and rosewood, a faint odour of wetted ashes. Across the threadbare cuffedge he saw the sea hailed as a great sweet mother by the well-fed voice beside him. The ring of bay and skyline held a dull green mass of liquid. A bowl of white china had stood beside her deathbed holding the green sluggish bile which she had torn up from her rotting liver by fits of loud groaning vomiting." (Ib.)

In my opinion, this is Joyce at his greatest, Joyce the poet in prose, accumulating dismal detail (jagged granite, fraying edge, wasted body, loose brown graveclothes, faint odour, wetted ashes, threadbare cuffedge) to convey the profound sense of loss and pain, touching the very essence of being, and ultimately, achieving pure beauty. The notion of the mortality of man underlines everything in this novel, rendering life as it appears here, in its brevity and vulnerability, a special glow. We also have an interesting case of self-awareness on the part of the author here, who otherwise in this book never acknowledges his existence, a self-awareness, usually associated with post-modernist writings. In the following example, as I see it, the musicality of the text, its stresses, is practically commented upon. The scene involves Stephen:

> Woodshadows floated silently by through the morning peace from the stairhead seaward where he gazed. Inshore and farther out the mirror of water whitened, spurned by lightshod hurrying feet. White

> breast of the dim sea. The twining stresses, two by two. A hand plucking the harpstrings, merging their twining chords. Wavewhite wedded words shimmering on the dim tide. (Ib. 8)

'The twining stresses' quite obviously refer to the antecedent sentence, with its pair of 'white breast' and 'dim sea'. The 'wavewhite wedded words', too, could be interpreted as a kind of authorial self-reference, if we wish so, but also as an allusion to a Yeats's poem sung by Mulligan and, importantly, by Stephen on his mother's death-bed. The scene of mother dying is powerfully re-enacted a few pages further on — first in a slightly modified version, a few words reshuffled here and there, as if carelessly copied, and others left out, creating a disturbing sense of déjà vu, and then further enlarged, forming the painful core of the entire chapter, as of the whole novel:

> In a dream, silently, she had come to him, her wasted body within its loose graveclothes giving off an odour of wax and rosewood, her breath, bent over him with mute secret words, a faint odour of wetted ashes.
>
> Her glazing eyes, staring out of death, to shake and bend my soul. On me alone. The ghostcandle to light her agony. Ghostly light on the tortured face. Her hoarse loud breath rattling in horror, while all prayed on their knees. Her eyes on me to strike me down. *Liliata rutilantium te confessorum turma circumdet: iubilantium te virginum chorus excipiat.*
>
> Ghoul! Chewer of corpses!
>
> No, mother! Let me be and let me live. (Ib. 9)

Oscillating perspectives (often unidentified) are generally believed to be the core of Joyce's novel literary technique, and even within a limited space as the above, we see it at work, very subtly so: in the first sentence we have "she had come to *him*" (emphasis here and further on mine), in the next one, "to shake and bend *my* soul", a shift from third to first person, very subtle, almost faint, to

intensify the mood. The same is true of switching styles: from straightforward to stream of consciousness to parodic, combined or prevailing within a chapter. The first predominantly lucid, the last, famously, a flow of associations, registering the slightest waverings of consciousness — an enormous impact on later literature. Within the changing styles, sudden switches to highly poetic diction and extravagant verbal play, or fireworks. (In fact, while trying to distinguish between the modern and the post-modern in Joyce, Ihab Hassan characterizes *Ulysses* as "modern shading into postmodern", and *Finnegans Wake* as "postmodern" (Hassan 2001: 8). He does so in the form of an answer to his own question, "Which Joyce?" (ib.), a question that can have no one answer in this supposedly postmodern world of ours.

Through the peregrinations of the characters, ordinary people of Dublin — paralyzed by their dismal circumstances, yet protean in their own way, a blend of seriousness and mockery, within a day that cover the in-between from maternity hospital to cemetery, we have a stunning panorama of life not just there and then but also of life here and now. All this captured in a book that is both novel and old, both 'novel' and 'roman', containing the prose and poetry of our very being as heard in this one word, written later, 'riverrun'. It defies all classifications and serves well to illustrate one of many definitions of the novel genre as such: its "best definition is ultimately the history of what it has been" (Coleman 1981: 299), a history that continues flowing with bends and refluxes, not entirely unlike 'riverrun'.

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Where IS the AU (STER)THOR?

VERA SHAMINA

The works of Paul Auster, generally referred to as postmodernist, in my view reflect some tendencies of its further development. Postmodernism itself becomes for Auster a kind of working material which can be reflected on and played with, as well as the rest of the whole bulk of all written texts belonging to the past. Still, at first glance, the reader gets an impression of having a text written according to all the rules of post modernism which has already developed its canon — intertextuality, literary and scientific allusions, the labyrinth of associations, the phantasmagoric interplay of reality and illusion, the reduplication of characters, the open finale etc. In his famous and most characteristic novel *City of Glass* — the first part of his *The New York Trilogy* — the plot involves all sorts of global issues, such as the divine origin of the language, the existential loneliness, the dread of changes in the routine world and others. But all these problems are used by the author as sphinx' puzzles which are not supposed to be solved, as there is no solution, they just lead the reader into a labyrinth, with no way out. All these ideas are used as the basis for contemplation, discussion, and re-evaluation, creating the suspense appropriate for the genre of the metaphysical thriller to which the novel belongs. The main problem here, as in many postmodernist works, is the problem of the interrelation of the author and its heroes on the one hand, and the reader on the other. This problem, which is introduced and tackled on several levels, becomes the most crucial for the novel and, unlike all the others, is finally solved in the text. However, it is not solved on the traditional level of the plot

structure because here we find ourselves again in a kind of labyrinth filled with doubles which multiply the puzzle. But at the same time the author's intention in creating these puzzles finally becomes clear as it is through them that he conveys his message, his attitude towards the problem of the author and his heroes. On the one hand, unlike many other works of fiction, the author seems to be present in this novel in the flesh, but we soon find out that, firstly, he is not the only one, and, secondly, he is not the Author!

The name of the central character is Daniel Quinn. He used to be a poet, a playwright, a translator, and a literary critic. After the death of his wife and son he rejects his previous life and starts writing mystical thrillers under the name of William Wilson, identifying himself with their protagonist Max Work. After a number of insistent late-night phone calls addressed to a different person but coming to his number Quinn agrees to take up a case of 'life and death' under the name of the person for whom those calls were meant. That is where the series of bizarre coincidences starts. The name of the detective in whose place Quinn finds himself is *Paul Auster*. Thus the readers find themselves involved in an intricate detective plot, which as it develops more and more resembles a mysterious labyrinth, where we get lost together with the protagonist. Totally confused, Quinn finds in the telephone directory a Paul Auster who, as the protagonist himself and the author of the novel, turns out to be a poet, a playwright, a translator, a literary critic, and a novelist. But this Auster is definitely not the Author and has very little to do with the plot. He becomes a kind of an intermediary between the protagonist, who finally disappears, and the first person narrator, who takes floor at the end of the novel. This narrator, who is sorry about Quinn's disappearance, and is well aware of the course of events, may seem to be the real author of the novel, who finally steps forward to speak to the reader directly (so far the novel was written in the third person). But this assumption also turns out to be wrong, as the narrator tells us that he learnt the whole story from Quinn's notebook, which they together with Auster found in the flat of the people who had hired Quinn as a detective, where he spent his last days before his disappearance. For the reader not to think that

finally everything starts to clear up, the narrator adds that, "The red book, of course, is only half the story, as any sensitive reader will understand" (Auster 2002: 132) — but does not explain where we have to look for the second half. The narrator's friend Auster was so sorry for Quinn that he decided not to do anything with the found notebook and told the narrator, "that he never wanted to see it again" (ib.). This is in brief the general outline of the plot, to be more exact, of the part connected with the presence of Paul Austers or different incarnations of the Author. All together, there are at least four of them — one is the author of the novel whose name is written on the cover, another, also a writer, is the one who unexpectedly appears in the middle of the novel, but who cannot be the author of the novel, as he did not read the red book which is used by the actual author. The third Auster is the detective who was looked for by Quinn's clients, also a poet, writer, translator, and critic. And finally there is the fake Auster — Daniel Quinn, who takes his name and carries out the investigation, and who in fact wrote the text in the red book. Still there are two more characters who can be at least partly identified as authors — the narrator, who appears in the end and seems to understand everything though not sharing his knowledge with the readers; and even more so Stillman, the man to spy on whom Quinn was hired.

Stillman attempted to carry out a horrible experiment. He wrote a book about the divine origin of language, where he tried to prove that if a child grew up totally isolated from society he would develop the language of God. In accordance with this hypothesis, he kept his own son for nine years in confinement, where he could neither see the light nor hear the human voice. He was fed through a hole in the wall and was punished whenever he tried to speak. The experiment was interrupted by fire, when Stillman the junior was found and taken to hospital and Stillman the senior put into prison. This story is related to Quinn by Stillman the junior, who hires him to shadow his father who has just left prison. It is interesting to note that apart from many different real cases when children were brought up away from society, Stillman in his book analyses the ancient myth about the Tower of Babel, which tells how the single divine language was split into numerous human

languages. What is especially stunning, Quinn finally becomes involved in the continuation of Stillman's experiment. Several months before his mysterious disappearance Quinn watches the house of his clients from the park. He practically lives as our forefathers did — he sleeps in the trees, eats whatever he can find, does not communicate with anybody, and finally loses the skills of articulate speech. After Quinn learns that Stillman committed suicide and his son with his wife left, he penetrates into their flat and stays in the room with no light, but where mysteriously from time to time he finds food. Quinn plunges into complete silence but records his story in the red book and finally disappears. Therefore the novel describes a gigantic experiment carried out according to Stillman's book. What is more, when Quinn tries to map Stillman's daily route, it graphically formulates the symbolic phrase the *Tower of Babel*. Thus we get an impression that Stillman is creating a myth which takes place in the modern Babel — New York. According to him, it is there that the divine language is to revive. But all these theories that we find in Stillman's book the latter claims to have borrowed from the book by Henry Dark (another author) written in the 17th century. Quinn got acquainted with Stillman's book in the library, as he wanted to get a better idea about the man he was going to spy on. Its first chapter is fully devoted to the myth about the Tower of Babel. It puzzles the reader, as it seems that it has nothing to do with the present story. But in the second chapter Stillman starts to comment a certain brochure written by Henry Dark, Milton's personal secretary. Stillman insists that most of the copies of this brochure, titled *New Babel* and published in 1690, perished in the fire and he seems to have found the only copy that survived. In this work Dark argues the possibility of regaining Paradise (a direct allusion to Milton), but according to him, it is not a place but a part of human being. Adam and Eve's fall brought along the disappearance of the divine language of purity and innocence, and having restored it humanity will get rid of its sinfulness and regain Paradise. Dark develops a detailed plan about where and how it will happen. He thinks that if Babel was to the east of the Promised Land, to the west of it should be Eden. The most western place in this case is

America. Then Dark compares the voyage of the Pilgrim Fathers over the ocean with Noah's Arch and comes to the following conclusion: just as Babel was built 340 years after the flood, New Babel will revive in 340 years after the first settlers — the new chosen people — came to America. Having calculated the date from *Mayflower*'s arrival, he concludes that in 1960 New Babel will come into being. The tower will have room for everyone, entering which a person will forget all that he/she knew before. In forty days (the duration of the Flood) a new man speaking the divine language and having regained paradise will be born: "History will be written in reverse" (Auster 2002: 48). Having read this, Quinn recalls that it was in the year of 1960 mentioned by Dark that Stillman started his experiment. So he was trying to implement the idea of another author, attempting to turn his hypothesis into reality. Moreover, the continuation of this experiment in which Quinn takes part is absolutely identical to what Dark described in his book — his life in an isolated room, silence, which finally results in total forgetfulness and rejection of his former life. But the thing is that Henry Dark was nothing but Stillman's invention, therefore in his book Stillman discusses, and comments on his own ideas, or we may say, is playing a typically postmodernist game with the readers. So where is the Author? The book is written by Quinn, who is also the protagonist, by the narrator, by Stillman and Paul Auster. What was the reason for the real Paul Auster, the author of ten other novels to create so many doubles, thus practically eliminating the border between the author and his characters? What is the meaning of these numerous personifications of himself?

To realize what is going on, it is worthwhile to recall the works of R. Barthes, who was the one to shed new light on the problem of the author in a work of fiction and turn it into a key issue of postmodernist discussions. To begin with, many peculiarities of the novel stop being enigmatic when acknowledged as a perfect actualization of some principles introduced by Barthes in *The Death of the Author*, where he attacks the common and traditional view of the author as the ultimate explanation of the work. According to him, the author becomes little more than a

hypothesis, mostly made up by critics, while the reader is free to interpret the text in his/her own way. Thus the birth of the reader occurs at the cost of the death of the Author (Barthes 1989: 391). Therefore we may say that in his novel Paul Auster follows Barthes recipe to the letter — he 'cedes the initiative to words', to the text itself, which generates its own meaning, which is in its turn destroyed by the further development of the text. This also echoes Jacques Derrida's idea that a text may possess so many different meanings that it cannot have a Meaning. Barthes also tries to create a new reader who is no longer conditioned by the construct of an author and his tyrannical dictatorship. Developing this idea in his later essay *From Work to Text* the critic becomes less categorical and states that the ghost of the author may appear in the text but only as 'a guest'; he does not have any parental rights and becomes one of the characters. (ib. 420). Therefore we may conclude that the message of Barthes' theory is not so much the death of the author but rather his/her equality with the reader and other characters.

That is exactly what Auster is doing. The author and the readers of his novel are absolutely in the same position; together they are trying to solve the same puzzles. When Quinn, who has adopted the name of Auster sees two Stillmans at the railway station he is just as bewildered as the reader, and they both have to decide which one is the one to watch, and both are not sure that they have chosen the right one. Together they follow Stillman in his strange strolls and simultaneously guess that his route can be graphically read as the *Tower of Babel*. Both the reader and Quinn/Auster — the creator of the story in the red book — are unaware of where Stillman finally disappears, as well as his son and daughter-in-law. All this creates the impression that the talented writer decides to demonstrate in practice the ideas of the talented critic and his novel serves as an illustration of Barthes' essays. But still there is something that puts us on the alert: Such obvious deliberateness creates rather a comic effect and makes us think of a parody rather than of a serious intention to prove Barthes' theory. Besides if we consider all those characters that serve as the Athor's shadows we can easily see the difference in

their functions in the text. Daniel Quinn is first and foremost the major character who performs one of the author's functions — to move the plot, in which he takes part himself and writes it down. He is as helpless and ignorant about the course of events as the reader. If compared with the types of authors in classic fiction, Quinn is close to the autobiographical model of the author. The second 'co-author' — Paul Auster, a writer — is in a different position: he does not know much of what is known to Quinn, as he refuses to read the red book, but on the other hand he possesses some information that the latter does not have. He learns from newspapers, which Quinn does not read, about Stillman's suicide, he is the first to find out that Sillman's son has left with his wife. He does not participate in the action but just watches it. Therefore his position in the text is close to the model of an observer-author. A certain anonymous narrator who appears in the end combines the functions of a first person narrator with those of an omniscient author, who seems to know much more than he relates. And finally we have Stillman who creates a kind of metatext, a scenario according to which the others are acting. This is very similar to the role of a playwright. So, on the one hand, the author is as ignorant as the reader, but on the other, he is multifarious and can perform different functions in the text. He may also be absent as the Paul Auster-detective, who does not appear in the text but serves as the drive of the plot. Thus the author of the novel brilliantly demonstrates that every character is just another incarnation of the author himself, which he creates in accordance with his views, and taken together they form the composite author who finally will be definitely more informed than the reader.

It is interesting to point out that the mechanism of such multi-authorship is described and discussed in the novel itself. It happens when Quinn visits Paul Auster, the writer, and they discuss the latter's essay on the authorship of *Don Quixote*. Just as in the case of the novel in question (*City of Glass)* nobody doubts who the real author is. But Cervantes himself insisted that he was only the editor of a manuscript translated from Arabic and written by a certain Cid Hamete Benengeli, who according to Cervantes had recorded some true facts. Paul Auster, the character, argues that in

this case Benengeli should be present in the text as an onlooker, a witness of the events. So where is he? Since Benengeli as a character is absent, Auster creates a theory that he is a composite author: "<...>he is actually a combination of four different people" (Auster 2002: 98). One is Sancho Panza — who was a good storyteller but could neither read nor write. His co-authors are the barber and the priest, who wrote the story down. And the forth is Simon Carasco — who translates it into Arabic. Still more important is the role of Don Quixote. According to Auster the character, he was quite sane and actually framed up the events: "He orchestrated the whole thing himself. <...> It was Don Quixote who engineered the Benengeli quartet" (ib. 99). Auster accounts for that by the fact that Don Quixote often expressed his worry that the chronicler might not record the events accurately, therefore he knew about his existence and even chose the one himself. The final question which logically follows is, 'why should a noble man take part in such an adventure?' — and Auster's answer eventually puts everything in its place: "Don Quixote was conducting an experiment. He wanted to test the gullibility of his fellowmen" (ib. 100).

Paul Auster's irony is obvious: giving this long explanation which seems to have no relation to the plot he actually articulates all those questions which the readers and critics could discuss having read his own novel and finally explains the model according to which his own novel is structured. Here, too, we have four co-authors — Quinn, two Austers (the detective and the writer) and the narrator in the end who corresponds to the figure of the translator in the case of 'Don Quixote'. Just as Cervantes used and parodied the traditions of tales of chivalry, Paul Auster uses and parodies different psychological, linguistic and literary theories. And finally the function of the mystical figure of Stillman becomes clear when compared to the role of Don Quixote as explained by Auster. The fake madman was actually a puppeteer in the experiment initiated and instrumented to prove his hypothesis. Thus Paul Auster actually implicitly creates a novel within a novel and this new novel is about the Author and his/her role in the text. This author is so free that he can play with the reader and himself,

limiting his own functions at will or creating his doubles, parodying himself, identifying himself at certain moments with one or several of his characters, at others — with the reader. Thus Auster implicitly argues with Barthes and just as the latter claims the death of the author, the writer makes him appear in his text in the flesh demonstrating all possible functions the author may perform. Auster agrees that the role of the author is functional, but this function is of prior importance — apart from being the *scriptor* he is at the same time the main and the minor character, the narrator and the creator of the myth. Actually the character of Stillman can be regarded as a model of a postmodernist author: he rewrites the old myth about the Tower of Babel, but transposes it to New York. Besides, on the basis of this myth, he creates an original story, transposing it into the real world. Thus it becomes impossible to separate the text and reality. This postmodern text generates other texts which, though they refer to it, are quite independent — first it is Quinn's story, which is later rewritten by the narrator. All together these texts constitute the novel *City of Glass* which in its turn is rewritten again in the following parts of the trilogy. That is how Auster actualizes the very process of creating a post-modern text.

On the other hand Auster indeed needs the reader as a very important component of his intellectual game. In his novel the reader, in full conformity with the rules of postmodernism, becomes an active creative force: on his/her intellectual and analytical abilities, knowledge and even mood depends the reading of the text, its depth and message. The multilevel text with each individual approach reveals one more aspect of its possible interpretation. Still Auster definitely claims that it has nothing to do with the death of the author as it is the latter that lays out the labyrinth and establishes the rules of the game. The relations of the author and the readers can be compared to the relationship of the tourists and the guidebook, which definitely excludes their equality. And in this particular point Auster's position differs from that declared and formulated by Barthes.

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Identity and Narrative Voice in Carol Shields's Novel *The Stone Diaries*

TIINA AUNIN

Carol Shields's (1935–2003) eighth novel *The Stone Diaries* (1993) takes its rise from a "humble opinion" that "the real troubles in this world tend to settle on the misalignment between men and women [...] men be(ing) allowed to strut under the privilege of their life adventures, while the stories that happen to women blow themselves up as big as balloons and cover over the day-to-day measure of their lives, swelling and pressing with such fierceness that even the plain and simple separation of time — hours, weeks, months — get lost of view". (Shields 1993: 121–122).

From the moment of her birth Daisy Goodwill's story starts blowing itself up into a cosmic joke called human life. Her mother dies on childbirth giving her child the last of her breath. But as is the case with a postmodern narrative, nothing that follows can be taken for sure, or as Daisy herself admits: "...for however hard I try I can be sure of nothing else in the world but this — the fact of her [mother's — T. A.] final breath [...] burning, freezing against my sealed eyelids and saying: open, open". (Ib. 40).

At first sight a traditional female character of Canadian literature — a sort of *baby ex machina*, to use Margaret Atwood's term — Daisy Goodwill is becoming more and more ambivalent in the narrative process. From the very beginning, the aforementioned "wing-beat of breath" appears to acquire the most crucial dynamics of the novel, become a device by which the

author starts to engender doubts that prevent the reader from a unidimensional reading of her character. In the course of the novel Daisy Goodwill adopts a mysterious narrative veil — a certain open-endedness and indefiniteness, her identity becomes linked to universality as well as to mimicry and masquerade.

A number of passages signal Daisy's erasure of her position as a model woman, let alone being an angel. Numerous narrative slips give the reader a clue to her performance. More than often, it appears, she is playing a role, assuming at times an elaborately fabricated identity. Her house-keeping duties, her endless costume changes, make-up and preparation for sexual rituals are illustrative of Daisy's place in discourse. On the surface, her narrative represents a tradition of women's life-stories, which in recent years have found their way into print all over the world, beginning with the newly independent Estonia down to South Africa. In those stories women often place themselves in the so-called house of representation. Beneath the surface, however, the text discloses a parody involved when the origins of femininity are shown to be an imposture. The excess of mimicry in the text constantly points to the falseness of the image of Daisy's essential selfhood.

Luce Irigaray's speculation on women's narratives gives the reader a clue how to read Shields's portrayal of Daisy and the duality of Daisy's self- representation. Irigaray unveils this kind of duality saying: "If women are such good mimics, it is because they are not simply resorbed in this function. They also remain elswere". (Irigaray 1985: 76) Daisy constantly speaks of herself as being a personage in a text, as being "other". For instance, when watching her first husband's fatal fall from the hotel window she experiences a strange alienation from her subjectivity: "...she is able to disappear from her own like, [...] she has a talent for self-obliteration, [...] she lives outside her story as well as inside". (Shields 1993: 123–124) Daisy's simultaneous participation in her narration and her remaining elsewhwere, her acting out the role of femininity and her dismantling of that part unveils the construction of her subjectivity in the narrative and illustrates the fact that boundaries are not demarcated easily in a postmodern writing.

According to Jacques Lacan's theory Daisy continually reminds herself of the lie between the mirror and mimesis. Mimesis implicates the character in a given society by making her party to the acts that imply it. She must give consent to the ethos of this society. The mirror helps to bring her "self" and "the other" into conjunction. In narrative self-representation Daisy Goodwill often strikes a pose of femininity to remain inside the realm of narrative where representation follows the strictures of masculine discourse. For instance, she follows the cosmetic advertisements and marriage advice in women's magazines for "this is something that has to be put up with" (ib. 186), and though she finds her husband's entreaties sporadic and unpredictable, Daisy still follows the recipe: she is waiting in bed "bathed, powdered, diaphragmed, and softly nightgowned ", for "the wearing of pajamas has driven many a man to seek affection elsewhere". (ib.) Although she believes that "every night would be a lot to put up with" she nevertheless always prepares herself. What all these speculations on masquerade suggest is that Daisy Goodwill, like many women, takes on a feminine role in order to appear less threatening in a system of phallic representation. "Her mimesis represents the procedure of representation, but, as metarepresentation, it is ontologically separated from the referent". (Foley 1986: 93) The character is as if "inserted" into the authorial ideology, which in its turn is relegated to an ambigious position between "general ideology" and the "ideology of the text".

There are numerous other episodes in the novel which testify the duality of Daisy's representation, all of them being intensified by adverse thoughts expressed by Fraidy Hoyt on her visit to Ottawa. Fraidy's first thought is full of admiration and envy on Daisy's "distinguished husband and a large well-managed house and three beautiful children" (Shields 1993: 184), "or else Fraidy Hoyt thought: oh, poor Daisy... Putting a little play every single hypocritical day of their lives. And what can I say to her? What's left to say? I see you are still breathing, Daisy. I notice you continue to wake up in the morning and go to bed at night. Now isn't that interesting. I believe your life is still going along, it's still happening to you. Isn't it? Well, well." (Ib. 184–185).

In this light, Cuyler Goodwill's — the old stonecarver's — words of the school graduation speech sound especially ironic to the reader's ear: "The tools of intelligence are in your hand. You can make of your lives one thing or the other... the choice ...is yours". (Ib. 116). Like many women of the early 20th-century paradigm, Daisy tries to accept the stonecarver's role of modelling her own life. First, she is looking around at the walls for some hopeful sign. And the sign is not long to be waited for: "...swelling and pressing with fierceness she feels a helpless sneeze coming on... the sneeze is loud, powerful, sudden, an explosion". (Ib. 119) When Daisy opens her eyes "...all she sees is an empty rectangle of glaring light". (Ib.). Her alcoholic husband is no longer on the window sill. What she is doing next is to demonstrate her talent for self- obliteration, for the only thing she remembers is "lying flat on the bed for at least a minute" before getting up to investigate whether her husband is alive or not. He is not. And for all the irony, Daisy, who "cannot bear to be the cause of injury" (ib. 334), retains her detachment and bewilderment throughout the novel. Despite all her heroic efforts to embody the very code of civility - she has had two marriages and three children — Daisy is compelled to conclude: all what she has carved in life "will remain half-hidden, half-exposed, and such will reflect the capriciousness of the revealed world". (Ib. 64).

One of the most conspicuous qualities of Carol Shield's novel is, to my mind, the absence of the center of authority. It seems as if the story in itself, without a narrator, is seeking who to hitch up to. It is not clear up to the end who tells us the story, the only possible answer being — we ourselves. The narrator's voice is, of course, constantly perceived, but it is not just a mechanical means whereby thoughts are broadcast. It has polyphonic dimension, it disseminates, as was shown before — different points of view, different perspectives. The way how to decipher the autobiographic "I" or "we", for example, in the following paragraph of *The Stone Diaries* has totally been left for the reader to decide: "We accept as a cosmic joke, the separate ways of men and women, their different levels of foolishness. At least we did back in the year 1936, the summer I turned thirty-one". (Ib. 121).

According to Mikhail Bakhtin, different voices can be isolated even in a narrator's or a single character's words, each of its carries its own values and perspectives. At the same time, these different voices are melting together giving the book magic dimensions. In *The Stone Diaries* Daisy's (Shields's?) consciousness explains these actual procedures to itself as follows: "Clarity bursts upon her, a spray of little stars. [...] The narrative maze opens and permits her to pass through. She may be crowded out of her own life [...] but she possesses, as a compensatory gift, the startling ability to draft alternate versions". (Ib. 190) In this way, the narrative voice of the novel as if assumes the quality of a medium or a channel of communication, which involves the reader in a process of collective sharing of attitudes. Daisy's words are always half someone else's, for they "exist in other people's mouths in other people's contexts, serving other people's intentions". (Bakhtin 1981: 293) It is from there that the author, the character as well as the reader will take the word and make it one's own.

It might also be useful for a reader of *The Stone Diaries* to take on board the lessons of Salman Rushdie's, Gabriel García Márquez's and Isabel Allende's novels which bring in view the "unreality of the real" and assert plural and multidimensional identities. Like Shields, these masters of magic realism offer a way out of xenophobic nationalisms and promote the idea of hybridity as a positive cultural category. Allowing the free play of a multiplicity of voices within the text these three authors offer opportunities for subversive and culturally liberating works in world literature. So does Carol Shields. *The Stone Diaries* is not subordinated to the controlling authority or voice of the writer. We may even say that the author herself is not largely concerned with who is the guiding force behind the utterance. At the same time, it is also difficult to argue that she or her character step back from the narrative in any true sense. What really matters is the idea of polyphony. This multiplicity of textual and subtextual voices seems to be at the heart of Shields´s concept about fiction.

In her interview of 1993 with Shields talks about fiction's magic as follows: "... our own lives are never quite enough for us.

They are too brief, too dark, too narrow, too circumscribed, too bound for geography, by gender, by cultural history. It is through fiction that I've learned [...] about how people think; biography and history have a narrative structure, but they don't tell us much about the interior lives of people. ... (Fiction — T. A.) attempts to be an account of all that cannot be documented but is, nevertheless, true." (Anderson 2003: 71) And further on, when asked about her authoral perspective, Shields says: "Well, I think most of the dialogue that occurs in world is what goes on in our own heads — us talking to ourselves — and this is where we are conflicted, I suppose, about right and wrong or attachment and detachment — all the things humble us and trouble us [...] In a way, writing is like conversation you might have with someone." (Ib. 63–64).

The use of the novel form which contains a multiplicity of voices enables Shields to embrace past and present, memory and history, Canada and Europe, man and woman. The writer herself explains her urge for polyphony in a short but elucidating manner: "As human beings we carry patterns of language and experience, and these patterns are what I find myself trying to bring together. You can see that this involves a good deal of trust, the trust that the reader's patterns will, somehow, match up with the writer's". (Shields 2003: 262) We may say that in Shields's polyphonic texts realities that are normally separated can meet, establishing a dialogic encounter, a constant meeting with the other.

Shields's novel, (auto)biographic by implication, exhibits major elements of postmodern technique. It demonstrates the absurdity of privileging one term over another in the metaphysical opposition. It asserts and at the same time parodies the multiform paradigm of the postmodern novel as such: its temporal disorder, fragmentation, distortion of history, vicious circles, paranoia, etc. — the reader can trace here all sorts of chance techniques favoured by the masters of postmodern thought. The novel can even be deconstructed to expose various ideological assumptions and values behind the surface, rotating round the Canadian-American-European cultural axis. The fabric of the text has been fragmented with space, titles, recipes and photos. Phrases like "she has a little

trouble with getting things straight; with the truth, that is", "she is not reliable when it comes to the details of her life" or "she is [...] causing all manner of wavy distortion" (Shields 1993: 148) flash forward and back like motifs in a symphony. Notions of an "inner essence" and "reality" disappear. "Authenticity" and "truth" are set up in the dress-codes of performers. There is no longer a place for the supposedly "pure" novel, "pure"(auto)biography, "pure" diary. What Carol Shields presents us is a sort of postmodern box-within-the-box, within-the-box or as she refers to it in her *Prairie Fire* interview: "I'm writing a novel, and I'm writing her life, and writing the knowledge of her life — so that's one. But it's also her looking at her life, so I think she has to be in first person sometimes to comment from outside". (Thomas 1993–1994: 58).

The author constructs Daisy's "diaries" out of fragments of truth as if asserting that the most important truths of our lives remain on the invisible plane. Symbolically, the loss of Daisy's private journal mentioned on page 156 suggests that her original story, the real story will never be found out and need not be. What the reader really needs is "a multidimensional mark of identity written on the body". (Shields 1993: 337).

With a postmodern novel like *The Stone Diaries* it has also become important to ask who the implied reader might be, and why people really connect with it. As is evident from multilingual literary criticism and translation practice, readers of different cultural landscape, men and women alike, are fascinated by its form and stylistic devices, enchanted by its interplay of facts and fantasy, intrigued by the author's choice of material. Why does the author, for example, use numerous apocryphal documents, antique family photos, newspaper ads, letters, recipes and all other sorts of autobiographical idiosyncrasies? Isn't it because certain autobiographic genres become even more convincing when seeking a so called "improved" version of truth? Although this question needs a more close research to be anwered exhaustively, we may presume that this is exactly the case with *The Stone Diaries*. For, recalling Tristine Rainer's words in her compelling sourcebook *Your Life as Story*, "many people still assume that the autobiographic writer... is chained to circumstances, that it is her job

to set down as accurately as possible everything that happened to her, "just as it really happened"... instead, what readers really want from an autobiographic writer is her *vision of reality*". (Rainer 1998: 175) Truth, like light, must be in motion. At the same time, its elusiveness tortures writers as well as readers — how much may we shape reality and call it autobiography, memoir, diary? Shields explains the risks of her (auto)biographical likes in *The Stone Diaries*, saying: "I'm always intrigued by the trickery that is required when an author explicitly tests the virtual realities shaped by points of view and pieces of evidence. [...] But the really tricky part was to write about a woman thinking her autobiography in which she is virtually absent". (Schnitzer 2003: 145).

It seems, at times, that the author of *The Stone Diaries* does not even much work upon the problem of shaping reality. On the contrary, in her humorous, sporadically grotesque way she disperses the reader's confidence in the letters and photographs presented. Especially the old family photographs within the novel contribute to the enigmas that develop. Shields has simply referred to them as techniques that she worked with to "encourage an illusion of biography in the novel". Still, "everyone wants to know where they came from... The editors found some of them in antique shops, and I found some in a postcard market in Paris. Some of them are from our family album, everyone thinks they're me, but I'm not in any of them". (Ib. 146) Although a "tempting fraud", the photographs, like the character Daisy herself, provide the illusion of both fact and artefact, mirror and mimesis, presence and absence.

In conclusion, paradoxical as it may seem, the lack of the narrative authority and the loss of the sense of authenticity make the story of *The Stone Diaries* even more convincing to the reader, adding to it some universal dimension and cultural understanding. Picture frames of the novel open for us windows to the actual. The readers can fill the letters, articles, memoirs, notebooks and photographs with their private observations, images and fantasies, thus reclaiming "theirstories" for the benefit of mutual understanding. Erecting for each of us his or her Goodwill Tower, Carol Shields's novel organises a puzzle, and in order to solve this

puzzle, to understand just one life the reader has to "swallow the world".

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The "Armpits" of History in Jeanette Winterson's Novels, or How Is The Past Made Present In Contemporary Fiction?

ANNELI NIITSOO

> Only a fool tries to reconstruct a bunch of grapes from a bottle of wine.
>
> Winterson, Art & Lies (140)

> It could be that this record set before you now is a fiction.
>
> Winterson, Art & Lies (30)

It is no secret that history has become one of the most widely exploited themes in contemporary fiction, and that the once so holy and undisputable branch of science is nowadays approached in an individual and original way, depending on the preferences of the writer. The days of *the history* are long gone even in *history proper;* the concept has been replaced by *histories* of places and peoples. In short, theorists like Michel Foucault (1991), Roland Barthes (1993), Linda Hutcheon (1988, 1989), Ihab Hassan (1963, 1987, 2001), to name but a few, unanimously claim that history is, above all, an *interpretation* or a *story of an event* because it is always communicated through language and always *related to the present*, as historical accounts are constantly rewritten, bearing the current concerns and problems in mind. Also, history writing can be selective, as we all remember from Soviet textbooks that probably serve as best examples here. Thus, history can be considered an extremely *powerful tool of propaganda,* which is why historians of the past few decades have started to pay great

attention to the so-called *"blanks" in history* (Hentilä 2002, Kalela 2002). Feminists in their turn believe that history, among other things, is a convenient *tool for the phallogocentric power and control over society*, a concept tackled by Julia Kristeva (1986), Judith Butler (1990), Hélène Cixous (1997) and Christy Burns (1996), to name only the most famous.

In a sense, the contemporary views on history are not unlike the anecdote where three blind men examine an elephant, and the one fingering the animal's ear claims that an elephant is like a sail. "No, an elephant is more like a snake," argues the one examining the trunk. "Well, gentlemen, you are both utterly mistaken," retorts the third man at the elephant's feet. "An elephant is, clearly enough, most similar to a big tree!"

It can be argued that the contemporary people are not blind, quite the contrary, we are equipped with all kinds of modern technology: cameras, microscopes, telescopes, CAT-scans, EKGs, and X-rays, and if someone took the trouble of providing the audience with a full picture, of, say, Tony Blair, they could. My argument alongside the postmodernist theorists, however, goes that there would still be some unexplorable spots, like armpits, for instance, which have traditionally been considered either too trivial or too inappropriate to tackle by history writers and have therefore been neglected.

The aim of the current article is to provide an overview of Jeanette Winterson's irreverent, "armpit-sniffing" treatment of historical facts and the biographies of great historical figures. A classification of what could be termed (false)auto/biographies is given, and a thorough analysis of the language games producing the prevailing mood of irony and parody in the young British writer's novels, is provided.

Jeanette Winterson was born in Manchester in 1959. In Britain, she has earned "a reputation as a holy terror, a lesbian desperado and a literary genius" (Miller n. pag). Her writing is no exception to the postmodernist rule that every rule should be broken. She scandalizes the reader both by the ambiguous narratives of her fictional works and by offering the press intriguing details about her private life and then baiting them for swallowing most

boldfaced lies. She plays with the concept of history as a story, a story that includes facts and fiction, ambiguity, uncertainty, subjectivity and open ends that leave space for fantasy. In her first novel *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* there is a voice that says, "People like to separate storytelling which is not fact from history which is fact. They do this so they know what to believe and what not to believe. This is very curious" (Winterson 1996: 91).

Let us begin with putting it all into a theoretical framework. David Malcolm, a British literary theorist currently working in Poland, in his critical study *The Impossible Thing: The British Novel 1978–1992* points out that contemporary British novels make their interest in history quite clear through:

1. precise dating
2. motifs of recall and the narrative organization of recollection
3. motifs of transience
4. an explicit presentation of public history and its close intertwining with personal history

(Malcolm 2001: 33).

All these aspects are present in Winterson's novels, the fourth perhaps most elaborately and explicitly. The fourth aspect in its turn is intermingled into a wider dimension, and that is what I have termed *(false)auto/biography*. In other words, Winterson makes elaborate use of famous names and events from history, treating them without any preconceived respect or truthfulness. She lets her fantasy float quite freely, providing us with most amusing accounts of the lives of great historical figures or fates of common people in the course of big historic events. This is also in keeping with the general postmodernist novel theory entailing vicious circles, short circuits and double bind. All the six novels under scrutiny are built up as collections of pieces of memories, put together at random like pieces of a puzzle and at times even like pieces of different puzzles, as different narrative voices would step into the text quite unexpectedly, moreover, exact quotations from her own earlier novels would appear in the later ones, this being in keeping with the general characteristic of the fragmentation of postmodernist novels. Her novels are built up loosely, with no obvious plot or

development of character. The latter are rather roughly moulded types, representing a certain layer of the society and, as a rule, depicted through irony and parody. Everything we learn about the characters is by way of their own memories or their impressions of other people.

It seems reasonable to classify the (false)auto/biographies in Winterson's novels into four categories:

1. apocryphal accounts of biographies of great historical figures who have caused major historical events (told by common people who have been in contact with them)
2. biographies of common people whose lives have been intertwined with and changed by 'big' historical events, told by a) themselves or b) other common people
3. details about common people who have supposedly changed history but cannot be found in the canonised history books
4. a (false)auto/biography where the double bind is prevalent throughout the book (the narrative voice in *Oranges*).

Almost no attempt is made in the current text to identify the "truthfulness" of the instances of history presented here, for as Malcolm put it, "historians have enough difficulty being good historians; it seems ill-advised for literary scholars to become cut-rate ones" (ib. 32). However, suggestions are made to identify the function of the instances of history in advocating the author's purport.

1. Apocryphal accounts of biographies of great historical figures

Let us begin with the first type of (false)auto/biographies, namely more or less apocryphal accounts of the biographies of great historical figures who are well known from reference books and have changed the course of history. All the instances concerning real historical figures gleaned from Winterson's novels are

narrated by common people who have been in close contact with the celebrities.

The biography of Napoleon constructed in *The Passion* by Henri, Napoleon's callboy who works in his kitchen, preparing chicken for his master's insatiable appetite, serves as a representative example here. Everything in connection with Napoleon is described through grotesque hyperbole and parody.

For example, starting with the opening lines of *The Passion* where Winterson does not hesitate for a moment when she lets Henri tell us most incredible stories about Napoleon's habit of swallowing whole roast chickens at any time of the day, so that the kitchen used to be in the state of constant upheaval:

> It was Napoleon who had such a passion for chicken that he kept his chefs working around the clock. *What a kitchen that was*, with *birds in every state of undress*; some still *cold* and *slung over hooks*, some *turning slowly on the spit*, but most in *wasted piles* because *the emperor was busy* (Winterson 1989: 3).

The episode with its tone of flippant humour juxtaposed with underlying indignation is quite representative of the mood of the whole book: clever puns on the double meanings of the word *birds* in close connection with the original metaphor *state of undress* for the neutral *being plucked* in close proximity with the inverted poetic exclamation *What a kitchen that was;* juxtaposed with the almost revoltingly naturalistic images of *cold [chickens] slung over hooks* and *turning slowly on the spit* and above all *in wasted piles because the emperor was busy*. The latter with the clash of cold and hot temperatures forms a certain kind of gradation only to be abruptly ended by the anticlimactic sense of lukewarm dispassion rendered by the phrase *in wasted piles*. The opening extract serves as an introduction to the numerous instances where Napoleon's thirst for power and control is brought home to the reader.

Let us continue with another apocryphal account about Napoleon, also at the very beginning of the book, told by Henri, where the author makes playful use of hyperbole, sound similarity and play on words:

> *No one* over five foot two *ever* waited on the Emperor. He kept *small* servants and *large* horses. The horse he loved was seventeen *hands* high with *a tail that could wrap round a man three times and still make a wig for his mistress*. That horse had an evil eye and there's been *almost as many dead grooms* in the *stable* as chickens on the *table*. The ones the beast didn't kill itself with an easy kick, its master had disposed of because its coat didn't shine or the *bit* was green (ib., emphasis added).

The most striking feature of the given episode is hyperbole. First, the strong expression *no one ... ever* sets the mood for overstatement, because it sounds too categorical, intensified with the antonyms *small* and *large*. The fact that the horse was *seventeen hands high* (170 cm), is not in itself too incredible, but the *hands* in close proximity with people who were barely taller than five *foot*, it sets the reader on the alert. To claim, however, that a horse has *a tail that could wrap round a man three times and still make a wig for his mistress* is clearly hyperbolic in nature and renders the whole extract comic in effect. The following "there's been *almost as many dead grooms* in the *stable* as chickens on the *table*' a clear overstatement intensified, first, with the lexical device of sound similarity between *stable* and *table*, creating a rhyming effect; simultaneously also adding extra humorous undertones to the situation by juxtaposing the tragedy of dead people and the down-to-earth nature of dead chicken, and, second, the contextual hint that there were *heaps* of dead chicken, thus it seems highly unlikely that there were such huge quantities of dead people.

The function of the abundant use of hyperbole here serves to bring Napoleon's obsession with grandeur home to the reader. It both underlines and ridicules the man's desperate wish for control and power. The story being narrated in first person is designed to add extra credibility to what is being said: it all comes "straight from the horse's mouth" — from a common person who has been close to the "armpits" of a great man. Thus the reader is actively involved in the play of double bind between reality and fantasy and it is entirely up to them where, if at all, the line should be

drawn. Matters are even further confused by Henri's recurrent direct address to the reader: "Trust me, I'm telling you stories" or "I'm telling you stories, trust me" (ib. 5, 13). The technique of drawing the readers' attention to the fact that the text is an artefact and not something natural and transparent the reader can just identify himself with, is a favourite of almost all postmodernist writers who take utmost pleasure in confusing the reader with hinting that the narrator cannot be trusted either because s/he might not remember things the way they were; or because the narrator chooses to play games with the reader.

2. Biographies of common people

The second category Winterson's (false)auto/biography comprises biographies of common people whose lives have been intertwined with and changed by "big" historical events, told by themselves or other common people, the narrative voice being then first person or third person, respectively.

A representative example of common people's lives being influenced by big events is the one where Henri speaks about their progress in Russia during the Napoelonic wars:

> we learned how little of the country had been spared, how comprehensive had been the burnings. Their own homes had escaped because they were sufficiently remote and mainly because a Russian high ranker was in love with the daughter of the goatherd. ... This Russian had promised to spare the village and re-routed his troops accordingly, so that when we French followed we too had gone another way (ib. 101).

The situation here is, characteristically to Winterson's writing, rather complex. First, many lives have been ruined due to powerful people and their games. But then, on the other hand, many lives are also saved due to the romantic mating games of the mighty and

the powerful. There are countless similar examples in her other novels.

The following example from *Art & Lies*, where Handel the gynaecologist (sic!) meditates about the good old days gone by, is representative of the elements of transience and nostalgia about the past:

> From my window I watched ... the busy street that used to be *flanked* on either side with self-distinguishing little shops, each with its own identity and purpose. Each with customers it knew and a responsibility towards them. Now, the *unflanked* street has been widened, for a road too dangerous to cross, that roars between plate glass *multi-national stores*, that *each sell the same* (Winterson 1995: 24, emphasis added).

The narrator's indignation with progress becomes prominent in pairing the words *flanked* and *unflanked*, the latter not to be found in dictionaries; and the clash of the notions of identity and responsibility against the dispassionate indifferent *plate glass multi-national* stores that, ironically enough, possess no distinct characteristic features.

3. Apocryphal accounts of common people who have supposedly changed history

The third category of (false)auto/biography includes apocryphal accounts about common people who have supposedly changed history but cannot be found in the canonised history books. These stories can roughly be divided into two. First, there are accounts of the origin of things and second, explanations to causes of big events.

3.1. Common people connected with the origin of things

Let us begin with the common people connected with the origin of things. In the following example, a narrative voice (it is impossible to establish whether it is imaginative or "real") tells a story of the first tulip brought to Europe.

> In the sixteenth century the first tulip was imported to Holland from Turkey. I know — I carried it myself.
>
> By 1634 the Dutch were so crazy about this fish-mouthed flower that one collector exchanged a thousand pounds of cheese, four oxen, eight pigs, twelve sheep, a bed and a suit of clothes for a single bulb (Winterson 2000: 9).

Similar stories, found in *Sexing the Cherry*, concern the first banana being brought to Britain and the upheaval the "unseemly colour and shape" (12) created among people, to the extent of "great swooning amongst the crowd" (ib.). Dog Woman, one of the narrative voices, says, "When Jordan was three I took him to see a great rarity.... There was news that one Thomas Johnson had got himself an edible fruit of the like never seen in England" (11). Dog Woman was rather shocked by the sight, "I swear that what he had resembled nothing more than the private parts of an Oriental. It was *yellow* and *livid* and *long* ... the crowd, seeing it for the first time, roared and nudged each other and demanded to know what poor fool had been so reduced as to sell his vitality" (Winterson 1987: 12). According to the narrator, Johnson, having lifted the fruit above his head, "shouted above the din as best he could 'THIS IS NOT SOME UNFORTUNATE'S RAKE ...IT IS THE FRUIT OF A TREE. IT IS TO BE PEELED AND EATEN'." (ib., original emphasis). The shock caused by such a statement is skilfully depicted in the following extract:

> At this there was unanimous retching. There was no good woman could put that to her mouth, and for a man it was the practice of cannibals. We had not gone to church all these years and been washed in the

> blood of Jesus only to eat ourselves up the way the Heathen do. (ib. 12–13).

While the first sight of a banana had shocked and upset most of "decent" churchgoers, the effect on Dog Woman's adopted son was somewhat different. Having travelled around the world, looking for love and happiness, he reflects on the same situation:

> When I was little my mother took me to see a great wonder. It was about 1633, I think, and never before had there been a banana in England. I saw it held high above a man's head. If, was yellow and speckled brown, and as I looked at it I saw the tree and the beach and the white waves below birds with wide wings (ib. 100).

Instead of fear, the banana created a longing in Jordan, a longing persistent in him for the rest of his life. It is interesting to note that Jordan also gives an exact date here. Combining his and Dog Woman's information, we also learn that Jordan was probably born around 1630, but we still do not know for certain. Seeing the banana at the age of three defined Jordan's life: "Then I forgot it completely. But in my games with ships and plants I was trying to return to that memory, to release whatever it had begun in me (ib.). Thus, Jordan with his stories and contemplations is yet another attribute to the post-modernist game with memory, trying to remember and to forget at the same time.

According to Dog Woman, it was Jordan who brought the first pineapple to England and created a great upheaval among people again. Dog Woman describes the situation in the following way:

> The pineapple arrived today.
>
> Jordan carried it in his arms as though it were a yellow baby; with the wisdom of Solomon he prepared to slice it in two. He had not sharpened the knife before Mr Rose, the royal gardener, flung himself across the table and begged to be sawn into bits instead. Those at the feast contorted themselves with laughter, and the King himself, in his new wig, came down

> from the dais and urged Mr Rose to delay his sacrifice. It was, after all, only a fruit. At this Mr Rose poked up his head from his abandonment amongst the dishes and reminded the company that this was an historic occasion. Indeed it was. It was 1661, and from Jordan's voyage to Barbados the first pineapple had come to England (ib. 104).

Characteristically to Winterson's writing, the episode abounds in allusions to well-known apocryphal incidents (Solomon's knot), exaggerated ridiculous behaviour (the gardener on the table), exact dates (1661) and a subtle allusion to the fact that the Kingdom has recently been restored and that, as an opposition to King Charles II's foreign policy favouring the French, a new party was formed (the King's new wig). However, all the canonically important historical incidents are only hinted at, and the arrival of the pineapple has been made a truly important historic occasion. The incidents adduced above are all in keeping with Winterson's playful deconstruction of the canonised historical truths and her flippant attempts at reconstructing alternative accounts from slightly different perspectives.

3.2. Common people who have caused well-known historical events

The second subtype of common people who have changed the course of history comprises incidents where common people have initiated events the results of which can be seen in every canonised history-book. These stories are often presented through grotesque and irony and are, as a rule, highly amusing.

A fine example can be observed in *Sexing the Cherry*, where with modest elegance Winterson lets us know that the Great Fire of London in 1666 was initiated by a huge woman who hardly ever washed herself and raised hordes of dogs whom she constantly walked around with. The lady simply decided that London really looked a mess after the plague, and that only a "nice common

purgatory fire" would make the town a bit more acceptable. Dog Woman says, "'This city should be burned down,' I whispered to myself ... It should burn and burn until there is nothing left but the cooling wind'" (ib. 141–142).

Thus, according to Dog Woman, the following happened:

> On September the second, in the year of Our Lord, sixteen hundred and sixty-six, a fire broke out in a baker's yard in Pudding Lane. The flames were as high as a man, and quickly spread to the next house and the next.
>
> I did not start the fire ... but I did not stop it. Indeed the act of pouring a vat of oil on to the flames may well have been said to encourage it (ib. 142–143).

In this episode, allusions are made to the version that has been common knowledge for centuries: the bakers and Pudding Lane. No huge woman has ever been mentioned in connection with the story but neither is there any proof that there was not one involved, a fact which Winterson makes mischievous use of, thus undermining the canonised historical narrative.

4. A (false)auto/biography proper

Finally, as the last type of (false)auto/biography in Jeanette Winterson's fiction, we get a (false)auto/biography proper where the double bind prevails and it is impossible to establish whose voice it is we are hearing, whether it is the author who has stepped into text, or is it the ghost of the author, everything is turned upside down in a carnivalesque merry-go-round.

Winterson's first novel *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* can be called an endless (false)auto/biography proper, as the method of narration in itself forms a continuous double bind and vicious circle. Namely, the story is about a 15-year-old girl Jeanette, a namesake of the author, who, quite similarly to the latter, is brought up in a highly religious family and who runs away from

home because of her sexual orientation. A great number of episodes described in the novel have also been claimed by Winterson to have taken place in her life. Yet she insists in her interviews that the novel is not autobiographical at all. Matters are even more confused due to the constant change in the register and degree of irony in the first person narration. The latter is made incredibly naïve at times, to the point of it becoming unclear whether it is naivety or clever fun-making of the reader, only to take a full turn and become immensely serious and philosophical, as if a completely different voice had stepped in. Therefore it seems only right to term the whole novel a "(false)auto/biography proper".

Why such irreverence?

Why does she tell these stories and keep challenging the readers, making them want to check the history books for the right answers just before they recall that, according to recent theories, there are no right answers? Also, why does she keep teasing us, not telling any story from the "beginning" to the "end"? Why does she give us only fragments? And why does the narrators both in *Written On The Body* and *The Passion* keep repeating: "Trust me, I'm telling you stories!", thus drawing extra attention to their unreliability?

What should the reader believe if the story-teller is puzzled like Handel the gynaecologist (sic!) in *Art & Lies*: "On what can I depend, if not my past, if not objectivity, if not the clean white coats of science? Should I acknowledge *the fiction that I am*?" (Winterson 1995: 34, emphasis added).

The answer is out there. On the opening pages of Winterson's latest novel *The PowerBook* (2000) we encounter the narrator's meditation: "What is it that I have to tell myself again and again?

That there is always a new beginning, a different end. *I can change the story. I am the story*" (4–5, emphasis added). Perhaps this statement is also the answer to most of the questions. Postmodernist theorists explain the contemporary obsession with telling stories by seeking something stable to hold on to in the

unstable globalising society characterized by shifting values where ironical relativity is the prevailing mood. Thus the person with his or her subjective viewpoint literally *becomes* the story. Or, as Handel, the gynaecologist in *Art & Lies* notes:

> People have found it hard to live without the personal landmarks they recognise. They can't say, "Look, this is where it happened." Now, they have no means to the past except through memory. Increasingly unable to remember, they have begun to invent (Winterson 1995: 44).

This extract sums up most of the features of contemporary British fiction, listed by Malcolm, namely the motifs of transience and concerns with memory and storytelling, the big history intertwined with the small. People create their own histories as they need them to maintain sanity.

Also, it is very likely that the abundant playful irreverent use of history in Winterson's novels serves the purpose of deconstructing the canonically masculine accounts of history, providing an alternative viewpoint, a woman's angle, as all the narrators in her novels are either women or slightly effeminate men who find it hard to cope in the "macho" world.

The narrative manner of parody and exaggeration in its turn allows us to cry while wearing the jester's cap, or, according to Mikhail Bahtin's theory (Bahtin 1987), get a specifically vivid picture of the scene. It may also be that the (sometimes forced) merriment is a kind of "smiling therapy": I smile because I am happy, I am happy because I smile.

Another explanation for the flippant ambiguity, open ends and double meanings in the stories she tells could also be the fact that Winterson is playing along with the contemporary conviction that the author is dead, first announced by Roland Barthes in the 1960s, meaning that the role of the author as a symbolic "father" figure responsible for the meaning of his (or her) work, has gradually but steadily declined and the balance of power has shifted towards the reader. This is also in keeping with Stanley Fish's famous claim that nowadays it is the readers who write the books. Thus, the open

ends and constant mystifying of the reader in Winterson's novels may serve as yet another tool at the author's disposal for undermining the traditional power relations in society.

Why such cartwheels with language?

Winterson's almost hysterical exhilaration in (ab)using the language in a playful manner may be classified under Jaqcues Lacan's term *jouissance*, describing the bliss of sexual orgasm. In postmodern discourse the term is used as the opposite of the *lack* accompanying desire. Julia Kristeva suggests the existence of a feminine *jouissance* that exceeds the bounds of patriarchal language, remaining within woman's vision but beyond articulation. This pleasurable experience is associated with the child's joyful continuity with the maternal. Luce Irigaray defines a "hysterical" *jouissance* that would not be "paternal", but would be unrepresentable — remaining for ever a lack within patriarchy (Sim 2001: 291). Julia Kristeva explains the relations between identity and language, claiming that when the child is still dependent on its mother, it is in the "semiotic" phase, it has no identity of its own, and therefore perceives no need for a means of communication between self and other. Its existence is regulated by physical desires, pulsations and impulses which the child gradually learns to control and which forms the ground for the practice of signification. The symbolic, however, does not supersede the semiotic. Instead, the two combine in order to form a discourse (ib. 296).

Winterson's writing, as was demonstrated in the present article, pulsates rather powerfully, mixing the symbolic and the semiotic quite freely and playfully. At times she makes use of scientific language where the symbolic dominates, only to turn to "semiotic" experiments with unexpected juxtapositions of incompatible notions or words from vastly different registers. While Jeanette Winterson may not succeed in creating completely new realities, and in many cases indeed in no more than playfully reverting the very common, trite stereotypes of power, she nevertheless draws

the readers' attention to the alternative views of history and power at a pleasurably high artistic level. Consequently, her fiction also serves to produce the *jouissance* resulting from the pleasurable reading experience, which is traditionally believed to be one of the main "functions" of literature (if it has any at all).

In search of an answer to the question repeatedly raised by literary theorists today, namely whether contemporary fiction is leaping forward or standing still, it seems reasonable to believe that contemporary novelists, in their obsession with the past and the stories, and the tantalizing interrelation of those two, are neither taking a decisive leap away from the modernist tradition nor standing completely still. Rather, they seem to be moving in circles or spirals, reaching different levels of the same phenomenon over and over again. In short, the treatment of history in contemporary fiction in general and in Jeanette Winterson's works in particular, can be compared to children's spinning top. The quicker it goes the less you see the colours and patterns on the body of it, and the speed is in the hands of the player. Of course, in the light of the following quotation also given as a motto to the present text, the work of all literary theorists could be considered utterly pointless. Namely, Handel in *Art & Lies* makes the following remark, "Only a fool tries to reconstruct a bunch of grapes from a bottle of wine" (Winterson 1995: 143). Here, all theorists could drop their tools and go home, if it was not for the fact that the character himself indulges in reconstructing the "grapes" from the "wine" of his own past and so do a great number of contemporary novelists.

By way of conclusion it may be said that if we gently stroke the history's "armpits", that is, canonically unexplored places, we make history seem quite human-like: either benevolently happy or frustrated, depending on how that particular person or event handles tickling. One only needs to make sure that one does not remain scratching for too long, otherwise a bleeding might occur. As for Winterson, it looks like her histories smile. Sometimes happily, sometimes sadly, most of the time ironically, but they do. Despite the ugliness and horror. Or due to the ugliness and horror.

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Disparate Identities Reconciled: Construction of "Britishness" in John Buchan's *The Free Fishers*

PILVI RAJAMÄE

In the post-devolution era in Britain the centuries-ignored problematics of national identity have resurfaced with a particular force. The British identity, for a long time perceived as monolithic, shows signs of fracturing. With their own parliament back in Edinburgh, the Scots are at pains to divorce their 'Scots' identity from that of 'North Briton', while the English, cast adrift without an identity of their own outside 'Britishness', are casting around for manifestations of 'Englishness'. In this context it may be of some interest to examine more closely the components from which the common 'British' identity was formed and do it through the eyes of a Scot, John Buchan (1875–1940), who seems to have successfully submerged his Scottish identity in a wider British one both in his private and professional lives.

When Buchan published his last work of historical fiction, *The Free Fishers,* in 1934, he was on the brink of what would turn out to be the crowning achievement of his career as a politician and man of affairs. Next year he would sail to Canada to become the dominion's thirty-fifth Governor-General. He had been chosen by the Canadians principally for his literary accomplishments, as a writer whose fame extended to the far corners of the empire and whose standing was high among the sizeable Scottish community in Canada. However, King George V was determined that his representative must also be a peer. So Buchan was created a baron and chose as his title Lord Tweedsmuir of Elsfield which neatly

summed up his Scottish Border roots and his chosen home in the heart of England. Elsfield is an 18th-century manor house in Oxfordshire where Buchan settled with his young family after the Great War. His wife was English, a member of the extended family of the immensely rich Duke of Westminster, raised in the best aristocratic tradition, while he was Scottish, lower middle class, son of a Free Kirk minister who was to make a brilliant career as author, barrister, publisher, historian, MP and man of affairs by dint of hard work and enterprise. Always eager to be at the centre of things, he had learned early to adjust to different environments and embrace with enthusiasm the requirements imposed on him by every new stage in his career. Above all, he had had to make a colossal transition, required of any Scotsman who wanted to make a career in London or further afield, from a fiercely proud Scot ever mindful of the historical wrongs done to his country by her powerful neighbour, to a broad-minded man of the world whose horizons now embraced the international scene and who had to negotiate a new place for his dearly loved Scotland in this new scheme of things. This involved some thinking on the nature of national identity, be it Scots or English, and their inevitable comparison. It would be intriguing to look at how Buchan, who loved and knew his Scotland and her history inside out, but who also came to love dearly and know equally well his adopted country, England, would define for himself the strengths and weaknesses of both nations. *The Free Fishers* is a most rewarding book in this respect, where Buchan, by training and temperament a classicist, explores and weighs the respective merits of the Scots and English with great equanimity and poise.

The Free Fishers is a book of adventure where the combined efforts of both Scots and Englishmen foil an assassination attempt on the British Prime Minister. The time is that of the Napoleonic wars and the villain of the piece is in French pay. It is patriotic fervour and youthful sense of adventure that bring together two very different, and initially hostile, protagonists to fight for a common cause.

When Mr Anthony Lammas, a licenced minister of the Kirk and Professor of Logic and Rhetoric at the University of St

Andrews in Fife in Scotland sets out on university business to London, it is a journey which will bring him into contact with that world of romance and adventure for which his soul secretly hankers. For, like with many a Buchan hero, and their creator, his serious and pragmatic demeanor belies the fire and yearning in his heart.

At twenty-eight Lammas has reached far in his chosen profession. As Buchan has liberally endowed his Scottish hero with qualities he quite obviously considers national assets when compared with the English, it might be worthwhile to take a closer look at Lammas's background, which, quite predictably, is closely interwoven with Buchan's own.

Lammas, like Buchan, is a scholarship boy with a lower middle class background. The son of a merchant and boat-builder in Fife, where Buchan spent his own childhood, he had educated himself by dint of winning scholarships and becoming a theologian at Edinburgh University, among whose graduates was also Buchan senior. A dedicated classical scholar like Buchan himself, he hoped for a college living at Tweedsmuir to pursue a scholarly way of life cultivating the muses, a prospect cherished by Buchan himself before going to Oxford and then settling down in London. Tweedsmuir hills were Buchan's favourite haunts during his summer vacations in the Scottish Borders. Quite differently from Buchan's own father, Lammas's has left him a small patrimony, which, combined with his salary, makes him financially independent. This fact will be of significance later on in the story when the occasion arises for the reader to compare Lammas and his English counterpart, Sir Turnour Wyse, who is a nobleman of limitless wealth. The financial position of the two men, besides allowing them to interact as equals, or almost, also neatly encapsulates both the respective financial positions of their kingdoms — the modest means of Scotland versus the incomparable wealth of England — but also points to the class in which, to Buchan's opinion, the strength of both countries lies. Scotland with her small and, when compared to England, impoverished aristocracy is no match for England. Her strength lies in her

persevering and well-educated middle class, the product of the Scottish Enlightenment.

Not accidentally is Lammas a graduate of both the universities of St Andrews and Edinburgh — the "Oxford" and "Athens of the North", respectively. After the Act of Union of 1707 it had become imperative for the Scots to forge a new national identity which would integrate them into the English empire on more or less equal terms. As on the economic front they were beneficiaries rather than benefactors, the new "North Britons" had to cast around for other sources of strength and found them in education and law, the two fields where Scotland had retained her independence besides the Kirk. And, indeed, here we have Lammas, an accomplished classical scholar, a professor of rhetoric at twenty-five, with a reputation for eloquence and aspirations of a writer, who hopes to make his name both in poetry and philosophical prose.

In the forefront of the Scottish Englightenment — Scotland's Golden Age — were the universities. By the standards of the time they were large, providing the highest proportion of university places in Europe (Lenman 2002: 341). Unlike English and continental universities which were in decline, the Scottish universities had undergone a renaissance. Though the universities of Glasgow and Aberdeen played their part, the driving force was Edinburgh. The professional élite these universities produced was expected to indulge in gentlemanly pursuits and express themselves eloquently with the pen, a proof of the liberal and cultivated mind, and indeed, from "no other university system did such a high proportion of the "polite" literature of the Enlightenment emerge" (ib.). However, as Roy Strong has pointed out, the movement was deeply practical:

> The heart of the Scottish Englightenment was never to lie in creative literature but in a quite extraordinary outpouring of analytical, speculative and historical work /.../ Out of collective Scottish endeavours came the beginnings of many of the social sciences, in particular economics, sociology, politics and anthropology. The Scottish Englightenment was also to

> embrace the beginnings of modern geology and make significant contributions in philosophy, chemistry, architecture and medicine. (Strong 2000: 468)

These two sides of the Enlightenment mind, literariness and pragmatism, are carefully balanced in our model Scot. Lammas, who habitually thinks in terms of Theocritus's idylls and hopes to produce a great poem to rival Sir Walter Scott and whose life's work is to be a great treatise on the relationship between art and morals, is also a man of affairs of some consequence. Being good with money, he has been appointed questor, a post which carries the management of academic revenues. He has also won the patronage of some powerful men and hopes one day to be his college Principal.

Yet his horizon is not bounded by Scotland only. With limited opportunities at home, the Scots have always looked to the wider world for chances of betterment. The Scottish contribution to the building and administration of the British Empire was way out of proportion to the size of her population, while in earlier times a significant section of the male population had served as mercenaries on the continent. Not surprisingly then do we learn that Lammas as a boy growing up in the fishing community in Fife had hankered after the sea and later had run away to join the army, only to be brought back to his studies by an irate parent. Nevertheless, the spirit of adventure is strong in him. To retain a bit of romance in his orderly life he has become the chaplain of a secret seafarers' organization called the Free Fishers. Buchan's love for secret societies is well known (see, for instance, the two biographies, by Janet Adam Smith and Andrew Lownie) and his protagonists frequently form their own or get embroiled in the machinations of already existing ones. However, no matter how far-fetched this particular one may sound, being supposedly a very old masonic order to protect fishing rights and provide a kind of co-operation against the perils of the sea, with a romantic Jacobite past and a little smuggling on the side, it is, as is usual with Buchan's historical fiction, firmly grounded in fact. In the nineteenth century Scottish trade unions were based on associations of

skilled men and were noted for the secret passwords, ritual initiations and occasional use of violence (Morton 2002: 367). The Free Fishers is just this kind of operation, shrouded in mystery and ritual, not above using violence or operating outside the law if necessary. Buchan's heroes frequently transgress the law, only to uphold it, especially when spying for their government, like the Free Fishers are doing in this novel.

For Lammas, their undercover exploits which he hears about at their nocturnal conclaves, provide a secret source of youthful joy which finds an outlet in his creative writing but which he is careful to hide from the world, as he does not consider such excitement quite proper for a "preceptor of youth" (Buchan 1994: 6). So, to disguise his romantic nature, he has started to cultivate "a special gravity in his deportment" (ib.). He speaks little, is always solidly commonsensical, adopts the air of the worldly-wise, inspiring trust and fear, and is proud of having carried this off when his Principal praises him for "having an old head upon young shoulders" (ib.: 17).

Lammas is slightly built, neat in person, a little precise in manner, his lips primly set and hair brushed back from a lofty brow — "the very pattern of a dignitary in the making" (ib.) is Buchan's slightly ironic comment but it is also young Buchan's own appearance to the life. Also, Lammas's name has interesting implications, hardly accidental. His first name, Anthony, brings to mind two well-known Christian saints — Antony of Egypt (251–356) and Antony of Padua (1195–1231).

The first is the founder of monasticism whose temptations of the flesh and his heroic struggle to overcome them have inspired numerous artists. As will appear later in the novel, Lammas too will be tempted, both by the flesh and worldly success, only to turn chastely away from both. It is often overlooked that this Egyptian recluse was also a popular, though austere, teacher of great personal warmth, very much like Lammas, and stood out among other Desert Fathers for his lack of fanaticism and excess, a consideration of no small importance for Buchan all of whose characters declare their abhorrence of fanaticism in favour of moderation in all things. Classical education had provided an

escape for Buchan from his own intensely religious home and moderation and lightness of touch were his ways of countering the strong pull of Calvinism.

Antony of Padua possessed an astounding gift of eloquence which attracted huge crowds whereever he went. His resounding sermons led to his appointment as the first lector in theology of the recently founded Franciscan order. He was also an ordained minister of outstanding administrative ability. The parallels with Lammas are obvious. His presence behind our Scottish hero becomes even more marked when we consider the latter's family name — Lammas. Lammas Day, celebrated on 1 August, is the church festival in Scotland to mark the beginning of the harvesting season, the Eucharist bread on that day being made from the new corn. Antony of Padua is the patron saint of harvests, sheaves of corn being one of his symbols.

It is Lammas's first trip south of the Border and he considers his destination with mixed feelings. The imperial capital which he had fondly thought of as an Hesperides, a place as distant and refined as the fabulous garden at the end of the earth, suddenly assumes the daunting aspect of Bunyan's Vanity Fair, a vulgar and hostile place of trade into which he has to venture, "a simple pilgrim", to do battle with "subtle lawyers and cold men of affairs" (Buchan 1994: 17). He reassures himself with the commonplace Scottish belief, not entirely unfounded in the context of English and Scottish imperial relations, that what Athens was to Rome, Scotland is to England now, a seat of learning versus the world's capital of power and commerce — "We are a little home of the humanities /.../ Rome in her great days was always kindly considerate of Athens" (ib.18). Rome is very much on his mind when he drives through the bucolic idyll of Fife in springtime. He thinks of Horace on his Sabine farm — the model for all classicists of combining the ease of country retirement with literary and political influence. Yet when he meets his first "Roman", his initial reaction is violent rejection.

Sir Turnour Wyse, Baronet, of Wood Rising Hall, Norfolk, Lammas's English counterpart in the novel, bursts onto the scene in a magnificent, custom-made chaise, "like a God from a

machine, looking like some Homeric hero, larger than human in the morning fog" (ib. 47), to rescue Lammas and his fellow passengers when their coach has crashed into a ditch. His fame has preceded him.

While passing through Edinburgh, Lammas has been given an additional task by one of his patrons. It appears that his former pupil, the young Lord Belses, has embroiled himself in a violent quarrel with this particular gentleman over the reputation of a lady suspected of Jacobin sympathies. The young man, deeply in love, has taken upon himself the role of her champion, while Wyse appears at this stage as the most vociferous of a pack of London dandies intent on dragging the lady's name through the mud. Belses has actually challenged the insolent slanderer to a duel, an appointment he was unable to keep. Having been locked up by his parents who fear for his life, Belses has incurred his opponent's scorn for cowardice. Fear of ridicule from his peers has driven the baronet to seek revenge and he has been searching high and low for Belses in order to settle the matter with him. Lammas has been asked to reason with the boy and make him see sense in settling the dispute without violence. The danger to his life is great indeed for the "mad baronet" is a crack pistol-shot who has already shot three duellists. Wyse is also known to be truculent and opinionated, so, the negotiations failing, Lammas is under orders to take Belses somewhere safe until the baronet's fury has abated.

With this awesome task before him, Lammas sets out for London. To while away the time, he strikes up a conversation with the coachman and learns that the adversary of his pupil is the most famous whip in England, thus adding another facet to Wyse's emerging character as a sportsman. To Lammas's question as to how the amateur gentlemen drivers, who own their own coaches or drive a stage coach as a hobby, compare to the regulars, Mr Tolley, the driver of the Royal Mail, the highest-ranking professional in his field with thirty-seven years of experience behind him, has the following to say:

> The college boys that drives the Oxford and Cambridge stages are of no particular account, though some of 'em learns the job in time. And there's heaps o' gentlemen as can make a pretty show with four nicely matched tits past Hyde Park Corner that I wouldn't trust for serious work. /.../ [T]here's three-four-yes, five gentlemen I allows to be my equal, and the equal of any professional coachman that ever drew on gloves. /.../ but there's one gentleman to whom I gives the best every time. Whatever stakes he enters for George Tolley withdraws, for he knows his master. And that gent is Sir Turnour Wyse, Baronet, of Wood Rising 'All, in the county of Norfolk. Well I know the name, for he sends my missus a brace of pheasants every Christmas. (Ib. 39–40)

With this comment the coachman establishes Wyse's credentials as the greatest sportsman of his day and a true gentleman, as testified by his largesse of sending the pheasants to a social minor in the spirit of fellow sportsmanship. The point is further reinforced by Lammas's fellow traveller's comment about Wyse after the coach accident: "A young Corinthian /.../ for he seemed to know more about horseflesh than is becoming in a man who does not make his living by it" (ib. 51). The not entirely complimentary nature of the last comment highlights the controversial nature of the "Corinthian" ideal espoused by Regency dandies like Wyse.

"Corinthian" as a synonym for a licentious libertine owes its origin to the loose-living citizens of Corinth in ancient Greece. In early nineteenth century the term came to be applied to a certain type of sport-loving dandy and man about town.

Thorsten Veblen (1953: 45) has argued that the Regency man of pleasure strove to fill his hours of leisure with non-productive yet conspicuous activities. This underlined his freedom from exploitation and thus lifted him above the vulgar masses engaged in productive work. Yet leisure for him did not mean indolence or inactivity. To account for his time genteelly, he had to fill it with time-consuming and ostentatious activities. Hours spent in front of

the mirror, choosing food and wine, playing sports and games were forms of conspicuous consumption of leisure.

In the golden age of the stage coach, before the railways put it out of business, dandies, bored by the endless social round, developed a passion for the open road and great speed. Driving carriages and coaches with professional expertise became a desired goal. To put Wyse's over-riding passion for driving all sorts of carriages into the proper period context, we should have a closer look at the kind of gentleman sportsman admired at the time.

Pierce Egan, in his *Real Life in London*, has in the character Mr Spankalong given us a composite portrait of a Regency dandy completely dedicated to his favourite sport of driving mail coaches. Bored with the inanities of society, he takes pleasure in the company of grooms and stable hands and even dresses like one:

> This gentleman has a most unconquerable attachment to grooms, coachmen and stable assistants; whose language and manners is one of the principal studies of his life to imitate /.../ He will take a journey of a hundred miles out of town, merely to meet and drive up a mail coach, paying for his own passage, and feeling the coachman for permission. /.../ And it is a fact, that he had one of his teeth punched out, in order to enable the noble aspirant to give the true coachman's whistle. (Egan 1905: 343)

In his *Sketches and Travels in London*, Thackery, writing about the fashions of the year 1810 makes a similar point about dressing down, also enlisting other favourite pastimes of men of fashion:

> It was the custom in those days with many gentlemen to dress as much like coachmen as possible: in top-boots, huge white coats with capes, Belcher neckerchiefs and the like adornments; and at the tables of bachelors of the very first fashion, you would meet with prize-fighters and jockeys and hear a great deal about the prize-ring, the cock-pit and the odds. (Quoted in Mason 1982: 82)

The beginnings of the cult of competitive sport, accompanied by betting, and the widespread admiration for the sporting hero, have been traced back to the time of the Napoleonic wars. Wyse's fictional exploits in *The Free Fishers*, touched upon later in the article, bring to mind some real life 19th-century sporting characters whose extraordinary careers must have been known to Buchan when he set about creating his quintessential Englishman.

"The English have usually been able to persuade themselves that there is a serious moral purpose behind whatever they enjoy," quips Philip Mason in his book *The English Gentleman. The Rise and Fall of an Ideal* (1982: 83). He goes on to discuss the elevation of fox-hunting to a cult status and outlines the careers of three men whose achievements turned them into national heroes.

Assheton Smith, described by Napoleon as "a premiere chausseur d'Angleterre", was an unequalled rider and huntsman. A master of hounds for forty-eight years, he made his reputation just after fox-hunting had been metamorphosed from the leisurely pastime of the 18th-century country squire into a brisk and competitive sport, more reminiscent of cross-country racing, involving breakneck speed and daredevil leaps over fences for riders who wanted to be in at the kill. Smith was an absolutely fearless rider who hunted his hounds four days a week, sometimes six, until he was seventy-eight. His principle was always to be with his hounds and no fence was too high for him. He was phenomenally good with horses, having a very light hand on the rein, and could tame even the most incorrigible brute. His energy was staggering. He could ride thirty miles or more to a meet and back the same day, hunt all day and every day and still have energy left over for his extensive business interests, politics and even ship-building. He was considered one of the best batsmen in England and was ready to take on any opponent with his fists. Yet he was not a typical "Corinthian", for he did not drink or bet and attended the church regularly.

George Osbaldeston, "the Squire of England", was more "Corinthian" in outlook. He was not a hard drinker but loved to bet, race and completely neglected the management of his estates. An incorrigible spendthrift, he whittled away his vast fortune and

died in poverty. Business and politics bored him, hunting and matches being his consuming passion. He was a master of hounds for most of his life and hunted six days a week. What made him famous, though, were his matches. Matches almost always involved betting, which was not confined to the gentry but crossed the class barrier to form the link between the sporting gentlemen and their servants. Matches could be made on all sorts of fights or individual feats of endurance. The Squire was willing to make matches on everything, backing himself at pigeon-shooting, partridge-shooting, trotting, boxing, driving, tennis, cricket and billiards. His most famous match was to ride two hundred miles at Newmarket in less than ten hours, all rests and changes included. Using twenty-eight horses, each riding a four-mile heat, he accomplished the race under nine hours. This was done for a bet. For pleasure Osbaldeston is known to have ridden seventeen miles from Northampton to hunt, cover twenty-five miles during the hunt and seventeen miles on the way back to Northampton, then riding relays of hacks forty-four miles from there to Cambridge to go to a ball the same evening, dance all night and ride another forty miles back to the meet next morning. For our purposes his most interesting match was undertaken when Osbaldeston was challenged that it was very well for him to drive a coach so well with a team of his own horses but he would not achieve such spectacular results with the horses the professional coachman had to deal with. The Squire accepted the challenge and allowed the challenger to load the coach of his choice. The man chose a London stage coach with the most notorious team and daredevil driver and packed the coach with the heaviest passengers he could find (eighteen Lifeguardsmen), all to no avail. The Squire's expertise overcame the greatest odds. In the circles which mattered to him, among hunters, racing men, boxers, fellow squires, he achieved his desired aim — fame as a sportsman of skill, endurance and unflinching courage.

Even more famous was Hugh Cecil Lowther, 5th earl of Lonsdale, whose interests were almost as wide as the Squire's but his exploits were better known due to their wide coverage in the newspapers. He too was fond of matches of all kinds and spent

money as if there was no tomorrow. For us again his most interesting match was the one against the earl of Shrewsbury — a twenty-mile drive in four stages from Dorking to Reigate. In the first stage a one-horse buggy was to be driven, in the second the two-horse trap, in the third a four-in-hand and in the fourth each contestant was to ride postillion with two horses and an open phaeton. Lonsdale's rival backed out at the last moment but Lonsdale carried out the drive nevertheless and at furious speed, his time being a little under an hour. A keen boxer, he travelled to the United States to test his skill against the reigning heavyweight champion of the world and beat him in the ring. He fought several battles in court to make boxing legal, was instrumental in starting a system of classifying boxers according to weight and contributed considerably to the drawing up of Queensberry Rules governing modern boxing. He spent lavishly on hunting, racing and personal magnificence, yet retained the common touch which made him hugely popular among the lower classes. The extent of his renown can be gauged from the public subscription for a present on the occasion of his fiftieth wedding anniversary. Money poured in from all over the world, totalling a quarter of a million pounds, for him to dispose as he pleased, all in recognition of his services to sport.

Summing up the achievements of such "Corinthians" and their lesser imitators, Mason writes:

> Courage, pugnacity, readiness to take a risk, disregard for money — often reckless extravagance, often a callous disregard for the feelings of other people — these were qualities of the eccentric sporting characters who flourished in the first half of the 19th century. Some of them were great nobles: some were wealthy squires. Most of them had a wide popular backing which continued through the century. Their behaviour was not always decorous but they were liked and admired. (Ib. 81)

Physical prowess and courage have of course been the hallmarks of the warrior class through ages, but could there have been

something more behind the readiness of the "Corinthians" to take on any physical challenge, Mason asks:

> Assheton Smith, like Osbaldeston and Lonsdale, was a *card*, a term that later in the century was used of a *character*, a man with sufficient confidence to do unconventional things and get away with them Yet with all this self-confidence went that fierce readiness to show himself as good as any man with his fists. Was this perhaps something to do with 1789 and the proclamation of liberty and equality on the other side of the Channel? Can it be that among Englishmen who drew wealth from the land there was a feeling well below the conscious level, that to justify privilege a man should be able to show that he could take on anyone and show himself equal or better in the most physical way possible? (Ib. 87)

When Lammas, and the reader, first encounter Wyse on the scene of the coach accident and later meet him again at an inn, they cannot help it but be struck by the baronet's sheer magnificence. Effortlessly taking charge and scolding the driver for having ignored his advice to use short wheel reins, his own particular fad, he disposes of the passengers and issues orders to the stricken crew who obviously know him well and hasten to obey his commands.

On closer inspection later at the inn, Lammas has to admit to himself that Wyse is "a very splendid creature", shining "like a Phoebus in his strength". He has a healthy sunburnt complexion and his hair is cut short in the sportsman's style, undressed with pomatum. He is impeccably dressed in the latest fashion — "everything about him breathed an air of extreme fashion, the finest and most workmanlike fashion". What Buchan chooses to underline, and which was not very common with dandies of the Regency period but was highly esteemed by the gentlemen of Buchan's own generation after the 19th-century revolution in male clothing, namely the moving away from flamboyance towards quiet elegance, is his lack of ostentation. Sir Turnour is certainly

"no fop with a quizzing eyeglass". His fine face, figure and clothes aside, what makes him so impressive to Lammas's quite envious eyes is his "air of arrogant, well-bred security". His Olympian indifference to lesser mortals infuriates Lammas. The world of wealth and privilege he had hitherto revered had shown him its less appealing side and for a while the deeply conservative Scotsman harbours republican sympathies. "The man had not been uncivil, nor had he been contemptuous /.../ He had scarcely even been condescending. He had simply by his manner blotted out Jock [a fellow Scottish traveller] from the world, ignored him as a thing too trivial for a thought. His god-like aloofness was the cruellest insolence that he had ever witnessed /.../ The great world had shown itself to the humble provinces and withered them with its stare. Mr. Lammas for the moment was a hot Jacobin. He longed to take that world by the scruff, with its wealth and brave clothes and fine, well-bred, well-tended bodies, and rub its nose in something mighty unpleasant". (All quotes Buchan 1994: 55–58)

Having been so far presented only with the outward aspect of the English baronet, as he appears to the quite prejudiced Scottish eyes, we get a glimpse of the inner workings of his mind when we accompany him on his journey to the house where he expects to find Belses, the desolate air of the Northumbrian moors having quite shaken his usual composure. A true aristocrat, he has embarked on his journey motivated by personal honour:

> He had come north on an errand which bored him, but which he could not shirk. No man had ever insulted him with impunity, and at whatever trouble to himself he must bring this young whippersnapper to instant account. It was not his reputation that moved him, for that he believed to be impregnable: it was his own self-respect. He could not be comfortable in his mind while one walked unpunished who had questioned his breeding or his courage. (Ib: 92)

It had not been his initial scheme to hunt out his adversary "like a fox from a hole". The whole business of pursuing an unworthy

opponent, he vaguely feels, is dangerously imperilling his "grand, rock-like, self-sufficiency, his complete confidence in life". (Ib.)

An occasion soon presents itself for regaining his composure. An insolent inn-keeper, with "the air of a dangerous bull " (ib. 93), refuses to serve him and orders him to leave. Wyse's peace of mind is instantly restored, for "[h]ere was a surly ruffian to be brought to heel, and that was a task with which he was familiar" (ib.). Eager to show off his expertise in the noble art of fisticuffs, he readily confronts his adversary who advances on him menacingly. But taking a closer look at the aristocrat, the village bully knows himself beaten and in his recognition of this, adds another facet to Wyse's character, that of a nobleman ready to prove his manhood by taking on anyone with his fists:

> For what he saw was no fleshy, dandified traveller, as he had judged from the voice and the figure as it had appeared on the box seat. Sir Turnour stood on his toes as lightly as a runner, his strong, clenched hands white at the knuckles, his poise easy but as charged with swift power as a thundercloud is charged with fire. The innkeeper marked the square shoulders, the corded muscles of the shapely neck, the slim flanks — above all, he marked the vigilant and scornful eye. He was himself a noted wrestler, but he knew that he could not give this man a fall, for he would never get to grips with him. The other would dance round him on those light feet, and an arm like a flail would smite him into unconsciousness. He was a bold man but no fool, and he recognized the trained fighter, no genteel amateur, but one bred in a tough school. So he surrendered at discretion and touched a damp forelock. (Ib. 94–95)

His next instance to rectify his character for the reader comes when he accidentally stumbles upon the chief villain of the book. With perspicacity born of experience, he can easily penetrate the latter's disguise of virtuous rusticity and perceive a fellow dandy capable of the evil excesses his insolent Byronic manner seems to

imply. When he finally meets Belses, whom he discovers lying in sickbed, he is at first outraged by the latter's unmanly pleas to help him but relents, and having received further proof of the villain's villainy, and having been called a lightweight by the latter, a Beau Brummel who should return to his dressing-glasses and powder-puffs, he resolves to seek personal revenge and thus further the cause of justice. Not for nothing is our squire a Justice of the Peace. What he initially refuses to swallow is the innocence of the villain's wife.

It is intriguing that while all middle class Scotsmen in the book fall under the heroine's spell and become her champions with very little actual proof as to her innocence, the book's only English hero remains highly sceptical about his fellow countrywoman's merits until the very end of the book. And then it is not the lady's charm that converts him to her cause but her love for her dog. This accords well with the reputation of the English as great lovers of animals but also highlights the supposed lack of romance in their souls. Definitely more worldly-wise than the provincial Scots, Wyse distrusts tragic romantic heroines on principle. Ever more interested in horseflesh than women, this representative of what Napoleon called the "nation of shopkeepers" is briefly attracted to the earthy and pragmatic off-spring of an enterprising Dutch ship-owner turned Scottish landed gentleman. The following passage, describing his feelings after he has just met the girl, neatly sums up Wyse's views on women:

> He had never had the name of a woman-fancier — more stirring occupations had filled his time. On the whole women had bored him with their airs and graces, their extravagant demands, their exigent charms. He did not even greatly admire the female form — too full of meaningless curves and cushions, too bottle-shouldered and heavy-hipped — a well-made man seemed to him a far finer creation of God. He could talk to them, banter them, take his pleasure with them, but none had ever touched his heart. But the girl that morning — she differed from any other woman he had ever known. She walked like a free

> creature, she was ripe and vital and yet fresh as a spring flower, a dainty being yet wholesome as a blood-horse and she had the most darling laughing eyes. Sir Turnour found himself moved to poetry and strove to dig Latin tags out of his Harrow memoirs. (Ib. 97–98)

Bored with the artificiality of aristocratic boudoirs, he yearns for naturalness and ease. As befits a devotee of the open road and the innyard, he meets her on a glorious sunny morning by the roadside. Her coach having crashed, he gets to display his particular brand of chivalry by promptly rescuing her in his chaise and furthering his acquaintance at a nearby inn.

Lammas, to whom this type of provincial nouveau riche country girl is all too well known, is more critical. He is impressed by her beauty, but not dazzled. Recalling her lower middle class ancestry, he thinks he can detect signs of future plumpness, and even coarseness, in her radiant face. Not for him the jollity and rosy cheeks. He yearns for mystery and aristocratic refinement. He, like Wyse, will find virtue in unfamiliarity.

Love comes to Lammas with all the trappings of a Gothic romance. While out adventuring on sublimely desolate moors and having just escaped the clutches of the villain's henchmen, in a mood of fear and high excitement he encounters the woman of his dreams. She first appears to him as a mysterious presence in the darkness of the night, a maid clearly in need of rescue, frail and terrified but ready to lay down her life to save her loved ones. He is initially overcome with horror when he learns that she is the villain's wife, whom everybody takes to be his amanuensis, a wicked temptress and weaver of foul plots in her own right, a Messalina and Delilah combined. The first light of day reveals instead a pale chivalrous Joan of Arc fired with a mission to right her husband's wrongs. He is conscious of entering a world of pure romance, "a world which he had always revered and dreaded, where his duty was not with books and papers, but with primitive hazards and crude human passion" (ib. 129) where his manhood

might be tested. A boy's adventure becomes a chivalric quest, a journey of maturation.

The lady Lammas pledges himself to is a noble Englishwoman, a creature of palaces and boudoirs. Providing a fitting focus for his yearning to serve, she, like a true lady of romance, helps the hero along the path of self-knowledge. Pitted against her merciless husband in single combat, Lammas will prove to himself that he can be as resolute a man of action as the English baronet.

Though they are both instrumental in defeating the villain, Lammas and Wyse could not be more different in their approach to the task in hand.

Lammas is wracked by self-doubt and painfully aware of his own inadequacy. When it comes to a showdown and he finds himself alone, his friends having been delayed on the way, he puts on a desperate show of courage. Outmanoeuvred by his opponent and inexperienced with firearms, he is forced to admit defeat and realizes that his courage, fired by love and hope, was really born of ignorance.

No doubts at all beset Wyse. Having set his mind on punishing the villain, his rage becomes an elemental force. While Lammas relies on stealth and cunning, Wyse needs no subterfuge. He openly storms the villain's house. Finding him gone, he masterminds the destruction of planted evidence against his wife and sets about pursuing him with all the air of a seasoned campaigner. His mind completely at ease, he can take pleasure in showing off his superb horsemanship on the way. On the first leg of the journey he tames an entirely unruly horse with ease and on the second hijacks a Royal Mail coach with the respectful cooperation of its driver and guards. What follows is in essence a "match", Wyse testing his skill as a coach driver against the professionals. Proudly knocking minutes off their scheduled time at each stage and carrying out impossible manouevres on most unpromising roads, he draws constant praise from the driver and his admiring friends. Arriving at the scene of the last confrontation in the nick of time, he saves the life of Lammas and the lady whose firm champion he now is. He shoots the villain and restores the lady's sanity by producing her spaniel whom he has

thoughtfully brought along. Fair and magnanimous, he plays down his own achievement by referring to Lammas, when the Prime Minister comes to offer his compliments: "Not me /.../ My part was only a trifling bit of coachmanship and a lucky shot. There's a fellow that played the master hand." (Ib. 274)

Lammas, on his part, has lost his initial hostility towards Wyse and can now think of the Englishman as embodying in all the world what is "sane and wholesome and human" (ib. 249). For Wyse he has now "not only that respect due to one who represented in all things his exact opposite, but affection for a human creature so massive and so nobly secure in its own code of life" (ib. 175). It befalls to Jock, a fellow Scotsman, who witnessed the whole magnificence of the baronet's performance, to deliver the final judgement on Englishness:

> Yon's England /.../ We don't breed them like that in the north. We're maybe cleverer and quicker, and we're just as brave when it comes to the pinch, but we're cockleshells compared to yon even keel. If I saw much of him I'd be always differing from him, but, man, I should also be dumb with admiration. /.../ He's like the stone in the Bible — whoever falls on it will be broken, and on whomsoever it shall fall it will grind him to powder. (Ib. 275–276)

The final word on Scottishness is pronounced by the Prime Minister. Upon being introduced to the man who foiled an international plot against his government and saved his own and his ward's life, he beams to Lammas: "A divine and a philosopher and a man of deeds. I think your nation has the monopoly of the happy combination." (Ib. 274)

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The Function of the Anonymous and Irrational in the Novel by W. Golding *The Lord of the Flies*

ELENA ALEYEVA

The category of the anonymous plays a very important role in the works of W. Golding. Though being quite contradictory in his philosophic views he is very persistently proving one point, which is recurrent in all of his works starting from the very first novel. That is the role of the intuitive, irrational as opposed to rational thinking. Therefore the category of the anonymous becomes a very important factor in his world outlook.

The novel *The Lord of the Flies* traces the spiritual development of man, the evolution of his consciousness from the pagan stage, when he felt integrity with nature, through the Fall to Christianity. The archaic phase of human consciousness is traced by Golding on two levels — the philosophic and ritualistic. The formation of man's consciousness started with its relating to the outside world. This phase, which is characterized by the total harmony of a man and nature, is represented in the first chapters of the novel. The wild life on the island is described. Here we get a kind of mythological picture of the world. At the same time the action of the novel is saturated with rituals: the ritual dance, imitating hunting, which occurs more than once in the novel; the cult of the Lord of the Flies, the offering of a scapegoat, the pigs that the boys are hunting are equaled to totems. The use of different ancient myths in this novel was treated by A. D. Fleck in his interesting article "The Golding Bouch" (Fleck 1971), while some critics view the novel as an actualization of the myth about

Dionysus and his priests (Baker, Dick 1967). The present author quite agrees with B. F. Dick who presumes that this myth has entered the novel through the tragedy of Euripides *Bacchae* (Dick 1967: 481) and shares the opinion that this myth is reflected in the novel.

The function of the rituals introduced by the author in his novel is practically the same as in prehistoric days — to harness the fear of the mysterious and unknown. The first time the boys start to dance when they start feeling this irrational, inexplicable fear which has no visual material embodiment. It is generated by their ignorance of the source of this fear. But the ritual is not limited only to that. At the background of the events of the novel there lies an expanded ritual act of slaying God, first as a totem and later as a human being. The pagan phase of human development is represented by such actions as the slaughter of a pig, the worship of its head placed on a pillar and finally the slaughter of Piggy. This completes the pagan stage, but we should not forget that is happens only at the very end of the narration.

In the line of Christian tradition Simon becomes the scapegoat who like Christ the Savior descends from the mountain to reveal the truth to the people and accept a martyr's death. This victim illuminates Ralph and makes him realize the essence of human nature. The Christian tradition is also represented in the novel through the image of a lost paradise. Golding's heroes, finding themselves in the situation of the Garden of Eden, taste the forbidden fruit of knowledge, fall from innocence and become associated with evil. Henceforth starts the motif of guilt and redemption and moral purification through suffering. The paradigms of Christian mythology become more evident in the novel after the first manifestation of brutality and aggression — the slaughter of the pig. It is after this that the archetypal opposition of Christ-Antichrist (Simon-Jack) acquires its full meaning.

The character of Simon is definitely associated with the figure of Christ, which is only natural for Golding who was a deeply religious person. The antagonist of Simon is Jack. This antithesis is accentuated through the motif of the mask, the werewolf that is connected with Jack and his choir. Jack's character is modeled

according to the archetype of Antichrist, who is a bloody persecutor of all witnesses of truth. He establishes his power based on a lie and violence; he threatens to kill everyone who will not worship the image of the Beast. Thus, according to Golding, at the background of human spiritual growth lies the opposition and confrontation of different forces, and the anonymous plays a very significant part in this struggle. This confrontation reaches its climax in the episode of Simon's talk to the dead head of the pig. There we see the visual materialization of Good and Evil, which underlies the whole structure of the novel, determines its levels of meaning.

As it has already been mentioned, Jack becomes the aggressive bearer of evil. He is devoid of any normal human qualities. Though the atmosphere of the first pages of the novel is peaceful, we feel that Jack and Ralph personify opposite ideologies. Their friendly relationship is sustained at first as if due to some *glamour*, which prevents Ralph from accepting reality as it is:

> Ralph found himself alone on a limb with Jack and they grinned at each other, sharing this burden. Once more, amid the breeze, the shouting, the slanting sunlight on the high mountain, was shed that glamour, that strange invisible light of friendship, adventure and content. (Golding 1982: 83)

Golding in a way depersonalizes his heroes: he deprives them of surnames (with the exception of one-Jack Meridew), their social and educational background, and even their age can be only guessed at. In the course of the narration he even strips them bare, which suggests their closeness to savages. But though outwardly they all look about the same, the author stresses the individual character of each hero. Thus, for example, he writes about Jack:

> <...> and except a pair of tattered shorts held up by his knife-belt he was naked. He closed his eyes, raised his head, and breathed in gently with flared nostrils, assessing the current of warm air for information. The forest and he were very still. (Ib. 94).

His image is strongly associated with hunting, which we do not find in the description of Ralph or Piggy. This unbounded striving for barbarity, violence, destruction is inherent in Jack's nature, as Golding implies by repeating the adjective *mad* as opposed to *sane*. The contradicting forces impersonated by Ralph and Jack are intensified through the images of death and blood, which are also associated with Jack. The word *blood* in this passage recurs eight times. More and more often Jack's outbursts end with a ritual dance. It becomes not just another game of the boys, but a manifestation of dark instincts, anarchic forces, and the impersonal evil, which bursts out. The conductor and inspirer of these forces is Jack. It is with his character that the image of the Beast is mostly associated. It he who substitutes the notions of *serpent*, *fear* by the notion *beast*. That is how he tries to materialize the impersonal, he thinks it can be killed, destroyed. Thus Jack symbolizes the initial stage of human development, being the embodiment of dark instinctive forces not guided by reason. This was later defined as the Dionysus' element, which according to R. P. Winnington-Ingram is a force which makes one feel like God while he is acting like a beast (Winnington-Ingram 1948: 10)

One of the major characters in the novel is Simon. He is an epileptic, a mystic, and Golding's first saint. His uncommonness is marked from the very beginning. It becomes evident already from the comments of the boys. Golding stresses the unusualness of his behavior, its lack of motivation. Simon knows about the Beast. He feels it due to his extrasensorial abilities. But Golding does not give him a chance to explain it. Some things cannot be explained; they can be just felt. Simon tried many a time to express his knowledge in words, but the fear had already taken possession of the hearts and souls of the boys and they took it for heresy. The author puts Simon from the very beginning in the position of the one whom no one takes seriously, though his character occurs in the most crucial moments of complication. Simon intrinsically possesses the knowledge which common men obtain through tragic experience. He is in harmony with nature, which through Simon is comprehended as an eternal and unfathomable part of the universe. The climax of the philosophic level of the narration is

Simon's talk to the Lord of the flies. His intercourse with the dead head is shown not as the sick boy's delirium, but as a kind of philosophic and religious revelation. This is prepared gradually. The necessary effect is created through changing the perspective from which the events are viewed. The pig's head starts to talk to Simon about things that he has already unconsciously felt:

> "Fancy thinking the Beast was something you could hunt and kill!" said the head. For a moment or two the forest and all the other dimly appreciated places echoed with a parody of laughter. "You knew, didn't you? I am part of you? Close, close, close! I'm the reason why it's no go? Why things are what they are? (Golding 1982: 221–222)

Thus, without violating the integrity of the artistic whole the author turns from prosaic descriptions to philosophic generalizations.

Piggy is the only one on the island who does not cast off the outward attributes of civilization. He keeps wearing shorts, he does not lose weight, his eyeglasses are in their place, and he seems to be the only one who has not grown long hair. It is he who becomes the last victim of barbarity, though up to his death he firmly believes in the shell as the symbol of democracy. This character throughout the narration keeps asking rhetorical questions, appealing to the common sense and calling for observing the rules instead of hunting and killing. He does not believe in the existence of the beast. He is sure that there is nothing to be afraid of on the island, if they just do not "scare each other". He is much concerned about the fact that the younger ones are not taken proper care of, that they have not done even such a simple thing as to make a list of all those who found themselves on the island. That is, like Simon, he realizes that the evil is within themselves. In spite of being ridiculous and awkward, he is wise and his wisdom reveals itself in his accurate definition of the nature of evil. But, like Simon, he is helpless to change anything on the island.

His name, or rather his nickname (Golding does not give us his actual name) is associated with the pigs that are being slaughtered.

Golding goes further than that, describing his death as follows: "Piggy saying nothing, with no time for even grunt..." (Ib. 269) Thus again we have a parallel with rituals: the slaughter of a sacred animal and then worshiping it as a totem. The most important among the major characters of the novel is Ralph. He tries to organize life on the island, he suggests building huts and doing whatever they can to save themselves. But with the gradual degradation of the boys, their turning into savages, Ralph discovers within his own self this ability to be violent and wild. It is very vividly expressed in the episode when Simon is killed:

> The hunters took their spears, the cooks took spits, and the rest clibs of fire-wood. A circling movement developed and a chant. While roger mimed the terror of the pig, the littluns ran and jumped on the outside of the circle. Piggy and Ralph, under the threat of the sky, found themselves eager to take a place in this demented but partly secure society. They were glad to touch the brown back of the fence that hemmed in the terror and made it governable.
>
> "Kill the beast! Cut his throat! Spill his blood!" (Ib. 231)

Here Golding shows how dark instincts are generated and are poured out from the soul of one of the most reasonable who just a moment ago dreamed about the advantages of civilization. The evolution that Ralph undergoes is not incidental. The author from the very first lines of his narration implies that the idyll of the first days on the island is nothing but a mirage. The action balances on the verge of dream and reality, day and night, light and darkness. Ralph symbolizes the positive foundations of man, which do not always take the upper hand. By the end of the novel the rational, the defined disappears from the narration. Ralph stops understanding what is going on, even reminiscences about his past do not help him. Argumentation and memory fail him. The understanding of "the darkness of man's heart" comes to him not through rational thinking but through his own tragic experience. He is the only character in the book whose character is shown in

development: his consciousness goes through all stages of evolution and opens itself to the problems of modern philosophic thinking.

Thus we can see that the anonymous, irrational is multifunctional in Golding's novel. It determines its narrative structure and all the elements of the text. Golding's philosophy is based on the antithesis, the confrontation and synthesis of the opposites, which is defined by such antipodes as joy and happiness of existence on the one hand and evil associated with death — on the other. But those opposites do not have equal significance in the novel. Everything that is associated with the joy of life is usually materialized. It can be felt and seen. The evil in this novel is impersonal, it is irrational. That is why it generates unconscious despair, primordial fear that takes possession of his heroes. Fear is the product of evil, its sequence. And people are desperately striving to conquer it. The most ancient way is that of ritual which served to get rid of the uncertain fear. But Golding himself was sure that evil is diffused in the world and is incurable, because it is part and parcel of the human nature itself. That is why he shows in his works how man tries to materialize the evil to be able to conquer the fear. But that is a tragic path of errors which leads to the tragic revelation: evil is inside each of us.

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The Poetics of Impressionism in Iris Murdoch's *Under the Net*

VERA CHEBINEVA

Impressionism may be defined as a highly personal manner of writing in which the author presents materials as they appear to an individual temperament at a precise moment and from a particular vantage point. The object of the writer, then, is to present material not as it is to the objective observer but as it is seen or felt to be by the narrator in a single moment.

To denote narrative of that kind the term was borrowed from painting — for the devices employed by the writers seemed to be similar to techniques which impressionists used in their work. As far as impressionism was recognized as a movement in 1874 in France, literary impressionism is traditionally treated as a derivative from French fine arts impressionism, though their direct dependence may be questioned because of several reasons:

First of all, pre-impressionistic painting originates from England — Joseph M. W. Turner (1775–1851) and John Constable (1776–1837) were praised by French impressionists as their teachers. Another Englishman, a writer Laurence Sterne (1713–1768) lived even earlier, but such elements of impressionistic poetics as fragmental narrative based on impressions, attention to small details, gestures and psychological state of characters, an easy approach to syntactical structure of sentences, experimentation were traced in his *The Sentimental Journey* and *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy Gentleman* both by Russian and foreign critics. It can be hardly explained by an odd coincidence — there must have been some reasons for the impressio-

nistic vision to appear (though without official recognition) in different fields of the 18th century English art. Then, till the end of the 19th – beginning of the 20th century, when the movement got its name and became spread all over Europe, impressionistic vision of reality had not again been popular. Virginia Woolf (1882–1941), the theoretician of English modernism and the author of impressionistic prose, in her views on new literary techniques, expressed in the essay *Modern Fiction,* had been partly guided by Sterne's writing manner that she had studied in the essay *The Sentimental Journey.* Thus she took up an original English tradition of literary impressionism.

Comparing the historical, social and cultural background of the periods, it is easy to distinguish their common features: these are crucial moments in the history of the country, connected with the change of priorities, when events make people turn from objective life to the subjective inner world of their characters: the Enlightenment tradition is being substituted with sentimental prose and mystics of gothic novels, vague modernistic texts appear as an alternative to the realism of the 19th century. Based on impressions, the fragmented, irrational, emotionally-coloured narrative is a sign of a transitional period.

At the early stage of its development in literature, differently from the fine arts, impressionistic features nearly always appeared as an addition to the main method of narrative, manifesting themselves in stylistics or the general idea of the story, but not its philosophy. As a component of contemporary literature impressionism has occupied quite stable positions: psychological analyses, the stream of consciousness technique, as well as the detailed painting-like descriptions with a lot of colours are an integral part of modern fiction. Moreover, such of its traits as the interest in the present moment, a very subjective multi-aspective approach to reality based on the "point of view" and the possibility for different interpretations of the same fact appear to be close to the postmodernist perception of reality. Thus, with time from a special manner of writing impressionism has developed into a kind of outlook, a way of life perception and understanding, which may determine the whole narrative.

As far as we treat impressionistic vision as a sign of transitional periods, and the 20th century appeared to be very rich in turning-points, it is natural that it has become an integral part of human outlook. What is peculiar is that the adoption of impressionism as a basic form of outlook may happen quite unconsciously, and the creative activity of Iris Murdoch (1919–1999) is a good illustration for that. Having experienced the Second World War, she, who actually never mentioned impressionism among those methods which had influenced her works, wrote many of novels employing its techniques. The most impressionistic among them is the novel *Under the Net*.

The very idea of the novel is based on the background of impressionistic categories. Told from the first person and built around the impressions of the narrator, the novel involves the reader into the constant process of a search for memories which appear as sense-data answers to those many facts of reality that surround Jake Donaghue. The story recalls a slice that was quite randomly cut from the "pie of life" and presented to the reader as it was — "for we all know only pieces of somebody's lives": that kind of fragmental composition was widely employed by impressionists.

The actual search that Jake undertakes through the whole story is the search for Hugo Belfounder, the key-person of the narrative. These two heroes by the very essence of their character and way of life symbolize the philosophies of existentialism and logical positivism. As a professional philosopher Murdoch could not distinguish between literary work and scientific studies, that is why all her novels were built around philosophical ideas that she was working at. The novel *Under the Net* was written in 1954 and became a successful opening for further works of the writer. At the very beginning of her literary career Murdoch was greatly influenced by Sartre's vision of existentialism and found herself in opposition to Wittgenstein's logical positivism. That is why it was quite natural for the author to load her first novel with ideas of these two trends and to make her characters embody them by the way they live and act. Though transferred into actions, ideas of

existentialism and logical positivism appear to be very impressionistic.

Jake is definitely an existential character. The category of *bad foi,* suggested by Sartre, may be found in those several realities that Jake lives in. Events and people from the past appear to him more true to life than the same people in the present and the character communicates not with real people, but with those subjective "impressions" of them that he once has received. But nearly always perception of present facts through the prism of memories appears to be wrong. This gap between Now and Then, Real and Subjective, as well as their discrepancy, is noticed by Jake only when his actions, designed in the context of his own "understanding" of people and situations, are not adequately perceived by the people around him. Jake is eager to explain these misunderstandings, turning again to impressions and interpreting them with the help of creative imagination, for he is a writer. As a result, reality as it is has little space in the novel, while the subjective reality of the hero, as well as his "artistically created" reality, constitute nearly the whole narration.

All the realities in which Jake is trying to find veritable existence are nothing but reflections of objective facts. In that sense these numerous forms of realities are very impressionistic, for they imply a highly personal, subjective interpretation of the actual event. This idea is supported with the category of interpretation as reflection. Being a writer, Jake most of the time is busy translating works by Jan Pierre into English but not writing anything of his own and it oppresses him for he wants to do real things, not copies. The book *The Silencer* that he published, after long discussions with Hugo, appeared to be a reflection of Hugo's philosophical position and not an independent work of art. By the end of the novel Jake dares to decide to start writing a book of his own.

Reflections also appear as a result of the influence people have on another: thus, the elements of Hugo's world perception Jake notices in Anna's behavior after she falls in love with Belfounder. Jake himself constantly tries to find his own being in those numerous ideas, emotions and people that surround him. One more

source of reflections around Jake is a river: Themes or Sienna nearly always flow close to the place where Jake happens to be and the character treats reflections in the water as if they were real, thus making equal the reflected reality and the reality as it is.

The idea of momentary being and self-understanding in the context of a possible death, on the one hand, makes Jake Donaghue an existential hero and, on the other, proves the impressionistic nature of his outlook, as the category of death defines for him the unique beauty of each moment.

> Events stream past us like these crowds and the face of each is seen only for a minute. What is urgent is not urgent for ever but only ephemerally. All work and all love, the search for wealth and fame, the search for truth, like itself, are made up of moments which pass and become nothing. Yet through this shaft of nothings we drive onward with that miraculous vitality that creates our precarious habitations in the past and the future. So we live; a spirit that broods and hovers over the continual death of time, the lost meaning, the unrecaptured moment, the unremembered face, until the final chop that ends all our moments and pleasures that spirit back into the void from which it came. (Murdoch 1999: 244)[1]

Keen about "feeling" life, Jake pays much attention to the category of impressions that let him study the world around him. Through the whole narrative Jake is busy collecting impressions for further analyses:

> As I had been rather busy since my meeting with Hugo I had not yet had time to brood upon my impressions. I now gathered them all together and began to turn them over one by one. I recalled in detail Hugo's expression, his tone of voice, his gestures even, and compared them with earlier memories. (Ib. 167)

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[1] Underlining is mine here and in the further quotations. — V. C.

Impression-studies serve as a background for psychological conclusions that help Jake to find a way to the people around him:

> I did not slink into the Hotel Prince de Cleves as I would normally have done. I strode in, making receptionists and porters cower. They did not need to affect to ignore, for I think they truly did not see, the leather patches on my elbows, such is the power of the human eye when it darts forth its fire. (Ib. 171)

The impressionistic approach to psychology (for example that of sitters that the painters invited to model) was based on the first sight impressions and were supposed to provide the key to the inner world of the person. When describing somebody Jake concentrates on the eyes and gestures, thus introducing into the narrative a whole "gallery" of portraits and sketches:

> Anna is about as like her sister as a sweet blackbird is like some sort of rather dangerous tropical fish.... Sadie is glossy and dazzling. She is younger than Anna and has Anna's features, only smaller and tighter, as if someone had started to shrink her head but had never got beyond the first stage. She has a speaking voice not unlike Anna's, only with the husky note made more metallic. Not chestnut husks but rusty iron. (Ib. 29–30).

Descriptions are based on details that, like brush strokes on impressionistic canvases, suggest the very essence of the character.

Elements of painting are seen in the way Jake perceives the reality around him — accentuating the colors and light as impressionists did:

> Street lamps were lighted now on the bridge, and far away the dark river ran into a crackle of light. (Ib. 45)

In this example our attention is drawn to the moving flow of light and its changes. In another passage

> We wandered into an avenue of crated blossoms... I passed between walls of long stemmed roses still wet with the dew of the night, and gathered white ones and pink ones and saffron ones. Round a corner I met Dave laden with white peonies, their bursting heads tinged with red. We put the flowers together into an armful. As there seemed no reason to stop there, we rifled wooden boxes full of violets and anemones, and crammed our pockets with pansies...(Ib. 110)

we see flowers that were loved by impressionists as an object for painting for their bright colors and jolly vitality.

Reality full of colors and light seems monolithic to Jake and makes him feel it through each detail:

> In my first glance I noticed a French horn, a rocking-horse, a set of red-striped tin trumpets, some Chinese silk robes, a couple of rifles, Paisley shawls, teddy bears, glass balls, tangles of necklaces and other jewellery, a convex mirror, a stuffed snake, countless toy animals, and a number of tin trunks out of which multi-coloured costumes trailed. (Ib. 38)

Stuffed with numerous details, the narration becomes physically tangible, material and each object from the description may be compared again to those brush strokes that create the atmosphere in impressionistic pictures.

The painting motive is also supported by the idea of frame that Jake introduces into his narration:

> ... but now suddenly the whole of London had become an empty <u>frame</u>. (Ib. 33); I contemplated her coolly, <u>framing</u> her head in my arms. (Ib. 40)

Taken all together, the attention to colors, light, details of the material world and the frame motive convey the idea of impressionistic painting in the novel.

Speech always plays a very important role in any novel narrated in the third person. In *Under the Net* Jake's speech, apart from its direct function, contributes to the impressionistic character of the

whole narration: obscure, uncertain, it produces an impression of having something behind the words:

> My name is James Donaghue, but you needn't bother about that, as I was in Dublin only once, on a whisky blind ... (Ib. 21)

Why needn't we bother about his name? Instead of providing information, Jake's speech only provokes more questions. The reader has to discover the answers to these questions by himself and as such an individual approach always presupposes different interpretations of the same fact, it suggests the impressionistic character to the narrative itself. The impressionistic multi-meaning of Jake's speech is supported by his own statement:

> Subtle people, like myself, can see too much ever to give a straight answer. Aspects have always been my trouble. (Ib. 9)

Aspects have always been an object for impressionists.

Hugo Belfounder is the second key-person of the narrative. During philosophical discussions with Jake he voices the ideas from Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* which appears to coincide with some impressionistic ideas. Thus, he suggests not to speak about things that cannot be experimentally proved. According to this idea, emotions and feelings, especially 'post factum', should not be mentioned in communication because, on the one hand, it is hard to find proper words to describe different moods, and, on the other hand, people are apt to exaggerate and will lie when telling about what they feel in different situations. Descriptions appear to be lies according to Hugo. Impressionists never "described" — they just reflected their impressions on their canvases. That is why the theatre of pantomime, opened under Hugo's leadership, uses gestures, not words, to tell stories. Jake, impressed by Hugo's ideas, wrote *The Silencer* and his understanding that he rejected these ideas by the very fact of describing them, obsesses Jake throughout the novel and defines its impressionistically-oriented character, serving as a starting-point for the narration.

Not only ideas, but Hugo's whole way of life appears to be very impressionistic. First of all Hugo perceives every fact of life as if he is seeing it for the first time. Fresh impressions without analyses or conclusions constitute his outlook that never forms itself into a logical theory:

> Hugo only noticed details. He never classified. It was as if his vision were sharpened to the point where even classification was impossible, for each thing was seen as absolutely unique. (Ib. 61)

Such a "momentary" approach to reality was characteristic of impressionists.

> He was the most purely objective and detached person I had ever met, only in him detachment showed less like a virtue and more like a sheer gift of nature, a thing of which he was quite unaware. (Ib. 57)

And exactly this kind of objective detachment impressionists tried to achieve in their paintings.

In general, Hugo's characteristics make him a sample of impressionistic nature, an outlook, a way of life and thinking. His attitude to fireworks conveys fully his impressionistic character:

> There was something about fireworks which absolutely fascinated Hugo. I think what pleased him most about them was their impermanence. I remember his holding forth to me once about what an honest thing a *firework* was. It was so patently just an ephemeral spurt of beauty of which in a moment nothing more was left. 'That's what all art is really,' said Hugo. (Ib. 54)

He admired

> the trigger-like relation of the parts, the contrasting appeal of explosion and colour, the blending of pyrotechnical styles, the methods for combining *eclat* with duration, the perennial question of the coda. (Ib.)

He saw the essence of fireworks in absolutely impressionistic categories.

Except for Jake and Hugo, Murdoch introduces into the narrative several animals which are important in the context of impressionistic poetics: animal characters perceive the world with an objective detachment, concentrating on each moment and not drawing conclusions.

For example the sheep dog Mars soon becomes Jake's best friend, thus "doubling" the impressionistic nature of his character. Chameleons are introduced into the narrative as Anna's favorite animals. Their very appearance is very impressionistic, for they constantly change color in accordance with environmental changes. What impressionists tried to study in their canvases if not that kind of dependence on light and colors around the object. Moreover, the chameleons move very slowly, as if prolonging each moment, giving us an opportunity to study them all around.

The animal-motive is widely used in comparisons suggested by Jake: thus, he sees Hugo as a bear, Anna as a bird, Sadie as a tropical fish, etc. Such parallels with the animal world not only contribute to poetical descriptions but also suggest definite psychological meanings to the heroes.

Landscapes and urban scenes, though not numerous in the novel, are created in an impressionistic manner. For example the description of the day that Jake spent in Paris is impressionistic for several reasons: it consists of several fragments each showing the city from different aspects — the cafe, the Zoo, the Tuileries Gardens, which like brushstrokes create for us the whole picture; moreover, these descriptions cover not only the visual aspects of objects, but also the audial ones, thus enriching the impression of reality. Thus, the description starts at the Fontaine des Medicis with the sound of babbling water that is soon substituted by a colorful picture of motionless chameleons, after which we see nothing but a crowded, noisy, colorful and bright market. The market, as well as the embankment (quay) with the outdoor fete, is described with the help of numerous details: banners flying, the accordion playing, lamps and garlands glittering, etc. These draw our attention to the street life of the city, while the next fragment

with the Tuileries Gardens describes mostly Jake's impressions that are evoked by the landscape.

The impressionistic features of the novel *Under the Net* depend also on the use of some devices, of which sound symbolism is not the least. Thus, if we return to the description of chameleons, we can see how the monotonous, slow movements are described with the help of the sentence plasticity:

> **V**ery **v**ery s**l**o**wl**y they were c**l**i**m**bing about their cage, their **l**ong tai**l**s cur**l**ing and uncur**l**ing with unspeakab**l**e de**l**iberation as with a scarce**l**y perceptib**l**e **m**otion they stretched out one of their **l**ong hands to grasp another branch. Their squinting eyes **w**ou**l**d stare quiet**l**y for a whi**l**e unti**l** one of them **w**ou**l**d s**w**iv**l** **v**ery gent**l**y to another ang**l**e. (Ib. 186)[2]

Alliterated sounds V, W, L and M produce an impression of calmness while the repeated prefix UN contributes to the idea of monotonous movement. Delivering impression with the help of sound is quite characteristic of literary impressionism where sounds substitute paints.

Murdoch, as was shown in the examples, wrote her novel according to the poetics of impressionism — except for the devices that she employed to "paint with sounds", to make landscape or urban pictures, the writer used impressionistic ideas as the basis for developing the whole story, as a leading motive in the characters' behavior. At the same time Murdoch never admitted the direct influence of impressionism on her writing. It makes us presuppose that she, may be unconsciously, applied the poetics of impressionism just because it appeared to be the most proper form to express the ideas of those philosophies that she was interested in. The study of contemporary philosophical trends shows that many of them have something impressionistic in their nature, as for example the attention to the moment, aspects, objective detachment and subjectivism, etc. It again supports our

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[2] Boldtype is mine. — V. C.

idea about the impressionistic outlook being a sign of transitional periods.

As far as the tradition of English literary impressionism is concerned, though Murdoch did not express her interest to Laurence Sterne and his prose, the novel *Under the Net*, if compared to *The Sentimental Journey*, appears to be very close to it both in the devices employed, structure, the protagonist, etc. This suggests the continuation of Sterne's tradition in the 20th century.

The circumstances of the present intellectual environment make contemporary novels develop not a single but a complex of ideas, meanings and interpretations in order to achieve an objective picture of the world. In that sense the impressionistic outlook, with its multi-aspective perception of reality, again provides convenient forms and devices.

Impressionism may also be treated as a possible way for psychological studies for it is based on impressions, the principal categories that give insight into a subjective outlook.

Wide recognition gained by literary impressionism in the 20th century is a new stage in the history of impressionism, developed from a number of devices to the level of conceptual characteristics of the century in general. In that sense the novel *Under the Net,* built around the ideas of existentialism and logical positivism on the basis of impressionistic poetics, may be treated as an example of one of the ways of the contemporary literary development. And it is definitely a leap.

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"The Outcasts' Aristocratism" with a Twist: A Study of the Functions of Low Style in Post-Socialist Estonian Novel

KRISTA VOGELBERG

In a 1993 study of the reception by Estonian upper-secondary-school students of Liksom's short story „We got married"[1], Malle Järve (2002) found that the aspects of the story that raised the most objections and were principally responsible for its overall negative evaluation were "the language and the unpleasant characters". The readers were primarily upset by "the coarse language of the first-person narrator", particularly by "the number of abusive words" "unpleasant to read from a printed text". The derogatory epithets employed to disparage the text were "low", "rough", and "vulgar". As one respondent put it, "the bad language was intolerable, although the plot was interesting". As shown by a replication of the study in 1998, the judgement remained surprisingly persistent throughout the five years of turbulent transformations in society.

The background for the condemnation of the vulgarity is, at least in part, described by Järve herself, who attributes it to the Estonian reader's view of literature as "an institution of high culture", the "peasant-like respectful attitude towards the written word" arising partially from "Estonia's comparatively short literary tradition, slightly older than one hundred years". Järve (op. cit.) traces the attitude back to the period of national awakening "when the mother tongue and the written word played a central role in

[1] Liksom 1993. The story is told by a cynical first-person narrator (remarkably, female) and is replete with slang and vulgarisms.

building national culture" and adds that Estonian secondary school curricula in literature are also based on classic, "high-cultural" texts of a traditional approach.

The historical explanation is debatable — not to say consistent with the general Estonian tendency towards self-debasement — since high or at least neutral style has for long been *de rigueur* for high literature in many other, "non-peasant" cultures, with dialect, slang and vulgarisms generally a marked feature used as a mode of exploitation of the general rules of the field[2]. In Bourdieuan terms, the literary field/market/game has been dominated by intellectuals rich in cultural (though not necessarily economic) capital, which includes mastery of the legitimate (official, literary) language. All apparent dissensions notwithstanding, indeed through the very struggles that give voice to the dissensions, writers have, thus, shared the stakes with teachers and grammarians in perpetuating the use of legitimate language which derives its very value from an opposition to the "ordinary use" (cf. Bourdieu 1997: 37–43).

The censorship exercised by Estonian school curricula, is, in that sense, no exception. That the censorship has been successful is witnessed, inter alia, by the following remark of one of Järve's respondents: "But you can hear such text on every corner. I think: I don't want to read books with such language very much precisely because it may be heard quite a lot in everyday life as well". A view of literature as an expression of cultural capital and a source of the profit of distinction is aptly captured by the model of "good prose" traceable behind the respondents comments, which includes „proper and enjoyable literary language where there is no place for slang or "low" style" (Järve, op. cit).

The five years between the study and its replication witnessed the victorious emergence in Estonian prose of the "low style" and "obscene literature", e.g., texts by Peeter Sauter and Kaur Kender. Their arrival was marked by a considerable time lag as compared to the emergence of their Anglo-American models, yet on the Estonian literary landscape they were first-comers. Thus, unlike

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[2] As in the case of the Romanticists with their imitation of popular usage.

Liksom in Finland, against the background of the expectations of the readers such as shown in Järve's studies, they could count, at the very least, on a shock effect.

Yet shock effect would be insufficient to account for the acclaim the new trend met with in literary circles, as witnessed by, e.g., the praise lavished on and the prestigious literary prize awarded to Kender's incontestably "low-style" début *Iseseisvuspäev* ('The Independence Day'). This and the following novels earned the author almost a reputation of a battering ram that managed to tear up a hole through which fresh air was able to reach Estonian literature.

As already mentioned, both the work and its reception in many ways reproduced similar developments elsewhere, particularly in Anglo-American culture. Indeed, Kender has made no secret of his admiration for (and, presumably, indebtedness to) Tarantino, Tupac, Bret Easton Ellis. Yet in the small, relatively closed cultural space of Estonia the mechanisms of the "battering ram" effect and the dangers potentially inherent in it are perhaps easier to trace, as well as having their own peculiarities.

In some ways, the invasion of high literature by low style prompts one to make a mental experiment of what would happen if the deliberately low-style verbal exchanges in the working-class all-male cafés and pubs, the "aristocratic outcasts" vividly described by Bourdieu as "completely dominated by the values of force and vitality" (1997: 98) and as "comprising one of the rare principles of effective resistance /.../against the dominant manners of speech and action" were, by some magical sleight of hand, transported to literary *salons* and continued there, uninterrupted, without the usual intimidating or silencing impact of the dominant speech. The first effect would be liberating — paradoxically even more so to the dominant speakers, the bearers of legitimate linguistic capital.

The paradox can perhaps best be explained by the perpetual strain endured by the dominant speakers who, in Marx's phrase borrowed by Bourdieu, are "dominated by their domination" (2001: 69), who pay with constant effort and vigilance needed for living up to the strict standards set to them for their "double-edged

privilege of indulging in the games of domination" (ib.). The strain is, perhaps, most acutely felt in societies characterised by greater social mobility with its attendant instability, such as the American one with its amorphous social structure where all individuals suffer from what Lipset (1992: 109) terms "status-uncertainty", which makes them — seemingly paradoxically — *more* status-conscious than the Europeans in their more "hierarchical" societies. As Brogan (1943, quoted in Lipset) has remarked, "American social fences have to be continually repaired; in England they are like wild hedges, they grow if left alone". Hence the ready cooptation by American society in particular of, e.g., rap that bears the double function of expressing the self-assertion of the dominated and a welcome safety-valve for the pressure felt by the dominant.

Even more, the second function may be the only viable one. Indeed, there are serious reasons to agree with Bourdieu when he points to a trap inherent in the kind of self-assertion: "when the dominated pursuit of distinction leads the dominated speakers to assert what distinguishes them — that is, the very thing in the name of which they are dominated and constituted as vulgar — according to a logic analogous to a kind which leads stigmatised groups to claim the stigma as the basis for their identity, should one talk of resistance?" (Bourdieu 1997: 95). Amidst the reverse admiration generated by sociolinguistic studies in the vein of Labov, Paul Willis (1978) was relatively rare in his perspicuous early remarks that the self-assertion of, e.g., members of the gang, coexists with a deep-seated conformism to all social hierarchies, the rebellion thus reproducing the social domination it rebels against, as well as imposing censorship of its own that converts transgression into a duty whose fulfilment imposes extraordinary tension. One can thus say that it is in perfect concordance with this logic that it is the dominant classes who draw primary satisfaction, indeed double satisfaction in the cooptation of the low style by at once appeasing their bad faith via the apparent liberation of the dominated and simultaneously finding a vicarious vent for their own frustrations.

Part of the appeal of the low style in the Estonian novels under consideration is, in all probability, due to a similar liberating effect, that the upwardly mobile need perhaps even more in an early capitalist society where status uncertainty is at its highest. Here, however, additional factors come into play, peculiar to socialist and post-socialist society, that at once require and make possible a reconsideration and development of some of the Bourdieuan schemes.

Though Bourdieu makes a careful distinction between cultural /linguistic and economic fields and, respectively, cultural/ linguistic and economic capital, the particular societies he examines are characterised by relatively predictable translation of one into another, as well as a relative stability of the results of the translation (cf. Bourdieu's comparison between a diploma from a prestigious French university and a noble title, Bourdieu 1994: 40). Thus, for Bourdieu, the linguistic/cultural and economic domination are typically mutually contingent, and his analysis of linguistic/cultural rebellion by the dominated, though critical, is informed with unmistakable empathy. Bourdieu is certainly openly critical of the outcasts' "ethic of brute force", their "unreasoning commitment to realism and cynicism", their "rejection of the feeling and sensitivity identified with feminine sentimentality and effeminacy", their "obligation to be tough with oneself and others", yet he also sees these principles as a product of a world "with no way out, dominated by poverty and the law of a jungle, discrimination and violence, where morality and sensitivity bring no benefit whatsoever" (1997: 96). Though the rebellion reproduces hierarchical patterns of domination inside the dominated group (in particular, via vigorously expressed male domination over the female), as well as objectively reinforcing the overall social hierarchy (by "claiming the stigma as the basis of identity"), it is nevertheless a rebellion born of desperation and thus deserving of sympathy.

Meanwhile, Estonian society, and in particular Estonian society in socialist times and the subsequent transition period, provides an interesting test case where the cultural and the economic fields are clearly separated. The narrator — and indeed the two prota-

gonists — in Kender's *Iseseisvuspäev* are culturally deprived to an almost grotesque extent, as perhaps best portrayed in the episode where the narrator goes to the National Library to look for literature that would "get it up" for him and gratefully accepts "The Red and the Black" as the third of the three titles offered, all the while stunned by the fact that there are only three books answering his demands in the whole of the huge library. However, in a society with a relatively egalitarian education system the deprivation has not been a result of economic necessity but to a far greater extent a matter of choice. What is more, in the muddy waters of the transition period the protagonists have no problem ending up as millionaires as the novel draws to its close.

This bifurcation between cultural and economic capital in the novel mirrors that in society at large. In the transition period, the Estonian (or, for that matter, in any post-socialist society) *nouveaux riches* were not dependent on cultural capital for their economic success while possessors of cultural capital — in many respects the *only* capital and the only source of the profit of distinction in socialist times — increasingly found that cultural capital was all they had left. However, the profit of distinction offered by the possession of cultural capital still retained most of its potency. Furthermore, since acquiring linguistic/cultural capital had not been economically determined, its possessors experienced no bad faith to atone for. The widening of the dominant horizon of expectations of a "good novel" via incorporation of the low style as a means of *caricaturising* the *nouveaux riches* can almost be regarded as a type of strategy of condescension. The grotesquely comic impact of the low style does probably serve the function of releasing the tension attendant to keeping up to the standard required by cultural domination — hence the "fresh air" effect referred to by a number of critics — but also acts as a reminder that in the only field that mattered the *nouveaux riches* were ultimately losers.

This line of reasoning would partly account for the decidedly more mixed reception of Kender's third novel — *Check-out* — that belongs to a time when economic capital, still largely unlinked to cultural capital, had, as it were, "come into its own".

Proclamations by representatives of the moneyed élite about, e.g., the outdatedness of all literature, still met with public ridicule yet the tone was far more indulgent. More importantly, the statements were widely publicised, this at a time were the belief was spreading that *all* publicity is eventually beneficial. Similarly to those of *Iseseisvuspäev,* the protagonists in *Check-out* display the whole array of the characteristics of Bourdieu's "aristocratic outcasts" — the slang, the vulgarisms, the cynicism, coupled, again, with the emphatic masculinity that recreates the hierarchy of domination in the dominated field — yet in the economic market they are the winners. They can in no way be regarded as dominated by poverty, discrimination and violence, indeed they are the ones that indulge in reckless violence, which, though indiscriminate, targets the poor in particular. The novel can still be read as a social satire, yet can also been interpreted as a straightforward proclamation of the victory of the cultural/linguistic "outcasts" through the very "outcasting", marginalisation of the cultural field.

This reading presupposes a fusion of the author and the narrator. The Estonian poet and critic Jürgen Rooste explicitly supports the fusion when he states that the novel "expresses Kaur Kender's personal ideology /.../ — contempt for the Second (in fact the only) Estonia, supreme hedonism, utter scorn for those who do not have the money needed to identify themselves as human beings. On p. 168 the author says outright that if you do not have the dough, you are not human" (Rooste 2002, my translation).

One should remember, of course, that, strictly speaking, it is *not* the author but the narrator who utters the statement. The author's own interpretation, though ambivalent, tends to emphasise the narrator as a self-destructive *nouveau riche* whose path ends in an impasse (Kender 2002) and who, accordingly, should evoke pity rather than be heard as a voice of authority.

However, the social climate had undergone considerable changes by the time of the novel's publication. Järve found a "clear shift in /the school-leavers' — K. V./ literary horizon of expectations" between the early and late 1990s, "especially in their attitude towards the language". For one, the respondents were not

unanimous in either study, and a dynamics of change in the attitudes was also clearly observable: in 1993, approximately every third (9 out of 30), and five years later almost every second (14 out of 34) respondent actually enjoyed the use of slang, "the juiciness and novelty of the language" and "the compliance of the style with the contents" ("It was cool to read; I liked the slang ... but not the characters", "In a way, it was written as if with a small dose of black humour", "It was quite a normal thing, particularly in terms of its vocabulary everything was said explicitly", "I liked the style, it was cool, such a novel and courageous one"). Järve states a relatively equal gender distribution of her respondents yet provides no data as to a possible gender breakdown in responses favourable/unfavourable to the use of "coarse language". From the (relatively few) comments cited, however, one does get the impression that male respondents were less judgmental about and more appreciative of the style.

Thus, slang and coarse vocabulary disturbed and shocked the young readers of the 1998 considerably less than their peers in 1993 — a change that Järve, correctly, attributes primarily to the rising influence of the media culture (Järve, op. cit.), and that, on analysis, liquefies borders around the field of cultural/linguistic capital. Coupled with the vigour and robustness of the narrator's voice in *Check-out*, the new circumstances undermine the distancing interpretation of the novel and endow the low style — as well as its attendant cynicism — with an altogether different function. It is no longer an expression, in the vein of rap, of the rage and revolt of the socially rejected, nor a comical marker of the cultural deprivation of the petty crooks — it is *de facto* elevated into a new norm. For post-socialist bearers of cultural capital the effect is no longer exhilarating or amusing, it borders on the scary.

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Die estnisch deutsche Gegensätzlichkeit um die Jahrhundertwende

MARI TARVAS
Hermann Bahr: Das Verschwinden des Autors in seinem Werk

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