



dynamics of the reception of world literature

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dynamiques de réception de la littérature
mondiale

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dynamik der rezeption der weltliteratur

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dinámica de recepción de la literatura
universal

interlitteraria

Tartu Ülikooli maailmakirjanduse õppetooli ja Eesti Võrdleva Kirjandusteaduse Assotsiatsiooni rahvusvaheline aastakiri.

Annual international refereed edition of the Chair of Comparative Literature of Tartu University and the Estonian Association of Comparative Literature.

Edition annuelle internationale de la Chaire de Littérature Comparée de l'Université de Tartu et de l'Association Estonienne de Littérature Comparée.

Internationales Jahrbuch des Lehrstuhls für Weltliteratur an der Universität Tartu und der Assoziation der Vergleichenden Literaturwissenschaft in Estland.

Edición anual internacional de la Cátedra de Literatura Comparada de la Universidad de Tartu y de la Asociación Estonia de Literatura Comparada.

Toimetuskolleegium/Editorial Board:

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Kirjastaja ja levitaja/Publisher and Distributor:

*Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus/Tartu University Press, Tiigi 78, Tartu 50410, Eesti/Estonia
tel.: +372 737 5945, fax: +372 737 5944, e-mail: tyk@ut.ee, website: www.tyk.ee*

Kujundaja/Designer:

Lemmi Koni

© 2006 by Tartu University Press

Printed and bound by Tartu University Press. Order No. 278

interlitteraria

11 - 2006 - vol I

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TARTU UNIVERSITY
PRESS

Contents ■ Matières ■ Inhalt ■ Contenido

JÜRI TALVET ■ 7

Introductory Note

DOROTHY FIGUEIRA ■ 10

Can We Ever Truly Engage the Other?

EDUARDO F. COUTINHO ■ 19

Comparativism in Latin America in the 21st Century

ÜLAR PLOOM ■ 26

Reception: Eugenics or Contamination. Some Observations
on Socio-Historical and Cultural Performatives

VID SNOJ ■ 41

World Literature against the Background of the Other

TERRY SIU-HAN YIP ■ 50

The Romantic Quest: The Reception of Goethe
in Modern Chinese Literature

WIESŁAW KRAJKA ■ 70

From Periphery through the Centre back to the Periphery:
The Reception of Joseph Conrad in Poland

VERA SHAMINA ■ 84

Chekhov on the American Stage

RAHILYA GEYBULLAYEVA ■ 95

The Influence of a Dominant Factor on the Language of Azerbaijani
National Literature

ELVIRA OSIPOVA ■ 106

American Writers in Russia: Some Notes on Reception

KWOK-KAN TAM ■ 113

Ibsenism and Feminist Awakenings among
Early Modern Chinese Writers

MAIJA BURIMA ■ 129

Latvian Literature between Ibsen and Hamsun (till 1940)

OLGA NESMELOVA ■ 138

Russian Reception of the US 20th-Century Literary Process:
The Ideological Battles of the 1920–30s

DOROTHY FIGUEIRA, THOMAS J. FIGUEIRA ■ 151

Imperialism: Heart over Minds?

ENE-REET SOOVİK ■ 161

How Newness Enters a Country:
Reception of the “Postcolonial” in Estonia

DAINIUS VAITIEKŪNAS ■ 174

A la recherche du postmodernisme: la réception de la littérature
étrangère dans la Lituanie contemporaine

TOMO VIRK ■ 181

Literary Reception and Political Background:
Slovene Reception of Postmodernism

JEANNE E. GLESENER ■ 190

The Emergence of the ‘Foreign’ Author and
the Bewilderment of the Reader / Critic

LICIA TAVERNA ■ 204

La littérature d’immigration et les dynamiques de la réception.
À partir de l’exemple de Yamina Benguigui

TXETXU AGUADO ■ 218

Beyond the Provincial Literary Canon of the Nation: The Reception
of Jorge Semprún’s Discordant Voice Within the Spanish Tradition

SABINE COELSCH-FOISNER ■ 233

*Pygmalion and My Fair Lady: From Social Satire to
Musical Romance*

STEFANO MONTES ■ 246

*Is Intra-Reception Possible? The Literatures of Anthropologists,
Marc Augé and Otherness*

Introductory Note

Once again, *Interlitteraria* gathers papers of an international conference. Once again, the conference was a special one, for its size, for the theme — “Dynamics of the Reception of World Literature” — and for the composition of scholars who on that occasion came from different corners of the world to Tartu, to be with us in the last days of September, 2005.

We could listen to nearly 50 papers on the subject of the reception of world literature. The size of the conference — by far surpassing the scope of our previous five international comparative literature forums — should make us, the organizers, seriously think about if we can really go on with our traditional “intimately academic” symposia, where we have tried to host (accommodate and feed) participants in Tartu for the most part on our own account, or should we accept the standard conference model widely rooted in the world, which, putting it simply, makes everybody’s own purse responsible for all the choices. The latter option would definitely diminish the special aura of our Tartu conferences — which so many participants have always deeply cherished and appreciated. Let us see what time brings. Our next conference — planned for the autumn of 2007 — is likely to become a touchstone in this sense.

Our EACL affiliation to the ICLA got a tangible evidence by the presence at our last conference of Dorothy Figueira, one of the ICLA Vice-Presidents, and of Eduardo Coutinho, the main organizer of the next ICLA world congress in Rio de Janeiro (2007). At the festive opening ceremony, held traditionally at the White Hall of Tartu University’s Museum of History — an ancient cathedral, until the 18th century — a letter was read with greetings to the conference participants by the ICLA President Tania Franco Carvalhal. I think it was particularly important for younger scholars: they could intuit from a close distance that comparative literary studies are one of the most important sections of cultural research on the global scale. Even if young scholars could not afford long and expensive trips to the ICLA

world congresses in Pretoria, Hong Kong or Rio de Janeiro, the ICLA leading members show willingness to move towards local nuclei of CL and bring along stimulating messages from the world organization.

The fact that our last conference, despite its seemingly “traditional” theme, managed to attract such a wide scholarly interest, should also make us think if in the enthusiasm of tracking the reigning postmodern trends and their key-words in cultural studies we have not moved too far away from areas of research which really could enlighten essential facets in the global cultural processes in history and in the present. The broad area of the role and the tendencies of translated world literature in different geo-cultural spaces, without any doubt, would require much more attention that it has deserved in modern cultural studies.

Thanks to the wonderful contributions by some of our conference participants from Far-East countries, we know now about deep, almost revolutionary changes in cultural consciousness caused by translations and staging in China and Korea of the work of Goethe and Ibsen. These are first-hand sources for further developing a discourse about the interrelations between the “own” and the “other” from both points of view, the East and the West.

However, we must acknowledge that these are only the very first steps in becoming aware, in an elementary way, of what is really going on at the “home of the other”. Many more international conferences are needed to deal with the same extensive research complex, to bring us closer to becoming genuine comparatists, i.e., overcoming the general state of fragmentation, still largely prevailing among CL scholars, who tend to be just “specialists”, without a transcendence, in some very narrow margin or fragment of world literature and culture.

Another extremely important facet of the reception of world literature is what is being done at schools and universities of the world, i.e., to what extent young generations are being educated in this fundamental section of world culture. The papers by some of our conference participants from Eastern Europe mention — as something self-evident — the tradition of teaching world literature at the schools and universities of their countries. Indeed, there are long traditions which, despite globalization and the postmodern rejection of “basic human truths”, have luckily not been totally broken or interrupted in these parts of the world.

What about Western Europe, where now, as we know, one of the primary and most urgent ideological tasks is to integrate smoothly the new members into the European Union? To what extent Western Europe — the traditional “centre” — knows deeper layers of East-European culture? Has anything really been done to improve the present state of things, faulty and defective in practically every sense, in the West? And what is being done in this area in the U.S., Japan, India and other world countries, big and small?

It seems that many new conference themes are ripening in this field. Some could be developed at our Tartu conferences in the coming years.

As in the last years, in general, *Interlitteraria* is thankful to the Estonian Cultural Foundation, Kultuurkapital, for its support.

Intelitteraria 12, 2007 — another planned miscellanea-issue — will once again offer a chance also to those scholars who have not (as yet) been able to join our Tartu conferences. The MSS should arrive by January 31, 2007.

Jüri Talvet,
Editor

Can We Ever Truly Engage the Other?

DOROTHY FIGUEIRA

The institutionalization of multiculturalism in the United States is a bureaucratic structure purporting to foster minority rights. An outgrowth of the movement in the 1980s on American campuses to revamp the canon, multiculturalism claims to open the canon up to subalterns, exiles, and others. Its call to reinvision the world from a decolonizing and anti-racist perspective has triggered reactions on both the Right and the Left. On the Right, multiculturalism was seen as an attack on Euro-American culture. On the Left, it represented not an assault on Euro-Americans, but on Eurocentrism, the discourse that “embeds, takes for granted and normalizes ... the hierarchical power relations generated by colonialism and imperialism” (Shohat and Stam 2003: 7). One of multiculturalism’s underlying assumptions was that people can only comprehend people like themselves, rather than translate difference (Gitlin 1995: 208–9). Or, as a Stanford University student put it, when asked during that university’s debates over canon revision about studying important non-Western trends such as Japanese capitalism or Islamic fundamentalism: “Who gives a damn about those things? I want to study myself” (San Juan 1995: 230–1).

In this context, it is worth noting the extent to which the crises in institutional multiculturalism are widespread. One only has to consider the murders of Theo Van Gogh in Holland and German women of Turkish descent in Germany for no greater crimes than self-expression. These instances, where democratically protected freedom of speech collides with sectarian intolerance, have become all too common. Europeans may pride themselves on their multiculturalism as the acceptance of difference, but this violence brings into glaring light how tolerance does not coexist well with radical intolerance. The recent violence that has beset France can be interpreted as a barometer to the failure of the

French model of multiculturalism, where immigrants are believed to be assimilated as citizens rather than as members of religions or ethnic groups. In all these cases, we have a Western government relying on concepts of inclusion (i.e. citizenship means equality) that are abstractions, totally at odds with the real experiences of minorities in these societies. The socio-cultural inequities have been discussed and theorized, but never addressed in a politically effective way. Unfortunately, America is equally culpable in this failure of understanding. The sad truth is that some multiculturalists, although they view themselves as "border-crossers" (Giroux 1992: 23) and cultural workers (ib. 21), define alterity in very self-referential terms, a trait, as we shall see, not unique to their conceptualization of alterity.

Multiculturalism presupposes two basic ideas. First, it recognizes that American history is not solely reflected in the activities of one race (white), one language group (English), one ethnicity (Anglo-Saxon) or one religion (Christianity). It quite correctly claims that African-Americans, Latinos, Asian-Americans, Native Americans and others have made central contributions to American culture. It also suggests that beneath the differences among Americans there are some underlying principles and values that bring them together, such as notions of equality, democratic government, individual liberty, etc. (San Juan 1995: 230). The assumption behind multiculturalism is that, given the ethnic plurality in American society, universities must "create an environment which will uphold, promote and instill multicultural values" premised on the notion that knowledge and information will presumably lead to a more enlightened, tolerant and, therefore, more democratically representative society (ib. 224).

However, such a theory of diversity presupposes and requires the notion of a common Americanism, a final transcendent and self-reproducing essence that binds all Americans together. It requires a national character that guarantees the individual's right to differ (ib. 225). This view of multiculturalism celebrates the competing claims of an assimilationist "common culture." It fulfills the desire for a free-wheeling social order founded on the principle of unity in multiplicity (ib. 223). This rendering of multiculturalism as spectacle revisions the image of America as a melting pot into America as a salad. America as a multicultural salad is now not only colorful and beautiful, but capable of being consumed. This transformation begs the question: "Who is the consumer?" (Davis 1996: 45).

Stanley Fish has identified two forms of multiculturalism operating in American academe today: what he has termed the boutique as opposed to the strong version. Boutique multiculturalism establishes a superficial relationship, wherein students are encouraged to admire and recognize the legitimacy of traditions other than their own. They stop short of approving other cultures only when some value at their core generates an act that offends the canons of civilized decency as they have been either declared or assumed. In other words, boutique multiculturalism embraces difference up to the point precisely when it matters most to committed members (Fish 1997: 378–9). Strong multiculturalism, in contrast, claims to accord a deep respect to all cultures at their core. Each has the right to form its own identity and nourish its own sense of what is rational and humane (ib. 389). For strong multiculturalists, the first principle is not rationality or some other supracultural universal, but tolerance. Strong multiculturalism works to the point where a culture whose core values you are tolerating reveals itself to be intolerant. At this juncture, you can either stretch your toleration to expand to their intolerance or condemn their core intolerance and therefore no longer accord it respect. The strong multiculturalist usually opts for the latter choice in the name of the suprauniversal. In short, strong multiculturalism reveals itself to be not very strong after all. Essentially, it is not very distinct from boutique multiculturalism,¹ just a deeper instance of what boutique multiculturalism presents in a shallow form (ib. 383). Fish does not see either form as able to come to terms with difference, although their inabilities are asymmetrical.

The philosophy and ethics of multiculturalism was first brought to prominence by Charles Taylor (Taylor 1992) and discussed subsequently by other scholars (Taylor 1992, 1994). Fish's article was a response to this debate and his concepts of boutique multiculturalism were patterned after these arguments (Fish 1997). One side of the debate was presented by Steven C. Rockefeller who posited our identity within the universal as primary and more fundamental than any particular identity such as citizenship, gender, race, or ethnicity (Rockefeller 1992:88). The universal will win out over the individual because the individual is the

¹ To be a strong multiculturalist, you would have to be really strong and therefore not multiculturalist at all since multiculturalism is predicated on the belief in the distinctiveness of a culture to the point where it expresses itself in the determination to stamp out distinctiveness of some other cultures (Fish 1997: 385).

foundation of recognition of equal value and the related idea of equal rights. Individual choice cannot be pursued to the point where it interferes with, prescribes, or proscribes the choices of others. Rockefeller's concept promotes a politics of equal dignity in which the local is subordinated to a universal value of free rational choice. Under a politics of equal dignity, shared potential is protected by law and particular forms of its realization (tradition, religion, ethnic allegiances) succeed or fail in the market-place "give and take" (Fish 1997: 381).

In opposition to Rockefeller's thesis, Charles Taylor promotes a politics of difference (Taylor 1992: 38), where the preferred value that is protected and fostered is the unique distinctiveness of the particular (Taylor 1992: 43). Taylor's multiculturalism is, essentially, the pedagogical praxis of the politics of recognition. Fish describes Taylor's politics of difference as nothing but strong multiculturalism (Fish 1997: 382). Boutique multiculturalism is akin to Rockefeller's recognition of equal dignity. It views the core values of cultures as overlays on a substratum of essential humanity and thus tolerates them without taking them seriously or seeing them as truly core (Fish 1997: 379). It honors diversity superficially with a deeper loyalty paid to universal potential.

Fish claims that neither boutique nor strong multiculturalism comes to terms with difference (Fish 1997: 385). Boutique does not take it seriously; we are all essentially alike. Strong multiculturalism takes difference seriously as a general principle but cannot take seriously any particular difference that refuses to be generous in its own turn; it cannot allow their imperatives full realization in political programs since it would inevitably lead to the suppression of difference (Fish 1997:386). Boutique multiculturalism views difference in terms of matters of lifestyle. It honors diversity in its most superficial aspects, with a deeper loyalty given to some notion of its universal potential. In these competing notions of recognition, Fish questions where respect for the Other actually resides, in tolerating difference (and, thereby, "disrespecting" it) or in taking it seriously enough to oppose it (Fish 1997: 388). Jürgen Habermas and Amy Gutmann, in their contributions to the multicultural debate, bypass this dilemma by presenting what Fish terms a vision of the world as a philosophy seminar where differences between rational persons can be talked through (Habermas 1994: 133). Fish characterizes Gutmann's stance as her holding her nose in disgust as she eschews the weapons her liberalism disdains (ungenerosity, intolerance, and repression). Fish opines that you do not respond to evil with tolerance,

assuming that its energies will dissipate in the face of scorn; you respond to it by stamping it out (Fish 1997: 392). Fish concludes that multiculturalism is ultimately an incoherent concept (ib. 388). The problem with multiculturalism (or monoculturalism, for that matter) is that it points to a disjunction of intellectual and institutional practices from operations of the centralized state and corporate business structure.

Other critics are equally dismissive in their assessments. Noam Chomsky dismissed it as a form of fetishized knowledge (Chomsky 1982). Russell Jacoby noted that multiculturalism flourishes as a programme while it weakens as a reality (Jacoby 1994: 124). Wahneema Lubiano condemned it as an empty abstraction used by administrators to take the political heat off their institutions for their failure to diversify (Lubiano 1996: 68). Under multicultural initiatives, students are still held to Euro-American values for education and life success (Guerrero 1996: 61). Studying the Other in multiculturalism's thoroughly appropriated and diluted fashion ensures that the continued domination of Eurocentric knowledge remains unchallenged.

Slavoj Žižek has characterized multiculturalism as an experience of the Other deprived of its Otherness. The idealized Other of multiculturalism dances fascinating dances and has an ecologically sound holistic approach to reality, while practices like wife-beating remain out of sight (Žižek 2002: 11). In other words, multiculturalism appears to many as nothing more than a subterfuge for business as usual. One can offer a selection of ethnic or racially specific courses without addressing the ways in which the focus of what we understand as Western culture is itself incomplete and distorted (Lubiano 1996: 68). American Indian Studies, for example, can be brought onto campuses as a "polite pseudo-intellectual vehicle to provide the appearance of ethnic diversity." Native American cultural production thus provides validation to supposed insights and conclusions of Euro-American academia, rather than any Native American tradition of scholarship offering an alternative to Eurocentrism and its institutions (Guerrero 1996: 56)

The key problem here is that identity is not simply a matter of positionality nor is the multicultural ideology a way to recuperate sensibilities disintegrated by society and the labor market (San Juan 1992: 4). The real concern is not just the texts that transmit the heritage of the humanities in order to preserve standards and promote excellence, but rather, "Who consumes the tasty salad?" In more concrete and less flavorful terms, we can formulate the situation as follows: Who defines

the standards of excellence and whose interests are at stake? Who should articulate the purpose and meaning of a humanities education and how? The multicultural battles at Stanford University over the revision of the canon met with considerable resistance from factions decrying the replacement of the classics from the Western tradition with lesser valued works from minority literatures. However, part of the resistance also stemmed from what was seen as the cooptative strategy behind such canon revision. Did not the process of liberalizing the canon by simple addition of non-Western texts betoken tokenization and exhibit a patronizing tolerance (Pratt 1993: 59, cited in San Juan 1995: 231)? If non-white materials are perceived as “add-ons” to white structures, they never address the centrality and dominance of the latter (Newfield and Gordon 1996: 87). Ultimately, difference should make a difference (Davis 1996: 48).

In practice, however, multiculturalism’s celebration of diversity in no way compromises American tendencies to cultural provincialism, triumphalism or indifference to the world. Like those popular ethnic fairs one finds in the States, multiculturalism allows students to taste other cultures without digesting them. The resounding global education that multiculturalism offers a literature student can then consist of nothing more than snippets from Arundhati Roy, Toni Morrison, or Maxine Hong Kingston (Talbot 2001). Multiculturalism presumes that one can grasp the world by reading selections from representative women of color writing in the English language. There is this tendency to act as if “anybody can play at anything,” whether it be Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*, Lacan’s “mirror stage” or the situations of subalterns in southeast Asia (Rapaport 2001:2). Multicultural scholars, without much homework, can create work of purported sophistication masking a selectively ignorant exploration and ensuring a general failure of engagement.

Let us take, for example the case of *The New Pelican Guide to English Literature*. A chapter of this volume is dedicated to American Indian literary production. It is quite extraordinary — filled with quotes ranging from Pound, Ginsburg, Whitman, Rimbaud, Cassirer, Breton and Rabelais. Indian writers are named only at the end of the chapter. No specific reference is made to genocide and the continued disposition of American Indians (San Juan 1991: 223). Essentially, what we have in this volume is a pretense of inclusion cloaking continued exclusion. In fact, this volume offers something even worse than the customary exclusion of an earlier age. It presents a type of dumbed-down ethnicity-

oriented scholarship that pretends to take seriously underrepresented cultures while providing less information regarding them than when they were largely excluded from the canon. Such scholarship offers a more subtly constructed hegemonic vision of race and it has come to be the "officially validated pedagogic approach" to the Other (San Juan 1991: 223).

The simple fact is that not only conservative think-tanks and champions of the Western canon criticized the institutionalization of multiculturalism. Minority critics and students made their voices heard. At the University of Texas, Chicano students expressed their uneasiness regarding multiculturalism. They viewed it as a bland, catch-all phrase connected with diversified reading lists or required courses on non-Western cultures. They perceived it as a means of thwarting a head-on confrontation that should take place over institutional racism (San Juan 1995: 224). Their perception had a good deal of validity. If multiculturalism largely functions as an application of the norm of tolerance, it becomes inherently a form of control (Essed 1991: 210, cited in San Juan 1995: 234). Satisfied with bracketing the Other, multiculturalism, as practiced in US institutions, does not adequately address difference. In fact, it avoids institutional and structural determinants of inequality (Gordon and Newfield 1996: 79) and fetishizes alterity by a separatist and hedonistic, self-concealing politics of identity (San Juan 1992: 4). It glosses over problems in the political, legal, and economic realms with postmodern language games played out in hyperreal space (San Juan 1995: 236).

Multiculturalism appears then as an academic fad signifying little more than the liberal presumptions that power is dispersed evenly and you need only to realign the symbolic system to appease the disaffected. It offers the illusion of victory over racism and pretends to establish a "border pedagogy responsive to the imperatives of a critical democracy" (Giroux 1992: 13). Certain individuals among the opportunistic and disaffected are willing to accept this master narrative. Many, however, recognize that multiculturalism does not, in fact, liberate or dignify anyone because it does not address the issue of who has the power to determine what courses are taught and what requirements are established (San Juan 1995: 224-5). It does not question who is allowed to enunciate questions of national identity and solicit answers (San Juan 1992: 131). Ultimately, multiculturalism does nothing to address what should be the key concern: "Who controls the university?" Rebecca Rice, an African-

American artist and educator put it fairly succinctly: “Who decides when and how various cultures will come together? Who pulls the purse strings (O’Brian and Little 1991: 209–10, cited in San Juan 1995: 225)? Who really benefits from the identity industry? One can safely claim that, contrary to its inflated aspirations, multiculturalism does not guarantee equality of opportunity or access to resources for the disenfranchised. It does not automatically empower victims of liberal democracy (San Juan 1995: 234). In fact, the case can be made that it provides a smokescreen for societal and institutional unwillingness to change the academic situation of minorities.

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Comparativism in Latin America in the 21st Century

EDUARDO F. COUTINHO

To discuss the role of Comparative Literature in Latin America is a complex task which brings about a series of problems that range from a re-evaluation of the very concepts of "comparativism" and "Latin American literature" to a criticism of the ethnocentric focus which has characterized the discipline in its former stages and which has always been present in the continent's critical and theoretical discourses. Initially marked by a historicist perspective, resulting from nineteenth-century Positivism, and later by the formalist approach dominant in the first half of the twentieth century, Comparative Literature, in its first manifestations upon the literature of the continent, acted as another element for the ratification of the discourse of cultural dependence. Later on, however, thanks to the very evolution of the discipline and to the questioning debate which unfolded in Latin America over its cultural differences, comparativism significantly shifted its axis and is now in the front line of reflection regarding the continent.

The practice of comparing authors, works and literary movements has long existed in Latin America, but it was based, after the French manner, on the studies of sources and influences, which, in addition, were carried out from a one-sided viewpoint. It consisted of a hierarchic system according to which a source or primary text, taken as a reference in the comparison, was wrapped in an aura of superiority, while the other term in the procedure, in its restricted condition as debtor, was relegated to secondary status. Since every time this method was employed in the study of Latin American literature the source text was a European (or, more recently, North American) work, the situation of inequality resulting from the procedure immediately became explicit. The result was an accentuation of dependency and

the ratification of the state of cultural colonialism which still ruled the continent.

This type of comparativism found a fertile soil in Latin America, already sown, in the field of literary history, by an alien and inadequate historiography and, in that of literary theory, by a method which could be designated as the application of presumably universal theoretical models. In the first case it suffices to recall the division of literary periods, which was always based on movements or schools of European origin, and the fact that Latin American manifestations were regarded as their extensions. And in the second case, let us simply mention the dogmatic application, as much in criticism as in the teaching of literature, of postulates of European literary currents to any literary work, without taking into account the latter's specificities as well as the differences between its cultural and historical context and the one from which they sprang.

Encouraged by Deconstruction, with its emphasis on the notion of difference, and on the re-evaluation of historical perspective, which stressed the importance of context, this practice, which reached its peak in the golden years of French Structuralism, began to be put into check in Latin America at the end of the 1970s. The questioning of such crystallized notions as authorship, copy, influence and originality undertaken by French poststructuralist philosophers had a useful effect upon comparativism, leading it to restructure many of its concepts and categories, among which those of sources and influences. Contrary to what used to be, the second text in a comparison was now no longer merely the "debtor" but also the one responsible for revitalizing the first text, and the relationship between the two texts, rather than being unidirectional, acquired a sense of reciprocity, thus becoming richer and more dynamic. What soon prevailed in a comparativist reading was no longer the relationship of similarity or continuity, always disadvantageous to the second text, but instead the element of differentiation which the second introduced in the intertextual dialogue established with the first.

Although the change in outlook which took place at the core of comparativism originated once again in the European milieu, it came at exactly the right moment in studies of Comparative Literature which involved Latin American production. What had once characterized itself as an imperfect copy of the model established by the central culture came to be regarded as a creative response, and the

deviation from the norm valued for the desecration which it performed upon the artistic object. The so far indispensable criteria of originality and antecedence were overthrown and the value of the Latin American contribution came to exist precisely in the manner by which it appropriated European literary forms, transforming and conferring new value upon them. The terms of the preceding hierarchic system were cast aside and the texts from both cultures were placed on equal grounds.

The other tendency of contemporary thought which contributed to the questioning of an ethnocentric world view — the revalorization of a historical perspective — also found fertile ground in the field of Latin American studies. In a context where currents such as Marxism and historicism always had a great influence and issues such as economic dependence could always be found at the heart of any cultural or political debate, the idea that literary manifestations constitute relationship networks and may only be sufficiently understood if approached from a global perspective which accounts for these relationships rekindled the flame of ancient disputes which had cooled with the prevalence of Structuralism and opened up ample and fruitful possibilities for a new type of comparativism. According to this, it was not enough to insist upon the importance of Latin American differences: one also needs to study the relationship between these differences and the system of which they are part — the literature of the continent in its various registers — and investigate the meaning which they acquire in the general cadre of Western literary tradition.

Recognizing the importance of these issues and the dearth of such studies within the heart of Latin American comparativism, usually concerned solely with literature's so-called "refined" vein or with parallels between literatures of different languages, we may attempt to systematize them as did, for example, Ana Pizarro (Pizarro 1985), who pointed out three guidelines or levels of interaction which the configuration of Latin American literature would demand of comparativism. They are: the traditional relationship between Latin America and Western Europe, the relationship between national literatures within Latin America, and the characterization of the heterogeneity of national literatures within a continental context. If we consider that no approximation to the literature of the continent could fail to fit the scope of this triple dynamic, without whose perception one cannot penetrate the complexity of Comparative Literature in Latin America,

we shall refer briefly to each of these guidelines, beginning with the last.

The characterization of heterogeneity in the national literatures of Latin America constitutes a fundamental problem for comparativism, insofar as it demands the recognition of registers which are not only different within the same national literature (Spanish and Quechua, for example, in Peru; or Spanish and Guarani in Paraguay), but also from traditionally distinct levels, such as the erudite and the popular, the latter being almost always marginalized. Since the sixteenth century, Latin American culture has always been characterized by a significant plurality, and comparativism cannot lose sight of this fact, ideally extending itself not only to the study of texts remaining from Indian cultures which existed prior to the arrival of Europeans on the continent, and to the few which continued to be produced in those languages spoken still today, but also to orally transmitted forms and the actions of these diverse cultures upon one another. Such is the case of the action of Indian cultures upon the work of authors like José María Arguedas and Miguel Angel Asturias, or of African slaves upon *créole* writing in the Caribbean, or its corresponding effects in places colonized by the British or the Dutch. Such is also the case, though in inverted form, of a way in which the cultural text is absorbed by the oral tradition, as is, for example, the case of Brazilian *cordel* production which narrates episodes from French *chansons de geste*.

The second level of interaction to which we refer, that of the relationship between the national literatures within Latin America, presents, among others, two problems of a certain magnitude: the delimitation of the area embraced by the concept of Latin America and the unity within the diversity which characterizes the continent's countries. In the first case, the immediate question is that of the criteria to be used in the delimitation of the concept, which evolved from an originally ethnolinguistic reference to a political perspective, which came to include regions of the Caribbean, for example, not colonized by peoples of Neo-Latin origin. The second, slightly more complex case, implies a multiple dynamic which extends from the independence, on the diachronic level, of the literary *corpus* in regard to the literatures of the colonizing metropolis, to the recognition, on the synchronic level, of national sets or blocks which slowly fit into other larger ones, until one arrives at a sort of mosaic whose parts, no matter how integrated to the whole, continue to maintain their

individuality. In this sense, the concept of Latin American literature is not restricted to an amalgamation of different national literatures, not to a generalization abstracted from any concrete historical analysis; on the contrary, it consists of the construction of a plural, mobile unit which seeks to account for the tension between the continent's overall literary production and its specific differences.

The third guideline mentioned, that of the relationships between Latin American literature and the literatures of Western Europe, to which we may more recently add those of North America, is the one already verifiable in traditional comparativism, which has undergone serious critical revision from the 1980s to the present, specially insofar as it questions the one-sided perspective. Here, besides the study of the creative responses which Latin American literature has been presenting in its process of appropriating European forms, and the examination of those differences encountered with regard to the system to which they belong, it is also necessary to approach the action of this literature upon European and North American literatures, and even upon literatures which belong to neither of these spheres. We must note, however, that it is not a question of inverting the model of traditional comparativism nor even of extending the ethnocentric paradigm to other peripheral systems. On the contrary, what is intended is the establishment of an equal dialogue between these diverse literatures so as to insure the transversality appropriate to the subject.

It is in understanding the specificities of literature or of the many Latin American literatures as well as its outlook upon the literary tradition of the continent that comparativism acquires meaning in Latin America, evolving from a mechanical and one-sided study of sources and influences to a discipline dedicated to the study of the literary phenomenon, capable of unleashing a true dialogue between cultures. According to Claudio Guillén (Guillén 1993) comparativism is a resolutely historical discipline, and since Latin American literature, by virtue of the very historical circumstances which engendered it, carries the dialectic between the local and the universal as a sort of mark, it is in this plurality, in this non-disjunctive syntagm, that it should be understood. No doubt the literatures of the various Latin American countries are strongly influenced by European literatures, and assimilate a series of aspects from them as well as from other literatures. But it substantially modifies these aspects as the moment

of appropriation, presenting characteristic elements which often stem from this process. This, for example, is what took place with Brazilian Modernism, which originated, on one hand, from the transculturation of the many European *avant-gardes* and, on the other hand, from a critical rereading of the literary tradition in Brazil, especially of the Romantic period.

Thus, whatever the approach comparativism may come to adopt with regard to Latin American literature, it will always be necessary to keep these issues in mind. The examples are manifold. One need only mention, as a sample, in the case of the genre studies, styles or *topoi*, issues such as magic realism, resulting from the transculturation of distinct forms of the European fantastic; of the baroque, which one again flourished on a large scale in the work of authors of the so-called "new narrative" of the 1950s and 1960s; of the twentieth century "Indigenist" fiction of the twenties and thirties; and of the cycles such as the *gaucho*, the jungle, the *llano* and the *sertão*, multifaceted expressions of regionalism also arising from transcultural processes. We must still mention, in the case of the ever more frequent interdisciplinary approaches in Comparative Literature, the need for the inclusion within these studies of a wide range of elements which, by their folkloric, or popular, nature, have until recently been kept aside.

Finally, in the field of the relationships between comparativism and the Historiography, Theory and Criticism of literature, one must proceed to the careful review of the criteria which have guided the study of these subjects in Latin America, so as to make the aforementioned dialogue viable. In the case of Historiography, it is important to recall, as an example, the problem of the establishment of literary periods which, instead of unquestioningly accepting the European model, would, as is already happening, open up new possibilities to account for the entangled paths followed by the literature of the continent. Within the sphere of Theory, let us mention the substitution of the method of dogmatic application of imported concepts and categories, expressive in itself of the colonized condition of its users, for a questioning of these concepts and a consistent reflection on the Latin American literary *corpus* itself. And insofar as Criticism is concerned, we propose a re-examination of the tenets of evaluation and a search for a discourse which, without failing to recognize the relevance of foreign contributions, also verifies what kind of monopoly sustains them so that it is possible to relativize their authority.

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Reception: Eugenics or Contamination. Some Observations on Socio-Historical and Cultural Performatives

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0. I would like to define reception studies as an interdisciplinary branch of literary studies which takes as its object those mechanisms by which texts (respectively works of art) become significantly accessible to individual readers and interpreters, groups of interpreters (critics, literary theoreticians, leaders of public opinion) and literary communities, even whole cultures, i.e. how they get actualised in reading and in their further application in social practice. In order to come to grips with such a broad definition (for it includes too many interrelated problems), I would like to highlight the verb *become* as the key word in regard to reception in my understanding. First of all, becoming is a key concept in phenomenology; for phenomenology and existentialism art is said to be the process of becoming par excellence (cf Cazeau 2001: 310). It is through the aesthetic becoming that both the distinction between subject and object and attempts at its overcoming, whereby we shape the world, become possible (ib. 310ff). But reception deals with the problematic of the "estrangement" of the experience of something, the sameness and alterity of the Other. How does becoming, then, relate to reception? First of all because it suggests that an artistic text, of which its recipients are a strategic part of (cf Eco 1979), is not ready namely from the point of view of reception, both as single receptive situations and as a discrete chain of receptive acts in the time to come. Even though Shakespeare has historically had a most fruitful reception in Germany, and perhaps a somewhat less fruitful reception in France, at least in some periods, the process of reception (despite its discreteness as a chain of

culturally significant events) has not come to an end. The question is, if new values act as a palimpsest, erasing the old ones, or if they establish themselves as if side by side with the old ones or perhaps above the old ones, shadowing them in a way? And if they do establish themselves as if side by side or above the old ones, then how does it happen? Does it happen because it is foreseen by the text? Or does it happen because it is the recipient's wilful act to read new interpretations into the text?

As for "eugenics", I have chosen (and of course rather playfully) this umbrella term because of its ambivalent nature. In contrast to "contamination", which rather unambiguously means to defile by touching or mixing with and therefore suggests a threat to the "true" historical meaning of works of art, "eugenics" sets forth the change of existing qualities in two opposite ways: the attempt at preserving the good (genetic) qualities (positive method) and the counter-attempt at eliminating the bad qualities (negative method). Therefore we can see that "eugenics" is a double term. Doubleness or rather the problematic of double reception, connected to the question of eugenics or contamination in regard to the becoming of a work of art, will be the main point of discussion in this article.

1. Some translation scholars and performative linguists have lately discussed double reception from the point of view of translation activities. One of the best examples of this phenomenon of double reception is the performance of *Macbeth* in the historic situation of the friction between the two Canadian communities in the 1980s. The case has been discussed by Annie Brisset (1991), Anthony Pym (1993, 2004) and Douglas Robinson (2003) in their account of translation problems in the performance of *Macbeth* translated by Michel Garneau.

According to Pym and Robinson the most significant spot where double reception appears is when the actor who recites the role of Macduff recalls the wrong done to him by Macbeth, using a speech act which diverts the audience's attention from the historic Scottish setting to the contemporary Canadian one, because instead of the so-called "normal" French translation Garneau has translated the text into Québécois French. So Shakespeare's Macduff's words

I cannot but remember such things were,

*That were most precious to me. Did heaven look on,
And would not take their part!"*
(*Macbeth*, Act IV, Scene III)

were uttered by the Québécois actor in the following way (I quote Robinson 2001: 46):

*C`que j`avas`s d`plus précieux dans l`monde,
chu t`obligé d`commencer
A m`en souv`nir. Comment c`est que l`bon dieu peut laisser fêre
Des affe`res pareilles? Sans prendre la part des faibles?*

Accordingly, instead or alongside with the supposedly English (or "Scottish") *I cannot but remember* or its French equivalents¹ we have the above quoted Québécois variant with its revelative phrase *chu t`obligé d`commencer a m`en souv`nir....* (I'm forced to begin to remember) which stresses particularly the becoming, the historical changing of the world around "us" (that is the world of the Québécois audience). Of course, we may agree that it is the role of the translation that has shifted the semantic dominant from Old Scotland to present day Canada, and that it would not have happened so, if the actor had recited the words of Macduff in Parisian French on a stage in France (or in English in whatever other place in the world). Surely we may agree, saying, that yes, indeed, instead of a full-blooded Scottish Macduff we have a contaminated French Canadian Macduff, which does not have anything in common with Shakespeare and that it is an altogether different play now. Or that if we studied Shakespeare hermeneutically, and brought the Québécois theatregoer or reader to him, as a reader should be brought to the author, not the other way round, suggested by Schleiermacher and supported for example by Ortega y Gasset (Ortega y Gasset 2002: 60ff), such a thing would not happen and thanks to the hermeneutical approach we would save the historical Macduff.² But Robinson (Robinson 2003: 47ff) argues that a francophone Quebecker reading *Macbeth* in the original English might

¹ E.g. François-Victor Hugo's *Je ne puis oublier qu`il a existé/ des êtres qui m`étaient si précieux/ Le ciel a donc regardé cela sans/ Prendre leur partie?* (Paris: Flammarion, 1964, p. 304).

² Ortega y Gasset does not discuss things past us in terms of eugenics but in terms of authentic errors.

very well come upon the line *I cannot but remember* or one of the perfect Parisian variants, not the above quoted Québécois phrasing, and still be unable to avoid remembering the local. It is not the question of such and such particular localisation as happened in Québec. Localisation, a performative event, does not necessarily happen through translation; it may happen also while simply reading the “original”. And that is a common social practice, not something which passes the head of a single scholar.

The mentioned linguistics and translation scholars discuss, in connection of the Québécois *Macbeth*, of the necessity of distinguishing between source-text performatives and target text performatives. In fact Pym argues in the wake of Brisset that “à m'en souv'nir calls up a powerful contextual phrase that enables a functionally performative *I remember* to be performed not just by the actor but also by a specific audience receiving his translation” (Pym 1993: 52). Robinson asks in turn if Garneau as the translator uttered the translation as a performative, or merely that this particular target audience received the translation as one (Robinson 2001: 47).

The question is: does the Québécois audience take the actor's words to be addressing them, and in so doing forget that this is a play about ancient Scotland. Or do they receive it as both at one time: that they compare what is performed on the stage (or in the mental theatre when they read the play) to what is happening in the world around them? And how does it relate then to eugenics and contamination? If we consider that Shakespeare could not know that one day his play would be placed into 20th century Québécois context, it should certainly be understood as contamination. On the other hand, Shakespeare certainly did not depict the change of the historical situation in Scotland but, I guess, first and foremost the changes in the historical situation in King James' England with all the intrigues, rivalries and massacres and therefore (even though perhaps he really did not mean to) changes in historical situations in general, where personal or social or other forms of injustice is done. Doubleness is actually written into this play. At the beginning of Scene II in Act II there are a great many puns around the words “equivocator” and “equivocation”. “Equivocator” is the one who uses double explanation and the historical reference is to the Jesuite priest Garnet who was hanged for the discrepancy between his deeds and his words: for giving a false oath in 1606. We come across an exemplifying case of

the fictional related to the real world. The audience was to understand the case of Garnet, which made the otherwise abstract constative allusion socio-historically performative. Equivocation is something which is characteristic of all times, but as such it is a 0-context, a pure abstract difference, which has to be filled with meaning in a socio-historical setting which makes it culturally (and politically) significant. The dichotomy between the fictional and the real surely gave a possibility for double reception in Shakespeare's days and it also happened on the Québécois scene, because fictional reality could be compared to the concrete historical reality (in this particular case a dramatic change in reality). Therefore I dare say that the Quebecian contamination should rather be viewed as an attempt at eugenics, the bringing out what is there already.

The dichotomy between the fictional and the real, the past historical and the present historical exist virtually in a work of art, but they may be received as such to a bigger or a lesser degree, depending on a great many factors. Interpretation depends on the dominant (*ground* in the peircean perspective). If the historical and especially the past historical prevailed, the outcome would be mostly a constative registration of the world classic. If the shift is on the fictional and on the present historical, the outcome is both culturally and socio-historically performative. I also think that it is necessary to make a distinction between primarily a socio-historical (political) performative and a primarily cultural performative. In the former the present historical prevails of the past historical, and in the latter the fictional dominates over the historical. But I would not like to draw strict boundaries.

I remember the situation of the Estonian theatre in the 1970s and the 80s, the period of stagnation. There were a lot of plays which were brought onto the Estonian stage and which became objects of double reception. For example Georgi Dzhararov's *Prosecutor* but also many other plays staged in Estonia during the years of Soviet occupation were received doubly. It is double reception which places a work of art in its true artistic and historic perspective, just because it attributes to the artistic the historical perspective of becoming and makes art historic. Art cannot but be living art, the art in becoming. And therefore it is born again in new concrete situations. It is also why censorship is always so much on the alert searching for the possibility of eugenics/contamination even in these texts which look innocent, ageless and academically innocuous. I remember a clamorous case of

the publishing of John Milton's *Areopagitica* in the translation of Henno Rajandi. It could not be published because just one very small thing which might have subverted the Soviet regime, for it discusses problems of parliamentary freedom. Therefore it appeared only in 1987, when *glasnost* was already in full swing. What today has lost its value, the value of giving a possibility for double reception, was curiously in the centre of public attention then. Paradoxically, because of double reception, art plays a significant role in totalitarian societies, for it acquires the dimension of sought for freedom. And it does not mean wilful interpretation which erases the original one, but contributes to the further becoming of a work, which is virtually inside all artistic texts worthy to stand the test of time.

Surely, if the socio-historical (political) performative aspect dominates over the fictional performative aspect, the event will remain in the receptive protocols of a work of art, but perhaps its place will be less significant in respect to those cases where the culturally performative aspect is the dominant.

2. Someone might say that I have come in this discussion quite close to Gadamerian *Horizontverschmelzung*, the fusion of horizons. And I do not deny it. For in his "Aesthetics and Hermeneutics" (1964) Gadamer sees the vitality of a work of art in the necessity of ceasing to be confined to the historical horizon, trying to keep to its main characteristic, its being present (*Gegenwart*) (Gadamer 2002: 227ff). On the other hand, the situation of reception, or rather interception, where this fusion is said to occur, is quite a tricky one, and a theoretician has to be aware of what is being fused and what should be kept apart. Yes, an artistic text surely enables the interaction of the past and the ever-changing present, a dialogue, whereby "[T]he modern critic establishes a critical tradition in which an earlier text can play along with contemporary critical protocols, simultaneously extending its and their existence", as discussed by Paul Hamilton in his article "Historicity and historical criticism" (Hamilton 2001: 22), adding that "the fusion of horizons effected by this tradition does not establish the superiority of one horizon over the other, but instead shows how contemporary criticism can endorse meanings outside its own protocols" (*ib.*). But in the given case I am actually not referring to the tradition, which is composed of different receptions in discreteness but to a concrete aesthetic situation, which is in its turn com-

posed of two horizons: the aesthetic ad hoc experience, synchronic and total even in bits, where the actual appearance of two or more totalities is impossible, therefore no need to speak about their fusion, and the complementary interpretative horizon, wherefore what occurs is the constant shuttling in and out between experience and interpretation. Therefore I believe that my understanding of experience as ad hoc does not run counter to Cazeaus's assertion in the wake of Sartre "Being and Nothingness" that "experience is successive" (Cazeau 2001: 313), although I am reserved as to his assumption that it occurs as a continuum. Or if it does, the linear points of the line nevertheless represent a discreteness.

This is exactly a major characteristic of double reception, which in my understanding is interception (for there is no pure perception of the so-called 0-contexts which may occur only in laboratories or textbooks), experience + interpretation, if one has an inclination to be an intellectual or a critic or a theoretician, but in an "ordinary" recipient as well if s/he is aware of the doubleness. This is what Robinson calls a case of "irony" when discussing the Québécois *Macbeth* (Robinson 2001: 49ff). The intellectual in the theatre hall or at his reading desk may think of two possible audiences who receive the text differently and take a pleasure in it. He may take a pleasure imagining the censors reading it one way, or both ways and being in a fix: to inhibit publishing or staging or not? He may even find himself split in two as a receiver, as Robinson puts it. But again I think that it is the inter/ceptive phase, not the ad hoc experience. The boundary between the two may be very slight, like the seeing of the rabbit and the duck in the famous cognitive quiz. It is possible to see both of the images, but not at one time, for it depends on the focusing and it is not possible to use the double focus simultaneously; therefore in the phase of experience it is the matter of diachronic interpretation, not synchronic experience. (Very much like the Saussureian dilemma of the diachronic and synchronic objects in linguistics.)

3. I already mentioned briefly the relation between receptive situations and reception as tradition. The latter is a historical comparison of interpretations, a repertoire of receptive situations not as real and concrete situations but as a protocol. These protocols enable a reconstruction of historic(al) receptive situations, but not their immediate experience. The protocols are the *énoncé*, not *énonciation*,

although they came into being as *énonciation*. This is to my understanding related to the question of iterability. As Derrida has demonstrated, iterability is at once possible and impossible. For Derrida iterability is a kind of generalized performability, a trace of past performances (for *I remember* virtually includes all past remembering in all registers, the true ones and the fake ones, the serious ones and the ironic ones) and an inclination towards future performances that carries with it the ever-present possibility of “misuse”, “misperforming”, “contamination”. Iterability (Latin *iterum* — again; Sanskrit *itara* — other) thus entails both “repetition” and “alterity”. In order to define the true nature of the Macduff situation in Quebec theatres or at the scholars’ table or at any reader’s table, we need it to be uttered/received in a new speech act, which is necessarily a new context. From the point of view of constative linguistics (laboratorial situation) it may present itself as a 0-context, from where all previous and possible future performances be eliminated. From the point of view of performative linguistics (on Derrida’s recount from the perspective of performative linguistics see Robinson 2003: ch II) it is this very speech act performed/perceived as such where it takes into it a value of contaminated 0. The new utterative/receptive context is the 0-context only in laboratorial conditions, the pure shift or a pure difference in any historical situation, but it is never empty in real social practice, for instead of a Québécois performative of national and social injustice as a situation of double reception it may take other receptive values of the same kind in other concrete historical situations.

But I repeat, I understand it as a result of the comparison of interpretative horizons, which as a direct experience never fuse. It appears that language in speech acts views itself in its previous performances (the diversities in *I remember*, *Je me souviens*, *Ma mäletan* only help to accentuate it), but speech acts are unique, each performative *I remember*, *Je me souviens*, or *Ma mäletan* is different from the previous ones. They may not be contaminated from the point of view of language, but they are necessarily contaminated as speech in action.

In the Estonian novel *Kevade* (*Spring*) Teele’s final words (although a case of free indirect speech) to Arno are full of being offended at his not coming to see her new home: *Vaata, kus oli ometi!* (*Look at you!*) At the same time in the same *Vaata* (*Look*) all previous exclamations cling, especially Teele’s insulting words to Arno *Vaat*

kus narr (*Look what a fool*), but also those of other characters in diverse situations. At the same time they are a completely new enunciation. Eugenics as the elimination of unwished contaminations is the 0-context in vacuum or in text-books. As Derrida says, a successful performative is necessarily an "impure" performative (Derrida 1988: 17). Which is it then — eugenics or contamination, or both?

4. Therefore dichotomy resides in the very nature of language and language in use, therefore also language and poetic reference. This is closely connected with the problem of the *intentio auctoris* and the *intentio operis*, the meaning which the author may have wanted to appear and the meaning which comes out in the textual possibilities. In *Interlitteraria* 3, 1998, I discussed some Petrarch's sonnets of which two absolutely different meaningful readings are possible. I am not going to repeat the analysis here, but limit myself to a few remarks only. In the opening sonnet to the *Canzoniere* where the poet declares his being gravely disappointed because of his vanity in spending his energies on praising worldly love, we also come across the possibility of interpreting it in an entirely new way which the text seems to permit linguistically (from the point of view of textual linguistics). For while reprimanding himself of what he does, Petrarch uses such a perfect poetic form that the *intentio operis* contradicts its author's very explicit declaration. This is not of little importance, for there has been a gradual shift from interpreting Petrarch basically in the ethical key which he himself seems to offer, to the aesthetic key, which the beautiful form of his compositions seem to profess. Yet from the point of view of reception as a tradition, these interpretations now continue living side by side, and testify to the cultural significance of Petrarch's work. It is not the question of which of the interpretations is correct from the point of historical truthfulness, for although the more hermeneutical approach might establish that as Petrarch also attempted at fictionality in his real life story (for it is now proved by literary historians that Petrarch falsified many of his biographical facts for the sake of an ideal history and therefore also his sonnet may be read from this point of doubleness), it still does not solve the metalevel of these so-called falsifications: the dilemma remains as to whether falsifications be interpreted from the point of view of ethics, setting an example of an ideal moral improvement for the coming generation, or seeing in it just an act of fiction. The fact that at one point the ideal

model dominated over the fictional one only shows that the first cases of contradictory readings proved to be culturally performative. The possibility of double reception, presented by the dichotomy between the historical and the fictional, the linguistic and referential reside in the text as an aesthetic object, but of course they become real in different concrete acts of interpretation, where the text speaks the same in difference to the recipient in concrete interceptions.

5. Finally I should like to discuss the problem of reconstructing historic(al) receptions as accounts of cultural performatives which make a culturally significant texts accessible as such culturally really significant. And here I should like to present quite a peculiar case in Estonian culture connected with the present year of the 100th anniversary from the birth of *Noor-Eesti* (*Young Estonia*), which was not just a literary circle or a circle of men of culture, but which marked a change in the cultural paradigm, resulting highly performative. My interest was specially attracted by the influence of the Italian decadent author Gabriele d'Annunzio on some of the leading members of the *Young Estonia*, which apart from literary and aesthetic problems took the task of the renewal of the Estonian literary language. The peculiarity lies in the first place in the fact that the work of D'Annunzio's, which has been quoted by a great many literary critics, cultural observers in newspaper clips and reviews in the 1910s and 20s or in private letters, is actually a work which was never translated into Estonian — *Il trionfo della morte*. I have come to understand that the reason for that temporary, yet historic interest was twofold. In the first place, the aesthetics of death and the aesthetics of decadence became a prevalent aesthetic attraction for many young Estonians. The reason was surely not only the fact that decadentism still enjoyed considerable success in western Europe where the young Estonians looked with eagerness at the outbreak of the new century, or the failure of the democratic revolution of 1905, which was followed by the harshening of the intellectual atmosphere in Russia and in all of its territories. I think that a young culture yearns to grow old quickly and decadence is therefore one of the attractions like a beard for a youngster. Innovation therefore in a way sometimes means its mingling with the past which produces a radical change (attempt at eugenics). And the novels of the Rose cycle of D'Annunzio were a perfect ground for that.

But the second and I dare say even the more important reason was not just decadence as an idea, but decadence in its concrete linguistic clothing, concrete performative speech acts. Some of the young Estonians, but particularly Aavik and Ridala, two outstanding language reformers, were attracted to D'Annunzio's linguistic programme expressed in the foreword to *Il Trionfo della Morte*. In it D'Annunzio professes the need to create the modern Italian narrative prose. In order to achieve that aim it was necessary to give up the traditional poetic, especially enlarge the restricted vocabulary which in the Italian century-old literary tradition was bound to trite canonized words which had lost originality, to look for freshness. Another of D'Annunzio's objectives was the change of the Italian syntax, where he accused the loose connection of clauses, without proper breathing and rhythm. Surely this attracted the Young Estonians who apart from the fascination of aesthetic decadentism were also looking for the possibilities of creating a new literary language, of freeing it from the influences of German and Russian vocabulary and also structure, and if D'Annunzio professed the Latin roots, their way was to go back to the archaic layers of the Fenno-Ugric languages. And of course here was the trap. For Latin literature and Latinisms in Italian vernacular literature are bounteous, but where does one look for them in a Fenno-Ugric culture with scarce literary language traditions, and even those that were available, with a heavy imprint of German influence both in syntax and in vocabulary. The options were two: the enrichment of Estonian through either Finnish words or Estonian dialects, with changes in morphology and syntax. Which is actually a misinterpretation (or maybe wilful contamination) of D'Annunzio's programme, though the young Estonians declared that they were following it. In fact in a letter to Friedebert Tuglas, one of the leaders of the Circle, Johannes Aavik says that the task of the young Estonians should be what d'Annunzio professes: to go back in the language to its archaic layers. Yes, indeed. But loanwords from other languages or from dialects were not allowed in D'Annunzio's programme. On the contrary, although D'Annunzio professed the primordial rites of Abbruzzo's, his region's people, the pagan rites connected to fertility, strong and powerful as opposed to the Christian weak and even grotesque morals (cf *Trionfo della Morte*), linguistic analyses have shown that there is no "contamination" of the literary language with words from the Abbruzzese or from any other Italian dialects. The

young Estonians, especially the poet, linguist, literary theoretician and folklorist Villem Grünthal-Ridala, who translated *Innocente* and *La città morta*, chose deliberately the innovative archaization and dialectization of the Estonian literary language. But despite all the misinterpretations that I have mentioned (surely many of them were deliberate), despite the fact that Ridala translated *Innocente* in 1913 so much differently from the way D'Annunzio had proposed the modern Italian poetic to be, he executes with his translation a cultural performative: the innovation of the Estonian language and the presentation of D'Annunzio as a decadent, a master of the form, "transparent and limpid and and fair as marble", but also "cold as marble" (Ridala 1913: XIX). Now some of the peculiarities of Ridala's approach: 1) Ridala keeps strictly to the Italian syntax, evidently to counterbalance the tradition of the Bible translators into Estonian by the German clergy thanks to what (in addition to the very exacting translation of judiciary documents) the Estonian structure is very close to the German structure. For example leaving out the subject in an Estonian sentence is quite rare, and very common to Italian, and this is exactly what Ridala does, although in his foreword he explains it as a true word order for the Estonian language; 2) As to the lexical stock it is a masterpiece of contamination as to the different layers of words, both archaic and dialectal and loan-words from other languages, and as such a clear contamination of D'Annunzio's ideas of a true literary language; 3) There are abundant innovations in morphology, also based on rather heterogeneous models.

As a result, the translation is far from limpidity and transparency which D'Annunzio demanded. In fact Ridala provides his translation with a vocabulary and a short grammar of morphological changes. So, the limpid, melodious and purist D'Annunzio is turned into a most fascinating archaic and dialectal mixture with a very strange syntax. At the same time one cannot deny the foreign charm of the translation, which gives the true feeling of decadentism.

True, some of the young Estonians considered the outcome not understandable and heavy, for example Tuglas in a letter to Aavik. At the same time, it is possible to affirm that it played an important part in the establishing a whole, although a temporary tradition, which made a remarkable step towards a conscious reception of the other in its otherness. Both in translation and interpretation. This was a tradition which was gradually lost in the new tradition of the post-war

translation turn which prescribed the benumbing of all foreign, not only in terms of reference, but also in terms of language, and which has practically persisted in our translation tradition up to this day.

In short, what was quite a big blunder in interpreting D'Annunzio, nevertheless turned out to be a justifiable step towards rendering the strangeness of D'Annunzio's language to the normative Italian literary language, despite its different strangeness, the strangeness in latinized purity. For the strong bias towards the rendering of perceptive processes, the breathing of objects and bodies, which D'Annunzio's novels of the Rose cycle present, the linguistic breath of decadentism, was performed with different instruments into the strangely innovative archaic and dialectal Estonian.

There have been more recent receptions of D'Annunzio. Tiina Randviir (Laats) for example has translated two short stories of the *Novelle della Pescara*, "Suor Orsola" e "Suor Anna" in 1991, but they do not breathe in the way Ridala's translation does. They are actually very good translations and mark a further step in D'Annunzio's reception, but differently, without becoming culturally performative, at least not to such a degree.

Therefore they are part of the historical perspective of D'Annunzio, truer in a way, not contaminated. But I want to underline the apparent paradox of how contamination may be actually part of eugenics (of course D'Annunzio's and Ridala's case needs a profounder analysis). For to enable an artistic text to become what it contains in its dichotomies, the performance in a socio-historical setting has to be in some way localised, even though it may remain a temporary success, even if it may turn out to be a failure.

In conclusion

I want to stress that contamination as a cultural performative is in a way a kind of going against the grain, of not meeting the horizon of expectations, as we know already from German reception theory. And of course the reception of world literature is full of curious instances of all kinds of goings against the grain, for it is part of the social and cultural practice. I repeat my conviction that going against the grain is a natural process because of the dichotomies in the text. One of the most clamorous cases has been mentioned by Umberto Eco (Eco 1979: 57; 119; 177) — a case of contamination/ eugenics which was

completed by the author himself. Eco discusses how Eugene Sue's *Les mystères de Paris* were first intended by the author to be *piquantes* stories about the dark sides of Parisian life to the bourgeois public, but which because of interpretations as if it were a critique on social injustice was then jumped on by the author himself. This is quite a challenge for those who argue in favour of bringing the reader to the author, unless of course the original meaning is in the text, not in the author's intentions, so that the author will himself discover what he has written and what his text means. This is actually a very modern idea, very futurist. Something like the Apostles speaking languages under the beneficial spell of the Holy Ghost.

In the *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods* Eco (Eco 1994: 127ff) discloses the phenomenon of a cult text. A cult text according to Eco is something where meaning is not inherent or where there are different meanings inside because of its disjointed and open nature (e.g. the Bible written by different authors at different times), or because of its complexity (the case of Dante's *Comedy*), or its being created in different stages with no clear foreknowledge of how it would end (e.g. Eco describes the success of the cult film *Casablanca* where Ingrid Bergman smiles mysteriously at each male candidate, for she does not know herself yet which of them she is to choose in the end). Eco also refers to T. S. Eliot's analysis of *Hamlet*'s centuries long success because of the dichotomies that the text presents. And of course this list could be extended to "infinity". Therefore I limit myself to stating that as far as cultural performatives go, we stand in reception studies at the boundary between phenomenology and textual pragmatics, or what the text does with the reader and the receiving community in its becoming, in its disclosing itself in new contexts, in new contaminations which paradoxically make up part of its eugenics, and which are programmed in them because of the double nature of an artistic text: artistic against historical, fictional against real, language against speech acts, translational performatives against translational constatives etc. It was my idea of highlighting some of these pragmatic or performative aspects of reception in some (double) receptive situations, of which of course we can but speak in terms of reconstructions on the bases of receptional protocols. Which by and by make up a literary tradition.

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World Literature against the Background of the Other

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The word *Weltliteratur*, “world literature,” is a coinage of Goethe. He used it publicly for the first time in the beginning of 1827. Since then, the term has appeared in his statements, approximately twenty in number, yet it seems as if the unfinished happening of world literature were both a cause and at the same time a justification for vagueness which, on the other hand, contributed to the dynamic *Wirkungsgeschichte* of its concept.

In some of his statements about world literature, Goethe still talks about national literatures. He does not abolish these in his concept of world literature. But if he mentions only the literatures of big European nations in this connection, this does not necessarily mean that he is excluding the literatures of other European nations from the concept of world literature, in place of which he occasionally, apparently twice (Barry 2001: 169), uses the term “European literature.” *World literature is a European literature merely with respect to what is said*, for Goethe does not explicitly deny anywhere that it could also be a non-European literature (considering the fact that he translated from eighteen languages, including such non-European languages as Arabic, Chinese and Persian, something like this could certainly not be impossible in the horizon of his cosmopolitan mind).

In the later reception, Goethe’s concept of world literature started to designate a distinguished canonicity, but according to another possibility, which allowed for a broader understanding of world literature, its expansion through international and transnational exchange, it became a widely comprehensive or even all-inclusive concept.

Both directions of development of this concept, the "elitist" and the "populist," were interwoven in the eurocentric and, at the same time, eurototalizing vision of Fritz Strich, who was perhaps the greatest advocate of world literature in the 20th century: "A European literature, thus a literature between the literatures of Europe, which mediates and is exchanged between the European peoples, is *the first stage of a world literature* that will spread from here and develop into *a complex which finally encompasses the world* [both stresses are mine]" (Strich 1946: 27). In Strich's vision, the one direction in which the concept of world literature has developed obviously continues and fulfills itself in the other direction. European literature, in being identified with the great works of European writers, becomes an in-between literature among the literatures of European nations, i.e. *an intermediary* between them and simultaneously *a center* which contains *Weltanspruch*: a center of Europe with an immanent claim to becoming the center of the world; an elitist literature which, in the end, will encompass everything.

Recently, however, *globalization* was recognized as a basis for the new development of a concept of world literature. John Pizer says: "With the globalization of the world economy, a true world literature, which is to say a global literature, is being created" (Pizer 2000: 213).

From here it seems *as if only now, just now, world literature in the true sense of the word is coming into existence* — as a global fact. In this perspective, world literature is seizing the reserves of texts all around the world by following the globalizative impetus of a freed liberal market economy, that is, by expanding in the furrow of late capitalism, which is taking possession of the world with an a-national logic of multinational capital. In this respect, world literature is *a particularly eloquent testimonial to the mixing of cultures on the fallen borders of the national*, which has guaranteed the stability of cultural identity, and, as such, is perhaps even the most thankful subject of cultural studies. It is a document of global cultural hybridization in which the disintegration of identity of big cultures is articulated in the finest way, including the manifestation and permeation of different linguistic, social, political, sexual and other marginal identities that were "invisible" until now.

However, it is not my intention to fill my reflections on world literature with merely an elucidation of Goethe's concept and its reception. In both cases, i.e. the wide, "populist" and the narrow,

“elitist” concept of world literature, we are dealing with a certain transcending of boundaries. The first case involves a horizontal crossing of borders between nations, a kind of inter-cendence that is drawn by the international (or intercultural) movement of literature, while the second is a case of vertical crossing, of crossing upwards, towards the supranational. Yet this second transcendence is also not envisioned in connection with literature itself, but only with the national that is being surpassed in literature. It is not seen *as a transcendence of literature, as its other, which is not an other with respect to something else, but the other of literature itself.*

What, in turn, is *the other of world literature*? Before we can answer this question, however, another arises, the question of literature and — the world. This now makes us attentive to the term “world literature,” to the adjective “world” alongside the word “literature.” In what relation is literature to the world?

In different religions the world is a universal place of existence, a triple zone of heavens, earth and the underground, which is divided into the kingdom of gods or the kingdom of God and the kingdom of mortals, or into the kingdom of the living and the kingdom of the dead, in short, into the other world of heaven and the underground and this world of earth.

In traditional philosophy, the world is usually a totality of beings.

However, existential analytics as exposed by Martin Heidegger in his *Being and Time (Sein und Zeit)* has taught us that the world is not physically spatial. We men are not in the world in the same way as water is in a glass or a suit is in the wardrobe (cf. Heidegger 1997: 85). *Man is not within the world, but in the world.* He is the only being (*Seiende*) that understands itself in its being (*Sein*), i.e. understands itself in its being-here, and as a self-understanding being is therefore a be-here (*Dasein*). In understanding, however, he in his “here” only spreads out the world by various modes of being.

The world is always a world of man; even more, it is always my world and your world and the world of someone else: a multitude of worlds. *The being of the world is, at its origin, a being of man.* But the world is not only a human world. In my being-here, it spreads out with my modes of being like a “space” in which I encounter others: men, animals and things, gods and God.

The world thus spreads out with each and every understanding, with each and every human staying on earth — spreading over and under earth — and its map unfolds in language.

But the world can also be closed. It may be closed in what is simply received and accepted. In stiff notions, prejudices and in the supposedly obvious.

What, in turn, opens a world thus closed is literature — and it opens up the world with a word. Through an opening that is uniquely its own, an opening in language, literature throws the world off the track of established notions and opinions again and again. In his essay, *Art as Procedure (Iskusstvo kak priem)*, the leading Russian formalist, Viktor Shklovsky, named this opening *ostranenie*, “estrangement,” recognizing it as the central procedure of literary language. According to Shklovsky’s famous metonymy, art or literature is simply “a procedure of ‘making things strange,’” the estrangement being in the transposition of things from “the usual comprehension to the field of receiving anew” (Šklovski 1984: 23, 30) Therefore, inasmuch as literature throws the accepted, generalized and all too human world off track, it simultaneously opens it up. *In opening up the world, literature is world-making.* World-making literature pronounces the opening-up of the world. *World-making literature is world literature.*

As a world-making literature, however, world literature simultaneously refers to that which is beyond each and every human world, and from there it opens up the world. Literature refers to the other of the world, and though the other rejects itself precisely as the other, as something that cannot be reduced to anything in the world, it somehow bears it, that is, literature suffers and sufferingly carries it. Literature allows the other to convey itself, and the conveyance of the other inside it appears strange or uncanny (*unheimlich*).

And so — I would now like to talk about the other. Not about the other as my neighbour, about my neighbour as an other in a cultural, linguistic or some other way, nor about the Other, who in His otherness is so distant that He is separated from me by an ontological abyss and is, consequently, for me *der ganz Andere*, “a wholly Other” — so God was named by modern protestant theology, for example by Rudolf Otto, who called the Other, in His breaking through the boundary of the world, a *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* in view of the ambivalent working of this break-through (cf. Otto 1917). I would like to talk about the other in the neuter gender, about the other

without a name, though in European and also non-European religious and philosophical traditions it mostly appears alongside the name of a certain god or under the word-name "God" or under the word-concept of "the Absolute."

As already mentioned, the other of the world, of my world and the world of others, is simultaneously the other of literature itself, the other of world literature.

This other is not contrary to literature and, as contrary, is not definable or includable in the concept. Yet precisely from the point of view of literature, in view of its pronouncing or of the word in which it exists and with which it opens up the world, the other must be named "the unsayable."

The other of literature which exists in language is the unsayable, namely, that which evades language, which is outside of language or before it and, as such, also outside our world, which spreads out in language. Yet this other nevertheless manages to convey itself in language, for we would otherwise not be able to preserve even the slightest premonition of it.

I would like to call your attention to the fact that not only the old literatures are familiar with the other in various forms. In the West, the Other is not only spoken of in the literature of the Jewish-Christian tradition, but, as an other, also in modern literature.

Je est un autre, "I is an other," says Arthur Rimbaud in the first of his *Lettres of the Visionary (Lettres du voyant)* (Rimbaud 1972: 249), and then fulfils this — as George Steiner points out — "uncompromising negation of the supreme tautology," of God's "I am who I am" from *Exodus* 3:14, in his verses, which inaugurate modern poetry, by the dispersion of I into the "Magellanic cloud of momentary energies" (Steiner 1989: 99, 100). In his central poetological speech entitled *Meridian*, Paul Celan reflects on the poem and asks: "Maybe here, with an I — with a *here* and *thus* freed, estranged I — maybe here still an other becomes free [*wird hier noch ein Anderes frei*]?" (Celan 1986: 196). On the other hand, even a special moment in modern prose can be understood as an uncanny coming or revelation of the other — namely, an "epiphany" in the short stories of James Joyce and in the narrative condensations of his novels. And much, much more.

It is therefore obvious that, with respect to the criterion of the other, the other as the unsayable, a work which does not broach any

major, generally human or transnationally intercultural theme on a large scale may also belong to world literature. Even a small lyrical poem may belong to it.

I would now like to talk about the other in connection with a lyrical poem, which, in turn, seemingly does not speak of the other at all. What does speak of the other, without naming it, is a poem by the American poet, William Carlos Williams. This poem is entitled *Young Sycamore*, it was first published in Williams' *Collected Poems 1921-1931* and reads like this (Williams 1951: 332):

I must tell you
 this young tree
 whose round and firm trunk
 between the wet

pavement and the gutter
 (where water
 is trickling) rises
 bodily

into the air with
 one undulant
 thrust half its height—
 and then

dividing and waning
 sending out
 young branches on
 all sides—

hung with cocoons
 it thins
 till nothing is left of it
 but two

eccentric knotted
 twigs
 bending forward
 hornlike at the top

I see the young sycamore in a world that is not and was never mine. I entered this world — we just entered it — by reading a poem. The world of *Bildgedicht*.

From the aspect of literary genre, *Bildgedicht*, or *Dinggedicht*, is a poem that speaks of a certain thing and gives an image of it — a poem-image of a thing. But Williams' poem is something special within this genre. Namely, it is inaugurated by a voice — by a certain I, perhaps an I of the poet himself — which at the very beginning addresses a certain you, obviously in the desire, or rather, in the urgent need to talk to someone about his fascination with a young thing — and only then disappears into impersonality. The fascination with this thing is drawn from the point of view of the voice, which, then, withdraws immediately after the initial address, and his speech comes out as a description giving an exact image of the young sycamore.

There is “no symbolism, no depth, no hint of a world beyond the world” in the poem, but “merely a description,” concludes Jay Hillis Miller (1985: 796). Yet in contrast to this reputable reader of poetry, one of the champions of American deconstruction, I claim: the poem is not “merely a description” behind which there is nothing — behind which there is, perhaps, a mere nothingness? — and it has a certain background, though this is not a background of the other world.

I emphasize again: *the other conveys itself in William's poem by remaining unnamed.*

But what is the sense of talking about something that is not named in the poem? How can the unnamed belong to the poem at all, if it is not named by any word in it? Are we, by claiming something like this, not putting something into the poem that is not in it at all? That is now the question.

I nevertheless still claim that the poem is speaking of the other without mentioning it, and I would like to tell you — I must tell you, for me it is absolutely necessary to tell you — how.

To make it easier to explain, I will use the words of Thomas Stearns Eliot, which appeared in an essay entitled *The Music of Poetry*. He utters them as a poet, from his own poetic experience: “[...] I know that a poem, or a passage of a poem, may tend to realize itself first as a particular rhythm before it reaches expression in words, and that this rhythm may bring to birth the idea and the image; and I do

not believe that this is an experience peculiar to myself' (Eliot 1958: 66–7).¹

According to cited experience — and Eliot obviously believes this is experienced by poets in general — what the poet has to put into words touches on him first, i.e. before it is put into words, with its rhythm — and this rhythm brings an image. If I continue Eliot's poetical testimony on my own or turn slightly from it, then it just may be that *the rhythm also comes from something for which it brings no image or name*, and hence this remains unnamed (which does not mean that, being unnamed, it is a mere nothingness). Williams' poem does not say what the young sycamore grows from, but one can nevertheless feel the rhythm undulating from what remains unnamed in the poem itself.

Let us take a look at the poem once more from this aspect. The first verse ("I must tell you") is followed by an impetuous buoyancy, and this buoyant rhythm diminishes after the eleventh verse, which takes us to the "half its height," i.e. the height of the young sycamore, so that the twelfth verse ("and then"), in which the rhythm starts to fall, stands almost exactly in the middle of the poem because the number of all verses is twenty-four. Up to the middle of the poem, the young sycamore is shooting upwards before our reading eyes, and then (from "and then" onwards) the description advances in the same direction, still upwards from the bottom, but at the same time a slowing-down — a waning — follows until it ends in an antlered top.

In short, the rhythm by which the growth of a tree is presented in Williams' poem undulates from the source, which, receiving no image from it, remains unnamed in the poem. Yet the unnamed, dark source nevertheless acts within it, by way of the rhythm, as a foil, *as a background of the other*. And it is only against this background that the phenomenon flashes in all its wonderful uniqueness: the young sycamore.

Williams's poem thus allows the other, inasmuch as it is unsayable, to convey itself in a manner other than naming, without receiving its own word — in a rhythm that is an incarnation of the (meta)ontological dynamics of the other. Seen in this way, the poem is — and I hope to have succeeded in showing this — an exemplary case of world literature.

¹ In: Thomas Stearns Eliot, *Selected Prose*, ed. John Hayward, Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1958, pp. 66–67.

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The Romantic Quest: The Reception of Goethe in Modern Chinese Literature

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The two decades immediately following the end of the First World War have often been considered as the most significant decades in modern Chinese literary history. It denotes a period of drastic social, cultural and political change; it also registers a period when many Chinese writers took a more reflective approach to literature, treating literature not merely as an art in itself but as a form of social critique. At a time when young Chinese writers were eager to look for alternative modes of expression through which private concerns and personal visions can be fully articulated, many turned to their European counterparts for inspiration and modelling. Such an ardent desire to deal with the personal self in the flux of socio-cultural change helps to explain the Chinese writers' incessant interest in Western literature, especially romantic literature, since the beginning of the twentieth century. It must be mentioned here that the term "romantic" used in this paper refers not to a period or a movement in European literary history. Instead, it is used to denote a general temperament that characterizes Chinese literature after the May Fourth Movement (roughly from 1919 to 1927) when sentimentalism, individualism and nationalism prevailed and when the young generation of writers celebrated romantic love and yearned for freedom of choice, especially in matters of love and marriage.

Goethe as a Model for the Chinese in Their Quest for Selfhood and Free Expression

Goethe was among the first few German writers introduced to the Chinese students studying in Japan and Germany at the end of the nineteenth century, but the exact year of his inception remains unknown to date. According to A Ying's short article "Early Chinese Translations of Goethe's Works," Ma Junwu (1881-1940) was probably the earliest Chinese scholar known today to have translated portions of Goethe's works into Chinese at the beginning of the twentieth century. Ma first studied engineering at Tokyo Imperial University and was the first Chinese student to receive a doctoral degree from the University of Berlin in 1916. His knowledge of German and interest in German culture prompted him to translate into Chinese a portion of *The Sorrows of Young Werther* in 1902 or 1903 (Ah Ying 1981: 100). However, Ma's translation did not receive immediate attention from the reading public at the time because of the unstable political and social situation in the country. The upheavals leading to the epochal event of the political revolution of 1911, the language reform of 1919, as well as China's declaration of war against Germany in 1917 all tended to divert the Chinese intellectuals' attention from any serious study of German literature. A look at Wolfgang Franke's and Dschang Schan-dien's *A Bibliography of Chinese Translations of German Texts* published in 1942 and Wolfgang Bauer's and Hwang Shen-chang's *German Impact on Modern Chinese Intellectual History: A Bibliography of Chinese Publications* published in 1982 shows that there was literally no Chinese translation of or writings on Goethe or his works in the 1910s. The German writer was only briefly mentioned in such general studies as Zhou Zuoren's *A History of European Literature*. But the situation was drastically changed in 1922 when Guo Moruo published a full translation of *Werther* in China.

Guo's translation of *Werther* was met with instant success for many readers noted with sympathy Werther's moral dilemma, felt the intensity of his emotions, moved by his sincerity and love. They shared young Werther's aspirations and understood the cause of his frustrations in life. Overnight Chinese interest in Goethe was revitalized and for more than a decade *Werther* remained "the bible of modern Chinese youths" (Lee 1973: 188), who were attracted to Werther's pantheistic view of life, his

love of nature, his admiration for primitivism, his quest for integrity and his search for the essence of life. They took all these as positive attitudes and qualities that would help lead them out of their decadent and paralysed environment. As Guo openly states in the preface to the Chinese translation of *Werther*, he wanted to “create” in China, through the introduction of Goethe’s *Werther* in Chinese, a world governed by love and the free spirit. He further explains in his preface to the 1955 revised edition of *Werther* that the Chinese found the German novel fascinating because *Werther* captures the uncertainties, the sense of restlessness, as well as the general anxiety and frustrations experienced by many young Chinese intellectuals who tended to question all established social institutions and challenge old moral standards and conventional practices.

Guo Moruo found young Goethe’s time highly comparable to the May Fourth era in China when young Chinese intellectuals reacted strongly against Confucianism with the aim of liberating the self from all forms of socio-moral constraints. They cherished the romantic notion of individualism characterized by freedom of choice and self-integrity. They yearned for means through which they could realize their dreams and vision in a society still governed by Confucian ideology and conventional socio-moral codes. With a sense of urgency and earnestness, they fought for a total break from established literary norms, from conventional forms of writing and the use of classical language, which all tended to confine their free spirit and emerging selfhood. They were drawn to Goethe’s romantic works for they found a “comrade” in *Werther*, who embodies not only the romantic sentiments and sensitivity of an individual, but also the human free spirit with his dedication and devotion to his cause in life. As the Danish critic Georg Brandes says, *Werther* “gives expression not merely to the isolated passion and suffering of a single individual, but to the passions, longings, and sufferings of a whole age. The hero . . . is more than the spirit of the new era, he is its genius” (Brandes 1924: 20).

It was against such a receptive literary climate that Goethe’s *Werther*, which embodies the quintessence of the epistolary novel, found its place in modern China. It is against such a background that one finds a whole generation of romantic dreamers, social misfits, or spiritual drifters in Chinese literature. Newly freed from their Confucian heritage and traditional values, many young writers, such as Cao Xuesong, Bing Xin (1900–1999), Guo Moruo (1892–1978), Tian Han (1898–1968), Lu Yin (1899–1934), Ding Ling (1904–1986),

and Xie Bingying (1906–2000) consciously experimented with “new” or Western forms of writing as means to a full exploration of the self. Viewed in this light, these Chinese writers’ works emphasize not so much the narration of events or experience as the narration of the self. Given their romantic temperament and uncompromising attitude towards tradition and morality, they often became victims of their own emotions, either losing themselves in the intensity of love or drowning themselves in their deep remorse and self-pity. A close look at their narratives shows that they were more interested in the portrayal of the psychological turmoil faced by individuals and in the moral dilemmas they had to resolve in life.

Wertherian Love and the Narration of the Self

The young Chinese writers’ interest in love and marriage shows on the one hand the profound influence of Goethe because their treatment of love was predominantly Wertherian in essence although they situated their characters in China. The protagonists’ struggle against parental arrangement of marriage and their fight for romantic love show on the other hand the rise of a new generation of young people in China who were determined to battle against prevailing social conventions and Confucian values that tended to subvert individualism and the expression of the self. It is worth noting that love and marriage had never been regarded as purely personal affairs; they were often closely related to socio-moral obligations and familial duties. It is against such a background that young people’s fight for freedom in love and their struggles against arranged marriages came to be significant, for such acts reflect their strong desire for self-liberation and autonomy. As revealed in the works of the young writers of the time, they celebrated love and spontaneity and showed their frustration over Confucian morality with its pedantic view on love and marriage. They were eager to construct a new self based on the romantic ideal and they turned to *Werther* as their role model from Europe. They acknowledged Werther’s honesty toward his self and registered his devotion and love. While many viewed Werther’s sorrows as the product of his own emotionalism, most of the young Chinese intellectuals believed that their personal distresses were caused and accentuated by social or familial forces.

The impact of *Werther* is best shown in Cao Xuesong's enthusiastic response to the German novel. As a young actor-playwright of the 1920s, he produced a drama version of Goethe's novel. As he admitted in the preface to his dramatic rendition of *Werther*, he used to discuss Werther's troubles with his lover Han Fei. Both attempted but in vain to find a solution to Werther's problem. Cao further admitted that he was so obsessed with the German novel that he openly called himself "a youth of Werther mania" (Cao 1927: 3). For Cao, Werther is not just a fictional character, but a true romantic self like himself. By adapting *Werther* into a four-act play, Cao voiced his own disappointments and restlessness in a society that subverts personal choice and full expression of the individual self. His play follows the original German novel closely although some scenes are removed or condensed, some dialogues added, and some details modified. The play opens with a farmer working in the field on an autumnal evening and Werther lamenting over his sorrows:

The Universe is dark; the stars are dim;
 The whole world is deadly silent.
 Lingering in the field,
 I cannot check my tears!
 In the heart of my heart,
 In my heart's heart,
 Is hidden sorrow!
 It occurs to me suddenly that
 Though I am still here today,
 Tomorrow, oh, tomorrow,
 I will be far away from this place,
 From my Lotte!
 Adieu! Adieu!
 Hills and trees,
 Rivers and brooklets,
 Adieu, my Lotte!
 Though I am determined to leave you,
 My heart, that loves you so much,
 Still lingers over your smiles!
 Please don't forget
 For one moment, one minute ...
 Please don't forget me and my feelings for you,
 My Lotte!

Such an opening scene sets the romantic tone for the play and highlights the source of Werther's sorrows. The outdoor scene in autumn further throws light on Werther's wandering spirit and restless soul and is used to bring out the sharp contrast between the dismal scene in Act I and the happy and cosy indoor scene in Act II with children playing and laughing. Werther's presence immediately disturbs the harmony in the family and tension is built around his frustration and suffering as an observer-outsider in Lotte's family. The climax of the play takes place in the following act with the final meeting between Lotte and Werther carefully played out. Details of plot, setting and time follow those of the original. However, Cao brings in his own interpretation of the German novel in this act by emphasizing social pressure on individuals, causing the latter immeasurable sufferings. To present Lotte's fond memory of her first ball with Werther on the stage, Cao borrows a device from traditional Chinese opera. A partition is put up to divide the stage into two parts with Lotte brooding over her past on one side of the stage and actors re-enacting the ball scene behind translucent curtains on the other. In this way Cao is able to show the audience in concrete images Lotte's mental recollection, achieving at the same time economy in scene/setting changing. The last part of the play focuses primarily on Werther's suicide, and incidents are modified to suit the Chinese audience. It is interesting to note that sentimentalism is emphasized throughout the play, showing Cao's own emotional preoccupation and his desire to work out a solution to his own tragic destiny as one trapped in a web of socio-familial relationships and traditional morality in China. His experimentation with the Western dramatic form enabled him to express his criticism of his contemporary society on the one hand and his admiration for Werther as a model of the romantic self on the other.

Werther's notion of love as life touches the heart of many liberated Chinese readers and writers at the time. As Tian Han reflects on his creative writing later, his play "Tragedy on the Lake" was written at the demand of the troubled young intellectuals (Tian Han 1983: 65). A close look at Tian Han's early plays such as "Return to the South" [Nanguì, 1929], "Tragedy on the Lake" [Hushang de beiju, 1929] and "The Return of Spring" [Huichun zhi ju, 1934] clearly shows Tian Han's preoccupation with the romantic ideal and his quest for personal space and for his own voice in the decade following the May Fourth

Movement in 1919. In these early plays Tian Han depicts self-conscious individuals' scrutiny of their relations with others and portrays young people's constant struggles for freedom and self-fulfilment in a tradition-ridden society. In most cases, the romantic individuals put up a battle against intolerable socio-moral circumstances which hamper personal growth and subvert the construction of the self based on individualism, self-expression and self-actualization. In "Tragedy on the Lake," for example, Tian Han displays strong emotionalism and sentimentalism by dramatizing the Wertherian kind of obsessive love and suicide in the play. Tian Han's romantic pre-occupation is revealed in his portrayal of a new type of female character who dares challenge the prevalent Confucian ideologies characterized by filial piety and absolute obedience to one's superiors. His exposure to such European works as Ibsen's "The Lady from the Sea" and Goethe's *Faust* and *The Sorrows of Young Werther* dates back to his student days in Japan when he read a great number of European masterpieces in Japanese translation.

Goethe as a Source of Inspiration

It is apparent that Chinese intellectuals at that time did not merely respond to Goethe's romantic works as keen readers; many regarded Goethe as their source of inspiration and model in their experimentation of literary form and narrative style. The sudden emergence of such literary forms as the diary novel, the epistolary novel, and confessional narratives in the 1920s, for example, is a clear indication of Goethe's "fortune" in the Chinese milieu. The Chinese epistolary novels of the 1920s and 1930s show strong resemblances in theme and technique to Goethe's work, with novels or short stories often open with the retrospection of a sensitive and egocentric protagonist and end with the premature death of the main character or with the protagonist's withdrawal from the world of activity at the prime of his or her life. A prime example of such romantic self is featured in Lu Yin's short story "The Sorrows of a Certain Youth" [Huoren de beiai, 1922], in which she dramatizes the sorrows of a young woman who strives but in vain to live a meaningful life of her own.

Adopting the first-person narrative, Lu Yin displays a psychological drama based on the female protagonist's sense of uncertainty as a result of her yearning for freedom, love and self-actualization. Yaxia's heart disease and her insomnia externalize her internal turmoil, showing at the same time the disparity between her desire to be freed and her awareness of her socio-moral obligations at home. As she writes to K.Y., she finds herself leading an unsubstantial life like a drifter roaming restlessly in a world indifferent to individual needs. Yaxia suffers because she consciously suppresses her romantic self and love for fear of social criticism and moral disapproval. In her narrative, Lu Yin mirrors the general conditions of many enlightened young people of the time, young people who felt helpless and lost in a world hostile to individual quest for self-expression and self-fulfilment. As revealed in the short story, the process of becoming an individual with a unique self defined by one's romantic inclinations is neither smooth nor easy in modern China. It often results in the alienation of the self. Like Werther, Yaxia is a romantic dreamer, a lonely fighter in her battle for love and freedom. As a hypersensitive soul entangled in love of the unattainable kind, Yaxia finds herself contemplating death as a means of escape from her love agony and from a world indifferent, if not hostile, to personal quest for individualism and self-fulfilment.

What is more, such an attempt can easily be short-circuited by parents' intervention or spouse's disapproval for they are often upholders of existing socio-moral norms and prevailing cultural values. This is the case with the female protagonist in Ding Ling's "Diary of Miss Sophie" [Shafei nushi de riji, 1928] who tries but in vain to seek happiness in life due to unfavourable social forces at work. The female character voices her frustration in love, her anxieties and confusion resulted from her attempt to redefine herself based on the romantic notion of individualism. Ding Ling's short story further reflects the problems one encounters in the process of self-discovery. Her narrative portrays the protagonist's defiance against social conformity and the latter's active struggle for self-autonomy and self-fulfilment. Highlighted in the text is the protagonist's non-compromising and non-conforming attitude. It is made explicit in the narrative that the Chinese society at the time was not yet ready to accept or to endorse such an ideological shift on the individual's part from a passive role-player to becoming an active goal-seeker.

At a time when the notion of the romantic self was in vogue, Lu Yin's and Ding Ling's treatment of the romantic self is exemplary. What they advocate in their narratives is self-actualization, especially women's, in the course of the nation's modernization. It is worth noting that although the diary novel and the epistolary novel as literary genres have been well established in European literature, such genres have never appeared as prominent literary forms in the history of Chinese literature characterized by its predominantly poetic tradition. However, this situation has been drastically changed as a result of Goethe's warm reception in China in the early twentieth century. That is why scholars like Leo Ou-fan Lee and Yang Wuneng believe that there exists a correlation between the sudden blossoming of the epistolary novel form in China and the instantaneous success of Werther in the country in the 1920s.

Goethe's Impact on the young Chinese Intellectuals

The warm reception of Goethe has led to surging interests in Goethe's other writings in China. By the mid-1920s Goethe's position as one of the most frequently translated and widely known European authors was firmly established in China. While *Study Lamp* [Xuedeng] was the first newspaper supplement to publish a special issue on Goethe and his works in 1922, it was the literary supplement of *Morning Post* [Chenbao fukan] that set up a column for young literary critics to discuss their favourite writers. Goethe was a popular writer for discussion in this newspaper supplement, appearing on it at least four times in 1925 alone. The most enthusiastic attempt to popularize Goethe and German literature as a whole was undertaken by the members of the Chinese-German Society at Tongji University, an institution devoted to German studies in Jiangsu. Through their publication venue, the *Chinese-German Monthly* [Zhong-De yuebao], they promoted the reading of Goethe's poetry such as "Gott" and "Des Dichters Vaterland" translated by Yu Dunpei, "Erlkonig" by Huang Guangchi, and "Der Schatzgraber" and "Gefunden" by Liang Junqing. Guo Moruo also contributed a translation of "Der Fischer" and "Mignon" to the journal in the mid-1920s. Yu Dafu, too, produced a new translation of "Mignon" after Ma Junwu published the first Chinese version of "Mignon" in 1902 or 1903. Scholars in general consider Yu Dafu's

translation a bit clumsy in style, while they praise Ma's rendition for its precision despite his excessive brevity and minor mistranslation. It is agreed that Guo Moruo's translation seems to be the most faithful rendition presented in fluent and precise language.

Generally speaking, Goethe's poems were warmly received in China for their lyricism. As Xu Zhimo, the famous Chinese poet of the early twentieth century, stated in *Morning Post Supplement* [Chenbao fukan] in 1925,

the messages in Goethe's [poems]. . . are so close to our heart that they seem to express for us those deep feelings which we fail to put into writing ourselves. This [experience in reading Goethe's poems] is like meeting an old friend in the spiritual world.

Xu's remarks clearly show the Chinese enthusiasm toward Goethe's writings for they found in Goethe's texts resonances of their own romantic yearnings. As Tian Han puts it in his discussion of Goethe's poetry in *Young China Journal* [Shaonian Zhongguo], the young generation in China then was drawn to Goethe's lyrical poems because his romantic poems feature an individual's incessant search for one's self and human love of nature. This general admiration for Goethe is best captured in the famous poetess and woman writer Bing Xin's poem "Yearning," published in February 1922, in which she expresses her desire to become Goethe's follower as a seeker of truth, a lover of nature, as well as an advocate of art and literature:

. . . In Truth and Nature,
Carrying the baby of Art,
[Goethe] walks joyously and freely
Along the road towards a bright future.
Hark! Hark!
The songs of the angels' precession are heard!
Forerunner!
Can you slow down you pace?

Within and without the railings of the age,
All are Nature's favourite children!
Let's bless one another,
In the love of the Mother!

It is worth mentioning that the popularity of Goethe in China in the early 1920s also prompted the Commercial Press, the largest publishing company then, to join in the Goethe promotion campaign initiated spontaneously by young writers of the time. A translation of *Stella* by Tang Yuanji was published in 1925, and *Clavigo* and *Reineke Fuchs* appeared in the following year with Wu Guangjian as the translator. These texts, however, failed to gain the same popularity enjoyed by *Werther* and *Faust* in the country. The generation of young writers of the post-May Fourth era was more responsive to romantic individualism as advocated in *Werther* as well as in Goethe's lyrical poems. A number of young intellectuals and writers were also drawn to Goethe for the romantic revolutionary spirit exemplified in *Faust*. Zhou Zuoren, for example, viewed Faust's pact with the devil not so much as an exchange for knowledge or pleasure as an individual's open battle with the devilish forces in society. As he stated in *A History of European Literature* published in 1919, he shares Goethe's purpose of life:

[Goethe] believes that the purpose of life is to develop one's self and personality, which should be based on an interest in the welfare of others. One should strive for the better and try to do one's best in life as Faust did. Faust fails to find satisfaction in knowledge, sensual pleasures, truth, and beauty. It is only by living and working among people can one understand the meaning of life. (Zhou 1918: 75)

Goethe and the Chinese Writers' Search for the Romantic Ideal

Among the early admirers of Goethe is Guo Moruo, who openly expressed his wish to found a Goethe Society in China in his letter to Tian Han on February 25, 1920. His enthusiasm is best illustrated in one of his poems on cherry blossoms which he composed in Japan in the 1910s in which he identified himself with Goethe and called his friend, Tian Han, Schiller (Tian Han, *Kleeblatt* 1920: 159-162). Goethe's strong emphasis on the expression and development of the self seems to agree well with the romantic temperament of young Guo

who was eager to define his self and to construct an identity characterized by Western individualism. To Guo, love and beauty represented the quintessence of the universe, the source and the spirit of life. Similar to Goethe, Guo was fascinated by the creative power of nature, and like Goethe, Guo believes that individuals are forever striving to unite, in a harmonious whole, with nature. That explains why Goethe's *Faust* serves as a source of inspiration and artistic stimulation for the young Chinese translator-writer, arousing Guo's passion and desire for self-expression, and inevitably leading him to the vocation of a writer.

In commemoration of the ninetieth anniversary of Goethe's death, Guo publicly praised Faust for his questing spirit and for the latter's ability to find meaning and value in life through striving and seeking in *Study Lamp* [Xue Deng], a literary supplement to the newspaper *The China Times* [Shishi xinbao] in March of 1922. Faust's dedication and perseverance are highlighted for it is this fighting spirit that sheds light on Guo's life, directing him to a life of the imagination. Like many young writers of the time, Guo Moruo celebrates spontaneity and the free expression of the self in his creative writings. The reading of *Faust* prompted Guo Moruo to poetry writing; but it is his translation of *Faust* that inspired him to the production of poetic drama. In "The Rebirth of the Goddesses" (1921), for example, Guo directly quotes the concluding lines of the second part of *Faust* at the beginning of his play to state the theme. While Goethe has made use of the Faust legend to create a poetic drama in which he probes a number of philosophical issues confronting people of his time, Guo Moruo reenacts the legendary war between two rulers in Chinese mythology in order to comment on the political scene in China. The goddesses' desire to create a new sun, which will brighten up the world clearly shows Guo's own romantic ideal in constructing a new China, nourished by love and care of her creator represented by the enlightened Chinese intellectuals, who demonstrate a keen interest in the construction of the individual self as opposed to the traditional Confucian self characterized by collectivism and social roles (Guo *Goddesses*: 4).

By borrowing the passage from *Faust*, Guo affirms, in a terse and forceful way, the importance of action and participation in life, and the folly and destructiveness of man's ambition and selfishness. Like Goethe, Guo took a progressive approach to life in the midst of the

political upheavals in modern China. He revealed his wish to create a society resembling that established by Faust not in a remote part of China but throughout the entire country. That is to say, Guo was eager to play an active part in constructing a new socio-moral order quite different from the old. The inclusion of the *Faust* passage in "The Rebirth of the Goddesses," together with the use of the mythological setting and legendary figures, gives the Chinese play a cosmic dimension, adding a sense of universality and grandiose to an otherwise personal play focusing on the chaotic situation in China and Guo's desire to save the country from disaster.

Guo Moruo's search for the romantic ideal is also discernible in his poetic play, "The Nirvana of the Phoenixes" [Fenghuang niepan, 1920; 1928], in which the theme of the spiritual rebirth of the country is further elaborated through the representation of the phoenixes, and their subsequent rebirth. The metamorphosis of the phoenixes, from an existence deadened by the corrupt world to a new being in the final apocalyptic scene of their resurrection, is used as a metaphor to show the urgency and necessity for change. Through the songs of the phoenixes, Guo voices his own dissatisfactions about the slow changes in the country and states his mission as an enlightened writer who is eager to initiate fundamental change in the socio-moral structure of China. The phoenixes' conscious act of self-realization and self-rejuvenation clearly elucidates Guo's romantic vision and his quest for an ideal society governed by love, beauty and truth.

One may notice from the above instances that many modern Chinese writers share Faust's revolutionary spirit, which is seen as a prerequisite for social reform and intellectual rejuvenation. The German play further allows many to relate their earnest quest for the emancipation of the self to the great cause of liberation of the nation at large. As reflected in Xie Bingying's famous autobiographical novel, *The Autobiography of a Woman Soldier* [Yige nubing de zizhuan, 1936], the Chinese romantic zeal for self-liberation and self-realization, accompanied often by emotionalism and sentimentalism in literature after the May Fourth era, was gradually replaced by a general outcry for liberation of the nation through the celebration of the revolutionary spirit in literature. A look at Xie's autobiography clearly reveals a change in the reception of Goethe in the country because the rise and fall of popularity of a foreign writer in China are

often closely linked to the change in social, political, or intellectual climate in the country.

With the menace of Japanese invasion at the threshold, the theme of romantic love and the sentimental tendency that have so far pervaded the Chinese literary world in general eventually gave way to a general zeal for nationalism. In *The Autobiography of a Woman Soldier*, Xie relates her various experiences as a child and her life as a girl soldier. She succinctly describes the pronounced effect of *Werther* upon her as a young student:

As for Goethe's *Werther*, I read it five times in a row. Truly this book was touching and its portrayal [of characters] extremely vivid. Sometimes I was so concentrated in my reading [of *Werther* in the library] that I totally ignored my schoolmates who needed my service [to check out library books for them]. It was only when they shouted at me that I was awakened from the spell [of *Werther*]. I would quickly put away my book and attended to their requests with an apology. (Xie 1936: 90)

As Xie Bingying recalls, her fascination with *Werther* represents a period of uncertainty and emotional unrest in her life. Like *Werther*, Xie questions the meaning of existence and fails to find her goal in life as a youth. She is often troubled by a strong desire to commit suicide, regarding it as a means of escape from her emotional turmoils. Like *Werther*, who attempts but in vain to free himself emotionally from his fruitless love of Lotte, Xie also finds it difficult to erase her lover from her memory:

For the first time in my life! I found that the shadow of a man has filled my world of thoughts. I was so tormented that I wanted to commit suicide. I did not understand why the image of that smiling youth was always there, always before my eyes so that I could not concentrate on my study. ... I could no longer live my life as before — a happy and sweet life as that of an angel, free from worries and thoughts. ... I wanted to destroy his image, but that's impossible. Often I was awakened at night, haunted by dreams that left me feeling sorrowful and terrified. (Ib. 123–124)

Xie's restless passion and anguish, together with her doubts and conflicting emotions, are eventually cured by an external incident. As she recalls,

The June First Incident was like a bomb, awakening countless earnest young men and women [from their romantic dreams]. It woke me, this stupid girl who only knew how to hide myself in the library, reading *Werther*. Oh, it has been so close, so dangerous! If it had not been for those second cannon which woke me up in 1926, perhaps I would have become a second *Werther* [and committed suicide]. (Ib. 119)

It is apparent that the political unrest of the late 1920s indeed saved Xie from self-destruction by directing her energy from self-pity and indulgence in love-sickness to a more meaningful cause in life. Her Wertherian sentiment was replaced by a Faustian kind. Driven by her romantic revolutionary spirit, she devoted herself to revolution. She noted with pride in her autobiography that her decision to join the army made her feel like a new being. Instead of wasting her time on self-pity and love-sickness, she dedicated her time to the betterment of the country, acknowledging the fact that the old social orders must be destroyed before Chinese women would ever see the day of liberation. As she observes, "Love is only a personal matter; it is less important than eating. If everyone is determined to offer his or her life to the service of the nation, then love is but a pastime for the few ladies and gentlemen of high society" (Xie 1936: 166-67).

By portraying her own "awakening" from remorse and uncertainty to a full engagement in the currents of life, Xie's narrative epitomizes her transformation from her Wertherian pessimism and sentiment to her Faustian approach to life — an approach closer to the sentiment of old Faust. While her fascination for *Werther* clearly shows her emotional capacity and her sensitivity as a young woman in love, it is her later participation in the Northern Expedition and her victory over sentimentalism and emotional inertia that she celebrates in her autobiography. Like Goethe, Xie takes a positive and constructive approach to life, and she reveals her progressive and optimistic view toward life in her narration of her self-development. Viewed in this light, Xie's recount of *Werther* not only shows the spell the German novel on her, but the incident also illustrates the general state and

temperamental impatience of many youths of the post-May Fourth era. Xie's use of the first-person narrative and her confessional tone further elucidates her affinity with Goethe. Her work can thus be seen as a final testimony of the tremendous impact of *Werther*. One may conclude that it is largely due to the influence of the German novel that a trend toward subjectivity and intimacy is firmly established in modern Chinese literary tradition. It is not by accident or mere coincidence that one saw the increasing use of the first person narrative, the emphasis on personal experience and psychological realism, as well as the sudden flourishing and popularity of such literary forms as diary novels, autobiographies, and epistolary novels in China. Such literary forms have never been popular before the appearance of *Werther* in China.

The Reception of Goethe and the Rise of Chinese Nationalism

This general shift of emphasis in the reception of Goethe from the celebration of individual romanticism in *Werther* to an affirmation of revolutionary romanticism in *Faust* is best illustrated in Tian Han's later plays. Written in 1934, Tian Han's three-act play "The Return of Spring" [Huichun zhi ju, 1934], for example, is a good example illustrative of the dynamic change in the reception of Goethe in the country. Inspired by Mignon's song in *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, Tian Han produced a play saluting not so much the devotion to love of a personal kind as an individual's patriotic love toward one's country. The basic themes of love and patriotism are represented by the protagonists, namely, Meiniang, the Chinese transliteration of Mignon, and Weihan, who protects the people of Han, an ancient name for China. The play deals with the notion of identity and national identity. Weihan is an overseas Chinese returning to China from Java to participate in the Anti-Japanese War. He represents the enlightened intellectuals, eager to protect the country from foreign invasion even if it means the sacrifice of one's personal happiness and love. Both Weihan and Meiniang represent the undivided love of young intellectuals for their country. She epitomizes the devotion of a lover (a national), who never deserts her beloved one (the country) even in time of adversity. She braces herself against all forces trying

to separate her from Weihan (the Chinese root/earth) and looks after her lover patiently, praying all the time for his recovery.

Goethe's impact is most explicitly felt in Meiniang's song, the theme song of the play. Like its German model, the Chinese song is based on Meiniang's nostalgia for her homeland and her happy and leisure life with Weihan in Java, her second homeland and a place of peace and plenitude, in the past. This romantic sentiment is quickly replaced by her narration of people's suffering in China. The sharp contrast between Meiniang's romantic past characterized by joy and peace and the horror she faces in war-trodden China shows the Faustian spirit that is considered desirable in the country in times of war.

Furthermore, Goethe's great accomplishment in *Faust* was also generally recognized and lauded by many Chinese. For instance, while teaching at Hebei Normal College for Women in Tianjin, Li Chendong used *Faust* as a text in his undergraduate course "Selected Readings of Western Masterpieces." Li helped his students in their study of *Faust* by distributing his own translation of Lichtenberg's lecture notes on *Faust*. Guo Moruo, too, commented on the significance of *Faust* after he translated the text into Chinese. According to Guo's understanding as expressed in "A Brief Discussion on *Faust*" [Fushide jianlun],

Goethe was not a revolutionary, but a more open-minded 'liberal.' He could not transcend his time nor could he free himself from the consciousness of the medieval ages. Apparently, he felt dissatisfied with the old, corrupt rule, but since the German people could not undergo metamorphosis from their corrupt system, the only way Goethe found satisfaction was by giving himself totally to utopianism. (Guo 1947: xv)

Guo regarded *Faust* and Mephistopheles not as opposites but as two aspects of Goethe and *Faust* as a whole delineates Goethe's development from self-centredness to people-orientation, which was a "natural development toward a consciousness of the people" according to Guo the socialist convert. However, most scholars agreed that *Faust* never gained the same degree of popularity among the readers as that enjoyed by *Werther* on the Chinese soil. The complexity of the plot, the many digressions and classical allusions, as well as the remoteness

of the incidents all tend to make Goethe's *Faust* intellectually more challenging to the general reading public in China. While *Werther* is considered as a work dealing with universal issues of human experience easily understood and commonly shared by readers in the world, the spiritual and intellectual disturbances of Faust, together with his philosophical speculation, his quest for ultimate knowledge and meaning of life, his search for happiness, and his pact with the devil are generally regarded as cultural and/or philosophical issues too specific and remote for an average reader in China. Nonetheless, *Faust* remains Goethe's best known text and the second most widely read work of Goethe's in China up to the present time. It is primarily the romantic elements, the rich ideas, the sincere feelings, and the portrayal of nature in Goethe's works, as well as his progressive and optimistic view of life, that the Chinese readers find most appealing and fascinating. Goethe's own personality, his individuality, his genius as a writer and as a scientist, his experience as Minister of State, and his relationships with women also tend to put him in a more favourable and glamorous light than most of other European writers in modern China.

The Chinese warm reception of Goethe shows not just his prominent position as a literary giant in world literature but, more importantly, his social, cultural, and political relevance to the general taste, temperament, as well as expectation of the Chinese reading public in China. The Chinese intellectuals' different responses to Goethe and his works further reveal various stages of modernization in the country. Not only were young Chinese writers at the time eager to bring "fresh air" to the Chinese literary scene through imitation or assimilation of other literatures, but many were enthusiastic toward the possibilities offered as a result of the introduction of foreign writers like Goethe, who served as their source of inspiration as well as model in their experimentation with different forms of writings. The romantic ideal advocated in Goethe's works further prompted many Chinese to re-examine their positions at both the personal and socio-cultural levels, encouraging many to re-define their selves in their quest for a new identity, be it personal or national, characterized by radical individualism, liberalism, and a strong sense of nationalism.

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From Periphery through the Centre back to the Periphery: the Reception of Joseph Conrad in Poland¹

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Joseph Conrad, the author of "Heart of Darkness," *Lord Jim*, *Nostromo*, *The Secret Agent*, *Under Western Eyes*, was one of the greatest English writers. He certainly belongs to both English and world literature: his diverse literary output is studied and read all over the world (Krajka 2004: 1). He is international also in the sense of being born to and steeped in Polish language and culture, influenced by French language and literature, to later serve in the British Merchant Navy, settle in England and write his wonderful prose in English, which has become a global language. He transmitted Polish ethos and mentality worldwide in ways attractive to the world (Krajka 1993: 49).

Conrad spent the first seventeen years of his life in partitioned Poland under the shadow of autocratic Russia and lost independence. Then followed four years of early manhood in Marseille which largely formed various sides of his personality and proved to be a kind of "rite of passage" into the political, marine and emotional aspects of his adult life (Krajka 1991). Next came sixteen years of service in the British Merchant Navy, a period which was decisive in shaping his mature self. The remaining years of life were spent creating his literary identity. His life was like a succession of jumps into four distinct realities, each completely different from the previous one.

Conrad wrote in English which was his third language (Polish was his native language, and French was his second language). However, in the course of the sixteen years of service in the British Merchant

¹ This text is based on Krajka 1993.

Marine he ceased to be foreign to the English language. He learnt it from his fellow-mariners and extensive readings: English became the language of his thoughts and he later followed a natural impulse to write his novels, short stories and essays in it. At this stage he was only slightly foreign to the English language: in his writing he committed some mistakes which resulted from transfer from Polish and partly from French. Whenever English did not have a grammatical category which appeared in Polish, he translated his Polish mental construction into a similar English one, which sometimes resulted in language eccentricities and even errors. For example, he rendered Polish reflexive voice through English intransitive verbs (Morzinski 1994). Linguistic studies have shown him to be stylistically eccentric and very different from his contemporary English and American writers (Lucas 2000; Morzinski 1994). Despite this, the depth and complexity of the message of his novels, short stories and essays made him the second (after Shakespeare) most international writer in English literature (Krajka 1999: 1–2). In his lifetime he enjoyed popularity and success with his English and American readership.

Understandably, biographical studies have been focused on the impact of each of the four periods in Conrad's life upon his literary works, and the influence of his experiences at sea was of course a crucial issue: many works of criticism discuss comprehensively and convincingly the significance of Conrad's particular voyages for his fiction. The influence, however, of the first two phases of Conrad's life, the Polish and the French, have not been so well explored. Biographical studies, both book-length and shorter, reveal areas of obscurity concerning Conrad's Marseille period: some facts are vague and difficult to explain, others are controversial (Braun 1989: 11–113).

The importance of Conrad's Polish years for his literary creation is even more difficult to evaluate, since obscure details of his childhood and early youth are concerned here. Some (mostly biographers and Western critics) have worked to establish the facts of Conrad's early period and their relevance to his later life, personality and works. Polish literary critics, on the other hand, have mainly examined the relationship between the writer's novels, short stories and essays and the culture and literature of his first homeland.² They have con-

² For a survey of these comparative investigations see Zabierowski 1971: 82–87, 115–155.

vincingly pointed to influence of certain general characteristics of Polish national mentality, ethos and cultural tradition (Dąbrowska 1974; Dyboski 1933; Helsztyński 1958; Hostowiec 1957; Jabłkowska 1961: 5–81; Jabłkowska 1981; Kocówna 1967; Krzyżanowski 1932: 246–248; Najder 1965; Najder 1974; Najder 1976: 85, 88–89; Zabierowski 1971). There are two types of studies concerning the impact of Polish literature upon his writings: one concentrates on general tendencies and movements in the history of Polish literature, whereas the other — on particular writers or works. The most valuable contributions of the former include those emphasizing elements of the literature of Polish Romanticism (especially Chwalewik 1963: 445–451; Janion 1978: 3; Kridl 1929: 81–82; Zabierowski 1971: 82–87, 122–155, 167–174) as well as of Polish variant of the oral tale (*gawęda*) (Borowy 1963; Wyka 1969: 58–60, 65, 94). The latter is best illustrated by those who have traced the impact of positivists, like Prus or Sienkiewicz (Jabłkowska 1961: 205–213; Zabierowski 1971: 175–185), and of Mickiewicz's works (especially *Konrad Wallenrod* and *Pan Tadeusz*) upon Conrad (Krzyżanowski 1963; Najder 1965: 14–16, 19–21, 104–105, 109; Wyka 1969/1970: 77–80; Zabierowski 1971: 133–142). The results of analogous comparative investigations concerning some other Polish romantics (Słowacki, Krasiński, Malczewski, Norwid and Fredro) are interesting though fragmentary and less convincing (Zabierowski 1971: 142–155). Even these sketchy comments confirm that Conrad's writings owe to Romanticism more than to any other period in the history of Polish literature, that Romanticism forms one of the principal Polish contexts of his output.

Considerations of affinities with Polish Positivism are inseparable from the debate over Orzeszkowa's accusation that Conrad betrayed Poland (Orzeszkowa 1963: 23–24). She was a remarkable writer and ardent spokesman for positivistic ideology. Unfortunately, her intolerant attack upon Conrad's choice of a career as an English author (unlike her own, which she viewed as the only one possible for a Pole) severely distorted Conrad studies in Poland. She channeled them in a false direction and made the dispute over the question of betrayal highly emotional. Instead of simply understanding the émigré and his reasons for leaving Poland, many of those taking part in the dispute engaged in a passionately partisan argument which was doomed to end with condemnations of the "unpatriotic" writer. This debate centred upon an accusation which is in fact unprovable, because it is

framed in such a way as to be non-falsifiable. For those who accept Orzeszkowa's ideology the conclusion is reasonable; otherwise it is empty. In neither case can it be proved or disproved on independent grounds. But it has re-surfaced, haunting Polish critics, readers, and admirers of Conrad, casting a slur on his reputation, and demanding that his actions be justified. It was of paramount importance to those whose creative life came in the 1920s, 30s and 40s, who were brought up according to romantic and positivistic stereotypes of fight for Poland's independence.³

During the first three decades of this century many of Conrad's works were translated into Polish and there was strong interest in his biography (Zabierowski 1971: 204–205, 212). Guided by critics of previous generations, people read him with the context of Polish literature in mind, viewing him either as belonging to the Polish literary scene, or at least as being very close to it. At that time two images of Conrad the writer were created in my country: one who followed the patterns of Polish Romanticism and as an author of sea fiction, exotic-adventurous romances. The interwar period, especially the years 1932–39, articulated the importance of philosophical, ideological and ethical strains in Conrad's works, thus adding the third major interpretative perspective, which ranged between viewing them in terms of personalism and of political conservatism (Zabierowski 1971: 211–212, 215–217; Zabierowski 1979).

What were the later developments of these three basic interpretations? The occupation of my country by Germany and the Soviet Union between 1939–45, and especially the Warsaw Uprising in August and September of 1944, saw the apex of the writer's popularity, particularly among the young generation (Gillon 1976: 214–216; Gillon 1976a: 211; Młynarska 1957; Najder 1957: 258; Prorok 1971: 131–132; Zabierowski 1968: 115–120; Zabierowski 1971: 216–218; Zabierowski 1979a). It was mostly the romanticism and idealism of his heroes, especially the protagonist of *Lord Jim*, which appealed to them. They wanted to fight and sacrifice their lives for some exalted cause, even a lost one: the happiness of their community, the revival and freedom of their nation. They intended to fulfil their ideal conception of themselves in this way. Thus, Conrad's works enhanced the

³ See Kurczaba's account of Gombrowicz's censure of this kind of critical stance: Kurczaba 1993.

rebirth of romantic Polish fight for national independence, lost to Hitler's Nazi Germany and Stalin's Communist Soviet Union in 1939.

After the Warsaw Uprising had been crushed and Poland had been swallowed in the Soviet bloc, investigation of psychological and ethical aspects of Conrad's characters' dilemmas became the leading tendency in criticism. The years 1945–48 were a period of comparative freedom and liberalism, yet at the same time of creeping Soviet totalitarianism into my homeland. They animated the natural conflict between a compromise with one's conscience, co-operation with authorities, or on the other hand, resisting them, following strictly one's own convictions. At that time, it meant for Poles a choice between whether to accept the new reality of Communist rule and adjust to it through moral compromise, or rather to defy it and remain loyal to one's ideals, principles, values and oaths. The former would have been a kind of defeat or betrayal, the latter amounted to serving a lost cause. This moral choice was well dramatized in Jerzy Andrzejewski's famous novel *Popiół i diament* (*Ashes and Diamonds*), which was one of many literary works addressing such issues. In this novel the young fighters from "Armia Krajowa" (Home Army) are torn between loyalty to the military oath made in the time of war, to their former political aspirations and ideals, and the necessity of coming to terms, after the war, with a new socio-political reality, much different from what they expected. The characters of *Popiół i diament*, not black-and-white creations, experience typically Conradian conflicting loyalties, the ordeal of guilt and remorse, and a whole range of complex ethical problems. The authors of this kind of literature were made sensitive to ethical problems largely by their reading of Conrad's masterpieces.

Under the rule of Stalinist hardliners in Poland (1948–56) Conrad was banned by political censorship. The censors used Jan Kott's essay to label the writer "an agent of imperialist companies."⁴ In the jargon of Communist propaganda this was passing sentence on him: between 1950–55 almost nothing on Conrad and nothing by Conrad was published. The only significant exception was a collection of his short

⁴ Kott 1946: 151–156. See the interpretation of Kott's attack upon Conrad in the context of the post-war polemic with the ideological program of the Polish underground movement: Zabierowski 1979b. See also an extended presentation of Jan Kott's attitude to Conrad and of the development of this attitude: Szczerbakiewicz 2004.

stories which appeared in 1952: it comprised "An Outpost of Progress," "Heart of Darkness," "Amy Foster" and "The Partner" — a selection meant to show him not as an admirer but as a critic of capitalism.⁵ However, neither this edition nor attempts at defence against Kott's attack altered his position in my country. Between 1948–56 the authorities were trying to erase his name from the Polish mind and tradition. The Stalinist ban echoed in the early 1980s, after the declaration of Marshall Law in Poland in December of 1981.

The political thaw in 1956 started a real renaissance of Conrad studies in my homeland.⁶ Both the centenary of his birth in 1957 and the fiftieth anniversary of his death in 1974 were celebrated by numerous conferences and publications. The Neophilological Committee of the Polish Academy of Sciences organized international Joseph Conrad conferences in 1957 and 1972 — the proceedings of both being published by "Ossolineum," a leading Polish scientific publisher (Jabłkowska 1975; Jabłkowska 1979). A few local Conrad conferences in Polish were held as well. The first complete edition of his works was issued in 1972–74 (the pieces rejected by censorship appeared in London as the 28th volume) under the editorship of Zdzisław Najder (Conrad 1972–1975). Polish Conradian Club, created at the Maritime Museum in Gdańsk, edited several numbers of *Informacje Polskiego Klubu Conradowskiego* (*The Conrad News. Polish Conradian Club*). Many critical works, books and articles, appeared, too. Among them one finds popular publications addressed either to general reading public or to university or secondary school students (Jabłkowska 1964; Koc 1989; Kocówna 1969; Mroczkowski 1970), biographies and reconstructions of Conrad's artistic personality (Jabłkowska 1961; Koc 1977; Kocówna 1967; Najder 1980; Najder 1983), collections of his private and professional correspondence (Bobrowski 1981; Conrad 1968; Najder 1964), others' reminiscences of him (Kocówna 1963; Najder 1983a; Prorok 1987), the only Polish monograph (Jabłkowska 1961), prose and poetry inspired by his personality and oeuvre (Biliński 1983; Skutnik 1977), impressionistic evaluations dominated by praise (e.g. Dąbrowska 1974a; Mroczkowski 1970), collections of source materials (Najder 1983a), studies of sources and reminiscences evoked by travels to the places depicted

⁵ Conrad 1952; see the preface by A. Gołubiew (xi–xii) to this collection. See also Morf 1976: 264; Najder 1957: 260.

⁶ On Conrad studies in Poland between 1957–59 see Gillon 1960: 40–54.

in Conrad's prose (Braun 1970; Braun 1972; Braun 1989), surveys of his reception in Poland (mainly Zabierowski 1971; Zabierowski 1979c), discussions of the influence of his writings upon the twentieth-century Polish literature (Prorok 1987; Zabierowski 1988), studies of select aspects of his texts (Dąbrowska 1974a; Kocówna 1963; Kocówna 1967; Komar 1978; Kowalska 1973; Kowalska 1986; Krajka 1988; Krajka 1992; Mroczkowski 1970; Najder 1965a; Zgorzelski 1984). This revival of Conrad research in my country meant not merely a substantial quantitative increase but also a qualitative change. The scene was now dominated not only by attempts to illuminate his life and character and to articulate his Polishness and romanticism but also by studies of moral and philosophical problems and formal elements in his fiction. The latter concern reflected some dominant tendencies in Polish literary criticism: formalism, structuralism, studies of literary genres and modes, semiotics.

Polish Conradians are best placed to reveal and appreciate his Polishness and the relation between his creation and Polish literature and culture. Polishness is deeply ingrained in his character and texts, and therefore it should be constantly re-examined. Poles should be proud of the impact which their national culture, mind, and ethos had on Conrad. After all, since the Renaissance, Poland can boast of not too many writers and artists whose appeal has been truly international. During the periods of Romanticism, Positivism and Young Poland the greatest Polish writers served the cause of national independence with their pens, since this was the patriotic necessity and duty (although they fulfilled this mission in different ways, characteristic of the literary and ideological trends of their epochs). Their visions were thematically limited though artistically magnificent, and appealed greatly to the Polish heart. This situation changed with the end of World War I, in 1918, when Poland regained freedom and her literature was absolved from the obligation to the national cause, even though the fourth partition of Poland in 1939 again reversed this trend temporarily. After 1918, such writers as Gombrowicz, Witkacy and Mrozek produced more universal works, many of which caught the interest of foreign readers. Against such a background, Conrad should be admired as one of not too many cases of world-wide transmission of Polish ethos (especially Romanticism). He made Polish values and heritage attractive, understood and appreciated by people of other nationalities. And for this reason Poles should be proud of him and

thoroughly study and disclose the elements of Polish literature and culture *actually* appearing in his texts.

Conrad's position among the reading public in Poland after 1956 did not tread the same path as in literary criticism. Before 1948 he was read by the élite, intellectuals and youth, whereas after 1956 by a great many lovers of literature among the general public. But this was a result not of increased interest in this author but rather of the growth of readership in general. Easy access to books and education was one of the few blessings of Communist rule in Poland: books became extremely cheap, and schools and libraries were free and open to everybody. This made reading literature and education in elementary and secondary schools available to the entire population. But these readers digested Conrad at a superficial level, focusing on the adventurous, the marine and the exotic aspects of his fiction, as well as on *Lord Jim* — an epitome of Polish Romanticism. It was these works by Conrad which produced the greatest number of editions in Poland. My secondary school syllabus had two of his works on the literature reading list: "Typhoon" and *Lord Jim*. Again, this illustrated the basic tendencies of his reception in Poland: the first text represented his marine fiction and the second his most Polish, most romantic work which corresponded nicely to the masterpieces of our national literature discussed extensively during Polish lessons. Was this double-patterned reception a result of the interests of readers themselves or rather of skilful manipulation? I have never studied this question, but it seems likely that manipulation is the answer. In Communist Poland the political Conrad of *Nostromo*, *The Secret Agent* and *Under Western Eyes* was never popular, nor was the Conrad of great ideological complexity in "Heart of Darkness."

This situation was slightly changed only in the 1970s by the publication of an almost complete edition of Conrad's works in Polish and the films based on "Heart of Darkness" (*Apocalypse Now* by Francis Ford Coppola) and *The Shadow-Line* (by Andrzej Wajda). And I could sense political manipulation of Conrad in 1983, under Martial Law, when a television adaptation of *Under Western Eyes* was turned into a story with a simple moral, condemning all conspiracy — especially if made against the military rulers of Poland (Huebner 1983). But complexity must have been another reason limiting the impact of his writings upon the general reader. In the late 1970s and 80s Conrad appeared in Poland also in the context of Polish émigré

literature. With the official recognition and appreciation of the Polish émigré literature made in the early 80s and repeated in 1989, the position of Conrad as one of its exponents rose (Krajka 1990).

The political order established in Yalta in 1945 was an act of injustice and immorality. Half of Europe was presented to the Soviet Union and Stalin the murderer. Poland was the only one of the allies which was forced to lose the war: over six million of her citizens were killed (about 18% of the population), the country was completely destroyed, her territory after the victorious war was smaller than before it, she was forced into Soviet-born Communism — alien and repulsive to the Polish mind, history and culture. Therefore people in Poland and in East-Central Europe interpret the “autumn of nations” of 1989 and the subsequent political changes as an act of historical justice. It has been claimed that it is Poland’s mission to make politics as moral as possible. And Conrad’s works may help propound the idea of moral politics: in the 1980s one could read in Polish newspapers and hear in the mass media quotations from Conrad pointing to the necessity of introducing morality into public life.

My presentation has been subjective: I have outlined certain visions and tendencies rather than documented and validated theses.⁷ Let me end with a prediction for the future of Conrad criticism and reception in Poland. The role of Anglicists in these studies will gradually increase in spite of the enormous and rapidly growing bulk of critical works on Conrad, which discourages young students from undertaking research into his canon. Polish Conradology will become more international, stronger integrated with investigations conducted abroad. I expect that such masterpieces as “Heart of Darkness,” *Nostromo*, *The Secret Agent* and *Under Western Eyes* will be “re-discovered” in Poland to become popular. I hope that the impact of Polish culture and literature upon his oeuvre will be more extensively, thoroughly and profoundly researched, and more convincingly proven. And I very much hope that Conrad’s deep moral insights will imbue politics with morality. And in these ways Conrad will be serving his

⁷ This presentation may be complemented by the following accounts of Conrad’s Polish reception: Gillon 1960: 40–54; Gillon 1960a; Gillon 1976; Gillon 1976a; Morf 1976; Najder 1957; Prorok 1971; Prorok 1987a; Zabierowski 1968; Zabierowski 1971; Zabierowski 1979c. Conrad’s reception by Polish emigrants is discussed in Turno, Hryniewicz-Moczulski 1957.

first homeland, as he has been serving it all the time, in many different ways, throughout this century.

Thus, Conrad, an English and world writer of Polish origin, "the other" vis-à-vis Poland, influenced Polish culture and literature tremendously and in a number of ways. Whereas Conrad's life was a movement from Polish periphery to English centre (Great Britain as the place of his life and creativity in the English language), the 20th century career of his works in Poland was an instance of mediation process from the centre back to the original periphery (Poland as the country of his birth and upbringing), into the foreign language (Polish) which was originally his native. It revealed the mechanism of transfer to "the other" which was simultaneously the original self. It is interesting to trace to what extent and in what specifically was this first self reproduced and where and how it was transformed in Polish national-cultural space — and this outline of Conrad's reception in Poland is meant to be a contribution to such study.

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Chekhov on the American Stage

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Performing foreign plays is one of the notable and productive types of intercultural reception. The way foreign plays are staged allows us to judge how one nation perceives the other, as this process involves the work of the translator at the initial stage, the work of the stage group — director, actor, stage designer, composer — and the reaction of the audience during the performance. Among the variety of Russian authors staged in America, including Ostrovski, Gorki, Mayakovski, Andreyev, Bulgakov, Erdman and others, Chekhov definitely ranks first. Americans are very much taken up with Chekhov, whom they perceive as the most eloquent incarnation of the “enigmatic” Russian soul. Here we are confronted with several problems which are quite common when a foreign play is staged. These problems are similar to the ones emerging in the case of translating a work of foreign literature and basically can be summarized by the question: what is more important — to be as accurate as possible in relating the national color and the style of the original or to make the work sound natural and understandable for the home audience, so that it becomes part of its national culture. This is exactly what happened with Shakespeare in Russia. It is hardly possible to answer this question straightforwardly, all depends on the artistic intuition, tact, taste and talent of the director and the rest of the stage group.

Chekhov's popularity in the US started with the tour of *The Moscow Art Theatre* in the 1924–26s and has not vanished till nowadays. It can be justly stated that his popularity on the American stage can be compared only with that of Shakespeare. Chekhov is performed all over the country, in small and big theatres, by small and big actors. All great American actors and especially actresses have starred in Chekhov's plays, condescending to play in tiny off-off-

Broadway theatre, often without any honorarium. Among them we find such distinguished stars of American stage as Stella Adler, Eva Le Gallienne, Jessica Tandy, Geraldine Page, Meryl Streep and others. Commenting on *The 4th Street Theatre* (off-off-Broadway) production of *The Seagull* of 1956 Harold Clurman wrote:

Such well-known actors as Betty Field, Jacob Ben-Ami, Shepperd Strudwich and some others will undertake difficult roles at nominal salaries on a tiny stage — all for the sake of appearing in the work of a great modern dramatist. (*The Nation*, 10 November 1956: 301)

The most often staged plays are *Cherry Orchard*, *Three Sisters*, *The Seagull*; lately directors have been often attracted by *Uncle Vanya*, much more rarely was staged *Ivanov*. At the same time small one-acts have not been ignored as well; most popular among them is *Marriage Proposal* although *Wedding* and *The Bear* have also been often produced.

What makes Americans stage Chekhov again and again? The actors engaged in his plays have often remarked that few other dramas have so many good parts. And still in this respect we can recall Ibsen, Strindberg or Shaw, whose plays are also abundant in wonderful parts. In my opinion, this persistent interest can be accounted for by the principle of attraction of the opposites: people are often attracted by something which they lack themselves. In our case it is the so-called enigma of the Russian soul. What seems understandable and logical for Russians, at least due to the peculiarities of their national character looks mysterious and enigmatic to the westerners, especially so to the pragmatic Americans. Thus professor Seul Gallin, with whom we were team teaching in Brooklyn College, CUNY in 1994 introduced me to the students in the following way: “We are sitting here like <....> and can’t understand why, the hell, the sisters couldn’t go to Moscow, and here is the person who will finally explain everything to us!” Indeed, it is very hard for them to understand why the sisters could not move out Natalya from the house that belonged to them; why could not they buy tickets, board a train and go to Moscow; why Ranyevskaya did not agree to cut the cherry orchard into plots and rent them out to save the family; and why uncle Vanya is working hard all his life to support the arrogant and good-for-nothing Serebryakov. And maybe to understand all this or at least come closer to understanding they go back to Chekhov again and again. However

some of American critics are likely to assume that these attempts are fruitless, for as *Commonwealth* wrote in 1962:

It is tedious to have to say once again that Americans with all the good in the free world can't seem to get Chekhov right. (*The Commonwealth*, 20 April 1962: 87)

It should be mentioned that American critics have developed a deep insight into Chekhovian dramaturgy providing subtle analysis of his plays. Among the regular faults of the productions American critics find the absence of the actors' ensemble on the one hand (the thing which Americans were so fascinated by in the performances of *The Moscow Art Theatre* in the 1920s), and lack of the hidden sub-current — on the other. That is how, for example, *The Seagull* in *The Phoenix Theatre* was commented on: Much more of the time the performance is a mixture of strangely varying acting styles <...> (*The New Yorker*, 22 May 1954: 70)

This was supported by Harold Clurman who pointed out that "This production <...> lacks homogeneity and correlation of ensemble". (*The Nation*, 29 May 1954: 120).

The first productions of Chekhov's plays were staged by the former actors of *The Moscow Art Theatre* — Alla Nasimova, Michael and Barbara Bulgakov, and some others who stayed in the USA after the tour of the Moscow Art Theatre. They started to teach Stanislavski's system, which became very popular and productive on the American ground and is also widely practiced nowadays known as *the Method*. Though their productions, as often mentioned by critics, were in many ways copying those of *The Moscow Art Theatre* the actors themselves were the bearers of the *Russianness* that Americans tried but often could not achieve on the stage. That is why very often American directors tried when possible to engage Russian actors in Chekhov's productions. Unfortunately the second encounter with the famous Art Theatre in 1965 was less enthusiastically commented on. Though the ensemble was there all right, there was something "old-fashioned about it, museum like" — wrote Robert Brustein:

Women bat their eyelids, posture and wring their hands with grief. What considered to be naturalistic now seems stagy and artificial and shows how much our notions of stage reality are subject to change.

In the end he concludes:

Stanislavski will undoubtedly be considered always as one of the greatest revolutionary modern artists whose reforms have affected every theatre of the West. But another swing of the pendulum has put this company in the rearguard. (*The New Republic*, 27 February 1965: 26)

This became evident not only in America but in Russia as well and, instead of trying hard to copy old productions of Chekhov, stimulated the search for new approaches.

Apart from the difficulties that any director in any country is confronted when staging a foreign play, America has its specific problems. Firstly it is the absence of repertory theatres with a permanent company. Actors are put together for one production and they just do not have enough time to develop an ensemble, which is so important for Chekhov's plays. As the well-known translator of Chekhov's plays Alex Szodyi justly pointed out in a private conversation, in Chekhov's plays every character, even a minor one, is so colorful that when played by a talented actor in the absence of a strong ensemble may cause a certain shift of meaning. Thus in one of the productions of the 1970s utmost attention in *Cherry Orchard* was paid to Dunyasha played by the young Meryl Streep.

Another problem, which is especially topical for the US, is the diversity of regional accents and ethnical types. They have to think about it whenever they launch a production of any classical European play. There are a lot of talented actors among Afro-Americans who most naturally do not want to limit themselves to ethnical repertory. For a long time in many productions based on Russian as well as on European classics they were engaged in comic parts only. However lately we can more and more often see ethnically mixed cast productions, which is quite accountable, especially when the director is not trying to recreate national color with specifically Russian realities. Alongside with these there are all-black or all-Asian cast productions, where you may absolutely forget about the color or ethnically specific facial features if the actors are not trying to play Russians.

For a long time one of the marked tendencies in American theatre was to cast English actors in the parts of Russian aristocrats. Their refined accent and manners created the necessary distance for the American audience. Generally speaking English actors evidently due

to their national traditions are more successful in creating not only the images of Russian aristocrats but also the atmosphere of Russian manor houses on the whole. Thus one of the most moving and authentic Chekovian productions in English was definitely Michael Redgrave's production of *Uncle Vanya* presented at Chichester theatre festival in 1963 where he himself gave a wonderful performance of the titular part with a deep and subtle understanding of Chekhov's art. Costarring were the glamorous Laurence Olivier (in a later production he will play the part of Voinitski) and the exquisitely enigmatic July Harris. This actress is worth special mention. She has many a time successfully starred in Chekhov's parts both at home and on the American stage. Exceedingly feminine (the quality not much favored by American actresses), she fits perfectly Chekhovian female characters. One of the main features of her talent is the ability to balance on the verge of irony and melancholy, comedy and tragedy, expressing all the subtlest nuances of human behavior. Leaving the character slightly incomplete and understated she creates deep and moving personalities, letting the audience draw their own conclusions. One of her best part is Arkadina in *The Seagull* (1980), where in 1962 she successfully starred as Nina. Her Arkadina is glamorous and pathetic at the same time. She is first and foremost an actress who has lost the sense of reality and does not distinguish between life and theatre. She is vain and vulnerable, comic and moving at the same time and extremely humane. Not many of Russian actresses managed to create such a subtle and complex character. As for the majority of American actresses, they usually impersonate Arkadina either as a calculating vulture or as a comically vulgar aging woman too different from the charming Chekhov's heroine. Her performance was highly praised in press as well: *The Nation* called her "exquisite" and "aristocratic" (*The Nation*, 29 November 1980: 589); *The New Republic* — "majestic" (*The New Republic*, 6 December 1980: 28); *The New Yorker* claimed that with her performance, *The Sea Gull* "turned into a play about Arkadina", just as when she played Nina in 1962 "it was a play about Nina and Konstantin" (*The New Yorker*, 24 November 1980: 135).

Among successful interpretations of Chekhov given by the English on the American stage *Cherry Orchard* directed by Peter Brook in 1988 definitely was one the most conspicuous. This was his second production of the play after France. In the US he did not limit himself

to American actors only, but put together an international cast: the part of Ranevskaya as in the previous production was played by Brook's wife — the exquisite Natasha Parry, English; Gayev — Swedish, Peter — Czech; Charlotte — German; Anya — a New-Yorker, Pishchik — from Chicago; Firs — from New England etc. Some critics reproached the director for the fact that in his production everyone was literary speaking his/her own language or at least with one's distinctively marked accent. John Simon complained:

Diversity of accents grated on my ears. This would matter less if the play did not call for homogeneity and closely knit ensemble acting'. (*The New Yorker*, 8 February 1988: 68)

However despite this ethnical diversity Peter Brook did succeed in what had been a challenge for many other directors — he managed to create a very harmonious ensemble in which everyone has one's own voice and is very accurately leading one's melody. Brook completely refused to recreate a true-to-life interior of a Russia manor house. The only furniture on the stage was the notorious wardrobe larger than life and a couple of chairs when necessary. The whole of the stage place was coated with soft carpets producing at the same time the effect of coziness and isolation from the outer world. In the last act the carpets were rolled up, the stage left bare exposing the crude wooden boards of the floor and the walls: the home is destroyed, the only way to go on living is to accept reality however ugly it might be. In this production the audience did not see the expected white branches of the eponymous orchard. It is nothing but illusion, it exists only in the characters' dreams and its actual absence on the stage dooms their strivings from the very beginning. As Frank Rich justly put it,

Peter Brook banished all forms of theatrical realism except the only one that really matters — emotional truth. (*The New York Times*, 25 January 1988:75)

But the major achievement to my mind is that Brook attained what is seldom accomplished not only abroad but in Chekhov's motherland as well — he managed very sincerely, lightly and ironically, avoiding false pathos and at the same time very compassionately to tell the story of peoples' dramas at the turn of the epochs. It is possible that the Russian roots of the great director played certain a role in that.

As for Americans, they succeeded a lot in playing Chekhov's plays not as tragedies but as comedies, following his own well-known directions. Here we can trace a certain development — from the black melancholy of the first productions to the overt comicality of the later ones. At first it seemed to Americans that the slow tempo and moody atmosphere were the best way to present the enigma of the Russian soul. But very soon such an approach revealed its inadequacy both in terms of commercial success as well as its appropriateness for treating Chekhov's plays. Luckily, a letter to Stanislavski was discovered and American directors literally snatched at it. *The Seagull' on the Wings of Laughter*; *Chekhov without Tears* — these are just some of the headlines of the reviews of Chekhov's productions. This tendency took shape as early as the 1940s. In the review of *Cherry Orchard* staged on Broadway by Magaret Webster and Eva Le Galienne published in *The Nation* of November 5, 1944 we read:

In the present production Yasha, Epikhodov, Leonid and Charlotta are made merely funny, sometimes grotesque and therefore really irrelevant. Epikhodov is a musical show character; Gaev is made a fool, Charlotta is a clown. Charlotta's wit is blown up into burlesque, the play pulled out of shape, its texture and tone violated. (*The Nation*, 5 November 1944: 167)

Very similar is the review published in *The New Republic* on Andre Serban's production of *Cherry Orchard* at *The Beaumont Theatre* more than 30 years later:

Serban is obsessed with the idea that Chekhov called the play comedy; but that was Chekhov's protest against the slow and mournful tempo he knew Stanislavski would try to achieve. (*The New Republic*, Kauffman, 1977: 28)

It turned out that it is not difficult at all to play Chekhov as a comedy. The only thing to be done is to bring to the logical end or accentuate what is already there. And there we are — the audience bursts out laughing when Voinitski (*Uncle Vanya*) is dashing around with a gun; Varya hits Lopakhin in the genitals; Epikhodov throws over a column, Dunyasha keeps dropping drawers, Ranevskaya before leaving runs in circles 3–4 times around the stage (*Cherry Orchard*). Masha is smoking a cigar or even a pipe instead of taking a snuff of tobacco (*The Seagull*); Kuligin (*Three Sisters*) when pronouncing the Polish

word 'kohanii', stumbles over the sound 'h' and spits Solyenii in the face. Sometimes just a slight shift is enough to achieve a comic effect. Thus in a production of *Three Sisters* (1992) the appearance of Vershinin is anticipated by the introduction that he is constantly complaining of his family situation. And no sooner he enters the room than he declares that he has a sick wife, mother-in-law and two girls on his hands, which understandably provokes laughter, although in the original he speaks about his family much later.

At the same time foreign productions, irrespective of the quality, help you to look at yourself from aside. Very often things that seem quite habitual and understandable to the natives look ridiculous to the foreigners. Therefore it is quite instructive to watch how your national plays are not only staged but also perceived abroad. In the case of Chekhov it seems funny at least to Americans that people can be dying of boredom doing nothing and keep saying how much they want to work. The American audience finds it funny that people can talk, talk, talk and do nothing, even when their lives are at stake.

Usually when you go to see a Russian play abroad (this is probably true for any other nation) for some reason you are first and foremost interested in how accurately *they* can portray *us*. And those for whom this issue is crucial are likely to be disappointed. To begin with, it is the language itself which even in the case of a most excellent translation cannot effectively relate for example such suffixes as '-ushk' and '-yushk' and many other specific things especially important in the case of folk characters. Therefore not a single western actress, not even as brilliant a one as Sybil Thorndike can convincingly impersonate a Russian peasant woman, the Russian *babushka* (Sybil Thorndike played the part of the old nurse in *Uncle Vanya*). These parts are regular failures in most of the productions. As a matter of fact directors have been seldom fully satisfied with translations and often even mixed parts translated by different authors, which in its turn could not provide the necessary integrity of style. Very often they try to simplify the language or to bring it closer to the American audience. Stark Young wrote in this respect:

The limitation in most directions of *Cherry Orchard* lies in the tendency towards simplification. In Chekhov it's very much misleading to cut his lines or stage directions in order to improve or to make him easy. (*The New Republic*, 14 February 1944:111)

This tendency can be clearly observed in the production of *Three Sisters* staged at ACT (American Conservatory Theatre) by William Ball in 1969. Solyony, for example, taking his leaf at the end of Act II declares: "Frankly, I don't give a dam!" echoing Clark Gable from *Gone with a Wind* instead of "It's all the same to me!". Tusenbach hearing Irina saying that she feels like a piano the key to which is lost, specifies evidently not trusting the intelligence of the audience: "the key to your heart!". Irina in Act I declares: "I am an adult woman!" instead of "I'm 20 years old.". When Tusenbach and Vershin are exchanging ideas about future life they do not hesitate to refer to people flying to the moon from Moscow. It is hard to believe but I was told by a keen theatergoer that in one of the translations of *Cherry Orchard* the famous remark about the sound resembling that of a burst string, to make it clearer it was substituted for the "sound of a broken elevator cord".

Secondly there are a lot of little things such as interjections and gestures. Even nowadays it is hard to imagine a Russian person, (with the exception maybe of some youngsters) who would exclaim 'woops!' or 'wawoo!' or shouting 'yo-hoo!' instead of 'aw-oo!' — let alone in the 19th century. Very often its the gestures and some little habits that betray foreignness — they kiss two times instead of three as they do in Russia; they eat crisps, cheese without bread; sometimes they do not know how to handle some household things customary in Russian homes. Wilborn Hampton humorously remarked reviewing *Uncle Vanya* in *RAPP*:

As for the mood of this Russian country life, there is a samovar in the first scene but no one seems to know how it works. (*The New York Times*, 3 March 1990: 72)

— which is very true for many other American productions.

Most of Western actors with few exceptions do not possess the special Russian lazy nonchalance so typical of country landlords. But little by little you get accustomed and stop noticing all those nuances. At this point the major question arises: "What is it all about?" — and it turns out that the message and implication of most of *their* productions is much the same as those of *ours*. I have noticed that most successful are the productions in which the director and the actors do not try hard to recreate in detail all the subtleties of the Russian environment and character, do not try to look Russian, as it is hardly

possible, but lay their stress on human predicaments which seem to be quite similar. In this case all linguistic and ethnical differences are easily forgotten and a new aesthetic quality is born when two cultures merge into one inseparable whole.

Another tendency which exists not only in reference to Chekhov's plays but also to all classics at large is the postmodern approach which is based on the utmost modernization and naturalization of the original. It was as early as 1970 when in New York they staged *Three Sisters* in contemporary costumes, with rock music and slides showing drug addicts and racists. And at the end instead of the military march they played the famous hymn of the blacks *We Shall Overcome*. As far as the effectiveness of such an approach is concerned, I would rather agree with Dick Brukenfeld who questions this tradition, asking:

If you want to simplify, to take only a part of Chekhov, and that distorted, why keep his words? Why not carve up the play to your own purposes? (*The Village Voice*, 15 June 1970: 26)

I would even say, why not write a new play?

One more postmodern tendency is to *remake* Chekhov adding new accents and changing the perspective. Most notable among them is definitely *The Notebook of Trigorin* by Tennessee Williams first staged in 1981, but revised by the author until his death and produced in its final version at *The Cincinnati Playhouse* in 1996. Actually it is not so much a remake but rather a free translation, infused with personal feelings, a tribute of the famous American playwright paid to his great predecessor and teacher. More typical for postmodern theatre are *Anton in Show Business*, staged by *The Second Thought Theatre* in Dallas, 2004 and *The Nina Variations* produced in North Hollywood, 2005. The first play shows three young actresses cast in the title roles of Chekhov's *The Three Sisters* working on their parts, solving their personal problems etc. The effect of such an approach was wittily summarized by Lawson Taitte who wrote:

When finally they get to do a tiny fragment from the real *Three Sisters* you wish they would start all over again and just do Chekhov straight. (*The Dallas Morning News*, 15 May 2004: 11)

The second play features three Ninas in three stages of life visiting Treplev. They go through their troubles trying to save Konstantin. The production calls for the answer to the question: what if things had turned out differently?

Needless to say that in the case of such an approach all the aforementioned issues concerning staging a foreign play become irrelevant, as for its fruitfulness — this is a topic to discuss within the scope of the general problems of postmodern theatre and art.

By way of a conclusion we may say that, in any case, staging foreign plays is definitely one of the most fruitful and interesting types of cultural dialogue, as it promotes understanding between nations often revealing more similarity than difference in the sets of moral and spiritual values.

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The Influence of a Dominant Factor on the Language of Azerbaijani National Literature

RAHILYA GEYBULLAYEVA

Background

Throughout history, many nations, languages, and cultures have *crossed* paths and diverged into distinctive new entities, influenced through confluence. For instance, Arabic cultures of people accepted Islam, growing into an Islamic-Arabic tradition. Moreover, the socialist ideology was integrated into a new country of nations, which became the Soviet Union. The manner in which other nations assimilated into this practice exemplifies the function of convergence.

Other ethnicities *run parallel*, but never touch, as in the independent development of the ancient Egyptian and Aztec civilizations. A third historical connection illustrates the *divergence of one culture* into another with common genetic roots, such as how the Slavic culture ultimately became unique in Russia, the Ukraine, Belarus, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia. Similar too is how the Turkic culture diverged to become the Turkish, Azeri, Uzbek, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, and Gagauz national cultures.

Each of these precedents brought change and modernization to different degrees during various historical periods, and appear in disparate contexts and zones of influence. Accordingly, the *dominant factors of each have determined a new orientation* and method of cultural development. The determining factor becomes the context. These changes affect traditional canonical elements of the culture, which then appear through a new sphere of influence and result in both successes and failures.

Part 1

There are different dominant factors that determine the basic orientation of general literary guidelines. During different historical periods, various factors determined the types of cultures and literature, including genetic-patrimonial, cultural, geographical-regional, and philosophic-religious generalities. Each reveals stratifications of the previous types.

Among the attributes of these new types, new generalities appear in the literature in a new historical-cultural context while also remaining in the various form, becoming the carrier of the former as well as of the new dominant traits.

With literature in a nation of a confluence of ethnicities, the investigation of a variety of literary types within one nation's literature results in a national literature. A problem results from treating this issue on a vertical diachronic level and horizontal synchronic level. What kind of large, appreciable historical and responding cultural changes, or insignificant, collateral influences have led to the new features of a *national literature* and generated the need to update a literary type?

The characteristics of modern Azerbaijani literature have developed from the following:

The *genetic Turkic generality*, as reflected in the monuments of culture, including language, ceremonies, folklore genres, and epics. For example, *The Book of Grandfather Gorgut*, and *Kyor-oglu*.

The *religious generality* within the Muslim religion, as reflected in language (Arab, Farsi, and the twisted languages that resulted from laws concerning language and the borrowing and transferring of elements of the lexicon and affixes). Also: within plots (the epic *Asli and Kerem*, about love between a Christian Armenian girl and the Moslem-Azerbaijani Kerem); the metrics (*aruz*), genres (*gaside* and *rubai*) that were peculiar before Arabian verses were added with corresponding genres, such as *gazelle*. These are customary in both the Farsi and Turkic groups of languages, including Azerbaijani and those used in our literature to this day.

The *regional generality*, since *Avesta*. This factor typically affects different archetypes, such as the plot and symbols. A popular sample of a plot is the archetype in which it is possible to count the poems on

the Arabian plot about Leyli and Mejnuon, written by the Azerbaijanians Nizami Ganjevi and Fizuli, the Uzbek Alisher Navoi, the Indian Emir Hosrov Dahlevi. Possibly, one could also include authors of other non-Muslim regions. For example, consider the story of Leyli and Medlum written by Velimir Hlebnikov.

And, at last, the *state-political* association of the Soviet state has resulted not only in destruction of a lot of talented writers and poets due to a lack of dependence from their nationality. This is not only alongside the preservation of the national origin of the literature made within the nationality, but also the certain changes of the ideology and sociological orientation that resulted. The basic principle of the Soviet society was the Marxist-Leninist ideology on which the society was formed. The literary method of socialist realism has been generated on the same basis. New tendencies have resulted not only in irreversible losses, which were inevitable, but also in the enrichment of culture and literature that possess new characteristic directions, from J. Jabbarly, S. Rustam, M. S. Ordubadi at the beginning of the twentieth century to Anar, I. Huseynov, A. Aylisly, Y. Samed-oglu, V. Jebrailzade, and R. Rovshan. The literature of this period, on the one hand, became a mirror of the changes in Azerbaijan society. These new elements have funneled all the way down to a *new bilingualism*; this time, the second language of the Azerbaijani literature became Russian. It was not the law, but a necessity in order to be known in the whole country of the Soviet Union, which included Azerbaijan among many others. Thus, Azerbaijan literature, as well as other national literatures of this period, kept the national features, a tendency that was proclaimed one of the main principles of a new literary method. The contents from a socialist perspective, and the form representing the nationalist.

Thus, *as with any national literature*, contours of the modern Azerbaijani literature are defined not only by the modern dominant factors and conditions of the world literary process, but also by how they developed from significant or somehow imperceptible traces of the previous dominant factors. And, as with any culture, frequently it is impossible to separate one's own and that of another.

In each formation of a new ethnos, its parts infiltrate the literature and culture with its traditions, not always being distributed to the entire nation. Quite often, they are kept to each part.

Literatures quite often intermingle and cross-fertilize by virtue of socio-historical processes. Literature that *belongs to one national milieu with little contact with another national milieu* is observed in periods of historical change. The concrete national milieu, with an already available heritage, rotates (within the changes) to a various degree within boundaries and undergoes changes during each new epoch. This paper will examine how these factors affect the contours of national literature with reference, in particular, to Azerbaijani literature.

What is considered *national literature* when, for example, Indian literature itself encompasses thirteen multiethnic literatures? Another example is how, at different times, the Arabic and then the Farsi became the languages of the literature of the Muslim East.

Regarding other communities of literature or literature types, Soviet literature also represents a *multinational* palette of literary works and the cross-fertilization of cultures. Not only American literature, but also modern British literature represents an alloy of distinct national traditions. *The definition of national literature includes the problem of historical context as well the question, "What is a nation, in general?"* All nations consist of various ethnoses that grow out of historical development — through wars and colonization, either through the peaceful connection of countries or the great resettlement of peoples. History abounds with similar formations of diverse ethnoses into one unity. Zaporozhskaya Sich, for instance, was formed as a shelter for the destitute people of many different ethnoses, including Russians, Turks, Moldavians, Poles, and Ukrainians, under the condition of acceptance of the one belief of Pravoslavnaya (Orthodoxy). The Zaporozhye Cossacks did not become a separate nation, but became a part of the Ukraine, even though they comprised the majority of the new population. They were called "Cossack," which in Turkic genesis means the homeless, the wanderer. This word also designated people without a throne, including princes from the dynasty of Teymur.

Different peoples have mixed during the formation of the Roman power. Ancient Roman literature arose on the basis of the dying of ancient Greek literature. A part of the Norwegian populace, the Normans who had lodged in France, merged with local people, and a segment moved during another historical epoch to Iceland, thereby forming a new country.

Part 2

At the bridge of two centuries and millennia, during the aggravation of the rekindling of national conflicts to the point of the wreckage of several countries, the more pressing question remained on criteria of a national literature, particularly concerning which literature is considered as such or which literary products or authors comprise it.

This question existed more than ten centuries ago. For example, with the distribution of Islam in the East, the main literary language was considered Arabian. And, many Muslim poets, including non-Arabs, were compelled to write mostly in Arabian, and then later in Farsi. Even now, Nizami is considered both an Azerbaijani poet in terms of national belonging and birthplace, and an Iranian, as he wrote in Farsi, as that was demanded at the time.

Thus, Azerbaijan shares the poetry of twelfth-century Nizami with Iran. Although he was born, grew up, and is buried in the Azerbaijani city of Gandzha during a period when the Turkish Sheddadis ruled. He wrote in Farsi, according to the requirements of the time. Yet, his poetry differs from the ingenious Iranian poet Firdousi, who also wrote in Farsi, not only in the phrases of his native language, but also in many moments of the content.

For example, characteristic to Turkic cultures, Nizami maintained the attitude of women. In this connection, we shall notice that, the common Turkic epic, *The Book of Grandfather Gorgud*, written in the eleventh century, two centuries after the acceptance of Islam in Azerbaijan, gives women the dominating attitude in the Turkic tribes. The woman battles and rides a horse like a man, and leads a tribe in the absence of her husband.

Nizami precedes the traditions of the Turkic epic. Moreover, the idea of the fair governor, which came to Europe some centuries late, is embodied in the image of a woman, Nushaba, the governor of Barda. Alexander the Great of Macedon is her visitor. Such elements within the content testify to the distinctive attributes of national and cultural belongings.

The process of belonging to one national environment while having close contacts with other national environments is observed from antiquity. The reasons were different. For example, from the ninth to the fifteenth century, the majority of the Moslim regions poets, including Turkic, wrote basically in Arabic and Persian — the

literary languages of the region. Accordingly, they were absorbed together with the language and culture of the people speaking them. Therefore, to this day, the poet of the eleventh century, Nizami Genjevi, though Azerbaijani in nationality, is considered Turkic-Azerbaijani and Persian-Iranian in terms of literature. The author of the first Persian tezkire *Lyubabul-elbab*, which is a mini-encyclopedia about poets and writers that gives brief snippets of information, Muhammad Ovfi remarked that Nizami is entirely a Turkic poet though he wrote in Persian. Or, the poet was distressed, so that the spelling of the poem about Leyli and Mejnun allowed him to write only in Farsi.

The case is similar when considering English-speaking writers that belong to different cultures, such as Cheng Lee, Jabran Halil, Salman Rushdie, or Jung Chang, who are considered as only American or English authors, and the Englishman Rudyard Kipling, who was born and lived in India became the author of *Mowgli* as an Indian author.

During the reign of Emeviler, beginning in 661 AD, particularly the period of Abdul-Melik Mervan (685–705 AD), the Arabian language illustrated that the study of religion had been given the prevailing status, and the usage of other languages was limited.

Naturally, such distribution of roles to language inevitably led to an inequality among peoples that contradicted the principle of "ummet," meaning that the religious unity of Islam made any racial and national inequality inadmissible. As a result, there came a period when Arabs as winners and conquerors were considered as the supreme nation above the others. They were not considered a second-grade nation. Even the assignment of posts, including gazi and vali, required the obligatory specification of a national belonging. To distinguish the supreme race in Iraq, a brand was placed on the hands of those in the Arabian tribes of "nehati." And, the Arabian soldiers were released from paying the ground tax, while soldiers of other nationalities received a monthly salary and a share from the plundered.

Only with the rule of the Abbasids in 750 was the interdiction of marriage with ajams, as Arabs named their non-Arab neighbors, including the Greeks and the Byzantines, removed. Moreover, this step was encouraged. This period is mirrored in the perception of the Soviet and post-Soviet space. Even on a map in the British encyclopedia issued in London during the era of the USSR, the former country is named as Russia. Though, in spite of everything, such a

reduction did not take place in the USSR. By the way, the article in this encyclopedia that is devoted to the USSR, also has other errors, concerning for example, the number of people.

It is still habitual to refer to "Russian" to represent the peoples of the former Union, though there are occasionally Western people who have more exact data on the USSR. The considerable role of Russian as an interethnic language is doubtless. During the nineteenth century, Russian poets living in exile in the Caucasus tried to learn Azerbaijani because it was spoken by M.Y. Lermontov, with the knowledge that, with this language, it was possible to travel all over Asia and the Caucasus.

Another similarity: from time to time, the French language dominated both Russian and Turkish societies. As result, in both Pushkin and Tolstoy, whole paragraphs or dialogues are given in French. Or, in the novel, *A Bird the Chorister*, the Turkish writer, Reshad Nuri Gyuntekin, underlined the prestigious role of the French elite.

One interesting reflection regarding the role of dominant languages in literature are found in the novel, *The Prince and the Pauper*. In Mark Twain's novel, the disguised prince could confirm the status of the Prince of England only when his friend, Michael, discovered a letter from this little beggar written in ancient Greek and Latin, an obligatory element of training at a royal court. The same occurred with Mary Stuart, Queen of the Scots during the fifteenth century, who wrote her sonnets in French. Both Mary Stuart and the Queen of England, Elizabeth I, in the fifteenth century, had to know ancient Greek and Latin and modern languages, including French.

Another role that the influence of language plays within the context of literature: The Ukrainians belonging to different centuries, N.V. Gogol and M. Bulgakov, are studied as classic authors of Russian literature. They wrote in Russian, though their creativity is full of Ukrainian folklore and philosophy according to Bulgakov, the Ukrainian philosopher Skovoroda, and the Ukrainian chronotop (Mirgorod; a Kreschatik). The Ukrainian, Taras Shevchenko, who wrote classic Ukrainian poetry also wrote in Russian. The Armenians, Sayat Nova and Miran, who are studied as Armenian poets, wrote in Armenian as well as Azerbaijani and Georgian.

What comes first when considering the author's nationality? For example, how to classify films by the Georgian-Soviet director, Geor-

giy Danelia? And, how can one categorize the Soviet film, *The White Sun of the Desert*, whose authors are Azerbaijani Rustam Ibrahim-beyov and Russian N. Mikhalkov? And, to what national culture or literature does one credit the film, *A Silver Lion*, that received an award at the Venetian film festival? Does the young Post-Soviet director of Azerbaijan, Mourad Ibragimbeyov, represent Russia, for a film constructed on the voice of Alim Gasimov, an Azerbaijani performer of mugam?

The advantages received as a result of a hybrid of cultures by virtue of various historical circumstances are obvious. But, the same advantages during an epoch of global and national cataclysms result in disputes regarding the criteria of a national literature. *In fact, one of the factors of national identification is based on belonging to one or another culture, a label that includes literature.*

So, we approach the next variant of the definition of national literature — that concerning the authors who wrote or write in exile.

Hierarchy within a society of any people results in inequality, to various degrees. This can be connected not only to the factors that form *zones within dominant* or local literatures, but also to the creativity of the carrier of a national literature abroad. For example, Russian dissidents wrote not only in Russian, but also in the language of their country of residence. For example, V. Nabokov, who lived in America and Switzerland, wrote in English and Gayto Gazdanov, who represented a chronotop in Paris while using the style of Chekhov in French. Or, there is the Azerbaijani Jeihun Hajibeili and Um-el-Banin, the daughter of the Baku millionaires, who ran away to France after the October revolution, who both wrote in French.

The sensational novel, *Ali and Nino*, by Gurban Said, an Azerbaijani emigrant, was written in German in the middle of twentieth century. Is this the property of Azerbaijani or German literature? The poems of Mirza Shafi from the nineteenth century were translated from Azerbaijani into German by his friend Bodenshtedt. After the success of them, the translator replaced the author's name with his own. This is also one of the questions of national belonging of the literary text.

A similar concern surrounds the names of some *disciplines* as well. For example, in private conversations with a scholar from New York, an expert in the area of Spanish Studies, I asked what Spanish literature means. The traditional consideration of Spanish Studies generally

includes only the literature of Spain. Only in the last decade did Spanish literature of Latin American countries begin to be examined as part of Spanish Studies. The picture is the same within French and English Studies (including British and American, both which also have diversity along national lines within one language). By virtue of various circumstances, these studies have expanded their borders as a result of countries' colonizing policies and as a result of a new wave of emigration from post-socialist countries.

Conclusions

In crossing of the various periods of history, different nations and ethnos crossed for different reasons. In different cycles of history, maps of the world vary. Tribes move, are at war, or win colonies. They occupy positions of hegemony, thus introducing their own culture as the leader. At the same time, the new dominant cultures borrow elements of peripheral cultures.

Intermingled cultures, religions, and outlooks, coexisting with modern traditions, have led to new contours within modern national cultures, forming a certain unity within diversity, and ultimately forming a new unity. A dominant factor in forming this new type is the cultural because it penetrates into all spheres — ideology, religion, art, and language.

To reveal the cultural features is not necessary for separation, but for mutual understanding and enrichment to the nations and their peoples. Different details in fiction or film can affect public opinion, change it, or, at least, affect societal moods. In this, it is possible to compare the roles of strong insurgents in a technical story with primitive horror films in terms of content, sowing only positive feelings that corresponds to the theory of old Indian drama, *Natyashastra*. Some new literary and cinema works are constructed on the contrary principle of this tractate, that is to create the best social mood through the formation of an imagined enemy.

The question of dominant cultural factors also allows us to address these problems:

What are the differences and similarities among national literatures throughout history? How were they formed and why? What are the criteria of a national literature?

Do they include the language in which the literary text was created, the national origin of the author, or the boundaries of the state? No one factor could be considered the only norm because of the reasons considered here.

As for Azerbaijani literature, the Azeri people have a history of diverse dominant factors, including the genetically Turkic elements and those foreign, such as from Arabs, Persians, and Russians, with various cultural influences. Going back centuries, the literature written by the Azeri has been produced in Turkish (both Azeri Turkish and Ottoman Turkish), Arabic, Persian, Russian, and even minor German, French, and English, all very different linguistic families. Finally, the phenomenon of bilingualism within Azerbaijan literature was, in a certain measure, due to the Russian influence, which has remained because of Soviet literature. Then, as with any national literature, it was created by the authors, who have belonged to different nationalities.

What about the boundaries, though, since, through history, different nations, as a rule, have had different margins?

Therefore, bilingualism and multilingualism as well as historical reasons for the belonging to different types of national literature do not comprise a new process in the literature. Until now, there has remained an open question concerning what to consider national literature, avoiding conflicts between nations. The given question faces any nation. In our opinion, it would be expedient to combine this term with cultural or literary considerations; yet, the question regarding the definition of national literature is real, and it demands further research.

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American Writers in Russia: Some Notes on Reception

ELVIRA OSIPOVA

Reception of American literature in Russia for two hundred years has been conditioned by several factors: prevailing tastes and literary sensibilities, the development of literary critique, ideological dogmas, and the art of translation.

Throughout its history the amount of freedom in Russia determined the number of publications and the choice of authors presented to the readership. Of particular interest is the impact of political and ideological factors on the introduction and propagation of American literature. The very fact of such dependence can be illustrated by the reception of several American authors in Russia, namely, Emerson and Thoreau, Jack London, Ernest Hemingway, Henry Miller, Vladimir Nabokov, Joseph Brodsky.

After a period of enormous popularity at the turn of the 20th century, the works of American Transcendentalists Ralph Emerson and Henry Thoreau were entirely forgotten, and their names disappeared from the literary scene. Religious and philosophic content of their works was adverse to Communist ideology; their mysticism was alien to materialistic philosophy of the ruling class. Emerson's and Thoreau's ideals of individual freedom, self-reliance, and non-conformism were not consonant with building a Communist utopia. The first appraisal of American Transcendentalism in Russian scholarship after several decades of deliberate neglect appeared as part of a general review of American literature. The publication of Volume I of *The History of American Literature* in 1947 was a real academic feat in the times of totalitarianism. Incidentally, the main editor A. Startzev was subsequently harassed, and the publication of other volumes was discontinued. His chapter on Transcendentalism presented a consistent

review of its philosophic underpinnings, as well as a description of the main concepts of Transcendentalism in the context of American thought (Startzev 1947: 194–208). However, in keeping with the spirit of the time, the scholar treated Emerson's the philosophical mysticism as "erroneous". He referred to Transcendentalism as a Romantic reaction against capitalism, underrating at the same time the social impact of its doctrines. The Walden experiment was interpreted by the critic as "a flight from reality", while Thoreau's individualism seemed to him a form of *asocial* behavior. Later, when *Walden, Or Life in the Woods* was translated and published in 1962, Startzev suppressed this politically motivated definition. In the afterward to the publication, he mentioned Thoreau's philosophical mysticism as "a limitation" (Startzev 1962: 230).

A similar approach was displayed by Russian scholars the 1960s. In line with traditions of Soviet scholarship of the 1930s–1940s Nikolai Samokhvalov divided Transcendentalists into "bourgeois reformists" and "radical protesters" (Samokhvalov 1971: 162). However, beginning with the mid-1970s a mere descriptive method, which characterized the first publications on American Transcendentalism, was superseded by detailed studies of the works of its exponents. A deeper interest in the aesthetics of American Romanticism brought about the publication of a valuable source book of translations compiled by Alexander Nikolyukin (Nikolyukin 1977). It contained some essays by Emerson and Thoreau, which facilitated the reception of Transcendentalism in Russia. Further translations were published in 1990 in a volume entitled *The Publicist Works of American Romantics* (Nikolyukin 1980). In it Emerson's *Self-Reliance* became available in Russia for the first time since 1917. Thoreau's *Plea for Captain John Brown* and excerpts from his journals enabled Russian readers to create a more comprehensive image of the Concord sage.

At about the same time Emerson came — again — under suspicion of the state. In the mid-1980s a collection of Emerson's essays (together with Thoreau's *Walden*) was prepared for publication. As chance would have it, Ronald Reagan in one of his public speeches quoted Emerson. The reaction was immediate, and the volume was doomed. It was only due to the interference of academician Georgy Arbatov that it was saved from virtual destruction. Incidentally, a short while afterwards Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev exchanged quotations from Emerson.

An important aspect of reception was (and is) the realization of the “modernity” of Emerson and Thoreau, the significance of their “living thoughts”. Indeed, politically laden doctrines of self-reliance and civil disobedience have rich connotations for the Russian mind. The Concord philosophers came to be considered by Soviet intellectuals as ideological allies in the times of conformism. It is not incidental that Thoreau’s *Civil Disobedience* made its first appearance on the Russian soil as late as 1977. Russian dissidents found justification of their beliefs in Thoreau’s words, “Under a Government which imprisons any unjustly, the true place for a just man is also a prison”; “We should be men first, and subjects afterwards”. Ethical doctrines of the American writer helped some of his readers in Russia to endure in the atmosphere of a repressive regime (Osipova 1985).

The most widely read American authors for a long time were — and still are — Edgar Poe, James F. Cooper, Mark Twain, and Jack London. Among the twentieth-century authors they are Theodore Dreiser, Ernest Hemingway, Francis Scott Fitzgerald, and of a later generation — Kurt Vonnegut, Jerome Salinger, Ray Bradbury, John Steinbeck, Thornton Wilder. Henry James and William Faulkner, very popular in America, are much less read — and taught — in Russia than in the United States.

In American eyes, the unabating popularity of Jack London in Russia is astounding. There has never been a political problem with publishing his works, since his socialist leanings were a strong point in his favor with the literary authorities. However, there were problems with interpretation. It was a standard practice to present him as a Marxist and a socialist, while his Social-Darwinist sensibilities were downplayed. London’s overtly racist views were usually not mentioned; his late novels, where they are particularly conspicuous, were regarded as a mere deviation from the mainstream. Thus, instead of carefully assessing Jack London’s strong and weak points as a writer, critics followed some unwritten rules squeezing his works into a Procrustean bed of preconceptions. The first attempt to reassess London’s worldview was made by Aleksey Zverev in his small book on London. (Zverev 1975). Further analysis of London’s Social-Darwinist ideas was undertaken in some of my publications (Osipova 2003: 371–378).

Another American writer, immensely popular in Russia, is Ernest Hemingway. He became a veritable cult figure in the 1960–1970s, at

the time of growing spiritual opposition to the Communist regime. His laconic style and rich subtext, aversion to wars, his characters with their noble moral code — all this appealed to the Russian public fed with official propaganda, with its verbosity and permanent lies. The 1960s saw the publication of a two-volume and then a four-volume edition of Hemingway's works. Many of his works became known before the war, with one notable exception. *For Whom the Bell Tolls* was to appear in translation in the magazine "Internatsional'naya Literatura" (International Literature). However, it was not published — for an obviously political reason. The episode with General Andre Marty was considered unacceptable. At that time the leader of French Communists was in emigration in Russia. Therefore, the state publishing house was averse to print a novel, which contained a most uncomplimentary portrait of this influential member of the Communist Party. Editor-in-chief of the magazine ordered to postpone the publication of the manuscript by some two decades. "In its character the novel is to be known to a maximally small number of persons", such was his verdict (Quoted by Nikol'yukin 2000: 52) Anyway; the novel had a wide circulation in proofs until its publication in 1968. The impact of the novel was immense. Critics believe that it influenced the Russian prose of the 1940–1950s.

The last two decades have witnessed a return to Russia of two great writers whose legacies are shared by Russia and America, Vladimir Nabokov and Joseph Brodsky.

Until 1985 the very name of Nabokov was a veritable taboo. For this very reason a reference book on American authors containing a profile of Nabokov was not allowed for publication for about ten years. Eventually it was published — in 1990, with an entry on Nabokov. The period of *perestroika* was undoubtedly beneficial for spiritual revival. Since 1990 Nabokov's Russian and American novels have become available. A five-volume edition of his works has been published, as well as numerous separate editions.

The Nabokov scholarship has reached an unprecedented scale. Over the last ten years Russian critics have regarded Nabokov as one of their most favorite subjects of research. Scholarship in translation from English is also considerable. Books by Brian Boyd devoted to Nabokov's Russian and American years are, perhaps, the best of its kind. Several collections of papers under the auspices of Pushkinsky

Dom (The Institute of Russian literature of the Academy of Sciences) have been devoted to various aspects of Nabokov's literary activities.

What the Russian public finds most appealing in Nabokov is his exquisite literary style, his prose (rather than poetry) permeated with feelings of nostalgia, the complexity of his plots and a certain Kafkaesque character of his *Invitation to a Beheading*. Among his books written in America, the most widely read in Russia are *Speak, Memory* and *Lolita*.

Our attitude to Nabokov, the writer, may be different. But one thing is certain. This "seeker of lexical adventures" (as he wrote in *The Gift*), brought **this** GIFT to Russia from his American and European exile: his pictorial art, the loving revival of the flavor of the Russian past, his love for Russia as a Paradise Lost. This gift, like a crystal, has many facets. One of the brightest is his mellifluous Russian language. He painted the Past in a manner reminding us of the paintings of Art Nouveau: Borisov-Musatov, or Alexander Benois. The Past, in Nabokov's words, "is the taste, the tinge, the tang of our individual being". This is the key-phrase for understanding his inimitable artistry in depicting the locus he was born in — the city of St. Petersburg with its environs.

We shall not forget one more aspect of Nabokov's work. He created a homage to his father, Vladimir Dmitrievich Nabokov, and thus, to the liberal tradition in Russia, which his father, a statesman and political figure of some renown, had done much to continue. His tribute sounds pertinent today.

The history of Russia ... could be considered from two points of view... first, as an evolution of the police... and second, as the development of a marvelous culture. Under the tsars... despite the fundamentally inept and ferocious character of their rule, a freedom-loving Russian had had incomparably more means of expressing himself, and used to run incomparably less risk in doing so, than under Lenin. Since the reforms of the eighteenth-sixties, the country had possessed (though not always adhered to) a legislation of which any Western democracy might have been proud, a vigorous public opinion that held despots at bay, widely read periodicals of all shades of liberal political thought, and what was especially striking, fearless and independent judges (Nabokov 1967: 263–264).

An extraordinary popularity of Nabokov's novel *Lolita* in Russia is understandable. For many years Russian readers were denied much of the Western stuff because of a persistence of "puritan" tastes, cultivated by literary and party authorities. A system of ideological taboos was complemented by "moral" taboos. The publication of *Lolita* has had a particular significance: it broke a hole in the bulwark of rigorist policies of our publishers.

Due to a newly gained freedom of publication, in the last years of the 20th century, there appeared translations of two trilogies of Henry Miller, this *enfant terrible* of American letters. Apart from that, Miller's documentary utopia *Big Sur and the Oranges of Hieronymus Bosch* appeared in Russian translation in 2004. So far it has not attracted critical attention, which it certainly deserves.

Another forced expatriate, who became part of American culture and literature, was Joseph Brodsky. His essays as well as his Nobel Lecture have recently been translated and published in Russia. They convey the spirit of freedom, a most fundamental prerequisite of democracy. Now, in the atmosphere of the 2000s, his essays *Room and a Half*, *Less Than One* come as a reminder of our recent past and a warning. In his Nobel Lecture he spoke — among other things — about aesthetic forms of resistance. One of the main ways of opposition to the state, in his words, is literary taste. As if echoing Edgar Poe's idea of interdependence of taste and ethics, Brodsky stated:

Literary (or some other) taste, can in itself turn out to be, if not as guarantee, then a form of defense against enslavement. For a man with taste, particularly literary taste is less susceptible to the refrains and the rhythmical incantations peculiar to any version of political demagoguery (Nobel Prize in Literature 303).

Though Brodsky was very pessimistic about "saving the world", he expressed hope in individual salvation. The path, open to us now, is to develop and cultivate aesthetic taste. To paraphrase Brodsky, the firmer is our taste, the more definite is our ethical choice. He put his finger on a very sensitive issue, which is characteristic of our time: the level of aesthetic taste is rapidly falling, reflecting as it were, a catastrophic deterioration of the morals. The more important, then, is Brodsky's message.

To sum up this short review of the way American authors are represented in Russia now, I will say the following. A greater political

freedom in the 1990s brought about wider opportunities in the ways of expression. The amount of liberty has proved to be in direct ratio to the influx of new translations and a scholarship unrestricted by ideological dogmas or inner censorship. This appears to be the case with American literature, its reception in Russia and incorporation into our cultural legacy. All leading American authors are being translated now, without any limitations as to the list of authors, or even, unfortunately, the artistic quality of their works. What will remain to live as a part of our own spiritual culture — time will tell.

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Ibsenism and Feminist Awakenings among Early Modern Chinese Writers

KWOK-KAN TAM

Ibsen is a dramatist, but he has been considered also as a social thinker, and controversially as a feminist. Since *A Doll's House* was published in 1879, critics have come to an agreement that Ibsen is both a dramatist and a social thinker, but they cannot come to an agreement whether Ibsen is a feminist. The reason why some critics do not think that Ibsen is a feminist is that Ibsen does not provide a conclusion on Nora's future. And for this reason, some critics conclude that Ibsen does not seem to have a clear feminist position. Russian Marxist critics, such as Georg Plekhanov, also thought of Ibsen as a half-hearted revolutionary because his plays lack a conclusion on social and feminist issues. However, the feminists at the beginning of the twentieth century, such as Emma Goldman, argued that Ibsen is a feminist (Tam 2001: 28–29).

In China, the early reception of Ibsen underwent a similar process of debate between critics who believed that Ibsen was a feminist and those who did not believe so. When Ibsen was first introduced to China in 1908, the focus was placed on Ibsen's revolutionary ideas of individualism and iconoclasm. Individualism was an explosive idea in China at the beginning of the twentieth century when China was undergoing a revolution against Confucianism and seeking a modern identity. Lu Xun was the first Chinese critic who saw the need to introduce Western ideas of individualism to China. He viewed Ibsen as a romantic hero who rebelled against hypocrisy and outdated morality. Most Chinese critics of the 1900s, including Lu Xun, had not had any idea that Ibsen could be associated with feminist ideas. Such a view that emphasized the revolutionary spirit of individualism in Ibsenism, and neglected its possible feminist inclinations, was due

probably to the revolutionary sentiments in China at the fall of the Qing dynasty.

The concept of the self as an individual is absent in traditional Chinese culture. A person has a self only in the fulfillment of his/her social and familial roles. Having a role-self, a person is a member in a web of relations, but not an individual. This is basically the Confucian concept of self-other relatedness. In the Chinese tradition, there was a social and moral hierarchy putting everyone in a place where a person is related to others in the form of subordination-regulation, for example, son to father, wife to husband, subject to the Emperor. The two concepts, individuality and gender, are absent in such a hierarchy and in the consideration of a person's selfhood.

Lu Xun's Individualism as Iconoclasm

For the awakened Chinese seeking a socio-cultural revolution in the 1900s, there was an urgent need to find a new moral philosophy as a substitute of the collapsing Confucian moral and social order. Many intellectuals, including Lu Xun, turned to Western thinkers for models of reform. The Chinese students in Japan at that time were in an advantageous position to come into contact with radical ideas from the West. As students in Japan, they enjoyed a high degree of freedom in expression on Chinese politics, and they could easily have access to Western philosophical ideas through Japanese translation.

While Lu Xun (1881–1936) was a student in Japan, he wrote an essay in 1908 criticizing traditional Chinese culture as hypocritical. In this essay, entitled “On Cultural Extremes” [Wenhua pianzhi lun], Lu Xun discussed Ibsen in the context of a lonely fighter against moral corruption. In admiring the iconoclastic courage of Dr. Stockmann, the lonely hero in *An Enemy of the People*, Lu Xun read Ibsen in terms of the social significance of individualism. As Lu Xun said, he introduced Ibsen's idea of individualism because he was frustrated not only with the Chinese prejudice against Western culture, but also with the lack of individuality among the Chinese in the 1900s. Lu Xun traced the origin of individualism to the philosophy of Stirner, Schopenhauer and Kierkegaard, and believed that China needed a new concept of self based on individualism so that China would undergo a complete revolution in culture. Such an idea worked against traditio-

nal Chinese values, particularly Confucianism, in which the family system was emphasized at the expense of the individual. This is because in the traditional Chinese concept of self, individualism is never a component. To save China from its imminent cultural collapse at a time when Confucianism proved ineffective for modern times, a remedy Lu Xun proposed was Nietzsche's ideas of the superman and Ibsen's advocacy of individual and social integrity.

As is well known, Ibsen was considered in the nineteenth century as an interpreter of Kierkegaard. His works, Lu Xun thought, were valued for iconoclastic ideas opposing social conventions. No matter whether they were customs, beliefs, or morals, if they were biased and unreasonable, Ibsen would criticize them. He saw that in the modern world there were people who did evil things in the name of equality. Mediocrity and superficiality grew day after day. Follies and hypocrisy became more and more widespread among the ignorant masses. Those who had high ideals and did not compromise their integrity for the favour of others were rejected in society. All these things in Norway caused Ibsen's anguish.

Lu Xun expressed his high opinion of *An Enemy of the People*. For him, Ibsen portrayed a hero who upholds truth and does not give in to moral conventions and popular superstition. As a result, the hero is totally isolated from other people. Although the cunning and evil persons become leaders of the fools, use the majority to bully the minority, and group together to form parties as a means to achieve their selfish transactions, the hero, Dr. Stockmann, is determined to fight against the villains. "The reality of society is fully depicted in the play" (Lu Xun 1980a: 51-52). Lu Xun's knowledge of *An Enemy of the People* was probably based on the Japanese translations, which appeared in 1893 and 1901 (Sato 1966: 57; 174).

Social relationships presented in *An Enemy of the People*, as revealed to Lu Xun, were essentially the same as those in China in the early 1900s. In Lu Xun's time, China was in transition from a traditional society to a modern one. People who grew up in an agrarian culture were at a loss as to how to react to the changes in society. In order to protect themselves amidst political chaos, they took a middle course in every social issue by following the majority view. This evasive attitude was ridiculed by Lu Xun in the short story *The True Story of Ah Q* (1921). Considering Ibsen as an intellectual fighter, Lu Xun concluded: "What Ibsen describes in his works are

those strong characters who believe in the strength of reform and struggle and are not afraid of being opposed to the majority" (Lu Xun 1980a: 55). To Lu Xun, Ibsen was more important as a social critic than as a dramatist.

Lu Xun's view of Ibsen as a champion of individualism can also be found in an earlier essay, "On the Power of Mara Poetry" [Moluo shili shuo, 1908], in which he discussed Ibsen as a Byronic hero, who "has a rebellious spirit and is revolutionary in action, but is not welcome in the world" (Lu Xun 1908b: 55). This is the first Chinese article that discusses in a comprehensive manner the literary pursuits of the Byronic poets. Lu Xun ranked Ibsen as one of these poets and compared the rebellious spirit exemplified in Ibsen's drama to Byron's Satanic tendency. Lu Xun had a particular liking for the play *An Enemy of the People*, in which Ibsen presented his ideas through the iconoclast Dr. Stockmann who, in upholding truth against the prejudices of society, is attacked by the people. Dr. Stockmann's being isolated by society, to Lu Xun, was an example of the follies of society. He valued greatly Dr. Stockmann's motto: "The strongest man in the world is he who stands most alone" (Lu Xun 1908a: 79). Lu Xun believed that Dr. Stockmann's persistence in upholding his own principle was the courage that the Chinese needed at the beginning of the twentieth century. Lu Xun's purpose was not just to introduce Byron or Ibsen, but also to call the Chinese attention to the need of an iconoclast spirit and a determination to face injustice alone. This is the spirit later expressed by Lu Xun's in his motto: "To face the accusations of a thousand men with indifference and cold eyebrows" [Hengmei lengdui qianfu zhi].

Lu Xun noted that although the Satanic poets "were different in their temperament and action, they were the same in spirit: all of them were strong and persistent in upholding truth. They never gave in or followed the majority opinion blindly. They would make their beliefs known to their fellow countrymen so as to bring them to a new life and save their country. But when we turn to China, do we find anyone comparable to them?" (Lu Xun 1908a: 89) According to Lu Xun, China became weak in the nineteenth century just because the Chinese had been too strong in the past and people were complacent with their present life. He thought that China needed more rebels like Ibsen to wake people up from their lethargy.

There is no evidence to prove the extent of Lu Xun's influence when he was writing on Ibsen as a student in Japan. However, when Lu Xun became a famous and influential writer in China in the 1930s, his views on Ibsen's individualism were considered important in the Chinese search for modernity.

Hu Shi's Ibsenism as Anti-Collectivism

With the launching of the 1917 Literary Revolution and the call for the introduction of Western ideas to rejuvenate traditional culture, China was ready for the influx of more radical thinkers. The credit for this campaign went first to *New Youth*, the leading intellectual organ of the movement. In June 1918, in a special issue on Ibsen, the dramatist for the first time was seriously and systematically presented to the Chinese reader. Hu Shi, the leader of the movement, wrote for the issue an article entitled "Ibsenism" [Yibusheng zhuyi], which became for many decades the most authoritative Chinese interpretation of the Norwegian dramatist. When China was already on the eve of cultural reevaluation, Ibsen came to China just in time to spark the fire and to serve as a guiding light for the movement.

Hu Shi (1891–1962) was educated in the United States. He received his doctorate in philosophy from Columbia University and was a follower of John Dewey's philosophy of pragmatism. During his stay in the United States, he watched several performances of Ibsen's plays. In his undergraduate years, he had also read Ibsen. His diary is full of admiring comments on Ibsen (Hu Shi 1959: 332; 685).

Soon after his return to China in June 1917, he was appointed professor of philosophy at Peking University, then an important centre for the dissemination of Western culture in China. In his essay, "Ibsenism," Hu considered Ibsen more as a social revolutionary than as a dramatist. To him, Ibsenism was basically a realistic attitude towards life. In this way, Ibsen's plays were seen as expression of his indictment of social conventions and traditional morals. Putting aside Ibsen's artistic achievements as a dramatist, Hu explored mainly his social philosophy. Hu Shi expounded in detail Ibsen's fundamental principles concerning society and the family. Law, religion, and moral institutions were regarded as social evils, together with the family system, which is nothing more than an embracement of selfishness,

slavishness, falsehood, and cowardice. Hu believed that Ibsen's greatest contribution to modern mentality was the advocacy of individualism. According to him, the individual as conceived by Ibsen is always suppressed by society, and only when society collapses will the individual be free from all bondage. The anarchist tendency in Hu's essay is self evident. As a young professor just returned from the USA, Hu, like many of his colleagues at Peking University, was an idealist.

Similar to Lu Xun, Hu Shi also thought that the most fascinating aspect of Ibsenism was the uncompromising courage and determination represented by Dr. Stockmann. He agreed with Ibsen that what mattered most in social integrity was not whether one belonged to the majority in his fight for justice. If one was correct, even though belonging to the minority, he still deserved admiration. Hu Shi was eager to introduce this concept to the Chinese, for he thought that the majority rule was not an effective political system in China. Like Lu Xun, Hu Shi held the view that a person's courage to stand alone was the most noble.

On the issue of the minority opinion versus the majority, Hu Shi believed there was a fundamental principle in Ibsenism that the minority was always correct, whereas the majority may not necessarily be so. Obviously, Hu Shi's purpose was to provide a cure for the social ills in China, though it was, according to him, a prescription of no prescription, or in Bernard Shaw's words, "a formula of no formula" (Shaw 1913: 172). Ibsen was regarded as a social doctor who would diagnose the illness, but not prescribe any remedy. Hu Shi did not mention the sources from which he formulated the principles of Ibsenism, but obviously he was inspired by Bernard Shaw's book *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*. Hu Shi's idea that the majority was always wrong was in line with Shaw's claim that there was a scientific principle in social philosophy: progressive ideas often germinate in a small group of people with insights.

An Early Chinese View on *A Doll's House*

The Chinese began to be interested in *A Doll's House* not because they saw the complex issues of gender, legal system and social moral in the play, but because they wanted to learn the techniques of modern

drama. *A Doll's House* came to the attention of the Chinese readers, not through translation of the play, but through a synopsis of it. In 1915, the *Short Story Magazine* [Xiaoshuo yuebao] published Hong Shen's (1894–1955) synopsis of *A Doll's House* under his pen-name Le Shui. The title given to the synopsis was *A Lovely Wife* [Jiao xi], which indicates that Hong Shen interpreted the play as a domestic melodrama. In the synopsis, Hong Shen praised Ibsen as a talented writer famous since youth, who incorporated in his works “novel ideas saying what other people dared not express” (Le Shui, 1915, various pagination). The synopsis ran for two pages and was composed in dense classical Chinese. The story of the play would have been retold in a faithful way had Hong Shen not presented the departure scene in a way much more dramatic than the original: “My [Nora's] heart is not made of stone, and I am not going to change my mind. From now on, I no longer care about the world. Then she leaves. No one knows where she goes” (Le Shui, 1915, various pagination). Instead of presenting Nora as an enlightened woman, Hong Shen interpreted Nora as a person who is completely disillusioned. In so doing, his emphasis is placed on Nora's disappointment with Helmer.

As for the theme of the play, Hong Shen thought that at least two messages could be discerned. First, women had their own way of thinking, which was different from that of men. People should understand the difficulties women had and help them, but should not demand of them the viewpoint of men and blame them for not having a vision. Second, the relationship between husband and wife was difficult to maintain. Both husband and wife should tolerate each other and compromise for their mutual interests. Husbands, however, seldom took into consideration this common interest, and whenever they were frustrated, they acted according to their natural leanings. Women were often shortsighted and shallow in knowledge. Once separated from the husband, they would be disillusioned and become pessimistic. They would behave in the most stupid way. Hong Shen advised that this was really what every single reader should be particularly careful about. It seems that Hong Shen wanted to make the play a lesson on the importance of harmony between husband and wife, which is a traditional Chinese concept.

Hong Shen was a dramatist and stage director educated in the USA and returned to China in the 1910s. He had openly declared his wish to be an “Ibsen in China.” He was the first Chinese who had written

on *A Doll's House*. His interest in the play was probably due to his desire to experiment with a new type of play for the Chinese stage. In the plays he produced for the Chinese stage later in his career, he showed that he was one of the most avant-garde directors who had a vision to adapt Western plays for the Chinese audience.

Nora as a Model of New Female Identity

Hu Shi was indebted to Bernard Shaw for his interpretation of Nora's departure. In a Shavian manner, Hu Shi argued that Nora in *A Doll's House* suddenly discovered that the family was a stage for monkey performances and that she was merely one of the performers. He thought that Nora had the courage to tear off her mask, say goodbye to the stage manager and jump down from the stage to live her own life. On the other hand, Mrs. Alving in *Ghosts* was a coward and thus she was persuaded by the pastor to return home and resume her role as a housewife (Hu 1918: 492).

On the difference between Nora and Mrs. Alving, Hu Shi made the point that "the husband is a personification of selfishness. Because he wants happiness, comfort and dignity, he marries a wife. This is true of Helmer in *A Doll's House*" (ib. 490). At the beginning of the essay, Hu Shi made an apology and admitted his ignorance of the subject: 'Ibsenism!' This is a difficult topic. I am not an Ibsen specialist; how can I be qualified to write such an essay? However, since we have to publish an 'Ibsen issue,' and to introduce Ibsen in a spectacular manner to the Chinese reader, it is necessary to have an essay on 'Ibsenism.' Anyway, I will offer the 'Ibsenism' I have in mind as an introduction to the special issue" (ib. 489). Despite its anti-Confucian remarks, Hu Shi's "Ibsenism" is a reflection of what the Chinese expected from Ibsen in 1918. The influence this essay exerted on the Chinese youth, particularly women, was greater than that of any other Chinese study of Ibsen. Although the Ibsen issue in *New Youth* was produced with much fanfare, the effects were shocking.

In the same issue of *New Youth* were Chinese translations of *A Doll's House*, *An Enemy of the People*, and *Little Eyolf* and a biography of Ibsen written by Yuan Zhenying, one of the major Chinese exponents of Ibsen, who based his material mainly on Edmund Gosse's study of Ibsen's life. This first Chinese biography of Ibsen

runs into fourteen pages and is divided into three parts. In the first two parts, Yuan Zhenying briefly described the life of Ibsen from his youth to his mature years. In the last part of the biography, where the main focus of the study lies, Yuan concentrated on an evaluation of Ibsen's major plays.

According to Yuan, "Ibsen reached the prime of his literary career in his last twenty to thirty years" (Yuan 1918: 610). Yuan singled out Ibsen's use of the vernacular in his prose drama as one of his major achievements and contributions to modern drama. This was in tune with the Chinese advocacy in the late 1910s of the use of the vernacular to replace the classical literary language. Concerning Ibsen's later plays, Yuan discussed the social problems raised in *A Doll's House*, *Ghosts*, and *An Enemy of the People*. Yuan described *A Doll's House* as a feminist manifesto, with the purpose of exposing hypocrisy in society as well as in the family. The implication of this play, Yuan thought, is that a woman's place in the family is comparable to that of a bird in a golden cage, in which all the evils of the family can be unraveled. A woman has her own duties, which lie not in her care of the husband and the children, but in her own education, independence, and freedom as a human being (ib. 612). In this way, Yuan's interpretation of the play, like Hu Shi's, remained in line with the nineteenth-century European view of Ibsen.

Yuan further considered *Ghosts* as a sequel to *A Doll's House* and he thought that the tragedy of Mrs. Alving lay precisely in her cowardice, whereas Nora's decision to leave home showed women a more promising future: "She is an angel of revolution and a bell ringing warnings to society (ib.). Comparing the two plays, Yuan reiterated his view that "*Ghosts* is a tragedy of heredity, whereas *A Doll's House* is one of marriage" (ib. 613). *An Enemy of the People*, Yuan further asserted, is a sequel to both *A Doll's House* and *Ghosts*. While Mrs. Alving succumbs to social expectation, Dr. Stockmann revolts against it. Concerning the theme of *An Enemy of the People*, Yuan held the same conviction as Hu Shi that "the minority are necessarily correct, and the majority not" (ib.).

Yuan's study of Ibsen's drama helped to provide the Chinese with the basic ideas of the Norwegian dramatist. It was in effect a supplement to Hu Shi's essay "Ibsenism." Taking into account that interpretations of literary works are often affected by the prevalent mode of thinking, one cannot deny that Hu and Yuan's works performed a

valuable service in introducing Ibsen to China. Hu and Yuan should be commended for their pioneering efforts. Historically, the significance of Hu Shi's essay lies more in its attacks on Chinese society than in its explication of Ibsen's ideas. In this sense, Ibsen became the mouthpiece of "Hu-Shi-ism." For a long time after the publication of this essay, Hu Shi's interpretation not only remained unquestioned, but it actually became a definitive Chinese statement on Ibsenism.

The impact of *New Youth's* Ibsenism issue can be seen in its pioneering attempt in raising the question of women's place in society. In the 1920s and 1930s many literary works, plays, short stories and novels, were devoted to debates on women's fate after they leave home. These literary writings denote the various experiments in the construction of a new model of the female self. As the most oppressed group in traditional society, women had very low status under the patriarchal authority of religion, family and state in traditional China. Reflecting the urgent need to extend freedom of education to Chinese women, many editors of influential journals in the 1920s devoted special issues to the discussion of injustice done to women. In addition, more than ten magazines were dedicated to creating a new consciousness among Chinese women. The most famous of these were *Women's Bell* [Nüxing zong], *Womens' Magazine* [Funü zazhi], *Women's Review* [Funü pinglun] and *Womens' Life* [Funü shenghuo], in which there were articles concerning the evils of foot-binding and inequality between sexes. These feminist journals were very important tools for Chinese women to learn what was happening to their counterparts in the West as there were many articles and translations on feminist literature, particularly the plays of Ibsen and Shaw. In the 1920s and 1930s, published in these journals were innumerable articles and translations dealing with Ibsen and the theme of women's emancipation in his plays. Li Zhiye's "The Woman Issue in Ibsen's plays" [Yibusheng xiju zhong de funu wenti] appeared in *The Ladies' Journal* in December 1924, and Jin Zhonghua's "Women's Emancipation in Modern Times as Reflected in Literature" [Jinshi funu jiefnag yundong zai wenxue shang de fanying], which was published in the same journal in July 1931. As a result of this feminist debate, Nora became a model of the new woman to the Chinese. The qualities of individualism embodied in her character represented to the new awakened Chinese youths a new morality based on the concept of the individual self.

Lu Xun's story *New Year's Sacrifice* [Zhu fu, 1924] is full of the cries of a woman who has no place in a male-dominated world and upon the death of her husband has to be transferred from one family to another like a commodity. It is a complaint, showing how Chinese women in the 1900s suffered from many misfortunes mainly because they lacked individual identity. They were regarded both by society and by themselves as dependents of the male, and as such they were like commodities.

Chinese Womanhood Unbound

As the spokesman of Ibsenism, Hu Shi experimented with a Chinese version of *A Doll's House*, which he called *The Greatest Event in Life* [Zhongshen dashi, 1919]. This play is typical of Hu Shi's interpretation that Ibsen was anti-family. Hu Shi called the play a comic farce, meaning that he wrote it just for fun. Hu was never considered a great dramatist. This play, which is valued not so much for its dramatic qualities as for its topical significance, was originally written in English for presentation in a gathering of the association of Chinese students returned from the USA. Since no "respectable" woman dared to act in the play, no attempt was made to stage it. The play was later translated into Chinese at the request of some students from a girls' school. Again no one dared to play the part of the female protagonist, who was considered to be too rebellious.

Hu Shi's play unfolds with a young woman, Tian Yamei, in conflict with her parents over the issue of freedom in marriage. Yamei's superstitious mother consults a fortune-teller to determine whether the match between Yamei and the man Yamei has chosen for herself will work out successfully. According to the Book of Fate, the fortune-teller says that the marriage will not work out because Yamei and her boyfriend belong to different zodiac animals, one a pig and the other a monkey. But Tian Yamei insists that she should marry the man she loves. She is a new youth educated in Japan and is one of China's liberated women. Facing the opposition of her mother, Tian Yamei can only invest her hope in her father, a man who is Westernized in appearance but conservative at heart, since he does not believe in fortune-telling.

When Mr. Tian returns from his work and learns that his wife has consulted a fortune-teller, he is extremely upset with her. Tian Yamei, as well as the reader, is led to think that her father is an enlightened gentleman who will support his daughter in her battle for freedom in marriage. An anti-climax takes place when Mr. Tian unexpectedly objects to the marriage. His excuse is that the Chen's and the Tian's belonged to the same family two thousand years ago. Mr. Tian even brings out the *Confucian Analects* as his source of authority. The real reason underlying his objection, however, is that he fears the scorn of the clan elders. Totally disappointed, Tian Yamei resorts to elopement with her boyfriend, leaving a brief note to her parents: "This is the greatest event in your daughter's life. She ought to make a decision for herself and has left in Mr. Chen's car. Goodbye for now" (Hu 1919: 8).

It is apparent that Hu Shi's *The Greatest Event in Life* is a Chinese adaptation of *A Doll's House*. In addition to the realistic setting of the box-set parlour and the technique of sudden turns borrowed from the well-made play, which is practiced in some of Eugene Scribe's and Ibsen's plays, the ending in which Tian Yamei leaves her parents is obviously modelled after *A Doll's House*. Tian Yamei has been regarded by Chinese critics as a "Chinese Nora" (Tian 1946: 35). Unfortunately, as Hu Shi noted in his epilogue, the play was never performed, for its story was considered "immoral." The play started a vogue in the 1920s with many other similar works showing indignation at arranged marriage and calling for women to leave home.

In the Chinese tradition, women are seldom considered as individuals other than the family roles to which they are assigned. Thus women are bound by the three rules of obedience, that they have to subordinate themselves to their father before they are married, to their husbands when they are married, and to their sons when their husband dies. Women only play a subordinate role in the family, outside which they do not have any identity. However, since *A Doll's House* was introduced to China in 1918 and especially since Hu Shi wrote *The Greatest Event in Life* in 1922 with a publicly acknowledged intention of promoting women's rights in freedom of marriage, a pressing question of female identity was raised. If women have the right to leave the family, they are no longer bound by the three rules of obedience, and they are free individuals. Much of the early Chinese feminist consciousness is indebted to Ibsen's portrayal of a Nora who

has the right to leave home and to pursue her own future. Chinese feminism did not begin with a movement fighting for equal rights and equal pay, but with a new definition of identity, in which individuality becomes a significant part of femininity.

Spatial Re-orientation in Chinese Womanhood

The act of leaving home does not seem to be a difficult decision in the twenty-first century. However, it was an extremely courageous act for Chinese women to do so in the early twentieth century. To leave home is not just to give up what one possesses, but also to open up a new space beyond the confinement of a domestic place. To open up the space for womanhood is to redefine female identity in terms of space, rather than place. This new identity is an identity unbound. The spatial liberation of Chinese women in the early twentieth century is as significant as the abolishment of foot-binding that it gives Chinese women unlimited space in their quest for individuality and freedom.

The spatial reorientation in modern Chinese womanhood brings in a new dimension to the definition of women, for it means a re-orientation in terms of newer social relations in the construction of women's identity. Once going out of the house, women seek re-definition by entering and establishing new webs of social relations. A new process of socialization will take place in women's search for identity. It is exactly this aspect of social construction of women's new identity that Ibsen's *A Doll's House* has opened up that caught the attention of many modern Chinese writers in the 1920s and 1930s.

In 1923, Lu Xun delivered a speech, "What Happens After Nora Leaves Home?", at the Peking Women's Teacher College, in which he warned that Chinese women leaving their home would have to face the problem of economic insecurity and all sorts of dangerous consequences. For this reason, he wrote a story "Regret for the Past" [Shang shi, 1925], in defense of his argument that women's liberation did not have to take place in the form of leaving home. The story unfolds with the couple's struggle for financial independence in their new life after they elope from their conservative families in pursuit of individual freedom in marriage and in life. The male protagonist says, "I would calm down and after we had gazed at each other in silence for a moment, the shabby room would gradually be filled with the

sound of my pronouncements on the tyranny of the family, the need to break from tradition, the equality between men and women, and our discussion of Ibsen, Tagore, Shelley. . . . She would nod her head and smile with her eyes full of childlike wonder” (Lu Xun 1925: 115–116). Ibsen is a constant source of inspiration, encouragement, and hope for the young couple. Zhijun is in a sense a Chinese portrayal of Nora and she shares with Nora the belief in individual freedom. The individuality of a new female can be found in Zijun’s own words: “I’m my own mistress. None of them has the right to interfere with my life” (ib. 116). Although Lu Xun portrays the couple’s struggle as futile and doomed to failure, he brings up the point of female individuality in his construction of a new woman.

Mao Dun (1896–1981) seemed to agree with Lu Xun that women would face many hardships after they left home, but he had an optimistic view that women might seek independence and find security by forming organizations with people who had similar ideals. Mao Dun believed that political revolution would change society and give the newly awakened Chinese women a space for survival. In *Rainbow* [Hong, 1929], Mao Dun portrays the psychological and spiritual growth of a young girl, Mei, under the influence of Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House*, and shows how she, after leaving home, comes to understand that personal freedom and liberation can only be achieved through participation in the revolution. Through the portrayal of such a revolutionary figure and the process of her “awakening” in her self-development, Mao Dun projects his idea of a collective self constructed on class, rather than gender, and under which all problems of the individual self are subsumed and suppressed. A passage in the novel reveals how Mei thinks about revolution in relation to the gender issues she faces:

Through participation in the stage performance, Mei achieved a deeper understanding of *A Doll’s House*. Previously she highly admired Nora, but now she found her commonplace. [...] On the contrary, Mrs. Linde was a true woman, for she *sacrificed* herself sexually twice to help other people and did not feel uneasy about it. She was a woman who could disregard her sex as female. This idea gradually became deeply rooted in Mei and affected her philosophy of life. She began to slight the idea that marriage was the “greatest event in

life" for women and she was prepared to sacrifice herself sexually for a greater cause, the general idea of which, however, was still vague to her. (Mao Dun 1929: 43)

From this passage it is clear that Mao Dun's construction of Mei as a new woman in defiance of her own sex and gendered self is ideologically a conscious and political act in suppressing the gender issues in favour of the national cause in the imagined relations between gender and revolution.

Lu Xun and Mao Dun can be considered as writers having taken two different approaches to the issue of spatial re-orientation in Chinese womanhood. While Lu Xun was more cautious about the possible adverse consequences of women leaving home, Mao Dun thought that a political revolution was possible and that women could be a part of it in creating a new social space for their survival and for their re-definition. Lu Xun was more pessimistic about the revolution as a new social space for women, but Mao Dun was optimistic. Mao Dun's novel *Rainbow* can thus be read as an answer to Lu Xun's question "What happens after Nora leaves home?"

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Latvian literature between Ibsen and Hamsun (till 1940)

MAIJA BURIMA

At the end of the 19th century Latvian literature undergoes a very intensive period of changes. The process of becoming aware of one's national independence takes place together with the wish to look upon Latvian literature within the context of the development of European literary processes. The 20th-century Latvian writers get involved in the active process of accumulation foreign literature in two ways:

1) by translating and publishing conceptually new literature. Conceptually new works in Latvian cultural space at that time are the works of Nietzsche, Maeterlinck, Rimbaud, Balmont, Bryusov, Wilde, Hamsun, Ibsen and of other writers who bring into literature the conceptual line characteristic of subjectivism, individualism, aestheticism and other significant modern culture types;

2) by creating their own texts corresponding to the new literary concepts. Quite often we can observe the influence of some West European, Scandinavian, Russian writer (or even several of them) in these texts.

Norwegian literature is well known in Latvia since the last decade of the 19th century. Its popularity begins with the translations of B. Bjørnson's¹ works which corresponded most of all to the Latvian literary paradigm existing at that time. The more Latvian literature approached European literary processes the greater interest about H. Ibsen's works became. Bjørnson's popularity continued only for two decades. In their turn Ibsen and Hamsun, who appear in Latvian cultural space a little bit later after Bjørnson, stay in the Latvian readers' consciousness for a long time.

¹ The first B. Bjørnson's published work in Latvia was the story *Arne* in 1879.

H. Ibsen and K. Hamsun as the most vivid representatives of 'Norwegian literary text' appear in Latvia within a short period one after another. The Latvian reader gets acquainted with H. Ibsen's name in 1889 when his play *The Pillars of Society* is performed in the German theatre and first reviews on it appear in the periodicals, although they do not praise the work too much. Hamsun's first appearance in the periodicals comes with a critical article about Norwegian modern writing. Acquaintance with both writers was furthered by the publications of the fragments of works in Latvian periodicals and the performances of Ibsen's dramas. On the background of all performances there are comparatively many stage versions of Ibsen's works. The first work of both writers is published in 1900: Ibsen's drama *The Doll's House* translated from German under the title *Nora* and Hamsun's novel *Victoria*.

The beginning of the 20th century till the 1940s is the time of the triumph of both writers in Latvia. It is not homogeneous neither in contents nor chronologically. At this period of time we can note certain moments of culmination and decrease in the writers' popularity. One of the reasons for this is that publications of both writers and Ibsen's performances coincide with general mood of Latvian society, with the inner development of Latvian culture and it helps to find the answer to those questions which concern Latvian society and are topical for Latvian writers. The peaks of popularity for both writers are connected with their life jubilees and remembrance dates, also after Ibsen's decease in 1906 with the dates of writer's death when Ibsen's personality and creative work was actualized.

In this context both writers are a significant object of studies when Latvian writers join the framework of modernism literary paradigm. Ibsen and Hamsun are studied from different aspects: both have modelling of the relationship between the individual and the crowd, psychology; and each of them has the subjective: Ibsen's language of symbols, search for the meaning of human existence (*Peer Gynt*), questions of duty, will-power, faith (*Brand*), confrontation of the creative and the destructive (*Builder Solness*, *When we, the dead are awakening*). In Hamsun's works the Latvian writers most often focus on the depiction of different oppositions (province — big city, nature — civilization, mind — feelings), and the representation of the stream-of-consciousness in the text.

Ibsen's Nora, Peer Gynt, Brand, Hamsun's lieutenant Glahn, heroes of *Hunger* and *Mysteries*, vagabond August become the stimulus of poetic mythology of many Latvian writers. In the works of a number creators of Latvian modernism, the so-called 'Latvian decadents', we can observe vividly expressed, easily „read” segments of Ibsen's and Hamsun's text, for example, A. Austrīņš (short story *Kaspars Glūns*), J. Akuraters (short stories *Peasant Pāns (Zemnieks Pāns)*, *Illusion Star (Maldu zvaigzne)* the main character of which is Victoria) a.o.; although the coincidence of proper names is only one evidence, we can meet more closeness to Norwegian writers also on other levels of the text; themes characters, text structures. Hamsun's text and Ibsen's text in Latvian literature — allusions, hints to Norwegian writers or the use of the attributes of their poetics are often found in the text of Latvian writers. It is not the wish to copy, but rather an attempt to get involved in a cultural dialogue and to create a new version about the Norwegian text so topical for Latvian writers. Such dialogues become especially significant at the moments when some national literature meets a new literary paradigm that already has precedents in another national literature. Also in literary criticism both writers are actualized with discussions about literary trends. In fact, Ibsen's name is mentioned in the context of all literary trends of that time as a 'typical representative of them' (symbolism, naturalism, realism, neoromanticism, impressionism). It testifies that Latvian literary thought (using literary scientific terms) is very uncertain at that time. In their turn Ibsen's dramas with their universalism are an inexhaustible source of impulses and self-evaluation for many Latvian writers.

Hamsun also is examined in different contexts, the most precise evaluation seems to be given by J. Asars in his article *About Knut Hamsun in Connection with Modern Writing in General (Par Knutu Hamsunu, sakarā ar moderno rakstniecību vispārīm)*. It appeared in the newspaper *Dienas Lapa* in 1900. Asars considers that Hamsun is the representative of modern art. In this article he tends to compare modern art with naturalistic art.

Modern art, in comparison with naturalistic art, does not explain everything in detail, with statistical profoundness, or express its purpose in dry arguments, does not put its ideas on the plate. On the contrary, it gives only so much in order to draw our attention, shows

direction in order to anticipate and to encourage ourselves to fill in the gaps in the way that the main impact on our soul should come from that what the artist left unexpressed. Modern art wants to awaken the artist in ourselves. (Akuraters 1908)

In this article Asars admits also the fact that Hamsun is a refined psychologist already in his first work *Hunger* (*Sult*, 1890). This is the second Hamsun's literary work which is published in a literary supplement of *Mājas Viesis* in 1903. As a book it is published in Valmiera in 1904. In comparison with early evaluations of Ibsen by literary critics Hamsun wins great acclaim at once because he enters Latvian cultural space later — at the moment when one part of Latvian readers is ready to perceive his works and adapt them to their understanding. But ten years before at the moment of Ibsen's appearance in Latvia the symbolic, directed towards individualism expression of the Norwegian writer practically remained without any response for some time. At the turn of the centuries delving into the works of Ibsen and Hamsun Latvian writers not only get the inspiration for their texts, but at the same time answer the question what are themselves and what way of literary creative work they should follow.

In the first half of the 20th century Latvian literary criticism loves Ibsen and Hamsun. Latvian writer Jānis Akuraters whose works have common features with both Norwegian writers and who translated into Latvian Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*, *Brand*, publishes the article *Ibsen, Hamsun and Grieg in Norway* when he returns from Norway in 1908. In this article the author tells about comparatively moderate popularity of Hamsun in his homeland:

Now we even cannot imagine the world of art without these Scandinavian vikings who shared their richness with all culture countries. [...] In our land artists, the best and real intellectuals speak about Hamsun's stories and novels. [...] In Norway they are less popular than in Europe. Norwegians were surprised when I told them how much people are interested about Hamsun in Russia and Latvia. (Akuraters 1908)

Trying to find out the reasons of moderate attitude by Norwegians J. Akuraters speaks about nationalism in Norwegian understanding as a criterion for writers' popularity. He considers that in Europe it is difficult to find as big nationalists as the Scandinavians, especially Norwegians, for whom nationalism has "merged together with the people's soul since time immemorial and has formed their culture, art, even politics and the state." (Ib.)

Akuraters indicates nationalism as one of the most important reasons that explain Bjernson's popularity over Ibsen and Hamsun in the time period when their works simultaneously appear in Latvia. Nevertheless, the wide range of problems offered in Ibsen's and Hamsun's works is one of the reasons why shortly after Bjernson's first reception, the interest in his works rapidly drops and during the second decade of the 20th century he becomes a marginal feature in the perception of Norwegian literature in Latvia.

The time when Akurater's article appears is the period of national and universal paradigm co-existence in Latvia. After the radical experiments of Modernism in the first decade of the 20th century, in Latvian literature the choice between nationalism and universalism takes places. Therefore, Akuraters in his article especially focuses on Norwegian nationalism and writes that Norwegian nationalism is rather intuitive, unconscious and rarely any of them would be able to answer what nationalism is. Akuraters compares the manifestations of Norwegian and Latvian nationalism and makes the conclusion that our nationalism sleeps in the museum, Norwegian nationalism is alive like it was hundreds of years ago, even today in their clothes, household tools, dances and religion. It is significant that some years later after this article was published Akuraters alienates himself from the search for Modernism and turns to the reconstruction of national and ethic values in his creative writing, at the same time maintaining close relationship with the best examples of European literature for new and high-quality poetic expression.

Similar views about Ibsen's creative work are expressed also in K. Skalbe's longest critical essay *Ibsen's Week in Christiania*. The Latvian writer K. Skalbe wrote the Latvian variant of Hamsun's novel *Hunger*. K. Skalbes essay was written in a similar situation, the writer was in exile in Christiania. Similar motives lie at the basis of the article — to understand Ibsen's role in Norwegian cultural consciousness and to compare it with Latvian views about the writer, as well as

to examine the artistic world of Ibsen's plays. The source of the inspiration for the essay is Ibsen's week at Christiania National Theater during which several Ibsen's plays are performed.

In his essay Skalbe does not tell the plot of the plays, but puts forward the aim to analyze what all of them have in common. Skalbe writes that Ibsen's characters are rooted in the writer's soul and behind them we feel the life of the epoch. Ibsen has accumulated in himself all that, he makes judgments, acquits and condemns.

World War I disrupted the great interest in Ibsen and Hamsun which existed in the beginning of the 20th century. After the war the attitude towards Ibsen becomes more moderate. As Kārlis Freibergs writes about this period of time after 10 years in 1928,

the interest about Ibsen has not revived yet. Now Ibsen as if has disappeared here for a time. But he will have his renaissance here again at least we have not fully exhausted his creative work. Of course, many things have passed in setting forth these problems. Ibsen does not surprise with his problems any more as he did some decades ago, but it is not the main thing. We should not consider Ibsen only as the writer who sets forth problems, but we should look upon him as a poet of man and the essence of man's life. He looks into the whirlpools of human life and opens them to us, so, perhaps, we should feel this depth of soul in ourselves and in our environment. (Freibergs 1928: 6)

Similarly Hamsun's literary fate develops in Latvia after World War I. Already in the twenties his works are published in Latvia shortly after their editions in Norway. Latvian reader is very interested in Hamsun. But, in comparison with Ibsen, literary criticism is less interested in him. A probable reason for that might be the difficulties caused by decoding seemingly simple riddles in the novels (evaluation of vagabonds and settlers, absurd little towns, games of proper names), but the layman reader is satisfied with the perception of the upper layer of captivating novels. In 1930 T. Lejas-Krūmiņš publishes the monograph devoted to Hamsun's personality and creative work. Up to now it is the biggest in volume edition in Latvian that is devoted to Hamsun. In 1935 the monograph devoted to Ibsen's personality is published. It is translated from German and it is Zuker's monograph. Both these editions are focused on the biographical evaluation of

creative work, they bring closer “the great Norwegians” to their Latvian readers.

In the thirties both writers are loved and respected in Latvia, although Ibsen's plays are staged in theatres less often than before World War I and there are also less critical articles about both writers. In 1935 significant changes take place in Latvian policy. In fact, these changes began already earlier and influenced the perception of foreign literature. The changes in public life are reflected in literature with the appearance of the so — called Latvian positivism. In culture it is manifested as focusing on oneself — one's own history, folklore, mythology. Several Latvian editions directly mention the formerly overflowing richness of foreign culture. In periodicals Oļģerts Kroders (Krolls 1931) several times asks a concrete question — why so few performances of original plays appear on the stages of the Latvian theatre.

In this situation the portion of foreign literature (even those authors who up to then were so close and loved) drastically diminishes. Nevertheless, in this period (1935 — 1940) Hamsun's Collected Works in fifteen volumes are published, because in Latvia he is now actualized as the author of *Growth of the Soil*, the work that was awarded the Nobel prize is a hymn to the land and its ploughmen, it praises harmonious coexistence of man and nature. In this interpretation (forgetting about initial modernistic search) Hamsun helps to reflect the official priorities in culture of Latvian society at that time. He is not only the writer read by the elite, but also loved by people. In the article *Knut Hamsun in Latvia* L. Stepinš writes, that

those who praised *Pan* could not get accustomed to *Growth of the Soil* because both works are divided by a wide gap: writer's development during twenty five years. Hamsun in *Growth of the Soil* does not admire youth any longer, does not sing a song of praise to a free wandering, now he emphasizes man's belonging to connection with land. Purely religious attachment to nature. (Stepinš 1984: 147)

In their turn Ibsen's nervous, self — tormenting doubting, insecure, ‘led by senses’ characters do not fit into the official culture conception. Perhaps, that is why, for the first time since Ibsen's jubilee decades are celebrated in Latvia, in 1938 Ibsen's jubilee passes silently without the usual pomposity. Also staging of the plays turns

more to social themes, for a time forgetting mysticism and dramas about the relative character of values.

In the year of Ibsen's centenary (1928) Kārlis Freibergs writes that in the 20th century another level of perception should be applied to Ibsen's works. Modern features of Ibsen's dramas disappear, but human fates depicted by him are deeply tragic. It shows their "poetic vitality". And Freibergs calls it the feature of immortality: "We have only to find a corresponding approach to these works." (Freibergs 1928: 6)

K. Freibergs also speaks about the influence of innovative technique of Ibsen's drama on the development of theatre:

His theatrical technique gives much exactly to the stage. With his works he helped to found the ensemble art that did not level, but distinguished personalities. A new way of speaking appeared because his word had a deeper inner force. Analysis came in with it, the moment of mind in acting. Ibsen had a higher purpose than only to depict reality, but in spite of the fact that his heroes were as if personified ideas, their life, nevertheless, was artistically true, only raised above the level of naturalism. (Ib. 7)

Thus Hamsun's and Ibsen's literary fates in Latvia cannot be perceived as oppositions, but as contributing to the development of Latvian literature where both writers at different times had to carry out the functions of the catalyst and the source of ideas, he example and the comparison.

To conclude, I will give the outline of Ibsen's and Hamsun's modern perspective. It is not an exaggeration to say that Ibsen's popularity in modern Latvian society is as strong as it was a hundred years ago. Then a number of reviews and critical articles devoted to Ibsen's dramas and their stage versions were published. Also nowadays in Latvia Ibsen's dramas are performed with great success (this season we can see *Hedda Gabler* and *Nora / Doll's House*). They cause heated discussions and encourage stage directors to search for a new expression of Ibsen's heroes' relationship. In its turn, on this background Hamsun's popularity is wave-like — the demand for his works is connected with concrete mood of society, for example, the culmination of his popularity in Latvia in recent years was in 1993–1994 and in 2002. In year 2002 was the year of Hamsun's jubilee. In

1993–1994 his popularity was determined by cultural political situation and public sentiments (for a long time it was forbidden to publish the writer in full).

In 1993–1994 the second reason for actualizing Hamsun in Latvia was the common element between his works and the public consciousness. The time was characterized by change — an unstable time of changes when it is difficult to draw a borderline between the illusion and the reality, when relativity of these two categories is strongly manifest. Hamsun's works published at the time (the August trilogy) as well as a number of other works actualize a small provincial town Polden (in other works Sirilund, Segelfoss) and oppose its regular, even life to turbulent events outside. The everyday existence of towns — phantoms, but at the same time stability and its opposition — openness of the world, which carries along with it the uprootedness, characterize well the fluctuation and self — search of Latvian society in the transition period.

In this interpretation the study of Ibsen's and Hamsun's works in different stages of development Latvian culture is an attempt to get closer to the contents of works of iconic figures in world literature, follow their examples, as one of the ways to know oneself better and perfect one's artistic expression.

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Russian Reception of the US 20th-Century Literary Process: The Ideological Battles of the 1920–30s

OLGA NESMELOVA

The main object of my research for the last ten years has been the investigation of the key points of the development of the US 20th-century prose reception by Russian scholars from the early Soviet period to post-Soviet times.

Two periods can be distinguished in this process. The first one is the foundation of the Soviet American Literary Studies in the 1920–30s. The main ideological and literary conflict originated in this early period. Young Soviet critics treated the idea of Americanism very contradictorily. On the one hand there was revolutionary nihilism towards everything American; on the other there was an often subconscious interest in and admiration for the young energy revealed in the US literary art. In this case the thing which is rather important is the perception of not only the artistic peculiarities of the US literary process, but the specific American culture in general, the American way of life and mentality by the young Soviet critics. The term ‘Americanism’ was used in the 1920–30s to define this notion.

The major aspects here are: the sociological method in Russian literary criticism; the phenomenon of ‘the proletarian literature’ and its followers; racial conflict in the US literature through the eyes of Soviet critics; polemics between Soviet Marxist scholars and their American colleagues.

The problems of the second period (after World War II) have become more related to art than ideology. This is the problem of art method and different trends in the US literature. We analyze how Russian scholars treated the correlation of realism — modernism —

postmodernism; the romantic tradition in the 20th-century literature; the naturalistic tendencies; the nonfiction tradition and its interaction with the epic and lyrical prose; the regional, ethnic, and racial peculiarities of the US 20th-century literature.

In spite of the fact that the second period is more interesting and serious in the perception and estimation of the literary process in the USA in the 20th century, the initial stage deserves our special attention, as the tendencies which had appeared there were continued later by literary critics and scholars.

The initial stage of American Studies in the field of literary studies and literary criticism in Russia, including the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries and the first revolutionary years, depends on the social stereotypes of perception of America and the American culture directly. At the given stage many pieces of American prose of the very beginning of new 20th century had not yet become the object of analysis. In fact, not the art potential of the actual American literature was estimated, but the specificity and characteristic features of the American nation, its national character, and spiritual life.

One of the first problems designated in Russian criticism at the turn of the century that was reflected in the Soviet criticism in the 1920–30s was the problem of the “autonomy” of American literature. It was usual to speak about the unity of English and American literatures and cultures, on the one hand, and about the artistic weakness and inferiority of American literature in comparison with the European one on the other hand. So, in *The General History of Literature* (1895) one and the same chapter presented the review of both English and American literature. Thirty-five pages were devoted to English literature and only ten to American. The section about American literature began with the aprioristic submission of it to the English one: “There is no use for North Americans to strive for full independence and isolation from England, especially in literature and art. Thanks to the unity of their origins, language, etc., North American literature will remain a kind of a branch of the English one for a long time.” A thoughtful analysis of the modern products followed and the final pages contained a very positive review of American literature contradicting the generally negative evaluation. Speaking about a new figure in American literature — F. Bret Harte, the author emphasized his achievements: “Someone says he brings a typical American unity of tragic element and humor into the world literature. Others tell about

the connection of fictional and historical truth. He has already formed his school and, maybe, has already given a start for American literature and its complete separation from English literature." (Всеобщая история литературы 1895: 965,974)¹

The main characteristic feature of the first works in the field of American Studies was its reference to sociology. And as a result there were discussions about the features of the American national character, about the interrelations and misunderstanding between the American and Russian national specific.

In 1895 P. Tverskoj's big detailed review *Modern Fiction in the American Periodicals* was published in *Vestnik Evropi* (*Bulletin of Europe*). The pro-American author made some curious statements concerning the specificity of American literature in general, and its differences from English literature, and the relations between 'publicism' and fiction in English-speaking literatures in his preface to the review. P. Tverskoj made interesting observations about the absence or, more likely, the overcoming of tendentiousness in the works of American writers: "American literary magazines do not have such a thing as the 'trend' in Russian. ... Neither journals nor writers have it. In Russia the writer can be a liberal, or a 'krepostnik' (landlord), or a conservative, an indifferent person, and etc. In America there is nothing similar to this, and consequently the challenge for a fiction writer is easier on the one hand, and more difficult on the other. It is impossible to pretend and to rely on the color of personal belief." (Тверской 1895: 533-534)²

The reaction to P. Tverskoj's article followed immediately. Before the last issues with translations of short stories were released, an anonymous author had published very malicious but rather sensible and truthful remarks in the *Literary Notes* column of the *Russkiy*

¹ Later in the analogous issue (*The History of Western Literature 1914*) the section *American Literature* written by Z. Vengerova, was expanded, and consisted of forty pages. But the analysis included only the 19th century literature and was ended with the name of H. Beecher Stowe. There is one more indirect proof of indifference toward American literature. The review, probably written by Z. Vengerova as well, was devoted to the book about English and American novel. But it touched only English novels, American works were ignored. (Венгерова 1895)

² The article in ##8-11 had attachments which included Russian translations of the eight short stories, P. Tverskoj presented in his review.

Vestnik (Russian Bulletin). They reached their target. These artistically weak short stories of US writers became a good reason to blame P. Tverskoy for his antipatriotic position: "The type of our indifferent cosmopolitan is too well-known and widespread. He doesn't care about where to live, and doesn't have any connection with his native place, religion and family traditions." And then about American literature as well: "Actually, only Bret Harte is known in our country, unfortunately in bad translations. And except his works nothing outstanding has appeared in the modern American fiction." (Русский вестник 1895: 311, 313)

Indirectly this discussion led to the problem of the definition of such notions as 'Americanism', 'the American way of life'. The researchers had to address literature again to find definitions. In an article dating back to 1914 with a telling title *The Two Ways to Accept the World* (it is necessary to mention, that the problem under analysis was American and European mentalities, but not ideological contradictions between Russia and the USA). S. Volsky gave an example of the work of three writers — W. Whitman, J. London and O. Henry to illustrate the American national character. It is necessary to mention that the critic foresaw the perception of these authors. And his observations in the field of national and social psychology are worth mentioning as well. He emphasized the characteristic features of American literature: realism³, common sense and worshipping the human will. Speaking about J. London, the critic wrote about the primitiveness of the feelings of his characters. He pointed out that even the technique of O. Henry's stories is quite different from the European, and the active position of the characters is shown even in the most lyrical and melodramatic situations. "You discover an absolutely new world where the human will, ideas and feelings are put into combinations, either unknown, or unacceptable in old Europe ... The world as a concept or problem means nothing. But the world as an act or gesture is everything. This is the perception of the world which is typical of the person on that side of the ocean, despite his views, profession and race." (Вольский 1914: 69, 71, 73–74, 77, 78) This article differed from others in its absence of aprioristic negative

³ In this case, we think, the term "realism" implied exactness of the documentary facts typical for the naturalistic method. It also presents national peculiarity of the literature of the USA, which became more vivid at the beginning of the 20th century during the period of muckrakers.

estimations, objectiveness, ascertaining of distinctions between national literatures and cultures deprived of anti-American and predominantly Russian moods.

In the first post-revolutionary years the given problem also occupied the critics' minds. It limited the borders of the ideological conflict. Comparing and finding out similarities and differences between Russian and American literatures aroused a special interest. The most excited questions were: What causes such a great interest in America in the Russians? What are the advantages of such a quickly developing country? What is 'Americanism' as a phenomenon and an ideological concept? It is interesting to compare two simultaneous responses to all these problems given by the opposite sides. They continued the pre-revolutionary discussions. In 1922 the almanac *Zapad (West)* published the work *American Impressions* written by V. Krimov, the former editor of the Petrograd magazine who lived in Berlin. In the editorial foreword he was characterized as a "clever and talented" journalist. The essay about America was included in a series of travelling notes of the author. A special section was devoted to the US literature. V. Krimov repeated the already widely known ideas about worshipping the dollar and its influence on literature, the yellow press, the popularity of cheap pocket novels, etc. But the conclusion was rather unexpected, not without irony, but at the same time with a big share of seriousness. "Read one hundred novels — you'll find the same thing everywhere: indispensable well-being, the happy end, the celebration of virtue and punished vice. This is a kind of national upbringing. Perhaps, it is really better. How far have we gone with our Dostoevschina and Chekhovschina (terms formed from the names of Dostoevski and Chekhov, meaning everything typical or similar to their works and views — O.N.)? They are gloomy, dull and grey. And here we always have a happy end and high and healthy spirit." (КРЫМОВ 1922: 31) The extremely left vision of the problem was given in the pages of magazine *LeF*. The ideological approach to the problems of culture was given almost without references to any examples from art. M. Levidov attacked the stereotypes in the perception of the problem of 'Americanism' with all the force of revolutionary passion. The style and language of the journalistic note was rather curious: "... And they admire this Americanism. Intellectual whiners admire it. Powerful force is impressive to them as well as the muscularity of the soul (in fact, created by imagination only). And

intellectual mystics curse it. The living spirit is killed. The soul is crucified on the crosswise advertising board for footwear. Love occurs in the lift. Flowers of life are crushed by a mechanical boot. American danger is coming like some mental contagious disease. Here is destruction. The earth is degenerating.” It is necessary to note that, despite such high-flown vocabulary, teasing style and affectation, the contradiction in the perception of ‘Americanism’ was rather precisely caught by the Soviet public thought. Nevertheless some literary facts appeared at the end of the article. These were some references to M. Cawly’s story and S. Lewis’s novel *Babbitt*. But the conclusion turned out to be much weaker than the article as a whole. It was also coloured by the revolutionary ideology: “But where is the person made of muscles, will and reason? He is being treated — not only for indigestion, but also for neurasthenia. Muscles? No, just old rags. Will? No, this is only rachitic aspiration. Reason? No, a blind and cowardly instinct. It is not only a tragic farce of Americanism. This is a tragic farce of all the capitalist culture.” (Левидов 1923: 45, 46)

These ideas created a platform for forming the so-called Soviet American Studies in literature in the first decade after the Revolution. Despite the constantly declared break not only with the old literature and art, but also with the literary and art critics, Soviet American Studies apprehended and developed the ideas that had been formed by science and criticism at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. Firstly, there is a kind of duality towards the USA in general, including its culture: admiration and enthusiasm on the one hand, indignation and irritation on the other. Secondly, an emphasis on the interaction between literary and social problems when studying the USA. This led to the predomination of the sociological method in Soviet American Studies in the 1920s and 30s. N. Travushkin has emphasized this prominent feature of pre-revolutionary literary criticism: “The estimations of works of foreign fiction could be more sociological. The work of the foreign author was not fully comprehended. Usually at least a part of the content (even without taking into consideration any national peculiarities of form, which are often lost in translation) was ignored by both the propagandist, and the reader. Necessary parallels with Russian life, Russian conditions and challenges in the social struggle were found out first of all.” (Травушкин 1977: 12) Thus the vulgar sociological method of literary criticism had its roots in the pre-revolutionary period and was not something innovative in Soviet

literary criticism. The third aspect of the problem became obvious during the first post-revolutionary years: a special attitude of the new Soviet Russia to that powerful energy which America as a state embodied. And, certainly, it fully related to literature and culture of the USA.

It seems that the perception of Americanism and American culture is obviously a point of argument. But the idea of the similarity of many national characteristics of Russian and American cultures makes its way sometimes against the desire of the critics themselves. And this tendency originates in pre-revolutionary literary criticism. And, certainly, the main point that attracts Russian and Soviet researchers, even if they do not want to admit it, is the energy, youth and self-assurance of Americans on the one hand, and their experiment with art forms on the other. That means that the experience of the first Soviet years was rather close to revolutionary creation and the art of avant-gardism. It is obvious from the choice of priority objects for the analysis: Soviet critics followed Soviet readers in their love for J. London and O. Henry whose works were full of adventures and charm and pathos connected with the development of a new land and the creation of new life on the one hand; and interest in art experiment, which was almost the same as political and social experiment, on the other. During the first period of Soviet American Studies only one monographic study appeared. And it was devoted not to some mature master of realism, but the experimenter and innovator John Dos Passos. It was *Dos Passos* (1934) — the book written by A. I. Startsev, one of the first Soviet specialists in American literature, who, by the way, died this summer.

One more conflict arose in the 1930s between American New Humanism and its ideological and artistic reception by Russian scholars. Of course now it is already the fact of history, but nevertheless the analysis of the ideological polemics of the 1930s becomes useful during the process of realizing the ways of evolution of cultural interactions between America and Russia.

New Humanism was seen by S. Dinamov, A. Elistratova and A. Startsev as the penetration of fascist ideology into the sphere of culture and art. Probably, in some sense, it was the fear of self-recognition, and even some sort of hysteria in this.

In 1930 in New York the book edited by Norman Foerster *Humanism and America. Essays on the Outlook of Modern Civiliza-*

tion was published. The reaction of the Soviet critics to it was instant and so furiously negative that it continues to surprise even today's reader of these articles who has already got used to the tone and peculiarities of the Soviet criticism of the 1930s. The polemic about American humanism is rather important and indicative and characterizes one of the stages of American Studies in Russia. It bears testimony to the ideological bent of literary criticism in that period, the political reasons for purely literary estimations and the peculiarities of perception of literature and art. They do not suit the official framework of proletarian ideology and at the same time have dangerous similarities and analogies.

The foreword of the editors of the book is very important. It can be regarded as a kind of manifest of New Humanism, which gives an outline of the program of this school in American criticism, the history of its formation and interaction of modern humanism with the humanistic thought of the past, and the argument with its opponents in the USA. In the essays that followed, the theory of Humanism became clearer and more concrete in its various aspects. New Humanist theory was against Naturalism with its tendency to see only the animal instincts in the human being. The discussion was held on the philosophical and aesthetic levels. Naturalism did not suit humanists because of its simplified ideas about human nature and mission. The responsibility for his actions was removed from a person and assigned to the society, environment, some biological factors, etc. This point of view was based on the philosophy of Determinism. Humanists did not accept cruelty, violence and the basic instincts of savages in literature. They put hope, self-identification and dignity of a person and the idea of order and discipline in opposition to these. That is why it was necessary to lift Humanism onto a new level. Its principles of measure and discipline could resist the chaos of animal instincts into which mankind had almost sunk due to Naturalism and the philosophy of H. Spencer. The necessity to revitalize the humanist ideas was proved to be built "by contradiction". First the enemies of Humanism were defined, and accusations were levelled at them, and then the opposite statements were declared in reply. "Romantics, realists and skeptics are daily attacking us on four fronts: humanists, it is held, are academic, un-American, reactionary and puritan. ... Now, humanism, does wish to emphasize discipline, whenever, as to-day, it needs to be emphasized. ... Humanism conceives that the power of restraint is

peculiarly human, and that those who throw down the reins are simply abandoning their humanity to the course of animal life or the complacency of vegetables." (*Humanism and America 1930*: xi, xiii-xiv) The reaction of Soviet scholars to the book published in the USA was immediate. The best experts replied to this event in American culture. The list of names spoke for itself: S. Dinamov, A. Elistratova, A. Startsev and I. Anisimov⁴.

The animosity of New Humanism to Soviet Marxist criticism was declared by the researchers with sociological positions: New Humanism was identified with fascist ideology, but there were no proper explanations for this. The readers had to accept this point of view as objective reality. The declarative tone of this statement was repeated in the critical works which had no direct connection with the researches in the field of New Humanism. For example, S. Dinamov in his article about Th. Dreiser paid a lot of attention to the polemics with New Humanism: "Humanism is a drapery of Fascism in America. Humanists are the leaders in the fight with Darwinism, they appeal to its followers to return to idealism and revive the so-called 'popovchina'." (Динамов 1932: 136) In this case in the author's free interpretation the terms 'fascism' and 'fascist' are probably synonymous with 'reaction' and 'conservativeness'.

Only A. Elistratova made an attempt to prove that fascism had become the origin of New Humanism. She gave two reasons. The first was one of the most important theoretical statements of New Humanism about discipline as a strict moral standard which was to cope with animal instincts and vices and to remind the person of his divine nature. The correlation between ideas of order and discipline, especially in the aesthetic sphere, and fascism and nothing else is rather disputable. (It is necessary to notice that S. Dinamov was the

⁴ The first who attacked American New Humanism was A. Elistratova in her special article, devoted to this school (Елистратова 1931: 213-217), and in the section of a big survey *Modern American literature* (Елистратова 1933). Almost at the same time S. Dinamov presented his impassioned article *American Fascism and Literature* (Динамов 1931: 79-87). In a year he continued this topic in his brochure *Goethe and modern Capitalism* (Динамов 1932). We should also point out two significant works by A. Startsev — the article (Старцев 1932: 39-62) and the section in the collection of articles (Старцев 1933: 38-63), where the discussion about New Humanism reached its climax, and at the same time some conclusions were drawn.

only critic who ever mentioned the term 'classicism', trying to return the discussion to the field of literary criticism). The second reason — and it was more convincing — was I. Babbit's statement in his book *Leaders and Democracy* (1924), quoted by all the three critics in their articles: "The choice to which the modern man will finally be reduced is that of being a Bolshevik or a Jesuit. In that case, there does not seem to be much room of hesitations. Catholicism does not, like Bolshevism, strike at the very root of civilization. ... Circumstances may arise that we get the American equivalent of a Mussolini; he may be needed to save us from the American equivalent of a Lenin." (Babbit 1924: 186, 312)

The conclusion that the Soviet critics drew after all these discussions was absolutely natural. True humanism in American literature was out of the question, because the defenders of its principles themselves proclaimed the necessity of the "strong hand" to govern the country, which meant an authoritarian and, to some degree, a dictatorial state. So, the reasons why Soviet critics identified New Humanism with fascist ideology have become clearer.

In our opinion the argument of Soviet literary criticism with New Humanists in its political aspect bears the sign of the tragedy of the times. Most likely, some frightening analogies between fascism and Soviet totalitarianism, which were perceived by American critics, disturbed the Soviet researchers at some subconscious level. This anxiety was reflected in their attempts to destroy New Humanism in their critical works, where they used familiar and already approved tactics of "giving labels". Researchers hurried to blame New Humanism, as though to expel the dangerous comparisons from their own and readers' minds.

In the field of literature all the scholars distinguished the main principles of New Humanism easily and without any distortions. They enumerated them one by one:

- a. the crisis of the bourgeois spirit became the reason for the appearance of New Humanism;
- b. New Humanists substituted unreal values for the real ones (the mirroring of the social situation was regarded as being of real value, and the depiction of the complicated inner life of the person was considered to be unreal);
- c. New Humanists denied the principle of determinism and gave the main role in the person's life to divine providence;

- d. realism was declared to be the main literal opponent of New Humanism (it is necessary to mention that the terms 'realism' and 'naturalism' are often synonymous in American Literary studies). That is why the open argument with radical writers — "the people of the 1920s" — started;
- e. the accent was moved from the creative method to the artist's intuition (at this point Soviet specialists in American Studies noticed some analogies with the activity of the Soviet Literary group *Pereval*);
- f. the theory of New Humanism was fully worked out and formulated in many statements. But the attempts to bring theoretical statements into artistic practice turned out to be unsuccessful.

Concerning the last point, Soviet critics noticed the most vulnerable feature of New Humanism — its aesthetic principles were not realized in the art itself. American researchers who were against this school also paid attention to this fact. But, in fact, they succeeded in finding one writer who practiced New Humanism. It was Th. Wilder, and all the rage of Soviet criticism was turned against him.

Soviet readers were not acquainted with the works of Wilder at all and the critics' opinion was the only thing to rely on. This opinion was not original and had a secondary character. It was based on the views of M. Gold which he had elaborated in his discussion with New Humanists about the works of Wilder.⁵

M. Gold was rather rude toward his compatriot and Soviet critics quoted his rudeness with pleasure: "All this system of New Humanism blows with death and doom. The works of its main writer Thornton Wilder, according to the neat remark of the American communist writer M. Gold, remind one of "the painted, combed and well-dressed dead body lying among sacred lamps and the lilies of the past. It will rot, if they put it in the sun". The rough strength of the facts is

⁵ The polemics between Soviet critics and New Humanism started thanks to M. Gold. According to the recollections of A. I. Starstev, the term "New Humanism" and the phenomenon itself appeared in the Soviet American studies as the object for analysis after M. Gold's visit to the USSR. He, probably, brought the polemics with New Humanism from the USA. M. Gold was one of the progressive "left" writers and was accepted by Soviet literature. That is why his literal "enemies" became our "enemies".

substituted by the false conflicts of the universal subconscious sphere.” (Елистратова 1931: 216)

In conclusion we would like to mention the works of A. Startsev. In general he shared the opinion of other critics but at the same time he brought some new aspects into the estimation of New Humanism in the USA. Firstly, his statements were milder, though he criticized New Humanism as a conception hostile to a Soviet person. Then A. Startsev introduced the polemics of Humanists with their American opponents and showed the success of Humanists and the weakness of the liberal critics' position in the arguments.⁶ New Humanists were reproached for the isolation from real life. They replied that they were greatly interested in the realization of their theories. In answer to the accusation of non-Americanism they told about their intention to arm the USA with a proper theory of civilization and culture. They were accused of Puritanism. But the reasonable reply was that one of the main virtues of Puritanism was the belief in something certain and definite, and their rivals did not possess even Puritan evils (Старцев 1933: 41).

To estimate the literary evaluation of the phenomenon of those times, it is necessary to make the way literally through clichés about fascism and the sociological characteristics of American literature. Certainly, we should mention the erudition, intelligence and efficiency of Soviet American Studies of the 1920–30s, which were evident in their arguments with New Humanists. Today, after some time has passed, the above-mentioned ideological position, and both the political views of critics and their aesthetic credos deserve attention and analysis. The researchers of that period were obviously greatly dependent on the line, chosen once and forever. But they allow us to understand the interpretation of such eternal things as humanism at different stages of human civilization.

⁶ A. I. Startsev made the most significant inclusion of critical works in his analysis. He freely operated with other works of New Humanists and the materials of journals' discussions. The argument started in 1930 after the publishing of the collection *Humanism and America* between *Bookman*, which represented New Humanists and *Nation*, *New Republic*, *Saturday Review of Literature* of the liberal critics.

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Imperialism: Heart over Minds?

DOROTHY FIGUEIRA, THOMAS J. FIGUEIRA

In considering "imperialism", we must start by adopting the widest possible historical perspective and excluding claims based on ideology rather than on the observation of cultural and social phenomena. Imperialism must always be framed within the wider context of exploitation that we may define as the coercive transfer of some good. Coercion affects interpersonal or inter-communal relations that involve material and other goods by altering their outcome in ways contrary to the will of the exploited person or group. Imperialism is the name that is given to exploitation which occurs when polities are the parties interacting. Hence, imperialism differs from intra-communal exploitation, that is, oppression or repression. We should treat colonialism as imperialism that has been given the permanent structures of bureaucratic subordination. Yet, when we do so, we are forced to abandon a whole rhetoric-based colonialism and post-colonialism which fancies another conflation, one where colonialism stands in covert metonymy for modernity itself.

Our emphasis on non-material goods is calculated, if not perhaps quantifiable. Measurements of the flows of material goods within admittedly colonial systems have sometimes led to surprising results. Fiscal data indicate that few modern colonials returned to the treasuries of their colonizers and masters more than the outlays lavished on their maintenance. Such determinations can miss, however, the psychological benefits garnered from exercising power over others against their will. Furthermore, the whole gamut of advantages which accrue to restricted cadres of beneficiaries, like administrators or entrepreneurs with preferred access to resources and labor, has to be taken into account. To offer an example of such political processes, we note that Keith Hopkins presented a striking hypothesis regarding

Roman expansion. He observed that a solidarity existed at Rome between the office-holding aristocracy, on the one hand, and, on the other, both the farmers who staffed the ranks of the army and the urban proletarians. He explained this solidarity by the dying out of techniques of elite economic exploitation of poorer fellow citizens. Inter-class amity and broadening of civic rights were owed to the compensation of the elite by exploitation of the conquered in the areas brought under Roman control. The existence of local elites who were co-opted into the machinery of empire warns us against stock sympathetic or hostile responses.¹

Our formulation of exploitation and imperialism may sound simplistic, but it does help to avoid certain pitfalls. Exploitation, imperialism, or colonialism are not conditions established by mere disparity in power and wealth, unless one can demonstrate that a "zero-sum game" is being played, one in which a static stock of assets is being distributed unfairly. Nor is it imperialism when ideas or customs disseminate from those perceived as more successful or powerful, or when native social practices fall into desuetude. We may well mourn these developments. But going further to nullify the cumulative impact of many purposive individual decisions by those borrowing and discarding behaviors robs our subjects of their human dignity as historical actors. Attributing cultural changes to vast, sinister, impersonal forces then risks turning into neo-racism. We may not recommend drinking Coca Cola or patronizing McDonalds, but equating the proliferation of such borrowed practices to imperialism is objectionable. Our examples are — to tell the truth — chosen for exaggeration and their humorous potential, but we could offer instances with more lofty cachet, such as the importation of sixth-century Athenian pottery among the Etruscans or the adoption of Greek coinage by fourth-century Egyptians.

Determining the presence of exploitation or imperialism requires discretion. From a historical or contemporary cross-cultural perspective, it is particularly difficult to evaluate in their psychological richness all the conditions, ramifications, advantages and disadvantages affecting any interaction or set of interactions. Thus, there is always a real risk of reductionism, which highlights a hint of unfairness taken

¹ Ironically, the success of this process of ostensible imperialism may be measured in the canons of Romance languages that are available for our study and which were the product of Romanization.

in isolation while failing to appreciate the existential richness of social interaction.² Our touchstone in determining the historicity of exploitation and imperialism must therefore be the authentic perceptions of the human actors themselves. We must be especially careful that we do not merely analyze the echoes of our own ideological preoccupations that may bounce back to us in intellectual transactions that in themselves can arguably be exploitative and colonial.

A further corollary is that imperialism is not the same condition as hegemony. We may consider the whole range of political contexts, that is, local, ethno-cultural, regional, continental, or even global, and, inevitably find a range of participant polities that differ in their geographical, demographic, or economic size. Such ranges are generated by the interplay of technological and productive factors with conceptual systems. Even in political environments in which "peer-polity" systems prevail, the equality of such peers must be loosely construed. We shall take two examples from the field of ancient history.

In archaic and early classical Greece in the period between 750 BC and 450 BC, a large number of peer polities existed that possessed a considerable degree of self-government. Yet, the size range among these hundreds of states was appreciable, with the largest perhaps fifty times the smallest, if we adopt scales such as size of territory, population, and economic output. Similarly, central Italy between 650 and 400 BC was divided into thirty to thirty-five city-states of the Latin and Etruscan peoples, with one state, Rome, disproportionately larger than the others. Nevertheless, in both settings, larger states exercised leadership over numbers of smaller communities. In Greek, such a leadership among city-states was *hegēmonia*, whence our term hegemony, and the leader was called a *hegēmōn*. Such hegemonies arose to redress perceived threats from other powers, whether larger peer polities, other combinations, or radically alien forces like the Persian universal monarchy or tribal states like the Thracians or Gauls. Moreover, such combinations are not limited to matters of

² For instance, in research on classical antiquity, the monumental study of Geoffrey de Ste Croix, *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World*, is certainly a rich compendium of indications of negative interplay among groups in society. Yet, it stumbles repeatedly in its simplification both of the full material terms of such interchanges and of their psychological texture.

aggression and survival, for they could involve joining forces for religious reasons and for other cultural rationales.³

Nonetheless, it would be fallacious to juxtapose a permissive climate of cooperation between communities with a realm of imperialistic compulsion, as though imperialism and hegemony were exclusive phenomena. Even among the peer polity examples we have just noted, size does indeed matter. Wealthy and populous states do truly have larger stakes in joint activities, a situation that is reflected in decision-making, sharing the profits, and bearing the losses. Like massive stars, they bend the fabric of space and time around them: that space being the arena of power relations and that time being inscribed by contemporary historical perspectives. Consequently, hegemonism and imperialism are not discrete categories, but typify modalities of power on a spectrum from an imaginary pure altruism among peoples to an imaginary (and infeasible) pure exploitation.⁴ Given these examples of the functioning of power in historical contexts, how are we to understand the way in which the trope of imperialism appears in recent critical thought? The case can be made that those schools of criticism that focus on identity and, especially, on the victimization of the oppressed play with notions of hegemony in a manner, to borrow the formulation of Joseph Gabel, that exhibits false consciousness.

In a seminal work in the field of social psychology, Gabel defined false consciousness as a dissociation produced by a reification of the past. False consciousness is primarily a distortion of the perception and experience of time (Gabel 1975: xiv). Existential psychoanalysis views constructions of reality by ideologues, schizophrenics, and utopian idealists as similar: they all seek to dissociate the natural flow of time, producing a perception that is out of touch with reality and at odds with historical fact. They are all seen to seek reification of their historical existence and understanding of their visions as an organized system of meaning produced to balance and disguise the disorder of

³ Disregarding the ritual roots of ancient athletic festivals, "the other," or should we say "the others" had to be enlisted for meaningful competition.

⁴ Even attempting to place specific historical situations on this scale not only implies that we can establish what contemporaries actually thought, but also depends on our ability to submit these claims to sufficient analysis to test their veracity.

their being-in-the-world (ib. 22). In postcolonial criticism, an analogous process is at work.

In postcolonial critical discourse, imbricated as it is in reveries of power relations, a postcolonial elite based in the West speaks for, constructs, and deconstructs the presumed voiceless oppressed and disenfranchised. It is a widely held opinion in some critical circles that postcolonial criticism's discourse on hegemony, imperialism, and colonialism masks the blatant power play of a privileged postcolonial elite based in metropolitan centers who seek legitimacy by playing the role of the marginal.

Homi Bhabha's invocation of both *Beloved* and the plight of border-crossing Mexican immigrants in the introduction to *The Location of Culture*, for example, functions in precisely this way, by invoking the struggles of African-American slaves and Latino communities only as a point of departure for his own discursive analysis of hybridity and the transposibility of cultural positions (Bhabha 1994: 6–18). Bhabha's by-now notorious refrain, "Who is *Beloved*?" (ib.18) emerges in this context as disingenuous and even cynical, given that the novel's very obvious positioning of *Beloved* herself — arguably among the most poignant characters in all of American literature — is reduced in Bhabha's analysis to a rhetorical figure in a broader analysis that ultimately confirms the critic's place as an arbiter of culture and spokesman for the other.

Gayatri Spivak's translations of Mahasweta Devi's fiction and her writing on the practice of *sati* in India, while more subtle and self-reflexive in their maneuverings, function in much the same way. Spivak is less interested in the stories themselves, which focus on the plight of the *devadasis*, than on how they serve as examples of her own theory of subalternity, as best explained in her well-known essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988). Spivak downplays the horrors perpetrated upon the protagonist of Devi's "Breast-Giver," for example, in favor of the broader argument about the incommensurability of subalternity and representation (Spivak 1988b: 222–40, 241–68). Likewise, Spivak's discussions of the case of the widowed Rani of Sirmur and the politically motivated suicide of a young militant Indian woman finally shift away from the individuals' respective predicaments and toward the critic's presentation of them (Spivak 1999: 307). Spivak goes on to further contextualize the women's struggles within an abstracted theoretical framework,

concluding ambivalently that “[t]he subaltern as female, cannot be heard or read.”⁵ In each of these examples, the native voice of the subaltern is sublated and folded into the critic’s larger theoretical imperatives, first among which is the positioning of the critic in an imaginary solidarity with the hegemonized Other who therefore cannot perforce speak. The native voice becomes mere fodder for the critic’s performance of a virtuous or eleemosynary marginality. Absent, of course, from this discussion is the fact that any archival investigation of native and colonial records shows ample evidence of subaltern women “speaking” for themselves.⁶

The problem with such postcolonial formulations becomes clear, as Epifanio San Juan suggests, “when contraposed to the resistance of colonized subalterns themselves” (San Juan 1998: 8). The truly marginalized are not there by choice; they do not, as does the post-colonial critic, position themselves on the perceived margin the better to produce elaborate academic critiques of Western imperialism. The result is a theory “divorced from its concrete social determinations” (San Juan 1998: 9). If for Spivak and Bhabha the margin is a desirable place from which to exploit the “unevenness” of colonial discourses, for Arif Dirlik such a posture of self-marginalization emphasizes cultural difference and linguistic indeterminacy (the critic’s strengths) at the expense of a more substantial critique of Western hegemony.⁷ Dirlik’s critique, echoing San Juan’s, effectively gives the lie to postcolonial formulations of Foucault’s theory of marginality by exposing the irreducible difference between the critic and the subaltern group. The critic may conspicuously position herself at the margin, but she retains a mobility (social and literal) of which the truly disenfranchised can only dream. As Michael Gorra points out in a different context, the fluidity and hybridity that postcolonialism so

⁵ Bhubaneswari attempted to ‘speak’ by turning her body into “a text or woman/writing” and that “her attempt had failed” because later generations of women in her own family failed to “hear” her correctly (Spivak 1985:308).

⁶ See Waters 1997.

⁷ Dirlik 1994: 343: “However much postcolonial intellectuals may insist on hybridity and the transposability of locations, not all positions are equal in power, as Spivak’s interrogators in India seem to recognize in their reference to the ‘wings of progress’ that brought her to India. To insist on hybridity against one’s own language, it seems to me, is to disguise not only ideological location but also the differences of power that go with different locations.”

prizes “remains best suited for those most able to live with a sense of uncertainty and improvisation — for the gifted and well-off, those for whom shuttling between London and Bombay is the literal and not the figurative truth” (Gorra 1997: 172).⁸ Postcolonial criticism’s distorted vision of the past, circumscribed by the critic’s strategies of self-representation, openly embraces its dissociation from historicity. By reifying the history of imperialism, making it the sole source of all socio-cultural evils, postcolonial critics foreclose the possibility of interrogating and transcending the endemic social and cultural dysfunction that predated imperialism or colonialism and lives on after the masters have left. In this respect, postcolonial critics do not merely exhibit a false consciousness. Through a process that I have labeled brahminization, literary critics reify their own position within both their professional and ethnic communities.⁹ “Brahmanization” is a term first introduced by the anthropologist M. N. Srinivas in the 1950s¹⁰ to describe the process whereby a group attempts to acquire the traditional symbols of high status (customs, rituals, and lifestyle) of the local highest elite (Srinivas 1966: 28).¹¹ Postcolonial critics, who appropriate the voice of the colonized subject and become professional spokespersons of their oppression, “brahminize” themselves by claiming the power to disseminate images of the national culture and its internal others, documenting, and managing the Other

⁸ In the quoted passage, Gorra’s immediate subject is Rushdie’s fiction and characters.

⁹ My use of the term “brahminization” actually refers to the entire appropriation of the Other, dating back to structuralism and extending beyond post-colonial criticism. In other words, there is nothing specifically “Indian” about this process. I see it as a hermeneutical ploy of all post-structuralist criticism.

¹⁰ In *Religion and Society Among the Coorgs of South India*, Srinivas defined Sanskritization as follows: “A low caste was able in a generation or two to rise to a higher position in the hierarchy by adopting vegetarianism and teetotalism, by Sanskritizing its ritual and pantheon, took over as far as possible the customs, rites and beliefs of the Brahmins” (1952: 30).

¹¹ In early formulations of his theory, Srinivas used the term “Sanskritization.” Although Srinivas admitted that the term “brahminization” more accurately described the process of emulating the highest group (Srinivas 1956), the term “Sanskritization” is more commonly used by anthropologists. As my argument deals directly with issues of textuality, I have chosen to adopt the term “brahminization,” to reflect the critics’ position as custodian of texts. (*D. F.*)

through an objectifying discourse. This process essentially denotes the hermeneutical task of the brahmin with regard to scripture.

What born-again comparatist Spivak calls for in *The Death of a Discipline* — a “reconstellation” of the discipline that retains its traditional strengths while embracing a suspiciously postcolonial-sounding “planetarity” (Spivak 2003: 91) — again promises to do everything, in the manner of a demonstrably overinflated postcoloniality, but offers only an anecdotal, willfully eclectic exposition of what such an analysis might look like. Spivak’s strategy, in particular, exemplifies the dishonesty pervading much postcolonial theory. It espouses an open-endedness in order to occlude a concerted lack of cultural knowledge, specificity, and ultimately, respect for the cultures supposedly being studied. Such lofty disinterest allows Spivak in a final, unfortunate parenthesis at the end of *Death of a Discipline* to blithely throw together figures as disparate as José Martí and W. E. B. DuBois for no better reason than that they represent “two widely known, heroic figures from the older minorities, writers of a previous dispensation” (ib. 92). She can invoke these two great modernists not to discuss carefully their works, but to employ them in her own critical project of “the turning of identitarian monuments into documents for reconstellation” (ib. 91). It is a profoundly disappointing, yet not surprising conclusion for the book. It points in a discouraging way to how one of our discipline’s most renowned professors practices her craft. Martí and DuBois do not need to be “reconstellated,” but Spivak’s version of Comparative Literature does.

Postcolonial criticism has, in fact, died. It died before we could even articulate adequately what it was. It is time for critics to retool themselves. What better persona to adopt, in the age of multiculturalism and globalism, than that of a comparatist? Postcolonial critics, whose formation almost exclusively had been in English literature, made their careers championing a brand of criticism that claimed to engage a voiceless, underrepresented world. They did so while ignoring the methodology and linguistic expertise traditional to the discipline of Comparative Literature. They now position themselves as prophets calling for a return to the very skills that their own scholarship has consistently eschewed. They claim to engage in a reform process of installing the standards of cultural, historical, and linguistic specificity to a discipline that their own deconstruction of hegemony had co-opted and colonized. They claim to discover what

comparatists have known and practiced for decades, with the telling difference that the focus continues to be on the consciousness of the critic herself rather than the culture supposedly under investigation. This too is an extension of the false consciousness that plagues ideologized scholars today.

The investigation of other cultures is not a mode of solidarity with their practitioners. Nor is post-colonialist research a populist enterprise. It is a necessarily elitist preoccupation, however humbly it is practiced, as it requires interlocutors with a considerable store of learning, a knowledge of appropriate methodology, and an unblinking self-critical spirit. To pretend otherwise is to indulge in demagoguery. Genuine political action and personal comportment are the true theaters for action of the compassionate intellectual, and political correctness and disciplinary conformity are no substitutes.

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How Newness Enters a Country: Reception of the “Postcolonial” in Estonia

ENE-REET SOOVIK

That the reception of literature is a dynamic, ever-changing process is a claim not many scholars would be likely to refute. Also, academic paradigms in the framework of which reception takes place are no less subject to shifts and changes. The past fifteen years have witnessed a major transformation in the Estonian literary system, its hurried, and at times haphazard, becoming adapted to a circulation of texts and ideas from which it used to be more or less isolated during the Soviet period. This paper attempts to trace a recent development in the history of ideas in Estonia and observe the emergence of postcolonial theory on our literary scene, as regards both scholarship as well as framing translations of some works of fiction that the academia has come to recognize as “post-colonial”.

I

Postcolonial literary studies had already become established as a discipline by the time of the break-up of the Soviet Union. For instance, the approximate dating of the discipline’s definitive emergence has been stressed by several contributors to the authoritative metacritical collection *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies* that takes stock of the developments and debates in the field so far and outlines possible developments for the future. The editor Neil Lazarus notes in his introductory chapter that postcolonial studies as an institutionalized field of academic specialization did not exist before the late 1970s (Lazarus 2004: 1), and further goes on to

suggest that earlier historico-ideological contexts would have rendered this kind of investigation meaningless (ib. 7). Laura Chrisman (2004: 183) begins her essay by mentioning that the "(p)ostcolonial studies emerged in the 1980s", while Fernando Coronil (2004: 221) comments on the "curiously rapid rise to prominence of "postcolonial studies" as an academic field in Western metropolitan centres since the late 1980s". Thus the late 1970s and the 1980s saw the paradigm established in the centres in the West, yet Coronil admits that even by the time he is writing there seems to be no discernible body of activities that could be labelled as "Latin American" postcolonial studies (ib.) and does not hesitate to call 'postcolonial studies' as such "a regional corpus of knowledge whose global influence cannot be separated from its grounding in powerful metropolitan universities." (ib. 222). Thus, we might ask what kind of points of contact this 'regional corpus' has made with the study of literature in Estonia and with the reception of the Estonian translations of works identified with the object of study for this system of knowledge?

The 1980s, the last decade of Soviet rule in Estonia, was not a decade to engage in a large-scale importation of current new trends from the international theoretical scene to the discussion of literature in Estonia. What emerged first was an interest in poststructuralism which for a while seemed to represent contemporary study of literature in its entirety. At the same time, traditional empirical criticism that had a complicated interrelationship with Socialist realist views, while not subscribing to any explicitly formulated theory, continued to be practiced. The sudden transition from a stable situation in which the premises for study seemed to be taken for granted to one in which sudden intrusions of other modes of thought called these in question triggered an intense scholarly interest in how literature was being studied in Estonia and whether there were any other new developments that could be fruitfully embraced. Thus in 1996 a series of four conferences and seminars dedicated to the situation in and methods of literary scholarship in Estonia and to the possibilities of writing literary history took place. Looking back at the collection of essays titled *Traditsioon ja pluralism (Tradition and Pluralism, 1998)* published on the basis of the papers given in these conferences, it is interesting to note that not a single text would make references to a scholarly field labelled as "postcolonial" nor any theoreticians usually associated with the field. This volume, that constitutes an important document in

literary scholarship's self-reflection in post-Soviet Estonia, apparently does not recognize the mode of enquiry as topical or relevant for the current situation in the country.

It is significant, however, that the majority of the contributors to this volume were involved in studying Estonian literature. In a couple of years, however, a shift in scholarly approaches started to manifest itself and the changes seemed first to occur at Comparative Literature and Modern Languages departments. The proceedings of an international British Studies conference held in Tartu in 1998 and entitled "New Britain: The Heritage of the Past and the Challenge of the Future" contain two Estonian contributions that explicitly refer to a postcolonial framework. The texts studied with the help of these tools, however, came from the Anglophone world and even though the problems of postcolonial representation in an Estonian context were addressed, the articles remained outside the mainstream discussion of literary scholarship in Estonia. What turned out to be the groundbreaking event was rather the EACL conference "Culture and Nation at the Turn of the Millenium" that took place in the following year. As the special issue of *Interlitteraria* (2000) testifies, Homi Bhabha was the authority quoted most, with *Nation and Narration* and *The Location of Culture* standing next to Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* in the lists of referenced sources. And it is by no means only international contributors who could be expected to employ the ideas to discuss literature deriving from Anglophone, or possibly Francophone, worlds. Three contributions to this issue used post-colonial tools while studying Estonian literature, and if this is not entirely surprising in the case of such authors as Tiina Kirss and Thomas Salumets, scholars of Estonian extraction with a North American background, Epp Annus's article that reconstructs and interprets a national mythology for Estonians from within Estonia in the light of concepts derived from Bhabha, Franz Fanon and Edward Said.

These scholars' insights, after having been tested at the conference, were also developed into articles appearing in the following year in Estonian-language journals that do not address an international scholarly community, but are of immediate national and local relevance. It is by this move that the paradigm really asserted itself on the landscape of literary scholarship in Estonia. The year 2001 also sees the defence of the first MA thesis in Comparative Literature on post-colonial issues that compares the German author W.O. Horn's story

“Huaskar” with an Estonian 19th century classic, Lydia Koidula’s “Peruamaa viimane inka” (“The last inca of Peru”) (See Peiker 2001). Thus, it appears that a postcolonial strand in the study of literature in Estonia is first and foremost a twenty-first-century phenomenon.

That the ECLA conference was not a one-off event is shown by later publications that seem to be well aware of treading on a territory not much travelled as yet and staking out new ground for research. The later papers do not fail to quote their predecessors, which, besides acknowledging their work, also suggests a still hovering need to seek legitimisation — the degree of applicability of postcolonial frameworks in Estonia is not taken absolutely for granted as yet. The seminal text that the later authors necessarily return to is Tiina Kirss’s article “Rändavad piirid. Postkolonialismi võimalused” (“Wandering Borders: The Possibilities of Postcolonialism”) in which the author suggests that Estonian literary studies could profit from exploring some avenues offered by postcolonial thought, particularly reading practices characteristic of the discipline and generative concepts such as “hybridity” and “unhomeliness”, while researchers’ concern with the topics of the nation, its narratives and mythologies can already be detected as a form of postcolonial studies *avant la lettre* (Kirss 2001: 675). While making these suggestions, Kirss also displays caution and alerts Estonian scholars to the dangers of cultural imperialism that may accompany importation or “translation” of theoretical paradigms (ib. 674). Later texts by other authors continue to display an awareness of these issues. They also weigh the possible restrictions concerning the object of research and pose questions whether the framework is best suited to the descriptions of the German supremacy in the Estonian territory and the nation-building during the national awakening of the second half of the 19th century, or if it also applies to the 20th century and the decades of Soviet occupation and the post-Soviet condition.

Thus, in 2003 Eve Annuk (2003: 26) feels compelled to make the enquiry: “To what extent can the Soviet period be conceptualised in the terminological network of colonialism/postcolonialism? Could the Socialist society of the close past be characterized by the term “colonialism”? Can the points of departure employed to study colonial societies and cultures also be adapted to Soviet Estonia and other former Soviet republics?”. She goes on to argue for the applicability of the theoretical tools also in the situations described, supporting her

arguments with claims made by Estonian literary scholars, as well as similar reasoning relating to the other Baltic literatures and societies. In 2005, Eneken Laanes can already display more certainty and state that possible applications of postcolonial theory in an Estonian context and the reservations conditioned by the context have been discussed much in the recent period. At the same time she argues for a firmer focus on the post-Soviet period in addition to an interest in the 19th century and the Soviet times that she sees as the area to which earlier researches have paid more attention. (Laanes 2005: 326)

In about five years, the paradigm has travelled from international conferences and publications in scholarly journals with an international readership via articles in journals and collections directed at the Estonian academic community to the final destination, the Estonian reading community at large as the Estonian-language non-specialist literary journal *Vikerkaar* published a special issue on postcolonialism in 2005. This is also the first venue in which the scholarly discipline is not treated in an instrumentalist way, asking whether it can be of any immediate use in conceptualising Estonian literature and history. Rather, the thrust in *Vikerkaar* is to inform and educate, among other things it also introduces the thought of Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak, but this, again, is carried out through a local filter, as survey articles have been commissioned from local “instrumentalist” scholars, such as Kirss and Annus. Despite Kirss’s earlier suggestions encouraging the translation of key texts of postcolonial theory into Estonian in order to empirically test the ideas’ capacity for being transferred and their survivability in the new context (2001: 681), this does not happen with the exception of an extract from the relatively lucid Edward Said. The intricacies of texts written by Bhabha and Spivak remain unaddressed by translators — or those commissioning translations.

II

What has been translated into Estonian, though, is several works that quite often can be found listed as core literary texts studied in courses on post-colonial writing. This is a development that has evolved parallel to, yet seemingly independently of, the academia’s growing involvement with postcolonial studies. The publishers, though, have

been compelled to label the translated works and present them to the reading public in a way that would be meaningful, while the target readers have not been able to place them automatically in a post-colonial context. Considering this, it might be interesting to observe how such works have been packaged for the Estonian reader and what qualities have been underscored to make them more appealing for the prospective readership. To attempt to answer these questions, three books will be discussed that were translated by renowned translators and brought out by reputable publishers: Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* and Ben Okri's *The Famished Road* (translated by Anne Lange as *Väikeste Asjade Jumal*, 1997, ja *Näljutatud tee*, 1998, published by the Kupid Publishing House that by now has ceased to exist) and Salman Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh* (translated by Kersti Unt, 2001, published by Varrak, at the moment Estonia's foremost publisher of fiction in translation). All three are by Booker-prize-winning authors, two of them actually winning novels, which may make us wonder if it was the British award with the imperial scope that has triggered their importation. This certainly does not hold for Roy whose novel's translation was commissioned — and even published — already before the prize was announced. The consideration can be there in case of Okri's work, as the prize has been duly mentioned in the Estonian afterword. As regards Rushdie, the afterword begins by calling him the contemporary English (sic!) author probably best known to the Estonian reader due to the infamous 'Rushdie affair' although none of his novels had preceded *The Moor's Last Sigh* in Estonian translation; thus it is probably the notorious *fatwa* rather than the particular novel that has caught the publishers' attention.

The very presence of the afterwords already indicates the status of the works in the system of translated fiction. Estonian publishing traditions quite often require that translations of works that carry a certain 'cultural capital' be accompanied by a commentary, usually in the form of an afterword. While the requirement is not absolute, the fact that an afterword has been included suggests that the text is marketed as quality literature. Most often the afterword is written by the translator who need not necessarily be a specialist either in the work of the given author or the source text's original context. Occasionally, afterwords are commissioned from specialists or Estonian writers not related to the production of the translation; in such cases it

is likely that the translations are published in more prestigious series, or else the editions have an educational purpose and are targeted at students. The afterwords to the novels under consideration are written by the translators, but the latter also have connections with universities.

Knowledge of Roy's novel reached the consciousness of the Estonian reader already before the translated work itself. The novel was recognised in Estonia as a global bestseller and earned special coverage as such even before its publication in translation under the title 'A Literary bomb from India', and its promotion campaign will probably go down in the history of Estonian publishing as the first and hitherto unsurpassed mega-launch of a translated novel with the author being present at the event. The publishers' interviews on the occasion of the release emphasised the novel's status as a bestseller, but also its fundamental otherness, at times unabashedly resorting to a discourse approaching Orientalism. "The book will strike our reader as alien, as it differs from the style of narration familiar to us as much as the flat Estonian landscape differs from a jungle," the publishing house's editor-in-chief claimed in an interview (quoted in Soovik 1999: 164).

While the marketing tended to concentrate on the features that marked the book as an exoticized Other, the newspaper reviews rather interpreted the work as an embodiment of universal features of humanity (ib. 164–165) — a feature explicitly criticised by Ashcroft et al who attribute the use of such universals to those occupying the positions of power and referring to their own particular characteristics under the pretext of universality. The translator's afterword starts by admitting that literature from the Indian subcontinent written by Indian authors is virtually unknown in Estonia, with the exception of writings by Tagore and Gandhi, and thus recognizing the absence of a literary-historical context in which the text could be placed. Therefore, the novel is said to have arrived "like the cat who walks by himself". The reference to Kipling, canonised as the recorder of colonial India, may well be intentional yet the seamless introduction of the image in an introduction of a work that is explicitly engaged in 'writing back' does not seem to be as problematic for Lange as it might be for someone filtering her discussion through an explicitly postcolonial lens.

The afterword also contains references to the autobiographical dimension of the novel, among other things introducing the state of

Kerala as one in which the density of population is the highest among India's states, one in which 20% of the population is Syrian Christian, and one that has been known for its communist leadership. The latter fact is underscored as a fairly unexpected point of connection between Kerala and Estonia, mentioning that Comrade S. Namboodiripad is already known to the Estonian reader from a travel book titled *Impressions and Thoughts from a Trip to India (Muljeid ja mõtteid India sõidult, 1958)* by Aira Kaal. "In this, we have more points in common with "them over there" than we maybe would like to have; the ideal that aspired to be Marxist in content, national in form — take it or leave it — has been the same globally." (Lange 2004: 346) While the intention of the claim certainly is to make a swipe at the fairly recently dissolved Soviet rule, marking this as a negative property we would not like to boast about at all, there is also an othering tendency at play, distancing the implied reader from the Keralan characters described as 'them over there' and expecting the reader to share this view. The text goes on to find it a blessing that the mutual class-aware proportion has not deleted the exoticism of the work.

Another topic covered is the mode of narration — the limited perspective of the main focal characters. In this context a fleeting observation of a difference between them and the girl narrator in the Estonian author Viivi Luik's novel *The Seventh Spring of Peace* is made; and a half-involuntary association with Kundera's *The Impossible Lightness of Being* brought up. The afterword closes with a continuation of the account of Roy's biography. No key words usually connected with post-colonial studies strike the eye. The book is placed in an intertextual node in regard with texts presumably known to the reader, and an appeal to the universality of human nature even in an exotic guise is used to work up an interest in the work.

The translation of Ben Okri's novel completed by the same translator was published a year later. This time, the afterword starts with evoking an already abandoned theory of the emergence of the jazz scale as an attempt to match the African and North American music. This is done in order "to recall that beside the white man who is bearing his burden, the black man has been walking for a long time already" (Lange 1998: 731). Again this background, *The Famished Road* is exposed as further from our familiar points of reference than the ragtime scene: it "has grown out of a culture that is older and stranger to us than that." (ib.) Ben Okri's Yoruba background is

mentioned and his birthplace is identified as Lagos, while the main part of the afterword introduces the place of the *egungun* and the *gelede* festivals in the traditional Yoruba world view. Okri's narrative method is again outlined next to a familiar point of comparison: the style of the graphic artist Eduard Viiralt's nightmarish excesses in his prints "Hell" and "Cabaret", known to every educated Estonian. The text concludes by calling Okri a unique representative of magic realist writing in English, and suggests that "the human core" of his work "does not succumb to the power of the white man's spirit" (Lange 1998: 735), which has been proved by the Booker prize *The Famished Road* received in 1991.

Both afterwords certainly speak of the translator's personal preferences, her love of detail and her method of associative jumps and finding similar elements in texts that at first sight seem to be unrelated. Yet the fact that the standard framework for introducing Roy or Okri one might expect from a 2005 vantage point is not evoked at all cannot probably be reduced only to the translator's idiosyncratic approach to the works. This is not revealed so much by the missing standard terms and concepts, as these indeed may have been considered to be too specialised in a text meant for popular consumption. It is rather that remarks about the novels' historical contexts do not mention the British Empire, yet both afterwords still make seemingly naïve references to Kipling, and that the afterwords only marginally touch race relationships, which happens in a fairly generalising manner. On the other hand, the afterwords communicate a wish to provide points of reference familiar to the Estonian reader from Eastern European literature or visual arts, centring on the local and the empirical.

Rushdie's novel came out in Estonian translation in 2001 when the decisive steps in importing postcolonial studies into Estonia had already been taken and, indeed, a certain shift in the angle can be detected that in addition to the admittedly different style of the author of the afterword could also be attributed to an increased general awareness and different reader expectations regarding the postcolonial paradigm. The relevance of pointing out possible cues for the target readers from their own culture is recognised, but the text repeatedly stresses the blend of traditions that makes up contemporary British writing (while still adhering to the Estonian way of using the words "British" and "English" interchangeably), and Rushdie's writing as a

particularly representative meeting place of the traditions of the West and the East. The latter happens without evoking Kipling, not even in order to contradict him. After having made an introduction by mentioning “the Rushdie affair” and comments on it available in Estonian, the afterword follows a widespread pattern of introducing the development of the author’s oeuvre in a chronological order, with an insistent stress on its hybridity. While such keywords as ‘post/colonial’ or, for that matter, ‘empire’ are not used, the text still culminates in the often-quoted citation originally characterizing *The Satanic Verses* which “celebrates hybridity, impurity, intermingling, the transformation that comes of new and unexpected combinations of human beings, cultures, ideas, politics, movies, songs. It rejoices in mongrelisation and fears the absolutism of the Pure. Mélange, hotch-potch, a bit of this and a bit of that is how newness enters the world.” (quoted in Unt 2001: 509–510)

This quote that by now can evoke both Rushdie and Bhabha may lead us to the question as to the translation strategies used to convey the “hybridity, impurity, intermingling” into Estonian, a language that could fairly be described as adhering to “the absolutism of the Pure”. The linguist and literary scholar Tiit Hennoste has characterised the language of Estonian literature as centred on a firmly established standard language and being carefully polished and edited (72). In comparison with standard Estonian that constitutes the model for literary language also in the minds of the common reader all sub-languages are marginal phenomena used to as small an extent as possible. (73) According to Hennoste, the conflation of the language of literature and standardised language is, on the one hand, a means of unifying and consolidating the nation; on the other hand it marks a colonial situation that strives for deleting resistant linguistic differences, and this double agenda is also visible in the translations of postcolonial novels that display subversive linguistic innovation and hybridity.

Kersti Unt accords Rushdie’s use of language the status of a separate topic in her afterword and suggests the weaving of this “motley carpet” — her metaphor for Rushdie’s writing — as specifically directed at “creating an impression of a mix, a *masala*” (Unt 2001: 503). The actual translations, however, demonstrate a shift towards more uniform, polished literary language in Estonian; the linguistic melange and unexpected forms are exploited and foregrounded to a

smaller degree. This can be ascribed to a general tendency in translations — already José Ortega y Gasset (2000: 50) commented on the translators' behaviour as necessarily conformist in contrast to the rebellion of established norms that creative writers commonly display. According to him, a translator "... will be ruled by cowardice, so instead of resisting grammatical restraints he will do just the opposite, he will place the translated author in the prison of normal expression; that is, he will betray him" — and contemporary research into universals of translation has confirmed this initially speculative claim. Gideon Toury has posited the law of growing standardization as one valid for all translational behaviour (1995: 267–8) and explicitation and normalization appear to be features that generally characterize translations in comparison with their source texts, target texts generally being "more readable, more idiomatic, more familiar and more coherently organized than the original." (Laviosa-Braithwaite 2001: 290).

The specific situation at hand, however, has not to do with translation universals only — there is also the translators' ideological agenda that is part of the agenda behind the standardised literary language in Estonia. While postcolonial authors may use subversive linguistic strategies in order to "write back" and inscribe their presence in the colonial language, thus counteracting the homogenising colonial power, standardised Estonian is also at the service of the consolidation of a small nation, as was also pointed out by Hennoste above. Indeed, the problematic question of celebrating the foreign element in translation is something that the translation scholar Michael Cronin has emphasised, when discussing the special position in translation situations of minority languages whose "vocabulary, syntax and cultural memory come under pressure from English" nowadays (2004: 147), while responses that resist the linguistic hegemony "often run the risk of misrepresentation as ethnocentric chauvinism." (Cronin 2004: 148) This reasoning finds a parallel in Tiina Kirss's arguments who has drawn attention to the possible inappropriateness of "some political and discursive strategies of coming to terms with colonial oppression and its aftermath that in larger collectivities would seem productive" (Kirss 2000: 134), by which she explains the presence of what could be labelled as "essentialism" regarding the land and the language found in Estonian writing. And it is exactly the example of Rushdie's

“ludic ‘hybridization’” that she presents as a contrast to the Estonian authors “more modest” use of language (ib.)

Thus it seems that while both postcolonial literary studies have been established as a mode of inquiry recognized and used by those studying Estonian literature, also translations of postcolonial literature have started to appear that are not marketed exclusively with the lure of the exotic any more. Yet the translation strategies used in producing these translations, although partly explained by the posited translation universals, counteract the subversive agenda of dismantling the language of the colonizer, and tend to support the local tradition of coherence, shared by many minority language communities, possibly creating an ideological tension between the language uses of the source text and the target text. Indeed, it appears that the target community interests may be preferred to documenting the issues informing the source texts, and a roughly similar claim could be made about the “translating” of postcolonial frameworks for the purposes of the study of literature in Estonia. Postcolonial theory is not shunned — after all, isolationalism on principle would condemn scholars of a small nation to an increased marginalisation — but its applications are carefully weighed and modified to avoid the paradoxical situation in which a paradigm embraced with hopes of foregrounding the specific and the local might turn into an agent of global cultural imperialism.

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A la recherche du postmodernisme: la réception de la littérature étrangère dans la Lituanie contemporaine

DAINIUS VAITIEKŪNAS

La notion du postmodernité a été répandue largement dans le discours critique lituanien tout récemment, vers les années 90. La chute de Rideau de fer et l'ouverture sur le monde a apporté pour la critique lituanienne le concept de postmodernisme. Selon une critique lituanienne Vanda Zaborskaitė, „La Lituanie s'est trouvé dans l'espace postmoderne dans lequel le monde occidental habite depuis les années 80. Une rencontre avec ce monde a été tentante et peureuse “ (Zaborskaitė 2002: 107). A l'heure actuelle la post-modernité est la notion-clé de métalangage contemporain des sciences humaines et parmi eux de la critique dans cette espace post-totalitaire, post-soviétique et post-communiste (le préfixe „post” signifie un dépassement de passé). Le philosophe lituanien Arūnas Sverdiolas affirme même que le postmodernisme est plus radical dans les pays post-communistes que à l'Occident (Sverdiolas 2004: 108). Le postmodernisme en Lituanie devient associé aux notions du nouveauté (nouveauté d'une mode), du globalisation, d'une imitation (imitation des littératures étrangères). Mais ce n'empêche pas à parler aussi de la mode académique et de caprice théorique.

Les recherches sérieux des traces de postmodernité dans la littérature lituanienne se commencent encore, mais les recherches du postmodernité dans la littérature étrangère sont importants depuis la chute de Rideau de fer. Ces derniers ont influencé les recherches dans la culture nationale. Donc la réflexion de la littérature étrangère est toujours l'importante dimension du critique littéraire. La postmodernité devient à la fois diabolisé et sacralisé. Le concept de post-

modernité souvent devient le pivot du raisonnement dans le discours critique contemporaine. Pour cerner les difficultés, il nous a semblé utile d'élaborer une description *grosso-modo* des différentes approches sur la postmodernité nous permettant de faire le point sur les connaissances de métalangage lituanien.

Dans l'*Encyclopédie de la littérature lituanienne* on peut lire que „le postmodernisme s'est commencé dans une architecture, une peinture, une musique, un théâtre, une littérature marquant la fin de siècle des mouvements de modernisme, surtout de l'avantgarde, ou, selon d'autres, sa troisième phase. Il trouve son commencement dans „la mort des idéologies”, dans l'impossibilité d'expliquer le chaos de la civilisation technique et de la société des consommateurs. Après la fin de „progrès de l'histoire” on a répandue la relativité absolue: chaque point de vue est juste, il n'y a pas une hiérarchie des valeurs, l'oeuvre d'art est créée pour l'instant et non plus pour l'éternité. Le postmodernisme refuse une synthèse logique: la pluralité des choses et des états de l'âme toujours en changement et ruineuse est l'objet de la création artistique. Le postmodernisme ne fait pas le style individuel, mais un jeu démi-parodique avec les clichés répandus, avec les citations des textes anciens, une imitation des manières d'écrire de passé, une jonction des motifs de passé et de présent, une juxtaposition de ce qui est beau et de ce qui est laid, une pluralité des points de vue différents, une composition de collage, un hasard comme le motif de l'action font l'oeuvre éclectique” (Kubilius, Rakauskas, Vanagas 2001: 392). C'est une synthèse approximative des traits de postmodernisme selon la critique littéraire lituanienne. Ces traits jalonnent la recherche de la postmodernité dans la littérature étrangère.

Les auteurs lituaniens circonscrivent le plus souvent la postmodernité à la littérature occidentale contemporaine (de 1960 à nos jours), littérature à l'intérieur de laquelle s'effectuent d'importantes transformations. D'autre part on parle de la postmodernité comme de la tendance dans la philosophie moderne et de la période contemporaine: par exemple le sociologue lituanien Vytautas Kavolis note qu'une seule citadelle de modernisme au coeur de la culture postmoderne est la politique. À vrai dire cette dernière façon d'appréhender la postmodernité est plus répandue que d'autre. La littérature étrangère est perçue en cette perspective tout d'abord comme un exemple dans le raisonnement sur la postmodernité de la culture en général.

Selon un philosophe Alvydas Jokubaitis, le postmodernisme philosophique diffère des autres postmodernismes, par exemple, de postmodernisme en architecture, en art et en littérature parce que dans la philosophie ce terme ne désigne pas l'orientation à la mode et aux choses temporaires mais il désigne quelques tendances contemporaines de la philosophie (Jokubaitis 1997: 7). Mais d'autre philosophe Arvydas Šliogeris estime que le postmodernisme pour lui est une falsification laquelle vient du conscience idéologique, le simulacre de la réalité et que le choix postmoderne peut détruire la philosophie. De toute façon les philosophes et sociologes lituaniens sont plus attachés encore sur cette notion que la plupart des critiques littéraires. En langue lituanienne on été traduit les importants auteurs des théories postmodernistes¹. Parmi les ouvrages des auteurs lituaniens sur le postmodernisme dans la culture et dans la philosophie (parfois avec les exemples dans la littérature) on peut distinguer les livres de Audronė Žukauskaitė (Žukauskaitė 2001; 2005), de Vytautas Rubavičius (Rubavičius 1997; 2003), de Eugenijus Ališanka (Ališanka 2001), les articles de Alvydas Jokubaitis (Jokubaitis 1997: I–II), de Antanas Andrijauskas (Andrijauskas 1996; 1997), etc.

La notion de postmodernisme est plus populaire dans le discours philosophique que dans le discours critique lituanien. C'est la notion laquelle peut diviser parfois les générations différentes des critiques. Elle passionne surtout les critiques de la génération nouvelle perçue comme l'opposition à la critique nommée „moraliste” ou „traditionnelle”.

La critique préfère citer les théories de postmodernisme étrangère à la construction du propre concept de postmodernité littéraire. Il n'y a pas les livres sur le postmodernisme en littérature, mais il existent plusieurs articles intéressants destinés à l'analyse des certaines oeuvres des auteurs étrangers contemporains avec la réflexion de façon direct ou indirect de postmodernisme. Parmi les travaux scientifiques des auteurs lituaniens sur le postmodernisme dans la

¹ Jean-François Lyotard (traduction en 1993: *La condition postmoderne*); Ernest Gellner (traduction en 1993: *Postmodernism, Reason and Religion*); Michel Foucault (traduction en 1998: *Surveiller et punir et L'ordre du discours*; traduction en 1999: *Histoire de la sexualité*), Jean Baudrillard (traduction en 2002: *Simulacres et simulation*), Fredric Jameson (traduction en 2002: *The Cultural Turn*), Wolfgang Iser (traduction en 2004: *Unsere postmoderne Moderne*), Jacques Derrida (traduction quelques articles), etc.

littérature étrangère (souvent avec les exemples dans la culture et dans la philosophie) il semble nécessaire de mentionner Eugenijus Ališanka qui dans son livre intitulé *Le retour de Dionysos: chtonique, postmodernité, silence* fait une description des tendances de la culture et de la littérature lituanienne d'aujourd'hui (Ališanka 2001). Il insiste sur l'existence de postmodernisme lituanien différent de postmodernisme français mais il est d'accord avec l'opinion répandue que le postmodernisme des ouvrages étrangers exercent une immense influence sur le postmodernisme lituanien (on parle même que le postmodernisme a été importé de l'étranger comme la marchandise de large consommation). A vrais dire le critique trouve beaucoup des traits essentiels de postmoderne communs même si selon lui le postmodernisme lituanien manque de la pureté.

Daina Miniotaitė a soutenu sa thèse *Conception postmoderne de l'homme dans les oeuvres de John Barth* (en 2002). Elle même dans l'étude sur le roman „postmoderne” *The Dead Father* (1975) de l'auteur américain Donald Barthelme déclare sans détour l'objectif d'une analyse trouver les liens entre la métaphore principale du personnage et les conceptions du monde et de la littérature postmodernes (Miniotaitė 2003: 83).

Irina Melnikova dans ses deux articles fait l'analyse intertextuelle des oeuvres de „l'écrivain postmoderniste” John Fowles (les récits *The Ebony Tower, The Enigma*; 1974). Elle prouve une existence des plusieurs dimensions (une pluralité de sens) dans une même histoire simple raconté. Selon une chercheuse, c'est prouve aussi une postmodernité même si ces textes ont le contenu à la surface de récit accessible à chacun. Ainsi, l'interprétation de l'intertextualité devient aussi une recherche des traces de postmodernisme (Melnikova 2003: 111-149).

L'oeuvre postmoderne selon Marija Aušrinė Povilionienė est l'oeuvre de l'intertextualité comme une réécriture complète des oeuvres connues. Par exemple elle lit un drame *Iago* (1979) de l'auteur américain C. Bernard Jackson et prouve la réécriture de drame *Othello* de William Shakespeare ou le drame à l'inverse „en version postmoderne”: Yago est un vrai ami d'Othello et un vrai héros positif (Povilionienė 2002).

Plusieurs critiques souligne de jeu des fragments sans le sens unique dans le roman postmoderne. Ainsi le roman *Enduring Love* (1997) de Ian Mc Ewan on a été présenté comme „vraiment étrange et

hypnotisant dans son histoire raconté et dans son labyrinthe intertextuel, auteur utilise la matière de l'histoire littéraire sur la vie des romantiques britannique Keats et Wordsworth, les faits de la médecine (psychopathologie), des sciences exactes, toujours en mouvement dans le champ des discours hétérogènes introduits dans le récit. Donc il s'installe parfaitement dans le contexte de la théorie littéraire contemporaine et pour cela il donne les grands possibilités pour l'interprétation" (Rudaitytė 1999: 43).

On cherche le jeu des simulacres et des reflets, la mise en abyme infinie dans les romans, par exemple dans le roman d'Angela Carter (Špėlytė 2002). Même dans l'article de Genovaitė Dručkutė sur les chroniques de Georges Haldas, d'un écrivain de Suisse, on peut lire en conclusion que l'analyse effectuée nous permet de constater la possibilité de plusieurs niveaux de lecture du *Livre des passions et des heures*: comme chronique, comme autobiographie, comme mémoires, comme roman de nouvelles (Dručkutė 2002). Vytautas Bikulčius dans le roman de *Désert* (1980, traduction en lituanien le 1993) de Jean-Marie Le Clézio dégage deux histoires parallèles qui ne s'entrecroisent jamais dans cette oeuvre et paraissent indépendantes. Selon lui, le désert devient le protagoniste du roman dans lequel on peut entrevoir trois niveaux: concret, abstrait et universel. Il estime que l'auteur crée son mythe qui montre qu'un roman philosophique de nouveau type apparaît devant le lecteur (Bikulčius 2001). Elina Naujokaitienė essaye décrire les trois romans contemporains: *Le tunnel sous la Manche* (1997) de Michel Cyprien, *Ville de la peur* (1997) de René Belletto et *Le pas si lent de l'amour* (1995) de Hector Bianciotti. Elle trouve que dans les romans choisis se mêlent la forme et le contenu, la création et le regard critique et que les formes de la narration deviennent l'objet d'un jeu (Naujokaitienė 2001).

Il est possible voir une tendance dans la critique de faire penser que tout la littérature étrangère contemporaine à l'Occident est plus ou moins postmoderne. En plusieurs occasions la lecture des auteurs étrangers dégagent, directement ou indirectement, les traits de postmodernisme. Parfois les difficultés du lecture ont associées avec le récit postmoderne et le sens de terme „postmoderne" devient plus en plus flou et contradictoire.

L'expérience des théories et des littératures „postmodernes" provoque à ouvrir les débats sur l'avenir de la littérature et sur les projets de la critique littéraire en Lituanie. Les critiques et les chercheurs

parlent de la nécessité de répondre à le défi de la globalisation, de la multiculturalité, de la pluralité des vérités et relativisme et de la culture populaire. On réclame la rupture définitive des liens avec la tradition décrire la vérité objective dans l'histoire littéraire. La pratique de déconstruction réclame ses droits dans l'échelle des méthodes et des pratiques du lecture établie. On exprime la méfiance des grands récits sur l'histoire littéraire positiviste (voir une discussion: Viliūnas 2005). Il peut paraître paradoxal de parler du postmodernité et en même temps parler de manque de l'histoire „objective” de la littérature lituanienne sans les traces d'une idéologie communiste. La critique se trouve entre positivisme et postpositivisme.

La critique construit toujours son objet mais l'objet peut construire la critique aussi. La critique lituanienne contemporaine tente se construire de nouveau par rapport à la littérature étrangère contemporaine. Définir cette littérature comme postmoderne c'est reconnaître la nouveauté provocante de l'objet et aussi la nécessité des changements sur le plan méthodologique. Telle est la tendance actuelle de la critique laquelle peut-être est en train de devenir postmoderne.

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Literary Reception and Political Background: Slovene Reception of Postmodernism

TOMO VIRK

It is always a bit risky to speak about literary postmodernism. Strong efforts have been made especially in the 1980s and 90s to determine the essence and extent of it, and to be able to use the term in a literary, historical and theoretical discourse at least so reliably and reasonably as other traditional terms of literary history, such as, for example, romanticism, realism, symbolism, existentialism or modernism. In the mid 90s, extensive international research was initiated by the International Comparative Literature Association with the purpose of finally establishing a term that seemed so evasive. The result was a large volume with the promising title, *International Postmodernism. Theory and Literary Practice*, issued in 1997 and covering, so to speak, postmodernism in almost every single literature of the world. But the result of this enterprise, as stated by the editors of the volume, Hans Bertens and Douwe Fokkema, was a bit frustrating. Despite all efforts, it had to be acknowledged that, strictly speaking, there is no such thing as "postmodernism", that we can at the most speak of postmodernisms, of "endless varieties of postmodernism" (Bertens-Fokkema 1997: ix). Postmodernism in the U.S., for example, differs considerably from Russian postmodernism, and both of these are completely different from the literature labeled "postmodernism" in China.

Nevertheless, I shall take the risk. In this paper, I shall use the term postmodernism. I will not quarrel about its "true" meaning and extent; I will not argue in favour of any particular theory of postmodernism. I shall simply take its most accepted understanding, as expressed in the

above-mentioned *International Postmodernism* (at least by its editors), despite its cautiously uttered skepticism. This means that I shall understand as postmodernist any type of literature that questions all stable truths and values, all identities and certainties using well-recognizable devices such as metafiction, intertextuality, rewriting, self-referentiality, etc.. In this paper, however, my point of interest is not postmodernism, but an interesting reception phenomenon which I have exemplified on (Slovene) postmodernism.

According to Hans Bertens and Douwe Fokkema (I am relying on *International Postmodernism* as a reference), "the early postmodernist texts seem to express an attitude of 'anything goes' ..., whereas the later postmodernist texts apparently distance themselves from that notion and are more open to political and ideological commitments" (Bertens-Fokkema 1997: vii). This statement ascertains a fact that is quite obvious and not very difficult to prove. For example, the early postmodernist texts of John Barth (e.g., *Lost in the Funhouse*, 1968), Robert Coover (*Pricksongs & Descants*, 1969), Richard Brautigan (*In Watermelon Sugar*, 1968), Donald Barthelme (*Snow White*, 1967), Ronald Sukenick (*The Death of the Novel and Other Stories*, 1969), Italo Calvino (*Le cosmicomiche*, 1965) and, of course, Jorge Luis Borges (*Ficciones*, 1944), to name only a few, certainly show the playful attitude of 'anything goes' and more or less exhaust themselves in self-referentiality. The distinctive feature of these works is the extensive use of metafictional and intertextual devices, which emphasize the fictional character of the text and indirectly draw attention to the fictionality of our so-called "real" world, our everyday reality, our existence, and our experiences as well. This emphasizing of universal fictionality is a common range of early self-referential postmodernism. Thus, considering the more "mature" works of postmodernism, such as those of the later John Barth (*Sabbathical*, 1982), Umberto Eco (*Il nome della rosa*, 1980), Toni Morrison (*Beloved*, 1987) or, say, Salman Rushdie (*Midnight's Children*, 1980), we can observe a shift precisely in the attitude towards "political and ideological commitments", as Bertens and Fokkema say.

This development seems absolutely logical. The first phase of a new literary phenomenon is more experimental, more radical in the use of new artistic devices, while the second phase is more "mature", classical, and moderate. Metafiction and intertextuality are no longer used merely to stress self-referentiality and fictionality, but as a means

of supporting the “classical” referentiality connected, to quote again, with “political and ideological commitments”.

In Slovene postmodernist fiction (as well as in the fiction of some other Slavic literatures),¹ however, this process goes the other way round. Slovene postmodernist fiction started in the early 80’s and ended about ten years later (cf. Kos 1995: 86–87, 90–92; Virk 2000: 194–199). It can be divided into two currents represented by two different literary generations. The early postmodernist texts were written by some authors of established literary generations: Drago Jančar (born in 1948) in some of his short stories (e.g. *Smrt pri Mariji Snežni* [Death of Mary-of-the-Snows], 1985) and Dimitrij Rupel (born in 1946) in his novelistic trilogy on Max and Maxism (first novel *Maks* 1983; second novel *Povabljeni pozabljeni* [The Invited, the Forgotten], 1985). Both authors make extensive use of established postmodernist devices such as metafiction and intertextuality (re-writing, citations, allusions, parody, ironic imitation, mise en abyme, regressus ad infinitum, etc.), yet at the same time show an explicitly political attitude. Drago Jančar constantly deals with political totalitarianism and repression. His postmodernist short fiction works, for example, discuss (Soviet and Slovene) Stalinism, South American dictatorship, post-war terror in some socialist European countries, the “violence of history” in general, etc. (cf. Virk 1995: 207 ff.). Similarly, Dimitrij Rupel treats, in the above-mentioned postmodernist novels, the post-war (WWII) socialist Slovene society with an openly critical political attitude. Let me give some examples of this early Slovene postmodernism to illustrate its “political and ideological commitment”.

Drago Jančar begins his short story *Death of Mary-of-the-Snows* as follows:

*In the great and terrible year of 1918, a young doctor, Aleksei Vasiylevich Turbin, almost lost his life simply because he had forgotten to remove an officer’s cockade from his fur hat. Mikhail Bulgakov depicts the event somewhere in his novel *The White Guard* (*The Day Tito Died*: 7).*

¹ Cf. Articles on Croatian, Czech and Polish postmodernisms in Старикова 2004.

The first sentence is a precise citation from Bulgakov's above-mentioned novel, from which the hero Turbin is also borrowed. The author himself points to this fact in the second sentence of the story. Here we are obviously dealing with typical postmodernist intertextuality. The author does not communicate any real or authentic experience, nor does he wish to give any such impression. On the contrary, he explicitly tells us that his hero and his story are borrowed from another literary text. For the sake of my argument, I do not need to go into a detailed analysis of the story. Let me just conclude that this implies that all reality is actually textual, nonreal, fictional — which is a radical postmodernist implication. At the same time, however, Jančar's story also reveals an opposite tendency. After reading the story to the end, one discovers that it is — despite the above-mentioned postmodernist implications — not at all about imagined, fictional life, but about the real tragic destiny of an individual, a victim of revolutionary terror, exemplified on a parallel, fictional life-destiny of a well-known literary hero. To sum up: Jančar only uses postmodernist devices to develop a tragic story which in reality lacks an exemplary postmodernist world view.

My other example is Dimitrij Rupel's second trilogy-novel, *The Invited, The Forgotten* (1985). The novel makes extensive use of all postmodernist devices; among others, it also alludes to Umberto Eco's theory of postmodernist citation, as presented in his *Postille a Il nome della rosa*. Particularly witty is the motto at the beginning of the novel, which reads: "The reader will write his own ending." And, in fact, the novel has alternative endings, such as in, e.g., *The French Lieutenant's Woman* by John Fowles, and the reader can actually choose the one he prefers. This is very much in accordance with the playful attitude of radical experimental postmodernism, as well as with what Linda Hutcheon calls "the metafictional paradox" (Hutcheon 1984). But again, this does not have only the playful postmodernist implications of all-textuality and all-fictionality. It is actually a slightly changed, famous quotation of the greatest Slovene fiction writer and playwright, Ivan Cankar. The original text has an explicitly political attitude: "The nation will write its own destiny" (Cankar 1910). At the time when Rupel wrote his novel, this was a standard slogan at political meetings of the Slovene Communist Party (the only party allowed in the then nondemocratic regime). Rupel's quote was a parodist persiflage of this slogan, and the novel in general was —

despite all its undoubtedly postmodernist features — actually a witty, but merciless critique of the Slovene society and the political regime (cf. Virk 2000: 227; Zorn 1988: 171).

This short analysis shows that the most prominent early Slovene postmodernists accepted the established postmodernist devices (Jančar mostly under the influence of Jorge Luis Borges² and Rupel under the influence of American metafiction³), but used them merely as a kind of “technical” device. The first reception of postmodernism in Slovenia was not at all a radical one. This is very much in accordance with the traditional Slovene reception of foreign literary influences. These were never received in their extreme, radical and experimental forms, but were always moderated with specific features of traditional Slovene fiction, such as lyricism, support for a national idea, attachment to empirical social life or to the existential dimension of the individual and his fate, etc.⁴ According to some Slovene literary historians, this is due to the fact that the Slovene nation did not achieve national independence for a very long time (having only become an independent state in 1991; before that, it was first a part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, and later a republic of Yugoslavia), even though it had desperately strove for it (cf. Virk 2004). This meant that all national activities were subordinated to the “sacred goal” of national independence, and for this reason literature could not be just a matter of aesthetics, but also a kind of political struggle. This explains why the traditional Slovene reception of western literary influences was never radical.

But in the case of the Slovene reception of postmodernism, national independence is not the only reason. To this we may also add the lack of political democracy and liberty. Gerda Elisabeth Moser

² In his short stories, Jančar often quotes Borges and manifestly borrows from him (cf. Virk 1995: 213–216).

³ Rupel studied in the USA and translated K. Vonnegut.

⁴ Cf. Kos, 1975: 210–211. He states the same for Central European literatures in general: “One of the typological specifics of Central European literary space is the fact that those literary currents and directions which are familiar to us from the development of so-called Western literature come to our literatures with a constant delay of several years, and not in their radical, straight forms, but adjusted to the specific traditions of these literatures” (Kos 1990: 20).

rightly observes, when answering the question, why Austrian postmodernism is so strictly self-referential and radically apolitical (according to Bertens and Fokkema: pertaining to the first wave of international postmodernism): "The play of signifiers is thus possible — and this is for me the point of postmodernism and its literature — only in periods of wealth, social security and freedom, when political freedom is also granted" (Moser 1994: 246). In other words: when literature can simply be literature and does not need to substitute for those political institutions that are lacking.

Slovenia gained national independence and political democracy at the beginning of the 1990s, that is, in the period when the second Slovene postmodernist generation, born in the 1960s, emerged (Andrej Blatnik, *Biographies of the Nameless*, 1989, Aleksa Šušulić, *Who Kills the Tales and Other Stories*, 1989). This generation decisively broke with the established traditional reception pattern and developed postmodernism in its extreme form as completely self-referential, self-reflective fiction having no connection with any reality outside of literature. Even more: this generation pushed postmodernism to the extreme by parodying it, and never abandoning its specific literary devices (metafiction, intertextuality, etc.) and aesthetic ideology (cf. Virk 2000: 197–198). It is quite obvious, I believe, that this reversal in the Slovene reception of postmodernism is due to the socio-cultural and political circumstances connected with the implementation of a political democracy and the attainment of national independence. This could also be sustained with the parallel development of the reception of postmodernism in some other Slavic (Eastern) literatures. The most prominent examples of early Serb postmodernism (Danilo Kiš, *The Vault of Boris Davidovich*, 1976; Milorad Pavić, *Khazars Dictionary*, 1982) are both written under the direct influence of experimental Western postmodernism, making extensive use of metafiction and intertextuality, yet at the same time expressing political criticism. The second phase began with *The Encyclopedia of the Death* by Danilo Kiš (1984), and continued with the short fiction works of Filip David and David Albahari, which were much more self-referential and written in an 'anything goes' attitude. Another illustrative example is Russian postmodernism in the early postmodernist novel of Andrei Bitov's *The Pushkin's House*, 1978, which undoubtedly belongs to "political" postmodernism, in contrast to the "playful" Russian postmodernism of the 90s, which followed

after the changes in the political system (cf. Лейдерман-Липовецкий 2003: 379; Epstein-Genis-Vladiv-Glover 1999: 215; Kraševac 1996: 292). It seems, that the same could easily be demonstrated for Croatian, Czech and Latin American literatures.⁵

All the above observations necessarily imply the following conclusions: Owing to the socio-political circumstances, early postmodernist writers, particularly in some Eastern European literatures — despite their acceptance of radical postmodernist formal devices (various types of metafiction and intertextuality) — were unable to write completely self-referential literature. In these literatures and cultures, the first reception of postmodernism was specific with regard to the “original”, Western postmodernism. While in Western literatures the “anything goes postmodernism” was followed by “postmodernism of political commitment”, in many Eastern European literatures this process went the other way round. The absence of political freedom and social justice urged literature — even postmodernist literature, which is by definition a self-referential language game — to renounce being a mere aesthetic artifact and to do the “political” job in place of the absent institutions of political democracy.⁶ This is particularly true of Slavic postmodernism and of the reception of Western influences in some Eastern European literatures.

But if this is so (and a great deal seems to point in this direction), then what implications can we draw from the circumstance that, in the so-called “Western literatures”, the second wave of postmodernism becomes political?

⁵ For Croatian, cf. Nemeč 2001; for Czech, cf. Шерлаимова 2004. For Latin American literatures with their boom- and post-boom postmodernisms I refer to Williams 1995: IX.

⁶ Discussing the Slovene “political” novels of the 80’s, Marko Juvan observes that “these texts not only functioned as intraliterary, but also as an allegory or ‘weapon’ (in the sense of B. Brecht’s word) employed by critical intelligence to fight the ruling ideology and political elite. In this way, they evoked the (bad) conscience of politics and, similarly to the nation-constitutional function of Slovene and other ‘small’ literatures in the 19th century, replaced the missing institutions of ‘normal’ political pluralism” (Juvan 1988/89: 49).

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The Emergence of the 'Foreign' Author and the Bewilderment of the Reader/Critic

JEANNE E. GLESENER

*Je t'ai donné un livre et je suis
entré dans la clandestinité
le livre est passé d'une main à l'autre
et je me demande
si celui que je t'ai donné
ressemble à celui que tu as reçu*

Jean Portante

Migrant Literature is one of the more recent phenomena that, in the wake of postcolonial literature, challenges traditional modes of reception such as they have been established by the Western "République Mondiale des Lettres". The impact of these literary centripetal genres and movements from the peripheries of the political, economical and cultural spheres of influence is such that it scratches at the foundations of dominant Western theoretical discourse and thought. For instance, Ian Chambers observes:

Western thought with its promise of a mastery of the complete picture is confronted by the incompleteness of the spilled, the broken world (...): a world broken down into complexities, diverse bodies, memories, languages, histories, differences. The postcolonial presence, where the abstract metaphor of the Other is now metamorphosed into concrete, historical bodies, challenges the screen of universal thought. (Chambers 1994: 70)

The emergence of the foreign or, in this case, the migrant writer in the highly traditional and hierarchically organised literary systems and

landscapes poses a problem of perception and consequently of reception. Indeed, the tangible presence of the Other, he who has for centuries figured as a hermeneutical tool for the West, provokes a perturbation of the former structures of reasoning and judgement. The Other, in and through his explicit manifestation, is no longer willing to give in to arbitrary and schematic treatment.

This paper will, by using the example of Turkish-German author Zafer Şenocak and Anglo-Japanese author Kazuo Ishiguro, show how these authors try to break out of the pre-constructed categories, into which they had been forced at one point in their careers and how, by deliberately causing the bewilderment of the critic, managed to put an end to an easy and arbitrary labelling of their work and their literary persona.

The difficulty the migrant writer faces is that, given his foreignness, he/she risks being treated, in matters of reception, in a way that makes him readable and 'placeable'. He is put into a category that enables literary criticism and the reviewers to interpret his works. These categories such as ethnic, minority, multicultural and also migrant writer are however often reductive in the sense that they focus more on the extraliterary reality of the writer (such as his nationality, his or his family's migrant experience, his place between cultures, languages and traditions etc.) and the evaluation and interpretation of his work is done in the light of these extraliterary details.

Yoko Tawada, a German-Japanese writer, poet and essayist, compares this kind of forceful handling to being made to wear a mask. She explains her point in an essay where, in an imagined conversation with her mother, the mother is surprised at how Asian her daughter's face has become, meaning by that: "Du hast ein fremdes Gesicht bekommen; wie die Japaner, die in amerikanischen Filmen auftreten." (Tawada 1999: 53) Tawada then goes on to describe, using the metaphor of the mask, the process of reception of the foreign-faced author: "Die Erwartungen der Betrachter erzeugen Masken, und die wachsen ins Fleisch der Fremden hinein. So werden stets die Blicke der anderen ins eigene Gesicht eingeschrieben." (ib. 53)

These masks come in different shapes and sizes. The one that is particularly hard to remove is the mask of exoticism that writers of African, Asian and especially of Arabian origin are made to wear. According to Iman O. Khalil, Arabian writers are trapped in either the

part of the oriental storyteller or of Shehrazade from which it follows that:

Die literarische Produktion eines Autors oder einer Autorin aus dem arabischen Sprach- und Kulturraum wird oft voreilig als Darstellung orientalischer Exotik, als Folklore im Stile von Tausendundeiner Nacht aufgefasst. So erscheint der Araber als Märchenerzähler, die Araberin als Sheherazade. Ihre Wundergeschichten scheinen dazu geeignet, in eskapistischer Manier den Leser in eine Zauberwelt zu entführen. (Khalil 1997: 120)

In his satirical poem-essay "Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei", the Turkish-German author Zafer Şenocak too criticises this tendency to exoticise the writer and his work:

wir berauschen euch (...)
 eure Phantasie ist unsere Wirklichkeit
 unsere Wirklichkeit eure Phantasie
 unsere Wirklichkeit ist Phantasie
 so kommen wir ohne Phantasie aus
 in unserer Wirklichkeit von euch
 so haben wir ein Leben in euren Träumen
 und das ist legal
 ein anderes Leben haben wir unter euch
 und unter euch ist unser Leben illegal
 (Şenocak 1994: 64)

However, Şenocak's criticism goes beyond the purely literary in that he also refers to the political situation of the immigrants in general. He objects to the German reading public's discriminative selectivity, regards it as a biased authority that is willing to accept only a limited part of what the foreign element has to offer. This selectivity extends here to the perception of the foreign author whose 'legal value' is restricted to the dreams and histories that he provides whereas in the dominating socio-political discourse the Turkish immigrant's existence in Germany is still often felt as illegal and disturbing.

As a fervent critic of exoticism in general, he objects to it when it is applied as much by the critics and reviewers as by the writers themselves, especially those who use exoticism as a marketing

strategy. Recurrent in his poems is the use of the metaphor the "market of stories" where the readership can acquire histories to its taste. The market of ideas however is also bound to inflation and it becomes increasingly difficult for the poet to "die Haut zu Markt zu tragen/ wo die Skalps immer billiger werden" (Şenocak 1991: 60) and Şenocak suggests that offering or rather providing the stories required by the market comes close to the prostitution of the oriental poet. In his essays too, Şenocak argues against a stereotyped perception of the Arabian writer and of the orient orientated reception of the writer's work. His observation on the reception of oriental literature by the European orientalists of the 19th century is also valid for present-day criticism:

Es ist, als läse man nicht den Gehalt aus den Texten der 'orientalischen' Dichter heraus, sondern die Texte in einen konstruierten Rahmen hinein. Lebensumstände, Charaktere und psychologische Hintergründe der einzelnen Dichter verschwinden in den Stereotypen, mit deren Hilfe man den Menschen, die Lebens- und Glaubensweise, sowie die Kunst des Orients zu erfassen können glaubt. (Şenocak 1994.1: 39)

He explicitly refers to this pre-constructed category into which the writer is put, a category that prevents other literary elements and reflections to be given any attention precisely because they go beyond or, in the critic's opinion, do not pertain to the category itself. As for the foreign author's handling of topics that are not deemed relevant, Şenocak goes on to say that: "Wenn türkische (...) Schriftsteller es wagen, Themen der Grossstadt, des modernen Lebens, Sexualität und Rollenwechsel zwischen den Geschlechtern, d.h. die Wirklichkeit in ihrer ganzen Komplexität auf experimentelle Art und Weise zu erfassen, fallen sie aus dem Blickwinkel." (Şenocak 1992: 68)

On the other hand, exoticism proves to be an excellent marketing strategy and it does sell extremely well. In Germany for instance, a great number of authors, such as Rafik Schami and Emine Sevgi Özdamar, both authors who use exoticism to great effect, are edited by two major German publishing houses (dtv and Kiepenheuer & Witsch) whereas authors, reluctant to exploit the same route, have to make do with smaller unknown publishers, resulting in a limited distribution and their works not being reprinted.

Indeed, the demands of the literary market seem to weigh heavier on the foreign as on the indigenous writer. The crucial point is that it is not only exoticism that sells well but ethnic and minority issues and problems do fare equally well, as Nigerian author Ben Okri remarks: "(...) to be a writer and to be black in Britain is to be in a corner. If you are not published because of color, you are read because of it." (Brennan 1990: 9)

These few examples show that migrant literature is conditioned in many ways and that the taste of the readership plays an important part. In post-1968 Germany, immigrant literature, was coined 'Literatur der Betroffenheit', as it harked back to the readership social conscience and fed its interest to know about life in the margins of the dominant society. Needless to say that the literariness of the texts got neglected as the socio-cultural content of the books was what determined them in the eyes of the critics and the readership.

This attitude however put the writers in a tight spot as the writing required or which was considered 'sellable' had not much to do with the writers' literary preoccupations. The ensuing situation was a tricky one as either way it would and could not be satisfactory. Either the writer continued to exploit his origins and get published by a major press, or he could focus on his literary aim but risk then not to get published at all. For the English-Caribbean poet David Dabbydeen, this situation does not really present a choice as, either way it restricts the writer to the subaltern's position since the only options available are to become either "Ariel" or "Caliban":

The pressure now is towards mimicry. Either you drop the epithet 'black' and think of yourself as a 'writer' (...) — that is, you cease dwelling on the nigger/tribal/nationalistic theme, you cease folkling up the literature, and you become 'universal' — or else you perish in the backwater of small presses, you don't get published by the 'quality' presses, and you don't receive the corresponding patronage of mediahype. This is how the threat against us is presented. Alison Daiches, summarizing these issues, puts them in a historical context: the pressure is to become mulatto and house-nigger (Ariel) rather than stay a field-nigger (Caliban). (Dabydeen 1990: 12–13)

On the other hand, no matter how stifling the media's and reader-ship's pressures may be perceived, it is undeniable that it does have a positive effect and were it only to get published at all. The example of Ishiguro is a very interesting case in point. When Salman Rushdie was awarded both the Booker Prize and the Booker of Bookers in 1981 for *Midnight's Children*, the publishing industry was quick to recognize the selling potential of writers from the 'outside'. Ishiguro himself is very aware of why his first novels were immediately successful and this had as much to do with his ethnicity as his literary accomplishments:

That was a real symbolic moment [Rushdie's Booker awards], and then everyone was suddenly looking for Rushdie's. It so happened that around this time I brought out *A Pale View of Hills*. Usually first novels disappear, as you know, without a trace. Yet I received a lot of attention, got lots of coverage, and did a lot of interviews. I know why this was. It was because I had this Japanese face and this Japanese name and it was what was being covered at the time. (Vorda 1993: 9)

However, since the publication of his first novel *A Pale View of Hills* (1982), Kazuo Ishiguro had his fair share of exoticism forced onto him. Not only were the reviews of his novels littered with references to the most common Japanese stereotypes such as sumo wrestling, geishas and Toyota cars, but he was also given the nickname: "the Shogun of Sydenham" (Morrison 1989: 35). Even though in the beginning this kind of ethnic stereotyping had its positive sides as "it gave him a distinct marketable image" in a literary climate "where there was an active search for non-native English writers" (Lewis 2000: 9), the disadvantages and limits soon became apparent, as Ishiguro states in an even earlier interview:

These stereotypes are all right as part of a publicity game. Where it starts to get irritating is when people read your work in a certain sort of way: it seems my Japanese novels are so exotic and remote that I could have written bizarre Márquezian or Kafkaesque stuff and people would still have taken it as straight realism. I've always struggled with the literal-minded tendency in British audiences. (Morrison 1989: 35)

A further difficulty Ishiguro is referring to in this statement concerns the "erroneous" interpretation or more precisely the underlying assumption that that which is being narrated must necessarily be "real", i.e. it must correspond with the circumstances of the author's life. This in turn leads to interpretations which fail to look beneath the surface of the text. Indeed social realism seems the only mode acceptable and everything that goes beyond it is not taken into consideration as, like Ishiguro says, all is taken literally. Given this fact, it is apparent that the conditioning exceeds the content matter only but also affects the literary mode: realism is permitted as it fulfils the requirement to inform the reader as the writer is fixed in the position of the cultural mediator, and so is the mode of the fantastic because of its inherent entertainment value.

These examples and observations lead to the following question: What seems to be the inherent problem embedded in the reception of a non-indigenous, of a foreign writer?

A literary movement, such as migrant literature for instance, that not only puts aesthetical and poetical innovation on its agenda but also seeks inspiration in different literary and cultural traditions, places the critic in front of a new given. As George Steiner notes in his essay-lecture 'What is comparative Literature':

We seek to understand, to 'place the object before us — the text, the painting, the sonata — by giving it the intelligible, informing context of previous and related experience. We look, intuitively, to analogy and precedent, to the traits as of a family (...) which relate the work that is new to us to a recognizable context. In the case of radical innovation, of a poetic or representational or musical structure, which strikes us as in some ways unprecedented, the process of response is a complex motion towards the incorporation of the new into the known. (Steiner 1995: 1)

However, while this mode of interpretation is certainly valid and acceptable, it is not without its risks. Trying to comprehend the unknown through the familiar or, as Susan Sontag would say: "(...) plucking a set of elements (the X, the Y, the Z and so forth) from the whole text" (Sontag 1972: 654), in order to transcribe and to translate them into a known and intelligible context, in short to find a

hermeneutic equivalent, comes down to "(...) [taming] the work of art." (ib. 656) The originality of the work gets lost in the name of a fragmented and reduced legibility and understanding. Furthermore, the critics, reviewers and the writers risk to become mere translators¹, with the critic figuring as the decoder of the foreign culture and the writer playing the part of the mediator between cultures.

This kind of procedure destroys the author's effort which, more often than not, is to alienate the reader: the different and the new cannot fully develop as they collide with the barriers of the known, the recognizable and the legible. Or, to phrase the dilemma differently: what happens to the foreign or migrant writer who enters the literary scene, to use Octavio Paz's words, "par la porte d'entrée de l'Occident" (Casanova 1999: 119)? His feelings must resemble those of Steiner's counter-classic writer penetrating the house of established literary tradition: "The classic writer (...) moves into a house richly furnished, its mirrors, as it were, radiant with the presence of preceding tenants. The counter-classic writer finds himself in a veritable prison-house of language." (Steiner 1995: 2) His situation is akin to the migrant writer's experience given that the problem here is also one of missing critical language and terminology, or to speak with Salman Rushdie: "I am being enveloped in, and described by a language that does not fit me." (Rushdie 1991: 405)

In matters of reception and especially in arguing against a standardized one, migrant literature has had its predecessor for there exists an almost genetic relationship between migrant and postcolonial literature. This is not only due to the conjunction of certain themes (e.g. the construction of identity, the conceptualization of hybridity, the multilingualism of the texts etc...) but it is moreover the criticism voiced against the literary authority exerted by the western literary centres that links these two movements. As an ex-centric literature with a centripetal drive, postcolonial literature was one of the first movements to unsettle the authority of the occidental centres. Postcolonial literature, by demanding an open perspective, capable to accommodate the heterogeneous and the different instead of a monolithic and Eurocentric one, has opened up that breach in the reception processes that migrant literature profits of today.

¹ «The task of interpretation is virtually an act of translation», Susan Sontag, p. 654

The literary text produced by the migrant/foreign author gives rise to the confusion of the reader/critic by placing him in front of a text that remains partly enigmatic if the reader approaches it with his usual reading experience. The text remains closed and inaccessible if the reader, as Schmitz-Emans notes, does not suspend, during the reading process, the imprint of his own culture: “[Dem] Leser wird zugemutet, zu seiner eignen kulturellen Prägung zumindest vorübergehend auf Distanz zu rücken.” (Schmitz-Emans 2001: 258–259) The reading of the text is akin to an adventure that one undertakes, leaving behind the familiar and habitual indications and reference points. Reading is transformed into the encounter with new and unknown symbols that are situated outside the norms and limits of the cultural experience of the reader/critic. Steinmetz describes the reader’s progress on foreign soil, so to speak, as follows:

Die Werke rufen etwas auf, richten sich auf etwas, das jenseits der Sinnordnung und der Leserfahrung liegt. Sie behandeln Fremdes, werden selbst gewissermaßen fremd und entziehen sich so dem Zugriff von der Sinnordnung her. Sie fordern vom Leser andere als die gewohnten und bewährten Konkretisierungsmethoden.(...) Er muss sich in Unbekanntes vorwagen, die erprobten, kollektiv fundierten Konkretisierungswege verlassen. **Sie nämlich reichen nicht mehr zu, das Neue, das Fremde zu erfassen.** (Steinmetz 1997: 85–86)

Steinmetz’s process remains an ideal approach of the foreign text for it is still mostly Steiner’s approach that is practised.

In order for the foreign author to escape this impasse, to avoid standardised and stereotypical interpretations and reviews, he has to break out of the implicit contract that seems to exist between himself and the reviewers, has to try and to induce a change in perception and reception by not meeting their horizon of expectation.

It could be said that Kazuo Ishiguro has, in a way, succeeded in doing this. After the publication of his first two novels *A Pale View of Hills* (1982) and *An Artist of the Floating World* (1986), two novels that are set in post-war Japan, Ishiguro was largely received as a Japanese author writing about Japan although the Japan described in his novels is fictional and only serves as the background to the stories, and Japaneseness as such is never a topic.

His third novel *The Remains of the Day* (1989) is set in England and relates the story of an old butler reminiscing about his years in the service of his former employer. This novel with its underlying critique of English imperialism, identity based on imperialism and the relation between colonizer and colonized, constitutes Ishiguro's first attempt to move away from the imposed label of 'Japanese writer'.

However, this was hardly recognized by the reviewers. Even though the novel was described as 'a perfect English novel', most of the reviewers continued to insert Ishiguro in the category of the ethnic writer, highlighting the supposedly Japanese characteristics of the novel. The butler's attention to detail for instance gets compared to the skill of an origami artist and his:

(...) insistence on ritual; his stoicism in performing his duties, especially in the face of adversity; his loyalty to his master that conflicts with his humanity — all these are prominent aspects of the Japanese collective psyche and Ishiguro imbues his description of Steven's world with a fine Japanese sensibility. (Gurewich 1989: 80)

As such the reviews are not only disappointing because of their fixation on the origin of the author but what disconcerts further is the display of authority and presumption in pinning down the author's intentions:

The Remains of the Day may just seem a small, private English novel done to — Japanese — perfection; (...). To anyone familiar with Japan, however, the author's real intention slips out as surely as a business card from a Savile Row suit. (...) *The Remains of the Day* is a perfectly English novel that could only have been written by a Japanese. (Iyer 1991: 586)

The writer is then stigmatized by the identity indicated by his foreign sounding name, his 'exotic' appearance, and his nationality. Apart from the fact that the critics often try to restrict the author to his ethnic identity, they moreover perform a kind of forced cultural repatriation (Connor 1996: 107) to a country and a culture the author, who has been living in England since the age of five, does no longer identify with.

This first attempt of breaking out having failed, Ishiguro takes up the challenge with the publication of *The Unconsoled*. Here the

alienation of the reader is almost complete because the novel is not only vaguely set in some Eastern European country, omitting all references of space and time, but this time it really compels the reader to read the novel outside the categories of Japaneseness that the reviewers and critics had constructed for him.

The Unconsoled, since it was atypical and because the author dared something new and unusual, failed to impress. Expecting a follow-up to the previous novel, a kind of *Son of the Remains of the Day* or *The Remains of the Day: The Sequel* (Lewis 2000: 142), the reviewers were confused and did not know what to do with the main character, a musician on his journey to an unknown city where he prepares for a concert that will never take place. The intrigue itself is kept in a metaphoric, enigmatic, oneiric style and a context reminiscent of Kafka.

Finally, even if the main themes explored in the novels are not really new, Ishiguro nevertheless proceeds to an almost complete break with his former style. Consequently, the novel because it ventures beyond the fringes of the usual categories, got very bad reviews and is described as “inventing it’s own category of badness” (Wood 1995: 5), “a monument of boredom” (Wilhelmus 1996: 322) and one particular reviewer considers it to be worse than the worst of Chinese water torture (Rorem 1996: 159). The bewilderment of the reviewers who are faced with a novel that they cannot situate and even less analyse with their habitual tools reserved for the migrant writer, is considerable: “What has gone wrong?...It’s almost as if the elegant butler in *The Remains of the Day*...has suddenly thrown his sleek, constraining waistcoat away, stripped off and gone on a dangerous, unruly bender.” (Kellaway 1995: 6)

The disappointment and most of all the confusion of the critics are understandable but they may well have been Ishiguro’s intent. His deviation from the prescribed path, his refusal to meet the reviewer’s horizon of expectation, constitutes his personal act of defiance. Without wanting to link his drastic change of style solely to his act of breaking out, it should nevertheless be considered as a very determined act which culminates in the impossibility of an easy labelling and an arbitrary categorisation. His act of defiance is commented on favourably by this other great adversary of literary taxonomy, Salman Rushdie, who writes about *The Unconsoled*: “Ishiguro has done something remarkable. He has said, ‘I am going to be

someone else'." (Kellaway 1995: 6) And it does indeed seem as though Ishiguro has succeeded to dress his own parameters of interpretation concerning both his literary person and novels.

Zafer Şenocak too is reluctant to permit an easy labelling of his work. This is also one of the reasons why he abandoned poetry because as a poet of Arabian origin, whose trademark, as he claims, is the metaphor (Şenocak 1992.2: 100), the trap of exoticism invariably, could never be far, as Ulrich Johannes Beil points out: "Şenocak mag mit den Jahren mehr und mehr zu der Auffassung gekommen sein, es schliesse derjenige, der 'heute noch' Metaphern gebraucht, im deutschsprachigen Kontext sich aus dem Bereich akzeptierter Literatur aus und tappe unweigerlich in die Falle des Exotismus (der 'Migrantenliteratur', des Märchenerzählers, des 'Poesie-Clowns')." (Beil 2003: 35) His prose texts in turn do explore such topics as cultural hybridity, fragmented identity, a quest of belonging etc. but rather than limiting these issues to the migrant's reality and situation, he links them more explicitly to the postmodern condition. Şenocak's prose is dense, often enigmatic and the texts cannot be understood if they are analysed solely through the prism of the migrant problematic. His bewilderment of the critic can moreover be found, for instance, in the negative hermeneutic code he advocates for:

Dort wo das Verstehen des Anderen nicht mehr weiterführt, könnte so etwas wie eine negative Hermeneutik ein Ausweg sein. Nicht mehr das vermeintlich Verstandene, sondern das, was nicht verstanden wird, sollte in den Blick gerückt werden, das Unverdauliche, das, was aufstösst, Tabus und Grenzen verletzt. Erst dann beginnt ein Werk (...) tatsächlich zu wirken, anstatt eingemeindet und dadurch domestiziert zu werden. (Şenocak 1994.3: 28)

He seems to apply this negative hermeneutic in his texts, deliberately telling stories: "(...) in denen Zeichen sich der Entschlüsselung radikal entziehen, Rätsel auf immer ungelöst bleiben, die Welt heillos undurchdringlich ist." (Schmitz-Emans 2004: 11)

To conclude then, it becomes apparent that the reception of the foreign author is a very intricate matter indeed and as for clear guidelines or rules, they are very difficult if not impossible to establish. Şenocak's negative hermeneutic is situated at exactly the opposite end of what Steiner suggests. Some kind of middle ground could be

helpful here, where the same and the known would not omit to acknowledge the different and the unknown and thus permit the foreign author's literary idiosyncrasies to emerge and lessen the focus on his otherwise stifling ethnicity.

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La littérature d'immigration et les dynamiques de la réception. À partir de l'exemple de Yamina Benguigui

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Le soi ne se connaît pas de façon immédiate mais seulement de façon indirecte, par un détour à travers différents signes culturels (Ricoeur 1991: 44)

Comment définir la réception? Pour la définir, faut-il avoir recours à l'ensemble des dynamiques d'interaction qui s'instaurent entre les éléments de la production et les pratiques de la réception? Est-ce que la réception est entièrement dissociable de la production? Ou bien, la réception concerne-t-elle seulement l'interaction entre deux cultures totalement différentes? Et encore, est-ce que la réception n'a rien à voir avec le politique? Évidemment il est difficile de répondre à toutes ces questions de manière univoque et définitive dans une courte contribution, car il y a plusieurs façons d'expliquer la réception. Et les nombreuses théories qui essaient de définir ce passage d'une altérité à une identité — de l'autre au même — témoignent de cette difficulté. Il suffit, à ce sujet, de citer Iser et Jauss, ou Eco et Ricoeur¹. Souvent la plupart de ces théories mettent l'accent sur le rôle joué par le sujet qui 'reçoit' l'autre, sur l'expérience directe qui permet ce passage des frontières, sur les compétences demandées par cet acte de lecture des phénomènes: sujet, expérience et compétences sont des termes clés de ces théories. Toutefois, plutôt que de parler des théories de la réception et de m'en servir pour expliquer la force interprétative de leur métalangage, je voudrais renverser la problématique et essayer

¹ Cf., en particulier, Iser 1985; Jauss 1978; Eco 1985; Ricoeur 1969.

d'aborder ces questions par un détour pratique, en prenant un exemple concret: celui précisément de Yamina Benguigui, et de son livre intitulé *Inch'Allah Dimanche*, afin d'essayer de voir de près comment la réception de l'altérité s'inscrit dans un texte précis et par quelles stratégies spécifiques on fait passer une identité culturelle. Car, c'est bien de cela qu'il s'agit: des cas concrets de réception peuvent être des exemples à partir desquels discuter les dynamiques d'interaction plus abstraites qui s'instaurent entre la production et la réception. C'est bien au travers de l'analyse de ces pratiques littéraires — en suivant un parcours inductif qui va de l'exemple concret à la théorie abstraite — qu'on peut arriver à saisir les anciennes formes littéraires et à en créer de nouvelles. Le fait de partir d'un exemple concret implique évidemment une prise de position théorique. Rappelons d'abord, si besoin est, que sujet, expérience et compétence ne sont pas des entités saisissables une fois pour toutes et de manière abstraite. Qu'est-ce, au juste, qu'un 'sujet', une 'expérience' ou, encore, la 'compétence'? Quels sont les critères qui peuvent aider à déterminer leur essence, leur fonction, leur véritable signification? De mon point de vue, ces entités sont destinées à demeurer abstraites, indéfinies et même évanescentes jusqu'à ce qu'elles se réalisent dans des textes qui les accueillent et dans lesquels elles trouvent un 'emplacement'. C'est pour cela que je voudrais commenter, précisément à partir de *Inch'Allah Dimanche*, certains passages clés de ce texte où l'expérience et la subjectivité se réalisent au travers de figures spécifiques. En utilisant cette approche, je ne veux pas affirmer qu'une position externaliste s'oppose à une position internaliste: dans ma perspective, les interactions sociales et les circonstances de vie se conjuguent avec les relations textuelles sans aucune priorité. Mais il faut souligner que, finalement, ce qui reste n'est pas l'événement dans son aspect temporel, phénoménologiquement volatil, mais sa trace écrite. Par conséquent, une manière de remonter aux 'faits référentiels' passe forcément par les textes, qu'ils soient visuels, enregistrés ou écrits. C'est sans doute pourquoi, dans le court fragment qui introduit son roman, Yamina Benguigui — en tant qu'auteur et narrateur de son livre — fait commencer le récit par l'explication des causes économiques et sociales qui ont créé un flux d'immigration en France. D'un point de vue sémiotique, on pourrait lire cette prémisse comme une *condensation* sémantique servant à expliquer la suite des événements. Sous cet angle, le roman pourrait alors être considéré comme une sorte

d'*expansion* sémantique qui développe ce qui est dit de manière succincte dans la prémisses :

Au lendemain de la Seconde Guerre mondiale, le gouvernement français assure son besoin de main-d'œuvre en recrutant massivement des Maghrébins, en particulier des Algériens. La loi ne leur permet pas de faire venir leur femmes et enfants: commence alors une migration d'hommes seuls. Pendant des décennies, ils vivent en transit, retournant au pays tous les deux ans.

1974. Le gouvernement français organise le regroupement familial qui autorise la venue des épouses et des enfants, afin de fixer cette main-d'œuvre dans le pays et de mettre un terme à toute nouvelle immigration (Benguigui 2001: 7).

L'explication des causes sociales et politiques est significative d'une manière de concevoir la fiction littéraire, une fiction qui, bien que telle, trouve sa motivation dans la réalité pour ensuite devenir texte. En d'autres termes, c'est une manière succincte de souligner le lien qui se crée entre la fiction, la vie vécue et les faits sociaux. Cette mise en évidence, dans la préface, des faits sociaux et économiques qui sont à la base de l'immigration n'est pas une coïncidence: cela montre la volonté de la part de l'auteur de situer historiquement la fiction et de créer un lecteur compétent pour recevoir les faits dont elle parle. L'auteur crée ainsi, dès le départ, un cercle de communication — représenté à l'intérieur du texte lui-même — entre un narrateur fictif et un lecteur impliqué qui sait situer les faits et peut les déchiffrer. En outre, et c'est là un point très important, cette explication qu'on retrouve dans la préface permet de voir qu'un acte de réception n'est pas seulement le passage (neutre et abstrait) d'une culture de départ à une culture d'arrivée, mais aussi un événement 'politique' qui implique des impositions et des choix, des contraintes et des libertés: en définitive, l'acte de réception et la dimension politique sont souvent étroitement liés dans ce type de littérature. Loin de vouloir s'arrêter sur les faits historiques (la France a été un pays colonial qui garde des relations avec les pays d'Afrique du Nord), on se limitera ici à souligner l'inscription 'textuelle' des causes 'réelles' qui ont provoqué un type particulier de littérature, notamment ce que j'appellerai ici la 'littérature d'immigration'. Il s'agit, pour être plus précis, d'une forme

d'écriture en partie autobiographique ou autofictionnelle où se 'déposent' les expériences vécues par des gens qui, pour des raisons différentes, abandonnent leur pays d'origine et vont vivre dans un pays étranger. La décision d'abandonner leur pays n'est pas le fruit d'un choix libre, mais le résultat de causes économiques et politiques. On peut alors affirmer que la littérature qui en découle est le produit de cette dynamique complexe (où les vies spécifiques des individus se relient aux éléments économiques et politiques), une interaction dans laquelle la réception et la production se mélangent. Cette dynamique se reflète dans la structure même d'*Inch 'Allah Dimanche*, un texte qui a pour fil conducteur le phénomène de l'immigration: le départ, l'arrivée et la rencontre sont les trois titres qui scandent ce que l'auteur considère comme les trois moments importants de ce parcours expérientiel. Et bien qu'elle soit spécifique de cette œuvre, cette structure nous amène à réfléchir sur un canon littéraire à l'intérieur duquel se situe un imaginaire caractérisé par des lieux thématiques récurrents. Malgré les variations, on retrouve à l'intérieur de ce canon littéraire des figures comme le 'départ' et l'abandon', le 'voyage' et l'arrivée', la 'nostalgie', la 'mémoire', l'intégration' ou le 'refus', autant de figures qui codifient l'immigration et la transforment en véritable genre littéraire. Si on accepte cette hypothèse, une piste de recherche s'ouvre pour la réception, une recherche qui consiste à voir quelles sont les ressemblances et les dissemblances entre les œuvres appartenant à ce genre littéraire. Cela veut dire aussi que le regard comparatif porté sur ce genre littéraire pourrait mettre en évidence les lieux privilégiés de l'imaginaire concernant l'immigration et, parallèlement, les manières spécifiques (et forcément variables) de 'devenir narration' de ces lieux thématiques récurrents que sont l'assimilation et le refus, le départ et l'abandon, le souvenir et la nostalgie. Mais ce qui est également important, dans ce type de littérature, est qu'elle présuppose l'imbrication du récit de vie (porteur de l'inscription d'une instance de production et des traces d'une identité mise en cause par l'expérience vécue) et la description critique de deux cultures en regard: celle du pays d'origine et celle du pays d'accueil. Grâce à ce procédé complexe, une instance de la réception s'inscrit dans le texte lui-même: c'est-à-dire la manière dont le narrateur reçoit la culture à l'intérieur de laquelle il se voit abruptement plongé et la manière dont il est reçu par cette même culture. En définitive, on entendra ici par littérature d'immigration une

écriture où s'entrelacent au moins trois éléments fondamentaux: (1) une identité narrative en devenir, (2) une modélisation spécifique à la fois de la production et de la réception et (3) la 'fictionalisation' de la migration.

- 1) En premier lieu, il s'agit de la mise en forme narrative d'une identité en train de changer, d'évoluer en raison de l'interaction qui s'établit entre un 'je' et un 'autre'², l'autre étant, en l'occurrence, toute une culture étrangère dans laquelle l'individu se trouve catapulté du jour au lendemain. Dans cette dialectique du même et de l'autre, le 'je' raconté essaye de conjuguer sa tradition de départ avec la culture d'arrivée, en mettant en œuvre sa propre manière particulière de 'recevoir' les signes et de s'adapter à tout un monde nouveau, inconnu et assez souvent très redouté ou méprisé. Cela implique une restructuration, pour le sujet, de sa personnalité et de son bagage d'expériences et de compétences: une mise en question totale de son identité et de sa propre manière de réagir aux situations nouvelles.
- 2) En deuxième lieu, on repère dans ces textes une réflexion — de la part de ces écrivains immigrés — sur les aspects de la culture qu'ils jugent comme fondamentaux et qu'ils veulent transmettre à la culture d'accueil; et, par conséquent, aussi une réflexion concernant les possibles réactions de la culture 'autre' à laquelle on adresse ce type de production littéraire. En d'autres termes, dans ce type de littérature les écrivains sont en quelque sorte obligés de prévoir — déjà à partir de leur propre production — un certain type de réception, une réception qui est dès lors inscrite auparavant dans le texte lui-même.
- 3) Finalement, bien que les événements racontés dans ces textes soient liés à des faits vécus par les écrivains eux-mêmes ou par leur entourage, il s'agit tout de même de la création d'un type de fiction, d'un type de littérature qui est le produit d'un déplacement migratoire. En dernière analyse, cette littérature permet la mise en

² Cf., à ce propos, Ricœur 1991: 35–47. Selon Ricœur: « la réception du récit par le lecteur est le lieu d'une multiplicité de modalités qui s'intitulent *identification* [...] nous nous demandons ce que signifie identifier une personne, s'identifier soi-même, être identique à soi-même, et voici que, sur la voie de l'identification du soi, se glisse l'identification avec un autre, de façon réelle dans le récit historique, de façon irréelle dans le récit de fiction » (*ibid.*: 45).

forme de véritables canons littéraires porteurs d'une codification culturelle et d'une stylistique spécifique.

À l'intérieur de ce panorama littéraire, le choix de Yamina Benguigui est donc pertinent pour une étude sur les principes esthétiques de ce type d'écriture et pour une réflexion sur les formes de réception inscrites dans son texte. Écrivain et réalisatrice algérienne née à Lille en 1957, Benguigui est une immigrée de la deuxième génération³. Ce fut principalement son père, culturellement très lié à ses traditions, qui l'obligea à 'choisir' la nationalité algérienne. Quant à elle, elle aurait préféré choisir dès le départ la nationalité française — ce qu'ensuite elle a fait en décidant de suivre le difficile parcours de la 'réintégration' en France⁴. Dès sa naissance, Benguigui a donc vécu en marge de deux cultures différentes: l'une (algérienne) trop distante pour être véritablement absorbée, l'autre (française) qui ne lui appartenait pas, ou du moins qui n'appartenait certainement pas à ses parents. Et la description qu'elle fait de son enfance est, en ce sens, très significative: «Tout petits, à la maison nous vivions en Algérie mais dès qu'on ouvrait la porte nous nous retrouvions en France.» (Benguigui, site Internet *laboratorioimmaginedonna.it*, ma trad.). Benguigui appartient donc à la catégorie de ce qu'on définit en anthropologie comme des *halfies*⁵, c'est-à-dire des personnes appartenant à la fois à deux cultures différentes. D'un point de vue anthropologique, la situation vécue par les *halfies* représente un phénomène important à étudier, car non seulement ces personnes sont culturellement porteuses de traits culturels hétérogènes et riches, mais elles sont en outre constamment soumises au jour le jour à des situations de réception et de traduction de signes culturels inconnus et nouveaux. Toutefois, au lieu de pouvoir librement exprimer toute la richesse culturelle dont ils sont les représentants, la plupart des immigrés sont destinés à une condition d'existence assez douloureuse: loin de leur pays d'origine et rejetés à la périphérie de la société d'accueil, ces immigrés ont le sentiment d'un double exil, à la fois physique et identitaire. «Je crois savoir

³ À cause de la guerre en Algérie et surtout de l'adhésion du père au Mouvement National Algérien, ces furent ses parents qui durent aller chercher refuge en France et qui décidèrent d'y rester.

⁴ Décision qu'elle a pris à cause de la mentalité 'trop algérienne' de son père, convaincu que les filles ne peuvent pas choisir leur destin et que les parents peuvent et doivent décider pour elles.

⁵ Cf. L. Abu-Lughod 1991: 137-162.

maintenant ce qu'est être citoyen ! Nous étions sans cesse d'ici et de là-bas, alors que nous n'étions rien là-bas où nous ne sommes que des émigrés, en décalage total, notamment au niveau de l'émancipation des filles » (in Barlet 2001). Autrement dit, en décalage par rapport aux évolutions culturelles du pays d'origine (et jamais véritablement acceptés par le pays d'accueil), les immigrés ont souvent le sentiment de n'être définitivement « ni d'ici, ni de là-bas » (Benguigui, site Internet *euromedcafe.org*). C'est donc précisément à cause du partage entre deux cultures différentes et 'distantes' qu'un immigré a la sensation de vivre dans un état identitaire limbique: il se sent suspendu entre, d'une part, une manière de penser et de vivre provenant du pays de ses propres origines familiales et, de l'autre, les influences culturelles exercées par le pays d'accueil. Et cela avec la conscience pénible de l'impossibilité d'une intégration complète dans le pays d'accueil et la certitude douloureuse que ce même pays (en l'occurrence, la France) est la seule patrie qu'il leur reste. Dans ce partage de cultures différentes, la réception joue un rôle important: le sujet est soumis à des processus continus d'interprétation de signes (culturels) qu'il ne connaît pas et qu'il doit déchiffrer, comprendre, évaluer, assimiler, accepter ou refuser. En même temps, ce même sujet peut à son tour devenir l'émetteur d'une nouvelle 'production' de signes (culturels et littéraires) qui contiennent les traces d'une culture 'autre' (celle du pays d'origine) que le pays d'accueil doit à son tour 'recevoir'. C'est précisément dans cette dynamique complexe de va-et-vient entre deux cultures, où la réception et la production se mêlent continuellement, que se situe l'œuvre de Benguigui: fille d'immigrés vivant en France depuis sa naissance, elle se sent appartenir à une autre culture. Pour cette raison, elle écrit un texte qui garde les traces aussi bien de sa propre réception que de la culture d'accueil.

Bien évidemment, l'histoire raconté dans *Inch'Allah dimanche* contient tous ces éléments. Cette histoire⁶ a pour protagoniste une femme algérienne, Zouina, obligée de rejoindre son mari en Picardie, un mari que, comme toutes les algériennes, elle ne connaît pas vraiment: premièrement, parce qu'elle l'a épousé par respect de la volonté du père (qui a organisé le mariage), et puis aussi parce qu'au lendemain même du mariage son mari était parti pour aller travailler

⁶ Bien qu'elle ait été suggérée par les souvenirs de la mère de Benguigui, cette histoire reste quand même fictive.

en France. Après avoir vécu sous le toit de sa mère, en Algérie, ses dix premières années de mariage et avoir vu son mari seulement une fois tous les deux ans — et à chaque fois juste le temps nécessaire pour faire un nouvel enfant —, Zouina est arrachée à sa famille et se retrouve dans un pays étranger (la France) et une vie familiale qu'elle ne connaît pas. Toutefois, bien que soumise constamment aux signes dépayés de la nouvelle culture dans laquelle Zouina est contrainte de vivre, le lecteur s'aperçoit vite que le problème ne concerne pas tant la compréhension ou l'acceptation de ces signes étrangers, qu'elle observe avec admiration, mais l'incompréhension des signes rétrogrades qui proviennent de sa culture de départ (s'agissant de traditions liées à une certaine mentalité algérienne qu'elle ne partage pas): d'une part, il y a la belle-mère, très méchante, la véritable patronne de la maison, qui se permet de s'interposer constamment entre Zouina et son mari et qui contrôle et dirige tout ce que fait sa belle-fille; de l'autre, on voit un mari avec lequel il n'y a pas de communication, qui se comporte en maître, frappe sa femme quand il est fâché contre elle, l'empêche de sortir et d'avoir une vraie vie en France. Après une première période dans cette nouvelle maison française devenue une prison étouffante, Zouina découvre qu'il y a en ville une autre famille algérienne. Cette découverte la pousse à sortir en cachette (pendant que son mari est sorti avec sa belle-mère) pour aller rencontrer la femme de cet autre famille algérienne dans l'espoir que celle-ci puisse comprendre sa solitude et son désespoir et l'aider à rentrer en Algérie. Malheureusement, cette rencontre si cherchée et souhaitée se révélera une nouvelle et tragique déception car la femme qu'elle rencontre (bien que vivant en France déjà depuis quinze ans) est, elle aussi, profondément influencée par une certaine culture algérienne où les hommes sont les maîtres et les femmes sont soumises à leurs volontés. Cependant, malgré cette vision négative de la culture algérienne, le roman se termine de manière positive: par un nouveau début dans lequel Zouina décide de reprendre en main sa vie et de montrer au mari qu'elle est capable de se révolter contre toute une série d'interdits. Ce nouveau départ est associé à un ensemble de gestes culturellement interdits et, par là même, symboliquement forts de Zouina: ainsi, elle sort toute seule de la maison sans la permission de son mari, enlève son foulard pour montrer ses cheveux, prend l'autobus, se met même à côté du conducteur, lui parle et lui sourit. Son mari, quant à lui, 'reçoit' tous ces signes non pas comme un défi

inacceptable pour sa culture algérienne de départ mais comme l'intégration naturelle et inévitable à une partie de la culture française.

Dans l'ensemble, on voit que le texte insiste sur des figures qui définissent cette littérature d'immigration; en même temps, ces figures focalisent l'attention sur la condition de l'immigré, la condition d'une personne dont le présent est suspendu entre le passé qui retourne de manière incessante et le futur toujours incertain:

Zouina s'assoit au bord du lit, en face des deux valises posées contre le mur, celles qu'elle va emporter aujourd'hui. Il lui semble qu'elles contiennent tout son avenir. Zouina les regarde, les fixes intensément. Quand on fixe l'avenir, c'est le passé qu'on voit [...] (Benguigui 2001: 12).

La condition de vulnérabilité émotive et d'instabilité cognitive que vit le personnage est ici mise en relief à travers le rôle joué par les valises. Si, d'une manière générale, les valises symbolisent le voyage et le déplacement, dans ce cas spécifique elles se chargent d'une signification supplémentaire: elles contiennent tous les biens de Zouina, des biens qui appartiennent à son passé, à son 'connu' et à tout un univers culturel de référence déjà acquis. Mais ces valises sont représentées ici comme un signe double qui conjugue les deux termes opposés d'un même plan de signification. Car ces valises renvoient aussi à un futur imprévu et incertain. Très efficacement, cette figure classique du voyage et du déplacement est utilisée ici afin de provoquer un sentiment de dépaysement et un amalgame indéfini entre le passé, le présent et le futur. Dans cet amalgame temporel, le passé de Zouina se rétrécit jusqu'à devenir l'espace minuscule d'une valise alors que le futur se bloque dans l'immobilité de cette image, dans la clôture de l'espace réduit qui entoure le personnage. De ce point de vue, l'organisation spatiale est significative: le lit n'est qu'un «bord», les valises sont «en face» de Zouina d'une manière presque conflictuelle et la partie de la maison «contre» laquelle elles sont appuyées est le «mur», une sorte de frontière qui marque la séparation entre l'intérieur et l'extérieur et, dans ce cas particulier, entre le présent et le futur. Cette suspension temporelle est réitérée à plusieurs reprises dans le texte:

Contre un des murs de la pièce [...] de multiples cartons, certains ouverts, d'autres fermés, soigneusement

empilés, ne permettent pas de savoir si celui qui vit ici vient juste d'arriver ou s'apprête à partir (Benguigui 2001: 36).

Bien que, dans ce fragment de texte, les valises soient remplacées par de plus modestes cartons, il reste l'idée que ces contenants 'précieux' se chargent d'entasser tous les biens et, avec eux, aussi les repères cognitifs du sujet qui les possède. Ces objets personnels réunis dans des cartons renvoient à la temporalité incertaine de leur état et à la recherche, de la part de leur propriétaire, d'un endroit définitif et stable où les ranger. Avec cette réitération du thème du déplacement et du transit, on retrouve à nouveau la figure du mur, comme à vouloir souligner la présence de cet anti-actant, cet opposant aux projets (de 'fuite' ou bien de 'stabilisation') du sujet: c'est en effet le mur contre lequel sont empilés les cartons qui semble vouloir souligner la présence de l'obstacle à dépasser et arrêter la recherche menée par le sujet. Mais, pour revenir à notre problématique de la réception, ce qui est pertinent ici est le type de regard porté sur ces objets, un regard étranger et dépaysé qui observe, de l'extérieur, ce qu'il découvre au fur et à mesure que se déroule le processus de l'observation. Dans ce cas spécifique, il s'agit du regard que Zouina — à peine arrivée en France et entrée dans sa nouvelle habitation — porte sur les objets de son mari. C'est là une manière astucieuse de mettre en forme l'altérité et le type de saisie qu'on peut en avoir. D'ailleurs, le roman contient de nombreuses manifestations de ce type de regard dépaysé d'étranger. Et tous les personnages sont vus avec les yeux de l'Autre qui ne connaît pas et qui voit les êtres et les situations comme pour la première fois. Ainsi, le regard que Zouina porte sur son mari:

Le regard remonte ensuite lentement jusqu'au visage. «Tiens, pense-t-elle seulement, je ne me souvenais pas qu'il avait une moustache.» (Benguigui 2001: 29)

Le regard qu'elle porte sur sa belle-mère:

Aïcha se dirige vers sa valise, l'ouvre, en sort la peau de mouton *qui ne la quitte jamais*, s'assoit dessus, remue son imposant derrière, jusqu'à ce qu'il ait trouvé sa place, celle où il adhère le mieux, bien au centre. Dans un *cliquetis ininterrompu* de bracelets, elle défait son foulard de voyage qui laisse apparaître une

invraisemblable couche d'autres foulards aux couleurs *indéfinissables* (ib. 38, je souligne dans le texte)

Ou, pareillement, le regard étonné (et même dégoûté) que la voisine d'appartement porte sur Aïcha:

Devant les yeux *épouvantés* de Mme Donze, se déroule le spectacle *effrayant* de mains toutes noires qui s'agitent dans l'air, et d'un foulard bariolé qui retombe comme une visière dès qu'Aïcha remue la tête (ib. 52, je souligne dans le texte).

Les exemples peuvent être multipliés à l'infini. Il suffit de dire que les formes d'altérité qu'on retrouve à l'intérieur de cette littérature jouent le rôle de médiateur dans la réception du genre littéraire lui-même. Par exemple, comment se montre le 'je' (individuel ou collectif) de celui qui parle? Comment représente-t-on la culture de ce 'je' et, parallèlement, comment représente-t-on celle de l'autre? On voit bien qu'il ne s'agit pas de montrer deux cultures comme si elles étaient des blocs opposés, mais de voir quel regard porte un individu sur une culture différente, d'assouplir la force de l'étrangeté et, en même temps, de critiquer de l'intérieur sa propre culture. De la même manière, l'inscription dans le texte du regard porté sur l'immigré par un membre de la culture d'accueil (comme, par exemple, Mme Donze) montre toute la difficulté de comprendre ce qu'on ne connaît pas et qui, précisément pour cette même raison, 'épouvante' jusqu'au point de choquer ou, comme on dit dans le texte, d'effrayer' celui qui l'observe pour la première fois.

Un autre exemple représentatif de la problématique de la réception est le thème du départ. Dans *Inch'Allah dimanche*, le départ de l'Algérie, raconté dans la première partie, coïncide non seulement avec le début d'une nouvelle vie en France mais aussi avec la figure plus spécifique du réveil:

Zouina vient d'ouvrir les yeux. Elle sait qu'elle ne se rendormira pas. Le jour, d'ailleurs, n'est pas loin (ib. 11)

Structurellement, donc, l'incipit du roman, l'incipit d'une nouvelle journée et l'incipit d'une nouvelle vie coïncident. L'ouverture des yeux de Zouina sur un nouveau jour symbolise, comme par hasard, un nouveau début de vie. Dans ce cas spécifique, ce nouveau début est

décrit comme très négatif: l'abandon douloureux de sa mère et de sa maison, le départ pour la France, la rencontre avec cet inconnu qu'est le mari, la nouvelle vie dans une autre habitation et, qui plus est, avec une belle-mère qu'elle connaît déjà comme très hostile et avec laquelle elle n'a aucune valeur en commun. Or, cette coïncidence entre l'incipit d'un nouveau jour et celui d'une nouvelle vie resterait sans importance si on ne la retrouvait encore une fois, presque à la fin du roman, et précisément dans l'incipit du troisième chapitre intitulé «la rencontre»:

Zouina s'est levée encore plus tôt que de coutume (ib. 139).

Le début de cette nouvelle journée coïncide encore une fois avec un départ, mais cette fois-ci plus symbolique: la fuite en cachette de Zouina de sa nouvelle maison française dans le seul but d'aller à la recherche de l'autre famille algérienne qui vit en ville. Départ de la maison, départ d'un nouvel espoir, départ d'une nouvelle vie. Départ donc qui est encore une fois associé à un réveil mais qui cependant — contrairement à ce qu'on pourrait penser en lisant le titre de cette troisième partie — n'est pas positif, mais chargé d'une connotation négative car cette 'rencontre' avec l'autre femme algérienne se révèle être un échec et marque une déception ultérieure. Tout comme si l'auteur avait voulu insister sur une équation provenant de sa propre vision du monde: 'tout début de changement, toute approche vers l'inconnu ne peut être qu'un échec. Ouvrir les yeux sur une nouvelle réalité ne peut qu'avoir des conséquences négatives'. Or, ces réveils sont particulièrement heureux parce qu'ils permettent de saisir l'isomorphisme qui se crée entre la réception et la structure du texte, dans lequel le départ (de son propre pays, ou de sa maison) coïncide avec l'incipit de quelque chose. Dans cette optique, la structure du texte peut être vue comme une anticipation d'un type de réception où le départ physique et symbolique est perçu comme négatif et décevant.

De plus, le problème des compétences, mises à l'épreuve dans la nouvelle expérience de vie de Zouina, est posé dès le début. Malgré tous les points inconnus sur son avenir, Zouina garde une compétence presque phénoménologique, liée à l'expérience qu'elle a de son propre sommeil («Elle sait qu'elle ne se rendormira pas»). En d'autres termes, ce rapport complexe entre connaissances acquises et savoirs à apprendre, entre expérience vécue et phénomènes nouveaux est

esquissé dès le début. Cette même dialectique entre le connu et l'inconnu, entre son propre monde de référence familial et rassurant et celui qu'on va être forcé de découvrir et d'apprendre, est une nouvelle fois proposée, de manière significative, dans l'incipit du chapitre suivant, qui est consacré à «l'arrivée» dans le pays étranger:

Deux jours de voyage, deux jours épuisants, durant lesquels Zouina n'a rien vu, rien regardé, et la voilà qui attend devant l'entrée d'une gare. Tout ce qu'elle sait, c'est qu'il s'agit de la gare Saint-Quentin, la ville où Ahmed vit depuis dix ans. Un de ses oncles lui a vaguement expliqué que c'était une ville du Nord de la France. Ahmed ne lui a rien dit (ib. 27).

Le dépaysement passe à nouveau par le biais du regard et du savoir. Autrement dit, l'expérience phénoménologique, qui devrait avoir lieu à travers la vue, est niée par le manque de volonté de l'héroïne («Zouina n'a rien vu, [mais surtout, elle n'a] rien regardé»). Par contre, la réorganisation de sa propre connaissance se fait avec difficulté («Tout ce qu'elle sait» et «Ahmed ne lui a rien dit») et de manière vague («Un de ses oncles lui a *vaguement* expliqué»). Comme on le voit, il s'agit là, encore une fois, d'une forme de réception impliquée dans la construction du texte.

En guise de conclusion, je voudrais résumer les formes multiples de réception et les questions corrélées que nous avons rencontrées lors de l'analyse du texte.

- 1) Les formes de codification d'un genre d'écriture qui se dessine à travers des lieux thématiques récurrents tels que le 'départ' et l'abandon', le 'voyage' et l'arrivée', la 'nostalgie', la 'mémoire', l'intégration' ou le 'refus'.
- 2) La dialectique qui s'instaure entre la représentation de l'identité et de l'altérité à l'intérieur de ce genre et qui joue le rôle de médiateur dans la réception du genre lui-même.
- 3) La problématique concernant la littérarité du texte d'immigration. Il est clair qu'un texte comme *Inch'Allah dimanche* n'est pas comparable à la *Recherche* de Proust. Mais cette remarque doit faire réfléchir sur un trait tel que la simplicité considéré comme constitutif de la littérarité. Est-ce que la simplicité est le trait sur lequel se basent nos jugements évaluatifs ? En d'autres termes, la simplicité exclut-elle l'artisticité ? Ce serait comme dire que l'œuvre de Proust est belle parce qu'elle est complexe. Est-ce

qu'on pourrait aussi supposer que la simplicité est un trait constitutif de ce type de littérature ? Une simplicité qui, dès lors, pourrait être considérée comme une forme de réception élargie permettant l'accès à un public plus vaste. En définitive, peut-on penser que l'auteur simplifie afin d'atteindre un plus large public ? Une réflexion sur la réception doit porter conjointement sur les éléments qui rapprochent certains textes d'un même genre (comme la littérature d'immigration) et sur les traits qui sont associés aux mécanismes d'évaluation du fait littéraire.

- 4) Finalement, pour une théorie et pratique de la réception, le fait qu'avant même d'être écrivain, Benguigui est cinéaste n'est pas sans importance. Chez elle, le vécu personnel ainsi que la forme d'altérité transmise à travers ses œuvres, passent d'abord par une sémiotique visuelle et ensuite par sa traduction et son adaptation littéraire. Dès lors, pour pouvoir comprendre la littérature de Benguigui, l'interrogation sur les mécanismes de conversion entre deux codes sémiotiques différents (visuel et écrit) et sur l'influence spécifique que chacun de ces codes peut avoir sur la réception de ce genre littéraire et culturel est essentielle.

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Beyond the Provincial Literary Canon of the Nation: The Reception of Jorge Semprún's Discordant Voice Within the Spanish Tradition

TXETXU AGUADO

The reception of the literary works of Spanish writer Jorge Semprún is paradigmatic of a pervasive attitude in Spanish cultural and literary criticism. His participation in the French Resistance Movement during the Nazi occupation of France in the Second World War, his internment in the Buchenwald concentration camp, his survival and dedication to anti-Franco political activism during the Spanish dictatorship, his expulsion from the Spanish Communist Party in 1965, his being Minister of Culture from 1988 to 1991 in one of Felipe González's governments, and his publishing mainly in French (even though three of his major works were written in Spanish)¹ have undermined the reading of his novels and essays as being more political than literary, more foreign than national, more external than internal to Spanish cultural paradigms. Semprún was, and to a certain degree still is today, a figure that resists classification within Spanish literary canons and traditions, an author simultaneously excluded and included in this history. His terrain is the border, the unclear in-between. Traditional academic literary circles perceive this author and his writings as an uneasy other, as an outsider always on the verge of either being accepted or rejected within Spanish literary history. In Spain, a sector of the literary establishment still finds it difficult to deal with works

¹ These works are *Autobiografía de Federico Sánchez* (1977), *Federico Sánchez se despide de ustedes* (1993), and *Veinte años y un día* (2003).

that voluntarily situate themselves in between canons, languages, cultural traditions, and national identities.

In this essay, I will analyze how Semprún's writing claims a space of its own, a space that dispels with narrow-minded notions of belonging to a particular national literary tradition. I will also address how his works re-enact a particular memory of suffering and oppression that demands to be fully incorporated into those still too optimistic versions of Spanish history disdainful of discordant voices. For Semprún's works to be accepted into the Spanish canon then, a two-fold operation is needed. On the one hand, his aesthetic practice must be studied as belonging to a broader Spanish tradition; on the other, the politics of memory enacted in his books must in turn form part of a collective memory of the Spanish historical past.

Semprún Within the Spanish National Canon

It is still fairly common to attend literary conferences that are broad ranging in scope and interests and yet come across endless discussions about the national status of a particular author. Even in the plurilingual state that Spain is today (I put aside the very fashionable debate about its plurinational nature that exceeds the scope of this essay), it is not unusual to engage in a scholarly discussion to discern if a particular author who writes in a language other than Spanish should be included or not within canonical Spanish literary history. Conversely, for others, only authors writing in Catalan, for example, are distinguished with the honor of representing the Catalan nation outside of Spain (and possibly with the favor of receiving the always meager public funds destined for the publication of books) hence excluding the writers who publish in Spanish in Catalunya, writers who, in my opinion, are imbued with the same degree of Catalanness as those who write in Catalan.

Shouldn't we literary critics try to separate the national from the literary once and for all? Would it not be wiser for aesthetic values to claim a space of their own, a space independent of national attributes, one that would not essentialize the literary and turn it into a universal aesthetic criteria valid across space and time? Is it possible to even try?

Of course, this is not an easy task to accomplish since national literatures are the base upon which the nation-state builds its linguistic origins. This is accomplished by identifying a mode of narration that differentiates one state from another, one's own language from the other's native expression, one literary tradition from the one found on the other side of the national border, one's own stories from those belonging to foreigners. Consequently, national literatures become, what I would like to call, the rhetorical legs of the nation-state, the repository of national words, expressions, unique and distinctive ways of narrating and verbalizing our common belonging. This is so because national literatures are believed to reflect with words, with a linguistic apparatus, the soul of the nation, its spirit, the *raison d'être* of its existence. Their sole purpose is to remind the nationals of the primal foundation of the nation-state with its stories. Nation and state come together because the national literature, with the help of other disciplines and instruments, tells us so. It is the cement that inseparably unites one with the other.

What is worth pointing out here is that thanks to national literatures what was only an abstraction from its inception (the idea that the state represents a nation, that the nation is mirrored in the state) becomes concrete because it makes the state tangible for every national. The nation-state is given a materiality in the words, thoughts, and situations of the nation reconstructed (I would even say invented) by the fathers (not by the many mothers) of the literary state. Literature is the real we can easily identify with in those situations when there is no self-evident reality of a nation-state to relate to. It provides the pathos, the emotion, and pity needed by the faceless state so that it can justify its coming into being and its claiming to represent the community of feeling of those involved in the nation. At the same time, national literatures render the ethos, the distinctive and differentiated character of a group, accessible to the nation, a reality much needed in order to distinguish between and distance ourselves from the outsider. If the union of state and nation is not as natural and external to the passing of time (i.e., something outside history) as defenders of the nation-state would like us to believe, it is thanks to literature (in a broad sense and, of course, among other discourses) that this relation becomes naturalized, that is to say, real, concrete, and part of those that comfortably identify themselves as the nationals of a particular nation-state.

Semprún's literary pieces could never be incorporated into a national literature of the kind described here given that his writing defies the very existence of a perfectly homogenous national literature and of its nation-state. His belonging to several non-exclusive backgrounds, his writing in at least two languages and within two national literary traditions, French and Spanish, and his being a political exile during the Franco dictatorship (at a time when being "Spanish" meant partaking of the values of the regime) places him in an obscure and unclassifiable border within Spain and within the literature that claims to represent its essence. His writings are not perceived as reaffirming the values of official Spanish culture hence making some critics even question labeling his work Spanish.

Semprún's writing bring to the foreground an interesting contradiction at play in the work of many literary historians, namely, that ethnic origins underlie the classification of the literary and the aesthetic. But what happens when the association of a particular author, like Semprún, to a nation or to a state is not crystal clear? What is at stake when the literary space delimited by the nation-state cannot give a convincing answer — a classificatory one — to a writer belonging to several ethnic groups and families of languages at the same time, as is the case in many eastern European countries? What occurs when the shrinkage of identities imposed by the nation-state is neither accepted nor taken for granted by many of its so-called nationals?

We are not only dealing here with a method of arranging and organizing a literary canon but also with the principles upon which the elimination of heterodoxy has been justified in the past. Semprún is still excluded by many from the Spanish literature studied in our universities simply because he writes mainly in French or because his style of writing is perceived as overly influenced by the contemporary French tradition. Those in favor of his exclusion seem to be comfortable with the idea of one language (or one way of narrating) for one nation. What is more important than the national identity associated to a writer, more important than being Spanish or French, is that the construction of the literary canon under the guise of the nation is one of the fields, a certainly very important one for literary critics, where the battle for normalization, for the homogenization of the heterodox and the dissident, is fought. And this is a much more serious concern than mere national identity because what is at stake is

the inclusion or not of novel topics and forms, of innovative ways of seeing and writing, into the literature we still teach today as our national literature.

For the defenders of one language for one nation, the more one writer participates in the national ethos with his/her writing, the more national his/her personality and literary production become. Just the opposite of what writers like Milan Kundera and Jorge Semprún, I dare say, would like to think. Their work would seem to contest notion of the roll of the writer within his/her nation. For Kundera, instead of making proximity and closeness to a local context and its values the guarantors of higher aesthetic achievement inside a national literature (in the guise of typical local characters, topics, and linguistic expressions taken from a national culture), he claims that “geographical remoteness distances the observer from the local context; it permits the apprehension of the larger world of the *Weltliteratur*, the only context capable of allowing the *aesthetic value* of a novel to appear: (and by aesthetic value I mean) namely, the unknown aspects of life that a particular novel has been able to reveal and the novelty in form that it has discovered” (Kundera 2005: 5).² Kundera does not posit a view of the literary that places formal values in opposition to the existential ones that the novel illuminates, as if these were merely external to the literary. In this manner, the *aesthetic value*, to use Kundera’s words, of Jorge Semprún’s writing would reside both in the clearly social and political concerns that he wishes to explore and in the pursuit of an adequate formal structure to express them. It is the capability of Semprún’s writing to insert its themes and formal aspects within a *global* European context (the role of memory and history, the concentration camp, the predominance of evil but also his approaching these topics from unconventional perspectives) that alienates him from the most traditional Spanish literary canons, in other words, the same aspects that determine the degree of aesthetic value for Kundera.

But if we are still unsure about Kundera’s proposal, of the need to expand the geographical horizon of literary production, we should ask ourselves why our students still read. I am afraid that literary know-

² “el alejamiento geográfico distancia al observador del contexto local y le permite abarcar el *gran contexto* de la *Weltliteratur*, el único capaz de hacer aflorar el *valor estético* de una novela, es decir: los aspectos hasta entonces desconocidos de la existencia que esa novela ha sabido iluminar; la novedad de la forma que ha sabido encontrar”.

ledge is not what motivates their interest, nor any type of formal experimentation that supposedly becomes part of the national; rarely in order to access literary national history. And yet they are motivated by the kind of knowledge that the literary provides, in other words, by the human experiences contained in the readings, experiences that do not fully belong to any particular language or literature, nor to any specific country, people, or nation. When our students read they are not searching for the less stimulating national idiosyncrasies of the local; instead they wish to understand the vicissitudes of the human experience expressed in local terms. If this is the case, Semprún's writing in French belongs as much to the Spanish canon as his writing in Spanish belongs to the one in French. The question is not one of identity (giving value to the representation of sameness) but of quality as defined by the canon of world literature: aesthetic value residing in the degree of openness towards difference that works show.

Kundera goes one step further in his call for a true world literature when he posits a cosmopolitan reading public for the enjoyment of this literature, one that does not need to know the intricacies of the local language: "Do I mean that one does not need to know the original language a novel was written in? Yes, that's exactly what I mean! Gide did not speak Russian, G. B. Shaw had no knowledge of Norwegian, Sartre did not read Dos Passos in the original. If the lot of Witold Gombrowicz's and Danilo Kis' books had relied exclusively on the evaluation of those who speak Polish and Serbian, the radical aesthetic novelty of their work would never have been discovered" (ib.).³ This, of course, does not imply that one needs to reject the advantages of reading in the original but it does call attention to the mystification of the national language (allotting it extra and ahistorical value aside from its communicative features); nor does it mean that one should give up great cultural productions just because one does not have direct access to the language in which they came into being. Isn't Kundera addressing the provincialism of great national literatures, like the one of Spain, in their incapability of moving

³ "¿Quiero decir con esto que, para juzgar una novela, podemos prescindir del conocimiento de su lengua original? Pues sí, ¡es exactamente lo que quiero decir! Gide no sabía ruso, G. B. Shaw no sabía noruego, Sartre no leyó a Dos Passos en su lengua original. Si los libros de Witold Gombrowicz y de Danilo Kis hubieran dependido únicamente del juicio de los que saben polaco y serbio, nunca se habría descubierto su radical novedad estética."

beyond the boundaries of their restricted cultural area, no matter how broad these might be, questioning their complacent self-sufficiency when they exclude the foreign because they conceive themselves as a self-contained microcosms, as the origin of everything written past and future?

Certainly, Jorge Semprún does not partake in this restrictive model of the national writer nor of the mystifying notion of one language and one literature for one nation-state. He does not assert one single identity; he could not do so because as he says: "I'm a Spaniard in Paris and a Frenchman in Madrid. When Thomas Mann went into exile because of the Nazi regime, he said that a writer's homeland is his tongue. I prefer to use the term language and not tongue. In German they are the same word. And our language, more than ever, must be European"⁴ (Mora), that is to say it must surpass national boundaries. "Our language must be European," let me make a pause here. Perhaps Semprún is proposing a European language of sorts, but not (this must be stated clearly) the predominance of one single national language in Europe. I will let Semprún explain this idea in his own words:

There are those who argue with extraordinary equanimity that Europe must have only one single language, like medieval Latin in the Middle Ages. That would be a disaster, in my opinion. It would be akin to giving up our history and our common roots. Some of these advocates have little doubt that only the French language merits this exclusive status — thanks to its clarity, its capacity for abstraction, its precision. But today, the democratic basis of Europe must be built on the knowledge of several languages, not with the imposition of a new 'lingua franca.' (Semprún, February 2003)

What does Semprún mean then with this notion that "our language must be European"? Perhaps it is easier to explain what this language is by what it is not. He does not advocate for a language able to collect

⁴ "Soy español en París y francés en Madrid. Thomas Mann, cuando tuvo que exiliarse por culpa del nazismo, dijo que la patria de un escritor es la lengua. Yo prefiero el término lenguaje antes que lengua. En alemán son la misma palabra. Y nuestro lenguaje, ahora más que nunca, debe ser europeo" (Mora).

and construct national characteristics, or for a language that mirrors a soul related to land and nation. Semprún is proposing not a tongue but rather the language of diversity, a language that requires in all probability the mastering of several languages, a language that will allow us to gain access to the experiences contained in the notion of world literature defended by Kundera and to the wisdom about human nature contained in it. It is also the language resulting from the distillation of what European citizens have in common, the language where the values of democracy and the possibilities of a peaceful coexistence find their home. Spanish philosopher Fernando Savater has argued in favor of the same reasoning when he states that the people who speak a language are more important than the language itself.

It is not surprising then for Semprún to state in *Mal et modernité*: “my homeland is neither French nor Spanish; my homeland is language. That is to say, a space for social communication, for linguistic creativity: a possible way of representing the universe; of modifying it as well through the works of literature and language, in a humble way, on the border” (1995: 102).⁵ This European language, Semprún’s mother country or fatherland, combines both his literary projects (the space for linguistic invention with the purpose of social communication) with his political claims (the representation and modification of reality).

A Hospitable Memory for Semprún

The acceptance of Semprún’s literary works and essays in Spain (and in university departments of Spanish in the US) requires another operation that goes beyond those that take place within the strict limits of literary criticism as a discipline. It surpasses literary critique in that it searches for a broader arena of reception and intervention for if the origins of Semprún’s production are in literature, their purpose aims to the political. Accepting Semprún’s works, reading them as part of a Spanish tradition, also means to come to terms with a discordant

⁵ “ma patrie n’est pas la langue ni la française ni l’espagnol, ma patrie c’est le langage. C’est-à-dire, un espace de communication sociale, d’invention linguistique: une possibilité de représentation de l’univers. De le modifier aussi, par les œuvres du langage, fût-ce de façon modeste, à la marge”.

voice, one that introduces a different melody in the homogenous tone of historical discourse. It is a voice and a language elaborated and constructed in literature (in fiction, in what does not exist in reality in literal terms) so that he can better address the problems he wants to undertake in the social and political spheres (in what is concrete and real).

The voice Semprún brings to the fore demands accepting and remembering the memory of a particular kind of European past, that of the refugee or the heterodox, that of the concentration camp of any kind — surprisingly still not fully taken into account by many Spanish readers as part of their own past. One needs to ponder on the meaning of the “foreignness” to Spanish culture of the suffering that took place in local concentration camps, especially when, according to cultural critic José María Ridaó, “if it were possible to characterize Spanish History, and I will say European History as well, with one single element this would be the displacement, the exile or even the death of those in disagreement with power, this being either the State or the Church” (2000: 11). How can so many Spaniards be unaware that the foundation of their national History is based on the elimination, the too often physical extermination, of the discordant voices writers like Semprún rescue from silence? It would seem then, that Semprún’s notion of language, for example, would not be conceived as the linguistic leg of the nation-state as much as the rhetorical instrument used to recuperate the silenced voices of European and Spanish Histories, a means that allows them to resurface from historical silence.

For Semprún, the untranslatable experiences of the concentration camp lead to political activism. From his writings it is easy to conclude that something fundamental to our notion of society needs to be changed if what was once excluded is going to find a way to make itself heard. This new model of collective identity also entails acknowledging the difficulties faced by those who claim a presence and are not given the opportunity to attain one. As the author addresses in *L’écriture ou la vie*: “The real problem is not to tell a story whatever the difficulties might be. It is to be listened to... Would anyone be willing to listen to our stories even if they were well narrated?”⁶ (1994: 134). His “stories” must be understood as attempts

⁶ “Le vrai problème n’est pas de raconter, quelles qu’en soient les difficultés. C’est d’écouter... Voudra-t-on écouter nos histoires, même si elles sont bien racontées?”

of making comprehensible the silenced and forgotten. It is not so much that the forgotten memories were intentionally deprived of a space of their own as that the violent nature of their content (and the difficulty of coming to terms with them) makes them difficult to hear without throwing listeners into a deep and troubled state of bewilderment. When Semprún's narrations are listened to or read by others, they inevitably trigger a process of reflection that offers a space to the silenced and makes the "foreign" personal. Listening demands an engagement with the public sphere given that it is only there that the confrontation with the pain and suffering of others becomes my own, i.e., it turns political. The stories transform the silenced into political actors who have attained the right to air their grievances. We then find ourselves getting closer to a kind of social truth, one originating in the identity and future of the unjustly treated victim.

"It is only by responding to the pain of others that we become fully human," states María Teresa de la Garza (2002: 25),⁷ an affirmation in line with the notion that humanity is not composed of isolated individuals estranged from each other. Our humanity finds a home along the lines of empathy that can be traced towards the suffering of others, lines that point towards its appeasement or elimination. It is the response we give to this uneasiness that is neither diffuse nor abstract, but rather specific and real, susceptible of being experimented at any time by anyone who is being called upon to listen. Semprún's body of work is driven by this ethical impulse of empathizing with the other and becoming a witness during his/her moments of suffering. His insistence on the need to narrate the experience of the concentration camp is in no way a cheap invitation to the grotesque nor is it an attempt to push the average reader beyond the limits s/he considers tolerable. Instead, the author has a political goal in mind for his goal is to give literary form to the story of the victim, to the ineffable nature of his/her pain.

Reyes Mate reminds us, "The pain of persecution can only be told in the language of the victim" (Mate 2004),⁸ a victim that in most cases is unfortunately gone forever. However, even if the victim were still alive, he or she would have to struggle with the meaning of words

⁷ "Sólo respondiendo al dolor del otro podemos llegar a ser plenamente humanos."

⁸ "El dolor de la persecución sólo se puede relatar en la lengua de la víctima."

for there is no vocabulary to express the magnitude of an experience that seems to be outside language itself, as is the case of the experience of the camps. Mate explains this short-circuiting of the verbal on the grounds that, "the language of the victim conceives knowledge not as an abstraction (theory) but as listening" (ib.).⁹ At the time of listening and of feeling empathy with what I previously termed the heterodox (Ridao), the victim finds a means to exist. Semprún's writing makes the act of listening between the narrator and the victim possible, hence enabling a communication between the victim and the reader. In other words, writing lends its ears to the mute rumor that reaches us from the past; it recuperates the lost essence of the experience of pain and it brings it to the forefront. The prose of the writer is a means of listening, in other words, an exercise of memory that wishes to gain access to the absent word of the victim. The purpose is not to disentangle the underlying factors that would explain this absence as the result of a past event; better information or analysis is not being sought. Instead, the objective being sought is the "mere" acknowledgment of the truth of the victim's suffering, a careful listening of his/her experience as it is only now being told. When we grant a voice to the individual who addresses us with his/her testimony, we stop the process of amnesia that unfairly erases and distorts the past. It is at this point when writing and reading are also a call for solidarity with the victim, important moments of listening.

In Semprún's literary works, memory is not an accumulation of traumatic remembrances of the past. It never wishes to contain itself within a circle of pain impossible to overcome. It does not aspire to aestheticize trauma as the source of writing. Semprún conceptualizes memory much in the same way as Mate theorizes its function, "Memory should not only serve the purpose of bringing events of the past into the consciousness of later generations. That is what history is for. Memory is a moral imperative with a political impulse" (Mate 2005: 37).¹⁰ In the work of Semprún, memory implies the reparation of the injustices committed in the past at the hands of those who held power and exerted it immorally. If memory has a political edge it is because

⁹ "la lengua de la víctima," in the words of Reyes Mate, "se plantea el conocimiento no en clave de visión (teoría), sino de escucha."

¹⁰ "La memoria no es sólo traer a la conciencia de las generaciones posteriores hechos que ocurrieron en el pasado. Para eso está la historia. La memoria es una exigencia moral con carga política."

its exercise cannot be separate from the appeasement of the conditions and circumstances that made it impossible in the past. When memory has a political imperative, victims suddenly become real for the larger social body. This new space allows them to be rescued from an incomprehensible and distorted past and it invests them with a voice that claims justice. This new identity no longer makes them phantoms in history but rather an important piece in the elaboration of political projects for the future, a future now removed from the monstrosities of the past.¹¹

Through narration Semprún aims at the formation of a collective memory, a site where his personal experiences can inhabit the memories of others in much the same way as they inhabit his. This reciprocal influence of memories, this dialogue between author and reader, is much more than a sharing of autobiographical material. More importantly, the aim of the project wishes to bring readers much closer to the awareness of a unclaimed memory, one dislocated from the time and space when it was categorized as other, foreign, and inassimilable. In this fashion, Spanish collective memory should address the excess of the concentration camp, the violences of the Spanish Civil War, the displacement of those in exile, the role of former Republican soldiers in the liberation of Europe in WWII, and look to redefine Francoism as a regime that never accounted for those it victimized.

How then will it ever be possible for Spanish civil society to accept experiences like Semprún's as part of their collective past when important conversations — like the one concerning the future of the Francoist legacy — are still pending? One example that readily comes to mind is the debate at hand in regards to the final use of the mausoleum (*el Valle de los Caídos* — *The Valley of the Fallen*) the dictator commissioned and had built by Republican prisoners held in concentration camp conditions.

¹¹ For Reyes Mate, “only when listening to them do victims become real: the victims are only specters, virtual beings, for their executioners; for the rest of us they are a moral obligation that anchors the future if it wishes to be different from the past” (Mate 2005: 31) (“las víctimas sólo son espectros, seres virtuales, para sus verdugos; para los demás son una exigencia moral de la que debe beber el futuro si quiere ser diferente del pasado”). Or in Semprún's words, “the moral imperative needs to be embedded in the past in order to project itself in what is to come” (Semprún 1994: 149) (“se nourrit du passé pour se projeter dans l'avenir”).

If the Spanish democracy is still doubtful, in political terms, as how to best manage the legacy of the dictatorship thirty years after its demise, how then can a writer who is demanding of historical memory be accepted within the cultural institutions of the Spanish nation-state? The traditional literary establishment has a role in this difficult positioning of Semprún given that it diminishes his aesthetic project when it finds it overly political, as if the two necessarily negated each other. How then will it be possible to include the kind of critical and democratic memory that appears in Semprún's writing, a memory that wishes to wrestle with the erasures of official Spanish History within this new history? How and where to build this notion of a hospitable memory¹² with which I began this section of the essay so that Semprún's characters can finally come home? If it were not too big a leap, one could even venture that there exists an unhappy coincidence between the fact that traditional literary studies feel uncomfortable with making Semprún's literary project a part of its body and the fact that the Spanish democracy has still not theorized Spanish History, the history of the Spanish nation-state, including the forty-year dictatorship, from the standpoint of its victims both present and past.

Epilogue

To conclude, I would like to return to the question I posed in the first section of this essay in regard to locating a space for aesthetic values, a space independent of national attributes in Kundera's sense of the term. This essay has pointed to several of the difficulties involved in the reception and classification of works like those of Jorge Semprún within the Spanish literary canon, namely, that traditional literary critics are trying to resolve a methodological question (should an author be included or not in a particular national literature?); how do we define a national literature?) with a metaphysical concern (what does it mean to belong to a particular national identity?). It should be clear by now that they are not wrestling with an aesthetic matter but rather with issues that pertain to the very nature of the nation-state and to the literature that expresses it. In the case of Semprún, the reticence

¹² I am referring to the concept developed by Jacques Derrida in *Spectres of Marx* (175).

that some critics still express in regards to his inclusion in the canon is based on his critique of the exclusions upon which this canon develops. If the Spanish literary canon showcases the idiosyncrasies of the Spanish nation-state, Semprún's writing would inevitably undermine the homogenization implicit in the notion of a national literature.

I would like to posit a different conceptualization of this literary and national dead-end, one inspired in the work of Semprún and Kundera. Would it be more productive to substitute the notion of the national with the notion of the citizen, the citizen being a type of identity that better embodies a multicultural society, a democracy of identities and origins where those that find them displaced for one reason or another (the heterodox) feel at home? If we entertain this possibility, instead of asking ourselves what it means to be a national of a particular state a more pertinent question would be to ask what kind of literature better represents civil society. Which is the literature or the literary canon that best articulates the multiple identities present in our societies? Certainly, Semprún's body of work provides us with insights as to how to formulate answers to these questions.

I would not like to conclude without expressing my own complicity in the situation described in these pages in regard to my relation with the literary canon and the writing of Jorge Semprún. The inclusion or exclusion of authors within a tradition is a task that takes place on a day-to-day basis in the teaching of literature, in the selection of texts and authors in curriculums, or in the frequency with which some authors are studied or neglected. Kundera adamantly asserts: "And the professors of foreign literatures? Is it not their given role to study texts in the context of *Weltliteratur*? It is too much to ask of them. In order to prove their competency as experts, they ostensibly identify themselves with the *restricted national context* of the literatures they teach. They adopt their opinions, their tastes, their prejudices. It is too much to ask of them: it is precisely in foreign universities where a work of art is irremediably entangled to its province of origin" (2005: 5).¹³

¹³ "¿Y los profesores de literaturas extranjeras? ¿No es su misión natural la de estudiar las obras en el contexto de la *Weltliteratur*? Es demasiado desear. Para demostrar su competencia como expertos, se identifican ostensiblemente con el *pequeño contexto* nacional de las literaturas que enseñan. Adoptan sus opiniones, sus gustos, sus prejuicios. Es demasiado desear: precisamente en las universidades en el extranjero es donde hunden una obra de arte en el más profundo atoladero de su provincia natal".

Perhaps the situation is not as dire as Kundera describes it to be, but we should take note of his warning.

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Pygmalion and My Fair Lady:
From Social Satire to Musical Romance

SABINE COELSCH-FOISNER

It is a long way from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* to G. B. Shaw's *Pygmalion*, and yet another long way from *Pygmalion* to Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe's *My Fair Lady* — concerning both generic properties and ideas. In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, an epic composed between 2 and 8 AD, which brings together a variety of transformation myths, Pygmalion shapes a statue more perfect than any real woman, falls in love with his work and, from the very beginning, treats it as if it were a real woman, caressing her and lavishing gifts on her. Venus hears Pygmalion's prayer and transforms the marble statue into responsive flesh. Significantly, she is wakened to life when he kisses her: "... and at last / His lips pressed real lips, and she, his girl, / Felt every kiss, and blushed, and shyly raised / Her eyes to his and saw the world and him." (M 234).¹ The creature beholds her creator and the world at once.

No such union crowns Shaw's play.² His *Pygmalion*, a renowned Professor of linguistics, is a different kind of creator, shaping a work in words and manners. Less devoted to his creation, Henry Higgins is a truly Shavian figure — a hero in the academic world but a petulant baby at home, a selfish creator who tampers with a plain flower girl and turns her into stone rather than bringing her to life. Shaw's play is a magnificent travesty of its model in terms of both plot and genre. Calling his play a romance, Shaw really designs it as a splendid anti-romance, constantly teasing the reader's expectations and strategically dismantling his or her hopes for a happy solution. Shaw's technique

¹ Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is subsequently abbreviated to M.

² G.B. Shaw's *Pygmalion* is subsequently abbreviated to P.

culminates in his so-called "sequel" to the play, actually written because the spectators' and the actors' romantic expectations threatened to overthrow the Shavian format of educating through disillusionment. "Now here is a last opportunity for romance. Would you not like to be assured that the shop was an immense success, thanks to Eliza's charms and her early business experience in Covent Garden?" (P 116), Shaw addresses his audience only to crush their hopes for a last time: "Alas! the truth is the truth: the shop did not pay for a long time, simply because Eliza and her Freddy did not know how to keep it." (Ib.) In this sequel, a treatise on the marital state, we learn about the unpromising afterlife of what was never meant to be a romantic wedding. Eliza and Freddy marry, but they are hopeless in the world of business, unskilled, untrained, and inadequately equipped for the task. What could be more unromantic but

... the piteous spectacle of the pair spending their evenings in shorthand schools and polytechnic classes, learning bookkeeping and typewriting with incipient junior clerks, male and female, from the elementary schools ... (P 117).

Eventually they accept depending on Colonel Pickering's generosity and financial means.

Lerner's *My Fair Lady*,³ by contrast, fulfils what Shaw denied his audiences, re-fashioning the latter's social anti-romance into a perfect musical romance and, thereby, bringing it closer again to the Ovidian model. After a phase of socio-critical subversion, the original myth of artistic creation and love rewarded by divine interference resurfaces in what now becomes a perfect love story and an enormous success, leaving none of the audience's romantic expectations unfulfilled.

In the following I shall explore this generic transformation from social satire to musical romance by pinpointing two strategies underlying it and bending the story again towards the metamorphosis of Pygmalion's statue in Ovid's epic: firstly, the reduction of character, secondly, changes in scenic division and dramaturgic arrangement.

³ Alan Jay Lerner's *My Fair Lady* is subsequently abbreviated to MFL.

1. Reduction of Character

Undoubtedly, Shaw's male protagonist has inherited Pygmalion's misogyny from Ovid. Henry Higgins is a sworn bachelor ("Oh, I can't be bothered with young women" [P 55]), dedicated to his studies, and aware of the academic esteem he holds. An authority in the science of speech, he is at the same time described as a big baby, ill-behaved, coaxing women like nurses (P 25, 37), dependent on his real mother and on surrogate mothers like Mrs. Pearce and, subsequently, Eliza to organise his domestic life. In typically Shavian manner, Higgins's reputation is progressively dismantled in the play. The more familiar we become with his ideas and manners, the less we respect him. The public hero is a private failure, a man like other men, probably even worse than other men — swearing, misbehaving, and insulting those he considers intellectually inferior. The apparently well-bred, well-clad, immaculate figure we meet in the first scene in Covent Garden, at this point a truly worthy successor of Ovid's Cyprian king, is made to step down from his semi-divine pedestal as soon as we get a glimpse of his social life. Significantly, his weaknesses are exposed by women: Mrs. Pearce and his mother openly accuse him, judge him, and order him about. Higgins's own verbal attacks against Eliza are of the most inventive and invective nature — "bilious pigeon", "squashed cabbage leaf" (P 18), "this baggage" (P 26), "with her kerbstone English" (P 18), "unfortunate animal" (P 51), "presumptuous insect", "[t]he creature" (P 76), "draggletailed guttersnipe" (P 29) — but once the reader is allowed a glimpse behind the scene, these epithets and appositions lose their vituperative edge. When Higgins decides to take up Eliza in his house, Mrs. Pearce admonishes him and implores him to relinquish his bad manners for the sake of his pupil. The catalogue of vices is impressive:

Mr. Higgins: will you please be very particular what you say before the girl? [...] Now it doesnt [sic!] matter before me: I'm used to it. But you really must not swear before the girl. [...] Then might I ask you not to come down to breakfast in your dressing-gown, or at any rate not to use it as a napkin to the extent you do, sir. And if you would be so good as not to eat everything off the same plate, and to remember not to put the porridge saucepan out of your hand on the tablecloth, it would be

a better example to the girl. You know you nearly choked yourself with a fishbone in the jam only last week. (P 39-40)

The motif of the mother rebuking her son is taken up in Act III, when Higgins appears at his mother's at-home day and is asked by her to leave instantly: "You offend all my friends: they stop coming whenever they meet you!" (P 54). The technique of exposing the flaws of a pillar of society is common in Shaw's drama and is prepared for in the opening scene of *Pygmalion*, when Higgins, noting down the Cockney accent of Eliza and her companions, is taken for an upstart policeman who seeks promotion. Here, too, his appearance does not match his presumed profession, because his shoes suggest he is a gentleman.

How can this social misfit, this declared hater of women, who avowedly cannot change ("all men are not confirmed old bachelors like me ..." [P 78]), whilst taking pleasure in changing, inventing, and creating others, be turned into a successful hero of romance? ("But you have no idea how frightfully interesting it is to take a human being and change her into a quite different human being ..." [P 65]; "I have created this thing ..." [P 93]). As distinct from Shaw, Lerner never insists on Higgins's domestic slips. There is no mention of his coming down in his dressing gown, half-choking himself with a fishbone, ill-using plates and dishes, or falling over chairs and tables in society. In Lerner's musical, Higgins is a petulant boy who needs to be educated, but he is not beyond education. Shaw's Higgins is a complete social failure, Lerner's is a prospective husband from the beginning, apt to trigger a romance plot. The recipe of reforming a sworn bachelor is a stock ingredient of the comedy of manners, but to render his conversion from declared misogyny ("But let a woman in your life" [MFL 38]) to a tender confession of loving his pupil ("I've got accustomed to her look" [MFL 119]) presupposes that the candidate must inalienably possess some traits that make him eligible for marriage. He must not be *wholly* fallen or despicable.

By preserving the image of the public hero, Lerner also preserves the image of the hero as creator, whose creation fulfils *the* prime purpose of romance: Eliza becomes a fit wife for a distinguished professor. When she returns to his studio in the last scene of the musical, she has acquired her due place in society and complies with the traditional gender pattern. Social rise is a prerequisite for romance and often a corollary of happy love. In Shaw, however, the purpose of

Higgins's creation, the metamorphosis of the flower girl into a duchess, is called into doubt from the very start. The question "But whats [sic!] to become of her" (P 32) uncomfortably haunts Eliza's transformation (see also Mrs Higgins reproaching both her son and Mr. Pickering: "You certainly are a pretty pair of babies playing with your live doll!" [P 65]).

In his sequel, written after a first round of successful performances, Shaw insists on the failure of Higgins's creation. During these early performances, Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree, playing Mr. Higgins, had tenuously suggested the hero's romantic dedication to the girl by throwing a bunch of flowers towards her at the end of the play. Shaw disliked any such suggestion and declared in his sequel that Eliza, contrary to what audiences desired, did marry Freddy, and that both were misfits in the flower business they started. The sequel makes unmistakably clear what the play ironically insinuates. A social metamorphosis has occurred, but it is of no avail to those involved, as Higgins suggests: "Making life means making trouble" (P 101). Higgins has definitely caused trouble. Besides, he has not created life but shaped a stony figure, as is hinted in the stage direction ("... and sits stonily as before" [P 74]) accompanying Higgins's announcement of the end of his experiment: "No more artificial duchesses. The whole thing has been simple purgatory." (P 75) By modifying the myth and presenting the audience with a creator who eventually rejects his creation — almost like Frankenstein, who rejects the monster created by him — Shaw implicitly hints at the failure of Higgins's "creature", the term used by both Frankenstein and Higgins. The irony is complete. While Higgins was given the (divine) power of changing a flower girl into a duchess, he sinks below Pygmalion by realising the imperfection and uselessness of his work. "[S]he's useful" (P 65–6) he scathingly commented on her when justifying his experiment to his mother, not realising that after her social transformation she would cease being useful for him — in the sense of becoming a surrogate mother and a housekeeper like Mrs. Pearce. Shaw's version of Pygmalion is a comic approximation of the creator figures in the tradition of Frankenstein or Dr. Jekyll, who call into life creatures that get out of their control and end up being rejected by their creators. That Shaw's Higgins should reject a creature that has risen *above* his own humanity (she is beautiful, well-mannered, well-spoken, and has an indestructible sense of her own dignity), whereas

Frankenstein's monster or Dr. Jekyll's Mr. Hyde are loathsome, murderous creatures, strengthens the subversive current of Shaw's play. The male protagonist becomes all the more pitiable for rejecting the accomplished creature made by him. Lerner's Higgins, as distinct from Shaw's hero, accepts his creation into his life. Yet, while this makes him more palatable to audiences, he is at the same time deprived of the complexity and the blatant incongruities and tensions characterising Shaw's male protagonist.

Let us take a closer look at the 'creature'. Lerner's Eliza is as innocent and morally intact as Shaw's, but she is a hint less dirty. We never see her going to bed in her underwear and the dirty rags she wears in the street. The dialogue between her and Mrs. Pearce preceding her much dreaded bath is cut in Lerner. The squalor and lowness, addressed by both Shaw's and Lerner's Higgins ("Put her in the dustbin"; "She's so deliciously low — so horribly dirty!" [MFL 33]), are left to the audience's imagination rather than being scenically placed before their eyes. Poor hygiene, which is both described in the stage directions and shown on stage in Shaw, is not an issue in Lerner. The reason is obvious: while the former's description of Eliza's dingy room and her own decrepit appearance is apt to communicate the socialist message of undeserved poverty and unjust class distinctions, a truly romantic heroine does not bear association with a place reeking of mould and teeming with beetles:

... a small room with very old wall paper hanging loose in the damp places. A broken pane in the window is mended with paper. [...] a draped packing case with a basin and jug on it and a little looking glass over it, a chair and table, the refuse of some suburban kitchen ... (P 21).

Poverty is a fit starting point for the Cinderella type of story, but a graphic account or show of refuse on stage is the least readers and theatregoers want in such a plot. Significantly, in Shaw, Eliza is described as "*not at all a romantic figure*" (P 10), in Lerner the stage direction is changed to "[s]he is *not at all an attractive person*" (MFL 15). Clearly, she *is* romantic in Lerner. Shaw's denying his heroine any romantic status introduces — *ex negativo* — the undercurrent of romance which he carefully builds up and subsequently destroys in the course of the play. Just as Shaw teases his reader, Higgins teases Eliza with the prospect of a romantic marriage when explaining the

transformation he has in store for her: "And you shall marry an officer in the Guards, with a beautiful moustache: the son of a marquis, who will disinherit him for marrying you, but will relent when he sees your beauty and goodness — " (P 33). No such prophecies are made in *My Fair Lady* (MFL 36), because romance is under way anyway. In Shaw's play Higgins's final suggestions to Eliza are a slap in the face of romance: he offers to adopt her as his daughter or ask Pickering to marry her or, in the alternative, to join their household and be three bachelors instead of two (P 101, 105). Marriage is completely out of the question.

Obviously such dramatic and meta-dramatic teasing, characteristic of both the dramatic and epic text of Shaw's play, disappears wholly from the musical. Romance is in the air, delayed by mutual recriminations and misgivings, but eventually triumphant, as in Ovid's myth. To complete the romance plot, Freddy is presented as a real rival, producing the obligatory triangle situation that makes the final union of the predestined lovers (Eliza and Higgins) so desirable. To turn into a potential marriage candidate Freddy cannot be depicted as the ineffectual fool he is in Shaw's *Pygmalion*, ordered about by his mother and sister when they insist on a taxi in the opening scene at Covent Garden. In Lerner, Freddy is clumsy, too, but nowhere seen soaking wet like a rat. He is protected rather than bullied by his mother ("Go on about your business, my girl." [MFL 16]) In Shaw, the irony of Eliza's planned wedding with Freddy is superb in the light of the latter's unmanly stature. He is a truly weak figure, but it is a weak man that Shaw, in his comments on men and women, envisages as a fit partner for a strong woman like Eliza:

Accordingly, it is a truth everywhere in evidence that strong people, masculine or feminine, not only do not marry stronger people, but do not shew any preferences for them in selecting their friends. When a lion meets another with a louder roar 'the first lion thinks the last a bore'. The man or woman who feels strong enough for two, seeks for every other quality in a partner than strength. (P 110)

Whatever the empirical evidence of Shaw's theory about the relationship between weak and strong marriage partners, his convictions contravene the conventions of romance, where superlatives are

conjoined: strong marries strong, fair is joined to fair, and the fittest are matched up with the fittest.

2. Changes in Scenic Division and Dramaturgic Arrangement

In *My Fair Lady* the structure of Shaw's 5-Act play is changed into a 2-Act libretto, typical of the genre of the musical, with numerous shifts of scene. The First Act is divided into eleven scenes, the second into seven. This transformation into shorter sequences, reminiscent of the music-hall tradition and the varied entertainments that make the rich legacy of English popular drama — from the masque attracting large and mixed audiences with its combination of spoken text, song and dance, to melodrama, pantomime and burlesque. Significantly, in *My Fair Lady* "three street entertainers, buskers" fill the stage in Scene 1 in Covent Garden, performing "acrobatic tricks, stunts, and dance steps" (MFL 15) recalling older, popular forms of folk entertainment prior to the development of the professional and serious theatre. With the introduction of acrobats, Shaw's social criticism is made to yield to entertainment. The hint, however, is taken from Shaw's own text, which effectively alludes to forms of popular entertainment: the "Sarcastic Bystander" in Act I says: "... tell him where he come from if you want to go fortune-telling" and the "Gentleman" addresses Higgins: "May I ask, sir, do you do this for your living at a music-hall?" (P 15)

Viewed in isolation, there is nothing particular about the structure of Lerner and Loewe's musical, but compared with Shaw's play, the changes that have been effected are illuminating with regard to the generic transformation from satire to romance.

The substance of *My Fair Lady* corresponds to that of *Pygmalion*, but it has been cast into a different mould to suit the overall aim of romantic entertainment. Lerner presents us with a plain girl needing education, which she receives in the form of lessons from a man well established in the academic world, but in need of education himself, notably of emotional education or *éducation sentimentale*, such as can typically be provided by a woman. To protract their union, Lerner adds to the couple's mutual reservations and recriminations, typical of the witty repartee of the comedy of manners, a dose of male jealousy

in the shape of Freddy. To make him a rival suitor, Freddy is given more presence on the musical stage than in the play and is seen waiting outside Higgins's house twice. In Act I Scene 8, his song "I have often walked down this street before" (MFL 72) stresses the impression of the lonely lovelorn figure in the dark, typical of romance. Freddy's second appearance outside of Higgins's house coincides with that in *Pygmalion* (P 81-3; in MFL 95-7), in both texts immediately following the climactic scene (Act IV in P, Act II Scene 1 in MFL) where Eliza quarrels with Higgins, packs her belongings and leaves his house. In Shaw, Freddy is seen only once outside Higgins's house, which increases our shock when Eliza eventually chooses him. Freddy seems a poor alternative after all we have learned about him and, from the little we have seen of him, he is clearly the second best husband. In Lerner, by contrast, Freddy is a fit romantic counterpart — remotely recalling the poet Eugen Marchbanks in *Candida* — a day-dreamer entirely devoted to the woman he loves, but eventually rejected by her because he proves stronger than *Candida's* husband. Even though this latter twist in Shaw's construction of the hero is not imitated in *My Fair Lady*, Freddy's arrival has been carefully prepared for, and although he remains the weaker man in the musical, he is nevertheless a potential candidate for Eliza's hand. What forbids their union in *My Fair Lady* is not Shaw's maieutic method, but the generic requirements of romance: a) Freddy is devoted to Eliza from their first encounter, which makes the obligatory quest plot in romance redundant; b) a strong woman does not choose a weak man, unless his strength is tested and established in the course of the plot, which is not the case in Lerner. Freddy is just attractive enough to provoke tension but not worthy enough to win the lovely heroine. We should not forget that what interests the audience in romance is not the outcome, which is obvious from the start, but the road towards happiness and the obstacles protracting the final union of the destined lovers. In Lerner, Freddy is an important part of Eliza's road to happiness, if only in the form of a possibility or temptation, as befits the quest formula of romance.

Some of the scenic shifts and additions simply provide more colourful settings and room for the songs — such as exchanging Ascot for Mrs. Higgins's at-home day, which creates an opportunity for the brilliant Ascot Gavotte. Other instances are the shift from the opening street scene to Alfred Doolittle (MFL Act I Scene 2) and back to

Higgins, which establishes an obvious link between the two sworn bachelors ("But let a woman in your life ..." [MFL 37–40]), or the shift from Higgins's house to Covent Garden after Eliza's desertion (MFL Act II Scene 3), where Doolittle appears again to announce his wedding — a portentous event in the light of Higgins's own destiny. Other changes, additions and omissions are more significant for the development of the plot.

Of particular interest are those scenes and explanations Shaw separates from the main text by three asterisks. These are not fit for stage productions, but only for cinematic adaptations, as he declares in the preface. The perspective in these scenes is entirely voyeuristic, placing the reader in the position of a trespasser. The tone suggests the author's complicity with his male protagonist in patronising Eliza (e.g. "*poor Eliza*" [P 21]) and commenting on her lowly background ("Let us follow the taxi to the entrance to Angel Court, a narrow little archway between two shops ..." [P 20]). The relevance of Shaw's account of Eliza's dingy room in London, her room at Higgins's, and the bathroom there, is mainly of a social nature, corresponding with Shaw's idea of drama as a forum for expressing ideas and airing social criticism. In the musical, we never follow Eliza into her dirty room. We are never allowed to trespass private space. The scene in the bath is only hinted, but not graphically described as in *Pygmalion*, where it is allocated ample space (P 35–37), stressing both the unromantic aspects of poverty and Eliza's firm moral principles.

Given the romantic cast of the musical, the heroine of *My Fair Lady* is unquestioningly presumed innocent so that the obsessive protestations of Shaw's Eliza have become superfluous. Nor do we follow Eliza into her room at Higgins's before she leaves. In *Pygmalion*, Eliza takes a final look in the mirror, as if to confirm herself of her transformation — a common device in metamorphic stories: "*She takes a last look at herself in the glass. She suddenly puts out her tongue at herself: then leaves the room, switching off the electric light at the door.*" (P 81). In the musical, Eliza's humiliation and anger are given vent in the form of song ("Just you wait, Henry Higgins, just you wait!" [MFL 93]) rather than through any such improper gesture. The prospective wife of a Professor of linguistics is not supposed to put out her tongue after her transformation, which is more complete and durable in *My Fair Lady* than it is in *Pygmalion*. Shaw's Eliza returns to Covent Garden, where she is not recognised by the other

flower girls. Yet, despite her transformation of shape, this brief scene is suggestive of the partial reversibility of Eliza's outer metamorphosis: she is thrown back into the gutter, and although she does not return to her old road, she will not return to Higgins's place either. Shaw's Eliza is suspended between two worlds — that of the natural flower girls and that of the artificial duchess with her hired jewels. The fact that the latter have to be returned adds to Shaw's subversion of Ovid's story. Galatea, even when still a statue, is adorned with jewellery by her artist creator. Initially, a symbol of genuine veneration, the jewels function as a mere status symbol in Shaw's play, ensuring Higgins's success at the ball. Shaw's jewels serve a meta-theatrical purpose: they are props in a performance aimed at suspending the audience's disbelief.

In Shaw's play, the scene at the embassy is again put after asterisks and thus transposed to a secondary textual level. As so often in Shaw, the stage direction is developed into a full narrative, calling upon the reader's imaginative capabilities. The barrier between life and the stage is dismantled once more in the obsessive intrusions by the author / narrator:

Clearly Eliza will not pass as a duchess yet; and Higgins's bet remains unwon. But the six months are not yet exhausted; and just in time Eliza does actually pass as a princess. For a glimpse of how she did it imagine an Embassy in London one summer evening after dark. ... (P 68)

While the phrase "how she did it" lends the words for Pickering's great musical number opening Act II in *My Fair Lady* ("Tonight, old man, you did it!" [MFL 85]), all epic elements, characteristic of Shaw's play, have been dropped in *My Fair Lady*. The illusion of the play is never disrupted: the embassy is a 'real embassy' (Act I Scenes 10 and 11), Nepommuk has changed into Karpathy, and Eliza's performance at the ball is treated on the same dramatic level as all other scenes.

The rapid scenic switches in *My Fair Lady* enhance its quality of entertainment. Not surprisingly, Act IV in *Pygmalion* is set at midnight. After the party, it is already 3 o'clock in the morning in *My Fair Lady* (Act II Scene 1), which suggests a more elaborate feast. The last scene in Shaw's play is a typical finale, recalling Act II at Mr. Higgins's, because the constellation of characters is similar: Eliza,

Pickering, Higgins, Doolittle and, this time, Mrs. Higgins instead of Mrs. Pearce in Act II. Very little has changed: Higgins has not changed at all, as he himself declares (P 98) and as Eliza accuses him ("made of iron" [P 36]), and he is still rebuked by his mother. The transformations that have been effected do not yield the desired effect. Eliza has nowhere to go once her speech and manners equal those of the Queen. Her 'disclassment' does not entail access to a superior class. Doolittle, too, has been disclassed, but since he has been delivered "into the hands of middle class morality" (P 88), he has to marry. Whether his accomplished social transformation is personally gratifying remains to be doubted in the light of his complaints and his initial insistence on being a member of the "undeserving poor" (P 90).

Lerner's ending, by contrast, brings together various conventions of romance. Higgins's mother and Eliza are in perfect accord (Act II Scene 5). She and her prospective mother-in-law collaborate in turning the old bachelor into a fit bridegroom. The final scene (Act II Scene 7) is the most significant addition to Shaw's play. Eliza returns to Higgins's house, catching him as he listens to her recorded voice, which eventually merges with her real voice. The frozen recording comes alive, just as the statue in Ovid's story of Pygmalion comes alive.

To bring it back to life, Lerner had to travel all the way via Shaw's play, parodying it in the light of the original myth and in the context of the social and cultural changes in England in the 1950s. Lerner's musical is a perfect romance, celebrating domestic bliss and leaving out all the rifts, contradictions, and uncomfortable open ends of Shaw's play. His characters are flattened, the motives made obvious, and the quest pattern more explicit. Still, Lerner's libretto is remarkable, transforming a play that could hardly have been more resistant to a musical setting into one of the most successful musicals of the post-war stage. What makes Lerner and Loewe's musical a unique work of art is its dynamic interaction with both the myth and Shaw's play that is so skilfully made, at times, to shine through and, at other times, to vanish behind the varnish of romance.

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**Is Intra-Reception Possible?
The Literatures of Anthropologists,
Marc Augé and Otherness**

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If one speaks of 'reception', one may have in mind a specific phenomenon called 'literature' and one may think of reception as something belonging above all to an artistic fact or effect. This association between 'literature' and 'reception' is even more justified if one has to present a paper on the reception of world literature. If this association is somewhat justified by the specific subject, by adopting this attitude one may give for granted what 'literature' is and what 'reception' is. My viewpoint is, on the contrary, that 'literature' and 'reception' are two concepts differently defined in time according to different theories: not only are they not universal but their meaning changes on the base of historical evolution. To grasp these concepts, in addition to historical considerations we also need to take into account the larger organization of cultures within which these concepts are 'situated'. In other terms, we should regard concepts and meanings together by making comparisons: advancing similarities and suggesting differences, putting together what is parallel and what is divergent in culture. As a consequence, rather than accepting the term 'reception' in itself and applying to a more common conception of 'literature', in my paper I will take into account a recent school of thought which has arisen in France thanks to the work of a few anthropologists who are trying to do a different kind of theory and practice of culture: the anthropology of contemporary world. More particularly, I will take the example of the French anthropologist Marc Augé and I will discuss what is more specifically called an ethnography, that is one of his short fieldworks contained in his book *L'impossible Voyage*. The

discussion of a discipline such as anthropology and the outlining of a more concrete case of ethnography have to be taken here as examples to show the connections between literature and anthropology, between a theory of reception (and of production) and a theory of culture. This connection is, in my opinion, important and necessary. To take this school of anthropology as an object of study is pertinent to focus on the interplay of concepts in the semantics of reception. That means also to state that a flow of reception has a semantics underlying its definitions and this semantics is the result of an interplay of terms shaping a discourse of a discipline.

Speaking more generally, this form of anthropology I want to take into account is a challenge to the main conception of reception as only a way of receiving and underlining above all the act of the 'arrival' of a process. For his cultural analysis Augé is producing a narrative construction that is built by an anthropologist who belongs to the same culture he applies: that is, a French anthropologist who is reflecting and analysing his own culture. In his case, where does the departure start and where does the reception end? Where are the frontiers laid between what is normally considered as the Other and what is the Same? What kind of narrative is best adapted, in his opinion and in his texts, to convey descriptions of otherness? Is this narrative totally different from 'common' literature? If this kind of anthropology questions the usual way we consider literature, reception, and culture, this questioning has to be applied and exported to other disciplines for crossed comparisons. One important point is that any different way we speak of reception and we think of its conceptualisation contains a semiotic and cultural mechanism which is interesting to study in itself: a complex mechanism which relies on semantic categories selected to build a meta-language (for example, 'arrival' or 'departure', 'production' or 'reception', 'interpretation' or 'translation', etc.) applying to the language-object we want to seize and define (for example, interconnections in world literatures, a translated text, an introduction to a foreign text, etc.). This dialectics between language-object and meta-language is, in my opinion, inescapable: to say something about any object or any kind of reality one needs to use in the first instance a coherent system of signs (a meta-language) that refers to these 'realities'; at the same time, the language-object provides feedback on the meta-language by creating a hermeneutic circle. But even if one is caught in a circle of cross-references and even if this interplay

between meta-language and language-object (between semiotic systems and objects to seize) is inescapable, this interplay has to be studied and discussed critically because it gives the possibility to perfect our definitions and to bare what is implicit in our methodological assumptions. In the case of anthropology, the understanding of implicit mechanisms is even more central because, by unveiling them, one realizes what are the different paradigms in the history of this discipline and more generally, since anthropology is the study of culture and man, it shows the situated way we see ourselves and the others, we define objects and concepts, literature and non-literature, processes of reception and production. In a word we could say: differences.

But before passing to analyse the anthropology conceived by Marc Augé (and one of his specific ethnography) there is a fundamental opposition in the theory and practice of anthropology that has to be remembered and anticipated. This *opposition* is corresponding to an anthropological meta-language that is related to the notion of production/reception and departure/arrival and is also a concrete *position* leading to an effective practice. In the past, anthropology was thought as a discipline whose knowledge of the Other depended on a physical and spatial displacement of the anthropologist who had to go faraway from his own culture and, thanks to this, could apply his look and method to a foreign culture. In short, to acquire the essential elements that constituted the reality of the Other, an anthropologist had to travel far: distance in space and difference in cultures were tightly associated. To go abroad and faraway was also important because at that time anthropologists thought that they had to hurry up because those cultures, different from the Western culture, were going to die and before their death the duty of any anthropologist was to describe them and to record them as a heritage for future generations. But, apart from the specific historical situation and the ethical move, this was also an important epistemological position further theorized by Lévi-Strauss as the *regard éloigné*. In a short version, it sounds more or less like this: getting away from the habits of one's own culture gives the anthropologist a freshness of understanding and a sort of 'estrangement feeling' that allows him to enter into the new culture and allows to speed up the process of catching differences. If this was the situation in the recent past, western anthropologists think nowadays that they can stay at home and they can carry out their

researches in their own culture and country. Taking into account remarkable differences in their respective approaches, this is the case for some American anthropology defined 'Postmodernist anthropology' and for some French anthropology called 'Anthropology of the contemporary world' (or 'Anthropology of the present time'). This historical situation and this change in theoretical perspectives leads to important reflections on the way some epistemological and semantic devices are used and conceived in anthropology but also, more generally, in any other disciplines concerned with the understanding of Otherness. More precisely, if we take into account anthropology nowadays, I think that we should ask ourselves some important questions. Does this new way of doing anthropology break the old forms of cultural critique (which implicitly foresaw a spatial displacement and the point of view of a foreigner) and does it oblige to reformulate an old idea of 'generalized reception'? Can we suggest that there is a new form of reception called (as I define it) 'intra-reception'? In which way is the complex mechanism of seeing and comparing 'oneself' and the 'other' remodelled by one person belonging to the same cultural background he studies (as it is the case for Augé)? What kind of new reflections does this kind of anthropology demand of the definition of literature itself? And, finally, what forms of new subjectivities this form of intra-reception is creating? Evidently, even though they are strongly related, it is not possible to answer all these questions in a short paper, but what I want to stress is my idea of reception and to define what I call intra-reception as a form of destabilized encounter of subjectivities and cultural critique, a form implying a selection of categories constituting a specific semantics and a normative discourse of a discipline. As I said previously, when we think the reception of literature or culture we implicitly rely on a semantic mechanism but also on a modelling of theoretical frontiers.

To be clear and to avoid misunderstandings concerning the concept of frontier, crucial to my argumentation, I want to take three simple examples and to discuss them. The first example is connected with effective and spatial frontiers. If I say that I study the reception of French literature in Estonia I inevitably create a frontier between what is internal and what is external, between what has to be studied as a departure phenomenon and what has to be studied as an arrival phenomenon: the French literature is seen as 'other' and the Estonian reception as 'sameness', the French literature is seen as a sort of 'pro-

duction' and the Estonian way of treating it as a 'reception'. In a sense, this above-mentioned perspective is justified: by real and true borders existing between two different countries such as France and Estonia, that is two faraway countries that have different national histories and different traditional backgrounds. But, apart from real necessities and evident considerations, further reflection on the subject reveals implicit insight and blindness: such as the fact that when you translate a poem into Estonian, for example, you do not do it automatically and passively but you read it by producing something new, something which is also based on your own poetics and contains aspects of novelty and transgression of departure French codes. In other terms: an act of reception includes an implicit (or explicit) act of production that sometimes tries to break the frontiers between what is thought of as foreign and what is thought of as internal, what is 'outside poetics' and what is 'inside poetics'. The semantic frontier created when one says "the reception of French literature in Estonia" is then hiding a model of discourse that does not take into account categories such as 'production (inside reception)', 'poetics of translators and interpreters', 'intercultural mutual transfer', 'creativity (inside reception)', 'activity (inside reception)', 'identity', and so on. By saying this, I do not want to affirm that a deconstructive procedure is essential to any hermeneutical act and that, in the last instance, one is entitled to interpret (or to translate) as he wants, without constraints, just because one category is worth another. What I am saying is that when we use words, when we make comparisons and when we are confronted with the need (or pleasure) to produce similar (or identical) entities, we establish theoretical and epistemological frontiers. And, as scientists, we have to be aware of these implicit frontiers. The duty itself of researchers is to reveal the hidden semantic charge of concepts and frontiers. Finally, the positing of these frontiers in different fields, such as literature and arts, but also in science and ordinary linguistic communication, is the play of culture and the normal and inevitable construction of diversity and identity. In the specific case of the reception of French literature in Estonia, it does not mean that we do not have to import French literature or translate it because methodologies are misleading or because of the inevitable selection of some categories: it only means that we have to pay attention to the different conceptual strategies used to do it (for example, implicitly and explicitly by translators) and that these strategies convey implied

theoretical attitudes whose positioning is relative to the manufacture of a culture. By taking this easy example, and without detailing here this connection between a theory of literature and a theory of culture, I hope that one assumption of my paper is clearer: by studying literature and dynamics of literary reception we also study the structuring of societies and cultures. I would even say that a theory of reception cannot be conceived without a theory of culture, a literary device without an anthropological structure. Furthermore, even if I gave as an example a short sentence (“the reception of French literature in Estonia”) relying more on a word (“reception”) than on texts and cultures, this is only because it is simpler to explain. Other examples can be taken relating to words and attitudes towards words. I think, more particularly, to French society and its overt refusal of introducing foreign words into the language or, on the contrary, the Italian society and its acceptance of assimilating foreign words. One special and more complicated case, concerning both literature and culture, is the one of francophone literatures. See, for example, such a writer as Ahmadou Kourouma who transgressed the rules of standard French language by using in his novels a mixture of Malinké and French languages and also inserting oral African narratives into literary novels. One wonders how a novel can be received (in France, for example) when the mixture is disrupting syntax and semantics and when the *incipit* of a novel is already working as a manifesto: “Je décide le titre définitif et complet de mon blablabla est *Allah n'est pas obligé d'être juste dans toutes ses choses ici-bas*. Voilà. Je commence à conter mes salades” (Kourouma 2000: 9). In francophone literatures (and Kourouma is one powerful example), what is considered to be the normal process of reception is often reversed: the *periphery* (the colonized country and the kind of literature adopted) becomes a centre, and the original *centre* imposing a code and a language (France and the French language) from *addresser* is transformed into the *receiver*. Working on these processes and on the implicit models of communication (sender/receiver, vernacular languages/official languages, etc.), does it mean that a literary theorist has to be an anthropologist or a semiotician? Even though it may be conflicting and exaggerated to other specialists, I am positive that an interdisciplinary attitude is the best starting point for a better and a more comprehensive understanding of literature and of culture itself: one

theory is the necessary bridge to the construction of another theory, and one discipline is relating to another.

If my first example dealt more directly with *practices*, the second example I want to give is connected with *theories*. On this matter, it was important to stress that implicit positionings are constructed even in a word, in the act of interpretation (or translation) or in a foreigner literature. But it is also worthwhile to stress that even reception theories (or reader-oriented theories) contain implied metaphorical levels and a semantic selection of categories in their conceptions. If, for example, we take into consideration the reader-oriented theory formulated by Wolfgang Iser in his well-known book *The Act of Reading. A Theory of Aesthetic Response*, we realize that some semantic categories are privileged to the detriment of others and that some metaphors are essential to the developing of his logics of reception. For example, the single experience of the reader is emphasized over the dominant context, the adjustments of readings over a global and finished reading, the process over the structure, the interplay of characters over the general plot, norms and values over *actantial systems*. And what can we say of the 'blank' the reader has to fill in the text? As a matter of fact, it is a metaphor for any kind of interrupted process in the text thanks to which some hypotheses can be advanced by readers. There is no 'blank' at all in a text but typologies of plot which determine what can be called a sort of 'gap'; and there is no filling on the part of readers but a special kind of relationship that 'leaves space' for readers to conjecture. To make up his theory, Iser resorts to a spatial *isotopy* (blank, gap), selecting a category such as determinacy/indeterminacy and connecting the whole to what is a cognitive dimension of thought. I used myself, to explain his theory, a spatial metaphor: 'to leave space'. The mixture of literal and metaphorical levels is sometimes inevitable and maybe even scientifically productive. As a consequence, does it mean that Iser's theory is false only because it is constructed on the privileging of certain isotopies and because it is connecting some entities such as a *cognitive dimension* and individual experience? No, I do not think so. But it is important to reveal the semantic structure of his theory and the selection of categories to be able to make choices between different reader-oriented theories: for example between the reader's experience theorized by Stanley Fish in his book *Is There a Text in This Class?* (based on a discussion of small sentences and oxymoron more than on

overall texts) and the encyclopaedic competence advanced by Umberto Eco in *Lector in fabula* (based more on the privileging of the figure of encyclopaedia than on the figure of dictionary).

The first example in my paper was taken to discuss an accepted idea of reception (the French literature in Estonia) in order to show that even a simple definition contains real frontiers (the effective national borders) and semantic frontiers (production/reception, activity/passivity, invention/acceptance, departure/arrival, originality/translation, otherness/sameness, centre/periphery, and so on). The second example was taken to reflect on the level of implicit construction present even in a refined theory such as Iser's reader-oriented theory. I would like to resort to a third example to summarize and conclude this part of the paper. Last night, I was watching an English movie in which some thieves rob some money from a bank. They do it with success but one of them is caught, goes to prison and is released after six months because he proved he was not guilty. When he gets out of prison, a fellow robber is waiting for him outside and they smile to each other. Nothing is said of the period he passed in prison and nothing is revealed about the contacts the two friends kept possibly on having during this period. To resort to Iser's terminology, the reader (or, in this case, the spectator) is invited to fill the gap in the text by making hypotheses based on his experience. As a matter of fact, even without having any personal experience of prison I made some hypotheses on the two men meeting out of prison. To be short, the result is that what Iser calls 'gap' and Fish 'experience' is not only related, in my opinion, to one individual's lived sphere but to the assumptions we also deduce from other texts: I have never been to prison and I have no empirical experience of this fact but I interpreted that real and true friendship is more important than economic interests or distance in time and space. This specific 'filling of gap' is possible because I saw the rest of the movie and because I saw other movies and these movies belong to western culture. In synthesis, to explain my path of interpretation I had to pass from my single individual reality to the whole culture, from the single reader's experience to an upper level constituted by the whole structure of the text (and the global genre to which this text is belonging). In other words and to put it bluntly, if you are watching a thriller and in a previous scene you see a running man with a knife in his hand and in the following scene a defenceless woman, the syntax of the images is manifest, unless the

director intends to transgress the rules of the genre. As a result, I do not think one can speak of experience (personal or acquired) without referring to the general dimension of the syntagmatic chains of text and without relating to the system of culture. This long diversion has been a practical expedient to explain the special emphasis I lay on the bridge connecting 'experience' to 'text' and 'text' to 'culture'. If culture is all-pervading, text is inevitable. A text is inevitable because it is a syntagmatic deployment of paradigmatic categories giving shape to experience and it communicates experience and events.

A recent trend in postmodernist American anthropology has drawn attention to subjectivity and experience, practices and situation, shifting maybe excessively the balance from the collective to the individual, from the system to the single event, from theory to practice. Marc Augé belongs to a French school of anthropology and is more prudent about it. He did research in the Ivory Coast and South America before dedicating himself to the study of modern western life. He passed from what is considered an exotic 'anthropology of faraway people' to the 'anthropology of his own culture'. What is impressive in this kind of anthropology is that, even if more poised, anthropologists renounced going to faraway and distant cultures but they did not renounce founding their explanations (of some events belonging to western culture) on fieldwork experience and subjective reception. Then, the question is: if modern anthropology renounces the 'faraway look' of exotic anthropology that provided a foundation for research, how does a modern anthropologist (an anthropologist of the present time) catch a culture, his own culture? The answer might be: by being in the field as a subject-anthropologist and by experiencing the real situation. This position does not answer all the objections because a 'reception' of a culture by an anthropologist is a complex process entailing different aspects to be taken into account: participation, observation, taking notes, resorting to memories, comparing structures, writing texts, and so on. And, if subjectivity is foregrounded by modern anthropologists, one more question is: what is the difference between what is subjective and what is objective? Difficult to say. If in Functionalist Anthropology free reflexivity and intervention of subjectivity in the text were banned, in this more recent kind of anthropology the subject-anthropologist shows himself as an Ego with uncertainties and doubts, a subject implied in the process of trying to catch a difficult and boring phenomenon to him: why people

go to Disneyland. This is the reason for Augé to go to Disneyland, for an 'expedition' (as he calls it) to a place which is about an hour from Paris. Placing 'subjectivity' in evidence and highlighting its power maybe means for Augé to let the readers (and the public) grasp objectively the process and the reasons themselves, to push beyond the difference between subjectivity and objectivity. The *incipit* of his text relating his 'experience' is:

Depuis quelques jours, je commençais à me demander si j'avais été vraiment bien inspiré en acceptant dans un moment d'euphorie la suggestion qui m'avait été faite d'aller jouer les ethnologues de la modernité à Disneyland. Fausse bonne idée, me disais-je: Disneyland, ce n'est jamais que la foire du Trône en rase campagne. (Augé 1997: 21).

The anthropologist is present in the text as an 'I' from the start of the story and of the situation. 'Story' and 'situation' are associated and almost equivalent. For this reason, he shows uncertainties and doubts, he is questioning himself about his duty. This foregrounding of subjectivity is even more evident when he declares his dislikes:

Le mercredi en outre (je n'avais pu libérer qu'un mercredi!), j'allais tomber sur tous les écoliers de France et de Navarre — proximité babillarde dont la seule idée me donnait des sueurs froides. Il était trop tard pour reculer mais j'imaginai sans enthousiasme les longues heures qu'il me faudrait bientôt passer dans la foule solitaire à trembler au spectacle du grand huit ou à gratter Mickey Mouse entre les oreilles. (Ib. 21–22).

The narrator-anthropologist (the two figures are corresponding in one and only instance) is not afraid to consider his trip to Disneyland as a work without enthusiasm. He is intervening in the text by resorting to parentheses and exclamation points which are signs of his presence in the process, a process taking place as he advances in the narration of facts. The difference with some anthropology of the past is that the figure of the anthropologist is not an impersonal Ego and Otherness is not shown as if it was given by itself: contrarily to this option, in the text the anthropologist is well defined and well inserted in the 'effective situation' that is in the course of developing, and the 'others' are seen from the viewpoints of the anthropologist himself. In other terms,

in this ethnography the difference between a text (relating accomplished facts) and facts (in a present evolving situation), between what happened in the 'past' and what is happening 'now' tends to vanish. One can also find a complete *actancial structure* presenting all the roles needed for a real and true short story. In the beginning, we saw that the reluctant anthropologist (Receiver) was given the charge to go to Disneyland without clearly mentioning the Sender but saying it was a 'suggestion from someone'. In the following fragment of the text is presented the Helper:

Aussi accueillis-je avec joie la proposition que me fit Catherine, une amie photographe et cinéaste à qui je confiai mes doutes, de m'accompagner dans mon expédition. Sa compagnie et son soutien me seraient précieux. (Ib. 22).

And a few lines after, the narrator-anthropologist, advancing doubts and perplexities, taking on the figurative role of 'intellectual', presents the Opponents:

Jouer les Hulot à Disneyland, voilà qui changeait le jour d'épreuve en jour de fête. Je m'inquiétais pourtant: le trac saisit toujours les grands comédiens, c'est bien connu, et puis je me demandais si nous pourrions nous présenter avec armes et bagages sans éveiller les soupçons des responsables de l'ordre. Ils savaient le mépris qu'éprouvent ordinairement les intellectuels français pour les divertissements importés d'Amérique. N'allaient-ils pas s'opposer à l'entrée d'une caméra qu'ils pouvaient craindre subversive ? (Ib.).

By revealing possible Opponents, the narrator-anthropologist is also delimiting material and symbolic frontiers. An Opponent is a symbolic frontier to pass, a frontier represented by an individual, but also the place of 'expedition' is seen as a kind of frontier both symbolic and material. This expedient allow the narrator-anthropologist to tell the process and to situate facts in the right order, with the arrival to Disneyland and the relative departure (at the end):

Lorsqu'on arrive à Disneyland par la route (un ami avait accepté de nous y déposer et de nous reprendre en soirée), l'émotion naît d'abord du paysage. Au loin, soudain, comme surgi de l'horizon mais déjà proche

(expérience visuelle analogue à celle qui permet de découvrir d'un seul coup d'œil le Mont-Saint-Michel ou la cathédrale de Chartres), le château de la Belle au bois dormant se découpe sur le ciel, avec ses tours et ses coupoles, semblable, étonnement semblable aux photos que l'on a vues dans la presse et aux images de la télévision. C'était sans doute cela le premier plaisir de Disneyland: on nous offrait un spectacle en tout point semblable à celui qu'on nous avait annoncé. Aucune surprise: c'était comme au Musée d'art moderne de New York, où l'on n'en revient pas de constater à quel point les originaux ressemblent à leurs copies. (Ib. 22–23).

By situating facts in the course of their developments, he can show, by the same way, the process of 'illumination' taking place gradually. First of all, he explains what can possibly be one source of pleasure, that is the spectacle of the landscape giving birth to emotion, and the pre-announced spectacle of Disneyland which does not leave any surprises. But this awareness is introduced as if it was the outcome of his own experiences on the spot and not an idea already formed in his mind and preceding the experience. As a matter of fact, the narrator-anthropologist is speaking of different pleasures in the text. A second one is presented a few lines afterwards:

On va à Disneyland pour pouvoir dire qu'on y est allé et en fournir la preuve. C'est une visite au futur antérieur qui trouve tout son sens plus tard, lorsque l'on montre aux parents et aux amis, commentaires à l'appui, les photos que le petit a fait à son père en train de le filmer, puis le film du père, pour vérifier. (Ib. 26).

This second consideration on the role of pleasure, its association with proofs such as photographs and films, is followed in the next page by a third source of pleasure:

La ville, le fleuve, la voie ferrée, sont des modèles réduits. Mais les chevaux sont de vrais chevaux, les voitures sont de vraies voitures, les maisons sont de vraies maisons; les mannequins ont des tailles d'hommes. Du contraste entre le réalisme des éléments et la réduction du paysage naît un plaisir particulier [...] (Ib. 27).

What Augé is trying to show is that we live nowadays in a world of non-places, that means in places where we only pass and wait, places without roots for our identity: airports, waiting rooms, trains, undergrounds and so on. In these non-places everything is compressed and identities are the result of this compression and acceleration. But to show his theory of non-places he is situating himself (the narrator-anthropologist) and the reader in a specific process: in the course of events that he is simulating, as if he was in the real time when he was living and telling. This is more evident when he says suddenly what it means to understand what is really seductive in a non-place such as Disneyland:

Soudain, je crus comprendre. Je crus comprendre ce qu'il y avait de séduisant dans l'ensemble de ce spectacle, le secret de la fascination qu'il exerçait sur ceux qui s'y laissaient prendre, l'effet de réalité, de surréalité, que produisait ce lieu de toutes les fictions. Nous vivons une époque qui met l'histoire en scène, qui en fait un spectacle et, en ce sens, déréalise la réalité [...] À Disneyland, c'est le spectacle lui-même qui est mis en spectacle [...] (Ib. 32).

Understanding does not come as a result of logic procedures and abstract thoughts. What is drawn from this text is that understanding is a form of sudden 'illumination', the outcome of 'being in situation', living the experience directly and observing, in the first person, places and individuals. This small ethnography by Augé was important to see how experience and text are connected. A lived experience, to be communicated, needs a semiotic support. Anyhow, the aim of this part of my paper was not to make a detailed analysis of the text produced by Augé to show the power of semiotics. More particularly, I wanted to show the relationship existing between an anthropological theory that can be explained in its abstraction (non-places by Augé) and the effective way that Augé himself is using in his ethnography: by situating himself in the course of events, by foregrounding subjectivity, by giving space to personal intuitions and practical means. In short, it would be equivalent to say that features such as observation and participation, experience and process, are fundamental in field-work for the anthropologist to get the 'revelation' of truth, the understanding of Otherness. What is this viewpoint hiding? It is hiding that 'process' and 'uttering' inevitably need 'texts' and 'utterances'. And

other texts, to the contrary, can represent the effort to cancel the traces of the anthropologist-subject speaking and living the experience:

The beach-dwelling Arapesh live in large houses, fifty to sixty feet in length, built upon piles, with specially enclosed verandas and decorated gable-ends. They cluster together in large villages, and the people go daily to their gardens and sago-patches, which are situated at no great distance from the village. These beach people are plump and well fed. The rhythm of their lives is slow and peaceful; there is plenty of food; pots and baskets, shell ornaments, and new dance-forms can be purchased from the passing canoes of the coastal trading peoples. But as one begins to climb up the narrow slippery trails that extend to definite networks over the precipitous mountains, the whole tone of life changes. (Mead 1935: 3-4).

In this short fragment by Margaret Mead, the only trace of subjectivity taking responsibility for the utterance is cancelled and is only visible when it is said: "one begins to climb". Is a scientific work the result of the absence of the subject uttering in the text produced? I think that an answer can be given only by comparing epistemological assumptions of different epochs and cultures. That was also the reason to compare a specific ethnography by Augé and his general theory of non-places. It was important to see what are the semantic categories utilized by Augé to rationalize his theory: permanent/passing, stable/instable, fiction/reality are some important ones. More generally, Augé carves a frontier between places giving positive values (and identity) and non-places containing negative values and eradication of identity. As we have seen in his short ethnography, Augé's theory on modern and globalized world is built upon three definitions of pleasure (pleasure coming from connection between subject and landscape/spectacle; pleasure coming from proving one's own vacation; pleasure coming from contrasts of realism and reduction). These forms of pleasure are based altogether on absence of surprise. Does it mean that for Augé the 'real' (and not fictional) pleasure has to be an effect of surprise (and novelty)? What is important for our hypotheses here is that his theory is a cultural critique and at the same time a textual form to seize the 'other' relying on a specific definition of subject whose features are 'presence', 'uttering', 'process'. His theory is also a form

of literature in which one of the main aspects is also the writing of the self and the reflection on his own cultural background. In conclusion, it can be said that reflecting on anthropology from this perspective offers to a different conception of sameness/otherness and reception theory. This reflection is central because writing on culture as an anthropologist means nowadays to think of a new (or at least different) kind of literature. To state that anthropology is also literature, it does not mean that the others are the outcome of our imagination, but that by describing the others one uses literary canons and sometimes one transgresses these canons and creates new ones. Furthermore, associating the history of a discipline such as anthropology and the corresponding textual forms can be a powerful means to explain epistemological paradigms of epochs and to see new possible ways of defining Otherness and the nature of literature itself.

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ISSN 1406-0701
SBN: 9949-11-425-X

interlitteraria
11 - 2006
vol I

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JÜRI TALVET ■ 7
Introductory Note

DOROTHY FIGUEIRA ■ 10
Can We Ever Truly Engage the Other?

EDUARDO F. COUTINHO ■ 19
Comparativism in Latin America in the 21st Century

ÜLAR PLOOM ■ 26
Reception: Eugenics or Contamination. Some Observations
on Socio-Historical and Cultural Performatives

VID SNOJ ■ 41
World Literature against the Background of the Other

TERRY SIU-HAN YIP ■ 50
The Romantic Quest: The Reception of Goethe
in Modern Chinese Literature

WIESLAW KRAJKA ■ 70
From Periphery through the Centre back to the Periphery:
The Reception of Joseph Conrad in Poland

VERA SHAMINA ■ 84
Chekhov on the American Stage

RAHILYA GEYBULLAYEVA ■ 95
The Influence of a Dominant Factor on the Language of Azerbaijani National
Literature

ELVIRA OSIPOVA ■ 106
American Writers in Russia: Some Notes on Reception

KWOK-KAN TAM ■ 113
Ibsenism and Feminist Awakenings among
Early Modern Chinese Writers

MAIJA BURIMA ■ 129
Latvian Literature between Ibsen and Hamsun (till 1940)

OLGA NESMELOVA ■ 138
Russian Reception of the US 20th-Century Literary Process:
The Ideological Battles of the 1920-30s

DOROTHY FIGUEIRA, THOMAS J. FIGUEIRA ■ 151
Imperialism: Heart over Minds?

ENE-REET SOOVIK ■ 161
How Newness Enters a Country:
Reception of the "Postcolonial" in Estonia

DAINIUS VAITIEKŪNAS ■ 174
A la recherche du postmodernisme: la réception de la littérature étrangère dans la
Lituanie contemporaine

TOMO VIRK ■ 181
Literary Reception and Political Background:
Slovene Reception of Postmodernism

JEANNE E. GLESENER ■ 190
The Reception of the American West in the Soviet Union



1 0300 00781572 5

TXETXU AGUADO ■ 218
Beyond the Provincial Literary Canon of the Nation: The Reception
of Jorge Semprún's Discordant Voice Within the Spanish Tradition

SABINE COELSCH-FOISNER ■ 233
Pygmalion and My Fair Lady: From Social Satire to
Musical Romance

STEFANO MONTES ■ 246
Is Intra-Reception Possible? The Literatures of Anthropologists,
Marc Augé and Otherness

82
1-61