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Contents ■ Matières ■ Inhalt ■ Contenido

VOLUME 1

JÜRI TALVET ■ 5
Introductory Note

DOROTHEA SCHOLL ■ 7
Ethik und Ästhetik zwischen Humanismus und
Posthumanismus: Überlegungen zur ethischen Literaturanalyse
in der Langzeitperspektive

ERSU DING ■ 29
Modernity vs Pre-modernity in a Global Literary Context

MONICA SPIRIDON ■ 41
Literary Studies at the Crossroads:
The Strategies of “Co-optation”

LI XIA ■ 50
Li Yidou's Credo: Intellectuals in The Post-Mao Literary and
Cultural Landscape

KRISTEL ZILMER ■ 69
From Dilemma to Diversity – Traditional and
Modern Approaches to Medieval Icelandic Sagas

JÜRI TALVET ■ 84
Constructing a Mythical Future City for a Symbiotic Nation
from the European “Periphery”.
Fr. R. Kreutzwald’s Epic *Kalevipoeg*

LIINA LUKAS ■ 104
Estnische Ortssagenmotive in deutschbaltischen Balladen

REIN VEIDEMANN ■ 129
About the Boundary/Boundaries of Estonian Culture

VIRVE SARAPIK ▪ 142

Anti-futurism of the Young Estonia Literary Movement

KAIA SISASK ▪ 162

Friedebert Tuglas and French *fin de siècle* Literature.
Between Aestheticism and Realism

KATILIINA GIELEN ▪ 174

Writing Alver, Writing Smith: *Everyday* in a Poet's Biography

GLYNN CUSTRED ▪ 182

Sheridan Le Fanu, Irish Writer and Innovator
in the Gothic Literary Tradition

PILVI RAJAMÄE ▪ 196

Bewitched by Bigotry: John Buchan's *Witch Wood*

EFSTRATIA OKTAPODA ▪ 204

Le mythe de la sorcière et ses avatars dans la littérature
contemporaine: les sorcières de Pierre Gripari

DOLORES ROMERO LÓPEZ ▪ 218

Guerra y exilio en la poesía escrita por las mujeres
del 27 en España

JESÚS SORIA CARO ▪ 230

Poesía y compromiso: de la modernidad a la posmodernidad

PIRET VIRES ▪ 247

The New Elite: from Digital Literature to a Printed Book

Introductory Note

The present one is the first *miscellanea*-issue of *Interlitteraria* that we publish in two volumes. It shows a fairly wide circle of topics in which comparative scholars work in our days. My personal impression is that, as the new century advances, we are heading towards a phase of reconciliation in cultural studies. Humanism and post-humanism, premodernism and modernism, realism, modernism and postmodernism, writing and rewriting, thinking and rethinking, traditional and innovative approaches in literary research are not really so antagonistic in their mutual relationship that it should divert us from the main goal: trying to understand and illuminate spiritual and mental processes as reflected by literature and their role in the historical modification and change of societies.

I think comparative studies of literature, the nucleus of which is always relating “own” to “other”, form just an ideal ground for overcoming one-sidedness and (either aesthetically or sociologically) biased approaches, as well as for deepening symbiotic ways of embracing the phenomena we research. We should remain open, avoid exclusiveness. On the same ground, especially as we come nearer to the 19th world Congress of International Comparative Literature Association in Korea (August 2010), whose general theme is “Expanding the Frontiers of Comparative Literature”, we should more and more be aware of the fact that literature is never merely literature, but much more than that. It transcends its linguistics and aesthetic boundaries. It is a one of the most powerful means of spiritually orientating societies, opposing injustice provoked by ideological, political as well as economical abuses of power. It is also one of the main resorts of culture as creation, especially because of its fundamental philosophic dimension. Literature’s potential in complementing what scholarly philosophy should do but has not been able to do, is really boundless.

Following tradition, we hope to present *Interlitteraria* 14 at the opening of the 8th International Conference of the Estonian Association of Comparative Literature, in September 2009. The theme of the conference is “History of Literature as a Factor of a National

and Supranational Literary Canon“. In this context I deeply regret that a good colleague, Gustav Liiv (1923–2008) has left us without being able to see published his substantial contribution to the first major Estonian effort of writing a comprehensive comparative overview of the history of world literature. Gustav Liiv wrote for our *Suur maailmakirjandus* (Great World Literature) large chapters on Western realistic prose narrative, about authors like Stendhal, Dickens, Balzac, Thackeray, Flaubert, Zola, Shaw, Kivi, Lagerlöf, Undset and others.

Was the widely extended realistic method a historical mistake? When writing literary histories in postmodern and “posthumanistic“ times, should we exclude realistic literature from national or international canon or demonstrate its definite inferiority as compared with what we, the postmoderns, consider our “own“?

These questions among other will be discussed at our conference. We will gather its papers in the next monographic issue of *Interlitteraria* (15, 2010). The manuscripts should arrive by January 31, 2010.

Jüri Talvet,
Editor

**Ethik und Ästhetik zwischen
Humanismus und Posthumanismus:
Überlegungen zur ethischen
Literaturanalyse
in der Langzeitperspektive**

DOROTHEA SCHOLL

*Les autres forment l'homme; je le recite et en represente un
particulier bien mal formé... Je n'enseigne point, je raconte.*

Montaigne, Essais III, 2 (Montaigne 1962: 782–784)

La morale de l'Art consiste dans sa beauté même...

Flaubert, Brief an Louis Bonenfant, 12. Dezember 1856
(Flaubert 1980: 652)

*There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are
well written or badly written. That is all.*

Oscar Wilde, *The picture of Dorian Gray* (1891),
Vorwort (Wilde 1968: 5)

In seiner Eröffnungsvorlesung am Collège de France hat Roland Barthes betont, dass die Literatur entsakralisiert sei und mit der Schwächung ihrer institutionellen Bedingungen auch ihre Modellfunktion im Hinblick auf das Humane verloren habe (Barthes 1978: 40). Barthes, der selbst entscheidend am ethischen Legitimationsverlust der Literatur beteiligt war, erklärte in "La mort de l'auteur" (1968) den Autor als moralische Instanz für tot, um dem Leser die absolute Freiheit der Deutungsmacht über den Text zu erteilen (Barthes 1984: 66). Die Konzeption des literarischen Textes als

einem komplexen Gebilde von intertextuellen und polyphonen Vernetzungen in einem wertfreien Raum ist bis in die Gegenwart ein wesentliches Axiom in der Literaturkritik, die damit auch auf Positionen zurückgeht, die innerhalb der Literatur selbst, vor allem seit dem 19. Jahrhundert, formuliert worden waren. Autoren wie Flaubert, Tschechow, Baudelaire und die Symbolisten betrachteten den literarischen Text als offenes Gebilde, dessen Sinn vom Leser selbst erschlossen werden müsse. “Mes vers ont le sens qu’on leur prête”, erklärte Paul Valéry (Valéry 1957: 1509), und Baudelaire schrieb über Flauberts *Madame Bovary*:

La logique de l’œuvre suffit à toutes les postulations de la morale, et c’est au lecteur de tirer les conclusions de la conclusion. (Baudelaire 1980: 480)

Mit Baudelaire sah Flaubert in der Ästhetik selbst die Ethik der Kunst (vgl. Séginger 2000), und für Anton Tschechow war Literatur keinesfalls der Ort moralischen Urteilens oder gar Verurteilens: “Der Künstler soll nicht Richter über seine Gestalten sein und über das, was sie sprechen, sondern nur ein unvoreingenommener Zeuge”, schrieb er in einem Brief an A.S. Suworin vom 30. Mai 1888 (Kluge 1995: 72). Für diese Autoren sind Ethik und Ästhetik kein Widerspruch, sondern sie betrachten die axiologische Neutralität im Kunstwerk als Ethos und als eine unabdingbare Voraussetzung für dessen ästhetische Qualität. Doch aufgrund des Postulats, dass Literarität und Moral einander ausschließen, wurde dessen ungeachtet die Zuordnung Ethik-Ästhetik in der Literaturwissenschaft des 20. Jahrhunderts so weitgehend ausgeklammert, dass die Abwesenheit von Wertediskussionen in literaturkritischen Texten zuweilen gar einer Tabuisierung gleichkommt.

Literaturwissenschaft nach dem *ethical turn*

Erst seit dem *ethical turn* Ende der 1980er Jahre bahnt sich mit einer neuen Sensibilisierung für ethische Probleme eine neue Methodik in den Literaturwissenschaften an.¹ Der sogenannte *ethical criticism* muss sich

¹ Darstellungen und Analysen des *ethical turn* bieten Baker 1995; Hoffmann / Hornung 1996; Parker 1998: 1–17; Hadfield / Rainsford / Woods

indes mit Positionen auseinandersetzen, in deren Sicht humanistische und sogenannte “posthumanistische”² Ethikkonzepte unvereinbar sind, was zu einer anhaltenden Polemik geführt hat, auf die hier nicht im einzelnen eingegangen werden kann (vgl. Kronick 2006).

In jüngster Zeit zeigen sich Versuche, den Konflikt zwischen humanistischen und “posthumanistischen” Ethik- und Ästhetikkonzepten zu überwinden. Ein Beispiel ist Mark William Roche. Er arbeitet die literaturwissenschaftliche Bedeutung der ethischen Textanalyse im Hinblick auf die technisierte Gesellschaft unserer Zeit heraus und kombiniert hermeneutische und poststrukturalistische Ansätze, die er jeweils kritisch auf ihre Vorzüge und Schwachstellen hin befragt (vgl. Roche 2002; 2004). Dabei weist er wiederholt darauf hin, dass Literatur in ihrer ganzen Komplexität mehr ist als das, was die Theorie, wie auch immer sie sich ideologisch situiert, über sie aussagen kann (s. bes. Roche 2002: 50–74).

Die Frage, wie sich Literatur und Theorie jeweils zueinander verhalten, kann Aufschlüsse über die Anwendungsfähigkeit und Angemessenheit von Theorien im Allgemeinen und im Besonderen geben. Literatur vermag durch die in ihr innewohnende Möglichkeit, das Leben in Ausschnitten und im Ganzen zu thematisieren und moralische Konflikte und Probleme in ihrer Komplexität zu vermitteln, Theorien entweder zu bestätigen oder zu hinterfragen oder gar zu widerlegen. Sie vermag eine ästhetische Distanz zu erzeugen, die es gestattet, beim Leser einen Erkenntnisprozess auszulösen. Gerade in der Komplexität liegt eine Chance der Literatur in ihrer Eigenschaft als Tradierungs-, Reflexions- und Vermittlungsort von Werten, denn in Ergänzung zu einer theoretischen Ethik hat die Literatur – auch das Erzählen als solches – die Möglichkeit und die Fähigkeit, im Sinne einer narrativen Ethik (vgl. z.B. Joisten 2007) zu wirken.

2001: 1–14; Davis / Womack 2001; Leypoldt 2003; Eskin 2004; Kronick 2006; Heinze 2006.

² Der Begriff des Posthumanismus wird im allgemeinen im Kontext der neuen bio- und medientechnologischen Möglichkeiten verwendet. Im Bereich der Literatur- und Kulturwissenschaft wird der Begriff häufig mit dem Poststrukturalismus, der Dekonstruktion und der Postmoderne identifiziert. In diesem Sinne impliziert er den mit dem Strukturalismus *und* Poststrukturalismus einhergehenden Wandel in der Sicht auf die Humanwissenschaften.

Martha Nussbaum inspiriert sich zur Ausarbeitung ihrer Emotionstheorie nicht zufällig gerade an literarischen Texten. Die "Rationalität" oder "Intelligenz" von Emotionen (vgl. Nussbaum 1996: 53–78 und 2001) könne nicht ohne den Bezug zu ästhetischen Ausdrucksformen erkannt werden, weil in diesen die psychologische Durchdringung und Erfassung von ethischen Problemen anders gestaltet sei, wogegen "[...] a part of ethical thought itself will be omitted with the omission of emotions." (Nussbaum 2001: 3)

Die literaturwissenschaftlichen Arbeiten nach dem *ethical turn* beziehen sich vorwiegend auf die Literatur der Neuzeit. Dagegen stehen Neuansätze ethischer Literaturkritik, die traditionelle Thematiken humanistischer Geisteskultur wiederentdecken und diese auf historischer und philologischer Basis unter den veränderten Voraussetzungen der Wissenschaften im Zeitalter der Globalisierung auf interdisziplinärer Ebene neu interpretieren.

Ethische Literaturanalyse in der Langzeitperspektive

Im Folgenden sollen methodische Ansätze im Hinblick auf wertorientierte Analysen in einer Langzeitperspektive vorgeschlagen werden. Dabei geht es nun aber nicht so sehr um die Erörterung der Frage nach dem moralischen Wert oder der moralischen Wirkung der Literatur, sondern vielmehr um die Frage, wie Literatur Werte inszeniert und ästhetisch legitimiert – auch jene Literatur, die als "unmoralisch" betrachtet wurde oder wird. Um als ästhetische Kommunikation rezipiert werden zu können muss die Literatur in ihrer dialogischen oder polyphonen Qualität Wertepluralismus repräsentieren oder in ihrer monologischen Qualität eine individuelle und kulturelle Verallgemeinerbarkeit voraussetzen.

Der Blick auf die *longue durée* ermöglicht es, ein Bewusstsein für historisch gewachsene Wertvorstellungen zu schaffen, die Bedeutung der Literatur im Kontext epochenspezifischer Moralvorstellungen herauszustellen und Phänomene wie Wertekonstanz und Wertewandel besser situieren und beurteilen zu können.

Folgende übergeordnete Fragen allgemeiner Art eignen sich – jeweils vom Textkorpus ausgehend und im Hinblick auf die kultu-

rellen Bedingungen der jeweiligen Epoche – als Orientierung für die ethische Analyse von Texten in der Langzeitperspektive:

- Welche historischen und systematischen Konzepte bedingen das Verhältnis Literatur und Ethik?
- Welche Instanzen (z.B. Kirche, Gesellschaft, Staat, Medien) produzieren und bestimmen welche Werte? Wie verhält sich Literatur gegenüber diesen Instanzen? Wie verhalten sich diese Instanzen gegenüber der Literatur?
- Wie, unter welchen Bedingungen und mit welchen Mitteln werden in der Literatur Werte inszeniert und diskutiert? Worin liegt unter den jeweiligen Bedingungen das Proprium der Literatur im Zusammenhang mit der Diskussion und Vermittlung von Werten? Wie wird in und durch Literatur Wertigkeit erzeugt? Worin liegt der Wert von Literatur?
- Wie ist das Verhältnis zwischen ethischen und ästhetischen Kategorien innerhalb eines Textes und in seinem Kontext?
- Welche Menschenbilder und Humanitätskonzepte determinieren aus welchen Gründen bestimmte Ethik- und Ästhetikkonzepte?
- Wie verhalten sich die Wertekonzepte und -systeme im Kanon der Weltliteratur zu jenen marginaler oder regionaler Literaturen und umgekehrt?
- Wie werden traditionelle Tugenden und Laster im Laufe der Zeiten konzipiert und beerbt? (z.B. Kardinaltugenden, christliche Tugenden, theologale Tugenden, Todsünden; Emblematisierung, Allegorisierung, Entallegorisierung und Reallegorisierung von Tugenden und Lastern in Text und Bild)
- Wie verhalten sich “neue” Theorien zu “alten” Theorien? Wie steht z.B. die moderne Emotionstheorie zur frühneuzeitlichen Tugend- und Affektenlehre und zur rhetorischen Theorie der Passionen?
- Welche Rolle spielen Literatur und Literaturkritik als Vermittlungsinstanzen moralischer Reflexion und moralischer Entwicklung? Welchen Beitrag leistet Literatur zur Bewusstwerdung, Differenzierung und Analyse ethischer Fragen und Probleme? Welchen Beitrag leistet Literatur zur Klärung und Differenzierung des Moralbegriffs?
- Wie ist das Verhältnis von Axiologie und Ethik? Welche axiologischen und ethischen Modelle bedingen die Literatur? Wie kann der Zusammenhang zwischen ideologischer, intertextueller,

axiologischer, ästhetischer und ethischer Textmodellierung erfasst und konzeptualisiert werden? (vgl. hierzu Kryszynski 1981: 30–75) Welchen Beitrag leistet die axiologische, ethische und ästhetische Modellierung von Texten der Vergangenheit für das Verständnis von Texten neuerer Zeit?

- Welche Rolle spielt Literatur als externe oder interne Vermittlungsinstanz von individuellem oder kollektivem Verhalten? (vgl. hierzu Girard 1961)
- Welche Rolle spielt Literatur als Vermittlungsinstanz eines kollektiven Gedächtnisses von Wertorientierungen und der Austragung von Wertkonflikten?

Diesen Fragen ließen sich noch weitere hinzufügen. Es soll hier zunächst nur um eine allgemeine Orientierung und Perspektivierung gehen. Dass eine ethische Analyse und Situierung von Texten nicht ohne interdisziplinäre Öffnung geschehen kann, steht außer Frage. Ohne Kenntnis der philosophischen, anthropologischen, theologischen, religiösen, sozialen, politischen und kulturellen Referenzsysteme können die Werke in ihrer ethischen Dimension nicht adäquat analysiert werden. Im Folgenden sollen in groben Zügen einige Beispiele angeführt werden, die vor allem dem Bereich der französischen und italienischen Literatur entnommen sind und verschiedene Konvergenz- und Kristallisationspunkte im Spannungs- und Problemfeld von Ethik und Ästhetik zwischen Humanismus und Posthumanismus bilden.

Aristoteles und die Ethik der Mitte

In Texten der frühen Neuzeit ist die literarische Rezeption und theoretische Kommentierung verschiedener literarisch relevanter Ethiktheorien der Bibel und der Antike eine Referenz in der humanistischen Auseinandersetzung im Hinblick auf das Spannungsverhältnis von Ethik und Ästhetik im literarischen Kontext. Eine entscheidende Rolle spielt hierbei die aristotelische Ethik. So bildet das aristotelische Tugendkonzept der Mitte, des Gleichgewichts und des Maßes (*Nikomachische Ethik* II, 1107a; 1180b) den Hintergrund für die Ethik des *juste milieu* der Komödien Molières, wenn etwa jede Abweichung eines Charakters zum Extremen hin und jeder Verstoß gegen das rechte Maß lächerlich wirkt und durch das Lachen eine Korrektur sittlichen Fehlverhaltens

(*castigare ridendo mores*) bewirkt werden soll – wobei berücksichtigt werden muss, dass sich Molière auch über das, was beim *Publikum* als das “juste milieu” gilt, lustig macht (vgl. Hawcroft 2007: 17 und 66) und er damit die konventionelle Stufe des moralischen Bewusstseins³ souverän überschreitet.

Die aristotelische Ethik ist ein wesentlicher Schlüsseltext für die ethische Analyse von Literatur in der Langzeitperspektive. Becketts *Oh, les beaux jours* (1961) führt nicht nur die aristotelische Poetik, sondern auch die teleologische Ethik der *eudaimonia* ad absurdum: Die in einem Sandhügel immer tiefer einsinkende Protagonistin Winnie ist unfähig, ihrem Leben einen Sinn zu geben, der ihr eine teleologische Orientierung für ihr Handeln liefern und sie zur Glückseligkeit führen könnte. Gleichzeitig hinterfragt Beckett auch die existentialistische Ethik der Wahl und der Selbstbestimmung, wie sie vor allem von Sartre propagiert wurde. Beckett nimmt in seinem Werk experimentell eine “posthumane” oder “transhumane” Perspektive ein, indem er das Ende oder das Endstadium des Menschen bzw. einer Welt ohne den Menschen antizipiert und damit den Rezipienten vor vollendete Tatsachen stellt. Becketts Ästhetik wurde von Adorno im Sinne eines neuen, antiideologischen Humanismus gedeutet (Adorno 1961; 1981: 370–371).⁴ In jüngster Zeit wurde sie mit der Vergänglichkeitsreflexion des biblischen Buches *Kohélet* in Bezug gesetzt.⁵

³ Zu den verschiedenen Theorien der Stufen des moralischen Bewusstseins vgl. Kohlberg 1981; 1984; Apel 1988.

⁴ In diesem Sinne wird “Kunst [...] human in dem Augenblick, da sie den Dienst kündigt. Unvereinbar ist ihre Humanität mit jeglicher Ideologie des Dienstes am Menschen. Treue hält sie den Menschen allein durch Inhumanität gegen sie.” (Adorno 1981: 293)

⁵ Das Kolloquium “Littérature et vanité: la trace de l’Ecclésiaste de Montaigne à Beckett” fand unter der Leitung von Jean-Charles Darmon Anfang Juni 2008 in Paris und Port-Royal statt. Die Akten sind noch nicht erschienen. Das Programm sowie weitere links können online konsultiert werden: <http://www.diffusion.ens.fr/index.php?idconf=1993&res=conf>

Kohélet und die Ethik der Skepsis

Die ethische Analyse von Texten in der Langzeitperspektive enthüllt die kreative Potenz von ethischen Urtexten. Zu diesen gehört neben der *Nikomachischen Ethik* auch die biblische Weisheitsliteratur, insbesondere das Buch *Kohélet* bzw. *Ecclesiastes*. Da Kohélet die etablierte Moral und das Wissen über den Menschen und die Welt im existentiellen Kontext der Lebenserfahrung und Daseinsreflexion hinterfragt und dann auch noch zum *carpe diem* auffordert, wurde das Buch aus jüdischer wie christlicher Sicht immer wieder angegriffen und ist bis in die Gegenwart umstritten, auch im Hinblick auf eine ontologische oder moralische und eine theologische oder atheistische Interpretation des Vanitas-Konzepts (vgl. Scholl 2006: 222–225).

Bei Kohélet zeigt sich eine Ethik der Skepsis, die im Renaissance- und Barockhumanismus (z.B. bei Montaigne) wesentlich zu einem neuen Verständnis von Moralität und Humanität führt und in der Folgezeit mindestens ebenso wirkmächtig wie die aristotelische Ethik ist.

Dante und die polysemische Wahrheit der Dichtung

Neben Aristoteles und Kohélet ist auch Dante eine Schlüsselfigur in der humanistischen Auseinandersetzung im Hinblick auf das Spannungsverhältnis von Ethik und Ästhetik im literarischen Kontext. Seine im *Convivio* (II, 1) vorgetragene Theorie der literarischen Fiktion als "schöne Lüge", hinter der sich ein Wahrheitsgehalt verbirgt (*una veritate ascosa sotto bella menzogna*), ist Ausgangspunkt für eine polysemische Orientierung der Textauslegung. Wenn auch die traditionelle Lehre vom vierfachen Schriftsinn häufig für überholt befunden wird,⁶ so darf doch nicht vergessen werden, dass Dante mit der Ausweitung der mittelalterlichen

⁶ Ein Grund dafür ist die figurale Interpretation der antiken Mythologie nach dem *sensus moralis* wie im *Ovide moralisé*. Eine neue Interpretation und Anwendung von Literalsinn und Moralsinn findet sich in den Studien von André Stanguennec (vgl. Stanguennec 2005).

Texthermeneutik auf die Literatur seiner Zeit eine neue Ebene ins Spiel bringt, deren Tragweite sich dann später auch in der Koexistenz verschiedener Interpretationsmethoden und -modelle zeigt:

The principle of manifold or 'polysemous' meaning, as Dante calls it, is not a theory anymore, but an established fact. The thing that has established it is the simultaneous development of several different schools of modern criticism, each making a distinctive choice of symbols in its analysis. (Frye 1957: 72)

Die Erkenntnis einer vielsinnigen Wahrheit der Dichtung und ihrer Lesarten ist von unhintergebar relevanter Relevanz für den ethischen Stellenwert von Literatur als fiktionalem Gebilde. Dies betrifft auch das im Laufe der Epochen immer wieder diskutierte Verhältnis von Literatur und Lüge bzw. Scheinhaftigkeit und ist in der Langzeitperspektive auch im Hinblick auf das Konzept ethischen Lesens (*ethical reading*; *ethics of reading*) das auf den Pluralismus von Lesarten baut (vgl. Miller 1987; Phelan 1989; Schwarz 1990, 2001), von grundlegender Bedeutung.

Montaigne und die Humanität des «Wilden»

Der Humanismus der Renaissance kombiniert und kompiliert in bildungspädagogischer Absicht biblische, antike und mittelalterliche Quellen und begründet ein neues axiologisches System, indem nun auch zunehmend die Kategorien der Erfahrung und Fiktion eingebracht werden. Eine kompilatorische und kombinatorische Praxis kennzeichnet das Werk Montaignes, der jedoch seine Quellen – besonders Kohelet, Aristoteles, Seneca und Plutarch, dessen *Moralia* 1572 in der Übersetzung Amyots erschienen waren –, nicht im Hinblick auf hohe Ideale auswählt, sondern sich gezielt und provokativ zum Menschlich-Allzumenschlichen hinwendet (vgl. Scholl 2007). Montaigne durchbricht Tabus, indem er die moralische Komplexität thematisiert und die konventionelle Moral auch im Blick auf die Sitten anderer Völker oder anderer Gesellschaftsschichten hinterfragt. Montaigne ist einer der ersten, die das eurozentrische Wertesystem infolge der Entdeckungen fremder Länder und Menschen erschüttern und relativieren. Er entdeckt die

humanitas von Völkern, die als "wild" galten und stellt deren Werte sogar als ethische Modelle oder Kontrastfolien zur "Barbarei" zivilisierter Völker dar (vgl. Montaigne 1962: bes. 203; 208). Montaigne entwickelt seine Ethik aus seiner Identitäts- und Alteritätsreflexion und begründet einen neuen Humanismus, der auch dem Privaten, Alltäglichen und Volkstümlichen Tribut zollt und hierarchische Wertssysteme umstürzt: "chaque homme porte la forme entiere de l'humaine condition." (Montaigne 1962: 782).

Die These, dass der Humanismus ein Produkt der Schriftkulturen sei und sich aus einer gewaltsamen Strategie der Selektion und Abgrenzung (vom "Wilden") konstituiert habe (Sloterdijk 1999), ist aus literaturwissenschaftlicher Sicht zu relativieren. Montaignes Blick auf den Anderen oder der frühneuzeitliche Diskurs der Körperlichkeit, der Groteske und des Traums (vgl. z.B. Teuber 1989) zeigen, dass Literatur in der Lage ist, gegen repressive Tendenzen seitens der Institutionen anzugehen, als Bewahrungs- und Tradierungsort der von Herrschaftsformen verdrängten Seinsordnungen zu wirken, Mündlichkeit auch marginalisierter oder analphabetischer Gruppen zu konservieren und damit auch marginalisierte Werte zu tradieren.

Moralistik und Libertinismus

Mit dem "humanisme dévot" (vgl. Bremond 1924) gerät der Renaissancehumanismus nach Meinung zahlreicher Forscher in eine Krise. Diese "Krise" macht sich auch an der Rezeption Montaignes durch das 17. Jahrhundert bemerkbar, der nun zum Opfer eines "zähmenden" Humanismus wird. Im 17. Jahrhundert gilt Montaigne als "Libertin". Nachdem Montaigne dann im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert zunächst als Prototyp des *Moralisten* rezipiert wird (Lessing 1753, Duval 1820), wird er im 19. Jahrhundert von Nietzsche erneut zum *Freigeist* stilisiert, nun aber im Sinne einer als positiv zu bewertenden geistigen und moralischen Ungebundenheit. Wie also verhalten sich Moralistik und Libertinismus?⁷ Wie sind Autoren zu bewerten, die formal der Gattungskonvention moralistischen

⁷ Die Forschungsaktivitäten Jean-Charles Darmons bieten hier (auch in der Langzeitperspektive) Anknüpfungsmöglichkeiten (vgl. Darmon 1998; 2007; 2008).

Schreibens (Essay, Fragment, Aphorismus, Sentenz, Maxime, Reflexion) entsprechen, deren Verhaltensreflexion jedoch libertinistischer Natur ist?

Auch die Frage nach der ethischen Bedeutung von Imagination und Fiktion im Zusammenhang von ästhetischer und moralischer Transgression wäre neu zu stellen. Bei Betrachtung der literarischen Traumdarstellungen in der frühen Neuzeit (vgl. Schmidt / Weber 2008) zeigt sich, dass der literarisierte Traum es erlaubt, innerhalb der kanonischen Literatur mit größerer Freiheit im Hinblick auf ästhetische und moralische Normen vorzugehen. Er bietet die Möglichkeit, unorthodoxe Ideen zu verbreiten, Kritik an weltlichen und geistlichen Machthabern zu üben und verdrängte oder verbotene Inhalte verschlüsselt, verschleiert oder verfremdet zum Vorschein kommen zu lassen. Die Traumsituation bildet den Ausgangspunkt und Rahmen für ganze Texte oder Textsammlungen, die teilweise jedoch dann gerade aufgrund ihres "Libertinismus" aus dem Kanon entfernt oder verdrängt wurden. Diese in der libertinen Tradition stehenden Texte stellen eine wichtige Quelle für die Tradierung marginalisierter Wertvorstellungen, Wertkulturen und Wertgemeinschaften dar.

Das Ethos des Stils und das Erhabene als transhistorische ethisch-ästhetische Kategorie

Lange vor Buffons berühmtem Ausspruch "*Le style, c'est l'homme même*", wird der literarische Stil immer wieder als Ausdruck moralischer Disposition bewertet, wie in der Rhetorik das *Ethos* des Redners (vgl. Meyer 2005: 86–87) die Grundlage und Bedingung für das Vertrauen, das man seiner Rede entgegenbringt, bildet. Im Laufe des 17. Jahrhunderts differenzieren sich die Ästhetiken Frankreichs und Italiens national mehr und mehr aus und der barocke Wertpluralismus wird zunehmenden Restriktionen ausgesetzt. Italienische Autoren wie Tasso oder Marino ebenso wie "italianisierende" französische Autoren wie Saint-Amant werden einer moralisch abwertenden Kritik unterzogen und aus dem Kanon ausgegrenzt. In diesen Zusammenhang gehört auch die ethische und ästhetische Dimension von Konzepten, die sowohl im Verhaltenscode der

Gesellschaft als auch im literarischen Kontext als Kriterium für Vollkommenheit oder Unvollkommenheit gelten (z.B. *sprezzatura, semplicità, eleganza, civiltà, urbanità, cortesia, bienséance, honnêteté, naïveté, galanterie, politesse, pureté, corruption, décadence, puérilité, extravagance, excès*).

Als höchste Vollkommenheit gilt das Erhabene bzw. Sublime. Der sublime Stil, der den Rezipienten mit Begeisterung erfüllt und mitreißt, wird aber auch als Ausdruck einer Genialität bewertet, der es gestattet ist, die Grenzen normativer oder konventioneller Moral zu überschreiten. Ethisch betrachtet ist der sublime Stil moralisch ambivalent.

Die Reflexion über das Erhabene, das wie das Groteske seit der Renaissance eine kontinuierliche Kategorie der Situierung und Selbstsituierung von Autoren, Künstlern und Theoretikern bildet, ist eine bedeutsame historische Quelle für die theoretische Konzeptualisierung und Legitimierung der Faszination am Transgressiven als Bedingung für das Interesse an Literatur und Kunst. Von hier aus ergibt sich auch der Anschluss an Nietzsche und an die heutige Diskussion über das Erhabene im Kontext von Ethik und Ästhetik zwischen Humanismus und Posthumanismus (z.B. *Du Sublime* 1988; Lyotard 1988, 1993; Schrott 1998, Rorty 2000).

Neue Lebens- und Tugendkonzepte zwischen Aufklärung und Romantik

Die Langzeitperspektive ist sowohl im Hinblick auf die Genese bestimmter Konzepte wie auch im Hinblick auf deren Fortentwicklung und Beerbung von heuristischer Bedeutung. Die in der Literatur der Aufklärung geführte Diskussion um die Tugenden und Laster (vgl. Moureau / Rieu 1984; Plard 1986) wirft ein Licht auf die Konzeption der Tugenden im 19. Jahrhundert. So polemisiert Théophile Gautier mit seinem Konzept des *l'art pour l'art* gegen utilitaristische, materialistische und sentimentalistische Tugendkonzepte und radikalisiert die in der libertinen Literatur des 18. Jahrhunderts praktizierte Demontage der Tugend, indem er das "Moralische" als das Böse und Abstoßende inszeniert und das "Unmoralische" als das Schöne und Anziehende (vgl. z.B. *Mademoiselle de Maupin* oder die

Contes fantastiques). Außer zur Traditionslinie libertinistischer Autoren des 18. Jahrhunderts findet sich bei Gautier aber noch ein weiterer Anknüpfungspunkt zu frühneuzeitlichen Konzepten des ethischen und ästhetischen Pluralismus. Sowohl in seinen literarischen und theoretischen Schriften als auch in seiner Selbstinszenierung als Bürgerschreck übt Gautier Kritik an zeitgenössischen Tugendidealen und plädiert – wie später die Surrealisten – für eine ästhetische Lebensführung der Freiheit, der Fülle und des Abenteuers, die er in den Literaturen vergangener Epochen (insbesondere von Renaissance und Barock) zu erkennen glaubt (vgl. Scholl 2004). Die Romantik insgesamt radikalisiert mit ihren neuen Lebenskonzepten nichtkanonische Konzepte bis hin zu deren Transposition ins Kanonische.

Der Konflikt zwischen Kunst und Moral im 19. Jahrhundert

Besonders aufschlussreich im Hinblick auf die Humanismusdebatten sind die Auseinandersetzungen zwischen dem von den Zeitgenossen als Misanthrop angesehenen Flaubert und der mit ihm befreundeten «philanthropischen» George Sand. Sand, nach deren Auffassung die Literatur dem moralischen Fortschritt der Menschheit zu dienen hat, warf Flaubert vor, die Rolle des Schriftstellers als moralische Instanz nicht zu achten, den Leser nicht an der Hand zu nehmen, um ihn aufzubauen und ihm die Moral seiner Erzählungen zu verdeutlichen. Flauberts Ästhetik der *Unparteilichkeit* sei *antihuman*:

[...] la suprême impartialité est une chose antihumaine et un roman doit être humain avant tout.
(George Sand, Brief an Flaubert, Nohant, 12. Januar 1876)

Baudelaire, dessen *Fleurs du Mal* seinerzeit ebenfalls als antihuman rezipiert und der wie Flaubert unter Anklage des Immoralismus strafrechtlich verfolgt wurde (vgl. Heitmann 1970), ist einer der wenigen Zeitgenossen, die Flauberts ästhetische Ideale nicht als Zeichen von Gefühlskälte, sondern als Ausdruck eines die Zeiten überdauernden künstlerischen *Ethos* verstanden haben. “Or, le poète n’est d’aucun parti. Autrement, il serait un simple mortel”, schreibt

er (Baudelaire 1980: 132; vgl. auch 477–483). Auch im Falle Baudelaires eröffnet die Langzeitperspektive eine andere Sicht. Sein Werk weist ein starkes Interesse an der mittelalterlichen und frühneuzeitlichen Emblemik und Allegorik auf.⁸ Baudelaire übersetzt alte Laster und Befindlichkeiten wie die *acedia* und die Melancholie in die neue Zeit (*spleen*), wobei er mit der Personifizierung von Abstrakta (z.B. der trübselig, Hukapfeife rauchende *Ennui* im Eingangsgedicht “Au lecteur” der *Fleurs du Mal*, vgl. Baudelaire 1980: 5) alte Traditionen – vor allem aus den Motivkomplexen der Vanitas-Tradition – aufgreift, diese aber der veränderten modernen Welt anpasst und seine Leser damit konfrontiert oder sogar schockiert.

Mit dem Dandy-Ideal knüpft das 19. Jahrhundert an ethisch ambivalente Konzepte der Selbststilisierung und ästhetischen Lebensführung an, die sich ebenfalls mit frühneuzeitlichen Konzepten («honnêteté») korrelieren lassen (vgl. Stanton 1980).

“Umwertung der Werte”

Viele Aspekte, die im 19. Jahrhundert in die Humanismusedebatte eingehen, sind schon im 18. Jahrhundert in der Diskussion um das Genie präsent. Das im Zusammenhang mit der Kategorie des Erhabenen vielfach theoretisierte Konzept der starken Charaktere, deren ästhetische Anziehungskraft darauf beruht, dass sie moralische Grenzen überschreiten, wird in Verbindung mit der ironischen und relativierenden Kategorie des Grotesken zu einer Ausdrucksform

⁸ Der Frage nach Baudelaires Verhältnis zur emblematischen Imagination der Vergangenheit wollte Walter Benjamin in einer Studie “Baudelaire als Allegoriker” nachgehen, die in Fragmentform erhalten ist. Benjamin fragt: “wie ist es möglich, daß eine zumindest dem Schein nach so durch und durch ‘unzeitgemäße’ Verhaltensweise wie die des Allegorikers im poetischen Werk des Jahrhunderts einen allerersten Platz hat?” (Benjamin 1997: 173). Nach Benjamin liegt die Antwort in einer Neigung des Melancholikers zur Allegorie. “Auf dem Passionswege des Melancholikers sind die Allegorien die Stationen.” (Ib. 159) “Der Grübler, als geschichtlich bestimmter Typus des Denkers ist derjenige, der unter den Allegorien zu Hause ist.” (Ib. 165)

romantischer Identität. Im Sinne einer externen Mediatisierung (vgl. Girard 1961) ergeben sich Zusammenhänge, die bis in die Renaissance zurückreichen. Für Stendhal, Michelet und Nietzsche ist die Renaissance eine heroische Epoche mit starken Individuen. Daneben – und teilweise bei den gleichen Autoren – lässt sich der von Montaigne und den klassischen Moralisten geprägte Typus des aphoristischen Moralismus und des Anekdotischen als narrativer Vermittlungsform ethischer Konzepte in neuer Form verfolgen (z.B. bei Stendhal, Chateaubriand, Sainte-Beuve, Michelet und Leopardi), die sich ebenfalls im 20. Jahrhundert fortsetzt, z.B. bei Paul Léautaud, Eugène Ionesco, Émile Cioran, Walter Benjamin, Stanislaw Jerzy Lec, Guido Ceronetti und Jean-François Lyotard, der in *Moralités postmodernes* (1993) mit der heterogenen Form von Erzählung, Dialog, Fabel, Maxime und Aphorismus “Reste” einer “melancholischen” Rückbesinnung auf “kohärente” Erzählungen aufscheinen lässt.

“Vielleicht ist das ganze Menschentum nur eine Entwicklungsphase einer bestimmten Thierart von begränzter Dauer: so dass der Mensch aus dem Affen geworden ist und wieder zum Affen werden wird, während Niemand da ist, der an diesem verwunderlichen Komödienausgang irgendein Interesse nehme”, schreibt Nietzsche im Aphorismus “Kreislauf des Menschentums” (Nietzsche 1980: 209–210) und situiert sich damit in der Traditionslinie des skeptischen Humanismus Kohelets, der ebenfalls eine posthumane Ära antizipiert: “Eine Generation geht, eine andere kommt. / Die Erde steht in Ewigkeit” (1 Koh 4). Nietzsche fügt aber aus einem humanistischen Impuls hinzu: “Gerade weil wir diese Perspective in’s Auge fassen können, sind wir vielleicht im Stande, einem solchen Ende der Zukunft vorzubeugen.” (Nietzsche 1980: 210)

Nietzsche, dessen Humanismuskonzept aus vielfältigen Quellen gespeist ist (vgl. *Noesis* 10, 2006, bes. Magnard), entwickelt aus seiner Rezeption der französischen Moralistik sein Konzept von der “Umwertung der Werte”, das auch beinhaltet, dass traditionelle Laster aufgewertet und traditionelle Tugenden abgewertet werden (vgl. Scholl 2007: 92–94). Mit Nietzsches Lehre vom Übermenschen und der Gott-ist-tot-Theologie bzw. -Anthropologie ergibt sich eine neue Veränderung im Verhältnis Ethik-Ästhetik und der traditionellen Humanismuskonzepte, die sich in der Literatur und Lebensphilosophie des *Fin de siècle* niederschlägt (z.B. bei D’Annunzio).

Auch Richard Wagners Konzept des "Künstlermenschen der Zukunft" beeinflusst die Literatur dieser Zeit. Das aristokratische Konzept der Ausnahmepersönlichkeit wird mit Wagners Utopie auf eine demokratische Ebene gestellt: "alle werden am Genie tätig teilhaben, das Genie wird ein gemeinsames sein", schreibt Wagner in *Das Künstlertum der Zukunft* (zit. nach Borchmeier 1982: 70).

Literatur und "Krise" des Humanismus

Vor allem in Zeiten des Umbruchs (Naturkatastrophen, Kriege, neue wissenschaftliche Erkenntnisse, neue Lebensformen) wird von einer "Krise" oder einem "Ende" des Humanismus gesprochen. Das Konzept der Krise beinhaltet wie jenes vom Ende als solches bereits ein Werturteil, da es einen als mehr oder weniger ideal empfundenen Zustand voraussetzt und den veränderten Zustand immer aus dieser Perspektive beurteilt. Die vergleichende Geschichte der historischen und aktuellen Diskurse über Humanismuskrisen muss erst noch aufgearbeitet werden.

In den Kriegs- und Nachkriegsjahren des 20. Jahrhunderts kommt es zu einer Neubesinnung und Rückbesinnung auf die Idee des Humanismus. Zahlreiche Autoren und Intellektuelle partizipieren an der Humanismus-Debatte – u.a. Maritain, Primo Levi, Saint-Exupéry, Camus, Malraux, Blanchot, Leiris, Césaire, Senghor, Memmi, de Lubac, Heidegger, Karl Barth, Simone Weil, Hannah Arendt, Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Erich Fromm.

An Sartres atheistischem Humanismus zeigt sich, wie das konventionelle Moralsystem durch das neue Paradigma der Psychoanalyse hinterfragt und als Ausdruck der Verdrängung und Entfremdung – auch im marxistischen Sinne – konzipiert und deklariert wird. Die traditionellen "Sünden" und "Tugenden" und die sie definierenden Instanzen sollen mit Hilfe der "existentiellen Psychoanalyse" überwunden und durch neue Werte und Instanzen ersetzt werden (Sartre 1943: 675). Der Schriftsteller hat die Aufgabe "de faire en sorte que nul ne puisse ignorer le monde et que nul ne s'en puisse dire innocent" (Sartre 1948: 31). Im Verlust der "Unkenntnis" und "Unschuld" angesichts der Welt und der Menschen sieht Sartre die Voraussetzung und Bedingung für eine authentische "Menschwerdung" des Menschen.

Mit dem Konflikt zwischen Sartre und Foucault, zwischen René Girard und Claude Lévi-Strauss, zwischen Strukturalismus und Poststrukturalismus im Problemfeld der Humanwissenschaften nimmt die Debatte um den Humanismus in der zunehmend globalisierten Theorie des 20. und beginnenden 21. Jahrhunderts eine neue Richtung, und es lassen sich immer öfter die Schlagworte "Anti-humanismus" oder "Posthumanismus" vernehmen. Foucaults Rede vom Ende des Menschen (Foucault 1966: 398), wurde als gegen die Subjektphilosophie Descartes' und Sartres gerichteter Antihumanismus aufgefasst, der gleichzeitig aus einem humanistischen Impuls heraus formuliert worden sei. Tobin Siebers bemerkt hierzu:

[...] killing the concept of the self because the self may kill does not extricate one from the cycle of violence. And yet the desire to eliminate the constitutive self of literature has ethical motivations that cannot be renounced, no matter how unpopular ethics may become. Whether we assert a theory of the self or deny it, we remain within the sphere of ethics, if only because the word 'ethics' derive from the Greek *ethos*, or 'moral character'. (Siebers 1988: 5)

"L'inefficacité de l'action humaine enseigne la précarité du concept: homme. [...] Non-essence de l'homme, possiblement moins que rien", schreibt Emmanuel Lévinas unter Berufung auf Maurice Blanchot (Lévinas 1973: 79; 110). Lévinas führt die neue "Krise des Humanismus" auf die Erfahrung der Wirkungslosigkeit menschlichen Handelns und Strebens und auf die Verunsicherung des Konzepts der Identität und des Menschen schlechthin durch die Kriegserfahrungen und durch die neuen Wissenschaften zurück (Lévinas 1973, bes. 73–74; 95–98). Doch auch die Psychoanalyse wird nun dekonstruiert. Lévinas betont – vielleicht zur Vorbeugung von diskriminatorischen Zuschreibungen (vgl. ib. 97–98) – die absolute Unzugänglichkeit des Subjekts. Das undurchdringliche Ich sieht sich einem undurchdringlichen Anderen gegenüber, der in Lévinas' Alteritätskonzept zur Ikone ästhetisiert wird (Lévinas 1973, bes. 48–57), um eine Ethik der Verantwortung für den "die Welt in sich (er)tragenden" Anderen (vgl. ib. 91) zu begründen.

*

Es dürfte deutlich geworden sein, dass ein zentrales Problem bei der ethischen Literaturanalyse in einer Langzeitperspektive in der Tatsache liegt, dass mit den Begriffen "Humanismus" und "Antihumanismus" je nach Epochen und Individuen verschiedene Inhalte gemeint sein können. Dies lässt sich bei Betrachtung der *longue durée* immer wieder an einzelnen Beispielen belegen. Sartres *L'Existentialisme est un humanisme* (1946) antwortet auf den Vorwurf des Antihumanismus. Camus' *L'Étranger* (1942) wurde wie in den fünfziger Jahren das *Théâtre de l'absurde* zunächst als antihumanistisch und antihuman rezipiert. Aimé Césaire bezichtigt in seinem *Discours sur le Colonialisme* (1950; 1955) den westlichen Humanismus einer antihumanen Gesinnung, die mit pseudohumanistischen Konzepten operiere und rassistische Menschen- und Weltbilder legitimiere (vgl. Césaire 1989).

Der Beitrag kolonialer und postkolonialer Autoren zur Humanismusdebatte ist grundlegend, da sich Autoren wie Césaire, Senghor, Fanon und Glissant, trotz ihrer berechtigten Kritik an einem ideologisch instrumentalisierten Humanismus, zu einem erneuerten Humanismus als Wertegemeinschaft bekennen, wobei sie teilweise auch auf marginalisierte Modelle innerhalb der abendländischen Literatur zurückgehen und diese wieder ins Bewusstsein bringen (vgl. Scholl, im Druck). In der Langzeitperspektive erweist sich, dass bestimmte Identitäts- und Alteritätskonzepte keine Errungenschaften postmoderner oder postkolonialer Theorie sind, sondern bereits früher konzipiert und verhandelt wurden.

Eine Historisierung und Kontextualisierung der Humanismus-Frage ist aus diesen Gründen unabdinglich. Bevor sich eine Klärung von Konzepten wie "Humanismus," "Antihumanismus," "Posthumanismus", "Transhumanismus", "Neohumanismus" herausstellt, sollten sie daher nicht affirmativ, sondern als heuristische Konzepte – aber auch als ideologische Konstrukte – verstanden und erläutert werden. Erst bei der konkreten Untersuchung der betreffenden Texte und Textstellen wird sich erweisen, ob und inwiefern die Humanismusdebatte der Vergangenheit ein Licht auf jene der Gegenwart wirft und umgekehrt und welche ethischen und ästhetischen Modelle und Systeme jeweils impliziert sind.

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Modernity vs Pre-modernity in a Global Literary Context

ERSU DING

In its non-specialist usage, the word “modern” simply means <of or having to do with the latest styles, methods, or ideas> and in that sense people of all historical periods can justifiably describe themselves with the same adjective. In socio-historical studies, however, the concept of modernity has been specifically linked with the emergence of industrial societies which first came into being in northwestern Europe some two centuries ago. There are many things that have been said to characterize a modern society. Put in the most general sociological terms, such a society possesses a multiplicity of institutions which have been developed for distinctive missions and special tasks; in particular, a modern society is guided in its actions by the findings which have been obtained through science.

Modernity, of course, does not happen in a vacuum; it is temporally preceded by thousands of years of civilization that centered around the tilling of land. As early as 10,000 BC our hunting and gathering ancestors took to domesticating animals and cultivating land, thereby establishing the first settled human communities the world had ever known, but their technology (the plow) and social structure (the village) remained almost unchanged until the advent of industrialism in the 18th century. Not surprisingly, the subsequent industrialization of society with its contingent institutions and values was to encounter strong resistance from the agrarian precedent which had its own deep-rooted ways of life. Whatever social area we look into, there is always a tension between the “old” and the “new”, the “backward” and the “progressive”, the “traditional” and the “modern”

which characterizes the entire historical process called “modernization”.

The incipient strain between tradition and modernity is nowhere more forcefully dramatized than in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* written by the British novelist Thomas Hardy. Set in Casterbridge (a fictional town of the early 19th century, England) and structured through a series of events surrounding Michael Henchard, the novel “explores the forces of historical change and their impact on a rural community”. (Harvey 2003: 32) At first, the provincial town functions in isolation from the rest of the world and Henchard, its mayor, runs the place according to the outdated rural customs: he mixes business with personal matters and relies on weather prophets to make work plans. When Donald Farfrae arrives, he brings with him new and efficient methods for increasing agricultural production and manipulating the local markets: he uses modern accounting skills as well as a scientific process by which damaged grains can be restored to their original condition.

The contrast and conflict between these two characters can be illustrated with their very different attitudes toward their relationship with others and between themselves. When Farfrae first joins Henchard’s business as his manager, they enjoy each other’s company, but their friendship soon cools off as a result of their disagreements over management. Henchard’s way of doing things can be described as patriarchal and inefficient. One such example involves Abel Whittle, a workman in his hay-yard who is often late for work. On a morning when he is late again, Henchard goes to his house, drags him out of his bed, and sends him to work half naked for the purpose of teaching him a lesson and reforming his work habit. Away from the public eye, Henchard has supplied Whittle’s mother with coals and potatoes the previous winter. (Chapter XV) Farfrae, on the other hand, thinks that a tardy worker should simply be fired rather than humiliated in public. The rationale behind his approach is that the public world of employment should be separated from the private realm of family, hence guaranteeing a kind of inviolability of the former. As time goes on, Farfrae’s impersonal style proves to be more popular with the residents of Casterbridge. When Henchard realizes that he is surpassed by Farfrae in the affections of townsfolk, he fires his highly talented manager in a fit of jealousy even though his decision negatively affects his financial situation. But Farfrae

does not take Henchard's hostility towards him personally because his primary motive in competing with his former boss is to usher an advanced economic system into Casterbridge and make the place more prosperous. Such a measured way of doing things exemplifies a model of science that is associated with modernity.

Thus the struggle between Henchard and Farfrae can be interpreted not merely as a competition between a grain merchant and his former protégé but rather as a tension between the old and the new. It is true that Hardy endows his protagonist with a great deal of sympathy, as is evidenced by the subtitle of the book – “A Story of a Man of Character”, yet he also seems to have portrayed Henchard's fall from eminence as being inevitable. Indeed, we as readers are invited to appreciate all the accomplishments the new comer has made: his determination to introduce modern technologies to Casterbridge and his efficient method for organizing the granary's business.¹

Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe is another novel which explores as its central theme the tension between tradition and modernity, but the battle of time presented therein is far greater both in intensity and magnitude. Raymond Williams, late professor of English literature at Oxford, is one of the earlier scholars who recognized the distinctiveness and significance of works of this kind. In his study of English literary representations of “the country” and “the city”, a pair of cognate notions to tradition and modernity, he points out that the tug of war between the traditional and the modern have taken place in more than one country and literature. There is an abundance of materials in French, Russian, German, Italian, and American literatures that feature the dichotomy between the rural and urban ways of life, all pointing to “an obvious need for more comparative studies” (Williams 1973: 292). More importantly, he continues,

it is not, was not, ever a question of study alone. The very fact that the historical process, in some of its

¹ Hardy is said to have had second thoughts about the characterization of Farfrae after the completion of the novel which prompted him to make some minor changes to its later editions so that the character would be judged in an unsympathetic light. For details, please refer to pp. 164–65 of *Thomas Hardy* by Timothy Hands.

main features, is now effectively international, means that we have more than material for interesting comparisons. We are touching, and know that we are touching, forms of a general crisis. Looking back, for example, on the English history, and especially on its culmination in imperialism, I can see in this process of the altering relations of country and city the driving force of a mode of production which has indeed transformed the world. (Ib.)

Williams, we know, was neo-Marxist in his theoretical orientation which explains the use of such classic terms as "imperialism" and "mode of production" in his exposition, but he is right on target in characterizing the historical process of industrialization as "now effectively international". This is also to say that moral strains and social conflicts caused by industrialization are not confined to the internal development of individual states; rather, they are being spread around the globe as the process extends outward from its original Western base to take in the rest of the world.

The international or intercultural dimension of the dichotomy of tradition vs. modernity is exactly what gets thematized in *Things Fall Apart*. In terms of narrative structure, Achebe's book consists of three parts: the first part is set in Umuofia before the arrival of the white man; the second part depicts Okonkwo's life in exile and reports the arrival of the white man in his home village; the third part shows the tragic fall of Okonkwo and the decay of the old ways of life in Igbo society. The conjunctive "and" in the last part of the previous sentence is worthy of our notice because what it connects are two entirely different responses to the uniquely African process of modernization.

At the personal level, Okonkwo resists the new political and religious orders because they threaten his established status in the Igbo community. His sense of self-worth is dependent upon the traditional notion of valor and toughness which has made him a hero in waging wars against the neighboring tribes and tilling the harsh land of Nigeria, but he fails to adapt to the new times when Europeans come to live among the Umuofians. As tolerance rather than violence now constitutes the wisest principle for survival in his changing society, Okonkwo becomes a man of the past, that is, a cultural relic only to be noted in the future book of the colonial

district commissioner: *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger*. (Chapter Twenty-Five)

As was indicated earlier, Achebe's book presents much more than the tragedy of one particular individual. In the first two parts of *Things Fall Apart* readers are given a comprehensive look into the Igbo society as a living structure which is held together by a network of intricate relationships. Through such joyful events as the planting season, the "New Yam Festival", a marriage feast, we are led to appreciate the depth and sophistication of the native culture. But this is not just an Eden of pre-modern life which is later destroyed by the white man. As a matter of fact, to put it in the words of Chidi Okonkwo,

Achebe presents the rural cosmos as maintained through ritual observances whose internal contradictions make the order vulnerable to chaotic forces. Umuofia, for instance, alienated some citizens by branding them as ritually unclean; it also oppressed women who either had no male children or had given birth only to twin. Naturally, these disaffected people proved receptive to missionaries' appeals. (Parker et al. 1995: 85)

Westerners' appeals are not merely psychological which were brought home through the institution of the Christian church. They also include trading posts which pumped goods and money into the village as well as hospitals and schools to which the villagers send their children. But whatever motivations behind their acceptance of a new way of life, the imaginary Igbo society of the 1890s experienced a wave of changes ignited by the arrival of a very different culture, and "[t]he greatness of *Things Fall Apart* lies in Achebe's ability to reveal both what was truly at stake in that tragic conflict and why it was that the confrontation was decided in favor of modernization." (Moses 1995: 108)

There is little doubt that works like *Things Fall Apart* need to be examined from a cross-cultural perspective because they substantially and visibly involve characters from different traditions interacting with one another, yet there are also texts where the presence of foreign cultures is not so apparent but whose interpretation still depends heavily on our knowledge of the global context in which

they function. Two good examples from the latter category are *The True Story of Ah Q* by Lu Xun and *The Good Earth* by Pearl Buck.

Lu Xun's story is about a Chinese peasant by the name Ah Q whose personality is depicted as rather thoughtless and self-deluding. When he is humiliated by his fellow villagers, Ah Q always manages to obtain a sense of victory by consoling himself in one way or another. For instance, one time when he is winning in a gamble, a skirmish erupts during which he not only loses his money but is also physically beaten up, but he is able to gain his peace of mind by slapping his own face, imagining that he is hitting his enemies. Even when he realizes that he is on his way to the execution ground at the end of the story, he remains calm most of the time, because "[i]t seemed to him that in this world probably it was the fate of everybody at some time to have his head cut off." (Lu 2000: 333)

On the literal level, *The True Story of Ah Q* does not seem to have anything to do with the tension between tradition and modernity that is thematized by Achebe, but if we dig into its socio-historical context, the affinity between that story and *Things Fall Apart* becomes much clearer. Long before the publication of Lu Xun's book, Western culture had started to penetrate the "Middle Kingdom", giving rise to numerous rounds of debates about the strengths and weaknesses of the native culture. The debates went on for decades following the Opium War (1839–42) and culminated in what is now known as the New Culture Movement of the 1920s which is characterized by a fierce ideological confrontation between the advocates of Confucianism and those of Western science and democracy. The issues that were most frequently debated during that period of time include: How can the Chinese cultural heritage be preserved and renewed? What is the proper relationship between spiritual culture and material culture? Where should one stand in terms of adopting or rejecting foreign cultures? Many Chinese politicians, philosophers, and literary writers participated in the debate and among them was Lu Xun, who gave up his medical career in order to save the souls of his countrymen with his pen. Thus, says Dr. Huang Sung-kang, "[a] more detailed study of the clash between Western thought and Chinese indigenous culture arising from the subsequent development of that movement is necessary to understand Lu Xun's position in the conflict between the Old and the New." (Huang 1992: 71)

As a writer, Lu Xun was greatly influenced by Western ideas and customs he was indirectly exposed to when he was an overseas student in Japan. Like many progressive intellectuals of his generation, he saw an urgent need for China to transform herself from an agricultural society into a modern industrialized nation so that the humiliations she suffered at the hands of contemporary foreign powers would not be repeated. To alert his countrymen to this need, he resorted to literary writing by which he hoped to expose the “national character” of the Chinese. Ah Q, we learn from Lu Xun’s story, has a very high opinion of himself: he looks down on all the people around him, considering the two young scholars in the village not worth a smile, thinking to himself that “my sons would be much greater!” When involved in a quarrel, he would glare at his opponent and say “We used to be much better off than you! Who do you think you are? These descriptions of a country fellow, although quite funny, may appear somehow idiosyncratic at first reading, but for those who are familiar with the psychological state of a large number of Chinese of the time, the behavior of Ah Q is highly symbolic or emblematic. In fact, with regard to the Chinese reaction towards the Western impact, it was not uncommon for Lu Xun’s contemporaries to read and hear everywhere such sayings as follows:

- China has an immense territory and its civilization is the oldest in the world.
- Whatever foreign nations have, China has already possessed before. A certain science is only this-and-that spoken of by ancient Chinese philosophers.
- Although the material civilization of the Western nations ranks high, China’s spiritual civilization is much better.

Given these prevalent Chinese attitudes towards the Western culture in that historical period, it was not difficult at all for Lu Xun’s intended readers to draw an interpretive parallel between the personal traits of Ah Q and the “national character” which many thought has hampered the course of China’s modernization. In other words, through the “spiritual victories” of Ah Q who does not even have a personal name nor an authentic hometown, Lu Xun’s readers are shown a much deeper, and more serious weakness of the Chinese people as a whole who refused to face up to the realities of being the loser in the Sino-West confrontation. It is also in this sense that *The*

True Story of Ah Q has been cited by Fredric Jameson as a typical example of what he calls “national allegory”:

Third-world texts, even those which are seemingly private and invested with a properly libidinal dynamic – necessarily project a political dimension in the form of national allegory: *the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society.* (Jameson 2000: 320)

We certainly need not go as far as Jameson in thinking that third-world literary texts are “always” or “necessarily” allegorical in nature, but this particular story by Lu Xun happens to fall into that category: it was “intended to convey a uniquely satirical conception of the Chinese national character” (Lee 1985: 10) and therefore should be interpreted as such.

Similar to *The True Story of Ah Q*, *The Good Earth* contains no non-Chinese characters except one who appears very briefly in a city scene distributing pictures of Christ on the cross to uncomprehending pedestrians (Chapter 14), yet if we want to achieve a full understanding of its import, the book has to be placed in its original intercultural context. *The Good Earth*, we know, depicts life in the Chinese countryside which is not an unusual subject matter. What makes the book distinctive, among other things, is the fact that its author is an American who crossed the Pacific Ocean to spend nearly half of her life in China as a member of a missionary family. For the sake of convenience in carrying out their missionary activities, her parents did not always live in one of those protected areas set up specifically for foreigners. Rather, they often chose to mix with ordinary local people as their neighbors and friends. This experience of living among the Chinese for an extended period of time earned the future writer a significant role as an “authentic” voice on Chinese people and their culture.

Pearl Buck was an extremely prolific writer authoring as many as one hundred and seven books in a life span of eighty-one years, but the work that made her instantly famous all over the world was *The Good Earth* which sold millions of copies when it came out in 1931. Since its content is related to China, the book has also received a great deal of attention in the country of its origin. One year after it

was first published in the United States, the Chinese version of *The Good Earth* also appeared in installments in *Orient*, a well known literary journal of the time. The following years saw eight different translations of the book in Shanghai, Beijing, Chongqing, and other places, and Shanghai Commercial Press alone issued twelve prints of its version between 1933 and 1949. (Lipscomb et al. 1994: 58)

It needs to be pointed out that except in the earlier years during which Chinese receptions of Buck were somewhat mixed, the critical responses to Buck in China have largely been harsh and negative. With regard to *The Good Earth*, she has been criticized for a number of things such as eulogizing Western missionaries in characterization, ignorance of cultural subtleties in description, and overuse of coincidences in plot development, but the most scathing accusation falls on her selection of subject-matter or, in today's critical parlance, on what is left unsaid in relation to what is being said in the text. The temporal setting of *The Good Earth* is around 1927, a time when millions of Chinese peasants in many parts of the country were rising up in their struggles against foreign powers, national warlords, corrupt government officials, and vicious landlords, yet nothing of the sort receives substantial treatment in the novel, and the rural world under Pearl Buck's pen is forever peaceful with well-to-do landlords smoking opium in their beds and poor peasants working away quietly in the land, interrupted only by drought, flood, or some other natural disasters.

What most Buck critics failed to notice or refused to see is that *The Good Earth* was written for the American readers of the 1930s who demanded a different set of narrative strategies as well as narrative substances. By the time this novel came out, the United States of America had already replaced Thomas Hardy's England as the most industrialized country in the world. Modernization, of course, brought with it its contingent social problems such as crowding, crime, unbearable intensity of work, and enormous disparity in wealth and all these were compounded by the Great Depression which left many in America yearning for a return to the past when human life was supposedly much simpler and happier. To a certain extent, *The Good Earth*, with its portrait of a Chinese farmer and his family, provided a vicariously enticing world of rural existence.

More importantly, *The Good Earth* was meant to be a book on general Chinese culture about which the majority of Americans at

the time were ignorant. Instead of reporting on the internal national politics of contemporary China which would not engage the book's targeted audience, Pearl Buck wanted to depict the entire communal life of Chinese peasants who made up almost ninety percent of the country's population. As Pradyumna S. Chauhan puts it in "Pearl S. Buck's *The Good Earth: The Novel as Epic*",

The Good Earth shows us all: the rituals of the community, the social gestures, the superstitions, the New Year's feast, the wedding gifts, and the burial ceremonies. The earth gods, we realize, must be remembered at all crucial occasions – upon the marriage and the birth, at mournings and festivals – and they must be remembered even when they curse and afflict the people who adore them. The whole range of behaviors confront us, thus, not only with the social picture of a people, but also with their "unconscious metaphysics," the ethos which defines them as a memorable entity. (Ib. 123)

This statement, of course, should not be taken as a proof that the inclusion of fictional details in *The Good Earth* was not selective; on the contrary, one is given there a rather heavy dose of strange and weird behaviors such as arranged marriage, polygamy, infanticide, and foot-binding which were stereotypically associated with Chinese culture at the time. Indeed, to capture her American readers back at home, Pearl Buck had no choice but to package those quaint features of pre-modern life that were not only in the past and but also at a distance (in China), and at that she was very successful.

To summarize, we can say that the tension between tradition and modernity can be and has been thematized in various ways for vastly different purposes. Thomas Hardy did it to remember the old and to celebrate the new within more or less one national tradition; Chinua Achebe did it to reveal the "shock" of Western modernization when it is imposed upon a hitherto harmonious pre-modern African community; Lu Xun did it to highlight the general weaknesses of his countrymen for the purpose of waking them up to Western science and democracy; and Pearl Buck did it to satisfy the American nostalgia for rural life and desire for exotic culture in a time of expanding industrialism and imperialism. To fully understand the

meaning and significance of each of those texts, we need to go back to its original historical context which, due to the process of globalization, has become more and more intercultural. The situation, in other words, calls for a comparative study of cultures. Perhaps one hundred years ago, it was still possible to argue that literatures written in different languages at different times by different peoples could be studied in isolation from one another but today, when the economic and cultural globalization is so widespread, it would be too provincial to confine our study to any single national heritage. As is also shown through the preceding textual analysis, despite their differences in style and content, the collective works of this international set of writers reflect a common concern with the tension between the traditional and the modern. If modernization is not merely a local phenomenon but a universal condition of humanity and therefore an inevitable subject of any literature, then the proper perspective of our study should be one that gives much greater critical attention to texts that come from cultures other than one's own.

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Literary Studies at the Crossroads: The Strategies of “Co-optation”

MONICA SPIRIDON

Over the last decades, we have frequently seen the professionals of literary studies take risky plunges into the very avant-garde of science – such as quantum physics or the theory of chaos – in an attempt to spice up their hypotheses on the loose nature of the artistic experience or to single out any possible homology between literary genres and scientific vocabularies. At least on the speculative level, an intensive two-way traffic of concepts and methods is right now under way.

Starting with the 80s, literature herself has been credited as a cognitive discourse on the real world, on society, on politics, on freedom, race, age, and sex, on social values or choices. An equal status to any other intellectual discourses in the area of social sciences and the humanities has been called for on her behalf.

Both scientific and speculative structuralisms have underpinned projects aiming to draw meta-literature into an overarching theory of all the human sciences put together. In the wake of structuralism and post-structuralism, the discourse of literary studies has made a radical shift from the models and metaphors borrowed from empirical, mostly natural, sciences, towards abstract speculation, ideology and social discourse. The traditional “organic” perspective and the “agricultural metaphors” in the study of literature have been cast away.

From an all-encompassing perspective, we cannot ignore the fact that the steady endeavor of literary theorists to blur the limits between meta-literature and science has also been boosted by the so-called *aesthetic turn* in post-modern sciences. Nowadays the fuzzy

boundaries between disparate types of intellectual discourse enhance the fusion and confusion between the hard sciences and the humanities, giving birth to the so-called “weak epistemologies”.

In this general trend, we can include the strongly appealing thermodynamics of Ilya Prigogine, Isabelle Stengers and their *La nouvelle alliance* (Prigogine, Stengers 1979); the fashionable mathematics and physics with Heisenberg’s equations, fuzzy logic and fuzzy systems; the uncertainties of quantum physics or of non-Euclidian geometry. To take just a well-known example, Lyotard as a practitioner of postmodern science practically canonized Mandelbrot, a famous mathematician specializing in non-Euclidian geometry. Mandelbrot’s fractal theory challenged the Euclidean strategy of approximating the ideal and unchanging forms of the world, replacing them with a new geometry of endless change and differentiation. (Mandelbrot 1977). Consequently it inspired the study of cultural topographies and of the realm of values, becoming an epitome of the chaotic processes that sum up the endless fragmentations of post modernity in all areas of creation and a genetic impulse towards the so called “Aesthetic of chaos”.

The phenomenality of the “New Alliance” between science and literature, in the so-called digital age, bears an obvious performative stamp, due to the new technological patterns of production/ consumption in the age of media culture. The vigorous genesis of many Para scientific and Para literary genres can be seen as a follow up to the “commodification” of scientific discourses, turned into products of cultural consumption mediated by new communication technologies: TV formats, advertising (the narrative and pseudoscientific turn in advertising), popular press, film and the virtual communication (the internet).

Due to its technologies and to its particular relationship with its audience, Television gained a well-established reputation as an innovating forum in contemporary culture. TV output is a main processor of scientific discourses and of their models and norms, assimilated by the current TV audiences to the cultural/literary conventions. (For instance, a new type of verisimilitude – *the scientific verisimilitude* – is now emerging beside the traditional well known types (referential, topic/ideological, and genre verisimilitude).

Apart from this, literary theorists have constantly been fascinated by the cultural output of the new media: the so-called “*mediagenic*

reality", the "cyberspace", the "virtual reality", "the hypertext" which even now seem to be in bad need of appropriate analytic categories.

One branch of late post-structuralism was making constant efforts to keep up with the boom of computer based intellectual production. As a matter of fact, some of the venerable "gurus" of deconstruction tried very hard to be perceived as early prophets of the particular type of culture crafted by the new media.

Up to a certain point, the development of the so-called electronic writing was mistakenly considered a consequence and an illustration of the earlier deconstructive hypotheses regarding textuality, representation and the media. In this context, particularly Derrida and Baudrillard emerged as self-appointed theorists of the new technologies.

The way in which Baudrillard assimilates VR (Virtual Reality) as a hypostasis of hyper-reality is obviously becoming more and more abusive. Starting with his book *America* (1986) the French theorist has described television and theme-parks such as *Disneyland* as ideal types of a dystopic non-reality or of a third degree imagined reality, a view which remains highly questionable. (Baudrillard 1985) Likewise, Derrida redefined the category of virtuality for his own use, especially in his various comments on spectral realities or on hallucinatory substance of some political representations, in a manner than could, and did, stir sarcastic reactions from some professionals specializing in the area. (Ryan 1999)

Even more dangerous seems the temptation to infer axiomatic affinities between electronic writing and postmodern aesthetics, in other words, to postulate an unmediated relation between the post-modern theories and the electronic textuality.

It could seem quite appealing to approach literature in the perspective of such dichotomies as linearity versus spatiality; the text as an experience of depth versus the text as an experience of surface; the hierarchical versus the free structure of the text; order versus chaos; continuity versus fragmentation and so on and so forth. Nonetheless the next inevitable step is to claim the equivalence of every second element of the oppositions above as converging symptoms of post modernity and of the electronic textuality.

Unfortunately, on a close scrutiny, the assumption that the border between modernity and the printed text, on the one side, and post

modernity and electronic textualism, on the other, is located between these two antinomic series is as inaccurate as it is deceptive: a mere fallacy. In fact, the new means of communication are playing on both terms and, when examined from this point of view, they appear to be rather complementary.

At this point a “*Chicken or Egg?*” dilemma becomes unavoidable: are the new concepts generated by the new technologies best fitted to the preexisting postmodern literature? Or is this type of literature particularly stimulated by the devices of modern technology – as the novels of Thomas Pynchon or of Don DeLillo, among many others, seem to suggest?

Talking about, *Mediascape, Mediagenic Reality, Information Superhighway* we have to bear in mind that every time new faces of very old dilemmas of language and literature re-emerge automatically. (Landlow, Delaney 1993) In this respect, the very concept of *virtuality* (VR) provides an example. Its destiny bears the mark of an old manicheism, whose roots descend towards a scholastico-aristotelian polarity: *in actu* versus *in potentia*, both present in the two faces of the reputedly postmodern virtual space. On the one hand, the latter one is a counterfeit (the product of “*to fake*”) and, on the other, the outcome of endless generation (the product of “*to make*”).

Another slippery concept newly appropriated by literary studies, *Cyberspace*, has already had a spectacular carrier in the most unexpected cultural areas, starting with art theory and finishing with advertising or with the columnist discourses. In a widely known reader edited by David Bell one of the tentative descriptions of cyberspaces provided by Michael Benedikt reads as follows:

“Cyberspace: A common mental geography, built, in turn, by consensus and revolution, canon and experiment: a territory swarming with data and lies, with mind stuff and memories of nature, with a million voices and two million eyes in a silent, invisible concert to enquiry, deal-making, dream-sharing, and simply beholding” (Bell 2000: 7)

However, very few of us know that here we are dealing with a mere epistemological *metaphor*, coined by the writer William Gibson in the early eighties, in a famous paragraph of 33 words, placed on the 3rd page of the first novel of the “sprawl trilogy” that includes

Neuromancer, *Count zero* and *Mona Lisa Overdrive*. (Gibson 1984, 1986, 1988) The aesthetic dimension of cyberspace is neatly captured by Gibson in the following passage from *Mona Lisa Overdrive*:

"All the data in the world stacked up like one big neon city, so you can cruise around and have a kind of grip on it, visually, anyway, because if you didn't, it was too complicated, trying to find your way to a particular piece of data you needed."(Gibson 1988, 23)

The main gibsonian hypothesis is that we experience cyberspace at the interface of reality and fantasy. The symbolic is an important way of thinking about cyberspace. In an frequently quoted public statement, the novelist himself made a revealing remark concerning the spatial substance at which his concept was pointed: "*There is no there, there*" (Gibson 1988: 33). Free of any cultural tradition, the empty recipient of this concept has, since the very beginning, functioned as a pure virtuality or as a catalyst of dreams. Moreover, almost the completely terminological bunch that has its sources in Gibson's book has a rich ludic dimension. Its potential is to highlight the hidden theatricality of the world, produced by the computers, playing on the double meaning of the word *performance*.

Many theorists think that we understand cyberspace through cyberpunk and also try to square our experience of cyberspace with the ways it is imagined in cyberpunk. The so-called Cyberpunk fiction, one of the main contemporary sub-genres of Science Fiction, it is sometimes seen as a distinctly 'post-modern' take on sci-fi. (Cavallaro, 2000). In a way cyberpunk can enact a kind of social criticism of the future, and can be read through the circuits of contemporary culture. Whether Gibson intended it or not in one of the main dimensions, his fiction can be read as social and cultural theory.

According to one of the leading figures of the "*Avant-Pop*", an alleged successor of postmodernism "most of the early practitioners of Postmodernism, who came into active adult consciousness in the fifties, sixties and early seventies, tried desperately to keep themselves away from the forefront of the newly powerful *Mediagenic Reality* that was rapidly becoming the place where most of our social exchange was taking place. Postmodernism found it overtaken by the

popular media engine that eventually killed it". (America, Olsen 1995: 11).

As regards Romanian literary studies, they are by no means deviant from the above-mentioned trends. For the sake of self-preservation on the intellectual market, they are constantly seeking partnership with theories of visual discourse and of the new digital media. Paradoxically, modern theories of film, that appeared by borrowing conceptual tools from literary studies, are now emerging as pristine sources of models for comparatists alongside the fashionable applicative area of video-textual study in comparative literature and literary theory.

Film studies especially appeal to Romanian literary studies and comparative literature, since the ideological analysis of film can concern itself with any social value that may be articulated in a given text or in a series of texts. This is firstly because as such a pervasive mass medium, film nowadays provides a social education for many people beyond the parameters of formal schooling. There is hardly an issue that has not been covered by film. Secondly, commercial cinema is so deliberately tailored to the tastes of the public at large. Thirdly, as a complex narrative medium which includes plot and dialogue in addition to visual content, film has a greater capacity for ideological loading than simpler visual texts. The ideological study of film is a heavily disputed field.

The most recent dynamics of Romanian literary studies could be seen as an embodiment of a more general movement of all peripheral European cultures to achieve visibility and recognition by the prestigious Centre, a movement analysed by Pascale Casanova in her well-known book *The World Republic of Letters*. In Casanova's view, this is a movement that flows from the periphery to the centre in accordance with the permanent effort of the so-called 'dominated' to incorporate themselves into the dominating nucleus of literary space, accepting the instruments that this nucleus offers them. (Casanova 2004: 90)

Conclusion

Ours seems to be a time when literary studies are quickly moving towards extension. In this particular context, some theorists emphasize the dimension of comparatism as a discipline founded on the idea of *co-optation*: "To co-opt is to appropriate a cultural space, by means of identification and characterization, and then to use it at a later time as a form of self-recognition. In other words, it is a way to incorporate something by recognizing and using it for one's own benefit." (Cabo Aseguinolaza 2007: 419).

In the above considerations, I preferred to unveil, beyond this move towards territorial conquest, a complex strategy of *new alliances*. The fact remains nonetheless that, in order to preserve her contemporary dignity and to counterbalance her indeterminacy, her incompleteness, her multilevel significant structure and her resistance to unidirectional deciphering, literature and her metadiscourses are fighting to overthrow the existing cultural configurations and to appropriate the other areas of the intellectual discourse: first and foremost sciences and the communication theories of the new medias,

We are also entitled to identify the astute tactic of contemporary literary studies as a steady endeavour to surpass the so-called *secondary* status of literature in the socio-cultural space. In a well known book, Virgil Nemoianu maintains: "Literature is itself secondary with respect to the central concerns of human beings and the central motors of history". (Nemoianu 1989: XII)

In fact, literature's standing, in contrast to that enjoyed by hard cultural models, should be perceived as a privilege rather than a handicap. Literature's *secondary* status needs no apology and provides no reason for humility. In a cultural economy, literature can take on unique endeavors. Its constant reactions to mainstream intellectual tendencies are functionally necessary to any symbolic economy. The converse is equally true: the aesthetic dimension of exact sciences or their temporary passage towards *weak epistemologies* is not valid arguments in favor of turning the actual configuration of intellectual discourses upside down. Literary imagination plays an important part in linking the *principal* with reality. In the same way, the networking process made possible by literature

results is therefore essential to highlight and to legitimate the specific differences of literature." (Ib. 194–195)

Before I conclude, there is something else to ask ourselves about the recent strategies and the spectacular compensatory turns of literary studies. How really "new" are these *new alliances*?

Standing at the edge of expanding the frontiers of literary study and looking back at how much it has changed we cannot help notice how much it has remained the same.

We might perhaps agree that the effort to identify new patterns of significance in electronic literature can be seen as only the latest episode of a quest as old as European culture itself. During its different ages, European culture took on the mission of symbolizing the ideal Model of wholeness to one type of cultural product after another. In the Middle Ages it was *the Cathedral*. During the Enlightenment it was the *Encyclopedia*. For Modernity it was *the Book* dreamed by Mallarmé and also the novel of Proust, in itself a verbal cathedral, as the author himself suggested in his essays on John Ruskin. For Postmodernity it was the *Endless utopian intertextuality*, where even the tiniest parts reflect the structure of the whole.

And there is more: Do the new media really demand new analytic strategies? Do they present new challenges to our assumptions about the relationship between reality, representation and culture?

Despite all the obvious snares and pitfalls, there remains an incredible amount of talk about the communications and media revolution through which we have to go. The hyperbole seems to increase on a daily basis. If we were to believe everything we read, write and hear the future should be unrecognisable by the end of next week. In reality, however we suspect that it won't be. In a real revolution there is a sudden schismatic break with the past in which previous paradigms are rendered invalid and the future proceeds on altogether new assumptions. Talk of revolution today should be used with extreme caution. What we are experiencing is, for the most part, a period of rapid evolution rather than a past-erasing revolution.

If our culture is indeed a compilation of stories we tell ourselves about ourselves, then the story of the new media and of their relationship with literature are still very much in the telling.

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Li Yidou's Credo: Intellectuals in the Post-Mao Literary and Cultural Landscape

LI XIA

While the socio-political and economic upheavals of Post-Mao China have been explored extensively and in great detail, albeit largely within clichéd East-West paradigms, the intellectual and cultural landscape and its major critical faultlines have attracted much less interest and are, as far as the West is concerned, at best known in their misty contours or what Zhang Xudong calls “the incompleteness, messiness and openness of Chinese modernity”.

The proposed paper attempts to elucidate the artistic representation of the Chinese intelligentsia in Post-Mao fiction as critical trigger for new modes of critical inquiry and the “constructive deconstruction” of outmoded visions (paradigms) of modern Chinese consciousness and cultural spiritual fabric and myth.

1. The Death-Camp Paymaster's Question

At the end of his passionate reflections on political and moral consciousness and the responsibility of the intellectual in a world of intolerable suffering, discrimination and unscrupulous deception, Noam Chomsky refers to the following interview Dwight Macdonald conducted with a death-camp paymaster pleading his innocence at the prospect of being hanged by the Russians: ““Why should they? What have I done?” he asked. Macdonald concludes: “Only those who are willing to resist authority themselves when it conflicts too intolerably with their personal moral code, only they have the right to condemn the death-camp paymaster.”

Significantly, Chomsky highlights the timelessness and relevance of the paymaster's question to all and everyone as follows:

The question, 'What have I done?' is one that we may well ask ourselves, as we read each day of fresh atrocities in Vietnam – as we create, or mouth, or tolerate the deceptions that will be used to justify the next defence of freedom. (Chomsky 1967)

Like Dwight Macdonald, whose articles he had read as an undergraduate at the end of World War Two, Chomsky makes a clear distinction between the ordinary citizen and the intellectual, although the former is by no means completely absolved from resisting complicity with moral and political injustice.

However, the moral responsibility of the intellectual to take a stand in defence of a just and humane society is of particular relevance due to the generally privileged position of intellectuals in society, among others, which Chomsky identifies as follows:

Intellectuals are in a position to expose the lies of governments, to analyze actions according to their causes and motives and often hidden intentions. In the Western world, at least, they have the power that comes from political liberty, from access to information and freedom of expression. For a privileged minority, Western democracy provides the leisure, the facilities, and the training to seek the truth lying hidden behind the veil of distortion and misrepresentation, ideology and class interest, through which the events of current history are presented to us. The responsibilities of the intellectual, then, are much deeper than what Macdonald calls the "responsibility of people," given the unique privileges that intellectuals enjoy. (Chomsky 1967)

Despite their privileged position, underlined by Chomsky, history shows that Western intellectuals have generally failed in openly and effectively resisting and preventing atrocities such as the "horrors" of the 1930s, the Nazi atrocities, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Nanjing Massacre (1937–38), among others, and the more recent unspeakable war crimes in the Balkans (Srebrenica) and in Sudan (Dafur). The awareness of the failure of the intellectuals to act as the nation's

conscience is particularly strong in Germany, where the past complicity of many leading intellectuals with fascism is still a matter of grave concern. But even more recent events, such as 9.11, among others, are identified as historical reference points of failure, as highlighted by Cordt Schnibben in the influential news magazine *Der Spiegel*:

As the ‘advisors of the powerful’ and the advocates for all manner of things, for ‘Ostpolitik’ and Vietnam, for the emergency laws and Chile, abortion and Biafra, nuclear energy, Nicaragua and rearmament, always at hand whenever the world’s conscience was called for, Germany’s intellectuals had failed the nation once again. (Schnibben 2001: 223–4)

The failure of acting as the nation’s conscience in defence of justice and human decency is by no means the prerogative of German intellectuals, but of Western intellectuals in general as Jeremy Jennings and Anthony Kemp-Welch underscore in their excellent study *Intellectuals in Politics: From the Dreyfus Affair to Salman Rushdi* (Jennings & Kemp-Welch, 1997).

Since the socio-political and cultural circumstances in China (and other non-Western countries) differ in many respects from the “privileged” position of the intellectuals in the West, as alluded to by Chomsky above, potential action and corrective influence is substantially reduced and often almost non-existent, which explains the defeatist attitude of many intellectuals and distrust or rejection by others.

2. Wang Shuo: “To Hell with Intellectuals!”

Chomsky’s differentiation between resource-rich, technologically advanced Western democracies and impoverished, economically backward totalitarian third-world countries in Africa and Asia also highlights the limited options of protest and dissent in the latter in comparison with the privileged position of intellectuals in the West. The majority of Chinese writers and intellectuals living in exile in Europe or the United States, such as Bei Dao, Yang Lian, Gao Xingjian, Zhang Zao, Duoduo, among others, have underlined at some

stage the personal anguish and dilemma arising from this situation, summarized succinctly by Gao Xingjian in his Nobel Prize acceptance speech given on December 7, 2000 in Stockholm:

If the writer sought to win intellectual freedom the choice was either to fall silent or to flee. However the writer relies on language and not to speak for a prolonged period is the same as suicide. The writer who sought to avoid suicide or being silenced and furthermore to express his own voice had no option but to go into exile. Surveying the history of literature in the East and the West this has always been so: from Qu Yuan to Dante, Joyce, Thomas Mann, Solzhenitsyn, and to the large numbers of Chinese intellectuals who went into exile after the Tiananmen massacre in 1989. This is the inevitable fate of the poet and the writer who continues to seek to preserve his own voice. (Gao Xingjian 2000)

The internationally acclaimed poet Bei Dao, a candidate in waiting for the Nobel Prize, on the other hand, underlines the favourable position of writers in the West (USA) and the financial support available in contrast to China: "They finance the poets and help them get published. That isn't so in China. But overall it is the same. You can't change society with poetry." (LaPiana 1994)

The emotional and artistic problems underlying a highly regulated and ideologically controlled regime of supervision of the arts has been explored in some detail in two excellent publications by Perry Link, Professor of Chinese Language and Literature at Princeton University (Link 1993; 2000). The developments of the 1980s and the "commercialisation of the 1990s" and its impact on Chinese intellectuals is the subject of Geremie Barmé's landmark study *In the Red: On Contemporary Chinese Culture* (CUP, 1999). With the gradual withdrawal of government patronage of the arts in the interest of a competitive free market ideology, many artists of high culture and representatives of the urban intellectual elite found it difficult to adjust to the "vulgar" demands of the marketplace and to make a living by pandering to the rapidly growing popular culture, be it in print or on television, or what Geremie Barmé refers to as "Apotheosis of the Liumang" (hooligans) (Barmé 1999: 64-98).

Economic reform encouraged investment from outside of China and opened the doors to popular taste and the development of mass entertainment:

Old-style elite culture, political repression and political censorship faltered in the face of market reforms and internationalisation, allowing popular culture to flourish. It has helped shape a new generation interested in life-style not revolution [...]. (Zha 1995: 109)

However, some intellectuals and writers adjusted to the new commercialised environment and were successfully involved in developing "China's pop culture, producing soap operas, tabloid newspapers, mass-market books, action movies, sitcoms, pop music and radio talk shows." (Zha 1995: 109–13)

Their best-known representative is Wang Shuo (born 1958) who made a name for himself as a popular novelist, author of short stories, film-maker, television scriptwriter, producer of soap-operas, and articulate critic of the elitist pretensions of the cultural intellectuals of Beijing and Shanghai. The fierceness of his attacks on high culture highlights the failure of the intellectuals to bridge the age-old gap between themselves and the "people", that is, workers and peasants, as highlighted in his literary works and interviews such as the one with Anne Nahan in *Asiaweek*:

To hell with intellectuals! They have done too many bad things in China. Intellectuals preach ideology. They claim to know what is good for us. Mao Zedong was an intellectual. They are jealous little people who try to set the people up against something or somebody, so that they can step in later. They appear to do it for humanitarian reasons, but, really, they have contempt for ordinary people. They think they are the only ones in China with a brain. For them, China is in a bad state because they have not been in power. But you have to remember that every leader in Chinese history was a cultured person. (Nahan 1996)

Wang Shuo's rejection of the intellectuals has to be seen in a wider socio-political context of China as a vision of the ultimate displacement of the intellectual from the privileged position they occupied in

the centre of feudal power over centuries in the history of China and the rise of the *liumang* has been associated with the “New Class” of Milvan Djilas' famous book (1957) of the same title (Barmé 1999: 66, 398–9). This important issue will be explored in some detail in the discussion of the relationship of the intellectual and the socially underprivileged and marginalised non-urban world of ordinary people in the literary *oeuvre* of Mo Yan and Gao Xingjian.

The disillusionment with the role of the intellectuals in present-day China is still widespread and forcefully articulated among others by Zhuo Bingxin in a recent contribution on this topic in the China Rights Forum (2007):

Intellectuals of all stripes have rushed willy-nilly to join the trend, abandoning their capacity to think, question, monitor and counterbalance the tyrannical regime in order to satisfy their base natures with the sensual allurements of consumerism. China has lost the intellectual class as spokesmen for the people and representatives of justice and the oppressed who through words and actions could provide moral and factual direction to the masses in times of difficulty. (Zhuo 2007: 2)

3. The Place of the Intellectual in Society

Zhuo Bingxin's lament concerning the loss of what he refers to as traditional intellectual values in the new era of consumerism and mass-entertainment in present-day China encapsulates essential qualities of the public intellectual, East and West. Most of the specific characteristics identified by Zhuo Bingxin above are also highlighted in Chomsky's deliberations on the responsibilities of the intellectual, the core of which is the intellectual's status as the conscience of the nation and the unqualified commitment to truth and the exposure of lies (Chomsky 1967), although this concurrence is probably purely coincidental. Significant, however, is Zhuo Bingxin's bleak conclusion concerning the near absence of true public intellectuals:

The quality of caring for truth and justice, of identifying the ills of society and suggesting cures for them, these qualities are almost impossible to find among China's intellectuals now. (Zhuo 2007: 2)

A notable exception is, of course, Mo Yan, among others, whose comprehensive literary oeuvre underlines the robust and fearless articulation of these values, above all in his internationally acclaimed novel *Jiuguo / The Republic of Wine* (1992, hereafter referred to as RW), in which the aspiring writer (and doctoral student) Li Yidou outlines the literary credo, underlying his new story *Meat Boy*, in a letter to his mentor and celebrated novelist "Mo Yan" from Beijing as follows:

In this story, I think I have shown more maturity in adopting Lu Xun's style of writing, turning my pen into a sharp dagger to flay the resplendent veneer of spiritual civilisation and expose the barbaric core of our wretched morality. This story of mine can be considered an example of 'grim realism'. I purposefully threw down the gauntlet before those who use literature as a 'play-thing' and are part of the 'punk movement,' that is, I use literature to awaken the populace. It was my intention to launch a violent attack against all the corrupt, venal officials here in Liquorland, and the story must be considered a 'ray of sunlight in our dark kingdom,' a latter-day 'Madman's Diary' [by Lu Xun]. (RW, 55)

The "subversive" function of literature (and art in general), programmatically proclaimed here and elsewhere in Mo Yan's *Republic of Wine* is a hallmark of the "public" intellectual's approach to literature that separates him/her from the "academic" "ivory tower"-intellectual whose commitment is focused on specific disciplines and areas of expertise without "public" commitment to and involvement in moral issues concerning society, such as the dignity of the individual and freedom, social justice, fairness and truth. Jean-Paul Sartre defined this very important distinction and its social implications, that is, the conflict with political power, as follows:

An atomic scientist is not an intellectual when working on atomic physics, but is an intellectual when signing a letter of protest against nuclear arms. (Goldfarb 1998: 30)

Since the power of ideas is intimately related to their diffusion and implementation, a certain degree of subversion on the part of the “public” (critical) intellectual as mentor and guide of a nation’s collective destiny is unavoidable, albeit without necessarily turning the “pen into a sharp dagger” (RW, 55); the guidance-leadership role of the critical intellectual is underscored by Wang Xiaoming in his characterisation of Lu Xun (1881–1936), the critical Chinese intellectual par excellence, as the “Moses” of Chinese modernity (Veg 2004: 63). Diametrically opposed to the critical involvement of the public intellectual in political and social affairs as the conscience of the nation and spokesperson for the people is Gao Xingjian’s solipsistic, self-oriented and intellectually gratifying position of the artist, programmatically outlined in his Nobel Prize acceptance speech on December 7, 2000:

Literature is not concerned with politics but is purely a matter of the individual. It is the gratification of the intellect together with an observation, a review of what has been experienced, reminiscences and feelings or the portrayal of a state of mind. (Gao Xingjian 2000c)

Issues related to society, politics, ethics, and customs are identified as extraneous impositions and alien to and incompatible with literature (and art in general).

Gao Xingjian refers to this kind of literature as “cold literature” which exists ultimately only as a “purely spiritual activity beyond the gratification of material desires.” In the light of the marketisation, globalisation and steadily growing emphasis on professionalism and specialist expertise, the intellectuals in the post-Mao era are faced with new challenges:

This sort of literature did not come into being today. However, whereas in the past it mainly had to fight oppressive political forces and social customs, today it has to battle with the subversive commercial values of consumerist society. (Gao Xingjian 2000c)

The wide-ranging implications of these changes and challenges Chinese intellectuals are confronted with are explored comprehensively and from a variety of relevant standpoints in the landmark study *Chinese Intellectuals between State and Market*, edited by

Edward Gu and Merle Goldman (Gu & Goldman 2004). The steady erosion of the privileged status Chinese intellectuals enjoyed for more than two thousand years as advisors of feudal rulers and scholar-bureaucrats with strong Confucian ethics started under Mao Zedong in 1949 and reached its climax during the Cultural Revolution. Finally, the rapid economic changes initiated by Deng Xiaoping in 1979 and the steadily growing forces of the globalisation and internationalisation of China's economy and the associated demand of technical experts, economic and social scientists and marketing professionals heightened the insecurity and vulnerability of Chinese intellectuals further and even overshadows their future, as documented in the final section of Wang Chao-hua's informative study *One China, Many Paths* (Wang 2005). The author also underlines the lack of information on the contemporary intellectual debate in China:

For most part, all that is available in the West are occasional summaries of popular themes or scattered disputes with little background explanation. The voices of Chinese thinkers rarely reach the West without reduction or mediation. (Wang 2005: 10)

4. Let's Go Become Goddammed Writers!

In response to the letter from Li Yidou, student at Brewer College in Liquorville and aspiring writer concerning literary mentorship and support, the celebrated Beijing novelist Mo Yan tries to dampen the young man's enthusiasm by facetiously underlining his own "hap-hazard" educational background (RW, 24) and the bleak prospects of a literary career:

During times like this, it is fair to say that literature is not the choice of the wise, and those of us for whom it is too late can but sigh at a lack of talent and skills that leaves us only with literature. (RW, 24)

He admits his admiration and envy of the doctoral student's status in society and his own disenchantment as a writer:

If I were a doctor of liquor studies, I doubt that I'd waste my time writing novels. In China, which reeks of liquor, can there be any endeavor with greater promise or a brighter future than the study of liquor, any field that bestows more abundant benefits? (RW, 24)

Finally, in order to clear up a possible misunderstanding and guilt-feelings on his part, Mo Yan makes a last appeal to Li Yidou to change his mind:

In your letter you said that one of my essays inspired you to become a writer. That is a big mistake. I wrote the asinine words 'liquor is literature' and 'people who are strangers to liquor are incapable of talking about literature when I was good and drunk, and you must not take them to heart. (RW, 25)

In the context of the first letter of a fairly extensive correspondence between mentor and student, Mo Yan, the literary figure, makes an important observation concerning the Chinese literary scene of his time, when he refers to the writer Li Qi and his literary background:

A writer by the name of Li Qi once wrote a novel entitled *Don't Treat Me Like a Dog*, in which he describes a gang of local punks who are deprived of opportunities to cheat or mug or steal or rob, so one of them says: Let's go become goddammed writers! I'd rather not go into detail regarding the implications. If you're interested, you can find a copy of the novel for yourself. (RW, 24)

The writer Li Qi, referred to by the "literary figure Mo Yan" in *The Republic of Wine* is, of course, Wang Shuo, and the 'novel' in question *Don't Treat Me Like a Human* gets cursory mentioning in Wang Shuo's story "An Attitude" as the title of a forthcoming literary work which the narrator Fang Yan explains as follows:

One person pleads with his fellow Chinese: whatever you do, don't treat me like a human being. If you treat me like a person, it will be the end of me and I'll share everyone else's fault. then our nation's problems will be solved. (Barmé 1999: 90f. and 409; footnotes 153 and 154)

Geremie Barmé underlines in the Wang Shuo comments of his landmark study of post-Mao Chinese culture *In the Red* (1999) that the experience of alienation and dehumanisation in Chinese youth already constitutes a major theme in Wang Shuo's early narrative prose (and essays) which turn into "self-destruction and reconstruction" (that is, transformation) in *No Man's Land* where they "become a motivating force" of national importance (Barmé 1999: 90–1). Wang Shuo's novel approach to literature (and art in general) has to be examined in the context of the massive commercialisation of Chinese culture, the impact of which John Fitzgerald compares to that of the Cultural Revolution (Fitzgerald 1984: 105). Wang Shuo characterises his unorthodox perspective of society as follows: "I'm most interested in the social stratum that (enjoys) a popular life-style [...] that contains violence, and sex, mockery and shamelessness" (Wang 1989: 108), which is identified by Geremie Barmé as "the underbelly of urban society" and its corresponding Beijing dialect (Barmé 1999: 71).

Of particular relevance in this context is Wang Shuo's rejection of Chinese intellectuals and their privileges the butt of his mockery and satire because of their arrogance and contempt for ordinary people, among other flaws, commented on in various interviews (Nahan 1996 and Sang Ye 2006) and referred to earlier in this paper under "To Hell with Intellectuals".

Chinese intellectuals are attacked and ridiculed by Wang Shuo in his diverse literary works and in film and television on numerous occasions. Particularly successful and popular was Mi Jiashan's typical Fifth Generation films *The Troubleshooters* (1989) based on Wang Shuo's early literary work *The Operators* in which three unemployed youths (Yu Guang, Ma Qin and Yang Zhong) set up a service company (3T) with the objective of assisting people in trouble. In this case Yang Zhong has to date a girl, Ma Qin who argues so successfully with the wife of a henpecked husband that she invites him to come back and Yu Guang, finally, stands in for the incompetent, untalented and condescending Beijing fiction writer Bao Kang at a literary award ceremony.

The successful lampooning of Beijing's (China's) intellectual elite is reflected in the virulent attack of both literary work and films by the Beijing's conservative literary elite. However, Geremie Barmé, among others, underlines the significance of Wang Shuo's

contribution to post-Mao literature as “one of China’s most versatile contemporary writers” due to the “unique perspective on the changing face of Chinese urban elite and popular culture” (Barmé 1999: 95–8).

5. The Republic of Wine: A “Latter-Day *Madman’s Diary*”?

It is hardly a coincidence that Lu Xun, canonised as the intellectual father of modern Chinese literature and the voice of China’s moral conscience in more recent times by Mao Zedong, the forefather of the Communist Revolution, constitutes an important thematic reference point in Mo Yan’s complex and multi-layered masterpiece *The Republic of Wine* (1992). As a matter of fact, the aspiring novelist Li Yidou already programmatically signals in his introductory letter to the literary figure Mo Yan his intention of “adopting Lu Xun’s style of writing” in order “to flay the resplendent veneer of spiritual civilization and expose the barbaric core of our wretched morality” (RW, 55). He identifies the role of literature as a powerful instrument against corruption in Liquorland and a wake-up call for its populace (RW, 55). Finally, he endows literature with the power of light (“a ray of sunlight”), that is, spiritual enlightenment, in what he calls “our dark kingdom” (RW, 55). The religious overtones are unmistakable and he associates the role of the writer with the urgency of a messianic mission.

The barriers of resistance the writer is confronted with are manifold and difficult to overcome. They require determination and absolute commitment as underlined by Li Yidou in the description of his own struggle against Professor Yuan (RW, 22), among others, and in the motivational power of Mo Yan’s literary achievements (RW, 23) and status as an acclaimed spiritual leader, which echoes Lu Xun’s legendary impact on China’s educated urban youth of his time and the traditional Confucian sense of responsibility and commitment towards society and the nation:

Recently, I saw the film adaptation of your novel *Red Sorghum*, which you also worked on, and I was so excited I could hardly sleep that night. [...] I was so

happy for you, Sir, and so proud. Mo Yan you are the pride of Liquorland! I shall appeal to people from all walks of life to pluck you from Northeast Gaomi township and settle you here in Liquorland. (RW, 23)

However, it is not only his admiration of Mo Yan's wisdom and judgment, which explains why he is "so captivated by literature", but also his self-assuredness and belief in his literary talent (RW, 23). Significantly, the resistance he encounters makes him almost uncontrollably angry:

I [...] was unable to mask completely the white-hot anger in my black eyes. Lu Xun couldn't do it either, right? But you know all this already, so why am I trying to impress you? This is like reciting the *Three Character Classic* at the door of Confucius [...] (RW, 23)

Li Yidou's emphasis on Mo Yan's knowledge, learnedness, and creative understanding and interpretation of Chinese culture and tradition (or what is also referred to as "cultural capital") highlights a significant feature of the claim of intellectuality, in China and the West (Bourdieu 1993: 166). Questions concerning the role of the intellectual in public life and the expected commitment to act as moral (social) conscience are discussed in some detail in the fairly extensive correspondence between Mo Yan in his role of mentor and critic and Li Yidou in the context of the nine stories ("Alcohol", "Meat Boy", "Child Prodigy", "Donkey Avenue", "Yichi, the Hero", "The Cooking Lesson", "Ape Liquor" and "Liquorville"), which Li Yidou forwards to Mo Yan for his critical perusal.

Naturally, Mo Yan also comments on his own literary interests and activities which include the novel *The Republic of Wine*, as work in progress and problems associated with it, as for example the fate of "Special Investigator Ding Gou'er of the Higher Procuratorate", who is dispatched to the Mount Luo Coal Mine to investigate rumours about cannibalism among the local officials:

I have reached an impasse in my novel. That slippery investigator from the Higher Procuratorate is fighting me every step of the way. I don't know whether to kill him off or have him go mad. And if I decide to finish

him off, I can't decide whether he should shoot himself or die in a drunken stupor. (RW, 250-1)

However, the actual end of Ding Gou'er who fails miserably in his social obligation to establish the truth, the sole purpose of his journey, is much less spectacular and dramatic, since the literary figure Mo Yan makes him drown in an open-air privy, after committing several crimes and outright complicity with the corrupt officials of the place:

The pitiless muck sealed his mouth as the irresistible force of gravity drew him under. Within seconds, the sacred panoply of ideals, justice, respect, honor, and love accompanied a long-suffering special investigator to the very bottom of the privy [...]. (RW, 330)

Ding Gou'er's gradual submission to corruption and his failure as a human being, committed to truth, appears several times briefly in Mo Yan's (the literary figure) lengthy inner monologue at the end of the novel (RW, 352-3; 356), which is an obvious ironic allusion to Molly Bloom's famous inner monologue at the end of James Joyce's *Ulysses*:

For many years the struggle between sex and morality has been a tangle causing much suffering split personality Faulkner learned from Joyce's *Ulysses* can't I learn from you [...] (RW, 353)

While the literary figure Mo Yan becomes aware of the author-manipulated moral demise of Ding Gou'er, the distinguished crack investigator and intellectual, Mo Yan himself, discovers his own moral vulnerability in a moment of self-reflection:

When I look up at the mirror with its peeling mercury I come face to face with the image of myself aging and ugly my disgusting image shames me how dare I fantasize touching a beautiful young girl Damn some will say I'm obviously imitating the style of *Ulysses* in this section Who cares I'm drunk when you get drunk you're out for three days Little Sun falsely reported that the writer from Beijing drank himself to death [...] (RW, 355)

At this crucial point, Mo Yan also realizes the fact that Ding Gou'er in his repulsiveness is actually part of himself, namely his "shadow" which is ultimately indistinguishable from himself:

[...] didn't think I'd end up like Ding Gou'er Ding Gou'er is my shadow he has become skinny as monkey with a game leg his body covered in shit and a drunk's vomit millions of fat white maggots crawling in his hair standing before me he looks me in the eye and gives me a knowing smile which makes me look to the ground where his shadow and mine overlap intertwined impossible to tell who's who [...] (RW, 356)

Finally, after a fierce and spooky struggle the separated parts of the self are united:

We both feel our hearts pierced with unbearable pain we jump up like carp on the dry land with all hope gone it seems our flesh was shot but what springs up from the ground are our shadows then we fall down face to face smiling like true brothers reunited after a long separation [...] (RW, 356)

In this context, it is appropriate to underscore the fact that the aspiring writer Li Yidou also constitutes an aspect of the literary figure Mo Yan which is highlighted by Mo Yan's calling him "brother" in his correspondence with the exception of the first letter. The tragic irony underlying Li Yidou's literary career is his change from an ardent and uncompromising admirer of Lu Xun's intellectual and artistic commitment to acting without fear as the moral and social conscience of society and the nation, to a willing instrument of the Department of Propaganda to prepare "public announcements" at the expense of his former ideals and missionary zeal as reflected in his letters and the stories submitted to his mentor Mo Yan for critical comment (RW, 338). Even Yu Yichi, his boss, registers his opportunistic eagerness of adapting swiftly to the system with contempt:

You've only been working at the Department of Propaganda for two days, and already you're a veteran ass-kisser. (RW, 338)

Significantly, the literary figure Mo Yan, his former mentor and supporter, identifies him as a “con man” and “evil-doer” who has fallen into his own “evil trap” and should die (RW, 355). But Mo Yan’s own journey to Liquorland is, like that of Ding Gou’er, also the moral failure of a self-alienated intellectual and “middle aged writer” (RW, 331) who, like the other composite parts of his self, is also unable to face the truth and defend it as Lu Xun and other great writers have done successfully with their pen. Li Yidou initially attempts to do the same in the prose pieces, as he tells his mentor Mo Yan:

I use literature to awaken the populace. It was my intention to launch a violent attack against all the corrupt, venal officials here in Liquorland. (RW, 55)

And while Mo Yan, the author of *The Republic of Wine*, highlights the fictionality of Liquorland and the relationship between man and liquor as the embodiment of “virtually all the contradictions involved in the process of human existence and development” (RW, 136), he also underlines the fact that the essential parts of Liquorland are artistically encoded reflections of present-day reality and by no means references to a past “extravaganza of decadence” as some critics argue (Yang 2005: 207–29) or past excesses of power and political corruption.

A cursory glance at the correspondence between the literary figures Mo Yan and Li Yidou and the nine stories of the latter which make up a substantial part of the novel, will suffice to confirm this. In some instances Mo Yan criticises the overt and passionate political criticism on Li Yidou’s part and suggests its removal (RW, 273). Particularly relevant examples can be found in the story “Liquorville” (RW, 314–23) and in the painstaking, tongue-in-cheek, representation of life and social conditions in this place:

... Liquorland’s annual tax bill has soared into the hundreds of millions, a huge contribution to the nation, while, at the same time, our citizens’ standard of living has kept improving. Our people now live comfortably, are on their way to becoming well off, and dream of the day when they can call themselves rich. What, you ask, is meant by ‘rich’? ‘Communism,’ that’s that. Now that you’ve read to this point,

dear readers, you understand why the Municipal Party Committee and government built their huge vat and cask. (RW, 316)

6. Conclusion

The irony underlying the above tongue-in cheek question, which the “narrator” asks the “reader” in the last story of Mo Yan’s novel *The Republic of Wine*, highlights in a nutshell the contradictory and conflicting currents of China’s socio-political, intellectual-ideological and cultural landscape in the post-Mao era, or what Liu Qingfeng refers to as the “Topography of Intellectual Culture in the 1990s Mainland China” (Liu Qingfeng 2001: 47–70) and Gloria Davies as “The Self-Made Maps of Chinese Intellectuality” (Davies 2001: 17–46). Unfortunately, these studies, like the excellent book on this matter by Edward Gu and Merle Goldman (2004), among others, focus primarily on the socio-cultural aspects at the expense of literature.

On the other hand, the critical reflections offered in this study, identify, although only in a condensed and synoptic form and restricted to representative and exemplary Chinese authors, literature as a sensitive and effective instrument in the critical exploration of intellectual and cultural movements and their formative impact on a nation’s artistic progress and transformation. While the critical distance to society, the commitment to truth and the defence of traditional moral and cultural values differ greatly with regard to Mo Yan, Gao Xinjian and Wang Shuo, due primarily to their ideological background, their critical stance is unambiguous, although programmatically denied, as for example, by Gao Xingjian in his Nobel-Prize acceptance speech. Significantly, they all show an acute awareness of the importance of China’s political, social and cultural past, that is, “cultural capital” and “Chineseness”, the urgency of closing the gap between the urban population and the rural populace, in other words between rich and poor, and associated with it, the steadily growing consumerism and obsession with wealth.

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From Dilemma to Diversity – Traditional and Modern Approaches to Medieval Icelandic Sagas

KRISTEL ZILMER

1. Introduction

Medieval Icelandic sagas form a complex cultural phenomenon that has long fascinated and puzzled scholars representing a wide variety of fields – such as literary scholarship, textual criticism, history, studies of folklore and oral tradition, and cultural and social anthropology, to name some of the main areas of study. Taking into consideration corresponding manifold perspectives, it becomes an intricate task to decide upon the exact source value of sagas. This in turn may cause uncertainty as to how, in fact, to address sagas – at least outside the sphere where one can simply read the texts and enjoy their literary qualities.

Although most commonly the sagas are collectively labelled as a literary tradition, they can also receive complementary explanations as a phenomenon that had its roots in particular social and historical circumstances of the Icelandic society and not simply in the sudden creative outburst of a group of medieval saga writers (cf. e.g. Byock 2004, Kristinson 2003).¹ One may further choose to emphasize the function of sagas as media of cultural and/or social memory (cf. Byock 1984–85, 2004, Glauser 2000), and as instruments applied in the course of identity creation with the purpose of making sense of

¹ On the other hand, the advanced quality and the scope of literary activities that medieval Icelanders engaged in formed an obvious pre-condition for expressing the ideas prevailing in the society in such a particular form.

one's past as well as the contemporary horizon. Icelandic sagas have namely been taken to echo the choices, actions and interests of the people of different epochs; for one, the sagas can be related to the mentality of the period during which the texts were composed/written down, i.e. the High Middle Ages. Secondly, the sagas have been claimed to reflect and represent (some of) the traditions of earlier times, which is indeed the subject matter of several sagas.

Focusing upon the role of tradition, the sagas can further be analyzed in terms of the complex interaction between the blossoming Old Norse vernacular writing and the original custom of oral narratives, with all their potentially varying functions and purposes (cf. e.g. Sigurðsson 2004). Looking in another direction, one can examine the transmission and reception processes of the actual preserved textual artefacts – i.e. the manuscripts from the 14th century onwards (these are at the same time mainly copies and copies of copies of original manuscripts). In this manner we can approach the sagas in the actual form they have reached us, figuring as philological resources as well as materialized cultural (re)collections that have undergone a series of changes and modifications.

All in all, when we speak today of medieval Icelandic sagas it is not automatically clear as to what the primary significance of these traditional texts and cultural monuments is – is it literary, historical or something else? The overall picture is further complicated by the fact that the designation “Icelandic sagas” is in itself very much a simplified generalization; under this label we find various categories of sagas. In saga scholarship it has become customary to speak of different sub-genres of sagas, as based upon their literary themes, temporal frames, stylistic criteria as well as their development and potential (external and internal) sources of inspiration and influence (for an overview, see e.g. Mundal 2004). In many contexts this strategy of operating with genres proves useful and finds its justification in the central features that certain sagas do indeed share with each other. However, the genre-concept does not represent the understandings and practices of the actual period of saga writing in Iceland. It is first and foremost a suitable modern convention projected upon the available body of material (cf. e.g. Ólason 1998: 17–18).

In the present paper we shall place particular emphasis upon the group of sagas commonly known as the sagas of Icelanders, or

family sagas, in Icelandic called *Íslendingasögur*;² although certain ideas will be relevant for other forms of saga literature as well. For one, the sagas of Icelanders belong among the most well-known and most analyzed sagas – the word “saga” is actually often used synonymously with the sagas of Icelanders; alternatively, one may emphasize that these sagas are the so-called classical sagas.³ Secondly, the methods of studying the sagas of Icelanders have been very directly influenced by the paradigms dominating the saga scholarship of different times. The main lines of development centre on certain key problems concerning the debated origins and the apparent realism of sagas and take us from traditionalist perspectives to more modern approaches.

The main purpose of this paper is to undertake a critical survey of the main ideas concerning the nature and the source value of the sagas of Icelanders. As part of the discussion we shall bring in examples from early saga scholarship so as to highlight the process leading from the original crucial dilemmas towards the present-day wider acceptance of the diversity of meanings. We shall further outline certain alternative perspectives and propose the treatment of sagas as a complex cultural phenomenon.

In light of the above, the present paper also serves an additional purpose; namely that of illustrating how a particular form of traditional texts can, and indeed should, be studied from a variety of platforms, which then do not have to exclude each other but rather can provide for a meaningful synthesis. In many ways the problems concerning the sagas of Icelanders demonstrate that certain sources themselves contribute to the breaking down of some of the conventional boundaries between the foci of different disciplines.

² The corresponding label is also conventional; no original references to the sagas of Icelanders as a separate group of sagas have been identified (cf. Meulengracht Sørensen 1993b: 168).

³ Such a strong emphasis upon this one group of sagas can naturally be criticized due to the fact that it may result in the importance of many other sagas being ignored.

2. Facts versus Fiction – on the Dynamics of Early Saga Scholarship

During the 16th and 17th centuries much of the scholarly attention in the emerging field of Old Norse studies was guided towards poetry, not prose (Clunies Ross 1997). When it came to editing, translating and applying the sagas as sources, certain other genres than the above-mentioned sagas of Icelanders were in focus, for instance the kings' sagas (*konungasögur*) and the legendary sagas (*fornaldarsögur*). Even the latter group of sagas – characterized by fantastic events and characters – was then applied as a source for historical writings, either alone or in combination with other sagas.

An early example of a kind of debate concerning the source value of sagas would be the works of the Icelandic historian Þormóður Torfason (1636–1719) and the discussions he had with another Icelandic, the famous manuscript collector and scholar of Old Icelandic heritage, Árni Magnússon (1663–1730). Þormóður Torfason compiled books about the history of the Nordic countries, applying the Icelandic saga literature – including the legendary sagas – as his source material (cf. e.g. Jørgensen 2005). His and Árni Magnússon's opinions with regard to the source value of the legendary sagas differed. Þormóður Torfason believed that these fantasy-ridden tales could be used in historical overviews when treated rightly; Árni Magnússon, on the other hand, was openly skeptical about their presumed historicity (Jørgensen 2005: 456–458).⁴

With regard to the sagas of Icelanders and their topic matter – the lives and the feuds of prominent Icelandic families in the first centuries after the country's settlement, i.e. from ca. 870–1030 – this material came to enjoy the wider attention of both learned Icelanders and people from other countries during the 18th and 19th centuries. Around that time the potential historical significance of the sagas of Icelanders, now understood as forming a clear contrast to the manner in which events were portrayed in the legendary sagas, was brought forth. The growing interest in the sagas of Icelanders has received different interpretations; according to Margaret Clunies Ross (1997)

⁴ In the meantime, as pointed out by Jørgensen, scholars continued to use the legendary sagas as sources long after Þormóður Torfason; certain examples can also be found from the 19th century.

it is important to take into consideration the rising nationalism of the 19th century with its particular ideas, goals and values (cf. also Byock 1994). A second general factor can be found in the changing literary interests of the time, resulting in a deep appreciation of what was then experienced as the obvious realism of sagas, comparable to masterly written historical novels and other works of realism (Clunies Ross 1997, cf. also Lönnroth 2002).

This brings us to the central debate in the traditional saga scholarship during the latter half of the 19th century as well as for much of the 20th century. In the wake of the growing awareness of the historical as well as the literary importance of the sagas of Icelanders, there naturally occurred the question as to whether the sagas were first and foremost “documents about the historical past” or simply “poetic writings”, to quote here the words used by Preben Meulengracht Sørensen (1992: 27) when discussing various perspectives to the sagas.

Historically, the corresponding issue was to a great degree related to discussions concerning the supposed origins of the sagas. Two schools emerged in the field of Old Norse studies, labelled by Andreas Heusler (1913) as *Freiproza* (freeprose theory) and *Buchproza* (bookprose theory). The main principles and ideas of these two schools have been discussed on numerous occasions; extensive historical surveys of the nature of the debate up to the 1960s-70s are given by Theodore M. Andersson (1964) and Else Mundal (1977). In short, the supporters of the freeprose approach argued for a strong authentic oral tradition behind the preserved sagas, which would in turn mean that the texts had been handed down for centuries and did indeed build upon actual historical events. Those in favour of the bookprose theory, on the contrary, laid emphasis upon the sagas as literary creations connected to individual authors. The scholars further attempted to clarify potential sources of influence for the saga writers in the context of the High Middle Ages, for example in the framework of the learned Latin and clerical culture. Bookprose theoreticians would not completely deny the possible existence of an oral tradition behind the sagas, but they found it methodologically impossible to trace such origins on the basis of the surviving manuscript versions.

Certain representatives of both schools also had their own specific agendas to follow besides adhering to the strictly scholarly

principles. As fittingly described by Gísli Sigurðsson, the early supporters of the freeprose theory (i.e. from the 19th century), being Swedish and Norwegian scholars, claimed that the core of this oral tradition in fact originated in Scandinavia, basically leaving the impression that “Icelanders had done little more than consign it to memory and preserve it there in their solitude and isolation through the long dark winter nights out in the middle of the North Atlantic” (Sigurðsson 2004: 19). The bookprose theory, on the other hand, came to be strongly associated with “[...] the growing sense of national identity and awareness among Icelanders” (ib.). The attempts of Icelandic saga scholars to identify the age of individual sagas and connect the compositions with known Icelandic authors presented saga literature as genuinely and uniquely Icelandic. During the 20th century corresponding ideas came to be manifested in the critical saga editions published in the series of *Íslenzk fornrit*, connected to the programme of the so-called Icelandic school of saga scholarship (cf. Clover 1985: 241–253).

To sum up, the scholarship concerning the sagas of Icelanders was up to around the mid-20th century defined to a great degree by the conflicting interpretations of the origins and the source value of sagas. Although for a while – particularly in the years from around 1920–1970 – the bookprose approach was the dominating trend, no definitive answer to the oral tradition vs. literary composition and the facts vs. fiction dilemma was provided. It was the categorical and somewhat black-and-white nature of the problem as well as particular ideological interests that came to be associated with the offered solutions that made it impossible to reach a sufficient conclusion in the matter.

3. Following Alternative Paths – Research Trends since the 1970s

The limitations of the main ideas of freeprose and bookprose theories as well as other question marks emerging in the field of saga scholarship gradually brought forth a variety of new approaches (for an overview, see e.g. Clover 1985, Lönnroth 1993, Ólason 1993, Zilmer 2005: 273–277). At the same time, the motivations behind the new

approaches differed; for one, there were scholars who argued that the extensive philological and text-critical studies (within the domain of the bookprose theory) had made the literary analysis as well as the actual aesthetic experience of the sagas redundant. As a result, more studies now started to focus upon the independent literary value of the sagas, analyzing their narrative structure and composition. This has been categorized by Carol J. Clover (1985) and Vésteinn Ólason (1993) as the formalist trend in modern saga studies.

Secondly, while treating sagas as literary works, scholars also became interested in a far-reaching comparative study of sagas and various forms of contemporary European literature. Lars Lönnroth (1993: 89) summarizes that whereas earlier scholars were influenced by their own nationalistic programme and attempted to show the sagas as something genuinely Nordic/Icelandic, a new research path appeared in terms of identifying parallels with and influences from Latin chronicles, hagiography and European court literature.⁵

Thirdly, criticism has been guided towards the earlier periods' somewhat naïve search for the truth and objectivity of sagas in terms of their portrayal of the Icelanders' past. As an alternative, scholars came to regard the sagas as sources of the mentality and ideology of the High Middle Ages, thus focusing upon an interpretation of the period during which they were composed/written down, and opening up the sagas' importance for their contemporary audience (cf. Clover 1985: 255). Such research has been labelled by some as the sociological approach (cf. Ólason 1993: 35); it further includes an anthropological dimension.⁶

Fourthly, theories that argued for the oral roots of sagas also underwent a renewal in the light of research achievements within the field of oral tradition. Carol J. Clover (1985: 272) has characterized the new-traditionalist studies of the orality of sagas as formalistic in the sense of being interested in the structures (episodes, formulas,

⁵ At the same time, as for example argued by Sverre Bagge (1997), the situation differs in the case of different sagas. The sagas of Icelanders still present themselves as a rather unique Icelandic contribution to world literature.

⁶ The anthropological interest in the sagas originates from the early 1970s, finding its expression e.g. in the work of Victor W. Turner (see e.g. Turner 1971).

etc.) present in the texts. Clover herself contributed to the discussion on the role of oral tradition by introducing the concepts of “the immanent whole” and the “immanent saga” (cf. Clover 1986). According to this concept, “[...] a whole saga existed at the preliterate stage not as a performed but as an immanent or potential entity, a collectively envisaged ‘whole’ to which performed parts [...] were understood to belong” (Clover 1986: 34).⁷

A fifth line of development has been related to perspectives concerning the collective nature of the saga tradition, which can also be re-examined from a historical point of view and as such can rehabilitate the general source value of sagas. Studies have illuminated certain recurring patterns in the sagas’ representation of the events and experiences of the past, which can then provide clues both to the oral roots as well as to the historical core of the tradition (cf. e.g. Ólason 1987, Sigurðsson 2004). Vésteinn Ólason has underlined the obvious inner consistencies of the saga material, which in his view can be interpreted in the light of an interplay between collective tradition and literary creation: “Vi må etter min mening regne med *forfattere* som ved bruk av *tradisjonelt stoff* og *tradisjonell fortellekunst* formet de helhetsstrukturer som vi kaller *sagaer*, og i sin utforming var de også i høy grad påvirket av og deltakere i en *litterær tradisjon*” (Ólason 1987: 41).⁸

In certain ways the age-old debate concerning sagas as history or fiction has in the meantime also continued, only now more in terms of proposing what the most neglected aspect of saga studies may have been, with the idea that it should then be brought into the centre of attention. Scholars who have found it important to give credit to sagas as works that carry a distinct literary significance may thus

⁷ In this manner, Clover also revised the earlier *þátr* hypothesis of saga origins; the term *þátr* means “strand”, and it is customarily applied to a type of Icelandic short stories bearing resemblance to the kings’ sagas as well as to the sagas of Icelanders. Clover’s concept of the “immanent whole” has among others inspired J. Miles Foley in his seminal studies of oral cultures, see e.g. the book *The Immanent Art* (1991).

⁸ “To my mind, we have to consider that these complete structures known to us as the sagas were formed by *writers* who used *traditional material* as well as the *traditional art of storytelling*, being in their manner of composing to a great extent also influenced by and participant in a *literary tradition*” (my translation).

argue that traditional but even modern approaches have been much too determined by views that treat sagas mostly as sources for social and political matters and overemphasize their seemingly realistic mode of expression (cf. Clunies Ross 1997, 2002). On the other hand, the experiences within the social and historical study of sagas can be the exact opposite; as exemplified by one statement in connection with the popular *Egils saga*: “This saga, like many of the Icelandic family sagas, offers a broad portrayal of social and historical issues yet scholars for the past half century have tended to study *Egils saga* principally for its literary inventiveness” (Byock 2004: 299).

All in all, it is nevertheless obvious that the paths laid out for modern saga research are much more inclusive and dynamic than the strong oppositions of the earlier freeprose and bookprose schools. Indeed, the emergence of many of the alternative approaches resulted from the insight that it was no longer a productive and justified strategy to reserve the sagas only for particular research interests. In the words of Preben Meulengracht Sørensen (1992: 33): “They [i.e. the sagas, my addition] are accounts of events that took place in a previous culture and as such are appropriate objects for historical and anthropological study, but they are also narrative presentations of that past and therefore suitable objects for literary analysis and interpretation”. However, the realization that we can combine various dimensions does not automatically explain why the sagas present themselves in this manner.

4. The Multifaceted Saga – Fictionality and Historicity Re-visited

The survey of the research trends in recent saga scholarship has demonstrated the emergence of multiple perspectives, which have contributed to a deeper understanding of the sagas of Icelanders as literature, but also brought along more nuanced studies of the potential historicity of the sources. At the same time, the complex nature of the sagas has become apparent, giving rise to a need to find better ways of characterizing their overall meaning and significance. Among others, Meulengracht Sørensen has made it clear that tradi-

tional research has very much failed “[...] to explain why the family sagas – if they are poetic works – appear as historical works – and why – if they are accounts of the past – they use poetic expressions, fiction and borrowings” (Meulengracht Sørensen 1992: 33).

What we encounter here is thus a call for a new understanding of the sagas as integral entities functioning on their own premises. Looking at the development of corresponding ideas, we notice different manners in which the sagas have been described as complete structures or compound systems of meaning. For instance, within anthropological research the sagas have been characterized in terms of being “totemic systems” (cf. Durrenberger 1991, 1992: 101–102); that is to say, as self-referential entities that make sense of events of the past by presenting them as something that has always been that way, without having to provide any causal explanations. At the same time, such an approach shows the sagas as somewhat closed and static systems, an idea which does not do justice to their complex ambiguities.

Then we find theories that seek to explain the sagas’ ambivalent and mixed nature in terms of a separate “truth” that they represent. M. I. Steblin-Kamenskij (cf. 1973: 21–48) proposed that there exist various forms of truth, i.e. artistic, historical, and syncretic. In his view, early Icelandic society was determined by one indivisible truth, the syncretic truth; as a result, no distinction was being made in literature between the other two truths: “For this reason, attempting to determine what in the sagas is historical truth and what is artistic truth is tantamount to seeking a difference whose very absence constitutes the essence of the truth presented in the sagas” (ib. 24–25).

Steblin-Kamenskij’s ideas form one possible philosophical platform on which to establish an understanding of the sagas as complex entities following their own logic – and this is taken to be the result of the very way in which the Icelanders experienced the surrounding world and their own traditions. However, other studies of Old Icelandic culture and literature have shown that the concept of “syncretic truth” is not unproblematic as an explanation to the way in which the sagas operate; it has thus been argued that Icelanders did distinguish between real and fictional circumstances and that they applied various strategies with regard to different sources (cf. e.g. Tómasson 1988; Tulinius 2002: 63–65).

In this light it may seem as though the explanation(s) to the mixed image of sagas is to be found in the nature of the texts as elements of blended traditions. As an alternative to operating with the more or less coherent concepts of a special “saga truth” or “saga realism”, some scholars have focused upon the merging of the features and devices characteristic of oral storytelling tradition and the particular saga format and style (cf. Meulengracht Sørensen 1993a: 174). Yet others have determined the sagas of Icelanders in terms of their multiple modalities that combine the historical/realistic and the fictional/fantastic modes of expression (cf. Clunies Ross 2002, Lönnroth 2002). It has been claimed that the sagas – and for that matter, other types of Old Icelandic prose texts as well – are “modally mixed [...] though we may quantify the varying strengths of different modes within a single text and note which are the stronger” (Clunies Ross 2002: 445). At the same time, in the latter opinion many studies have tended to overstress the role of realistic elements in the sagas of Icelanders; Clunies Ross rather wishes to guide more attention to the elements that connect with the fantastic mode.

One risk that may occur in the analysis of such multiple modalities is that the sagas’ various modes of expression may get treated as rather clear-cut (and clearly defined) entities that could somehow be turned on and off when found necessary. This scheme may appear problematic even when combined with the idea that within the narrative tradition and the saga format obvious distinctions could be made between real(istic) and fictional premises, which would then trigger the activation of different modalities. Also, it may be questioned as to what indeed constitutes the mode of fantasy/fictionality, and what lies behind the mode of realism/historicity. It has been argued that the narrative mode of sagas as well as other traditional texts presents itself as something more intricate. Slavica Ranković characterizes the sagas of Icelanders in terms of what may still be experienced as the dominant realism in their manner of addressing the past; she focuses upon “[...] what it is in the literary texture of the sagas that brings the past forth so vividly” (Ranković 2006: 41). In the meantime, instead of determining realism as the established image of verisimilitude she launches the concept of “emergent realism”, being inspired by the concepts applied in the sciences of complexity (cf. Ranković 2005). Emergent realism finds its

expression through numerous intra- and extra-textual dynamics: “[...] those between orality and literacy, fictionality and historicity, aristocratic and democratic ethos, winner and loser attitudes, etc.” (Ranković 2004: 4).⁹

Alternatively, keeping other types of sagas in mind, we may choose to speak of “emergent modal facets”, to borrow Ranković’s careful terminology and combine it with Clunies Ross’ concept of multiple modalities. The notion of being “emergent” (arising naturally and with ease) underlines the dynamics of (our experience of) the saga narrative. The overall concept further implies a constant interaction between different modalities and various elements of tradition that contribute to the very formation of the cultural phenomenon we know as the saga. In this, the true complexity of the sagas becomes apparent.

The multifaceted modes of expression and the varying directions in which the complex images unfold in the various sub-genres of saga literature have also been underlined in connection with other types of sagas. When comparing the legendary sagas to the sagas of Icelanders, it has for example been noted that they differ with regard to “[...] the different degrees of complexity in their use of fiction” (Tulinus 2002: 295).

In our opinion, future studies of the sagas of Icelanders as well as other forms of saga literature should build further upon the idea of sagas as complex representations of a multifaceted cultural tradition. Their complexity results from the interaction of oral tradition and literary composition, from the combination of collective experiences and individual creativity, from the merging of the horizons of different epochs alongside varying historical and social circumstances. In this light, there is no such thing as one particular “saga truth” or “saga fiction” – it is rather a question of the extent to which the symbiosis of a variety of features has been activated and unfolds itself.

It can thus be concluded that for a modern scholar the sagas of Icelanders should no longer bring about the experience of strong dilemmas and either-or confrontations. The productive way now is to acknowledge the diversity of meanings and search for improved

⁹ The paper (available in the form of an unpublished manuscript) was presented at the international course “Cultures in Contact: Northern Europe 700–1200 AD”, Tartu, August 16–26, 2004.

methods in which to better grasp the multifaceted sagas. This may in the following step have certain consequences for the merging together of the principles and foci of various fields of scholarship. Besides acknowledging the interrelated modes and meanings in the sagas, it also becomes necessary to combine different approaches in actual study. Indeed, we would claim that the road from dilemmas towards the acceptance of diversity has in the case of the Icelandic sagas also brought along the understanding that it is important to promote the dialectical interplay between the contributions of various areas of study. This does not mean that there is no longer room for specialist studies of specific aspects of sagas; say for example sagas as expressions of particular forms of historical evidence or as masterly works of literature. Nevertheless, it is important to realize that the sagas are multifaceted sources that advocate for the meaningful interaction and symbiosis of perspectives, instead of forcing us to choose one exclusive path into the depths of their meanings.

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**Constructing a Mythical Future City for
a Symbiotic Nation from the European
“Periphery”. Fr. R. Kreutzwald’s epic
*Kalevipoeg***

JÜRI TALVET

In a recent article, “Belated Nations: Grand Apocrypha as a Challenge to the Mythic Establishment”, Lauri Pilter has pointedly argued that ancient mythical epics have often served as tools for power centres, as an end to their political ambitions. Such a tendency in their nature has made them at the same time simplify the human being as a complex individuality. To counterpoise such mythic narratives, which indeed have been included by a number of postmodern scholars in the complex of “extinguishing grand narratives” of the past (the most recent being the ideological “grand narratives” of fascism and communism), Pilter proposes the term of “grand apocrypha”. He speaks of the examples of Hermann Broch’s and William Faulkner’s narratives, which are mythical, yet have no political or social ambitions. He also mentions the European “belated nations” (including the “peripheral” Baltic nations), as a fertile ground for “apocryphal thinking”: “the Easterners” may have held intact values that are generally lost in the more “advanced” countries”. (Pilter 2008: 73–85)

Pilter’s conclusions run parallel to the assertions made by the late Yuri M. Lotman, especially in his last works (like in Lotman 1992) about the “semiosphere”. The latter above all can be imagined as a large intersection area between the noo-sphere and the biosphere. The logical and the regular, characteristic of “centres”, loses its effectiveness in “peripheries”. A potent presence of biospheric

factors make any too rectilinear development (a logical or calculated predictability) in a culture impossible. As Pilter puts it:

By challenging, in their fluid approaches, the rigid institutional narratives, the apocrypha are to astound the reader outside the established sociocultural fabric into the perception of a flow of existence of basic animate continuity, tying humanity to the natural world, as well as into the sensation of new cultural insights. (Ib. 84)

***Kalevipoeg* as a stem text of a nation**

To come closer to our object of research, Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald's (1803–1882) epic *Kalevipoeg*¹, Jaan Undusk observed already in 1994 the obvious paradox that despite being strongly criticized since its first publication (1857–1861; in book form, 1862), *Kalevipoeg* (The Son of Kalev) has become a “stem text” of a nation and the ideological axis of Estonian national feeling; it is not simply an epic of a Finno-Ugric people, but the Estonian national epic. (Undusk 1994: 148–149). Ten years later, in an essay titled “The Existential Kreutzwald” (Undusk 2003), Undusk mentions another paradox: how Kreutzwald, a practicing medical doctor in the provincial South Estonian town of Võru, could create from extremely scarce and fragmentary folk epic source-material a majestic epic of a nation. Undusk explains it by identifying Kreutzwald as an existential thinker, close to the ideas of the European Enlightenment current of Deism and those of Albert Camus, after WWII: as logic cannot be achieved, the absurdity of life should be accepted; as a nation and national culture cannot be achieved, the absurd task of writing an

¹ There are translations in English (by Jüri Kurman: *Kalevipoeg. An Ancient Estonian Tale*. Moorestown. New Jersey: Symposia Press, 1982; reprint: Tallinn: Æle Õla, 2007), in German (by Ferdinand Loewe, 1900; reprint, edited by Peter Petersen: Stuttgart: Verlag Mayer, 2004), in French (by Antoine Chalvin, Paris: Gallimard, 2004), as well as in many other languages (Russian, Swedish, Hungarian, Finnish, etc.)

epic carrying national sentiments and hopes, should still be undertaken... (Undusk 2003).

Both Pilter and Undusk have indeed come quite close to overcoming the folkloric point of view which, despite all shades of difference, has prevailed in Estonia, as respects Kreutzwald's epic. To be very short, the main idea in the folkloric viewpoint is that in comparison with Elias Lönnrot's *Kalevala* (1835–1849), Kreutzwald could not use "authentic" folksongs as the basis of *Kalevipoeg* – they were very meagre in Estonia – and, to compensate it, he had to invent himself a kind of pseudo-folklore. Hence the conclusion: it is an eclectic work, it lacks the unity of composition inherent in ancient great epics. Friedebert Tuglas who was to become one of Estonian's foremost writers and literary ideologists, assumed a strongly critical stand as regards *Kalevipoeg*, from the very first decade of the 20th century. In an influential essay, published in 1912, young Tuglas stated: "There is an absolute lack of scientific correctness" (Tuglas 1959: 127)², "*Kalevipoeg* has taught us a false pathos, hollow phrases, superficiality in content and form" (ib. 131), Kreutzwald turned "a coarse giant, a stone-thrower, a rapist of women and a great sleeper" of folklore into a national hero and an ideal governor of a state (ib. 131–132). Tuglas did not attribute to *Kalevipoeg* any aesthetic value and claimed that the work had mainly been used to amplify Estonian national-patriotic feelings, having served, above all, to propagagate social and political ambitions.

The series of paradoxes connected with *Kalevipoeg* could be enlarged. The work became, indeed, a tool in the hands of Estonian national politicians, before and after our first political independence (1918–1939), between the two world wars. However, one should not forget that the official anthem of the Socialist Soviet Republic of Estonia (in the wording of the writer Johannes Semper) started with a direct reference to *Kalevipoeg*.³

² Here and in the following, translation of quotations from critical sources is mine. – J. T.

³ A soberly balanced description of how the signs of Kreutzwald and *Kalevipoeg* have been manipulated from different political-ideological positions, can be found in Mart Velsker's article "Kreutzwaldi tähendus" (Kreutzwald's significance). It is obvious that more than *Kalevipoeg*, his author Kreutzwald has suffered from ideologically tendentious handling of his sign.

Go on strong and perdure, valiant people of Kalev

One should not ignore either the fact that Kreutzwald's *Kalevipoeg*, to a much larger extent than the folksongs about the giant Kalev, has been echoed in a vast complex of intertextualities running through a great number of works of literature and the arts (music, ballet, opera, painting, sculpture) created in Estonia in the 20th century. (Cf. Laak 2005). The figure of Kalevipoeg has been endlessly parodied and mocked at, in literary works and in the mass media. Yet it has not destroyed the myth of Kalevipoeg created by Kreutzwald, but paradoxically has ever expanded and enhanced it.

There is an obvious parallel with Cervantes's *Don Quixote*: the work was meant as a parody of the books of chivalry, but it did not destroy at all the strong mythical vein emerging from the latter, but conveyed it, as a part of a new powerful myth, into the 20th century. It became a primary element in the birth of the influential current of magical realism, above all in the Latin American novel of the second half of the 20th century.

***Kalevipoeg* as a philosophical discourse and a multi-layered epic**

I do not think the attempts to associate Kreutzwald's ideas in *Kalevipoeg* with any concrete philosophical current before or after him would make much sense. Kreutzwald, in my opinion, belonged to the minor tribe of writers (Calderón, Quevedo, Byron, the Bask Miguel de Unamuno, the Estonian poet Juhan Liiv, as a number of others) who, having a deep awareness of the limits of the individual human life, did not believe in the illusions and perspectives the rationally inclined and materially bound power structures, manipulating the majority, have ever tried to impose on Western societies, at least since the Enlightenment. The dissenting minority has definitely been the humanist tribe of writers.

Vague and "self-constructed" as "image philosophy" of literature may seem, it not only has been complementary to the work of professional philosophers, but in certain historical epochs has had a deep repercussion in societies, by far exceeding the influence of professional philosophy born at universities. Besides, above all in smaller,

“peripheral” and younger nations, writers, especially at crucial historical moments, have often overtaken the role of philosophers. Thus, the prophesies of the poet Walt Whitman have had a much wider world audience than the ideas of the best acknowledged American philosopher, the transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson. Portugal celebrates as its greatest thinkers, embodying the national spirit to its highest degree, the writers Luís Vaz de Camões and Fernando Pessoa.

The same observation could be applied to Estonia. None of its professional philosophers have been able to influence to any serious extent the processes in the society, while Kreutzwald’s *Kalevipoeg* and Juhan Liiv’s lyrical poetry have not only stirred national sentiments but contain an extremely intense philosophical discourse. It has been capable of orientating the young Estonian nation in its difficult historical choices and its quest for identity.

The background of such a complemented (now symbiotic, now contradictory) spiritual action and process has well been resumed in the observations of José Ortega y Gasset in his essay *Kant* (1929–1931). Here as in many other works, he opposes the Western predominant current of thought reaching from René Descartes to post-modern philosophers, like Derrida or Foucault.

El *moi-même* de Descartes, que sólo se da cuenta de sí, es una abstracción que acaba siendo un error. El “*je ne suis qu’une chose que pense*” es falso. Mi pensamiento es una función parcial de “mi vida” que no puede desintegrarse del resto. [---] No hay, pues, un “*moi-même*” sino en la medida en que hay otras cosas, y no hay otras cosas si no las hay *para* mí. (Ortega y Gasset 1932: 885)

Throughout his work and in unison with his “ratio-vitalist” as well as existential thinking – by the way, exactly in the same line with Yuri Lotman’ late conclusions – Ortega y Gasset has also emphasized the basic truth that to imagine life as something that should be logical is mistaken in its very principle. The greatest asset of literature, in comparison with professional philosophy, is that in its most outstanding achievements it has never centred exclusively in the brain operations of a thinking individual, the purified domain of thought, but has presented human beings in their vital environment, subject to

biological-sexual as well as social factors, transmitting its philosophy through sensual and concrete images that, as such, can reach a wide human audience.

Literature, with its ambiguities and metaphors, is the perfect ground for the perpetuation of myths. As soon as it becomes too rational, intellectual or abstract – thus, moving closer to professional philosophy –, it loses its myth-making and myth-perpetuating capacity.

For the same reason, although a number of ancient mythical-literary works have been manipulated by political-economic power structures, they still contain a lot of ambiguity, due to which their mythical message does not necessarily lose its broader human significance, either philosophical or psychological. It is especially true of a number of the most famous epic works of different European nations. The French *Chanson de Roland* glorifies Christianity and the centralizing power of Charlemagne. On the other hand, it reveals some of the basic human qualities of its heroes pushed into critical liminal situations. Besides, it made stand forth a patriotic ideal of a united France and thus strongly contributed to French national self-conscience. Even though the old Germanic mythology, including the great Nibelungen-saga, was to serve the Nazi ideologists in spreading their abortive racial ideas, a closer look at the *Nibelungenlied* (start of the 13th century) would probably reveal germs of a nation's self-criticism, as a number of deeply negative features are not those carried by "others" or "foreigners", but appear as ascribed to the Germanic race itself. Although the celebration of the great historic deeds of the Portuguese, always shown in a clear-cut positive light, may seem exaggerated in Camões's *Os Lusíadas* (The Lusíads), the work was to become a major spiritual discourse of the Portuguese in their self-identification as a nation, an existential support for a peripheral national endeavour of self-defence against the menace of being absorbed by its mighty neighbour, Spain, or other bigger nations.

In the same basic cue, the Estonian epic *Kalevipoeg* should be interpreted as a multi-layered poetic work. If I earlier spoke of the necessity of overcoming the folkloric point of view in the treatment of Kreutzwald's epic, I did not mean at all that the folkloric conception should be underrated. Luckily, the perspective for a new

approach to *Kalevipoeg* has been envisaged in the work of one of the major folklorists Estonia has had, August Annist (1899–1972), our celebrated translator of Lönnrot's *Kalevala* (first published in 1939, a revised version in 1959).

Although Annist did not manage to finish his *opus magnum* on *Kalevipoeg*, his *Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwaldi "Kalevipoeg"* (Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald's *Kalevipoeg*), published posthumously (Annist 2005), contains nearly 900 pages organized in chapters according to their publication in Annist's lifetime, since his doctoral dissertation (1934), in which he compared Kreutzwald's epic with the myth about Kalevipoeg in Estonian folklore.

In my opinion, nearly all major guidelines for understanding the importance of Kreutzwald's *Kalevipoeg* as a literary work are contained in Annist's *opus magnum*. However, as Annist went in a great detail into *Kalevipoeg*'s folkloric sources and background, not always the literary aspect stands forth in the way it would have deserved. Some of Annist's valuable ideas, especially as regards the interpretation of *Kalevipoeg*'s role in a broader literary context of European epics and major fictional works, without any doubt, need to be further developed. It directly concerns one of the central motives in *Kalevipoeg*, the construction of a mythical future city from the European periphery.

Kreutzwald's mystification as a means of mythicizing the work. The contribution from "outside" to the emergence of *Kalevipoeg*

In the first place, I postulate that *Kalevipoeg* is an individual literary work, an epic created by its author, Kreutzwald. I fully admit its definition by Annist: *Kalevipoeg* is "a folksongs-like art(ful) epic" (Annist 2005: 381). According to Annist, approximately one third of *Kalevipoeg*'s plot relies on genuine folktales or their elements. Referring to the data provided by the Finnish folklorist Uno Karttunen, Annist mentions that about ten percent of the epic's verses are borrowed from folk-songs. (Ib. 717, 719)

I will not dwell on the question if genuine folksong-based epics exist at all. Suffice to say that even though the Finnish *Kalevala*

comprises for the most part genuine folksongs, it would never have worked as an epic without a substantial reconstructing, selecting, structuring and framing of the material on the part of Elias Lönnrot. The final part of *Kalevala* is strongly biased in exalting Christianity, thus having little to do with the more archaic pre-Christian conscience.

Kreutzwald in his Preface to the first edition of *Kalevipoeg* (1857; written, by the way, in German) indeed claimed that his epic contained genuine folksongs. The fact, however, should not be over-rated. It was not at all easy to publish *Kalevipoeg*. To avoid the tsarist censorship and at the same time to satisfy the taste of his Baltic-German critics, Kreutzwald was literally forced to produce a kind of mystification, presenting his work as genuine folklore. *Kalevipoeg* was first published in the proceedings of the Learned Estonian Society (Õpetatud Eesti Selts), with a parallel German translation (1857–1861).

The forced mystification, however, became an additional element in the mythicizing of *Kalevipoeg*'s action, extending the dimension of the uncertainty and obscurity of the work. Like in genuine folklore, the images of *Kalevipoeg* are for the most part concrete, departing from a number of historical *loci*. However, the action linked to these *loci* is mostly magic and supra-natural. Nothing can be historically or rationally proved, the origins of the myth remain in semi-darkness. In the same way, the mystifying frame provides an impression of a scientifically "objective" approach to folktales. Yet these tales are mixed in their very germ with Kreutzwald's own philosophy and often obscure (deeply sensual) impulses of his creativity.

The publishing process has been described in detail by Annist (2005: 518–555). Contacts with Finnish scholars, working in more liberal conditions, had a decisive role in the publication of *Kalevipoeg* in the form of a book (Kuopio, 1862) and in the appreciation of Kreutzwald's great effort. Annist mentions a praising speech made in Helsinki in 1859 by Sven Gabriel Elmgren, who considered *Kalevipoeg* equal to *Kalevala*. (Ib. 533–534) Also, Kreutzwald's contacts with the scholars of Saint Petersburg were very important. At their initiative *Kalevipoeg* was presented to the Demidov prize of the Academy of Sciences, which was indeed given to Kreutzwald in 1860 (when only a part of the epic had been published).

At the same time in Estonia itself Kreutzwald had to be extremely cautious because the work received more criticism than praise. Even the Baltic-German G. J. Schultz-Bertram who with Kreutzwald's close friend Fr. R. Faehlmann had been one of the main architects of the plan of an Estonian national epic, was quite harshly critical of *Kalevipoeg*, considering it too prosaic and modernized. (Ib. 534)

Kalevipoeg can be regarded as an epitome for a great number of works created in the "periphery", which, whatever their value, have not been able to transcend their national frontiers by means of a merely national, local criticism.

The same "technical" context of *Kalevipoeg*'s publishing process – and not so much the author's existentialism – explains Kreutzwald's cautiousness and modesty in his own evaluation of his epic in the above mentioned Preface. In those circumstances he certainly could not be sure that he had managed to write a national epic. However, Kreutzwald did not fail to emphasize the main purpose of the epic: it was to provide a continuation to the liberation of the Estonian people from their serfdom and oppose "the ardent striving of our people for German education and culture, a striving which appears to have deadened them to all indigenous national feelings" (Kreutzwald 2007: 3). Or, as Annist has put it:

But the main exterior aim of the work was to exercise national influence, to awaken in the foreigners respect for the Estonian people and, in the Estonians themselves, national conscience and love. (Annist 2005: 560)

Building a city for a nation

After *Kalevipoeg*'s initial crimes and sinning – which on the symbolic plane could be interpreted as a young nation's mistakes, due to inexperience –, the motif of building is first introduced in the 6th Tale. From the 10th Tale until the end of the epic – thus, roughly occupying a half of the epic text –, the construction of Estonian towns appears as the fundamental action of Kreutzwald's work. Symbolically, this action can be viewed as the building of the Estonian nation.

Since the closing centuries of the European Middle Ages, the rise of the modern European nations ran parallel with an intense and rapid urbanization of Europe. Cities became the organizing and communicative nuclei of national fermentation. Rural isolation was overcome. Cities were the most important vehicle in the modernizing process and, since the early Renaissance, with an ever ampler net of universities in its axis, embodied also a radical renovation in culture. In most parts of Europe, traditional medieval forms of literature were abandoned, and new modern fashions triumphed.

Since those centuries, modernism has been identified in Europe with change. It has ever responded to the aspirations of the young vanguard. However, since their childhood, cities, with their advancing techniques of reproduction and copying, have also nourished mass culture and superficial fashion, producing a kind of a false modernism, *kitsch*, and, in many cases, contradicting such cultural creativity that could respond to the real needs of a nation's social development.

During the Renaissance and until the start of the 19th century, all the above said could be applied almost exclusively to the "leading" nations, those of having bigger and mightier "bodies". They imposed on the smaller and peripheral nations their rules and laws, their ideology and also, their cultural fashions.

The greatest counter-turn was produced in the European Romanticism. It enhanced liberation from slavery and a gradual understanding of the "other". It introduced the idea of the individuality of nations and cultures and sought respect as regards cultural differences. The concept of "world literature" was coined in Germany by Goethe, against the background of the philosophy of Herder and ideas of the earlier Renaissance and Baroque writers of the humanist kind (Erasmus, More, Rabelais, Montaigne, Shakespeare, Cervantes, Calderón, and others). The Romantic vanguard was strongly attuned to the past, but at the same time also to the future. Its future vision was in part utopian, but simultaneously it was a kind of transmodernism⁴, uneasily to be assimilated by the social establishment and power structures under the dominion of the male gender.

⁴ The term "transmodernism" has key importance in the writings, since the last decade of the 20th century, of the Spanish philosopher Rosa María Rodríguez Magda. Cf. e. g. her *Transmodernidad*. Barcelona: Anthropos,

For that reason, from the Renaissance to the end of the 19th century the symbolic building of a city and of a nation in European peripheral literature varies considerably in its ideology, though, as far as the genre of the epic in its formal aspect is concerned, interesting similarities could also be revealed.

Constructing the nation from the European “periphery”

Annist observed that Kreutzwald wrote his *Kalevipoeg* at the time when the scientific turn in European cultural research had begun; thus it was impossible to follow any more in the footsteps of James Macpherson’s Ossian’s songs (Annist 2005: 443). Annist also mentions the shadow of Goethe’s *Faust* hanging over Kreutzwald, at least in the introduction to *Kalevipoeg* (ib. 619).

Indeed, by that time writing epic verse in Europe had reached its critical limits. Verse epics were overshadowed by the novel, the great triumphant literary genre at least since the work of Scott, Balzac and Dickens. Since the second half of the 19th century the creation of verse epics was driven to the European periphery, as “centres” were no longer interested in it. Their cities and nations had already been built up long before. By the way, even in the Renaissance the task of writing a true epic that would have a meaning in the sense of building a city and a nation remained a peripheral challenge. The fashion itself of writing verse epics was still there, but the content became ever more novel-like. Pierre de Ronsard and Edmund Spenser tried to write epics that would have a meaning for a nation, but both failed, as their respective works, *The Franciade* and *The Fairy Queen* remained unfinished. The large epic poems created in

2004. In a way, it is a continuation of the challenges of modernism after the failure of the enlightenment project, rejecting at the same time nihilist approaches and relying on refreshing contributions on the part of feminist philosophy. I myself apply it here as synonymous of a permanent strive for a creative search in societies and culture, in parallel with a basically symbiotic paradigm, as regards genders, centres and peripheries, biospheric and noospheric processes. I have tried to forward the idea of symbiosis in my book *A Call for Cultural Symbiosis*. Toronto: Guernica, 2005.

Italy by Pulci, Boiardo, Ariosto and Tasso could well be defined as verse novels. Indeed, their main content did not differ much from prose novels of chivalry, created since the start of the 16th century in Spain.

Thus Luís Vaz de Camões, who published his *Os Lusíadas* in 1572, was a lonely peripheral writer in his task of writing a national epic. He could not avoid imitating the formal and ideological patterns imposed by the Renaissance “mainstream”. He wrote his epic in *ottava rima*, assembled his pantheon of ancient Roman gods and did not doubt the right of the Europeans to conquer “vicious countries of Africa and Asia”, to “edify among remote people a new kingdom”, spreading there Christian faith, inherited from the Roman empire. (See the inaugural strophes of Song I of *Os Lusíadas*).

By contrast, in Kreutzwald’s time not only the general content of the epic genre had become much more varied, but after the abolition of slavery and serfdom the traditional power centres of Europe were gradually losing their direct impact in the periphery. This fact inspired the Finn Elias Lönnrot and the Estonian Kreutzwald to create their epics in the traditional-autochthonal metres of Finno-Ugric folksongs, which village people still remembered and could reproduce in their day, even though the heyday of folksong as a vigorous phenomenon was rapidly losing ground.

The more menaced a nation is existentially, the more urgent becomes the need to defend it by means of culture. It is one of the reasons why Camões, in Portugal, was in the European renaissance the only great writer who took up writing a patriotic epic. It also explains, at least to some extent, why Kreutzwald turned the town / nation building into the main theme of his *Kalevipoeg*, while in Lönnrot’s *Kalevala* such a theme is practically absent. As a part of the Swedish kingdom, the Finns, unlike the Estonians, had not suffered from serfdom. Even as a part of the Russian tsarist empire, Finland had a considerable degree of autonomy.

In *Kalevala*, the main themes are, on the one hand, Väinämöinen’s search for a wife and, on the other hand, the quest of Sampo, a symbol of earthly welfare. These are topics characteristic of ancient folklore, and not directly interfering in the Finnish people’s situation in the present or in the future. Naturally, in a more indirect and much less political way than *Kalevipoeg*, in the Estonian

case, Lönnrot's *Kalevala* has likewise encouraged and elevated the Finnish national self-consciousness.

In *Kalevipoeg*, Kreutzwald neutralizes from the very beginning the germ of a private story, which has characterized the European novel since it started to take shape in the medieval and Renaissance romances of chivalry. After the first unfortunate and tragic erotic experience with the Island Maid, Kalevipoeg does not make any attempt to find a wife for himself, although he helps his friends in finding brides. In the 7th Tale, when Kalevipoeg sings, approaching the Estonian coast, he imagines three ships full of young women all eager to marry the hero or become his lovers. Yet Kalevipoeg's answer is:

But Kalevipoeg won't be your husband,
This lad will never be your helpmate.
(Kp 2007: 93)

After becoming the king of the Estonians, Kalevipoeg, very much like the prince Segismundo in Calderón *Life Is a Dream*, suppresses his personal love, to assume a full responsibility for his country. In the words of an old man, who in the 9th Tale predicts that Kalevipoeg will become a just and honest ruler:

A king must bear ten burdens,
A ruler has one hundred cares,
(---)
ten thousand tasks for Kalevipoeg!
(Kp 2007: 121)

Kreutzwald models his hero Kalevipoeg as a ruler of his country, exactly corresponding to the ideas about an ideal monarch, expressed in Erasmus's *Education of a Christian Prince* (1516): he assumes a total responsibility for his people and country, in a radical contrast to a tyrant who exercises power in his own private interests.

The above-said does not mean at all that girls and women will not attract Kalevipoeg in the following course of the epic. He is about to frolic and enjoy sexually the Hell maids. One of the maids, however, with tears in her eyes, asks him not to rob her of her innocence, once again hinting at Kalevipoeg's nobler mission prescribed by the gods:

don't poke your iron paw,
 your finger, into this girl
 (---)
 Don't budge, little brother,
 Don't come one step closer;
 Taara has created you immense,
 The Oldman made you so
 (Kp 2007: 178)

Although Kalevipoeg frolics with the Hell maids, there is no proof that he has any sexual intercourse with them. He promises to match the girls with his friends, admitting that:

I myself won't woo –
 still tiny, a can't take a bride.
 I have to grow for yet a fathom,
 swell for several spans
 and gain a bit in wisdom
 (Kp 2007: 181)

Kalevipoeg appears, thus, as an ideal builder of a city / a nation. His personal life is sacrificed at the altar of social and common welfare, in the name of his people.

On the basis of the above said – quite apparent as it is in Kreutzwald's epic – Sergei Kruks in his interesting sociological comparison of *Kalevipoeg* and the Latvian epic *Lāčplēsis* (1888), by Andrejs Pumpurs, claims that “Kalevipoeg manifests a rather pragmatic and socially responsible behaviour”, while “Lāčplēsis suffers from manic depressive psychosis” (Kruks 2003: 236).

There is no denying that the respective epics of Kreutzwald and Pumpurs display, to some extent at least, what is generally observed as a difference between the Estonians and the Latvians. To put it roughly, the former are considered to be rather rational-minded, while the latter are believed to be predominantly sensible and sentimental. However, I would add that a lot of the difference is prompted by the very nature of the Latvian epic. It is meant as a novel-like story, with a private amorous plain prevailing over social developments. It follows the model established by the Italian Renaissance epics, rather than the patriotic and socially oriented epic *Os Lusíadas*, of Camões.

Binding rationalism with sensibility: towards a transmodern and symbiotic nation

As any pragmatism is closely associated with rationality, I would further argue that Kalevipoeg's rationality – if it at all can be defined as the Estonian hero's characteristic feature – is quite complicated in its nature. Rationalism and pragmatism do not imply necessarily and inevitably a socially orientated action. On the contrary, they have in Western history predominantly served as tools of materialistic individualism. In *Kalevipoeg*, on the contrary, rationalism becomes intensely as well as extensively balanced by sensibility and feelings, of which the source is nature. Only as a sensible hero, open to nature at every stage of his story and myth, and never suppressing nature by reason, Kalevipoeg is able to envisage a city and a nation that transcend a rationalistic, individualistic as well as a dogmatic construction, and provide them with a wisdom that could be called transmodern.

Modernism as well as modern cities were above all construed, imagined and constructed by men, the masters of the *techne*. Their inventions sooner or later had to enter into a conflict with nature. The modern city, of which the postmodern city probably represents a final agonized stage, is obviously undergoing a crisis. It is very close to reaching the climax of contamination and human alienation. By contrast, *Kalevipoeg* envisages a city and a nation, in part utopian, ideal, but at the same time still not at all devoid of a realistic dimension. It projects into the future a semiospheric as well as symbiotic city and a nation.

The key issue for the new symbiotic vision of the city and the nation emerges from a new approach to the inter-gender relationship. Unlike technically orientated modernism, *Kalevipoeg* does not intend to "overcome" or suppress nature. The presence of the natural in the epic of Kreutzwald is above all presented by its feminine germ, visible and palpable by far more than in the majority of Western epics.

Tuglas in his adolescent days did not deny the value of some lyrical passages of *Kalevipoeg*, but considered Kreutzwald's main failure his intent to create an epic mainly on the basis of lyrical material (Tuglas 1959: 124–125). Annist mentions an important

detail: while for bigger nations their folklore was their “own” heritage and professional singers started to spread them, in Estonia, dominated during the Middle Ages by foreign landlords, such professional (male) singers and poets could not emerge; instead, Estonian folksongs were predominantly the product of women. (Annist 2005: 72). Hence, Annist concludes, to make his *Kalevipoeg* look like an epic, Kreutzwald had to undertake a special effort to masculinize his material (ib. 480–481).

On my part, I would suggest that the basic lyrical tonality of *Kalevipoeg*, as a direct extension of the feminine presence as well as of a philosophy departing from nature and life’s magic totality, could be regarded as Kreutzwald’s main asset in introducing a new type of a lyrical epic and in the creation of a new symbiotic vision of a city and a nation. A hint at it could be found in what Kreutzwald himself asserted in his 1857 Preface to *Kalevipoeg*:

The elegiac, which is the dominant trend in Estonian poetry, is also represented in the *Kalevipoeg* saga, and surely with bolder strokes than could be expected for this powerful, gigantic hero-figure, whose character nevertheless is a tragic one through and through. (Kreutzwald 2007: 4)

It is at the same time the main guarantee of providing the city and the nation, envisaged in *Kalevipoeg*, with a dimension of the mythical. It is the reign of the senses, the sensual, the lyrical, the magic, the obscure. All these features are fully present in Kreutzwald’s epic. The hero himself is in constant touch with nature, both its lighter and darker side, which conditions and limits his choices at every stage of his life. Even if the construction of the city may seem a rational-technical action, it manifests in *Kalevipoeg* its transcendent dimension just because *Kalevipoeg* never becomes a technician himself. He provides natural material for the building (timber) as well as envisages the city’s broader philosophical contours. The task of the technical construction of the city is left to *Olevipoeg*.

A city of peace. Women shaping a future nation

Felix Oinas wonders why Kalevipoeg avoids entering the war in the 9th Tale (Oinas 1979: 37). Is Kalevipoeg's not cowardly? The answer to that question is provided by a transcendent, symbiotic world view, emerging in the work of some of the greatest European humanist writers, like Erasmus, Thomas More and Michel de Montaigne.

The great majority of European epics adopt the monologic ideology of the male gender. *Kalevipoeg* is a great exception. It seeks a balanced dialogue of the genders, instead of suppressing and silencing the female. The future city and nation of Estonia, envisaged by Kreutzwald, is meant as a symbiotic space for a tolerable co-existence of the male and the female.

Kalevipoeg's grandmother was a bird, a black grouse. Thus the magic of nature and its female germ is hidden deep in the essence of Kalevipoeg. The epical action is not triggered and guided by a search for a wife or material wealth (like in *Kalevala*) or quarrelling about women and gold (like in the German *Nibelungenlied*), but by Kalevipoeg's search for his mother and his will to avenge her male rapist. The memory of his mother Linda haunts Kalevipoeg in a number of crucial and dramatic episodes of the epic, while the sense of guilt at having caused the Island Maid's death becomes one of his main obsessions. These feelings transcend the limits of life. The dead mother and the dead Island Maid guide, from the beyond, Kalevipoeg's sentimental and moral education.

The main city built in Kalevipoeg's kingdom is called Lindanisa (Linda's Tit). Whatever its historical origin (cf. Annist 231–234), Kreutzwald names it so in honour of Kalevipoeg's mother Linda. It symbolizes nature's nourishing the city and the nation, just like the main condition for Kalevipoeg's becoming great and strong was that Linda, after giving birth to his youngest son, suckled him for three years.

The basic sensibility of the hero makes him look at the world differently, as compared to most epical protagonists of the past. Kalevipoeg is certainly not so much a hero of the past than of the future. This explains his aversion to wars, which in the past – and still in our days – have been exclusively started, planned and waged by men. Kalevipoeg, instead, defends peace and envisages a city and

a nation that would be a shelter in wars for the traditionally weaker members of the society: women, children, the old.

The balanced social and humanist project of *Kalevipoeg*, however, need not be simplified. It is certainly not an enlightenment project, based on the idea of a universal reason capable of annihilating and suppressing the dark and the evil hidden in nature itself. In fact, a symbiotic philosophy would never accept the idea of fighting or silencing nature. Only when deeply intertwined with nature, can human action gain in wisdom.

Nature, the evil and the “wandering” Hell. The final mystery

The afore said does not mean that evil would not exist in nature. However, the evil of nature is above all awakened and stirred up by the interference of rationally planned human actions: greed, violence, egoism. Dante Alighieri, in his *Divine Comedy*, avoided too severely condemning adultery committed because of the call of nature; on the contrary, prostitution guided by scheming and reason – as a conscious act – was shown as one of the ugliest crimes in Dante’s philosophic imagery.

The same can be seen in *Kalevipoeg*. The hero’s father, from his grave, comforts his son. As Kalevipoeg killed the Finnish blacksmith’s son not intentionally, but in a fit of anger, his father Kalev advises him to assuage his guilt by better and nobler deeds.

On the contrary, the Devil’s world, so extensively present in the epic, can only be interpreted as the reign of evil consciously constructed by man’s rational action. The main symbol of its tremendous might is its earthly wealth – gold, silver. Kreutzwald presents Hell by means of a powerful symbolism: its entrances can be found at the same time in various places. One is near the Lake Endla, not far from Tartu (13th Tale), the other seems to be near Assamalla, where a battle with the invaders takes place (17th Tale), while the end of the world (16th Tale) is also identified with an entrance to Hell. It means that Hell perpetually accompanies human beings, wherever they go. It is an inalienable part of human existence, and it is also a part of a city and a nation under construction.

Hell and the Devil personify the alienating power in its highest concentration. It constantly invades the city and the nation, therefore, Kalevipoeg, as the king and the hero has to battle against it in a number of instances and be on a constant watch, to repel it from his country, his people and from himself.

Three centuries earlier, Luiz Vaz de Camões showed a similar ethic preoccupation while constructing the Portuguese nation in his *Os Lusíadas*. He justified the conquest of foreign countries and people only as a spiritually guided action, while severely condemning earthly greed: "Once treasures and riches move you so much, you cannot be moved by the Holy House!" (VII, 11).

The epic's final symbol, often seen as logically contradictory, was probably never intended by Kreutzwald as anything logical or clearly explicable. The image of Kalevipoeg's coming home, when the splinters at both their ends burst into flame, indeed, could mean endless light as well as eternal darkness. More simply put, the final illumination might be identified, perhaps, with the end of the Western male-made ideal of progress. After the apex has been achieved and nature has been consumed, eternal darkness follows.

However, a cue to a spiritually subtler interpretation of the final passage is provided at the very start of the epic. The good and the just, Kalevipoeg and – more hiddenly – Kreutzwald among them, are at the *home* of gods, fully aware of Kalevipoeg's life and deeds on the earth, turned into a myth. Kalevipoeg's coming home could be understood, perhaps, as a complicated symbol, to some extent parallel to the ending of Goethe's *Faust*, Calderón's *El mágico prodigioso* and Shelley's *The Revolt of Islam*.

Analogically with Christ's mystery, it could mean Kalevipoeg's entering the heart and the mind of his people. However, to meet Kalevipoeg and merge with him, his people should be prepared, like him, for suffering, regretting their sins and fighting for peace, against wars and violence as well as against the Devil (=human greed), to grant a continuation of the building of a just city and nation.

Kalevipoeg in Kreutzwald's epic is in a continuous movement between the ideal and the real. Now he is identifiable with a future projection of a nation, now he embodies the vices and erring of his people. Thus, his coming home may refer to the earthy Kalevipoeg, as the historical Estonian people, whose final goal should be meeting the other, better Kalevipoeg at the home of gods.

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Estnische Ortssagenmotive in deutschbaltischen Balladen

LIINA LUKAS

*Dies muß ein Land der Sagen sein,
An Emma's Strom, an Belts Gestein!
Das Wasser rauscht am Waldesrand
Blau flutend hin zum Meeresstrand....
Doch ob man auch Gesichte schaut,
Die Sage wird nur wenig laut.
Was ist's, dass sie so wenig spricht,
Da überall sich zeigt Gesicht?*

K.H. von Busse, Die Sage in Livland (Das Inland
1846, H. 38, S. 909–910, 19.Blg.B)

*Ja wol! Vom theuren Vaterland
Ist manche Sage noch bekannt;
Doch nicht in unsres Volkes Mund –
Die Chronik thut sie nur uns kund.*

O. Dreistern (Das Inland 1848, H. 40 S. 949,
40.Blg.B)

Ortssagen sind ein Gemeingut der estnischen und deutschbaltischen Literatur. Das spätromantische Interesse für Ortsüberlieferungen erwachte im Baltikum in den 30er Jahren des 19. Jahrhunderts und gipfelte im estnischen Sprachgebiet in der zweisprachigen Ausgabe des estnischen Nationalepos *Kalevipoeg*.

Literarische Bearbeitungen von Volkssagen fanden schnell ihren Weg in Zeitungen und Zeitschriften, in Gedichtbände und Antho-

logien – oft in modischer Balladenform, die dem mythisch-romantischen Inhalt der Volkssage am besten zu entsprechen schien. Im Folgenden wird untersucht, welche Bedeutung Ortssagen in der deutschbaltischen Balladendichtung zukam.

I Die Tradition der deutschen Kunstballade

Die Vorliebe zur Ballade erklärt sich durch die allgemeine Beliebtheit dieser Gattung (Kunstballade) in der deutschen Literatur seit der zweiten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts. Obwohl die deutsche Balladentradition in ihren Anfängen sich auf englische und schottische Vorbilder bezog, wurde die Ballade schnell zu einer „deutschen Gattung“ (Kayser 1936: 295). Den entscheidenden Impuls gab G. A. Bürger mit seiner „Leonore“ (1773). Ihr Wirkungskreis umfasste ganz Europa und strahlte auch in das Baltikum aus, wo unter ihrem Einfluss unter anderem die estnischsprachigen Balladen entstanden.

Seit dem Sturm und Drang steht die Ballade im Zentrum theoretischer Diskussionen über Poesie. Nach Goethe war sie die eigentliche, alle drei poetischen Grundarten umfassende Urform der Dichtung, wobei „die Elemente noch nicht getrennt, sondern wie in einem lebendigem Ur-Ei zusammen sind“ (Goethe 1821: 591–592). Deutlich wurde er dabei vom Herderschen Menschenbild mit seiner Einheit von Denken, Fühlen und Handeln sowie den von ihm gepriesenen Qualitäten der Volkspoesie – Volkstümlichkeit, Lebendigkeit, Unmittelbarkeit, Naturhaftigkeit, Sinnlichkeit, Sprunghaftigkeit – beeinflusst, die zu Charakteristika der Kunstballade werden sollten. Goethes und Schillers Balladendichtung der klassischen Periode machte aus den bänkelsängerischen Versen, die das Geheimnisvolle, Gespensterhaftige oder Mysteriöse, wie Goethe es ausdrückte, in den Vordergrund rückten, Ideenballaden, in der der Mensch weniger mit übersinnlichen Kräften, als mit sittlichen Ideen konfrontiert wird.

Den romantischen Forderungen nach einer Aufhebung der Gattungsgrenzen und einer Synthese von Endlichem und Unendlichem kam die Ballade sowohl in der allegorisch-mystischen Naturballade der Frühromantiker (Fr. Schlegel, L. Tieck), als auch im Volksliedstil der schwäbischen Dichterschule (Uhland, Mörike, Kerner, Schwab) nach, wie er sich in *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*

(1801–1806) manifestiert und für spätere Balladendichter verpflichtend wurde.

In der Biedermeier-Ära kam es zu einem regelrechten Balladenboom in der deutschen Literatur. Geibel, Chamisso, Mörike, Rückert, Platen und Kerner überfluten auch baltische Familienblätter. Mit der Ausprägung eines historisch-nationalen Bewusstseins wandte sich die Ballade immer mehr der Geschichte zu, wobei sie konkrete historische Ereignisse und Persönlichkeiten in den Vordergrund rückte. Die historische Ballade a la Fouqué oder Uhland fand ihren Stoff in den nordischen Sagen, ließ die germanische Vergangenheit aufstehen und verherrlichte das germanische Heldentum – garniert mit biedereren Werten wie Gerechtigkeit, Frömmigkeit, Güte, Edelmut usw. Angeregt von den *Deutschen Sagen* (1816–1818) der Gebrüder Grimm und ihren Epigonen, wurde die historische Sagenballade zu einer der beliebtesten Gedichtarten des Biedermeier (Kayser 193). Besonders die Ortssagenballaden fanden einen festen Platz in den umfangreichen Balladensammlungen des 19. Jahrhunderts. (z. B. Hub 1845)

Gegen Mitte des Jahrhunderts erlangte der Berliner literarische Verein „Tunnel über der Spree“ herausragende Bedeutung als Erneuerer der Ballade. Er stellte dem bürgerlichen Biedermeier das aristokratisch-heroische Lebensgefühl gegenüber, schöpfte aus der deutschen Geschichte und pflegte landeskundliche und historische Balladen. Als einflussreiches Mitglied dieser bis in die 1890er Jahre bestehenden Gesellschaft, die so namhafte Dichter wie Theodor Fontane, Emmanuel Geibel, Felix Dahn, Gottfried Keller u. a. versammelte, findet sich auch der Deutschbalte Roman von Budberg-Boenninghausen (1816–1858).

Die letzte große Balladenwelle datiert auf die Jahrhundertwende und erhob sich in Göttingen um den Dichter Börries von Münchhausen, dessen Balladen bis in die 1930er Jahre hinein in Deutschland überaus beliebt waren. Die bekannteste Vertreterin dieses Kreises ist Agnes Miegel, die auch in Baltikum viel gedruckt und vermutlich auch gelesen wurde. Der Göttinger-Kreis erhoffte eine Neubelebung der Gattung aus dem Geist ihres Vorbildes, des Göttinger Hainbundes. Er griff also auf die Anfänge der Kunstballade zurück und versuchte, die romantische Gesinnung wiederzubeleben und so den naturalistischen Strömungen der Zeit entgegenzuwirken. Anstatt Erneuerung zu bewirken, untermauerte er damit die alten Fundamente

der Gattung. Während die Ballade in ihrer Entstehungszeit den sozialen Wandel und gesellschaftliche Umbrüche widerspiegelte, ist sie um 1900 eher von einer konservativen Lebenshaltung getragen. Das gilt auch für die Blüte der deutschbaltischen Ballade.

Gattungsmerkmale

Unter der Ballade wird heute eine zwischen drei Grundformen stehende Gattung verstanden, die „ein ungewöhnliches, oft handlungsreiches /---/ und meist tragisches Geschehen aus Geschichte, Sage oder Mythos /---/, durch Rede und Gegenrede vorangetrieben, in gedrängter, meist strophisch gereimter Form unmittelbar gegenwärtig darstellt und dabei durch Gefühlsinhalt des Erzählten /---/ eine lyrische Stimmung hervorruft.“ (Wilpert 2001). Oder kürzer ausgedrückt: „Unter dem epischen Inhalt verbirgt sich ein dramatischer Konflikt, ausgedrückt in der lyrischen Form und im Interesse des Lyrischen.“ (Merilai 1991: 19) Ihrer Form nach ist die Ballade relativ frei, stehen ihr doch fast alle strophischen oder metrischen Formen offen. In der Regel findet sich eine Gliederung in Strophen (am üblichsten sind in der deutschen Ballade vierzeilige Strophen, wobei sich vierfüßige und dreifüßige Versen mit Kreuzreim abwechseln) und Endreim (Weißert 1993: 17–19). Auch die Länge kann unterschiedlich sein und manchmal können Balladen von längeren Poemen oder epischen Gesängen kaum unterschieden werden. Ihr wichtigstes Kriterium ist die Konzentriertheit auf ein einziges dramatisches Geschehen und wenige Handelnden. Die Ballade ist eine geschlossene Form.

Bislang konnte keine einheitliche inhaltliche Typologie der Ballade erstellt werden. Im Großen und Ganzen werden numinose Balladen, in denen der Mensch als passiv Handelnder mit übersinnlichen, übernatürlichen (inneren oder äußeren) Kräften konfrontiert wird, die sein Schicksal bestimmen (Schicksalsballade, Legendenballade, Geisterballade, psychologische, naturmagische oder totenmagische Ballade), von historischen Balladen unterschieden. Numinose Balladen herrschten unter den deutschen Kunstballaden der Entstehungszeit vor (z. B. Bürgers *Leonore*, oder Goethes *Braut von Korinth*).

Im Gegensatz hierzu fußt die historische Ballade auf einem historischen Geschehen bzw. konzentriert sich auf eine historische Person (Heldenballade, Ritterballade, heroische Ballade, Ideenballade, soziale Ballade). Auch numinose Balladen können historische Stoffe behandeln, doch besitzt das Historische hier nur Stimmungswert, während es in der historischen Ballade die eigentliche Substanz des Gedichts ausmacht (Lang 1942: 42). In den meisten Balladen finden sich beide Momente, wobei die Deutung einer numinosen Erscheinung mit den historischen Realien verknüpft wird. Entscheidend für die Einordnung als numinose oder historische Ballade ist die Dominanz des einen oder anderen Moments.

Wichtiger aber als ihr Inhalt ist bei der Ballade die Stimmung, die durch den erzählten Stoff vermittelt wird. Bei der Motivwahl ist für die Ballade typisch, dass sie keine originelle Geschichte erzählt, sondern ein bereits bekanntes Geschehen, eine Legende, einen Mythos, ein historisches Geschehen oder eine Sage wiedergibt.

II Die deutschbaltische Ballade

Das deutschbaltische Balladengut wurde trotz seines beträchtlichen Umfangs in der Forschung bislang kaum beachtet. Die hiesige Abhandlung fußt neben den im Druck erschienenen Balladensammlungen (Balladen und Lieder 1846; Wittorff 1859; Schilling 1912, Zoege von Manteuffel 1922, Hirschheydt 1934, Brincken 1918, 1929, 1924, Schmid) auf den in EEVA, der Digitalen Textsammlung älterer Literatur Estlands (www.utlib.ee/ekollekt/eeva), aufgenommenen Texten, in der sich auch solche Balladen finden, die in baltischen Zeitungen, Zeitschriften, Anthologien und Almanachen erschienen.

Die frühesten in EEVA erfassten Balladen stammen aus dem 1812 in Dorpat und Riga erschienenen historisch-poetischen Taschenbuch „Livona“ (Livona 1812–1815). Die erste Ballade wurde vom kurländischen Dichter und Künstler Carl Grass (1767–1814) verfasst und trägt den Titel *Der Jungfrau Unglücksweg. Eine Jägerballade. Dem Schatten einer edlen Lettländerin* (Livona 1812: 84–87), die zweite, *Thekla* (Livona 1815: 157–159), stammt vom Estländer Peter Goetze (1793–1818), der in St. Petersburg als Slawist

bekannt wurde. Obwohl es das Ziel der Ausgabe ist, „das Merkwürdigste aus der Vergangenheit und Gegenwart unsers Vaterlandes“ dem Publikum vorzulegen (Livona 1812: III), wobei einige Beiträge diesem Ziel auch gewissenhaft anstreben (über das Schloss Helmet, den heiligen Bach Vöhhando, die schönen Gegenden Livlands, die Volkslieder der Letten usw.), sind die meisten Balladen des Taschenbuches jedoch frei von dieser Art „Heimatarbeit“ und spielen in einer zeit- und ortlosen romantischen Landschaft („Wo unter des Anhanges schaurigem Steg / Die neblichten Abgründe gähnen, / Und Fluth die Stützen der Felsen zerreisst“ (so Grass, siehe Livona 1812: 84). Ihr Thema ist zumeist unglückliche Liebe.

In den nun folgenden Jahrzehnten wird die Ausbeute an Balladen immer reicher. In dem zwischen 1820–1821 vom Dichter Carl Eduard Raupach (1794–1882) in Tartu herausgegebenen „Inländischen Museum“ (insgesamt 6 Hefte) und dem folgenden „Neuen Museum“ (Dorpat, 1824 und 1825, 2 Hefte) finden sich Balladen oder Romanzen von Karl Knorre (*Lucinde*), Karl Friedrich von der Borg (*Der Steuermann*) und Gustav Bienemann (*Mutterliebe, Das Bild im Bächlein*), doch fehlten ihnen zumeist der ortsgeschichtliche Bezug.

Der zwischen 1828 und 1830 in Reval von Alexander Heinrich Neus (1795–1876) herausgegebene literarische Almanach „Inländischer Dichtergarten“ beginnt viel versprechend mit dem Zyklus „Romanzen“.¹ Unter den Autoren befinden sich bekannte baltische Dichter, wie etwa die herausragende Gestalt des literarischen Lebens in Dorpat, der Direktor der Universitäts-Kanzlei, Karl Friedrich von der Borg (1794–1848), Heinrich Neus, Wilhelm Smets (1796–1848), der sich auch außerhalb des Baltikums einen Namen gemacht hatte, der aus Kurland stammende Dichter Carl von Fircks (1828–1871), der Dorpater Lehrer Martin Asmuss (1784–1844) und ein junger Dichter, der zu dem bekannteste Dichter baltischer Herkunft seiner

¹ Im deutschen Sprachgebrauch werden Ballade und Romanze synonym verwendet: beide Bezeichnungen tauchen in der gleichen Zeit auf. Bürger bezeichnet seine *Leonore* als eine Romanze, Goethe verwendet beide Begriffe parallel. Später gibt es Unterscheidungsversuche nach den Ursprungsland der Bezeichnung – die Romanze wird mit der südeuropäischen heiteren Gesinnung, die Ballade mit der nordischen dunkel-düsteren Stimmung verbunden. (Weißert 1993: 3)

Zeit werden sollte, Alexander von Ungern-Sternberg (1806–1868). Obwohl der Herausgeber des „Dichtergarten“, Heinrich Neus, als Sammler, Übersetzer und Erforscher der estnischen Volkslieder bekannt ist², findet sich keine Widerspiegelung dieser Tätigkeit in seinen Balladen. Weder *Fischer und Schifflin*, *Der schiffende Knabe* und *Der Liebenden Klage*, noch der *Kreuzfahrer* oder *Des Norden Todesfahrt* enthalten ortsgeschichtliche Referenzen. Sie stehen in der Tradition der deutschen Kunstballade, wie ein rascher Vergleich mit Bürger verdeutlicht:

<p>Bürger, <i>Der wilde Jäger</i>: Der Wild- und Rheingraf stieß ins Horn: „Hallo, Hallo zu Fuß und Roß!“ Sein Hengst erhob sich wiehernd vorn; Laut rasselnd stürzt' ihm nach der Troß.</p>	<p>Neus, <i>Des Waidmanns Noth</i>: Halloh, ihr werthen Herrn, zu Ross; Die Hörner rufen munter! Der Graf erschien; da stob der Tross Den engen Pfad hinunter.</p>
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Doch können wir hier nicht nur Bürgers Vorbild erkennen: „zahllose Dichter tummelten ihr Rösslein mit lautem Halli und Hallo auf dem (nicht mehr ganz – Anm. des Verfassers) neuen Felde“, wie der Balladenforscher Wolfgang Kayser es ausdrückt (Kayser 1936: 101). Die hier vorgelegten Balladen stellen Bearbeitungen nordischer Sagen (z. B. *Oskar's Klage um Swanhild* von Franz Schleicher, 1801–1868) oder biblischer Legenden (*Der heilige Lucas* von Alexander von Ungern-Sternberg) dar. Karl Friedrich von der Borg, der als Übersetzer englischer und russischer Literatur tätig war, lehnt sich in seiner Romanzenproduktion an diese seine Vorbilder (Walter Scott, Robert Southey) an. Die Ballade *Der Geist im Walde* ist eine Geisterballade in der Tradition des Sturm und Drang. Das einzige auf einem baltischen Motiv basierende Gedicht dieser Sammlung, das aber aufgrund fehlender Dramatik kaum mehr als richtige Ballade bezeichnet werden kann, ist *Meinhard, der Apostel der Liven* von Alexander von Ungern-Sternberg. Es bezieht sich auf die baltischen

² *Ehstnische Volkslieder*. Übersetzt von H. Neus, hg. von der Ehstländ. Literar. Gesellschaft. Reval 1850–52; Zusammen mit Fr.R. Kreutzwald, *Mythische und magische Lieder der Ehsten*, St. Petersburg 1854.

Chroniken und preist die Mission des Predigers, „das Heil den blinden Sündern zu bringen“ und „vor der Höllen Pforten“ des Glaubens Schloss zu pflanzen (Inländischer 1830: 1–5).

In den 1830er Jahren finden sich häufiger Ortssagen in baltischen Balladen, was auf das wachsende Interesse in Deutschland an ortsgeschichtlichen Motiven zurückgeführt werden kann. So hatte doch Jacob Grimm in seiner *Deutschen Mythologie* (1835) auch mehrere estnische und lettische Sagen international bekannt gemacht.

Das Interesse an Volksüberlieferungen reicht im Baltikum auf das 18. Jahrhundert zurück (Hupel 1774–1782, Scherwinzky 1788 u. a.). Durch die Vermittlung August Wilhelm Hupels (1737–1819), der auf die Bitte Johann Gottfried Herders zwischen 1777 und 1778 eine erste Sammelaktion estnischer und lettischer Volkslieder in Livland organisierte (siehe Jürjo 2004: 398–406), brachte Herder estnische und lettische Volkslieder ins Bewusstsein der gelehrten Öffentlichkeit (Seine *Volkslieder* erschienen 1778–1779). Im Jahre 1787 publizierte Christian Hieronymus Justus Schlegel, Hofmeister in Estland von 1780–1782, in der Weimarer Zeitschrift „Der Teutsche Merkur“ 13 estnische Volkslieder und druckte einige estnische Sagen und Märchen ab. Auch finden sich Dichter, die estnische Volkslieder übersetzten oder nachdichteten, wie z. B. der Dorpater Universitätslektor und Dichter Carl Petersen (1775–1822): seine Adaptionen zweier estnischer Volkslieder, *Klage der Tochter* und *Klage um den Bruder* (Petersen 1846), verwenden geschickt auch die formale Struktur des älteren estnischen Volksliedes (regivärs): Parallelismus, vierfüßiger Trochäus, Alliteration und Assonanz und fehlender Endreim. Zur Popularisierung der estnischen Mythologie trug Kristian Jaak Peterson (1801–1822) mit seiner mit Anmerkungen versehenen Übersetzung von Christfried Gananders *Finnischer Mythologie* (Peterson 1822) bei.

In den 1830er Jahren blühte das wissenschaftliche Interesse an estnischer und lettischer Folklore auf. Mit der Gründung der „Gelehrten Estnischen Gesellschaft“ im Jahre 1838 begann das systematische Sammeln. Die Arbeit der Gesellschaft gipfelte in der zweisprachigen Ausgabe der estnischen Nationalepos *Kalevipoeg / Kalew's Sohn* (1857–1861), dem Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald (1803–1882) seine Endgestalt gab, das aber von diversen Sammlern und Bearbeitern deutscher und estnischer Herkunft geprägt worden war. Eine noch größere Wirkung auf das deutschsprachige Publikum

des Landes übten die in den *Verhandlungen der Gelehrten Estnischen Gesellschaft* zwischen 1840 und 1852 erschienenen deutschsprachigen Mythen von Friedrich Robert Faehmann (1798–1850) aus.

Im Jahre 1836 wurde die Zeitschrift *Das Inland* (1836–1863) gegründet, die sich programmgemäß der baltischen Landeskunde widmete und systematisch Beiträge über estnische oder lettische Sagen und Märchen sowie Übersetzungen von Volksliedern veröffentlichte (vor allem von Heinrich Neus, Georg Julius von Schultze-Bertram (1808–1875), Eduard Pabst (1815–1882), Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald, Nikolai von Rehbinder (1823–1876) und Gustav Heinrich Schüdlöffel (1789–1857)).

Literarische Bearbeitungen von Volkssagen fanden schnell ihren Weg in die Zeitungen und Zeitschriften, Gedichtbänden und Anthologien. In der zwischen 1836 und 1837 erschienenen Literaturzeitschrift „Der Refraktor“ finden sich bereits mehrere Nachdichtungen estnischer und lettischer Sagen. Das Gedicht von Friedrich Georg Glasenapp (1799–1858) *Die lettische Mutter* ist ein Klagelied, eine Mahnung der Mutter an ihre Tochter, an den tradierten Sitten festzuhalten, um dem bösen Schicksal der Mutter zu entgehen. Das von einem anonymen Verfasser stammende Gedicht *Die Elftochter. Eine estnische Sage* (Refraktor 1836: 261–262) ist eine Adaption der estnischen Sage von der Brautwerbung der Jungfrau Salme. Kreutzwald behandelt sie im ersten Gesang des *Kalevipoeg*. In unserer Ballade geht es um einen Hirten, der auf der Weide ein Kind findet und es aufzieht, bis es zu einer Jungfrau „göttlicher Abstammung“ aufgewachsen ist. Von ihren drei Freiern, Sonne, Mond und Stern, wählt sie den letzten. In der moralisierenden Schlussstrophe heißt es:

Nun winkt uns jeden Abend
Die Maid im Hesperus!
Aus Lucifer, erlabend,
Beut sie den Morgengruß.
Doch, Jüngling! Schau nicht weiter
Nach ihrem Zauberbild!
Dein freies Herz, so heiter,
Wird sonst von Lieb' erfüllt.

Abgesehen von den früheren wort- und formtreuen Nachdichtungen estnischer Volkslieder, handelt es sich hierbei wohl um die erste nach

den Motiven einer estnischen Sage verfasste deutschbaltische Ballade. Das Gedicht ist mit folgender Anmerkung des Herausgebers versehen: „Aehnliche Beiträge zur Kenntniß der ehstnischen Nationalpoesie, wie wir Hupeln und Herdern schon einige, wenn auch leider sehr wenige, verdanken, werden mit größtem Danke auch in Zukunft angenommen werden. Besonders erwünscht zur Kenntniß derselben wäre es jedoch wol, wenn solche Nationallieder uns, so viel möglich, ganz treu wiedergeben würden.“ (Refraktor, Nr. 33, 1836: 261). Tatsächlich finden wir schon im übernächsten Heft (Nr. 37) eine weitere Ballade, die sich als „Esthnische Volkssage“ ausgibt: *Die Räuberhöhle bei Tischert. Esthnische Volkssage* (Refraktor, Nr. 37, 1836: 277–279) des Estländers Roman von Budberg-Boenninghausen. Das Gedicht wurde vom Autor auf 1832 datiert und erschien später in seiner Gedichtsammlung *Erste Lieder* (Reval 1838).

Hier geht es um den Räuberhäuptling Alf den Wilden, dessen geliebte und engelschöne Tochter Adda sich in den Gefangenen Adolar verliebt. Nachdem der Vater von der Zuneigung der beiden erfährt, stößt er den Jüngling von einer Klippe ins Meer, woraufhin sich auch Adda in die Wellen stürzt. Als Strafe der Natur werden Klippe samt Räuber von einem Blitzschlag zunichte gemacht, und doch:

Nächtlich streift durch die Gefilde
 Eine dunkele Gestalt,
 Und das Volk sagt, Alf der Wilde,
 Sei's, der ohne Ruhe wallt.

Die dritte nach einer estnischen Sage verfasste Ballade des „Refraktors“ stammt von Karl von Borg und trägt den Titel *Junker Heins. Zum Theil nach einer Ehstnischen Volkssage* (Refraktor, No 37, 1837: 293–294):

Vernahmt ihr die Mähre vom Junker Heins,
 wie den Teufel er heimgeschicket?
 Ein arger Geselle war Junker Heins!
 In der Gegend gab es der Mädchen keins,
 Das er nicht getauscht und berücket!

Der schlaue Junker konnte selbst den Teufel täuschen, der ihn wegen seinen Sünden in Gestalt eines Herrn mit Pferdefuß, stattlichem Horn und schwarz wie Ruß holen kam, indem er ihm anbot, voranzugehen

und mit dem linken Fuß das Höllentor zuschlug. Durch seine Buße war er zudem für immer dem Teufel entrückt.

In der Zeitschrift "Das Inland" (1836–1863) kommt die baltische ortsgeschichtliche Ballade zu ihrer Blüte. Hier veröffentlichten Heinrich Blindner (eigentlich K.H. von Busse), O. Dreistern, Eduard Pabst, Minna von Mädler (1804–1891), Theodor Rutenberg, Robert Falck, P. Otto u. a. ihre Sagen. 1845 erscheint das nach einer Sage von Robert Faehlmann verfasste Gedicht „Koit und Hämarik. (Morgenroth und Abendroth)“ von Minna von Mädler – es ist fünf Jahre älter als Fr. R. Kreuzwalds estnischsprachige Ballade „Koit ja Hämarik“ aus dem Jahr 1850. Zwischen 1831 und 1836 erschienen auch deutschsprachige Balladen von Friedrich Reinhold Kreuzwald, von denen „Die Belagerung von Bewerin im Jahre 1207“ 1846 im *Inland* gedruckt wird (1846, H. 22 S. 529).

Das Jahr 1846 kann als „Balladenjahr“ der Zeitschrift bezeichnet werden und fand seinen Auftakt im oben zitierten Gedicht *Die Sage in Livland* von K.H. von Busse. Im gleichen Jahr erscheinen weiterhin *Das Begräbnis zu Hapsal* von H. Blindner (K.H. Busse), die nach einer lettischen Sage verfasste Ballade *Sternschnuppe* von Minna von Mädler, *Die Macht der Töne* von P. Otto, *Reiter* von Eduard Pabst, *Der Blauburg*, *Die Gründung Wolmars*, *Des Ermordeten Fluch*, *Das Begräbnis bei Riga*, *Das Kreuz auf dem Grabe* von O. Dreistern, *Das versteinerte Brautpaar* von einem anonymen Autor u. a.

Weiterhin erscheint 1846 in Tartu die Anthologie *Balladen und Lieder*, die Gedichte von Jegór von Sivers (1823–1879), Reinhold Schellbach (1825–1857), Konstantin Theodor Glitzsch (1820–1883), Andreas Wittorf (1813–1886) und Karl Walfried von Stern (1819–1874) enthält. Unter den vielen Heimatgedichten und balladesken Bearbeitungen der norddeutschen Sagen finden sich hier auch sieben ortsgeschichtliche Balladen, von denen drei auf der Chronik Balthasar Russows basieren (*Das Prachtgewand*, *Die Schlacht auf dem Peipus* und *Die Jungfrau Maria als Beschützerin von Livland* von Jegór von Sivers) und drei weitere Bearbeitungen estnischer Volks-sagen sind (*Der Alp* von Reinhold Schellbach, *Wannemunnes erster Sang* und *Wannemunnes letzter Sang* von Jegór von Sivers). (Das Gedicht *Aa und Embach* von Andreas von Wittorf ist wohl der Phantasie des Dichters entsprungen.)

Einen neuen Schwung bekommt die ortsgeschichtliche Ballade um 1900 im Zusammenhang mit dem sich verstärkenden Identitätsbewusstsein der deutschbaltischen Bevölkerungsgruppe. In populären Sagensammlungen wie *Das Livländische Sagenbuch* (Reval 1897) von Friedrich Bienemann jun. (1860–1915) oder *Märchen und Sagen* (Berlin 1916) von August von Löwis of Menar (1881–1930) wird der Versuch unternommen, das estnische, lettische, deutsche und schwedische Sagengut des Landes zu einer Synthese zu bringen. Carl von Stern, der Herausgeber der *Estnischen Volkssagen* (Riga 1935), begründete sein Unternehmen wie folgt: „wir fühlen uns nicht wohl zwischen nüchternen kahlen Wänden... Volkssagen haben es in sich, vertiefend auf Heimatgefühl zu wirken. Darum sind für uns Balten estnische und lettische Volkssagen mehr als ein schöner Wandschmuck...“ (Estnische Volkssagen 1935: 8).

Wer Liebe für seine Heimath hegt,
Auch ihre Sagen im Herzen trägt,

erklärt die estländische Dichterin Hedda von Schmid (1864–1921) ihre Auseinandersetzung mit der Sagenwelt ihrer Heimat in ihrem epischen Gedicht *Am Astijärw. Eine livländische Sage* (Reval 1889). Und die Kurländerin Helene von Engelhardt (1850–1919), die in ihren früheren Bänden vor allem germanische Mythologie bearbeitete, beschäftigte sich in ihrem epischen Gedicht *Beatennacht. Ein Märchengesang aus Kurland* (Reval: Kluge 1900) nunmehr mit der mythischen Landschaft ihrer Heimat. Die ortsgeschichtliche Ballade wird auch von Victor von Andrejanoff (1857–1895), Otto von Schilling (1874–1929), Peter Zoege von Manteuffel (1866–1947), Gustav von Hirschheydt (1854–1934) u. a. gepflegt. In den 1920er Jahren widmet sich zeitgleich mit der estnischen Dichterin Marie Under (1883–1980, siehe Under: 1929) auch die deutschbaltische Dichterin Gertrud von den Brinken (1892–1982) der Ballade.

Anhand der genannten Quellen können wir zwischen zwei Arten der deutschbaltischen ortsgeschichtlichen Ballade unterscheiden:

2.2. Die historische Ballade

Ich grüsse euch im Morgenlichte,
 Ruinen auf den Uferhöhn,
 Der Heimat Sage und Geschichte
 Lasst ihr aus Trümmern auferstehn!
 (Hirschheydt 1934: 41)

Die eigentliche Domäne der deutschbaltischen Ballade ist die historische Sage, die, auf baltischen Chroniken und Familiengeschichten fußend, von Gutshöfen, Kirchen, Schlössern und Ruinen und den hier einst lebenden historischen Personen und ihren Heldentaten berichtet.

Friedrich Bienemann, der Herausgeber des *Livländischen Sagenbuches* (1897), begründet die Vorliebe für die historische Sage im Vergleich zur Natursage unter der deutschen Bevölkerung im Baltikum wie folgt:

Solcher Sagen nur, die irgendwie örtlich, an Seen, Berge, Steine, gebunden sind, /---/ haben ihren Ursprung unmittelbar und ausschließlich in der Tiefe des estnischen und lettischen Volkes, der ursprünglichen Bevölkerung des Landes. Sie entquellen, wie ungebrochene Lichtstrahlen, dem Volksleben, wie es seit uralten Zeiten, Generation auf Generation, mit der umgebenden Natur des heimatlichen Bodens verwachsen ist; in sein Verhältnis zur Natur konnte durch den Wandel der äußeren Geschehnisse des Volks nur wenig oder nichts fremdartiges hemmend, verflüchtigend, auflösend eingreifen. /---/ Daher kommt es, dass unter den Deutschen Livlands, die ja auf fremdem Boden sich erst eine neue Heimat schufen, ohne doch den Zusammenhang mit der alten gänzlich zu verlieren, die Sage verhältnismäßig nur wenig laut wird, und ebenso, daß unter Esten und Letten die eigentlich historische Sage auch eine viel geringere Triebkraft gezeigt hat, als jene andere Gattung, die Lokalsage. (Bienemann 1897: VII–VIII)

Am häufigsten finden sich hier Heldenballaden, die von den heroischen Taten tapferer Ritter erzählen (z. B. Wittorf, *Ritter Klot*,

Schilling, *Herr Torck*), wobei die Ordensmeister, allen voran Wolter von Plettenberg (Pabst, *Herr Walter von Plettenberg*; Busse, *Der Tod Plettenbergs*, Hirschheydt, *Plettenbergs Ende*), das größte Interesse auf sich ziehen. Gustav von Hirscheydt scheint sich auf die Balladisierung des Ordenmeisters geradezu spezialisiert zu haben (*Philipp Schall von Bell*, *Fürstenberg*, *Kaspar von Oldenbockum*, *Wolthuß von Herse*, *Plettenbergs Ende*, *Ruine Tolsburg* u. a.). Neben den Ordensmeistern wird auch das Angedenken an die Erzbischöfe Livlands in den Balladen verewigt (Ungern-Sternberg, *Meinhard*, *der Apostel der Liven*, Andrejanoff, *Bischof Meinhard's Tod*, Hirschheydt, *Bischof Albert*). Der Held mehrerer (lyro-)epischer Dichtungen ist Heinrich Boismann, der im Livländischen Krieg aus Furcht vor Iwan dem Schrecklichen das Schloss Wenden samt allen Verteidigern und Flüchtlingen in die Luft sprengte (Wittorf, *Wenden*, Andrejanoff, *Wenden's Fall. Ein Lied aus Livlands Vergangenheit*, John Siebert, *Wendens Opfertod*). Von den Bürgerlichen zog der tapfere Schreiber Hans Bühring die Aufmerksamkeit der Dichter auf sich: er eroberte die Burg Wenden zurück, indem er als Holzhändler verkleidet in die Burg gelangte, statt eines Holzhaufens aber Krieger mit sich führte (Hirschheydt, *Hans Bühring*; Wittorf, *Hans Bühring*).

Nur selten werden wilde und böse Ritter dargestellt, wie etwa der Verräter Graf Johann von der Bogen (Busse, *Der Graf von Bogen 1563*) oder der mit Humor von Peter Zoege von Manteuffel porträtierte *Ritter Fabian von Jegelecht*, der wegen Verletzung der Stadtrechte im Streit mit dem Revaler Rat lag und auf dem Weg nach Rom, wo er den Papst stürzen wollte, sein Ende fand (Zoege von Manteuffel, *Ritter Fabians Ende*). Von zweifelhaftem Ruhm ist auch der Junker Jörg in der Ballade *Die tanzende Sünde* von Otto von Schilling, der mit einer teuflischen Schönheit direkt in die Hölle tanzt.

Der Livländische Krieg bot reichlich Stoff für Balladen. Die *Livländischen Chronik*, die in der Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts mehrmals, u. a. von Eduard Pabst aufgelegt wurde (Russow 1845 und 1847), hatte großen Einfluss auf die Dichtung. Aber auch die Chronik von Christian Kelch, deren vollständige Ausgabe von Johannes Lossius im Jahre 1875 herausgegeben wurde, sowie die Livländische Chronik Heinrichs von Lettland, deren deutsche Übersetzung um die Mitte des Jahrhunderts gleich zweimal aufgelegt wurde (1857 in Riga, übersetzt von A. Hansen; 1867 in Reval, zum

Anlass der Estländischen literarischen Gesellschaft, in der Übersetzung von Eduard Pabst), wirkten auf die Balladenproduktion ein. Auch finden sich in den Balladen Hinweise auf die Chronik von Thomas Hjörn (Busse, *Der Graf von Bogen*) und die Reimchronik von F. L. Alnpek (Busse, *Des Comthurs Haupt 1245*). Entsprechend den verwendeten Quellen variiert die Haltung der Dichter zu den dargestellten Ereignissen. So etwa ist Otto von Schilling ausgehend von Russows Chronik gegenüber der baltischen Aristokratie kritisch eingestellt. Häufig finden sich bei ihm niederdeutsche Dialoge wie in der Ballade *Bluthochzeit*, eine Erzählung mit der Russow die Leichtsinnigkeit des Livländischen Adels illustriert. Zu dem Hochzeitsfest war der gesamte „Adel von Harrien, Jerwen und Wieck“ zusammengekommen und ließ sich nicht einmal von der Nachricht vom Einfall des Feindes stören, was zu einem blutigen Ende führte.

Die Gegend, in der die deutschbaltische Heldendichtung am häufigsten spielt, ist die so genannte Livländische Schweiz in Nordlettland, das romantische Aa-Tal (Gauja) mit den Schlössern Wenden (Cēsis), Treiden (Turaida), Beverin/Burtneck (Burtnieki), Cremon (Krimulda) und Segewold (Sigulda). Die Vorliebe für dieses Gebiet expliziert das Gedicht *Aa und Embach* von Andreas von Wittorf: im Wettkampf der beiden Flüsse Aa und Embach um das schönste Flussbett gewinnt die rasche und schlanke Aa, während die schwerfällige und träge Embeck (Embach/Emajõgi) verschläft und nur bis zum Wirzjerw-See (Võrtsjärv) kommt.

Der Schloss Wenden mit seiner Belagerung im Livländischen Krieg bildet häufig den Schauplatz lyroepischen Geschehens. Eines der Lieblingsmotive der baltischen Ballade ist die von Heinrich von Lettland erzählte Belagerung von Beverin, in der die anstürmenden Esten mit Hilfe der überwältigenden Macht des Gesanges besiegt wurden. In der Zeitschrift *Das Inland* ist dieses Motiv gleich viermal in Balladenform behandelt worden: zuerst von Fr. R. Kreutzwald (*Belagerung von Beverin*, 1846, geschrieben vermutlich zwischen 1831–1836), von P. Otto (*Die Macht der Töne*, 1846), von Eduard Pabst (*Der Sang von Beverin*, 1852) und von einem anonymen Autor (*Macht des Gesanges oder die Bestürmung der Burg Beverin im J. 1215*, datiert auf 1832). 1851 behandelt das Motiv auch Andreas von Wittorf (*Der Tonkunst Sieg*). Während die Mehrheit der Autoren entsprechend der Chronik christianisierte Letten mit heidnischen Esten konfrontieren, stellt Kreutzwald dem Esten, der den „Heiligen

Boden seiner Ahnen, /seiner Götter Rauchaltäre, /seine Freiheit, Weiber, Kinder" verteidigt, „schulgerechte deutsche Streiter" gegenüber. Im anonymen Gedicht aus dem Jahr 1851 ist es die Stimme eines Mädchens, Gertrud, die den Angriff des „Waldes Sohn" stoppt: in ihrer schönen Stimme erklang die himmlische Macht des Gottes „Wanemuinen". Auch Pabst bringt „Wannemunne" ins Spiel, um den göttlichen Einfluss der Musik auf die Esten zu betonen.

Aussagekräftiger sind jedoch jene Balladen, in denen die Erzählung des historischen Geschehens kein Selbstzweck, sondern der Darstellung menschlicher Tragödien unterordnet ist. Eines der balladesksten Themen ist die verbotene Liebe, für die sich in den Baltischen Chroniken, vor allem bei Russow, genügend Motive findet. Otto von Schilling berichtet von dem Ritter Magnus Torck (*Herr Torck*), dem aufgrund der Verarmung seiner Familie seine Geliebte, die reiche Jungfrau Susanne, verweigert wird. Sein Fluch, die Geliebte trotz allem und sei es im Totenhemd zu sich zu holen, bestimmt den tragischen Lauf des Geschehen. Ein weiteres literarisch erfolgreiches Motiv aus der Chronik von Russow ist das Schicksal der Barbara von Tiesenhausen, die für ihre unstandesgemäße Liebesbeziehung von ihrem Bruder im Eisloch ertränkt wird (Kreutzwald, *Das Fräulein von Borkholm*, 1836, Eduard Pabst, *Der Ritter von Randen und seine arme Schwester*, 1855). Die grausame Geschichte wurde vom kollektiven Gedächtnis tradiert³ und erhält in der Volksüberlieferung einen numinosen Charakter, den beide Autoren in ihren Balladen beibehalten: die Sage soll eine mysteriöse Naturerscheinung, das Flimmern eines Lichtes auf dem nächtlichen Teich bei Kreutzwald oder die Erscheinung eines Frauenbildes aus der Tiefe des Weihers bei Pabst, erklären. (Zur Darstellung des Motivs in der Geschichtsschreibung und seiner künstlerischen Bearbeitung siehe Kreem-Lukas 2008)

Ein weiteres balladeskes Motiv aus der Chronik von Russow ist die Geschichte der Schlossherrin von Ringen, die, an Pracht und Luxus gewöhnt, für ihre Tochter ein prächtiges Kleid anfertigen ließ

³ Russow nennt sogar den Namen der Unglücklichen nicht, also muss die Geschichte auch von der Familiengeschichte weitergeerbt werden und hat sogar zusammen mit der Familie den Ereignisort gewechselt: Kreutzwald verbindet die Geschichte mit Bornholm, Pabst mit Randen, beide sind im Familienbesitz.

(Sivers, *Das Prachtgewand*; Busse, *Das Begräbnis zu Hapsal*, Wittorf, *Festkleid und Todtenhemd*). Sie verpflichtete dazu einen Schneider, der ihr versprach, ein Kleid zu nähen, „dass selbst der Teufel drüber / aus vollem Halse lacht“ (Sivers in: *Balladen 1846*: 35–37). Das Kleid aber brachte ihr kein Glück:

Arm an Glück und Glückesschein –
 Bettelnd starb sie in der Fremde,
 Und der schlechte schwarze Schrein
 War der Nackten Leichenhemde.
 (Wittorf 1859: 18).

Auch das Gedicht *Aus Alt-Dorpat* von Schilling behandelt ein auf Russow zurückgehendes Motiv, den Kleidungsstreit zwischen Bürgern und Handwerkern: die Bürgersfrauen erregten sich darüber, dass eine „scharmvergeßne Dirne der Bürgerfrauen Kleid“ trug, und ließen ihr die Kleider vom Leibe reißen. Als aber das Mädchen schließlich nackt vor ihnen stand, lasen sie in den Blicken ihrer Ehemänner, wie dumm ihr Tun gewesen ist.

2.3. Estnische Volkssagen als Balladenquelle

O sagumwob'ne Heimatscholle!
 Mein Gottesländchen Märenreich!
 Dort athmet das Geheimnisvolle
 aus Wald und Hein, aus Born und Teich.
 (Engelhardt 1900: 33)

Die zweite Art deutschbaltischer Balladen basiert auf estnischen bzw. lettischen Sagengut und ist in der mysteriösen Sphäre der Naturmagie verankert: *Dort athmet das Geheimnisvolle/ aus Wald und Hein, aus Born und Teich*. Aus Platzgründen konzentrieren wir uns im Weiteren nur auf einige estnische Sagenmotive, die in die deutschbaltischen Balladen Einzug gefunden haben.

Bräutwerbungssagen

Wie bereits dargestellt, war das erste estnische Sagenmotiv, das sich in deutschbaltischen Balladen findet, die Bräutwerbung der Jungfrau Salme, deren Herkunft märchenhaft ist: In der estnischen Sage

schlüpft sie aus einem Hühnerei, ist aber himmlischer Herkunft, im deutschen Gedicht wird sie zu einer Elfentochter germanisiert. Das in der Sammlung *Balladen und Lieder* 1846 gedruckte Gedicht *Der Alp. Ehstnische Sage* von Reinhold Schellbach behandelt eine andere bekannte Sage von der geheimnisvollen Herkunft der Ehefrau. Nachdem der Mann die Herkunft seiner Frau beleuchtet, verschwindet sie und lässt ihren Mann zurück. Das Motiv findet sich auch in der estnischen Ballade *Luupainaja* von Jaan Bergmann aus dem Jahr 1901. In seinem 48. Heft (S. 1146) druckt *Das Inland* 1846 die Sage von der Frau des Rögutaja, einer Hexe, die ihre hässliche Tochter mit Hilfe eines Zaubermittels verheiraten will (hier finden sich Hinweise auf A. Knüpfner und J. Grimm). Gleich nach ihrer Bekanntmachung im „Inland“ verfasst K. H. Busse sein Gedicht *Das Pflegekind des Rögutaja. Nach einer esthnischen Volkssage* (erschieden ebenda, 1847 H.14, S. 305–306, 14 Blg.)

Auf Estnisch findet die Sage in Kreuzwalds *Eesti-Rahva Ennemuistsed jutud ja Vanad laulud* (1860–1865) Verbreitung.

Faehlmansche Mythen

Kennst du wohl des Nordens Nächte?
 Jene wonnevollen Stunden,
 Wenn der Sommer ist erschienen,
 Wenn am fernen Himmelssaume
 Abendrot und Morgenröte
 Liebend sich die Hände reichen,
 In dem Brautkuss sich umfassen?
 (Schroeder 1889: 92–93)

Zum Lieblingsmotiv estnischer Sagen in deutschbaltischen Balladen wird aber das von Fr. R. Faehlmann im Jahre 1844 im dritten Heft der *Verhandlungen der Gelehrten Estnischen Gesellschaft* veröffentlichte Märchen von Koit und Hämarik, Morgen- und Abendröte, die sich als ewiges Brautpaar nur einmal im Hochsommer umarmen und küssen dürfen. Schon im darauf folgenden Jahr (*Das Inland* 1845, H 43 S.741–743) bearbeitet Minna von Mädler das Motiv in ihrem Gedicht *Koit und Ämmarik, Morgenroth und Abendroth*. Im Jahre 1850 legt Fr. R. Kreuzwald die estnischsprachige Ballade *Koit ja Hämarik* vor, wobei er die formalen Mittel des alliterierenden älteren

estnischen Volksliedes (regivärss) verwendet. Denselben Versucht unternimmt auf Deutsch der Dorpater Gelehrte und Dichter Leopold von Schroeder in seinem mehr als 100-zeiligen Gedicht *Koit und Aemmarick. Eine estnische Sage*. Das Motiv findet sich später auch bei Gregor von Glasenapp (*Hemmarik und Koit: Abendrot und Morgenrot*, Glasenapp 1907: 2–3)

Ein weiterer von Faehlmann begründeter Mythos, der die Feder deutschbaltischer Dichter inspirierte, ist der Sagenkreis um den estnischen Sängergott Vanemuine, von dem alle Geschöpfen ihre Singstimme erhielten (Sivers, *Wannemunnes erster Sang, Wannemunnes letzter Sang*, Schroeder, *Wannemuines Sang*).

Die Reckensagen

Obwohl die Sage vom Sohn des Kalew seit der Gründung der Zeitschrift „Das Inland“ und in den Kreisen der Gelehrten Ehstnischen Gesellschaft in aller Munde war (der erste Aufsatz zum Sagenstoff von Gustav Heinrich Schüdlöffel erschien im Jahre 1836 im *Inland*, im Jahre 1839 hielt Fr. R. Faehlmann in der Gesellschaft seinen grundlegenden Vortrag über die Sagen des Kalevipoeg) und ungeachtet der Tatsache zwischen 1857 bis 1861 der Text von Kreutzwald samt deutscher Übersetzung veröffentlicht wurde – gibt es keine deutschsprachige Originaldichtungen über den Sohn des Kalew. Von den estnischen Helden ist „Suur Töll“ von der Insel Ösel/Saaremaa, der seinem Volk Glück und Erfolg sicherte, aber seine Gunst entzog, wenn man ihn aus Neugier in seiner Ruhe störte, der einzige, der sich in der deutschbaltischen Dichtung verewigte (Eduard Pabst *Suremees* 1856).

Die Olaikirche zu Reval

Deutlich größeres Interesse erregte unter den deutschsprachigen Dichtern die Sage vom Baumeister Olaf, der als siebter Baumeister den Turm der Olai-Kirche zwar fertig stellte, jedoch beim Aufstecken des Hahnes in die Tiefe stürzt. Die Sage wird im „Inland“ mehrmals wiedergegeben, zweimal in Prosaform, 1847 von Kreutzwald und 1853 von Georg Julius von Schultz-Bertram, dreimal in Form eines Gedichtes: Georg Julius von Schultz-Bertram, *Der Thurm des Olaus, ein Ehstnischer Runenkreis* (1853, H. 17. S. 433–438), Eduard Pabst *Die Olaikirche zu Reval* (1859, H. 36, S. 503–504) und Andreas von Wittorff, *St Olai. Eine Revaler Sage* (1860,

H.21 S.411–414). Fünfzig Jahre später greift Mia Munier-Wroblewska in ihrem Gedicht *Das Lied von Olaiturm* auf das Motiv zurück (*Rigascher Almanach für 1912*, S. 183–186). Während Andreas von Wittorf sich auf das Gedicht von Schultz-Bertrams stützt, benutzte Munier-Wroblewska Kreuzwald als Vorlage, worauf der Turm als Warnzeichen für fremde Schiffe, die sieben Baumeister, der Versuch, den höchsten Turm der Region zu erbauen und das lachende kleine Männlein im roten Mantel hinweisen.

Die Sage vom versunkenen Gut bzw. Kirche

Dass Seen Orte versunkener Städte oder Bauten sind, ist ein internationales, von der Grimmschen Mythologie her bekanntes Motiv, das sich auch in der estnischen bzw. lettischen Überlieferung findet, wie bereits A.W. Hupel erwähnte. Im Jahre 1838 gibt Kreuzwald im *Inland* die Sage von Blankensee wieder, wobei er auf eine Mitteilung des von Otto Wilhelm Masing herausgegebenen estnischsprachigen Wochenblattes *Marahwa Näddala-Leht* aus dem Jahre 1821 verweist. Im Blankensee sei ein Gut versunken, auf dem vor der Katastrophe eine Hochzeit gefeiert wurde. Kreuzwald verbindet das Motiv mit dem Helmetschen Kirchspiel. In O. Dreisterns Ballade *Die Hochzeit zu Marienburg* wird im Schloss Marienburg ein Geschwisterpaar getraut, das sich die kirchliche Bewilligung dieser „Frevelthat“ für „lauteres Gold“ gekauft hatte. Doch wird diese Tat von den Naturgewalten bestraft:

Unendlicher Regen ergießt sich herab –
 Die Erde eröffnet ein weites Grab –
 Vergebenes Rufen! Die Burg versinkt;
 Der geschändete Boden sie dürstend verschlingt –
 Ein tiefer See nur kündet uns heut
 Wo einst sie gestanden in Herrlichkeit.-

Wandernde Seen

Wandernde Seen, wie sie sich häufig in estnischen und lettischen Sagen finden, kennt die germanische Mythologie nicht. Die erste estnische Ortssage, die internationale Beachtung erlangte, machte Jacob Grimm in seiner *Deutschen Mythologie* im Jahre 1835 unter dem Titel *Der See Eim* bekannt. Der See wandert in ihr an einen

anderen Ort. Schon Hupel berichtet von einer ähnlichen Sage über den Astjärw/Burtneck-See in Livland.

Die estnische und lettische Folklore kennt das Motiv des wandernden Sees in sehr vielen Varianten und verbindet sie mit verschiedenen Seen (siehe Eisen 1920). Der Grund, warum die Seen ihren ursprünglichen Standort verlassen, ist am häufigsten eine Verschmutzung des Wassers oder die moralische Schuld der Menschen.

In der estnischen Literatur verwurzelte sich dieses Motiv mit dem Erscheinen von Kreuzwalds *Eesti-Rahva Ennemuistsed jutud*: in der hier veröffentlichten Erzählung *Der See, der seinen Ort verließ* (*Pai-gast läinud järveke*) verlässt der See sein ursprüngliches Flussbett aus Verdruss über ein falsches Gelöbnis. Das Verschwinden des Sees wird als ein Zeichen der Nichtigkeit des adligen Gelöbnisses gedeutet. Dieses Motiv findet sich auch der estnischen Dichtung von Matthias Johann Eisen (*Walewanne* 1884) und Marie Under (*Rändav järv* 1929).

In der Ballade *Der fliegende See* von Victor von Andrejanoff wird das Motiv mit dem Sepensee in Kurland in Verbindung gebracht. Nur die Hirtenkinder werden von der vernichtenden Überschwemmung aufgrund ihres schönen Gesangs verschont und von einem fremdartigen Greis gewarnt. Das Herannahen des Sees, der auch in den Sagen meistens fliegt, wird vom Dichter in einer sachlich-sinnlichen Vision beschrieben:

Da mit lauten Donnerschlägen
Niederrauscht ein mächt'ger Regen:
Fische, Muscheln, Frösche, Quallen,
Schilf und See gras niederfallen,
Und die Wolke aus der Höh'
Senkt sich nieder, – wird zum See.

Die Dichterin Hedda von Schmid behandelt das Motive in ihrem langen epischen Gedicht *Am Astjärw. Eine livländische Sage* (1889). Hier wird das Leitmotiv in der selbständigen Ballade romantisierend behandelt: eine von ihrem Geliebten verlassene Fee wechselt mit dem See, in dem sie lebt, den Ort des Unglücks:

Mit meinem See entweiche ich zur Stund',
Ich trage ihn hinweg in meinem Schleier;
Von hier, wo Bruch der Treue schnöd' geübt,

Entfliehe ich mit meiner blauen Welle,
 Wo kein Erinn' rungshauch mein Dasein trübt,
 Da breite ich sie aus an schön' rer Stelle!...

Die versunkene Kirchenglocke

Sagen von im See versenkten Kirchenglocken, die auf diese Weise vom Feind gerettet wurden, sind international bekannt und auch im estnischen Volksmund überliefert. Im Jahre 1854 berichtet Eduard Pabst im *Inland* von den versenkten „zerelschen“ (=Sääre, Saaremaa) Kirchenglocken und fügt als Illustration ein Gedicht bei. Andreas von Wittorf verbindet in seiner Ballade *Glocken-See* das Motiv mit dem tief im Wald verborgenen Zarnikau (Zarnikava)-See. Die im Laufe der Zeit vergessene Glocke wird hier von einem Bettler entdeckt, der am Ufer des Sees einschlief und von ihrem Klang aufgeweckt wurde. Nachdem der Gutsherr vom Glockenfund vernimmt und sie dem Bettler nicht gönnen will, flieht die Glocke jedoch „mit zornigem Gell“ in den See und bleibt von nun an unauffindbar. Hedda von Schmid verlegt in ihrem Gedicht *Bei Sternberg in St. Martens* die Geschichte auf die Wieck und berichtet hier von den Glocken der Kirche Klein-Ruhde (Väike-Rõude), die im Fluss, dessen Bett an manchen Stellen grundlos sei, versenkt worden seien.

Zusammenfassung

Die deutschbaltische Ballade wendet sich Ende der 1830er Jahren baltischen Motiven zu und fußt dabei auf zwei Quellen, anhand derer wir zwei Arten deutschbaltischer ortsgeschichtlicher Ballade unterscheiden können:

- 1) Die historische Ballade schöpft ihre Motive aus den baltischen Chroniken. Die erzählten Ereignisse sind vom Autor datiert oder von den Lesern datierbar. Der historische Stoff steht im Vordergrund. Die Gestaltung historischer Gegebenheiten ist verknüpft mit einer aktuellen politischen Tendenz: die Erinnerung an historische Heldentaten soll Verständnis für die gegenwartsituation wecken. Die Vorkommnisse, die das Schicksal der Helden bestimmen, sind rational erklärbar. Selten sind überirdische Kräfte im Spiel.

- 2) Die zweite Art schöpft aus der estnischen bzw. lettischen Volksüberlieferung und weist einen numinosen Charakter auf. Oft liegt ihr eine ätiologische Sage über die Entstehung eines See, einer Burg, einer Naturerscheinung etc. zugrunde. Hier befinden wir uns in einer vorgeschichtlichen, mythischen Welt, die meistens zeit- und nicht selten auch ortlos ist. Beliebte Quellen sind Märchen oder Erklärungssagen mit ihren jeweiligen zeitgenössischen Redaktionen, wobei sich mythische Elemente mit Motiven der schriftlich fixierten Geschichtserzählung der Chroniken und entlehnten internationalen Sagenmotiven mischen.

Während gegen Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts die zweite Art beliebt ist, gewinnt um 1900, getragen von politischen Strömungen, die zweite Art an Dominanz.

Ein Vergleich mit estnischsprachigen ortsgeschichtlichen Balladen, auf den hier nicht eingegangen werden konnte, ist interessant und ein Thema weiterführender Behandlungen.

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About the Boundary/Boundaries of Estonian Culture

REIN VEIDEMANN

Yuri Lotman – the founder of cultural semiotics – opens his intellectual testament *Culture and Explosion* with the following recognition: “The main question in any semiotic system is firstly its own relation to the exterior cross-border world, and secondly the relationship between the static and the dynamic. The last issue may be worded also as follows: how can a system develop and retain its identity at the same time?” (Lotman 2001: 9).

Yuri Lotman discloses his response in “semiosphere” – a term introduced by him, which is briefly paraphrased by the theoretician of culture Mikhail Lotman in the epilogue to his father's book as follows:

Like texts, which require environment to be created into and which is permanently (re)created by the former, also cultures are in need of such an environment. For a text such an environment is culture, for culture it is the semiosphere. The latter being an even more paradoxical phenomenon than text and culture, because from the aspect of semiotics nothing more substantial or ultimate exists, it is the beginning and the end, cause and result of itself. The constituents of the semiosphere do not include time and causality; semiotic space is not created by mechanisms intrinsic to the physical world, but mechanisms characteristic of the sign system. Primarily it is communication and interpretation. (Lotman, M. 2001: 225–226).

Yuri Lotman's handling of boundaries stands out for its ambivalence: boundaries as an imminent structure (Lotman 1990: 282) do not differentiate one phenomenon from an alternative, do not only limit, but also carry and model information. It means that differentiation also brings forward universality; antitheticity is a specific form of universality.

Proceeding from here, Lotman reaches the main thesis: boundary is like a bilingual mechanism and semiosphere is like an entanglement of boundaries (Lotman 1999: 14–17). However, this labyrinth has its dimension of completeness and the boundary in its profound essence continually manifests movement – “the limitlessness” (Veidemann 2008: 810).¹

The following is to confer upon the fact that the discussion about the boundary/boundaries of Estonian culture on the one hand is an appropriate example to demonstrate the applicability of the cultural-semiotic research paradigm. On the other hand, I will try to confirm the hypothesis of the total bounding character of Estonian culture. I shall define culture – as is common in cultural semiotics – as communication (the exchange, saving and creation of valuable messages) and a set and network of texts (i.e. of any meaningful wholeness, “semiotic monads”). As a matter of fact, geography – *conditio sine qua non* – has had a major impact on the essence of the Estonian culture.

From a cultural-semiotic aspect, cultural “space is the context for primary and secondary modelling systems, but also the substrate of these systems” (Randviir 2002: 143). Generally, any culture together with its carriers is confined to a territory. Through this fact, the aspiration to possess and mark a territory, which enables to preserve the identity, becomes understandable (Jürgenson 2006). The reason is that identity is a process in itself, “which at the same time occurs in individual consciousness and in the cultural centre of a group” (Ruutsoo 1999: 181). On the one hand individual and collective

¹ The three functions of the above-mentioned boundary in Lotman's semiotics the internalising-closing, uniting-interpreting function and the function of the creation of meaning have been thoroughly analysed by Daniele Monticelli in his doctor's theses “Wholeness and its remainders: theoretical procedures of totalization and detotalization in semiotics, philosophy and politics” (Monticelli 2008: 191–210).

identity are characterised by uniqueness, and on the other hand by an endeavour to be a part of something. The aspiration and craving do not concern only the whole territory but also the different meanings of sectors and spheres. In the case of the latter, several sub-cultures are formed within the boundaries of one culture. Anywhere where “common rules of behaviour and comprehensible symbols are effective, boundaries of different size may function”.

Boundaries, however, depend on which category of the outer circle the partner or stranger belongs to. (Jürgenson 2006). Or in other words, the cultural identity of a nation and community inhabiting the territory is connected to the markers of physical (*resp* geographical) space and their relation to narratives (legends, reminiscences, sacralised history and symbols, which function as intensifying magic formulas) (Dovey 1985: 42). When the legends work no longer, the “last story dies” (Palang, Paal 2002: 108) and then the cultural landscape (*resp* – space) loses its importance and the geographical factor does not play any more role in the creation of identity.

During the Soviet time there was a popular song the refrain of which reads as follows (in English): “My address is not a house or a street, my address is the Soviet Union” – this is a good example of an empty marker of the Soviet culture. It was an inappropriate, indeterminate conglomerate.

Estonian culture is extraordinary due to its specific meaning – *topos*, being focussed on a definitely structured (specified) and coherent space (Undusk, R. 2001: 17). The concentration, on the one hand, may proceed from the fact that figuratively, from the aspect of world history, Estonian culture was formed in the process of contraction and consolidation. Namely, in the foundation story of the proto-ethnoses. Interdisciplinary (language history, archaeological, paleodemographic and genetic) research has indicated that the “original home” of the Finno-Ugrian peoples, to whom Estonians belong as a branch of the Baltic-Finnish group, was initially in the Dnepr-Don refugium during the Ice Age, from where, after the ice retreated about 10,000–8,000 years BC, they spread to Northern Europe and the Urals (Wiik 2005: 325–332, Villems 2001: 30).

The ancestors of Estonians (Finno-Ugrian peoples) are considered to be among the oldest in Europe. According to the maternal genetic strain they were “predominantly the Europeans of the pre-Ice

Age“ (Villems/Künnap 2000: 516). From the aspect of race divergence, the Finno-Ugrian peoples, including Estonians, represent a very old (or the oldest) branch (Heapost 2000: 514). The Fenno-Baltic migration to the present area evidently took place during the first millennium AD (Wiik 2005: 386).

On the other hand, Estonians being focussed on cultural space is evidently due to the fact that they have lived in one location for a very long time. Taking into account archaeological evidence and theories, the first permanent human settlements on the territory of Estonia (the Pulli settlement) date back to 8,000 years BC (Jaaniits, Laul, Lõugas, Tõnisson 1982: 33). The so-called archaeological culture started to develop a more systematic (i.e. comparable to other regions) image since the Stone Age from 6,500 BC (the Kunda culture) and specifically since 2,000 BC in connection with the so-called boat-shaped axes culture (Uustalu 2005: 24). The beginning of agriculture, which triggered the formation of peasantry – the main carrier of Estonian culture, is dated to the turn of the millennium (about 500 BC – 500 AD). Ancient fields, identified thanks to archaeological finds, date back to 1st – 2nd century AD (History of Estonian Peasantry 1992: 69). The agricultural-cultural landscape was formed in the 11th – 13th century (History of Estonian Peasantry 1992: 96), i.e. at the end of the prehistoric period, which coincided with the invasion of German crusaders of the Estonian territory and the spread of Christianity.

As a matter of fact, the corresponding loanwords in Estonian such as *raamat*, *rist*, *pagan*, *papp* (book, the Cross, pagan, parson) suggest that Estonians had their first contacts with Christianity via the Slavonic languages (Ross 1999: 20). Before that period the ancestors of Estonian, Latvian and Finnish people retained a kind of animistic interspace, which prevented the spread of Christianity for several centuries, as it has been assumed that from the south no missionaries, whom the people would have understood, could have come (Taagepera 2000: 67; 2009). The result was that Christianity reached the territory of Estonia and became rooted after foreign invasions.

The third factor that has had an impact on the focus of space in the cultural consciousness of the Estonians is the location of the territory that remained on the edge of civilisations. The creation of the Estonian cultural space was influenced by the expansion of western Christianity in the east in the 11th–13th century, defining also the

periphery of Europe.^{2**} At that time semiotic processes commenced (interpretation, adaptation and the creation of new meanings) and in accordance with the corresponding principle of cultural semiotics, spread quicker than in the ecumenical centre, i.e. Europe (Lotman, J. 1999: 16).

In fact, the relationship of the centre and the periphery, as described by Yuri Lotman in his article "About Semiosphere", in which the periphery is attributed with the capacity of conquering the cultural centre (Lotman, J. 1999: 17), cannot be observed in Estonia. The dominance of other cultural spaces (early medieval Latin-European and Germany 1227–1561, Germany and Sweden 1561–1710, Germany and Russia 1710–1918, Russia (The Soviet Union) 1940–1991) (Vihalemm 1997: 133) on the Estonian territory left enough room for the independent development of peasant culture. No colonizing big power resettled its peasants in this region. Russian territories east of Estonia lacked the corresponding human recourses, as the area was sparsely populated and the infiltration of German peasants was evidently hindered by the sea (Taagepera 2009).

The attractive cultural centres were Tartu, where in 1632 one of the oldest North-European universities was founded, and Tallinn, which had become an influential Hanseatic town already in the early Middle Ages. In the first decades of the 19th century new centres were added: Pärnu (where the local Baltic-German parson and man of letters J. H. Rosenplänter published the first magazine *Beiträge* which was devoted to the research of the Estonian language and literature and where the Estonian parson J. V. Jannsen edited the first newspaper *Perno Postimees* from 1857) and Viljandi as another major coordination centre of the 19th century national movement

² From the aspect of European historical writing periphericity as a fact can be proved by Joan Thomson's book "The Achievements of Western Civilization. A Historical Outline" published in 1964. (Estonian translation in 1996), which does not contain any reference to the invasion of the eastern territories of the Baltic Sea by German crusaders in the 13th century. In comparison to the numerous crusades directed mainly to the Far East, the invasion of Livonia and Estonia, initiated by Germans from Riga in 1200, had a more diffident nature, but denoted a major revolutionary and irreversible cultural-historical change for the indigenous people inhabiting the territory before the invasion.

besides Tartu. Towns, manors, churches and the network of people's schools, which started to develop in the second half of the 17th century thanks to Bengt Forselius, formed the first infrastructure of cultural space. Naturally one may ask how could towns, manors and churches play an important role in the creation of Estonian cultural space because their main inhabitants were of German origin and spoke mainly German. However, the numerical balance of culture carriers for the occurrence of reciprocal communication, the acceptance of impact and transmission is not always required. Motivation, example and practical adaptability are more important factors.

The so-called genuine cultural core of the Estonian peasantry – animism and the farm as the “centre of the universe” – was powerful enough to retain the main identity. The most characteristic features of the Estonian peasantry are considered to be the folk beliefs, the runic verse of the folk song and the barnhouse (Viies 1998: 658). For another three hundred years after the enforced acceptance of Christianity, people had still preserved their animistic beliefs (Andresen 2003: 15). Therefore it may be said that Estonian culture in its spatial aspect constituted a stable, self-absorbed unity between different semioses (western and eastern Christianity), and on the other hand it denoted the expansion of interior boundaries via every possible contact.

The identity of Estonian culture – that something that can be called *Estonian* culture – is primarily discovered in transitivity, in the manifestation of crossing the boundaries and limits that differentiate the centre from the periphery.

The history of Estonian culture provides several examples of “crossing the boundary” that have determined its culture. The first invasion of European space upon the indigenous settlement areas of the Estonian, Livonian and Latvian people at the beginning of the 13th century, which has been described as both a story of colonisation and later as self-colonisation of these peoples (e.g. Hennoste 2003: 303–314, 2008: 262–275), proved to be pivotal in the form of sacral literature within in the creation of Estonian literary culture in the first half of the 16th century. It had a considerable German flavour (Hennoste 1997: 51–52, Paul 1999: 291), but also revealed existing boundaries of the Estonian cultural space, the North

Estonian and the South Estonian-language culture.³ The cultural differences of North and South Estonia are not confined only to different dialects but also concern mentality and behaviour. According to contemporary research, the behaviour of people in South Estonia is characterised as more collectivistic than that of the people living in North Estonia. People in South Estonia have a bigger distance from power: the employer is more accountable for a work assignment than the employee. People in South Estonia endure instability better; they are more tolerant towards divergence and can put up with reforms more easily. People in South Estonia are characterised by a more feminine attitude in general. They appreciate caring for each other more than the people in North Estonia, who rather focus on development and success (Soiver 2006).

At the beginning of the 17th century, it seemed that the language of South Estonia still possessed the potential of retaining an equal position as a communication system and a standardised language. In 1686 New Testament was published in the South Estonian dialect, together with the ABC book in the North Estonian dialect in 1694. Bengt Forselius published also an ABC book in the South Estonian dialect in 1698. Then the publishing of the complete Bible in 1739, which has metaphorical been described as the appearance of the first independent manifest of the Estonian language, concluded the issue of the linguistic-cultural centre in favour of North Estonia. The language of North Estonia forged ahead. At the beginning of the 19th century, outstanding Baltic German estophiles O. W. Masing and J. H. Rosenplänter started to propagate the language of North Estonia as the basis for written Estonian culture. The "border conflict" of the two main dialects even developed into a verbal "language war" on

³ This kind of distribution supported the subordination of Estonian peasant to different big powers: until the middle of the 14th century, Danes ruled North Estonia. As a part of Old Livonia, South Estonia was in the centre of the fight between Germany, Russia, Sweden, Poland-Lithuania. As the result of the Livonian War (1558–1583) Estonia was divided between three neighbouring countries: North Estonia was united with Sweden, South Estonia or North Livonia belonged to Poland and Saaremaa to Denmark. Estonians were comprised into one entity only at the beginning of the Swedish time in 1629. Division into North and South Estonia is justified from the aspect of terrain and ecology: Low- and High-Estonia (Kant 2007: 77)

the pages of the magazine *Beiträge* (Laanekask 1993: 54–61). At the height of the national movement in 1860–1880, when the main ideologues belonged to the first generation of Estonian intellectuals, the dialect of North Estonia attained the status of the national language (Raag 2008: 59).

However, that did not denote the extinction of the South Estonian dialect. A certain part of literature was still published in this dialect, retaining not only the regional but also the poetic idiosyncrasy. The beginning of the 21st century witnessed an attempt to raise the status of the Võru language – the dominating dialect of South Estonia. Textbooks and literature are being published; Võru Institute is in charge of the research of the Võru language and culture. Another major dialect of the South Estonian language – the Mulgi dialect – is restoring its position as a regional language. For the purpose even the Institute of Mulgi Culture has been created. Among regional sub-cultures, we may point out linguistic-cultural enclaves in the Estonian cultural space such as Setomaa located in the farthest south-eastern corner of Estonia just next to Russia, the settlements of Estonian Swedes living on the coast, colonies of the Old Russian Believers on the western bank of Lake Peipus, and the island of Kihnu. If the formation of colonies of the Estonian Swedes and Old Believers was primarily determined by the historical factor (Estonian Swedes or *Eibofolke* lived on the north-western coast of Estonia and on the islands already in the 13th century, Old Believers migrated from Central Russia to the western banks of Lake Peipus in order to escape religious persecution at the turn of the 17th – 18th century), then in the case of the Seto and Kihnu cultural enclaves the main factor has been their isolation. The above-mentioned facts support the statement that the formation of Estonian culture is heterogeneous and has retained the network of its internal boundaries up to the present day.

However, the main boundary is still the one between the Baltic German (resp European) and Estonian culture. The observed transitivity has been mutual, which has lately given grounds for regarding the Baltic German literature as a common branch of Estonian (and Latvian) literature (Undusk 2008: 95). Previously, the two space slides proceeding from the centre of Europe and having a major impact on the establishment of the boundaries of the Estonian culture – the wave of conquests in the 13th century and the

reformation in the 16th century – have been referred to. In itself it constituted a cultural dilemma for the developing Baltic German cultural identity, which cast a shadow on the Baltic German history until its very end in 1939. Is it a part of German culture or rather an independent German culture in the Baltic? Both – the unity with Germany and the independence of the Baltic are considered relevant (Undusk 2008: 96). Writing in different genres served the purpose of recreating the Baltic German identity over and over again, whereby the identity in the aspect of history was justified (Lukas 2006: 487). The 19th century marks a profound relocation of boundaries between the Baltic German and the Estonian (peasant) culture. The impact of French Enlightenment enabled the Estonian country people to enter the Baltic German cultural consciousness as the exotic “other”. This denoted the collapse of the earlier “alien”-paradigm, according to which an Estonian country man was as an object and the Baltic Germans were observed as “a community of invincible border guards” (Undusk 2002: 1367). The Baltic German estophile became the midwife of the Estonian national culture (Jansen 2004: 412). Via the distribution mechanisms of written culture like books, early newspapers and the network of folk schools the new interpretation of what it meant to be an Estonian spread among the country people, having a certain impact on the formation of the Estonian national identity (Jansen 2004: 422). The proper name of the nation – Estonians – was first used by Fr. R. Faehlmann, a doctor and a man of letters, in his fictitious folk legend “Keelte keetmine” (Cooking languages) written in German and published in 1840, in which the Estonian nation is given the honour to be the first nation chosen by God to speak His language. The substitution of the former term “country people” by the name of the nation “Estonians” seems to date back to the middle of the 19th century. In the first newspaper *Perno Postimees*, published in the Estonian language in the summer of 1857, the editor J. V. Jannsen addressed the readers in his opening article: “Armas eesti rahvas!” (Dear Estonians!).

The opening of the Baltic German cultural consciousness to the developing Estonian national culture marked several consecutive challenges to “cross the boundary”. Practically the whole cultural system (societies, form of press, arrangement of churches, including the tradition of choir music) was taken over from the Germans and applied in the development of the Estonian national culture (inter-

preted in the context of high culture at the time). Moreover, in the first patriotic speech the indigenous Estonian enlightener Carl Robert Jakobson made in the “Vanemuine” Society in 1868, the culture of pre-historic Estonia was elevated to the same level with the ancient Greek culture. The tempestuous breakthrough of the cultural movement “Noor-Eesti” (Young Estonia) at the beginning of the 20th century marked the shift of boundaries right into the (cultural) heart of Europe. In the first decades of the 20th century the Estonian high culture (literature, art, music, theatre) underwent changes, which in case of bigger nations had taken a century or longer and in which the relation to “crossing the boundaries” did not mean copying. Anything supporting the identity on the one hand and the enhancement of individual idiosyncrasy on the other was borrowed, accepted and adapted (Jansen 2004: 426).

In the middle of the 20th century Estonia culture encountered an obligatory crossing of the boundary. As a result of the occupation by the Soviet Union, followed by colonisation, many Estonians belonging to the cultural elite emigrated to the west in 1944. Figuratively speaking it was like the removal of the heart from the body (Estonian culture). Although, in 1944–1955 the culture of Soviet Estonia in relation to the Estonian culture in exile was marked as periphery (for example, in exile the number of original novels published was five times bigger, and the number of memoirs even nine times bigger than in Soviet Estonia) (Valmas 2003: 168), it was still possible to retain intellectual concentration – *genius loci* – in this periphery, which led the Estonian culture to a new rise in the second half of the 20th century. The fading of the exiled Estonian culture at the end of 1980s, when Estonia step-by-step was heading towards breaking away from the Soviet empire (the independent Estonian state was re-established on August 20, 1991) proves the inseparable connection of the Estonian cultural identity with the spatial identity. All “crossings of the boundaries” can only be mental and applied to facilitate the vitality of the existing cultural space. Or using the words of Piret Kruuspere – the editor of the history of Estonian literature in exile and the author of the introduction: “In the identity of being in exile, from the aspect of self-defence, it was important to know that Estonia created in the spirit of Estonia existed and could not be taken away from them.” (Kruuspere 2008: 18).

The expressed idea may be expanded to understand Estonian culture as a whole. As a transition zone or border land between two civilisations, Estonian culture has managed to establish itself as ESTONIAN culture only due to the fact that it has been able to sublimate different boundaries into its own consciousness of boundariness. It is not possible to take away boundaries from the one who is constantly on the border, whose nature – *conditio sine qua non* – is being the boundary. I hold the opinion that it enables us to talk about Estonian culture as an extraordinary existential phenomenon.

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Anti-futurism of the Young Estonia Literary Movement

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First of all I would like to point out that the notion of futurism (or, to be precise, anti-futurism) in the title does not refer to the determined cultural phenomenon as such, which emerged in Italy and Russia before World War I, but instead to some of its characteristic aspects. These include its orientation towards the future and an essential connection with contemporary urban culture, industry and technology. In art and literature, as well as in the activity of futurists, futurism occasionally acquired rather weird forms, which attracted attention and rebuffed, and thus the harmonious relationship between high culture and technology has often been neglected.

The function of easing the opposition between industrial production and individual creative work is at the same time quite unique. The 19th century realism did notice and depicted the emerging industrial urban culture, but only in a critical key. Neo-realism, Jugendstil and symbolism that followed realism distanced themselves from the topic. Futurists discredited themselves to a great extent by extolling the war. Connection with contemporary industrial urban culture was restored only in the 1920s – in the development of design, functionalism etc – and then in the 1960s.

The initiators of the Young Estonia movement who desired cultural and social innovations were secondary school pupils. The main location was Tartu with its secret pupils' clubs. The young people became active in the tense atmosphere preceding the 1905 revolution in Russia also in other places around Estonia. Still, at first it was Tartu where the ideas and subsequent publications of the Young

Estonia developed. The first Young Estonia album appeared in July 1905; due to the abolishing of censorship, the collection *Võitluse päivil* (*In the Days of Battle*) came out the same autumn. The second album was published in 1907 and the third in 1909. This period could be called the time when the Young Estonia ideas matured. The current paper is based on the writings of five people who are firmly associated with the Young Estonia from its very beginning: the poet and critic Gustav Suits as the author of programmatic texts; the novelist and critic Friedebert Tuglas; the linguist Johannes Aavik; the poet and linguist Villem Grünthal-Ridala, Bernhard Linde who was active in many cultural areas, and one of the younger members, the writer and critic Johannes Semper.

The Young Estonia movement naturally withdrew on phenomena such as factories, technology and industry. The Young Estonia nevertheless had a clear dimension and mission directed towards the future: to be the creator of the new Estonian culture. The Young Estonia survives in the cultural memory as an innovator, an instigator of something new, including establishing urban culture.

What we have here is if not an opposition, then certainly an absence of something. The current paper attempts to examine this absence/lack by means of a few sensitive elements or symptoms. This is not to suggest that I wish to abandon or reject the mood of innovation associated with the Young Estonia. Rather, I try to supplement the usual innovation-focused middle ground with some side-nuances, point out the inevitable counter-currents in the bottom layers of the mainstream.

1. The new and the denial

The rhetoric of the new and the future features strongly in the Young Estonia's leading articles, the contemporary and later reception of the movement. "It has been said, with full justification, that this period is the time of transition and rebirth" (Suits 1905a: 5) and "We perceive how our young people are looking for ideals – their path to the future" (ib. 6), confirms the introduction to the first album. The very first sentence claims: "The aim of the new magazine Young Estonia is to promote the trends of modern culture in Estonia in order to create new personal and social values of life." (Suits

1910: 2, my emphases – V. S.) The aim, therefore, is the new, with the more immediate task of conveying, translating and learning the new. Rebirth and orientation towards the future must inevitably cast aside and leave something behind. The Young Estonia members acknowledged only chosen ‘fragments’ from the strictly preceding or more distant history of Estonian culture (Juhan Liiv, Kristjan Jaak Peterson). These fragments had to produce a suitable background to innovations, to confirm and support them, rather than refer to the natural continuity with what came before. As a negative aspect, the Young Estonia cleansed and annulled the preceding history of literature, levelling the traces of possible history and promoting only very little of it. This was mostly achieved through the rhetoric in the programmatic articles, later by overviews of literature written by the Young Estonians themselves.

This aspiration has a clear reason: “In no other field are our people lagging behind the European intellectual movement as in literature and art. How many works of literature do we have that rise to the standard of educated taste and requirements of art? /---/ – and as for our art, there was no reason to talk about it at all until now.” (Suits 1905a: 18)

Thus – literature possessed some pre-Young Estonia history, whereas art did not, although Estonian art history had Johann Köler, August Weizenberg, Karl Ludwig Maibach and Amandus Adamson, who enjoyed considerably greater international success than the Young Estonians or the artists connected with them. The non-existence of Estonian art was the conviction of Gustav Suits,¹ one of the leading members of the Young Estonia group. The reason was not the absence of artists but the absence of art life. The Young Estonia period indeed contains a unique experience in Estonian art history, i.e. perceiving the contemporary era as the birth of art, as a zero point. There are references to the first, second and third

¹ Suits expresses this idea already in his school-time article “‘Figurative Art’ in Estonia and the pictures of Kalevipoeg” (Suits 1903), and his letter to Johannes Aavik says: “A visit to an Estonian artist’s studio – it sounds so weird and incredible, but is nevertheless true. Laipman is a bigger artist than I had expected...” (6 August 1904, see Suits 1969: 558).

Estonian art exhibition,² the first exhibition catalogue, the first exhibition reviews. The 'first' thus confirms and amplifies the lack of the previous.³

Although the Young Estonia texts contain plenty of rhetoric about the new, the future and the relevant youth and change, the ideal of the future is not quite clearly outlined. Besides, the yearning for the new of the Young Estonians themselves does not rely on the simple conviction that the new is essentially better than the old. Emphasising the new – youth – future often indeed seems to grow out of the desire to criticise the old at any cost. Stress is laid on transition, struggle and its expectation, rather than the more precise construction of the possible ideal. A more lucid orientation towards the future and an urge to create the new is represented by another central Young Estonian, Johannes Aavik. He demanded radical innovation of the language, the "future Estonian language", the new, educated class, a new type of texts and a new style. In fact Aavik goes quite far, as new texts, style and people cannot emerge without an appropriate language:

And thus we forge and build a new form for ourselves, richer, more flexible, prettier and more original, which alone is worthy and able to serve the future, classical Estonian literature. /---/ Language must change. Woe to it if it didn't and carried on in its present form! /---/ We have nothing to lose! So far we do not have a single literary work the unreadability of which would suffer because of changed language. (Aavik 1912: 175, 178)

Aavik's radicalism is fanatical: discard the whole existing written culture in the name of a new and better language; turn Estonian into an ideal language, where the words do not merely follow the aesthetic sound principle, but additionally, mimetic relations with the meaning of the words is achieved.

² I – 1906, II – 1909, III – 1910. The term "first" exhibition was officially not used, but it was done by several reviewers (e.g. Hermann 1906; Jürgenstein 1906).

³ Alfred Vaga makes the decisive turn only in 1932, organically including the Middle Ages in the Estonian history of art (Vaga 1932).

2. Town and idyll

The Young Estonia is known as the reviver of urban culture (see e.g. Hallas 1995: 94ff; Kepp 2003: 363; Olesk 2005), or at least a formulator of its ideals (Hennoste 2006a: 25). The Young Estonians themselves are connected with towns in two ways. First by moving from rural areas to towns; a change of residence that was initially connected with school and then university. Mostly, the Young Estonians were first-generation town dwellers and their aspirations to encourage the emergence of the new class, the Estonian intelligentsia, was also connected with towns. Secondly, they desired to leave Estonia for cities abroad. Estonia had no big cities and thus the real urban experience had to be obtained elsewhere. In that sense the semi-forced exile after the 1905 revolution suited the wishes of the Young Estonians really well.⁴

The connections between the Young Estonians' texts – both programmatic and fiction – and towns were more complicated. Usually a few truly revealing writings are pointed out. The most radical of them, almost like a manifesto, is the last part of the essay by Tuglas, “Kirjanduslik stiil” (Literary Style), which unites into a whole the slowly emerging Estonian urban culture, the new language and manner of writing (Tuglas 1912: 95–100).

There are very few earlier references to town and urban culture. In his longer writing “Kaks ilmavaadet” (Two Worldviews, Suits 1906: 37, 46–47) Suits does mention the developing towns, although primarily from the aspect of the developing working classes and the lack of bigger towns in Estonia. Some texts of fiction apart, which however are connected with towns only indirectly, there are no longer discussions on the topic of towns and urbanisation before the fourth Young Estonia album in 1912. The essay of Tuglas, “Eduard Vilde and Ernst Peterson”, and Bernhard Linde's “Noored ja vanad” (The Young and the Old) contain ideas that Estonian people have

⁴ The preferred places were Helsinki (Suits, Aavik, Tuglas, Villem Grünthal-Ridala), Paris (Tuglas), also St Petersburg (Johannes Semper) and Kiev (Johannes Barbarus), other cities were less known. The big-city experience of artists who contributed to the Young Estonia albums (primarily Nikolai Triik, Jaan Koort, Konrad Mägi, Aleksander Tassa) was quite similar: studies in St Petersburg, exile life in Helsinki, Paris, Berlin.

always preferred country to towns (town as a place of sin), but this was now changing (cf. Tuglas 1909; Linde 1910). Realism had found suitable material from the criticism of urban life; realists represented the ideals of small towns and townships. The Estonian nationalists, on the other hand, desired a strong rural culture instead of urban culture. However, through negation, the true opinions of Tuglas and Linde are revealed, or the positive sides of urban life.

In the article "Kirjanduslik stiil", Tuglas finishes the ideas emerging in the writing of Vilde and Peterson:

A new culture is about to be born, with new psychology and understanding of life: it is the urban culture of intelligentsia. Technological success, railway, widespread education, newspapers – all this prevents us from continuing with our previous lives and turns us into world citizens, despite our most ardent patriotism. The towns are growing, they will start living their own intellectual life, assimilating all international influences, accepting the international achievements of science and art, re-melting them and changing ourselves in the process. (Tuglas 1912: 95–96)

As there were no big cities in Estonia, the attitudes regarding urban culture were acquired theoretically, indirectly, via education and literature. Tuglas thus finds it necessary to produce a new text about the development of towns:

Because the flexible, realistic, light and precise prose, which we so urgently need, to a certain extent requires culture that we do not yet have to offer. /---/ These [general cultural traditions] can only be provided by the big assimilator and blender, the big winepress and culture cauldron – the Modern City." (Tuglas 1912: 99)

The cultural winepress, however, is a future road that is still awaiting Estonia, and we can reach it through technological success, as well as a desire for a new type of texts.

In addition to Tuglas's glorification of the emerging urban culture, the 4th album of the Young Estonia (1912) also contained various other urban texts. The most interesting of them was Johannes

Semper's essay "Lüürik ja meie aeg" (The Lyric Poet and Our Time). Tuglas only announces the arrival of urban culture and the relevant new literature, whereas Semper stands right in it, as it were: a big city indeed is 'our time', nature has already been subjected to technology, people have moved to towns. We do not know whether this big, kaleidoscopically changing city, presented almost as a living organism, is actually in Russia, France or even in Estonia. Although our time is not poetry-friendly, a new type of literature has already emerged in towns (Semper 1912: 150ff). As if fed up with extremist antics, Semper ignores the futurists, unanimists, 'scientific' poets (ib. 158). He is instead captivated by Émile Verhaeren's aeroplane-like poems and symbolism (ib. 164).

The visual aspect of the fourth album is also connected with the city, namely Erik Obermann's illustrations. The depicted vamp women, people in cafes and harlequins could only operate in cities. The urban nature of the pictures is further emphasised by Aleksander Tassa's obituary of Obermann. Its attitude and manner fit perfectly with Semper's text: an artist is a "representative of the cultural type in a big city", only the urban crowds, variety and the labyrinth of streets are able to design such "flexibility of brains" (Tassa 1912: 236).

We could thus claim that the Young Estonians managed to properly perceive the urban culture by the year 1912, when they all had already experienced a big city first-hand. However, then and also later, cities appear only in a few prose texts.⁵ In solidarity with Semper we could of course say that symbolism, prose with its own mythology, and neo-romanticism in general are all fruits of urban culture, whether the action is set in the country or in an invented place. On the other hand, it is interesting to see how urban environment had been described in those few texts of fiction.

The first difference from realism is indeed the fact that a city as a place of action is not necessarily depraved and negative and influencing the narrative in that way. The city (and an event taking place there) is presented in three ways.

(1) An idyllic city without factory chimneys, street noise and differences between classes, foul smells and dirt. It is instead a green

⁵ For the absence of urban topics in the Young Estonia poetry, see: Kepp 2003.

suburb with its parks, gardens and cultural temples. This is how J. Randvere (= Johannes Aavik) described the place where his protagonist Ruth lived, somewhere in a university town: "Her flat is not on the fourth or fifth floor of a big house /---/ that was why she chose to live in a small street in the suburbs, in a single-storey house, hidden by ancient trees in an old, semi-abandoned garden /---/." (Aavik 1909: 49–50) Typically of the idyll chronotope the setting does not develop or change (see Bakhtin 1981: 225ff).

(2) A room or rooms, obviously in town. In most cases the reader has no idea what happens outside; the view from the window is not described, only voices can be heard through a wall or from the corridor. It is occasionally mentioned that a character walks in a street, but the reader cannot share his experience of it.

(3) A nameless city, seen from a distance. It is dynamic, changing and pulsating, but the reader sees this through the eyes of the character who is outside the urban environment. Thus the city is seen at a distance, in a valley, in the short story "Oma päikese poole" (Towards One's Own Sun, Tuglas 1905), or through the bars, inaccessible, in "Vabadus ja surm" (Freedom and Death, Tuglas 1915a).

Interim summary

Although the Young Estonia's fiction largely gets its material from nature and land, the town nevertheless finds its place as well. The town in the Young Estonia texts is a nameless, abstract place, an invented location that similarly with the ideology of the 19th century industrial revolution, hypocritically tries to conceal its real, as well as imaginary, faults. However, the Young Estonia characters do not live in the urban environment, they do not perceive the pulse of the city like a flâneur, they do not walk around in the street melee, do not observe, smell or touch the environment with all their senses. The town in the Young Estonia's texts is not associated with narrative, it does not play along or function as a directly perceptible environment. The status of the Young Estonia in establishing urban culture is primarily justified by the change of attitude. The earlier views of the town were criticised, emphasising its evils and frustrations,

whereas the Young Estonia's texts reveal the positive aspects of the town.

Despite the shortage of urban descriptions, we could still say that the 3rd Young Estonia album signified a kind of aesthetic change in the views of Young Estonia, whereas the 4th represents, albeit more covertly, a turn towards the urban. The following 5th album and magazine *Vaba Sõna* (*Free Word*) only confirm that, although mostly in articles and essays, not in fiction.

The Young Estonians create a new idyll chronotope, the examples of which could be an urban flat, a slum house with a garden or summer landscape in full colour. When the idyllic place is in the country, it is a place for summer holidays, and the surrounding village life is observed from a distance (e.g. Tuglas's novel *Felix Ormusson*, 1915), or it is an invented place. A Young Estonia intellectual is an urban intellectual who might enjoy the beauty of nature during the summer holidays in the country, but who would never settle there and advance rural life. Unlike the Baltic Germans or the rural intelligentsia of the previous generation, the activities of the Young Estonia cannot take place in the country. The town-centred way of life of the Young Estonians is indeed what connects them with the emergence of urban culture.

3. Industry and proletariat

The Young Estonia's ideal was a specially functioning social class: the intelligentsia, free creators (see also Sarapik 2007: 76–77). For Young Estonians, the working class and the intelligentsia seem to live in separate worlds, their wishes and needs do not coincide:

The trains rushing through the country, telegraph and telephone posts by the road – all these are messengers of a new culture in Estonia and have almost the same 'revolutionary' meaning for simple country folk as Nietzsche or Gorki to an intellectual. (Suits 1906: 47–48)

However, the two new classes – the proletariat and the intelligentsia – are connected in their disparity: the freedom of the intelligentsia is not possible without political freedom (cf. Suits

1906: 8, 56). The Young Estonia intellectuals were therefore compelled, at least in the abstract, to deal with the problems of the proletariat and mass production, occasionally approaching and occasionally distancing from them.

Manifesto “Noorte püüded” (Aspirations of the Young) in the first album declares the freedom of the young to be above all the parties; and “In the Days of Battle” tackles the proletariat’s historical leading position (Suits 1905a: 5; Suits 1905b: 5–6). In 1910 the interests of people were completely abandoned in favour of the interests of culture (Suits 1910: 4). The magazine *Vaba Sõna* starting in 1914 declares its aim to be “to introduce wider masses, especially workers, to all current problems of culture and new trends in science, literature and art”, because it is the workers’ “historic task to produce a new social order” (Eds. 1914: 3); additionally, the requirement of part purity is abandoned.

The social world view of the Young Estonia thus made a U-turn or travelled the ring of a spiral: at first enthusing about socialism, then distancing themselves from it, and later approaching it again, at least to some extent. This development runs counter to aspirations of aesthetic freedom. We could perhaps say that the above described urban turn signifies the end of the heyday of the art-for-art’s sake principle. Urban topics indicate a new approach to socialism, and from a positivist direction, without fully perceiving this⁶: a creator’s views depend on his origin (village, township, country). Urbanisation brings about a new type of culture; however, urban culture cannot exist without a big city or the development of technology. Absolute creative freedom thus does not exist because a text grows out of its environment and surrounding circumstances. Young Estonians were still not prepared to acknowledge the social determination of cultural sphere; individual creative freedom had to be maintained at whatever cost.⁷ Even Suits’s most Marxist ideas refused to regard the proletariat as the single leading force of society.⁸

⁶ Tiit Hennoste (2006b) systematically connects the writing about the Young Estonia literature with positivism.

⁷ Liberating (individualism) society and especially an individual was the leading idea already in Suits’s collection of essays, *Sihid ja vaated (Aims and Views)*, cf. Suits 1906: 1, 4–8). There, although with some contradictions, he tries to employ a sociological method in order to show “how the

The separate worlds of the intelligentsia and workers were also pointed out by the Young Estonia's idyll chronotope: a city without industry; an interior never disturbed by the melee in the streets; streets where the storm and sun are more important than the smoke of factory chimneys. Technological development is the prerequisite of urban culture, but not its natural part. The first to blur this boundary was Semper's essay "Lüürik ja meie aeg" (The Lyric Poet and Our Time). Here, technology, man and the city are almost organically blended. The city becomes animate and there is no longer any untouched nature not even in the country:

The mechanical forces of nature are in the hands of man, /---/ straight railway lines and channels cut through bogs and marshes, the wolves' howling is replaced by the hum of the telephone wires or a sudden scream of an automobile /---/. Leaving the meadows to the machines /---/, people are retreating into towns, which rise and grow daily with their maze of buildings and criss-crossing streets where you can get lost just as easily as in a deep forest. Even the sun is made sooty by the smoke ribbons of a big city, and at night a single movement of the hand will light a row of electric lamps, the moon is doomed, which in any case is never clearly visible behind all the ribbons of soot. (Semper 1912: 146)

And:

Man has become more agile, mobile, attentive. Handshakes are more urgent. Visits shorter. Letters more precise. Speeches abridged. Gestures more nervous. Glances quicker. Man has certainly become more alert amongst the stone bulks, on the stone pavements, in

phenomena of intellectual life can be fully understood and explained only in connection with the political and economical conditions of society" (Suits 1906: 2).

⁸ Suits's *Two World Views* attempts to disregard internationalism as the principle of vanishing nations. (Suits 1906: 50–55). Its final part and *Kultuur ja poliitika* (*Culture and Politics*, 1907) try to reconcile the independent development of cultural sphere with Marxism, protesting against the commercialisation of art and against class pressure (Suits 1931).

new light and new shadows, in narrow rooms that keep rising as if they hated the earth, containing modern people and separating us with walls from nature. (Ib. 147)

There are no longer any environmental boundaries between workers, poets and the bourgeoisie. Although Semper ignores futurism, his text reveals his past interest in it, and its obvious influence.

The beginning of another text in the same album has similar style and intensity, although not so similar topic: "Language culture! Language reform! The unavoidable need to purify, manage, enrich and adorn the language! /---/ No nation without a language! No literature without a developed language! No finer aspects of people's lives without an educated language! My God, what trumpets would make these words resound, what instruments would roar these sentences into the ears of our fellow citizens!" (Aavik 1912: 170) This seems like a futurist manifesto and it does not only predict the slogan from the same year: "Tool before, then a work of art, language first, then literature..." (Aavik 1990: 43) Here, a later and much-quoted paragraph should be read again:

We repeat again: language is a tool, language is a machine. It should therefore not be observed only with the eye of a natural scientist who is interested in merely stating and explaining phenomena, but it should be observed with the eye of people in industry, engineers, technicians who would try to bend and use everything to their own purpose. (Aavik 1924: 9)

In the earlier environment, e.g. in *Ruth* published in 1909, the 20th century technological achievements were unthinkable, whereas now Aavik is increasingly of the opinion that at least the foundation of culture should be constructed rationally, according to engineering principles.

In sum – Suits is keen on Marxism and proletariat as class, but not in town; Tuglas is fascinated with the town as a principle and he acknowledges technology as an inevitable prerequisite of urban culture; Grünthal-Ridala is not interested in the town either in theory or in poetry. However, for at least two people the gap between high culture and industrial culture was disappearing. Semper is the only one who introduces industrial topics to the aesthetic sphere. Aavik

seems to become increasingly aware that for the aesthetic sphere, you must “forge and build” a suitable form beforehand. Still, neither of them quite accepts the total disappearance of the border between high culture and industry.

4. Futurism

In pre-WW I Estonian press the word ‘futurism’ was used remarkably often. The heyday was in 1913–1914. There were some sensible introductions, although most articles ridiculed and mocked futurism.⁹ We could say, in sum, that the usage of the term ‘futurism’ was quite wide, covering the entire avant-garde of the time, or more precisely – the bits of information about it that reached Estonia. The other dimension of the term was evaluative: at best, futurism could be neutral, although it was largely understood in the negative-ironic meaning. However, futurism was ridiculed, but the attitude was not exactly hostile. The word itself seemed to fulfil the function of entertainment and gossip, signifying all that is incomprehensible in the innovating culture. After all, as the ‘starting point’ of Estonian art was only fixed in the early 20th century, it would have been too much to expect a warm welcome to futurism, at least in the field of pictorial art.

The word’s contradictory interpretations also derive from the movement itself, as various forms of style, manifestos and actions of the futurists.

The interpretations that spread in Estonia in the first decades of the 20th century can be roughly divided into three:

- (1) futurism as a special way of creating a text, a certain style (e.g. Barbarus 1914; Semper 1919);
- (2) futurism as a world view and an attitude of human psychology; a desire for future, a negation of the past, or both, can dominate (e.g. Tammsaare 1914; Tuglas 1915b: 787–788);
- (3) futuristic activity as a revolt or mockery and buffoonery.

⁹ Reflections of futurism in the earlier Estonian texts have been thoroughly examined by Rein Kruus (Kruus 1981).

The endless mentions, ridicule and comparisons of futurism derive on the whole from the third, as the activities of futurists were simultaneously fascinating and off-putting, experimenting and ridiculous, and thus hardly encouraging anyone to take futurism seriously. The branches of futurism outside Italy were generally more playful and less serious. The Estonian press did not usually distinguish between the Italian and Russian futurism, but articles about the latter in the Russian papers must have been the main source of local futurism folklore.

The term futurism in Estonian pictorial art was used in Ado Vabbe's paraphrases and improvisations. In literature the group *Moment* was categorised as futurist a bit earlier.¹⁰ The connection of both with futurism as a style or a manner of creating is rather vague. In Vabbe's expressionist-abstractionist works, futurism applies only in the meaning of 'new', i.e. as an art of the future. The *Moment* members prefer the other aspect (e.g. farcical orders of the day). Therefore, despite the frequent use of the word, the real Estonian futurism did not actually emerge during the Young Estonia period.

The Young Estonia's attitude towards futurism as a phenomenon of art was contradictory. As the term was so widely employed, it was not possible for the Young Estonians to ignore it either. Besides, Semper was one of the first and most sensible promoters of futurism.¹¹ Fridebert Tuglas's views were controversial. He attacked the supposedly futurist *Moment* with the elegant claim that the two were actually united by nothing more than the square shape of the book (Tuglas 1914). Tuglas did not seem to think much of futurism, and in a way this article was double denouncement of the members of *Moment*: according to him, they could not understand and use this

¹⁰ The collection *Moment. The First* was published in December 1913; *Green Moment* as a reaction to its criticism, appeared on 31 March 1914.

¹¹ In his memoirs, Semper describes his first contacts with futurism in 1910 (Semper 1969: 199–202). As a student in St Petersburg he hears Marinetti and learns about the activities of Russian futurists. On 18 February 1914 he reads a paper in Tartu that introduces futurism, "The Newest Trends in Literature", and later in Tallinn. Various reviews of the paper appear in the press; Semper's more comprehensive overview of futurism is published a few years later in the collection of essays *Näokatted (Masks)*, Semper 1919). Some days later Ado Vabbe shows his abstract works at a Young Estonia art exhibition 20–24 February 1914.

rather boring style, which they reputedly see as an example. In 1915, however, Tuglas seemed to be more tolerant, claiming to understand the *Moment* people better after rereading their work. At the same time Tuglas stresses several significant ideas. First, futurism brings about new sociality, tackling social problems and reality; secondly, the futurist revolt has a refreshing influence on cultural life, as it forces people to rethink the previous notions and art philosophy; thirdly, futurism introduces new topics in art and provides suitable methods for describing the new speed of life; in sum – futurism adds new strength and energy to art, which were fading together with the increasingly lethargic symbolism (Tuglas 1915b: 787–788). Futurism itself, however, remains an oddity; the intellectuals could draw useful conclusions from it, but not actually accept it.

The attitude towards futurism was made more complicated by the 1914 war and news about the futurists supporting it. The Young Estonia was firmly against the war (Suits 1915, numerous articles in *Vaba Sõna*). The outbreak of WW I in fact signified the collapse of their European ideals: they yearned for Europe, but this Europe was gone and was being replaced by a battlefield. This explains the following sentence of Suits: “Anarchists and futurists can now sleep peacefully: the programmes of destruction and disorder are being most effectively carried out by the instigators of the current world conflagration.” (Suits 1915: 7)

Finally, another association could be pointed out: futurism and language innovation. In Estonia, this was somewhat fumblingly delineated in 1914 by Jaan Jõgever, a conservative linguist and literary figure of the older generation. He called the word usage of younger poets ‘futurist’ (Jõgever 1914: 131). Jõgever regarded any experimentation with the language dangerous, because Estonian was not yet fully developed. On the other hand, futurism is associated with language already in the manifestos of Marinetti.¹² The most eager to tackle linguistic issues were the Russian cubo-futurists, who were mostly interested in the sound aspect of a language. Word as such forms a phonetic entity, a self-sufficient living organism, and

¹² Futurist poetry is tackled in *Manifesto tecnico della letteratura futurista* (1912, *Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature*) and *Distruzione della sintassi. Immaginazione senza fili. Parole in libertà* (1913, *Breaking up the Syntax. Images that Do Not Correlate. Words in Freedom*).

the conventional indication/meaning relation did not matter. Word was thus sensed synesthetically: it could be heard, even touched and smelt (cf. Lawton 2005: 3–14; Lawton, Eagle 2005: 49–105; Perloff 2003: 116–160). The Russian futurism also inspired the Russian formalists; Roman Jakobson (Eagle 2005: 281ff), for example, had a direct connection with cubo-futurists. In his recollections of that time, the Estonian poet Henrik Visnapuu also found that if there indeed was some kind of Estonian futurism, then mostly in language experiments (Visnapuu 1995: 182).

Let us return to Johannes Aavik's afore-quoted ideas. Aavik's language innovation project was indeed unique in his hope that the activity of one person (or originally perhaps a group) could change the whole language use of the entire nation, and the new language could be constructed according to 'correct' rules. Marinetti and cubo-futurists were actually doing the same: they provided the rules and 'demanded' their fulfilment, in order to innovate poetry. Aavik's hopes were even grander, although he also started with the demand of changing the language of literature, and became increasingly radical later. The rhetoric of his writings approached futurism and became more constructivist: from building and tool to engineers and machinery. "Lallations" of futurism did not much attract Aavik. In his review of *Moment* he considers their greatest contribution – and probably of futurism – shaking the indifferent audiences: the most negative feature of art is boredom (Aavik 1914).

Summary

The Young Estonia aspirations can be characterised as a change of place (where to speak) and form (how to speak); it was also characterised by differentiation and opposition, i.e. becoming something else through negation. The Young Estonians had a number of such 'others' which they used for self-construction: the old, servility, flatland, German and Russian mentality, absence of a compact whole, no style etc. Despite the aureole of the creators of urban culture, the 'others' can also include technology, industry and proletariat. The intellectuals had their own sphere, without trains speeding through the country, spring-tooth harrows, electricity poles or cinematographs.

Although the Young Estonians' aspirations were characterised by the entirety and harmony of the cultural sphere, the latter contains separate fields with which a Young Estonian intellectual hardly ever came into contact. The problems of town and urban culture emerged in the 4th Young Estonia album in 1912, both in its various texts and in the visual aspect. By that time the leading Young Estonians already had some real experience of a big city. The earlier publications had very few references to urban culture. However, then and afterwards, the town did not become an organic part in the Young Estonian literary texts. The Young Estonian urban culture did not yet present a hurrying, impetuous street life full of vehicles. Instead, it was a suitable place of residence for an intellectual, with its idyllic parks, museums, theatres and houses where the windows opened into a green garden.

Although the Young Estonia ideals changed in the course of ten years, their attitude towards industrial culture remains the same. The outbreak of war further increased the distance from it: the futurists' buffoonery, circus and cinema, together with the supporters of war, stay on the other side of the 'frontlines'.

The views of the leading Young Estonians did not naturally coincide. Suits was fascinated by Marxism, but leaves an independent sphere for the culture; Tuglas and Linde were to a certain extent attracted by urban culture, even by futurism, although they did not pursue them very far and seemed to immediately take a step backwards. Aavik's views contained interesting parallel developments concerning the early 20th century urban culture and even futurism and constructivism. The young Semper and Barbarus who joined the Young Estonia later were actually the ones who regarded the new radical phenomena with most briskness and curiosity. The Young Estonia arsenal certainly did not contain any parody or revolt, because there was actually nothing much to parody as yet.

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**Friedebert Tuglas and
French *fin de siècle* Literature.
Between Aestheticism and Realism**

KAIA SISASK

In the present article I will deal with the influences of French *fin de siècle* literature on Friedebert Tuglas's' early work during the first decades of the 20th century. The years 1910–1915 is the time of the peak and the fall of the decadent and symbolist current in Estonian literature, characterized by the art-for-art's-sake aesthetics and propagated by the Young Estonia literary movement in general, and especially by its voluminous magazine published in 1910–1911. On one hand, the spread of these new tendencies is a law-governed process, similar to that of other European countries during the same period; on the other hand, it represents quite an interesting case in Estonia where even literary realism was making its first steps and the whole “new” literature had to be invented on the basis of old didactic romanticism.

After the decay of the revolutionary enthusiasm of 1905 when new approaches to literature contained a certain rebellious spirit, the main aspiration of the Young Estonia was to escape the dull reality and to be able to share the intense literary and artistic life of Europe. This explains also its hostility to literary realism – the expression of the “gray ambiance” (according to Tuglas) of the suburbs of Estonian provincial towns. Still, in spite of experimenting with symbolist theories, the world view of the Young Estonians remains realistic in its essence and lacks the abstract metaphysical and religious perspective characteristic of its main paragons in France, francophonic Belgium and even in the neighbouring countries, Latvia and Lithuania.

Tuglas's work can be compared with that of Gustave Flaubert in several ways. Firstly, Flaubert's approaches to literature and the literary creation process are referred by Tuglas several times in his essays. Secondly, the two authors seem to share some ways of obtaining inspiration. Thirdly, there are quite evident influences of Flaubert in some Tuglas' novels. Fourthly, with his way of uniting aestheticism and realism Flaubert seems to show Tuglas a solution and the issue of his own quest among current literary tendencies of Europe where neither pure aestheticism nor pure realism seemed to satisfy his tastes.

In *Marginalia*, Tuglas quotes Oscar Wilde's credo that "life copies art" (Tuglas 2001: 16). This approach to life is common to the representatives of the aesthetic movement who according to A. Cassagne make the aspects of nature enter into finished artistic conceptions: "Souvent ce sont les tableaux qu'ils connaissent (...) qui leur ont appris à connaître la nature" (Cassagne 1998: 294). Tuglas speaks often about the influences of the works of art (Breughel, Bosch, Goya) on his sensibility as his sources of inspiration, about the need to experience life by the eyes of this or that painter or writer. Among writers he is especially impressed by the nature descriptions in Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*: "Kui ilus näis maailm – päike, meri, kaljude kontuur! Iga rohuhelvet väljal, iga lainejoont rannal nägin nüüd selle raamatu [*Zarathustra*] valgusel uena, otseku esimest korda." [How beautiful the world seemed – the sun, the sea, the contour of the rocks! Every grass-leaf on the meadow, every line of the waves on the beach, I saw them now in the light of this book [*Zarathustra*] as if for the first time.] And he adds: "Neidsamu maailma ja enese avastamise hetki on mulle võimaldanud mõned teisedki kirjanduslikud suurteosed – "Kalevalast" "Bhagavadgita'ni"" [Similar moments of self-discovery and the discovery of the world were offered to me by some other great literary works – from *Kalevala* to *Bhagavatgita*. (Tuglas 2001: 114)] About Danish writer J.-P. Jacobsen Tuglas says: "Vaatesin oma ümbrustki tolle juba ammu manalasse varisenud taanlase silmil." [I looked even at my surroundings through the eyes of this long-deceased Dane. (Tuglas 1960: 332)] To compare with Flaubert, he is known to have got the inspiration for *The Temptation of Saint Anthony* and for *The Legend of Saint Julien the Hospitalier* from Breughel's painting and a stained glass church window.

The writers through whose eyes Tuglas looks at the world during the peak of his period of aestheticism include also d'Annunzio, Rodenbach and Brjussov who let him see the world in decadent and symbolist colours. The protagonist of his short story "Õhtu taevas" [*The Evening Sky*], Allan, reads these authors and lets even the Psalms to be imbibed by decadent imagery, seeing them as "unistavalt-magusaid aforismusi, mida see suur melanholilik epikurlane oma lossi katusel istudes ja unistaval pilgul siidist varjude all puhkavate Moabi, Sidoni ja Itti naiste pääle vaadates sumedatel õhtupoolikutel pikkade papiruse rullide pääle kirjutas, kui Seba kuningaemanda kingitud neegripoiss vaulinnu sulgedega Liibanoni seedrite lõhna tema pää ümber liigutas." [dreamy and sweet aphorisms, written by this melancholic epicurean, during the tender afternoons, on the long scrolls of papyrus, sitting on the roof of his palace and looking with dreamy eyes on the women of Moab, Sidon and Itt, who are reposing under parasols of silk, while the little negro boy, presented to him by the queen of Sheba, moved the perfume of the cedars of Lebanon around his head. (Tuglas, 1910/11: 7)] These aphorisms contain for him "the source of eternal beauty", his heart is full of "deep elegiac happiness from all the colours and forms experienced during the day", the sunset glow is like "a red-headed dying woman", his own woman, Iris, wants to "inhale Allan into herself like a chaos", Allan is ready to "break his heart into pieces and to feed it to the black birds of the sky", he carries his woman down the stairs "touching the faces of the wooden god Quetzalcoatl in the dark" etc. Later, however, Tuglas admits that, imitating the decadents, notably d'Annunzio, he did not realize that their work was in fact closer to reality than he had guessed, it was the distance that made it seem so unreal. (Tuglas 1960: 363)

The symbolist writing in France balances between two tendencies, of contraction and dispersal. The need to break out from the forms and obstacles (Kahn, Laforgue) is opposed to Mallarmés stiffness, to his "raréfaction des images en quelques signes comptés" (Mallarmé 1995: 216) and to Flaubert's eliminating way of writing. Tuglas bothers himself with uttermost stylizing, the purification of the sentence of all that is superfluous, with the quest for "transcendental beauty" and with the wish "to treat reality only as a symbol of reality" (Tuglas 1960: 362). But in spite of this ideal, he is aware of his over-comparing and over-describing tendencies. As to

his characters, they are far from being clear-cut, they tend to disperse, their selves become diluted in the world of illusions and fantasies. Tuglas's short stories fit into the framework of Moréas's symbolist theory of the novel almost by all criteria. According to Moréas, in the centre of an oeuvre there is a chaotic crowd or a single hero, who moves in the environment deformed by his hallucinations and moods and where this deformation is more real than the reality itself. The hero is surrounded by shadow-like beings, pretexts for his perceptions, feelings and thoughts. According to Leconte de Lisle, all phenomena are empty manifestations, the world is but an illusion, life but a dream with no significance. "Éclair, rêve sinistre, éternité qui ment,/ La Vie antique est faite inépuisablement/ Du tourbillon sans fin des apparences vaines." (Leconte de Lisle source électronique: 158) Sully Prudhomme's quote as the motto of another Young Estonian, J. Randvere's short story "Ruth" declares: "J'imagine! ainsi je puis faire / Un ange sous mon front mortel! / Et qui peut dire en quoi diffère / l'etre imaginé du réel." / (Randvere 1909: 18). M. Maeterlinck's *Pelléas and Mélisande* and *The Treasure of the Humbles* are constructed around something silent and unknown, Rodenbach's hero in *Bruges-la-morte* wanders in an hallucinatory city. All these authors (maybe except Moréas for whom there is no explicit evidence) were known to Tuglas when he constructed his short stories governed by the idea of the illusory nature of the world. Already in 1905 he declares in "Oma päikese poole" [*Towards Your Own Sun*]: "Und näha – kui kogu elu on juba üksainus uni!" [To dream – all life is already a dream! (Tuglas 1957: 9)] A fantasy may break in as a dream when the hero does not understand whether he is sleeping or not, it may begin to develop from some sight in the nature or in a city, it may imbibe secretly and terrifyingly *à la* E. A. Poe, or attack like the "heavenly riders" from the story of Tuglas with the same title. Unreality can be perceived even in full consciousness – need the hero only take some distance and look at the world from aside, when the world starts to look like a merry-go-round or an ant-hill. The feeling of irreality calls forth the feeling of emptiness. "Ääretu valu täitis Rannuse rinna: Ah, kõik on tühi! Kõik on ainult kannatus. Vabaduski on orjapõli!" [An immense pain filled the heart of Rannus: Ah, everything is empty! Everything is but suffering. Even liberty is slavery. (Tuglas in 1915: 162)] or: "Mis oli elu? Mis oli inimene? Mistarvis viskles inimene elu puuris,

mida piiras igalt poolt ainult mõttetu tühjus?” [What was life? What was a human being? Why did a human being toss about in the cage of life, surrounded on every side only by meaningless emptiness. (Tuglas 1957: 127)] The feelings expressed by Tuglas’s heroes are expressed in the same mood by the author himself in *Marginalia*: “Jah, ka seda tean ma, et mu meeletu mõttepingutus on tühi töö, täitsa tühi töö. Tean sedagi, et see mu viimse elujõu sööb ja mind mitu korda viib lähemale kõige tühjusele.” [Yes, and I know also that my immense mental strain is a useless work, absolutely useless work. And I also know that it eats up my last force of life and takes me even more closer to everything’s emptiness. (Tuglas 2001: 307)] or in “Kriitiline intermezzo” (*Critical Intermezzo*): “Ilusam ja õhulisem peaks olema see maailm, milles inimene oma elutunnid kahe tühjuse vahel mööda saadab!” [More beautiful and more airy should be the world where man spends his life’s hours between two emptinesses. (Tuglas 2001: 29)] This recurrent theme in Tuglas’s works refers to several aspects of his own situation. First, as it was already said, he perceived his own ambiance as spiritually suffocating. Secondly, in about 1914 he starts to lose his interest in decadence and pure aestheticism but, understanding literature only in terms of literary movements, he does not find anything “better” than realism to replace it; third, he is still influenced by the fashion of baudelairian *spleen* and *fin de siècle* spirituality, although it is already mixed with more existentialist concerns and the reality of war. He seems to make an effort of replacing the symbol system of decadent emptiness by that of eastern religions but does not go very far along this path. At that critical point, in my opinion, he takes a greater interest in Flaubert’s approaches to literature and the world, notably in his book *The Temptation of Saint Anthony*.

In his introduction to Flaubert’s *La Tentation de Saint Antoine* Michel Foucault compares Flaubert’s work to a library. The fantastical imagery of the book is not created by some deviated consciousness but, on the contrary, by a scientific approach to the material. “The domain of phantasms is no longer the night, the sleep of reason, or the uncertain void that stands before desire, but, on the contrary, wakefulness, untiring attention, zealous erudition and constant vigilance...” (Foucault in Flaubert 2001) We see as if the pages of an encyclopedia were opened for us, full of descriptions of the follies and queerness of mankind. Flaubert’s studies of amounts

and amounts of material for describing the smallest detail are notorious and even his seemingly most frantic fantasies and exotic descriptions are based on deep erudition. It is also well known that Flaubert never estimated his *Madame Bovary* as highly as *The Temptation of Saint Anthony* and *Salamambo*, the exotic novel about the I Punic War. So he is in fact more rooted in decadence than in the realist spirit, and so is Tuglas who praises highly the latter's two books but gives no evidence about having read *Madame Bovary* or *Sentimental Education* during his Young Estonia period.

An expert of Estonian literature Toomas Liiv considers the fantasies of Tuglas closely connected to his difficult experiences in prison during the revolution of 1905. I, on the contrary, suppose them to be loosely connected to direct experiences. Tuglas's way of writing resembles to that of Flaubert by its erudition, and his fantasies, inspired, as it was already said, often by some pictures or literary works are a logical development of the latter. In my opinion the inspiration got from *Saint Anthony* and *Salamambo* enters into Tuglas's short stories of the beginning of 1920s, "Rändaja" [*The Traveller* 1921], "Poeet ja idioot" [*The Poet and The Idiot*, 1924] and "Androgüüni päev" [*The Androgyn's Day*, 1925.] but may be noticed already four years earlier in "Artur Valdes" [1916]. These short stories differ from his other symbolist stories by being dedicated more to philosophical reflection about the uncertainty and changing nature of existence than to generating an emotion of horror or threat. In "Arthur Valdes" Tuglas writes: "Kogu eluaja töötas ta ühe tehnilise küsimuse kallal: õppida tundma fantaasiaseadusi, valitsema irreaalse loogikat ja saavutama ka kõige fantastilisemais aineis psühholoogilist usaldatavust./---/ Kui kirjanduses midagi võrdluseks võtta, siis vahest ainult Flaubert'i *Salammbô* ja *La Tentation de Saint Antoine*." [All his life he had worked at one technical question: to know the laws of fantasy, to govern the logic of the unreal and to attain psychological credibility even in most fantastical material. /---/ If to take something in comparison from literature, then maybe only Flaubert's *Salammbô* and *La Tentation de Saint Antoine*. (Tuglas 1986: 284)]

At the beginning of "The Traveller" Tuglas gives us a key to the understanding of his sources of inspiration by two quotes, one from *Saint Anthony*:

Madalail riuleil olid reas raamatud, mille paljas nägemine pani kiiremini tuksuma ta südame. Ta ulatas käe, võttis oma jumaldatud Flaubert'i "Püha Antoniuse kiusatuse", Alphonse Lemerre'i gratsioosuses väljaandes, ja lehitse seda. Üks koht paelus ta silmad juba nii mitmes kord. Ta luges pikkamööda ja vaikse häälega, paar korda: [On low shelves there were books, even the sight of which made his heart beat faster. He stretched out his hand, took his adored *The Temptation of Saint Anthony* of Flaubert in the gracious edition of Alphonse Lemerre and turned over the leaves. One extract attracted his eyes several times. He read slowly and quietly, a couple of times:]

Je peux faire se mouvoir des serpents de bronze, rire des statues de marbre, parler des chiens. Je te montrerai une immense quantité d'or; j'établirai des rois; tu verras des peuples m'adorant! Je peux marcher sur les nuages et sur les flots, passer à travers les montagnes, apparaître en jeun homme, en vieillard, en tigre et en fourmi, prendre ton visage, te donner le mien, conduire le foudre. L'entends-tu? (Tuglas1987: 89)

and the other from *Bhagavatgita*:

Sest sündinu sureb kindlasti ja surnu sünnib kindlasti jälle. Sellepärast ära leina seda, mida ei või ükski takistada. Kõik olendid on algseisundis nähtamatud, ilmumatud, keskseisundis nad ilmuvad, oi Bhârata! ja surmas saavad nad jälle nähtamatuiks. Mille üle oleks siin kurta! [For what is born will surely die and the dead will surely be reborn. That's why don't cry for what can't be hindered. All beings are invisible, inappearable in the original state, in the middle state they appear, oh Bharata! and in death they will be invisible again. What is here to complain about! *Ib.*]

What unites these two quotes and all the philosophical background of the story, is the idea of the changing nature of existence and visible forms. In *Saint Anthony* the speaker is Simon Magnus, a gnostic, one in the gallery of characters that appear to Saint Anthony in his

visions to reveal to him the ridiculous nature of all religions, dogmas and principles, all the merry-go-round of human consciousness, sentenced however to fail in its aspiration to embrace the sense of the universe. The same themes pass through the other above mentioned short stories: the Androgyne reincarnates all the time into new bodies, the Poet listens to the ideas of Kobras about Satan as the basic principle of the universe, Allan of the “The Traveller” does not reincarnate himself but observes the changing of forms around him in the city.

The direct influence of *Saint Anthony* on Tuglas can be followed the best in comparing the following extracts. In *Marginalia* Tuglas writes:

Unustada end hetkekski, valguda laiali ürgosiks, kohada kaasa lainete pahinaga ja maruga puude ladvus, peituda liblikasse ja tiigrisse, rännata kassina, kes jälgib öösel oma salapäraseid teid, tegutseda metsinimesena ja lennata linnuna ning vaadata kordki maailma nende silmil[To forget oneself even for a moment, to spread into primary elements, to roar with the waves and with the tempest in tree-tops, to hide oneself in a tiger or in a butterfly, to wander like a cat who follows at night its mysterious ways, to act as a savage and to fly as a bird and to look even once at the world with their eyes. Tuglas 2001: 142]] 1

Just before that extract Tuglas has made a reference to Flaubert who writes in one of his private letters: “I’d like to be a cow, to be able to eat grass!” (ib.)

And Saint Anthony says:

...ma tahaksin /.../ puhuda suitsu, kanda lonti, väänata oma keha, jagada ennast kõikjale, olla kõiges, voolata välja koos lõhnadega, areneda kui taim, vuliseda kui vesi, vibreeruda kui heli, särada kui valgus, varjuda kõigisse vormidesse, tungida igasse aatomisse, laskuda mateeria põhja – olla mateeria! [I’d like to /.../ blow the smoke, to have a trunk, to twist my body, to divide myself everywhere, to be in everything, to spread with the smells, to develop like a plant, to gurgle like the water, to vibrate like a sound, to shine

like light, to hide myself in all forms, to penetrate every atom, to descend to the bottom of the matter – to be the matter! (Flaubert 1995: 219)]

The idea of changing and the plurality of forms do not always contain *angst* for Tuglas. Several times he has referred to fantasy as a possibility to lead a fuller life, to experience all the possibilities of existence, while in reality all these possibilities must be sacrificed to only one.

The exotic imagery of Allan's visions in "The Traveller" are close to these of *Saint Anthony* and *Salambo*: a Hindu who wants to arrange his turban but takes off his head, the ruins of an ancient city where the jackals move, black people with their "horrificing language", the negro wood and metal craft that changes into "a great armed manoeuvre" (cf. the negro revolts in *Salambo*), a wavering stone snake, the red tiger jumping through the reed followed by the flock of jackals, the swallows falling through the air into the mouths of the jackals. The Allan of "Arthur Valdes" perceives behind the constant changes a Tempter (Kiusaja) who "takes thousand of forms, hides behind every object, being itself nothing nor having any concrete form." (Tuglas 1986: 268). If Satan in *Saint Anthony* says to the protagonist: "Vorm on võib-olla sinu meelte eksitus, substants sinu mõttekujutus. Juhul kui selles maailmas, kus asjad on pidevas liikumises, just näivus ei ole see kõige õigem, illusioon ainus reaalsus. Aga oled sa kindel, et sa näed? Oled sa kindel, et sa elad? Võib-olla ei ole midagi?" [Form may be the error of your mind, substance may be only your idea. Except if, in this world where things are in constant movement, appearance be the truest thing, illusion be the only reality. But are you sure to see? Are you sure to live? Maybe there is nothing. (Flaubert 1995: 204)], in "Arthur Valdes" Satan grows, to become "the symbol of boundlessness" (Tuglas 1986: 269), and "man surrenders in front of this cosmic vision. Who is he to compete with this Great Something that governs the world." (ib.). He wants only to understand his task in this great machinery and his position in the universe. The same is wanted by Saint Anthony, to whom Satan answers: "Iial ei õpi sa tundma universumit tema ulatuses; järelikult ei saa sa kujutleda tema põjuslikkust, omada õiget ettekujutust Jumalast, ega öelda isegi seda, et universum on lõputu, sest enne tuleb lõpmatust tunda." [You will

never comprehend the universe in its scope; consequently you can't imagine it's causality, to have a real idea of God nor to say even that the universe has no end, because before that you should know infinity. (Flaubert 1995: 204)]

Saint Anthony ends by Anthony seeing Jesus, "The Traveller" by Allan seeing somebody like the Buddha:

Lõpuks hakkab päev koitma; ja otsekui tabernaakli tõstetud eesriided paljastavad laiade voluutidena rulluvad kuldsed pilved taeva. Päris keskel otse päikesekettas endas särab Jeesuse Kristuse nägu. Antonius lööb risti ette ja hakkab palvetama. [At last the day dawns and like the lifted curtains of a tabernacle, the golden clouds cover the sky, rolling like volutes. Directly in the center, on the disc of the sun, shines the face of Jesus Christ. Anthony makes the sign of the cross and starts to pray. (Flaubert 1995: 219)]

And "The Traveller":

Allan astus templisse. Selle kuppel tõusis kullatud kõrgusse, sealt laskusid nikerdatud puuviljad ja linnud. /---/ Küünalde vahelt tõusval hiigellootslilel istus väike laps, igavesti naeratava näoga, käed sirutatud tulukeste sõõri poole, mis värisesid ta ümber nagu heledad õielehed. [Allan entered the temple. Its dome arose towards golden heights, from where carved fruits and birds descended. /---/ On the giant lotus-flower in the middle of the candles there was sitting a small child, eternally smiling, his hands stretched towards a circle of lights shivering around him like fair petals. (Tuglas 1987: 102)]

Thus, the two short stories by Tuglas, "Arthur Valdes" and "The Traveller" are tightly connected by similar reflections. The name, Allan, of the protagonist refers back to Tuglas's probably most decadent short story "The Evening Sky", being in a way like the decadent *alter ego* of Tuglas himself (who, by the way, likes the play with different egos, another being his Felix Ormusson). In "The Traveller" there is no Satan, but Satan is one of the main characters in Tuglas's chronologically next short story "The Poet and the Idiot",

and, as it was said, the theme of everlasting change is picked up in "The Androgyn's Day". I consider these three short stories to be a kind of summary and issue of Tuglas's decadent period where, with the help of Flaubert, he is looking to new possibilities to combine reality and illusion. Tuglas is well informed by Huysmans's and Maupassant's similar aspirations. In his personal library [the archives of Tuglas's home museum] he has underlined a sentence in the foreword of Huysmans's *Là-bas* where Huysmans proposes to invent "spiritual realism" (Huysmans 1911: 12) and in *Marginalia* he makes a reference to the foreword of Maupassant's *Pierre et Jean*, where Maupassant declares that creation means creating a full illusion of reality and that true realists should in fact be called illusionists. (Tuglas 2001: 29) So it is in fact interesting that Tuglas who is generally quite open about his influences has not directly admitted Flaubert to be one, and quite important, of them.

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Writing Alver, Writing Smith: *Everyday* in a Poet's Biography

KATILIINA GIELEN

*"Everyday is the measure of all things."*¹

Guy Debord

The dates when somebody is born, a book is published, an exhibition is opened or just when something is begun or finished are usually easily remembered or can be retraced with the help of written records, documents, newspapers, archival material and the like. The countries we have travelled to, the cities we have seen and the landmarks we have visited are the places of prominence in our memory. What about the moments when nothing unusual happens? Or rather, what happens in between the memorable, the pivotal and the exceptional?

The aim of this paper is to analyze the extent of the *everyday*² in the biographies of two very different poets – Stevie Smith and Betti Alver. Although the word *everyday* bears a connotation of something unimportant, trivial and ordinary, something that is usually forgotten, the concept of *everyday*, however, has acquired a certain prominence in the recent decades. *Everyday* has, for example, been theorized by researchers like Roland Barthes, Michel de Certeau, Henri Lefebvre, to name just a few; it has found wide application in cultural and literary studies as well as in gender studies. Michael Sheringham

¹ Quoted in Rita Felski, *Doing Time*. 2000

² I will use the term 'the everyday' in the sense Rita Felski defines it, as human experience consisting of repetition, habit and home.

connects the rehabilitation of the quotidian, among other things, with the 'return' of the subject after the structuralist displacement of subjectivity. Sheringham points to the increase in the popularity of life-writing as an important vehicle behind the rise of the seemingly mundane *everyday*. (Sheringham 2006: 346) As poetry can be said to bear the least connection to life, it is interesting to see how and to which degree the biographers have decided to expose the mundane, the banal – *the everyday* – and what effect it has in the biographies of Betti Alver and Stevie Smith, two poets of different background and eminence.

The biographies under scrutiny are the two books on Stevie Smith – the authorized biography by Frances Spalding titled *Stevie Smith a Critical Biography* (1988)³, the unauthorized version *Stevie: A Biography of Stevie Smith* by Jack Barbera and William McBrien (1985)⁴ and the two stories on the life and work of Betti Alver: firstly *Betti Alver* by Karl Muru⁵ and secondly, a biographical collection of Betti Alver compiled and edited by Enn Lillemets and Kristi Metste titled *Betti Alver: Interviews. Letters. Diary Entries. Memories.* (2007)⁶. But firstly, some remarks on the concept of *everyday*.

Everyday is a difficult concept to define as everyday seems to be everywhere. Rita Felski, in an essay *The Invention of Everyday* (Felski 2000), devises an interesting definition of the *everyday* by combining the work of Henri Lefebvre and Agnes Heller. According to Felski's interpretation the *everyday* consists of three key factors: time, space and modality. Time – the temporality of *everyday* can be seen in repetition, the endless continuum of mundane events. The space for everyday is home. *Home* does not only signify the place where we eat, sleep and live but has, according to Felski, a wider spatial meaning combining all our routine places and itineraries as well as the movement between these places. The third component, the mode of experiencing the everyday is habit. In her essay Felski

³ For the considerations of space *Stevie Smith a Critical Biography* by Frances Spalding hereinafter referred to as SS1

⁴ *Stevie: A Biography of Stevie Smith* by Jack Barbera and William McBrien hereinafter referred to as SS2

⁵ *Betti Alver* by Karl Muru hereinafter referred to as BA1

⁶ *Betti Alver: Interviews. Letters. Diary Entries. Memories.* by Enn Lillemets and Kristi Metste hereinafter referred to as BA2

counter-argues Henri Lefebvre's materialism-oriented description of *everyday* that positions the habitual and home-centered actions outside the experience of authentic modernity. Felski too defines the *everyday* as a strongly gendered term, but contrary to Lefebvre, who argues that the *concept of everyday* victimizes its representatives – the women (Lefebvre 1984), Felski disputes Lefebvre's assumptions about the quotidian, habitual actions as representing the standstill rather than progression. I would like to, hereby, take up Felski's argument that the development of an individual is closely connected to repetition, and therefore the cyclical movement is as important as the linear movement forward. Repetition and thus habitual action is the manner in which an individual makes sense and organizes the world. Accordingly, *everyday* is both, the regression and enslavement, as proposed by Lefebvre, as well as liberation and emancipation, as argued by Felski. As the definitions of the *everyday* are few and far between, I will hereby adopt Felski's concept of the *everyday* as a quotidian continuum consisting of repetition, home and habit. Subsequently, let us contemplate on the effects of *everyday* in biography writing.

There is not much common ground to the British poet Stevie Smith (1902–1971), and the Estonian poet Betti Alver (1906–1989). If anything at all – they were both born at the very beginning of the 20th century, they are both women and they both started their literary career as novelists. Alver and Smith differ in their style of writing and are poets with different magnitude and meaning inside their native culture: Betti Alver is considered to be one of the most important Estonian poets and translators, who is valued for her philosophical, language-sensitive work as well as her integrity as a poet. Stevie Smith, on the other hand, is a highly idiosyncratic English poet who has never possessed a considerably significant position either inside or outside the poetic circles. Furthermore, although Smith's researchers have noticed a rise in the popularity of her poems and person in recent decades, there are critics who dismiss Smith as a mere ex-centric and an oddball. Andrew Duncan, a poet and a researcher, describes Stevie Smith as a "...ghastly pseudo-naïve poet clinging to the values of Edwardian nursery..." (Duncan 2003: 56). Despite Smith's somewhat ambivalent position, she has been widely anthologized since the 1960s and considered by many a

researcher⁷ to be one of the most significant female poets of the mid-twentieth century England.

As dissimilar as the two poets can be, Betti Alver and Stevie Smith have a lot in common when considering aspects connected with the *everyday* as featured in their biographies. The set of two biographies of both poets Alver and Smith, is comparable, first and foremost, since one of the two in each case seems to be a 'supplementary' biography – a biographical text seconding the version that is considered to be the 'main' or the 'serious' treatment – a provisional text with a different angle or a complimentary set of material. The biography in each case that could be regarded as the 'main' version is the one whose focus is set to be on the poetry rather than life events. In Betti Alver's case it is the biography by Karl Muru (BA1) that aims, according to the author, at the analysis of Alver's creative work and where only "...slight attention is paid to the biographical events with the sole objective to highlight the most important ones that could contribute to the better understanding of her [Alver's] work"⁸ (Muru 2003: 8). Muru's implication is clear – the work of the poet comes first and as work is inevitably connected to the life, a choice of clarifying biographical facts is added. Frances Spalding in her introduction to SS1, displays a similar aim when comparing her biography of Stevie Smith that has been authorized by Smith's literary executor James MacGibbon, to the unauthorized version by Barbera and McBrian: "...the readers will find here a more restricted use of anecdote in order to focus more consistently to the vital relationship between Stevie Smith's life and work." (Spalding 1988)

The difference in the choice of the method of writing between the two poets' four biographies is apparent: the two Stevie Smith's biographies are both more or less chronological narrations written by the biographers, who, relying on the available material – letters, interviews, previous research – have written a narration of the poet's life and work. The difference between the two of Smith's biographies is that of the stress on the subject matter – Spalding's authorized biography SS1, as mentioned above, puts the emphases on the poetry and the disputes on the position Smith occupies in the

⁷ See Romana Huk, *Stevie Smith: Between the Lines*. 2005

⁸ Translations by the author of the present paper

canon, with the aim to set things right. Whereas the unauthorized version by Barbera and McBrien (SS2) is an extensive, beaver style study of the material, mostly letters, newspaper articles and personal papers that aspires to portray an interesting poet and an individual life story, including poetry. Spalding, much in the same fashion as Muru in the analytical biography of BA1, concentrates rather on the analysis of poems, critical reception and the impact of the life events (the non-everyday) to the poetic output.

Lillemets/Metste's biographical collection⁹ of Betti Alver is, differently from the previously mentioned biographies, compiled of different extracts – letters, diary entries and a valuable contribution to the study – memories by friends and contemporaries. The material is collected in the course of a detective work of impressive magnitude and compiled by the authors of the biography into an overlapping and, at times, supplementing narrative. The authors have chosen not to write a biography but rather let the biography write itself instead. The final outcome is dependent on the reader who translates the evidence, clues and signs into a customized narrative. In compiling a biography in such a manner, using written, unaltered materials that provide different angles to matters, we can detect a wish for greater democracy and the aspiration towards objectivity. The material in BA2 is treated with piety and respect to the smallest detail. The interviews with the contributors (mostly friends and acquaintances) are transcribed with utmost care. For the first time all the interviews given by the poet are collected inside the covers of one book. And it is only against the backdrop of such a collection that we can notice the extent to which the *everyday* has been discarded from the narrative poetry-oriented treatments SS1 and BA1 and, to a certain extent, also from SS2. Consequently, we can infer that it is the authors' interpretation and the manner of narration that makes correctives in the material on the ordinary – the *everyday*, and in doing so, involuntarily perpetuates the myth of *the poet*.

For instance, in Smith's case both of the biographers put an extra stress on the fact that the poet lived, together with her maternal aunt, Aunty Lion, as Smith called her, on Avondale Road in Palmers Green, a suburb of London, and never moved. Spalding writes: "...

⁹ Significantly, the word biography is not mentioned in the title of BA2, but Enn Lillemets refers to it as a biography in his introductory note.

One fact that she (Smith) promoted was her never changing address.” According to Spalding it surprised Smith’s friends “...that she (Smith) could find material for poetry in such restricted circumstances....” Smith’s poem “A House of Mercy” is cited in both biographies as evidence of Smith’s attachment to the suburban setting. Spalding’s conclusion relying on the ‘evidence’ of the poet’s everyday experience of space is that it is because of her “...rooted existence that Smith became a poet of alienation” (Spalding 1988). By this example we can witness how the *everyday* becomes a writing problem. The *everyday* of the poet stops being the *everyday* and acquires an extra dimension for the reader. It seems that by collecting the everyday events into a printed narration by the author of the biography, the concept is changed from the mundane to the particular, the myth is created.

Everyday of the poet, her home, appears to be the central notion in the biographical collection of Alver by Lillemets and Metste (BA2), yet, in a different way than the other three biographies under observation. The narration of the author, the censor, the writer, is missing and thus, the lapses into the mundane are more frequent and unfiltered. Poor living conditions, search for a home and the poet’s indifference towards everyday spaces are the recurrent themes emerging equally from the letters, diary entries and memoirs. The indifference towards living conditions, however, does not concern the privacy of these spaces. Home as equalled to privacy is often mentioned in the memoirs by the contributors to the collection of Betti Alver in connection to more or less wanted visitors. Many of the contributors mention the endless flow of friends, acquaintances and admirers of Betti Alver’s poetry that began especially after the death of her second husband Mart Lepik. Lepik, as mentioned in the memoirs of some of Alver’s friends, functioned as a guardian of the poet’s privacy of home – her living and work environment. There is a certain common trail in the memoirs of the contributors to BA2 that each of them perpetuates: “me” as a true friend with a special access code (knock on the window) to the privacy of the poet’s home and “the others” as the intruders in the poet’s privacy. Without a wish to lapse into the discussion about cultural stereotypes, the observation is still quite telling.

Certain trails are more likely to be eagerly picked up by the writers of the biographies of a poet – one of these being the poet in

need of protection and sustenance. When posing the question at the very beginning of the present paper, I have consciously avoided the word pair 'woman poet' since such labelling does not do justice to the poets and presumably may even spur preconception among the potential readers. Nevertheless, all the biographies under observation, the authorized biography of Smith less than the unauthorised version by Barbera and McBrian, Betti Alver's biography by Lillemets and Metste more than Karl Muru's version, show the customary, gendered point of departure to the material with the difference in the degree of subjectivity. Hence, I believe, the abundance of descriptions of homes, the knickknack on the shelves, the pictures, flowers and furniture in the biographies of both Smith and Alver and even if the material is presented in the manner like it is in BA 2, in the form of actually existing factual material, it is but the benevolent yet subjective choice of the biographer, if we choose to leave out chance, that determines the final version. It is the choice of the biographer that determines the extent of explication and the emphasis on certain aspects of the life and work of the subject.

Considering that knowledge is always partial and contextually dependent and differs in relation to the location of its producers, there is no escape from subjectivity in any kind of writing, let alone in biography writing. However, partiality and subjectivity are not necessarily the disadvantages one has to steer clear of when writing, above all when writing a biography. According to the general belief, the concept of *everyday* has to be rooted out from an analysis that aspires to be a 'serious' treatment. Corresponding to such a belief, *everyday* is the paramount shared reality and thus a secular concept that does not accommodate the divine and the poetic – factors that are commonly regarded as preconditions for any 'serious' treatment of a poet's life. But it is precisely because *everyday* is the paramount shared reality and a secular concept that it explicates the person who otherwise stands in the shadows of the subject of study. My aim here was by no means to prescribe a set of rules for a prospective writer of a biography of a poet, nor was it to reproach the writers for having different objectives and methods or for aspiring towards greater objectivity; it was merely to describe the search for objectivity and seriousness at the expense of the *everyday*, as an elusive practice in biography writing. As every life contains the element of ordinary,

everyday, as unimportant and mundane as it may appear, it is the measure of all things.

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Sheridan Le Fanu, Irish Writer and Innovator in the Gothic Literary Tradition

GLYNN CUSTRED

Sheridan Le Fanu (1814–1873) was an heir of the Gothic tradition, author both of novels and short fiction and a literary innovator whose innovations in the short story resulted not only in the refinement of the modern tale of the supernatural, some say he even invented it, but who also contributed to the rise to prominence of the short story as a distinctive genre. Le Fanu was also an Irish writer working within the rich Anglo-Irish tradition, a literary stream that produced a number of authors whose voices have resonated beyond their native land. Above all, Le Fanu was a story-teller who knew his medium well, the medium of everyday and literary language, employing to best effect its full range of expressive resources in the telling of his tales.

The Anglo-Irish tradition

Ireland during Le Fanu's lifetime was a deeply divided society. At the top was the dominant Protestant Anglo-Irish minority, the Ascendancy, the descendants of Protestants who had come from England in Elizabethan times to form the land-owning elite and the middle class of the country. The majority of the rest of the population was Catholic of the native Celtic stock, most living in the countryside, many still speaking Gaelic (Irish), a large number of them mired in poverty.¹ Anglo-Irish literature, appearing in 1800 and lasting until

¹ At the turn of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, after a rebellion of the Irish in Ulster, Protestants from Lowland Scotland were brought as

the middle of the twentieth century was predominately the literature of the dominant class, although there were notable representatives from the Catholic majority among them in its initial stages (Welch 1996: 13–15; Moynahan 1995: 253–256).

The first phase of Anglo-Irish literature, when the Ascendancy stood at its high water mark, did not reflect the narrow perspective and interests of the dominant class, but from the very start was concerned with Ireland as a whole. This view was established by Maria Edgeworth (1767–1849) who in 1800, with the publication of her novel *Castle Rackrent* initiated Anglo-Irish literature. *Castle Rackrent* is the story of the decline and fall of an Anglo-Irish landowning family, in many ways a family like her own. The story is told by Thady Quirk, a Catholic peasant and one of the family's loyal retainers. Thady tells of the family's fortunes from his own point of view, in his own way and above all in his own words. With this novel, says Julian Moynahan, Edgeworth created "Anglo-Irish literature in a single stroke" (Moynahan 1995: 49).

Maria Edgeworth not only set the tone of Anglo-Irish literature; she also created the national novel as a distinctive subgenre. For example, Sir Walter Scott wrote in the introduction to his *Waverley Novels* that his wish was to describe personalities of his native Scotland "in some distant degree to emulate the admirable Irish portraits drawn by Miss Edgeworth", and in 1829 in a preface to a collected edition of his novels, Scott wrote that he had attempted in his work "something of the same kind that Miss Edgeworth so fortunately achieved for Ireland." Ivan Turgenev also looked to Edgeworth as an example, allegedly saying that her stories inspired his *A Sportsman's Sketches*. Both Scott and Turgenev, observes Robert Wolf, were themselves landmarks of national fiction (Wolf 1979: v-vi).

Maria Edgeworth was followed in that tradition by writers such as Charles Robert Maturin (1767–1849), Samuel Lever (1797–1868) and Charles Lover (1806–1872), all from the Dublin middle class, as well as Anne Marie Hall (Mrs. S. C. Hall 1800–1881) who was born in Dublin but grew up in County Wexford, and at the end of the century by Somerville and Ross (Edith Somerville, 1858–1949 and

settlers to Northern Ireland. Known as Ulster Scots, this distinctive group forms another segment of the general population.

Violet Martin, pen name Martin Ross, 1862–1915) writing after the Ascendancy had lost its dominant position.

Anglo-Irish literature, however, was not entirely Protestant. In its first years it also included writers from the Catholic farmer and lower middle class such as Michael (1796–1874) and John (1798–1842) Banim, Gerald Griffin (1803–1840) and William Carleton (1794–1869), authors who knew the Irish peasantry well and who made them and their lives center pieces of their novels and short fiction. Carleton in particular was intent on depicting the Irish “character” in the most realistic terms, telling the reader in the preface of *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry* that “His desire is neither to distort his own countrymen into demons, nor to enshrine them as suffering innocents and saints – but to exhibit them as they really are.”

Carleton did know his countrymen well. He was born and raised in the north of Ireland, in a Gaelic-speaking zone, a speaker both of English and Gaelic, a student of the Hedge Schools of rural Ireland and well acquainted with peasant life and with the long tradition of Irish oral storytelling. His father in fact was a well known storyteller and local historian and his mother a singer of Irish songs. When someone once observed that his stories seemed more authentic than Mrs. S. C. Hall’s *Irish Sketches*, Carleton replied, “Of course, they are! Did she ever live with the people as I did? Did she ever dance and fight with them? Did she ever get drunk with them as I did?” (Schirmer 1984: 23)

Authenticity has been described as “the project of an Irish imaginative literature in English resting on the authentic account” first established by Maria Edgeworth and followed ever since by writers on both sides of the hyphen (Moynahan 1995: 51). Authenticity and realism, however, were not restricted to Anglo-Irish literature. Realism had characterized, indeed defined, the novel as a genre since its inception in the early eighteenth century. Realism was strengthened in European literature by the romanticism and nationalism that prevailed during the nineteenth century, not just as a literary movement but also in the form of a broad cultural movement with powerful political consequences, a movement that emphasized the common man, the distant past and the manner, beliefs and oral traditions of folk societies. Folklore scholarship and literature flourished together at that time throughout Europe and especially in Ireland. In fact, folklore scholarship and literature were so intert-

wined in Anglo-Irish letters that to understand one, we must also understand the other.

In 1827 Thomas Crofton Croker published the first collection of folktales in the British Isles titled *Fairy Legends of the South of Ireland*, narratives he had heard and had written down while in that part of the country, and that he later edited in literary form for publication. His book attracted the attention of Sir Walter Scott as well as the Grimm Brothers, the founders of folklore scholarship, and within a year a German translation had appeared. Folklore studies in Ireland evolved over the century from literary adaptations of orally transmitted tales and legends, like those of Croker, into a scholarly discipline requiring the accurate recording of oral narratives directly from the informant's lips and the careful and systematic archiving of the data collected.

Patrick Kennedy, John O'Hanlon, Jeremiah Curtin and William Larminie were important figures in the development of Irish folklore studies, as were William Wild and his wife Jane Francesca "Speranza" (parents of Oscar Wilde who did not share their enthusiasm). Douglas Hyde at the end of the century was the first to include the names of informants and their location in his collections, publishing his material in the Irish original with parallel English translations. In 1935 another folklore scholar, James H. Delaney (known also as Séamus Ó Duilerga) founded the Irish Folklore Commission which, as of 1996, had in its archives 50,000 pages of oral transcription and 10,000 hours of audio recordings (Welch 1996: 264; Dorson 1966: v-xxxii).

The interrelationship between folk studies and literature reached its high point in the late flowering of Anglo-Irish literature known as the Literary Revival (1890 to 1922). Among the writers of that movement were George Russell, William Butler Yeats, John Milton Singe and Lady Augusta Gregory. Revival authors however focused so intently on the unity of the intellectuals and the peasantry that they ignored the Catholic middle class. The result was growing hard feelings between the two, reaching their high point when Synge's attempt at authenticity and honesty in his play *Playboy of the Western World* so offended middle class propriety and the middle class sense of national honor, that riots broke out in the Abbey Theater when the play was first produced.

James Joyce (1882–1941), son of a middle class Catholic family, was the first Catholic writer since Carleton to enter the scene. He was critical of Revival authors not for their honesty, but for what he considered their excesses. His work took a different direction from theirs, exerting an influence that has reached far beyond the shores of Ireland. Joyce's work, however, was still deeply grounded in Irish life, attentive to Irish sentiments and perspectives and sensitive to the genuine Irish voice.

Sheridan Le Fanu lived and wrote in the first half of that rich literary tradition. Like other writers of the time he was attuned to Irish lore and speech, not just that of his native Dublin but also of County Limerick where his family moved when he was a child.² Like others of his tradition Le Fanu was also interested in folklore. In June 1836 he published an article in the *Dublin University Magazine* titled "Scraps of Hibernian Ballads" (later included in *The Purcell Papers*) in which he wrote of "the pleasurable and patriotic duty of collecting together the many, many specimens of genuine poetic feeling, which have sprung up like flowers, from the warm though neglected soil" of Ireland. And like other Anglo-Irish writers Le Fanu wove Irish characters and settings into his fiction, although he used far fewer folk themes in his stories than did others of that tradition.

Looking back to his work Elizabeth Bowen says that "the point of view, the evaluation, the mood, the dilemmas" of Le Fanu's fiction, even when set in England, "are all Hibernian." "His Ireland", she says, "was far from being 'stage Ireland', it was the Ireland as he knew her to be, for better or worse" (Bowen 1968: vii–viii; 1947: 8). Le Fanu's work can thus be best understood and appreciated when the author is viewed as an Irish writer within the Anglo-Irish tradition employing Irish motifs, characters, mood, setting and the folk speech. It is, however, his place in the fiction of the supernatural that we recognize his most important contribution.

² See the memoirs of William Le Fanu, Sheridan Le Fanu's brother for a description of the family's years in Limerick.

Le Fanu and the Gothic Tradition

Le Fanu was heir to the Gothic novel, a new kind of literature that appeared in 1764 when Horace Walpole brought together the realism of the novel and the fantasy of previous forms of fiction. This new genre was refined and diversified by Clara Reeve, Anne Radcliffe, Matthew "Monk" Lewis and Le Fanu's fellow Dubliner, who like himself was of Huguenot descent, Charles Robert Maturin. By 1820 the Gothic novel had run its course, and alongside novels of other kinds shorter fiction had begun to rise to prominence.

The modern short story emerged from forms such as the parable, fable, sketch and anecdote. The short story in its modern literary form first took shape in early nineteenth century America with the work of Washington Irving, Nathaniel Hawthorne and above Edgar Allan Poe who not only wrote some of the first short stories in the modern manner, including the first stories of mystery and suspense, but who also gave us a theory of its most effective composition. In the last decades of the nineteenth century the short story rose to prominence throughout Europe, exemplified by the work of Guy de Maupassant, Anton Chekhov, Ivan Turgenev and others.

Short fiction was present in Anglo-Irish fiction from its inception. In fact it has been said that Maria Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent* may be regarded "as the very first Irish short story" (Kilroy 1984: 3). V. S. Pritchett has also observed that the short story is a form in which Irish writers have always excelled (ib. 1) as seen in Irish writing from the work of the early authors of Anglo-Irish literature through Joyce and beyond. Le Fanu wrote novels and some poetry. It was with his short stories of the supernatural, however, that he excelled as a writer and emerged as a literary innovator.

The supernatural was commonplace in pre-modern literature, especially the romance, disappearing for a time in modern fiction as a result of the Enlightenment emphasis on science and reason, then reappearing in the Gothic novel (Clery 1999), and it has been thriving ever since in literature and in other media of popular culture. This resiliency and staying power show that the supernatural is one of those timeless, universal ideas that appear as recurrent themes in both oral traditions and written literature.

The supernatural appears in folklore in different ways in different genres. Max Lüthi, examining the supernatural in European oral

traditions, says that fairy tales (also called folk tale and *Märchen*) are pure fantasy in which action takes place outside normal time and space, in a "once upon a time" realm "in a place far away", where fairy godmothers, magical transformation, monsters, witches, etc. routinely appear, elements that function, as do ordinary characters, to advance the plot.

Legends and sagas, unlike the folk tale, take place in historical time and specific places. Characters and events in these genres are believed, by those who tell and listen to the story, to be real people experiencing real events. In the *Märchen* the appearance of the supernatural arouses no particular emotion. In legends, however, a brush with the preternatural, or the sudden intrusions of the other-worldly into everyday affairs, "arouses in people an uncanny horror". One shudders, says Lüthi, "when he hears the roar of the wild hunt and sees it ghostly progression across the night sky... his senses weaken when he feels himself suddenly jerked up and pulled away to a distant place."

The preternatural is all the more disquieting in folk societies, for although the other world is imagined as strictly distinct from the profane, it is not far away, and can intrude on our reality at any time. Indeed its representatives are very close, often living among ordinary people, "in their houses, in their fields, in the nearby woods, river, mountain or lake". And when someone encounters one of them, even those numinous figures that have come as helpers, the experience is different in kind from encounters with fellow human beings; more demanding, more pressing and more relentless than those made on individuals from our side of reality (Lüthi 1992: 10–11).

The difference between folk and modern societies is that people living in folk communities never question the existence of the supernatural and thus accept its presence as a natural, although unsettling event, when encountered in legends and sagas. In the modern society, on the other hand, readers no longer believe in preternatural forces and spiritual being, although some still do, and others have their doubts, more of both than one might think. In this case the writer of supernatural tales, unlike the teller of traditional legends, must entice the reader into the willing suspension of disbelief, or ask them to indulge what belief may linger, in order for the story to work the way it should.

This is the usual way of looking at fiction going back to Coleridge, not just supernatural stories. Perhaps a better way of looking at it, though, would be to follow Brigid Lowe who maintains that fiction does not ask us to believe anything. Our primary object of telling a story is “to produce an imaginative experience” (Lowe 2007: 82–83). The skill of the author of the supernatural tale, therefore, is to entice us into imagining what it would be like for us if there were indeed such a thing as the supernatural; how we would feel if we suddenly encountered it and through this imaging to arouse a sense of the uncanny and the thrill of fear and horror one has felt from primordial days in an encounter with the Other World.

What has actually endured in literary form, however, is not the supernatural itself, but rather the shock of encountering it, the same feature indeed that Lüthi tells us stands at the heart of the legends and sagas of the oral tradition. Thus the heart of the modern literary tale of the supernatural lies in what Tzvetan Todorov calls the fantastic, “the duration of uncertainty” in the narrative when characters in the story, and the readers, have not yet decided between a natural or a supernatural explanation to the puzzling and frightening events that have so far unfolded in the narrative. (Todorov 1973) We can see how this works in two novels by Le Fanu, *Uncle Silas* where the supernatural is used to advance the plot and in *The House by the Churchyard* that includes a subplot that narrates the shock of encountering the otherworldly that can stand on its own as a short story.

Uncle Silas is the story of a young heiress, Maude Ruthyn, threatened by her unscrupulous uncle, his son and a villainous accomplice, Madame de la Rougierre, who plot her murder for her inheritance. In the first part of the novel Maud’s father hires Madame de la Rougierre as Maude’s governess. From the very start the Madame attempts to establish dominance over Maude. To that end she exploits a legend associated with Maud’s ancestral home, Knowl.

“There is not an old house in England” says Maude “of which the servants and young people who live in it do not cherish some traditions of the ghostly.” Knowl was no exception for it too had its “shadows, noises, and marvelous records”. One such specter was the ghost of Rachel Ruthyn, “the beauty of Queen Anne’s time, who died of grief for the handsome Colonel Norbrooke, who was killed in the Low Countries”, the lady now a ghost that “walks the house at

night, in crisp and sounding silks. She is not seen, only heard. The tapping of her high heeled shoes, the sweep and rustle of her brocade, her sighs as she pauses in the galleries, near the bedroom doors; and sometimes, on stormy nights, her sobs”.

The other specter was the link-man “a lank, dark faced, black-haired man, in a sable suit, with a link or torch in his hand. The torch usually only smolders, a deep red glow, as the link-man visits his beat. The library is one of the rooms he sees to”. This apparition unlike “Lady Rachel is seen only, never heard. His steps fall noiselessly as shadows on the floor and carpet” and by the stories she had heard from others, helping the evil Madame, as Maude herself tells us, to make Maude nervous and to prepare the way for the “odd sort of ascendancy” that gradually and seemingly without effort the “repulsive Frenchwoman” was establishing over her. There is no “duration of uncertainty” here, and no final shock of encountering the otherworldly. The ghosts in this context serve only to add some atmosphere to the narrative, and as a means of developing in the narrative the relationship between the villain and the heroine.

The story of the hand in *The House by the Churchyard* is another matter. The novel tells a complicated story unfolding over the span of a century of suspense, intrigue and violence involving multiple characters and various plots, punctuated by murder, blackmail and suicide. A sense of unease is introduced in the narrative when the mysterious Mr. Mervyn takes up residence in the Tiled House, a house that is rumored to be haunted. Le Fanu develops the atmosphere and mystery of the Tiled House by inserting the story of the spectral hand as a subplot into the narrative.

The hand is first seen by the lady of the house reaching over the garden wall. She thinks it might be the hand of someone preparing to climb over into the garden and cries out in alarm. At that point the hand is withdrawn. The servants see it as well and hear strange knocking sounds on the window. Eventually the hand appears inside the house. The master of the house at first dismisses such reports until he too sees it reaching through the curtains of the four poster bed where he and the lady of the house are lying. It retreats to the closet when the master pursues it, yet when the door is opened and the contents of the closet examined, there is no one inside. The hand is finally seen reaching for the family’s eldest child in his bed. The quiet and steady intrusion of the hand from outside the garden into

the house and finally to the baby's crib, along with the fact that at no time did anyone see more than the hand, increases the sense of horror of its uncanny appearance.

This episode is only an aside in the twists and turns of the novel and Le Fanu apologizes to the reader for "loitering so long" over it. Yet the tale is a model modern ghost story and as such has been extracted from the novel and published in anthologies. It is an example of the most effective narrative realization of the recurrent theme of the shock of an encounter with the preternatural in the short story form.

It is difficult to extend the duration of uncertainty for very long. The classic Gothic novel, therefore, included the fantastic not as a central theme but rather as a narrative element or a subplot, much as did Le Fanu in his own novels. Also the reading public eventually became weary of page after page of ghosts and goblins. Eventually the theme of the encounter left the novel, shedding all the trappings and melodrama of the Gothic novel and settled into a kind of tale "wholly and uniquely devoted to the supernatural, returning", as Peter Penzoldt says "to its most logical form, the short story" (1965: 5).

The short story and the novel, says Boris Ejxenbawm (variously spelled Eichenbaum and Eikenbaum), are two types of prose fiction that differ not only in kind, but that are "also inherently at odds" with one another. The novel, he says, derives from history, from travels; the short story from folklore and anecdote. The novel must make room for the development of characters. It must accommodate different episodes and conduct parallel intrigues with different centers of concentration, requiring authorial skill in deploying those elements and in binding them together into a coherent narrative. The short story, on the other hand, "must be constructed on the basis of some contradiction, incongruity, error, contrast, etc. ...amassing its whole weight toward the ending". In the case of the modern tale of the supernatural, the incongruity of bizarre events and the contrast of the ordinary and predictable on the one hand and the disconcerting on the other leads to the shock of the otherworldly intrusion which is its ending. There are no parallel intrigues in the short story, says Ejxenbawm "no digressions or episodes. There is complete unity of time, place and action" (1968: 7, 4).

This was just the kind of story that Le Fanu was writing in the middle of the nineteenth century, within the evolving Irish tradition of short fiction, refining it in his own manner and thus preparing the way for the rise to predominance of this form of fiction in the last decades of the century. Le Fanu has been called the inventor of the modern tale of the supernatural, and it has even been claimed that he wrote the first ghost story in the short story format.³ Leaving aside questions of firsts, Le Fanu did introduce something new into the short story of the supernatural; his accurate description of psychological details, especially the details of psychological abnormalities, and his own vision of the supernatural as inspired by the Swedish mystic Emmanuel Swedenborg.

The supernatural in Le Fanu's fiction is imagined in terms of powerful forces that exist parallel to ordinary reality, forces usually unconnected with our ordinary affairs, but that can occasionally intrude unbidden into our realm of reality. Such intrusions may occur when individuals undergo physical or psychological stress when the path is open for psychic forces to work their way into the inner self and manifest themselves in the form of what we might call mental disturbances. With this view of the Other World, Le Fanu has, in other words, provided a supernatural explanation of psychosis. He presents this explanation in a scientific manner in the form of case studies from the practice of the fictitious Dr. Hesselius. With this air of authenticity Le Fanu heightens the contrast between what we know, what we believe and what we have confidence in on the one hand, and the mysterious and threatening other dimension on the other, a contrast effective for the modern reader for the drama of events and the eventual shock of encountering the otherworldly.

Le Fanu's stories anticipated or directly influenced later writers such as M. R. James, Algernon Blackwood and Arthur Machen. He also anticipated the psychological drama that would later flourish under the influence of Freud and others. He also introduced the infallible scientific detective later appearing in Bram Stoker's Dr.

³ Daniel Defoe's "A Relation of the Apparition of Mrs. Veal" published in 1705 is usually considered the first ghost story in English written in the short story format. That story, however, although using narrative devices typical of fiction, was intended not as fiction but rather as an account of a true incident (Search 1959: 9).

van Helsing in *Dracula*, and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories. It is "not so much in the subject-matter" however as "as in the manner of its expression" (Brown 1951: 121) that we see Le Fanu's art and craft, the way in which he uses language to create a sense of plausibility and drama and to bring to us with a greater force the shock of the inevitable encounter.

Le Fanu's use of language

James Wood notes that the old modernist hope is that prose will be as well written as poetry (Brown 2008: 182). This means that writers pay attention not only to the structure of the narrative, the advancement of plots and the development of characters, and to achieving the aura of realism, but that they also attend to the nuances and affective associations of words, and to patterns of sound and grammar, repetitions, parallels, echoes and the balance and the rhythm of the sentence. As a story-teller Le Fanu uses, to great effect, those devices in the telling of his stories.

In the vampire story "Carmilla" he develops the character of the young protagonist in part by the words she uses in her first person narrative in which she describes the region in which she lives, "where everything is so marvelously cheap, I really don't see how ever so much more money would at all materially add to our comforts, or even luxury". These are words one would expect from an optimistic and innocent young girl under such circumstances. Also, the aura of credibility and scientific authenticity of Dr. Hesselius's medical journal are created by the use of medical and scientific diction.

Le Fanu also uses syntax for stylistic purposes is seen, for example, in a passage in *The House by the Churchyard* where he uses alliteration and coined sentences to form a regular meter and cadence to evoke the steady downpour described in the passage, and in "Some Strange Disturbances in an Old House in Aungier Street" he creates suspense and builds tension with short, loosely connected sentences and repetitions. He also uses different register (words and patterns to fit different situations) for stylistic effect, contrasting a reportative style, for the purpose of narrative description, with the formal epistolary style of the day to evoke both authenticity and a

closeness between reader and character through the direct address of a personal letter. Le Fanu also uses dialect in both dialogue and narrative for the same purposes.

Such stylistic devices not only advance the plot, help depict characters and create the suspension of belief necessary for the effectiveness of this kind of narrative, but it also imparts to La Fanu's prose a smoother, more poetic quality that enhances the tales that he tells.

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**Bewitched by Bigotry:
John Buchan's *Witch Wood***

PILVI RAJAMÄE

The present article proposes to address the problematics of ethics as related to religion by tackling the problem of religious extremism in John Buchan's *Witch Wood* (1927). Buchan (1875–1940), a Scottish author and historian and a Free Kirk minister's son who had developed a passionate hatred for religious fanaticism, being all too familiar with his church's record blemished with violence, in *Witch Wood* examines how the Gospel of Love of the New Testament is perverted by the Scottish Kirk into a creed of hate and violence in seventeenth-century Scotland by the Kirk's bid to seize secular power. The book resounds with astonishing topicality. In the 1920s the book was a response to the emergence of extremist ideologies which had wreaked havoc with the European civilization during and after the Great War. Today it speaks more powerfully than ever before about the fragility of civilized values in the face of bigotry and intolerance and complicated games of power which are shielded by the mask of piety. In *Witch Wood* a young idealistic minister who is an embodiment of Christian love for his fellow mortals has to combat the Covenanting dogmatists during the English Civil War, which among other things was a huge arena for testing and experimenting with new forms of religious worship, with the upsurge in Scotland of extreme Calvinist fanaticism which relied heavily, and largely incomprehendingly, on the Old Testament's militancy which seemed to sanction even murder of the innocents in the name of true religion. Buchan shows how the obverse side of Christian fanaticism is no better than crude paganism, the young minister's congregation having succumbed to the lure of the renegade Elect and, with the connivance of the local church authorities, has turned itself into a

witches' coven, practicing satanic orgies in the woods. The book is a bitter indictment against attempts to harness religion in the service of goals far removed from its original purpose and takes a firm stance against manipulating the deluded believers to commit atrocities they would never otherwise contemplate.

Central to the book is the interpretation of law, both ecclesiastical and secular. The historical context of the book – the years 1644 to 1646 when the outcome of the Civil War was hanging in the balance, both sides still dreaming of imposing their interpretation of good government on the population in religious turmoil – is used by Buchan to show to what effect bigotry and uncritical zeal can distort a creed the central message of which is *caritas* as opposed to hate. A passionate moderate, Buchan chose as his touchstone another impassioned moderate, his favourite Scottish hero the Marquis of Montrose, who had been one of the instigators of the original Solemn League and Covenant to protect the Kirk from incursions from Anglican fanatics but had taken exception to the second Covenant as giving the Kirk an unduly big role in secular government. To Buchan, Montrose is also ideally placed vis-à-vis the King, Charles II, whose excessive, if necessary, use of the royal prerogative he did not approve of. Another favourable credential was the Marquis' impressive campaigning record, especially his year of miraculous marches and surprise victories over Covenanting forces in the Highlands which the book covers, to end in predictable defeat, as his fellow countrymen, bewitched by the illusory prospect of imposing their Calvinism on Anglicans in the south, prefer zeal to balanced argument. Throughout the book the English and Scottish divines are disputing the envisaged common future of Presbyterianism at Westminster to give a bigger backdrop to the individual struggles of the parishioners in a parochial and backward parish of Woodilee in the Scottish Borders. The impossibility of not taking an individual stance in seemingly big and remote issues is borne out by the career of the young minister David Sempill whose tragic rite of passage from an idealistic minister to disillusioned soldier the book traces. The soldiery component is crucial, not only because Sempill is a character in the Victorian evangelical soldier of Christ mould, but because moderation itself, when circumstances demand it, can perforce be a combative creed. Sempill's evolution from a well-meaning but unquestioning and uncritical member of his church to

an active combatant against it on Montrose's side illustrates Buchan's tenet, voiced in *The Marquis of Montrose*, written parallelly with *Witch Wood*. Writing of Montrose's quixotic stance for lawful central authority, embodied by the King, in a country gone rampant with the exorbitant claims of unruly nobles and the fanatical Kirk, he ascribes Montrose "a moderation which is in itself a fire, where enthusiasm burns as fiercely for the whole truth as it commonly does for half-truths, where toleration becomes not merely a policy, but is itself an act of religion" (1996: 204). If that is the case, the moderate man is justified in resorting to arms to defend his policy, for "it is the soldier who turns the scale" (ib.) in any revolution.

How is a fighter to combat evil when it masks as piety? What roads are open to an enlightened moderate in a society crippled by superstition? Can and should the legal channels be utilized, though they are corrupt? Can one rely on popular opinion when one's own goes against the grain? Can personal example be educative, to demonstrate the truth through actions rather than words? Can good combat evil by virtue of it being virtuous? Whose province is it to define good and evil? Is it the sole prerogative of the church as mediating the divine law? If so, what should be the limitations imposed on those who proclaim 'divine' truths? Can they impose them themselves or should secular authority intervene? If churchmen are allowed to rule the state like ancient priests ruled pagan societies, what makes a Christian state different from a pagan one? Can bloodshed be justified to defend a righteous cause? How to reconcile the militancy of the Old Testament and the message of love of the New Testament? And how should one proceed when one's church and state preach a creed that is inimical to one's convictions? These are some of the troublesome questions the book asks and central to all these problems for Buchan is the management of doctrine in the specific context of Scottish Presbyterianism.

The Scottish reformation had started out as a widely democratic popular movement to free the population of the despotism of the self-seeking nobility but at the hands of fanatical reformers the original good intentions were lost. The doctrine of predestination especially left a wide leeway for pride and self-righteousness to creep back in, culminating in the unfettered arrogance of the Covenanting saints. In *The Marquis of Montrose* Buchan has put the matter in a nutshell:

As conceived by its authors, Scottish Presbyterianism was to be a noble democracy, the sanctuary of the true Word, and not a museum of pedantries. /.../ Unhappily, like all things built of new materials by human hands, it contained the elements of strife and decay. Seeking its warrant directly from on high, it made of the Bible a manual of government, not only for Church but for State. While it repudiated Rome, it revived the claims of Rome, and imposed a far more merciless discipline. 'New presbyter,' in Milton's phrase, was, 'but old priest writ large.' The Kirk had, indeed, become possessed of weapons too terrible for plain men to use with safety to themselves or others. It sought to make rules for daily life out of the fierce ritual of early Israel. It forgot the spirit of the letter and religion in its mechanical forms. /.../ If a man believes that his heart is desperately wicked, that he is doomed to eternal fires but for the interposition of God's grace, and that to walk in grace it is necessary to observe half-understood precepts from the Scriptures without any attempt to rethink them in the light of new conditions – nay, that such an attempt is in God's eyes the unpardonable sin – it is small wonder if he forge such an instrument as the seventeenth-century Scottish Kirk. To him tolerance must only be another name for lukewarmness, and reason only the temptation of the devil. If he is right, all those who differ from him must be wrong, and it is his duty to enforce his faith with fire and sword. Since God orders all things, no part of life is beyond the province of His servants, and the Kirk must rule not only in general assemblies but in court and camp and parliament. And from this it is only a little step to a kind of Jesuitism – the belief that in the performance of so great a work a sin or two will not be remembered against the worker. (Ib. 10)

In *Witch Wood* he demonstrates to what extent human corruption can distort a sound theological argument that God cannot be argued with and His mercy can only be a free gift. Predestination was the central tenet of the Scottish Kirk and it was central to the creed of the

Church of England as expounded in the Thirty-Nine Articles. The Synod of Dort of 1618, with a strong contingent of British divines, reaffirmed Calvinism on predestination, summing up the creed in a suitable Dutch mnemonic – the TULIP – where “T stands for Total Depravity, the result of original sin, whereby human nature is innately corrupt, and incapable of seeking salvation unaided; U for Unconditional Election, God’s choice of his saints being absolute and unalterable; L for Limited Atonement, that Christ died to redeem only the elect, not all mankind; I for Irresistible Grace, that an individual cannot frustrate God’s intentions towards him; P for Perseverance of the Saints, that one cannot lose his election.” (Parry 1996: 184) Calvin had spoken of the visible and invisible churches, the visible one being the community of Christian believers, both good and evil, elect and reprobate, and the invisible one being an assembly of the saints and the elect, known only to God since the beginning of time.

It is the peculiar nature of Calvin’s doctrine of election that lays it open to charges of hypocrisy. If election is unconditional and irreversible, it produces in those who perceive themselves as the Elect the kind of smug self-righteousness which leaves no room for argument or seeing an alternative point of view. The merciless rigidity of doctrine and the presumed utter depravity of human nature banish all innocent joy. The upshot is a despotism no less self-seeking than any other.

Buchan has chosen to make manifest this inbuilt duality by giving the lighter and darker side of Calvinism face and form. The forces of light are represented by the young minister and his future wife who minister to the needs of his congregation in the true spirit of Christian humility and *caritas*. Darkness is embodied by the Covenanting elders and ministers who abet or condone depravity out of wilful ignorance or convenience. Depravity is given the form of a witches’ coven, an alternative congregation that holds pagan rites in the woods and black masses in the church. By exposing the seemingly virtuous saints to the temptations of the flesh and showing with what ease they can reframe the doctrine to accommodate a little illicit private pleasure for themselves, Buchan exposes the emptiness of their claims to the monopoly of virtue. By showing pagan orgies and human sacrifice in the woods as being in no way different from the Covenanters’ massacre of Montrose’s innocent camp followers,

women and children, in an orgy of blood-letting, Buchan takes the air out of the argument that the Kirk might be the custodian of some unique, deeper truth not subject to human decency. He argues that the undue rigidity of the creed itself opens the way to the perversion of doctrine, laying the Kirk open to charges of hypocrisy. The speaker here is one of Montrose's soldiers who has seen the world and is thus in a position to put the Scottish church in a wider perspective:

The kirk has made the yett of grace ower wide for sinful men, and all ither yetts ower narrow. It has banned innocence and so made a calling of hypocrisy, for human nature is human nature, and if you tell a man that ilka honest pleasure is a sin in God's sight, he finds a way to get pleasure and yet keep the name of godliness. And mind you, the pleasure he enjoys with a doubtful conscience will no long be honest. There will be a drop of black ink in the spring water that makes it drumly, and ere he kens he'll be seeking a stronger brew. The upshot will be that folk who sit under you in the kirk will dance in the Wood on the auld heathen holidays, and the man whose word gangs furthest with the Presbytery will be hugging lusts to his bosom that would make a common foot-sentinel spew. For they've all their sure title, as they call it – they're all elected into grace, so what for should they fash themselves? (Buchan 1993: 225)

This duality can be a way to religious backsliding and madness, as shown by Sempill's chief adversary, his most exemplary elder and the King-Devil of the witches' coven for whom the strains of his dual personality are too much and he loses his reason. Bewitched by bigotry and duped by illicit pleasure, the congregation-coven fails to recognize true saintliness when it appears among them and banishes it with fear and disgust. At the end of the book the Kirk stands unredeemed and as Sempill's fate shows, for freedom of conscience to be possible one has to physically remove oneself from the poisoned atmosphere to countries and climes more amenable to the spirit of free inquiry and debate.

Sempill goes into exile on the Continent and chooses the career of a mercenary. In this he is typical of a long tradition of Scottish

men finding military employment abroad but it is also a comment on the impasse the society has reached. The big questions raised by the book necessarily get a negative answer. Virtue and truth on their own are powerless to sway public opinion, no matter how manifest they are. To minds twisted by perverted dogma piety appears as carnal policy, moderation as backsliding, independent opinion as contumacy, moderation as lack of true zeal. The church militant harnessed to state policy banishes pity and humanity, producing a tyranny more fierce than any secular ruler could impose because it masks as true piety. Private refuge from its relentless onslaught can ultimately only be found in death, as demonstrated by Sempill's truly charitable bride Katrine who puts her life and enlightened medical knowledge at the disposal of the plague-stricken community and is rewarded with scorn and fear. Her death and transformation into a neo-Platonic idea/form in Sempill's classically trained imagination seems to point to the regrettable narrowing of philosophical sensibility in the reformed churches, especially of the Calvinist kind which rely heavily on the blood-thirsty militarism of the Old Testament at the expense of the mellower philosophical heritage of Greece. This last, integral to the long catholic tradition, when banished from the reformed churches as unnecessarily detracting from true zeal, produces a maimed creed, unbalanced and virulent, as it lacks a necessary corrective. A religion without a free inquiry into its nature and dogma cannot pretend to be anything more than blind superstition, and as such, stands on a par with any heathen creed. In fact, true paganism, a life in harmony with the natural cycles of life, instead of their perversion, might be preferable to misunderstood Christian teaching. This is signalled by Katrine, the embodiment of pure, selfless Christian *caritas* in the book, who is construed by the superstitious villagers as an evil elf of the woods but who in fact banishes any superstitious fears of the woods from Sempill's mind by embracing all manifestations of nature without the distorting lens of Calvinist dogma. Significantly, she is not buried in the kirkyard but in the woods where she used to joyously roam as a free spirit. Unconstrained by false dogma, she is the spirit of love embracing all creation that turns the sin-tainted woods for Sempill into a prelapsarian Eden. It is only her image of pure, selfless love that Sempill the minister takes with him into exile, for ultimately that is all that matters, the Kirk's painfully contrived edifice built around

this basic human emotion to distort and stifle it having fallen by the roadside as quite useless.

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Note

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Le mythe de la sorcière et ses avatars dans la littérature contemporaine: les sorcières de Pierre Gripari

EFSTRATIA OKTAPODA

L'homme ne vit pas seulement de pain. Il vit aussi de rêves, et la fonction fabulatrice est une fonction vitale [...] C'est pourquoi il n'y a rien de plus beau, ni de meilleur, ni de plus important au monde que de raconter des histoires. C'est mon métier, et j'en suis fier. Bien avant Gutenberg et Pasteur, je place au premier rang des bienfaiteurs de l'homme les génies inconnus qui ont conçu l'histoire de *Peau d'Âne*, de *Blanche Neige* ou de *Cendrillon*.

Pierre Gripari, *Gueule d'Aminche*, *L'Âge d'Homme*.

Figure frontalière entre le civilisé et le sauvage, le réel et le sacré, le passé et le présent, la sorcière lie les différents univers, héritant d'un secret transmis et s'érigeant dans la continuité d'une tradition. Le personnage de la sorcière, inscrit de *prime abord* dans la tradition orale, tire son pouvoir du *mythos*, parole formulée, à l'opposition du *logos*, discours écrit (J.-P. Vernant), et il incarne la réeffectuation de la parole et l'appropriation d'un discours ancestral. Comme tout grand mythe, celui de la sorcière est tendu par des forces antagonistes, et c'est grâce à ces contradictions que celle-ci ne reste pas une figure figée.

Être humain suspecté ou pourchassé, la sorcière reste, au fil des siècles, un personnage à mi-chemin entre le naturel et le surnaturel, ancré profondément dans une réalité sociale comme pôle de désordre et de chaos, dans une société constituée pour l'exclure; la sorcière, c'est l'ennemi.

Mais si la sorcière et ses multiples représentations apparaissent désormais comme “un archétype de notre culture, inscrite dans la littérature, la peinture, l’opéra, c’est qu’elle a d’abord été vivante”. (Gaborit, Guesdon & Boutrolle-Caporal 1988: 1306) Contrairement au sorcier qui ne possède ni le pouvoir ni la valeur emblématique de la sorcière, car il se situe dans la lointaine dérive du savoir féminin, cette dernière naît, telle une Sybille, dans les formules magiques qu’elle seule sait formuler, et s’inscrit dans le processus de la longue durée, continuant à nourrir l’imaginaire collectif.

Personnage populaire donc, figure prolifique dans la tradition orale, les contes et les récits, “tapie dans l’ombre de nos nuits et de nos peurs, la Sorcière nous hante, nous séduit, nous amuse”. (Ib. 1307) Au fil de son évolution dans la tradition orale, elle gagne jusque dans les textes littéraires. Le plus souvent maléfique, on la retrouve aussi bien dans la psychanalyse que dans la littérature enfantine à côté de son doublet, l’ogre, figure emblématique comme elle, également de nature ambiguë.

Les avatars du mythe de la sorcière dans la littérature pour la jeunesse

Constitutive de la littérature pour la jeunesse, la sorcière permet au mythe de nourrir les sociétés et les générations successives en lui assurant sa pérennité. Reléguée au niveau du merveilleux, elle “se dépouille de son mystère, de sa force de suggestion, de sa réalité”. (Ib. 1318) Pour être comprise d’un large public, elle est assortie volontairement de caractéristiques figées et des comportements déterminés. Elle devient alors “ce personnage sénile et grimaçant, doté d’attributs précis, bien que vidés de tout sens” (ib. 1319): balai, quenouille, hibou ou chat, chapeau pointu et verrue sur le nez ...

Édentée, hideuse ou diabolique, elle devient alors un personnage caricatural “comme si l’outrance des caractéristiques psychiques et physiques allait compenser la perte de densité du mythe”. (1319) Pierre Gripari dépeint ainsi

[...] une vieille dame [...] mal coiffée, mal habillée
[...] avec des cheveux dans les yeux, une dent sur le

devant, une bosse par derrière, et une goutte au bout du nez qui ne voulait jamais tomber.

(*La Sorcière et le commissaire* 1981: 6)

Représentée avec une cape et une grosse ceinture de vesse-de-loup, pourvue d'une bourse contenant "charmes et amulettes", la sorcière a des gants en peau de chat doublés de fourrure, et pour chaussures des poulaines. Elle porte des chaussettes tricolores aux couleurs extravagantes, presque ridicules, des lunettes rondes; elle figure toujours un balai à la main, quand il n'est pas dans le placard, suivie d'un chat, de préférence noir, si elle n'est pas en train de mijoter, tel un alchimiste, des ingrédients redoutables et pestilentiels dans des grosses marmites, proférant force incantations magiques incohérentes.

Équipée d'une semblable panoplie d'attributs et d'accessoires, elle devient un personnage stéréotypé, résolument simpliste. Malgré cette schématisation primaire dans la littérature contemporaine pour la jeunesse, on est loin de la sorcière maléfique comme celle qu'on a connue dans le conte de *Hansel et Gretel* de Grimm, illustré par L. Zweger.

Qu'elle s'appelle Camomille ou Grabouilla, elle fait irruption dans les contes pour enfants et dans les séries télévisées, en renouvelant les avatars du mythe. Maléfique ou au pouvoir de nuisance limité, sadique ou exotique (la collection de Gallimard "Un livre dont vous êtes le héros"), bleue (la Schtroumpette dans le petit monde bleu des Schtroumpfs) ou verte, rebelle ou non, répugnante ou bien aimée, (Samantha et sa famille dans le feuilleton américain *Ma sorcière bien-aimée*): la fonctionnalité de la sorcière varie d'un conte à l'autre, d'une époque à l'autre.

Les sorcières de Pierre Gripari

Auteur français, Gripari est l'un des écrivains les plus appréciés des enfants. Il est né à Paris en 1925 et est mort en 1990. Fils d'une mère française et d'un père grec originaire de Mykonos, Gripari fait des études de lettres au lycée Louis-le-Grand, puis s'engage trois ans dans l'armée. Resté orphelin pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale, il abandonne ses études et fait plusieurs métiers pour vivre. Il arrête de

travailler pour se consacrer à la littérature. En 1963, il publie une autobiographie *Pierrot la lune*, et sa pièce de théâtre *Lieutenant Tenant* est montée à la Gaîté-Montparnasse.

Il écrit des romans, des contes fantastiques et des récits pour enfants: *Histoires du Prince Pipo, Nanasse et Gigantet, Petite sœur, Pirlipipi, deux sirops, une sorcière* (Éditions Grasset-Jeunesse), *L'incroyable Équipée de Phosphore Noloc*, etc. (aux Éditions de la Table Ronde), *Pièces enfantines, Café-Théâtre*, etc. (Éditions de l'Âge d'Homme).

Gripari sait mettre à profit les mythes et le folklore, et il s'amuse à bouleverser l'ordre du merveilleux. Il est sans conteste l'un des auteurs majeurs de la littérature pour la jeunesse en France. Il a écrit énormément de livres pour la jeunesse. Les *Contes de la rue Broca* (1967) constituent son ouvrage le plus célèbre. Composé d'un ensemble de récits, il met en scène le merveilleux dans le cadre familial d'un quartier de Paris à l'époque contemporaine; géants, sorcières et fées surgissent d'un vieux patrimoine légendaire et s'animent d'une vitalité nouvelle. Le recueil, passé inaperçu dans sa première édition chez la Table Ronde, a apporté, grâce à sa réédition par Gallimard, succès et célébrité à Gripari. L'ouvrage est traduit dans le monde entier, en Italie, en Allemagne, en Grèce, en Bulgarie, en Pologne, au Brésil, en Hongrie et au Japon. En 1976, on décerna à l'auteur le Prix Voltaire pour l'ensemble de son œuvre.

Gripari a le don d'écrire des histoires où il est toujours question de diables et de sorcières. Ses livres sont un peu l'histoire de sa vie, telle qu'il l'a racontée lui-même dans plusieurs autobiographies.

Selon une version, il est né, il y a plusieurs siècles, dans la petite ville de Lutèce en Gaule car en ce temps-là, la France s'appelait la Gaule, mais c'était un pays bien différent de celui que nous connaissons. Sa mère était une sorcière viking, et son père un magicien grec. Ils s'épousèrent par amour, mais leur union ne fut pas heureuse. La mère espérait que le père utiliserait sa magie orientale pour fabriquer de l'or, mais le père s'y refusait. De son côté, elle abusait de la potion magique et finit un beau jour par se noyer dans son chaudron. Quelques années plus tard, le père fut foudroyé par un feu descendu du ciel. On pense généralement que Dieu était fâché contre lui, mais on n'a jamais su pourquoi. (Gripari, *Archives, L'Âge d'Homme*).

Indifférent à toute ambition matérielle, il se voulait surtout marchand de rêves. Plein d'imagination, de drôlerie, de malice et de tendresse, il est un véritable poète. Ses sorcières, celle de la rue Mouffetard, celle du placard aux balais, celle avec le commissaire, ou encore celle de *Pirlipipi*, *2 sirops*, *une sorcière*, se classent parmi les personnages classiques pour la jeunesse. Elles ont veillé des générations et des générations d'enfants et ont un long avenir devant elles, en librairie, en musique, et au théâtre.

Encore une histoire de sorcière

Des histoires des sorcières, il y en eut beaucoup, au fil des siècles, mais en voici encore une: Il était une fois la ville de Paris. Il était une fois une rue Broca. Il était une fois un café kabyle. Il était une fois un Monsieur Pierre. Il était une fois un petit garçon qui s'appelait Bachir. Il était une fois une petite fille. C'est ainsi qu'en lisant *La sorcière de la rue Mouffetard et autres contes de la rue Broca*, on fait la connaissance non seulement d'une sorcière, mais aussi d'une paire de chaussures, de la fée du robinet et de deux petits poissons magiques. Il faut dire que les sorcières et les fées de cet ouvrage sont très contemporaines.

Les sorcières modernes, comme la Clapiclote de J. Held, en moustaches et pantalons, ont une tout autre allure que la sorcière traditionnelle, aux traits terrifiants. S'opère ainsi la désincarnation du mythe de la sorcière dans ce domaine spécifique littéraire qu'est la littérature pour la jeunesse. Auteurs et illustrateurs des albums livrent aux enfants un personnage stéréotypé résolument simpliste, qui incarne à lui seul plusieurs personnages de sorcières.

"La sorcière de la rue Mouffetard" est bien différente des sorcières de Roald Dahl de *La Potion magique de Georges Bouillon* (Gallimard, 1982) et des *Sacrées sorcières* (Gallimard, 1983), récits capitaux. La sorcière de Pierre Gripari habite rue Mouffetard, elle est donc parisienne. Son auteur est un monsieur qui aime à plaisanter, narquois, impertinent, qui s'amuse à bouleverser l'ordre du merveilleux pour le plus grand plaisir des enfants, et aussi des adultes, de parents fatigués des mièvreries classiques.

Gripari se réapproprie le mythe et fait de la sorcière de la rue Mouffetard “une vieille sorcière, affreusement vieille, et laide, mais qui aurait bien voulu passer pour la plus belle fille du monde!”. (“La sorcière de la rue Mouffetard”, 1967: 19) Voilà les ingrédients garants de l’humour et du rire.

En même temps, le mythe se renouvelle. La vieille sorcière doit manger une petite fille à la tomate pour rajeunir. Car voici qu’un beau jour, en lisant le *Journal des sorcières*, elle tombe sur le communiqué suivant:

MADAME,
 Vous qui êtes VIEILLE et LAIDE
 Vous deviendrez JEUNE et JOLIE !
 Et pour cela:
 MANGEZ UNE PETITE FILLE
 à la sauce tomate.

(“La sorcière de la rue Mouffetard”, 19)

Mais pas n’importe quelle petite fille, une fillette dont le prénom commence obligatoirement par la lettre N. La suite du récit apprend que Nadia se promène rue Mouffetard, quand elle rencontre une vieille dame. Entre Nadia et la vieille dame, la conversation se déroule plutôt bien, cependant Nadia se méfie. Dans un premier temps, la sorcière lui demande un service: une boîte de sauce tomate. Dans un deuxième temps, plusieurs jours après cet épisode, elle parvient à enfermer la fillette dans le tiroir-caisse de la boutique. Le quiproquo, procédé théâtral bien connu dans les comédies, permet ici d’insister sur la confusion de la sorcière, et donc sur sa dévalorisation face aux humains. En outre, ses pièges pour attraper Nadia sont infantiles.

Bachir, Bachir, délivre-moi
 Ou la sorcière me tuera !

(“La sorcière de la rue Mouffetard”, 27)

crie de toutes ses forces Nadia. Dans le respect du bon sens populaire, les incantations cèdent la place à un langage vernaculaire à base de dictons et de proverbes tenant un rôle de contrepoint, la sorcière du placard aux balais sert de porte-parole à l’auteur. En effet, dans le conte éponyme, “Monsieur Pierre”, Gripari lui-même,

se met en scène; il mystifie ainsi son public et brouille les pistes, en répétant en leitmotiv cette formule magique qui tient la clé du récit:

Sorcière, sorcière,
Prends garde à ton derrière !
("La sorcière du placard aux balais", 106)

Le jour où "Monsieur Pierre" la prononce en entier, la sorcière sort de son placard et malheur à celui sur qui elle tombera ! Elle l'emportera ou bien le métamorphosera en poisson, ou en grenouille, à moins que... Oui, à moins qu'elle n'arrive pas à emporter les trois choses impossibles que le malheureux lui demandera. La sorcière sera alors métamorphosée elle-même en grenouille, une grenouille à cheveux, que "Monsieur Pierre" enfermera à tout jamais dans un bocal, après l'avoir rasée.

Autre avatar du mythe initiatique: Gripari reprend l'attribut du balai, sans pour autant doter sa sorcière de cet accessoire phallique. La sorcière du placard est non seulement dépourvue d'homme et de balai, mais aussi condamnée à vivre enfermée dans un placard aux balais, endroit réduit, pour finir, toujours seule, dans un bocal à grenouille, au moment où les poissons, quant à eux, vont par paire.

Transfuges d'exotisme et d'insolite, dans "La sorcière du placard aux balais", les animaux parlent entre eux et avec les humains; la petite souris sert même d'interprète entre l'homme et les poissons. Les formules magiques s'effacent ici devant des incantations rimées toutefois, non par la sorcière, mais prononcées par l'homme – ce qui est significatif du pouvoir final de l'humain sur la sorcière magicienne et d'une provocation verbale. Le conte conserve ainsi, du mythe archétypal de la sorcière, le dramatique (mise à mort, transformation) et le merveilleux (paroles des animaux).

Les sorcières de Pierre Gripari ne portent pas de nom. Facteur de mystère ou objet d'une mutation, elles tendent à s'uniformiser pour caractériser l'Innommable. Mais à l'image de leurs ancêtres, Médée et Circé, elles conservent le pouvoir de métamorphose.

Pourtant, la véritable transformation du mythe de la sorcière qu'opère Gripari réside en ce qu'elle perd son pouvoir magique. Au lieu de transformer l'homme en grenouille, c'est elle qui est ainsi transformée. Elle tombe dans le piège qu'elle a monté de toutes pièces, devenant subordonnée à l'homme dont le pouvoir s'affirme

supérieur au sien. Elle se voit alors dépouillée de son mystère. Une telle mutation de pouvoirs crée du merveilleux et provoque le rire.

Une sorcière pour rire

Les sorcières de Pierre Gripari font peur pour rire. En réalité, on n'a pas peur d'elles, ou on les craint à peine; elles n'ont rien d'effrayant, malgré leur physique horrible et abominable. "Agrémentées" de surcroît d'une verrue sur le nez, d'une dent devant et d'une bosse derrière, d'une taille ronde et courte, comme une tomate, d'un chapeau pointu noir, ou de tout autre détail comique, elles prennent une allure ludique sous le pinceau malicieux de Claude Lapointe et de Puig Rosado.

La peur ressentie de prime abord à l'apparence de la sorcière cède vite la place au sentiment du ridicule et se transforme en rire. La sorcière de Gripari dédramatise par l'humour l'angoisse qu'elle devrait générer. Si elle veut se rajeunir – et Dieu sait que les sorcières sont vieilles et laides, mais *très* vieilles et *très* laides –, la sorcière de la rue Mouffetard doit manger à tout prix une petite fille dont on a déjà vu que l'initiale de son prénom soit un N. L'angoisse cède la place au rire.

– Bonjour, Madame. Vous désirez ?

– Je voudrais Nadia.

(“La sorcière de la rue Mouffetard”, 22)

Loin de la traditionnelle mégère maléfique, la sorcière à la sauce tomate ne peut être que ridicule, extrêmement ridicule. Après sa rencontre avec Nadia, elle la suit à l'épicerie tenue par le père de cette dernière:

– Je voulais une boîte de sauce tomate.

– Ah, bon ? Une petite ou une grande ?

– Une grande, c'est pour Nadia...

– Quoi ?

(“La sorcière de la rue Mouffetard”, 22)

Personnage caricatural, peut-être pas grande, mais grosse et forte, la sorcière génère ici le rire, à peine retenu sur les lèvres du lecteur par

la confusion de ses propos qui montre son inadaptation à la situation. Car les sorcières du XX^e et du XXI^e siècles, anonymes et insolites, ont perdu leur cruauté initiale, désormais dissimulée sous le jeu et l'humour. Sollicitant la magie de la parole ou la parole magique, Gripari réactive les mythes anciens, et les invocations rimées des contes de Perrault ou de Grimm (Peyroutet 1994: 34–35):

Sorcière, sorcière,
Prends garde à ton derrière !
("La Sorcière du placard aux balais", 108)

chante malicieusement Monsieur Pierre tout le long du récit, sans jamais finir sa phrase. Car malheur à celui qui osera la terminer. La sorcière alors sortira et l'emportera.

Zut! Ça y était ! Cette fois, je l'avais dit! Au même moment j'entends, tout près de moi, une petite voix pointue, aigre, méchante:
– Ah, vraiment! Et pourquoi est-ce que je dois prendre garde à mon derrière?
("La Sorcière du placard aux balais", 108–109)

"La Sorcière de la rue Mouffetard" et "La Sorcière du placard aux balais" sont sans doute les deux plus célèbres récits de Pierre Gripari. Magicien du verbe et amoureux des mythes et des contes, il a ravivé avec succès les histoires de sorcières qui ont bercé plusieurs générations d'enfants.

La bouffonnerie et le rire, Gripari les a dans le sang. Il écrit dans "La fée du robinet": "au lieu de la fée du robinet, elle serait devenue la fée des cabinets" (88), si elle s'était engloutie dans une canalisation d'eau avant d'aboutir dans un gros robinet de cuivre. "C'était une chance pour elle, car elle aurait pu aussi bien tomber dans une chasse d'eau" (ib.).

L'humour apparaît de même quand on apprend de Bachir, dans "La Sorcière du placard aux balais", qu'il faut un interprète pour parler aux poissons. Une souris tiendra ce rôle:

– Je ne peux pas leur parler moi-même, ils ne comprennent pas le français. Il faut un interprète!
– Ne t'en fais pas. Moi, j'en ai un.
Et voilà mon Bachir qui se met à chanter:

Petite souris
Petite amie
Viens par ici
Parle avec mes petits poissons
Et tu auras du saucisson!

(“La Sorcière du placard aux balais”, 112)

Bachir devient adjuvant et joue le rôle du sorcier, curieusement bénéfique. La chanson séduit et amuse, et le discours écrit, proche de la tradition orale, associe la contemporanéité de cette sorcière à tout(e) sorcièr(e) de tout temps, constituant ainsi l’archétype de la sorcière.

Les sorcières de Pierre Gripari: obsession ou enchantement ?

Gripari renouvelle le type de la sorcière toute puissante, en la transformant de personnage traditionnel en personnage moderne. Il se réapproprie le mythe et, à côté de ses sorcières aux pouvoirs maléfiques désormais limités, il met aussi en scène de gentilles fées qui suscitent l’admiration des hommes. Telle est la fée du robinet:

Il était une fois une fée, une gentille petite fée, qui vivait dans une source, pas très loin d’un village. À cette époque, les gens de ce village adoraient cette fée-là. [...] Et puis, un jour, [...] le curé [...] prétendait qu’ils perdraient leurs âmes, et que la fée était un diable. Les villageois savaient que ce n’était pas vrai: cependant, ils n’osaient rien dire, parce qu’ils avaient peur du curé. (“La fée du robinet”, 85)

Mais cette gentille fée, toute minuscule qu’elle soit pour pouvoir passer sous une porte, est rattachée à Fata, soit les Destins, les héritières des Parques. Elle ne transforme pas les humains en pourceaux comme Circé, mais elle distribue des dons, en une réminiscence des contes de fées et de *Cendrillon*.

Toujours anonyme chez Gripari et ses contemporains, la fée, “une toute petite bonne femme en robe mauve, avec des ailes de libellule [...] [qui] s’échappa du robinet”, (“La fée du robinet”, 88) est dotée

d'“ une baguette surmontée d'une étoile d'or ” (ib.). Elle n'adresse pas d'incantations, mais elle parle d'une voix musicale, convenant à sa nature fine et fluette. Pour récompenser Martine de sa gentillesse de lui avoir donné de la confiture, elle lui fit un don: “à chaque mot que tu diras, il te sortira de la bouche une perle”. (89)

– Ben ça, alors ! dit Martine.

– Et, comme elle disait ces mots, trois perles lui tombèrent de la bouche.

(“La fée du robinet”, ib.)

Issu directement des contes de fées de Perrault, le motif est archiconnu: les parents, pauvres, obligent Marie, la cadette, à boire le soir un verre d'eau du robinet. Par un renversement de situation, Marie n'envie pas le destin de sa sœur, et elle choisit de ne pas donner de confiture à la fée, provoquant ainsi la malédiction de la gentille fée qui, n'étant pas habituée à l'usage du monde, est déçue du comportement impoli de Marie.

Puisque vous êtes si peu aimable, je vous donne pour don qu'à chaque mot que vous direz, il vous sortira de la bouche un serpent!

(“La fée du robinet”, 94)

Deuxième renversement de situation et renouvellement du mythe, la malédiction de la fée est, pour Marie, une véritable aubaine et elle exerce une fonction bénéfique, puisque la jeune fille, grâce à cela, épouse un jeune docteur qui travaille, à l'Institut Pasteur, à la fabrication des sérums antivenimeux. Et comme il manque toujours de serpents, Marie est pour lui un véritable trésor.

À la fin de l'histoire, l'ordre des choses se rétablit: Martine qui était bavarde et malicieuse devint “douce et bonne”, (“La fée du robinet”, 101) alors que l'époux de Marie découvrit une femme aussi intelligente que sage.

La sorcière est une figure particulièrement chère à Gripari, au point qu'elle est au centre de la majorité de ses contes. Non pas obsession, mais charmeuse réminiscence d'enfance, elle semble envoûter l'écrivain, qui se la réapproprie dans un imaginaire renouvelé. Tiré des *Contes de la Folie Méricourt*, celui de “La Sorcière et le

commissaire” frappe le lecteur, par sa bonne humeur et son ton humoristique. Moderne et espiègle, ce récit parle d’une sorcière qui transforme un taxi en citrouille bleue et son chauffeur en gros rat rouge, un agent de police en chien vert installés depuis dans son jardin. Cela provoque la colère des habitants du quartier, inquiets et montés contre la vieille dame qu’ils emmènent chez le commissaire. Celui-ci exige de la sorcière qu’elle remette tout en ordre. Tous lui demandent: “Sorcière, sorcière, qu’as-tu dans ton jardin?” (“La sorcière et le commissaire”, 1981: 10)

Elle est bien obligée de répondre et chacun retrouve finalement sa place, non sans peine et sans pleurs, car personne n’est content, surtout pas la sorcière qui finit en prison. En effet, rien ne va plus dans ce quartier. “Alors, moi, j’ai décidé de délivrer la sorcière” (17). Grâce à Monsieur Pierre, fondateur du M.L.S. (Mouvement de libération des sorcières), et à ses initiatives clandestines, la sorcière retrouve la liberté et ses voisins redeviennent des animaux heureux de leur sort.

Mis en paroles et en musique de bout en bout, ce joli conte est stimulant, extravagant et très réjouissant.

Elle a pris la crémière
 Pour en faire une vache laitière.
 Elle a pris le cordonnier
 Pour en faire un marronnier.
 Elle a pris le facteur
 Pour en faire un congélateur.
 Elle a pris un boueux
 Pour en faire un piano à queue.
 Elle a pris un clochard
 Pour en faire un placard.
 Un beau jour elle me prendra
 Pour faire de moi ce qu’elle voudra !
 (“La sorcière et le commissaire”, 22)

En guise de conclusion: le rire à répétition

Pierre Gripari récupère les valeurs symboliques du mythe de la sorcière et bouleverse les schémas littéraires traditionnels. Si les

sorcières ne font pas peur, elles font rire. C'est leur fonction principale. Mais alors que la sorcière de la rue Mouffetard est comique, car non conforme au stéréotype, et dangereuse, la sorcière du placard aux balais est plus drôle, parce qu'elle est phantasme intérieur que l'on exorcise.

La pérennité du mythe s'opère non seulement par les livres, mais surtout par le théâtre et l'opéra; par la musique aussi. *La sorcière de la rue Mouffetard et autres contes de la rue Broca* de Gripari ont été chantés et racontés dans des CD destinés aux enfants. Une deuxième vie est alors réservée à ces sorcières au destin immortel.

Dotées d'une double fonction ludique et pédagogique pour des générations entières, telles sont les représentations des contes de sorcières de Gripari, (théâtre Gaîté Montparnasse, le Lucernaire Paris 6^e, etc.), tandis que la Compagnie *C'est pour de rire* a interprété l'auteur, en 2007, au Palais des Glaces, sur une mise en scène de Guy Grimberg et avec une mise en musique de Martine Nouvel (paroles) et de Guy Grimberg (musique). Il s'agissait d'une pièce où chansons, musique, comédie, suspense, peur, pièges et farces se sont succédé dans une atmosphère de délire; c'était un spectacle où l'on frissonne et où l'on rit comme des enfants.

Loin des forces morbides et de la magie noire, l'image attendue de la sorcière maléfique s'éclipse devant une figure renouvelée car positive. Le tragique se substitue au comique, et le rire gagne le spectateur. Voilà un exemple pertinent de réappropriation du mythe, visée par la littérature de jeunesse et par Gripari en particulier.

“Écrire, décrire les Sorcières, c'est encore leur donner une audience publique et leur conférer une portée beaucoup plus vaste que celle du cercle de contage primitif”. (Gaborit et *al.*: 1318)

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¹ Toutes les citations du conte "La Sorcière de la rue Mouffetard", ainsi que "La sorcière du placard aux balais" et "La fée du robinet", sont faites d'après la première édition du recueil *La Sorcière de la rue Mouffetard et autres Contes de la rue Broca*, aux éditions La Table Ronde, Paris, 1967.

Guerra y exilio en la poesía escrita por las mujeres del 27 en España

DOLORES ROMERO LÓPEZ

Ya he publicado en otro sitio (Romero López 1998: 51) que el concepto de generación literaria aplicado casi exclusivamente a la historiografía hispana procede de principios teóricos que se fundan en la Alemania prefascista. Junto al bien conocido *Die Literarischen Generationen* [Las generaciones literarias] publicado en Berlín en 1930 por J. Petersen hay que recordar, al menos, los artículos de E. Wechssler “Die Generation als Jugendgemeinschaft” [La generación como comunidad juvenil] (Wechssler 1927: 66–102) y “Das Problem der Generation in der Geistesgeschichte” [El problema de la generación en la historia del espíritu] (Wechssler 1929: 209–210) y aquél de R. Alewyn “Das Problem der Generation in der Geschichte” [El problema del concepto de generación en la historia] (Alewyn 1929: 519–527). Me preguntaba yo entonces, y me sigo preguntando ahora, si no es éste un método determinista con base literaria, histórica y científica, encaminado a demostrar la predestinación de las personas por causas de nacimiento. Es decir, ¿hasta qué punto no se convierte la metodología de las generaciones en un modo de limpiar la literatura y la historia de aquellos cuyas obras no favorecían una radical ideología? ¿No son el nacimiento, elementos formativos, relaciones personales, vivencias generacionales, caudillaje, anquilosamiento de la generación anterior y lenguaje generacional un cúmulo de preguntas propias de quienes desean separar etnias, religiones, ideologías o sexos? Lo cierto es que generación es un concepto sociológico más que histórico o estético que encontró el terreno abonado en la España de los años 40 en adelante. ¿Dónde están las voces de la poesía escrita por mujeres? Las busco por ser

mujeres, es decir, por ser poetas olvidadas por una historiografía literaria lastrada por intereses ideológicos hoy caducos.

Es José-Carlos Mainer en 1990 quien en una conferencia homenaje a María Teresa León se da cuenta de la injusta situación que sufren los nombres femeninos en la nómina del llamado grupo de 1927. Él menciona un grupo de mujeres poetas antologadas en la revista zaragozana *Noroeste* en 1935. En ella, junto a Carmen Conde, Ernestina de Champourcín, aparecen Dolores Arana, Mercedes Ballesteros, María Cegarra Salcedo, Elena Fortún, Juana de Ibarbouru, María Luisa Muñoz de Buendía, Margarita de Pedroso, Rosario Suárez Castiello, Ruth Velázquez, María Teresa Roca de Tagores, Norah Borges – hermana del escritor argentino y esposa de Guillermo de Torre – Menchu Gal, Misia Masdéu, Marisa Pinazo, Ángeles Santos, Rosario de Velasco y Ruth Velásquez. En dicha conferencia intenta Mainer justificar una generación femenina del 27 y articula el panorama en tres apartados: “Primeras armas líricas (1923–1927)”, “La plenitud (1927–1932)” y “Libros poéticos de 1936”. El juicio crítico de Mainer abrió la puerta a otras investigaciones posteriores, como las de Juan Ignacio Ferreras quien en 1997 habla de la discriminación sexual que padece la literatura española o la apuesta de Emilio Miró en 1999 que ya se atreve a ofrecernos una *Antología de poetas del 27* donde sólo aparecen las que él considera principales, a saber, Concha Méndez, Rosa Chacel, Ernestina de Champourcín, Josefina de la Torre y Carmen Conde.

Lo que se deduce de esta revisión bibliográfica es que la crítica se ha ido esforzando en hacer visibles para la historiografía literaria a estas mujeres poetas que han quedado aletargadas porque, como justifica José-Carlos “la derecha más berroqueña vio con mucha aprensión el fenómeno de la emancipación femenina y, en su marco, la dedicación de la mujer a la escritura” (1990: 15). Reforcemos los criterios de visibilidad de estas creadoras exponiendo datos sobre su biografía que condicionaron su poética.

Más allá de los criterios de Petersen por aglutinar generaciones literarias, lo que parece a estas alturas significativo como experiencia histórica, social, cultural y estética – común a hombres y mujeres, jóvenes y no tan jóvenes – es precisamente el evento histórico de la Guerra Civil Española. ¿Qué respuesta personal y literaria dan nuestras poetas al conflicto bélico? Voy a ir tratando de explicarlo a continuación siguiendo dos criterios: individual – poeta por poeta – y

cronológico – fecha de nacimiento – No he querido dejarme llevar por el enfrentamiento entre republicanas y conservadoras porque, aunque existente y obvio – como se ve en los textos –, lo que más nos interesaba era poner en evidencia el hecho de que por encima de las ideologías latan las experiencias vitales y los conflictos personales que cada una de ellas reflejan en sus textos.

Investigar el tema de la guerra en la poesía escrita por mujeres encierra en sí una triple pirueta: por un lado podría parecer que la *guerra* es un tema propio de los varones; en segundo lugar, no parece asunto demasiado *poético*, sino más bien narrativo; y, el triplete *mujer-poesía y guerra* encierra cierta complejidad metodológica basada principalmente en la amplitud del tema y la vivencia personal e ideológica. El tema de la Guerra Civil española (1936–1939) en la literatura escrita por mujeres no ha sido investigado suficientemente. La guerra, vivida y sufrida, es un tema denso, no demasiado apto para la lírica, es cierto, pero muy significativo. Lo que aquí demuestro es el resultado de varios meses de investigación releando con atención las contribuciones, en forma de libro o en publicación periódica, de las poetisas escogidas. He seleccionado sólo a algunas de las mujeres poetisas del 27: Pilar de Valderrama, Rosa Chacel, Concha Méndez, Teresa León, Ana María Martínez Sagi, Ernestina Champourcin, Carmen Conde, hay más...

Pilar de Valderrama: Exilio anti-republicano en Portugal.

Había nacido en Madrid el 27 de septiembre de 1889. Según cuenta en su autobiografía, *Sí, soy Guiomar*, su padre fue abogado brillante, diputado por el Partido Liberal antes de los 25 años, y gobernador en Oviedo, Alicante y Zarazoga. Contrae matrimonio con Rafael Martínez Romarate con el que tiene tres hijos, Alicia, María Luz y Rafael. Su marido construye una casa en el Paseo de Rosales, en Madrid. Su primer libro, *Las piedras de Horeb*, data de 1923, ilustrado con dibujos de su marido. Como tantas familias conservadoras, observan con terror el sufrimiento de la República y se oponen a ella. Pilar ha de marcharse con sus hijos a Portugal porque un pelotón de desalmados había entrado en su piso y habían quemado su biblioteca. En sus “Memorias de mi vida” – un apartado de *Sí, soy Guiomar* – nos cuenta su exilio en Estoril, su preocupación por el asesinato de Calvo Sotelo – “este magnicidio de carácter público nos llenó de preocupación al pensar qué sería de nuestra patria” (1982: 53) –, el accidente de aviación que sufre el general Sanjurjo en Lisboa y cómo

con su muerte pierden todas las esperanzas de futuro. Su hijo Rafael se alista al ejército y se suma al Cuartel General de Franco desde Salamanca. Le llega a Estoril la noticia de la muerte de Lorca – “que nos llenó de pesar el hecho en sí y por lo que suponía para España la pérdida de una gloria nacional” (ib. 56) –. En 1937, Pilar Valderrama regresa a España, a Palencia, donde tanto ella como sus hijas colaboran en un hospital. Después de la guerra su hijo cae enfermo en Zaragoza. En San Sebastián se le opera y tres días después fallece. Entonces Pilar se deprimió hasta un estado de locura, de desesperación, de aniquilamiento total, de muerte. La muerte de su hijo había transformado al padre –“más unido a nosotras ahora, más entrañable y cumplidor de sus deberes religiosos” (ib. 60) –. Fruto de toda esa vivencia es su libro *Holocausto* (1943) dedicado a: “Al hijo amado que Dios me llevó. Desde aquí abajo esta angustia, esta lucha, esta sed...” El primer poema es un soneto titulado “Eco, prólogo” de Manuel Machado. Todo este libro, que no se ha vuelto a editar revela el dolor de la poeta por una Guerra cruel que ha afectado a su familia.

Rosa Chacel: Exilio republicano en Sudamérica. El caso de Rosa Chacel es muy diferente. Nacida en Valladolid en 1898, a los diez años se traslada a Madrid donde se matricula en la Escuela Superior de Bellas Artes de San Fernando para estudiar escultura. En abril de 1921 se casa con el pintor Timoteo Pérez Rubio. Y en 1922 se trasladan a vivir a Italia donde él trabajará en la Escuela de Arte de Roma. En 1930 da a luz a su hijo Carlos. Al estallar la Guerra Civil Española, Pérez Rubio se alista en el ejército republicano y Chacel firma el *Manifiesto de los intelectuales antifascistas*, colabora con la prensa republicana y trabaja como enfermera. El agravamiento de la situación militar hace que se decida el envío al exterior de las obras del Museo del Prado, responsabilidad que se encarga a Timoteo Pérez Rubio. Rosa Chacel y su hijo parten a Barcelona, Valencia y luego al exterior, a Francia, con una breve etapa en Grecia, donde son hospedados por el escritor Nikos Kazantzakis. Tras la caída de la República la familia se traslada a Brasil y después a Buenos Aires. En el exilio Rosa Chacel colabora con revistas y suplementos literarios y lleva a cabo traducciones del francés y del inglés. La situación económica de la familia es comprometida durante todo ese periodo. Hasta la muerte de su marido en 1977 Rosa

Chacel continúa alternando su residencia entre Río de Janeiro y Madrid, pero finalmente se traslada a Madrid.

Su primer libro de poesía está publicado en 1936 y se titula *A la orilla de un pozo*. En las dedicatorias de los treinta sonetos encontramos nombres de su generación. Pero lo que más nos interesa es su producción de exilio. Rosa Chacel comienza a escribir su biografía el mismo día en que tiene que exiliarse y la publica en 1982 bajo el título de *Alcancia. Ida*. Fracaso, desolación laten en las primeras páginas del texto. En Buenos Aires, el 23 de enero del 1952 vuelve a retomar el diario y rellena unos títulos que había escrito con anterioridad. Uno de ellos, titulado "La mano armada", nos interesa especialmente porque aparece un tema significativo, el miedo a la pérdida de la memoria, a la pérdida de su identidad. Reflexiones intelectuales de sus propias emociones en las que podemos imaginar el reflejo de la guerra y el exilio, pero no encontramos una referencia concreta a los hechos. Sólo a su vuelta a España, en *Versos prohibidos* (1978), se puede leer: "Fui por buscar las huellas, ese fruto/ Sin cuerpo, hijo del tiempo y el amor/ ¿A quién puedo culpar de mi derrota / Si nadie pudo ver correr su sangre?" El recuerdo brota en ese poema titulado "Fruto de las ruinas" en el que el yo lírico parece revivir cómo era la España que ella dejó: humilde, operaria, de viejas puertas y canción en el alma.

Concha Méndez Cuesta: Exilio republicano en Cuba y México. Esta autora nos ha legado su voz poética comprometida con la causa republicana que sufre la guerra en carne y hueso. Nace en Madrid en 1898 y muere en Ciudad de México en 1986. Poeta desde su adolescencia, con 19 años conoció a Luis Buñuel en sus vacaciones de San Sebastián, allí se harán novios. A través de él, conocerá a Lorca y Alberti. Viajera incansable, en 1931 se enamora de Manuel Altolaguirre con quien se casa y de quien tendrá una hija, Paloma. Junto a su marido contribuye a la difusión de la obra del grupo del 27, editando colecciones de poesías y revistas como *Poesía, Héroe y Caballo verde para la poesía*. Al finalizar la guerra, junto con miles de republicanos españoles, Altolaguirre y Concha se trasladaron al Nuevo Mundo. Los primeros años del exilio, 1939-40, los pasaron en La Habana, Cuba, donde montaron otra vez una imprenta, La Verónica. *Lluvias enlazadas*, el sexto libro de Concha y fue uno de los primeros volúmenes en editarse, salió de la imprenta en noviembre de 1939. No todos los poemas de esta colección son

nuevos. En realidad se trata de una antología que reúne, al lado de una docena de textos inéditos, una amplia selección de los poemas recogidos en sus dos libros anteriores. Es decir, el libro proporciona una imagen bastante precisa del desarrollo de la poesía de Concha desde 1931. Quedaron eliminados de la colección los poemas que había escrito inspirándose directamente en la guerra, pero incluye "Vine" que es una queja ante la situación en que ha quedado España. En su siguiente libro *Sombras y sueños* reúne textos escritos durante siete años transcurridos desde que salió de España y proporcionan una imagen muy completa de los circunstancias. Exiliados, añoranza de su tierra natal recuerda las romerías de San Isidro, Sierra de Guadarrama, sus poetas preferidos son Antonio Machado, Bécquer y Rosalía. Nostalgia, ante la muerte de su madre y también ante el fin abrupto de su matrimonio... pero ante eso busca la fe en su capacidad de sobrevivir, por dar un sentido a su vida. Buscar los paisajes interiores de su alma... En *Vida o río* encontramos un poema, titulado "Gran Ciudad" que describe la visión de una mujer que regresa a su patria después de mucho tiempo: no encuentra a ninguno de los suyos, todo es nuevo (las caras, el paisaje...), toda la gente va de prisa, no tienen tiempo para nadie. Regresa a Madrid en 1966, pero decide seguir residiendo en México hasta su fallecimiento en 1986.

En 1991 se publican sus *Memorias habladas, memorias armadas* (Mondadori, Madrid, 1990), fruto de unas cintas que había ido grabando su nieta, Paloma Ulacia Altolaquirre, quien efectivamente armó el material de la memoria viva que Concha iba desgranando oralmente desde su casa de Coyoacán, donde, por cierto murió en 1963 Luis Cernuda, fiel amigo suyo que se quedó a vivir con ella. También tenemos el testimonio de su hija Paloma Altolaquirre quien en *Una vida para la poesía* publica un capítulo dedicado a "Algunos recuerdos de mis padres". Una de las características del exilio es, sin duda, sentir que su identidad se ha perdido, razón por la cual sus recuerdos se le vuelven doblemente importantes. En sus memorias, Concha Méndez piensa sólo en contar anécdotas y no en buscar una interpretación de su vida. Y efectivamente allí nos cuenta los recuerdos del conflicto. Después del estallido, la poeta, que siempre había apoyado al gobierno republicano, sintió el deseo de ayudar en lo que pudiera. Pero, preocupada por el bienestar de su hija Paloma, finalmente se dejó convencer de la necesidad de buscar refugio en el

extranjero. Así, gran parte de la guerra la pasó fuera de España, dividiendo su tiempo entre Inglaterra, Francia y Bélgica. Desde lejos asistió a la lenta destrucción de su país. A mediados de 1938, decidió que ya no resistía más la separación e hizo dos viajes a Barcelona para reunirse con Altolaguirre, que por aquellas fechas se había integrado al XI Cuerpo del Ejército del Este. No es mucho lo que escribe la poeta durante este periodo, al menos es relativamente poco lo que publica. En noviembre de 1937, colabora en la revista *Hora de España*, con dos poemas que expresan sus sentimientos sobre el conflicto. En ambos, fiel a la causa republicana, afirma su convicción de que finalmente triunfarán el bien y la verdad y de que este triunfo marcará el inicio de un nuevo orden de paz y libertad. Es decir, son textos que en general siguen las convenciones ya establecidas para este tipo de poesía de compromiso, aunque, dicho esto, hay que reconocer que en el caso del segundo poema, "España" este convencionalismo no impide que la expresión adquiera intensidad; y esto, gracias, sobre todo, a una feliz adecuación entre forma y fondo, entre el ritmo del pensamiento y el ritmo del verso. Empleando un recurso parecido al apóstrofe que usara Cernuda en algunas de sus elegías españolas, la poeta se dirige a su país. En el poema "España"¹ habla de la angustia que pesa sobre ella al ver cómo se derrama la sangre. Su mirada se centra en los niños y ve en ellos la justificación de su lucha: "Ellos serán tan sólo los que cojan el fruto/ Del mañana sin sangre./Hombres ya de otra hora más fácil que la nuestra".

Ernestina de Champourcin: Fronteras del exilio. Nació en Vitoria en 1905, aunque desde muy niña residió en Madrid. Recibió una esmerada educación en la que destacaron los idiomas. Años después cuando estalla la Guerra y tiene que exiliarse a México con su marido, el también poeta Juan José Domenchina, esa excelente formación le servirá para conseguir un lugar destacado como traductora. Ernestina descubrió su vocación poética cuando era muy joven, pero, como muchos otros creadores, no estaba satisfecha con los poemas que escribía así que los destruyó. Su primer libro *En silencio* es de 1926, a partir de ahí los libros comienzan a sucederse uno tras otro *Ahora* (1928), *La voz en el viento* (1931), *Cántico inútil* (1936). Sus libros son de una aguda sensibilidad y un delicado

¹ Bruselas, junio de 1937. publicado en *Hora de España* (Valencia), número XVI noviembre 1937.

desbordamiento amoroso donde se mezclan emociones con sensaciones. En estos libros evoluciona desde un Modernismo inicial a la sombra de Juan Ramón Jiménez a una poesía más personal donde domina el tema del amor envuelto en una rica sensualidad. Gerardo Diego la seleccionó para su *Antología* de 1934. Compartió con los intelectuales de la República actividades en el Liceo Femenino, del que fue secretaria y donde conoció en 1930 a Juan José Domenchina (secretario personal de Manuel Azaña). Allí conoció además a Juan Ramón Jiménez y su mujer Zenobia Camprubí, a Concha Méndez, María de Maeztu, María Baeza, Pilar Zubiaurre, Manuel Altolaguirre, Emilio Prados, Juan de la Encina y Rafael Alberti.

Durante la Guerra Civil, Juan Ramón Jiménez y Zenobia, preocupados por los niños huérfanos o abandonados, fundan una especie de comité denominado "Protección de Menores". Ernestina se suma a este trabajo en calidad de enfermera. A partir de las vivencias que tiene en este trabajo inicia la redacción de una novela *Mientras allí se muere*, inconclusa. Debido a las ideas políticas de Domenchina, afiliado a Izquierda Republicana, el matrimonio se desplaza con el Gobierno y el 5º Regimiento a Valencia, tarde a Barcelona y de ahí a Francia. Residen durante tres meses en Toulouse, acogidos por el Comité de Ayuda a los Intelectuales Españoles. De espíritu aventurero y amante de los viajes, la escritora tomó el destierro como un viaje de aquellos que imaginaba y narraba en su niñez. Una vez instalados en México colaboran con el Fondo de Cultura Económica en calidad de traductores. Muchas de las traducciones de Ernestina de Champourcin siguen vigentes y reeditándose a pesar del tiempo transcurrido. Las alusiones de Ernestina de Champourcin a la Guerra Civil son escasas y tardías. Aparecen claramente en su obra *Primer exilio* de 1978. Es éste un libro de poemas escrito desde la vejez evocando los temores de aquellos que están viviendo la tortura de la persecución durante la guerra. Recuerda cómo en Madrid "la noche se desgarró a golpes de culata", se escuchan pasos, hay miedo, silencio, hermetismo. Pero lo más interesante del libro es que, a través de sus versos, el lector recorre, de mano del yo lírico, el destierro a pie. Encontramos algunas precisiones geográficas en su huida, el recuerdo marchito de Antonio Machado y dramatismo en lo que sus ojos ven. El yo lírico está sujeto a la conmoción histórica. En el poema titulado "La

Junquera” nos describe la desesperación de aquellos que huyen de su país a pie, abandonando sus últimas posesiones en la cuneta de las carreteras porque ya no pueden seguir arrastrándolas por más tiempo.

Ana María Martínez Sagi: Guerra y exilio en primera persona. Nacida en Barcelona en 1907, Ana María Martínez Sagi encarna a la mujer deportista, profesional, independiente, republicana, liberada del hombre, y, en cierto modo, de la moral y de la religión. Hoy la única biografía que hay de la autora, es una biografía novela por Juan Manuel de Prada en su libro *Las esquinas del aire: en busca de Ana María Martínez Sagi*. Ana María necesitó expresarse mediante la poesía a lo largo de su vida, desde *Caminos* 1929 hasta *Laberinto de presencias* (1969), encontramos seis libros distribuidos en el tiempo: *Canciones entre la isla* (1936), *País de ausencia* (1940), *Los motivos del mar* (1955), *Visiones y sortilegios* (1960), *Jalones entre la niebla* (1967), *Amor perdido* (1968). Comienza a escribir poemas con apenas veintidós años, con inquietudes entre románticas y modernistas y, ese será su estilo a lo largo de toda su producción. Lo que interesa para nuestro tema está en la parte final del libro de Juan Manuel Prada, donde el autor reproduce unas grabaciones Ana María que son recuerdos autobiográficos. Encontramos dos capítulos que tienen que ver con su experiencia de la Guerra Civil: “La ubícua reportera” y “Un terco río desatado”. En el primero nos cuenta cómo había obtenido por oposición una plaza en el Servicio de Prensa del ayuntamiento de Barcelona, lo que le permitió cubrir noticias, hacer reportajes y entrevistas en la Barcelona de la República y de la Guerra. Recuerda su asistencia a actos políticos, principalmente a los mítines del orador Durruti, que defendía la insurrección contra la república y el advenimiento del comunismo libertario. Ana María cruzó la frontera por Cerbère el 29 de enero de 1939, cuando ya el signo del combate se decantaba hacia las águilas imperiales de Franco. La tragedia de Ana María Martínez Sagi, como la de otros exiliados, había consistido en habitar durante treinta años en la patria de la memoria. En 1969 publicó *Laberinto de presencias*. Se trata de una crónica ajetreada de un exilio poético donde incluye un poema titulado “La guerra” en el que habla del viento del odio, de la luna inerte, de los cañones, de los rumores, de la sangre, de las explosiones, de los gritos alocados, del corazón podrido de los hombres. A la escasez de referencias sobre la guerra que hay en su poesía habría que citar un poema titulado “Por el río

venía”, atribuido a Martínez Sagi y que es recopilado por Joan Llarch en su libro *Cantos y poemas de la Guerra Civil Española*. Es éste un poema lorquiano, intenso e inolvidable en el que se nos habla del cuerpo moreno de un miliciano que llega flotando por el río, mezclando su sangre con el agua. Ana María Martínez Sagi muere en el año 2000. Su longeva vida le ha permitido que su vida y su obra hayan sido recuperada como memoria histórica.

Carmen Conde: Exilio interior. Por último, dentro de las poetas que viven y escriben sobre la Guerra cabe destacar a Carmen Conde Abellán. Nació en Cartagena en 1907 aunque su infancia transcurre entre esa ciudad y Melilla, donde vive de 1914 a 1920, y Madrid, donde se establece definitivamente en 1939. Estudia Magisterio en la Escuela Normal de Murcia y más tarde Filosofía y Letras en la Universidad de Valencia. Publica su primera obra, *Brocal*, en 1929. En 1931 se casa con el poeta Antonio Oliver Belmás. Juntos fundan y dirigen la Universidad Popular de Cartagena y el Archivo Semanario de Rubén Darío en la Universidad de Madrid. Es una escritora de éxito después de la Guerra Civil española; desde 1978 a la Real Academia Española de la lengua. Fallece el 8 de enero de 1996 en Madrid. Al estallar la Guerra Civil, Antonio Oliver se une al ejército republicano al frente de la Emisora Radio Frente Popular. Carmen le sigue por varias ciudades de Andalucía, pero regresa a Cartagena para cuidar de su madre. Al acabar la Guerra, Carmen Conde se instala en El Escorial, en casa de unos amigos, los Alcázar. La década de 1940 fue literariamente muy productiva. Ella utiliza como seudónimos Magdalena Noguera, Florentina del Mar en sus publicaciones, imparte cursos, conferencias, colabora en la Sección bibliográfica del CSIC y es asesora literaria de la Editorial Alhambra. En 1941, Carmen se instala en la calle Wellingtonia de Madrid, en un inmueble propiedad de Vicente Aleixandre, que reside en la planta baja. Estos años publica algunas de sus obras poéticas más importantes: *Ansia de la Gracia*, *Mujer sin Edén...* En *Sea la luz* el tema es la muerte, pero no la producida en guerra, es la que se lleva dentro, la viscosidad, la rigidez, frente a la libertad y la vida. La degradación, lo sucio... va descubriendo así un misterio humano. En su obra *Mi fin en el viento* también encontramos poemas sobre un destierro simbólico en el que la poeta deambula en la sombra, como una criatura eterna. También hay referencia a los muertos. “El pesar de la criatura” todos los muertos pesan sobre ella, la aplastan y la

poeta les habla, les pregunta, les pide que la dejen en libertad, sola, sin memoria. Pero en 1938–1939 compone *Mientras los hombres mueren...* es su gran reflexión sobre la Guerra. Y efectivamente el poema más desgarrador, intensamente emotivo, del libro es precisamente el titulado “A los niños muertos por la Guerra” con la utilización de un léxico realista, pero de expresividad surrealista. El yo lírico se dirige a los “cañones” a las “bombas” para que no hagan daño a los niños de “leche rosada”, de “sangrecitas dulces” de “Piel de labio”. Pero ella no puede hacer nada con sus palabras. Y a partir de esa denuncia, Carmen Conde se encierra en sí misma y derrama dolor por lo ocurrido en su país, comparado con una charca de incertidumbres. En su libro *Sea la luz* se sigue obsesionando por la muerte, pero lo deriva a sentimientos más religiosos: busca la luz, rechaza la sombra. Habla de la voluntad sometida, de la angustia y del hallazgo de dios recogiendo en sus manos la triste alma errante. “En ti, mi dios, en ti quiero estar callada. Transparentándote.” (1979: 339).

En conclusión, la Guerra Civil española es una experiencia única para todos y todas. Hay un factor que las separa: el exilio: Méndez, Champourcin y León se establecieron en México y Cuba, Chacel en Argentina y Brasil, Martínez Sagi en Francia. Otras se quedan: Carmen Conde, vinculada intelectualmente a la República se quedó primero silenciada y después bajo seudónimo Florentina del Mar, salió a la luz. Pilar de Valderrama siguió publicando en España. Pero si logramos superar el enfrentamiento entre republicanas y conservadoras, cada una de las poetisas estudiadas da una respuesta personal al conflicto: Pilar de Valderrama nos muestra su lado más trágicamente maternal al componer versos sobre la muerte de su hijo, muerto en guerra; Rosa Chacel nos habla su conflicto interno, la derrota que siente en su alma durante los largos años de exilio; Concha Méndez alienta con sus poemas a los republicanos que defienden los ideales de la libertad en las trincheras; Teresa León recopila los romances y canciones de Guerra; con Ernestina de Champourcin recorreremos las calamidades de quien se exilia; Ana María Martínez Sagi es la reportera, ella vivió la guerra en primera persona y, por último, Carmen Conde, se queda, pero exiliada en su alma.

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Poesía y compromiso: de la modernidad a la posmodernidad

JESÚS SORIA CARO

El primer romanticismo constituyó un primer gran intento de aunar literatura, arte y vida que, posteriormente encontrará continuidad en las vanguardias y en la postmodernidad. El movimiento romántico supone la génesis del pensamiento moderno; hay una idea de soledad del hombre y de oposición a un mundo mal hecho, hay un rechazo a las estructuras filosóficas, políticas y religiosas. Las cartas de Schiller pueden traslucir esa denuncia al desencanto de una revolución fallida, en estas se plantea un estado estético en el que es posible recuperar la totalidad del ser escindido por la razón, por su integración en un orden social. En la última carta afloran las referencias políticas, las alusiones a los ideales de la revolución francesa que son confrontados con una renovación social frustrada. Frente a la realidad de la época, en la Carta XXVIII se exalta ese mundo o reino estético donde “cúmplase el ideal de igualdad, que el visionario quisiera hallar realizado” (*apud* Marchán Fiz 1992: 139). Así, Schiller en su utopía estética pretende reescribir la historia, reconducir los frustrados ideales liberales, revisar las ruinas del proyecto ilustrado. Como señaló Marchán Fiz, en el romanticismo se gestará ya una dialéctica dual de la estética, adquiriendo esta un doble valor de filosofía del arte por un lado, y de praxis social o valor ético por otro:

La temática se había gestado en la dialéctica ilustrada de la emancipación estética, que no es ajena a la utopía social de los ideales de libertad e igualdad mediados por la primera, tras haber comprobado el escepticismo respecto a la situación histórica y a las capacidades regeneradoras del estado. (Ib. 80)

Los dos poemas de Keats sobre el mito de *Hyperion* también adquieren un valor político, ya que el motivo central de estos lo constituye una revolución. La trama de *Hyperion* nos sitúa en un conflicto que ha producido una revolución cósmica, Saturno ha sido despojado del trono y este está ocupado por una nueva dinastía de dioses olímpicos. En el libro segundo se presenta el consejo de los titanes, se relata el momento en el que se produce el discurso de Océano, realizando este la exhortación de un cambio histórico, cuya exposición deja traslucir los ideales liberales de la época.

En muchos textos románticos hay un marcado compromiso ideológico, destaca la obra de William Blake *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, en la que se demolieron las estructuras morales dualistas, basadas en concepciones dicotómicas: Dios y el Diablo, cielo e infierno, hombre y naturaleza, bien y mal; en su nueva propuesta se establecerá la unión de dichos opuestos. Sus obra puede considerarse como la exploración de un tema central: la liberación de la humanidad encadenada debido a la acción de poder de gobernantes, religiones y del orden patriarcal que subyace a la actividad de estos. En la correspondencia de oposiciones que se establece entre algunas composiciones de *Songs of innocence* y *Songs of experience*, Blake cuestiona los principios de la sociedad y sus convencionalismos, así encontraremos un buen ejemplo en el poema "Holy Thursday", de *Songs of innocence*, donde se retrata ejemplarmente a un grupo de niños asistiendo al culto religioso. Pero este retrato casi "costumbrista" de una ceremonia religiosa y de los valores éticos implícitos al cristianismo entrarán en contraste con la revisión moral que se produce de estos en *Songs of experience*:

Is this a holy thing to see
 In a rich and fruitful land,
 Babes reduced to misery,
 Fed with cold and usurous hand?

Is that trembling cry a song?
 Can it be a song of joy?
 And so many children poor?
 (Blake 2002: 74)

Se cuestionan nuestros principios morales, como nos dicen los versos de Bake: "Can it be a song of joy?/And so many children poor?", analizando la supuesta caridad que enmascara una mirada reducida a la tranquilidad moral de un burgués que, al poseer mucho más de lo que necesita, ocasiona la precariedad de otros muchos que carecerán de lo más básico para sobrevivir. En la mitología posterior elaborada por Blake aparece Albion, figura que representa la conciencia individual y colectiva, es el hombre arquetipo, simboliza tanto el individuo como la sociedad y a su vez es un símbolo de la historia de la evolución de la humanidad, este aparece degradado respecto a un tiempo originario en el que no existía ni el poder ni el sufrimiento. Como antagonista aparece Urizen, que es el causante de que el estado natural originario haya sido pervertido, es el oscuro genio creador del mundo, es el creador de la historia, de la sociedad, de la razón, es uno de los Zoas que representa el intelecto, entendido este como un proceso intelectual que mutila la libertad del "yo", su capacidad para crear e imaginar. La acción revolucionaria está simbolizada en Orc, que no puede soportar el yugo de Urizen, representa la libertad, otras veces es la imaginación humana que busca la liberación de cualquier imposición dogmática, es el símbolo de una renovación vital que tuvo su correlato histórico en las revoluciones liberales del siglo XIX.

Posteriormente, otros movimientos como el surrealismo, el dadaísmo y otras vanguardias históricas recogerán la revolución estética romántica, realizando innovaciones formales vinculadas a un compromiso ideológico; de todos estos, los que ejercieron una verdadera praxis fueron el dadaísmo y el surrealismo, que además de ambicionar una revolución social también pretendió ser una revolución individual: "el surrealismo pretendía ante todo provocar, en lo intelectual y lo moral, una crisis de conciencia del tipo más general y más grave posible" (Breton 1969: 162).

El movimiento de vanguardia que supone el inicio de una estética de acción social fue el dadaísmo, su programa estético fue un anti-programa: la negación total del arte y del significado, había nacido con una intención de agitación social en una época en la que había surgido la socialdemocracia; la práctica dadaísta poseía un marcado contenido político, como señaló Tzara dadá perseguía: "La asociación revolucionaria internacional de todas las personas creativas e inteligentes del mundo entero sobre la base del comunismo radical."

(*Apud* Huelsenbeck 2000: 56). El dadá constituyó una manifestación artística que orientó su finalidad estética tanto a la destrucción de las tendencias artísticas precedentes como a la institucionalización del lenguaje como sistema de representación de la realidad burguesa, conformando un ataque a su valor representativo de los valores asociados a dicha clase social:

Destruyo las gavetas del cerebro y las de la organización social: desmoralizar por todas partes y echar la mano del cielo al infierno, lo ojos del infierno al cielo, restablecer la rueda fecunda de un circo universal en las potencias reales y en la fantasía de cada individuo. La filosofía es la cuestión: de qué lado empezar a mirar la vida, Dios, la idea, o cualquier otra cosa. Todo lo que uno mira es falso (Tzara 1999: 14–15).

Sus fundamentos tenían un carácter ideológico, conformando un movimiento contrario a todo, al mismo arte, a los valores religiosos, pero sobre todo a las interpretaciones y concepciones morales de la vida impuestas por la burguesía. Peter Bürger (1987) indicó que algunas vanguardias – entre ellas el dadaísmo –, al negar cualquier valor mimético del arte y al proclamar de esta manera un arte independiente: “ejercían una negación social la protesta de la vanguardia cuya meta es devolver el arte a la praxis vital, descubrir la conexión entre autonomía y carencia de función social”. (Bürger 1987: 62). Este ataque a los fundamentos del lenguaje se entendía como una posibilidad del caos tras el que se restaurase la libertad, así, en el congreso de escritores de 1935, Tzara alza su voz de acción de cambio proponiendo una ruptura hacia propuestas revolucionarias:

nada podrá obligarnos a renegar de los nombres de Marx y de Lenin. Nosotros sostenemos que la actividad de interpretación del mundo debe seguir vinculada a la actividad de transformación del mundo. (Tzara 1999: 269)

Su ruptura con el lenguaje racional y su deseo de subvertir las normas abrió nuevos caminos para el desarrollo del surrealismo; sin duda el movimiento liderado por Tzara fue fundamental para la creación de un lenguaje poético libre y sin límites. La base del automatismo surrealista era el azar, que se iba a constituir en el centro

constructor de la creación, había que permitir que las ideas y las asociaciones entre estas surgieran libremente, frente a las circunstancias normales en las que la razón ejerce un control y una censura moral en dicho proceso. La transformación que proponían, además de ser estética, pretendía la destrucción de las estructuras sociales burguesas, como afirmó Luis Buñuel:

Los surrealistas, que no se consideraban terroristas, activistas armados, luchaban contra una sociedad a la que detestaban utilizando como arma principal el escándalo. Contra las desigualdades sociales, la explotación del hombre por el hombre, la influencia embrutecedora de la religión, el militarismo burdo y materialista, vieron durante mucho tiempo el revelador potente, capaz de hacer aparecer los resortes secretos y odiosos del sistema que había que derribar. (Buñuel 1982: 128)

El deseo, el azar, la imaginación y la exploración onírica pasaron a ser conceptos estéticos y simultáneamente valores éticos del movimiento, mediante dichos elementos se lograba penetrar en una realidad subjetiva fuera de las fronteras de la lógica, del dictado de la razón, concepto asociado a una forma de entender el mundo que impedía al hombre su libertad absoluta. Así, en el poema de Breton "Au vent", el denominado proceso automático refleja el flujo del pensamiento de un nivel de conciencia ajeno a la razón, que es el inconsciente; un estado en el que ni la moral ni la lógica pueden intervenir:

AU VENT

Jersey Guernesey par temps sombre et illustre
 Restituent au flot deux coups débordant de mélodie
 L'une dont le nom est sur toutes les levres
 L'autre qui n'a été en rien profanée
 Et celle-ci découvre un coin de tableau anodin familial {...}
 Et qu'il soit appelé à se parer du nom de Saint-Yves d'Al-
 Veydre
 Et le poulpe dans son repaire cristallin
 Le cède en volutes et en tintements...
 (Breton, 1978: 114)

Se producen una serie de imágenes en las que se unen elementos inconexos, como es el caso de la estrofa: "Y el sea llamado a engalanarse con el nombre de Saint Yves d'Alveydre" que se une con los siguientes versos de forma irracional: "Y el pulpo en su guarida cristalina/Lo ceda en volutas y en tañidos". Hay una ruptura de la continuidad lógica, quiebra que supone un gesto contra-social, una acción de libertad que al subvertir el lenguaje quiebra los paradigmas morales en los que este se integra. Los surrealistas encontrarán, siguiendo las teorías de Freud, una vía de acceso a la suprarrealidad, el acceso a un nivel subconsciente donde se produce la liberación real del ser, la manifestación de sus verdaderos deseos fuera de cualquier influencia ejercida por la razón y por la moral; según las teorías de Freud los impulsos eróticos negados por nuestros valores morales se manifiestan en los sueños a través de los símbolos." La búsqueda del placer, o como nosotros decimos, la libido, escoge en los sueños sus objetos sin tropezar con resistencia ninguna, y los escoge entre los prohibidos" (Freud 1984: 47).

Laurent Jenny (2003) destaca que Breton en *Champs magnétiques* llevará a cabo una exploración de los límites del orden oculto de la conciencia, abriéndose así la poesía hacia las oscuras regiones de la mente, del subconsciente: "La escritura automática iniciada con *Champs magnétiques* llevó a cabo de otro modo la intención de escribir sin escribir, proponiendo, si se puede decir, una alineación íntima de la palabra" (Jenny 2003: 146).

Al destruir las bases lógicas del lenguaje, se ejercerá una protesta contra la civilización burguesa que había sido la causante de la primera guerra mundial y de sistemas sociales que impedían la libertad. Los aspectos reprobables para la moral burguesa: la pasión, lo irracional, el erotismo, la locura; serán considerados como partes integrantes, al igual que sus opuestos, de una realidad absoluta del ser. La represión de algunas de estas facetas era para los surrealistas causa de la infelicidad al imposibilitar la libertad. En el caso de la locura, para Breton no era un estado patológico sino que suponía la máxima expresión de la subjetividad, la libertad total; para el papa negro surrealista esta se regía por sus propias leyes al margen de la sociedad oficial:

Estoy plenamente dispuesto a reconocer que los locos son, en cierta medida, víctimas de su imaginación, en

el sentido que esta les induce a quebrantar ciertas reglas, reglas cuya trasgresión define la calidad del loco, lo cual todo ser humano ha de procurar por su propio bien... (Rodenas de Moya 2007: 132)

Pero el surrealismo también mitificará la infancia asociándola a un estado de autenticidad del ser en el que este se halla libre de cualquier condicionamiento social y moral externo; como señalan Angels Santa y Marta Giné (2001), el acceso a ese estado de libertad del individuo se podía lograr mediante la escritura automática: “el lenguaje si constituye un medio útil para acceder al conocimiento profundo de sí mismo por medio de la escritura automática” (Santa y Giné 2001: 28). Otro aspecto fundamental en la ideología surrealista fue el erotismo; según la ética del movimiento: el amor surrealista se estructuraba, al igual que el lenguaje, sobre la negación de la instrumentalización social, explotando la libertad frente a las leyes morales. Toda esta subversión social impregna el cine de Luis Buñuel. La exploración de lo onírico, la libertad del hombre frente al poder y la moral burguesa hacen de su obra una de las referencias centrales del surrealismo. El film *Un perro andaluz* surgirá como resultado de la confluencia de una serie de sueños, como señaló en su biografía:

Escribimos el guión en menos de una semana, siguiendo una regla muy simple, adoptada de común acuerdo: no aceptar idea ni imagen alguna que pudiera dar lugar a una explicación racional, psicológica o cultural. Abrir todas las puertas a lo irracional. (Buñuel 1982: 124)

La película soporta bien una lectura metafórica, proponiendo en la escena principal del ojo rajado por la navaja una nueva mirada poética, social y moral sobre la vida: hay que destruir las antiguas interpretaciones para abrir nuevas miradas al arte, a la sociedad y a la vida. El *film* es un ataque a las bases lógicas del discurso artístico, subyugado a lo largo de la historia a los centros de poder económicos y religiosos. Para Sánchez Vidal (1984), es un poema visual desarrollado por asociaciones inconscientes, poseyendo: “una actitud vehemente y militantemente anti-narrativa, más cercana al poema que a otra manifestación literaria”. (Sánchez Vidal 1984: 63)

La generación del 27 y algunos poetas posmodernos recuperan las técnicas surrealistas. Los miembros del 27 adoptaron técnicas como imágenes oníricas e irracionales, aunque en muchas de sus obras permaneció una base lógica; así sucede en *Sobre los ángeles* de Alberti, en la poesía de Cernuda y en *Poeta en Nueva York* de Lorca. Esta última funde la crisis emocional del autor con el paisaje deshumanizado de una ciudad que aparece desrealizada. Se encuentra un acercamiento mayor del poeta a las nuevas propuestas técnicas que había desarrollado el surrealismo: hay un mayor grado de ilogicismo mediante la unión de imágenes sin conexión lógica. En "Ruina" encontramos elementos de la naturaleza fuera de su orden biológico, son signos negativos que se manifiestan en una lucha entre ellos, se ofrece la doble lectura de la destrucción natural y de la destrucción interior del hombre debido a una civilización deshumanizada, contaminada social y moralmente:

Sin encontrarse.
 Viajero por su propio torso blanco.
 ¡Así iba el aire!
 Pronto se vio que la luna
 era una calavera de caballo
 y el aire una manzana oscura.
 (García Lorca 1989: 190-91)

Se presenta la destrucción de los elementos naturales estableciendo una asociación ilógica entre el referente (el elemento natural) y la imagen, que transgrede cualquier vinculación lógica con el elemento natural referido. De "la luna" se nos dice que era una "calavera de caballo", estableciendo así una asociación entre el astro y un elemento que carece de relación lógica respecto a esta; "calavera de caballo" es una imagen onírica que alude a un mundo natural muerto, destruido por el crecimiento industrial, lo mismo sucede con el aire que se vincula metafóricamente a "una manzana oscura", elemento que carece de cualquier unión racional y que connota un valor negativo al asociarse a una naturaleza masacrada.

Hay que señalar que el léxico biológico es una herencia directa de Lautréamont, padre espiritual del surrealismo y del que tanto Dalí como Lorca señalaron como un referente estético; así está presente, como en *Los cantos de Maldoror*, la tensión violenta entre el mundo humano y el natural, que en Lautréamont se materializaba en

híbridos deformes del hombre y los animales, como bien afirmó Virginia Higginbotham:

Si Lorca no sabía del surrealismo “oficial” de estos escritores, compartió con ellos su opinión de que la sociedad industrial es violenta y destructiva. La expresión lírica de esa actitud surge de la yuxtaposición del mundo animal con la metrópoli, *uno de los símbolos más punzantes y fundamentales de Poeta en Nueva York*. De esta yuxtaposición, símbolo del conflicto, el hombre emerge como el destructor de la vida, más feroz que las bestias. (Higginbotham 1972: 68)

La ciudad de Nueva York pasa a ser un símbolo patético del mundo moderno, de su industrialización, asemejándose su retrato crítico a obras literarias y cinematográficas como *Manhattan Transfer* y *Metrópolis*. Lorca reviste su denuncia social de una imaginaria de corte surreal en la que están presentes imágenes oníricas y símbolos que quiebran cualquier posible relación lógica con el referente al que se asocian, y es que, en su obra, como en la de otros miembros de la generación del 27, las técnicas surrealistas fueron la respuesta a la necesidad de encontrar nuevas formas expresivas que lograran evocar el conflicto interior del poeta, su violencia ante una realidad social y moralmente alienante.

En “La aurora” se retrata la desolación del yo lírico ante una ciudad-muerte en la que un aspecto humano fundamental, el amor, está mutilado por la incomunicación, por la presión económica que somete las vidas humanas a jornadas laborales interminables; es una ciudad donde el crecimiento económico e industrial ha supuesto un deterioro de un elemento natural tan fundamental como la luz. Los edificios, enormes centros económicos, son las prisiones de un escenario espectral en el que la aurora ha perdido su capacidad para ofrecer la luz:

La aurora de Nueva York tiene
cuatro columnas de cieno
y un huracán de negras palomas
que chapotean las aguas podridas.
La aurora de Nueva York gime
por las inmensas escaleras
buscando entre las aristas

nardos de angustia dibujada.
(García Lorca 1989: 161)

En “Nueva York (oficina y denuncia)” las técnicas surrealistas son utilizadas para retratar un mundo dominado por la codicia económica y en el que se olvidan “los otros”, que son los animales, pero que también son los “otros” marginados por el sistema:

Debajo de las multiplicaciones
hay una gota de sangre de pato {...}
Un río que viene cantando
por los dormitorios de los arrabales,
y es plata, cemento o brisa
en el alba mentida de New York.
(Ib. 206)

Destaca en esta composición el proceso de personificación mediante el que el río abandona su función lógica para ser el agente del mensaje de la destrucción exterior e interior de quienes habitan la ciudad, el poema no posee un imagen onírica, sino que todo este en sí es un conjunto de imágenes que encadenadas adquieren un valor onírico pero, poseyendo siempre un valor referencial, hay un principio lógico que sustenta la composición, que en este caso, como en los anteriormente citados, es la denuncia de un mundo deshumanizado que vulnera la dignidad de la naturaleza y de los hombres.

De los autores de la posguerra que retoman la ética crítica del surrealismo destaca Miguel Labordeta, en cuya obra se pueden encontrar restos del influjo dadaísta y sobre todo surrealista. A partir de *Transeunte central* y *Epilírica*, la obra de Miguel Labordeta adquiere un valor político. Hay un continuo juego satírico contra los valores de la sociedad burguesa de posguerra, del monólogo del poemario anterior se pasa a una concepción dialógica, que da lugar a una serie de composiciones destinadas a un “tú” genérico, como es el caso del poema “Salutación al pueblo en primavera”, el “tú” receptor no es otro que el pueblo o la conciencia social de este: “quiero en los ojos pues mirarte/contemplar tu alma sepultada como un león dormido” (Labordeta 1994: 167).

En el poema “Hombre sin tesis” se retrata a toda una generación que ha sufrido la impotencia moral de la posguerra. Labordeta recurre a la imaginaria surrealista para evocar esa sensación de vacío

de una juventud masacrada moral y culturalmente por la represión social:

Y sin embargo vivo
en las gotas de madera
mi insaciada pasión
de jóvenes suicidas.

(Labordeta, 1994: 89)

Este “hombre sin tesis” es el hombre sumido en el tedio moral y cultural que vive: “en las gotas de madera”, imagen onírica que alude mediante una asociación irracional al mundo interior del poeta que es extrapolado a los otros hombres, seres condicionados por un sistema opresor. En otros dos poemas se pueden reunir las bases de la ideología poética labordetiana: “Acaecer” y “Momento novembriño”, en el primero hay un rechazo a las masas y una repulsa a la ideología burguesa franquista:

Muchedumbres atroces de chaquetas usadas
avanzan en silencio
hambrientas de horizonte brutal
por las roncadas avenidas
de las sirenas metalúrgicas.

(*Apud* Medina 1997: 93)

Las masas son calificadas como: “muchedumbres atroces de chaquetas usadas”, imagen que simboliza lo externo, que en este caso son las normas que deben ser obedecidas ya que están dictadas por unos imperativos morales de conducta. Estas masas están: “hambrientas de horizonte brutal”, sintagma de base surreal que vincula a su núcleo un sintagma preposicional con el que no mantiene ningún tipo de relación lógica; dicho rasgo es inherente a la imagen surrealista en la que se transgrede la relación lógica entre los elementos conectados metafóricamente. Así, “horizonte” pasa a ser un símbolo de la búsqueda de la libertad, además estas muchedumbres avanzan: “por las roncadas avenidas”, espacios en los que la voz está “ronca”, es decir, gastada por no poder gritar su verdad. En “Momento novembriño” también se lleva a cabo una crítica a la sociedad burguesa, a sus convencionalismos, a sus leyes morales que limitan la libertad del individuo:

No quiero más templos donde roben mi vuelo,
sino intemperie para que incendie mi caída.
No más engaños ya. Toda verdad es vana,
casi mentira sólo.

(Labordeta 1994: 157).

La metáfora “templos” alude a la moral católica del régimen y a su represión erótica en la que el sexo sólo es entendido como forma de reproducción, como engranaje productivo de un mecanismo social que pretende perpetuarse, la voz lírica reclama la “intemperie”, es decir, un elemento que se asocia a temas negativos como el frío, de esta manera al seleccionar dicho término se propone una transgresión en el plano metafórico que supone a su vez un gesto de búsqueda de lo prohibido, de oposición a lo correcto para el canon estético y moral del sistema franquista. La poesía labordetiana reclama el *change le vie* de Rimbaud, *leit motiv* de la praxis ideológica del surrealismo, cuya denuncia de la represión amorosa nos legó el mensaje de que sólo a través de la libertad sexual era posible lograr la social.

Esta línea estética surrealista tuvo su continuidad en algunos de los novísimos y también en autores de la década de los ochenta. Entre los novísimos, Leopoldo María Panero, sintió atracción por la ética de la libertad del surrealismo, por su búsqueda del absurdo como forma de acción estética capaz de desenmascarar la opresión. En su ética-poética se pretende la destrucción contra cualquier valor social mediante un lenguaje que subvierte los principios morales, realizando un ataque a las leyes del decoro inherentes al lenguaje normativo en una búsqueda de lo prohibido. La inclusión de términos que la literatura había negado, como: “retrete”, “orina”, “mierda”, “heces”, suponen, como señaló Túa Blesa (2001), un gesto político avocado a una revolución moral, una estancia en el margen del otro lado en la frontera de lo no permitido, esta trasgresión de lo “decible” abre caminos de libertad en una sociedad que establece continuos límites morales:

Morir en un Wáter de Tánger
con mi cuerpo besando el suelo
fin del poema y verdad de mi existencia
donde las águilas entran a través de las

ventanas del sol
 y los ángeles hacen llamear sus espadas en
 la puerta del retrete
 donde la mierda habló de Dios.
 (Panero 2001: 385)

Jorge Riechmann es un autor posmoderno actual que mantiene un cierto vínculo con la vanguardias, conservando un marcado vínculo político en su obra lírica, en esta se ejerce una actitud de resistencia frente a la deshumanización posmoderna, así en obras como: *Cántico de la erosión* o en *Cuaderno de Berlín* y en *La lengua de la muerte*, se analizarán aspectos como la quiebra de los regímenes comunistas y la lacra de los sistemas neocapitalistas. En “Contra el consuelo” de *Cuaderno de Berlín* hay un retrato de la posmodernidad como resultado de una masacre ideológica y social en la que ya no es posible la utopía, el hombre debe sobrevivir en un oasis de progreso social en el que el mercado y el desarrollo industrial se han impuesto sobre las prácticas ideológicas progresistas:

“Nada puede borrarse de la historia;
 a lo más, ser superado en sentido hegeliano”
 Lo tiene escrito Franz Fühmann, que es notable poeta,
 de éstos que creen en la veracidad subjetiva
 no extinta en las cloacas de la era nuclear.

Balsámica papilla para bardos
 de hipersensible corazón herido:
 con qué saña fecal lo practican los amos.

En este mediodía de los ojos helados,
 un solo harapo podría enjugar
 la historia entera.

(Riechmann 1989: 23)

La escritura ofrece la posibilidad de la resistencia, de la revancha de un compromiso frente al espectáculo catastrófico del mundo neocapitalista, de la amenaza nuclear. La lucha es posible llevando a cabo una reflexión irónica sobre la impotencia del hombre actual ante un sistema que conlleva, tal vez no un control estatal sino algo que es peor; el sometimiento de la vida del hombre dentro el engranaje productivo de un sistema que le integra en un falso bienestar que requiere de su consumo para alimentar la economía global. En

“Encuentro con el ángel” hay un desdoblamiento del yo lírico en el que se retrata la pérdida de dignidad del hombre actual, su retrato es el de un hombre sin ideología, o lo que es peor, el de un hombre que ya no encuentra sentido en la ideología; ya que esta ya no es posible:

Hoy he conocido al Ángel
Ganas dan de llorar. Qué terca criaturilla miserable,
desaseada, vanidosa. Qué plumas grasientas de super-
viviente de marea negra, qué calva vergonzante cubierta
de pelo ralo y engominado, qué barriguilla lúbrica, qué
falta de dignidad.
(Ib. 30)

La propuesta de una ética social en la escritura y el proyecto de la libertad individual nacen con el romanticismo – génesis de la modernidad – y como señaló Octavio Paz (1990), continúan en las vanguardias:

Ambos son rebeliones contra la razón, sus construcciones y sus valores; en ambas el cuerpo, sus pasiones y sus visiones-erotismo, sueño, inspiración- ocupan un lugar cardinal; ambas son tentativas por destruir la realidad visible para encontrar o inventar otra- mágica sobrenatural, suparreal. Dos grandes acontecimientos históricos alternativamente los fascinan y los desgarran: al romanticismo, la revolución francesa, el terror jacobino y el imperio napoleónico; a la vanguardia la revolución rusa. (Paz 1990: 147)

La modernidad que había abierto el camino a las vanguardias reaccionó contra sí misma, tras la demolición moral de la segunda guerra mundial, que originó la conciencia del fracaso de la revolución. Lo que originaría la posmodernidad, que supone la puesta en crisis de la historia, del pensamiento revolucionario y sobre todo el deseo de desarticular un lenguaje institucionalizado que ha escrito el discurso de la historia. Sin embargo, aunque la crítica establece la escisión de la posmodernidad después de la segunda guerra mundial, para Matei Calinescu (2003) la modernidad ya tenía dos vertientes: una progresista, racionalista y tecnológica y otra que era lo que hoy calificamos de posmoderno, es decir, crítica con el pensamiento: “la otra culturalmente crítica y autocrítica, concentrada en desen-

mascarar los valores de la primera” (Calinescu 2003). Adorno ya había indicado que el stalinismo quebró la unidad entre vanguardia política y artística. Vattimo en *El fin de la modernidad* había establecido una relación de los discursos de Nietzsche y Heidegger con el fin de la modernidad. Por eso no podemos entender la posmodernidad como una total ruptura con el legado moderno, ya que supone una revisión crítica e irónica del edificio moderno, construido sobre frágiles convicciones filosóficas, que en la praxis social han constituido una ruina de la utopía:

Así podríamos resumir los rasgos de la koiné post-moderna: visita al pasado de la modernidad, para convertir en escombros sus falsas edificaciones y crear así una encrucijada de nuevos caminos. (Hernández y Espinosa 1999: 11)

Calinescu también había señalado una línea de continuidad ideológica crítica que arranca en la modernidad y que tiene su culminación en la posmodernidad. La vanguardia está relacionada históricamente con la crisis del hombre, con la ruptura con la visión humanista, que había quedado obsoleta después del pensamiento de Nietzsche. Aunque algunos críticos han situado la estética vanguardista como el límite estético que marca el fin de la modernidad y la posmodernidad, como un movimiento que rompe radicalmente con las vanguardias, esto no es cierto, ya que en muchos aspectos esta supone una revitalización de los movimientos vanguardistas. Alfredo Saldaña (1997) ha insistido en que esta conciencia crítica, radicalizada con el surrealismo y el dadaísmo, encuentra una línea de continuidad estética e ideológica en la posmodernidad:

De hecho, determinadas manifestaciones artísticas posmodernas han reactualizado esos componentes experimentalistas, críticos y de denuncia que caracterizaron – desde mi punto de vista – a las vanguardias históricas más interesantes. (Saldaña 1997: 125)

Hay un cierto posmodernismo que tiene, como las vanguardias, un marcado valor crítico, el marco social es demoledor: dos guerras mundiales, las bombas atómicas, la globalización. Ante estos acontecimientos sólo podemos llegar a una destructiva conclusión: las utopías son irrealizables ya que no han dejado tras de sí más que

ruinas de inhumanidad. Debido a toda esta catástrofe el posmodernismo nació como un grito cultural contra el control de las masas, la crisis social del capitalismo y el sueño frustrado de la revolución liberal. Esta actitud social tuvo su repercusión estética ya que sobre las ruinas de la utopía se deconstruyó una expresión estética que remitía al liberalismo burgués, que era su discurso institucionalizado. El posmodernismo rompió estas cadenas estéticas y construyó un nuevo discurso en el que ya no había formas privilegiadas, una nueva fusión genérica y de artes que no se somete a la sistematización, un nuevo discurso de la libertad; lo que nos transporta históricamente a la afiliación del surrealismo y del dadaísmo con una nueva forma de expresión que negaba cualquier autoridad moral o estética y que se propuso llevar a cabo una praxis revolucionaria.

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The New Elite: from Digital Literature to a Printed Book

PIRET VIRES

In his well-known essay “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” (first published in 1936), Walter Benjamin claimed that a work of art is characterised by an aura, which the viewer perceives as a sublime spell or devotion. In the age of mechanical reproduction this aura, according to Benjamin, is lost, because the work of art is no longer unique but reproduced, and the necessary distance for the aura to emerge between the work of art and the viewer has vanished. Benjamin writes:

One might subsume the eliminated element in the term “aura” and go on to say: that which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura of the work of art. This is a symptomatic process whose significance points beyond the realm of art. One might generalize by saying: the technique of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the domain of tradition. By making many reproductions it substitutes a plurality of copies for a unique existence. (Benjamin 1968: 223)

And continues:

The concept of aura which was proposed above with reference to historical objects may usefully be illustrated with reference to the aura of natural ones. We define the aura of the latter as the unique phenomenon of a distance, however close it may be. (Benjamin 1968: 224.)

Benjamin's major examples are photography and cinema, where the aura has disappeared unlike, say, in for example a unique painting or sculpture.

When Benjamin wrote his essay, the film and photography were indeed the most recent innovations of technology. Today's computer technology was unknown to Benjamin. His ideas can nevertheless be adapted and generalised in modern technological and cultural situations. As a comparison we could recall J.-F. Lyotard, who in his *Postmodern Condition* (1979) described a computerised society and stressed the role of computers in the circulation of knowledge (Lyotard 1999: 4). However, in the year when the work appeared, 1979, there were no computer networks or Internet; these began to spread only since 1989. We can thus say that although Lyotard lacked any knowledge of the Internet, the World Wide Web, he nevertheless predicted a development towards such a society. One of his calls is nothing less than prophetic – the public should be given access to databases, because in a computerised society information is power (Lyotard 1999: 14–17). Ten years later, with the emergence of Internet and especially the spread of World Wide Web, Lyotard's call was answered.

The same could be said about Benjamin that in his essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" he emphasised several points that characterise the role of a work of art not only in the age of mechanical reproduction, but also in today's high-technology info-technological society.

Although Benjamin talks about the lost aura in the age of mechanical reproduction, the analogy is valid also about the current, digital age. We could claim that in the digital age, too, the aura of a work of art has been lost, being destroyed by digital multiplicity.

This claim is primarily true in the works of art in the digital form, which mainly spread over the Internet. The present article neglects other art forms and focuses on digital literature or cyberliterature on the Internet.

Cyberliterature spreading on the Internet is a wide notion containing many different sub-categories. In addition to literature in the traditional form, the Internet has cybertexts with a complicated structure as well as phenomena that shift the borders of literature, the fringes of literature, including for example fan fiction and blogs.

Fan fiction and blogs are an example of the democratisation of literature, of the so-called ‘everyman’s literature’, which is connected with the term “participatory culture”, i.e. culture created not only by professional culture producers but by all interested people and amateur authors. (See also Jenkins 1992, 2006) And the Internet is a perfect place for such kind of culture.

Fan fiction, one of the best examples of participation culture, mostly represents texts created as a so-called pseudo-sequel to a book, comics, TV series or film. These are not written by professional authors, but fans. The characters are usually from the relevant book or film, and the location could be the same too (although not always); the fan fiction author simply adds new plot lines. The main reason why fan fiction is produced is love for the objects the fan authors fancy and a wish to see their favourite characters in more scenes than the real authors of the books or films have foreseen. The other reason is entertainment and relating to the fan community who all like a book, film etc. A separate fan fiction sub-group contains texts written by fans of various pop or rock bands – this is the so-called real person fiction. Pop or rock idols in such stories act according to the author’s wish in a totally new environment; or sometimes the stories are connected with their activity in music. The authors’ fantasy is completely let loose here, only preserving the idols’ personal image, characteristics and appearance, to make it easier for the reader to grasp the plot. In fan fiction, the usual author’s role as well as the reader’s role has changed – on Internet forums the readers directly interfere with their comments in the writing process. Researching fan fiction is a relatively new area, although some work has been done in recent years (see also Busse, Hellekson 2006).

In blogs or weblogs people usually write about their daily doings, putting up the texts to be read and commented upon on the Internet. Blogs have quickly acquired the status of alternative journalism, although the current article focuses on blogs that could be connected with literature. Literary blogs are those produced by writers themselves, where they express their opinions also about cultural or social events or publish their work (e.g. the blog of writer Kivisildnik¹) or

¹ <http://kivisildnik.blogspot.com/>

there are blogs by amateur authors with literary ambitions who use blogs to spread their work.

Returning to Benjamin and the aura of a work of art, we could claim that fan fiction and blogs lack aura in Benjamin's sense – after all, these are freely accessible, endlessly reproduced works. The Internet fan fiction or blogs are by no means unique; the texts are accessible to thousands of people, thousands of computers reproduce the same work of art simultaneously. There is also no longer any distance between the reader and the work, no devotion and respect for a work of art.

Today's Internet literature is a widely spreading and quickly developing phenomenon. New literary forms emerge, the texts previously published continue to be digitalised and made available via Internet. Probably one of the biggest projects of digitising printed texts is the one carried out by Google. At the same time also the unique archive materials are being digitalised and spread on the Internet. It would thus be possible to say that the general tendency nowadays is replacing the published culture with digital culture and the printed texts with digital texts on the Internet.

There are cases, however, where on the contrary to the dominant trend, virtual literature has been transformed back into printed culture. Although these cases can be quite different the current article views two – in the first case it is fan fiction that is transformed into printed culture, and in the second the blogs. These cases differ also because fan fiction usually remains in the expanse of the Internet and is turned into books very rarely, whereas this is more common in blogs.

The first example is fan fiction by a Thai author called Linna Wongwantanee. Linna was a fan of the Russian girl band t.A.T.u. and published fan fiction on forums dedicated to the band in 2003 under the username of Uhaku. The fiction was titled "666".² Linna's fan fiction belongs in a sub-group of real person fiction; the main characters were t.A.T.u. singers Lena Katina and Julia Volkova. t.A.T.u. was largely known because it carried out its marketing via pseudo-lesbian images, thus acquiring fans mainly among young lesbian and bisexual girls. As a marketing trick this worked very well, although it had nothing to do with the real sexual inclinations

² E.g. <http://www.tatu.us/forum/>

of the singers. Typical t.A.T.u. fan fiction also focused on Julia and Lena's possible love affair.

Although Linna's fan fiction "666" was the usual t.A.T.u. fan fiction in a sense that it focused on Julia and Lena's love affair, it nevertheless differed from others by its sheer bulk, maturity, strong visual power in depicting the scenes (Linna had studied at a film school) and its entirety. Linna published her fan fiction at forums, a typical place to do it. She published her story by chapters, depending on how she got on with her writing. The readers on the forums reacted to every published chapter, commented them, expressed their appreciation, and made their own suggestions about how the story might continue. Linna replied to the comments and occasionally followed the advice; there was a continuous active discussion about what she was writing.

By the end of 2003 Linna had finished her fan fiction. The fan fiction authors who finish their work usually embark on a new project or find another hobby. Linna, however, decided to publish her work in book form.

For that purpose she wanted to abandon the canons of fan fiction; the first step in that direction was to lose contact with the real t.A.T.u. singers – Lena and Julia. So Linna changed the protagonists' names, thus disrupting the connection with the t.A.T.u. fan community. As a result, fan fiction became ordinary fiction, with fictitious characters. This change of names was by no means simple. One of the prerequisites of real person fiction is the fact that the appearance and character of the protagonists are known to the readers, i.e. a fan fiction author has no need to create a wholly new character, but only has to vary on the given theme. Linna's changed novel now required that she worked more on her characters, made them more precise and profound. The text was additionally thoroughly edited, the style was polished and verbal excess was abandoned. The book appeared in 2004 (Wongwantanee 2004a) and is being sold in respectable on-line bookstores such as Amazon and Barnes and Nobles.

Why did Linna Wongwantanee do this? One of the reasons was the fact that fan fiction has its limits and the author is not free when writing about real people. She also argued:

And then one moment I realized that I was no longer writing about my pop idols, but about myself. I discovered feelings and thoughts in myself that I did not know existed in me and that I was then pouring in my writing. This moment I realized that I was no longer writing fan fiction. Fan fiction is entertainment. Literature, the true art, is what touches you deeply and actually. So I gave up fan fiction and turned my novel into literature. (Wongwantanee 2004b).

Answering the question why she decided to publish it as a book, she said:

As to why I want to see it in book form? Well, wouldn't it be nice to see what I wrote on my shelf? (Wongwantanee 2004b).

This was then a case where digital literature was directly transformed into printed literature. The author was restricted by the rules of one of the sub-groups of Internet literature – fan fiction, and she wished to see her work in a form which she considered typical of the ‘real literature’ – a book that would be “nice to see on my shelf”.

This also shows that the author had a firm idea of the book’s symbolic value and that fan fiction on the Internet held no such meaning for Linna as her novel in the form of a printed book.

Another example I would like to tackle here are the blogs of two Estonians – Epp Petrone and Dagmar Reintam. Both have been active bloggers for years; especially Epp Petrone who wrote blogs all the time when she lived in America. In their construction, blogs slightly resemble fan fiction. Although the stories mostly concern the authors’ daily life, and not fiction as in fan fiction, the common feature is that the blog, too, offers a chance to comment that the readers eagerly use. Thus the reader interferes in the author’s writing process, expresses an opinion, adds something, and sometimes suggests what the author should write. And like on a fan fiction forum, the blog author also replies to his or her readers, explains facts, argues and occasionally meets the wishes of the readers. The blog author thus receives the readers’ reaction directly, unlike a book author who has to wait for the critics’ opinions or meet the readers on a special evening.

Epp Petrone's American-blog³ describes the author's daily life, getting used to an alien cultural environment and her husband's family. Petrone is precise and has excellent style, and although her writing offers diary-like sketches of various situations, her blog could still be regarded as literature.

Dagmar Reintam's blog "daki.elab.siin"⁴ is also a witty description of her daily life presented with good style. The author is a journalist by profession in her twenties. Her experiences and impressions have been compared with the series "Sex and the City" and with "The Diary of Bridget Jones".

In 2007 both Epp Petrone and Dagmar Reintam published their blogs as a book, Petrone's book was in two volumes titled *Minu Ameerika* ("My America", Petrone 2007) and Reintam's was called *daki.elab.siin* ("daki.lives.here", Reintam 2007). Just as with Linna Wongwantanee's novel "666", we have here again the question of why the blog authors were not satisfied with their work spreading only on the Internet. After all, both for fan fiction and blogs the Internet readership is infinitely bigger than for any printed book. We can thus guess that the authors did not undertake this because of readers or popularity. The business side could be discarded as well, because Linna, for example, paid herself for the publication of her novel (known as vanity publishing), without earning anything special from the sale. Both Petrone and Reintam published their books at Petrone's own publishing house; it is most unlikely that either has earned great sums of money here in Estonia.

The answer to the question of why the authors wish to turn their popular writing on the Internet into books, must lie somewhere else. I would suggest that a printed book holds more symbolic value for the authors, and this is more elitist than Internet literature. The book form, a printed work, is associated with the so-called real literature. Having thus rejected the all-permissive and uncontrollable nature of Internet literature and the close interaction with readers, the book form has a meaning of a sign for the authors. They become more like Authors, their works are more like Books and thus more Literature.

Recalling again Walter Benjamin and his concept about the aura of a work of art, we could say that it is namely the authors who do

³ <http://eppppp.tahvel.info/>

⁴ <http://daki.tahvel.info/>

not want the aura to be lost in the digital age, instead they are trying to restore it. A book can thus be seen as an elitist art form, which stands out from the Internet literature in mass consumption. This also indicates that the authors' way of thinking who transform Internet literature into books relies on the modernist elitist meaning of a work of art, and not on the postmodernist multiplicity of literary forms. Modernism sees the author as central, and the authors' singularity is emphasised by their singular works of art; postmodernism abolishes the boundaries between elitist art and mass culture, blurs the roles of the author and the reader, and regards literature as a mixture of different forms, multiplicity of various media. It could be thus said that digital literature on the Internet is essentially postmodernist and in case the authors wish to abandon this sphere and publish their Internet literature as books, they are trying to move from the postmodernist paradigm to the modernist one. This also confirms that despite the decades-long domination of postmodernist culture situation, some authors always associate 'real literature' with modernist elitist literature, expressed in a printed book.

This is how to draw a line between Internet literature – mass literature, accessible to all and constantly changing – and book literature, which has become or is still becoming the mark of the elite.

At this point we should recall Neal Stephenson's science-fiction novel *Diamond Age*. The book describes a future society based on nanotechnology and virtual reality, which is simultaneously a Neo-Victorian class society. The entire humankind is using virtual, electronic, constantly changing information. There is, however, a difference: the lower classes, the masses, read electronic papers, where the information keeps changing. The higher class, aristocracy, read papers that are static and never change. The most elitist class reads papers printed on paper. (Stephenson 1995) This science-fiction novel therefore predicts that society could develop towards a situation where the elite in an overwhelming virtuality is a book or newspaper printed on paper.

We could thus claim that in the current age of digital multiplicity a book printed on paper acquires an elitist significance. A book offers a bigger opportunity to capture the lost aura of a work of art; besides, a book might also acquire cult value in Benjamin's sense.

The printed book marks the new elite. The authors who publish their books as books wish to belong to the elite and the readers

reading printed books are elitist readers. We can thus say in conclusion that the aura lost in the digital world has been found again in the world of books.

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vol I

JÜRI TALVET ■ 5

Introductory Note

DOROTHEA SCHÖL

Ethik und Ästhetik zwischen
Posthumanismus: Überlegungen zu
in der Langzeitperspektive

82
1-61

ERSU DING ■ 25

Modernity vs Pre-modernity in a Global Literary Context

MONICA SPIRIDON ■ 41

Literary Studies at the Crossroads:
The Strategies of "Co-optation"

LI XIA ■ 50

Li Yidou's Credo: Intellectuals in The Post-Mao Literary and Cultural
Landscape

KRISTEL ZILMER ■ 69

From Dilemma to Diversity – Traditional and
Modern Approaches to Medieval Icelandic Sagas

JÜRI TALVET ■ 84

Constructing a Mythical Future City for a Symbiotic Nation
from the European "Periphery".
Fr. R. Kreuzwald's Epic *Kalevipoeg*

LIINA LUKAS ■ 104

Estnische Ortssagenmotive in deutschbaltischen Balladen

REIN VEIDEMANN ■ 129

About the Boundary/Boundaries of Estonian Culture

VIRVE SARAPIK ■ 142

Anti-futurism of the Young Estonia Literary Movement

KAIA SISASK ■ 162

Friedebert Tuglas and French *fin de siècle* Literature.
Between Aestheticism and Realism

KATILIIINA GIELEN ■ 174

Writing Alver, Writing Smith: *Everyday* in a Poet's Biography

GLYNN CUSTRED ■ 182

Sheridan Le Fanu, Irish Writer and Innovator
in the Gothic Literary Tradition

PILVI RAJAMÄE ■ 196

Bewitched by Bigotry: John Buchan's *Witch Wood*

EFSTRATIA OKTAPODA ■ 204

Le mythe de la sorcière et ses avatars dans la littérature contemporaine:
les sorcières de Pierre Gripari

DOLORES ROMERO LÓPEZ ■ 218

Guerra y exilio en la poesía escrita por las mujeres
del 27 en España

JESÚS SORIA CARO ■ 230

Poesía y compromiso: de la modernidad a la posmodernidad

PIRETT VIRES ■ 247

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