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## Introductory Note

The present *miscellanea*-issue of *Interlitteraria* (3, 1998) appears in the wake of the 15<sup>th</sup> Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association, "Literature as Cultural Memory", held in August, 1997, in Leiden. For the first time a small representation of Estonian comparatists, members of the Estonian Association of Comparative Literature, took part in a major international forum of comparative literary studies. *Interlitteraria* 3, in its way, reflects our increasing and highly stimulating contacts with the international academic community. Not only do we include in *Interlitteraria* some of the papers presented at the Leiden Congress — thus providing a foretaste of a major edition of the Congress' *Acta*, announced by the organizers; we also hope to convey in our *Interlitteraria*'s microforum the lively spirit of West-East and North-South cross polylogue that was perhaps the most important feature of the Leiden Congress.

The synchronic (if not chaotic) development of a variety of methods and approaches, characteristic of the state of comparative literary studies in our postmodern days, inescapably has left its footprint on the pages of the present *Interlitteraria*. Moreover, the ever intensifying blend of philosophic and literary-theoretic discourse, championed by postmodern thinkers like Derrida, can vividly be pursued along the lines of a number of articles we publish here.

The Italian comparatist Giuseppina Restivo, who in recent years (cf. her articles in *Interlitteraria* 1, 1996, and 2, 1997) has shown herself as one of the most productive elaborators of the late Yuri Lotman's aesthetic-semiotic heritage, this time makes an attempt to evaluate Lotman's interpretation of the basic chronocultural codes in the context of postmodern cultural theories and philosophies. I think she convincingly demonstrates that Lotman's semiospheric theory gains postmodern actuality above all thanks to its radically dynamic intersectionism.

In a broader scope, intersectionism seems to be a characteristic sign not only of the most important literary and cultural theories, but also of all significant literature itself. As the French professor Jean Bessière in his fundamental theoretical meditation about the relationship of knowledge in fiction and knowledge outside fiction argues, all fiction, in a way, is “pure fiction” and, at the same time, a kind of an “allégorèse”, an intersection of these two types of knowledge. The complicated intersection of historical and literary, supplementary and complementary sources of literature is analyzed in the article by the Danish semiotician Svend Erik Larsen. The Bengali scholar Mohit K. Ray, in his turn, eloquently shows the traces of historical intersectionism in the notion of *écriture*, of the postmodern thinker Jacques Derrida, and the language philosophy of the Indian writer Bhartṛhari (7<sup>th</sup> century).

An important problematic issue is touched upon in the article of Ülar Ploom, an Estonian scholar and translator of Petrarch's *Secretum*. There seems to be a widening gap between writers (poets) themselves and philosophers (theorists) of literature in understanding the essence of literary (poetic) creation. Especially in our postmodern days we, perhaps, too eagerly listen to the voices of theorists, and tend to forget that another (maybe, primary) philosophy emerges from literature itself. I hint at something that might comfort the fears expressed by the Mexican scholar Gabriel Weisz: while the pasture of theory are ideas and its primary tool is an intellectualized language, literature (as all art, from its very beginnings) has always been the great playground of bodily language and philosophy that derives from images, not mere ideas or rationality. This has to do with my own arguments while discussing the issue of literature as a nation's emotional memory. I try to show that under certain historical circumstances, while culture's intellectual mechanisms are suppressed or distorted, literature can also form a “hidden” emotional text in a nation's conscience, providing culture's subtle continuity. The same seems to be true of the “messages in bottles” of banished or exiled poets, discussed in the article of the young Italian scholar Maria Gabriella Ambrosioni. Because of their “hiddenness” they become rooted in a nation's memory much more deeply than an intellectual message ever could.



The Swedish professor Arne Melberg polemizes with the conclusions the German thinker Erich Auerbach drew, in his days, of Cervantes' *Don Quijote*. Melberg argues that the sign of transcendence, "figura", as Auerbach himself defined it, is powerfully present also in Cervantes' great novel. Here again, I suppose, we should bear in mind that an intellectual discourse, like that of Auerbach, however ingenious, can hardly exhaust the ingeniousness of the imaginative philosophy of a great writer, like Cervantes. The latter provides a great variety of codes, the subsequent deciphering of which is likely to be most productive in some of culture's intersectionist "border" areas, like the one between Enlightenment and Romanticism, where, as we know, the philosophical or "transcendent" reading of Cervantes, Dante, Shakespeare, and other great writers of earlier epochs, was engendered.

That the relationship between fiction and the "historical truth" can hardly explain exhaustively the essence of fiction, is shown in the articles of Georges Fréris, from Greece, and Heli Mattisen, from Estonia. More than an attempt to transmit reality as factual history, significant literature (be it historical or war fiction) is always a philosophical (ideological) reading and interpretation of history — a philosophy in images, as "real" as reality itself, of which it becomes a part.

I would especially appreciate the fact that in this *miscellanea*-number of *Interlitteraria*, to a greater extent than in its previous issues, Estonia's own literary presence can be felt. The exchange of ideas, thus, becomes bilateral: not only we receive on *Interlitteraria*'s pages the world experience of modern literary discourse. Alongside there are attempts to illuminate literary developments in one of Europe's minor (and generally ignored) cultural spaces. This minority area, however, especially as observed not so much from "inside" or "outside" than from an intercultural and intersectional "border area" can produce important additions to the understanding of the world literary discourse in our days. The work of Kreutzwald, Koidula, Liiv, Ristikivi, Visnapuu, Kross, Kaplinski, Luik and several others appears for the first time in the comparative-generic or socio-ideological context, as

viewed by the Estonian scholars Thomas Salumets, Jaan Undusk, Tiina Aunin, Reet Sool, Leena Kurvet-Käosaar and myself.

The Canadian-Estonian professor Thomas Salumets, inspired by some of the ideas of the German philosopher Norbert Elias, attempts in his article to define the basic responses of a postmodern writer in the terms of “escape artists” and “freedom’s children”. Who is then the young Chinese poet Gu Cheng, whose tragic exile story in all its relevant details is exposed here by the Chinese-Australian scholar Li Xia — an “escape artist” or a “freedom’s child”?

In several articles the main theme intersects with the discussion of a utopian (or even, dystopian) thinking model in literature. From the times of Thomas More and Jonathan Swift, however, the question remains: is a utopia, after all, less “real” than the reality itself?

The problems of feminine narrative and its responses to different socio-cultural spaces are discussed (on the examples of the work of Atwood, Luik, Quiroga, Laforet, Matute, and others) in the articles of the Estonian Leena Kurvet-Käosaar and the Spaniard Carmen Ochando. Ana Goutman, from Mexico, offers a semiotically orientated meditation on the notion of “theatricality” — a theme that was two years ago introduced in *Interlitteraria* (1, 1996) by the Estonian scholar Luule Epner. In practical terms, an eloquent example of how and with what effects a generic intersection, involving theatrical texts, is produced, can be seen from the article by the Argentine-Canadian Emilia Deffis de Calvo, as she analyzes the presence of several *autos sacramentales* in Lope de Vega’s novel *El peregrino en su patria*.

Exemplary cases of intertextual formation of literary works are presented by the American Nan Cohen (Auden’s “The Secret Agent”, as deriving from the Anglo-Saxon “Wulf and Eadwacer”) and by the Estonian Pilvi Rajamäe (Waugh’s *A Handful of Dust*, as echoing the mental structures of the medieval Arthurian romances). The intertextuality becomes a broader intercultural phenomenon, in fact, a wonderful example of East-West literary dialogue, in Rilke’s relationship with the Japanese haiku — as described in the article by the Japanese Yoriko Shibata. Julie Wolkenstein from France and Vassiliki Lalagianni from Greece, in

their turn, summarize the discovery of the European roots by the American writers Henry James, Francis Scott Fitzgerald and Henry Miller, and the often contradicting effects of the cultural intersections, deriving both from intertextual and physical spaces, in their creative mind. Finally, the Italian Sergia Adamo views the intersectionism that involves different branches of art — dance and literature —, thus approaching the same complex of problems revealed in the notions of theatricality and bodily language.

The forthcoming issues of *Interlitteraria* (4, 1999, and 5, 2000) will gather, above all, the papers of two international conferences of the Estonian Association of Comparative Literature. The first, on the subject of “World Poetry in the Postmodern Age”, will be held in Tartu in October, 1998, and the second, centered on “Culture and Nation”, will be organized in October, 1999. The manuscripts of *Interlitteraria* 4, 1999, should arrive by January 31, 1999.

Jüri Talvet,  
*Editor*



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# The Enlightenment Code in Yuri Lotman's Theory of Culture

GIUSEPPINA RESTIVO

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## 1. Between Two Descents

According to Richard Rorty, in contemporary philosophy and humanistic studies a split has occurred between two lines of thought: the Hegelian *lignée*, still dominant and represented by Deconstructionism and Hermeneutics, both stemming from Hegel's *Phenomenology of the Spirit*; and the Kantian *lignée*, which preserves an epistemologic approach and is represented by Linguistic Analysis and scientific thought. (Rorty 1982).

A disciple of Jean Hyppolite, an outstanding Hegel scholar, Jacques Derrida has combined his Hegelian descent with Heidegger's radical rejection of metaphysics. He has enjoyed success first in Europe and then in the United States, starting with his famous lecture in 1966 at the Johns Hopkins University, where he was accompanied by Jean Hyppolite, Jacques Lacan, Paul de Man. From the States his fame boomeranged back to Europe, and has lasted for thirty years.

Building on the void left by the subsiding of what Ricoeur called "the school of suspicion" (Nietzsche, Freud, Marx), Deconstructionism has expanded from Derrida's own thought, covering both "strong" and "weak" textualism, represented respectively by Richard Rorty's pragmatism and the Yale critics (De Man, Hartman, Hillis Miller and Harold Bloom). It involved Lyotard, who has followed his own route to postmodernism, while Gadamer has turned Hegel's philosophy of history into a *Wirkungsgeschichte* and produced his own Hermeneutics.



Derrida's Deconstructionism is based on two assumptions: Kant's transcendentalism definitely severed empirical science from non-empirical philosophy; after Heidegger the separation of the two cultures was, moreover, followed by the death of philosophy itself, brought about by the definitive end of metaphysics. As no truth or revelation is left for philosophy to discover, what remains is only the philosophical tradition. From such a tradition it is nevertheless necessary to take one's distance, but without being able to go beyond it — as in Hegel's dialectics, suppressing a thesis and its opposite through synthesis (*Überwindung*) — or to deviate from it — as in Heidegger's *Verwindung*, a term meaning a transforming passage or "recovering from", or a "distortion-deviation". Within the circle of language and tradition, both philosophical and literary, the only task left is then the deconstructing of tradition itself. The rejection of commitment to either *Überwindung* or *Verwindung* brings about a game between the two, in a sort of double bind. The *grands récits* of the past have been swept away, as Lyotard pointed out, and the success of Deconstructionism "excluded" the Kantian line, represented by Putnam or Strawson.

From its own specific point of view, the so-called "Weak Thought", shared by Vattimo, Rovatti, Eco, confirmed this line, which, via Heidegger, has at the same time developed and annihilated Hegel's dialectic historicism.

In its antimetaphysical sway, Deconstructionism criticized structuralism, exposing its inner contradictions and curbing the success of French semiotics. But the Russian school of semiotics, which was different from the start, both in its aims and method, has survived, and Mikhail Bakhtin's "philosophy of language" has today achieved worldwide success. His *dialogism* fitted into the frame of the dominant currents of contemporary thought and the postmodern outlook: its plurality and relativism have met with wide acceptance and merged with the main trend.

Yuri Lotman's "philosophy of culture" has in its turn met with favour: but recognition of his work has not yet coincided with actual widespread critical practice, or with a debate about and development of his complex theories on the dynamism and pheno-

menology of culture. In its most engaging aspects it has virtually remained unexplored.

With Bakhtin Lotman shares several traits: both started their studies at Petersburg University, read German philosophy and reacted to Hegelism, Russian formalism and to Saussurean linguistics, living through the turmoils of contemporary Russian history. As Bakhtin died in 1975, and Lotman (27 years his junior) died in 1993, a continuation of what had become, in spite of their differences, a common line, was left to Lotman. His work responded to, built upon and included Bakhtin's heritage, while at the same time reaching a more complex perspective.

Lotman's background included both science and a philosophy: he derived his concept of the semiosphere from the Russian biologist Vernadsky<sup>1</sup> and, while avoiding direct philosophical debate, he criticized Hegel and has discussed Kant, whose complete work he read in German, and in whose line of descent he belongs.

After a structuralist start, he denounced the limits of Jakobson's structuralism, from which he differed defining his own original theory of culture by surprisingly joining two terms which had previously been considered antithetic: historical semiotics. The definition suggests his unusual bridging position: if Lotman's scientific allegiances and his semiotics, characterized by a double dependence from both *a priori* principles and experience, can lead back to Kant, his typical and unique blend of diachrony and synchrony seems to account for historical dynamism. Lotman's theory of culture can even provide, as I argue later, its own semiotic explanation of postmodernism.

A debate on Lotman's theories could therefore help to solve the opposition between the two philosophical descents in contemporary thought — Hegelian and Kantian — as well as between the scientific and humanistic cultures. Paradoxically, to its own detriment, the theoretical search of knowledge on itself has split at precisely the time science is obtaining results quicker than ever, suggesting new paradigms and new epistemological horizons.

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<sup>1</sup> Vladimir Vernadsky (Petersburg 1863 – Moscow 1945): the relevance of his scientific thought and his relationship with Yuri Lotman are emphasized by Silvano Tagliagambe: 1997.

## 2. A Code Typology

In the context of Lotman's theory of culture, his model of the Enlightenment stands central. It refers to a period in which he specialized in Russian literature under the influence of French Enlightenment and Rousseau and it played a fundamental role in the genesis of his theory of culture. He did not derive it by choosing one or more key aspects from the vast production of the age: its birth was instead tied to his intuition of a general "law of semiotics" underlying the enormous variety of cultural productions.

The empirical verification of a convergence of its outcome with recent historical-philosophical studies is striking and increasing, as the debate on the Enlightenment proceeds. It therefore poses a double problem of great interest, related to the nature of such an important phase or type of western culture and to its role in Lotman's code type theory and its possible impact.

In a 24-page essay in the Italian translation (the piece has still to be translated into English or French) Lotman identifies in Russian (and in European) culture four basic types of codes, the infinite combinations of which are usually hierarchically organized and originate a manifold variety of texts. This essay, included in 1970 in *Stat'i po tipologii kul'tury: materialy k kursu teorii literatury* (*Essays on the Typology of Culture: materials for the course of Theory of Literature*), was briefly summarized in an article in *The Times Literary Supplement* of October 12, 1973. The same year it was translated into Italian. (Lotman 1973)<sup>2</sup>. The essay marked a turning point in Lotman's studies during 1970, as Ann Shukman pointed out in her 1977 volume *Literature and Semiotics. A Study of the Writings of Yu. M. Lotman*:

The year 1970 was in many ways the end of a stage [...] the beginning of a new trend, the turn towards the theoretical discussion of culture as a whole, and the attempt to define cultural universals in semiotic terms; from this period Lotman's theory of literature became part of his theory of culture. (Shukman 1977:1).

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<sup>2</sup> From now on indicated as *The Problem of Sign*.



Yet, according to Ann Shukman, its roots went back to a 1967 essay, *The problem of a Typology of Culture*, translated into French in the same year, and then into Italian in 1969. Here Lotman distinguished two opposing types of culture built on different dominant codes, based on different relationships with the sign: one was the symbolic Medieval type, the other the Enlightenment one. The essence of the latter was expressed in Gogol's rejection of "the horrible reign of words in the place of facts", an attitude also mirrored in Tolstoy's story *Kholstomer* and which leads back to Rousseau's philosophy.

The attempt to define Enlightenment culture was indeed the starting point for Lotman's formulation of the four dominant codes of culture, later developed and described in *The Problem of Sign and of Sign Systems*. And this model, deriving from years of study, can directly relate to or virtually combine with all of the author's subsequent work.

Lotman nevertheless left the pieces of his typology of culture separate, as each essay stands autonomous. He did not provide a general theoretical system: even if the 1970/1973 essay could be seen forming the cornerstone to the typology (or phenomenology) of culture it had started, Lotman did not unify his theoretical production, interrupted by his death in 1993. In his final years, in particular, many of his essays partly overlap in their theoretical scope and in their perceptive insight into relevant and far-reaching problems, suggesting his attempt to outline a mode of thinking which would be open to later exploration and development.

The range of Lotman's essays is fundamentally complementary: when he speaks of the intersection of different "languages" in the culture of the Middle Ages, the Enlightenment or the Romantic period, such "languages", not further specified but evidently intended as distinct communicative models, would be more specifically defined and become more meaningful if referred to the four basic types of codes and their combinations. His spatial typological models (for which he makes reference to his own code theory) and his description of the dynamics of cultures and of the centre/periphery exchanges, would acquire a more effective sense if it were connected with the workings of code combinations. These could better explain the transactions among cultural entities

in that border or "contact area" in which, according to Lotman, renewal and invention are produced: a view that is today confirmed in scientific research, from quantistic physics to biology, from immunology to the neuro-sciences, with their shared emphasis on the contact areas, where evolutionary adaptations occur and qualities of objects can be defined or known. (Tagliagambe 1997).

The importance of dynamic connections in contact areas emerging today was indeed anticipated in Lotman's thought, in his redefinition of communication as a variable intersection, but this variable intersection can acquire a tangible meaning if related to his code type theory. Before moving to such a wide range of problems as those suggested, the first task which can be faced here is to test the theory at its beginning: in the definition of the Enlightenment type code.

### 3. Nature/Reason

Lotman's four fundamental code types originate from a dual basis. Synchronically speaking, Lotman identifies the two elementary relationships of the sign in its binary opposition: with what "it stands for", representing its *symbolic*, referential function; and with other signs, in its *syntagmatic* or syntactic connections. These two relations had already been studied in formal logic.

The syntagmatic relation marked Rudolf Carnap's Wien neopositivistic phase: in 1934, in his *The Logical Syntax of Language*, Carnap delved into the problem of the syntactic control of scientific sign relations. The symbolic or referential function stood instead at the centre of his American period, under the influence of Charles Morris, in *Meaning and Necessity* (1947), where he analysed the relation between sign and object.

After choosing these two synchronic logic relationships, Lotman proceeds by considering their four basic possible combinations, as they can both be present or absent or, in turn, present in the absence of the other.

Then, diachronically speaking, the four types of code produced as combinations of the symbolic and syntagmatic relations of the

sign appear as empirically and historically present and actually dominant in four cultural periods: the Middle Ages, Renaissance, Enlightenment and Romanticism.

The symbolic or semantic (referential) code type seems in fact to dominate and "explain" Medieval culture, in which the historical world is supposed to reflect God's eternal structure and Providence. This ensures both social stability and cohesion, a precise collocation for every member of society, the more so as social roles and positions are maintained on an hereditary basis. The individual receives his meaning and worth from his place in the general order, rather than from his personal qualities: his biological attributes or needs are ignored, but his symbolic function makes him a part of society, the equivalent of totality. From this viewpoint, Lotman asserts, the part is not inferior but equivalent to the whole. This ensures protection for every state, be it the lowest servant's in the social pyramid, but it prevents change and forbids the new, imposes static repetition and imitation of the *exempla* in a culture oriented towards the past. Only what has existed from ancient times can actually exist and be acknowledged.

The *syntagmatic* code instead permeated Renaissance culture. The unit, the part, is now inferior to the whole and can be sacrificed to it and its efficiency. The concrete, pragmatic aspects of life that were sacrificed by Medieval symbolism, are vindicated. Effectiveness is of utmost value. Reference, the guarantee of symbolic meaning, can yield to the advantages of appearance or even deception: Machiavelli's *The Prince* may teach the prince how to dissimulate, while rhetoric and trompe-l'oeil effects are extolled. This code allows space for individual enterprise and innovation (be this scientific or geographical), in favour of the social and global structure. Political and territorial centralization are favoured, as the town becomes the centre of social life, and mechanical invention develops: it's the advent of the machine.

The negation of the fundamental types of code so far outlined — both symbolic and syntagmatic — becomes the dominant trait of the third type code, coinciding with Enlightenment culture. This provides a "double liberation" from past culture. By negating both principles of semiosis, this code would indeed lead to utter silence, to the very effacement of culture, but it rather tends to



restrict its *asyntagmatic*, *asemantic* and *aparadigmatic* (anti-hierarchical) traits to a criticism of the two previously dominating codes and "creates the signs of this double negation", as Lotman puts it. (Lotman 1973: 59).

The loss of meaning and the fragmentation of reality that were produced, were to trigger off the re-evaluation of the two semiotic principles denied, the combination of which in a *semantic-syntagmatic* code becomes the basis of the Romantic culture. After the nineteenth century — Lotman hints — the code typical of the Enlightenment and that typical of Romanticism both hold the stage, combining together: Lotman's analysis stops short at the beginning of the twentieth century.

With its "asyntotic" double negation of the symbolic and syntagmatic functions, the Enlightenment type code produces two main effects: various degrees of *desemiotization*, brought about by its double semiotic negation; and the effacement of history, or rejection of its artificiality, in favour of the only residual reality left, nature, which is turned into the core value.

The distance between the signifier and the signified is denounced to the point of actual opposition to signs, which are perceived as artificial, not real: bread, water, life, love are essential and real, not money, uniforms, grades or reputations, illusory and deceptive symbols. Besides, "singularity" is positive, while being a part, a fraction of a large totality, is now negative, it does not increase but decreases value.

The opposition natural/unnatural stands central to Enlightenment culture, Lotman insists, and turns social structures into the artificial constrictions of a false civilization. The individual's anthropological qualities, life as a biological process and its basic needs are real, while the modern world of words and signs, rejected for instance by Gogol, implies the realm of lies. If for the symbolic, Medieval imagination "in the beginning was the Word", for Enlightenment culture the word is rather a disvalue. Lotman quotes Rousseau profusely: as the inspirer of Tolstoy's *Kholstomer*, in which a horse looks with critical desemiotizing eyes upon the human world of property, social roles and conventions; or directly, in his description of the child, who has



still to learn about the artificiality of verbal language. He indeed uses the only natural language common to all men:

On a longtemps cherché, s'il y avait une langue naturelle et commune à tous les hommes: sans doute il y en a une et c'est celle que les enfants parlent avant de savoir parler. (Ib. 56).

This language is based on mimicry and intonation: "L'accent est l'âme du discours [...] L'accent ment moins que la parole".

In Rousseau's outlook the sharing of the syntagmatic ties of social life in a state does not increase individual freedom or dignity. In fact, the larger the state, the smaller the citizen's freedom or strength of representation: Lotman quotes the famous *Contrat social* passage in which Rousseau argues that it is better to be a citizen in a state of 10,000 people rather than in one of 100,000, as the individual's portion of suffrage power and influence on law-making decreases tenfold in the second case: "plus l'état s'agrandit, plus la liberté diminue".

In a syntagmatic culture or code, Lotman remarks, one typically appreciates the impact of the majority as conferring superior power to the individual, while the opposite attitude, detracting value from social dependence, is a clear sign of an Enlightenment type code, as in the case of Robinson Crusoe on his desert island. Man's happiness becomes therefore the sole proper aim of social doctrine. And the members of a crowd or a people are attractive not as a compact mass, but as a sum of single, equal, weak and subjected individuals, who need liberating.

The double attack that the Enlightenment code bears on the symbolic and syntagmatic structure of the state, leaving nature as the only important principle to test society, brings the natural man's viewpoint to the fore, or even suggests to embrace an animal's outlook, as in the case of Tolstoy's horse in *Kholstomer*, so close, in this aspect, to Swift's horses in *Gulliver's Travels*. It is the appraisal of nature that fosters the rewriting of the social contract as well as the *égalité-liberté-fraternité* formula of the French Revolution. And yet desemiotization, which is the main innovative tool of the Enlightenment code, comes to a paradox just regarding nature, its original founding value.

The historical world, where man actually lives, is seen as false, while the real entity, nature, is from the point of view of experience as ungraspable and indefinite as the natural condition, which escapes determination. "Real reality" becomes baffling and the debate as to the nature of nature becomes endless or grows fantastic, as in Voltaire's Eldorado or in Swift's Houyhnhnmland. Opposed to signs, nature has indeed become a second degree sign: such is the meaning of its heuristic value discussed by Rousseau.

But the Enlightenment type code, which dominates eighteenth-century culture, plays a particular critical function: it makes an insurgence at each critical moment of social change and devaluation of current social structures. If the four basic code types are "available" or "possible" at any historical moment, employable when necessary, the aparadigmatic-asyntagmatic type that fostered the French Revolution tends to appear whenever radical innovation is necessary. It is to be found, Lotman remarks, in the times of change, as from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, and from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment proper, which developed when the code became dominant. The code in question works as a renewing mechanism, complicating or "outphasing" the interplay and degree of code combinations.

Each of the four code types outlined by Lotman actually hides more than a paradox, and none can claim a right to hegemony. But the Enlightenment type, the most vigorous semiotic device of change, and probably the most characteristic code of Western civilization, perhaps implies the highest number of paradoxes. Lotman's model both exposes and explains at least four of them, previously undetected as such, but actual sources of controversy. Besides the one concerning "the nature of nature", already pointed out by Lotman, at least three more emerge from his model of the Enlightenment and will now be discussed.

The first is in fact immanent in *desemiotization*, the basic tool of the code. This enables the eighteenth century to produce on the one hand a deep skepticism and the most scathing criticism, and on the other a celebration of renewal and of the rebuilding quality of reason, which Kant defines in his first *Critique*.

Yet in his description of the Enlightenment, Lotman surprisingly never mentions reason and certainly this is not incidental.

Indeed this term has caused controversial discussion as to the definition and evaluation of Enlightenment and concerning the actual philosophers and thinkers who can coherently represent its thought. It directly brings us to our main point: a comparison between Lotman's model and previous extant models.

#### 4. Adorno's Dialectic

After Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (1947), the problem of reason and its function would seem inescapable in any discussion concerning the Enlightenment. Lotman's avoidance of the word reason is therefore particularly conspicuous.

In the Enlightenment culture Adorno sees not so much a specific moment of historical change, but a phase in the developing self, the bourgeois traits of which he considers as already at work in Homer's *Odyssey*. The progress of this development increases during the Renaissance and the Enlightenment proper, only to shift its centre, after the French Revolution, to German philosophy and culture. Here it culminates in Hitler's Nazism and then produces the alienated destiny of contemporary mass society, as best evident in America.

Its very cause and source are seen in the pressing problem of survival, which has imposed the alternative of either succumbing to nature or dominating it. The choice of dominion has developed bringing about both a denial of nature and the subjection of the weaker and the majority, with the aim of achieving an increasing control. But the logic of dominion soon backfired on the dominators themselves, in the shape of coercive self-dominion. Enlightenment then becomes a "dialectic" between a progressive attempt at dominating nature and a corresponding social regression in terms of growing coercion. Self-preservation has thus brought about totalitarianism through a double device: economic and scientific organization.

The "mathematic spirit", the very core of reason, finds its climax in Enlightenment culture, which according to Adorno equates Positivism. It reduces thought to a mathematical apparatus, and denies value to abstract activities, like art and thought as such:



this is, Adorno argues, what Ulysses' attitude to the singing Sirens in the XXII canto of the *Odyssey* already envisaged.

Ulysses decides to hear the Sirens' irresistible chant, but has himself tied to the mast of his ship in order not to yield to it, while his companions go on rowing indifferently, as their ears have been stopped with wax. In Ulysses' impotence to act Adorno sees a prefiguration of bourgeois art, which, like nature, must be denied in order to keep the control and self-control necessary for survival. This denial for Adorno is the basic core of Enlightenment, seen as a transhistorical will of dominion or reason (*Verstand*), characteristic of Western culture and responsible for its dismaying outcome in the last century: the horror of the concentration camps and the "waste land" of a generalized distribution of means and goods, parallel to the growing social insignificance of subdued masses.

Adorno's description, a political overall judgement of our civilization, does not offer a proper specific interpretation of the eighteenth century culture. It places Kant side by side with Sade and Nietzsche and considers them as all part of a coherent program, ultimately leading to Nazi pogroms and the contemporary "equalization" that levels culture.

If compared to Ernst Cassirer's 1932 study, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* (later discussed here), the Adornian 1947 theory of the Enlightenment can actually appear as an astonishing reversal. And Lotman's later model, emphasizing the primacy of nature and the desemiotizing critical attitude towards history, seems, in its turn, to invert Adorno's Enlightenment, as based on the primacy of a degenerating reason perverting history. Contrasts are indeed disconcerting.

The way to Adorno's negative view had been paved by Hegel's philosophy of history. Hegel's discussion of the Enlightenment (or rather *Aufklärung*) in the *Phenomenology of the Spirit* is indeed ambiguous. On the one hand, it represents the culmination of the spirit's progress since Antigone's times, which caused "the descent of heaven on earth", wiping out superstition and the transcendence separating self from self. But at the same time the experience of Terror marks the failure of the Enlightenment to liberate the self and poses the problem of the moral state, to a

degree jeopardizing Hegel's conclusion of his *Phenomenology*. (As pointed out by Hyppolite 1972: 396–399).

Under the pressure of recent historical horror, Adorno's outlook, like Hegel's, goes back to Greek civilization, to denounce a superhistorical structural constant pervading centuries of western culture, an increasing "bourgeois rationalistic dominion" culminating in Nazi terror. And he calls this constant Enlightenment.

But how has such a position been produced? Again it was Hegel who furnished two relevant premises for Adorno's attitude: the effacement of nature in the Enlightenment culture and the depreciation of Newton's science.

## 5. Hegel's Deletions and Cassirer's Return

In Hegel's description of the Enlightenment in vol. II, VI of the *Phenomenology* it is not difficult to recognize the equivalent of Lotman's desemiotization in what is called the "language of disgregation" (*Zerrissenheit*), typical of the period and expressed in Diderot's *Le nouveau de Rameau*. This is defined as an inversion — in terms of detached wit and brilliant irony — of the self's values. But just as Hegel examines the rebellion implied in this *Zerrissenheit*, he finds a concept he cannot but recognize and immediately discards as inappropriate to his system of values: nature as opposed to history.

No individual, not even Diogenes, he argues, can really leave the world, while the single self as such is "the negative". Rebellion must be considered only from the viewpoint of "universal individuality": this "cannot" revert to nature, abandon the civilized well-educated consciousness reached through the long historical progress he had described starting from the Greek polis. There, in Antigone's rebellion to Creontes, he had detected the clash between natural blood bonds and history, marking the end of the "beautiful unity" of an undivided self. It simply could not be that the historical development reached in the eighteenth century should lead the self back to what he calls "the wildness of an animal-like consciousness, be it ever called nature or innocence". (Hegel II, vi: 87).

Thus Hegel dismisses the uncomfortable concept of a return to nature, which he discovered in the Enlightenment, by dissolving the concept of nature along lines which were closely followed by his disciples. What prevents him from recognizing the importance of the concept he found, is his refusal to renounce the progressive development of his historical dialectics. This excluded the possibility to revert to a primitive stage (nature) and allowed no free alternative: an attitude Lotman denounces in one of his essays. In *Historical Laws and the Structure of the Text* (Lotman 1990) Lotman opposes Hegel's secular escatology and historical process to his own interpretation of history as an open experiment. This view is certainly closer to that of the French revolutionaries, who rejected the old year numeration to start history anew from year 1 after the revolution, and even changed the names of the months, recurring to seasonal natural aspects, to emphasize total renewal. But Hegel's blindness to the role of nature in the Enlightenment was made even more relevant by his parallel refusal of another fundamental aspect of the Enlightenment, which was in its turn connected to nature.

In 1986, in an authoritative article entitled *Povert  dell'illuminismo* (*Shallowness of the Enlightenment*), a renowned Italian expert of the Enlightenment, Paolo Casini, pointed to Hegel's disregard, starting from 1801, for Newton's theory of gravitation, described as "born from an illegitimate relation between physics and mathematics". Newton had mistakenly assumed certain concepts of reason as natural laws and had admitted the irrational element of experience into a science like astronomy, that was to be founded *a priori* on dialectic thought. Newton's method was a negative example of how experiments can lead nowhere and yield no knowledge: "wie  berhaupt gar nichts zu erkennen ist". (Casini 1971: 232).

Hegel's attitude produced, Casini remarks, a double outcome in his philosophical descent: while up to Hegel the history of the scientific revolution had been included in the history of philosophy, after him physics, astronomy and mechanics were excluded. The relation between scientific method or discovery and Enlightenment thought — that was so vital to the Neokantian Ernst Cassirer in his *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* — was



erased. This left Enlightenment arguments and debate, including Kant's distinction between phenomenon and noumenon, in a gnoseological void, caused by the impoverishment of the proper background. Hence the cliché of the "shallowness of the Enlightenment", which Casini decidedly retorts on Hegelism.

It is therefore no chance that Cassirer's 1932 study of Enlightenment had to wait until the 50's for a translation into English, and even longer to receive a better, albeit belated recognition as a fundamental contribution, at a time when Hegel's prejudices, and those of his descent, start dying down. From the point of view of Lotman's model it offers amply documented proof of the validity of its two central points, desemiotization and opposition between nature and history. Lotman had indeed most probably read Cassirer, but what is relevant, in any case, is that Lotman reaches an analogous outlook by a totally different procedure, in the field of his own historical semiotics. This convergence appears to be a reciprocal testing and validation on the concepts in question: while the rich historical factuality brought about by Cassirer "fulfils" the expectations of Lotman's model, this seems in its turn to solve or "justify" some of the apparently contradictory aspects in Cassirer's exposition. (Dieckman 1979).<sup>3</sup>

These refer to the two scientific methods — Descartes' and Newton's — and the relative "genealogies" active in the eighteenth century, which Cassirer at times sharply distinguishes and at times melts into an undifferentiated continuum, a problem connected with that of the list of the philosophers worth considering, mentioned in the *Preface*.

Stressing that "the real philosophy of the Enlightenment is not simply the sum total of what its leading thinkers — Voltaire and Montesquieu, Hume or Condillac, D'Alembert or Diderot, Wolff or Lambert — thought or taught", Cassirer leaves out both Rousseau and Kant. (Cassirer 1951: ix). Yet the latter — who is actually often quoted in the essay, although no specific part of the book is devoted to him — had already been the subject of a volume by Cassirer and, according to Dieckman, Cassirer's

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<sup>3</sup> Herbert Dieckman discusses specific limitations and shortcomings in Cassirer's work, which are not relevant in the present discussion.



description of the Enlightenment actually refers to Kant as its culmination. (Dieckman 1979: 24). As for Rousseau, he is likewise present throughout *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*. Yet the problem remains that both names are not included in the *Preface*. Here this is relevant, as Lotman mainly exemplifies his model with Rousseau, his presence being so pervasive in Russian culture and literature.

## 6. Two Reasons

By quoting at the start of his first chapter D'Alembert's *Essay on the Elements of Philosophy*, Cassirer establishes the premises on which he bases the intellectual turmoil of the eighteenth century. The new analytic spirit nourishing "the century of philosophy *par excellence*", challenging the old tutelage of established tradition and superseding the theological control of knowledge as well as political absolutism, stands at the core of the new nature-oriented science. And science has drawn attention to nature as the sole source of knowledge against the pretenses of Revelation: "Newton finished what Kepler and Galileo had begun" (ib. 9). D'Alembert has no hesitation as to the origin of the new "lively fermentation of minds", the "enthusiasm which accompanies discoveries" characteristic of his age:

Natural science from day to day accumulates new riches [...] The true system of the world has been recognized, developed and perfected [...] In short, from the earth to Saturn, from the history of the heavens to that of insects, natural philosophy has been revolutionized; and nearly all other fields of knowledge have assumed new forms. (Ib. 3).

But, Cassirer points out, it is of no little importance that D'Alembert's philosophical method

involves recourse to Newton's "Rules of philosophizing" rather than to Descartes' *Discourse on Method*, with the result that philosophy presently takes

an entirely new direction. For Newton's method is not that of pure deduction, but that of analysis. (Ib. 7).

Newton's method is indeed the reverse of Descartes': it does not begin, as in Descartes' systematic deduction, by setting certain principles, general concepts and axioms from which the particular and the factual can be derived by proof and inference, through a rigorous chain, no link of which can be removed. The eighteenth century abandons this "scientific genealogy", this kind of deduction and of proof: "it no longer vies with Descartes and Malebranche, with Leibniz and Spinoza for the prize of systematic rigour and completeness". (Ib.) It rather starts from empirical data — nature — proceeding not from concepts and axioms to phenomena, but vice versa: observation produces the datum of science to be analyzed, principles and laws are the object of the investigation, obtained through reduction. The methodological pattern of Newton's physics triumphs in the middle of the century:

However much individual thinkers and schools differ in their results, they agree in this epistemological premise. Voltaire's *Treatise on Metaphysics*, D'Alembert's *Preliminary Discourse* and Kant's *Inquiry concerning the Principles of Natural Theology and Morality* all concur on this point. (Ib. 12).

The first assumption of the epistemology here implied is the independence of the original truth of nature, of the "realm of nature" as opposed to the "realm of grace": nature has become the horizon of knowledge, and the comprehension of reality requires no other aid than the natural forces of knowledge. In the self-sufficiency of both nature and intellect lies the premise for Kant's famous definition of the Enlightenment as "man's exodus from his self-incurred tutelage". (Kant 169).

Cassirer's distinctions are here clear and sharp, as his emphasis on nature and on the two concepts that can be immediately connected with the scientific method: that of reason and that of system. From them indeed, as Cassirer laments, so many misunderstandings have originated, leading to "a customary consideration of the philosophy of nature of the eighteenth century as a turn

toward mechanism and materialism". This has actually often been taken as the basic trend of the French spirit. (Cassirer 1951: 55).

Concerning the concept of system confusion must be avoided:

The value of system, the *esprit systématique*, is neither underestimated nor neglected; but it is sharply distinguished from the love of system for its own sake, the *esprit de système*. The whole theory of knowledge of the eighteenth century strives to confirm this distinction. D'Alembert in his "Preliminary Discourse" to the French *Encyclopaedia* makes this distinction the central point of his argument, and Condillac in his *Treatise on Systems* gives it explicit form and justification. (Ib. 8).

Fontanelle's mechanical universe described as "clockwork" in his *Conversations on the Plurality of Worlds* is gradually superseded and then abandoned as the epistemologists of modern physics win the field, and Condillac in his *Treatise on Systems* banishes the "spirit of systems" from physics: the physicist must not explain the mechanism of the universe, but establish definite general relations in nature. While for Descartes geometry was the master of physics, the physical body being extension (*res extensa*) and this had entangled him in difficulties, Newton no longer believed it possible to reduce physics to geometry and recurred instead to mathematics. His analysis indeed implied no absolute end or closed geometries, but remained open, producing only relative provisional stopping points. (Ib. 51). This difference from the great seventeenth century systems — which in Lotman's terms we could define as based on a dominant syntagmatic type code — is stressed by Cassirer, as he points out that

materialism as it appears in Holbach's *System of Nature* and Lamettrie's *Man a Machine* (*L'homme machine*), is an isolated phenomenon of no characteristic significance. Both works represent special cases and exemplify a retrogression into that dogmatic mode of thinking which the leading scientific minds of the eighteenth century oppose and endeavor to eliminate. The scientific sentiments of the



Encyclopaedists are not represented by Holbach and Lamettrie, but by D'Alembert: and in the latter we find the vehement renunciation of mechanism and materialism as the ultimate principle for the explanation of things, as the ostensible solution of the riddles of the universe. D'Alembert never deviates from the Newtonian method. (Ib. 55).

The real meaning of the word reason used by eighteenth century thinkers now becomes apparent, as do the misconceptions it has raised. An expression indicating the power of the mind,

"reason" becomes the unifying and central point of this century, expressing all that it longs and strives for, and all that it achieves. But the historian of the eighteenth century would be guilty of error and hasty judgment if he were satisfied with this characterization and thought it a safe point of departure. [...] We can scarcely use this word any longer without being conscious of its history; and time and again we see how great a change of meaning the term has undergone. This circumstance constantly reminds us how little meaning the term "reason" and "rationalism" still retain, even in the sense of purely historical characteristics. (Ib. 5-6).

As compared with the seventeenth century usage, the concept of reason in the eighteenth century undergoes an evident change of meaning:

In the great metaphysical systems of that century — those of Descartes and Malebranche, of Spinoza and Leibniz — reason is the realm of the "eternal verities", of those truths held in common by the human and the divine mind. What we know through reason, we therefore behold "in God" (ib. 13).

This "centralized" unitarian ("syntagmatic") reason of eternal verities is superseded by an analytical reason, taken in "a different and more modest sense", "no longer the sum total of innate ideas [...] a sound body of knowledge, principles and truths, but a kind

of energy, fully comprehensible only in its agency and effects". This energy, Cassirer remarks, dissolves data through analysis, as it does with "any evidence of revelation, tradition and authority", from Voltaire to Hume (ib.): that is, it "desemiotizes" through nature.

It is now evident that Cassirer's study confirms or rather "validates" both Lotman's primacy of nature and principle of desemiotization as the basic tenets of the Enlightenment culture. But it also delegitimizes the very word reason which Lotman avoids as useless or misleading: the seventeenth century has its own (syntagmatic) reason, while the eighteenth (asyntagmatic) century has a different one. Here are to be found the historical premises of Lotman's semiotics, according to which every code type has its codifying principle or "reason".

More evidence in favour of the two characteristics selected in Lotman's model of the Enlightenment type code could be derived also from the vast range of recent historical reassessments, from Franco Venturi's analyses to Reinhart Kosellek's studies. (See Venturi 1970, Kosellek 1959). But the convergences shown seem already to qualify Lotman's "simple" model and its "elementary" logic for serious consideration within contemporary reflection on culture and its production.

## 7. Explications

Although clear in his fundamental distinctions, now and then Cassirer seems to hesitate when, for instance, he considers how Newton completes Galileo's search, or how, apart from emphasis on method, he detects a steady development of the new ideal of knowledge spreading with no real chasm since the previous century. (Cassirer 1951: 22). While these remarks may seem contradictory to Cassirer's own thesis of the innovation characteristic in the eighteenth century, Lotman's theory of the code types can easily account for them.

Anticipations of the Enlightenment code, such as Galileo's, are pointed out by Lotman in the passage from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance and then from the Renaissance to the new epoch: this

can explain what appear as cases of "continuity" within a frame of contrasting dominant codes in different periods. On the other hand, as Lotman points out, different phases of code dominance can coexist or overlap, and combinations of codes are the rule, since a text, and even more so a culture, is formed by a hierarchy of codes.

As to Cassirer's (not unusual) difficulty in enlisting Kant or Rousseau side by side with the Encyclopaedians, while at the same time frequently referring to them, this again can be explained, in Lotman's terms, as due to their composite texture. Rousseau's *volonté general* seems to reflect a code semiotically different (a syntagmatic one) from the one informing Rousseau's own dominant "desemiotizing" nature, which does not prevent him from showing some of the most articulated and typical aspects of the asyntagmatic Enlightenment type code. Similarly, Kant can well embrace a compound of codes, the Enlightenment one already mixed with a relevant secondary Romantic component. Neither chronology nor authorship can guarantee the unitarian composition of a cultural text. This is indeed as variable as any organic individual adaptation to life. Only an immanent principle, capable of describing the possible outcomes of culture such as Lotman's, can help distinguish, classify, evaluate the cultural syntax of texts.

This springs from code combinations, the variety of which is practically infinite, considering the different weight of each component in its incidence on the final overall result. A comparison with the combinations of the four bases of human DNA, giving rise to the infinite diversity of individuals and, at the same time, to the precise identification of each individual, comes easily to mind.

Moreover, Lotman's model can explain an apparently contradictory aspect of Enlightenment culture: the presence of a utopian attitude, fostering new social contracts and innovation, alongside a skeptical disruptive attitude (what Hegel calls *Zerrissenheit*), which may verge on the absurd. Lotman points out the two different outcomes of the Enlightenment code as produced by its intimate nature. (Lotman 1975).

Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* and Johnson's *Rasselas* well exemplify the double outcome that the two principles of the Enlightenment — the (heuristic) value of nature and desemiotization — can produce. In his description of an imaginary race of "noble horses",



following the example of More's and Bacon's imaginary utopias, Swift depicts an ideal world representing a positive natural condition. Johnsons' *Rasselas*, instead, fails in his search for a positive "choice of life" in the actual world because of the disappointing results offered by his socio-anthropological observation or rather desemiotization. In the first case, the supposed "memory" of the heuristic image of natural positiveness is intended as an educational tool, simulated in the protagonist's supposed experience in the ideal world; in the second case, as nature cannot but be experienced in history, natural positiveness becomes ungraspable and this paradox prevents *Rasselas* from making a choice, leading him to the verge of the absurd.

Lotman's code theory can, on the other hand, even help interpret Adorno's attitude in its contrast with Cassirer's almost completely inverted picture of the Enlightenment.

Thinking in terms of an Hegelian historical continuum, Adorno merges the specific type of Enlightenment culture in the subsequent (and also preceding) forms of culture, pointing to a trans-historical syntagmatism in order to explain the traumatic outcomes of contemporary history. At the same time he personally assumes a radically asyntagmatic attitude, denouncing the "artificial dominion" of nature: in Lotman's terms, he pursues an Enlightenment type code. Such a code, in its absurdist outcome, informs his "negative dialectic"; while on the other hand Cassirer points to the renewing-utopistic aspect of the Enlightenment, with which his personal outlook seems to coincide or "intersect".

As Cassirer laments, inversion in the evaluation of the Enlightenment was not unusual, and we can now have a cue to such contrasts. Cassirer himself belongs — with Dilthey (1901), Fueter (1911), Meinecke (1936) — to the first wave of scholars who started a reassessment of the Enlightenment against the Romantic bias.

In spite of an enhancement of the influence of the Adorno-Horkheimer outlook, produced by the 1968 crisis, more recent historical and philosophical research confirms a "renewed reading" of the Enlightenment; and Lotman's theories can be considered to stand in this trend. At the same time, though, they can suggest why the contemporary tendency to include all aspects of the culture of



the eighteenth century, with no distinguishing principle, has weakened the term Enlightenment itself, making it appear more and more elusive.

The attempt to avoid the (Kantian/scientific) principle of simplification, in order to embrace all the occurring manifestations, in an (Hegelian/historical) "completeness", necessarily prevents an understanding of the workings underlying the surface appearance of phenomena.

Recently, in studies on the Enlightenment, a large variety of research methods have been applied, from *nouvelle critique* to statistical analysis, from the *Annales* tradition to Foucault's inversion of official values and opposition/emargination, the latter having become the protagonist of the century. Against this background, contemporary to Deconstructionism, Cassirer's *Philosophy of the Enlightenment* was at first eclipsed as abstract speculation, but is now newly emerging, as the Hegelian dominant recedes.

Adding new emphasis to the scientific debate of the eighteenth century, siding against the old "spirit of system" in favour of hypothetical probabilistic procedures, Casini has recently pointed out Cassirer's *Philosophy of the Enlightenment* as a valid reference on the historical, scientific, epistemological and aesthetic turn of the period. (Casini 1994: 12). And new attention has recently been paid to the central importance of *nature* in eighteenth century economic and juridical doctrines, in physiocracy and in jusnaturalism. These again confirm Lotman's theory, in the light of which they are at the same time better understandable. In its unique stress on nature as agriculture, physiocracy reveals itself as a typical manifestation of the Enlightenment.

In François Quesnay's *Tableau Economique* only agriculture produces wealth and is considered a positive investment, while commercial and industrial activities are seen as unproductive: from Mirabeau's *L'ami de l'homme* (1760) and *Philosophie rurale* (1766) to de la Rivière's *L'ordre naturel et essentiel des sociétés politiques* (1767), the primacy of nature and of agriculture stands at the basis of a physiological self-maintaining natural balance in economics, and represents the first formulation of the *laissez-faire* principle. Though rejecting the unproductivity of non agricultural

activities, Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* (1766) was the critical heir to Quesnay's theories.

Jusnaturalism in its turn leads to different outcomes in Enlightenment culture, but they all share the stress on nature as their founding principle, as well as its positiveness. This is evident in Locke's juridical value of the state of nature, as in Rousseau's *sauvage*, deprived of social links and juridical traits, or in Kant's provisory natural right, forming the basis for social private right. At the same time nature as an original condition of man is, like reason, a variable redefined in every dominant code: while for the Enlightenment it has a positive heuristic value, in previous outlooks it sometimes appeared very differently. According to the jusnaturalistic outlook of Hobbes' *Leviathan*, natural equality meant total war and led to the alienation of individual rights: these were renounced to establish a monarch's absolute power, which ensured peace through subjection. Here a syntagmatic outlook favoured centralized control, while the eighteenth century reversed the negative quality of the natural condition, preferring it to historical organization. For Rousseau in particular war is not primary, but is rather the outcome of civilization: original natural freedom and equality are lost when society comes into existence.

From the standpoint of Lotman's model the actual texts — be they literary or not — appear, as already emphasized, usually based on a combination of different codes, one of them being a dominant one: a text is therefore plural, but mostly organized according to a hierarchic order. After Romanticism, though, the equal forces of the two latter code types — the Enlightenment and the romantic ones — seem to produce "half and half" combinations: a kind of dialogue on an even basis. Pushing this development further, we could see contemporary postmodernism as the outcome of the lack of a dominant code, or as the simultaneous presence of all types, none being hegemonic.

### 8. An Epistemology of Intersection?

Lotman's theories can appear, as they did to Julia Kristeva in her 1994 essay in PMLA, as culturally "subversive". (Kristeva 1994:

375). The metaphor of the fall of the Berlin wall, used by Kristeva to stress the impact of Lotman's dynamic historical semiotics on the static philological attitude of classic structuralism, can still be valid today. A semiotic study, no longer of the text itself, but of its sociology as well, has not yet been tried, although as early as in 1977 Fokkema and Kunne-Ibsch defined in this sense Lotman's theories as a potential "Copernican revolution" in humanistic studies. (Fokkema-Kunne-Ibsch 1977: 45, quoted in Sørensen 1987: 309). Ten years later Dolf Sørensen analyzed Lotman's thought in his *Theory Formation and the Study of Literature* (Sørensen, op. cit. 281–319) as capable of a far-reaching renewal in textual interpretation: which must be based on both micro- and macro-analysis, a "completeness" for the sake of which Sørensen even suggested a fusion of Lotman's theories (more open to macro-analysis) with those (more inclined to micro-analysis) of Algirdas Greimas.

As an hermeneutic tool, Lotman's model allows for utmost "comprehensiveness", as it offers a possibility to recognize the composite nature of semiosis, in cultures as in texts, and to map their hierarchical organization. At the same time it does not sacrifice an overall understanding and theoretical explanation of the diversified data compounding a text or producing a cultural outlook, as well as a dialogue of cultures.

What is striking about Lotman's theory is its double move towards simplification and complication in the constitution of a text. A model of only four code types explains the basic characteristics of four historical periods, from the Middle Ages to Romanticism. Surprisingly, the general logical assets of these different periods are made to stand forth cogently, as Lotman's essay shows, through a procedure typical of simplifying and non-reductive scientific generalization.

At the same time each text appears composite, and its interpretation more complex. This now consists in the encounter of virtually contrasting sets of code combinations, both the set that gave rise to the text and the set belonging to the reader or listener. An enormous gap opens on the hermeneutic front, since the probability of total coincidence between the two sets is low: this offers a semiotic justification for the infinite openness of inter-



pretation. Interpretation becomes in fact a form of partial *intersection*, or rather *the series of possible intersections*.

If to the plurality of each text and its readings we add Lotman's dynamic view of the text described in *O Semiosfere* (1984) — a work deeply influenced by biologist Ivan Vernadsky — we begin to appreciate a double profound affinity. On the one hand, with the general principles of Bakhtin's dialogism, which are in Lotman transposed from the domain of genre to the domain of semantics and of its dynamics. On the other hand, with the play of interference, counteraction and combination, typical of the new scientific paradigm common today to physics as well as artificial intelligence, biology, immunology, or the neurosciences.

It has been observed in fact (see Tagliagambe 1997) that the quantum theory, Gödel's and Church-Turing's theorems, have all brought to an end the idea of objects as independent from the observer, as *separable*, *localized* and *representable*. Traditional epistemology, extending from Leibniz to Frege and Hilbert, which even Einstein still tried to defend in 1948 (Einstein-Born 1973: 201), is no longer viable today. Scientific research suggests a different outlook: reality is not "representable" but "explicable" through models. Object configurations can be described from the border area separating/connecting them with the outside, as it is in this area that relations with the observer and with the ambience are reciprocally determined and can be known. Vernadsky's concept of co-evolution, of "biosphere" (based on the interaction of organisms and ambience) and "noosphere" (based on the interaction of human culture and ambience) stand at the same time at the source of Lotman's models and concept of "semiosphere", as at the root of the contemporary scientific outlook. Conceptual convergence is not therefore casual: Lotman's intersectionism and its implied "epistemology of contact" can appear as the semiotic equivalent of the new epistemologic paradigm emerging in the fields of science.

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## Savoir et fiction. Impropropriété, aporie et pertinence de la fiction

JEAN BESSIÈRE

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L'argument que l'on propose ici, choisit une allure mineure. Il entend situer, resituer implicitement, explicitement, bien des thèses contemporaines relatives à la fiction littéraire, à l'occasion de l'examen du rapport entre savoir et fiction. Sa perspective est aisément définissable. Le tour de vis auquel la fiction peut procéder (Henry James), le fait que, face à la fiction littéraire, la pensée soit en reste — simplement obligée à la reconnaissance de la lettre — ou contrainte à jouer d'une métaphoricité et d'une analogie supplémentaires, dispose la question du savoir de la fiction de façon spécifique. Ce savoir est précisément en question, non parce que la fiction littéraire serait toujours à quelque degré mensongère ou parce que le savoir serait toujours à quelque degré fictif, mais parce que la fiction qui est son propre fait — cela se conclut des thèses de J. R. Searle (1972) —, suscite l'interrogation sur ce fait — de bien des points de vue, esthétiques, cognitifs. Esthétique est ce qui ouvre explicitement une alternative dans le jeu des apparences communes de ces discours. Participe du cognitif ce discours qui ouvre une alternative dans le jeu des savoirs. Cette interrogation caractérise, *de facto*, le discours de la fiction littéraire comme une manière de para-discours dans les discours de nos savoirs, qui n'invalide aucun savoir et en suppose la reconnaissance lors même que le discours de la fiction littéraire ne participe pas expressément de ces savoirs. Cette reconnaissance est probablement le moyen de reconnaître la fiction, le moyen par lequel la fiction se donne à reconnaître, sans que soient considérées les marques formelles que celle-ci peut présenter, et sans



qu'elle soit définie comme constituant l'élément d'une alternative par rapport à ce qui n'est pas elle.

Apparenter savoir, connaissance et fiction constitue un geste ambivalent. La fiction — nous entendons ici celle de la littérature écrite — donne à lire ses propres énoncés, ses propres arguments, ses propres discours suivant des moyens divers de présentation de ces énoncés, de ces arguments, de ces discours. Ces énoncés, ces arguments, ces discours sont interprétables dans le cadre de la fiction. Le texte de la fiction est à la fois signifiant et signifié; il se donne en une sorte d'immédiateté, alors qu'il suppose codes et savoirs. Aussi est-il indissociable de la caractérisation du savoir que porte, qu'élabore la fiction. A cause de ce caractère indissociable du texte et du savoir, la fiction peut prendre la fiction *per se* comme objet de son savoir. Exposé de la réflexivité de la fiction et métafiction sont les moyens de ce jeu sur le savoir que la fiction donnerait d'elle-même. Dire les savoirs de la fiction, les cadres de ces savoirs, revient à dire que les cadres de ces savoirs ne sont que relatifs les uns aux autres, lors même que la fiction se donne pour "pure fiction", sans report assuré sur un autre discours, un autre savoir. Que la fiction soit présentation d'elle-même ne récuse pas que des savoirs y soient identifiables, ceux que portent cette présentation, ceux qui sont la condition de cette présentation. Aussi internes à la fiction que soient ces savoirs, celle-ci suppose toujours un dehors de ces savoirs, c'est-à-dire d'autres savoirs.

Cette ambivalence de l'apparement du savoir et de la fiction suggère, précisément en termes de savoirs et de situations des savoirs, une caractérisation aisée de la fiction littéraire écrite. (On ne considère pas ici les composantes de ces savoirs.) Si l'on se tient au seul récit, on peut distinguer trois statuts du récit suivant les rapports que tels récits, le mythe, le récit historiographique, le récit littéraire de fiction, entretiennent avec l'exposé des savoirs. Le mythe est inclusif de tout savoir; il exclut toute interrogation de ses savoirs; il est exactement irrelatif. Le récit de l'historiographie est récit d'un savoir dont les données initiales sont, de principe, extérieures au récit; celui-ci est à la fois l'exposition, la constitution d'un savoir et le discours sur ce savoir. Le récit littéraire est exclusif de l'un et l'autre savoirs, bien qu'il puisse les figurer, précisément à titre de savoirs figurés. Il ne peut prétendre à la

totalisation des significations de ses propres discours ni, par là, à un défaut d'interrogativité. Il ne peut se donner, de manière certaine et constante, pour l'exposition de données et de savoirs qui lui seraient extérieurs et qui le constitueraient continûment. Le partage des trois sortes de récit s'interprète aisément. Au savoir totalisant du mythe, la fiction littéraire narrative substitue une perspective hypothétique et une perspective interrogative. A la différence de la fiction littéraire narrative, le récit historiographique privilégie le point de vue de l'adéquation possible de l'exposé de son savoir à un événement attesté. Chacune de ces sortes de récit, y compris le récit historiographique, interprète, en elle-même, ses propres données, ses propres savoirs. Le récit littéraire de fiction a pour trait distinctif de caractériser son savoir comme irrelatif. En d'autres termes, le récit de fiction est inévitablement une interrogation sur la savoir qu'il expose. Le savoir que porte la fiction peut consister dans la reconnaissance de cette interrogation. La notation de cette interrogation qui, dans le récit de fiction, n'est pas nécessairement explicite, est un premier moyen de rendre compte de l'ambivalence de l'apparement du savoir et de la fiction.

### Savoir et pertinence de la fiction

Aussi la fiction littéraire n'entend-elle pas être la vérité, mais la mise en œuvre, sous le signe de l'interrogativité, d'un savoir qui peut se donner pour le savoir de la vérité ou de la réalité. Aussi peut-elle être représentationnelle et engager le savoir de la représentation, sans pour autant donner sa représentation pour quelque représentation de la vérité ou de la vérité de quelque objet. Dans ces conditions, noter un savoir de la fiction équivaut à noter la pertinence de cette fiction. Cette pertinence se définit doublement.

Première définition de cette pertinence. Lorsqu'on dit qu'une fiction offre un authentique savoir et, suivant la formule de Henry James, qu'elle est un "equipment for living", on entend que cette fiction nous convient et qu'elle a autant de valeur pour nous sujets que tel savoir qui concerne la réalité, naturelle, sociale, ou simplement humaine. En termes d'usage des savoirs, la fiction

peut être aussi utile que les savoirs que nous avons du réel. C'est, à tout le moins, ce que les écrivains ont répété. Cette reconnaissance suppose que nous prêtions aux énoncés des fictions littéraires un minimum de correspondance avec nos savoirs relatifs aux univers réels. Il ne suffit pas, comme le suppose le réalisme littéraire strict, qu'il puisse y avoir une correspondance terme à terme — ou quasiment — entre le savoir qu'expose la fiction et le savoir que nous avons de la réalité. Il faut encore que cette correspondance soit une correspondance construite et interprétative de ces savoirs. En d'autres termes, le savoir qu'expose la fiction peut recevoir une lecture qui place ce savoir sous le signe d'une allégorèse. Allégorèse fait simplement entendre: la fiction se lit doublement, d'une part, suivant sa lettre et le savoir que celle-ci peut formuler, d'autre part, suivant le savoir qui peut être prêté à cette lettre. Ce prêt est une interprétation de la lettre. La perspective lectorale, utilisée ici pour caractériser le savoir de la fiction, ne contredit pas ce que peut être la perspective de l'écrivain. Si, dans son artifice et dans son autonomie, la fiction reste essentiellement relative, le savoir explicite que l'écrivain entreprend de nouer dans la fiction, est un savoir qui relève d'une double allégorèse. D'une part, ce savoir peut, dans la fiction, jouer comme un interprétant des présentations et des représentations, ainsi que, de manière réciproque, ces présentations et ces représentations peuvent jouer comme les interprétants du savoir. D'autre part, ce savoir inscrit dans la fiction peut apparaître comme l'autre et comme le lecteur du savoir sans questionnement, et du savoir qui sait sa propre allégorèse. C'est là une reformulation des conséquences qui peuvent être tirées de la distinction entre récit mythique, récit littéraire et fictionnel, récit historiographique. C'est là aussi une reprise de la notion d'interrogativité.

Deuxième définition de la pertinence de la fiction. La fiction littéraire, comme tout discours, se donne pour communicable. Ce principe de communicabilité qui ne commande pas nécessairement un rapport réglé de l'écrivain, de la fiction, et du lecteur, dispose que la fiction littéraire est communicable de manière explicite et de manière implicite. De manière explicite: elle est communiquée et reçue comme fiction. De manière implicite: quel que soit le degré de défaut de vérité qui puisse être prêté à la fiction, quelle



que soit la difficulté qu'il puise y avoir à paraphraser le texte de fiction, ce texte est reçu suivant une présomption de pertinence. Cette présomption suscite, chez le lecteur, la mise en œuvre de représentations et de savoirs suivant un jeu de ressemblances avec les présentations et représentations, les savoirs qu'expose éventuellement la fiction. Ce jeu de ressemblances peut ne concerner que des lieux restreints du texte. L'exposé du savoir de la fiction ou la simple inscription du savoir dans la fiction — il suffit de dire les signifiés — supposent, en conséquence, une double reconnaissance: suivant le savoir qui peut être dit par la fiction dans la fiction, d'une part, et, d'autre part, suivant l'attente du savoir qui est indissociable des principes de communicabilité et de pertinence. Il en résulte que le savoir de la fiction est à la fois le savoir de cette fiction et le savoir que le lecteur engage dans un jeu de ressemblance avec le savoir de la fiction. Savoir s'interprète largement: représentations, connaissances. L'allégorèse est constituée par le jeu des représentations et des savoirs que le lecteur applique à la fiction et qui sont des identifications des savoirs que portent les signifiés de la fiction, ou qui peuvent leur être prêtés. L'allégorèse suppose, réduit et finalement préserve l'interrogativité.

### **Pertinence, savoir et impropriété**

La notation de l'interrogativité de la fiction, les définitions de la pertinence cette même fiction suggèrent une première conclusion. La fiction porte un savoir; ce savoir est approchable de manière seulement impropre. Il n'y a pas de correspondance ou de coïncidence exactes entre les savoirs qu'expose la fiction et ceux qui lui sont appliqués. Cette impropriété est indissociable de l'hypothèse et de la pratique de la fiction littéraire, sauf lorsque celle-ci ferme le jeu de l'allégorèse. Le genre de la fable fournit l'exemple d'une telle fermeture. Cette impropriété peut être tenue pour fonctionnelle. Quels que soient les savoirs explicites que porte telle fiction, cette fiction, parce qu'elle n'est pas dissociable des principes de communicabilité et de pertinence, a pour condition qu'écrivain et lecteur admettent qu'il y ait du sens à

rapporter, à entendre les savoirs les uns des autres. Mais sur une scène qui ne peut être que tropologique, la scène de la fiction. Il y a là une nouvelle formulation de la distinction entre mythe, récit historiographique, récit littéraire, encore que la fiction ne commande pas nécessairement le récit. La fiction sait cette impropiété quand elle se dit “pure fiction”, mais également quand elle se dit fiction réaliste.

L'expression “pure fiction” est d'un usage fréquent, de Mallarmé aux critiques déconstructionniste. Elle permet aussi de désigner le roman du roman et la métafiction. Cela appartient à la vulgate critique. On sait encore — et il suffit de se reporter au texte en prose “Mimique” de Mallarmé (1945: 310) — qu'il est prêté une transitivité spécifique à cette “pure fiction”. Transitivité veut dire que cette fiction représente en elle-même la relation à un savoir et que cette relation est aussi une relation à un savoir extérieur, similaire à celui que reconnaît la “pure fiction”. L'important n'est pas ici, à la différence de ce que suggère Jacques Derrida dans son commentaire de “Mimique” (Derrida 1972: 211–257), de noter le défaut d'antécédent à la représentation à laquelle peut être identifiée la représentation de la “pure fiction”. Il convient de souligner que cette représentation est à la fois relative au savoir qu'elle suppose dans la “pure fiction” et à la reconnaissance d'un savoir similaire hors de la fiction. L'impropiété réside d'abord dans le fait que rien n'atteste ou ne valide cette ressemblance, puis dans le fait que cette “pure fiction” ne dit pas, de manière explicite, l'hypothèse de cette ressemblance. Suivant une autre formulation, la “pure fiction” nierait et supposerait la possibilité de l'allégorèse et ne présenterait pas les moyens d'authentifier cette allégorèse. Telle est l'ambivalence que dit Mallarmé lorsqu'il voit dans le mime l'exemple de la “pure fiction”. Le mime est à la fois présentation et représentation, sa propre action et sa propre interprétation. Il suscite, chez le spectateur, la conscience de cette ambivalence, le constat du caractère irrelatif de cette “pure fiction”. Il est une autre conséquence de cette ambivalence, qu'il convient de définir à partir du texte de Mallarmé. Puisque la “pure fiction” est et n'est pas authentifiable, elle peut être également caractérisée comme une fiction quelconque, une fiction qui précisément n'est pas définissable par le seul savoir qu'elle expose.

La fiction quelconque est, en conséquence, rapportable à tout savoir qui lui est extérieur et qui rend compte d'elle, de la présentation et de la représentation qu'elle porte. Cette assimilation de la "pure fiction" à une fiction quelconque fait de cette fiction celle qui peut être le plus aisément soumise au principe de pertinence. L'équivoque du jeu ressemblance entre savoir interne et savoir externe au texte est le moyen de reconnaître, d'identifier la fiction comme telle.

La fiction réaliste sait également cette impropriété, bien qu'elle fasse l'hypothèse que la ressemblance des savoirs que porte ou suppose la fiction, et des savoirs qui lui sont appliqués, est relativement stricte. Ecrire et lire auraient alors pour condition la reconnaissance de cette ressemblance. Une telle condition impose la notation suivante. Dès lors que la continuité et la totalité textuelles de la fiction sont soumises à cette reconnaissance, toute fiction réaliste court le risque d'être prise en défaut de savoir, court le risque de l'impropriété. En effet, quelle fiction, fût-elle réaliste, peut satisfaire à toutes les données des savoirs qu'elle implique? La même reconnaissance peut se caractériser comme ce qui rend possible l'identification des cadres du savoir du réalisme, mais aussi comme ce qui laisse relativement libre l'étiquetage des éléments de la fiction suivant les données d'un savoir. Là encore, il y a une manière d'impropriété: le réglage du jeu de l'allégorèse n'exclut pas une liberté du jeu de l'allégorèse.

"Pure fiction". Fiction réaliste. Le constat de l'impropriété peut se reformuler dans les termes suivants. Dans le cas de la "pure fiction", le savoir de la fiction est explicite; il est l'objet de la présentation de la fiction et, en conséquence, l'objet de la représentation que fait la fiction; par là, il est, pour celui qui lit la fiction, la possibilité de sa représentation et de son interprétation hors de la fiction. Dans le cas de la fiction réaliste, le fait que l'allégorèse soit tenue pour indissociable d'un savoir du réel, conduit contradictoirement à la notation d'une manière d'autonomie de la fiction. Celle ne peut attester continûment ce lien avec un tel savoir. Les deux fictions renvoient à un jeu de dedans et de dehors. Le savoir de la "fiction pure", qui est le dedans de cette fiction, marque, par sa propre représentation, la possibilité de son dehors. Le dehors du savoir que suppose la fiction réaliste, ne va



sans la condition que le savoir qu'expose cette fiction puisse lui être en grande partie interne.

### Savoir et reconnaissance de la fiction

Les commentaires de cette impropropriété sont usuellement de trois sortes. Un premier commentaire note que la fiction joue de ses savoirs et d'une telle impropropriété, parce que la fiction offre, dans son texte, les indices du caractère irrelatif de ses savoirs. Ces indices sont divers. Ils peuvent se confondre avec des jeux d'interrogation, avec l'indication explicite du caractère irrelatif de ces savoirs, avec la mise en évidence de l'incompatibilité des savoirs exposés. Mais il y a un indice constant et essentiel, également caractérisable de manière paradoxale. Si la fiction doit exposer le caractère irrelatif de ses savoirs, elle ne peut le faire ultimement que par rapport aux savoirs qui lui sont extérieurs. En d'autres termes, elle porte inévitablement les indices de ces savoirs extérieurs, qui permettent de noter cette relativité du savoir de la fiction et suggèrent le dedans et le dehors de la fiction.

Ces remarques ne diffèrent pas de celles qui concluent à propos des savoirs de la fiction présentationnelle et de la fiction représentationnelle, de la manière suivante. La fiction ne développe sa propre autonomie scripturaire, son propre univers et son propre pouvoir de présentation que par des jeux de "props" (Walton 1990). Ces "props" peuvent être exactement fictionnels au sens où ils ne correspondent à rien dans la réalité connue. Mais ils sont inévitablement conçus de manière acceptable par le lecteur, c'est-à-dire suivant une ressemblance minimale avec les significations et les savoirs du lecteur. Ou le lecteur les lit de telle façon qu'il applique, en termes de savoir, un jeu de ressemblance minimale. Cette notation peut être précisée de façon paradoxale. La fiction littéraire est construite comme un objet arbitraire qui génère son propre arbitraire — par exemple, la série de ses signifiés. Cet objet, arbitraire de part en part, est aussi le "prop" de la fiction. A cause de quoi, il peut être dit que toute fiction est une "fiction pure", sans lieu dans le monde réel, et, cependant, un objet de savoir, objet qui porte un savoir, objet que l'on sait. Ce défaut de

lieu permet l'articulation de l'irrelativité et de la relativité de la fiction. Arbitraire et défaut de lieu marquent la limite du savoir applicable à la fiction; ils marquent aussi que la fiction est identifiable comme fiction par ce jeu d'application et par la reconnaissance de cette limite. La "fiction pure" traduit, de façon extrême, la dualité de ce jeu et de cette reconnaissance dans la mesure où cette "fiction pure" est entièrement rapportable à son dedans et à son dehors. Rappeler que la fiction littéraire est, pour le lecteur, l'occasion, l'objet d'une allégorèse qui reste sans conclusion équivaut à caractériser cette allégorèse comme ce qui rend compte, de diverses manières de la reconnaissance de cette limite, de ce "prop" qu'est le texte de fiction même.

Les deux autres commentaires attachés à la notation de l'impropriété résultent du constat de cet arbitraire de la fiction. Un premier commentaire, celui de Paul Ricœur (1983), conclut: la fiction serait ultimement indissociable du savoir du monde et de son rapport à ce savoir, parce que l'arbitraire de la fiction est relatif à ce sur quoi il se lève, le langage et le savoir du réel. En d'autres termes, l'impropriété est toujours relative et se résout dans le savoir que nous avons du monde. La fiction ne peut passer les limites de ce savoir. Elle n'en est qu'une certaine forme de présentation et d'aménagement, de la même manière qu'elle ne peut être séparée de l'expérience existentielle que nous avons du réel. L'allégorèse qui, dans la lecture, fait de la fiction son occasion et son objet, est toujours pertinente, de la même façon que la fiction est aussi constamment pertinente parce qu'elle ne passe les limites d'aucun savoir et qu'elle reste indissociable de notre expérience existentielle. La limite de la fiction se définit doublement: suivant les limites des savoirs, suivant ce qui figure la limite du monde existentiel, c'est-à-dire le silence. Mallarmé sait, dans "Mimique", que le silence nous ramène à la lecture du mime, autrement dit à la fiction et à sa limite, et que cela même constitue le savoir inévitable de la fiction, par lequel elle est reportable sur tout autre savoir.

Un second commentaire, celui de Wolfgang Iser (1991), conclut: la fiction se confondrait avec son propre jeu de signifiés, sans qu'il y ait nécessairement à supposer un rapport avec un savoir du monde, et sans qu'il y ait à identifier écriture, au sens où

écriture serait synonyme du seul signifiant, et fiction. La fiction est précisément la mise en œuvre de l'autonomie de ses signifiés qui sont cependant explicitement lisibles suivant leurs propres codes ou les codes du lecteur, et suivant l'incertitude de ces codes. Wolfgang Iser identifie dans Beckett l'illustration de cette thèse. Cette thèse présente l'intérêt de marquer que la fiction joue selon une manière de limite par rapport à toute approche codifiée de ses signifiés.

En alliant ces deux dernières façons de prêter une fonction positive à l'impropiété de la fiction, on retrouve les éléments du débat sur la pertinence de la fiction. Le principe de pertinence, qui va avec la fiction, commande le questionnement de la fiction suivant un jeu de pertinence interne — c'est pourquoi la fiction peut être considérée suivant les savoirs que portent ses signifiés —, ou suivant un jeu de pertinence externe — c'est pourquoi la fiction peut être considérée comme relative à ce sur quoi elle se lève. L'un et l'autre jeux supposent la reconnaissance du fait de la fiction et de son paradoxe: il est une immédiateté de la fiction, comme il est une immédiateté du signe esthétique, qui n'exclut pas la dimension de la cognition, ou encore du questionnement de ce fait. Cette dimension et ce questionnement traduisent qu'écrivain et lecteur jouent sur ce qui est l'intuition de cette immédiateté et sur les implications cognitives du langage et de tout geste de communication. Il convient de rappeler que la notation des implications cognitives est inséparable de l'identification de la fiction — que cette identification soit le fait de l'écrivain ou du lecteur. Les divers arguments relatifs aux rapports de la fiction et du savoir se résument suivant une double approche de la fiction littéraire. Les jeux du savoir sont les moyens d'élaborer, de reconnaître la fiction et son caractère arbitraire. De ce caractère arbitraire est indissociable l'intuition de l'immédiateté de la fiction.

Il reste remarquable que la littérature du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle ait particulièrement identifié la fiction avec une telle mise en œuvre du savoir et avec des modes de présentation de la fiction et des techniques romanesques qui permettent de suggérer, dans le texte même, l'intuition de l'immédiateté de la fiction. Il suffit sur ce point de revenir à Mallarmé et à "Mimique", de considérer le jeu



du point de vue romanesque et celui du roman sur le roman et, plus généralement, de l'autoréflexion de la littérature.

L'intuition de l'immédiateté de la fiction peut donc être suggérée par l'objet fictionnel. Cette suggestion suppose le dessin d'un rapport spécifique avec le spectateur ou le lecteur. Ce rapport permet de caractériser la présence de l'objet fictionnel. Le mime installe, écrit Mallarmé, un "milieu de pure fiction" (1945: 310). Cette fiction n'est qu'une allusion à sa propre action, à son propre savoir. Une fiction silencieuse qui est cependant une fiction présente. Ou plus exactement — et telle est une des significations des notations du mime, de la pure fiction et du silence: le mime ne peut montrer, dans les conditions de son exercice, qu'il est conscient de la présence du spectateur; s'il ne peut se rendre présent au spectateur, celui-ci est présent au mime. Le spectateur reconnaît le mime, le reconnaît comme un personnage sur une scène. Cette scène devient un monde. Reconnaître le mime, ce n'est que reconnaître le cadre théâtral qu'il se donne, le fait — il faut ici rappeler la notation du silence — que cette reconnaissance est sans réciprocité de la part du mime. Par cette reconnaissance sans réciprocité, par cette reconnaissance de la théâtralisation, indissociable du mime, et par cette reconnaissance du mime comme personnage-personne auquel il est donné une scène, le spectateur, mais il faudrait dire aussi, pour rester fidèle à Mallarmé, le lecteur face au texte de fiction, reconnaît un spectacle de fiction et convertit cette fiction dans le spectacle d'une action et d'un monde de cette action. Le savoir de la fiction est ici double: celui que manifeste le mime dans son mime; celui que manifeste le spectateur dans la reconnaissance du mime. A cause de l'arbitraire de la fiction, le savoir que la fiction porte en elle-même, éventuellement sur elle-même, peut être tenu pour contingent. Par le jeu de la reconnaissance, cette fiction acquiert une présence, et le savoir qu'elle expose devient relatif au monde, acquiert une sorte de nécessité — de façon unilatérale puisque la reconnaissance n'est pas ici réciproque. Le défaut de réciprocité fonde la reconnaissance de la fiction.

La fiction peut cependant inclure, selon certains moyens et de manière indissociable du savoir ou de l'interrogation sur le savoir, les figures explicites de cette reconnaissance. Le jeu des points de

vue narratifs et des perspectives que portent les personnages d'une fiction narrative, est interprétable, en un premier temps, comme une manière de jeu sceptique. Moins à cause du relativisme et, en conséquence, du défaut d'assertion sur les données de la fiction, qu'un tel jeu suppose, qu'à cause du fait que la fiction présente ces points de vue et ces perspectives et que le lecteur circule entre ces points de vue et ces perspectives. Cette circulation atteste qu'aucun personnage ne peut être caractérisé comme occupant complètement son monde ou un monde. En conséquence, ces mondes ne peuvent faire prévaloir les savoirs qu'ils portent, puisqu'ils n'ont aucun témoin qui rende pleinement compte d'eux. Cette impuissance peut être interprétée d'une autre manière. Ce que révèle la fiction, ce qu'elle présente par son discours, est tout — et seulement cela — qui est supposé, dans la fiction, être révélé, présenté. Le fait et la limite fictionnelle de cette présentation sont marqués par le jeu des points de vue et des perspectives. Il y aurait là d'abord le moyen de conclure encore, par un autre biais, à l'inévitable pureté de la fiction. Il y a là aussi l'invitation à noter ce en quoi consiste l'exercice, écriture, lecture, de cette fiction. Par l'exposition des divers points de vue et perspectives, par la circulation entre ces points de vue et perspectives, la fiction se donne pour la reconnaissance de ces points de vue et perspectives, des présentations qui leur sont liées. En d'autres termes, elle est la figure des conditions de la reconnaissance et de tout savoir que l'on peut avoir d'autrui, du réel et de la fiction.

Enfin, la fiction peut jouer sur elle-même de telle manière qu'elle pose la question de l'intuition de son immédiateté et, par là, la question de sa pertinence. L'autoréflexion romanesque est un tel jeu. Le roman sur le roman participe, on le sait, de l'autoréflexion qui caractérise l'art moderne, et indique que le "medium" romanesque doit être découvert à partir de lui-même, à partir de ses propres procédures. Cette découverte a pour condition que le lecteur entre dans l'objet romanesque. Objet se comprend comme l'ensemble des procédures romanesques mises en œuvre, comme l'ensemble scripturaire du roman et comme la fiction que porte ce roman. En d'autres termes, l'autoréflexivité romanesque, outre tout ce qu'elle peut faire entendre sur l'autonomie du roman, sur l'autonomie de sa construction et de son écriture, fait encore



entendre qu'elle appelle la reconnaissance du lecteur. Cette reconnaissance est ambivalente: elle est la reconnaissance du "medium"; elle constitue la lettre en une manière de présence — ce qui est donné là sans réciprocité — et ouvre par là la question de la pertinence de la fiction.

### Fonctions de l'aporie de la fiction

Quelle que soit la façon dont on la considère ici, la fiction littéraire apparaît comme aporétique. A partir du jeu des savoirs et du défaut de réciprocité de la fiction et du monde, à partir de l'application du principe de pertinence, la reconnaissance, pratiquée par le lecteur, est celle d'un objet qui laisse la réflexion, les savoirs en reste, face à sa lettre. L'allégorèse, indissociable du principe de pertinence, reste sans conclusion. L'aporie est là: la fiction doit être lue suivant sa lettre dans la mesure où ses signifiés n'excluent jamais la possibilité d'une métaphoricité supplémentaire, d'un autre jeu de pertinence. L'aporie de la fiction est indissociable du geste qui l'identifie et qui se définit comme l'application d'un savoir à la fiction et comme la reconnaissance de la limite de cette application. Ce geste est aussi bien celui de l'écrivain que celui du lecteur. L'écrivain sait qu'il écrit selon le défaut de réciprocité qui caractérise le texte de fiction; il sait aussi que la pertinence qu'il prête à son texte est une pertinence en quelque sorte provisoire puisqu'elle n'est pas dissociable de la relativité et de l'irrelativité de la fiction. Le lecteur lit à partir du défaut de réciprocité que présente la fiction, et à partir d'un possible jeu de pertinence. Il peut être dit, dans ses conditions, un inconnaissable de la fiction. Mais, faut-il immédiatement remarquer, cet inconnaissable n'est pas à considérer en lui-même. Il apparaît comme un effet de l'aporie de la fiction. La fiction peut évoquer un inconnaissable, mais elle n'a pas partie essentiellement et nécessairement liée avec quelque inconnaissable. Par une manière de conséquence paradoxale du principe de pertinence, elle expose constamment son impropriété qui ne suppose ni la récusation des savoirs, ni l'identification de la fiction à quelque cécité face au savoir. Cette impropriété fait de chaque fiction une singularité qui n'est jamais intelligence



spécifique de quelque chose, mais intelligence d'une intelligibilité — l'intelligibilité précisément de l'aporie, de l'impropriété, des conditions de la reconnaissance et du savoir d'autrui et du réel. En d'autres termes, la fiction littéraire sait sa finitude. Grâce à ce savoir, elle permet, à l'écrivain, au lecteur, de jouer explicitement de la concordance et de l'incompatibilité entre l'intuition de son immédiateté et les savoirs qu'elle expose ou qui lui sont appliqués.

Si, comme il a été dit, l'inconnaissable de la fiction n'est que la figure d'une métaphoricité, d'une analogie supplémentaires dans le jeu d'écriture et de lecture que commande le principe de pertinence, l'aporie marque deux choses: la fiction se confond, par définition, avec la possibilité d'autres reconnaissances d'elle-même; la fiction est d'une impropropriété indifférente, faut-il répéter, parce que cette impropropriété est la condition de toute reconnaissance, de toute recherche d'une intelligibilité de la fiction, et d'une intelligence de l'intelligibilité des conditions de la reconnaissance et du savoir d'autrui et du réel. Toute fiction littéraire porterait ainsi une manière d'argument implicite: elle dirait la différence de la lettre et de l'esprit, de la lettre et de tout savoir, et, par la notation de cette différence, la possible transformation de la lettre dans l'esprit, dans le savoir, dès lors que l'écrivain et le lecteur savent cette différence qui est l'occasion de questionner la fiction et de faire de la fiction le moyen de questionner la lettre, l'esprit, le savoir. La fiction littéraire se caractérise ainsi: elle a les moyens de suggérer l'intuition de l'immédiateté de la lettre, de passer le scepticisme, d'exposer sa possible pertinence, et de préserver cependant son impropropriété.

Il importe sans doute de s'attacher au fait que la fiction littéraire puisse exposer un savoir. Il importe plus d'examiner quelle peut être, pour la fiction littéraire, l'utilité d'exposer un savoir, fût-ce, comme on l'a dit, le savoir que la fiction littéraire a d'elle-même. Les ambivalences de l'exposition du savoir dans la fiction témoignent moins des incertitudes ou des certitudes relatives au savoir que du statut que se donne la fiction littéraire par l'usage qu'elle fait des savoirs et par l'application qu'elle suscite des savoirs. Dans cette perspective, il est vain de reprendre les thèses qui notent que la fiction littéraire est une construction langagière. Et qui, à partir de cette notation, identifient la question du savoir et

de la fiction, avec celle d'un référent mensonger, et avec celle du rapport du locuteur avec ses énoncés, pour conclure que la fiction littéraire a pour fonction de constituer le sujet et le monde au moyen de la seule loi de la forme de la fiction. Dans cette même perspective, il n'y a pas lieu de revenir aux thèses converses de ces conclusions, à ces thèses qui prêtent à la fiction littéraire une fonction de représentation cognitive explicite et certaine.

Il convient de dire plus simplement: l'impropriété de la fiction par rapport au savoir qu'elle expose, au savoir qui lui est appliqué, est indissociable de l'intention même de fiction. Que cette intention soit considérée du point de vue de l'écrivain ou du point de vue du lecteur. Puisqu'il n'y a pas de marques formelles du discours de fiction, il est inévitable de rapporter le discours de fiction à une intention de fiction. Fictionnel est ce discours dont le locuteur pose ou suppose la dépragmatisation. Fictionnel est ce discours dont le récepteur pose ou suppose la dépragmatisation. Telles sont les conclusions qui se tirent des thèses de Ronald Searle. S'il est donc admis que le discours de fiction est un discours intentionnel, il peut aussi être admis qu'il s'agit d'un discours qui, à cause de cette intention, porte en lui-même un argument implicite. Cet argument peut se formuler: ce discours expose qu'il se donne comme sa propre scène, comme le recueil de ses savoirs, mais que, se donnant ainsi, il ne récuse rien des autres discours ni des savoirs que ces discours portent — que ceux-ci soient ou ne soient pas fictionnels. Cet argument caractérise l'intention de fiction de manière paradoxale. Cette intention est une intention de dépragmatisation qui fait du discours fictionnel et de ses signifiés une sorte d'isolat, une facticité. En bref: le discours et l'univers de la fiction sont leur propre fait. Cette intention commande de préciser l'ambivalence de l'irrelativité de ce discours et de cet univers: ils supposent précisément la dépragmatisation et, en conséquence, la continuité et la proximité des discours, des univers pragmatiques, et du discours irrelatif.

Tout ce qui s'écrit sur la fiction littéraire sous les rubriques du "comme si", des mondes possibles, de la distance de l'univers de la fiction aux univers réels, reste une manière de noter cette facticité, de marquer que, par cette facticité, la fiction figure l'autre de nos discours et de nos univers pragmatiques. A ainsi associer facticité

et distance de la fiction littéraire, la critique se donne pour hypothèse que la fiction littéraire, dans sa facticité, appelle que lui soient comparés les autres discours, fictionnels ou non, les autres univers, fictionnels ou non. C'est là confirmer le jeu même de l'intention de fiction: donner le discours, l'univers de la fiction pour leur propre fait; donner ce fait comme ce qui appartient aux discours et à la réalité des hommes; disposer que ce fait reste irréductible aux autres discours et aux autres univers, et qu'il fait entrer, dans ces discours, dans ces univers, comme un autre discours, un autre univers, qui ne sont pas de pures altérités, mais cela même qui figure le tout autre, cela même qui figure les rapports des discours pragmatiques et des savoirs du réel — discours et savoirs qui sont représentations des uns auprès des autres et récusations implicites de l'aliénation du tout autre. L'impropropriété de la fiction résulte de l'intention même de fiction: faire jouer dans nos discours et représentations le discours et la représentation dépragmatisés et donc les constituer comme des comparants. Cette intention rend fonctionnelle l'aporie de la fiction: donner celle-ci pour le lieu exemplaire de l'exercice de la pertinence.

### **Fiction et savoir**

On a dit l'aporie de la fiction. Cette aporie n'est sans doute que l'aporie de la littérature — ce discours qui est donné ainsi que ses mondes, sans réciprocité et sans règle d'application contraignante. Il est un exemple simple de cette aporie et de ce défaut de contrainte de la forme littéraire. L'organisation prosodique est le moyen à la fois de prêter forme au discours et de le soumettre à une discontinuité. La série des signifiés et les jeux de pertinence que portent les textes en vers, sont alors indissociables d'une interrogativité exclusive de toute contrainte stricte d'interprétation. C'est marquer ici que l'aporie de la littérature se définit, entre autres caractérisations possibles, par une manière d'incompatibilité choisie entre sa forme discursive et la dimension cognitive que porte son discours.

Noter explicitement les rapports de la fiction et du savoir dans les termes de la pertinence, de l'impropropriété, revient à marquer: la



fiction littéraire lorsqu'elle se donne pour fiction expose et dépasse l'aporie de la littérature. Exposer l'aporie: exposer cette incompatibilité du discours littéraire et de la dimension cognitive. Dépasse l'aporie: parce que cette incompatibilité est une construction de la fiction, elle est, pour l'écrivain et pour le lecteur, moyen de situer la fiction. Pour l'écrivain: situer la fiction suivant le principe de pertinence et, par là, indiquer comment l'incompatibilité joue suivant une double dualité. D'une part, la dualité de la forme et de la dimension cognitive, qui fait l'incompatibilité. D'autre part, la dualité du savoir interne et du savoir externe à la fiction. Pour le lecteur: grâce au constat de l'incompatibilité, reconnaître la fiction et, par là, lui prêter scène et monde. Cette reconnaissance équivaut, pour le lecteur, à situer la fiction dans un jeu de dualité par rapport à lui-même et par rapport à tout savoir externe à cette fiction. De telles entreprises de situation constituent des dépassements de l'aporie de la fiction et, par là, de la littérature, parce qu'elles disposent, d'une part, que la fiction littéraire n'est qu'elle-même — cela qui nous assure, à nous lecteurs, l'intuition de son immédiateté —, et, d'autre part, que cette fiction attend son expansion générale, son exode hors d'elle-même dans les savoirs qui lui sont contemporains et dans les savoirs à venir. Il faut rappeler ici l'impropriété indifférente de la fiction.

Le doublet fiction et savoir ne fait donc pas nécessairement lire l'inconsistance du savoir et le pouvoir de la fiction, c'est-à-dire de la feinte, du scepticisme. Il n'invite donc pas, en une façon de réversion de cette première notation, à reconnaître le pouvoir du savoir — la fiction s'écrit et se lirait ultimement selon le savoir. Ce même doublet ne commande pas enfin de conclure sur la thèse qui donnerait également droit de cité à la fiction et au savoir. La fiction littéraire s'auto-identifierait et serait identifiable tantôt suivant sa feintise, tantôt suivant un savoir interne ou externe. Personne ne l'ignore: la critique a le plus souvent vu dans cette dualité le moyen qu'aurait la fiction de constituer son *make-believe*, et la justification que la fiction relèverait toujours de deux mondes, son propre monde et celui du savoir. Ces trois thèses renvoient au même supposé: rendre compte du fait que la fiction puisse être ancrée dans une réalité qui lui est extérieure et qui se définit essentiellement en termes de savoir.

Remarquer que la fiction littéraire attend son expansion générale, n'équivaut pas à poser la question d'un tel ancrage. Cette remarque commande de revenir de manière spécifique à la notation de la pertinence. La fiction littéraire qui dit toujours, au moins à un certain degré, son caractère de fiction, place, par là-même, sous le signe d'un relativisme les savoirs qu'elle présente. Elle suppose donc un certain degré de scepticisme. La critique littéraire désigne implicitement ou explicitement ce scepticisme en soulignant que la fiction dessine son propre monde et que l'autonomie de ce monde figure l'impossibilité de prêter crédit, en termes de savoir, au langage. Il y a une autre façon d'interpréter ce constat et cette conclusion. Souligner que la fiction dessine son propre monde, c'est également souligner que telle fiction, ce discours qui est une partie des discours, en est elle-même une partie intégrante. Elle constitue un tout singulier. Remarquer que la fiction attend, en termes de savoir, son expansion générale équivaut à remarquer: telle fiction est cet emblème qui est écrit et reste à lire suivant l'hypothèse que le tout de cette fiction donne sur le tout — sur les autres fictions et sur les autres savoirs, particulièrement ceux qui peuvent lui être appliqués. C'est là revenir au principe de pertinence dont l'écriture et la lecture sont indissociables. Et répéter le paradoxe de l'aporie que constitue la fiction littéraire: celle-ci peut être caractérisée, dans le cadre des savoirs, par un jeu d'impropiété; ce jeu est aussi le moyen, dans la fiction, d'exposer que les savoirs, comme les discours, font passage entre eux.

Ce rappel et ce dépassement de l'aporie de la fiction peuvent encore se formuler de la manière suivante. Que l'on soit écrivain ou lecteur de la fiction, prendre la fiction au pied de la lettre revient, d'une part, à rechercher, à exposer les rapports entre procédés littéraires, procédés fictionnels et savoirs, et, d'autre part, à indiquer la limite de cette exposition et de cette recherche. Limite où l'impropiété de la fiction au regard des savoirs déferait tout savoir. Limite où cette impropiété déferait les différences entre les savoirs et, en conséquence, interdirait de reconnaître le principe de pertinence dont la fiction littéraire est indissociable, comme tout discours est indissociable de ce principe.

Noter le rapport du savoir et de la fiction littéraire, tel que le contexte critique contemporain caractérise ce rapport, ne com-



mande pas de conclure sur le rapport même du savoir et de la fiction. Cette notation entraîne une notation plus spécifique. En faisant de la question du rapport de la fiction et du savoir une question commune au savoir et à la fiction, on explique pourquoi la fiction sert à évaluer le statut du savoir, comme le savoir sert à évaluer le statut de la fiction, si l'on se tient à considérer le rapport sous l'aspect d'une gémellité polémique. Cette question commune marque, de plus, que la fiction n'est hors d'aucun savoir: elle est au moins dans le savoir que porte la reconnaissance de la fiction et, par là-même, dans le savoir propre à la fiction que porte cette reconnaissance. Ce jeu de reconnaissance définit le caractère transitif de la fiction. La littérature et la critique contemporaines, ainsi que nous l'avons montré (Bessière 1993), approchent de manière implicite ou explicite cette thèse par le biais de la notation de l'interrogativité de la fiction. Cette approche porte une leçon: on passe de la question de l'adéquation ou de l'inadéquation du texte au réel (quels que soient les modes cette adéquation ou de cette inadéquation) à la caractérisation du jeu du savoir comme le moyen de faire de la fiction littéraire un objet pour lui-même — la facticité de la fiction —, mais aussi un objet transitif et transitionnel. Dire le savoir ou le non-savoir de la fiction équivaut à dire une pertinence possible et, par là, une transitivity de la fiction et une transition de la fiction au sens où, par la reconnaissance qu'elle induit, elle exemplifierait le passage d'un savoir à l'autre. Transitivity: la fiction n'est pas l'élément d'une alternative qui la dessinerait comme le tout autre, mais le dessin de l'alternative des savoirs dans la reconnaissance de la fiction; alternative qui font le sens même de la fiction, et la définit comme le pouvoir de mesurer la distance des savoirs et de toujours renégocier cette distance. Où il faut répéter l'impropriété indifférente. Et le milieu de pure fiction.



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## Historical and Literary Sources: A Complementary View

SVEND ERIK LARSEN

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### 1. Literature and History

In chapter 18 of *Mimesis*, "Im Hôtel de la Mole", Erich Auerbach gives a detailed account of 19th century French realism and naturalism. In this chapter, as elsewhere in *Mimesis*, we witness the author's erudition and his striking ability to make, out of detailed textual analysis and historical generalizations, a seamlessly interwoven texture threaded with a few tinted lines of theoretical principles. But this merge of different aspects of the critical discourse also reduces the range of historical and theoretical reflections in their own right. It seems to me that Auerbach makes certain untenable assumptions on the nature of the relationship between literature and history and therefore jumps too easily to conclusions that deserve a more extended analysis.

Auerbach quotes and analyses meticulously the moment in Stendhal's *Le Rouge et le Noir* when Julien Sorel declares to the astonishment of the snobbish abbé Pirard that he prefers a supper for 40 sous to the boring dinner with the noble family. To grasp Julien's both spontaneous and carefully designed behavior in the de la Mole family Auerbach claims that it is "nur aus der politisch-gesellschaftlichen Konstellation des aktuellen geschichtlichen Augenblicks zu verstehen" (Auerbach 1994: 424). The historical moment is thus repeated in the narrated moment. A little later Auerbach approaches Balzac's "Darstellungsweise", the specific symbiosis of characters and their environments in Balzac, especially in *Le Père Goriot*. This "atmosphärische Realistik" is

interpreted as "ein Erzeugnis seiner Epoche, sie ist selbst Teil und Produkt einer Atmosphäre" (ib. 441), an atmosphere that includes contemporary biology and theories of consciousness. The real historical atmosphere is repeated as the narrated realistic atmosphere.

In other words, in order to understand literature properly we will have to *supplement* it with historical sources, both on the level of the characters, as in the case of Julien's behavior, and on the level of the author, as in the case of Honoré's narrative technique or, to put it in more general terms, both on the level of representational reference, as in the case of Julien, and on the level of representational technique, as in the case of Honoré. But is this supplementing possible and on which conditions? It is clear that mimesis as repetition (cf. Melberg 1995) is not based on a set of aesthetic devices (cf. Jakobson 1960), but is both a referential and technical operation. Following his evasive, at times almost hostile, attitude to theoretical deliberations (Auerbach 1994: 509, 517), Auerbach vaguely presupposes a continuity between fiction and reality, between historical documentation and literary representation.

In sharp contrast to theoretically oriented literary scholars, as for instance Georg Lukács (Lukács 1965), Auerbach makes it clear at the end of chapter 18 that his interest in history is not expressed in any rigorous historical analysis or social theory:

Die ernsthafte Behandlung der alltäglichen Wirklichkeit, das Aufsteigen breiterer und sozial tieferstehender Menschengruppen zu Gegenständen problematisch-existentieller Darstellung einerseits — die Einbettung der beliebig alltäglichen Personen und Ereignisse in den Gesamtverlauf der zeitgenössischen Geschichte, der geschichtlich bewegte Hintergrund andererseits — dies sind, wie wir glauben, die Grundlagen des modernen Realismus, und es ist natürlich, daß die breite und elastische Form des Prosaromans sich für eine so viele Elemente zusammenfassende Wiedergabe immer mehr durchsetzte. (Auerbach 1994: 458f)



Here Auerbach points to a society that has no fundamental determining features, let alone any cohesion. It is a mere collection of "viele Elemente" and consists of "Menschengruppen". It is literature that makes a "zusammenfassende Wiedergabe" out of it. Although the text itself is the ultimate touchstone for his analysis, Auerbach also refers constantly to the transformation of social and historical reality into literature, especially in chapter 18, in order to validate his readings. In spite of his admitted neglect of theory, Auerbach therefore cannot escape the need to be more explicit about the *conditions* for the linkage of literature and history from *his* specific point of view. This is what I set out to do in this paper, on his behalf as it were, beginning with a discussion on the role of sources.

## 2. There Are Sources and Sources

Some sources give water, others give oil, and still others are of disease, conflict, or wonder. Social unrest, economic hardship, competition for oil wealth, perhaps a political pronouncement, and general economic determinations, all these can be sources of historical events. These sorts of sources are all themselves the origin or cause of that which springs from them. But there are other historical sources. They are not sources of history, but sources of knowledge about history. And that is something completely different. When we investigate, say, a political document that actually triggered an event, then the character of its role as a historical source has changed. From being a source of events it has become a source for interpretation and thus in the nature of a literary text. The historian and the literary critic may both become its interpreters, although not necessarily of the same kind. Here, in this historico-literary limbo, so uncanny for many historians of a positivistic bent, we find Auerbach when he declares that a literary text is "ein Erzeugnis seiner Epoche" (ib. 441). "Erzeugnis" raises the problem, not of cluster of determining social factors, but of the truth value of the text and its interpretability (cf. Ellrodt 1996, Furst 1995, Holton 1994, Jauß (ed.) 1969, Ricœur 1983–86, esp. vol. 3, and also Ronen 1994, Ryan 1991). An illumination of

this theoretical twilight zone of interpretation is thus crucial for Auerbach's line of thought.

In the following I take historical sources to be any items of testimony that fulfill two requirements: 1) they document that events have taken place, and 2) they are capable of being interpreted. If the first requirement is not met — in the cases, say, of fraudulent sources, or poems — then the interpretation, no matter how reasonable, is invalid. If *only* the first requirement is met — a cryptic pottery fragment, an unreadable inscription — then the material in question can also not function as a historical source.

The value of sources for the documentation and interpretation of history lies therefore not only in the fact that they document that events are real. There are indeed many things that do that without being historical sources (although in some cases they may provide data for other sciences). Usable historical sources document historically relevant aspects of reality, mostly those that rely on human actions. Furthermore, it is not enough that the sources are interpretable. They must furnish knowledge, recognized as valid, about historically relevant aspects of reality: the effects and preconditions of human action, their voluntary or involuntary character, their unfolding etc. Here the term history is simply taken — and I agree — to cover all processes in which humans are involved. Natural processes are not regarded here as historical processes, unless they are seen in an interplay with human activities. Sources document all aspects of human capacities that are active in this process and the effects of that activity. Historical reality is therefore also a social reality. The objectivity of sources therefore has to be associated not only with direct empirical reliability or comprehensibility. Sources are chosen for their objectivity according to prescribed criteria for reality and knowledge that historiography recognizes.

Consequently, the criteria delimiting the field of possible sources can be debated, as it happens for instance in new branches of history like environmental history or history of mentalities. Here for example biological or meteorological data, hitherto regarded as documenting real but for historical research irrelevant events, will have to be integrated among historical sources. Or, in the case of history of mentalities, fiction or philosophical systems, presumably

without reference to what many historians consider to be the unquestioned realm of historical facts, will have to be included among the sources to be interpreted. A new theory of history may be needed in order to select and interpret new type of data. To recognize historical sources as relevant sources therefore requires more than reference to empirical truth and interpretability. It also presupposes a theory of history defining their relevance. It is never self-evident that certain items acquire a status as a relevant historical sources. A distinction between right or wrong sources is untenable in its unchangeable rigidity, whereas a distinction between relevant and irrelevant sources opens for redefinition of sources, of history, of research interest, and of fields of knowledge.

Irrelevant sources will be of three kinds. First, we have those that can not contribute with any knowledge to the type of historical processes foregrounded by the implicit of explicit theory of history behind the criteria of relevance. My diary is an interpretable document about facts in my life, but it is completely irrelevant for the history of Denmark from any view point. Second, we face sources that are relevant under certain circumstances and which in such cases can be used on the basis of the same criteria according to which the sources of primary relevance are selected. The diary of one of the former prime ministers of Denmark may be integrated to substantiate or modify the interpretation of certain political events that have been investigated through other primary sources. This type of source I call a *supplementary source*. Third, we encounter sources that can only be declared relevant if other criteria are used than those taken into account to select, validate and interpret a given cluster of relevant sources. If not they are irrelevant. Such sources I call *complementary sources*. My argument in this paper is that literature in certain but not all contexts can play the role as a complementary source, and that this is the case in Auerbach's analysis of modern realism. Moreover, the distinctions just made will prove useful to compensate for the lack of theoretical reflection in Auerbach concerning the linkage of literature and history.



### 3. Auerbach and Supplementary Sources

When Auerbach, as mentioned above, holds that Balzac's texts are "Zeugnisse", he implicitly admits that the interpretation of literature in relation to its historical context is carried out on the conditions of the historical sources. The literary text shows lacunae that impede the interpretation. It has to be supplemented with other texts. Here knowledge of history, that is historical sources, adds a necessary dimension both of reality and of interpretability to the literary texts. Moreover, when this implicit claim is advanced both on behalf of the character (Julien Sorel) and of the author (Balzac), it is obvious that the reference to the "Konstellation des geschichtlichen Augenblicks", as we learned from Auerbach, can only be made at the price of abandoning the literariness and fictionality of literature. This is the condition for the continuous *va-et-vient* between literature and history, also, one has to add, when history learns from literature about the unavoidable representational power of narrative techniques, as for instance in Hayden White (White 1987, cf. Ricœur 1983–86, esp. vol. 3), or when the content of literary descriptions is used as a historical source, as for instance in Louis Chevalier (Chevalier 1978). Therefore, if Auerbach really wants to refer to literature as a "Zeugnis" of history, he will have to be theoretically more explicit. Otherwise literature will disappear as literature in front of his very interpreting eyes, while he is filling the interpretative gaps that derive from the very literariness of the texts.

His most explicit notion, the *figura*, is used to explain the relation between two phenomena separated in time and space (Auerbach 1994: 74f). A relation of the *figura* type occurs when an event or a person A refers to an event or a person B, and when event or person B at the same time contains A; B so to speak constitutes the reality of A. This is the case when for example events in Jewish history (A) as referred to in the Old Testament appear in the New Testament (B) as prophecies about the life of Jews and therefore constitute the reality or meaningfulness of A and thus contain A (ib.: 51f). But, as Auerbach openly states, this specific meaning production is obsolete in modern realism (ib. 516), presumably because the relationship to be dealt with

here concerns a text and its contemporary historical context. A theory that integrates historical reality in literary interpretation without ending up excluding literature is needed. The mechanism of *figura* cannot be used. Here the distinction between supplementary and complementary sources comes in.

Let us begin with a quotation and approach it in Auerbach's manner as a "Zeugnis" of history and then gradually, "allmählich" as Auerbach likes it, try to improve the reading with a more consistent view of the linkage between literature and history.

Depuis le guichet qui mène au pont du Carroussel, jusqu'à la rue du Musée, tout homme venu, ne fût-ce que pour quelques jours, à Paris, remarque une dizaine de maisons à façades ruinées, où les propriétaires découragés ne font aucune réparation, et qui sont le résidu d'un ancien quartier en démolition depuis le jour où Napoléon résolut de terminer le Louvre. La rue et l'impasse du Doyenné, voilà les seules voies intérieures de ce pâté sombre et désert où les habitants sont probablement des fantômes, car on n'y voit jamais personne. Le pavé, beaucoup plus bas que celui de la chaussée de la rue du Musée, se trouve au niveau de celle de la rue Froidmanteau. Enterrés déjà par l'exhaussement de la place, ces maisons sont enveloppées de l'ombre éternelle que projettent les hautes galeries du Louvre, noircies de ce côté par le souffle du Nord. Les ténèbres, le silence, l'air glacial, la profondeur caverneuse du sol concourent à faire de ces maisons des espèces de cryptes, des tombeaux vivants.

Lorsqu'on passe en cabriolet le long de ce demi-quartier mort, et que le regard s'engage dans la ruelle du Doyenné, l'âme a froid, l'on se demande qui peut demeurer là, ce qui doit s'y passer le soir, à l'heure où cette ruelle se change en coupe-gorge, et où les vices de Paris, enveloppés du manteau de la nuit, se donnent pleine carrière.

Is this text a historical source as defined earlier? If yes, what sort of actual events does it document, and what sort of knowledge can

we obtain about them? It certainly *might* be a source. The study of history, after all, is about changes in society and environment under the influence of human actions and motives. Working from the name of the city and street names, we can quickly localize the events described in the quotation as occurring in and near the slum quarters in the courtyard of the Louvre in Paris, during or after the reign of one of the Napoléons. The description is of a process of decay, resulting from failed human plans and actions of broad, and therefore representative, character, ranging from those of Napoléon down to those of the anonymous landlords and tenants. The failure of all of them has been made worse by unfavorable natural influences. The quarter is falling to ruin because of Napoléon's only half-realized construction project, motivated presumably by power politics, to enhance Paris' monumentality through the completion of the Louvre. For that reason, it has become both unprofitable and dangerous to live in the quarter. All rational motives for settling in this slum having disappeared, the only people living there do so out of necessity. We could easily find other material to supplement both the data drawn from this quotation and our interpretation of it.

Seen from this perspective, a source like this text *documents* the existence of closed events that are directly dependent on, or at least bear on, human actions. Occurrences in nature, which can be documented quite precisely, do not become historical sources until they intrude on the cultural sphere and contribute to the documentation of these sorts of events as the climatic conditions referred to in the quotation (a more general example is the decline of forests due to overexploitation). When looked upon as a historical source, the reality behind the text is seen more as a series of closed states of affairs covered with human fingerprints, than as an ongoing process.

When these sources are subsequently used for *interpretation*, then we must search for the inner and reciprocal connections of the factors determining such a state of affairs. We are looking for explanations primarily concerned with material actions, as they are governed by certain motives and rational interests that are causes of a certain historical situation (as regards, for example, political power, access to resources, control of trade routes or, as it might



be the case in the quotation, speculation in real estate). Other types of motives (for example, fanaticism, mythological modes of consciousness, aesthetic experiences, the quest for subjective identity, self-perception, and the like) only come under consideration as secondary explanations, when other material is lacking; otherwise they are weeded out as irrational elements, and the sources in which such motives are manifested can be declared irrelevant. The interpretation of historical sources is not concerned with what motivates people to live and take part in historical reality in the first place, but rather with the competing interests within that historical reality that bring about events that can be observed and can be given an interpretation with a general perspective. As the quotation, however, suggests — “l'on se demande qui peut demeurer là” — not everything and everyone will follow this explanatory model.

We therefore need more precise information about the actions and acting persons referred to in the quotation. And we must also be sure that our perception of place, time, and events is correct. The function of a text as a source thus depends on whether *supplementary sources* can substantiate the documentation and elaborate on the interpretation. If one has too few sources, one is forced to make guesses. If one has too many, one must pick and choose among them. What occurs in both cases is an extension of the governing explanatory model: the relevant state of affairs is a closed but complex behavioral situation, relying on certain interests. When I now reveal that the text I have used here is fiction, namely a short passage from Honoré de Balzac's novel *La Cousine Bette* from 1846 (Balzac 1966: 27) the need for an accuracy test is acute. In short: if literature is to be used as a historical source in the traditional sense, it must be supplemented. Moreover, one must pay no attention to its status as literature, because in that case there is nothing to add, and if additions are made they cannot supplement any palpable reality which in fiction by principle is absent. The patient will die, but the fever will leave him. Nevertheless, we have proceeded as Auerbach *volens volens* would have done. We have seen the text as a “Zeugnis” of a certain historical “Augenblick”, but are left somewhat dissatisfied, both in terms of reading and in terms of theory.

#### 4. Complementary Sources

At this point, literary critics and historians could part ways, and forget their kinship: "I'll take care of my literature, you take care of your history. If you forget about literature witnessing anything else than imagination, then I'll stop using your well documented but narrow picture of reality." When supplementation is the only possible way of cooperating, the study of literature will inevitably be absorbed by the study of history if they do not follow separate ways. But there is more to the idea of the historical source than supplementation, so let us dwell at the crossroads a little longer. In fact, we are facing a problem parallel to the one Niels Bohr presented to a group of biologists at a congress in Bologna in 1937, when he was supposed to explain the insights of quantum mechanics regarding knowledge and objectivity, and apply them to other sciences (Bohr 1937).

Biologists can study living organisms as objects comprised of atoms and particles, exactly like all other physical objects, but there is a price: they must abandon attempts to explain what it means to be alive. Life becomes an axiom, rather than an object for study. The question: What does it mean to be alive? cannot be asked. Conversely, if one wants to understand physical organisms as living, one must bring in factors from beyond physics, such as instinct, intentionality, memory, speech and so on, and take the very physicality of the phenomenon for granted. Now the question: What does it mean to be a material entity? cannot be asked. Bohr's point is that one cannot merely stick the two kinds of knowledge together and thus create a single larger kind of knowledge. A continuous integration of supplementary sources toward a more and more encompassing synthesis is not possible. One must accept that in certain case to understand different phenomena we must create different types of knowledge, which may all be correct on their own terms, but cannot be converted into some common denominator. They are, as Bohr said, *complementary*.

The same logic is at work when when history and literary studies deal with sources (cf. Larsen 1994). In their use of sources, historians must also take it for granted that behind the closed state of affairs under observation, there *is* a continuous process that we

ourselves are part of, and that people, including ourselves, *are* motivated to take part in it, even if we cannot objectify this relationship (as, for example, psychology, anthropology, or aesthetics set out to do). It is only when grounded on this presupposition that our knowledge about the epochs or situations we distantly observe as cut out of the historical process becomes relevant historical knowledge. The question: What is the historical process? cannot be asked. Literary studies, too, rely on implicit presuppositions. They will have to assume that there exists a reality with which literature is both relying on and playing around with. Fiction would be powerless and culturally irrelevant were there not a reality to deny, to distort, to turn upside down etc. The question: What is reality? cannot be asked without the answer being trapped by Epimenides' paradox: It is true that I'm lying.

In this perspective it becomes clear that history and literary studies do not deal with the same object, but with each other's tacit presuppositions as, for example, when Lukács through literature asks the question about the nature of the historical process. Only if the basic assumptions of the two interpretative enterprises are the same, as Auerbach seems to believe in the chapter on realism, the continuous supplementing process is possible. And this, I believe, is a rare case. And if they are not identical, then the problem arises when and on what conditions a complementary use of sources, in history and in literary studies, is possible and relevant.

I hold that such conditions are historical, and not essential based on, say, the universal nature of art. Furthermore, they are bound to historical phenomena that are not mere events or state of affairs, but fundamental principles for our participation in history. Finally, they become necessary conditions for the use of complementary sources if they materialize in historical complexes that both change the physical lay-out of our environments and challenge our ideas both of what events, situations, state of affairs really are, what the historical flow is, and what the reality is that literature is playing around with. To refer to historical reality as a historical moment, as Auerbach does, is too vague although he develops it a little. Lukács, on the other hand, is far too general when he points to the changing subject-object relations during capitalism as the objective basis of literature.



## 5. The Modern City and Complementary Sources

I will propose that *the modern city* as a historical phenomenon is a historical locus where the complementary use of sources is possible and relevant in relation to modern realism. This paper is not the place to give a detailed account of the development of urban culture. When urban forms, first in Europe and a little later in the USA, became expansive especially from the 19th century onward, it turned into a global phenomenon that redefined whatever local urban forms it met with, or developed from. Its effects, therefore, reach beyond the city limits and become a cross-cultural structuring of quotidian life on all levels. Therefore it has become increasingly difficult to rely on traditional categories of time, space, and action and, therefore, also difficult to define historical sources, in order to aid our understanding of the city in its entirety as a historical phenomenon.

This is where literature comes in — as one very specific source of information, among many, about such historical complexes. Its value in this regard derives from three characteristics that are truly related to its status as literary fiction, but very different from the quasi-objective descriptionism Auerbach refers to:

1) In literature, people's reflections on their own identity and sense of belonging are braided *inextricably* together with references to their relationship to the environment and each other. In a reality that takes on the forms of permanent flux, such as the urban environment, this indissoluble bond stands at the core of a person's reworking of reality, even if it is still not organized into representative, rational patterns of self-interest and action that can be traced in the usual type of historical sources.

2) Literature is concerned with the continual, actual influence of imaginary, which is to say *unreal*, representations on the thoughts and actions of people. Thus, for example, the urban mass is seldom a clearly defined physical entity, but is instead an agitated tug of war between the anonymous individual and the riotous crush. But in the urban conceptual realm, all this becomes one entity, the Mass, which represents a perpetual force, both attractive and repulsive, for actions, regardless of whether they are

imaginary or not. The Mass is only a reality if it is real as a symbolic phenomenon (cf. Rudé 1964, Canetti 1985).

3) This brings us to literature's third important characteristic: its concern with the representation of experiences at the *threshold of consciousness*, and their effects. This makes literature a valuable source for cultural knowledge that flows from the aesthetic form and aesthetic experience. In periods of transition, as is the case of the emerging metropolis and the entire period in which Auerbach locates modern realism, the threshold of what is consciously perceived or conceptualized and what is not, merge into each other and gets a new effect which is difficult to trace in sources according to the usual two criteria: unambiguous empirical verifiability and clear intentional interpretability. There is no doubt in my mind that the literature of modern realism that Auerbach calls a "Zeugnis" of a historical moment, embraces a historical reality of an urban origin penetrated by the material and cognitive instability just described. The interpretation of such a historical reality therefore needs literature as a complementary source that can focus our attention on the three aspects of human experience articulated in literature: the relation between identity and environment, the effect of the unreal on the real, and the threshold between consciousness and unconsciousness.

## 6. Sources of Self-Interpretation

Let us briefly return to the Balzac quotation to see how the complementarity works. On the one hand, the text gives us a description of a concrete, easily recognizable local space, while on the other hand, all the actions that might fill this space are either unreal (the landlords cannot do anything, the tenants are ghosts) or hypothetical (the text can only postulate what "tout homme" who comes to Paris will remark, or that the "on", driving by in the cab and looking into the alley, will fantasize about "ce qui doit s'y passer"). Thus the reality is depicted as simultaneously real and unreal. It is just this sort of universe that literature is good at representing.

The character of such spatial reality without fixed common objective features is therefore tied to the direct experience of the body. Sensation in the Balzac text is primarily confined to two senses: the sense involving distance — sight — which demarcates for us the limiting horizon for our actions, and enables us to keep a certain distance from things close by; and the intimate sense, touch, which forms the ultimate border between our own body and the world around us, including the bodies of others, that forces itself upon us, here expressed in metaphors that are tied to confinement, concealment, cold, death and other expressions for the experience of a threatening intimacy. These two types of experience, oriented in opposite directions: away from oneself and toward oneself, are mastered in the private compartment, the cab, which remains in constant movement, protected by the distancing effect of the visual sense.

Such a reality, half actual, half hypothetical, in which one must keep in constant movement, rather than settle peacefully in a place, gives no opportunity for the achievement of some grand perceptual synthesis, rather nothing more than individual survival in whatever way possible (which is the concern of many of Balzac's novels, including this one, whose protagonist, *la cousine Bette*, lives in the *Rue du Doyenné*). The text therefore holds several views of the city: that of the narrator, who throws out hypotheses and "*se demande*" and therefore does not completely understand what is going on; and those of various anonymous persons, of which two kinds are merely chance passersby (the "*on*" driving by in the carriage, and the "*tout homme*"), while the two others (landlords and tenants) are, in principal, permanent residents, but in fact are as impotent and unreal as ghosts. A place, to be a place, acquires an identity, and it undergoes development through interconnected action and perception — but not here. The text cannot therefore be subsumed under one conception of the city that we could assign to Balzac like the contemporary theories of biology and mentality that Balzac is a "*Zeugnis*" of according to Auerbach. To look for an omniscient narrator as a spokesman of Balzac is not of much help. He is here identified with the "*on*" in the hurriedly passing carriage, at a safe distance, throwing out a cursory but frightened glance out of the window. (There are other literary texts about the



city, including some by Balzac, that present a more unified perspective, but all texts from the 19th and 20th centuries have urban instability as a thematic assumption.)

What can be said about people who take part in a process that simultaneously transforms them and their environment, displaces *their* identity and *its* character of reality? The very problem of subjective identity as coexistent with an environment of an unstable identity is at the heart of a historical complex such as the modern metropolis. Knowledge of such phenomena is what literature can offer. And when they are crucial to a historical reality, literature becomes crucial as well. If you want to know what the city and its cultural impact really is, and only wish to use traditional historical sources and make your conclusions along the lines of traditional use of the sources, you will not grasp the reality of the city. After all, Balzac is right in *Le Père Goriot*: "Ah! sachez-le: ce drame n'est ni une fiction, ni un roman. *All is true*, il est si véritable, que chacun peut en reconnaître les éléments chez soi, dans son cœur peut-être." (Balzac 1965: 217). And maybe he feels the thrill of the narrator Mira Jama in Isak Dinesen's story "The Diver": "It is to a poet a thing of awe to find that his story is true" (Dinesen 1958: 15).

The conditions for the interplay between history and literature are both bound to the narrative activity itself, to the power of literary form, and to the events and material involved in the narration. The historical sources present these conditions on three levels: 1) An *ontological* level — what is the ontological status of texts, events, texts as events generating historical events, social structures etc.? This is the level that mainly preoccupies Lukács. 2) An *epistemological* level — what type of knowledge do we obtain from the sources, what do they witness? Here Auerbach is situated. 3) A *methodological* level — how do we distinguish between relevant and irrelevant, supplementary and complementary sources, how do we subsequently analyze the linkage of literature and history?

## 7. Textual Analysis

My intention is not to denigrate historical source-reading and to offer literary insight as a way to redeem it. After all, I would not be able to conduct research on literature without anchoring myself in the human experiences that historical knowledge describes, however literarily formulated. Neither am I arguing that all historians should begin to mine literature for material to fill the holes in their knowledge. Of course, literary texts and historical sources do not always need each other. The appropriateness of that approach depends on what sort of problems one is studying. There are historical subjects that have no relation to literature and art, and there are literary problems without connection to history. But if one focuses on a historical complex of problems of the type that sets reality in operation — and it is this type that I cherish — then the use of complementary and not just supplementary sources is necessary to gain insight in the fact that the reality of the imagined, the reality of self-identity, and the reality of the unconscious is as real and influential on the flow of events as any navy, economical breakdown or territorial boundary. And when it becomes necessary to adopt such a complementary perspective, then one must also employ different methods for reading texts. That is the requirement, both of historians and of students of literature.

The reading of both literary texts and historical sources must indeed be meticulous. Thoroughness consists not only in having all the details; it requires having methods for organizing them. I will not examine reading methods here. But it is clear that as soon as one decides to use literature as a source, one cannot avoid paying attention to its representative techniques — the use of narrators, metaphors and other indirect forms of expression — precisely because literature's special knowledge, as just referred to in the three points, is often of fractured experiences that can be represented only in this way. And even when historical sources are sources of knowledge that can be verified beyond the sources, they have no effect until the knowledge is presented to someone. In this case, too, the form and technique of presentation is important. After all, historiography has grown out of a literary genre, the tale

or the story, and hence out of a basic human activity close to literature on which historians are still dependent: the storytelling. This narrative or epic genre is the aesthetic form in which people, actions and environment are combined and shaped so that they can be understood as parts of a process, before we even know if the process is real or fictitious. Narration is the basis for Homer, Saxo, and any national history, and Balzac. Rightly considered, it is exactly this that makes both history and literature exciting: by telling what we know, we become part of the reality we are talking about. This excitement is irresistibly present in Auerbach's *Mimesis*, but methodologically and theoretically it does not bring him to a more refined interrelationship between history and literature than mere supplementing.

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## Derrida and the Indian Theory of Language

MOHIT K. RAY

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It was in October 1966 during the symposium on "The Language of Criticism and Sciences of Man" held in Johns Hopkins University that Derrida presented his now famous paper "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of Human Science" and initiated something like a Copernican revolution in the fields of Philosophy, Linguistics and Literary Criticism. His critique of Western metaphysics struck at the very root of all Western philosophical discourses which attempt to establish the signifier as offering an unobstructed view of an autonomous signified whether it is truth or reality or being. In the process he questioned the primacy of speech and put forward a theory of writing — écriture or arche-writing that prefigures both speech and writing. Furthermore, it contains within it the potentials of everything that may be written or spoken. It is only what is contained in the écriture that can be either verbalized or orthographed.

Writing, for Derrida, is not just the inscription of words on paper but includes the neuronal traces in the brain which Freud identifies as memory. In "Freud and the Scene of Writing" Derrida writes:

Freud does not simply use the metaphor of non-phonetic writing: he does not deem it expedient to manipulate scriptural metaphors for didactic ends. If such metaphors are indispensable, it is perhaps because they illuminate, inversely, the meaning of a trace in general, and eventually, in articulation with this meaning, may illuminate the meaning of writing in the popular sense. (...) the gesture sketched out by Freud (...) opens up a new kind of question about

metaphor, writing, and spacing in general. (Derrida 1978: 199).

And again:

Finally, what must be the relationship between psyche, writing and spacing for such a metaphoric transition to be possible, not only, nor primarily, within theoretical discourse, but within the history of psyche, text, and technology? (Ib.).

Derrida refers to Freud's insight into language by calling attention to Freud's example.

Assume, for example, says Freud, that I have dreamed of a letter (Brief / epistola), then a burial. Open a Traumbuch, a book in which the keys to the dreams are recorded, an encyclopaedia of dream signs, the dream dictionary which Freud will soon reject. It teaches us that letter must be translated (übersetzen) by spite, and burial by engagement to be married. Thus a letter (epistola) written with letters (litterae), a document composed of phonetic signs, the transcription of verbal discourse may be translated by nonverbal signifier which, inasmuch as it is a determined affect, belongs to the overall syntax of dream writing. The verbal is cathected, and its phonetic transcription is bound, far from the center, in a web of silent script (Ib. 207).

For Derrida writing is nothing but dynamic expressive difference. It does not depend on sound and writing, but is the condition for such sound and writing. Although it does not phenomenally exist its possibility is anterior to all experiences.

For Bhartṛhari, Brahman, as the Word-Principle, is an intrinsically dynamic and expressive reality, and the language is its manifestation through the process of temporal beginning. In the very opening verse of his *Vākyapadīya* Bhartṛhari, possibly the greatest exponent of the Grammarian School has given a brilliant exposition to the unique nature of the Eternal Verbum. Bhartṛhari does not use Derridean words like trace or archewriting but uses the word śabdatattva or Word-Principle. In Bhartṛhari the Eternal



Verbum is conceived as an eternal principle having neither production, nor annihilation, nor any sequence of things and this objective world, according to him, is nothing but its illusory modification:

Anādinidhanam Brahma śabdatattam Yadaksara  
Vivartate'rthabhāvena prakriyā jagato yatah  
(*Vākyapadīya* 1:1)

In order to drive home his point Bhartṛhari conceives of certain eternal powers (*Śaktis*) residing in the Eternal Verbum, of which Time-power (*Kala-Śakti*) is the chief one inasmuch as it regulates all the other powers. In order to disarm criticism, that is how the unitary character of the Eternal Verbum can be postulated if the myriad objects of the world be its manifestations, he argues that its unitary character can never be denied outright since, though it is really one and undifferentiated, it appears to be manifold and different owing to the superimposition of differentiation belonging to the eternal powers creating diverse objects:

Ekameva Yadāmnātam bhinnam śaktivyapāśrayāt  
Aprthaktvepi Śaktibhyah prthaktveneiva Vartate  
(*Vākyapadīya* 1:2)

He continues further that though the powers are eternal, the possibility of successive occurrence of the six states of things, namely production, existence, modification, growth, dimension and destruction, cannot be objected, for it is the apparent sequence in its Time-power which is solely responsible for the occurrence of these transformations in succession:

Adhyāhitakālām yasya kālaśaktimupāśritāh  
Janmādayo vikārāh sad bhāvabhedasya yonayah  
(*Vākyapadīya* 1:3)

It is language that allows every form of knowledge to be manifested. In other words, had our knowledge lost linguistic form it would not have been manifested at all:

Vāgrūpatā cenniskrāmedavabodhasya śāsvatī  
Na prakāśah prakāśeta sā hi pratyavamarśinī  
(*Vākyapadīya* 1:124)

Language, according to Bhartṛhari, is consciousness in the form of external and internal experience, since consciousness in all creatures is never devoid of comprehension of words:

Saisā samsārinām saññā bahirantaśca vartate  
Tanmāt rāmanatīkrāntam caitanyam sarvajantusu  
(*Vākyapadīya* 1:120)

This is evident also in the fact that all the persons are impelled to react through language and that they become devoid of consciousness like a piece of wood or wall when language ceases:

Arthakriyāsu vāk sarvān samīhayati dehinah  
Tadutkrantau viśamjño'yam drśyate kāsthakudyavat  
(*Vākyapadīya* 1:127)

Bhartṛhari contends that just as one cannot conceive of an object entirely independent of knowledge, in a similar manner one cannot have any knowledge from language which is the only medium of its expression:

Na so' sti pratyayo loke yah śabdanugamādrte  
Anuviddhamiva jñānam sarvam śabdena bhāṣate  
(*Vākyapadīya* 1:123)

So, the fundamental principle must be knowledge or knowledge par excellence imbibed with linguistic principle. Thus knowledge is revelation, revelation is expression and expression is communication. It is thus that consciousness and language are combined into one principle the Eternal Verbum or Śabdabrahman.

Like Derrida, Bhartṛhari also sees the inherent trace consciousness of language as conditioning all psychic experience from deep sleep to dreams, to ordinary awareness and even to the mystical, the states in which direct supersensuous perception of the meaning is obtained. In the dream state the only difference is that the seeds or traces of language function in a more subtle manner. For Bhartṛhari, as for Derrida the experience of self is the unobstructed experience of śubdatattva or archewriting manifested in the temporal dynamics of language.

Before we proceed further it would be worthwhile to have some idea of Bhartṛhari's theory of Sphota in order to appreciate the

points of affinity between Bhartṛhari and Derrida regarding their theory of language. Sphota or more precisely the theory of Sphota in its rudimentary form maintains that a word or a sentence is not just a collection of sound units or phonemes arranged in a particular order, but a single whole. The audible sounds, the 'noisy realities' are regarded in this theory as the means by which the whole, the relevant Sphota is made public. The implication is that language is what is revealed finally and not the phonemes themselves. Early Indologists like Keith, for example, described Sphota as a mysterious or mystical entity. But it was established by later scholars, by Brough and Kunjnni Baja, for example, that Sphota was not a mystical entity.

Bhartṛhari, in fact, begins his discussion of Sphota by reference to the two distinctions made by his predecessors. In 1:44 he says that the linguists comprehend two types of śabda among the upādāna śabda, linguistic sound. One is the causal root of its manifestations and the other is applied, being manifested, to convey meaning. In other words, in the sequenceless nature of the speech (vāk) both powers to be articulated in sound or audible from the power to convey meaning are intermixed. Sound is the linguistic unit properly understood. It is the real language while the first is what manifests or expresses it. This may be seen as sphota-nāda distinction. Nāda manifests sphota and sphota conveys meaning. The sphota is an indivisible unit, a partless, sequenceless whole, and it is connected with the verbal dispositional ability or the speaker or the listener. For the sake of communication between language-users sphota must necessarily be made explicit. The potentiality must be realized so that the listener may receive it. But this cannot be done without nāda the sequential utterances of the phonemes. This is how the nāda becomes the causal factor for making sphota explicit. Sphota is also shared by the listener, and as a result the listener's sphota is awakened by the utterance of the speaker. This awakening of the listener's sphota is what is called the comprehension by the listener. This is what is meant by the claim that the sentence uttered must already be present in the listener. From the point of view of the speaker, however, the sphota already present in him will be the causal condition of the



nāda or the sequential word utterance. In verse 1:46 Bhartṛhari says that as fire resides in the arani stick and being manifested becomes the cause for manifesting other objects, śabda resides likewise in the mind (buddhi) and, being manifested becomes separately the cause for manifesting the meaning as well as itself. In 1:48 Bhartṛhari tries to account for the general wrong notion that sphota is sequential. He says that since nāda or sound arises in sequence, sphota which has neither a former nor a later stage and which is sequenceless or akrama appears to be having a sequence of parts because it is apprehended through nāda. Thus the properties of nāda are transferred to the sphota. He tries to clarify the situation with a simile. The moon resides in a separate location, say, in the sky. But the reflected image of the moon shares the operations of objects in a separate location. If the image is reflected in waves in water it assumes the movement of the waves. Similarly, sphota being manifested in nāda shares the properties of nāda. Like Derrida, Bhartṛhari believes that the temporal transformation of the originating source of language through speech and writing is continuous. Derrida uses the technical term “sign” to refer to the whole, and this is Bhartṛhari’s sphota. And what is “signified” for Derrida is artha for Bhartṛhari. For both Derrida and Bhartṛhari the linguistic whole — the sign or sphota — has an inherent force of differentiation that produces the double manifestation in inner meaning (signified / artha) and spoken sound (signifier / dhvani). Although sign and sphota are irreducible, neither can be experienced in pure presence. The pregnant push towards sequencing, spacing, punctuation or differentiation in space and time is rooted within language even in its most holistic form. In *Vākyapadīya* (1:99 and 1:5) Bhartṛhari asserts that śabdatattva symbolized by AUM is sequenced by the power of time into the various recitations of the Veda and all spoken words. For Derrida the image is one of sign as the linguistic whole being differentiated by spacing on the page and pause in speaking into articulated meaning and sound-image. According to Derrida, since a sign which supposed to indicate the unity of the signifier and the signified cannot be produced within the plenitude of absolute presence, there is therefore no full speech, no absolute truth or full meaning. For both

Derrida and Bhartṛhari the sphota and the sign are manifested, and in the dynamic tension of that manifestation lies truth. Both see truth contained in the dynamics of the language rather than arriving at a scepticism of language that it is devoid of any truth.

Bhartṛhari contends that even before the utterance the language along with whatever it conveys or means is like the yolk of a peahen's egg. In that state all the variegated colours of a full grown peacock lie dormant in potential form. Later these colours are actualized. Similarly in the self of the speaker or listener all the variety and differentiation of linguistic items and their meanings exist as potentialities. Language and thought are identical at this stage. Bhartṛhari even believes that the nature of the self is nothing but identical with the nature of language-thought. This state of complete identity of language and thought is called the paśyanti stage of language. Before the proper articulation of the sound-sequence or utterance there is another intermediate stage (mādhvamik vāk) where the language and the thought it conveys are still one and undifferentiated, but at this pre-verbal stage the speaker sees them as differentiable. In other words, he recognizes the verbal part, which he is about to verbalize either to himself or to another, as distinct and separable from the artha, meaning or thought. This perception impels him to speech which results in nāda-sphota differentiation.

Derrida's critique of the Western metaphysics focuses on the privileging of the spoken over the written word. Barbara Johnson summarizes Derrida's position in the following words:

The spoken word is given a higher value because the speaker and listener are both present to the utterance simultaneously. There is no temporal or spatial distance between speaker, speech, and listener, since the speaker hears himself speak at the same moment as the listener does. This immediacy seems to guarantee the notion that in the spoken word we know what we mean, mean what we say, say what we mean, and know what we have said. Whether or not perfect understanding always occurs in fact, this image of perfectly self-present meaning is, according to Derrida, the underlying ideal of Western culture (Derrida 1981: ix).

Derrida calls this belief in the self-presentation of meaning "logocentrism", from the Greek *logos*. Writing, from the logocentric perspective, is seen as a secondary representation of speech to be used when speaking is impossible. As the writer reduces thought to writing he distances it from the immediacy of speech and enables it to be read by someone far away, even after the writer's death. All of this is seen as a corruption of the self-presence of meaning, an opening of meanings to forms of corruption which the presence of speech would have prevented. It should be noted here that Derrida's critique is not aimed at reversing the value system, and showing writing to be superior to speech. What he actually tries to do is to dissect the whole system of metaphysical opposition upon which the speech versus writing debate is grounded. Derrida shows that both speech and writing are beginninglessly structured by difference and distance. The very experience of meaning is itself an experience of difference, and Derrida shows that this difference inhabits in the very heart of what appears to be immediate and present. In his commentary on Freud's mystic writing pad Derrida has shown that difference is present even in the structures of the unconscious. The apparent experience of a unitary self-presence of meaning and consciousness actually arises from the repression of the differential structures from which they spring.

Derrida finds support in a passage in Plato's *Phaedrus* in *The Dialogues of Plato*. The relevant passage runs as follows:

Socrates. Is there another kind of word or speech far better than this, and having far greater power — a son of the same family, but lawfully begotten?

Phaedrus. What do you mean, and what is the origin?

Socrates. I mean an intelligent word graven in the soul of the learner, which can defend itself, and knows with whom to speak and with whom to be silent.

Phaedrus. You mean the living word of knowledge which has a soul, and of which the written word is properly no more than an image?

Socrates. Yes, of course that is what I mean.

(Plato 1953: 185–186)



This other kind of writing, 'graven in the soul of the learner' is arche-writing for Derrida and this is the preverbal stage in Bhartṛhari's theory of sphota.

If all knowledge comes through language, is there a source or ground of language which lies outside of or beyond language? Can we say that language depends on something else — God or Brahman? Both Bhartṛhari and Derrida would hold that there is no such extralinguistic source of language. For Bhartṛhari as is clearly enunciated in *Vākyapadīya* the absolute is the śabdātattva, the Word-Principle, and therefore is not something outside or beyond language. Derrida deconstructs the western metaphysics and the notion of any extralinguistic source of language through his understanding of writing as différance containing all of spoken language and inscribed language.

It should be evident from the above discussion that there are many striking affinities between Bhartṛhari and Derrida in their notions of language. Both believe that speech and writing are beginninglessly structured by difference and distance. Both break down the barriers between literary criticism and philosophy. Both believe in the wholeness of the preverbal stage which precedes both speech and writing, and none of them believes in any extralinguistic source of language.

It would not be possibly wrong to say that Bhartṛhari as an exponent of the Indian theory of language prefigured much of Derrida's critique of Western metaphysics.

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## Some Comparative Aspects of Traditional and Modern Poetics While Reading Early Italian Poetry

ÜLAR PLOOM

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....I' mi son un che, quando  
Amor mi spira, noto, e a quel modo  
ch' e' ditta dentro vo significando.

(Dante, Purgatorio XXIV, 49–54)

(... I'm the one who when  
Amor stirs me, takes notice, and in the way  
he dictates in the soul, signify.)

“The object of the human sciences is not language (though it is spoken by men alone); it is that being which, from the interior of language by which he is surrounded, represents to himself, by speaking, the sense of the words or propositions he utters, and finally provides himself with a representation of language itself.”

(M. Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. 353.)

1. The present paper is primarily meant to be an attempt at viewing some differences between traditional poetics and contemporary poetics, especially in regard to the relationship *author — text — reality* (the realm of *res*). Among these contemporary approaches primary attention is paid to three moments: 1) the analysis and interpretation of the text as a dialogue of different discourses; 2) the primary role of the signifier in the

making of a text as embedded in the signified; 3) macro or archistrukture as an object of non-analysis, unless transformed into a new signifying chain.

Before we come to the modern approaches, I shall make a very short excursus into traditional poetics. The problematics connected with the role of the author in relation to text and reality is ancient.

1.1. Aristotle states in the *Poietikê* that the objective of the author — on the example of tragedy writing — is that of *mimesis* — the imitation of reality. Yet it is artistic quasi-reality, inasmuch as it must take the upper hand if necessary. So in *Poietikê* 24, 1460a it is stated that “the verisimilitude which is not (really) possible is to be preferred to the possible which is not verisimilar”. In 19, 1456a–b Aristotle speaks of the importance of the language (*lexis*) in connection with thought (*dianoia*). The domain of the thought comprises all effects which should be expressed through the words. “It is its [the thought’s — Ü.P.] part to demonstrate and confute, to raise feelings such as mercy, terror, rage and other similar emotions, also the augmentation or diminution of these.” The only distinction between action (*drama*) and a discourse is that in action there is no need for verbal interpretation, but in a discourse these emotions (*pathos*) must be caused by the one who speaks, they should proceed from his words.

So the word’s role is to engender a feeling in the spectator. The word (or action in drama) is a kind of bridge to the feeling and the thought of the actor and through that to those of the author.

1.2. This particular work of Aristotle was not authentically known in the Middle Ages, as it was translated into Latin from Greek only later. What the medievals certainly knew were Averroes’ commentaries on it. However, another *auctor* of the poetic art, Horace, was widely known. Horace maintains in his *Ars poetica* (II, 3; 102–103) that “if you [author] want us to weep [over what we read] you must first weep yourself” — *Si vis me flere, dolendum est/ primum ipse tibi*.

Does this mean identification with reality? Horace hardly means crude identification, for in several other places he stresses the necessity of the harmonious composition of the work, the



suitable selection and unity of its components and its style. And that is already artistry.

1.3. The doctrinal writers of the Duecento were thoroughly explicit. For example Geoffrey of Vinsauf puts it in his *Poetria nova*, vv. 2048–49 (Cf. Faral, p. 260) as follows: *Veros imitare furores, non tamen esto furens* (Truly imitate fury, not being, however, furious). The medieval poet is, rather, a kind of architect, a *faber*, an artisan in the noble sense of the word.<sup>1</sup> How does it then agree with another conception of the poet, the poet as *vates*, prophet (the term goes back to Terrentius Varro)? A prophet is a madman. He is furious. He speaks out in a rage. A lover (at least in the romantic sense, or the lover as the subject of the irrational feeling) is mad too. God speaks in the rage of the prophet, who is also irrational. Jehova is furious Himself, as is shown in many extracts of the Old Testament. Fury became a widely-discussed topic in the age of humanism (fury vs melancholy). Does God speak through the madness of the lover? What kind of madness is that? What should we say of the sentiment of the Canticle of canticles — the love song of Solomon. Is it madness checked and harmonized?

Perhaps it is in this light that we should view the troubadours, quoting for example the well-known lines of Rambautz d'Aurenga: *Cars bruns et teinz mots entrebec/ Pensius pensans* (as I entwine dark and light words/thinking thoughtfully: quoted in Kristeva, p. 349). The poets were well aware of the double character of the matter they treated. In the case of Rambautz the complicated, inexpressible nature of the sensation of love is to be seen in the "dark" words besides the "light" ones. They were also aware of the complications they had to tackle when they wished to express this matter in their art. In the case of Rambautz, they should do it being pensively pensive, thoughtfully thinking, or expressively expressing, if we extend it by analogy.

The "dark" and "light" words entwined by Rambautz actually correspond to the theory of two ornaments in the new poetics of

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<sup>1</sup> Dante writes (*Purgatorio* XXVI, 115 ff.) about Arnautz Daniel that he is the "miglior fabbro del parlar materno" ("the best poet in the mother tongue").

the Duecento — the *ornatus difficilis* and the *ornatus facilis*. Geoffrey of Vinsauf says in *Documentum de arte versificandi*, 132 (Cf. Faral, p. 309): *Quanto difficilius, tanto laudabilius est bene tractare materiam* (the more difficult, the more commendable it is to treat the (subject-) matter well). The *ornatus difficilis* is employing the words in another sense than that which is their proper sense and thus creates ingenuity and dexterity in word-play (Cf. Faral, pp. 89–98). There follows a whole classification of tropes (which we are not going to treat at this point), yet one thing is clear. The theoreticians of the Duecento are also of the opinion that words have their proper sense, and the poet, if he belongs to the trend of *trobar clus* (closed, dark, intricate poetics), only plays with the other signified as expressed by the same signifiers. This is another, extended, variant of *mimesis* and it is based on reality. The troubadours are magicians, yet they work their magic on reality. Or there is the outside reality for them even if they maybe do not make use of it. That reality is then the idea of the reality itself. A troubadour as an alchemist of love is the term that best characterizes him as a creator. He is a scientist in the medieval sense who in cold blood exercises what he has conceived in the fury of his mind. Yet the question arises: what is his primary material — feeling or language? Arnautz Daniel sings in his “En cest sonet coind’e leri” (quoted in Bec, pp. 186–188) as follows:

En cest sonet coind’e lèri  
 Fauc motz e capug e dòli,  
 E seràn verai e cèrt  
 Quan n’aurai passat la lima;  
 Qu’ Amors marves plan’ e daura  
 Mon chantar, que de lièi mòu  
 Qui prètz mantén e govèrna.

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To this light and gracious melody/ I make words  
 which I plane and scrape:/ they will be sincere and  
 stable/ when I shall have tried on them my file./ For  
 Love polishes and goldens my song, /which is  
 inspired by my Lady,/ the protector and the guide of  
 all merit.

Tot jorn melheur et esmèri, 8  
 Car la gensor sèrv e còli  
 Del mon /.../

Each day I improve and I get more refined,/ for I  
 serve and hold in respect the most gentle lady of the  
 world /.../

Tan l'am de còr e la quèri 22  
 Qu'ab tròp voler cug la'm tòli,  
 S'òm ren per ben amar pèrt.  
 Que'l sieus còrs sobretracima  
 Lo mieu tot e no s'eisaura;  
 Tant a de ver fait renou  
 Qu'obrador n'a e tavèrna.

I love and desire her with all my heart/ so that in  
 excessive ardour I shall rob her from myself,/ if one  
 may lose a being for loving it too much./ For her  
 heart submerges/ with mine in a flow which will  
 nevermore evaporate./ Doing so she will have  
 acquired both/ the artisan and the boutique.

Ges pel maltrach qu'eu sofèri 36  
 De ben amar no'm destòli,  
 Si tot me ten en desèrt,  
 Qu'aissi'n fatz los motz en rima.

The torture which I endure/does not hinder me in the  
 least of loving her well,/ although it keeps me in  
 solitude,/ as it allows me to set my words in verses.

Ieu sui Arnautz qu'amàs l'aura 43  
 E chatza la lèbr'ab lo bòu  
 E nadi contra subèrna.

I am Arnautz who collects the wind;/ I chase the  
 rabbit with an ox/ and swim against the current.



It may be that here he comes closest to expressing modern literary ideas about the role of the language in making a text. Arnautz says that his words will be sincere and stable only after refined work. Yet despite all the eagerness with which we might want him to express the modern conception of language superimposing itself on the poet's thought and making him understand better what he feels, Arnautz still states that it all comes from the feeling for the lady. Be it delight or torment, it is the feeling that allows him to set his words to verses, but not the word which creates meaning.

1.4. Let us now observe the first of the two quotations presented as a binary motto to this work. Dante declares that Amor speaks inside him and dictates what he should say.<sup>2</sup> Thus it is Love which is the real *dittatore* (*Dichter*) and not the poet. Or, if we proceed, it is the nature of the feeling which gives the poet the notion to be signified in verbal form. It is the signified which requires signifying. Whatever now the poet says is the mere registration of what is already there, inside him in the form of emotion and intellect.

Let it be noted that the suggestion of the authorship of Love is very interesting. We actually deal with an episode in *Purgatorio*. Dante and Vergil find themselves in the circle of the *golosi* (the greedy) and among others there is Bonagiunta di Lucca, a poet who wrote according to the traditional canons of Provençal and Sicilian poets. Dante wants to express the idea that he does not care for the strict canons which the Provençal masters had placed between life itself and its expression in literary form. He declares — as he had already mentioned in the introductory part to his famous sonnet “Donne ch’avete l’intelletto d’amore” (*Vita Nuova* XIX): *la mia lingua parlò quasi come per se stessa mossa* (my tongue spoke as if almost moved by itself) — that his expression is spontaneous, following the close study of the feeling inside him. To this Bonagiunta answers that he now sees clearly how Dante and the other masters write what Love dictates (*Io veggio ben come le vostre penne /di retroal dittator sen vanno strette,*

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<sup>2</sup> This particular phrase of Dante's is one of the favourite quotations of all researchers of Dante.

*Purgatorio* XXIV, vv. 57–58 ). Here, too, the author is almost “dead”, if we wished to go in the wake of Barthes, and it would suffice to interpret Love as a “*déjà vu*” and “*déjà lu*”. But it would be an error to subjugate Dante-the-author to the dictations of language in a modern sense, despite the fact that Dante was very keen on linguistic problematics. For although the topos of inexpressibility is a common one practically all through the *Paradiso*, the underlying idea is that man cannot know, to the full, the divine idea because of his inefficiency and therefore he cannot express it in language.

1.5. To be convinced that it is really love that dictates according to the poets of the Duecento, let us also have a look at two extracts from Cavalcanti’s canzone “Donna me prega” (A Lady asks me), his doctrinal poem on love’s location in the sensitive soul, the lady in her visible form as its agent, which takes possession of the intellective soul (in *intellectus possibilis*) similarly to a dark light which dims rational will as its mode, an accident to senses as its essence, delight and torment as its effect, invisibility as its distinction.

Vèn da veduta forma che s’intende, 21  
che prende — nel possibile intelletto,  
come in subietto, — loco e dimoranza.

.....  
.....  
La nova — qualità move sospiri, 50  
e vol ch’om miri ’n non formato loco(,)

It comes from the preceived form, which takes its place and habitat in the possible intellect as its subject /.../.

The novel [strange — Ü.P.] quality causes sighs and makes man look into the non-formed place/.../.

Cavalcanti probably proceeds from Averroes’ commentaries on Aristotle’s *De sensu* (Cf. Ciccuto, p. 119). Love is born as a result of an idea contemplated in its visible form — the lady. As an idea it comes to the intellective soul, which according to Averroes is

not part of the individual soul, thus not perishable. And as an idea it is only contemplated. Bliss does not come from this, it comes from feeling. Love as a feeling resides in the sensitive soul and causes both bliss and torment.

Contemplation thus takes hold of the subject as an idea in a visible form. Then it is turned into feeling through sense organs and it is the feeling that is registred (cf. Dante) as a signified. There is the sliding of the signified (cf. Lacan's signifying chain which will be discussed later), expressed by the *non-formato loco*, but it is not under the incision of the linguistic signifier, it is the sliding of the idea of love under the instability of the agent of love.

To conclude we may say that despite all importance attached to spontaneity of expression, it is still the signified which is considered to be the basis of signification as expressed by the author. And in spite of various approaches, it seems to be a common feature of traditional poetics.

2. If we now study Foucault's statement, in the second motto, we see that he sees it the other way round. It is man who through speaking represents to himself the sense of the words or propositions he utters. Thus the signified does not make the signifier, it is thanks to signifying that the poet makes sense of what he feels. And signifying means, according to modern theories, a representation *ad libitum* of signifying elements, not the underlying signified, which "slide away". It is exactly in the signifying chain or the interplay of Signifiers (written with the capital S by Lacan in the famous formula S/s and standing over the signified) which governs signification. Lacan speaks of the "supremacy of the signifier in the subject". He states the relationship of the subject's interdependence with the signifier. It is actually so that the signifier penetrates into the signified with the subject just as (in an attempt to compare the structure of language and that of the unconscious)

"/.../ a neurosis is a question which being poses for a subject "from that place where it was before the subject came into the world". /.../. It does not pose it [the problem — Ü.P.] *before* the subject /.../ but it



poses it *in place* of the subject, that is, in that place it poses the question *with* the subject, as one poses a problem with a pen, or as man in antiquity thought *with* his soul" (Lacan 1988: 99).

The subject is thus empty, mobile, without a centre. It moves from one analytic task to another and through a language in which all expectations of coherence are invalid (Bowie 1979: 132). The *ego* as opposed to the *subject*, a cognizent entity, is then but a succession of different states of mind (read: signifying chains, language itself).

It is primarily the reversal of hierarchies (in addition to the one above) that Derrida "centres" upon (the word "centre" itself seems out of place on the background of the Derridean "différance") in his mode of deconstructive reading. It is not actually the deconstruction of structures or discourses themselves, it is the deconstruction of the mode of reading and interpreting these structures or discourses.

Anyway all three — Foucault, Lacan and Derrida, as most contemporary theorists<sup>3</sup> — declare différance to be the major element of all distinction whereon any communication is based on. Moreover difference is based on some event which is not present, which has occurred and of which some traces are preserved. Therefore différance includes both differing and deferring.

Yet one wants to object by saying that it is not only the quality of difference as a result of previous events which stands at the root of signification, but also similarity.<sup>4</sup> Thus it would be a mistake to concentrate only on the differences in sequences like *pet*, *bet*, *met*, *set*, *let* etc. and forget the sameness of the differentiating elements

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<sup>3</sup> I shall not go into detail and point out the divergencies of their distinctive approaches.

<sup>4</sup> Derrida writes in the *Positions*: "Whether in written or spoken discourse, no element can function as a sign without relating to another element which itself is not simply present. This linkage means that each "element" — phoneme or grapheme — is constituted with reference to the trace in it of the other elements of the sequence or the system... Nothing, in either the elements or the system, is anywhere ever simply present or absent", reported in Culler 1979: 164.

*p, b, m, s, l* in their allophones or allographs *p', b', m', s', l', etc.* even though they are never pronounced in the same way or written in the same way. It is both the presence and the absence that characterize a linguistic sign or any sign. It is exactly through similarity (and sameness as its special case) that the quality of presence is also maintained in the mentioned sequences to counter-balance the quality of difference which is sometimes overstressed. Derrida has himself pointed to the quality of iterability as a necessary precondition for any signification<sup>5</sup>. It is exactly in the iterability that presence reveals itself. Thus it is not the supremacy of either speech or writing in the narrow sense or micro-structures, but the so-called archiwriting, a kind of macrostructure, a structure of relations to be found in all structures, which escapes analysis<sup>6</sup>.

We shall now make an attempt at reading some early Italian poetry in the light of the afore-mentioned modern key concepts: a dialogue of discourses, signification as primarily dependent on the interplay of signifiers which bear both on difference and similarity as a departure for the deconstruction of a seemingly homogeneous text and the reconstruction of the discrepancies on a metalevel.

2.1. Let us start with the dialogue of discourses. As an example we shall look at the opening sonnet of Petrarch's *Canzoniere*.

Voi ch'ascoltate in rime sparse il suono  
di quei sospiri ond'io nudriva 'l core  
in sul mio primo giovenile errore,  
quand'era in parte altr'uom da quel ch'I' sono;

del vario stile in ch'io piango e ragiono,  
fra le vane speranze e 'l van dolore,  
ove sia chi per prova intende amore,  
spero trovar pietà, non che perdono.

<sup>5</sup> *Marges de la philosophie*, p. 389, reported in Culler 1982, ch. 2.

<sup>6</sup> Derrida says in his *Grammatology* that although this concept [archi-writing] is invoked by the themes of the "arbitrariness of the sign" and of difference, it can never be recognized as the *object of a science*. It is that very thing which cannot let itself be reduced to the form of a presence. Cf. Culler 1979: 172.

Ma ben veggio or sì come al popol tutto  
favola fui gran tempo; onde sovente  
 di me medesimo meco mi vergogno:

e del mio *vaneggiar vergogna* è 'l frutto,  
 e 'l *pentersi*, e 'l conoscer chiaramente  
 che quanto piace al mondo è breve **sogno**.

You who hear in scattered rhymes the sound of those  
 sighs on which I fed my heart in the time of my first  
 youthful error, when I was in part another man from  
 the one I am now:

for the varied style in which I speak and lament,  
 between vain hopes and vain sorrow, wherever there  
 is someone who understands love from experience I  
 hope to find not only pardon, but also pity.

But now I see well how I was the laughing stock of  
 everyone for a long time, and for that I am often  
 ashamed of myself;

and of my delirium shame is the fruit, and repen-  
 tance, and the clear recognition that whatever is  
 pleasing in the world is a brief dream.

(Trans. by S. Minta, p. 26)

The English translation is very clear and seems to postulate convincingly the supremacy of reason over sentiment. The poet laments and shows the futility of all youthful feeling — vain hopes and vain sorrows. His love has been a laughing-stock for all those who are in their right mind. Therefore he now asks for understanding and even pity from those who have had a similar experience. And he declares at the end that he is ashamed of himself and recognizes clearly that whatever is pleasing in the world is a brief dream.

If we take this interpretation for the text we have to agree. Yet we might as well try a different interpretation: I have nurtured my heart with the sweetness of the rhymes that I have written. I have



used various styles to lament and through this lament reason. And surely you, who know what love is, pity me and forgive me. I became a fable amongst the people and my reputation was long. I myself understood what I was doing and it proved fruitful, for I understand that all this sweetness which pleases us is like a short dream.

Certainly this interpretation is not true either. In order to get at what the text tells us, we would have to transcribe the text as it is in the original version of Petrarch (rewritten at least nine times, as the *Canzoniere* that we possess is, actually, its ninth edition). Therefore we can really see that there are different discourses in dialogue within one and the same text (cf. Bahtin 1987, Barthes 1988). The classical approach to analysis would be the different levels of the text: literal and rhetorical, or the content and the expression, or message 1 and message 2<sup>7</sup>. One level is what it says and the other is how it says it. Yet Foucault observes that it would be banal to distinguish between "what is said" and "how it is said", because the saying, the "utterance" (*énonciation*), is what constitutes a "content", a "referent", or an "object" of discourse. (Cf. White 1979: 82).<sup>8</sup> This would make any interpretation a betrayal of the text. It would actually mean that if there was just one word that got lost in the text, it would mean another thing. Yet we could take turns and read out Petrarch's text in different ways, stressing different words at different readings (for example according to the patterns as indicated in the text in Italian). The outcome would be different. Foucault would probably say that they are then different texts. We would in theory get an infinite number of different texts. Possibly they are different, but they would be variants of the architext which would then not be an object of analysis. It is in the architext that presence is maintained despite differences in variants. At present we content ourselves with comparing just two different readings and postulate the

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. Kristeva 1983: 355.

<sup>8</sup> One wonders about idiomatic expressions, such as *It rains cats and dogs*. Is it here also the utterance that constitutes the content of discourse?

difference of discourses: one which stresses the voice of *reason* and the other which stresses the voice of the sweetness of the *song*.

2.2. Let us now leave the dialogue or conflict of discourses and study the second characteristic which interests us — that of the primary role of the signifier in the key offered by Lacan in “The Insistence of the Letter in the Unconscious”. Lacan proves the incessant sliding of the signified under the signifier [S/s] drawing on various examples. He declares the insufficiency of the linearity of the chain of discourse and stresses the importance of the other dimension — verticality. He now proceeds similarly with Jakobson on the two poles of metonymy and metaphor. Metonymy is based on the signifier to signifier connection, metaphor springs from two signifiers, one of which has taken the place of the other in the signifying chain. Lacan then turns to the theory of Freud and posits metaphor on the pole of *Verdichtung* or condensation as a structure of the overlapping of signifiers. He likewise posits metonymy on the pole of *Verschiebung*, or displacement<sup>9</sup>. Now there follow the 2 famous formulae

$$f(S....S') \quad S \sim S (-) s \quad \text{— for metonymy, whereby}$$

the signifier stands to a signifier ( $\sim$ ) and their relation is patent in the signifying chain (like in the synechdochical example of *boat* represented by *vail*, by which  $\text{boat/boat} = \text{vail/boat}^{10}$ ), so that the second signifier is maintained adjacent with the first one it represents in creating the original thought, or ideally both *vail* and *boat* are preserved as signifiers in their relation to the object (boat).

$$f(S'/S) \quad S \sim S (+) s \quad \text{for metaphor, whereby}$$

the second signifier substitutes the first one, whereas their relation is latent, and the + stands for the leap over the line between the

<sup>9</sup> Jakobson had treated both, condensation and displacement, as relevant to metonymy.

<sup>10</sup> My example.

signifier and the signified, i.e. *pancake* for *full moon*<sup>11</sup> marks the condensation of the first signifier (moon) by the second one (pancake), whereas *moon* as a signifier is not there in its relation to the object (moon), but concealed under the second signifier *pancake* which has taken the place of the first one in the signifying chain.

After this rather complicated interpretation of Lacan's interpretation of metaphor and metonymy we return to Petrarch's sonnet. We shall first concentrate on three *paronomasias* **suono, sono, sogno** in verses 1, 4, 14. Here we deal again with both, differences and similarities. As signifiers on the level of reason, they are clearly different, **u** and **g** in the "suono" and "sogno" being clearly the differentiating phonemes. There is however the similarity of sound, presented by the presence of **s o n o** in all of the three entities and which here plays its role, as these are the words which create the unison of melody, especially the rhyming of "suono" and "sono" in the first stanza, but also "suono" and "sogno" as the last word of the first and last line respectively. As to the similarity of sound and the difference of "literal" (that is out-of-this-text) meaning, we deal with the case of a metaphoric chain of superimposing signifiers which incide in the signified, so that it begins to slide. It is as if the subject who postulates his being /sono/, also refers to his being sound /suono/ and dream /sogno/. To this rather hardy reading we may find support in stressing some other melodious alliterated signifiers like *favola fui. pietà perdono. vaneggiar vergogna, me medesmo meco, conoscer chiaramente* etc. despite the out-of-this-text difference in their signified. It is interesting to note that there are semantic units in the text which are clearly polyphonic (cf. Bakhtin, Barthes), such as *favola* which suits either positive or negative interpretation from the point of view of the code, etc.

Or if we turn to by now classical interpretation of a text following different levels of analysis (literal and rhetorical, morphological and syntactical, phonetical and semantical), we would also find support in the afore-mentioned abundance of semantic units in favour of love and the sweetness of singing it. The vain hopes

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<sup>11</sup> My example.



and vain sorrow are expressed in a very elaborate form which revert the lament of the futility of all hope and all sorrow. It is the elevated style itself which counterfeits the seeming vainness of all worldly reasoning.

What we have here observed as an example of the sliding of the signified under the signifier only confirms the afore-mentioned statement of the dialogue of different discourses in "one and the same" text. The different stressing of the same signifying chain, actually the whole text either in the key of reason or sentiment creates the effect of the sliding of macrosignified or the meaning. Thus in an attempt at a reading on the macrotext level we might say that there is the triumph of sentiment and the defeat of reason, if we read in the key of stressing the sound similarity of the melody. Yet it is not the same sentiment which has been denied by the Poet. It is an archisentiment which comprises both reason and sentiment of the microtext level. The conflict seems to be overcome on the macrotext level. Yet it remains on the microtext level. For we cannot get rid of what the text enables in reading it in the key of reason, that is stressing the difference in the "meaning" or what the poet says explicitly according to the traditional analysis. Moreover, if we tried to figure out the structure of the archisentiment or archireason, we would at once have to deal with another binary approach. Because if we declare that vainness is good because it is sweet in melody, it would just be another kind of reason, a reverted one, but still reason, for in order to explain we would have to reason and show why it is good.

2.3. To demonstrate that the macrolevel shifts out of the sphere of interpretation, let us also have a look at Sonnet 3 in Petrarch's *Canzoniere*.

Era il giorno ch'al sol si scoloraro  
per la pietà del suo fattore i rai;  
quando I' fui preso, e non me ne guardai,  
ché I be' vostr'occhi. **Donna**, mi legaro.

Tempo non mi pareva di far riparo  
 contr' a' colpi d'**Amor**; però m'andai  
 secur, senza sospetto; onde I miei guai  
 nel comune **dolor** s'incominciaro.

Trovommi Amor del tutto disarmato,  
 et aperta la via per gli occhi al core,  
 che di lagrime son fatti uscio e varco.

Però, al mio parer, non li fu onore  
 ferir me de saetta in quello stato,  
 a voi armata non mostrar pur l'arco.

It was on the day when the rays of the sun grew pale  
 out of compassion for his Maker that I was captured,  
 and I did not defend myself against it, for your  
 beautiful eyes, Lady, bound me.

It did not seem to me a time for protecting myself  
 against blows of Love; therefore I went secure and  
 without suspicion; and so my sorrows began in the  
 midst of the common grief.

Love found me quite unarmed, and the way open  
 through my eyes to the heart, my eyes which have  
 become the gate and passageway of tears.

So I see it, it did him no honour to wound me with  
 his arrow while I was in that state, and not even to  
 show his bow to you, who were armed.

(Trans. by Minta, p. 27)

If we start again from the conception of the dialogue of different discourses we may trace an oscillation between the two levels of (1) universal — moral — normative and (2) individual — amoral — abnormal.

Differently from sonnet 1 we here deal not with sound metaphoricity but with visual metaphoricity. The signifying chain depends on the analogies of rays of the **sun** and the eyes of the **Lady**. Yet their function is the opposite. The Sun turned its eyes away for the sorrow of seeing the death of Christ, but Laura looks

mercilessly at the poet on that very day (for according to Petrarch he first saw Laura on Good Friday). Opposite is also the effect. The Suffering of Christ is bad, abnormal, amoral. Yet the turning away of the Sun in pity and shock is good, normal, moral. The look of the Lady is also bad, abnormal, amoral, yet it is good (expressed by "be' occhi" — "beautiful eyes"). Thus the collective bad is opposed to the individual good. The collective "bad" is to be read in the key of rationality, the individual "good" is sensual.

**Common grief (comune dolor)** is also analogous to **Love (Amor)**. Yet their function is the opposite. Common grief is universal, good, normal rationally, though it is sensually bad. Amor is individual, abnormal, amoral (especially on the day of the death of Christ) rationally, and also sensually bad, because of the Poet's participation in the common grief.

The Poet is disarmed against Love. This is rationally, universally, morally, normatively bad. It is also individually, sensually very bad. Laura is armed against Love. This is rationally, universally, morally, normatively good. Yet individually, sensually very bad.

The confusion of good and bad results from the conflict of two different discourses. Thus it is not that good is bad and bad is good, but what is rationally bad need not always be emotionally so, what is emotionally good need not be rationally so. Here rational coincides with normative/universal and sensual with the individual/ abnormative.

We again deal with both similarities and differences. Differences lie, here too, in the out-of-text "meaning" as inferred by the different signified. Thus sunrays need not have anything in common with the Lady's eyes. Yet it is in this very sequence by means of analogy Sun/rays and Lady/eyes (Lady is like the sun and her eyes are like sunrays) that the metaphor called forth by replacing the second signifier *Sun* for the first signifier *lady* in relation to the object (Lady — Laura) and the second signifier *rays* for the first signifier *eyes* in relation to the object (eyes) is constructed. It is not exactly the case of metaphor treated above (pancake-moon), for here we have a metaphor not due to similarity, but mainly due to the similarity of the relation Sun/rays and Lady/eyes which has a metonymic structure, and therefore both signifiers remain



adjacent in the signifying chain. That we also deal with a case of metaphor is manifest in many other examples of the *Canzoniere* where the signifier *rai* (rays) are also used in reference to *eyes*, and *sun* in reference to lady Laura. There the second signifier is, indeed, condensed in the first one and latent only. And then there is of course the case *par excellence* of the interplay of the signifier *Laura*, *lauro*, *l'aura*, *oro*, *aria* etc., whereby the signified begins to slide and we do not know what it is.

In the second stanza of Sonnet 3 we also deal with another metaphor Amor-Death. Death killed Christ on Good Friday and Amor here is hunting the poet, also unarmed.

Thus if we deconstructed two different discourses from the text, we might get two (or theoretically infinitely more) variants. One speaks so in the key of rationality, the universal norm. On Good Friday, when all feel grief over the death of Christ, vain worldly Love suddenly turned me away from my sorrow and caused a new sorrow, entirely different and shameful. I was not prepared to take this Death of Love into my heart and I do not think that it is fair, the more so that you yourself, Lady, are well armed against Amor's attack.

The other discourse in the key of sensuality, individual abnormality says the following: On Good Friday, when I was ready to grieve, I all of a sudden saw your beautiful eyes, Lady, which fell on me like sunrays. Yet what a grief, my own amongst the common grief, when I discovered that I alone, not you, fell victim to the murderous Amor.

And just as well we may construct a macrolevel by emphasizing the individual sorrow for the passion unanswered by Laura, where we postulate the supremacy of the sweetness of the sentiment as higher than that of reason, especially drawing it from the last line of the poem: *a voi armata non mostrar pur l'arco*. It is bad that you are not wounded, Lady, for I am in love with you. Yet this is not an object of analysis, for we should begin to reason and defend it against the opposite macrolevel, derived from the reading in the key of reason. This would result in the supremacy of archireason, in which both reason and sentiment of microlevels are overcome, stating that what happened on Good Friday was the beginning of personal torment for the poet, to which there is no end. So it is the

macrosignifier that decides the macrosignified, which may transform *ad libitum* at the merest change in the signifier — both phonemic and phonetic, which in the present case was of macro-phonemic nature.

2.4. We shall now try to apply the above-mentioned methods in a very brief analysis (and of course an absolutely superficial one, at least at this point) of Dante's work. Dante himself is a keen master of the dialogue of discourses. As Contini and several other researchers have pointed out, there is the dialogue of Dante — the author and Dante — the protagonist. Dante the author represents the discourse of the doctrine of the Church and Dante — the protagonist is the carrier of the discourse of just an ordinary man. There is also the dialogue of the rational mind as represented by Vergil and the intellectual-supernatural mind as represented by Beatrice. There is the dialogue of the discourse of God and the discourse of man. Dante several times expresses the idea of the inexpressibility of the supreme truth which is a very clear proof in favour of what has been stated above about the macrolevel remaining out of the scope of human analysis. There is also the dialogue of the grotesque and the harmonious, as to the conflicting discourses of human understanding and divine order. Dante seems to "resolve" all these conflicts on the metalevel in favour of the higher truth.<sup>12</sup> Yet when this higher truth is then visible, as in the last episode of the Holy Trinity contemplating itself<sup>13</sup>, Dante feels that his word cannot express what he understands. Losing consciousness — or a dream or a sudden lightning-like revelation — is in fact the tool of ex-

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<sup>12</sup> For example there are numerous cases in which Dante-the protagonist-the man discovers in the supernatural realm of either Inferno, Purgatory and Paradise that man's ideas of concrete things had proved different from God's ideas. This is in fact one of the main messages of the *Commedia*.

<sup>13</sup> They present themselves to the vision of Dante as three circles of three different colours, one as a rainbow reflected by the other rainbow and fire emanating from both of them. And in the light which reflected the other light Dante saw the reflection of his own face, the reflection of humanity.

pressing the state of enrapture, the only state of getting to know.  
For otherwise he has to state

Qual è la geometra che tutto s'affige 133  
per misurar lo cerchio, e non ritrova,  
pensando, quel principio ond'elli indige,  
tal era io a quella visiva nova:  
veder voleva come si convenne  
l'imgo al cerchio e come vi s'indova;  
ma non eran da ciò le proprie penne:

Just as a geometre who concentrates to measure the circle and, thinking, does not find the principle which he needs, was I in front of this novel (extraordinary) vision: I wanted to see how the human image fits the circle and how it is attached to it;

but my wings were not adequate:<sup>14</sup>

Here all commentaries at hand suggested either "wings" or "capacities" to the "literal" meaning of "pens" (*penne*), which is actually of great interest, suggesting that the word and writing were inadequate.

Well then, Dante's mind has refused to interpret the structural binarity of Christ's essence — his godliness and his manliness. Therefore he proceeds in the supernatural way:

se non che la mia mente fu percossa  
da un fulgore in che sua voglia venne.

A l'alta fantasia qui mancò possa;  
ma già volgeva il mio disio e 'l velle,  
sì come rota ch'igualmente è mossa,  
l'Amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle. 145

but my mind was struck by a lightning in which its desire was fulfilled.

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<sup>14</sup> My translation.



The high fantasy here was powerless; but already my desire and my will, just like the spheres which always move, were guided by Love which moves the sun and the other stars.<sup>15</sup>

Hence the fantasy which is the mediator between senses and thought (cf. Aristotle and St. Thomas of Aquinas) ceases. This is the condition of those who see in beatitude their own will identified with the will of God. Dante's vision and the whole work is completed herewith.

### Conclusions:

It has often been suggested that with the philosophy of Descartes the real age of modernism begins. Descartes' *Cogito, ergo sum* is seen as a radical turn in the cultural discourse. Instead of the hitherto reigning ontological discursivity, the gnoseological discursivity is being introduced. The emphasis does not lie any more on the discovery and the interpretation of the reality outside man. From now onwards the point is how man perceives that reality. Moreover, it is exactly this perception of the reality in the human mind that determines the nature of this reality. In this respect the discoveries of modern linguistics and modern literary theory based on it very much proceed in the same direction. If St. Augustine proceeds from the *res* to lay the foundations of his doctrine of the symbolic order, the moderners proceed from the symbolic order (cf. Lacan) as a necessary precondition of perceiving *res*. The mental registration of authentic feeling causes authentic expression with the poets of the *Dolce stil nuovo*; the modern theorists argue that it is language itself which enables the poet to understand and express himself. Therefore it seems that these two discursivities on the nature of poetic discourse are only comparable as long and as far as their methodological differences are born in mind. Because the modern analyzer may well maintain that the Love who dictates in Dante's (or any other poet's) soul is language itself. But we must remember that neither Dante nor his contemporaries seem to

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<sup>15</sup> My translation.

have ever really thought so. The question arises: is it at all permissible to analyze old texts resorting to the modern approach? Perhaps they should be left to be analyzed only by those researchers who work on the problematics of historical semantics? It still seems that both approaches prove useful as long as they are not confused. For historical semantics will surely decide on the nature of the interpretation on microtext levels. Yet it seems that it would not solve the problem of dialogism between different discourses within one and the same text. The dialogue as such will always remain, as the macrotext level is not analyzable by means of a discourse on discourse.

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## Mimetic Temporality

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*Mimesis* in Auerbach's version is, as is well-known enough, a representation of reality, *dargestellte Wirklichkeit*: reality as it has been experienced by our senses. I will not explore the conceptual history here, nor will I discuss the interesting but problematic relations that Auerbach establishes between style and sense-experience. Instead I will try to say something about his view of the temporality of representation by way of another concept: *figura*. This is much used in his Dante-chapter in *Mimesis* but not in the chapter where I would like to have seen it: the pages on Cervantes' *Don Quijote*.

Auerbach's *figura* is presented in his impressive essay by that name from the 30s: there, he works his way through the history of the concept up to Dante. Its originally grammatical and rhetorical import — Quintillian provides the examples — expands into temporal pertinence through the church-fathers. The relation of the Old Testament to the New is constructed in temporal terms with the first instance prefiguring the second or being a "figure" of its own realization. Auerbach quotes Tertullian explaining the words of Christ, "Hoc est corpus meum," as meaning "*figura corporis mei*" (Auerbach 1959: 31). The host being a "figure" would not mean that it is a "phantasma" but a physical reality. Still, this reality can become even more real; the figure is its own prefiguration, meaning that it is imagined to be realized in future time. The figure is a reminder (of Christ's body) and a promise (of resurrection). Thus, Auerbach situates the idea of "*figura*" in a Christian tradition that divides the world vertically as well as horizontally: *this* world is but a shadow of another world, that is

either parallel or futural or both. *This* world is full of those meaningful signs called "figura." These are real but still mere *umbræ*, i.e. shadows of an *other* world; they are at once physical and spiritual, "hence" — in Auerbach's words — "authentic, significant, and existential" (ib. 45). "Figura" is close to the allegorical sign as well as to the symbol but Auerbach claims "figura" to be their alternative: "figura" is not *only* a sign referring in time (as the allegorical sign) but is simultaneously manifest and present. Not *only* filled by its own presence, like the symbol, but at the same time referring in time. "Figura" can perhaps be called a hermeneutical construction, to use a term *not* used by Auerbach; "figura" being closely related to interpretation. A phenomenon perceived as a "figura" can only be understood in its relation to other phenomena. Auerbach defines figural interpretation as the establishment of a relation between two phenomena separate in time but still *within* time (Auerbach 1945: 53). The possibilities of figural interpretation are therefore as inexhaustible as time and world (or times and worlds) and figural thinking is doomed to interpretation. Auerbach insists on the concrete empirical character of figural thinking at the same time as figural interpretation transforms empirical reality into text and history into an endless process: the full reality of resurrection will always be beyond.

Auerbach's prime example on figural thinking is Dante, a Dante not read allegorically or theologically but read as simultaneously allegorical *and* realistic. In the figural interpretation Virgil is real but *also* a figure of Dante, who is real but *also* a figure of the poet, etc. Dante's comedy "is a vision which regards and proclaims the figural truth as already fulfilled," according to Auerbach (1959: 67). This idea is further developed in the *Mimesis*-chapter dealing with Dante ("Farinata and Cavalcante"). In this brilliant part of *Mimesis* Auerbach derives stylistic breaks and blends from the poet's contact with real life — his "sensory experience of life on earth" (Auerbach 1957: 166). Still, Dante's stylistic mixture is subordinated to an elevated level just as Dante's realism is a figural realism presenting earthly phenomena as real while they receive their full meaning only in transcendence. Unearthly phenomena are still sensory phenomena along with being eternal; they have received their *forma perfectior*. Dante's

figures joins the eternal with the transitory and the result is, in Auerbach's words, a "direct experience of life which overwhelms everything else" (ib. 176). So overwhelming, indeed, that man eclipses the divine; in an astonishing conclusion Auerbach writes that Dante's figures become autonomous through their consummation, that he "made man's Christian-figural being a reality, and destroyed it in the very process of realizing it" (ib.).

The consequence and consummation of figural thought was its dissolution — when Dante approaches God it means the death of God. That was of course not Auerbach's words, but seems like the logical consequence when Dante is said to destroy the very "figura" he realizes, the "figura" of a Christian tradition, determined by the idea of *this* world as a shadow of an *other* world. This figural realization includes the destruction of the temporal tension defining Auerbach's "figura." His figural *mimesis* was a temporal *mimesis*: a representation of the past joined with the future just as the host connected the body of Christ with my body and the resurrected body. Dante's simultaneous realization and destruction of such a temporality brings figural thought to an end as far as Auerbach is concerned: he finds no place for a figural interpretation in his readings of literature after Dante. What I have to say here is an elegy over this fact. As I read art and literature there are temporal tensions in *all* representation, *all mimesis*. What Auerbach calls "figura" could therefore be given pertinence beyond the Christian tradition as a permanent alternative to allegory and to symbol.

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I will now proceed to present Auerbach's reading of Cervantes aiming to show how this could have been enriched by those temporal tensions defined as "figura" by Auerbach but limited, by him, to the Christian tradition. The starting-point is the tenth chapter from the second part of *Don Quijote*, where Cervantes tells us about Sancho's "devices" made for the "enchantment" of Dulcinea. It has to do with the meeting between the knight and the lady of his heart, an obviously central drama in those romances that modelled the actions of our knight. Sancho has been sent in



advance in order to negotiate with Dulcinea; he solves this task by picking up the first girls he meets on the road, presenting them for his master as Dulcinea with her ladies-in-waiting. Don Quijote, however, does not see what he wants to see; "I can see nothing, said Don Quijote, but three village girls on three donkeys" — and Auerbach starts his analysis in this sentence. The knight makes a feeble effort to express his devotion and Sancho tries to persuade him that he is actually seeing Dulcinea but nothing helps; she who was not Dulcinea does not behave as she should and Don Quijote cannot see these girls as anything but what they are. He explains this for himself with the malign enchantments that has befallen Dulcinea and when he realizes that he cannot lift the ban in order to make reality *his* reality the chapter is concluded with the knight calling himself "the most unfortunate of men." (Or: the "unhappiest" or most "rejected" of men: *el más desdichado de los hombres*. In the discussion of this sequence I am borrowing from my own observations in the chapter on Cervantes in *Theories of Mimesis*).

Auerbach concludes his quotation before this line and starts his analysis with the knight's belief in the enchantment of Dulcinea; he "takes pride in his sublime misfortune" according to Auerbach (1957: 301), it saves the situation for him by making him the "elect" and "unique" victim of wizardry. The scene is "special" in the sense that it forebodes the final insight of the knight: the death-bed-verdict over his knightly ambitions. But basically the scene, like the whole book, is "pure farce" completely lacking in "tragic complications and serious consequences" (ib. 303). Its abrupt contrasts and stylistic mixture are for fun: "To find anything serious, or a concealed deeper meaning in this scene, one must violently overinterpret it" (ib.).

I am only one among many readers of *Don Quijote* (at least from Romanticism and onwards) that have indeed been tempted to find something "serious" among all the "farces" in *Don Quijote* — and for us this very scene with the failed meeting is of great importance. The reason seems simple: the knight calling himself unhappy, "the most unfortunate of men", can hardly be read as the knight taking pride in being exceptional. This is not so much due to the scene itself (it could very well be read as comical) nor to any

hidden meanings; it depends rather on the part played by the scene in the novel. The misery of Don Quijote happens to be instrumental for the great novel in making his *melancholy* manifest. This melancholy has always been in store for "the knight of the sad countenance" but from this point — the turning-point — it quickly develops into his *profunda melancolía*, to quote from some chapters later. Melancholy will actually become mortal for the knight, as the doctor at the death-bed of the final chapter has to confirm: "melancholy and despondency were bringing him to his end."

To put this differently: the episode discussed by Auerbach is no doubt comical when read in isolation; and the whole book *Don Quijote* can of course be read as a series of purely comical episodes. Within a context this is not as easy: when you realize the continuity between the Don Quijote, unhappy from his non-meeting with Dulcinea, and the Don Quijote who dies, then something distinctly "serious" intervenes in your reading. The name of this context or continuity is *time*: in the book on Don Quijote there is a temporal development, that takes very little analytical effort to follow. This development can be described in terms of prefiguration: the poor *hidalgo* of the introduction prefigures the wind-mill-fighter of the first part, who in his turn prefigures the melancholy knight of the second part, who is a prefiguration of the Don Quijote, who finally stops being Don Quijote and dies. Such a development is by no means unusual in a novel; and the novel *Don Quijote* prefigures a whole tradition of novels and even makes a model, according to some readers, for the very Novel itself. Our knight is a novelistic character or figure. He lacks the reality as well as the transcendence, that Auerbach demands from a figure in order to qualify as "figura". Still, he is defined by two figurations derived from mimetic representation, both constituting narrative tensions: an imitative impulse and a temporal continuity. I will comment upon both.

*Mimesis* has of course to do with imitation and similarity; this is part of the concept in its long history up to Romanticism. The poor gentleman of some rank from La Mancha making himself into Don Quijote is, as we all know, the result of an act of comical imitation: he wants to become similar to the knights he has been

reading so much about, specially Amadís de Gaul. The concept "imitation" is furthermore frequently in use in the many aesthetical discussions in the book probably functioning as a translation of Aristotle's *mimesis* — we are in the renaissance of Aristotelian Poetics. In the prologue of the book "imitation" functions as an aesthetic pass-word: "In what you are writing you only have to make use of imitation," according to the friend, who encourages the efforts of the narrator, "and the more perfect this is, the better your writing will be." And in the end of the first part (ch. 47) Aristotelian poetics is presented by a certain *canónigo*, who tells us that the narrative should provoke "admiration and delight" in order to reach its "perfection," that consists of "verisimilitude and imitation."

Auerbach's *mimesis* was, as will be remembered, a *Darstellung* or representation of reality as it was perceived by our senses; Aristotle's *mimesis* was defined as an imitation or representation of the *praxis* — the act or action — limited by beginning, middle and end. Both thinkers insist that mimetical representation immediately relates to the world of phenomena and senses. Cervantes does not: when he discusses *mimesis* through his fiction there is, remarkably enough, no mention of reality or *praxis*. Nobody says anything whatsoever on what imitation imitates. What Cervantes calls *imitación* seems like an aesthetical device without relevance for or reference to anything but the literary structure of the work.

This has its equivalence in the imitation of Don Quijote, that is literary in the sense that Alonso Quijano, supposedly his real name, imitates literature when picking up the name Don Quijote; he wants to transform himself into a literary figure by naming his horse Rocinante and the girl from the neighbour village Dulcinea. Naming is the literary strategy of the knight; and the comical structure of the book is simply derived from the conflict between this literary project and a reluctant reality, that does not wish to become literature. The windmills do not behave like foul giants, the girl from the inn is no lady and the peasant girl does not accept the name Dulcinea.

On top of this comedy Cervantes has put some complications that point towards irony. This happens when the knight, who wants



to make the world literary, insists on the reality of literature. He is not content with playing around with names like Don Quijote and Sancho Panza; no, he proclaims the literary world to be more real than the real world. He calls the literary world he has taken upon him to establish for a "golden age"; his own task to *revive* (*resucitar*) this "golden age" in the present "iron age" (this is in the 20th chapter, first part). That is: to change reality in a literary way, install true reality (that was literary) in the pseudo-reality where we happen to live.

*Time* accordingly enters the story of Don Quijote by way of the classical golden age-myth: his real reality is long since passed and his task is to change the present through the past into the future. The knight is situated (or situates himself) in a great temporal drama — giving an ironic dimension to the comedy of the book, that is based on the unvariable: the uncorrigible knight in constant conflict with an immutable reality. A kind of *figural interpretation* is going on already *in* the story of Don Quijote — the knight understands himself and his reality in relation to a mythical past and an utopian future — in spite of Auerbach's reading of the book as a series of purely comical scenes.

It belongs to the ironies of the book, that Cervantes allows the knight some success in his revival of the golden age. The name Don Quijote, for instance, is accepted by everyone in the book and also by its readers: we would never dream of referring to this literary figure as Alonso Quijano (or whatever name he had). But obviously his success cannot be complete: that would mean the end of time and the transformation of the novel into pastoral. His failure is finally demonstrated, also for himself, in the chapter where Auerbach started: the meeting with the girl who was not Dulcinea.

This chapter is actually a diabolical repetition of chapter 31 from the first part: here Don Quijote has sent away Sancho with a message to Dulcinea and he comes back for report. Sancho has not been near anyone like a Dulcinea but he starts guessing what the visit would have been like, had it been to the model, i.e. the girl Aldonza from the neighbour village. Sancho invents a realist fiction, so to speak, that Don Quijote answers by correcting his realism on every point and in accordance with his elevated literary

examples on how the visit to the beloved lady should work out in ideal reality.

In chapter 10 of the second part — Auerbach's and our example — it is instead Don Quijote who can only see reality while Sancho tries a literary version of the meeting. Sancho does not hesitate to present a random peasant girl as Dulcinea and why should he hesitate? — throughout the first part and some chapters in the second his lord has shown his excellent capacity of interpreting and naming reality in accordance with literary models: windmills he has made into giants, the landlord into a real lord, the barmaid into a lady. Reality in itself does not interest our knight; only the literary transformed reality. When, in the first part (ch. 25) he reveals for Sancho that Dulcinea has a model in the neighbour village, he also states that it is not the real Aldonza that interests him but the idealized: "... in my imagination I draw her as I would have her be, both as to her beauty and her rank."

No more drawing when the knight meets the girl who was not Dulcinea. Don Quijote sees "nothing" but plain iron-age reality: "three village girls on three donkeys."

If this had been pure comedy — as it is in Auerbach's reading — reality would not have stopped the knight from naming Dulcinea. Neither magic nor reality could stop him from naming the windmills giants! His reality was actually enchanted from the beginning, i.e. from the moment he decided to make it literary but this has in no way stopped him from naming and trying. But now, he suddenly stops: i.e. he starts paying his compliments (without using the name Dulcinea) but is willingly interrupted by the girl's snappy answer; and he can use the name Dulcinea only when the girls have trotted away. The conclusion seems inevitable: when trying to make the literary Woman into reality the knight loses his naming capacity. The reality of Woman stays an unapproachable Golden Age, a literature that cannot be brought to life: Don Quijote sees "nothing"; but he realizes that Golden Age cannot be "revived" and that a real woman is nothing but a peasant girl.

I will not go into the psychological speculation opened by this fatal situation concerning gender relations in this book but simply state that Don Quijote becomes unhappy due to his combined blindness and insight. He becomes "the most unfortunate of men."

I cannot share Auerbach's opinion when he thinks that the knight "takes pride in his sublime misfortune" (but I find it odd with this moralizing tone concerning a book regarded as "pure farce"). Instead I have already described the misery of the knight as the first acute expression of the melancholia, that accelerates in coming chapters and finally becomes mortal.

There was of course a melancholy touch in our knight from the very beginning. All his setbacks when trying to bring literature into life have, however, not stopped him from trying again. The suddenly acute melancholia can *not* be explained by the meeting with Dulcinea becoming a farce — such was routine for the knight — but depends on its never taking place ("I see nothing"). Combined, of course, with the inevitable insight: that the meeting never *can* take place. The quijotic project — reviving Golden Age, making literature real, abolish the curse of time and reality — came to nought in the decisive moment. Golden Age is forever lost and the reality of the knight stays real. The melancholia triggered by this can, in other words, be regarded as a result of the intervention of time in the quijotic project. Melancholia consists in grief over a loss. The knight has lost the presence of a timeless literary reality and the loss was provoked by the non-meeting with the Woman. Approaching the ideal brings about *distance* to the ideal. Our episode shows that Don Quijote can name Dulcinea only in her absence: distance in time and space is what makes ideal into ideal. (We are almost close to Proust's famous sentence: "The only true paradise is a paradise lost.") This insight leaves no room for a realization in the future: when the peasant girl who was not Dulcinea disappears there is no hope that she will return as Dulcinea. The mimetic impulse that made Alonso transform himself into Don Quijote has, finally, developed a distance in time instead of bringing about the presence of a Golden Age.

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I have by now tried to read the *mimesis*, developed by Cervantes in *Don Quijote*, in three ways. First, as a literary slogan, used in the aesthetical debate of the book. Then as a model for the doings of the knight: acting and naming he tries to make reality imitate a



literary ideal. Finally as a principle of organization: the episode discussed was a reversed imitation of an episode from the first part of the book, in its turn a parodical imitation of literary models. Altogether this seems to show that *mimesis*, for Cervantes, has little to do with representation of reality. Reality certainly plays an important part in *Don Quijote* but not so much as object of representation as a kind of stumbling-block: an adjuster of literary activity. It can seem as if the literary pass-word *imitation* comes out as *repetition*: the knight imitates in more or less parodical repetitions and so does Cervantes. By way of repetition time enters the mimetical project: if imitation is an effort to abolish distance then its repetitive element emphasizes difference and temporal distance. "The dialectic of repetition is easy," according to Kierkegaard's narrator in *Repetition* (*Gjentagelsen*): "because what is repeated, has been, otherwise it could not be repeated, but the fact that it has been, makes repetition into the new" (Kierkegaard 1983:149).

A repetitive imitation seems not far from the kind of figurality, that Auerbach found in the Christian tradition, with its temporal tensions between this world and other worlds. In *Don Quijote* the knight understands mythical golden age as a real phenomenon in time and he interprets consequently present time and future in relation to this prefiguration. He practices what must be called a figural interpretation although the fantasies of the knight and the radical inner-worldliness of Cervantes make for a parodical repetition of the figural interpretation that Auerbach limited to a Christian tradition. The figure Don Quijote reminds us, like the host, of the past and he promises a glorious future; but his novel is a comical denial of the future in favour of what is. When we read the novel as a novel (and not as a pastoral) we read in figures: the knight combines a comically uncorrigible figure with a "figura" in constant transformation. And Don Quijote becomes, as we all know, a prototype for the novel: Hegel praised Cervantes as the creator of *das Romanhafte* and, following Hegel, Lukács read Don Quijote — the figure and the book — as a model of "transcendental homeless-ness" (*Obdachlosigkeit*) as well as of the ironical struggle with time that constitutes the Novel itself (according to his *Theory of the Novel*).

As a meeting-place for such grand categorical thinking with the close reading of a critic like Auerbach I would like to suggest figurality. In order to make such a meeting function we have, of course — contrary to Auerbach — to modify the Christian idea of separate worlds into, say, a conflict of the imaginary and the real in combination with the temporal tension, that I take for the motor of figural thought and locate to the transformative repetitions of representation. Let me try to illuminate this through an example, that is normally never associated with any *mimesis* whatsoever: Proust. Auerbach actually uses Proust himself in the final chapter of *Mimesis* and quotes a few lines from the famous episode from the first part of *A la recherche*, where Marcel, who cannot go to sleep, unexpectedly gets bedroom-company from his mother; a seductive piece of text, where Marcel retrospectively sighs over the many years that have passed (“Il y a bien longtemps”) since his father could say to his mother: “Va avec le petit” (Proust 1991: 36). The text chosen by Auerbach thus emphasizes the temporal distance between the Narrator and the protagonist Marcel (“le petit”). Auerbach comments: “Through the temporal perspective we sense here an element of the symbolic omnitemporality (*Jederzeitlichkeit*) of an event fixed in a remembering consciousness” (1957: 481). Auerbach seems to mean that the whole book expresses the reflexive activity of, precisely, “a remembering consciousness,” a construction typical for the modern novel in general, as read by Auerbach.

If we continue reading the Proustian example we will find the following sentences directly after Auerbach’s quotation:

Maman spent that night in my room; at the very moment when I had committed such an offence that I expected to be banished from the household, my parents gave me a greater concession than I could ever have won as the reward of a good deed.

No more emphasis here on the workings of time or remembrance or “never again will such moments be possible for me” as it was said about Maman’s nightly visit in the preceding lines. Instead the perspective shrinks, so to speak, making it impossible to decide if “I” am the narrator looking back on a distant event or the prota-

gonist taking part in the event itself. As all readers of Proust will know such an elastic temporality is something of a rule in *A la recherche*: the protagonist is a naive young man ("le petit") observing the world around him, inquisitively but ununderstandingly, while *simultaneously* memorizing, knowing all, moralizing, looking back. Narrator and protagonist are separate in time while being one and the same in grammar; they are sometimes one in the story but they come together from opposite ends in the huge temporal span of the book. Proustian time is not only fixed by memory, as Auerbach's short commentary seems to indicate, but just as much by presence. We will not be able to understand the elastic, dynamic relations between now and then, between presence and memory, between protagonist and narrator, with categories like allegory or symbol. The narrator is not only an allegorical index pointing backwards in time and the protagonist Marcel is not only a symbol of his own future as narrator. Perhaps figurality could do the work: Proust as the protagonist Marcel prefigures the accomplished narrator, who is a transformed and innovating repetition of himself, a kind of artful *forma perfectior* of his own story in the valley of shadows. Both positions are just as real (within the universe of the book); still, nobody can be imagined without the other, something that Proust keeps reminding us about by running them together — as in the sentence "Maman spent that night in my room," just as magically promising for young Marcel as it is nostalgic for his simultaneously present narrator.

Proust is actually lining up examples on a kind of modern, worldly, narratively and aesthetically functional figurality in his conception of Marcel as simultaneously protagonist and narrator. And not only Marcel: several connections and relations between characters in the novel — for instance Marcel's relations to Swann and to Charlus — could be appropriately described as transformative repetitions within that dynamic temporality characteristic of Auerbach's "figura". A striking example is given by Proust as a prefiguration of the whole novel; it is in the conclusion of *Contre Sainte-Beuve*, where he writes of the *garçon* he carries within himself, a boy characterized by a special sensibility for finding relations between sense-perceptions and ideas. "Nobody but him is



going to write my books" (Proust 1954: 303). The sensitive "boy" comes "before" the grown-up man since he is so much smaller; and he is "within" due to his sensibility; and he prefigures the *forma perfectior* that, for Proust, only can exist in writing. The "boy" — *le petit* — is Proust's private host, his "figura": a reminder and a promise of an innovative and transformative temporal *mimesis*.

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There is little of this dynamic temporality to be found in Auerbach's reading of Proust, who becomes, instead, a reflecting remembrance-artist with symbolist inclinations. In *Don Quijote* Auerbach reads a "pure farce", while I (and not only I) find, instead, an ironic temporalization framed by melancholia. Just like the sad knight confronting the girl who was not Dulcinea Auerbach sees "nothing" when facing these texts. Perhaps we should ask ourselves what brings about such blindness in a man so extraordinarily equipped for insight. Could it be a conflict between incongruent visions? A demonstration of textual reality overcoming textual ideals? Comedy or elegy? Is Auerbach a Don Quijote of literary criticism, who has named his literary ideal "reality" and thereafter fights one text after the other hoping to make them all real while they stubbornly stay literary?

I am now hinting at an allegorical reading of Auerbach which is, of course, both misleading and unfair. It is, after all, Auerbach himself who has provided generations of literary critics with insights, that they have used to see other things than he wanted to see. He has provided me with the "figura" that I find everywhere and not least in those texts where Auerbach sees "nothing," since his "figura" is limited to the Christian tradition. If, then, Auerbach is the Don Quijote of literary criticism then I (and not only I) is nobody but the Sancho Panza, who has been hired to join the master on his wanderings through the literature of the world, who comes up with one text after the other hoping that they will be recognized as the literary Dulcinea; or, at least, as a repetition or imitation of Dulcinea. But the knight himself sees "nothing" as long as he keeps looking for reality.

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## Literature as a Nation's Emotional Memory

JÜRI TALVET

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In some of my previous writings I have tried to call attention to the evaluative shift in the interpretation by Yuri Lotman of the fundamental cultural codes he himself has proposed, (cf. Talvet 1994/1995, 1997), namely of what he defines in his early work as the “syntagmatic” and the “paradigmatic” (or “symbolic”) code.<sup>1</sup>

Whereas in 1977 Lotman speaks of culture as “collective intellect” and “collective reason” — which is identical with “collective memory” — and still reiterates it as late as in 1988 (Lotman 1977, 1988, 1992), in 1984, on the other hand, he launches the notion of the “semiosphere” (Lotman 1984, 1992) which seems to cover a much wider area than culture. The main obsession in Lotman’s late writings was to explain the functioning of irregular, unpredicted, explosive changes in the semiosphere and, even especially those occurring on the “borders” and in the “peripheries” of the semiosphere, i.e., in the domain where the “syntagmatic” or rational links traditionally fail to function.

I suppose this shift of focusing has not only to do with Lotman’s individual existential experience, but also with the beginning of the transition of the Eastern block “closed” semiosphere to the “open” Western type liberal semiosphere. This process gradually started in the Baltic states — the “periphery” of the Soviet

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<sup>1</sup> These metaphorized definitions have recently been fruitfully resuscitated and applied, for instance, to literary and philosophical phenomena of the Renaissance (Shakespeare, as related to Montaigne and Machiavelli) and of the Enlightenment and Modernism (the grotesque aspect in Swift and Vonnegut) by the Italian comparatist Giuseppina Restivo. Cf. Restivo 1996, 1997.



empire — in the middle of the 80s. On the other hand, supposedly not only has it to do with the crises of the official Soviet cultural science — which was obvious to Lotman and his school more than a decade earlier —, but also, and even particularly, with the crises in Western cultural science and philosophy.

The latter began to be felt with the ever more outspoken upsurge of postmodern thinking, by way of coincidence, in the middle of the 80s.

Sadly, Lotman died at the end of 1993. His late legacy, a meditation about “borders”, “peripheries”, “explosions”, “leaps” and “disruptions” in the semiosphere, however, is full of actual meanings for the late years of our millenium. Contrary to what Samuel Huntington has prognosticated, not only have the traditional borders between the Western Christian world and the Eastern civilizations “blurred” and merged in many aspects, not only has “élite” culture under the sign of postmodernism merged with a sector of mass culture, but the same phenomenon of “blurring” is ever more evident in the discourses or narratives that try to illuminate or describe different aspects of the universe and human activity.

It is ever more difficult to define the borderline between philosophy and anthropology, philosophy and semiotics, semiotics and anthropology (cf. Gross 1996), or philosophy, semiotics and anthropology, on the one hand, and (comparative) literary research, on the other, while literary research and literature themselves, in the writing of the late Barthes, of Derrida and their followers is identified with the equalizing product of *écriture*. The efforts to establish distinguishing borders — like the proposal by Mignolo to define literary science or theory as “literaturology” (Cáceres Sánchez 1993: 348) have so far failed. I suppose the introduction of the notion of “philosophology” would likewise fail.

These changes do not mean simply the widening of “inter-disciplinary” studies (where the knowledge of different fields of science is supposed to offer mutual support), but just merging, the increasing crisis of self-identification.

Facing the radical changes of our time some, like George Steiner, predict an almost apocalyptic future (Steiner 1996: 12–13), others, like Tzvetan Todorov or Umberto Eco, try to calm us,

assuring us that the main problem is just the lack of education (Todorov 1992: 30) or finding a common language, another Esperanto in which the knowledge of different cultures could be transmitted to the new multiracial Europe of the 21st century (see Eco's declarations at the Congress of the 3rd Millenium in Valencia, *El País*. 24. I 1997, p. 32). Some, like Hans-Georg Gadamer, insist on continuing, whatever the outcome, to penetrate into the "other", while for others, like Edward W. Said, this effort would hardly be distinguished from the previous colonialist and imperialist politics of the West.

There are only few, like Jürgen Habermas, who in our days would dare to draw a kind of a rational panorama, classifying these attitudes and expectations under spectrums like those of "young conservatives" (Derrida, Foucault, and their numerous addicts), pre-modernist, rather rationalist and cautious "old conservatives" (with whom Habermas himself apparently sympathizes) and post-modern or art-for art's sake "new conservatives" (Habermas 1996: 91–92).

What has the above said to do with the "emotional memory" and Estonian literature?

I suppose there was only a short "leap" that separated the late Lotman from reinterpreting his former concept of culture as "collective intellect". As he admits in his late work, "the semiosphere practically cannot meet the non-semiotic world", as the latter, once it is imagined (from the semiosphere — *J.T.*), becomes also, even though superficially, "semiotized" (Lotman 1993: 375). In other words, the semiotic world is one with the non-semiotic world, the world of culture is one with the world of non-culture, and the world of intellect is one with the world of non-intellect. The efforts to separate them would be in most cases artificial and simplifying.

Constant transitions between these worlds are part of the great cosmic transformation. Therefore, to assert that culture is collective intellect and, at the same time, collective memory, which means, by a simple transposition that collective intellect is collective memory and intellect is memory, and vice versa, is scarcely more exact than to claim that culture is collective creation and

creative memory in which emotions, sex, and senses have historically had the same weight as intellect or reason.

The complicated interrelation between these phenomena are especially obvious in socio-geographical or, in a broader sense, semiospheric border areas like Estonia, along with other Baltic countries. Like in all "frontier" or "peripheric" cultures, syntagmatic (or rational) structures here have often failed to function, while texts have been born invisibly to the eye of those that try to impose what they themselves imagine as syntagmatic codes.

Let us mention a few examples, both from the past and our *fin-de-siècle*.

Under the Russian tzarist regime, the use of the Estonian language at Estonian elementary schools was for the first time permitted only in 1905. Until then, Estonian schoolchildren — those of the generation of my own grandparents — who dared to speak at school in their native tongue were punished and humiliated by Russian authorities. Even though books and regular newspapers began to appear in Estonian much earlier, the normal functioning of ethnic culture was for a long time curbed and suppressed.

In these conditions where national literature itself was still in its very initial stage, Estonian oral folksongs were the principal means (or, the invisible text) that sustained the memory of the nation. We do not know exactly where the origins of these songs are, maybe in the late Middle Ages, maybe in the 18th century, but the fact is that there is a huge body of Estonian (as well as Latvian) folksongs that has reached our days, in a great variety of regional subtypes.

It is also known that the main "authors" of this anonymous body of folksongs were peasant women. The songs were predominantly lyrical and emotional — in contrast with those of Scandinavian skalds or the male jongleurs, who recited the lineages of their kings or great historic events, which in those times were nearly always "men's business".

Herder offered some samples of Baltic folksongs in his *Volkslieder* (1778/79), while in Estonia the systematic collection and publishing of regional folksongs started in the second half of the 19th century.



It is evident that until the beginning of the 20th century this oral creativity in the Estonian language was hardly considered by the ruling foreigners as an expression of the conscience or culture of a nation in Estonia — since the ethnic peasant people were for them just simple folk and never a nation. It is true that under the influence of positive sciences the collection and even the publication of old songs were tolerated by the authorities. However, these were supposed to be “exotic” material from the past, having mainly historical interest, in the syntagmatic construction of a civilized society by the “dominant nations”. That ethnic folksongs could become an essential part in the national ethnic “awakening” of the Estonians, was never expected nor desired.

The persistence of the emotional memory as a hidden detonating force — as well as an indispensable factor of a dialogue — can be proved by other examples. Now, a century later, we are approaching another chronocultural “border”. The tendency towards a homogenous market type society is equally strong in all postcommunist societies, including Estonia. However, traditional song festivals — an intertext reaching us from the times of predominantly oral culture — are held almost every year in the Estonian capital Tallinn and other major towns. They bring together thousands of singers, wearing national costumes, from all parts of the country.

From the point of view of a thoroughbred postmodernist this could be viewed as an awkward anachronism. The direct intertextuality — similar traditions, a century ago, in Germany — has disappeared. In the Estonian poetry of the second half of the 20th century there is hardly any poet who would imitate old folksong’s meters, and the young ladies in Tallinn and other major towns, even in Estonian villages, follow the same fashion trends as their counterparts in Paris or London.

Maybe this paradoxical phenomenon has to do with the peculiar inner stratification of a “border” culture. First, to survive, it has to be both dialogical and polylogical. As soon as it admits fully one of the dominant “centralizing” or, in Lotman’s terms, syntagmatic structures, it disappears as an individual culture or conscience. On the other hand, as the nation’s individual cultural development has covered a relatively short lapse of time — in the

case of the Estonians, scarcely more than a century — the borderlines of the cultural intertextuality are concentrated in an extraordinarily limited temporal space.

This means that different chronocultural "borders" cross and intertwine to a far greater extent than this could be in the case of "dominant" cultures of bigger nations. Different and even contradicting chronocultural codes intermingle. Or, to apply existentialist terminology, the *predispositions* for alienating structures are definitely weaker in a small society than in a big society. The proportion of the emotional memory, in the reaffirmation of an individual conscience, may even seem as exaggerated to those alien to this particular "border" semiosphere.

The word "predisposition" was stressed, because any "border" culture or "border" semiosphere exists in a constant state of self-defence, being continuously menaced by the imposition of monological, centralizing and syntagmatic structures both from "outside" and "inside".

In 1861 Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald, one of the main founders of Estonian national literature, published his epic poem *Kalevipoeg*. Strongly influenced by *Kalevala*, of his Finnish colleague Elias Lönnrot, Kreutzwald aspired to give the Estonian people its true national monument, comparable to the ancient epics of bigger and older nations.

Scarcely half a century later, in 1912, Kreutzwald's epic was strongly criticized by Friedebert Tuglas, at that time a young symbolist writer who, however, had already travelled in Italy and Scandinavia, had breathed in the modern airs of European naturalism and symbolism and was to become one of the most influential Estonian literary critics of the 20th century. His main objections to Kreutzwald were that *Kalevipoeg*, in contrast to Lönnrot's *Kalevala*, was not so much based on authentic folksongs than on the author's own imagination; that Kreutzwald's style was eclectic, "scientifically incorrect" and that he had tried to create an epic work from basically lyrical material (Tuglas 1959: 124, 126, 127).

Despite Tuglas' criticism, some later attempts of freudian interpretation of *Kalevipoeg* and parodic travesties, like that by Enn Vetemaa (1971), the fact remains that Kreutzwald still succeeded in creating an integral myth of a national hero, *Kalevipoeg*, which



has firmly settled in the emotional memory of the Estonians, very much like Goethe's Faust in German national memory.

Tuglas' criticism can be viewed as a typical conflict of a chronocultural code (symbolism, mixed with positivist thinking) with the preceding one (romanticism). Tuglas was devoid of an evaluative distance to locate *Kalevipoeg* in a wider romantic (and even symbolist) context. Such a distance would have reaffirmed Kreutzwald's work as the last great national-heroic epic of European nations. It offers a vigorous symbol of a hero — not at all devoid of defects and contradictions — who defends his people against foreign invaders and the forces of the evil, is finally punished for his sins (a symbol of a young inexperienced nation falling under tyranny of mightier invaders), but promises in the final scene to return one day and bring liberty to Estonia.

The mixture of the epic text with lyrical elements, quite contrary to what Tuglas suggested, is the main source of Kreutzwald's individuality and the main asset of the myth, created by him, in the emotional memory of the nation. In view of the romantic conception of intertextuality, formulated already in the philosophy of Herder, it would be rather ridiculous to blame Kreutzwald for not employing, in the vein of "scientific" seriousness, the authentic material of the folksongs. The basic connection with the ethnic-poetic tradition is achieved by the rhythm, the metre and abundant alliterative associations.

Contrary to what is generally thought in the shadow of Tuglas' spiritual authority, I tend to suggest that the greatness of Kreutzwald's genius lies just in not following the example of *Kalevala*, i.e. not trying to imitate the medieval poetic code and create a collective hero (based on a variety of folksong cycles), but in a rather loose folkloric intertextuality which supports and never restrains the construction of an individual myth, in the true spirit of late Romantic poetics.

By the way, the persistence of Kreutzwald's myth has just gained renewed evidence, as a witty burlesque play *Säärane soolikas* (*Such Guts*) by a talented young Estonian humourist and playwright, Andrus Kivirätk, has been staged at Pärnu Theatre (1997), with the leading figures of the "awakening" period, Kreutzwald, Koidula, Jakobson and Jannsen, as the main charac-



ters. The emotional intertext reaching us from the past preserves its strongly accentuated ambiguity. The provincial surgeon Kreutzwald working on *Kalevipoeg* under the (supposed) tyranny of his wife and receiving a secret visit by his intimate "pen-pal", the dark-haired patriotic poetess Koidula, is turned into a caricature and at the same time elevated. The play mingles elements of post-modern *camp* and ethnic folklore. In the final scene Kreutzwald and Koidula perform a dance on roller skates and, singing, extol liberty.

I have referred above to some of the advantages the relative smallness of a semiosphere can provide. On the other hand, the obvious disadvantage is that because of the scarcity of relevant literary criticism, a code can easily be extended beyond its historical (and, thus, relative) borders, at the expense of other codes. It is quite natural that the generation headed by Tuglas began to construct, at the start of the 20th century, a code differing from that of Kreutzwald and the national "awakening" of the 19th century. However, as soon as the new code became overwhelming and acquired a syntagmatic quality, which was supported by Tuglas' own (even officially) "central" position in the Estonian postwar literature — framed by the Soviet marxist theory of "realism" —, it did not work any more for the openness of the national memory, but rather for its ideologically tendentious closure.

Besides the myth of Kalevipoeg, another example of how, despite the imposition of "centralizing" syntagmatic structures, the emotional memory of the nation survives in literature, is the patriotic poetry of Lydia Koidula. Her most famous poems where she exalts the ideas of Estonian national liberty and love of her country are contained in her first mature collection *Emajõe ööbik* ('The Nightingale of Emajõgi'), published in 1867. She herself became one of the symbols of the national "awakening" (her writer's name Koidula is a derivate of the word *koit* — 'dawn').

During the Soviet postwar period, however, there was some ambiguity over her work. Like Kreutzwald's *Kalevipoeg*, it was in part accepted by the official ideology (as a symbol of her people's national liberation from the German landlords). Yet the ethnic patriotism, under the Soviet rule, had its clearcut limits: no hint

was allowed at the desire to have more liberty than the Soviet empire itself provided.

During those years, at all national song festivals, the presentations by choirs of a song based on one of the most famous patriotic poems of Lydia Koidula, "Mu isamaa on minu arm!" ('My Homeland is My Love!') became the point of a semiotic conflict between the emotional memory of the nation and the "official" syntagmatic structures. Singing it could not be entirely forbidden by the Soviet authorities, but as people at the end of any festival would demand to repeat just this song, there was always a considerable trouble with the final ceremony and the KGB was put on a constant alert.

Some of Koidula's best patriotic poems are also an example of how a poetic intertext can be transformed into an original text, capable of supporting the nation's memory. In an essay on Koidula, Tuglas is apparently puzzled by the fact that Koidula's "real" poems are almost unknown by the general public, while a couple of poems, supposedly adaptations from the German, have become the main signs of Koidula's myth, known to every Estonian (Tuglas 1959: 212).

Like in the case of *Kalevipoeg*, the perplexity is once again produced by the positivist yearning of "factual authenticity". At the same time world literary history abounds in examples of how intertexts deriving from other semiospheres are recodified into original texts capable of transmitting in their "own" semiosphere much more powerful messages than the possible prototexts ever could in their semiospheres. This concerns especially the texts that have become part of the emotional memory of a nation.

To a far greater extent than the work of Kreutzwald and Koidula, the poetry of Juhan Liiv (1864–1913) falls out of the main poetic current of his time. Liiv, who later came to be considered as Estonia's most purely lyrical poetic genius, spent the final part of his life in the state of mental disorder, in poverty and harrassed by illnesses. However, several of his early lyric poems and the verses written during his short periods of recovery have become firmly rooted in the national memory. Whereas the bulk of the "syntagmatic" poetic pattern consciously constructed by the immediately following symbolist generation, headed by Tuglas,

has faded in time and in the collective memory, some of Liiv's short elliptic poems are known by heart by nearly all Estonians. Despite their apparent simplicity they transmit an emotion nearly always reflecting some essential features of Estonia's history and conscience.

In the words of the Spanish philosopher Miguel de Unamuno, this would be the "tragic feeling of life of peoples and nations" (*el sentimiento trágico de la vida*). In Estonian, however, the implications are even wider, as the Estonian verb *tundma*, of what *tunne* ('feeling', 'sentimiento') is a derivate, does not mean only "to feel" or "sentir", but also "to know", "conocer".

Though Liiv's poems, too, transmitted patriotic feelings, Tuglas could not reproach him for romantic "simplicity". Yet Liiv was "alien" in his time. He himself was quite conscious of the difference, as he addressed the "official" Estonian literary society giving one of his poem's the title "Don't Ask Poems of Me" and rejecting, in the poem "Noor-Eestile" ('To Young Estonia') the homage the new literary circle paid him.

One may guess that what made Liiv different was not just an intertextuality from the past. In fact, the latter was extensively present in the work of the early symbolists themselves — just because of the inevitable closeness of chronocultural "borders" in a small cultural space. Liiv introduced rather an intertextuality from the future — a new pre-existential code which rejected any syntagmatic mannerism as false and artificial. Not only did Liiv in his life resemble Hölderlin, from a century earlier, but also in the elliptic, i. e. *asyntagmatic*, way of expression. Below I shall try to transmit a (rather literal) free verse translation of one of Liiv's characteristic short poems, "Tule, öö pimedus" ("Come, Night's Darkness"), supposedly from the last part of his life — an eloquent example of an "unconscious intertext" going back to Hölderlin's poem "Hälfte des Lebens".



Tule, öö pimedus,  
võta mind sülle.

Come, night's darkness,  
take me in your lap.

Minu päike ei tunne mind,  
öö jäänud mulle.

My sun doesn't recognize me,  
the night is left to me.

Ainust tähte sääl pole,  
minul on kole.

There's not a single star,  
I am in horror.

Varja mu üle.

Shadow over me.

Finally, as we come to our present day *fin-de-siècle* codes in Estonian literature, a curious similarity can be observed with the situation in the 1920s. With the new liberties after Estonia's regained independence, a rush of Western philosophical ideas, both from the past and the present, has hurriedly counterbalanced the absence of an open philosophical discourse during the Soviet period. In less than two years in a new philosophical series fundamental works of Russell, Mill, Heidegger, Derrida, Seneca, Aristotle, Unamuno, Camus and others have appeared, while the monthly literary or literary-philosophical magazines *Akadeemia*, *Vikerkaar* and *Looming* compete in holding up a dense philosophical discourse. Estonia's own younger philosophical voices can be heard, now continuing the nihilist (or, in Habermas' terms, "young conservative") line of thinking, now adhering to a more rational position, a kind of a new realism.

Indeed, the outward impression would confirm Lotman's theory of a cultural explosion and a subsequent "leap" to a new quality. Some of the younger philosophically bent critics (most outspokenly, Hasso Krull) have come to speak about the "culture of disruption"(cf. Krull 1996).

Here I would disagree. Any "leap", in my opinion, can only become reality because of the continuity of discourse, even though the latter may be a hidden, "invisible" or suppressed one, represented not so much by syntagmatic (rational, positivist, intellectual, official) structures, as by the emotional memory. I would even argue that the discontinuity of culture usually becomes especially "visible" due to the "invisibility" of a section of culture's continuity. Emotion (in the literal meaning, 'a movement up and

out'), suppressed and, thus, condensed in a detonating state, mobilizes all creative faculties into a capability of producing an "explosion" — a break-through in the centralizing syntagmatic structures.

However, we should not simplify. Literature has a special mission. It has to fulfil the function of philosophy, as the section of cultural discourse which always has been closest to verbally expressed philosophical discourse. At the same time literature can hardly be a purely "intellectual" discourse. The primary function of its images is to transmit, along with the mental and intellectual values, the integral fullness of reality, including its emotional, sensual, sexual, telluric, psychological, spiritual, etc. aspects. In other words, to transmit and create reality — and philosophy as its part — not as a mere idea, but in its complicated, sensually graspable "bodiness".

While the philosophical or, let's say, intellectual memory was at least in part crippled during the Soviet period, the philosophical discourse continued to exist in literature as a kind of emotional memory. It goes without saying that it had to be skilfully hidden in images, allusions, ambivalent grotesque and irony — the expressive means that were prevailingly characteristic of Estonian literature (and other branches of art) at least from the beginning of the 1960s. (Cf. on this subject Tootmaa 1997).

Liberal philosophical discourse also reached Estonia via translations (e.g. in the 60s Kafka's *Der Prozess* and short stories, and in 1972 Camus' *Le mythe de Sisyphe* as well as the first book of Borges' prose were translated) or was read directly in its original language. The new generation of Estonian writers emerging in the 1960s was fully aware of existentialism, the literature of the absurd, the new theatrical experiences, etc. Although the menacing presence of censorship was always evident, it would be wrong to claim the absence of philosophical discourse itself, as Yuri Lotman started to publish his influential articles on structural semiotics, while continuing to work until his death at the University of Tartu, as early as in the 1970s.

Last but not least, the main channel of the plurality of discourses, including those sustained by the emotional memory, as well as the main basis for a "border" polylogue, never disappeared

in Estonia. I mean the Estonian language, which despite all efforts of Russification and even during the harshest years of stalinism continued to function at all schools, universities, the major newspapers and magazines of Estonia.

Yuri Lotman has used on several occasions the notion of "desemiotization". I suppose this is a fundamental process of the semiosis. Under certain historical or political circumstances some strata of reality are "forgotten", desemiotized. However, I would like to stress that desemiotization is seldom absolute. Even the zero-sign, of what Lotman, too, has spoken, is full of significance and capable of generating an abundance of new signs. Thus, while the intellectual strata of a nation's memory is deafened and blinded, emotional memory — of what literature is a primary vehicle — lives on, to make both semiosis and dialogue everlasting realities.

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## Narcotic Writing

GABRIEL WEISZ

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Why is it that I am so stubbornly interested in shamanism, even though many colleagues have warned me that I should better change the subject for something nearer to literature, to our culture, to something serious. These attitudes often conceal the ugly face of academic racism, the implication made that there exists a preference or obligation to write about legitimate literature. The territorial imperative of human creation that happens in a written text and is universally recognized and approved by a competent community as high literature. Another attitude hidden behind these statements considers shamanism as a foreign and rather primitive object not suitable for academic research, excluding ethnology and a few other 'proper' places.

As a third consequence, it might be stated that academia wants control over knowledge, because profitable intellectual objects can be legitimized when deriving from one's own culture. Unless there is a military or commercial project against underdeveloped ethnias, and strategic information on that culture is required. Many other reasons may be lurking behind those words, but let us stop speculating.

Shamanic texts have been the objects of my research for some time. Not only are they poetically pleasing but also harbor a mostly unknown dimension of body intelligence. The time has come to determine how our rationalistically ridden cultures managed to wipe out any trace of magical, imaginative or creative aspects, by which to regard our bodies. Anyway this line of inquiry shall not be pursued any further.

Some shamanic cultures believe in a kind of magical internal work with mind and body, quite distant from the pragmatic significance with which we load the term 'work'. Anyhow our cultures are not that simple, since most of us are under the impression that we know something about shamanism. Indeed, our mega informational machines have already processed a few dozens or so films and published quite a score of books on the subject. Gurus and mystical schools proliferate as busily as mushroom colonies, people are thirsty for some form or other of mystical and physical control. The prevailing indefinite sensation of emptiness must be filled with some kind of exotic teaching, the same goes for strange foods catered in a variety of restaurants, perhaps both remain interchangeable?

Each time we read a novel, poem or play, we feel transported into a place where things, people, objects, animals and sensations become part of our imaginational experience. Analogously, when we are involved in a shamanic text, a special place of mind and body is accessed. The idea is not to examine in a closed rationalistic mode, but merely to read with our most flexible theoretical and intuitional resources, a space which remains largely unknown. One has to be warned to relinquish most cultural determinisms in order to contact our otherness in this otherness. The similitude of words notwithstanding, due to the very real differences between worlds.

What is understood as the unconscious — those events performed without awareness; that lack of awareness of ongoing internal process occurring out of consciousness or simply that which is not conscious. Most of what we store in the unconscious becomes, in my rendering, a magical consciousness in shamanism. A consciousness able to understand invisible, supernatural and mental phenomena that acquires a certain textural nature. A substance mediating a relationship between humans, their internal lives, their supernatural beliefs and the environment. More shall be said on the subject as we proceed.

We find a case in point of magical consciousness among the Cherokee Ani-Kuta-ni. It was believed that the Ani-Kuta-ni possessed the kind of powers that enabled them to alter their forms, known as shape-changers. The legend reports how a warrior returning to his village found that his people were being attacked by a large group of enemies. Fearing for his grandmother he put her into



a small gourd, which he fastened to his belt. Then he climbed a tree and changed his shape into a swamp woodcock, next he flew across a river and once landing in a safe place changed both of them back into their original shape. (Cf. Pijoan 1993). It turns out that the medicine pouch, always carried by the Ani-Kuta-ni, functions as the magical mediator. The materiality of the supernatural appears in the shape-shifting motive. A well known bird of the region is chosen as a magical metaphorical vehicle to assimilate the human form to the swamp woodcock. This alterations offer, within the native background of storytelling, the fashioning of a visionary body.

The body needs a language in order to communicate its own narrative articulations. Most of us own mute and dumb organisms that live and perish in silence. This silence can be traced back into the late nineteenth century — if not before — where people restricted and concealed their bodies. This silence persists nowadays even if most of the media displays the naked body as the center of attention. Furthermore our cultures submerge the body in a *logos*. In such an enclosure, the body that belongs to the natural order is believed to have a rational purpose. By the mid-nineteenth century the craze of a specular fashion develops photographic experiments in anatomy, physiology, histology, pathology and psychology. The technical eye is the prime *logos* dissector.

We live in an era of fragmentation, which sets off from the aesthetic or scientific photographic discernance — a term deriving from *discernen*, *discerner*, *discernere*, to separate and divide — to digital cadavers soon able to replace corpses in medical schools; genetic engineering, organ implants; surgical and hormone sex change, to geometrical fractals and deconstruction theories capable of destabilizing formal and conceptual systems. Our scientific *logos* shifts between the microscopic and macroscopic experiences of specular interpretation.

At any rate there is another *topos* of the *logos* linked to magical procedures. In Greece illnesses were attributed to demonic possession. Conjurations and enchantments are mentioned in the Odyssey as part of a therapeutic *epode* — from *epi*, upon and *ode*, a song. Odysseus' leg is injured by a wild boar, the sons of Autolycus bandage the leg (*desan*) and stop the flow of blood with an *epaoidé* or enchantment. Two leading scholars have pointed out that both the

Greek verb *deo*: ligature and binding, in addition to *ligare* are often related to the act of enchantment through binding and ligature (Cf. Scheftelowitz and Pfister, quoted by Entralgo 1987). In this sense Odysseus' leg is cured; be that as it may, the *logos* clearly reveals magical therapeutical attributes: The thaumaturgic character of the *epode* can be divided into a restraining action, such as stopping the flow of blood by means of a conjuration; and an enchantment, formulated to demand numinous assistance. The Hellenic *epode* combined the *logos* of the word with a musical medium.

Among the Orphics, enchantments were accompanied by music in order to cure disease and to purify. Modern research claims that auditory nerves have more connections than any other nerve. It has also been shown how music affects digestion, circulation, respiration and nutrition (Cf. Tame 1984).

Dismemberment as initiatory death, outlines a form of knowledge, because a new body is construed. Myth tells about the dismemberment of Dionysus-Zagreus by the Titans, while Orpheus was rent by the wild women of Thrace. We are also familiar with Orpheus' journey to the underworld to save his wife Eurydice from Hades. Through the art of his singing and by playing the cithara before the king and queen of the underworld he obtains the release of Erydice.

The musical language of Orphic mysteries deploys a bridge between death and the body. Platonic Eros traced the quest for knowledge at different levels. Initially as beauty of the body, then the beauty of many bodies, next the beauty of concrete things, the beauty of categories of knowledge, and the quest of beauty as such or beauty as pure thought. The Orphic endeavor was the same as the categories of knowledge in the Platonic Eros. The initiates or *mystai* who had to keep their eyes closed, eventually became seers or *epoptes*. A denial of the body is related to that kind of abstraction of the *logos* that ends in pure thought. (Cf. Walter Wili 1955).

Altered states of consciousness are brought about by a combination of music and poetry, according to certain findings rhythmic stimulation can lead to auditive hallucinations (Cf. Jaynes 1976). Could one surmise that the mental state of the *mystai* and pure thought derived from auditive hallucinations? At any rate this is one way in which the musical text is assimilated by an imaginal text;



thus accounting for a magical process that triggered the sensation of total organic integration. Furthermore, Korean shamans create a certain rhythmic beat of the drum, these tones are read by each person. The body's rhythm is accentuated or diminished, hence people are prepared to enter a trance state. The *manshin* or woman shaman evokes, through music, a magical space in which she will meet the spirits. In a state of trance the *manshin* is invested with a metaphorical body. All her movements now belong to the spirits (Cf. Covell 1986). Music can change body rhythms and induce trance like experiences. A body that is used as a vehicle by the spirits takes on a metaphorical configuration. The tropological exchange occurs when the definition of the body (the spirit) is insinuated into another body, the *manshin's*. The similitude between the spirit's body and the *manshin's* is procured by a trance inducing music.

Hippocrates, a contemporary of Socrates, viewed disease as an internal disorder. In other terms, the *logos* of the body, its text was affected by *ametria* (disorder of the powers), *dyskrasia* (humoral disorder) or *dysrroia* (disorder in the flux of pneuma). The magical *logos* is displaced by a *tekhne iatrike* or art. With the advent of Hypocratic medicine the *epode* is put aside. The doctor interrogates his patient, prognosis is assimilated to *tekhne*. It is necessary to know the present state and to predict the future. The overall idea being, to explain disease to the patient. A rationalistic profile of the *logos* is set as the essential feature of Hypocratic discourse.

Throughout this quick description it is possible to acknowledge vestiges of shamanic elements in early Greek healing rituals and the initial characteristics of the medical *logos*. Two different texts are issued: one articulated by a magical *logos*, which narrativizes the body in a supernatural universe, where disease is personified; and another text delimited by a logical chain of cause and effect.

However such neat divisions will prove difficult to sustain. The difference between spoken word and written one concerned Plato's concept of *logos*. The problem is staged in the *Phaedrus* with the story of Theuth or Thoth. An Egyptian deity, master of magical formulas, he was the god of writing and medicine. Theuth, eager to share his knowledge goes to Thamus King of All Egypt. Before the king, Theuth explains that writing is a prescription (*pharmakon*) for



memory and wisdom. Thamus challenges this discovery, on the grounds that memory may be put to sleep by writing.

The key term advanced by Derrida to determine the difference between spoken word and writing is *pharmakon*, a Greek word with antithetical meanings since it may denote either a remedy or a poison. But this is not the only reading we can give to the word, for it also is associated with a magical logos. Forcibly *pharmakon* becomes an important element in the argumentation of the shamanic texts.

Derrida has shown a marked predilection for a certain ambiguity and juxtaposition in the meanings of words. *Differance*, deconstruction, dissemination and *Pharmakon*, to name a few. The ambiguity of *pharmakon* formulates the multiple locations of meaning and can permeate and affect every part of Plato's philosophical discourse. Derrida's predilection opens a path to a high theoretical mobility. The question on mobility is a pertinent one inasmuch as we are constantly dealing with the problem of power. A constellation of words like possession, centeredness, presence and appropriation belong to the power sphere and may be questioned by a certain impersonality in theory striving toward decentralized conceptualizations. We have chosen to follow some of the implications given by the term *pharmakon* by Derrida, because in so doing shamanism, or rather the mobile analysis insinuated in the shamanic texts is headed to a theoretical space where the boundaries of meaning remain uncertain and insecure. Unsettled conceptuality agrees with theoretical mobility. Theory can easily fall prey to a reification of its own presence; an attraction to inhabit a center from which to issue laws and prescribe where analytical thought should go. It can also become very possessive of its topics of study, appropriating meaning to reinforce its position in the power stronghold.

When I chose to study shamanic texts, I soon realized the boundaries of theoretical thinking and how cumbersome they could be. Often enough silencing the voices of difference which must prevail in the study of shamanic texts.

Plato compares disease with the *logos*, underlining its rhythms and articulations. *Pharmakon*, conceived as an artificial substance disturbs the "natural progress of the illness" (Derrida 1981: 100). The disruptive character of writing becomes one of the features the

king objects to in the story of Theuth. *Pharmakon* is the narcotic substance of writing, considering that writing is a drug. *Pharmakon* can only be held in distrust by Plato, due to the fact that it disrupts the living authority of the *logos*. The power of the *logos* is embodied by the spoken word of the father. Thamus is another name for Ammon, not only the sun king but also the father of the gods. The *logos* can be traced to a father figure, always guarded in the memory of the *logos*. That is why if memory is disturbed the father *logos* suffers by sympathetic contamination. Let us not forget at this point that rhetorical practice was linked to memory.

Through Plato's discourse Socrates discloses a strategy to fight *pharmakon*; that which remains occult. Socrates argues that fear of death is what lies behind the power of *pharmakon*. Socrates wants to challenge this power with his own remedy in the form of dialectics. His strategy is to overwrite the *pharmakon* with the inscription of self examination. Knowledge of the self involves an internalization of words into the body. This entails the actual antidote against the *pharmakeus* of fear. Dialectics is the textual substance that inverts the *pharmakon*. Inverted *pharmakon* is the metaphorical device through which the episteme or discursive conditions of knowledge can be entered. Magical knowledge is changed into a rationalized cure. However, reason is not able to abandon the powerful attraction of magical metaphors, insofar as it is through magical metaphors that dialectics exchanges the drug for the remedy. This procedure is accomplished when the shamanic traits of early Greek thought are transformed into a rationalistic drug. *Pharmakon* is a metaphorical *locus* where opposites converge.

The written word or rather its power penetrates the body, due to the knowledge dragged in by the *pharmakon*, as a substance that allots a textural concatenation to the body; writing as remedy or as poison. At this point a few propositions of the text should be voiced. The text yields significance, it is an open network, which is at the infinity of language, this last conceived as not subject to closure. At the root of textual analysis the text becomes loose, explodes and disseminates. (Cf. Barthes 1985). The *pharmakon* that underlies the text is exposed to all the propositions of the text. By this same token the textural disposition of the body will have to yield meaning; an open network as well, where meanings cross each other acquiring

informational density, and of course cannot be restricted to any theoretical closure.

Although briefly, I want to mention how Eskimo healing practice rely on a secret language or *pharmakon* to contact the spirits. Once in a trance the shaman sings:

My body is all eyes  
Look at it! Be not afraid!  
I look in all directions!

This language comes from a trance state where the body has changed into a magical one (Cf. Eliade 1964: 290). Secret language and the text of the body are united to deliver a special kind of knowledge.

Socrates distrusts *pharmakon*, describing it as an impurity that disrupts the inner purity. Thus, the external menace of the *pharmakon* must be put back outside. The *logos* restores balance and acts as a cure where inside and outside are once again clearly delimited. The term *pharmakos* indicates an external demonic possession, at the same time it can be depicted as an outer supernatural force that threatens the inner harmony of the city. In shamanic practice the body is possessed and when in trance the shaman can depart in a magical flight. Does this suggest that the shamanic *logos* was able to deal with psychic externalizations? If this is true, then it is in strong contrast to the Socratic fear of psychic disruption.

The rite of the *pharmakos* was performed in order to pacify the wrath of a god, whenever a calamity struck the city. A person was sacrificed and burnt to purify the city. The city is imagined as a closed body and has to find someone to personify the scapegoat.

Frazer describes how in Greece, a man belonging to the poorer classes was willing to personify the scapegoat. He was fed, dressed in sacred garments and people prayed that all their evils might fall on him. "The Athenians regularly maintained a number of degraded and useless beings at the public expense; and when any calamity, such as plague, drought, or famine, befell the city, they sacrificed two of these outcast scapegoats" (1940: 579). The inside *regnum* of the *logos* is opposed to the outside influence of magical calamities.

*Pharmakon* as a tangible narcotic substance is well known among Venezuelan and Colombian Guajiro natives. They use a



special variety of tobacco to cure internal psychic disorders; this substance works as a self-healing device. The drug, acting as a magical *logos* "reveals the true causes and symptoms of the sickness" (Cf. Kalweit 1988: 166). After the narcotic vision, the Piache or shaman acquires special knowledge. Tobacco along with dreams can be read as a sort of *pharmakon*/writing that procure knowledge. Supernatural visions, contemplated as spirits, become part of a psychological engraving or writing.

Socrates likens the *graphēma* to the *zōgraphēma*, that is writing compared to painting. "Reality" is incarnated by the simulacra of writing and painting. Resemblance can only simulate the real; painting denatures what it imitates as writing denatures speech. Once again reason functions as an antidote *pharmakon* against imitation.

A prevalent epistemic apprehension is imported into scientific discourse, which exchanged places with the old Greek Socratic *logos*. When the matter of shamanism is brought up, *pharmakon* against non-rationalistic knowledge from other cultures is put to action. "A characteristic feature of solanaceae psychosis is furthermore that the intoxicated person imagines himself to have been changed into some animal, and the hallucinosis, due probably to main paraethetic" (Hesse quoted by Harner 1978: 142). The sacred shamanic European trance state is explained away with a terminology that suggests mental disease.

More to the point though, is the fact that the fiction of reality blocks both the pictorial and scriptural aspects of the *pharmakon*. This process is engaged when the real is confronted to different systems of writing or painting. The *epistēmē* dispels illusion by imposing a territory. As such it is manifested by measuring, weighing and counting opposed to the illusions produced by painters and writers who play with the substance of *pharmakon*. The analytical rational mind invokes the *epistēmē* so as to fight the magical substance of *pharmakon*. "The *Republic* also calls the painter's colors *pharmaka*. The magic of writing and painting is like a cosmetic concealing the dead under the appearance of the living" (Derrida 1981: 142).

Navaho compositions of sand paintings in different healing ceremonies are related to that *pharmaka*. These paintings are made by

the medicine man and his assistants. Each sand painting reproduces the design that the chant hero received from the gods. These paintings have a short life, since they must be destroyed before sunset. Other paintings — those used to chase evil forces — are elaborated during the night and destroyed before dawn. The painting defines a sacred space where gods come and go. The patient can only see the finished painting (Cf. Sandner 1991). Along these lines the *pharmakon* turns into a bridge connecting a sacred space with disease. The vision received from the gods is written on the sand. Healing powers lie beneath the images and are part of the *pharmakon*, but part of an imitation or simulacra of vision as well.

Recapturing the concept of *pharmakon* as an external dangerous substance, we learn that according to Navaho beliefs, illness can be caused by “the introduction of certain poisonous substances into the victims body...” (ib. 134). A supernatural outside seems to create disturbance in the textual harmony of the body.

Sand paintings could be associated with a system where space, symbols and figures represent a special kind of painting/writing; a magical narrative map where gods are invoked. People identify with symbols that are endowed with specific powers; an animated text is absorbed. The medicine man is the magical reader able to transfer healing powers to the patient, who now incarnates that force. Sand paintings are so intimately entwined with chants, that if these are forgotten the sand paintings will also disappear. Are we witnessing once more the therapeutic attributes of the *epode*?

Mythical writing or the mythos of writing is the constructional factor in the textualization of the body. Words construe a body or give it a *pharmakon* garment so that individuals have access to the intelligence of their bodies. Only those words that convey the *pharmakon* can stimulate this virtual reconstruction.

One of the closest models to understand the constructional factor of the *pharmakon* is found in mantras. A mantra is composed as a concentrated thought form, renderable by syllables with magical properties and linked to sound vibrations. When the body is tuned to a mantra an altered feeling of consciousness is awakened. Each divinity can be recognized by its seed syllable. Hence sound represents a different somatic and vibrational quality for each deity (Cf. Mookerjee and Khanna 1977). In tantric practice there is a close

relationship between sound, symbol and physical rhythmicity. These are the basic ingredients in the *pharmakon* of a somatic text, all of which create the symbolic and psychic resonance of mantras. Rhythmic repetition of mantras evoke the metaphorical body. This rhythmic reiteration is a modality of sound/writing performed in psyche and body. Built into the mantra is the magical *logos*, a somatic concept made by the characteristic components of an imaginal body stimulated by words, sounds and images.

The expositive hybrids that I have been surveying along this work, are not to be taken literally. The Greek terminology employed as a theoretical device, is not meant to destroy complexity of other forms of knowledge. I regard expositive hybridity as a reading aid in order to amplify one form of knowledge into another. Knowledge is not a universal phenomena that can be defined by just one individual or culture; there are several kinds of knowledge and a combination of these opens a wider span of possibilities.

I hope that through the different renderings of *logos*, *pharmakon* and *pharmakos* we become more tolerant about the shamanic traces of the written word. The shamanic events display a considerable textual complexity and we must devise new learning devices to read them. The body must no longer be excluded, as we have often done in the past when engaged in an exclusively conventional and rationalistic reading.

We have spinned a theoretical vignette, nearer to a poetics of theory, than the positivist theoretical mode that claims an objective representation of truth. Metafictional theory draws attention to its own fragile fictionality, reading shamanic texts and events as performative utterances. This means that they are activated in the alien cultural background of the reader.

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## Roman de guerre et mémoire collective

GEORGES FRÉRIS

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Le titre de cette étude, composée de deux notions, "roman de guerre" et "mémoire collective", aborde le problème de la relation entre la réalité et la fiction romanesque. C'est pourquoi très brièvement, je me contenterais, en premier lieu, à définir le roman de guerre puis la mémoire collective, et ensuite, à voir si le roman de guerre exprime l'histoire ou la culture, si l'engagement guerrier (volontiers, imposé ou indifférent) est une expression sociale ou culturelle, c'est-à-dire si le roman de guerre implique un changement dans les idées décrivant une époque spécifique, ou bien s'il a un caractère diachronique, s'il est dépositaire d'une mémoire. Il n'est pas question bien sûr de renouveler une problématique et une réflexion qui a ses lettres de noblesse, ses recherches, son histoire, ses spécialistes compétents, qui a exploré et continue d'explorer les rapports du texte avec l'idéologie. (Voir Bowra 1961, Hamburger 1982, Klein 1978, Bridgewater 1987: 208-226, Pomeau 1963, Rieuneau 1974, Riegel 1978, Stanzel 1987: 227-244, Fussell 1980: 175-187, Fréris 1993).

Issu du roman historique pour des raisons sociales, idéologiques et esthétiques (Fréris 1993: 64-69), le roman de guerre connaît une prédominance avant, pendant, et peu de temps après un conflit, c'est-à-dire qu'il touche un événement vécu par une génération, par une classe sociale. Le même thème guerrier, abordé plus tard, non vécu, à l'aide des archives, devient un mythe, perd sa valeur de témoignage, n'a rien de la pulsion originale; il devient un simple outil de manipulation idéologique, n'exprimant plus un vif sentiment, mais une réalité préfabriquée. Nous considérons donc comme romans de guerre les œuvres des auteurs qui ont vécu

les événements d'un conflit, soit comme protagonistes, soit comme simples spectateurs qui ont eu l'occasion de voir l'histoire se transformer en "mythe". La raison de ce choix est que le roman de guerre est créé par ceux qui participent à une guerre ou qui revivent ce même événement plus tard, dans leur mémoire. (Voir Cru 1929, 1930). Au contraire, nous excluons les auteurs qui sans avoir vécu un conflit, utilisent la guerre comme un thème ou un mythe et considèrent le conflit comme un événement historique.

Ainsi défini, le roman de guerre qui est avant tout un texte, tend à première vue, à exclure la poétique ou l'approche poétique, puisque l'auteur apparaît être très préoccupé avec le réel, le vrai, le sujet, le sens, le contenu, l'idéologie, l'histoire. (Lukacs 1974: 32, 1975: 49-63). Conséquence de cette attitude est que l'idéologie qui ressort du texte du roman de guerre tend à se confondre avec les "mythes" d'une société ou d'une classe sociale. Dans aucun cas, l'idéologie d'un roman de guerre n'exprime la ou une vérité absolue. C'est pourquoi par "idéologie" nous attendons le rapport imaginaire à un monde réel, le texte du roman de guerre étant axé sur un réel supposé connu par le lecteur (dates, lieux, référents, etc), ce qui rend plus intéressante l'analyse des institutions, des jeux de pouvoir, des moments historiques de crise ainsi que les passages textuels qui s'y réfèrent. Il ne faut pas oublier que les auteurs de roman de guerre, parallèlement à leurs intentions littéraires, ont toujours pris soin de laisser un "message". Ils ont voulu, en écrivant leurs œuvres, se délivrer de l'aventure-chimère vécue, ce qui explique la richesse multiforme du roman de guerre lequel a touché tous les procédés expressifs, tous les courants et styles, du naturalisme jusqu'au surréalisme.

Ainsi élaborées, les notions de roman de guerre et d'idéologie — cette dernière ne fournit à la poétique qu'un outillage fort sommaire, qu'un nombre bien réduit de concepts opératoires à l'analyse et à la théorie des rapports entre l'idéologique et le textuel — il nous semble utile de signaler néanmoins cinq points qui nous paraissent être importants dans les rapports entre texte et idéologie, en ce qui concerne le roman de guerre:

- a) l'étude de l'idéologie du texte a la même importance que l'effet-idéologie du texte;
- b) l'idéologie est production et manipulation dynamique de programmes et de moyens orientés vers des fins de pouvoir, ce qui



- entraîne le texte à se plier à une construction de simulation et l'auteur à devenir soit un actant engagé, soit un actant opposé;
- c) l'analyse entre texte(s) — idéologie(s) ne doit pas être restreinte du corpus de genres circonscrits (discours politiques, polémiques, etc);
  - d) la méthode à suivre doit être d'inspiration historique ou sociologique, polarisée sur l'étude des motifs littéraires utilisés;
  - e) la recherche ne doit pas se limiter à un seul niveau scientifique mais à s'étendre sur plusieurs pour pouvoir se recentrer sur une sémiotique du savoir<sup>1</sup>.

Quant à la notion de mémoire collective, nous attendons l'ensemble des valeurs et d'événements, qu'une société s'approprie à tel point que cet ensemble avec le temps, devient tradition historique, mythe. Cette tradition historique, que souvent l'histoire rationnelle nie, a une telle force, qu'à travers la littérature, orale ou écrite, elle devient un paramètre important, ne représentant pas quelque chose d'étrange à l'individu, mais une réalité et un prétexte qui lui permet de prendre conscience de son comportement. Cette tradition historique, que le temps rend presque mythique, bien que vivement critiquée par la critique historique avec ses critères scientifiques objectifs, exerce un impact sur toute conscience individuelle et collective parce qu'à travers l'histoire l'individu découvre son monde spirituel. Si les événements historiques (guerres, combats, victoires, défaites, etc.) pèsent fort sur tout individu, le fait de les revivre intérieurement ou de se les rappeler, selon les circonstances, c'est-à-dire la foi intérieure au mythe historique, entretenue par la tradition y compris littéraire, est une réalité qui constitue et conserve le monde intérieur de la conscience d'un individu, d'un peuple, d'une nation. (Balibar, Wallerstein 1990).

Cette tradition historique ou mythique, qui la plus part des fois est une variation fictive d'une réalité, n'est pas une simple mention aux événements; elle inclue aussi des comportements "originaux", elle décrit des codes d'action obligeant l'individu de se comporter selon les modèles "mythiques". Toute déviation de ces "prototypes" ou "archétypes" est vivement critiquée, à moins que le

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<sup>1</sup> Cette énumération, faite par Philippe Hamon, est longuement expliquée dans son œuvre: *Texte et idéologie* (Hamon 1984: 9-11).

nouveau comportement, à son tour, ne crée un nouveau "mythe", lequel dessert un autre besoin ou bien il offre une certaine solution à un problème. C'est pourquoi ces comportements avec le temps acquièrent une certaine historicité et deviennent des moyens d'affrontement d'une situation critique. Et lors d'une crise, comme la guerre — qu'elle soit nationale, internationale ou civile, pour des raisons purement idéologiques — toute société met en valeur et souligne par des traits fictifs, voire "mythiques", ce comportement, le reliant avec le passé et le projetant dans l'avenir. C'est alors que tout groupe social essaie de se distinguer des autres, et tout individu à adopter une attitude conforme aux codes de ce comportement collectif et à prendre conscience qu'il appartient à une collectivité dont il partage la même mémoire. (Voir Goldmann 1964, Zérafra 1969, 1971).

Sous ce prisme, il est évident que le roman de guerre qui se rapporte à l'histoire, à des événements réels, exprime la mémoire collective d'un groupe social, bien que dans la narration du roman de guerre, le déroulement des événements ne coïncide pas avec celui de l'histoire. (Voir Barthes 1972, Perrot 1976, Caillois 1989, Dumézil 1970, 1968, Eliade 1975, 1975a, Lévi-Strauss 1958). Le "mythe" romanesque falsifie toujours l'histoire qu'on embellit: on exagère le danger, on rend plus dramatique la situation pour mieux souligner l'action des héros, action qui en principe dépasse les limites humaines, on accentue le comportement du héros qui agit toujours au nom de la collectivité pour des raisons idéalistes. Si donc l'histoire exprime une réalité simple, la fiction ou le mythe transforme tout événement historique, lui attribuant des dimensions que l'idéologie exige<sup>2</sup>. C'est pourquoi l'histoire constitue la matière première du roman de guerre, la raison de son action, de sa narration. L'histoire ne sert pas seulement de cadre romanesque au roman de guerre; elle est aussi l'essence de la vraisemblance, la confirmation d'un témoignage pour un événement que le lecteur a vécu ou connaît. Si le rôle de l'histoire est décisif pour la connaissance et l'évolution de l'individu, dans un groupe social, la fiction de l'histoire contribue à renforcer cette tendance, surtout quand le lecteur ne parvient pas à distinguer le mythe de la réalité,

<sup>2</sup> Voir Escarpit 1970, où le système communicatif entre romancier et public est privilégié aux dépens de l'analyse des structures littéraires.



c'est-à-dire quand se réalise le but de la narration, l'identification du fantastique avec le réel, "l'effet de réel", selon l'expression de Barthes (1968, 1982: 89).

Sous cette optique, le roman de guerre apparaît être une simple expression de l'histoire, ce qui est vrai, en partie. Mais il ne faut pas oublier que cette histoire événementielle, qui inclue une mémoire collective, n'est qu'un prétexte pour tout romancier de roman de guerre. Son but consiste à équilibrer la fonction tragique du récit des événements ressentis par le héros, avec le mouvement du texte qui décrit les événements d'une collectivité, c'est-à-dire il semble que histoire et narration visent à décrire un "monde"<sup>3</sup>. Ce monde se révèle à travers une série d'éléments réels que la fiction transforme et déforme pour les besoins de la narration romanesque. Ainsi l'évolution de la mémoire du héros-narrateur ne nous découvre pas seulement son passé, les origines de sa tradition historique, mais simultanément il nous décrit aussi ses intentions pour l'avenir. Cette projection de mémoires et d'intentions se fait par étapes, le lecteur les déchiffre tout au long du récit, alors que le héros-narrateur nous est décrit. Ainsi, le temps de la narration et celui de l'histoire coïncident et se confondent. (Pouillon 1946: 86). C'est le cas des *Thibault* de R. Martin du Gard, de *Don paisible* de M. Cholokhov, de *A l'Ouest rien de nouveau* d'E.-M. Remarque, de *L'Histoire d'un prisonnier* de S. Doukas, etc.

Grace à cette technique l'écrivain du roman de guerre prend ses distances de la description routinière de la réalité laquelle devient un lieu commun. Ce qui évolue dans le récit c'est seulement le héros-narrateur qui utilise son imagination et sa mémoire comme moyens pour voyager dans un temps imaginaire, où présent, avenir et passé sont bien distincts. Parallèlement l'auteur de roman de guerre aborde des grands problèmes, c'est-à-dire qu'il passe de l'actualité à l'avenir, et transformant son discours narratif, de descriptif en littéraire, il pousse le lecteur à imaginer, ce qu'il passe sous silence. Le discours qui découle de cette projection de la réalité sur la dimension imaginaire permet au roman de guerre de créer une idée-but, une idéologie-résultat. C'est pourquoi le lecteur prend conscience de la naissance de cette idée, il devient à

<sup>3</sup> Roland Barthes soutient que "le Récit comme forme extensive à la fois au Roman et à l'Histoire, reste donc bien, en général, le choix ou l'expression d'un moment historique" (Barthes 1972: 25).



son tour témoin de cette prise de conscience et de l'évolution de cette idée, il constate le passage du personnel au collectif et simultanément, il imagine le sort de cette prise de conscience dans l'avenir. De cette coexistence de la réalité (histoire) avec l'utopie (fiction)<sup>4</sup> découle la réussite diachronique du roman de guerre, puisque le roman de guerre, bien qu'il décrive un milieu limité (vie monotone de champs de bataille et une action toujours polarisée sur les exploits d'un héros), il est toujours orienté vers un avenir meilleur. Tout est axé sur l'avenir, en particulier la mémoire collective qui agit et fonctionne sous des apparences individuelles, comme la puissance motrice d'affronter la crise présente et d'esquisser l'avenir<sup>5</sup>. Le cadre idéologique des romans de L. Guil-loux, de R. Dorgelès, d'Ernest von Salomon, d'Alexandre Soljén-nitsyne, de I. Venezis, de Y. Beratis, d'I. Kadaré, de R. H. Mott-ram, et de bien d'autres, en sont la preuve.

Cette attitude a pour résultat que le discours du roman de guerre exploite le climat instable de la guerre et se fondant sur des situations, des descriptions réelles qu'il varie à volonté et selon ses buts, de présenter plus vraisemblables et plus convaincantes ses promesses "fictives" idéologiques. Le discours fictif donc du roman de guerre vise à la réalisation des buts de la mémoire collective, exigeant toujours la fidélité à la tradition historique, exploitant idéologiquement les comportements des héros, critiquant toujours le pouvoir. Même les écrivains qui acceptent la guerre, comme Montherlant, Jünger, Dragoumis, et autres, ne manquent pas l'occasion de condamner les conditions négatives de la guerre et d'essayer d'humaniser, via les modèles de la mémoire collective, le monde à venir. C'est pourquoi tout écrivain de roman de

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<sup>4</sup> Rappelons que G. Bachelard soutenait qu' "image littéraire, c'est un sens à l'état naissant; ... Signifier autre chose et faire rêver autrement, telle est la double fonction de l'image littéraire. ... Quand cette parole prend conscience de soi, alors l'activité humaine désire écrire, c'est-à-dire agencer les rêves et les pensées...". (Bachelard 1983: 283-284).

<sup>5</sup> Retenons la phrase de Roland Barthes que "L'écriture, étant la forme spectaculairement engagée de la parole, contient à la fois, par une ambiguïté précieuse, l'être et le paraître du pouvoir, ce qu'il est et ce qu'il voudrait qu'on le croie." (Barthes 1972: 22). Voir aussi Glucks-mann 1974.

guerre s'engage<sup>6</sup>. Certains même militent, comme Barbusse, Chokhov, Myrivilis, Céline, Latzko, Hašek. Sous l'aspect de l'engagement social, ils contribuent à créer et à maintenir une mémoire collective. Leur discours ne consiste pas seulement à la description de la violence ou à ridiculiser le pouvoir. Leur discours vise premièrement à présenter leur opinion personnelle au nom d'un groupe social sur un événement réel vécu, devenu "histoire", récit, mémoire, fiction, et deuxièmement à assimiler, à comprendre, à définir, à expliquer, toujours selon leurs critères personnels, un événement réel qui pèse et pèsera dans l'avenir.

Cependant, l'auteur du roman de guerre, engagé ou militant, après avoir partagé ou vécu une série d'épreuves collectives, a le sentiment, que son témoignage personnel est le plus représentatif et que sa mémoire personnelle deviendra collective. C'est pourquoi il croit que décrire la guerre, déposer son témoignage selon ses expériences ou ses illusions ressenties, a une importance capitale, puisque son discours narratif influencera des consciences, puisque sa mémoire deviendra mémoire de ses lecteurs, puisque sa mémoire individuelle contribuera à la formation de la mémoire collective. Ainsi le roman de guerre de simple genre dépositaire de la mémoire culturelle devient "patrimoine" culturel d'une mémoire idéologique, toujours prête à défendre des "causes", à inspirer de nouveaux "combats", à décrire de nouvelles "expériences" personnelles et collectives, à exprimer ou à inventer de nouveaux modes et types d'expressions littéraires. Et il y parvient non pas

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<sup>6</sup> L'acte d'engagement peut aussi s'expliquer par la théorie de l'horizon d'attente de H.-R. Jauss qui soutient que "L'histoire de la littérature n'aura pleinement accompli sa tâche que quand la production littéraire sera non seulement représentée en synchronie et en diachronie, dans la succession des systèmes qui la constituent, mais encore aperçue, en tant qu'histoire particulière, dans son rapport spécifique à l'histoire générale. Ce rapport ne se borne pas au fait que l'on peut découvrir dans la littérature de tous les temps une image typique, idéalisée, satirique ou utopique de l'existence sociale. La fonction sociale de la littérature ne se manifeste dans toute l'ampleur de ses possibilités authentiques que là où l'expérience littéraire du lecteur intervient dans l'horizon d'attente de sa vie quotidienne, oriente ou modifie sa vision du monde et par conséquent réagit sur son comportement social." (Jauss 1978: 72-73, 80).

sous l'aspect d'une lecture du passé mais d'une relecture, c'est-à-dire quand le lecteur révise le passé à la lumière du présent.

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**Karl Ristikivi und sein Roman  
*Der Freudengesang im Zwiegespräch  
mit Novalis' Heinrich von Ofterdingen***

HELI MATTISEN

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In ewigen Verwandlungen begrüßt  
uns des Gesangs geheime Macht hienieden,  
Dort segnet sie das Land als ew'ger Frieden,  
Indes sie hier als Jugend uns umfließt.

(Novalis, "Zueignung",  
*Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, S. 6)

Karl Ristikivi (1912–1977) gehört neben Jaan Kross zu den bedeutendsten und produktivsten Verfassern der historischen Romane in der estnischen Literatur. Von Ristikivi stammen insgesamt elf historische Romane und eine Reihe von Novellen historischen Inhalts. Im Vergleich zu Jaan Kross, dessen Werke immer einen Beitrag zur Vertiefung in die Forschung der estnischen Kulturgeschichte darstellen, wandert Ristikivi zusammen mit seinen historischen und literarischen Figuren gern durch mittelalterliche europäische Länder, deren Geschichte und Kultur kaum Berührungspunkte mit der estnischen aufweisen.

Ristikivi begründete seine Vorliebe für distanzierte historische Diskurse kurz mit der Behauptung, es sei einfacher, "bei Europa zu borgen", weil es dort mehr zu borgen gäbe (Kangro, Ristikivi 1985: 14). In Ristikivis Romanen handelt es sich aber nicht nur um eine räumliche, sondern auch um eine bedeutsame zeitliche Distanz. Zusammen mit einem breiteren geographischen Raum und umfangreicheren historischen Stoff, borgt Ristikivi bei der Geschichte auch 'Zeit'. "Was fesselt mich bei der Geschichte? Ich

denke, das ist die Zeit als solche. In der Geschichte gibt es viel Zeit. Nimm soviel du willst, sie wird nie aus sein." (Ib. 20).

Karl Ristikivis Roman *Der Freudengesang* (*Rõõmulaul*, 1966) gehört zur Trilogie der Biographien und könnte eher als historischer Künstlerroman bezeichnet werden. Dem Diskurs liegen zeitlich und geographisch genau fixierte historische Ereignisse zugrunde, so der Anfang des Romans: "Am 14. September 1307 ließ der französische König Philipp IV., ebenso unter dem Namen Philipp der Schöne bekannt, alle Ritter des Templerordens verhaften und unter Anklage stellen" (Ristikivi 1993: 5). Vor dem konkreten historischen Hintergrund — die zweite Etappe des 100-jährigen Krieges in Frankreich und Flandern — wird das Schicksal einer fiktiven historischen Gestalt — des Musikers Namens David de Galles dargestellt. Davids Wanderschaft, sein Weg 'nach Hause', zum Meer als Symbol des Endlosen, der absoluten Freiheit, die er endlich erst auf dem Sterbebett in seiner Phantasie erlebt, erinnert in vieler Hinsicht an die Wanderschaft des frühromantischen Erzpoeten Heinrich von Ofterdingen aus dem gleichnamigen Roman Friedrich von Hardenbergs alias Novalis.

Novalis' Roman kann kaum als historischer Roman bezeichnet werden. Dem Autor ging es beim Konzept des Romans vor allem um die Realisierung seines magischen Idealismus in der Fiktion, um die "symbolische Construction der /.../ transzendentalen Welt" (Novalis 1989: 519). Immerhin spielt die Geschichte 'an sich' auch in Novalis' Roman eine ausschlaggebende Rolle, denn im Grunde genommen stellt das Werk einen Versuch zur poetischen Läuterung des historischen Prozesses in Form einer Theorie 'historia tripartita' dar. Dabei vermißt man hier beinahe völlig zeitliche bzw. räumliche Begrenzungen. Ab und zu sind Allusionen auf Mittelalter nur zu erahnen. Den einzigen direkten Stützpunkt bietet der Name des Titelhelden, der auf den sagenhaften, jedoch schon seit dem 13. Jahrhundert als historische Gestalt behandelten mittelalterlichen Ritter-Sänger deutet, der mit Zauberkraften im Bund gestanden habe. Der fixierten Tatsache darf jedoch keine allzu große Bedeutung beigemessen werden, denn der ursprünglich vorgesehene Titel des Romans lautete *Heinrich von Aferdingen*. Also handelt es sich um den Poeten 'after dingen', dessen Werdegang zum magischen Schlüssel für die Apotheose der Welt vom Autor 'construiert' wird.



Heinrich und David sind beide passive Helden, ihr Schicksal ist vorbestimmt, jedoch müssen die beiden einen langen Weg der Welt- und Selbsterkenntnis durchwandern, bevor sie ihrer Berufung bewußt werden. Die beiden Helden sind in 'Erwartung' (so der Titel des ersten Teils des Hardenbergs Romans), sie stehen in einem distanzierten — Heinrich vertrauensvollen, David unsicheren — Verhältnis zur äußeren Welt. Heinrich und David lassen sich führen, der eine von der höheren Macht, der andere von kaum überschaubaren historischen Ereignissen. Im Unterschied zu Heinrich unternimmt David mehrmals den Versuch, einen anderen Weg einzuschlagen, jedoch wird er immer wieder wie durch Zufall zum Ausgangspunkt zurückgeführt. In seinem letzten Roman *Das Römische Tagebuch* (*Rooma päevik*, 1976) hat Ristikivi das Leben des Menschen mit dem Brief verglichen, der erst auf dem Weg und dessen Inhalt dem Betreffenden noch nicht bekannt ist (Ristikivi 1976: 210). David durchwandert seinen Weg dreimal: das zweite Mal rückwärts, wie im Spiegelbild, das dritte auf dem Sterbebett in seiner Phantasie. Obwohl das Schicksal des Musikers in Determiniertheit von historischen Ereignissen erscheint, 'construiert' auch Ristikivi in seinem Roman neben dem wirklichkeitsgebundenen Raum eine 'transzendente Welt', in der der Lebensbrief des Musikers David schon längst geschrieben steht.

So begleiten den Musiker David de Galles auf dessen Weg zur Erkenntnis drei Leitmotive, die keinen direkten Bezug auf die historische Wirklichkeit haben. Das erste, 'Fluch der Tempelherren', wird gleich am Anfang des Romans dargelegt und dient einerseits zur Begründung der im folgenden dargestellten tragischen Ereignisse des Krieges, andererseits zur Verdeutlichung der metaphysischen Macht der Musik: Ein Harfenspieler ist der einzige, der mit seinem Gesang den Zorn der weißen Tempelherren über den Trümmern der Stadt beschwichtigen und die Menschheit retten mag. Das zweite Leitmotiv knüpft sich an das letzte und deutet auf den Zusammenhang zwischen dem Musiker David und vom Gott zum König gesalbten Hirten David, der mit seinem Spiel den bösen Geist von Saul zu verjagen vermochte. Das dritte Motiv — die biblische Legende von den drei Männern im Feuerofen, die an ihrem Glauben haften und in Flammen den Herrn lobpreisen — gilt wohl als Metapher für das ganze Leben und Schaffen des Tonkünstlers und 'Harfenspielers' David de Galles, der auf seinem

Weg ebenso den 'Flammen' des Krieges ausgesetzt und trotz seines tragischen Geschicks bis zum letzten Augenblick bestrebt ist, einen Lobgesang, einen überschwenglichen Freudengesang zu Ehren des großen Schöpfers zu verfassen.

Die erwähnten Legenden können gleichzeitig als Auswertung der entsprechenden historischen Entwicklungsstufe Europas betrachtet werden. Dementsprechend würde die Allusion auf Saul, von dem 'der Geist des Herrn wich' und den 'ein böser Geist vom Herrn ängstigte', auf den 'Geisteszustand' des spätmittelalterlichen Europa deuten: auf den totalen Zusammenbruch der früher einheitlichen christlichen Welt, deren Fortdauern vom 'Fluch der Tempelherren' gedroht zu sein scheint.

Im Jahre 1966 schreibt Ristikivi: "Gott weiß, was aus dieser alten Welt wird, deren Todesringen wir mitzuerleben haben. Und dann bekommt es gut, zurückzugehen und den zurückgelegten Weg noch einmal durchzugehen. Damals, wenn alles von Tag zu Tag besser wurde oder wenigstens besser zu werden schien." (Kangro, Ristikivi 1985: 9) An einer anderen Stelle vergleicht er sich mit Marcel Proust und sagt, er sei ebenso "auf der Suche nach der verlorenen Zeit". (ib. 72) Auf der Suche nach der verlorenen Zeit ist auch der Protagonist des Romans *Das Römische Tagebuch*. Der Autor läßt Kaspar von Schmerzberg — eine fiktive literarische Figur in der Rolle des Aufklärers, Humanisten und Literaten des 18. Jahrhunderts — im Jahre 1765 nach Rom reisen. In den Ruinen der Stadt kommt der Vertreter des Zeitalters des Neuhumanismus durch die antike Kultur zur Umwertung des frühmittelalterlichen christlichen Erbes und entdeckt in sich eine mystische Sehnsucht nach dem Wanderleben des mittelalterlichen Ritters mit dessen Suche nach dem Gral. (Vgl. Undusk 1988: 59–104).

Das Mittelalter wird in sämtlichen historischen Romanen Ristikivis als 'Verinnerlichung', als Wunschtraum, als Vision einer einheitlichen christlichen Idealwelt thematisiert und läßt damit eine Sinnverwandtschaft zum Mittelalterbild und zur Geschichtsauffassung der deutschen Frühromantik im allgemeinen aufdecken.

Das Geschichtsdenken der Romantiker stand im engsten Zusammenhang mit ihrer Reaktion auf die Zeitereignisse, auf die krisenhafte Diskontinuität des historischen Entwicklungsprozesses, bedingt in hohem Grade durch die Französische Revolution und ihre Folgeereignisse. Nach N. Luhmann kommt es zu einem "Führ-



ungswechsel der Zeithorizonte" (Luhmann 1976: 370). Die Gegenwart wird nicht mehr als Endpunkt der Vergangenheit, sondern nur als Übergangsstufe zur unabsehbaren Zukunft verstanden, weil die unmittelbare Verbindung von Vergangenheit und Gegenwart von der Revolution unterbrochen wird. Die Theorie einer 'historia tripartita' war nicht nur Novalis und dem Kreis der Frühromantiker, sondern auch Herder und Schiller geläufig. Dieser Betrachtung gemäß steht am Anfang eine paradiesische Entwicklungsstufe der Menschheit, das Goldene Zeitalter universeller Einheit und Harmonie aller Lebensbereiche. Die Gegenwart wird als unabdingbares Durchgangsstadium der Entzweiung und der Zerrissenheit verstanden, das vom wiederkehrenden Goldenen Zeitalter aufgelöst werden soll. Dieses Zukunftsziel erscheint jedoch nicht als etwas empirisch Wahrnehmbares, sondern eher als eine allumfassende regulative Idee, die das Leben und Tun der Menschen prägen und bestimmen soll (vgl. Mähl 1965: 249). Im Grunde genommen wird auch die erste Epoche, die sogenannte 'Vorzeit' eigentlich nicht näher bestimmt. Sie wird wohl je nachdem mit der Antike oder dem historischen Mittelalter identifiziert, bedarf jedoch innerhalb des frühromantischen Konzepts der 'zukunftsorientierten retrograden' Utopie keiner genaueren Bestimmung als 'Vorzeit'.

In Novalis' Fragment *Die Christenheit oder Europa* ist die Rede von "schöne(n), glänzende(n) Zeiten, wo Europa ein christliches Land war, wo *Eine* Christenheit diesen menschlich gestalteten Welttheil bewohnte" (Novalis 1989: 346). Damit ist eine mythische 'Urzeit' beschworen, deren Charakteristiken wohl einige Identifikationen mit dem historischen Mittelalter zulassen. Vielmehr handelt es sich hier jedoch um einen bildhaften dichterischen Entwurf, um eine poetische Heraufbeschwörung und Aneignung der Geschichte, die auf die Auseinandersetzung mit der Gegenwart gerichtet ist. Novalis ruft seine Zeitgenossen auf, von dem widernatürlichen und "törichten Bestreben" abzulassen, "die Geschichte und die Menschheit modeln" zu wollen. Man soll der Geschichte nachgehen, von ihr lernen, mit ihr gleichen Schritt halten und ihren Verheißungen folgen (ib. 352). Geschichte galt als Prozeß, der mit naturgegebener Notwendigkeit vollzog und keine verändernden Aktivitäten vonseiten des Subjekts voraussah. Damit wird dem Individuum kaum Spielraum gelassen, den Prozeß



irgendwie beeinflussen zu können. Das Letzte widerspricht jedoch eindeutig der programmatischen Forderung des Erzpoeten der deutschen Romantik Novalis: "Das Leben soll kein uns gegebener, sondern ein von uns gemachter Roman sein". (ib. 408) Der Widerspruch löst sich, indem das Prinzip des Goldenen Zeitalters als eine jederzeit gegenwärtige regulative Idee verkündet wird, deren Realisierung vom Wahrnehmungsvermögen des Subjekts abhängig gemacht wird. Es geht also nicht um das 'handelnde', sondern um das 'empfindende' Individuum, das die 'magische Fähigkeit' besitzt, vom Bewußtsein her die Widersprüche der Welt zu überwinden. In der 'poetischen' ('romantischen') Wahrnehmungsweise sah Novalis die Möglichkeit, eine der empirischen Wirklichkeit überlegene, vom Subjekt beherrschte Wirklichkeit zu schaffen. Der Poet übernahm dabei die Rolle des "transzendentalen Arztes":

"Poesie ist die große Kunst der Konstruktion der transzendentalen Gesundheit." (ib. 379) Die Poesie "schaltet und waltet /.../ zu ihrem großen Zweck der Zwecke — der Erhebung des Menschen über sich selbst." (ib.) Um dem Menschen dabei zu helfen, soll der Poet die Welt 'romantisieren'. "Indem ich dem Gemeinen einen hohen Sinn, dem Gewöhnlichen ein geheimnisvolles Ansehn, dem bekannten die Würde des Unbekannten, dem Endlichen einen unendlichen Schein gebe, so romantisiere ich es." (ib. 389) Karl Ristikivi schließt sich diesem Gedanken einigermaßen an, indem er in seinen Frühschriften schreibt: "Alles sollte entfernt und fremdartig sein, denn ansonsten wäre es keine Literatur gewesen". (Ristikivi 1953: 87)

Entfernt und fremdartig, sprich 'mystifiziert' erscheint auch die historische Wirklichkeit in Ristikivis Romanen. Der größte Unterschied zwischen dem *Freudengesang* und *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* — auf der einen Seite das wirklichkeitsgebundene, genau fixierbare historische Geschehen, auf der anderen zweckmäßig konstruierte poetische Welt — löst sich auf in eine unbedeutende formale Diskrepanz. "/.../ die Geschichte ist nur Vorwand" (Kangro, Ristikivi 1985: 129), behauptete Ristikivi selbst. Ristikivi interessiert sich nicht für historische Entwicklung, eher interessiert

er sich dafür, was hinter dieser Entwicklung steckt. Ristikivi bedient sich bei der Darstellung der historischen Ereignisse des Verfahrens der Montage. In seinen Romanen erleben wir kein breites historisches Panorama, sondern einzelne — wohl exakt vermittelte — historische Fragmente, die in ihrer chaotischen, auf Verwirrung gerichteten Tendenz mit einer allumfassenden Gleichnishaftigkeit der Welt korrespondieren.

Die romantische Theorie vom Goldenen Zeitalter schlägt sich im Werk eines Schriftstellers des 20. Jahrhunderts in das metaphysische (und märchenhafte) 'Einmal' um, das Gegenwart und Zukunft gleichzeitig wahren läßt. (Vgl. Liiv 1987: 1251). Ristikivis Held wandert in Raum und Zeit und ist 'allgegenwärtig', so wie ist allgegenwärtig auch die Legende vom Harfenspieler, von der erlösenden Macht der Musik.

Am Ende des Romans erlebt David die 'Erfüllung' (so der Titel des zweiten Teils von Hardenbergs Roman), erlebt allein für sich in seiner Vorstellung die Komposition des großen Lobgesangs, identifiziert sich völlig mit der Musik. "Musik ist allein für sich. Sie wird allein klingen, zwischen Himmel und Erde, dort, wo es kein Gut und Böse gibt." (Ristikivi 1993: 220). Den jungen Guillaume Dufay, den bekannten niederländischen Komponisten (1400–1474), in dessen Musik französische, italienische und englische Traditionen zusammenklingen, läßt Ristikivi zum sterbenden David eilen. Unterwegs erreicht jenen aber die Nachricht vom Tode des ehrwürdigen Meisters und er setzt seinen Weg fort. 'Der Weg des Künstlers' setzt sich fort.

In Ristikivis Romanen erscheint die Geschichte — so Novalis — "Just das Gegenteil der wahren Geschichte und doch Geschichte, wie sie sein soll: weissagend und synchronistisch." (Novalis 1989: 513).

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## Escape Artists and Freedom's Children

THOMAS SALUMETS

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born from a storm of disorder  
nomads of time without tiding  
in a void without border  
riding the storm

(Norbert Elias, *Los der Menschen*: 81)

*For Leiki and Andres*

I will base my argument on two metaphors — “escape artists” and “freedom’s children” — which will become clearer in the course of the discussion. They represent two groups of people both captivated by freedom. But their visions compete: freedom’s children imagine a world without other, escape artists imagine an opposite other. Still, in hidden ways their paths intersect.

It is the aim of this essay to consider distinctions and emerging tension balances between escape artists and freedom’s children with the help of several strong voices. Among them are three authors, of different generations yet intimately connected to one of Europe’s small nations, for whom pressures to integrate and to locate themselves without reference to others have been particularly high. How do they — two Estonian writers, Jaan Kross and Jaan Kaplinski, as well as an Estonian-Canadian novelist, K. Linda Kivi — negotiate this difficult terrain?

A satisfactory answer to this question requires a much fuller treatment than is possible here. Even so, perhaps the following observations are useful. They begin with an attempt to mark the differences between escape artists and freedom’s children. They

conclude with explorations ranging from the impossibility of escape, to living for something instead of against, to the need for escape from art itself.

### Escape Artists: Writers and Magicians

The art of the writer is not unlike the art of the magician. Both are escape artists of sorts. Cast in a similar mold as a Harry Houdini, perhaps the most famous of all illusionists, they are known for their ability to escape from “impossible restraints” (Henning 1977: 10). “Nothing on earth can hold Houdini a prisoner,” we are told on a 1906 promotional poster advertising the legendary magician (ibid.).

Writers of imaginative literature defy that which confines. As we know for example from Kundera’s *The Art of the Novel*, their challenges might include the “tunnels of the specialized disciplines” (Kundera 1993: 3), the discoveries of others, a “world where good and evil can be clearly distinguished” (ibid.: 7), “the world of one single Truth” (ibid.: 14), of certainty, seriousness, the “imperative of verisimilitude” (ibid.: 16), analytical thought, discontinuity, the focus on the present, easy and quick answers, and the author’s intention (ibid.: 3–20, 157–165).

As difficult as these trials of strength might be, escape artists have the magical skill, in Milan Kundera’s phrase, to “break free of the seemingly inescapable” (ibid.: 16). They are able to elude “blindness” turning it into “insight” (Paul de Man), break free from an “iron mould, a shirt, a suit — a uniform”, to borrow from Slavenka Draculić’s *Café Europa* (1996: 2). And in the process, they produce the kind of art, as Gadamer sees it, which “indefinitely escapes all explanation” (Bourdieu 1996: xiv), or, in Todorov’s view, the clichés of our times (Todorov 1996: 10).

The “habitus” (Elias, Bourdieu) — the internalized patterns of restraint — escape artists share, is informed by the desire to get away, be that from the “ugly” (Luhmann 1997: 308–312), the “boring” (Plumpe/Werber 1993: 30–35), or economic interests (Bourdieu 1996: 216). In George Steiner’s words, “the construct of the artist is a counter-statement to the world”, one that pits the

"constraints of the observed" against the "boundless possibilities of the imagined" (Steiner 1989: 11). In short, what for many writers matters more than where they are, to paraphrase the narrator in Jonathan Holland's 1994 novel *The Escape Artist*, is where they are not (1994: 5). To put it differently, they hope to arrive at a location opposite any other, to claim a space of their own.

However, they have to contend with a deep-seated temptation: the creation of that grand "final" escape which turns illusion, as if by magic, into reality, fiction into fact. Such a permanent escape would, of course, spell the end of the escape artist. It is like giving up on escapes altogether. Indefinite confinement is the result. "If ever I lie down in idleness and contentment, let that be the end of me", as Goethe famously put it in his *Faust*. "If ever the passing moment is such that I wish it not to pass ... then let that be the finish." Should that ever happen, this is Faust's promise to the devil, "[y]ou can put me in chains and ring the death-bell" (Goethe 1985: 25).

To guarantee their success, escape artists need an audience which is keen on the experience that human beings can't be held prisoner by anything; that they can even escape from the inescapable, from escape-proof handcuffs, or, as the case may be, philosophy's truths, eternal laws, first principles, unassailable foundations, and other, perhaps less common oppositional forces. But escape artists are not only dependent on an audience with a thirst for miraculous escapes. They also need an audience which still believes in the inescapable, in the escape-proof straitjacket or timeless tradition; just enough so that the claims of the escape artist remain in doubt until proven wrong; but not more so than is required for the new way to find acceptance — which in turn will only be revealed as yet another trap to be converted into an opportunity for the next escape artist to show her unbelievable skills and so on. As participants in and practitioners of this paradoxical affirmation and denial of escapes the products of escape artists become meaningless without such an audience. And this is the threat freedom's children pose.



### Freedom's Children<sup>1</sup>

It is not yet another form of "escape" that helps explain their alternative ways. They are not bonded to escape artists in the complex manner outsiders are to established (Elias 1990), or simply tied to one another by virtue of reversed values. For them, freedom is, in the first instance, not a question of oppositions; that is the stuff of escape artists.

Freedom's children are not even critical of illusionists. Rather than turning their back, they just walk away; they don't go to their shows; don't buy their products; they are not interested. This seeming indifference has earned them a bad reputation. Freedom's children are accused of wasting cultural, social, and moral resources (Beck 1997a: 9–16). They are seen as selfish, narcissistic, hedonistic, culturally illiterate, morally bankrupt, irresponsible, disrespectful, ill bred, shallow, permissive and politically disinterested. As their numbers and influence grow, so does the fear that we have reached the point of diminishing returns. If we stay the course, it's all downhill. Institutions, beliefs, traditions, values which in the past provided a sense of stability, security and hope are being eroded. The growing sense of total loss, a loss likened to the unrecoverable depletion of natural resources, is deeply felt; so deeply in fact that it now seems reasonable to ask: Is this really the beginning of the end?

The losses are no doubt real. There is the loss of authority, the looming eclipse of the single nation as primary survival unit, the growing loss of religion, the erosion of academic disciplines, the seeming end of the dominance of print culture, the loss of stable meaning, the loss of hope for future material wealth, the end of absolute truth, the "death of the author" (Barthes 1988: 166–172), the loss of traditions, the loss of security in a shared morality, the loss of belief in the importance of mass approval, the decline of faith in the effectiveness of political parties and a general public

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<sup>1</sup> This part is largely based on my reading of Ulrich Beck's collection of essays *Kinder der Freiheit*, Anthony Giddens's *Jenseits von Links und Rechts*, Richard Rorty's "pragmatism" and Norbert Elias's "figurational sociology".

pessimism, the loss of unquestioned loyalties to family and other close local attachments, the sense of being alone in the universe without guidance, and a deeply felt loss of Nature as the untouched counterpart to civilization. For these reasons, insecurity grows and a sense of loss rather than hope threatens to overshadow the lives of many at the turn of the millennium.

Some observers, however, suggest that this is a cover-up and that we are not at all dealing with a de-civilizing process. The world, in their view, is not coming apart. What we are witnessing instead, we are told, is an "informalizing process" (Wouters 1987), the unplanned consequences and expressions of more variety, of increased and more routine, not "magical", freedom (Beck 1997a: 12). Not their kind of freedom is thus the obstacle they counter, it is the inability of organizations, political parties, institutions, and survival units to adequately respond to the current democratizing forces of change initiated by freedom's children. (ibid.: 17).

### **Altruistic Individualism<sup>2</sup>**

What freedom's children stand for is not a question of indifference, of having no values. It is rather a question of competing values. Freedom's children celebrate the fact that never in history have so many people, so often and in so many places had so much of a say as today. They are not indifferent. They are not a threat. They are not morally and socially bankrupt.

What they say is that recipes of the past have lost their power to convince. Time-honoured ways of organizing communal life, marriage, parenthood, family, class, and nation are therefore going to change. Their world is not driven by Tradition or Nature. It is a world driven by the desire for solidarity. Freedom's children are partners in dialogue who seek consensus. They are not conquerors. In this respect freedom's children are related to Richard Rorty's "pragmatists": "For pragmatists, the desire for objectivity is not the desire to escape the limitations of one's community but simply

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<sup>2</sup> See Beck 1997a: 19.

the desire for as much intersubjective agreement as possible, the desire to extend the reference of 'us' as far as we can" (1991: 23).

Freedom's children see it as their task to achieve togetherness in a society of individuals without, as Beck put it, religion, war and economic security (1997b: 391). They see it as their task to resist the tremendous pressures to locate selves without reference to other human beings and their non-human environment. They see it as their task not to assert but to cope with increases in choice, with a world of continuously changing networks of interdependencies.

Their world is a post-traditional, highly individualized but not atomized world; a world with a keen sense for the destruction of the environment; a high degree of tolerance for other ways of life; an open-ended world where closeness is not eclipsed by needs for distinction; a world which is more accurately called a "society of individuals" (Elias 1991: 1–66); a world where the "art of free association" (Beck 1997b: 395), where the management of mobility, variety are key; where "altruistic individualism" is not a paradox but a new value (Beck 1997a: 19). In short, it is a "world without others" (Giddens 1997: 338). It is this vision that separates freedom's children from escape artists.

### **Jaak Kross and The Czar's Madman**

But can we really separate escape artists from freedom's children? Or is it perhaps more useful to speak of a tension balance? For, as Jaak Kross put it, it is often "devilishly difficult to decide who someone really is" (Kross 1992: 27). His 1978 novel *The Czar's Madman* (English in 1993) is a case in point. In complex ways it is implicated in both — not unlike Jaak Kross himself.

The author of *The Czar's Madman* is known as Estonia's grand old man of the historical novel. Born 78 years ago in Tallinn, Jaak Kross studied law and international relations at the University of Tartu. In 1944 he was arrested by the occupying Germans and in 1946 deported into Russian labor camps. After his return to Tallinn in 1954 Kross worked as a translator and writer (Rebas 1990: 79–87). In the 50s and 60s he wrote poetry. Today, he is



celebrated worldwide for his historical novels. Among them are the trilogy *Between Three Plagues* (1970–77), *Professor Martens' Departure* (1984, English in 1994), and his to date most successful novel, *The Czar's Madman*. It has been translated into Hungarian, German, French, Spanish, Swedish, English and another half a dozen languages or so.

From the vantage point of freedom's children, Jaan Kross tends to be an escape artist of sorts. Although his own decision not to escape from occupied Estonia seems to suggest otherwise. That is not to say he wasn't tempted. On the contrary, the thought was part of him for almost half a century. And on two occasions he came very close to, as it were, getting away from it all: First in 1944 when the Germans were retreating from Estonia and the Russians advancing; and then in 1978 during the Estonian writers congress. But, as he said in an interview shortly after Estonia had regained its independence, he could not flee when a million had to stay (1992: 27).

In 1991, following the news of the overthrow attempt in Moscow and the looming threat of a return to Stalinism, Kross, for the first time, was ready to give in and really escape. He had already bought tickets for the ferry ride across from Tallinn to Helsinki when the news broke that the coup attempt had failed. Kross stayed (Raubold 1992: 31).

Perhaps he also decided to stay, and this is what his novel *The Czar's Madman* suggests, because escape is impossible to begin with. It is impossible for two reasons: First, we co-determine one another, there really is no wall between "us" and "them" except in our imagination; we live in a world without "other"; escape does not make sense. Second, if there is to be hope, we cannot afford to leave our "home" or forget the stories of its past. But this, as paradoxical as it may seem, makes Jaan Kross more of an escape artist than he appears to be. Without "erring on the side of nationalism" (Dickens 1995: xiii), his novel becomes the site of narrating the small, colonized nation, to borrow from Homi K. Bhaba (1993: 297). Reading the novel with processes of globalization rather than colonization in mind, it thus tells the story of escape from integration into other survival units.

One of the heroes of the novel, the historical Timotheus von Bock (1797–1836) is the czar's madman. He is a German-Estonian nobleman who in 1817 marries an Estonian peasant woman — in those days, a scandal, in more ways than one. There is consensus among historians that in the first half of the nineteenth century the “Baltic German nobility, clergy, and merchants continued to form the elites in both rural and urban areas. The Estonian population — whether peasants or members of the lower orders in the cities — found little opportunity for upward social mobility, and those who did rise on the social ladder could only do so by *adopting* the language, customs, and values of the German elites” (my italics; Raun, 37).

The division between the Baltic German nobility and the Estonian population was not only a social division, it was also an ethnic division and the division between colonizer and colonized (Kross 1986: 66). The result, such a wide rift that it couldn't even be bridged. One had to, in Heinz von zur Mühlen's phrase, “jump the national gap” (Lieven 1994: 135).

Kross is fully aware of this split. But with his novel he challenges the view that the issues concerning upward mobility should be described in terms of adopting the ways of the established or jumping across to the established. This kind of description fails to account for the emotional impact involved and it suggests that the established are isolated from the outsiders, that there is no in-between, that they are separate and that the changes are unidirectional concerning only the habitus of the supposedly powerless Estonian peasants.

From the perspective of *The Czar's Madman* the historian's narrative, as valuable as it is, misses the “power of the powerless” (Havel 1985), the interdependence of colonizer and colonized. For both, Baltic Germans and the Estonian population, were affected by the established-outsider relations they together formed. As unequal as they were, neither could escape the influence of the other. The result was a continuously changing and hybrid rather than fixed and monolithic identity. The story of Jakob Mättik, the narrator in *The Czar's Madman*, expresses this interdependence and the tensions which go hand in hand with it perhaps in the most memorable way.

Von Bock's wife Eeva and her brother Jakob are sent away for five years to learn the language, customs, and values of the German elites. Afterwards, Jakob does not feel at ease anywhere: "But I remain a very odd bird in the eyes of the villagers ... the fact that I lived in the old manor at Voisiku [Võisiku in the Estonian original], and was the brother in law of that reputed madman that fact made me into such an odd visitor from another world" (Kross 1993: 200). Jakob turns into "that half-a-squire" and half Estonian peasant wearing German trousers and speaking French (ibid.: 74). Put this way, it becomes apparent that his identity is located on neither side. It is instead in-between, a "perpetual seesaw of superiority and inferiority" (ibid.: 75). In this sense, Jakob embodies the fate of all cultures. They are, as Edward Said put it in *Culture and Imperialism*, "involved in one another; none of them single and pure, all are hybrid, heterogenous, extraordinarily differentiated, and unmonolithic" (1994: xxv). But unlike freedom's children, Jakob does not welcome this fluid identity. Instead, he mourns lost stability and certainty, the loss of his "home" (Kross 1993: 200), feels "miserable and disconnected" (ibid.: 201).

It is this kind of rich relational description and tension balance that informs *The Czar's Madman*. While still indebted to the oppositional thinking typical for escape artists, the novel points out the impossibility of escaping to or from any other. In this way and with this purpose in mind, the author crosses and joins many boundaries. For example, the reader is left uncertain where historical fact ends and fiction begins. This includes the "Editor's Preface", the "Afterword", and the "more than a dozen texts that are imbedded within" the main text (Valgemäe 1993: 391) as well as the many fictionalized historical characters appearing in *The Czar's Madman*. Furthermore, the narrative structure of the novel is such that it is easy to confuse past with present events. As the narrator puts it: "I notice it seems to be my pattern to alternate passages dealing with the present and the past. From now on, I'll try to maintain this alternation rather than diverge from it, even though this might be confusing to an outsider ... especially since it seems to me now that I myself have some difficulty distinguishing the present from the past in and around me" (Kross 1993: 67). In addition, languages and literatures — such as Estonian, French,



German, Russian — intersect; the boundaries between sanity and insanity, truth and opinion are blurred. Is Timo really mad? Was his death murder, an accident, or suicide? The novel does not provide a definite answer, only changing perspectives, doubt about absolutes. *The Czar's Madman* remains "uncertain", as the author confirms in the "Afterword" (ibid.: 350). We witness Timo's deep commitment to his German past but also see him move closer to the way of life more common to the native Estonian population. He, for example, speaks Estonian, albeit with an "awkwardness" the narrator finds difficult to accept (ibid.: 58), and his family is deeply rooted in this part of the world. The boots his parents in law made for him are symbolic of this often painful and slow but steady merging of two cultures. "They were my favorite boots, in the wintertime. There, there are times when a man can feel so low — I know I did — that his heart sinks all the way down into his boots ... But when I wore those boots, my heart warmed up so much in them that it rose back into my chest" (ibid.: 264/5). We read about the narrator's efforts to stay clear of the local informers and any relationship "afflicted by suspicion" (ibid.: 65). Without realizing it at first, he nevertheless ends up compromising his efforts. Escape is not possible, only interdependencies.

However, apart from the static and oppositional manner in which Kross tends to treat gender relations and the rather stereotypical descriptions of the German nobility (Lieven 1994: 137), there is a notable exception to his quest pointing towards a "world without other".

In addition to the story of the marriage between Timo and Eeva, there is the story of Timo's relationship with the initially relatively liberal minded Czar Alexander I. Being his close friend, the Czar asks Timo to always tell him the truth. Timo does. In a memorandum he accuses him of being a tyrant and urges radical social reforms. The Czar's answer: solitary confinement for his confidant. Like Kross himself who spent 1944 and the years from 1946 to 1954 in prison, Timo is under detention for nine years (Kross 1990: 33). In 1827 he is allowed to return, but only because he has been deemed mad by the new Czar Nicholas. This, in short, is the other strand of the novel.

The two narratives merge in the plan of the protagonists to escape. After two years of secret preparations, on September 18th, 1829, Timo, Eeva, and their son Jüri are ready to board the cargo ship "Ameland" which is waiting to take them across the Baltic Sea. In the last moment, and for no apparent reason, Timo aborts the escape. Trying to explain his decision to his devastated wife, he says: "When you realize that you're standing in a hail of grapeshot — of course you want to escape from it ... And if your wife and child ... are close by ... in mortal danger ... and want to help you get away ... and you yourself ought to help them get away from where they are [...] you just push the most categorical imperative out of your mind — which is that one must never flee from a battle!" (ibid.: 278). Escape is impossible for Timo because he is convinced that: "who wants something more important, he stays at home" (ibid.). And with that the matter is decided.

It is above all here where the novel succumbs to the temptation of the escape artist. As if approaching some final destination, all doubt is cast aside and replaced by a rigid sense of certainty, of forever being where others are not. Resistance and opposition rule from now on. Even Eeva — the only character in the novel who was able to cross and join many seemingly impenetrable barriers with relative ease — decides to join the battle the "madman" could not leave unfought. Long after her husband's death she says: "Timo wanted to be an iron nail in the body of the empire ... Now and again, he needed strong words — and proved his right to use them ... I've been thinking: Perhaps I, too, might wish that I were — do you know what they call this bush in Estonian? It is 'the slave's whip' — Sklavenrute. So — I would like to be a slave's whip in the empire's bosom — as long as I live ..." (ibid.: 346). It is as if fiction had succumb to history turning *The Czar's Madman* into another chapter "in the national history of Estonia" (Moreau 1990: 167).

Neither Timo nor Eeva can simply walk away, like freedom's children. Instead, they stay put and continue to define themselves in opposition to others. What from the perspective of freedom's children is a failure can be attributed to "one of Europe's finest illusions" (Kundera 1993: 8): the historically constructed self-image of the isolated ego, the "we-less I" or homo clausus, as the



human scientist Norbert Elias referred to it (1991). Countering it without contributing to its perpetuation is especially difficult for small Western nations such as Estonia. Apart from the Cartesian heritage it shares with other Western nations, Estonia has to contend with a deeply ingrained colonial legacy, its relatively small size, and, most recently, the perceived threat of disappearing into a European identity.

The long history of colonial rule from the medieval Christian invasions to the Soviet occupation in this century has above all shaped the habitus of Estonians. Schooled in a succession of brutal conquests, thinking in terms of confinement, dependency, and opposition comes easier than thinking confidently in terms of conversation, interdependence, relations and contingency. Being members of a small nation, Estonians have grown accustomed to seeing their linguistic isolation and the indifference of other nations as "normal troubles" (Jaan Kross 1996: 9). And these troubles are conducive to defensive resignation rather than hope in a world that is increasingly becoming a global society of individuals. Furthermore, the threat of disappearing into the new Europe looms large. As the anthropologist Cris Shore points out: "the idea of a 'European identity' appears as yet another ideological device designed as much for the exclusion of Europe's 'Other' as a mechanism for achieving European political and social integration... celebrat(ing) power at the center .... tend(ing) to provoke anxiety and vulnerability at the peripheries, which is then translated into local chauvinism and xenophobia" (Shore 1997: 795).

While European integration was a non-issue when Kross wrote his *The Czar's Madman* (although European culture figures prominently in it), it still comes as no surprise that thoughts of escape should run deep in his novel. It was after all published at a time when Estonia, against its will, was part of another empire.

From the postcolonial perspective that informs freedom's children, *The Czar's Madman* ends up reproducing, in true escape artist fashion, the very problem it is critical of. It substitutes one truth for another. And who has to pay the price? Marrying Eeva, we are told in the novel "was part of the grand plan [Timo] had drawn up for his life. By this marriage, he would prove the equality of all human beings before God, nature and his ideals." (Kross 1993: 9)



A plan, an idea becomes more important than the human beings it is supposed to help; it ruins Eeva's life, gets Timo imprisoned and, is possibly the reason for his premature death. And his son, with the telling name Jüri — a name evoking the bloody mid-fourteenth century revolt of the Estonian peasants against the German overlords and their subsequent crushing revenge — leaves to serve his father's enemy, the Czar. Both Timo and Jüri are, in Eeva's words, "pursuing perfection" in different ways (ibid.: 324). Even Eeva joins this devastating quest for ideals. The novel seems to have given up on its own commitment to the relational, the in-between, the "boundary between fact and fancy" (ibid.: 350). Yet the narrator of Jaan Kross' novel suggests that there is hope. Its source? Jakob Mättik's diary, Jaan Kross's *The Czar's Madman*, Eeva's and Timo's world. The novel concludes with the following message: "If Jüri destroys my journal, there is no hope for the world. If he keeps it, there is hope for the world" (ibid.: 348). In the end then, *The Czar's Madman* refers back to itself as if a life worth living could indeed be contained between the covers of one book; as if it were possible to forever escape from other narratives, other nations, cultures, people, points of view. Kross knows better than that. His narrator, among the main characters the only non-historical figure (Kross 1990: 39), doesn't.

### *If Home is a Place*

While Timo and Eeva feel compelled to stay, K. Linda Kivi's protagonist Esther is able to walk away. Of course, time and place are in many ways very different. Nevertheless, as we shall see, there is also some overlap.

Based on historical facts, including many interviews, Kivi's first novel tells the story of three generations of women: grandmother Mari, her daughters Helgi and Sofi, and granddaughter Esther. The voices of men remain largely silent. Shifting between events in the past and the present, we learn about Mari's escape with her daughters from Estonia to Germany and their subsequent emigration to Canada.

*If Home is a Place* is also the story of Esther, the Canadian born daughter of Sofi. She grows up with close ties to the Estonian exile community. In the summer of 1989, she visits Estonia and comes to realize that what is home to her parents, isn't hers. "And it would never be. Though her mother tongue filled some of the gaps ... she did not belong to this place. Or not all of her, or even much. Not enough to erase the fifty years that her family had rooted in another place" (105). Finally, she decides to leave her family and the Estonian community in Winnipeg for a life in a remote part of Canada's West.

Linda Kivi herself, the youngest of the three authors discussed here, grew up in Toronto's vibrant Estonian community, went to Estonian kindergarten, Estonian gymnastics, even had an Estonian piano teacher. Increasingly, however, she experiences her heritage also as a burden, on balance a limiting rather than liberating force. As Kivi put it, she grew tired of the "insular world" of Toronto's Estonian community and her parent's nostalgia (Kivi 1996). She now lives about 750 km east of Vancouver, outside of Nelson, sharing 88 acres of property with her four land partners.

### **"Home is the way in which points join"**

Esther, the protagonist of Kivi's novel *If Home is a Place*, leaves her parents because she is longing for a place where "she fit" (Kivi 1995: 140), where she could escape from a life lived in opposition. "The more Esther looked at her life, the more she saw that there needed to be more than just resistance. She needed to take hold of her life and actually become who she wanted to be" (ibid.). She needed to give up the habit "of being the wronged" one (ibid.: 267). "Who were Estonians," Esther asks, "if they weren't opposed to the Soviets? What had she ever been taught about living for something instead of against it?" (Ibid.: 245).

While the exile Estonians, including her parents, are more part of a community of escape artists, Esther is drawn towards the habitus of freedom's children. She is an individualist with a nature-centred desire for unity who enjoys being with her "own thoughts" (ibid.: 67). Following her affinity for the soil, she

decides to study agriculture, much to her parent's surprise. "The New World promised so much; anyone could become a doctor, a lawyer, a biochemist, professions which offered security, respect and cleanliness" (ibid.: 68). Esther is not interested in a career or the compartmentalized knowledge universities tend to offer. She wants "to study how things interconnected, not how they came apart" (ibid.: 69).

There are traces of this thinking in terms of relations throughout the novel. They include the interdependence between human beings and the soil, as Maria, Esther's grandmother, suggests when she ponders her life as a farmer. "This earth has given and given, fed us our potatoes, cabbage, beets, turnips, parsnips and carrots for so many years ... And what have I given in return?" (Ibid.: 12). A keen awareness of intercultural interdependencies is also part of the appeal of this novel. Esther's grandmother is Russian, but this fact is hidden so that she would not have to stay in a Russian camp during their refugee years in post-war Germany: "I don't even have my own name anymore. We dropped the 'a' from Maria when we bought my Estonian papers, so now I am Mari, an Estonian woman" (ibid.: 145). She sings a Russian lullaby that her mother used to sing to her but "making up Estonian words for the tune" (ibid.: 149). The intersection of various cultures, strongly resisted by the exile community, seems ever present. In hidden ways, the paths of Germans, Estonians and Canadians cross. As we learn from Kivi's novel, it is, for example, not uncommon for Winnipeg's Estonian congregation to meet in "the old German Lutheran church" (ibid.: 224). Her family too is not an unalloyed ethnic unit. As the cultural hybridity of her own family surfaces, Esther comes to realize "that the reason her family touched and hugged each other more than other Estonians was probably because Vanaema [Estonian for grandmother] was Russian" (ibid.: 87). Where others hide relations, connections and interdependencies, Esther is drawn towards them and rebels against that which leads away from her vision of a life "without other". Kivi's definition of home exemplifies the importance of the relational and processual for Esther in perhaps the most succinct and memorable manner. Home, for her, is not static and not limited to a geographical location. Rather, it is "the way in which points join. It is a grid for reference only, not a



firm, fixed thing that never alters. Home can grow. And shrink" (ibid.: 268). Identity then is not an object, not a commodity but instead a continuity of changing networks of interdependencies.

At the same time, however, the novel questions its own intentions and falls prey to the escape artist's mode. That is what Linda Kivi's interpretation of her novel suggests as well. According to her, she wrote the novel to "unravel what is Estonian, what is part of the exile community" (Kivi 1996). In this process, however, Esther uncovers a possibility of connecting to an Estonian past without reinforcing her parent's longing for home at the expense of her desire to live in a world "without other". Esther learns about a shared interest in the soil, in the land, in nature. From this point of view, Esther ends up being more of an Estonian, as she understands their identity, with her life in rural British Columbia than her parents in Winnipeg who enjoy watching Lawrence Welk reruns, a popular North American musical variety show of the sixties.

Nevertheless, her discovery of a unity between her Estonia and herself is cast in a quest for roots and an attempt to separate the identity of the exile community from the one which is supposedly genuinely Estonian. Here resurfaces the temptation of creating yet another "insular world", of imagining another reality, something which Jaan Kaplinski, her favourite poet, rejects.

### **"Behind the sauna by the pond"**

Jaan Kaplinski was born in 1941 in the Estonian University town of Tartu. He has been a freelance writer and translator since 1972 and is best known for his poetry. Among the collections of his poems in English translation are *The Same Sea in Us All* (1985), *The Wandering Border* (1988), and most recently *Through the Forest* (1996). *I Am the Spring in Tartu* (1993) gathers his poems written originally in English.

Sam Hamill, the co-editor of Jaan Kaplinski's second collection of poetry in English translation, *The Wandering Border*, wrote: "Some poets have careers in poetry. Others have lives in it. Jaan Kaplinski certainly belongs among the latter." (Afterword, 67). A

wonderful compliment — but mistaken. For it is art Kaplinski wants to escape from. Poems, he asserts, are best left unwritten, unless one “cannot do otherwise” (Kaplinski 1996a: 26). Consequently, his poems tend to point beyond themselves, as if moving towards life while saying that it cannot be walled in by words. Although Kaplinski “ended up in literature”, as he himself put it, “because it seems, perhaps, closest to [his] proper place” (ibid.: 77), he does not think of it as a special place, a place somehow removed, on its own, exotic. Such lines of separation are not real (ibid.: 6); they only appear to be:

Far-off lands and foreign peoples are a dream,  
a dreaming with open eyes  
somebody does not wake from.  
It's the same with poetry — seen from afar  
it's something special, mysterious, festive.  
No, poetry is even less  
special than a sugar cane plantation or potato field.  
Poetry is like sawdust coming from under the saw  
or soft yellowish shavings from a plane.  
Poetry is washing hands in the evening  
or a clean handkerchief that my late aunt  
never forgot to put in my pocket.  
("Once I Got a Postcard", *The Wandering Border*,  
56)

While Kaplinski's poems don't want to be caught in the powerful essentialist drift of what often is referred to as Western analytical thought, in the end, they still are more like ideas, “shadows of reality” (Kaplinski 1996b). As such his poems too create distinctions which do not really exist and give rise to the need not to abandon but to extend beyond the modes of artistic perception.

Kaplinski is very much aware of the limitations of language. He knows that languages do not only provide opportunities, but also create constraints. For example, where they suggest closure, they betray “the openness of things” (Kaplinski 1987: 31), where they reify, they turn against the ever-changing, the “wandering borders”, “the coming to know” (ibid.: 43), Kaplinski's poems so

often evoke. We say that the wind blows, as if there were a wind without the blowing.

The wind does not blow. The wind is the process of blowing itself.

Can there be wind that does not blow? Sun that does not shine?

A river that does not flow? Time that does not flow.

(*Through the Forest*, 12)

Movement is first arrested, it is reduced to a noun and only then verbs are added as if to recoup losses incurred by the inadequacies of language. We know, to quote from another poem by Kaplinski:

There is no Good, no Evil, no Sin, no Virtue,  
no Faithfulness, no Unfaithfulness, no Marriage, no  
Adultery.

There is also no Love, although sometimes  
these and other words are spoken or written  
on paper, on sand, into stone or wind.

(*The Wandering Border*, 20)

The tendency towards "process reduction" (Elias) is inscribed into languages. It goes hand in hand with a long-standing habit which many like to call Western thought: to place a higher value on that which does not move, to regard the stationary as the norm and change as the exception. Principles, laws, grammars, identities, truth, they are all closely connected to this hierarchy of values; a hierarchy of values which languages reproduce. In one of his more recently published collections of poetry, *Through the Forest*, Kaplinski writes: "Nouns are like ice and snow; in them is death and eternity, which is almost the same... I sometimes dream of a language in which there are no nouns, only verbs" (1996a: 77). Life, as Kaplinski and freedom's children see it, "cannot be contained in words ... cannot be explained or understood [...] can only be lived, and perhaps also protected" as he put it in this poem.

From this point of view, poetry can indeed be only escape art, escaping one pair of shackles and thereby creating another trap which we have to free ourselves from. The more such limitations of the supposedly "boundless possibilities of the imagined"



become visible (Steiner 1989: 11) the stronger the need to escape from art itself : "I feel that I want to escape from art, from that which is called culture ... all those exhibitions, presentations, ... performances, ... conferences" (Kaplinski 1997: B1; 1993: 11).

So where is the hope for a poet without poetry? Kaplinski nevertheless considers himself lucky, he can — as he put it evoking ancient habits and the folk tradition of Estonian song — escape to his sauna and the pond behind it, plant trees and work in his garden (Kaplinski 1997: B1) leaving poems unwritten whenever he cannot do otherwise.

Perhaps this is Kaplinski's way of extending the altruistic individualism of freedom's children to include another feeling of interdependence: a unity with objects "which situate and stabilize selves, define individual identity just as much as communities or families used to do" (Knorr 1997: 1). But this further process of integration presupposes and goes hand in hand with knowledge of these very objects (ibid.: 23). In part, cultural capital, including Kaplinski's own poetry, as much as it also can turn into a burden, provides and intersects with that knowledge. Moving beyond poetry should therefore not be confused with a license to ignore it.

### Concluding remarks

What emerges from Jaan Kross's *The Czar's Madman*, Linda Kivi's *If Home is a Place* and some of Jaan Kaplinski's poetry is not so much a separation of escape artists from freedom's children but rather a tension balance. Recognizing this, brings a site into view which is defined neither by permanent change nor, conversely, the unchanging. Re-focussing our energies on this cross-over location might in turn help us see more clearly that points of arrival constitute opportunities for departures made possible by an ever-changing world. As a consequence, we should be in a better position to merge the quest for more individual space with the continuously widening patterns of interdependencies shaping our world today.

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## The Message in the Bottle

MARIA GABRIELLA AMBROSIONI

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In this article I will focus on the role of memory and language in the works of two poets (Anna Akhmatova and Czesław Miłosz) who wrote in times when historical oblivion was a political weapon.

Osip Mandelshtam portrayed the poet as a shipwrecked sailor who seals messages in a bottle and Paul Celan regards himself as the secret addressee of those messages. I would like to borrow this image and regard Anna Akhmatova's "silenced" poems and Czesław Miłosz' ones as messages hidden in a bottle sent out toward someone, with the hope that one day they would wash up on a shore.

Miłosz went into exile in 1951. Akhmatova, instead, chose to be exiled in her own country:

I'm not of those who left their country  
For wolves to tear it limb from limb.

(Akhmatova 1985. "I'm not of those who left their country", *Anno Domini*: 52).

And from 1925 to 1939 her poems — secretly written and not officially published — circulated only underground: "that was the first time I witnessed my death as a citizen. I was thirty-five." (Akhmatova 1994: 46).

Miłosz had already gone through experience of the Nazi dictatorship and as "a Jew of the New Testament" (Miłosz 1988. "A Poor Christian Looks at the Ghetto", *Rescue*: 68) was haunted by the silence of "those deported from their home at dawn". (Miłosz 1988. "Lecture IV", *New Poems*: 488). As an exile, he was brutally cut off from the sound and the evolution of his mother tongue, from his community and his readers and risked the death

as an artist. Exile is "an abnormal morbid condition ... for anyone but especially for the writer, the bearer of a spiritual tradition". (Mann 1994: 101).

Faithful mother tongue

.....  
You were my native land; I lacked any other.

(Miłosz 1988. "My Faithful Mother", *City without a Name*: 216).

For Akhmatova too, only her mother tongue was left: the Soviet régime tried to bury her alive.

Actually, language would be her weapon against dictatorship. Without accepting the changes required by socialism, she remained true to her style. In the twenties, "during the time of the cult of violence and the rejection of values", when readers asked for innovation and "a break with form and all ideas" (Mandelstam, N. 1994: 109), she went on to counter the incomprehensibility of the moment with precision and clarity, she went on focusing on her feelings, clinging to all that the régime wanted to deprive her of: her self and her existence as an individual. As she would write in her autobiographical notes, "suffocating times began and lasted for years" and she reacted by the way of "precision and ... having each word its proper place in the line, as if it were there for a thousand years, yet the reader hears it for the first time." (Akhmatova 1994: 23). Her poems are elegant, but characterized by a sharp bareness and a strong emotional tension. Her short sentences without metaphors highlight the contrast and the clash of words in her verses. Such a style and such a content were considered a provocation and she was condemned to silence. Nonetheless, in 1959 she could write: "I never abandoned Poetry, though the frequent hard knocks of the oars against my numbed hands clinging to the side of the boat beckoned me to sink to the bottom." (Ib.).

In 1934 the poet Osip Mandelstam, one of her best friends, was arrested. The following year, 1935, Stalin's purges started to rage. In 1938 her only child, Lev, was arrested, then also her third husband was arrested and he would soon die in prison. In the meantime the war and the danger of Nazism raged all over Europe. History burst into her private life. She would write in her auto-



biographical notes: "in 1936 ... my penmanship had changed and my voice was different. ... There can be no return to the former way. ... My verses ... come quickly, breathlessly...". (Ib. 19). Her poems acquired a new universality and spirituality:

When you bury an epoch  
You do not sing psalms at the tomb.

.....  
And it's quiet, Lord, so quiet,  
Time has become audible.  
And one day the age will rise,  
Like a corpse in a spring river —  
But no mother's son will recognize  
the body of his mother.

(Akhmatova 1985. "In 1940", *The Seventh Book*: 69).

In 1938 Lev was arrested and for seventeen months, waiting for the pending sentence, almost every morning Akhmatova would go to the prison, where relatives (almost all women) stood waiting in unending lines outside the prison wall in order to send a parcel to a prisoner. (When the parcel was not accepted, the relatives would know that the prisoner was dead).

In the fearful years of the Yezhov terror I spent seventeen months in prison queues in Leningrad. One day somebody 'identified' me. Beside me, in the queue, there was a woman with blue lips. She had, of course, never heard of me; but she suddenly came out of that trance so common to us all and whispered in my ear (everybody spoke in whispers there): 'Can you describe this?' And I said: 'Yes, I can.' And then something like the shadow of a smile crossed what had once been her face. (Akhmatova, 1985, *Requiem*: 87).

Reality is not meaningful by itself. It is perception that gives it a meaning. In her introduction to *Requiem*, Akhmatova shows that artists have an irreplaceable role and responsibility in society, even if they cannot express themselves freely. In that "accursed time of bestial fear" (Mandelstam, N. 1994: 102) the poet could witness, remember and transmit to future generations, trying to describe what was beyond description:

They took you away at daybreak. Half waking, as  
though at a wake, I followed

.....

A deathly sweat at your brow.

(Akhmatova 1985, *Requiem*, I: 89).

What happened could not be forgotten:

There I learned how faces fall apart,

How fear looks out from under the eyelids,

How deep are the hieroglyphics

Cut by suffering on people's cheeks.

(Akhmatova 1985, "Epilogue", *Requiem*: 95).

Her suffering becomes the suffering of all Russian women. She dedicates *Requiem* to "her friends of those two years" during which she "stood in hell". In the poem the pronoun "I" and the pronoun "we" alternate and overlap: "No, it is not I, it is someone else who is suffering. / I could not have borne it. ..." (Akhmatova 1985, *Requiem*, 3: 90). Akhmatova's grief could never be kept apart from the suffering of the women who stood in line with her:

I should like to call you all by name,

But they have lost the lists ...

.....

I remember them always and everywhere,

And if they shut my tormented mouth,

Through which a hundred million of my people cry,

Let them remember me also

.....

But here, where I stood for three hundred hours

And where they never, never opened the doors for me.

(Akhmatova 1985, "Epilogue", *Requiem*: 95-6).

After seventeen months "the sentence" arrived:

Then fell the word of stone on

My still existing, still heaving breast.

.....

Yes, long ago I knew this day:

This radiant day, and this empty house.

(Akhmatova 1985, "The Sentence", *Requiem*: 92).

The radiant day clashes with the empty house and her words have the power to express her torment as a mother, the risk that her mind would fail.

*Requiem* could not be published, but not even written down. For many years it could only be memorized by Akhmatova and by a few trustworthy friends. In Russia it would be published only in 1987. Before that date it could circulate only in manuscript copies and it was under this form that it won widespread fame.

Akhmatova herself was astonished by the number of people who knew and quoted poems which had never been published and circulated only privately in manuscript copies: "we never suspected that poetry was so viable". (Mandelstam, N. 1994: 108). In those years when "only the dead smiled, / Glad to be at rest", silent poems would "go creep to our wailing wall, / Crawl to the Kremlin towers." (Akhmatova 1985, *Requiem*: 89).

On the contrary, those who emigrated published from abroad and often started magazines, trying to build "a sort of literary government-in-exile" (McCarthy 1994: 52) able to support those who were working underground in their homelands. The magazines in exile are a very important link of the underground chain of "private" literature. *Kultura*, for example, the Polish review published in exile, became an important bridge between private and public writing. Through an underground chain of solidarity and complicity this smuggled literature would achieve the same choral participation as the Greek theatre, a public manifestation *par excellence*. The works of both Akhmatova and Miłosz were "private", still they spread far and wide. The more the writer is isolated from his community, the closer is his bond with it and with human society in general. As a matter of fact, the readers resort to any stratagem in order to get hold of the forbidden works. As Nadezdha Mandelshtam would write, "once you buy a book you can lose it or choose not to read it. But who will forget the poems they take such a trouble to acquire and secretly retype?" (Mandelstam, N. 1994: 105). Censorship and this paradoxical cultural transmission highlight the importance of art.

It seems to me that many of the most important works of the 20th century were either the ones written in exile or the ones that — secretly written and not officially published — circulated



underground as a message hidden in a bottle. In both cases, the writer was isolated from the society that surrounded him. The poet, argues Marcel Proust, "vit les volets clos, ne sait rien du monde, reste immobile comme un hibou et comme celui-ci, ne voit un peu clair que dans les ténèbres." (Proust 1988: 371). What began as a condition of discomfort can in a certain sense turn out to be a "privileged" position. The hard condition of the writers in exile (internal or external exile) makes their perception of the world and of the human spirit sharper. Proust came to the conclusion "que jamais Noé ne put si bien voir le monde que de l'arche, malgré qu'elle fût close et qu'il fît nuit sur la terre." (Proust 1971: 6). Even if it is born in the silence and in the dark, the poem, "being an instance of language, hence essentially dialogue, may be a letter in a bottle thrown out to sea with the ... hope that it may somehow wash up somewhere, perhaps on a shoreline of the heart. (Celan 1986: 34-5).

The Czechoslovak writer Eda Kriseová recounts how that after having asked for seven years for an exit visa to travel to the United States, she finally obtained it in 1988, thanks to the efforts of her American friends. After giving a public reading of her fiction at Harvard University, she visited the library. Bursting into tears, she discovered that its computers housed the names of her underground manuscripts, described as "carbon copy with the signature of the author". "I felt something like a victorious Robinson Crusoe — my message in the bottle had washed up on a shore somewhere. Unfortunately I had to return to the desert island — but at least I knew the system worked." (Kriseova 1992: 703).

Isaiah Berlin wrote that to speak with Russian writers "was like speaking to the victims of shipwreck on a desert island cut off for decades from civilization" (Berlin 1980: 187): indeed they were exiles in their own homeland.

Totalitarian régimes cause a sort of schizophrenic split in the writer and in the narrative techniques, authorizing only decorous statements and forcing all personal thoughts underground.

On the other hand the language of writers in exile, not influenced by their homeland's everyday speech anymore, becomes a sort of private language, which widens "the purity of its voca-

bulary, the rhythmic expressiveness and the syntactic balance". (Miłosz 1994: 40).

Both conditions are extreme and make words acquire a special intensity. Akhmatova writes in *Requiem*:

In those years only the dead smiled  
Glad to be at rest  
And Leningrad city swayed like  
A needless appendix to its prisons.

.....  
Stars of death stood  
Above us and innocent Russia.  
(Akhmatova 1985, "Prologue", *Requiem*: 89).

All the people Akhmatova loved were one by one arrested, deported, murdered. She survived alone, buried alive:

.....the shade  
of a woman lying ill,  
of a woman stretched alone  
Son in irons and husband clay.  
Pray. Pray.  
(Akhmatova 1985, *Requiem*, 2: 90).

The lucidity of her bare style underlines the unfathomable depth of her grief: words as a way to survive.

Miłosz, who already after the war and after the Holocaust was ashamed because he had "survived alone" (Miłosz 1988, "Café", *Rescue*: 64), with the exile lost all that he had been left.

We learned ...  
how, gradually, what could not be taken away  
is taken. People, countrysides.  
And the heart does not die when one thinks it should.  
(Miłosz 1988, "Elegy for N. N.", *From the Rising of the Sun*: 239).

In 1953 he would write that the living and the dead speak the same language. Only the dead are left to those who survive alone.

And you, my friends who have been called away,  
 I have been spared to mourn for you and weep,  
 Not as a frozen willow over your memory  
 But to cry to the world the names of those who sleep.  
 (Akhmatova 1985, "And you my friends", *The Seventh Book*: 72).

In Akhmatova's life, "death ... became too real for any emotion to matter. From a figure of speech it became a figure that leaves you speechless." (Brodsky 1986: 49). The dead and memory became the main subject of her poems.

The souls of those I love are on high stars.  
 How good that there is no-one left to lose  
 And one can weep .....  
 Rising from the past, my shadow  
 Comes silently to meet me.  
 (Akhmatova 1985, "The souls of those I love", *The Seventh Book*: 74).

In his poem "Antigone", Miłosz makes the heroine say that great is the power of the dead. Even if Creon was surrounded by millions of spies and guards, the dead would reach him: only the fools think that they can live well sacrificing the past.

Beside hiding her poems in a bottle, it is as if Akhmatova also *received* a sealed message, a message sent out by Antiquity: Sophocles' *Antigone*. In a sense Akhmatova could read her destiny in Antigone's destiny.

Antigone too refused to obey the laws of a tyrannical régime which intruded on private lives and consciences: "I did not suppose that your decrees had such power that you, a mortal, could outrun the gods' unwritten and unfailing rules." (Sophocles 1987: 59. 455–6). Antigone too, because of this brave deed, would be condemned to be buried alive. Still, she faced death with dignity and consistency: "Do you want to do anything more than take me and kill me? ... Then why do you delay?" (ib. 61. 497–500). On her side, Akhmatova wrote a poem to death, after her son had been sentenced to death:

You will come in any case, so why not now?  
 Life is very hard: I'm waiting for you.  
 (Akhmatova 1985, "To Death", *Requiem*: 92).



For both Antigone and Akhmatova the world of the dead enters the world of the living and conditions it. They both expressed their courage, their refusal to give their consent through their use of words: sharp and resolute words thrown like stones in defence of the values they believed in.

Kafka wrote that "the Sirens have a still more fatal weapon than their song, namely their silence". (Kafka 1993: 398). One could say that totalitarian regimes, by banishing the truth to the silence, could prevent some authors from publishing their works, but they could do nothing against their pregnant and dangerous silence.

There is a special energy in the private word, perhaps comparable to the power ascribed to the word in Antiquity: in the Greek tragedies the words had a material, physical weight. (Cf. Steiner 1975: 328). Antigone's words of pain did not express pain, they *were* the pain. In the same way, the writers who were prevented from their régimes from publishing their works *were* themselves their works, which only through the samizdat could belong, if not to everybody, at least to somebody else. In fact, even if "the poem is lonely", it is "in the mystery of the encounter": it "intends another, needs this other, needs an opposite." (Celan 1986: 49).

When historical oblivion becomes a political weapon, literature secretly keeps close ties to the past, as a bearer of memory.

Actually, Akhmatova was obsessed by the risk of forgetting. In 1953 she wrote:

We realize that we could not contain  
This past within the frontiers of our life,  
And it has become almost as foreign to us  
As to our neighbour in the next apartment.  
And that we would not recognize  
Those who have died; ...  
(Akhmatova 1985, "The Sixth", *Northern Elegies*,  
*The Seventh Book*: 79).

Miłosz too feared "the oblivion/ born before the flames have died" (Miłosz 1988, "Campo dei fiori", *Rescue*: 33), worried that horror could overcome the poet's talent to express and remember it.

Miłosz said in his *Nobel Lecture* that there are moments when he thinks he can decipher "the meaning of afflictions which befell the nations of the 'other Europe', and that meaning is to make them the bearers of memory — at the time when Europe ... and America possess it less and less .... It is possible that there is no other memory than the memory of wounds." (Miłosz 1981: 20).

You who wronged a simple man  
 .....  
 .....  
 Do not feel safe. The poet remembers.  
 (Miłosz 1988, "You who wronged", *Daylight*: 106).

The poets, by writing words of truth, refused their consent, they refused to collaborate, keeping the dignity of the individual intact. The efforts of the poets are "the efforts of those who, with man-made stars flying overhead, unsheltered even by the traditional tent of the sky, exposed in an unsuspected, terrifying way, carry their existence into language, racked by reality and in search of it." (Celan 1986: 35).

When only lies are publicly allowed, the writers do all that is within their power in order to keep the truth and the language alive and this is what Akhmatova called "courage". The means by which "the poet remembers" (Miłosz 1988, "You who wronged", *Daylight*: 106) is language, itself a product of the past, a guardian of memory. Faraway from the sound of his mother tongue, Miłosz would particularly feel the energy of Polish words and cling to them as the only spiritual link with his past, as the only way to save the single individual. "What is poetry which does not save/ Nations or people?", he wonders. "A connivance with official lies":

You whom I could not save  
 Listen to me.  
 Try to understand this simple speech as I would be  
 ashamed of another.  
 (Miłosz 1988, "Dedication", *Rescue*: 78).

Akhmatova's words too were her only oasis of inner freedom, that is why she feels she has a special responsibility towards her language:

We will preserve you, Russian speech,  
Keep you alive, great Russian word.  
We will pass you to our sons and heirs  
Free and clean, and they in turn to theirs,  
And so forever

(Akhmatova 1985, "Courage", *The Seventh Book*: 72).

Totalitarian regimes try to deform the language, to limit it, to transform it in a purely "public" language, without private references: in "the language of a captive community ... whole zones of reality cease to exist simply because they have no name." (Miłosz 1981: 13).

Akhmatova, who remained in her homeland, tried to keep her language pure; Miłosz, who emigrated, kept on remembering his past and his language, by never ceasing to use it.

"The true enemy of man is generalization", writes Miłosz. (1988: "Lecture IV", *Six Lectures in Verse*, *La Belle Époque*: 488). Through memory and words, the only weapons at his disposal, the poet saves those "details", such as human beings, that history has condemned: "innumerable lives/ Unremembered. Cities on maps only/.../ And those deported from their homes at dawn" their names, their grief. (Ib.).

As Brodsky wrote, "at certain periods of history it is only poetry that is capable of dealing with reality by condensing it into something graspable...". (Brodsky 1986: 52).

Through their poems, Akhmatova and Miłosz spoke for their countries, but they also saw something that was not visible to the majority. Their sharp perception and sensitivity made them write words which would reveal all their pregnancy in the future. In his *Nobel Lecture*, Miłosz says that even if "all arts prove to be nothing compared with action, yet to embrace reality in such a manner that it is preserved in all its old tangle of ... despair and hope, is possible only thanks to a distance." (Miłosz 1981: 12). It is the distance of art, a distance which is sharpened by exile, a condition that makes the writer rise over any boundary of time and space.



In 1935 Osip Mandelshtam wrote:

You took away my seas and running jumps and sky  
 And propped my foot against the violent earth  
 Where could this brilliant calculation get you?  
 You couldn't take away my muttering lips.  
 (Mandelshtam, O. 1991)

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## **Annihilation of the Self in Exile: Gu Cheng's Prose Text *Ying'er* (1993)**

LI XIA

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Literature in exile has attracted considerable critical interest in recent years. Martin Tucker's comprehensive book *Literary Exile in the Twentieth Century: An Analysis and Biographical Dictionary* (Tucker 1991) highlights perhaps better than any other current study the complexity and diversity of the problem. In well over five hundred entries Tucker examines the life of writers who found themselves, voluntarily or involuntarily, and for a variety of reasons (political, religious, sexual, social, cultural or legal) in the condition of exile. Tucker also rightly suggests that 'exile' constitutes above all a phenomenon of the modern era. Indeed, the scale and intensity of the traumatic experience of German speaking writers during the years of the holocaust stands out singularly in human history, although the suffering inflicted on millions by other dictators of the twentieth century was equally inhuman. Therefore, it is not surprising that research in this field has been of particular significance in German literary criticism. (Barron 1997 and Eagleton 1970)

Writers, of course, have been banished from their homeland for all sorts of reasons long before the terror of the Nazi regime. For example, Ovid, who spent years of exile in Tomi at the Black Sea where he wrote letters and poems overshadowed by inner isolation and existential anguish. (Thibault 1964). Qu Yuan and Du Fu are perhaps the best-known Chinese examples that come to mind. In the West, writers and artists such as Dante, Swift, Madame de Staël, Heine, Büchner, Marx, Engels, Wagner, to mention only a few, experienced life in exile and produced works of art out of this experience before the twentieth century. However, the German-



speaking writers and artists who left Germany in the 1930s, such as Thomas Mann, Heinrich Mann, Bertolt Brecht, Robert Musil, Anna Seghers, Klaus Mann, Elias Canetti, Erich Fried, Oskar Kokoschka, Else Lasker-Schüler, Peter Weiss, Franz Werfel, Stefan Zweig and many others reflect in their works on the experience of exile and emotional dislocation caused by fascist persecution during World War Two and thus created a literary genre in its own right. The ever-growing interest in this field of research is documented in the plethora of scholarly publications which now also include national literatures such as Russian, Polish, Czech, Italian and so on. The erection of the Berlin Wall at the height of the Cold War forced many writers from the GDR to seek exile in the FRG. Their contrastive depiction of life in the East and the West and their personal circumstances as part of the dismal political situation in general generated great scholarly interest in this field of study on both sides of the Iron Curtain.

The tragic events of Tian'an Man Square in 1989 forced a large number of Chinese writers and intellectuals to go into exile in order to escape persecution and to write isolated from China about their unique experience in the West: "About a quarter of China's hundred-odd best known intellectuals and writers were forced into exile in the West as a result of the events of June 1989. They fled from China either because they were more or less entangled in the democracy movement or because they belonged to the group of avant-garde authors most likely to be persecuted. Others had no option but to prolong their stay in the West rather than return to a China that was bound and gagged. Thus, they found themselves in a situation similar to that of the Czech intellectuals who happened to be abroad during the Soviet invasion of 1968." (Martin 1992: XXVI). Unfortunately, very little research has been carried out in this area to date. Regrettably current research efforts have been focused almost exclusively on areas such as period definition, problems of inner and outer exile, the social, historical and political background of exile, national characteristics, attitudes of the host country, the movement of the writer in exile, the grouping of writers, the appropriateness of the genre (Georg Lukács claimed the novel as the appropriate form, Brecht, on the other hand, poetry), the problem of being alien in the host country, as well as the biographical, socio-historical and political circumstances of

*Exilliteratur* at the expense of detailed textual analysis. Also, a satisfactory definition of what *Exilliteratur* is, in my view, remains to be determined.

This study will examine the thematic structure of Gu Cheng's (1956–1993) extended autobiographical prose work *Ying'er* (Gu, Lei 1995) and its underlying archetypal imagery which defines the protagonist's journey to the West, namely New Zealand and Germany, as a searching statement of the griefs and doubts of life in exile and the final ritualistic annihilation of the self as one of its consequences. It will be argued that Gu Cheng's *Ying'er* should not only be read in the narrow context of a fatally flawed love-triangle and the tragic murder-suicide apparently directly resulting from it, but more importantly as a metaphor for the alienated, fragmented and displaced consciousness of a Chinese artist in exile, alienated not only from the new environment, but also from himself and a traumatic past. The condition of exile explicitly and implicitly explored by the author ought to be seen therefore as part of the artistic consciousness and thus as a paradigmatic document of Chinese *Exilliterature*.

In the overall structure of the text, the problem of separation from the homeland China is of paramount importance and forms the overriding thematic concern of the work with regard to characters, time and place, action and language. The protagonist is haunted by childhood memories which continuously transform his new environment in the West into visions of the Chinese landscape of past experiences. (This is also the case in the cycle of poems entitled *Cheng* [The City] (Gu 1993: 117–132) which Gu Cheng wrote in Berlin between 1992 and 1993. Moreover, these poems highlight the poet's ("I") alienation from the 'new' China based on money and widespread destruction of the past. The multiple fragmentation of the poet's self as reflected in his last poems (and in his prose work *Ying'er*) contributed to his overall psychological and emotional destabilisation, aggravated by personal problems in his relationship with his wife and his lover Ying'er.

Gu Cheng was a highly sensitive and complex person whose disconnected artistic self is reflected in great detail in his prose work *Ying'er* in which he opens himself up in a frank and uncompromising manner, foreshadowing the impending catastrophe that



was to follow in October 1993: "Writing the book has opened me up page by page to know that I have been mad for a long time." (Gu, Lei 1995: 87) It would seem that the book is above all a psychological study of the writer himself and it has indeed been seen as such. I refer to articles written by Marián Gálik. (Gálik 1995: 277–298). However, this approach ignores a very important dimension of the work which is intrinsically connected with Gu Cheng's feverish, hallucinatory state of mind, his existential feeling of homelessness, isolation and his extensive conscious and subconscious pre-occupation with China which the two female protagonists, Ying'er and Lei, ultimately embody in their Chinese-ness. Wolfgang Kubin, in his article "Verbotene Früchte" (Kubin 1995: 1–31) attests to Gu Cheng's deep bonding with China when he refers to the poet's weekly correspondence with his family in the six months leading up to his death, asking his father to send him soil from Beijing and requesting that his ashes be transported back home after his death.

The book *Ying'er* was completed in March, 1993 in Germany and published in China in the same year. It was circulated privately in Germany and China prior to publication — a Chinese language radio station in Germany is said to have planned 1000 minutes of reading of the original script and friends of Gu Cheng and Xie Ye in Beijing also read advance copies of it. Its immediate success as an important and authentic document of a troubled artistic mind separated from his family, friends, country and language of his childhood can be attributed to a number of factors: the author's international status as a poet, the sensational circumstances of his and his wife's death, the lingering controversy over the authorship of the text, the overt biographical dimension of the young artist's journey to New Zealand and Berlin and the memories of his past reanimated in his new environment, the narrative technique employed and the lyrical quality of the language vividly reflecting the protagonist's highly precarious emotional state. However, despite its popularity in China, the book has received little serious critical attention in China and the West. The only book that is of some relevance is *Gu Cheng Qi Cheng* [Gu Cheng Abandons the City/Gu Cheng Abandons Himself], a collection of essays and memoirs which contains Marián Gálik's April 1992 interview with Gu Cheng on "The Nature of the Fe-



minine in *Faust* and *A Dream of Red Mansions*." This study will focus on the thematic core and the underlying archetypal metaphor of the text, where the protagonist's pilgrimage to the West (New Zealand and Germany) can be seen as a quest for self-realization and freedom in an unfamiliar and alien world that ultimately leads to self-destruction, and on the two female characters, Ying'er and Lei, who accompany him on his ritualistic journey and their role as essential aspects of the protagonist's fragmented Chinese self which does not gain creative sustenance from exile, but deteriorating emotional anguish and pain.

The book exists in two versions in the simplified script (published in Beijing within one month of each other) which are inconsistent and yet present essential and complementary dimensions of Gu Cheng's troubled self. Version One claims to be "the only legal, complete version authorized by the writers", namely Gu Cheng and Lei Mi, his wife's pen name. It was a gift to the Writers Publishing House from an anonymous person who professes to have bought the script for 33,000 yuan at a Shenzhen literary scripts auction the day after Gu Cheng axed his wife Xie Ye to death and then committed suicide. Version Two, published by Huayi Publishing House, was presented to the publisher by a literary associate of the couple, Liu Zhenyun, who had met Gu Cheng and Xie Ye in Berlin at an international conference on Chinese literature in June 1993. Given certain features of this version, it may be presumed the request for publication came from Gu Cheng, without his wife's agreement or perhaps even knowledge. The considerable differences between the two versions are intrinsically relevant to this study.

Firstly, despite the fact that both editions have Gu Cheng and Lei Mi as the joint authors on the front cover and at the same time as the central characters of the novel, a skilful literary device blurring fiction and reality, the two versions differ fundamentally in the tables of contents. The Writers' Version clearly states the author of each part. It shows Gu Cheng as the sole author of the core of the novel consisting of Part One and Part Two which are Gu Cheng's confessions about his love for Ying'er, his lover, and it attributes to Lei Mi authorship of the Extra Part, containing her memoirs about Samuel, her son. These memoirs were written as a result of her forced separation from the latter due to Gu Cheng's

all-exclusive possessiveness towards his wife. The Extra Part is in fact part of a book entitled *Ni jiao xiao mu'er* [Your Name Is Little Samuel] that Lei Mi wrote in Berlin while accompanying Gu Cheng on a DAAD fellowship in 1993. This part is not only a presentation of Gu Cheng's extremely anti-social and problematic paternal attitude, but its very existence casts strong doubts on Lei Mi's active involvement in the writing of Part One and Part Two. The Huayi Version, by contrast, by not being specific about the authorship of each part, implicitly suggests joint authorship of all parts, thus making Lei Mi a party to the maltreatment she received, through her endorsement and legitimation of Gu Cheng's bigamous relationship at the expense of herself and their son.

Secondly, additional elements in both versions combine to provide vital clues which can assist the reader in piecing together a fuller picture of Gu Cheng's troubled relationship with Ying'er and Lei in an unfamiliar Western environment to which he is able to gain access only with their help. The inclusion in the Writers' Version of Ying'er's letters to Gu Cheng and Lei in Berlin not only gives a more balanced view of the interaction between the three, but also sets Ying'er apart from the role that Gu Cheng claims for her in the Huayi Version, which has her as no more than a victim of fate. In fact, this is the first time Ying'er is heard to "speak for herself" and it offers a new perspective to the story which is otherwise two-sided. Furthermore, these letters reveal Ying'er as an intellectual, mature and rational woman, presenting her as Gu Cheng's most objective critic, in stark contrast to the image of the female sex symbol of Gu Cheng's adolescent fantasies. Her observations and assertions about Gu Cheng and the West, particularly Waiheke Island, provide a critical assessment of the overall dilemma all three characters are faced with in the West. They show quite clearly that the two women have adapted much more smoothly to life in a strange and unfamiliar environment, although no clear reason is given for it.

Thirdly, the inclusion in the Writers' Version of Xiaonan's letters to Gu Cheng and Lei in Berlin, likewise, sheds light on a fairytale dream that is deeply rooted in Chinese culture and tradition that they had shared long before Gu Cheng's emigration to the West. The letter by Xiaonan, a female character who introduced Ying'er to Gu Cheng in Beijing in the first place, and who



professes to be a true believer in Gu Cheng's ideal, for the first time spells out his original design of the garden of pure flowers and pronounces its disintegration because of Ying'er's maturity and the departure for the West: "I remember saying to you when you came home: When Ying'er left China, I knew that was the end of it. You have always lived in the fairytale of our past. In fact, it has been a long time since Ying'er believed in it. The only person who believes in it is me. Until today, I still remember Lei showing me the picture book. We were so absorbed in the fairytale. Ying'er wanted to believe in it, but she could no longer persist in that state of mind. It is not that she doesn't understand, but that she is so good at controlling her feelings ..." (Gu/Zuoia 1993: 272).

Fourthly, the narrative structure of the two versions is quite dissimilar due to the different arrangement of the same material by the narrator, which significantly alters the way the text is read. In the Huayi Version, the narrator who is a Ph.D student from China studying in Berlin, appears only at the beginning of the novel in the Prologue and at the end in the Epilogue. In the Prologue, the narrator speaking as an onlooker from mainstream society, gives what seems to be objective background information about the reclusive poet Gu Cheng who fantasises about polygamy and the innocent world of the "Kingdom of Daughters" as depicted in the "Grand View Garden" of *A Dream of Red Mansions*. He introduces the story as a mystery book contained in a box made available to him by Lei on his visit to the Island after Gu Cheng's disappearance. In the Epilogue, with the mystery now revealed, the same narrative voice returns, condemning Gu Cheng and speaking with the moral authority of society at large. The Prologue is the same in both versions, but the three sections of the Epilogue in the Huayi Version are inserted into different places in the Writers Version, with Section One as the last section of Part One, Section Two as the Prologue of Part Two and Section Three as the Epilogue of Part Two. If the narrator is Gu Cheng stepping outside himself and looking at himself, and thereby presenting his rational side, then the recurrence of his Chinese voice throughout the Writers Version underpins the stranglehold the old world of China has on him and his inability to free himself from it and to leave it behind, resulting in his highly confused state of mind and contributing his final emotional disintegration.



In order to analyse the underlying archetypal metaphor of the text, it is necessary to examine the two editions of the novel as one body of text. The narrative of Parts One and Two consists mainly of Gu Cheng's inner monologue and presents his confessions, mad ramblings and fantasies, in the stream of consciousness technique, about his love affair and obsession with Ying'er, her loving interaction with his wife Lei, and how her elopement with "the old man" triggers off his insanity and his subsequent decision to kill himself. There are constant flashbacks to past events in Beijing and Waiheke Island, New Zealand, in which his original vision of a Chinese fairyland and the "Kingdom of Daughters" unfolds, with Ying'er and Lei as the protagonists. Gu Cheng's obsession with building a castle on Waiheke Island and his failure to do so forms a thread running through the entire text. The Huayi Version has also, as its opening section, a six page preface by Gu Cheng's father, a recollection of the making of the poet and his early life in China. Appropriately entitled "Pursuing His Dream", it is an affectionate account of Gu Cheng's poetic genius and gives legitimacy to his childhood dreams and aspirations which are to his father clearly part of the making of an artist, paving the foundations for the pursuit of his ideal world. Thus it effectively marks one of the most important stations of Gu Cheng's metaphorical journey through life. The presence in the Huayi Version of Gu Cheng's last poem "Return Home" to his son, ostensibly written on September 3, 1993 on board the plane from Germany to New Zealand via the United States, serves to elevate the reluctant father to the status of a loving family man, but reveals at the same time his guilty conscience. By linking his son to the final return home to China, this poem highlights the ultimate failure of Gu Cheng's dream to find ultimate freedom and self-realization in the West: "I want to say one thing to you/ Shan, I love you/ This I say only to you/ No one else can hear it/ I love you Shan/ I want to return home/ You can take me home./ (Gu, Lei 1995: 306)

Deeply embedded in the literary traditions of China, Gu Cheng's attempt in *Ying'er* to transplant a Chinese dream into a romanticized and idealistic setting in the West seems to be doomed from the outset because of the hero's outsider position, his lack of understanding of the Western world and the continuous and powerful intrusion of his Chinese past despite his claims to

the contrary. Waiheke Island in New Zealand offers Gu Cheng the transient, anonymous existence and detachment from institutionalized society necessary for productive living and creativity. Here, his strange neurotic restlessness and existential disquiet finds apparently temporary peace and fulfilment in a simple and idyllic life close to nature despite hard physical work, self-discipline and existential vulnerability in a pristine natural environment: "The most mystifying thing to his friends about his B City behaviour was his talk about the Island. It was at the beginning of 1988 when he first landed there. At that stage C, his wife was still nursing their child aged five months. There, they started a kind of modern primitive life. They drank rainwater, sawed timber, made pots, collected shellfish and raised chickens. The bit about raising chickens, chasing chickens was written up by someone and together with the photos, was published in a computer network magazine. It has also appeared on my computer." (Ib. 6). Waiheke Island represents to Gu Cheng the "Garden of Peach Blossoms" and at the same time a testing ground where modern man is confronted with nature: "Its coast was flat with a stretch of forest and a small river running through it. I put things in a circle, the bag and sticks the way Robinson Crusoe does when he lands, as if I were going to live in trees. I said this was my house and I had dug holes there before. You laughed. I said I had mined for coal there. You said I didn't get anything out." (Ib. 175). There he experiences with other believers in an alternative life-style and social utopians the disillusionment with modern industrial mass society and the nostalgic longing for the authenticity of a pre-industrial form of life: "Smoking marijuana is no big deal on our island. It's full of old hippies anyway. They make a living by planting a bit of marijuana and by handicrafts. Generally speaking, they are not bad people." (Ib. 209) Here Gu Cheng also reaffirms his vision of total independence and defiant individualism as his final destiny as an artist: "I should die there. I should believe in nothing, want nothing, like a mad tree that does not move no matter how powerful the storm is. It stands there until it is broken. It won't float around in the sea or in dirty mud." (Ib. 114) The intense conflict between the ideal and real world, between nature and culture and between China and the West is centred in Ying'er, the title character of the novel, Gu Cheng's lover whose elopement



with an elderly white man provokes the rupture of his loosely constructed dream world. His inability to integrate these elements constitutes an integral part of his self-destruction.

Berlin, the other station of Gu Cheng's journey to the West, supplies a powerful thematic contrast to Waiheke Island. This modern metropolis provides the opportunity for him to earn the money required for permanent settlement on the small unspoiled island in the Antipodes: "We came to Berlin with that little house in mind. It is on the opposite side of time, one year. A house with new windows, a new little cupboard with glasses inside. There is a little staircase, like a toy, that Ying'er likes. I feel that one year, no matter how insurmountable, will pass. The days after it will be clear-cut. It should be a long corridor with no end. If I close my eyes, the time will pass. I make myself go to sleep, like a river. I always see Ying'er standing on the steps, appearing the way I like her, in her little blouse with floral patterns." (Ib. 202). In Berlin, Gu Cheng is disoriented, bored, homesick and constantly overcome by longing for the pristine nature of Waiheke or the China of his childhood. It is the city from which he wants to escape, as the narrator observes in the Prologue. Not even his reputation as a poet holds much attraction for him: "When he was in B City, G could be regarded as a poet, but he never went to any gatherings of the literati or the smart set. He didn't like going to the movies either." (Ib. 5) Gu Cheng's dislike of Berlin is shared by the Ph.D student whose alienation from life in Germany and his work as an engineer is contrasted with the intensity of his longing for Waiheke and equally powerful childhood memories of China: "Everyone in B City thought the most likely person to visit them on the Island was Dayu. Dayu was a Ph.D student in hydro mechanics and wave reduction, but he hated his thesis. No one dared ask him about it and as to exactly what he researched in the end, no one really knew. It never left his mind that he would one day return to the high school in his home town and push his music teacher into the river. Almost all of his friends in B City who had been to his house had watched his favourite video of some long horned lobsters on migration in the South-West Pacific. Equally present in his mind was the trip to New Zealand to catch these lobsters." (Ib. 8)



Berlin also highlights the Western lifestyle of material wealth and technical progress epitomized in the ubiquitous car: "I live in a cave, and sometimes I look outside the window at the neat, quiet street covered with cars stretching from one end to the other. They are not the old bombs still running on the Island, but new German cars. Lined up end to end, they are polished like buttons." (Ib. 119). Material progress, however, is constantly shown as being remorselessly qualified by and associated with an environment in which the vitality of a productive nature is perverted into an ominous wasteland and people are reduced to shadows of their natural selves: "Those railway tracks were hidden in the wild grass and both grass and trees were growing luxuriantly. At the place near the forest, there were still track after track of rails in the middle of which white birch, oak, wild pear and lilac were growing. It was a deserted place with broken walls, rubble, empty windows, collapsed wells and living trees everywhere. No one came here and we walked around the purple lilac bush, avoiding the thorns of the wild roses. The living city was no longer in sight. Only occasionally the shadow of a person could be seen in the ruins." (Ib. 106)

Gu Cheng's negative experience is all-pervasive, extending far beyond Berlin and overshadowing even the romantic side of Germany: "There was nothing in this dream. Waking up, I had a bitter taste in my mouth. Still in the dark night of Germany, in the town of Trier, this mountain valley filled with the sound of water. This mill that had been turning for many years was turning no longer." (Ib. 178)

Even in Berlin, Gu Cheng's dreams and childhood memories take him continuously back to China and her vulnerability to the West which mirrors the protagonist's own insecurity: "I have retreated bit by bit. I can't sleep for long these days. The minute I fall asleep, I wake up and roll back to sleep again. But when I get into a slightly deeper sleep, dreams will come one after another. It might have been near the Summer Palace; there is a rock the size of the Marble Barge. He stands there saying: 'It will all be the same in three hundred years.' Later, he thought even after one hundred years it will all be the same. All will be dust." (Ib. 119).

The fact that *Ying'er* represents Gu Cheng's idealistic search for the ultimate self-fulfilment in life is highlighted in the preface

of the novel by Gu Cheng's father, a poet in his own right, on behalf of his son. Gu Gong fondly remembers his poet son: "Papa, Papa, I've written another poem.....', my eight year old son Gu Cheng returned home every day after school at Xi Zhi Men Primary. Up the curving stairs and along the corridor, he came running, pushing open the door to jump into my arms, his little heart beating fast. Breathing heavily, he would recite me poems — stories about pine-cones and rain drops; dialogues between clouds and the earth; intimate chats of a ladybird with an ant ..." (Ib. 1)

Gu Cheng's projection of his aesthetic ideal of the feminine role into real life induces him to invite Ying'er, his lover, to join him and his wife for life under the same roof, casting out all concerns of practicality, morality and social convention. On the surface, he is engaged in a bigamous relationship, with Ying'er satisfying his sexual, emotional and intellectual needs and his wife Lei offering him stability, security and the handling of daily affairs. At a deeper level, Ying'er and Lei are captives in his infantile self-centred dream world with a more or less decorative, ornamental role. They are not loved as individuals but rather for their assigned roles as consort and mother in his childhood games.

Gu Cheng's personal view of the feminine and of his own masculinity provides the basic principle of his aesthetic world which is deeply rooted in Chinese culture and appropriated from the literary classics of various feudal dynasties. In the interview with Marián Gálík on "The Nature of the Feminine in Goethe's *Faust* and *A Dream of Red Mansions*", Gu Cheng expresses agreement with Guo Moruo's translation of the last verse of *Faust*, "Das Ewig-Weibliche zieht uns hinan" into Chinese as "yongheng zhi nüxing yindao women zou", which translates into English as "the eternal feminine guides us upwards". Gálík agrees with Gu Cheng's assertion, adding that the most profound and the most beautiful aspect of the two works, is the value conferred on the feminine and the interaction between women. In this respect, Gálík says *A Dream of Red Mansions* sets a precedent in world literature. Gu Cheng claims that the notion of the "feminine" does not denote a mode of sex or sexuality, but rather, a state of mind or being. He draws a parallel between the so-called heavenly peacefulness of the feminine and the ultimate Buddhist state of tranquillity which is, to him, both illusory and real. His Orphic



appreciation of women for their purely aesthetic dimension, only to be seen and not touched, may explain his inability to have a productive and creative relationship with them. Therefore, Lei's fertility is as much her socially acceptable form of sexuality in her role as his wife as it is her tragedy which sees their son adopted out to a Maori woman because of Gu Cheng's refusal to accept him as a member of his family.

Whilst Gu Cheng's elevation of the feminine to abstractions of the sublime has found an echo in Western literature, *his* ideal notion is set in the context of an idealized Chinese fairyland. He romanticizes Ying'er's child-like playfulness and takes the part she plays in his life as real: "There was a little girl's voice in the air, she came running from the building. She climbed up the lilac tree while answering me. Her little dress was also a bunch of flowers." (Ib. 56) Indeed, women are nothing but flowers to Gu Cheng. In refusing to accept that Ying'er will mature and free herself from his fantasy world filled with adolescent obsessions, Gu Cheng is preparing his own downfall as foreseen by Ying'er in a letter to him: "It wasn't until I went into town for some business the other day that I realised that we hadn't been living a real life. It was not real life or it could be regarded as playing a part in a novel or playing house." (Zuojia: 246) When Ying'er finally elopes with a Westerner, it is not only an assertion of her own sexual maturity, but also an attempt at living a real and socially acceptable life. In fact, it is this daring act that brings home to Gu Cheng the failure of his grand plan.

To Gu Cheng, the interaction between the maidens of the "Grand View Garden" and Jia Baoyu, the hero of *A Dream of Red Mansions*, is both ideal and real. Jia Baoyu's protection of and love for the girls is non-sexual and therefore, amounts to love for nature and the self. It is in this sense of "love for the feminine as love for the Self" that Lei, Gu Cheng's wife, and Ying'er, his lover, are identified as the externalized aspects of his self, sustaining him in his quest for self-realization in a alien environment. Lei and Ying'er represent the two sides of Gu Cheng's basic needs. Lei as the mother of his son gives him security, stability and domestic care as he admits himself in a moment of delirious confession: "Lei, I love you. No, I respect you. I don't love you. You never let me overstep the boundaries. I really love this



security." (Gu, Lei 1995: 21). Ying'er, by contrast, is portrayed as his dark, mysterious side: "I ask my voice to look for you. It becomes rain in the blue and orange storms. I don't know where my words might fall, in the untrod forest or on the road covered with rotten tree branches, or in the surprised stare returned by strangers. No one knows I have written this to you. No one knows you. They sometimes recall another person or a voice in life, an illustration in a book. Your parents don't know you either, or your brother or your female friends. When I say I know you, everyone is surprised. They all think I have got the wrong person. Whatever I say, no one knows because it is written for you." (Ib. 111). Ying'er also represents sensuality, eloquence, and intellectuality. Her qualities and those of Lei, complementary and yet in stark contrast with each other, together contribute to form the fully rounded person of Gu Cheng's externalized self. If Gu Cheng's view of the feminine is responsible for his existential dilemma, then his childish sense of reality becomes ultimately crucial to his condition. His reality is not only overshadowed by the two women, but also by his past in China that these women have come to embody in his new environment to which he can gain access only with their help. The Chinese qualities with which they are imbued are an invigorating support which enables Gu Cheng to retain his Chinese identity: "I don't quite believe that you can still speak Chinese, the language that enabled us to live together. I don't believe your heart can still see me. But I still write, day and night. Write with disbelief. I talk to you at night and during the day, I put these words into the letter box." (Ib.).

Gu Cheng's condition is not only negated by his constant nostalgia for his Chinese past, but also by his conscious decision not to make real contact with the West through his refusal to learn English, which he justifies as a continuous effort to retain his Chinese identity. *The Beijing Evening Daily*, which carried a controversial interview with two prominent writers about Gu Cheng, quotes him as saying: "If a Chinese person learns another language, he then will lose his feeling of the existence of the Self, his being. The loss of the Self occurs in learning another language." (Beijing Evening Daily, April 16, 1994) This concept provides the footnote to the "isolation" and "innocence" he takes such pride in. The self-glorified isolation arises out of an inner need to

exclude what is foreign and un-Chinese. Gu Cheng confirms this in a moment of delirium: "I was born not to belong to life. I live in my room and I don't go into the street. I draw in my room and I don't look at the scenery outside. I speak my own tongue and I don't understand other languages. But there isn't a person. Look at me. I don't have a spiritual voice. What I have kept is only between me and life, what can be kept in a kitchen and in a corridor." (Gu, Lei 1995: 87) In a letter to his friend Xiaonan in Beijing, Gu Cheng again confirms his alienation from the West and his preferred position as an outsider: "The cars come and go. They have nothing to do with me. I don't understand their language either. It is really good ... I signalled to one and it stopped for me. I waved at it and it went again. I don't know anyone. I am a foreigner just as when I first arrived." (Ib. 101). Furthermore, the China that he cherishes is the China of the past as it is romanticized in the Chinese film *Liang jia funü* characterised by a primitive life and outdated marital customs. Lei's parody of *Yumeiren*, a classical Chinese poem, where Li Yu, the last emperor of South Tang in captivity, laments his lost kingdom, not only negates Gu Cheng's existential position by evoking the irrelevance of a bygone era, but also captures the tragic tone of her own condition. The entire novel repeatedly highlights Gu Cheng's inability to leave China behind him. Even in his final state of mental and emotional disintegration, he still asserts his Chinese identity: "In his heart there is a large lake, abundant in water and roaring waves. Ordinary ships can't sail into it. After crying for a while, he finds all the wheat has turned green. Modern man is rather weak. He who has shed tears will have a refreshed look with sand and dust deposited in his eyes." (Ib. 109). Finally he says to his wife: "You got it all wrong. I'm not the character in the book and I didn't ask you to ladle out water to feed my big herd of camels. I've never had a big herd of camels. I go to work by bicycle, a native of Beijing. It's true I'm from the East. But there are many countries in the East. Not every man from the East is called Abraham." (Ib. 110).

Unlike the Monk Xuan Zang who walked to India in the 7th century and returned with the Buddhist Scriptures and the wisdom of the sages of the West, Gu Cheng never returned to China and his pilgrimage was a failure due to his inability to integrate his

past with the present. And unlike the self-styled paradise of the 4th century hermit poet and philosopher Tao Yuanming, whose quest for freedom and self-realization found expression in the "Garden of Peach Blossoms", a Chinese Utopia free from the trammels of society and immortalized in his "pastoral poetry," Gu Cheng's "Garden of Peach Blossoms" existed only in his imagination.

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## Die Ehe als Utopie: Einführung in ein literarisches Motiv

JAAN UNDUSK

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Meinen ursprünglichen Plan, über "die Grenzen der Brüderlichkeit der estnischen und deutschbaltischen Literatur" zu reden, habe ich thematisch eingegrenzt<sup>1</sup>. Statt einen Überblick über die Möglichkeiten einer symbolischen Verbrüderung auf allen literarischen Ebenen — beginnend mit gegenseitigem sprachlichen Materialaustausch und endend mit Übereinstimmungen im Naturempfinden — zu geben, werde ich mich nur auf eines, dafür aber ein sehr wesentliches inhaltliches Motiv konzentrieren, in dem die literarische Intimität der beiden Völker am weitesten gegangen ist: ich möchte nämlich von der Liebe und Ehe zwischen Esten und baltischen Adligen sprechen, sowohl in der estnischen und, in geringerem Ausmaße, deutschbaltischen Literatur. Ich betrete damit also ein Terrain, auf dem gemeinsame Empfindungen zweier Völker, eigentlich zweier national bedingten Stände, durch die stärkste menschliche Sympathiebekundung gekrönt werden. Insofern handelt es sich hier in gewisser Hinsicht um die Form höchster literarischer Zusammenarbeit zwischen Esten und Deutschbalten — und nicht nur literarisch, sondern auch ideologisch und weltanschaulich.

Das Motiv ist in der estnischen Literatur spürbar verbreiteter als in der deutschbaltischen Literatur. So überraschend es auch sein mag, als erster brachte Carl Robert Jakobson, der Anführer des radikaleren und deutschfeindlicheren Flügels der estnischen

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<sup>1</sup> Vortrag, gehalten am 9. Juni 1995 auf dem 7. Baltischen Seminar "Literaturbeziehungen zwischen Deutschbalten, Esten und Letten" in der Ost-Akademie Lüneburg.

Nationalisten, das Thema aufs Tapet, und zwar in seinem Schauspiel *Arthur und Anna* (Jakobson 1872), dessen erste Variante auf deutsch niedergeschrieben wurde. Natürlich gab es auch eine vorbereitende Phase der literarischen Motivausarbeitung, z.B. im Werk von Johann Voldemar Jannsen (während der 1840–1860er Jahre), wo symptomatischerweise fast ausschließlich mit fremden Entlehnungen oder vorsichtigen Andeutungen gespielt wird, ohne sich die Lebenswichtigkeit der Problemstellung vorzunehmen. Eine sogenannte **klassische** Bearbeitung des Motivs findet man ferner in den Werken von Jakob Pärn (1879, 1883), Eduard Bornhöhe (1880, 1905), Elisabeth Aspe (1888), Kaarel Krimm (1890), Eduard Vilde (1886, 1892) und Hella Wuolijoki (1933), aber auch in Jaan Kross' in Deutschland schon in drei Auflagen erschienenem historischen Roman *Der Verrückte des Zaren* (1978, 1988, 1990, 1994). Dies sind äußerst verschiedene Bücher aus einer Zeitspanne von mehr als einhundert Jahren, in denen das Motiv mal glücklich, mal weniger glücklich gelöst wird, in der Mehrzahl der Fälle naiv, manchmal kitschig, selten auf künstlerisch hohem Niveau; was sie alle aber doch vereint, ist, daß das Liebesverhältnis zwischen Esten und deutschbaltischen Adligen hier ernstgenommen wird, es wird zwischen den Zeilen oder direkt gewürdigt. Die wenn auch nur prinzipielle Möglichkeit der Ehe zwischen gesellschaftlichen Antipoden ist hier gleichsam ein Zeichen von einer neuen, besseren Welt ohne Epauletten.

In eine andere Gruppe würden einige Werke vom Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts gehören, so Vildes *Der Milchmann von Mäeküla* (1916) und Siedler Woltershausen (1925, 1979), ebenso Anton Hansen Tammsaares *Ich liebte eine Deutsche* (1935, 1977) und Karl August Hindreys *Und die Welt und die Menschen ...* (1939), wo die Behandlung des Themas durch eine **ironische**, stellenweise geradezu parodistische Dimension vertieft wird, was dem Motiv erst psychologische Reife verleiht.

Aus der deutschbaltischen Literatur gibt es wesentlich weniger Beispiele; genaugenommen ziehe ich nur zwei Werke zur näheren Betrachtung heran, die dafür aber in unserem Kontext recht beispielhaft sind, nämlich Elisär von Kupffers *Feuer im Osten*

(1908) und Siegfried von Vegesacks *Jaschka und Janne* (1965)<sup>2</sup>. Auch wenn sie sich von der Art und Weise des Pathos her unterscheiden, wird in ihnen beiden das zur Eheschließung führende Liebesverhältnis zwischen Esten und baltischen Adligen positiv gewürdigt, mehr noch: als die Keimzelle einer neuen besseren Welt gesehen. Insofern würden sie in die sogenannte klassische, nicht in die ironische Gruppe gehören.

Ich möchte betonen, daß ich nicht bloß von der Liebe und Ehe zwischen Esten und baltischen Deutschen rede, sondern von dem Verhältnis zwischen Esten und baltischen Adligen, was ein Thema vollkommen für sich und mit starker semiotischer Markierung ist. Das Liebesverhältnis zwischen Esten und Deutschen im allgemeinen ist etwas wesentlich gewöhnlicheres, unbestimmteres, so wie auch im Leben selbst; so waren beispielsweise die kulturell aktiven Esten im 19. Jahrhundert häufig mit Deutschen verheiratet. Hinzu kommt noch die Problematik der sogenannten Wacholder- oder Halbdeutschen, das heißt die undeutliche Pufferzone, die sich sprachlich aber auch von der Herkunft her an der Grenze zwischen zwei Völkern befindet. Diesen ganzen bunten estnisch-deutschen Bereich kann man in der Literatur auch im Vorbeigehen behandeln, nur streifend, als Nebensache. Ein näherer Kontakt zwischen Adliger und Esten, Adligem und Estin, ist dagegen immer, sofern er denn auftritt, im Zentrum der Aufmerksamkeit, wenn nicht sogar das einzige, so doch wenigstens eines der Hauptmotive des Werkes, worüber der Autor oder die Autorin nicht einfach so hinwegschreiben kann; es würde nur den Effekt einer Farce haben, wenn unvorbereitet ein Satz wie der folgende fallengelassen würde: der Este sowieso, sagen wir Jüri Jalakas, ist verheiratet mit der Gräfin Stenbock. Die Situation ist nicht undenkbar, aber sie erfordert immer eine längere Begründung — es handelt sich vom Wesen her um ein literarisches Haupt- und kein Nebenmotiv.

Warum das eben so ist, wird durch einen Blick auf die hinter der Literatur liegende Referenzebene deutlich, im gegebenen Fall also auf die gesellschaftlichen Umstände im Baltikum. Das historische Verhältnis zwischen baltischen Adligen und Esten ist aus

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<sup>2</sup> Der Roman von Mia Munier-Wroblewski "Zeitenwende" (1940) war mir leider nicht zugänglich.



dem Blickwinkel der Liebe ein delikates, für beide Seiten peinliches, auch verheimlichtes Thema. Es gibt hier wenig Möglichkeiten, sich auf schriftliche Beweise zu stützen, die Hauptinformation kommt aus mündlicher Überlieferung und Annahmen. Die Spitze des Eisbergs, das was man also garantiert sehen kann, ist die Tatsache, daß im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert der besprochene Ehetyt aufgrund der tiefen Kastenunterschiede eine seltene Erscheinung war. Was für eine Manipulationskunst man dafür benötigte, beschreibt Vegesack in seinem *Jaschka und Janne* (Vegesack 1965: 76–78). In den früheren Jahrhunderten der baltischen Kolonisation gestaltete sich die Oberschicht wesentlich offener, weswegen es keinen Grund gibt, daran zu zweifeln, daß auch in den Adern des örtlichen Adels eine gehörige Portion estnischen Bluts floß. Dieses Blut kam auch später dorthin, durch die deutschbaltischen Zwischenschichten, die verdeutschten oder verschwedischen Esten. Die genannten Fakten werden übrigens oft auch in den literarischen Bearbeitungen des Motivs benutzt, um bei dem einen oder der anderen Adligen die geradezu ererbte Sympathie gegenüber den Esten zu begründen.

Wie dem auch sei, später verdienten die Adligen, die öffentlich ein Mädchen von niederer Geburt zur Frau beehrten, den Titel eines "Verrückten" — natürlich ist dies etwas überspitzt formuliert, weil Ehen zwischen den Ständen in den letzten Jahrhunderten vielleicht nicht so selten waren, wie man es im allgemeinen sehen wollte, und nicht nur von der deutschen, sondern auch von der estnischen Seite. Einer der Begründer der estnischen Bauernszählung, im Volksmund der "verrückte" Graf Peter Mannteuffel, brachte sich aus Wien eine Schäferstochter mit und lebte mit ihr in wilder Ehe, aus der drei Töchter hervorgingen. Der Gutsherr von Võisiku, der baltische Dissident Timotheus von Bock, den der Zar für verrückt erklären ließ, ehelichte eine estnische Bauerntochter. Sein Name als "Verrückter des Zaren" ist durch Jaan Kross' gleichnamigen Roman verewigt worden. Auch als Prototyp von Arthur von Adelstein in Jakobsons Schauspiel *Arthur und Anna*, das mehr als hundert Jahre vor Kross geschrieben worden ist, hat man denselben Timotheus von Bock angenommen (Loone 1962: 342–343). Weil Jakobsons Schauspiel das erste belletristische Werk war, in dem das Liebesverhältnis zwischen einem Adligen

und einer Estin thematisiert wurde — was innerhalb der estnischen Literatur zu einer eigenen Richtung führte — können wir Herrn von Bock als **den** Prototyp eines edlen Ritters der estnischen Literatur verstehen und sogar von einer hundertjährigen Entwicklung des Motivs reden, "von Bock zu Bock" nämlich.

Diese spannende, wenn auch nicht bis ins letzte überzeugende Schlußfolgerung zeigt ja auch, daß hinter einer ganzen Serie gleichartiger literarischer Figuren im realen Leben prinzipiell nicht mehr als nur eine einzige legendäre Person zu stehen braucht, deren literarische Vervielfältigung in der Folge schon im mehr oder weniger geschlossenen Raum, literaturintern, in der intertextuellen Sphäre stattfindet. Also: das Leben kann nur eine schillernde Person vorgeben, in den literarischen Traumlandschaften wird diese auf Druck der sozialen Bestellung zu einem sich von Werk zu Werk wiederholenden Typ. Spätere Betrachter haben schon Schwierigkeiten zu entscheiden, wo die Widerspiegelung lebendiger Situationen endet und das literarische Recycling beginnt. Ganz sicher muß man auch den Einfluß der deutschen Literatur des 19. Jahrhunderts berücksichtigen, war doch auch hier die Ehe zwischen den Ständen eines der Modethemen; so ist beispielsweise Eduard Bornhöhes *Annis Jungfernzeit* nach der direkten Vorlage von Fontanes *Irrungen, Wirrungen* (1888) geschrieben. Die meisten deutschen Vorbilder zur Verarbeitung des Motivs gehörten aber zu viel niedrigeren Ebenen der Literaturwelt (z.B. Marlitt).

Die andere Seite der ständebedingten Distanz zwischen baltischem Adel und Esten war vielleicht etwas völlig entgegengesetztes: nämlich die Gewohnheitsmäßigkeit und große Verbreitung ihres inoffiziellen Verkehrs. Ich sage "vielleicht", denn hier verirren wir uns schon in diejenigen Zonen des Eisberges, die unterhalb der Wasseroberfläche liegen, wo peinliche Dämmerung herrscht. Stichwort ist hier das *ius primae noctis*, das Recht der ersten Nacht, d.h. die Berechtigung des Landesherrn, in der Hochtzeitsnacht die Braut seines Leibeigenen zu gebrauchen. Da die Informationen über "Richtlinien" oder Gültigkeit dieser merkwürdigen Feudalsitte knapp sind, wollen wir den Ausdruck hier vielmehr in symbolischer Bedeutung benutzen, als Kennzeichnung für die allgemeine sexuelle Willkür des Gutsherrn. Wahrscheinlich



hat auch der Volksmund, in dem noch zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts die Erzählungen davon nicht verstummen wollten, dieses "Recht" ebenso unbestimmt aufgefaßt (s. Salu 1981: 94 ff.). Wieviel in solchen Erzählungen Erinnerungen aus realen Erlebnissen und inwieweit verbotene sexuelle Phantasien, oder Sozialkritik, eine Rolle spielten (à la dem Teufel ein Liebchen sein), können wir nicht sagen, ebensowenig, was der psychologische Hintergrund des "Gesetzes" gewesen sein konnte. Die radikale Kritik hat behauptet, daß das "Gesetz" in Estland überflüssig war, weil hier das Recht "von jeder Nacht und jedem Tag" galt. Eine gemäßigte Analyse bringt ans Tageslicht, daß die Mädchen, die im Gut dienten, häufig verführt wurden und daß von den Vätern der unehelichen Kinder etwa ein Viertel Esten waren, während den größeren Teil Personen bildeten, deren Name nicht genannt wird — wahrscheinlich waren es die örtlichen Herren (Raud 1915: 80 ff.; 1961: 139 ff.). Es geschah auch, daß Baronensöhne und -töchter auf den Bauernhöfen aufwuchsen, ohne daß der "wirkliche" Vater etwas davon wußte — oder mit seinem stillschweigenden Einverständnis. Ein estnischer Dorfscherz, den Hella Wuolijoki in ihrem Roman *Leeni aus Udu-taguste in Tartu* verwendet hat: am Johannisfeuer des Dorfes sitzen eine Menge Bauern, die — aus irgendeinem Grunde! — alle die Adlernase des örtlichen Gutsherrn Rehbinder haben (Vuolijoki 1933: 17).

Einerlei, ob das Recht der ersten Nacht in Estland existierte oder nicht, ob ein Verhältnis des Gutsherrn mit Untergebenen das Ergebnis reiner Gewalt oder gegenseitiger Zugeständnisse war — in jedem Fall war dieses Verhältnis später Gegenstand von Verachtung oder wenigstens Geheimnistuerei, d.h. auf der Ebene der öffentlichen Meinung somit illegal. Die literarische Anwendung des Motivs bedeutet nun aber nichts anderes, als eine Legalisierung und Veredlung dieses illegalen Verhältnisses, und mehr noch, es wird ins Gegenteil verkehrt und in den Rahmen der sozialen Utopie gesetzt. Anstelle eines ehrlosen Konkubinats sehen wir den öffentlichen Dialog edler Naturen, anstatt dem Bauern die Frau abzupressen macht der Adlige hier einen ernsten und ehrerbietigen Vorschlag. Das ist auf seine Weise eine vollkommene **literarische Kompensation** des legendären *ius primae noctis*. Aber es ist auch mehr, wie gesagt, es ist die gesellschaftliche Utopie in literari-



schem Gewand, mit der man — mit den Worten des “verrückten Bock” von Jaan Kross — “die Gleichheit aller guten Menschen vor Gott, der Natur und den Idealen beweisen” will (Kross 1990: 15). Das ist die Ablehnung des Klassenkampfes und das Projekt eines liebenswürdigen Zusammenschmelzens, als dessen Motto sich der berühmte Satz anbietet: *Bella gerant alii! tu, felix Austria, nube! / Nam quae Mars aliis, dat tibi regna Venus!* “Anderen lasse den Krieg! du, glückliches Österreich, freie! / Mars mehrt andern das Reich, Venus vergrößert es dir!” Wenn im glücklichen Österreich in der zweiten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts eine Volksgruppe diese Losung für bare Münze nahm, dann waren das die Wiener Juden, deren einer Teil ganz bewußt in das Großbürgertum und den Adel hineinheiratete, was zu hervorragenden, manchmal geradezu operettenartigen Ergebnissen führte. In den Ostseeprovinzen des sumpfkalten Rußlands wurden andere Saiten aufgezogen. Die baltische Heirats-Utopie, die keinesfalls nur ein literarisches Unternehmen war, sondern ein vorläufiges Durchspielen der wichtigen gesellschaftlichen Reformidee, blieb vorwiegend zwischen den Buchdeckeln stehen, wo sie schließlich sich selbst traurig auslachte. Wenn auch die Zahl der deutsch-estnischen Mischehen weiterhin wuchs und nach Meinung mancher Balten vor dem Zweiten Weltkrieg ein geradezu erschreckendes Niveau erlangt hat (s. z.B. Bremen 1993: 251), hat dies doch kaum den Adel betroffen.

Es ist eine alte Wahrheit, daß die Ehe im Märchen fast immer den definitiven Aufstieg des Helden/der Heldin aus einem niedrigen gesellschaftlichen Stand in einen höheren bedeutet (Röhrich 1981: 1037). In dieser Hinsicht entspricht das zur Debatte stehende Motiv vollkommen der landläufigen Vorstellung, derzufolge die Literatur zu Wunschträumen aufwiegele. Es entspricht auch vollkommen den Anforderungen des literarischen Kitschs, wo das “vom Dienstmädchen zur Königstochter” geradezu eine kompositorische Regel ist. Ich möchte aber weder den Kitsch noch die Volkstümlichkeit betonen. Die Ehe zwischen Esten und baltischen Adligen war zu zart, ideologisch ein todernstes Thema, als daß man sie als Kitsch hätte genießen können. Ästhetische Billigkeit ging Hand in Hand mit schwermütigen programmatischen Gedanken, und die Leichtigkeit von Wunder-

märchen hat vielleicht nur Hella Wuolijoki erreicht. Eher würde der Begriff realistisches, oder sogar funktionalistisches Märchen passen. Man traf freilich auch auf wahren Kitsch, aber der war entlehnt. Zum Beispiel lautet der Untertitel von H. Leithammels Erzählung *Bauer und Ritter* (1899) "Eine Erzählung aus Estland", die Personen tragen baltische Adelsnamen; weil ihr aber jeglicher Bezug zu den baltischen Gegebenheiten fehlt, bleibt sie hier unberücksichtigt.

Gehen wir weiter. Max Lüthi hat konstatiert: "Die Ehe ist Ziel der meisten Märchen. Aber sie ist nicht ihr Gegenstand." (Lüthi 1970: 67). Das trifft auch auf die uns interessierende Textansammlung zu. Das Erreichen oder Nichterreichen eines Ehestandes, der die verschiedenen Schichten miteinander verbindet, ist ein Ereignis von symbolischem Wert, und das Zusammenleben selbst tut nichts mehr zur Sache. Auch die Psychologie der Liebe bleibt meistens auf der Ebene des Aufeinandertreffens schichtenspezifischer Symbole, ihres Antagonismus oder ihrer Solidarisierung. Sogar Kupffer und Kross, in deren Werken die Partner bereits verheiratet sind, lassen sich nicht zu einer psychologischen Analyse der Ehe herab, denn die von ihrer Feder geschaffenen estnischen Frauen sind so erhaben und klug, daß Eheprobleme ausgeschlossen sind. Interessant ist allerdings der Konflikt mit der reaktionären Gesellschaft, in der die Frau als humanistische Stütze an der Seite ihres Mannes steht. Persönlichkeits- und nationalpsychologische Tiefen werden erst in der ironischen Phase der Motivanwendung ausgelotet.

Was sind nun eigentlich die Voraussetzungen für diese hinsichtlich der sozialen Stände sehr ungleiche Ehe? In erster Linie alles besiegende Liebe. Anders könnte es in der meist hohen moralischen Atmosphäre einer auf dem Motiv der Weltverbesserung basierenden Literatur auch gar nicht sein. "Wann hat Liebe sich um den Kommet oder irgendeine Grenze gekümmert?" kann man mit Vegesack fragen (1965: 11). Und wirklich, was sonst würde die sozial und finanziell höher gestellte Person zwingen, sich soviel Ungemach zu bereiten, wenn nicht Liebe? Dieser in jeder Hinsicht logische Standpunkt wird in der estnischen Literatur durch die Behauptung erhärtet, daß man gewöhnlich gerade innerhalb der Oberschicht Eheangelegenheiten mit Blick auf wirt-



schaftlichen Gewinn regelte (s. Pärn 1979: 116). Doch verhielt man sich, das sei hinzugefügt, auch unter den Bauern ebenso pragmatisch. Eine außergewöhnliche Ehe zwischen den Ständen muß dagegen einen außergewöhnlichen Grund haben — und das kann nur lodernde Liebe sein. Gewiß, stellenweise, zum Beispiel bei Jakobsons *Arthur und Anna* oder besonders in Kross' *Verrücktem des Zaren*, kommt als starkes Argument auch der bewußte Wille des Deutschbalten in Frage, der öffentlichen Meinung zu trotzen, aber der erste Motor des ganzen Prozesses kann dennoch nichts anderes sein als edle Leidenschaft, ein bezüglich der Stände gleichgültiges, daher geradezu revolutionäres Gefühl — Liebe.

Die Idee, daß die Liebe nicht nach dem Stand fragt, wird häufig gerade den deutschbaltischen Figuren, das heißt dem Partner, der höher auf der sozialen Leiter steht, in den Mund gelegt, die Initiative zur Liebe kommt von oben. Das schließt als Grund für das Verhältnis Gewinnsucht bei der sozial niedriger stehenden Person aus. Liebe, ein Gefühl, das eine spontane, sozusagen vorgesellschaftliche und also ursprüngliche menschliche Wahrheit zum Ausdruck bringt, ist die mächtigste Waffe gegen soziologische Denkmodelle. Wenn Esten und Deutschbalten einander lieben, dann stellt die Liebe sie beide nicht nur biologisch oder emotional auf die gleiche Stufe, sondern auch soziologisch. Gerade das Wissen darum, daß die Liebe ein Verhältnis **gleichberechtigter Partner** ist, gibt dem Liebesverhältnis zwischen Esten und Deutschbalten das soziale Pathos.

Gleichzeitig aber ist kein einziger der Schriftsteller, die das Thema behandeln, so naiv, daß er alles der Liebe überläßt. Es handelt sich hier um lehrende, das Volk aufklärende Werke, die nicht nur Hoffnung geben wollen, sondern auch Ratschläge für ein besseres, den gesellschaftlichen Aufstieg ermöglichendes Leben. Und deswegen wird die Liebe sorgfältig mit Argumenten wie Bildung und edlem Charakter abgesichert. Die Esten, die die Liebe eines Deutschbalten gewinnen können oder sie sogar heiraten, sind, erstens, bildungshungrige junge Frauen und Männer, begabte Lerner, die, zweitens, auch durch ihr großzügiges, selbstaufopferndes Verhalten auffallen. Die Bildungspropaganda ist von diesen Werken nicht zu trennen, die Eltern der lernbegierigen jungen Leute tun ihr bestes, um ihren Kindern Schulbildung



angedeihen zu lassen, wobei als Moral die Maxime dient: gerade eine gute Bildung gibt die Freiheit, **den** zu lieben, den die Seele begehrt. "Und deinetwegen will ich lernen, was ein Mensch je lernen kann", sagt Ain aus Ennosaare in der gleichnamigen Erzählung zu Hilde von Habermann, während er um ihre Hand anhält (Aspe 1974: 41). Diese Hand bekommt er nicht, aber ein fähiger Astronom wird er schon. Noch bei Vegesacks *Jaschka und Janne* können wir lesen, wie eine einfache estnische Jungfer, die einen geistig anspruchslosen Balten heiratet, sich dennoch zu einer gesellschaftlich feinen und gebildeten Dame entwickelt. Ebenso läßt Timo von Bock in Kross' *Verrücktem des Zaren* seine Eeva trotz aller stürmischer Leidenschaft fünf Jahre ausbilden, ehe er sie heimführt. Alles dies weist auf die historisch erwiesene Tatsache, daß in die deutsche Gesellschaft zu gelangen für einen Esten bis zum Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts gleichsam bedeutete, in den Genuß von Bildung zu kommen, und daß unser Ehemotiv eigentlich ein Bildungsmotiv war. Häufig erweisen die Esten ihren späteren deutschbaltischen Geliebten persönliche Dienste, erretten sie aus dem Tod, helfen in Not, geben guten Rat. Hier schimmern echte Märchenrituale in den Geschichten durch, denen zufolge der jüngste Bruder drei Mutproben ableisten muß, ehe er die Hand der Prinzessen erlangt.

So ist also der Preis eines Deutschbalten/einer Deutschbaltin für einen Esten oder eine Estin hochgeschraubt, und die Anforderungen an die Esten selbst deswegen sehr groß. Um sich Deutschbalten zu fangen oder von ihnen fangen zu lassen, müssen die Esten wahrlich begabt, schön und vornehm sein. Im Ergebnis wachsen die estnischen Romanfiguren den armen Balten manchmal über den Kopf, das heißt, sie werden selbst so königlich, daß die Balten daneben blaß wirken. Und hier erhebt sich dann letztlich die Frage, ob für solche wertvollen Esten die Deutschbalten überhaupt noch ausreichen? Das ist ein oft entstehendes Paradox, das in Pärns *Schwarzer Rock* zu seinem logischen Ende geführt wird: in der Geschichte treten zwei Balten auf, die Esten begehren, eine Frau und ein Mann, und die Geschichte droht mit einer doppelten Mischehe zu enden. Doch entscheiden sich die Esten zugunsten **ihrer** Volksgenossinnen und -genossen, die wesentlich adliger, gebildeter und geistig gereifter dargestellt sind als die

Deutschen. Den gleichen Zug kann man in deutschbaltischen Werken entdecken. In Kupffers Schauspiel *Feuer im Osten* ragt die Baronin Linda, die estnischer Herkunft ist, als tragische Heldin aus ihrer Umgebung hervor, indem sie nicht nur das humanistische Schmuckstück ihres baltischen Mannes, sondern der gesamten deutschen Gesellschaft wird.

Um Esten und Deutschbalten in ein gegenseitiges Liebesverhältnis zu führen, muß man nicht nur die Esten veredeln, sondern die Deutschen auch sozusagen temperieren. Das wird daran deutlich, mit welcher Vorsicht sich man an das zu betrachtende Motiv machte und wieviele Kompromisse man glaubte eingehen zu müssen. In Jakobsons *Arthur und Anna* kennt und liebt Arthur, der für den Gutsherrn unpassenderweise eine Dichterveranlagung hat, estnische Volkslieder, da er erst in der dritten Generation ein — von estnischen Bauern abstammender — Adliger ist. In Pärns *Juhan und Adele* hat sich Adeles Vater, der von niederer Herkunft ist, erst zu seinen eigenen Lebzeiten den Adelstitel erdient. In Vegesacks *Jaschka und Janne* wird der Majoratsherr Jaschka durch "eine Vorliebe für das Ursprüngliche, Derbe und Volkstümliche" charakterisiert (Vegesack 1965: 28); auch er kann estnische Volkslieder und ist ein Nachkomme des geadelten Kindes von Graf Mengden und dessen undeutscher Sklavin. Kupffer rechtfertigt die eheliche Verbindung zwischen einem Deutschen und einer Estin — der Schwester des Anführers der Aufständischen — im Vorwort zu seinem Schauspiel mit der geringen Größe der baltischen Gesellschaft (Kupffer 1908: 4). So macht man den Deutschen, die sich in Esten verliebt haben, also mit jedem Schritt Zugeständnisse, um die Leser davon zu überzeugen, daß es sich nicht um gewöhnliche, sondern recht besondere Exemplare handelt.

Das Verhältnis zwischen Esten und baltischen Adligen hat zwei geschlechtliche Varianten, es kann sich entweder um einen estnischen Mann und eine deutsche Frau halten oder umgekehrt. Voraussetzungen für eine glückliche Liebe und die Eheschließung bietet aber in Wahrheit nur eine Variante, nämlich die Fixierung eines deutschen Adligen auf ein estnisches Mädchen. Ein estnischer Mann, der sich anschickt, um die Hand einer deutschen Adelsdame anzuhalten und ihr Herz zu gewinnen, erhält wahr-



scheinlich einen Korb. Diese Körbe gab es übrigens auch im richtigen Leben. So mußte beispielsweise Eduard Bornhöhe, der 1879 als Siebzehnjähriger in seinem "Rächer" von einer mißglückten Liebe zwischen einem estnischen Jüngling und einem deutschen Adelsfräulein schrieb, einige Jahre später selbst eine herbe Enttäuschung bei der Baronesse Hoyningen-Huene hinnehmen (Salu 1965: 142). Nur ganz selten gelingt es einem estnischen Mann in der Literatur, ein Adelsmädchen zu heiraten (Pärns *Juhan und Adele*). Das steht mit der historischen Wahrscheinlichkeit und der Logik der Motiventwicklung im Einklang. Wenn die Frau den höheren Stand vertritt, würde die Ehe für sie einen Abstieg auf der gesellschaftlichen Leiter bedeuten. Ein Mann wird von einer so großen Gefahr nicht bedroht, bei der Heirat mit einer estnischen Frau fällt er selbst nicht in dem Maße, in dem er die andere erhebt. Im übrigen kommt der Ehevorschlag meistens vom höheren Stand, wenn es sich dabei aber um eine Frau handelt, so hat sie in den patriarchalischen Strukturen jedoch keine selbständige Handlungsfreiheit. Der niedrigere Stand ist häufig psychologisch nicht bereit, die Initiative zu ergreifen, gleichfalls könnte seine Initiative den Argwohn wecken, jemand sei materiell interessiert, was im Widerspruch zur ethischen Reinheit des Motivs steht.

Wie gesagt, verfügt die Entwicklungsgeschichte des hier zur Debatte stehenden Motivs auch über eine ironische Phase, die man in den Jahren 1910 bis 1930 ansiedeln kann. Eingeleitet wird dies unmittelbar vor der Entstehung der Republik Estland in Vildes *Der Milchmann von Mäeküla* (ein Roman, der meines Wissens überhaupt die beste baltische "Baronenpsychologie" bietet!), und sie gipfelt in der Reifezeit der Republik. Ironisch nenne ich diese Phase nicht nur deswegen, weil hier bei der Bearbeitung des Motivs häufig Ausdrucksmittel der Ironie ins Spiel kommen, sondern auch, weil die ganze Situation zur Selbstironie geworden ist. Besonders deutlich kommt das in Tammsaares *Ich liebte eine Deutsche* zum Vorschein, der den literarischen Scheitelpunkt des Intimverhältnisses zwischen Esten und Deutschen darstellt und einer der besten estnischen Liebesromane ist; aber auch in Hindreys Roman *Und die Welt und die Menschen ...*, der gleichzeitig wie ein elegischer Abschiedswalzer unmittelbar vor der Umsied-



lung der Balten wirkt. Woher kommt nun die historische Ironie der Situation?

In den dreißiger Jahren ist angesichts der sozialen Veränderungen die Liebe zwischen Esten und Deutschen wieder auf der Tagesordnung: die Republik Estland ist in vollem Gang, die Esten befinden sich in ihrem Staat in den Führungspositionen, die Deutschbalten haben ihre äußerlichen Privilegien verloren und stehen auf der sozialen Leiter sogar unter den Esten. Vildes Novelle *Siedler Woltershausen* arbeitet mit scharfen und komischen Kontrasten das Auf-den-Kopf-Stellen der alten Welt heraus. Nicht mehr der Este, sondern die deutschbaltische Baronentochter ist nun bemüht, beim estnischen Student eine höhere Bildung zu wundern (*Ich liebte eine Deutsche*). Es ist natürlich, daß diese Demokratisierungstendenzen ihren Ausdruck auch in Mischehen finden, die ja wohl doch äußerst empfindliche Gradmesser für die nationale und soziale Solidarität einer Gesellschaft sind. Auf der Ebene der Kleinbürger ist auch alles ziemlich einfach: der kleine deutsche Mann weiß, daß ihm bei einer Heirat mit einer Estin kein Zacken aus der Krone bricht, vor allem nicht, wenn es wirtschaftlichen Gewinn verspricht, und der kleine estnische Mann weiß, daß eine Blutvermischung mit einer Deutschen sogar chique ist. Probleme entstehen in den Oberschichten, auf der Ebene des ehemaligen deutschen Adels und des Literatenstandes einerseits und der gegenwärtigen estnischen Intelligenz andererseits. Und die Erkenntnis, daß das Zerschneiden äußerer Barrieren auf dem Wege der Liebe nicht die inneren Widerstände der menschlichen Seele beseitigt hat und daß die baltische Eheutopie immer noch nicht und vielleicht überhaupt nicht verwirklicht ist — diese Erkenntnis kann sich als tragikomisch erweisen. Obwohl die Liebe nun unvergleichlich wirklicher, kraftvoller ist als je in der Entwicklungsgeschichte unseres Motivs, können weder die Esten noch die Balten über ihren Schatten springen: Die utopische Liebe — nun völlig ohne märchenhafte Züge, bloß ironisch-analytisch dargestellt — führt nicht zur Eheschließung. Doch bot diese humanistisch-diplomatische Herangehensweise, in der der retrospektive Dialog der Kulturen letztlich stattgefunden hat, völlig neue Chancen für eine sozialpsychologische Analyse des Baltischen Raums. Tammsaare und Hindrey schneiden tiefer in die

Verhältnisse zweier Völker ein, als es früher oder später geschehen ist.

Aber kaum war der Dialog entstanden, verschwand seine brennende Aktualität auf Wunsch der Geschichte bald wieder. Der Dialog selbst aber wurde das Objekt nur platonischen Interesses der Geschichtsschreibung.

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## Die Ehe als Utopie: Motivanalytisches Schema

Motiv	Die Ehe zwischen einem/einer Esten/Estin und einem/einer deutschbaltischen Adligen															
Zeitraum	Die estnische und die deutschbaltische Literatur von den 1870er bis zu den 1970er Jahren															
Gründerzeitraum	Die estnische Literatur in den 1870–1890er Jahren															
Nachzeitraum oder Motivwende	Die estnische Literatur in den 1910–1930er Jahren															
Motivphase oder Pathostyp	a) klassische Phase, bildet sich im Gründerzeitraum b) ironische Phase, bildet sich im Nachzeitraum															
Textbasis (Chronologie der Werke; * ironische Phase)	1) C. R. Jakobson, <i>Arthur ja Anna</i> (1872) 2) J. Pärn, <i>Juhan ja Adele</i> (1879) 3) E. Bornhöhe, <i>Tasuja</i> (1880) 4) J. Pärn, <i>Must kuub</i> (1883) 5) E. Vilde, <i>Musta mantliga mees</i> (1886) 6) E. Aspe, <i>Ennosaare Ain</i> (1888) 7) K. Krimm, <i>Ära tungi!</i> (1890) 8) E. Bornhöhe, <i>Anni neitsipõlv</i> (geschr. 1891) 9) E. Vilde, <i>Kännud ja käbid</i> (1892) 10) H. Leithammel, <i>Talupoeg ja rüütel</i> (1899) 11) E. v. Kupffer, <i>Feuer im Osten</i> (1908) 12) *E. Vilde, <i>Mäeküla piimamees</i> (1916) 13) *E. Vilde, <i>Asunik Woltershausen</i> (1925) 14) H. Wuolijoki, <i>Udutaguste Leeni Tartus</i> (1933) 15) *A. H. Tammsaare, <i>Ma armastasin sakslast</i> (1935) 16) * K. A. Hindrey, <i>Ja ilma ja inimesi</i> (1939) 17) S. v. Vegesack, <i>Jaschka und Janne</i> (1965) 18) J. Kross, <i>Keisri hull</i> (1978)															
Hauptvarianten	<table><tr><td></td><td>Estnischer Mann</td><td>deutscher Mann</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>+</td><td>+</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>deutsche Frau</td><td>estnische Frau</td></tr><tr><td>gelungen</td><td>.</td><td>x</td></tr><tr><td>mißlungen</td><td>x</td><td></td></tr></table>		Estnischer Mann	deutscher Mann		+	+		deutsche Frau	estnische Frau	gelungen	.	x	mißlungen	x	
	Estnischer Mann	deutscher Mann														
	+	+														
	deutsche Frau	estnische Frau														
gelungen	.	x														
mißlungen	x															
Haupttendenz der Motivausarbeitung (klassische Phase)	a) Veredelung von Esten b) “Temperierung” von Deutschen															

Textgeschichtlicher Hintergrund	a) Märchen b) literarischer Kitsch c) aufklärerischer und sozialkritischer Realismus
Sozialer Hintergrund	a) öffentliche Isolation der Stände b) verborgene Intimität der Stände (jus primae noctis) c) öffentliche Intimität der Stände (das Phänomen des "verrückten Grafen")
Ideologie des Motivs	a) moralischer Sinn: Bildungspropaganda b) allegorischer Sinn: literarische Kompensation c) anagogischer Sinn: soziale Utopie (Antiutopie)

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## **Dystopian Versions of Future (and Past) as Programs for Cultural Self-Understanding**

TIINA AUNIN

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By around 1910, to use Virginia Woolf's terminology, human nature had changed. Jointly with this, the art-historical term "perspective", originally limited to the visible world, had acquired a measure of universality that seemed to justify its use in literary discourse, too. Changes in terminology often record the more or less traumatic transition from one order of things to a different one.

One might recall Frank Lloyd Wright — a prominent American architect saying: "The hope for man lies in the ability to change and to speak out on behalf of that change". The writers on the verge of the new millennium continue speaking out strongly, but they express that change in a somewhat different rhetoric than did F. L. Wright, V. Woolf and their other modernist colleagues. Not all of them envision the 21st century as an opportunity for a greater exercise of reason. Often the writers' vision is a man or woman who cannot see his history, his world and his future. As a result, the intellectuals more often than ever turn to various forms of fantasy and utopia. A special literary genre of dystopia has been developed to call man's attention to specific ominous events in 20th-century politics and science. Dystopias allow certain tendencies in modern society to spin forward without distorting reality beyond recognition. They appeal for readers' vigilance without the brake of their humanity. They also evoke our national and cultural memory. "The real world is incomprehensible unless we see it within the context of possible worlds, of which it is a part," says Matei Calinescu. It means that dystopian worlds not only "confront us with what it would be like to live under the laws of this or that (...) political system, but the future in them is always like the past,



once you get there" (Calinescu 1982: 141). The Canadian author Margaret Atwood whose novel is under discussion in this article has expressed it even more clearly. She said: "there is nothing in the book that hasn't already happened. All the things described in the book, people have already done to one another" (*Books in Canada*, 1985). Thus, by envisioning an appalling future already implicit in the contemporary world, the writers condemn just those past and present propensities that make this future possible.

As I mentioned above, the intellectuals' pessimistic prospects began to take shape already earlier in this century, under the increasing pressure of the profit — minded prophets for whom the vision of the future was a man of power. On this point let us recall Michel Foucault's observation of the complex relationship between science and power, between sexuality and power, and even go back to Tocquevillian ideas about the relationship between democracy and power. Different forms of power may use different languages, but in its ultimate aim the language of power is the same: rejection, exclusion, refusal, blockage, concealment and mask. "Its effects take the general form of limit and lack," says Foucault and continues: "All the modes of domination, submission and subjugation are ultimately reduced to an effect of obedience." (Foucault 1978: 85) Keeping this in mind helps us to question society's directions and to reject laws which force people to march blindly together. This also helps to contextualize the agonies of the protagonists in two dystopias under discussion: 1) in M. Atwood's novel *The Handmaid's Tale* and 2) in Eiv Eloon's *The Dual Tribe*.

In intertextual endeavours one would usually do well when proceeding discreetly from the particular to the general. My strategy is to elaborate certain dystopian features these two novels embody which have been pointed out as salient by various literary critics, and to show that these features also function as means for national and cultural self-understanding. The selection of these dystopian features for comparison is of the greatest importance. We cannot just choose any science fiction for intertextual analyses and call it dystopia. But when studying analogies between Atwood's and Eloon's (the pen name of the Estonian female author Lea Soo — b. in 1945) texts, the comparison seems to be fully justified. For here we can speak of the same overtly acknowledged

"intertextuality" and, of the same dependence on another literary work, namely Foucault's book *The History of Sexuality*.

Atwood, who has molded the shape of the genre in Canada, published her *Handmaid's Tale* in 1985. The first volume of Eiloon's fantasy was published in 1981, the second volume in 1988, three years later than Atwood's novel, but the same distinctly Atwoodian dimension prevails in it. Both novels are constructed within the theoretical framework of Michel Foucault's *The History of Sexuality*. Both have the basic devices of fantastic literature which, according to Jorge Luis Borges, are only three in number:

- 1) the work within the work (tapes found and chosen as a conference topic in one case; a MS found, translated and published in the other case);
- 2) the contamination of reality by dream (nightmare);
- 3) the double, or duality (inherent already in the title of Eiloon's novel).

In fact, all these three devices involve numerous binary oppositions, for dystopias like any other "fantastic literature depend for their effect on a sharply defined opposition" (Clayton 1982: 75), the opposition of primary importance being, of course, (1) that between fantasy and reality itself. Curious enough, this is an opposition to which the sophisticated twentieth century can no longer lend its credence. "Today we can no longer believe in an unchanging external reality, nor in a literature which would be the transcription of that reality", quotes Clayton the pessimistic view of structuralist Todorov in his essay "On Realistic and Fantastic Discourse" (ib.), and wonders that despite the lack of historical perspective people still continue to believe.

Maybe this is why Eiloon sets the scene of activity for his dual tribe on another planet, into another cosmic area of the universe, but leaves all problems unmistakably as ours. Namely, how to say "yes" to the national potential without violating human identity, or his (her) dignity? With her book she seems to echo J. Rabkin's concept of Plato's *Republic* having as its cornerstone that "each person is educated to fulfill the one job for which he is best qualified by native talent, and educated to believe that his functioning in society must be as a door of that job" (Rabkin 1977: 6). Likewise, the mimetic impulse of Atwood's dystopia aims at wresting an imperfect reality from a horror-ridden future. It also



appeals for an appreciation of mature values of compassion and for one's unique identity.

Fears of our end-of-the-millennium reality are recognizeable in both novels. In the Estonian novel the combined machinery of science and political power is focusing on one single effort — to produce more and more of dual species capable of resisting to the outward threat (radiation). In 1981 the vision of the author was to some extent prophetic: it gives us a sparkling apocalyptic prediction of cloning. Ten years before the actual scientific breakthrough, it presents a description of a similar experiment so simple any skilled lab technician can do it. As in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, it also sets up the central moral issue: what's possible and what's ethical may be two very different things. At the same time it contains certain political allusions understandable for the Estonian reader.

The eternal conflict between individual choice and social necessity is the second main opposition both dystopias dramatize. Atwood's protagonist is resenting the replacement of her private volition by compulsory decisions made by an impersonal bureaucratic machinery. Likewise, one of Eloon's female characters sums up the conflict as that between the body and the population. The gaalis as more resistant species are compelled to perform their painful incubator assignment as a matter of obligation prohibiting choice.

The legislative power is on one side, and an obedient subject on the other.

"To the formal homogeneity of power (...) corresponds the general form of submission in the one who is constrained by it — whether the individual in question is the subject opposite the monarch, the citizen opposite the state (as it is in Atwood's dystopia — T.A.) (...), or the disciple opposite the master (as it is in Eloon's fantasy — T.A.)." (Foucault 1978: 85)

Whatever the other oppositions, be it judgment and tolerance, nature and civilization, intuition and knowledge — in the issue all they go back to the eternal conflict between the good and the evil as the driving force behind modern science and political power.



2) Here we come to another major feature of the genre: fear and forewarning. Having its origins in fear, the dystopian vision grows out of the need for survival in an originally hostile world. Fear and guilt are the two overwhelming emotions in dystopias. The sense of guilt the characters feel for the past and the fear of the future — both are loaded by elements of horror. Offred's guilt over her mother's disappearance and her fears for her daughter actually represent her fears of the future: "But I haven't done anything (...) all I did was not tell. They know where my child is. What if they bring her, threaten something to her, in front of me? Or do it. I can't bear to think what they might do (...). Dear God, don't make me choose." (Atwood 1986: 267).

At the same time, the dystopian horror is never there for its own sake; its emphasis is always on forewarning. Science and power are the main targets of criticism and forewarning. The tactics of criticism may still differ. While criticizing the scientists' attempt to reconstruct authentic history, Atwood's attitude to science as a whole seems quite ambivalent. The Gileadeans exploit technology in order to control (money, supplies, people), but also *do not* employ it for religious reasons (pre-natal testing, genetics, abortion) because it is "against God's will". Elton's criticism goes directly against uncontrolled experimentation in bio-genetics. Both authors seem to be convinced that even in the most developed form of scientific research there is an aggressive compulsion to subject everything to its law.

Which methods could establish balance here? Irony, grotesque and demythologization are the methods both authors use when aiming at bringing the violence of scientific and political forces under control. When condemning the brutal solutions made by Gilead spokespersons, Atwood does it on the level of the comic. "There is something humorously appropriate, for example, when the Commander's wife (...) gets exactly the life that she earlier advocates others and does not find it good" (Davidson 1988: 113–114). And there is something grotesquely ironical about the International Historical Association's conference of 2195, and the ways it "intellectually forays back into the Gilead Regime" (ib. 114).

Interestingly, there is foreign threat (radiation, genetic war, pollution, etc.) always looming somewhere in the background providing tension, internal terror and fear for extinction. The latter, in

its turn, justifies all sort of grotesque experimentation. In the Estonian dystopia the "touch of excess" in experimentation is not as noticeable as in the Canadian novel. It carries the narrative only one step beyond our reality, as I said, sets it on another planet. And this is quite understandable — in 1981 when the first volume of the book was written (and even in 1988) the space between the writer and the text in Estonia was still governed by censorship.

3) In Atwood's book merciless power is openly misogynic, turning women into "sacred vessels, ambulatory chalices", to use the protagonist's words. This view of marginalization of woman is the third dystopian feature which rests on Foucault's observation about the power-sex correlative. But, while Atwood poignantly condemns the misogynic mentality that takes a heavy toll and causes a lot of suffering, her Estonian colleague can find some Jesuitical justification for the God-like manipulative role the scientists of one tribe (all male) play in the other tribe's (female) life. The victimization process itself has been described here as the manifestation of one's free will. I dare not say that it is quite symptomatic of our national character, as pointed out by some critics but, still, the suicidal rate in Estonia has always been one of the highest in Europe. Anyway, sparing the reader from the gory scenes of experimentation and surgery, both authors masterly forward the effects of fear upon human psyche, and the ways of surpassing it.

To sum up, we may still ask: What is the use of dystopian vision? Is the genre as such bearing any positive message? The answer is: yes. Despite the fact that the thematic possibilities of dystopias are somewhat restricted, they are overtly educational novels, using the present as an instructive reference to the dystopian configuration. They are kind of programs of creating better society for all — constructing and at the same time pulling down the facade of fear for us. The future shows whether we can read them this way; whether the writers' civil courage to say "no" to some ominous events and tendencies in the end-of-the-millennium society is to be turned into the readers' individual, as well as national courage to say "yes" to the human potential. Without believing this "the hope for a future is left to those whose vision is power more than the promise of human dignity on a small planet" (*In the Course of Architecture*: 20–21), said Frank Lloyd Wright, an outstanding architect and a great master of the perspective.

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## The Burden of Optimism: E. A. Poe

REET SOOL

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This paper was first presented at a conference devoted to North American optimism — hence its peculiar bent.

To be an optimist — is it not the burden of being unable to get rid of pessimism? Etymologically, as we know, ‘optimism’ and ‘optimum’ are closely linked, and though the tenets of philosophical optimism have been mocked over the ages, there are millions of people today that are convinced that this world, and more specifically, their country, is the best of all possible worlds or countries. Is this belief not a burden, too, in a way? To be a superpower, the only one that is still left, is definitely a burden since it means the constant need to retain and reinforce itself as such in order to guarantee security and to create a *new* optimal world order, based, though, on the 18<sup>th</sup>-century ideas of Enlightenment, put down in the Declaration of Independence. It is ‘the pursuit of happiness’ that seems most pertinent in the context of this conference. America is an idea, repeated President Clinton recently. This idea could be realized by the manipulable arrangement of a scientific-technological world, and a kind of optimal thinking that carefully controls and considers all possibilities in it. (See Heidegger 1992). This forms the basis for the kind of optimism, the traces of which were present in the work of authors traditionally not associated with optimism — E. A. Poe, for example. His optimism is really an ‘optimalism’, if we are to take liberties with the language, and thus certainly different from the optimism of, say, Emerson or Whitman. Poe’s emphasis on logic, reason, coherent forecast, calculation and ratiocination make him a very modern author, and a ‘modern’ optimist. For as Nietzsche tells us, “logic,

by its nature, is optimism.” (Nietzsche 1994: 17). On the other hand, he states in *Ecce Homo*:

I shall have a major occasion to demonstrate how the historical consequences of *optimism*, this abortion of the *homines optimi*, have been uncanny beyond measure. Zarathustra, who was the first to grasp that the optimist is just as decadent as the pessimist, and perhaps more harmful, says: “Good men never speak the truth.” (Nietzsche 1989: 329).

Presuming that Poe, by popular understanding of his contemporaries at least, was not a ‘good man’, we could expect *him* to speak the truth and thus venture to look for optimism, or American optimism, in Poe’s work traditionally known as tales of terror, “The Pit and the Pendulum”, even. This tale has been described as the very essence of nightmare, built upon an utterly hopeless situation from which there is no apparent escape. Yet at the opening of his tale, the narrator asserts:

I had swooned; but will not say that all of consciousness was lost. What of it there remained I will not attempt to define, or even to describe; yet all was not lost. In the deepest slumber — no! In delirium — no! In a swoon — no! In death — no! even in the grave all *is not* lost. Else there is no immortality for man. (Poe 1992: 435).

There are no utterly hopeless situations, it is implied, since the rational man, applying certain optimum, can save himself by ratiocination, as this tale (as well as various others) so eloquently testify. Optimal behaviour in threatening situations leads to optimistic solutions. The weak, i.e. the ones that cannot soberly calculate at crucial moments, will perish — sucked into pits, abysses, maelströms, etc. The calculation has to be optimally accurate, mistakes can be fatal. Poe builds up the tension very carefully, step by step, having his protagonist overcome new and seemingly insurmountable obstacles. Moreover, the prisoner is oscillating between hope and hopelessness, following the oscillations of the pendulum itself on its mechanically ruthless path:

I saw that some ten or twelve vibrations would bring the steel in actual contact with my robe — and with this observation there suddenly came over my spirit all the keen, collected calmness of *despair*. For the first time during many hours — or perhaps days — I *thought*. (Ib. 442).

Counting and recounting paces in the dungeon, observing the exact movement of the killer pendulum, the manner in which the bandage is tied and, finally, an Orwellian foreboding, the eating habits of the rats:

At first, the ravenous animals were startled and terrified at the change — at the cessation of movement. They shrank alarmedly back; many sought the well. But this was only for a moment. I had not counted in vain upon their voracity. Observing that I remained without motion, one or two of the boldest leaped upon the framework, and smelt at the surcingle. This seemed the signal for a general rush. Forth from the well they hurried in fresh troops. They clung to the wood — they overran it, and leapt in hundreds upon my person. The measured movement of the pendulum disturbed them not at all. Avoiding its strokes, they busied themselves with the anointed bandage. They pressed — they warmed upon me in ever accumulating heaps. They writhed upon my throat; their cold lips sought my own; I was half stifled by their thronging pressure; a disgust, for which the world has no name, swelled my bosom, and chilled, with a deadly clamminess, my heart. Yet one minute, and I felt that the struggle would be over. Plainly I perceived the loosening of the bandage. I knew that in more than one place it must be already severed. With a more than human resolution I lay *still*.

Nor had I erred in my calculations — nor had I endured in vain. I at length felt that I was *free*. /.../ For the moment, at least, I was *free*. Free! — and in the grasp of the Inquisition! (Ib. 443).



Not to err in calculations, to *think*, even in despair, especially in despair, is the modern *optimalist's* credo. This enables to evade whatever abyss, to prolong one's existence until an outstretched arm catches one's own. (General Lasalle's troops invaded Toledo on May 6, 1808.) In a way, since it is General Lasalle that rescues the narrator from the clutches of the Inquisition, we might say that he owes his life both to his own reasoning and the ideas of Enlightenment. Initially, after having heard his death sentence, he observes:

After that, the sound of the inquisitorial voices seemed merged in one dreamy indeterminate hum. It conveyed to my soul the idea of *revolution* — perhaps from its association in fancy with the burr of a mill-wheel. (Ib. 434).

The idea of *revolution*, a subtle ambiguity, rarely noticed by translators, at the opening of the tale is complemented by the ushering in of the Age of Reason at its ending. In a man-made hell one no longer expects a miracle escape thanks to the heavenly forces but resorts to his own power of reasoning. This capacity, imaginative ratiocination or inspired reasoning, is eventually the source of optimism of the modern man. In fact, imagination tends to be the starting point of ratiocination, the imaginative governing the rational. This idea is subtly elaborated in "The Purloined Letter" as Dupin solves the mystery by identifying himself with Minister D., a rational man and a poet, discarding the merely rational approach of Monsieur G., the Prefect of the Parisian police:" /.../ As poet *and* mathematician, he would reason well; as poet, profoundly; as mere mathematician, he could not have reasoned at all, and thus would have been at the mercy of the Prefect." (Ib. 602).

The narrator of "A Descent Into the Maelström" rescues himself from destruction all on his own, by imaginative reasoning, and a strange *keen* and *unnatural* curiosity that replaces terror:

I have already described the unnatural curiosity which had taken the place of my original terrors. It appeared to grow upon me as I drew nearer to my dreadful doom. I now began to watch, with a strange interest, the numerous things that floated in our com-

pany. I *must* have been delirious — for I even sought *amusement* in speculating upon the relative velocities of their several descents toward the foam below.” /.../ “It was not a new terror that thus affected me, but the dawn of a more exciting *hope*. This hope arose partly from memory, and partly from present observation. (Ib.: 351–352).

Hope means optimism. The observation concerning the specific tendency of cylindrical objects to be absorbed more slowly saved the man's life. The inability of his brother to feel the same kind of *unnatural* curiosity, to apply the life-saving optimum, killed him, sending him into the maelström, the abyss, the precipice, the pit. The word *unnatural* seems essential here since it transcends the merely mechanical. Poe's dislike for the triumph of mechanical reason, confirmed by technical progress, is well-known, as is Paul Valéry's observation about the fusion of “a kind of mathematics and a kind of mysticism” in Poe's “very strict and deeply alluring doctrine”. (*The Science Fiction of Edgar Allan Poe*: XV).

However successful the optimist, he is still conscious of the ever-existing precipice. Optimism seems to presuppose a certain sense of danger, danger being its major challenge in Poe's work.

As Derrida has observed in connection with the science of writing: “The future can only be anticipated in the form of an absolute danger. It is that which breaks absolutely with constituted normality and can only be proclaimed, *presented*, as a sort of monstrosity.” (Derrida 1976: 5). Poe says in “Eureka”: “I am but pausing, for a moment, on the awful threshold of the Future.” (*The Science Fiction of Edgar Allan Poe*: 275).

Poe, whose optimism/optimalism we have just tried to demonstrate, conveys very powerfully the mid-19<sup>th</sup>-century feeling or fear of standing on the brink of an abyss: “Horror and fatality have been stalking abroad in all ages. Why then give a date to the story / “Metzengerstein”/ I have to tell?” (Poe 1992: 93). “Misery is manifold. The wretchedness of earth is multiform.”/ “Berenice — A Tale”/ (Ib. 145). And yet again — “We stand upon the brink of a precipice. We peer into the abyss — we grow sick and dizzy. Our first impulse is to shrink from the danger, and yet, unaccountably, we remain. /...// “The Imp of the Perverse”/ (Ib. 639). What made

that threshold so awful? Should we know it by now, standing on the threshold of a new millennium? *Mellonta Tauta* — these things are in the future, says Poe, echoing Sophocles.

It is especially after World War II that the burden of optimism has grown heavier on the United States. Among many hopes and expectations focused on this country were the ones of Baltic refugees, including poets.

Henrik Visnapuu (1890–1951), one of our greatest lyrists who migrated to the US in 1949, makes a direct appeal to the Western democracies in his epic poem “Mare Balticum” (1948), asking to defend the torn world. It is a desperate plea and a warning at the same time:

Listen,  
The British Commonwealth of Nations!  
Listen,  
reckless America,  
to the prophecy of the shaman of an ancient race:

When the gates of Mare Balticum will be shut  
and the Baltic states perish, soon  
new masters strut  
Samara sickles shine in Welsh cornfields and fate,  
then it's too late  
to drop to the moon.  
(Visnapuu 1965: 212)

Or else:

Don't forget the Baltic states, you all,  
now before the snow of blood will fall!  
(Ib. 210)

And again:

Don't Mare Balticum  
and the Gulf of Finland  
(never German or Russian pools!)  
belong to Europe  
like the coal of the Ruhr?  
(Ib. 213)

Oscillating from despair to desperate hope, Visnapuu presents his vision of the free Balto-Scandinavian United States, Baltoscandia,



as he calls it, at the finale of the poem, ending it at an optimistic note:

Stones of Baltic fields once rested  
 in the ground of Fennoscandia.  
 Snow would melt like old nostalgia  
 for a world yet unmolested.  
 In the roots and waters linger  
 traces of the same deft fingers.

Liberty and truth, soar higher,  
 northern spirit, holy blaze!  
 Ice age is a passing phase,  
 joys and sorrows, burning fire.  
 Merry polar lights are flaring,  
 warlocks on the warpath faring.

Flower of the ancient Northland,  
 Baltoscandia, bright wreath,  
 on the Baltic Sea, now free.  
 Let the waves that wash the lone strands  
 in the breeze or stormy weather  
 band these lands at last together.  
 (Ib. 215–216) (*My translation — R.S.*)

Constructing the world of the future, let us hope that America will not cast off its burden of optimism, so that *Mare Balticum* will not become *Mare Tenebrarum*. At this point we again have reason to repeat: *Mellonta Tauta* — these things are in the future.

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**Multidimensional Time-Space  
in Margaret Atwood's *Cat's Eye* and  
Viivi Luik's *The Seventh Spring of Peace***

LEENA KURVET-KÄOSAAR

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Time is not a line but a dimension, like the dimensions of space.

You don't look back along time but through it, like water.

Margaret Atwood, *Cat's Eye*

People and the time in which they live are connected. You cannot tell anything about people without telling also something about time and the other way round.

From an interview with Viivi Luik

A nation's literature always reflects the history of the nation — the more problematic a period, the more reflection/contemplation it finds in literature. The history of Estonia and Canada does not have much in common, yet my period of interest — the years following World War II, problematic for all countries involved — at least allows for a comparative study through fiction. This paper deals with two post-World War II formative novels — *Cat's Eye* (1988) by Margaret Atwood, and *The Seventh Spring of Peace* (*Seitsmes rahukevad*) (1985) by a well-known Estonian poet and novelist, Viivi Luik. Both novels are autobiographical, telling the story of a young girl growing up in post-war Canada and Estonia, respectively. Relying on New Historicist grounds, I consider the



discourse of the novels as having the status of both fiction and history.

In the early 1980's, New Historicism re-drew the boundaries between the discourse of history and literature, emphasizing, among other issues, "a reciprocal concern with the historicity of texts and the textuality of history" (Montrose 1989: 23). According to White, "[H]istorical events are no longer directly accessible to perception. As such, in order to be constituted as objects of reflection, they must be described in some kind of natural or technical language. On this basis alone, one is justified in speaking of history as a text" (White 1989: 297). Since the texts that constitute history are no more than presumably adequate "written representations or textualizations of the events" (ib.), the dichotomy of history (as truth) versus fiction (as fabulation) can no longer be considered valid. On the one hand, New Historicism calls into doubt the undebatable ontological truth-value of such 'canonical' and generally accepted representations of history as, for example, chronicles and scholarly research on history. On the other, it views non-historical texts (including literature) as representations of history comparable in their truth-value to the 'canonical' ones.

Feminist literary critics welcomed New Historicism, for it constituted a theoretical framework favourable for their purposes. Since the 'canonical' discourse of history was dominantly produced by men, New Historicism enabled feminist critics to give women's discourse of history, often represented in the form of diaries, autobiographies, biographies, and fiction, an equal standing with men's discourse and a status in the 'mainstream' discourse of history in general. "Can historians accept an equal revelatory force in fiction as in events as evidence of lived reality?" asks Jane Marcus in her study of the literature of World War I by women authors that aims to "demonstrate that history and literature deserve equal narrative force in a cultural text" (Marcus 1989: 134).

Her article, as well as Margaret R. Higonnet's "Cassandra's Question: Do Women Write War Novels?" (1994) deals with an issue — women writing about war — that is relevant in my study of Margaret Atwood's *Cat's Eye* and Viivi Luik's *The Seventh Spring of Peace* as well. According to Higonnet, "no other genre [than the war novel] is so highly gendered" (Higonnet 1994: 144)

and that in war literature, the “‘event’ became identified with a genre and with the construction of a sexed subject; the ‘reality’ of the war and its authoritative representation were pinned to concepts of masculinity” (ib. 145). Although Higonnet emphasizes that not all meaningful topics connected to war are directly related to warfare and battles and that this is the area where women have a larger role to play, she nevertheless considers the fact that “[the] ideological system [of war] reinforces women’s traditional roles” to be dominantly negative, and focuses on “women’s multiple war-time activities of their firsthand experiences at the front” (ib. 146). Marcus discusses the status and situation of women outside the context of the front; however, she concentrates on the depiction of women’s madness in WW I fiction written by women. In both articles, the intent of the authors is to restore the role of women in the historical discourse of WW I so that it could be measured up with the role of men. However, as a result, women are either shown in a minority position (it is undeniable that men had a more extensive experience of the front and battles) or in a position that emphasizes their weaknesses rather than their strong sides.

My point of departure in the discussion of the topic is somewhat different from that of Marcus and Higonnet since the novels I discuss are about girls who belong to the post-war generation. Although *Cat’s Eye* and *The Seventh Spring of Peace* contain no events as extreme as those in Anthonia White’s *The House of Clouds* or Rose Macalay’s *Noncombatants and Others*<sup>1</sup>, the effects of war (radically different for Estonia and Canada) are nonetheless the major formative features in the lives of the young protagonists. Both Atwood (b. 1939) and Luik (b. 1946) belong to the post-war generation, and both novels are to a certain extent autobiographical. In my paper I propose an interpretation of *Cat’s Eye* and *The Seventh Spring of Peace* as representational novels of the post-war generations of Estonia and Canada. I will focus on the depiction of history through multidimensional time-space (Toronto in At-

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<sup>1</sup> White’s novel, discussed in the article by Marcus, is about the horrifying asylum experience of a mentally unstable war-widow Helen. *The Daughters of Hekuba*, used as an example in Higonnet’s article, is a story of women in wartime Berlin.

wood's novel and the little protagonist's home farm in *The Seventh Spring of Peace*) and discuss in detail the problematic process of identity-construction of the young protagonists. Although there are several external features in the lives of the protagonists that are relatively similar, the personalities of Luik's little girl and Atwood's Elanie have (at least by behavioural standards) very little in common and represent opposite poles of history.

World War II, of central importance in both novels, had crucially different effects on Estonia and Canada. Canada benefited richly from the war; during that time, the gross national product doubled and created industries with a durable role in the post-war economy. Despite the loss of 43,000 men and women in the war, for many Canadians, the war years were a bright contrast with the grim depression of the 30's. The economic growth continued after the war, the rate of unemployment fell, the country witnessed a spread of consumer society, the birth-rate increased by two percent.

For Estonia, on the other hand, World War II had devastating results. It meant the end of national independence, German and Soviet occupations, Stalinist terror, deportations of thousands of Estonians to Siberia, emigration of thousands others to the West, and destruction of national agriculture and industry. In WW II, Estonia lost one fifth of its population (200,000 people) and fifty percent of living space.

*The Seventh Spring of Peace* takes place in rural south-western Estonia. The family of the novel's little protagonist are the so-called new settlers (*uusmaasaajad*) who were given land confiscated from well-to-do farmers. 1949 witnessed an upsurge of collectivization which also included the deportation of 8–12% of the Estonian rural population to Siberia. People were forced to join the kolhoses, all land and cattle were taken away. These were also the times when the guerilla movement was still active, especially in Virumaa, Pärnumaa (where *The Seventh Spring of Peace* takes place) and Võrumaa, that were Estonia's most deeply forested areas. By the time of mass collectivization the dream of restored independence had vanished and revenge against the Soviet regime had become the major driving force behind the guerilla movement.



Now for some introductory remarks about the novels. *Cat's Eye* starts when the protagonist Elanie is 8 years old and continues through her adult life, the most formative years are from age 8 to 12 (from 1948–1951). *Seitsmes rahukevad* covers only the fall of 1950 and the winter and spring of 1951 (the seventh spring of peace), when the narrator-protagonist is about 5–6 years old. Since Luik's protagonist doesn't have a name (a highly symbolic aspect of the novel) I refer to her simply as 'the girl'.

Elanie's father is a forest-insect field researcher. For the first 8 years of her life Elanie, her brother and mother accompany the father on his field trips. They have no real home: "[W]e didn't really live anywhere; or we lived in so many places it was hard to remember them" (Atwood 1988: 22). Since Elanie's family spent so much time on the road, their "low-slung, boat-sized" Studebaker was to a certain extent a substitution for home for Elanie along with a heavy canvas tent with wooden poles, shabby motels, and apartments that were "really the upper floors of other people's houses" (ib.). After the end of the war Elanie's family moves to Toronto to an unfinished house on the outskirts of the city. Elanie starts going to school and makes her first girl-friends. These friendships later develop into monstrous and torturing relationships for Elanie, driving her to the edge of suicide. Following high school, she attends art school and becomes a painter. At the time of narration, she is about 40 years old, is married for the second time and lives in Vancouver.

Luik's protagonist lives on a farm with her mother who has a round sulking face of a schoolgirl, her powerful grandmother, who is the head of the household and whose face "look[s] out of her scarf like from a sharp arch of a church window" (Luik 1985: 16), an uncle who works as a butcher for nearby farmers and whose pipes "stare humbly and angrily" (ib. 17) from the shelf, and with a mostly absent father who drives a motorcyclé, "adores gasoline, electricity, apple blossoms and car engines" (ib. 41), carries apple seeds in his pocket and mechanizes dairy farms. The girl's family (like many Estonian families after the war) is frightfully poor; they have no electricity or running water. The girl has no proper toys or clothes, not even enough proper food.

*Cat's Eye* starts with a definition of time: Elanie begins to think of time "as having space, like a series of liquid transparencies laid on top of each other" (Atwood 1988: 3). For Elanie, time does almost literally have space — the drama of her personal history is all set in or around Toronto; it is in that city where her painful self-identification process begins as a child and continues when she returns for her first retrospective exhibition. In *The Seventh Spring of Peace*, the space around which the depiction of post-war Estonia is centred is the little protagonist's home farm. In an interview, Viivi Luik recounts the episode that first motivated her to write. It happened one cold winter evening when, as a child of 11, she was waiting for her mother to return from hospital: "I felt somehow bodily how the surrounding landscape seeped into me together with the winter's cold. Within me the landscape changed, my desperate longing and great worry cast their own reflection: not simply a landscape, but a landscape through me" (Luik 1983: 256–57). Throughout the novel, the protagonist-narrator's feelings and thoughts are expressed through the landscape, the fields, and her home. At the same time, the girl explicitly functions as a symbol of time: "I was like a clock, small but powerful. The future stirred in me," says the little protagonist about herself (Luik 1985: 25). By way of elaborating Luik's metaphor, I would add that the girl is like the hands of the clock ticking history that move on the landscape of "wet post-war Estonia" (ib. 3). Therefore, it would not be ungrounded to maintain that in Luik's novel, time can be looked upon as having 'space' as well.

In *The Seventh Spring of Peace*, the 'time-space' is limited to the protagonist's home farm and the surrounding fields, woods, and deserted farmsteads. The rest of the world is filtered through this space; it is the point of entrance of change and the multidimensional impact of time into the narration. The rural Estonian landscape — a space that has been idealized in the Estonian literary tradition as a symbol of the strength and continuity of Estonians — now takes on frightening shapes and terrifying images. It is a place where a cow is symbolically crucified in the forest (ib. 92), where a hay-stack can hide a gun or a human body (ib. 3), where a brand-new shining white enamelled skillet lies under a fir-tree in the forest (ib. 4) and where melting snow can



uncover both spring flowers and secret graves (ib. 190). It is no longer an idyllic Estonian countryside, it is a place of displacement and substitution. The bedroom of the old peasant woman, Liisu, from the neighbouring farm becomes the hiding places for her guerilla son. When the girl secretly peeps through the door, she sees eyes shining from the darkness and a gun sticking out from the bed sheets (ib. 66). When the girl goes to her father's deserted farmstead, she walks through her paternal grandmother's empty bedroom that is now used as a storage place for potatoes and old tools. Everything in the child's home is being used for something else: an old apron for a towel, an old dress for a night-shirt.

However, the power of this central symbol in the Estonian literature — the rural Estonian land- and farm-scape — is still preserved, and even enhanced, through its defamiliarization. Luik emphasizes that regardless of the times that "won't let them sleep at night" (ib. 188), people still plough their fields, milk their cows, pick potatoes and gather eggs — in other words, continue to exist as they have for centuries. However, the fact that the reader sees this defamiliarized Estonian countryside through the eyes of the little protagonist, a five-year-old girl with an extremely vivid sense of imagination adds further interpretation possibilities to the symbol. Maire Jaanus has pointed out that Luik's girl is "in the process of language acquisition" and, in order to make sense of the part of the world that comes through words, "gives them the same reality as things" (Jaanus 1988: 40–41). Luik has turned a child (herself or any child growing up after the war) into a mirror of time, change, and history, and this makes the little girl's thought "the world had changed unalterably since the great war" (Luik 1985: 38) echo through every line and word of the novel.

Luik's novel is narrated in the past tense. The main story time is fall/winter 1950–51 but there are also several foreshadowings into the time when the protagonist's identity as a poet is formed. Again, time and history are the main landmarks through which the poet defines herself; most of what the grown-up protagonist lists as parts of "her thing (her business)" are selected historical events of the world of the 1960–70's but she also recalls meeting the poets of the older generation. She refers to a well-known Estonian poet, Artur Alliksaar, as "the soul of a quickly darkening day" (ib. 24)



and quotes the verses conveying the loneliness and homesickness of the exiled Estonian poet and novelist Karl Ristikivi. Through this reference the author covertly outlines her task as a poet and a voice of her generation. In my opinion, the whole novel is a masterful hide-and-seek game played with the Soviet censorship that was still in full force at the time when the novel was published. However, Luik also gives voice to the first post-war generation to whom independent Estonia was no more than a memory of the preceding generation. On the one hand, she stresses the importance of remembering the past; on the other, she warns against clinging to the past. The process of finding her voice goes through the preceding generation of poets. She fully understands the pain of external and internal exile in their poetry, but the reader can sense a need of the new generation's poet to move beyond this. In a more concentrated form, Luik's perception of her generation and of herself as a poet is articulated in her poem "Ladvad liigutavad, sirab kasetoht" ("Treetops stir and birch bark shimmers") from her collection of poetry *Rängast rõõmust (Of Grave Joy)* (see Luik 1982: 50–51).

Although the narrator uses the past tense, the nervous tension of her discourse and attention to detail — partly realistic, partly imaginary — as well as the use of a regional dialect leave the impression that the events are unfolding under the reader's eyes. However, the occasional foreshadowings have the effect of crystalizing the story time as the past. When the girl sneaks up to an old beehive and finds a dagger hidden there, she is frightened, but at the same time, the narrator interrupts: "But the dagger was none of my business. My business was a beautiful June day in 1979 in Drottningholm, narrow smooth gravelled paths among green hills and festive cold blue of the sky behind every movement and pose. [...] In my uncle, there was a fear for the hidden dagger, in my grandmother, the fear for the milk ration and the state loan. I was their consolation and their promise for the future. In me, my mother should have seen her perm and the new blue suit, my grandmother — tennis shoes and a plastic case for glasses, the Estonian people — the Viru Hotel, discotheques, elevators and color TV-s" (Luik 1985: 25).

The history presented in the novel is certainly not the textbook history — the least the historical discourse of the story time and narration time. Since the historical documents and history books of the Soviet times offered a distorted view of history, embellished with false facts and highly rhetorical demagoguery, one might argue that at the time when the novel was written, the boundaries of the 'canonical' historical discourse had been blurred from the side of discourse supposed to carry the ontological status of truth. Therefore the highly fictionalized version of history in the *Seventh Spring of Peace* with obvious claims first and foremost for fictional discourse is not such a far cry from history books. Luik's novel offers a personalized and subjective historical discourse. Would it be then correct to assume that this text has the status of history to the author only — it is dominantly based on her personal experience after all?

In my opinion, it is possible to address this issue from two different points of view. Relying on the fact that Luik's little protagonist has no name, it can be argued that the author's aim was, at least to a certain extent, to depict any girl (or even any child) of the post-war generation. The criticism on Luik's novel by her contemporaries indicates that several critics feel that the novel conveys the atmosphere of their childhood as well. Mati Unt, for example, "see[s his] own youth in the novel as well" (Unt 1985: 632), and according to Joel Sang, this novel is "a credo of one generation" (Sang 1985: 986). However, the episode in the novel where two women come to the little protagonist's farm to write down the amount of cattle they have and to inform them about the plans made by agricultural authorities about towing all farmhouses to the kolhoz center adds an extra dimension to Luik's concept of history. The little protagonist observes the tense conversation between her grandmother and the other women. As always in frightening or confusing situations, the girl tries to console herself with tales from her books but soon comes to an understanding that these stories, where everything happens "so quickly and in such interesting and festive manner", where "life was compressed like sugar cubes and made visible from all sides", are helpless against the real life where "everything took so long to happen", where "days and nights were long and people grey and

usual", where "some things happened in such hideous manner that it was possible to take part in them and yet not have a clue about what was going on" (Luik 1985: 161–62). I think that this passage offers Luik's concept of history. Through these lines, the author wishes to emphasize that the kind of history that matters is indeed very individual, that history (regardless whether its source is life experience or history books) filters through people. Furthermore, Luik seems to suggest that it is almost a moral obligation to perceive history both with one's mind and with one's heart. I feel that what is voiced here is the personalized history of a generation, the living history of real-life people, not the presentation of plain facts and scholarly interpretations. Moreover, considering the structure of history presented in the novel and the method of narration where small details or routine activities of daily life on a farm are used to convey the disquieting and insecure atmosphere of the period, I would argue that *The Seventh Spring of Peace* can be looked upon as an example of the feminine style of historical narration, in a way like a historical version of Cixous's *écriture féminine*.

The status of the discourse of *Cat's Eye* is more complicated, since one of the leading undertones of the novel is Elanie's alienation from her generation. She, too, is the voice of the post-war generation, but it is the voice people have tried to put behind them, to cut out of their collective memory. If in *The Seventh Spring of Peace* both the need to remember the past and the necessity to live in the present (to make the present livable) are emphasized, then Atwood's protagonist concentrates almost entirely on the past and finds almost nothing valuable in the present. However, Elanie's preoccupation with her childhood is by no means an idealization of the past. Atwood does not let her reader forget that the roots of Elanie's pervasive insecurity and marginalization are in her troubled childhood. The painful memories of Elanie's childhood are less clearly connected to time as those of Luik's little protagonist; yet it is the voice of Elanie's childhood, recognizably the narrow-minded post-war mentality that speaks and acts through different characters and first and foremost through Elanie's friends.



Elanie's dimensions of space are tied to Toronto. This is the concentrated sphere of change in her life, more than any other place a point of departure for her self-identification. However, Elanie functions through refusal and negative definition. She refuses to accept Toronto. During her childhood, she juxtaposes the freedom and happiness of Canadian woods (referring to her family as "nomads on the far edges of the war") to her miserable existence in Toronto, the beauty of wilderness to the ugly piles of mud and construction garbage in the yard of their new house that in her mind resembles war-space: "our house looks like something left over from the war: all around it spreads rubble, devastation" (Atwood 1988). At the time of the narration she lives in Vancouver, leading a happier life than she ever did in Toronto. Nevertheless, Vancouver is referred to as a place of temporary exile, defined only by its distance from Toronto; it is "as far away from Toronto as [she] could get without drowning" (ibid.: 14). With its "stagey scenery like a cardboard movie backdrop" (ib. 43) it is not real enough for her — it lacks the flatness and grubbiness of Toronto.

In *Cat's Eye*, Toronto functions as a symbol of the concentrated sphere of change not only in terms of Elanie's life. Toronto's growth from the wartime rundown, grubby, and boring provincial town into an economically flourishing "world-class city" by the 1980's makes this city the very embodiment of the benefits of WW II for Canada. The theme of metropolis and urban alienation, although quite common in postmodern fiction, gained weight first and foremost during the rise of Modernism in Europe. The Toronto of *Cat's Eye* is quite a typical postmodern interpretation of this central modernist symbol. If for the Modernists — alongside the feelings of alienation and loss — the metropolis with its quickly beating pulse also evoked admiration and stimulated creative imagination; for the postmodernists the city has dominantly become a place devoid of any positively inspirational meaning. When Elanie returns to Toronto after many years, behind the glitz and the European-style awnings she sees the old city, still "malicious, grudging, vindictive, impalpable" (ib. 14).

The little protagonist in *The Seventh Spring of Peace* functions like the scales balancing the past and the present. It is through this

act of balancing that she is defined as a poet carrying the voice of her generation. Elanie's voice, on the other hand, is never the voice of her generation, it is always juxtaposed with the other voices, both in her childhood and in her adult life. The conflict between her perception of time and space around her and that of the others is never resolved and it seems that it is always her voice that is silenced in the end.

One of the leading themes of the novel is Elanie's childhood relationship with her three friends: Grace, Carol, and Cordelia, who turn Elanie into a scapegoat and order her around according to their whims. To a certain extent, these characters function in the novel to destroy the stereotypical image of girls as 'little angles', almost as common nowadays as it was in the post-war years. Partially however, the girls' behaviour is determined by the mentality of the times. One of the main reasons why Elanie is turned into a scapegoat is the breach between the value system of her family and that of Elanie's friends. Elanie's parents do not share the conservative family values of 1940's – 50's, especially noticeable in the rapidly expanding suburbia, and they also make very little effort to act according to the social norms that reflect these values. According to Veronica Strong-Boag, in the years following the Second World War in Canada, "residential suburbs provided symbolic female counterparts, 'bedrooms' as it were, to the male-dominated, market-oriented world of modern cities. The postwar [housing] experiment placed Canadian women in suburban homes and men in employment located elsewhere." (Strong-Boag 1994: 481–82). Strong-Boag also quotes a newspaper advertisement from 1949, crediting housewives with "the recipe for good citizenship". According to the advertisement "a woman's influence extends far beyond the horizons of housekeeping ... she guards her family's health by buying standards, hers is the opportunity of training her children ... of promoting good character and citizenship" (ib. 486). The homes of Elanie's friends are dominated by the same mentality, carried out mostly by the mothers or viewed as the result of their impact on children. However, Atwood has highlighted rather different aspects of that mentality: shallow consumerism (Carol's home), hypocritical piety (Grace's home), and lazy unambitious children as a result of too comfortable and affluent life (Cordelia's



home). Elanie's own mother does not cultivate any of the above-mentioned features in her children. However, neither does she provide a positive role model of a mother and a woman for Elanie. Elanie's mother is quite well aware of the true nature of the friendship between Elanie and the other girls but she is unable to help or protect her daughter in any way. Therefore it is not surprising, that the process of familiarizing herself with girls' customs" is quite hard for Elanie, that with girls she always senses that she is "on the verge of some unforeseen, calamitous blunder" (Atwood 1988: 50).

Carol proudly presents Elanie's family to other children at school as "the antics of some primitive tribe: true, but incredible" (ib. 52), grounding her characterization mainly on the fact that they lack proper furniture in their house. Her own house with green-painted shutters, living-room furniture with matching drapes of chintz, and matching chenille bedspreads in her parents' bedroom looks like a model suburban home. Before Carol also introduces Elanie to the world of things, she does not have the faintest idea what the words *chintz*, *twin set*, or *cold wave* stand for; for her the only association is with her brother Stephen's fantasy world. After Carol shows Elanie her clothes, Elanie inspects her own and starts to suspect that "more may be required" (ib. 52). The choice of words in this episode clearly indicates the presence of certain imposed norms in Elanie's mind. Sometimes Elanie and her friends play a shopping game with old Eaton<sup>2</sup> catalogues. To Elanie, these catalogues are reminiscent of the motel outhouses where they were used instead of toilet paper; now she is surprised to discover that here the catalogues are "treated with reverence" (ib. 56). The girls closely imitate grown-ups' manner — they even pay each others' "purchases" hypocritical compliments.

Another feature that differentiates Elanie's family from those of her friends is the fact that they don't go to church. Elanie starts going to church with Grace's family who seems to be extremely pious. Soon Elanie finds out that for Grace's mother, Mrs. Smeath, religion is only a means of boosting self-confidence at the expense of mercilessly putting others down. However, Mrs. Smeath turns

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<sup>2</sup> One of the biggest department store chains in Canada.



into a symbol of the narrow-minded, self-righteous and malicious mentality of the post-war times only after Elanie discovers that Mrs. Smeath is fully aware of her scapegoat status among her friends. Moreover, Elanie understands, that what is happening to her is not "something going on among girls" (ib. 193). It's their parents' attitude that really determines the behaviour of Carol, Cordelia, and Grace. Elanie's hatred for Mrs. Smeath is so strong that many years later it finds expression in a series of paintings. Here Atwood employs the same technique of displacement and substitution that Luik uses to convey the spirit of post-war rural Estonia. In *The Seventh Spring of Peace*, the effect is achieved through the distortion of rural Estonian land- and farm-scape, in *Cat's Eye* it is done through the defamiliarization of items connected to such concepts as good housekeeping, the security of home, good (religious) people, emblematic of the post-war suburban ideology. Taken out of context, items like a paring knife, a rubber plant, and a bib apron seem frightening and evil. As Elanie herself admits, the paintings also contain an element of indecency (Mrs. Smeath's saggy-legged cotton underpants, her exposed breast showing her "reptilian" heart). For Elanie, the paintings are not about composition and the use of color; she quite frankly admits that this "bathroom graffiti raised to higher order" (ib. 373) is about revenge. When a middle-aged woman greatly resembling Mrs. Smeath appears at the opening of the exhibition and throws ink at one of Elanie's paintings, she is pleased and feels that she is in control at last. This episode bears certain resemblance to the dagger and beehive episode in *The Seventh Spring of Peace*. Mrs. Smeath and the dagger in the beehive both frighten the young protagonists of the novels and make them feel angry and defeated. Both novels also show how the protagonists overcome their fears and enjoy a victory over time. The main difference lies in the narrative strategy. In *The Seventh Spring of Peace*, the tension in the episode is relieved right away through a foreshadowing by the narrator. The narrator of *Cat's Eye*, on the other hand, almost convinces the reader of the inevitability of Elanie's defeat until the very end of the novel.

Throughout the novel, Elanie is marginalized, pushed to the outskirts, defined as 'the other'. Elanie seems to be a model of a

marginalized woman. She even defines herself through marginalization — “a nomad at the far end of the war”. “I’m peripheral” (ib. 370), she says, walking in the gallery before the opening of a feminist exhibition ‘F(our) for all’. In spite of the pun on the word ‘our’ in the title of the exhibition, the concept of sisterhood is unacceptable to Elanie. She can only imagine brotherhood since she never had a sister. Her idealized memory of her relationship with her brother breaks down in a failed attempt for shared childhood recollections. She realizes that for her, Stephen was a given — there never was a time he didn’t exist; “But I was not a given for him. Once he was singular, and I was an intrusion” (ib. 354) Stephen is a whole, a unity in himself, Elanie is a moment of unbalance, a breaker of unity. Regardless of the undermining of her inferiority, Elanie’s relationship with her brother is expressed in words implying self-assertion. Elanie evaded her brother’s masculine singularity, forced him to re-order his space to make room for Elanie.

Elanie is also marginalized in her relationship with her three friends Carol, Cordelia, and Grace. She becomes the hateful other, an evil force to be conquered, an exotic savage from the forest. Cordelia used to ask her “What do have to say for yourself?”, and Elanie always answered, “Nothing”. Yet this nothing is not a void or an empty space, it is a different dimension, a space between, it is her point of existence. When she discovers a poster for her exhibition, where moustache has been added to her face, she is content, finally she has acquired a face worth defacing. All the world around Elanie as a child, and Elanie as an artist is a perpetual masking and unmasking.

Elanie’s existence is defined in her interpretation of the marble called cat’s eye: “The cat’s eyes really are like eyes, but not the eyes of cats. They’re the eyes of something that isn’t known but exists anyway; like the green eye of the radio; like the eyes of aliens from a distant planet”(ib. 67). It is interesting that her self-definition has striking similarities with that of Luik’s protagonist: “From the bottom of my heart I wished to be not a human being, but a radio generator — a source of power, black, square, and secret — that catches and reveals all voices floating in the air” (ib. 174).



The most obvious difference between these models is the external shape of the images: cat's eye is round, the radio generator is square. In the feminist discourse, the round shape or a circle are often connected to femininity (that which is intrinsically characteristic of women), and the square shape, in turn, is connected to masculinity. This kind of distinction, in my opinion, can also be applied to the symbols of self-definitions of the protagonists of *Cat's Eye* and *The Seventh Spring of Peace*. The round shape of the marble symbolizes the feminine sphere of existence, the square generator — the masculine sphere. Such interpretation also provides an explanation for Elanie's relative failure as a person and a voice of her generation, compared to Luik's protagonist's powerful self-assertion as the embodiment of future and her awareness of a clearly distinguishable "my time".

In my opinion, Luik's protagonist internalizes the patriarchal order and values; her rebellious and stubborn "I" has strong masculine characteristics. She also generally prefers the activities and qualities of men to those of women. The child wishes to be like her father; she adores his motorbike and the fact that his living-space is many times wider than hers (he travels around the countryside and only comes home once in two weeks). Father also brings her the radio, a mysterious machine that widens her space beyond her grasp. At first, she attributes the voice coming from the radio to someone in the set. Later, when her father has explained her the principle of the radio, she often ponders upon the meaning of different conflicting discourses of the programs (the news, propaganda programs, song lyrics). Despite the fact that the little girl is quite premature for her age, she does not quite understand that the conflicts reflect the tensions of the time, she thinks that her father, because of his wider view of the world (or, to be more exact, because of the fact that he travels around Estonia so much) has it all figured out. The protagonist also compares herself to another machine — a clock ticking time in the future and with it a higher standard of living that will in the future provide different consumer goods for her family that they cannot even dream about during the story-time. She wants to be the embodiment of progress — yet she does not partake in the actual production of this process in the literal sense. Since the girl in *The Seventh Spring of Peace* is an



only child, she in a way entails both genders — she is at the same time a little girl and a boy. In fact, if the text did not contain several references to the little protagonist's girl's clothes, she would correspond more to the stereotypical image of a boy than that of a girl. When she plays with other children she is always the leader, most of her games have an element of violence in them (cutting peony buds with scissors, frightening the hen, executing and burying her doll).

It is paradoxical that she wishes to be a black radio generator — her worst fears are all connected to darkness: ghosts stirring in the dark corners, dark man sitting in the oak-tree. By internalizing the masculine order she also becomes a warrior, a builder, a transformer of the future; she becomes her father, bringing modern technology to dairy farms. This, in turn, gives her strength that more often than not finds expression in aggressive and violent behaviour, yelling and shouting, but helps her to overcome the multiple fears surrounding her and to survive.

The element of internalization of masculine order is present in the little protagonist of the *Seventh Spring of Peace* also on another level. In her perception of the world, the little girl juxtaposes the quite miserable and problematic everyday reality of her family with the beautiful world of strong nicely dressed and well-fed people cheerfully marching toward an even happier future created by the Soviet propaganda. She often finds solutions to her problems through imitating the activities and repeating the words from her children's books and radio programs. This makes her feel that she has control over all troublesome, frightening and confusing issues of her life.

Cat's eye is a very different symbol — it stands for a mode of existence that is not even formulated anywhere in Atwood's novel and that can only be perceived as an undefinable 'substance' hovering between the lines. This can be best seen through Elanie's characterization in the text. As I mentioned earlier, it seems that she perceives the world dominantly through negative definition and refusal. Throughout the novel, the reader is presented with numerous episodes where Elanie for many different reasons finds the circumstances unacceptable, is unable to identify herself with the others, does not wish or is not able to act in the manner ex-

pected in a given situation. At the same time, there is very little indication of alternative ways of thought or action by Elanie. In other words — the reader is shown in great detail what Elanie is not, but can only make guesses about what she is or might be. However, it is undeniable that the recurring submissive pattern of her behaviour indicates certain strength and self-assertion. Elanie's friends make her into a scapegoat not because of her weaknesses but because of her stubbornness and her reluctance to give up. Furthermore, it does not take Elanie long to understand that the real insecurity and fears are Cordelia's, not hers. She only suffers from Cordelia's ability to masterfully project her own weaknesses to Elanie. In the course of the novel it paradoxically turns out that Cordelia is, in fact, something like Elanie's weaker double.

It seems that Elanie is constantly balancing on the verge of falling over the edge, falling into non-existence. This motif is present both in the plot (Elanie's suicide attempt), and in the imagery (e.g., Vancouver is on the edge). Yet, in my opinion, Elanie has a strong self from the very beginning of the novel even though she might not be aware of it herself. She quite systematically manages to resist all roles and positions others want to impose on her. Elanie always keeps her identity (both as a person and as an artist) as an exotic savage from the forest. In terms of her self-definition as an artist, this puts the emphasis on speaking the language and symbols of her country, juxtaposed to compromises made for fame or acceptance. Elanie's true identity is indeed like the marble called cat's eye — it is like the mode of existence of an alien from a distant planet.

**Conclusion.** In my comparative analysis of Margaret Atwood's *Cat's Eye* and Viivi Luik's *The Seventh Spring of Peace* I viewed both novels as representational of the post-WW II generations. The novels can be looked upon as having the status of both fiction and history, especially in the context of New Historicism. Atwood and Luik both tell the story of a young girl whose main formative years coincide with the post-war times. Although Luik's little girl and Atwood's Elanie come to represent opposite poles of history, their childhoods have quite a few aspects in common. *Cat's Eye* and *The Seventh Spring of Peace* clearly demonstrate that the post-war years were tense and problematic on both sides of the Iron Curtain.

The dominating atmosphere of the protagonists' environments can be best described as insecure, confusing, frightening, hostile, and overwhelming. I think that *Cat's Eye* and *The Seventh Spring of Peace* are both novels of survival — Elane's fragmented self is what survives from her struggle for existence, Viivi Luik's little girl survives the fears and losses through the internalization of the patriarchal order of power.

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## El espacio femenino como frontera

CARMEN OCHANDO AYMERICH

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En el ensayo *Las mujeres y la narrativa* (1929), Virginia Woolf analiza el proceso según el cual las limitaciones de la experiencia vital impuestas a las mujeres generaron barreras literarias en la novelística de buena parte de las escritoras inglesas del XIX. Sin basar su afirmación en una concepción determinista de la relación entre literatura y sociedad, la creadora de una “habitación propia” sugería que la comprensión del modo de vida de la mujer común (la situación civil, el número de hijos, las tareas hogareñas, el medio de subsistencia, la tenencia de capital propio o no...) posibilitaba la comprensión del éxito o fracaso de la mujer extraordinaria en aquel entonces, de la escritora. Según este punto de vista, las clásicas decimonónicas inglesas (Jane Austen, George Eliot, Charlotte y Emily Brontë, ...), socialmente recluidas en el ámbito de la casa y de las propias emociones, y excluidas de lugares públicos que les propiciaran el encuentro con el espacio social, produjeron una escritura teñida de un cáliz autobiográfico. Una escritura a veces más preocupada por la demostración de las cualidades propias, en comparación con las “demostradas” cualidades literarias masculinas, que por la generación y experimentación de posibilidades expresivas y renovación de códigos.

Se han reducido las barreras que impedían el acceso de las mujeres al ámbito social, de la relación (no necesariamente amorosa) con el ‘otro’; las mujeres se han incorporado al mundo productivo; han conquistado la posibilidad de una independencia económica y de un espacio privado y personal y, lo que es más importante, existe una amplia conciencia de las limitaciones de la experiencia de épocas anteriores y de los residuos limitantes de la contemporánea.

Desde esta perspectiva es posible observar y analizar críticamente la expresión narrativa precedente con un punto de vista más preocupado por la comprensión que por la reivindicación de un espacio genérico (en el sentido sexual y literario) singular.

La búsqueda de ese espacio singular, independiente y diferenciador, ha permeado, a lo largo de buena parte del siglo XX, la literatura escrita por mujeres. Y esa indagación, que en el mejor de los casos será interpretada como la conquista de un 'lugar propio' en el ámbito de la escritura, ha devenido una limitación, triste y paradójica, de lo que podría denominarse **morfología textual femenina**. Tal vez porque no se ha roto el cordón umbilical invisible que condena la expresión femenina al espacio autobiográfico; tal vez porque en el ansia diferenciadora y en la preocupación por delimitar un 'espacio propio' se ha perdido parte de las energías que podrían haberse canalizado hacia la reflexión propiamente literaria.

El espacio constituye una categoría de análisis cargada de múltiples significaciones. Desde que los pioneros Frank (1945) y Bachelard (1958), el primero como crítico y el segundo como filósofo de la cultura, se empeñaran en demostrar la importancia de los espacios vitales en relación con el tiempo ("el tiempo está en el espacio") y la construcción literaria, alrededor del concepto de espacio se ha desarrollado todo un lenguaje crítico y teórico al que se traducen e incorporan problemas apprehendidos con anterioridad por otras concepciones críticas.

El espacio ha dejado de ser un componente más de la realidad representada para devenir el centro de la semántica de la obra. El análisis de esta categoría puede ser llevado a cabo desde perspectivas de distinta índole: como fenómeno explicable en el orden de la morfología de la obra literaria, como reflexión de los patrones culturales de la experiencia del espacio (propio-ajeno, cotidiano-sagrado ...), como representación ideológica, como símbolo de universales arquetípicos (paraíso, jardín, casa, ...), como transformación del espacio físico en espacio literario, o, según señalara Lotman en *La semiosfera*, concepto vertebrador del análisis semiótico cultural, entendida como el espacio semiótico necesario para la existencia y funcionamiento de los lenguajes. Todas ellas constituyen latidos teóricos de esa modernidad iniciada con Joyce, y representada en España por, entre otros, Camilo José Cela (*Pabellón de reposo*,

1944), Miguel Delibes (*Parábola de un naufrago*, 1969) o Juan Benet (*Volverás a Región*, 1968), en la que se acentuó deliberadamente el proceso espacializador.

El espacio, producto del paso de la concepción de la novela como objeto temporal (sucesión de acontecimientos en el tiempo) a objeto espacial (como gramática estructural), es pensado, según Ricardo Gullón, "como una realidad y como una fuerza que abarca lo que es y lo que puede ser, lo que vemos (apenas nada) y lo que sentimos o pensamos (en potencia, todo)". Este concepto abstracto se concreta en manifestaciones textuales tangibles y reconocibles, en formas y sentidos, "a través de" y "en" la palabra escrita (Gullón 1980: 5).

Cabría preguntarse, una vez más, si el enfrentamiento de las escritoras con la hoja en blanco implica una cosmovisión de los personajes y del hecho literario distintos del de los escritores masculinos. ¿Acaso una concepción de la estructura diferente? Las respuestas, críticas o teóricas, deben hallarse, más allá de las sombras proyectadas desde ámbitos no literarios, en los textos concretos. Me limitaré en este análisis a la observación del tratamiento de la relación entre espacio y punto de vista en algunos textos, escritos por mujeres, de la literatura española de posguerra cuyos protagonistas son niñas o adolescentes.

Abordo, en efecto, un período difícil y discutido, ya que la guerra civil supuso, en el espacio literario hispánico, un corte profundo con la tradición inmediatamente anterior. Un período en que, como ha señalado la crítica, la novela entronca con los patrones realistas de la segunda mitad del XIX y se olvida, a la fuerza, de la búsqueda de nuevos códigos narrativos y la experimentación que las vanguardias habían llevado a cabo, y que, en parte, asume, debido a la censura imperante, el papel de crítica social que les era negada a unos medios de comunicación dominados -política e ideológicamente- por los aparatos del Estado franquista. El establecimiento de fronteras infranqueables entre lo "propio-nacional" y lo "ajeno-extranjero", impuestas por el régimen, es uno de los elementos que ayudan a comprender este espacio semiótico autárquico — donde se había eliminado la posibilidad de sistemas en competencia — compartido por todos los integrantes (emisores y receptores) de cualquier acto comunicativo literario en él producido. A su vez, los renovados



códigos realistas presentarán la voluntad de completa traducibilidad de los hechos históricos (referente) a la palabra escrita.

Dado este peculiar paisaje cultural resultaría tentador dejarse llevar por la lógica que asocia, no sin cierta razón, circunstancia y creación, y justificar las limitaciones narrativas de estas novelas por causas no literarias, sean éstas sociales, políticas o económicas. Más allá de esta tentación redundante (con respecto a estudios anteriores), pretendemos observar cómo la caracterización de unos personajes infantiles, que luchan por la independencia y diferenciación de sus mayores femeninos y, sobre todo, que pelean por apropiarse de los espacios públicos, permea hasta tal punto la estructura de la novela que se corre el peligro de convertirla en un mundo tan cerrado y estanco como el ambiente donde fue creada. Observar, en definitiva, cómo la búsqueda de ese 'espacio propio femenino' puede derivar en una limitación paradójica del horizonte narrativo.

La novela *Nada* (1945), de Carmen Laforet, reclama una atención excepcional. En primer lugar, porque constituye uno de los grandes éxitos de la primera narrativa de posguerra y, en segundo, porque es en la relación dialéctica espacio-personaje donde reposa su urdimbre argumental.

Andrea, la joven protagonista-narradora, llega a Barcelona con el fin de pasar un curso universitario. En la casa de sus parientes, que en ningún momento llega a sentir como propia ("el sordo horror de aquella casa sucia"), halla un ambiente desquiciado y huraño, a veces misterioso, al que se acerca desde un punto de vista objetivo y con el que establece una distancia narrativa insalvable, a pesar de que la narración se estructure en primera persona.

El piso de la calle Aribau no se corresponde con la intimidad y privacidad que, en principio, cabe esperar del espacio hogareño. En contraposición, la ciudad, conquistada a hurtadillas por la protagonista, adquiere las connotaciones placenteras y liberadoras que no alberga la casa de la abuela. Andrea se deja llevar por la placidez de los espacios urbanos, esos lugares en los que el tiempo deviene presencia, por las calles y las construcciones ("Dejé que aquel profundo hechizo de las formas me penetrara durante unos minutos") y por el deseo de hacer suyo el espacio ajeno. A través de la conquista del espacio, planteado como barrera de la feminidad ("Hija mía, hay unas calles en las que si una señorita se metiera alguna vez, perdería

para siempre su reputación”), la novela de Carmen Laforet se brinda como una argamasa estructural privilegiada de las dicotomías dentro-fuera y propio-ajeno. Y, a diferencia de otros textos, la ruptura con el espacio interior (de la casa) supone tanto la ampliación del horizonte de la protagonista como de la estructura de la novela.

Las niñas de las novelas de Elena Quiroga no parecen presentar esta actitud de rebeldía ante las imposiciones del ambiente. Desde su primera novela, *Viento del norte* (1951), es posible observar que en esta escritora la caracterización de los personajes se supedita al mandato de los espacios.

En *Viento del norte* se percibe una doble funcionalidad espacial. A partir de las relaciones de Marcela, la protagonista, con otros personajes y con el entorno, el espacio narrativo se presenta como una dicotomía significativa. De un lado, conforma la psicología de la protagonista en su relación con la naturaleza; de otro, adquiere el sentido de jerarquía social entre los personajes (criada-señor). La vida de Marcela está representada desde el momento de su nacimiento hasta el final de la juventud. Hija natural de una campesina y abandonada pocos días después del parto, Marcela se configura mediante una simbiosis voluntaria (“Ella no había salido nunca del pazo, siendo sus fronteras los límites de aquél”) con el paisaje rural gallego.

La representación del espacio en *Viento del norte* recuerda las aproximaciones de la decimonónica Pardo Bazán al mundo rural gallego y enlaza, sin abusar, con rasgos de un romanticismo trasnochado. La niña Marcela sólo establece vínculos afectivos, hasta fundirse, con el paisaje y con Ermitas, la criada que la cuidó tras el abandono de la madre. Marcela tiene una personalidad libre y salvaje, de pertenencia a la tierra, que llama la atención de don Alvaro, quien se enamorará de ella. La joven protagonista, sumisa y obediente, acepta la propuesta de matrimonio del granado amo del pazo. Pero, ni las buenas intenciones y el amor de Alvaro ni la llegada del hijo conseguirán el entendimiento del matrimonio. Marcela no logra sobreponerse a la distancia física y social que representa la casa del amo (“De una manera primitiva e ingenua razonó que andaría por el jardín, con sus mirtos podados, y que, empinada sobre la sepultura, lavaría en el pozo, y probaría el mosto en la época



de la vendimia”), hasta el final de la novela, después de la muerte solitaria de Alvaro.

Para Tadea, la protagonista de *Tristura* (1960), la casa no constituye el espacio de protección e intimidad donde refugiarse. Huérfana de madre desde el primer año de vida, la niña vive en la casa de la abuela, junto con sus tíos y primos. La quinta novela de Elena Quiroga se estructura a través de un diálogo infantil (de Tadea con sus primos, y de estos con los mayores de la casa), apenas interrumpido por leves aproximaciones a los espacios familiares (en la mayor parte de los inicios de los capítulos) y pinceladas descriptivas de la interioridad de la niña.

El espacio abstracto se concreta mediante la mirada infantil. A los ojos de Tadea, rechazada y relegada a un segundo lugar por el entorno familiar, el ámbito de “fuera” constituye un anhelo constante. La niña otea incansablemente el horizonte, lleno de prohibiciones (“Una niña no escucha, no mira a los lados”), situado más allá de los contornos del jardín. No en vano el libro se inicia con una breve descripción de éste (“La puerta del jardín se abría desde la cocina. Había un agarrador del que partía un alambre tenso, en diagonal ascendente, hacia la izquierda, donde el bosque de tamarindos. De tanto ver el alambre no nos dábamos cuenta, pero allí estaba, de allí partía..”), seguida, de inmediato, de la primera restricción.

A lo largo de la novela, el vínculo entre Tadea y el entorno se perfila mediante la delimitación de dos espacios que llegan, en ocasiones, a confundirse en la mente de la niña. La casa de la abuela es vista desde la objetividad de la tercera persona. No obstante esta distancia psicológica, la represión corporal del entorno ha hecho mella en Tadea quien, en algún momento, llega a la interiorización (“Rejas podía ser un muro, un jardín, una avenida de plátanos, otra niña, voces frías de los mayores, voces burlonas o compasivas, risas de otros niños, voces untuosas, pegadizas como el aceite. Rejas podía ser aquello que te contenía aunque tuvieras ganas, venía no se sabía de dónde”) de las limitaciones impuestas. El otro espacio, el deseado, es intuitivo más allá de los muros de plátanos que rodean el jardín, pero sólo será alcanzado ocasionalmente en algún paseo por la ciudad o casi al final del texto, cuando la niña se escapa de la casa.



Dolores Medio, en momentos de pleno auge de la literatura realista y social, consigue con *Nosotros los Rivero* (1953) una notable expresión de la novela entendida como vínculo entre espacio y personaje. Al finalizar la lectura del texto al lector le invade la duda sobre la verdadera identidad del protagonista narrativo: ¿Es la niña observada por la adulta Lena Rivero? ¿Es la húmeda Vetusta-Oviedo de Clarín? La escritora teje la urdimbre textual a partir de la interacción entre ambos aspectos. La personalidad de la niña Lena Rivero crece a medida que se va apropiando de los espacios urbanos y, a su vez, los paseos y los estacionamientos de su mirada conducen la historia del paisaje ovetense.

En el primer capítulo, la adulta Lena Rivero llega a la ciudad, allí donde el tiempo se ha transformado en espacio habitado, en busca de los resortes del pasado familiar que le ayuden a escribir una nueva novela. Muy pronto la narradora se deja llevar por la mirada del recuerdo. Aquella experiencia infantil la obligará a descomponer las distintas aristas del espacio narrativo iniciado “un día de la primavera del año 1924 ...”, y concluido, algunos años más tarde, una vez conseguida la aprehensión íntima y particular (“y estas cadenas son mías. Me pertenecen. Las he ganado, como Sancho el Fuerte, por derecho de conquista, en reñidas batallas contra los chicos del barrio”) del espacio urbano de la niñez. Las vidas, personal de Lena Rivero y pública de Oviedo, transcurren entre ambos momentos.

La visión retrospectiva se inicia con la muerte del padre, a quien Lena se hallaba estrechamente unida. La niña, que durante nueve años ha vivido bajo la mirada condescendiente de su progenitor, mantendrá desde este momento difíciles relaciones con la madre, quien aparece como el agente represor de los anhelos de Lena. Sus devaneos callejeros, hasta entonces tolerados, devendrán deseos siempre insatisfechos. La ciudad — espacio fuente de la imaginación (“Ante sus ojos, la vieja fortaleza cobraba vida y volvía a levantarse sobre sus ruinas ...”), motivo de identificación (“Los jardines de Portier eran sencillos, salvajes, aviniéndose por ello con el temperamento de la pequeña Rivero ...”) y camino de libertad y aventura — se convierte en la mayor de las prohibiciones. Una vez más la casa (sobre todo la que habitan después de la muerte del padre) significa para la protagonista femenina fortaleza y prisión.

Pero, a diferencia de otros personajes mencionados, la adolescente Lena Rivero traspasará el umbral.

*Nosotros, los Rivero* puede ser interpretada como una novela de formación. En ella, la interiorización de la protagonista del espacio exterior urbano, se organiza como experiencia que remite también a la recreación de espacios literarios anteriores, sobre todo de Pérez de Ayala y Clarín. La aprehensión de los espacios reales y novelísticos, de la ciudad y sus alrededores, de los lugares de una historia que transcurre desde la dictadura del general Primo de Rivera hasta el advenimiento de la II República, constituye el motivo central de la novela.

Las protagonistas de las novelas *Entre visillos* (1958) y *Primera memoria* (1960), de Carmen Martín Gaité y Ana María Matute respectivamente, se sitúan en la línea difusa que supone el paso de la infancia a la adolescencia. Hijas de autoras de la generación del medio siglo, fueron escritas en los momentos en que España se incorporaba a la órbita internacional, hecho que implicó también una renovación formal en el ámbito literario.

La vida de la joven protagonista de la novela de Carmen Martín Gaité transcurre en la placidez y aburrimiento de una ciudad de provincias, Salamanca, que no hacen más que estimular en ella el deseo de huir de la casa. El tedio que producen los lugares observados "entre visillos" se transmite mediante la relación dialogada entre los personajes y es ambientado ("Paseó un momento sus ojos sin pestañear por toda aquella masa agrupada de la ciudad que empezaba a salpicarse de luces y le pareció una ciudad desconocida") en los lugares que podríamos denominar de 'relación social', del encuentro con el otro: el Casino y el instituto, la calle y los espacios abiertos de los paseos y las plazas.

*Primera memoria*, merecedora del premio Nadal, pertenece a la trilogía *Los mercaderes*, completada con *Los soldados lloran de noche* (1969) y *La trampa* (1970), textos cuya temática gira alrededor de la guerra civil. Está escrita, tal como ha señalado Ricardo Gullón, recreando dos situaciones temporales: la de la protagonista con la propia novela y la de la narradora que escribe lo que ha vivido y sobre lo que ha vivido. Constituye un texto en el que el tiempo comparte el protagonismo de los personajes.

*Primera memoria* supone el encuentro con los recuerdos de una adolescente triste y soñadora en los inicios de la guerra civil. Trata el tema sin eludir la crueldad (“Era una guerra sorda y ensañada, cuyo sentido no estaba a mi alcance, pero que me desazonaba, no por el daño que pudiera hacerse, sino porque presentía en ella algo oscuro, que me estremecía”) que el hecho histórico generó en los dos bandos. La realidad es retratada sin concesiones, pero lo que interesa para la temática propuesta en estas líneas no reside en el tratamiento particular del conflicto nacional, sino en las relaciones que establece la joven con el espacio de la narración.

La novela se inicia con un rechazo explícito (“Pero no desaprovechaba ocasión para demostrar a mi abuela que estaba allí contra mi voluntad”) del lugar, la casa de la abuela en la isla de Mallorca, al que dos niños son trasladados al declararse la guerra civil. La vida en la isla transcurre, en un principio, entre la monotonía y la indolencia; para los niños el descubrimiento de los espacios de la casa y de los alrededores supone prácticamente la única diversión cotidiana.

Los primos entablan amistad con Manuel, un niño chueta (descendiente de judíos conversos). Mientras que en el inicio esta relación se establece en términos de igualdad para los tres, a medida que la protagonista se acerca a la adolescencia algunos de los lugares le son vetados por la abuela (“Dos de las veces que fueron al Naranjal les acompañé hasta el Port, a despedirlos, sin que la abuela lo supiese. Luego volví a casa, en la Leontina, odiando ser mujer”), hecho que le crea un rechazo explícito de la propia identidad femenina. También la relación con Manuel degenerará en la formación de una barrera social infranqueable (“ellos” frente a “nosotros”), propia de la situación bélica, y alimentada por los dictados de la abuela a los que la niña, a pesar de sus sentimientos contradictorios, finalmente se someterá.

Mención aparte reclaman las niñas protagonistas de las novelas de Rosa Chacel. Aunque algunos de sus textos fueron publicados en la misma época que los citados con anterioridad, su gestación y su lugar de edición (en consecuencia, de recepción) fueron distintos. Una de las novelas fundamentales de Rosa Chacel relacionadas con el tema, *Barrio de maravillas*, es concebido en los años veinte, a pesar de que no ve la primera edición hasta mediados de los setenta.



Este texto, cuyo tiempo narrativo se desliza desde los primeros años del presente siglo hasta la declaración de la Primera Guerra Mundial, fluye a lo largo de un espacio que en nada recuerda la oscuridad y estrechez de los espacios comentados con anterioridad. Tal vez porque Rosa Chacel se inscribe en un espacio semiótico marcado por las vanguardias.

En *Barrio de maravillas* los vínculos entre personajes y espacios ("La ciudad, que siempre había sido un lugar transitable, el espacio que quedaba entre una y otra casa, una y otra familia: el espacio, las calles para ir de visita ...") constituyen motivos de placer, de descubrimiento y solaz, de encuentro. Las dos protagonistas (Elena e Isabel), que representan dos miradas diferenciadas y también dos maneras de relacionarse con el mundo distintas, construyen, a través de la imagen en la palabra, el espacio narrativo. Isabel, hija de madre soltera, se interna en él con tanta timidez como deseo; Elena, vitalista y dominadora, dirigirá, no en pocas ocasiones, los trabajos de la construcción narrativa. El espacio exterior no constituye una prohibición. La novela, iniciada con una referencia pictórica utilizada para la creación de personajes, se descubre como un lienzo cuyo argumento se perfila con sutiles pinceladas, como si de una acuarela se tratara.

El tema sugerido no se agota, por supuesto, en estas líneas. El tratamiento de la relación entre espacio y personaje en la construcción narrativa, sólo significa una mirada más sobre el amplio debate acerca de la particularidad de la 'escritura femenina'. Los textos analizados poseen en común la pertenencia a una época muy concreta de la literatura española y, en consecuencia, no es posible realizar generalizaciones. Cada uno de los textos analizados requeriría una atención individualizada, pero, aunque no se puedan señalar semejanzas estructurales entre los mismos, curiosamente se insinúan coincidencias en el tratamiento de los vínculos entre espacios y personajes. ¿Coincidencias producto de una época? No. Confluencias que son consecuencias de compartir el mismo espacio semiótico. Productos no tanto de una especificidad literaria femenina sino de unas experiencias vitales y literarias comunes: la de la España franquista, rechazada en lo que constituía la concepción de mujer-ama de casa, y, formalmente, la de la aceptación de los códigos realistas.

El espacio situado más allá del entorno familiar aparece, en la mirada de las protagonistas, como un deseo inalcanzable y prohibido porque traspasar los límites, conquistar el espacio externo urbano, el lugar de encuentro con el otro, conllevaba la pérdida de la feminidad. En consecuencia, el entorno hogareño (simbolizado por la casa) representa, por excelencia, el lugar rechazado.

Siguiendo el curso de estas dicotomías ('dentro-fuera', 'casa-ciudad', 'prohibición-deseo', 'propio-ajeno') se observa que el rechazo de los primeros términos y la reivindicación de los segundos restan protagonismo a la construcción de los espacios propiamente narrativos. Las escritoras, y sus personajes niñas, actúan reactivamente, por "oposición a" — la época, el ambiente y las represiones, representados, sobre todo, a través de los personajes femeninos adultos —, dejando de lado aquellos aspectos que les hubieran permitido transformar la literatura 'femenina' en, simplemente, literatura. ¿Tal vez porque aprovecharon la estructura novelística para reflejar la experiencia personal de las autoras? ¿Tal vez porque, extrapolando los argumentos de Virginia Woolf, podría decirse que los espacios textuales reproducen los espacios de la realidad de la época? ¿Tal vez porque estos textos siguen las corrientes literarias de posguerra agrupadas en torno del denominado 'realismo social'?

Podríamos hallar respuestas afirmativas para cada una de estas dudas. Pero, a pesar de tranquilizarnos con ellas, seguiríamos pensando que la experiencia literaria, entendida como experiencia femenina diferenciada y diferenciadora, puede conllevar una limitación en la propia arquitectura de la novela. Y que a su vez, un límite derivado de la carencia de las libertades (literaria y psicológica) necesarias para acercarse al mundo del "otro" puede degenerar en una limitación textual, es decir, en una imposibilidad de imaginar la experiencia y el espacio ajenos.

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## Teatralidad: ¿un concepto?

ANA GOUTMAN

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**La naturaleza de lo que sucede en la escena, lo que está allí produciéndose y produciendo el espectáculo, solemos llamarla teatralidad. Abstraerla es un error de método, pero al nombrarla se acota la particularidad o especificidad de una jungla de sensaciones y evocaciones que existen antes de ser pensadas.**

1. Un relato de la investigadora del teatro caribeño María Marriatu (1994) introduce el tema de la teatralidad a través del proceso, de difícil transmisión, en el teatro religioso. Ella se ocupa del teatro caribeño y ritual que representa los misterios de la Regla de Ocha o santería, del Palo Monte de origen bantú, del vodú haitiano y de la Sociedad Secreta Abakuá y también las formas acriolladas del espiritismo. Teatro y religión o teatro sagrado expresa el arte religioso y una cultura que se aprende y se cultiva con dedicación. *Los bailes y el teatro de los negros en el folklore de Cuba*, libro del cubano Fernando Ortíz, expone la teatralidad de los sistemas religiosos que se conservan y las fuentes del teatro caribeño y ritual guardado en los recintos sagrados hasta después de 1959. El mito-rito no sólo abarca la vida religiosa sino la profana en la santería de origen yoruba. Ambos mito-rito, como dice María Marriatu, o texto-puesta en escena, tienen un significado mágico. “Los dramas escenificados de los rituales incursionan en la estrecha relación del hombre con los dioses y el culto a los antepasados y a los espíritus....” (Marriatu 1994).

Estas manifestaciones que invocan la teatralidad caribeña aparecen en el sentido oculto del significante que tiene la representación

y que ha estado presente en los orígenes del teatro, cuando éste aún no había olvidado su función religiosa.

La representación muestra el simbolismo de esa secreta relación entre los objetos, los gestos y la palabra, la capacidad para convocar fuerzas y ponerlas en función de la vida, de la liberación de las emociones. Todas características inherentes al acto ritual y al acto teatral. La representación invoca a los muertos para que ofrezcan su bendición, pero también a los vivos, para que aporten su gracia, su fuerza. "En las fiestas de la santería, lo mismo en el vudú, que en una sesión espiritual, todos están actuando, representando ante ese participante, siempre activo, que es el creyente" (ib.).

La acción que representa un mito o varios, "se sirve de un espacio escénico lleno de sentido, puede ser el recinto sagrado de misterios, donde se realizan las ceremonias esotéricas. Así mismo pueden entrar en función ritual la sala, el patio y hasta la calle en ritos colectivos o de carácter público" (ib.).

2. Con estos elementos se puede elaborar la idea de un signo, cosa o acto que centra la atención en la construcción interna, no en la validez de la comunicación, ni siquiera cuando comunica algo. Es un signo estético, por ello es autónomo y tiene fin en sí mismo. Su tarea es liberar la capacidad de descubrir la influencia de la práctica, orientar a su receptor hacia una combinación de funciones diferente de la familiar, y conducirlo hacia otra manera de ver la realidad, hasta el momento no aplicada ni abordada.

En el arte se aumenta la dificultad y la duración de la percepción, se describe el objeto como si se lo viera por primera vez; el fin de la imagen no es el de poner más próxima a nuestra comprensión la significación que transmite, sino el de crear una percepción particular del objeto, según Shklovski. La percepción particular del objeto es el resultado de un sentimiento de extrañamiento, por lo mismo, se trata de una desviación de la norma, lo que caracteriza el fenómeno estético. Explica el uso poético de las creaciones artísticas, que se presentan por primera vez a un público, todavía no acostumbrado, y las propias violaciones rítmicas que se ponen en práctica, en el momento mismo en que el arte parece elegir sus reglas.

Cuando el investigador se distancia del espacio escénico, se convierte en espíritu que sueña la teatralidad, como una ilusión, o planea

el procedimiento artístico como una transposición del texto dramático. Entonces la descripción es evanescente, lo muestran los trabajos que se refieren al texto dramático, a la intertextualidad, al código espectacular, etc., donde se aplica la problemática narratológica al teatro. Por ello, la necesidad de encarar el objeto según el canon clásico, como objeto de conocimiento y objeto estético.

Hablar de lo “específicamente” teatral evoca la esencia, el concepto a definir, un saber que suponemos permanente, invariante y subjetivo; la “inserción” en el espacio escénico vuelve la realidad teatral un espectáculo, donde su logro es inherente al espacio que comparten representación y espectador.

La teatralidad se configura, se construye, en el momento en que desandamos el camino de una ritualidad que impregna a actores y espectadores; de esta manera sucede en el carnaval, que reúne e impulsa un nuevo juego social en el espacio escénico donde, una primera representación geométrica fundada sobre lo real, nace de propiedades espaciales, implica conveniencias más ocultas, leyes topológicas menos solidarias, relaciones métricas inmediatamente aparentes.

La construcción de la teatralidad nos introduce al concepto de subjetividad, que es patrimonio del análisis de Kant, el primero en apuntar que la objetividad incluye un modo de aparecer subjetivo, donde se reconoce el paralelismo entre objetos de valor y objetos de percepción. Entonces el valor estético es, a la percepción sensible, lo que el sentimiento de felicidad es a lo vivido de la percepción.

En un texto de Zilberberg (1985: 42) figura una reflexión sobre la efervescencia estética, el pluralismo, que nos asalta en esta época. Destaca la construcción del objeto estético en tres niveles: la modalización estética donde se reactiva el objeto, el nivel epistémico, que informará el objeto, como depositario de un secreto, y el nivel figural donde los estilos y su conceptualización exhiben las categorías que utilizan.

El objeto epistémico y el objeto estético se asemejan y son dos objetos de saber que difieren según el ángulo del tiempo; aparece como perdurable el objeto que uno quiere, ése que le entretiene, el que retiene la admiración del espectador. Desde otro ángulo, la ceremonia del te, es un objeto estético. En el mismo volumen, *Regards sur l'esthétique*, figura un análisis de Mannar Hammad (1985: 10)



sobre “el te”, así considerado por la cultura japonesa. Los momentos previos a la sesión son considerados también dentro del análisis; la “reunión” es un objeto estético, reconocido en el discurso. Por ello: la constitución del actante colectivo es una condición necesaria a la constitución del objeto estético: “reunión del te”. El único objeto estético es un actante colectivo. El sujeto individual no lo es.

También señala que el estado de objeto estético tiene que ver con un subdominio cognoscitivo, en la medida en que los objetos considerados, son transformados por la acción dinámica. Antes de adquirir el estatuto estético, son objetos pasivos, pasionales o patémicos. Existe un paralelismo, que sorprende, en el análisis del desarrollo de la reunión, porque la estética “ingresa”, después de la constitución del actante colectivo. En estas condiciones la emoción y el placer de la reunión corren parejas con la constitución de otro objeto: la teatralidad.

3. *Los enfoques.* Se sustituyen rápidamente, pero el espacio escénico no puede estar ausente en esa creación estética, donde actúa la teatralidad, que descubre y a su vez alienta la creación. El espacio escénico es como el mundo de las emociones que, allí, se transfiguran en incesantes modos de semiotización o semiosis ininterumpida, mientras el espectáculo exista.

Para la actriz Julia Varley, del Odin Theater, la teatralidad es un juego de precisiones, y la precisión se ha logrado cuando no se le puede preguntar al actor, si está determinado por una motivación interna o por un movimiento físico extremo, estas palabras dejan de resultar relevantes y la técnica se ha hecho vida.

Fátima Patterson, actriz caribeña, piensa que la teatralidad está contenida en cada una de las ceremonias de los diversos cultos sincréticos. Es la fuente para desarrollar modos expresivos y elementos teóricos en la unidad espiritual del hombre y la mujer, a partir de esta enorme riqueza humana — la cultura — que facilita vías alternativas, de comprensión de las problemáticas más diversas.

4. *Semiótica de la cultura.* En otra perspectiva, Iuri Lotman y Zara Mints se ocupan del arte y la ritualidad (1991: 30) y opinan que las diferentes épocas históricas y los diferentes tipos de cultura distinguen diversos acontecimientos, personalidades, textos como mitó-

genos — unidad de análisis — o ciclos de textos que se desintegran en episodios isomorfos, libremente aumentables. Es la cultura masiva, generalizadora, la que presenta un terreno fértil para la creación de mitos, acompañada de una particularidad pragmática, ya que esos textos incitan al auditorio a la co-creación y no pueden funcionar sin su participación activa.

No sucede así, dice Lotman, con las obras no mitológicas, en las que entre el texto y el auditorio pasa una frontera precisa. La cultura sólo puede funcionar a condición de que su mecanismo sea heterogéneo y semióticamente polígloto. Mitología y arte son dos tendencias complementarias y cada uno de ellas supone desde tiempos inmemoriales la presencia de la otra y sólo en contraste se toma conciencia de ellas mismas y de su especificidad. Sin duda, este punto de vista corrige errores asentados por el positivismo, tales como “no es posible unir literatura y ritualidad”, que la práctica ha desechado, y “la especificidad es un modo del reduccionismo”, con lo cual la tarea de profundización del conocimiento se confunde con el propósito de parcialización del conocimiento y no es un resultado del contraste, como se señaló, entre cultura y ritualidad. Estos puntos de vista enfrentan, en abierta polémica, las culturas cerradas o que se desean elitistas, con las culturas abiertas o abarcadoras. Lo que confiere al proceso de transmisión-recepción la fisonomía de una representación continua-no discreta, en lugar del intercambio de comunicados no discretos.

Existe una aspiración a incrementar la diversidad semiótica dentro del organismo de la cultura, que conduce a que cada organización estructural sea poseedora de significado y tienda a convertirse en una peculiar “personalidad cultural”: un mundo inmanente, cerrado en su propia organización, semiótico-estructural interna, memoria propia, comportamiento individual, facultades intelectuales y mecanismo de autodesarrollo.

El mito conduce a un mundo donde reinan los nombres propios para objetos y personas. Iuri Lotman (1991: 54) abunda en un trabajo sobre el cine y el lenguaje mitológico acerca del asunto; porque el nombre no designa algún modelo abstracto del objeto, es una propiedad inseparable del objeto; el predicado de una cosa es otra cosa, con un nombre propio. La acción se piensa con tal carácter concreto, que se reproduce la acción, no se enuncia un verbo.



Entonces la teatralidad no es una excepción, sino la regla, de la conciencia mitológica y sólo desaparece, si el espectáculo sale de la conciencia, es como decir que no hay un sujeto espectador.

El retrato, el plano en el cine, representan el "nombre propio" del lenguaje de las artes figurativas, y ese sentimiento de familiaridad que nos sucede al llamar por el nombre, nos ubica en un mundo donde las relaciones son íntimas: es la cosmovisión del mito, que presenta el ritual. Lotman dice más aún: si el lenguaje sirve como un metalenguaje de la cultura, la semiótica funciona como la autoorganización en la cual figuran el mito, el arte y la ciencia. Lenguajes que se combinan y aparecen en el cine, como en el teatro y en cualquier otra manifestación artística.

Todo lo que se simplifica acarrea desinterés. Lo único cierto, según Lotman, es que en cualquier cultura, de las que nos han sido dadas, realmente, hasta en las muy arcaicas, estaremos obligados a hablar de la compleja heterogeneidad del mecanismo metalingüístico, que incluye los tres aspectos: mito, arte y ciencia. (Ib. 60).

El mecanismo metalingüístico no es una transcripción de etapas de una historia de la cultura, como tampoco lo es de las tres posibilidades tipológicas que aún menos se identifican con el proceso real de la historia.

5. *Literalidad, poeticidad y teatralidad.* Destaca que entre estos términos existe una común preocupación ajena a la realidad del espacio escénico. La literaridad es, según los formalistas, lo que la obra tiene de específicamente literario. Jakobson señala en 1919 un punto de partida de la poética: "si los estudios literarios quieren llegar a ser una ciencia, deben reconocer en el procedimiento su personaje único". Por esto, ellos no se concentran en la obra individual sino en las estructuras narrativas, estilísticas, rítmicas, sonoras, sin excluir, la evolución literaria.

Lo que procede, es la descripción del concepto de teatralidad, como "omniciente" de la actividad teatral. Considero que ha sido un concepto útil pero erróneo. Ya sea porque recuerda: a) la oposición con un texto que no es específicamente teatral; b) o lo que según Artaud, ha relegado Occidente y que no cabe en el diálogo como posibilidad de sonorización en escena...; c) o lo que señala Barthes, "un espesor de signos..., el teatro menos el texto".



La polémica — de existir — comenzaría con la pregunta, ¿la teatralidad, será la sustancia, o es la forma de la expresión? ¿Será el espacio visual o la enunciación teatral? ¿La traducción en el mundo de los objetos del llamado contenido latente, o el lugar donde se produce el espectáculo, ese espacio de sala y escena, que es el espacio escénico?

En el *Diccionario* de Patrice Pavis: “La teatralidad no se manifiesta como una cualidad o una esencia inherente a un texto o a una situación, sino como una utilización pragmática del instrumento escénico”. Pero agrega: “de manera que los componentes de la representación ponen de manifiesto y fragmentan la linealidad del texto y de la palabra.” ¿Qué quiere decir poner de manifiesto y fragmentar? ¿La teatralidad es, entonces, un resultado de la fragmentación de los elementos que pone de manifiesto la representación?

La fragmentación de la linealidad y de la palabra, ¿qué da como resultado? El orden de la percepción, en el cual no sucede nada más que un relato de acontecimientos. Si bien es cierto que se trata de la utilización pragmática, ¿para qué regresar al análisis literario, que se ocupa de subvertir la linealidad por la vía de la fragmentación?

A modo de conclusión: si la teatralidad es un concepto como el nombre de lo que sucede, entonces deja de ser concepto, según lo que he presentado más arriba, o queda como tal y es un anacronismo, sin sentido preciso.

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## Novela y autos sacramentales: el caso de *El peregrino en su patria* de Lope de Vega

EMILIA DEFFIS DE CALVO

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Al estudiar la estructura del relato en las novelas españolas del Barroco uno de los aspectos más interesantes es la inserción de componentes que proceden de otros géneros. En *El peregrino en su patria* (Sevilla, 1604) Lope de Vega incluye un auto sacramental al final de cada uno de los cuatro primeros libros de la novela. Éstos son: el auto del *Viaje del Alma*, el de las *Bodas entre el Alma y el Amor Divino*, el de *La Maya*, y el del *Hijo pródigo*.

¿Por qué Lope de Vega los introduce en una trama narrativa del tipo de la novela de amor y aventuras? Según Vossler (1940: 174) la novela sería una especie de receptáculo de poemas y autos, opinión discutida por Avalle-Arce (1973: 23), quien señala la práctica de la inserción de piezas dramáticas en la novela pastoril primero, y luego en la novela cortesana. Avalle sostiene que la inclusión de los autos "cumple una clara función estructurante, ya que [...] son el instrumento de la simetría arquitectónica de la novela" (ib. 24), y que, además, son obras de propaganda catequística en sintonía con los mandatos del Concilio de Trento.

Tras el objetivo de demostrar que los autos son elementos estructurantes por su construcción interna, y no sólo masas textuales que actuarían como las columnas de un edificio, trazando una perspectiva visual equilibrada, me detendré en el análisis de la construcción de los autos, en especial en la constitución de los personajes del *Auto del viaje del Alma* (con algunas referencias al *Auto de las Bodas del Alma y el Amor Divino*) a partir de la fuerza ilocutoria de sus dichos. La consideración de los mecanismos de inserción y de dos núcleos semánticos fundamentales, el viaje y las



bodas, completarán mi exposición. Previamente revisaré de manera sucinta las definiciones genéricas de auto sacramental, los componentes de su representación y la alegoría.

### El auto sacramental: fiesta y alegoría

Este género teatral tan característico de la España barroca, creado para exaltar el sacramento de la Eucaristía o, tal como precisa Arellano (1995: 687), para tratar “de la Redención del género humano, con sus motivos anejos (caída, pecado original, mal, bien, sacrificio redentor de Cristo...)”, ofrece múltiples perspectivas en cuanto a su significación y su deslinde como serie literaria<sup>1</sup>.

En 1865, cien años después de la real cédula de Carlos III prohibiendo la representación de autos sacramentales, Eduardo González Pedroso publica en la Biblioteca de Autores Españoles la primera antología moderna de teatro religioso del Siglo de Oro con un estudio preliminar (58: 7-61). Allí define al género:

(...) entendiendo que por tal nombre los dramas sagrados en un acto, que tiene por objeto elogiar las excelencias del sacramento de la Eucaristía, o de los cuales consta, por lo menos, que se representaron en la festividad del Corpus (8).

Pero para acercarse a una definición más precisa de esta especie dramática se puede acudir a las que de ella dan el propio Lope de Vega y Pedro Calderón de la Barca. El primero lo hace en su *Loa entre un villano y una labradora*:

Y qué son los autos? — *Comedias*  
a honor y gloria del Pan  
que tan devota celebra  
esta coronada villa,  
porque su alabanza sea  
confusión de la herejía

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<sup>1</sup> Arellano dedica el capítulo 10 de su *Historia* al auto sacramental y cita abundante bibliografía.

y gloria de la fe nuestra,  
todas de historias divinas (2: 141)<sup>2</sup>.

De donde, como señala acertadamente Bruce W. Wardropper (1967: 28), surgen tres características fundamentales: la glorificación de la Hostia Sagrada, el carácter público y colectivo del espectáculo bajo auspicio cívico, y el doble objetivo de combatir los errores heréticos y ensalzar las verdades de la fe. Pero además se observa que la conexión entre la representación y la fiesta, en la generación anterior a Calderón, era muy libre, y no necesariamente temática.

En cambio veremos que para Calderón la conexión entre el día de Corpus y el auto sacramental es teológico:

*Sermones  
puestos en verso, en idea  
representable cuestiones  
de la Sacra Teología,  
que no alcanzan mis razones  
a explicar ni comprender,  
y al regocijo dispone  
en aplauso de este día (427)*<sup>3</sup>.

Al reflexionar sobre esta definición calderoniana, Alexander Parker (1983:45) señala que los autos sacramentales no pueden divorciarse de la teología dogmática y moral; en Calderón, el dogma se transforma en poesía dramática. Pero además observa que

Calderón distingue entre el ASUNTO y el ARGUMENTO del auto. El asunto de todo auto es, pues, la Eucaristía, pero el argumento puede variar de uno a otro, puede proceder de cualquier "historia divina" — histórica, legendaria o ficticia — con tal de que ilumine de algún modo un aspecto del asunto. (Ib. 46)

Esta distinción nos demuestra que Calderón tiene una idea más clara del género que Lope, ya que una cosa es el tema o **asunto** (la

<sup>2</sup> Loa al auto *El nombre de Jesús en Fiestas del Santísimo Sacramento* (1644) de Lope de Vega.

<sup>3</sup> Loa al auto *La segunda esposa* (1648-9?) de Calderón de la Barca.

Eucaristía) y otra el **argumento** (las parábolas evangélicas, trasposición de mitos paganos o bien leyendas); y entonces

la relación entre el asunto y la forma artística es así bien clara. (...) Pasa de arriba a abajo, del "concepto imaginado" al "práctico concepto" de su medio artístico; el lector, si quiere apreciar su arte tiene que proceder en sentido inverso yendo de la forma al significado. (Ib. 56)

Y de la forma al significado irían también los espectadores de los autos, tal como dice Calderón en su auto *Sueños hay que verdad son*:

...sé que quiere Dios  
que para rastrear lo inmenso  
de su Amor, Poder y Ciencia,  
nos valgamos de los medios  
que, a humano modo aplicados  
nos pueden servir de ejemplo.  
Y pues lo caduco no  
puede comprender lo eterno,  
y es necesario que, para  
venir en conocimiento  
suyo, haya un medio visible  
que en el corto caudal nuestro  
del *concepto imaginado*  
pase a *práctico concepto*,  
*hagamos representable*  
a los teatros del tiempo (58: 1215).

La intención didáctica resulta obvia, y el sermón dramatiza ideas, no acciones humanas.

Pero estas aproximaciones a la definición genérica resultan insuficientes si no se ubican en su contexto histórico. Para ello será necesario remontarse a sus orígenes. Orígenes que son oscuros, ya que no derivan de la tradición del teatro religioso medieval de los misterios y moralidades. En tal sentido los autos sacramentales son, como afirma Wardropper "un fenómeno rigurosamente español" (1967: 149).

Más adelante explicitaré los elementos de la representación que hacen de la pieza en un acto un auto sacramental; ahora me detendré brevemente en la consideración de la fiesta del Corpus



Christi, dado que, como se ve en las formas más acabadas del género, los autos calderonianos, la ligazón con la festividad es parte esencial de su definición.

La fiesta del Corpus Christi se celebra el jueves siguiente a la fiesta de la Santísima Trinidad y, como lo señala su nombre glorifica el sacramento de la eucaristía. Se festejó por primera vez en 1246 en Lieja, luego el papa Juan XXII (1316-1334) estableció la procesión en la que tuvo gran importancia la participación de los gremios de artesanos. El Concilio de Trento (1565) hizo de la festividad de Corpus una manifestación del triunfo de la verdad sobre la herejía, por lo tanto arma de la Contrarreforma<sup>4</sup>.

El hecho es que la procesión con sus cantos, bailes y alegría era el centro de la fiesta. En Valencia se celebraba con gran esplendor en el siglo XV. Se presentaban cuadros vivos, llamados *roques o entramesos* (grupos de estatuas), luego reemplazadas por hombres inmóviles, sobre plataformas con ruedas, que escenificaban vidas de santos o historias bíblicas. Desde 1400 se agregaron coristas (vestidos de ángeles, santos o figuras de la Pasión) y decorados, ya en 1425 aparece cierto movimiento coreográfico. Desde 1517 las roques se vuelven pequeñas comedias religiosas, misterios dramáticos. En cambio en Sevilla se desarrolla el drama litúrgico dentro del templo hasta producir un tipo rudimentario de auto sacramental, que sale de la catedral en el siglo XVI y nunca conoce las etapas intermedias: los *cuadros al vivo* y los misterios.

Wardropper (ib. 59) resume así las etapas de formación del primitivo drama religioso en España:

- 1) Había una tradición dramática relacionada con la fiesta del Corpus.
- 2) En el Levante la tradición seguía más de cerca a la europea que el resto de España.

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<sup>4</sup> Sobre esta cuestión M. Bataillon (1964:189), basándose en las escasas alusiones a la herejía en los autos del *Códice de autos viejos*, sostiene:

“En dos palabras, el nacimiento de un teatro eucarístico destinado al Corpus no parece que es un hecho de *Contrarreforma*, sino un hecho de *Reforma católica*. Como que ese nacimiento pone de manifiesto la voluntad de depuración y cultura religiosa que animaba entonces a la capa selecta del clero, particularmente en España.”

3) En Castilla y Andalucía esta tradición se desarrolló en la catedral de la cual fue expulsada a la plaza.

4) Su evolución empezó por ser semejante a la de los tropos medievales, pero se detuvo antes de llegar a formar misterios.

En la complejidad del espectáculo entraban también los medios tridimensionales de representación; sabemos que los decorados de los carros en los que se mostraban los autos eran esplendorosos, y que aún antes del imperio de los tramoyistas barrocos, los telones pintados y los efectos escénicos mostraban gran ingeniosidad<sup>5</sup>. También la riqueza del vestuario era tradicional, ya que cada año se renovaba y era sumamente costoso. Después de 1636 el fastuo va disminuyendo a la vez que se acentúa el desprestigio de los actores profesionales que, llevando una vida licenciosa participan en los autos, hasta que ya a mediados del siglo XVIII comienzan las críticas francamente adversas al género que culminarían en la prohibición de representar los autos sacramentales en 1765.

Algunos de los antecesores más importantes de Lope de Vega fueron: Hernán López de Yanguas, con su *Farsa Sacramental* (1521), Diego Sánchez de Badajoz con la *Recopilación en metro* (1554)<sup>6</sup>, los dramas sacramentales anónimos (1550-1600) recopi-

<sup>5</sup> A propósito de esto dice González Pedroso (58:16):

Abrirse los cielos para recibir a la Virgen, que desde la tierra se elevaba hasta el trono de la Santísima Trinidad, de quien era coronada; aparecer Sansón dando vueltas a un molino, abrazar las columnas de un templo y derribarlas; revestirse de flores el báculo de San Cristóbal al clavarlo el santo en la tierra por orden del niño Jesús; convertirse en serpiente un bolsillo a la voz de San Francisco; ahorcar a Amán; decapitar al Bautista y quemar a Santa Eulalia, todo a la faz del público, son solamente una parte de los espectáculos que los tramoyistas con su ingenio, o los espectadores con su buena voluntad, tenían que poner en punto de perfección al representarse algunas de las farsas que hemos leído.

<sup>6</sup> Especialmente la *Farsa racional del Libre albedrío*, *Farsa moral*, *Farsa militar*, *Farsa del juego de cañas* y la *Montería espiritual*. Sobre esta última cf. el valioso artículo de Celina S. de Cortazar: "Un tema teológico en Diego Sánchez de Badajoz: las potencias del alma y su acción recíproca", *Studia hispanica in honorem R. Lapesa*. Madrid: Gredos, 1974, II: 555-575.

lados en el *Códice de autos viejos* (Rouanet), y el *Aucto de la oveja perdida* (1575) de Juan de Timoneda.

Antes de definir a la alegoría como recurso retórico y su realización dramática, interesa destacar algo que señala Wardropper (ib. 99) recordando cuál es el fin último del género en su contexto histórico correspondiente:

En los autos sacramentales la poesía y la alegoría se prestan a ser interpretados según la capacidad del oyente. Es el gran recurso literario que permite a Timoneda, a Valdivielso y a Calderón dirigirse a un público que abarca desde los Grandes de España hasta las fregonas de las posadas.

De manera que, si bien la alegoría es un procedimiento de raíces filosófico-teológicas, no debe olvidarse que, en todos los casos, sus destinatarios históricos comprendían perfectamente la sugestión analógica que los autos tornaban visible a sus ojos. Por su parte, Díez Borque explica la recepción de los autos sacramentales desde la perspectiva del "pueblo feligrés" que participa de la fiesta poniendo en juego no sólo su razón sino también las emociones desencadenadas por el espectáculo<sup>7</sup>.

La alegoría explica algo desconocido mediante su relación con un hecho o una personalidad comprensible. Hace posible la representación dramática de los dogmas. Si la idea central del auto es el dogma de la Redención, que supone la caída, el pecado, la Encarnación, la Pasión de Jesús, para dramatizarla se necesitan personajes alegóricos: la Culpa, la Humanidad, Dios.

No es mérito exclusivo de Lope de Vega el personificar abstracciones y convertirlas en personajes dramáticos, ya que existía la tradición de los dramas religiosos medievales que también lo habían hecho e incluso utilizaban la alegoría. Se puede suponer, releyendo las definiciones que Lope y Calderón daban del auto como género, que el primero no tuviera una conciencia muy clara de los com-

<sup>7</sup> Díez Borque, J. M. *Historia del teatro en España*. Madrid:Taurus, 1983, apud Arellano (1995:697) quien considera los mecanismos de la "fascinación sensorial" del público de los autos en su *Historia*, 698 y ss.



plejos hilos que se mueven detrás de la alegoría religiosa, tal como luego la entenderá Calderón en la loa de *El sacro Parnaso*:

.....soy  
 si en términos me defino  
 docta Alegoría, tropo  
 retórico, que expresivo,  
 debajo de una alusión  
 de otra cosa, significo  
 las propiedades en lejos,  
 los accidentes en vivos,  
 pues dando cuerpo al concepto  
 aún lo no visible animo... (5: 3)

Pero aunque las alegorías de Lope de Vega carezcan de profundidad teológica, en cambio funcionan con la misma eficacia que los personajes de sus comedias. Pongo por caso el *Auto de las bodas entre el Alma y el Amor Divino* del *Peregrino* en que el Apetito, el loco de la princesa (el Alma), cumple plenamente el rol tradicional del gracioso, creando situaciones cómicas en diálogos rápidos y vivaces.

### Los autos del *Peregrino*

Concentraré aquí mi lectura en el auto del *Viaje del Alma*, con algunas breves referencias al de las *Bodas del Alma y el Amor Divino*, considerando a las dos piezas como parte del marco de referencia ideológica y estética de una especie narrativa en formación: la novela española de peregrinaje.

En todos los casos la aparición de un auto sacramental al final de los cuatro primeros libros del *Peregrino* supone la suspensión de la historia para introducir la representación dramática.<sup>8</sup> Eso, por un

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<sup>8</sup> En el siguiente cuadro se muestran las instancias espacio-temporales de la representación de los cuatro autos, de donde surge un evidente desfasaje cronológico, comentado por Avalor-Arce como fruto de la necesidad de congeniar la acción de la novela con el año santo de 1600 (fecha de la peregrinación a Italia de los protagonistas del *Persiles* cervantino):

lado, transforma a los autos en digresiones discursivas, ya que la acción representada en escena invade la narración, deteniéndola e introduciendo el mensaje doctrinal de exaltación sacramental. Pero, por el otro, enriquece al texto con la perspectiva visual del narrador como espectador junto con los personajes y el lector de la novela. El resultado final de esta técnica es, entre otros, el logro de la profundidad y multiplicidad de planos de la narración, en una *mise en abîme* de gran esplendor escenográfico y de indudable eficacia didáctica, a pesar del pobre espesor teológico de los autos.<sup>9</sup>

Al concluir la representación escénica, la narración, lógicamente, sigue su curso, pero en dos oportunidades la maquinaria escenográfica incide en lo narrado: 1) en el auto del *Viaje del Alma*: cuando la Nave de la Penitencia, que había sido prolijamente descrita en la didascalia, es festejada: “Con general aplauso de los oyentes, fiesta y salva a esta embarcación se hizo[...]La Maya: donde la imagen de la Eucaristía que cierra triunfante el auto resuena aún en la narración, e incluso es sometida a evaluación por los espectadores quienes ponderan la actuación “de los representantes” y “la industria del artífice” (326).

### El auto del Viaje del Alma

Bien avanzado el libro I el Peregrino es liberado de la prisión, y decide encaminarse hacia Valencia, ciudad en la que se preparan grandes fiestas:

Auto	Lugar	Fecha
<i>Viaje del alma</i>	Valencia	1600
<i>Bodas del Alma y el Amor Divino</i>	Valencia	Abril de 1599
<i>La Maya</i>	Zaragoza	Mayo (?) de 1598
<i>Hijo pródigo</i>	Perpiñán	1600

<sup>9</sup> Tal como señala C. S. de Cortazar (1983:825–831) refiriéndose a los autos del *Peregrino*: “En todos los casos la alegoría es superficial, el interés teológico poco profundo, la acción de las Potencias limitadísima y no específica”.

[...] siguiendo el Peregrino el concurso de la gente vio que tomaban lugar en una plaza para escuchar sobre un teatro **una representación moral del Viaje del Alma**, y, como a este género de fiestas fuese **aficionadísimo**, y **sea común de los peregrinos** hallarse en todas, tomó asiento, [...] (107-108) (El subrayado es mío)

Como corresponde a las normas del género es la casualidad la que rige en este episodio. El azar determina que el protagonista llegue a la ciudad justamente en el momento en que se representa el auto. Pero, para reforzar la motivación, el narrador agrega la definición del Peregrino como "aficionadísimo a las fiestas de este género", causalidad en el orden de lo individual que luego es inmediatamente sustentada por una de orden colectivo "y sea común en los peregrinos hallarse en todas", con lo que parece suficiente razón para insertar la pieza dramática.

En la novela los enamorados peregrinan a Roma para casarse allí luego de confirmada su fe católica. En el camino asisten a la representación de los autos, que muestran la manera de seguir el buen camino hacia la salvación eterna. Como es sabido, en este período el auto sacramental, y especialmente el auto loresco, sufre la influencia de la estructura dramática de la comedia profana, esto es la tripartición de la acción representada en otras tantas situaciones fundamentales. Estas situaciones hacen las veces de exposición, nudo y desenlace y se apoyan en tres fuerzas:

- + una fuerza temática inicial: la redención del Alma.
- + una fuerza opositora: el Demonio y su aliados, los Vicios, Deleite, Apetito, Engaño.
- + una fuerza arbitral: las Potencias del Alma, Memoria, Voluntad, y Entendimiento.

En el Apéndice puede verse la organización tripartita del auto estudiado. Analizo la organización de los autos utilizando la metodología puesta a punto por Alfredo Hermenegildo para establecer el eje estructurante del relato dramático, y para cuantificar y calificar la masa fónica atribuida a cada personaje alegórico. Este análisis debe darnos claves para una mejor comprensión, no sólo de la estructuración interna del auto intercalado, sino también de su interacción genérica con la narración que lo incluye.



La identificación del eje ordenador de la fábula sigue, pues, las reglas gramaticales del modelo arbóreo de Pavel en el que la estructura narrativa (EN) supone las categorías de Orden turbado (OT), Orden restablecido (OR), Situación inicial (SI), Transgresión (T), Mediación (M) y Desenlace (D). En cuanto al estudio de la masa textual de los parlamentos y su connotación dominante, aplico la tipología establecida por Hermenegildo en ocho funciones: ponente, oponente, carnavalesca, imperativa, ejecutora, conjuntiva, informante y metaliteraria.<sup>10</sup> Ceñiré mi trabajo a la consideración de cinco personajes: el Alma, el Demonio, Cristo, Entendimiento y Memoria. Esta selección respeta un principio constructivo fundamental de la narración: el héroe (Alma) debe enfrentar la encrucijada del camino entre el bien (Cristo) y el mal (Demonio) y es auxiliada por sus Potencias.

En el *Viaje del Alma* resulta evidente la tripartición de la representación moral. Interesa señalar que luego del planteo de la situación inicial en la primera parte (El Alma busca nave para ir a Sión), la segunda parte es, desde todo punto de vista, la más connotada. Se trata del inicio de la batalla naval alegórica entre la Nave

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<sup>10</sup> En su trabajo inédito "La disolución del personaje dramático: Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz y el auto sacramental", Hermenegildo define una vez más las funciones que diseñan al personaje dramático: "1) **Ponente**: implica la cosmovisión y la axiología del héroe o todo signo que reproduce y apoya su visión del mundo y su escala de valores. 2) **Oponente**: marca una disidencia con relación a la visión del mundo preconizada por el héroe, por el donador. El punto de referencia que condiciona la "oposición" ha de estar definido por los intereses que envuelven al héroe. 3) **Carnavalesca**: expresa una visión burlesca del mundo del héroe, del espacio oficial. 4) **Imperativa**: enuncia una orden. 5) **Ejecutora**: manifiesta la realización de una orden. 6) **Conjuntiva** o función implícita en intervenciones generalmente breves, que deben establecer relaciones subordinadas o coordinadas entre las situaciones escénicas que las anteceden o las siguen. Los parlamentos conjuntivos son signos "grises", átonos, sin gran contenido semántico. 7) **Informante** es la función de un segmento textual que implica la transmisión de noticias. 8) **Metaliteraria**, o función del parlamento en el que se utiliza el código literario como objeto del mensaje."

Agradezco de manera muy especial la generosidad de Alfredo Hermenegildo al permitirme consultar este artículo.

del Deleite, piloteada por el Demonio y los vicios, y la nave de la Penitencia bajo el mando de Cristo. La metáfora náutica se manifiesta aquí en los cuadros escenográficos, pero además es complementada por dos zalomas, canciones de los marineros al izar las velas: una es profana, entonada por el Demonio y los Vicios /vv. 723-732/ (129-130), y la otra sacra, en las voces de Penitencia y los suyos /vv. 855-866/ (134-135). Las didascalias señalan la gradual visualización de la nave del Demonio, hasta su aparición final. Más tarde aparecerá la Nave de la Penitencia.<sup>11</sup> Cito parcialmente ambas descripciones:

Corrieron a este tiempo una cortina, descubriéndose la nave del Deleite, toda popa dorada y llena de historias de vicios, así de la divina como de la humana historia, encima de la cual estaban muchas damas y galanes comiendo y bebiendo y alrededor de las mesas muchos truhanes y músicos. (133)

Descubrióse en esta sazón la nave de la Penitencia, cuyo árbol y entena eran una cruz, que por jarcias desde los clavos y rótulo tenía la esponja, la lanza, la escalera y los azotes, con muchas flámulas, estandartes y gallardetes bordados de cálices de oro, que hacía una hermosa vista; por trinquete tenía la coluna y San Bernardo abrazado a ella; la popa era el sepulcro, al pie del cual estaba la Magdalena. (137)

La *zaloma* a lo divino que precede a la aparición de la nave del Deleite actúa como emblema dinámico de la tentación.<sup>12</sup> En la

<sup>11</sup> En cuanto a la metáfora náutica, de larguísima tradición literaria, presenta la imagen de la nave donde "el poeta se convierte en navegante y su espíritu o su obra en un bajel" (Curtius 1975:190). En ese sentido resalta la significación de este auto en el contexto temático del viaje del alma.

<sup>12</sup> Los párrafos didascálicos presentan a las alegorías en hábito de personajes de comedia, facilitando aún más de la decodificación de la acción. Así, por ejemplo, el Alma aparece vestida de dama, la Voluntad de villano, la Memoria de mancebo y el Entendimiento de viejo venerable, con lo que su conducta eventual se hace previsible y reconocible.

tercera parte sucede lo mismo con la Nave de la penitencia, en paralelismo perfecto como signo de: 1) el enfrentamiento entre ambas embarcaciones, y 2) la apoteosis final de Cristo y del Alma a El unida: (vv.1003-1004) "que el Alma a embarcarse va;/ pasa a mi nave mi esposa". (139)

La aplicación del árbol de dependencias de Pavel (cuadro 1) muestra en este caso el siguiente diseño: el eje ordenador de la fábula es el Alma, sujeto de la estructura narrativa, que dirige la acción hacia el desenlace (D), es decir, su salvación eterna. La transgresión (T) es llevada a cabo por el Demonio y los suyos, y la mediación (M) que restaura el orden por Entendimiento y Memoria.

En cuanto al estudio de la masa textual atribuida a los personajes y a las funciones que dominan en el diálogo, lo primero que salta a la vista es la ausencia de las funciones **carnavalesca** y **metateatral** en el auto del *Viaje*.<sup>13</sup> El cuadro 2 presenta el peso relativo de las funciones en el total de los dichos de cada personaje desglosando los segmentos caracterizados como *varia*, es decir aquellos en los que se superpone más de una connotación.

Los 16 parlamentos de función **ponente** de Alma (43.24% del total de sus intervenciones), uniformemente distribuidas en las tres partes del auto, muestran claramente su actuación como héroe de la estructura narrativa. Sin embargo, es significativo el desplazamiento de esta función hacia los personajes mediadores: Entendimiento y Memoria (con 15 y 13 intervenciones respectivamente, lo que suma un total de 28). A la hora de reafirmar los valores de la fe católica Alma pierde iniciativa ante la decidida acción de sus Potencias. Algo similar ocurre con la función **conjuntiva**, que establece nexos sintácticos entre las situaciones escénicas. Mientras el Alma cuenta con 6 parlamentos en los que domina esta función (16.22%),

<sup>13</sup> La función metateatral aparece en el auto de *La Maya*. La acción se organiza teniendo en cuenta las normas de la festividad tradicional, por lo tanto constituye una representación dentro de la representación (TeT en términos de Hermenegildo). En cuanto a la función carnavalesca que aparece en el auto de las *Bodas* en el personaje de *Apetito*, se registra en el auto del *Hijo pródigo* en el Juego, gracioso en hábito de **zan** de la *commedia dell' arte*, que contribuye a dar la visión burlesca del mundo heroico, con su lenguaje de tintes macarrónicos.



Entendimiento la supera con 12 (34.28%) y Memoria con 10 (31.25%).

Cristo interviene en el diálogo solamente en la tercera parte del auto. Lo hace en contadas oportunidades aunque con un peso cuantitativamente superior al de Demonio y Alma (10.3 versos por parlamento, mientras que Alma cuenta con 3.39 versos y Demonio con 5.08). La aparición final del piloto de la nave de la Penitencia ha sido preparada por Memoria y Entendimiento. De allí que en el análisis de las funciones dominantes en los dichos de Cristo es evidente que las connotaciones **ponente** (52.94%) e **imperativa** (47.05%) son las que muestran su carácter de soberano (Cristo/Piloto/Rey). En tanto tal ordena y declara los artículos de la fe católica.

En cuanto a la función **oponente** es interesante observar que en la segunda parte el Alma vacila acerca de si embarcarse o no en la Nave del Deleite. Clasifico como **oponente** a los segmentos connotados por la duda, ya que para la ortodoxia católica toda vacilación va en contra de la certidumbre, más allá de toda razón, propia de la fe. Es precisamente en la segunda parte, durante la batalla naval alegórica, donde el Demonio acentúa su función **oponente** (31.43%) y participa de manera activa en la lucha, por lo que en sus intervenciones la función **conjuntiva** (22.85%) es mayor que la del Alma (16.22%).

Una observación acerca de la función **ejecutora**. Ni Cristo ni el Demonio obedecen, puestos en situación de pilotos de las naves alegóricas. Las potencias, Entendimiento y Memoria, tampoco cumplen órdenes dada su función de consejeras de Alma. Pero el Alma, en plena apoteosis de Cristo responde a sus llamados en la tercera parte (5.40%). De manera que, a pesar de la presencia cuantitativamente escasa de esta función, su situación contextual subraya la cualidad esencial al dogma: el Alma obedece a Cristo y sube a la nave de la salvación.

El recuento de la función **imperativa** muestra la complementación entre Memoria (5 intervenciones) que actúa en la primera y segunda parte del auto, y Entendimiento (7) que lo hace en la segunda y tercera. La suma de ambos (12) y de las órdenes emanadas de Cristo (8 parlamentos) supera ampliamente la acción del Demonio (20 vs. 8).

Finalmente, señalo la función **informante** de Memoria (12.5%), que en la segunda parte da cuenta a Entendimiento acerca de lo sucedido en su ausencia.

La falta de iniciativa de Alma queda puesta en evidencia en el auto del *Viaje*. En el auto de las *Bodas*, no analizado aquí en detalle, se comprueba un fenómeno similar en cuanto al debilitamiento del accionar del héroe. Sólo mencionaré que en este auto Alma tampoco asume completamente la función **ponente** ya que ésta es encarnada por otros personajes, entre los que Fe y San Juan Bautista son los más importantes difusores del dogma católico. En la función **oponente** el auto de las *Bodas* muestra el desplazamiento evidente de esta función del Alma hacia Apetito, el gracioso. Amor Divino, por su parte, muestra un comportamiento similar al de Cristo en el auto del *Viaje*, o sea, interviene mínimamente en el diálogo y las funciones de sus dichos son la **ponente** y la **imperativa**. La función **informante** de Alma desaparece ya que es llenada por otros personajes. El ejemplo más evidente es el parlamento de San Juan Evangelista, aposentador real, en la tercera parte (vv. 1145-1235) del auto en la que describe el desfile de la corte celestial que anuncia la llegada del rey, Amor Divino.

Si observamos el cuadro 3 en su totalidad surgen con cierta evidencia algunos rasgos estructurales interesantes del auto. El discurso ideológico del dogma religioso proclamado (por la función **ponente**), puesto en duda o negado (por la **oponente**) y hecho orden (a favor o en contra, por la función **imperativa**) concentra la mayor parte de la fuerza ilocutoria de los personajes analizados. La función ejecutora no se corresponde, como sería lógico esperar, con la **imperativa**, es decir que hay poca acción. La única ocurrencia destaca la redención final de Alma. Queda claro, además, que el encadenamiento de las situaciones escénicas (la función **conjuntiva**) muestra la iniciativa evidente de Entendimiento, secundado por Memoria. No es el héroe quien interactúa sino sus consejeros.

En resumen, el auto del *Viaje del Alma* desarrolla una estructura narrativa eminentemente expositora de ideas, con escasa acción pero con un despliegue escenográfico impactante de la batalla naval alegórica.

Volviendo a la hipótesis de que el análisis de los personajes alegóricos contribuye a una mejor comprensión de la novela marco,



los dos autos estudiados corroboran la constitución de un héroe: el Alma, con el que es razonable suponer deben identificarse, en tanto espectadores de la representación, los enamorados peregrinos Pánfilo y Nise. Un héroe, pues, debilitado en su acción a causa del peso de la materia dogmática proclamada por los personajes que actúan a su servicio.<sup>14</sup> Esto indica la completa armonía entre la construcción de los personajes de los autos sacramentales incluidos y el estatismo propio de los protagonistas de la novela marco. Volveré luego a esta cuestión.

### Conclusiones

En los modelos clásicos de la novela bizantina, *Las Etiópicas* de Heliodoro y *Teágenes y Cariclea* de Aquiles Tacio, se incluyen descripciones de cuadros y tapices (imágenes visuales sincrónicas) en la narración. Lope los sustituye en su novela por los autos sacramentales (en tanto dramas, imágenes visuales diacrónicas). Hay motivos individuales e históricos para explicar el uso de tal procedimiento. Sabemos cuán proclive era Lope a infringir las normas genéricas establecidas, y conocemos su búsqueda de prestigio intelectual para integrarse a los círculos áulicos. Además, todo este período (siglos XVI y XVII) aparece inmerso en el auge de la literatura emblemática, fácilmente integrable en el texto dramático mediante la asociación de imagen y texto.

Me refiero ahora, muy brevemente, a los dos núcleos semánticos principales de la historia: el viaje y las bodas. El viaje, armazón estructural de los relatos de antiquísima data, obra en el *Peregrino* como elemento conducente hacia el dogma alegorizado, la difusión doctrinal y el artificio barroco. En la novela el viaje del alma corre parejo con el peregrinaje amoroso (Pánfilo y Nise son antes que nada amantes que verificarán su espiritualidad católica). Pero si suponemos *a priori* que en todo viaje del alma se va de un extremo al otro, desde la oscuridad hacia la luz, de lo sensible a lo ultra-

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<sup>14</sup> En ambos autos se corrobora la observación de Hermenegildo: "El héroe [...] ve reducida su dinámica dramática al serle retiradas una serie de incidencias de las funciones oponente y ponente" (art. cit.).



sensible; y pensamos que la historia de los protagonistas sufre igual conversión, seremos decepcionados por la novela de Lope. Porque Pánfilo y Nise, peregrinos de amor, no se convierten sino que simplemente confirman su fe. Así, el tema del viaje espiritual desplaza su mayor peso semántico hacia lo alegórico, construido con eficiencia por Lope en los autos incluidos. Como es lógico suponer, en los autos, especialmente en los que el viaje es el principio constructivo: el *Auto del viaje del alma* (L.I) y el *Auto del Hijo Pródigo* (L.IV), la materia dogmática se muestra plenamente. El Alma, bajo el imperio del libre albedrío, emprenderá el camino hacia la salvación eterna si es capaz de escuchar las voces de sus potencias (Entendimiento, Memoria y Voluntad) y responde al llamado de Cristo.

El motivo de las bodas, ricamente elaborado por la literatura mística para expresar mediante términos eróticos los sutiles estados del alma en su unión con Dios, actúa tanto en la novela como en los autos sacramentales estrechamente ligado al viaje: el alma va hacia Dios y luego se une con Él en matrimonio, de la misma manera que Pánfilo y Nise peregrinan hasta reencontrarse en Roma y se casan.

Ahora bien, así como en los autos la transformación alegórica del Alma (del vicio a la virtud) aparece atenuada por la débil iniciativa de ésta a favor de la activa intervención de otros personajes, en la novela los protagonistas terminan tan virtuosos como comenzaron. Esto me lleva a concluir que Lope de Vega construye unos héroes que: a) en lo dramático son debilitados en su iniciativa por la decidida participación de los personajes que concretan la difusión dogmática; b) en lo narrativo no consiguen desprenderse del fatal designio de los modelos clásicos del relato bizantino: el estatismo interior, y la no modificación de su espiritualidad, que sólo es verificada por las peripecias novelescas.

De modo que la inclusión de los autos sacramentales en el contexto de la novela *El peregrino en su patria* se explica: 1) porque sirven de refuerzo plástico del mensaje ideológico-religioso que fundamenta toda la novela, es decir, la reafirmación del dogma de la Redención y la Eucaristía. Y en este sentido se los puede considerar como materia emblemática dentro de la narración (fijando incluso determinadas imágenes escenográficas como la de la Nave de la Penitencia o la Hostia que encierra a Cristo); 2) por-

que son el marco de referencia estética para definir el camino espiritual (viaje del alma alegorizado en el *Auto del Viaje del Alma* y el *Auto del Hijo Pródigo*, libros I y IV) del alma hacia la unión definitiva con Dios (plasmado en el *Auto de las bodas entre el Alma y el Amor Divino* y el auto de *La Maya*, libros II y III), y 3) porque su función estructurante no se reduce sólo a la simetría de la ubicación al final de los primeros cuatro libros de la novela (como sostiene Avalle-Arce) sino que se define, como he demostrado en el auto analizado, por su construcción interna, que reproduce en perfecta *mise en abîme* los componentes esenciales de la narración que los enmarca.

De esta forma parece pertinente releer *El peregrino en su patria* con diferente mirada, y considerar a la novela como un experimento narrativo de irregular fortuna del dramaturgo exitoso que era Lope en el momento en que la escribe y, en ese contexto, integrar a los autos sacramentales en el conjunto espectacular del relato, con su doble dimensión espaciotemporal (la narración y la representación). Pues aunque estos autos no lleguen a la elaboración filosófico-teológica de los de Valdivielso o los de Calderón, instauran un **aquí** y **ahora** de la peregrinación en los que el camino vale más por los artificios que lo rodean, que por el azaroso itinerario de la aventura.

## Apéndices

### El auto del viaje del Alma /1056 vv./

#### *Situaciones dramáticas*

#### 1. Nave del Deleite /vv. 285-607/

El alma va hacia la ciudad de Sión, busca un piloto.

El Demonio y los Vicios la llevan a la Nave del Deleite (Lujuria, Soberbia y otros pecados).

#### 2. Batalla naval alegórica /vv. 608-866/

Las Potencias advierten a Alma sobre el error de su elección.

#### 3. Nave de la Penitencia /vv. 867-1056/

Cristo es su piloto e invita al Alma a subir.

### Cuadro 1

#### *Auto del Viaje del Alma*



N = Estructura Narrativa; OT = orden turbado; OR = orden restaurado; SI = situación inicial; T = transgresión; M = mediación; D = desenlace. (1) Alma busca nave para ir a Sión; (2) Demonio y Nave del Deleite; (3) Entendimiento, Memoria y Nave de la Penitencia; (4) Alma sube a la nave de Cristo.

### Cuadro 2

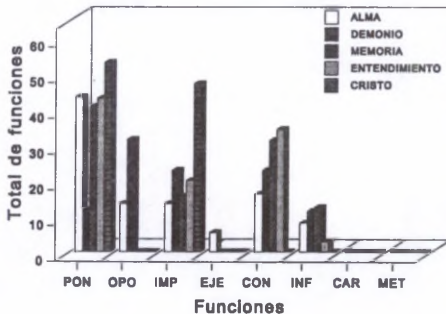
El peso relativo de las funciones para cada personaje es el siguiente:

	PON	OPO	IMP	EJE	CON	INF	total
Alma	<b>43.24%</b>	13.51%	13.51%	5.40%	16.22%	8.11%	99.99%
Demonio	11.43%	<b>31.43%</b>	22.85%	0	22.85%	11.43%	99.99%
Memoria	<b>40.62%</b>	0	15.62%	0	31.25%	12.5%	99.99%
Entendimiento	<b>42.86%</b>	0	20%	0	34.28%	2.85%	99.99%
Cristo	<b>52.94%</b>	0	47.05%	0	0	0	99.99%

Nota: En negrita los valores de la función predominante para cada personaje. A continuación se trasladan estos datos a un gráfico tridimensional.

### Cuadro 3

#### Auto del viaje del alma





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## Auden's Conspiracy: "The Secret Agent" and "Wulf and Eadwacer"

NAN COHEN

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"The Secret Agent" is one of the earliest of W. H. Auden's poems that he chose to retain in collections of his work, although in maturity he lopped off the title and it now appears as #3 in his *Selected Poems* ("Control of the passes was, he saw, the key") although his editor, Edward Mendelson, restores the title in the *Collected Poems*. He was almost 21 when he wrote it, in his last year at Oxford, in and out of romantic "entanglements", as his biographer, Humphrey Carpenter, describes that time. The year was 1928: postwar, pre-'Thirties. "The Secret Agent" is a small poem, an unrhymed sonnet, but it is unquestionably about a man entangled in a very twentieth-century situation:

Control of the passes was, he saw, the key  
To this new district, but who would get it?  
He, the trained spy, had walked into the trap  
For a bogus guide, seduced with the old tricks.  
At Greenhearth was a fine site for a dam  
And easy power, had they pushed the rail  
Some stations nearer. They ignored his wires.  
The bridges were unbuilt and trouble coming.

The street music seemed gracious now to one  
For weeks up in the desert. Woken by water  
Running away in the dark, he often had

Reproached the night for a companion  
 Dreamed of already. They would shoot, of course,  
 Parting easily two who were never joined<sup>1</sup>.

It is well known that the last line is an echo of the final sentiment of an Old English poem called "Wulf and Eadwacer", which ends "One easily parts what was never joined,/our story together". Although this essay's intent is to illuminate the relationship, signaled by this line, between Auden's poem and "Wulf and Eadwacer", the reader's initial response to find this echo cropping up in "The Secret Agent" should not be one of surprise. We can find ample context for this thievery in Auden's lifelong delight in Anglo-Saxon poetry, his youthful attraction to the challenge of burying an unusual allusion in a neatly crafted sonnet, and his poetic susceptibility to a good-sounding line. And it does no harm if we wish to read the poem as a vignette of modern disaffection, a between-wars paradigm of old-fashioned loyalty and ability rendered useless by the destruction of familiar signs and the installation of a new, by definition unreadable code.

This is what I call the spy-novel reading of "The Secret Agent", because throughout the octave one is struck by how very like a spy novel this terse, urgent poem is, and indeed, what do we ordinary people, readers and writers, know about spies except what we read in spy novels? The poem seems to criticize the way political necessities crush honest men underfoot and bureaucracy renders loyalty and honor obsolete. In his *study Cover Stories: Narrative and Ideology in the British Spy Thriller*, Michael Denning proposes that the spy novel tries to restore a connection between ordinary individuals and an increasingly complicated and forbidding social order. The figure of the spy allows us to cope with giant concepts on a human scale:

History is displaced to secret conspiracies and secret agents, from politics to ethics. The secret *agent*

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<sup>1</sup> I have chosen to work from the version of "The Secret Agent" in Auden's *Collected Poems*. The significant change in the *Selected Poems* version is that the last line reads "Parting easily who were never joined", omitting the word *two*.



returns human *agency* to a world which seems less and less the product of human action (Denning 1987: 14; emphasis his).

And while it is doubtful that Auden's secret agent can complete such a transaction for us in his fourteen allotted lines, he is nevertheless there, in that anonymous landscape, and if he is frustrated and shut out, he still knows more than his audience does; he confronts the alienation for us. And in the final line, the negation of "never joined" gestures wordlessly toward the hopeless longing for joining, either with the companion or with the trusted masters who have cut him off; and the word "easily" is ambiguously poised, suggesting either relief at being sloughed off by the Bureau quickly at the end, or bitterness at never having been allowed to join with a companion.

But "The Secret Agent" is still an enigma; all those definite articles contribute to the reader's impression of being left out of a professional briefing: where is Greenhearth? What are the old tricks? A spy novelist would have provided these as plot elements, perhaps. Auden's best readers have remained dissatisfied with describing the poem as a spy story or even as a vignette of postwar alienation. In *A Reader's Guide to W. H. Auden*, John Fuller suggests that "The Secret Agent" is a story of "unconsummated love" (34), substituting love story for spy story. In this scheme,

[t]he spy represents the individual's emotional urge to make contact with another human being... he is forced to act as a secret agent because the individual does not consciously recognize his love (the spy) and represses it. 'They,' who ignore his wires, and eventually shoot him, represent the conscious will, the Censor, which represses the individual's emotional desires (Fuller 1970: 34).

Fuller's reading has become the basis for most interpretations of the poem; it is particularly satisfying since it gives us a hook on which to hang our interpretive hat without diminishing the poem's pleasing mystery. Edward Mendelson, in *Early Auden*, cautions that the poem

need not be allegorized into a simple complaint about unconsummated love. The division acknowledged at the end of the poem is present everywhere: death that parts lovers also parts mind and body, "who were never joined" (Mendelson 1981: 36).

Although Carpenter mentions that "The Secret Agent" was written during Auden's infatuation with his fellow student Gabriel Carritt, both he and Mendelson doubt that the poem is addressed to any specific person. Though it is a sonnet, it lacks the tone of a lover's complaint to his disdainful beloved. One might argue that Auden comments ironically on a modern love aesthetic in which the lover and the object of his unrequited love are reduced to mutual helplessness in the face of miscommunication and disaffection, but that argument ascribes to the young Auden a view of love which I find too severe, particularly when compared to a poem of the same period, "The Letter" ("From the very first coming down" in *Selected Poems*, dated just one month before "The Secret Agent"). Like "The Secret Agent", it is not dedicated to anyone in particular, though on a friend's copy of this poem Auden wrote the initials W. M., apparently meaning William McElwee, another undergraduate friend with whom he had a romantic entanglement (Carpenter 1981: 76).

From the very first coming down  
 Into a new valley with a frown  
 Because of the sun and a lost way,  
 You certainly remain: to-day  
 I, crouching behind a sheep-pen, heard  
 Travel across a sudden bird,  
 Cry out against the storm, and found  
 The year's arc a completed round  
 And love's worn circuit re-begun,  
 Endless with no dissenting turn.  
 Shall see, shall pass, as we have seen  
 The swallow on the tile, spring's green  
 Preliminary shiver, passed  
 A solitary truck, the last  
 Of shunting in the Autumn. But now,  
 To interrupt the homely brow,

Thought warmed to evening through and through,  
Your letter comes, speaking as you,  
Speaking of much but not to come.

Nor speech is close nor fingers numb,  
If love not seldom has received  
An unjust answer, was deceived.  
I, decent with the seasons, move  
Different or with a different love,  
Nor question overmuch the nod,  
The stone smile of this country god  
That never was more reticent,  
Always afraid to say more than it meant.

The poem speaks of the reticence which characterizes the course of "love's worn circuit", but with a frankness — even using the very word "reticent" — that would surely be impossible in a poem that viewed reticence as crippling. The poem embodies reticence, full-bodied: its voice is composed, precise, and like the "stone smile of the country god", who was "always afraid to say more than it meant". Lovers and poems alike fear saying more than they mean; both poems and lovers (particularly reticent ones) are content to mean more than they say. Those who disappoint us in love, however, usually mean no more than what they say: "Your letter comes, speaking as you,/ Speaking of much but not to come". The speaker of the poem may be disappointed by what is not said, but he his reticence does not keep him from producing a poem whose reticence is eloquent.

In "The Secret Agent", lovers' reticence is replaced by an atmosphere of repression and unspeakability, in which there is certainly room to think about the poem's relationship to its young author's musings about his emergent homosexuality. Influenced by Carpenter's account, I am inclined to suggest that while the imagined "companion" is almost surely a man rather than a woman, the poem's imagery is not concentrated on producing a picture of love repressed because of its homosexual nature; it seems more concerned with the impossibility of overcoming emotional geography in order to express and enjoy love. Socially imposed fear and hatred of homosexuality may be a feature of that land-



scape for the "agent", but not the only one. For him, the barrier to love has an even more forbidding political and historical character.

Mendelson reminds us that the poem's alienation "is not only sexual: it is any separation from unity or satisfaction" (1981: 36). The secret agent is cut off from his nation (or whatever vague entity to which he gave his allegiance) and this separation makes the satisfaction of a "companion/Dreamed of already" impossible as well. For both Fuller and Mendelson, the borrowing of the line "Parting easily who were never joined" reinforces a reading of the poem as a love story, or perhaps a story about the impossibility of love, since, as Mendelson describes it, "Wulf and Eadwacer" is "the monologue of a captive woman separated from her lover" (36). But for them, the subject matter of "Wulf and Eadwacer" is not crucial to "The Secret Agent". As Mendelson says of Auden's "The Wanderer" ("Doom is dark and deeper than any sea-dingle", #13 in *Selected Poems*), which has a more overt kinship to another Old English poem from the Exeter Book manuscript, where "Wulf and Eadwacer" is found:

He does not much care if his readers recognize that his lines derive from an ancient source. The point in Auden is not that a distant past has been laboriously recovered for the present, but that a statement about present loneliness and anxiety can be made in terms that the past freely provides (ib. 46).

Particularly appealing is the suggestion of personification and intention in Mendelson's observation that the past is generous. As a piece of the past, "Wulf and Eadwacer" is more generous than most, rife as it is with uncertainties of interpretation which make it one of the least agreed-upon poems in the body of work that survives in Old English — and there, of course, is the difficulty and the delight for conscientious readers of "The Secret Agent". Auden's poem holds strong echoes of "Wulf and Eadwacer", in its double theme of exile from the tribe and from one beloved individual, and in its choice of language, even apart from the borrowed last line. Further, it is possible to read "The Secret Agent" as a kind of reply to "Wulf and Eadwacer", a companion poem answering it across a span of almost a thousand years, echoing its

concerns and intertwining with its narrative (reminiscent of the relationship many readers have seen between the two Exeter Book poems called "The Wife's Lament" and "The Husband's Message"). Here is my translation of "Wulf and Eadwacer", using Krapp and Dobbie's edition in *The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records*.

It is to them, my people, as if one made them an offering;  
 they want to destroy him, if he comes into their hands.  
 It is different with us.  
 Wulf is on an island, I on another.  
 Fast is that island, bound up with fen.  
 Fierce men are there, there on that island;  
 they want to destroy him, if he comes into their hands.  
 It is different with us.  
 My Wulf I awaited, yearnings far-reaching,  
 when it was rainy weather, and I sat weeping,  
 when the warrior wrapped me in his great boughs,  
 there was pleasure for me, there for me was pain.  
 Wulf, my Wulf, for want of you  
 I am made sick; your seldom coming,  
 my mourning mind, not want of food.  
 Do you hear, Eadwacer? Our wretched whelp  
 Wulf will bear to the wood.  
 One easily parts what was never joined,  
 our story together.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Like most Old English poetry, "Wulf and Eadwacer" is enriched by words of multiple meanings — in this line, *giedd*, which could be translated "song" or "poem" as well as "story". Some of the disagreement about how to read "Wulf and Eadwacer" turns on more complex translation choices: for example, the line I translate "They want to destroy him if he comes into their hands" is translated by R. K. Gordon as "Will they feed him, if he should feel want?" The difference is due to the uncertainty of the word *apecgan*, which can mean either "to destroy" or "to nourish".

"Wulf and Eadwacer", as I have already mentioned, is the title given to a nineteen-line poem in the medieval manuscript called the Exeter Book, which also contains a number of Anglo-Saxon riddles and the Exeter Book elegies, the scattering of extraordinary lyric poems which includes "Wulf and Eadwacer" as well as "The Wanderer" and "The Seafarer". Enough ink has been spilled over why these should be called elegies — or why they should be grouped at all — that I say here only that they do deal with loss and suffering, themes dear to the Anglo-Saxon heart, in what might be called an elegiac mode<sup>3</sup>. The generic distinction is relatively recent, however, and more to the point is the fact that a century ago "Wulf and Eadwacer", which in the manuscript follows the elegy "Deor" and precedes a large group of riddles, was thought to be a riddle as well.

While this view had been largely discarded by the time Auden wrote his poem, it had not been replaced with a less puzzling suggestion. If thinking of "Wulf and Eadwacer" as a love poem encourages a reading of "The Secret Agent" as a love poem, or a poem about the difficulty of love, then surely the knowledge that "Wulf and Eadwacer" was once thought to be a riddle should make us look twice at the "reticence" of "The Secret Agent" and at the spy's question — "But who would get it?" "The Secret Agent" is probably not a riddle — what on earth would its answer be? — but it does seem to be about riddling, in part, and perhaps about the difficulty of riddles, as well. Old English riddles are famous for pointing toward a delightfully raunchy answer but having an "innocent" alternative; many of those collected in the Exeter Book are of this sort, but there are also some which, while not what a twentieth-century sensibility would call funny, are small masterpieces of metaphoric innovation and caches of information about Anglo-Saxon life. Because they do rely on readers with firsthand everyday knowledge of the culture, a few riddles have eluded the best attempts of scholars to explain them, and as a riddle "Wulf

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<sup>3</sup> This curt synopsis of earlier theories about the poem is drawn mostly from Gordon's introduction, although most discussions of "Wulf and Eadwacer" mention these facts. Bradley's introduction is particularly thoughtful about the dangers of interpretation.



and Eadwacer" proved nearly impossible. A wrenching nineteenth-century effort produced the answer "Cynewulf", leading to a few decades' hope that Cynewulf was author of not only "Wulf and Eadwacer" but also the riddles which follow it, a hope now dead from neglect.<sup>4</sup>

In 1888 Henry Bradley proposed that "Wulf and Eadwacer" was a dramatic monologue like "The Wife's Lament" and "The Husband's Message", two elegies which are either simplified or complicated, depending on how you look at it, by the fact that they appear to be speaking to each other and are usually considered together, despite the fact that, like "The Wanderer" and "The Seafarer", they do not appear side by side in the text. Most subsequent discussions of "Wulf and Eadwacer" have agreed that the speaker is a woman, lamenting her separation from Wulf, a lover or husband. The opening line, "It is to my people as if one gave them an offering" (Gordon) and the next, which has been variously translated "They want to destroy him if he comes under subjugation" (Bradley) and "Will they feed him, if he should feel want?" (Gordon), suggests that she fears his capture by her own people. She may herself be a captive, either among her kin because they keep her from Wulf, or among strangers. In "rainy weather", while sits weeping for him, a "warlike man" (Gordon) winds his arms about her, or surrounds her with boughs, depending on the translation and interpretation of *mec se beaducafa bogum bilegde*. He is usually presumed to be the person she addresses as Eadwacer, and who may be her tyrannical husband, or her foreign captor, and whose attentions are "pleasure" (wyn) to her, but also "loathsome" (*lað*). She asks him mockingly,

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<sup>4</sup> The generic question is, however, fascinating. There are numerous articles on the subject, and the opening chapter of Peter Sacks's valuable study *The English Elegy: Studies in the Genre from Spenser to Yeats*, which does not treat the Exeter Book poems specifically, has nevertheless been of great help to me in thinking about the genre of the Old English elegies. Two particularly helpful elements are Sacks's discussion of the classical origins of the elegy as a love poem, and his elucidation of Freud's concept of the "work of mourning", which provides a useful way of looking at "Wulf and Eadwacer".

Do you hear, Eadwacer? Our wretched whelp  
 Wulf will bear off to the wood.  
 One easily parts what was never joined,  
 the story of us together.

Is the "whelp" (also translated "cub") the speaker's child with one of these men, and if so, why does she call it *earne*, which Gordon translates as "cowardly" and Bradley as "wretched"? Does she anticipate her own and her child's escape from the warrior to whom she was never truly *gesomnad* (joined), or lament her continuing separation from Wulf, together with whom she had a *giedd* (story, song, or poem) but no socially approved connection?

I have yet to read an explication of "Wulf and Eadwacer" which accounts for all ambiguities of plot and diction, and as I have begun to doubt I ever will, I incline toward Alain Renoir's suggestion, as reported by Marijane Osborn, that "the tension between longing and the sense of separation" is the real theme of the poem, making it, as he says, "lyrically coherent", even though its narrative is not perfectly clear (Osborn 1983: 176). Some of the best analyses of the poem have embraced its ambiguities, asserting that the multiple meanings of several key words and phrases are intentional and the specifics of the speaker's story deliberately obscure. Others argue, with varying degrees of persuasion, for specific explanations of the relationships between the characters mentioned. S. A. J. Bradley introduces his translation of "Wulf and Eadwacer" with the tentative suggestion that it is a Christian poem which attempts to use metaphors of erotic love and exile to talk about divine love. And in a recent article, Osborn mentions interpretations as diverse as "an episode in the Sigurd story, a canine love song, and a charm against wens" (ib. 174). Osborn herself has recently proposed that the speaker of the poem is not a woman talking about her lover, but a mother talking about her son. While this interpretation is unlikely to replace all others, it makes a valuable addition to the body of comment on the poem with its suggestion that "Wulf and Eadwacer" is not merely a lament, a poem of static longing, but a dramatic narrative in which the speaker comes to the realization that Wulf, the outlaw son, poses a danger to her and her family. For all its obscurity, the poem has

emotional progression from the formal repetitions of the lament to the bitter jubilation of "Do you hear, Eadwacer?"

From a slight but maddening acquaintance with the puzzle of "Wulf and Eadwacer", it is a short leap to the idea that its presence in Auden's poem urges a more, not less, complex reading; that "Parting easily who were never joined" is not only one of those "terms the past freely provides" (Mendelson 1981: 46) but a line which draws both poems into a shared space out of time. "The Secret Agent" also suggests stasis, helpless suspension, but it, too, unfolds emotionally, moving from the surveyed outer landscape to the intimate details of our spy's troubled sleep. Like "Wulf and Eadwacer", it does not only describe its principal character's alienation, but acts it out on the poem's audience: we know less than they do, and through the poems' performance they, disempowered as they are, become more powerful.

The two poems share a similar movement, but the claim of their connection is also persuasively grounded in a few historical and thematic facts. According to Carpenter, Auden's interest in Norse and Anglo-Saxon subjects began in childhood; he was an accomplished reader of Old English by his last year at Oxford, if not before. A young John Betjeman marveled that his new friend Wystan "really admired the boring Anglo-Saxon poets like Beowulf whom we had read in the English school" (Betjeman 1974: 44). The poem loosely based on (and once titled) "The Wanderer", "Doom is dark and deeper than any sea-dingle" (*Selected Poems*, 18), was written eighteen months after "The Secret Agent", suggesting recent acquaintance with the elegies of the Exeter Book<sup>5</sup>. And no student of that maddening manuscript can remain long unacquainted with its puzzles of interpretation, even among which "Wulf and Eadwacer" stands out.

Both "The Secret Agent" and "Wulf and Eadwacer" deal with exile, also an important theme in "The Wanderer" and a staple of Anglo-Saxon poetry generally. Both "The Wanderer" and the con-

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<sup>5</sup> See Mendelson, *Early Auden*, for a thorough examination of Auden's "Wanderer". As will be seen, his discussion of this poem is indispensable to my thinking about "The Secret Agent", though it is not always applicable to both poems in the same way.



solation "Deor", which precedes "Wulf and Eadwacer" in the Exeter Book, exemplify the necessity of having a lord and a place among one's people, if one is to be happy. This element has been largely elided from "Doom is dark and deeper than any sea-dingle", with dream images of the banquet hall and the wanderer "embracing and kissing his lord" (Bradley 1982: 323) replaced by dreams of domestic life:

There head falls forward, fatigued at evening,  
And dreams of home,  
Waving from window, spread of welcome,  
Kissing of wife under single sheet...  
(*Selected Poems*, 18)

In this Auden's "Wanderer" is closer in spirit to "Wulf and Eadwacer", where the importance of the speaker's people varies, depending on whether Wulf is interpreted as her lawful mate, but the loneliness of exile is usually attributed to separation from the beloved rather than the people:

Wulf, my Wulf, for want of you  
I am made sick; your seldom coming,  
my mourning mind, not want of food.

In "The Secret Agent", the two separations are conflated: the political alienation and the powerful lack of a "companion/ Dreamed of already" each intensify the other. "Parting easily who were never joined" (the *Selected Poems* line) can refer to both kinds of connections. The line has the same kind of ambiguity in "Wulf and Eadwacer": it means one thing if Eadwacer is her legal husband but they were never joined in love, another if he is her foreign captor.

Central to my view of the concurrence between the movement and theme of these two poems is the expectation that it is intentional. The final line of "The Secret Agent" is not a lucky appendation, not merely a phrase conveniently provided out of Auden's reading, but a signal that the poet is making, not a translation, but an answer to his Anglo-Saxon source. Mendelson says of "The Wanderer" that it is for Auden

thoroughly available to the present. He makes no fuss about translating the social isolation of the Old English poem into the psychological isolation of his twentieth-century one (1981: 46).

Now I wish to suggest that "The Secret Agent" is not a translation in this sense either, but a poem phrased in the same idiom as its Anglo-Saxon antecedent, with not only a strikingly similar range of concern, but with a common purpose. For a model we need look no further than the previously mentioned "The Wife's Lament" and "The Husband's Message", two of the Exeter Book elegies which, although separated by four other items in the manuscript, make considerably better narrative sense when considered together. Needless to say, it is not known whether they might have the same author. They speak to each other only obliquely, and in style seem to share only what Bradley describes as a "riddlingly allusive" tone (*Anglo-Saxon Poetry*: 398).

But narrative sense is not necessarily what we need from either of these pairs of poems. In the case of "The Secret Agent" and "Wulf and Eadwacer" it's a ridiculous requirement: we should look instead at the commonality of their purpose. Are they speaking to each other? If so, it's nothing so formal as a dialogue. The relationship of "The Secret Agent" to "Wulf and Eadwacer", like that of Auden to the anonymous Anglo-Saxon poet, is best described as a conspiracy, with that word's suggestion of stealth and loverlike complicity. Its roots in Latin for "breathing together" are exactly what is needed to suggest the poems' congruent themes, their parallel emotional progressions, and their matched yearning after a missing companion. "The Secret Agent" makes remarkably better sense when seen as a poem whose ambitions are not merely allusive but acquisitive, a poem crying out for a "companion" and reaching directly into an ancient source for one. Unfortunately, we cannot attribute the same motives to "Wulf and Eadwacer", but surely we can imagine that Auden might have had them in his playfulness, in what Mendelson describes as his search for literary antecedents more authentic and compelling than those offered by more recent eras, and perhaps in a kind of compassion

for the persistently misunderstood speaker of "Wulf and Eadwacer".

For textual clues to this conspiracy we might look at the phonic and imagistic similarity of the *renig weder* (rainy weather) during which the narrator of "Wulf and Eadwacer" sits crying, and the running water (possibly suggesting rain, or tears) of "The Secret Agent"; or, more startlingly, the slightly unusual word "bogus" in "The Secret Agent" and the etymologically unrelated *bogum* (nominative singular: *bogas*) for "boughs", or the arms of Eadwacer, in "Wulf and Eadwacer". And we might turn once again to the line that sparked these inquiries, "Parting easily who were never joined", and note its ambiguity in both poems: "easily" can suggest relief or bitterness, triumph or resignation.

In his discussion of "The Wanderer", Mendelson argues that early in Auden's career, his

resistance to the recent literary past and his recovery of more ancient sources — both for the purpose of finding his own poetic energies — served to intensify romantic literary modes (1981: 43).

Indeed, this is perhaps the most romantic poem of Auden's career, early or late, suggesting as it does two lovers calling to one another across the centuries, with none of what Mendelson identifies as a Poundian emphasis on the "historical distance" of the subject (ib. 45); and, because the mechanism is concealed by the obscurity of the allusion, without the self-conscious complication of histories seen in a later Auden poem like "The Fall of Rome". It is my hope that this reading will help to expand our view of Auden's use of literary antecedents to include the flexibility of genre and the willingness to interfere in the process of interpretation represented by his use of "Wulf and Eadwacer".



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## Camelot Revised: the Arthurian Theme in Evelyn Waugh's Novel *A Handful of Dust*

PILVI RAJAMÄE

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Evelyn Waugh's *A Handful of Dust* came out in 1934 when Waugh was thirty three years old. For the last four years he had been a Roman Catholic. Having started his career as a Bright Young Thing, a member of the 1920s' fashionable Mayfair set of rebellious young aristocrats with money to burn, he had come to question their mindless pursuit of pleasure. A deeply conservative man at heart, he increasingly came to identify himself with traditional values, in a non-sentimental kind of way, retaining throughout his career his ability to mock human frailties and prejudices.

*A Handful of Dust* is a story of a marriage. It is also an examination of the modern condition of man in a world which has suddenly lost its centre. The novel's deliberately ruthless comic tone can barely hide Waugh's deep concern for the society's loss of old values, represented in the book by the aristocratic code of chivalry.

The novel's protagonist Tony Last lives in a Victorian Gothic mansion called Hetton Abbey with his wife and son. He has inherited the estate from his father and plans one day to hand it over to his son. The house is quite a hideous mixture of pretentious medievalism and an appalling disregard for comfort but Tony loves every bit of it. For him the house stands for continuity and traditions, a way of life going back many centuries. It is also redolent with romance. Waugh tells us in passing that the bedrooms are named after the principal characters of Arthurian romances, Tony's room being called Morgan le Fay, his wife's Guinevere, and immediately preceding the couple's rooms in the list is the name Galahad. Yet there is nothing casual in this grouping and the

three principal characters of the story are linked to the legendary ones in subtle and ironic ways. King Arthur's name does not appear but his presence in the background is strongly felt, like in all the romances surrounding Camelot.

Waugh's choice of Gothic from any number of stylistic options for a 19<sup>th</sup>-century house is not accidental. While Gothic was claimed in the last century by many European nations as their very own national style, only in England could it lay any claim to unbroken continuity. While continental nations had embraced Classicism-based styles with alacrity, the English had retained their fondness for Gothic long after it had been superseded elsewhere. It had barely gone out of fashion at the end of the seventeenth century to be brought back in the middle of the eighteenth in the context of the medieval revival. It came to be associated with pre-Conquest liberties of free-born Englishmen and was patriotically hailed as the truly English vernacular. It was also associated with the chivalric ideals of the Arthurian romances of the Middle Ages which for the English had long been a source of national pride.

Waugh's treatment of the Arthurian theme in *A Handful of Dust* is indebted to the Victorian reworkings of the Round Table stories and is also a commentary on them.

The pragmatic Victorians had searched the past for noble ideals to counterbalance the overbearing utilitarianism of their age. In the chivalric Middle Ages they felt they had found the kind of harmony in society which their age had lost. The revived stories of Arthur's ideal court came to serve them as parables of proper moral conduct when all other creeds had demonstrated their insufficiency. "In reviving the Arthurian legend", writes Debra N. Mancoff in *The Return of King Arthur: The Legend Through Victorian Eyes*, "Victorian artists and writers and their eager audience sought a window on the past in a desire to learn from their heroic and noble ancestors. /.../ No single legend could suffice to speak to the diverse Victorian public. There was an official version for the queen and the state, celebrating monarchy and heritage. A heroic version confirmed masculine power and position, playing an essential role in the construction of Victorian manhood. The legend for women taught them their place in society as well,



defining patterns to follow and paths to avoid. Even children had their own legend, written in simple language and depicted in innocent wonder, a legend without moral stain and without a tragic ending." And about Arthur: "He returned in glory to reign over the popular imagination, and little in the era — from the first days of the young queen's accession, through the vast expansion of Britain's colonial empire, to the tragic losses in the wars of the early twentieth century — was untouched by Arthur's image. But just as the mythic king left his stamp on Victorian England, Victorian England transformed the mythic king. Even today we cannot look back to the Arthurian world without the lens of Victorian transformation." (Mancoff, 1995: 89)

The Victorians learned to look at Arthur and his companions through the eyes of their Poet Laureate, Alfred Lord Tennyson. He revived the legend with his 1842 Christmas piece *Morte d'Arthur*, defined anew its principal characters in the successive episodes of his planned new English epic, *Idylls of the King*, and sent Arthur on his last journey when his work was done.

As the story of Tennyson's Arthur unfolded before their eyes, the Victorian men found in the symbolic king's life many concerns they could share. Though living in legendary times and partaking of fantastic adventures, Arthur's life was strikingly similar to their own. The head of a large household with an unruly wife and troublesome "sons", his knights, a civil servant with taxing responsibilities outside the home in the hostile public sphere where fierce rivals and treacherous friends were watching for the slightest sign of weakening power to pounce on him and effect his destruction, Arthur needed every ounce of his will-power and courage to live his life according to his high ethical and moral standards. "In the directed energy of his youth, his selfless public service, and his devotion to wife and family, Arthur's new audience found a timely answer to the question "What makes a man?" Arthur emerged as more than knight, warrior, and king; he appeared as breadwinner, public servant, husband and father. These were points of shared identity and most often illustrated by the painters who interpreted the legend. In the portrayal of an extraordinary man in ordinary circumstances — the passage to manhood, the work ethic, the man's responsibility in the marriage and the household —

Tennyson demonstrated the “ideal manhood” in the “real man”, revitalizing the medieval king with a modern sensibility. In art, as much as in poetry, Arthur was the paradigmatic Victorian gentleman.” (Ib. 53)

By the strength of his arm Arthur had won his kingdom, in the Round Table he had established the ideal brotherhood of man, but his happiness was not complete. Success in the public sphere meant little without a happy home where a man could find solace and rest, a peaceful haven in a turbulent world.

Creating a private sanctuary for her man was the woman’s responsibility. Putting his needs and wishes before her own, subjecting her will and desires to his, finding her satisfaction through his ambition and pleasure at his discretion, she was meek and mild and shunned power and sexuality in any form. Basically asexual, she put duty above pleasure and morality above passion. By marrying the woman of his choice and staying faithful to her, the man honoured the woman above all others, but he also ennobled himself, for the woman’s purity and gentility saved him from his own base desires.

Arthur chose Guinevere to be his queen. He married for love but she loved another, Arthur’s noblest companion and friend. In medieval times Guinevere’s and Lancelot’s love affair had fitted into the framework of courtly love and their passion had elicited sympathy and pity. The Victorians passed a harsher judgement. Adultery did not fit into their moral code. The violation of the home and marriage of the noblest of men could only be interpreted as the most heinous of crimes. Tennyson makes Guinevere’s infidelity the direct cause of the destruction of Arthur’s kingdom.

The Queen’s tragic flaw was her too high self-esteem which prevented her from seeing higher virtue than her own in the one man whose devotion to her was the greatest — Arthur. Having been captivated by the more superficial charms of Lancelot, she thought him cold, “high, self-contained, and passionless” (Tennyson 1995: 536). Longing to be the centre of his attention, she did not realize that he put duty before love, interpreting his reserve as lack of interest in her. When her love for Lancelot deepened, she was hurt by her husband’s refusal to have anything said against her. But Arthur only followed his own creed: “To speak no



slander, no, nor listen to it,/To honour his own words as if his God's,/To live sweet lives of purest chastity,/To love one maiden only, cleave to her,/And worship her by years of noble deeds." (Ib. 537)

The Victorians felt uneasy about the medieval Arthur's sexual frolics with his sister, preferring to forget about it and pretend that no kinship ties bound Arthur to Mordred, the evil fruit of that incestuous affair. Tennyson decisively removed any stigma of sexual infidelity from Arthur by having him self-righteously exclaim to Guinevere: "I was ever virgin save for thee" (ib.) and putting the blame for his downfall squarely on her shoulders: "Thou hast not made my life so sweet to me,/That I the King should greatly care to live;/For thou hast spoilt the purpose of my life." (Ib.)

In Victorian eyes she had indeed gravely erred. Putting sensual pleasure before duty, preferring another man to her lord and sovereign, she was punished by God with infertility. Her lack of moral fibre corrupted her and her court where her behaviour served as an evil example, followed by the less righteous of her subjects. Arthur magnanimously forgave her but refused to take her back lest her pernicious influence should corrupt the remaining virtuous members of his household. Having told her that he loved her, Arthur left Guinevere to repent in a nunnery where she had fled when her affair with Launcelot had become public knowledge. Arthur's generous refusal to punish her opened her eyes to the enormity of her crime. She had transgressed the boundaries of good wifely behaviour by indulging in her power of sexual attraction but with repentance she redeemed herself. Devoting herself entirely to the service of others, she from then on led a quiet, religious life and died a beloved and respected abbess.

Guinevere's tragic flaw had been her limited vision which had prevented her from giving her affection to the most deserving of men. Her repentance showed that she possessed a womanly heart and could therefore be viewed with some compassion. She had erred but she had not deliberately sought to destroy any man.

The woman who did that, the false-hearted enchantress who used her cunning and sexual power to seduce and destroy men, was beyond redemption. Reversing the "natural" order of things,



the power-hungry Victorian *femme fatale* was perversity incarnated. "Her irresistible beauty captivated men and drew them to her side, and under her power. Her motives were rarely explained, but her dangerous potential was fully comprehended. Enemy to all men and the male order, she incarnated the deeply rooted misogyny of the period. A woman who scorned family, responsibility, her proper place, and male superiority endangered all who came into contact with her. She was in every sense a deadly force. But unlike the tragic heroine who suffered for the consequences of her flawed soul, the *femme fatale* had no conscience, and others paid dearly when victimized by her perversity." (Mancoff 1995: 93–94)

The Arthurian cycle offers a generous selection of such women, beautiful temptresses, sorceresses, castspellers, devils incarnate who lure men to their destruction. The Victorians were entranced by their evil charms. They also reviled them much more than the medieval writers had done. A case in point here is Morgan-le-Fay. Having started her life, early in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, as a harmless shape-shifter and practitioner of herbal medicine, by the end of the Middle Ages she had become a sorceress and enemy of Arthur, even making an attempt on his life. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century her reputation turned really sour. She was depicted as a demonic creature, concocting spells in her den. Her notoriety was only rivalled by that of Nimuë/Vivien who inveigled Merlin's secrets out of him and, using his own magic, robbed him of his powers. By inverting the natural hierarchy and assuming control over men's destinies, these fearsome women destroyed rather than nurtured.

As strongly as the Victorians hated and condemned, they could worship and idolize. Sir Galahad, the purest of knights, destined to be the only one of the company of the Round Table to be rewarded by a clear view of the Holy Grail and an instant death in blissful raptures straight afterwards, became a universal favourite after Tennyson had published his *Sir Galahad*. Having illegitimate origins in the medieval tradition (some sources say he was Lancelot's son), Galahad takes a vow of chastity. His great spiritual beauty is reflected in his incomparable physical beauty and extraordinary prowess in battle. Tennyson created his Galahad as the ideal youth to complement Arthur, the ideal man. This paragon

of selfless dedication to the ideal allows himself to be rewarded by the sweet looks of the ladies who shower him with flowers on his return from triumphant campaigns but scorns any fleshly pleasure. Destined to remain "a maiden knight" forever, he would never know "the kiss of love", nor feel a "maiden's hand in his" (Tennyson 1995: 181). Inspired by Tennyson's vision, Victorian painters created an image of a beautiful boy, serene in his innocence and single-minded in his pursuit, riding undaunted through wild and rugged landscapes with dogged determination, scorning any comfort until his quest is over. Though a considerably older Tennyson came to question such uncritical dedication to an abstract idea in *The Holy Grail*, his contemporaries did not. The ever-youthful and ever-naïve Galahad entered the Victorian iconography as a shining example of dedicated and unquestioning service and was to inspire generations of boys and young men to give up their lives for their country in distant parts of the Empire and finally, and most brutally, in the Great War. The horrors of modern trench warfare, and millions of victims it claimed, revealed the ethereal nature of Galahad's quest and his popularity declined.

Tony Last's story in *A Handful of Dust* opens on the morning of the day which will change his life forever. It is supposed to be married bliss in Camelot. "I often think Tony Last's one of the happiest men I know. He's got enough money, loves the place, one son's he is crazy about, devoted wife, not a worry in the world," Tony's friend tells Beaver at the club. (Waugh 1977: 12). Beaver's mother has her doubts. Brenda is "wasted on Tony Last, he's a prig. I should say it was time she began to be bored." (Ib. 9).

She is nearer to the truth than she thinks. There are cracks in the marriage of which Tony is blissfully unaware in his boyhood sanctuary of a bedroom, Morgan le Fay. Surrounded by the treasures of his adolescence, he contemplates the ceiling. With supreme skill Waugh gives us, in a few noncommittal lines describing the crumbling Gothic decor, a true picture of his marriage: "The ceiling of Morgan le Fay was not in perfect repair. In order to make an appearance of coffered wood, moulded slats had been nailed in a chequer across the plaster. They were painted in chevrons of blue and gold. The squares between were decorated

alternately with Tudor roses and fleur-de-lis. But damp had penetrated into one corner, leaving a large patch where gilt had tarnished and the colour flaked away; in another place the wooden laths had become warped and separated from the plaster." (Ib. 15). This description identifies Tony as Arthur to his Guinevere (all those Tudor roses and royal fleur-de-lis), hints at the rot lurking behind the spotless facade of his marriage (the damp which has tarnished the gilt and the once brilliant colours now fading away) and foretells his doom (his castle is literally crumbling away). Unknown to him, the secure little world he has carved for himself is as fake as the Gothic of his ceiling. Morgan-le-Fay, the weaver of magic and evil spells, has clouded his vision. Surrounding him with mementoes of childhood's innocuous pleasures, she offers a false promise of uncorrupted innocence.

In the next room, Guinevere, Brenda lies in regal splendour on the dais. We already know that she is royal (*née* Rex!) and a vision of pale gold beauty. We witness a little domestic bickering which instantly identifies the problem in their marriage. The husband and wife hold diametrically opposite views on the place of Hetton in their lives. Tony's earnest reflections about their duties towards the estate and their employees are cut short by Brenda's pained reaction and accusations of pomposity.

The Lasts' cosy breakfast is interrupted by a piece of unwelcome news. They are to have a house guest for the weekend, a man unknown to them whom Tony has inadvertently asked to pay them a visit at his club. The Lasts have a recipe for dealing with such bothersome guests. They send them into Galahad, the notoriously uncomfortable bedroom. "No one who sleeps there ever comes again — the bed's agony I believe," says Tony for our benefit (ib. 25). But he has not reckoned with Beaver's resilience.

Like the mythical Galahad of yore, he, too, is on a quest, but in his case spurning hardships and inconvenience in search of a free meal in prestigious company. Actually, this single-minded pursuit occupies his whole time to the exclusion of everything else. Beaver, a nondescript and destitute young man, derives what comic character he has from implicit comparisons between him and the original Galahad. That these comparisons are not accidental but deliberate is evident from little pointers in the text, like



the one which identifies his tossings and turnings in Galahad's creaky bed with broken springs as a patient "quest" of a better position (ib. 29).

In creating a mock-Galahad in Beaver Waugh is playing around with the popular image of the Victorian favourite young man, creating stark contrasts and drawing surprising parallels.

Beaver, the latter-day Galahad, also saves damsels in distress, with as keen purposefulness as his illustrious predecessor. His vigil, instead of before the altar in a lonely chapel, takes place at his bedside phone. He is every socialite's last minute spare escort, ready to serve at a moment's notice. Though necessary, probably even indispensable, he is despised as a "dreary", "second-rate" young man, "as cold as fish" and "a snob" (ib. 51). Men overlook him, women find him sexually uninteresting. The salvation he is looking for is acceptance by his "betters" and material gain. Though inexperienced in matters of love like the virginal Galahad, he is not above using the meager charms he has to bed a woman when necessary.

His path crosses Brenda's when the latter has become bored with the uneventful serenity reigning in Camelot. The high moral tone of their life, coming naturally to Tony, irritates her. She hates the duty part of their life at Hetton, the functions she has to attend, the little ceremonies to go through, which inevitably go together with her position as Tony's wife. She does not see the point in all these obligations and mercilessly teases Tony about his earnestness when performing these little rituals. She has chosen not to understand Tony's point of view and makes fun of his "posing as an upright, God-fearing gentleman of the old school" (ib. 30). Tony tries to see the fun in the joke for Brenda's sake but the pleasure he derives from being lord of the manor is totally sincere. He loves his inheritance, no matter how impractical or costly its upkeep.

Part of Brenda's resentment for Hetton derives from a constant need to economize to keep the house which gives her little aesthetic pleasure. She has learned to hide her resentment from Tony but when she embarks on her affair with Beaver such tender considerations vanish. The same recklessness with which she throws herself at Beaver she adopts in relation to the house. She

decides to refurbish the morning-room. Being, or rather having been, a Bright Young Thing, her taste runs to things modern and flashy. Beaver's pushy mother recommends hiding the pink marble fireplace and Gothic decor behind shining chromium-plated steel panels. Work is commenced immediately and as Tony's happiness crumbles away, so does the Gothic decor of the morning-room, destroyed by careless hands.

In her selfish pursuit of pleasure Brenda lives up to the Victorian vision of Queen Guinevere who abandoned the sanctity of family ties to chase elusive happiness at another man's side. Like Arthur, Tony is the last to know that his wife is the talk of the town, refusing to be drawn into any discussion about his wife's behaviour, loving and trusting Brenda in the face of condemning evidence. Until the very end of his life with her he actually follows Arthur's famous dictum ("To speak no slander, no, nor listen to it /.../ to love one maiden only, cleave to her" (Tennyson 1995: 537) word for word. Brenda, as her affair progresses, reveals her true nature which she has hitherto suppressed from considerations of propriety. She turns out to be heartless, manipulative, scheming and totally amoral. She uses her feminine wiles to twist everything to her advantage, cheating with pleasure and using her sexuality to keep Tony eating out of her hand. Failing to appreciate Tony's honest good nature, she has nothing but scorn for Tony's high moral precepts. She cannot live up to Tony's image of her as a caring and selfless creature of pure charm. For her thrills and sexual pleasure come before the responsibilities of marriage and motherhood.

She is unlike Guinevere, though, in her total lack of pangs of conscience about what she is doing. Guinevere was fully aware of the wrongness of her actions and was tortured by guilt. As Brenda's story unfolds, she reveals herself not as a flawed but essentially virtuous woman like Guinevere but as a thoroughly designing false woman, like the reptilian temptress Vivien, using her charm to hold Tony spellbound and destroy his will, or like Morgan-le-Fay, concocting potions of lies to hide her corruption. The depth of her, and her set's, depravity is revealed when she cruelly tries to push into Tony's arms a comically coarse pseudo-Oriental temptress, a vulgarized caricature of herself.

While the original Guinevere's behaviour could at least be partly understood, she having chosen as her lover the noblest and most accomplished of her husband's subjects, then Brenda's choice is baffling even her friends with its foolishness. In her case there is no ennobling and reciprocated passion in this liaison, for Beaver no attraction even, only base material gain in return for half-heartedly given sexual favours. In a blind desire to get away from the environment she hates, Brenda gives her love to a sleazy social climber and callously destroys Tony's world. Like Guinevere's, her crime unleashes forces of destruction.

God's punishment for Guinevere's scorning the role of wife and mother was to make her childless. Waugh lets Tony's and Brenda's son get killed in a hunting accident. Ostensibly nobody's fault, the implicit blame is put on Brenda's total neglect of her role as mother. That she is the real culprit is revealed by her sob of relief and words of thanks to God when she learns that it was only her son who was killed, not her lover.

The world where an innocent life can be destroyed and nobody is willing to shoulder the blame, the world which is not outraged when Brenda wants Tony to sell his ancestral estate in order for him to pay her an alimony big enough to make Beaver marry her and puts all the blame on Tony, the world where traditions and ideals are scorned, where a sense of duty and responsibility is ridiculed, is a world where old values do not hold, where chivalry is dead. "A whole Gothic world had come to grief ...there was no armour glittering through the forest glades, no emroidered feet on the green sward; the cream and dappled unicorns had fled ..." (Waugh 1977: 151). This world cannot be redeemed because there has been no repentance.

When Arthur's Camelot lay in ruins and he found himself in a world he did not recognize nor wanted to know, he told Sir Bedivere: "The old order changeth, yielding place to new" (Tennyson 1995: 116) and sailed away to Avalon, some say to heal his wounds, some say to die. When Tony Last, the last survivor of the Gothic world of chivalry as his name implies, finds himself among aliens, he, too, decides to go away. His journey, too, will take him across the sea to the Great Unknown. He goes to find a City.



A messenger has come to him, telling stories of a fabulous city far in the west where nobody has ever been. He thinks of this unknown city in the Amazon delta in terms of chivalric romance: "It was Gothic in character, all vanes and pinnacles, gargoyles, battlements, groining and tracery, pavilions and terraces, a transfigured Hetton, pennons and banners floating on the sweet breeze, everything luminous and translucent, a coral citadel crowning a green hill-top sown with daisies, among groves and streams, a tapestry landscape filled with heraldic and fabulous animals and symmetrical disproportionate blossom /.../ Carpet and canopy, tapestry and velvet, portcullis and bastion, waterfowl on the moat and kingcups along its margin, peacocks trailing their finery across the lawns; high overhead in a sky of sapphire and swansdown silver bells chiming in a turret of alabaster." (Waugh: 160–161)

This is not only an evocation of a lost world of perfection where old ideals still hold, it is also a description of a tomb effigy. Unknown to himself Tony is on his way to meet Death. The latter appears to him in the guise of Mr Todd, a recluse living deep in the jungle whose humble mansion will be Tony's last resting-place. Racked with fever and tortured by visions Tony makes his way towards it. His arrival is rendered in terms of the king's triumphant return to his capital, a favourite subject with Victorian painters, complete with apple blossoms floating in the air: "At last he came into the open. The gates were before him and trumpets were sounding along the walls, saluting his arrival; from bastion to bastion the message ran to the four points of the compass; petals of almond and apple blossom were in the air; they carpeted the way, as, after a summer storm, they lay in the orchards of Hetton. Gilded cupolas and spires of alabaster shone in the sunlight." (Ib. 203).

The destination of all innocent and honest souls, Jerusalem the Golden, the City of God, is opening its portals to Tony. Only there will an uncorrupted soul find its true reward. "Glorious beyond compare is the heavenly city. There, victory is truth, dignity is holiness, peace is happiness, life is eternity," writes St. Augustine in his *City of God* (St. Augustine 1958: 77) and stresses time and again the basic Christian tenet that no man can be perfectly happy in this life. "On earth we are happy, after a fashion, when we enjoy

the peace, little as it is, which good life brings; but such happiness compared with the beatitude which is our end in eternity is, in point of fact misery." (Ib. 450). Man's attempt to create one's private Edenic idyll here on earth is inevitably doomed. Happiness proves as elusive as the mythical Grail and the pursuit of it as arduous.

When Arthur left for Avalon, his departure was not deemed as final. It held a promise of return. He was thought of as resting from his labours in a fabled land, recovering his strength, to ride forth again on a distant day when his services would be needed by his people.

Tony Last's fate is as ambivalent as Arthur's. We never know when or whether he really died. We leave him in limbo, and actually in comparative good health, at the court of Mr Todd.

At home he is presumed dead but his spirit lives on at Hetton. The vulgar forces of modernity have been beaten back. The Gothic decor of the morning room has been restored and the dream of chivalry lives on in Tony's young cousin Teddy, heir presumptive of Hetton, who has chosen Galahad as his bedroom. One day he hopes to restore his heritage to its former glory. Man's pursuit of an ideal is never-ending, every generation needing to redefine it for itself.

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## The Influence of Haiku on Rilke

YORIKO SHIBATA

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Rainer Maria Rilke was highly sensitive to the influence of foreign cultures throughout his life; they contributed to the development of his works and ultimate poetic concept.

The theme of my paper is the influence of Japanese haiku on Rilke's French works of the later years. During his last three years (1923–1926), Rilke wrote more than four hundred poems in French, which have been influenced by Japanese haiku, as the Dutch Germanist, Herman Meyer, suggested. In his significant paper (1980), Meyer published his discovery that Rilke's purchase of the book about haiku by Paul-Louis Couchoud (1919) had taken place in 1920, not, as was commonly believed, in 1925, the year following the completion of the greater part of his French cycles. This discovery enabled Meyer to examine the influence of haiku on Rilke's later works, in particular the French cycles *Les Quatrains Valaisans* (written 1924) and *Les Roses* (written 1924–26). However, this area has not been fully examined, despite articles by Japanese scholars. (Fujikawa 1964, Koshina 1983, Tsukakoshi 1982, Shibata 1992, 1992a, 1996).

Rilke became acquainted with haiku from 1920 onwards through French translations in Couchoud's *Sages et Poètes d'Asie* (1919). Rilke's copy contains many markings and notes in his hand. Some of them have already been described, but the relationship between the parts with Rilke's markings and his own works has never been specifically examined. My aim is to provide concrete examples, based on these markings, of how the haiku and Couchoud's commentary on haiku are assimilated into *Les Roses*. I am going to deal with two poems in detail, to illustrate the relationship between the structure of haiku and Rilke's charac-



teristic images of the rose as “pure contradiction.” (Jaccottet 1978: 12). Finally, I shall refer to Rilke’s French letter to Sophy Giauque (Nov. 26, 1925) (*Rilke en Valais*: 83–93; also *Rilke Briefe* 3: 902–905)<sup>1</sup>, in which he cites haiku and expresses a view of haiku as the ultimate poetry.

### 1. Rilke’s Encounter with Haiku

Rilke’s first encounter with haiku was through *La Nouvelle Revue Française*, of September 1, 1920, which was a special issue devoted to “Haï-kai”. This was two years before Rilke completed *Duino Elegies*. Meyer points out (1980: 142) that six months prior to his first encounter with haiku, Rilke wrote in a letter that he was dissatisfied with poetic cliché and was searching for an innermost core language (“eine innerste Sprache, ... eine Sprache aus Wort-Kernen”).

The following month Rilke purchased Couchoud’s book, on the end paper of which his first note reads: “Acheté à Paris chez Flammarion et Vaillant le jour de mon départ.” (Appendix 1).

### 2. Rilke’s Markings

In his copy abundant markings occur, in particular in the second chapter. Four comments of Couchoud concerning the characteristics of haiku are marked by Rilke. The first is the description of haiku as “simplification audacieuse” (Couchoud 1919: 55), a boldly simplified form enclosing infinite detail in a way comparable to the “croquis japonais”. The second describes haiku as a vivid image, which awakens some dormant sensation within us: “une vision qui s’adresse directement à notre œil, une impression vive qui peut éveiller en nous quelque impression endormie.” (Ib. 58) (Appendix 2). The third highlights the haiku by Arakida Moritake:

Un pétale tombé  
Remonte à sa branche:  
Ah! c’est un papillon!

<sup>1</sup> The latter edition does not contain Rilke’s haiku quotations.

and Couchoud's comment following it: "Ce dernier exemple est typique. Un bref étonnement! (Underlined by Rilke) C'est la définition même du haïkaï." (Ib. 62) (Appendix 3) The fourth comment refers to the "vibration": the resonance created by the three concise lines of haiku. Here I should like to concentrate on the second and third comments just mentioned: the imagery and definition of haiku.

The second chapter under the title "Les Epigrammes Lyriques Du Japon" was the first thorough introduction to haiku in France.<sup>2</sup> Couchoud introduces haiku as the essence of poetry, calling it "l'exemple achevé de la poésie discontinue vers quoi tend tout poète japonais." (Ib. 7). He claims that haiku offers a contrast to the eloquence engulfing western poetry.

158 haikus by about 40 haiku poets from the 15th century through Basho and his disciples up to Onitsura and Buson were translated, of which more than one third (63) were by Buson. All of these translations come from *Buson-Kushu-Kogi* (1900–1903), the first important annotated edition of Buson's haiku by Shiki Ma-saoka and his circle in Japan. Couchoud's translations relate closely to these interpretations of Buson's haiku. This followed Couchoud's visit to Japan between 1903 and 1904.

In the second chapter of Rilke's copy, we find more than 50 of his markings; 36 refer to haiku, and 14 to haiku poets. The most frequently marked poet is Buson, with a total of 8 marks, followed by Basho with 4. In 1925, Rilke sent 10 haiku by Buson to Sophy Giauque, a Swiss painter.

I would like to consider a number of haiku in which Rilke took particular interest. The haiku he marked with many lines in the book and which he quoted in the letter center on themes and motifs prevalent in his own poetry such as death, flowers, the poet's relationship with nature, or poetic form itself. Rilke cites, for example, Buson's: "Epouvantement.../J'ai marché dans la chambre,/ Sur le peigne de ma femme morte."<sup>3</sup> (Appendix 4). His comment: "... comme une nouvelle de E.-A. Poe, en trois lignes". (*Rilke en Valais*: 1990). Another haiku, by Chiyojo, is also cited: "Que je veille/ Ou que je dorme, — comme la moustiquaire/ Me

<sup>2</sup> Originally published in 1906. (*Les lettres*, Paris, No. 3–7).

<sup>3</sup> This haiku was marked with 4 lines. (Ib. 111).

paraît grande!” (Couchaud 1919: 7). Notice the terms “veille” and “dorme” which I shall refer to later.

The poet seems to renounce human company and to find friendship among flowers in Kyorai’s: “Tous mes amis,/ Loin de moi, oh! loin de moi!/ Je regarde les fleurs”,<sup>4</sup> or in the moon of Buson’s: “Sans compagnon/ Tout seul comme je suis,/ La lune pour amie!”<sup>5</sup>

In addition to this, he shows interest in elements of surprise and the comic: “Mon voleur/ S’est fait mon élève;/ Voyage d’automne.”<sup>6</sup> (Buson)

There is only one haiku beside which Rilke drew an asterisk:

Elles s’épanouissent, — alors  
On les regarde, — alors les fleurs  
Se flétrissent, — alors...  
(Ib. 113. Onitsura, Appendix 5.)

Next to this haiku there are three markings and two notes by Rilke, which is the greatest number pertaining to any haiku in the book. The notes refer to Onitsura: “date?” and “élève de Bashô”. This haiku<sup>7</sup> is about flowers, and it was the first encountered by Rilke, who admired it immediately in a letter to Gudi Nölke with the accompanying annotation: “The translation of a form inexpressibly pure in its brevity.”<sup>8</sup> He quoted Onitsura’s haiku and added: “rien de plus! c’est délicieux!” Referring to Couchaud’s book, five years later, Rilke also included this haiku in his letter to Giauque and added: “Et cet autre, délicieux et tout ouvert vers l’infini” [followed by the haiku] and “Onitsura, élève du grand Bashô”. (*Rilke en Valais*: 91).<sup>9</sup>

<sup>4</sup> This was marked with 5, the highest number of lines. (Ib. 115).

<sup>5</sup> This was marked with 4 lines. (Ib.).

<sup>6</sup> This was marked with four lines. (Ib. 76).

<sup>7</sup> *Nouvelle Revue Française*, Sept. 1, 1920, p. 330.

<sup>8</sup> Sept. 4, 1920. Insel-Verlag, 1956: 580.

<sup>9</sup> Rilke is following Couchaud’s text. (p. 125).



### 3. The Assimilations

I would like to examine the relationship between this haiku of Onitsura and some lines of Rilke. Before this let me quote Onitsura's original Japanese haiku: "Saku karani miru karani hana no chiru karani" (1704).

Couchoud gives the three-line translation not from the original but from Chamberlain's two line version: "They blossom forth, and so I gaze, / And so these flowers fade, and so..." (Chamberlain 1902: 246). In Couchoud's text, Onitsura's haiku is prefaced by the following note: "qui ramasse en un éclair à peine prolongé le ruissellement ininterrompu des apparences et tout le désenchantement bouddhique. L'inachevé est ici plus qu'un saisissant moyen d'expression, c'est l'image même du monde sensible." (Couchoud 1919: 112-113).

Compare, in poem XIV of *Les Roses* (Rilke 1956, vol. 2: 580):

Été: être pour quelques jours  
le contemporain des roses  
respirer ce qui flotte autour  
de leurs âmes écloses.

Faire de chacune qui se meurt,  
une confidente,  
et survivre à cette sœur  
en d'autres roses absente.

The flower is a common motif and the flow of transience seems to be a common theme in both Onitsura's haiku and Rilke's poem XIV. This poem starts with a concrete word, "Été", and a momentary vision of the transient world of the rose is portrayed in a rapid touch, as in Onitsura's haiku, for example.

1) The first two lines of poem XIV correspond to the first line of the haiku, "Elles s'épanouissent, — alors." The word "le contemporain" expresses all the poet's fondness for the blooming roses and presents his feeling as a vivid image in one word almost playfully.

2) The third and fourth lines of the poem mirror the second line of the haiku "On les regarde, — alors les fleurs" (regarde), the haiku's expression of adoration, becoming "respirer." In Rilke's late poems, the words "regarder" and "respirer" are fundamental

terms which demonstrate “pure relationship” with things. The scent which exudes from the rose is its soul, and as he breathes it in, the poet maintains a “pure relationship” with the flower like a haiku poet. Couchoud explains that a haiku poet feels in flowers the nascent soul. (Couchoud 1919: 68).

3) The opening lines of the second stanza of the poem correspond to “se flétrissent — alors...” in the third line of the haiku reflected directly in the words: “se meurt”. The poet’s feeling is illustrated by only one word, “une confidente”, similar to “la lune pour amie” in Buson’s haiku marked by Rilke. The fading flower becomes an invisible image of all the absent beings no longer in this world, brought back to life in the poem.

As stated in Couchoud’s notes, the haiku has a sense of incompleteness, ending with the expression “alors...”. The French word “alors”, followed by points de suspension, implies the never-ending process of all things flowering back to where they started: hence to the beginning of the haiku, “Elles s’épanouissent, alors”. In the following poem in the cycle, “cette sœur absente” is revived as the “abondante fleur”.

In another haiku about a flower by Buson, cited in the letter to Giauque,

Et morte,  
On la revoit vivante,  
La pivoine.

(*Rilke en Valais*: 87)

the idea found in the second stanza of poem XIV is anticipated in the invisible image of the flower “pivoine”, remaining even after the flower itself has withered. The invisible image of the flower is suggested by the contrast between death and rebirth.

The opening poem of *Les Roses* describes the “heureuse rose”. Interestingly enough, in the image of the rose in this first poem, the key words Rilke marked in Couchoud’s definition of haiku reappear: “un bref étonnement”, and also his imagery: “éveiller en nous quelque impression endormie”. In the first stanza, the “freshness” of the rose, which “astonishes us” (“nous étonne”), is portrayed concretely in the words “pétale contre pétale, tu te reposes”. The words “nous étonne” echo Couchoud’s definition of haiku as “un bref étonnement”. The second stanza reads:

Ensemble tout éveillé, dont le milieu  
dort, pendant qu'innombrables, se touchent  
les tendresses de ce cœur silencieux  
qui aboutissent à l'extrême bouche.  
(Rilke 1956, vol. 2: 575)

Here the choice of the paradoxical words “éveillé” and “dort” for the rose image in the second stanza are adopted from Couchoud’s imagery of haiku (“éveiller en nous quelque impression endormie”). We also find the terms “veille” and “dorme” of Chiyojo’s haiku. This concrete portrayal of overlapping petals caressing one another from the rose’s sleeping center to an outer wakefulness develops Rilke’s Orphic theme of the unity of life and death.

#### 4. Rilke’s View of Haiku

In his letter to Sophy Giauque, Rilke included 29 haiku by Buson, Onitsura, Moritake and others. He wrote how Giauque’s “petites Œuvres” seem to him to evoke haiku and explained his view of haiku as the ultimate art; “cette réussite rare et exquise qui consiste à placer une chose imaginaire dans un espace approprié, c’est-à-dire tout aussi intérieur, telle que vous la réalisez, me fait penser au Haï-Kaï ces minuscules unités poétiques, cultivées par les Japonais depuis le 15<sup>me</sup> siècle. (*Rilke en Valais*: 85–86).

In one of the most important passages concerned with haiku, Rilke states that “l’art de faire cette pilule où entrent des éléments disparates réunis par l’évènement, par l’émotion qu’il provoque, mais à la condition que cette émotion soit tout a fait résorbée par le simple bonheur des images” (ib. 91). Here Rilke describes haiku as the art of creating capsule “pilule”, a process by which a flower or other object is evoked by images within the capsule, in which disparate, unrelated elements are combined by means of one event or the feelings evoked by that event. Thus combined, the elements become completely absorbed into “the simple suitability of the images” (“le simple bonheur des images”). This explanation seems to come close to the central nature of Japanese haiku. Terms such as “disparate elements reunited” correspond to one haiku feature known as a kind of *toriawase* (“juxtaposition”). (Keene 1976: 140). He goes on “Le visible est pris d’une main sûre, il est cueilli comme



un fruit mûr, mais il ne pèse point, car à peine posé, il se voit forcé de signifier l'invisible." Rilke felt he had found in haiku the form of poetry for which he had been searching, a form in which objects undergo transformations from the visible to the invisible. Thus, Rilke's ultimate poetic world would be one in which the transformation of all transient objects on earth could be achieved by means of a "langage de l'invisible". (*Rilke en Valais*: 92).

Rilke wrote his own epitaph on the Rose one month before this letter to Giauque where he explained his view of haiku.

Meyer has pointed out (1980: 161-168) that the Rose epitaph was set out as three lines:

Rose, oh reiner Widerspruch, Lust,  
Niemandes Schlaf zu sein unter soviel  
Lidern

According to Meyer, these three lines represent a haiku in both theme and structure. I agree with Meyer that the presence of "paradox" lends Rilke's epitaph something of the qualities of haiku. I also share his opinion that the rose is likened to "pure contradiction" ("reiner Widerspruch") and that this corresponds to the "inner form of haiku". "Pure contradiction" makes us think of Rilke's description of haiku as "disparate elements reunited" or "those tiny poetical unities".

In many poems of *Les Roses*, Rilke's image of the rose is a manifestation of "the simple suitability of the images" as "pure contradiction". For example, in poem I, as mentioned earlier, "Ensemble tout éveillé, dont le milieu dort", the structure is boldly simplified. There are no metaphysical explanations, only juxtaposition in the sense of oxymoron. There is a hidden suggestion evoking Rilke's Orphic image. The thematically related poem XXIII exemplifies "pure contradiction" by saying: "Rose qui, en naissant, à rebours imites les lenteurs de la mort", "un ineffable accord du néant et de l'être". Many more examples of images of the rose as a kind of "contradiction" or "paradox" can be found in *Les Roses*: "Narcisse exaucé", "sainte nue", "Une rose seul, c'est toutes les roses", "infiniment possède la perte", the rose fragrance as "musique des yeux", "glace d'odeur", and so forth.

*Les Roses* has been evaluated in terms of "chant" and "la structure paradoxale de ce lyrisme." (David 1975: 428). Bernard

Böschstein pointed out the paradoxical "jeux du langage" as an important feature of Rilke's French poems. (1992: 1-16).

I would like to suggest that the relationship between these paradoxical features is not only an element of French poetry, but also of haiku.

Koji Kawamoto has recently stated that the fundamental element of haiku is "comic", expressed by means of only two basic stylistic devices: oxymoron and hyperbole. The oxymoron covers "a whole range of meaning from contradiction to opposition to contrast". (Kawamoto 1991: 210-211, 1992: 5).

A kind of oxymoron can often be found in the structure of the haiku Rilke marked or cited, typically in Moritake (Un pétale tombé...) and in Buson (Et morte, ...). Significantly, Couchoud heightened the sense of oxymoron in the translations, thus highlighting the contradictory elements.

Many poems in *Les Roses* do not deal with the metaphysical, but with a vivid image through a kind of oxymoron, or in one or two concrete words. Therefore, his "simple suitability of the images" contains a hidden suggestion and also the element of surprise the same way as haiku. Through his portrayal of the rose, Rilke's metaphysical themes of death, love, and poetry are suggested without explanation or metaphor. This is a new feature of his poetry that distinguishes his French cycles from his well-known German poems devoted to the rose, such as "Die Rosenschale" (1907), "Das Rosen-Innere" (1908) "Heute will ich dir..." (1914) written before Rilke's experience of haiku. In these poems, Rilke frequently used analogies introduced by the words "wie" or "ob" and pursued his more poetic conceptions, such as "Weltinnenraum", as Meyer suggested. Compare, for example: "Sieh jene weiße, die sich selig aufschlug / und dasteht in den großen, offenen Blättern / wie eine Venus aufrecht in der Muschel"<sup>10</sup>, with images in *Les Roses*, such as "sainte nue".

I would suggest that Rilke's experience of haiku and the structure of haiku contributed to his later French works and ultimate poetic concept through indirect contact, such as that with the book which resulted from Couchoud's experiences in Japan.

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<sup>10</sup> Neue Gedichte (Rilke 1956, vol. 1: 553).

And through Couchoud's translation, the renewed interest in Buson in Japan indirectly passed on to Rilke.

Up to now, the influence of French literature (Valéry, Mallarmé) on Rilke's French poems has been much emphasised, but I should like to conclude by strongly recommending a consideration of haiku as a means of understanding better the poetic background of Rilke's final years.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1 Rilke's Copy and his Note



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## Rilke's Markings and Notes

### Appendix 2

traduction pour nous frapper. C'est une vision }  
qui s'adresse directement à notre œil, une }  
impression vive qui peut éveiller en nous }  
quelques impressions endormies. Sans doute il }

### Appendix 3

Un pétale tombé  
Remonte à sa branche :  
Ahl c'est un papillon !  
ARAKIDA MURIKAKE, 1172-1540.  
Ce dernier exemple est typique. Un bref  
étonnement ! C'est la définition même du  
haïkai. Le saisissement est son seul moyen

### Appendix 4

III Épouvantement...  
J'ai marché, dans la chambre,  
Sur le peigne de ma femme morte.  
BUSHŪ.

### Appendix 5

\* Elles s'épanouissent, — alors  
On les regarde, — alors les fleurs  
Se défont, — alors...  
CHITSURA. (date ?)  
reçu de Nishō

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## Les prisonniers de Chillon: James et Fitzgerald sur les traces de Byron

JULIE WOLKENSTEIN

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Les parcours européens d'Henry James et de Francis Scott Fitzgerald les conduisent inévitablement à assigner à des lieux communs du tourisme américain la même place signifiante: le Paris des grands hôtels, la Riviera, les monuments romains offrent ainsi les mêmes repères d'un itinéraire invariable aux personnages de *Daisy Miller*, *The Portrait of a Lady*, *The Ambassadors*, et à ceux de *Tender is the Night*.

Il en est un pourtant, de ces carrefours de l'exil, qui, relativement peu célèbre, constitue moins l'un de ces passages obligés (tels que la baie de Cannes ou le Colisée), qu'il ne révèle une filiation intertextuelle concertée. En réservant dans *Tender is the Night* au château de Chillon, sur le lac Léman, un traitement central, il semble en effet que Fitzgerald rende hommage, et à *Daisy Miller*, et au poème de Lord Byron, *The Prisoner of Chillon*, qui motivait déjà implicitement le choix de ce site chez James lui-même. Cette présence récurrente, dans deux fictions américaines, d'un lieu préalablement élu par la figure la plus représentative du mouvement romantique, permet de réorienter la lecture de ces deux oeuvres, et de mesurer la dette de l'une à l'autre. L'élection répétée d'un tel décor éclaire, chez les deux auteurs, la nécessité romanesque de l'espace européen.

L'élaboration d'un espace littéraire passe chez James comme chez Fitzgerald, par des données topographiques réelles. L'Europe existe, et c'est de réalités géographiques, historiques, religieuses, artistiques, que se nourrit l'imaginaire américain. Dans ce processus, les différents pays qui composent l'Ancien Continent présentent chacun une typologie singulière. Les Américains de ces

fictions suivent un parcours qui obéit à certaines règles dramatiques, narratologiques et symboliques; et la Suisse constitue souvent le point de départ de leur voyage initiatique, qu'elle apparaisse la première dans l'ordre diégétique, comme c'est le cas dans *Daisy Miller*, ou dans l'ordre chronologique, comme dans *Tender is the Night*.

Cette priorité est d'abord motivée par un souci de vraisemblance — la Suisse est le pays des pensionnats, des écoles, des institutions qui accueillent alors une clientèle internationale fortunée. A la fois pays de l'enfance et de l'apprentissage, elle est la patrie d'élection du héros de *Daisy Miller*, Frédéric Winterbourne, qui continue, figé dans une attitude infantile, à étudier à Genève. C'est à Zurich qu'environ quarante ans plus tard, Fitzgerald situe, au livre II de *Tender is the Night*, la rencontre du jeune étudiant en médecine, Dick Diver, et de Nicole Warren.

Si la vraisemblance, le fait de société expliquent que la Suisse soit souvent à l'origine de l'initiation à l'Europe, d'autres raisons, moins évidentes, justifient le statut dont elle jouit et la première place qu'elle occupe souvent dans le déroulement des deux récits.

Le paysage est la première de ces explications: les panoramas alpins sont ceux qui, en Europe, ressemblent le plus aux espaces sauvages, immenses, accidentés de la Nouvelle Angleterre. Par ailleurs, l'influence de la religion protestante, faite de puritanisme et de transparence, induit également un sentiment de familiarité. En Suisse, le voyage, l'initiation à l'Europe n'ont pas encore vraiment commencé. Les premières lignes de *Daisy Miller* disent cette confusion possible — et exceptionnelle dans l'oeuvre — entre les deux pays:

It may be said, indeed, that Vevey assumes at this period some of the characteristics of an American watering-place. There are sights and sounds which evoke a vision, an echo, of Newport and Saratoga. (James 1983: 135).

Le phénomène est dû, en partie, à la présence massive d'Américains. James choisit à dessein un lieu consensuel, dont l'évocation impressionniste souligne l'aspect international. De même Fitzgerald souligne-t-il cette particularité de la Suisse: "Zurich is not unlike an American city." (Fitzgerald 1993: 110).



L'Hôtel des Trois Couronnes ne se distingue pas seulement par sa clientèle cosmopolite, qui abolit les frontières et les nationalités, mais aussi par sa dimension atemporelle:

The shore of the lake presents an unbroken array of establishments of this order, of every category, from the 'grand hotel' of the newest fashion, with a chalk-white front, a hundred balconies, and a dozen flags flying from its roof, to the little Swiss pension of an elder day, with its name inscribed in German looking lettering upon a pink or yellow wall, and an awkward summer-house in the angle of the garden. One of the hotels at Vevey, however, is famous, even classical, being distinguished from many of its upstart neighbours by an air both of luxury and of maturity. (James 1983: 133).

Ni tout à fait inscrit dans l'histoire locale, comme les auberges aux enseignes gothiques, ni trop agressivement moderne, comme le Grand-Hôtel, le décor se prête à toutes les rencontres. Par ailleurs, on ne peut s'empêcher de voir dans cette description un projet littéraire, qui consiste à se démarquer d'une part des artifices tape-à-l'oeil à la mode, d'autre part d'un pittoresque galvaudé, pour se situer, stylistiquement, dans un rigoureux — le terme est employé dans le texte — classicisme.

Ce programme esthétique intègre, en même temps qu'il la subvertit, la tradition romantique. Plus encore que le motif antique, celle-ci revient en effet avec insistance tout au long de la nouvelle. James travaille de façon continue à souligner l'influence de ce courant sur l'imaginaire des Américains européens, essentiellement à travers la récurrence du modèle mythique qu'est Byron. C'est évidemment chez Winterbourne que se manifeste l'empreinte de la tradition romantique, Daisy n'est pas assez cultivée pour cela. Elle n'est pas insensible au charme des lieux, mais ne leur superpose pas une référence poétique.

Ce sont leurs résonances littéraires qui motivent le choix de la Suisse et de l'Italie, décors successifs du récit: les hauteurs de l'une portent aux élans spirituels, les ruines de l'autre ressassent la fatalité de la passion, la nécessité de la mort; toutes deux favorisent la mélancolie, et permettent une adéquation facile entre les mouvements de l'âme et le paysage extérieur, osmose qui fonde

le sentiment romantique. L'influence de cette tradition est également sensible à travers les allusions lisibles dans le nom du personnage principal: Winterbourne, outre ses connotations hivernales, a une consonance germanique; et Frédéric, son prénom, évoque inévitablement le héros de *L'Éducation Sentimentale*, parue en 1869, soit à peine dix ans plus tôt. Comme Flaubert, James dénonce les ridicules et les conséquences désastreuses des chimères romantiques, et, comme lui, laisse affleurer, sous l'ironie, une forte charge émotionnelle. Exemple de l'attitude de James par rapport à la tradition littéraire européenne, son approche du romantisme est sans doute moins irrespectueuse qu'il n'y paraît. La mort de Daisy obéit d'une certaine façon à une logique de la fatalité, et produit des effets pathétiques qui échappent à la réécriture amusée des lieux communs.

La figure littéraire de Lord Byron incarne et concentre efficacement tous les attraits du romantisme: l'image du dandy, de l'aristocrate, du poète, de l'amoureux, du génie mort trop jeune, etc. Il apparaît à deux reprises, l'une en Suisse, l'autre en Italie. La seconde des ces allusions est seule explicite. Inspirée par la promenade nocturne qu'improvise Winterbourne au Colisée, et juste avant qu'il n'y surprenne Daisy au bras de son Don Juan de seconde zone, le bien nommé Giovanelli, la référence est directement attribuée au héros:

Then he passed in among the cavernous shadows of the great structure, and emerged upon the clear and silent arena. The place had never seemed to him more impressive. One half of the gigantic circus was in deep shade; the other was sleeping in the luminous dusk. As he stood there he began to murmur Byron's famous lines, out of *Manfred*; but before he had finished his quotation he remembered that if nocturnal meditations in the Colosseum are recommended by the poets, they are deprecated by the doctors. The historic atmosphere was there, certainly, but the historic atmosphere, scientifically considered, was no better than a villainous miasma. (Ib. 187).

Ce passage, son évolution, sa construction, sont particulièrement représentatifs du rapport entretenu par James avec la référence romantique. Dans un premier temps, la description mime l'emphase



du poète, accumule les adjectifs sur un rythme binaire, souligne les jeux de lumière, s'adapte au génie du lieu. Mais cette imitation prépare un retournement, une rupture de ton: Winterbourne lui-même prend conscience de l'inadéquation de l'humeur romantique avec la réalité; revenant à des considérations beaucoup plus prosaïques, il compare le point de vue des poètes à celui des savants, et en conclut que la poésie d'une ruine romaine au clair de lune ne mérite pas qu'on meure pour elle.

Mais le fonctionnement du texte va plus loin que cet adroit renversement de perspectives: l'ironie brutale qui coupe court aux épanchements de Winterbourne n'est pas exempte de tragique. Le dénouement du récit nous prouvera que ce rappel à la réalité n'est pas seulement dicté par une intention comique, mais que le destin de Daisy est bien de mourir pour avoir succombé à la poésie d'un lieu habité par le fantôme de Lord Byron. La littérature reprend le dessus. La puissance de l'imagination de Winterbourne tue Daisy plus sûrement que les fameux miasmes dénoncés par la médecine.

Explicitement invoqué, quelques lignes seulement avant le dénouement du récit, Byron étend ainsi son ombre, tel un ornement funéraire, sur la tombe de Daisy. Mais cette présence littéraire a été préparée, dès la première partie du roman, indirectement cette fois convoquée par le décor choisi: le château de Chillon domine en effet de ses "picturesque towers" (ib. 135), et le lac Léman, et les deux premiers chapitres de la nouvelle, au bout desquels y a enfin lieu l'excursion depuis longtemps projetée, comme si ce lieu historique constituait la fin de tous les désirs des personnages, de tous les fils narratifs, de toutes les potentialités dramatiques. Les conditions de cette visite ont déjà été longuement évoquées, et toujours associées à des clichés romantiques, (la comparaison de Daisy avec un sylphe, la perspective d'une promenade en barque à la lueur des étoiles).

Lors de l'excursion proprement dite, c'est l'ellipse même de la référence à Byron qui est remarquable, tant il hante évidemment le texte.

Well; I hope you know enough!' she said to her companion, after he had told her the history of the unhappy Bonivard. 'I never saw a man that knew so much!' The history of Bonivard had evidently, as



they say, gone into one ear and out of the other.  
(Ib. 160).

François de Bonivard, prieur du monastère de St Victor, qui, au seizième siècle, conspira, avec d'autres patriotes genevois, contre le duc de Savoie, fut emprisonné dans ce château de Chillon, puis libéré par les Bernois. Or l'épisode historique a inspiré à Byron une oeuvre que Winterbourne ne peut manquer d'avoir lue: *The Prisoner of Chillon*, publié en 1816, n'est pourtant pas cité. Il est rare que James élude ainsi une référence pourtant imposée par le contexte. Et c'est sans doute cette éliision même qui signifie, mieux encore que le sort explicite fait à *Manfred* dans le dernier chapitre, la dette paradoxale, et parfois insupportable de James à l'égard de ses prédécesseurs européens.

Cette dette, qui, chez Fitzgerald, comprend, de plus, l'oeuvre de ce précurseur américain, motive la même référence, plus voilée encore dans *Tender is the Night*, au point que, même valorisée comme elle l'est, introduite au centre d'un chapitre essentiel du roman, son sens n'est précisément décryptable qu'à la lumière de l'hypotexte jamesien. Ce chapitre, le huitième du livre II, qui, à quelques lignes près, occupe le centre exact du récit, relate les retrouvailles du médecin et de sa patiente, après que celui-là a renoncé, pour se conformer à son éthique de psychiatre, à l'amour de celle-ci. Il s'agit du chapitre central du roman, de par sa position, mais aussi parce que s'y opère un renversement, la rupture d'un certain équilibre entre Dick et Nicole. Après cette seconde rencontre, le héros se verra aliéné, par la fortune et par la folie de sa femme, et perdra progressivement, au profit de celle-ci, son identité intellectuelle, sa force physique, et sa liberté. Grâce à l'artifice narratif que constitue l'analepse ouverte au livre II, le livre I et le début du second commencent par établir la supériorité de Dick sur Nicole, accusant ainsi la courbe descendante, la dégradation irrémédiable de l'un et la guérison parallèle de l'autre, dans la seconde partie du roman.

On voit donc Dick, dans ce chapitre, partir, à bicyclette, à l'assaut des pentes suisses. A Glion, il emprunte le funiculaire et y rencontre par hasard Nicole, accompagnée — comme Daisy à Rome — d'un Italien à la noblesse douteuse, le comte Marmora. Ces retrouvailles feront vaciller ses résolutions. Dans les pages suivantes, il demandera sa main, provoquant ainsi sa propre

déchéance, et la guérison de sa femme. Fitzgerald annonce très habilement ce mécanisme impitoyable, en insérant, dans le récit, une description précise du fonctionnement du funiculaire, qui reproduit, en donnant ainsi le mode d'emploi, celui du chapitre, et du roman tout entier:

As water gushed from the chamber under the car, Dick was impressed with the ingenuity of the whole idea — a complementary car was now taking on mountain water at the top and would pull the lightened car up by gravity, as soon as the brakes were released. It must have been a great inspiration. (Fitzgerald 1993: 137).

Le procédé, affiché sans modestie comme génial, s'applique aussi bien au funiculaire qu'au roman lui-même. La rencontre qui va avoir lieu videra en effet Dick de ses forces, physiques et créatrices, au profit de Nicole. C'est ce processus de déperdition, tragiquement ressenti par Fitzgerald lui-même, qui est ainsi concrètement représenté dans le texte, sous la forme métaphorique, et moderne à dessein, de la machine. Les conséquences de la transgression que le couple s'apprête à commettre, et du lien qu'ils vont nouer sont clairement associées au mécanisme décrit: alors même que Dick formule le vœu pieux de ne pas descendre, une fois parvenu à destination, dans le même hôtel que Nicole, Fitzgerald exploite à nouveau les potentialités du décor signifiant qu'il a choisi pour cette rencontre:

When the funicular came to rest those new to it stirred in suspension between the blues of two heavens. It was merely for a mysterious exchange between the conductor of the car going up and the conductor of the car coming down. (Ib. 139).

Ce "mysterious exchange" est bien, aussi, celui qui se produit ici entre l'homme et la femme, dont Fitzgerald désigne ainsi métaphoriquement le statut de vases communicants, la relation, nécessairement inégale, fondée sur une mécanique des fluides, c'est-à-dire vitale, organique, sexuelle.

Dès lors qu'on interprète cette curieuse parenthèse mécanique comme la représentation de l'inversion, ici même, des processus de déchéance ou de progression jusque là incarnés par Dick et

Nicole, qui, en s'enchaînant l'un à l'autre, vont échanger leurs chances, leurs forces, leur vie, le reste du chapitre doit être réévalué, comme résumant de façon synthétique les différents thèmes du roman tout entier. Or, juste avant que Fitzgerald ne s'attarde sur les propriétés de sa métaphore hydraulique, il signale, et surinvestit de façon très curieuse un élément du panorama qui s'offre à Dick:

On the centre of the lake, cooled by the piercing current of the Rhône, lay the true centre of the Western World. Upon it floated swans like boats and boats like swans, both lost in the nothingness of the heartless beauty. (...) When Chillon and the island palace of Salagnon came into view Dick turned his eyes inward. (Ib. 138).

C'est encore à Chillon qu'est ainsi dévolue la fonction d'indiquer au lecteur le dispositif intertextuel: ni Byron ni James ne sont explicitement cités. Cependant, la source romantique inspire continûment *Tender is the Night*, depuis *Ode to a Nightingale*, de Keats, qui lui donne son titre, l'inspire pour mieux signifier son irrémédiable inaptitude face au progrès, à l'argent, à la guerre. Si l'on relit, et le chapitre, et le roman, à la lumière de cette double et discrète illusion, on constate que Fitzgerald se livre, en plusieurs occasions, à une réécriture de *Daisy Miller*. La réapparition même de Nicole, au bras de Marmora, identifie avec force la jeune fille aux fleurs qui, avant elle, pénètrent dans le compartiment de Dick:

It was a railside garden, and in the car was a sign: *Défense de cueillir les fleurs*. "C'était comme un jardin, et la cabine portait une pancarte: *Défense de cueillir les fleurs*." (Ib.).

La transgression ainsi préparée reproduit l'enjeu dramatique du récit de James — la virginité indécidable de Daisy (la marguerite). Ailleurs dans le roman, c'est le plus souvent Rosemary Hoyt, personnage secondaire, qui reprend les attributs de l'héroïne de James. Comme Daisy, elle porte un prénom fleuri, vient de l'Ouest, (mais de plus loin que Shenectady, des rivages fortunés de Californie), et voyage en compagnie d'une mère toute dévouée à ses caprices. Comme Daisy, elle est d'une beauté radieuse, et, comme elle, elle fait la connaissance du héros, Dick Diver, dans



un hôtel, de la Côte d'Azur cette fois, dit "des Étrangers". Plus tard, à la fin du livre deux, la liaison Rosemary avec Dick sera enfin consommée dans un décor romain que Fitzgerald sature à nouveau de références à *Daisy Miller*, mais toujours dévalorisées, comme si les ruines du romantisme se révélaient, comme son héros, incompatibles avec la fiction moderne. Ainsi les promenades des amants reproduisent-ils scrupuleusement celles de Daisy et Winterbourne, à ces différences près que, chez Fitzgerald, *Castelli dei Cesari* est un restaurant, et le Forum une reconstitution de carton-pâte, un décor de film. Comme Chillon au chapitre VIII, Rome active la référence à James en même temps qu'elle condamne Dick à incarner la défaite du romantisme.

Jamais James n'est directement cité dans le roman, si l'on excepte la signification possible, bien que seconde, de l'allusion à *l'Ecclésiaste*, 12, 6-7, au livre I:

The silver cord is cut and the golden bowl is broken  
and all that, but an old romantic like me can't do  
anything about it. (Ib. 54).

La situation de la citation biblique est révélatrice, puisqu'elle succède à l'évocation de l'arrière plan culturel qui a conduit au front une génération d'occidentaux: Lewis Carroll, Jules Verne, et surtout Friedrich de la Motte-Fouquet, l'auteur d'*Ondine*. Par ailleurs, l'impuissance du romantisme, sur ce champ de bataille du Nord, est énoncée alors que résonne encore la référence voilée à *The Golden Bowl*, comme si Fitzgerald rejoignait James dans le constat moderne du nécessaire renouvellement de la fiction.

Enfin, le lien avec *Daisy Miller* est concrètement représenté, à l'orée de *Tender is the Night*, sur la page de l'Hôtel des Étrangers:

Three British nannies sat knitting the slow pattern of  
Victorian England, the pattern of the forties, the sixties,  
and the eighties, into sweaters and socks, to the  
tune of gossip as formalised as incantation. (Ib. 4).

Telles les Parques, ces silhouettes fugitives veillent sur le destin des personnages romanesques, et garantissent une continuité, métaphorisée ici par le fil, entre la tradition littéraire du dix-neuvième siècle, et le vingtième. On pense, bien sûr, à toutes les terrifiantes figures de gouvernantes peintes par James: l'héroïne de *The Turn of the Screw*, la Mrs. Wix de *What Maisie Knew*, Susan

Stringham dans *The Wings of the Dove*, et, peut-être, ce qui éclairerait son statut, la Mrs. Walker de *Daisy Miller*. Cette continuité, cette parenté, Fitzgerald les assume ainsi d'emblée, comme s'il réfutait par avance sa propre modernité, et ambitionnait le même classicisme nostalgique, le romantisme démodé que son héros. Peut-être n'est-ce pas un hasard, si le funiculaire, sur le fonctionnement duquel il calque sa dynamique narrative, a été inventé en 1879, l'année où Daisy Miller paraît en Angleterre.

L'ombre proprement indicible de Byron plane ainsi sur les récits de James et de Fitzgerald, véritable esprit du lieu, lieu européen, lieu de la fiction. Ce lieu, c'est le château de Chillon, monument élevé à un romantisme que les deux oeuvres s'épuisent à réactiver. Comme le Bonivard auquel Byron prête sa voix, les deux romanciers avouent aussi, souterrainement, leur statut, s'affirment prisonniers de leurs origines littéraires, dénoncent sans s'en délivrer la dimension claustrophobique de l'intertextualité.

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## Paris dans le *Tropique du Cancer* de Henry Miller

VASSILIKI LALAGIANNI

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*Tropique du Cancer* (1934) est un roman écrit à la première personne; Miller lui-même affirme que c'est une autobiographie toute simple, mais le tempo et la façon de raconter l'histoire sont ceux d'un roman. *Tropique du Cancer* c'est d'abord Paris, Miller à Paris, découvrant Paris et se découvrant lui-même. Ouvert au réel, curieux de tout et disponible de tout son temps, Miller a regardé Paris mieux que personne. S'il lui arrive d'en donner une vision synthétique, qui d'ailleurs atteint des dimensions cosmiques, il nous promène aussi à travers les rues, citant leurs noms, décrivant leurs détails. Le réalisme avec lequel Miller approche la ville de Paris, ne peut nous tromper; la subjectivité colore toutes les descriptions de l'écrivain. Le Paris de Miller n'existe qu'en fonction de lui-même, de ses souffrances et de ses joies; c'est son propre visage que désespérément l'écrivain tente de déchiffrer lorsqu'il déambule à travers les rues parisiennes. La subjectivité des descriptions fait de Paris un lieu protéiforme, qui suit les contradictions de Miller. Les aspects contradictoires de Paris se développent à travers des images de la fluidité et de la fixité; la fluidité est du côté de la vie, même en ce qu'elle comporte de mort: flux du désir, flux de la femme, flux du devenir, tout ce qui s'oppose à la prison-ville et à la pierre. La fluidité finit par avoir raison de la fixité dans ce Paris entraîné par le temps et parcouru de flux. La ville ne cesse de changer: théâtre des métamorphoses essentielles où l'homme vient pour sortir de sa chrysalide, elle est elle-même sujet de métamorphose, que ce soit dans le temps de l'Histoire ou dans celui du quotidien. (Voir *Henri Miller*: 1)



L'image de la ville se construit tout le long du *Tropique du Cancer* par la marche. L'écrivain ne s'est pas enfermé dans un coin de Paris; il a marché des journées entières à travers la capitale, et exploré ses alentours. Il n'a pas un "territoire" aussi étroit que celui de Hemingway dans *Paris est une fête* ou des surréalistes. Il aime flâner partout; dans *Tropique du Cancer* on voit tout de même se dessiner ses territoires d'élection, et ceux qu'il rejette. Miller ne se sent pas à l'aise dans les beaux-quartiers de la rive droite au dans les "bars chics autour des Champs Elysées" où Tania l'emmène. La vie là est superficielle et agréable, faite de douceur, de sensualité et de sentimentalisme<sup>1</sup>. Mais il ne se laisse pas prendre au piège car "dans ce monde (...), la plupart des choses qui arrivent sont tout juste merde et saloperie, aussi moche que toute ordure". (Ib. 249).

Plusieurs motifs attirent Miller dans le 9ème arrondissement: le "Chicago Tribune" et ses locaux, la maison de Nanantatee se trouvent dans ce quartier; l'écrivain avec Perlès et Bald fréquentent un café de la rue Lamartine. Miller qui croyait ce quartier luxueux, n'y trouve que des taudis, des maisons closes et des prostituées. En revanche, il ne pousse pas jusqu'à Montmartre, pourtant proche mais d'un pittoresque trop touristique. On peut d'ailleurs penser que cette délimitation doit quelque chose à Breton, car il s'agit ici du quartier de *Nadja*, "un livre unique" que Miller a relu plusieurs fois.<sup>2</sup>

Les quartiers périphériques l'attirent aussi: le quartier de l'Hôtel de Ville avec son atmosphère de guetto le fascine; il faut noter, également, l'errance entre la République et la Bastille avec les petites rues alentour. Le Quartier Latin et le centre chargé d'histoire semblent le séduire: du Louvre é l'Etoile, "c'est comme un morceau de musique pour piano" (T.C. 85) traversé par la Seine qui reflète "un monde oublié". Dans T.C. on n'a pas affaire au

<sup>1</sup> "Nous devenons sentimentaux, peut-être à cause des éclairages doux et de cette crémeuse musique d'acajou dont tout le bar est saturé" (Miller 1991: 247). (Abrégé T.C. dans le texte et les notes).

<sup>2</sup> "Nadja continue à être, à mon sens, un livre unique. (Les photos qui accompagnent le texte ont une valeur à elles seules). Qui qu'il en soit, c'est un de ces livres que j'ai relus plusieurs fois sans que soit rompu le charme créé à l'origine." (Miller 1950: 51).

Paris historique et culturel: tous les endroits qui d'ordinaire font l'attrait des touristes jouent ici un rôle tout à fait secondaire. L'espace parisien vécu par Miller ne coïncide pas avec celui des plans: il se réfère à "ce Paris aux arrondissements indécis", à "un Paris qui doit être vécu, qui doit être senti jour par jour sous mille formes différentes de torture". (Ib. 255). Les limites des arrondissements se confondent: les quartiers luxueux de l'Opéra se fondent dans celui qui entoure Montmartre lorsqu'on suit la rue Lamartine; le quartier de l'Hôtel de Ville paraît excentré par son atmosphère alors qu'il ne l'est pas topographiquement. Aux trajets fixes des guides s'oppose l'espace confus et librement parcouru. Miller savoure la ville tout en y marchant. Le déplacement est joie du corps qui se dépense en s'appropriant l'espace urbain, en s'ouvrant aux bruits, aux odeurs, aux couleurs; c'est aussi joie de l'esprit curieux de tout et sensible aux détails humains. Dans *T.C.* l'espace vécu l'emporte sur l'espace culturel.

Miller refuse explicitement une vision intellectuelle et esthétique de Paris.<sup>3</sup> Dès le début du livre, il renonce à se croire un artiste. (Ib. 22). S'il écrit, c'est pour consigner tout ce que la littérature a refusé jusqu'ici<sup>4</sup>. S'il fréquente des artistes, c'est pour leur personnalité souvent étrange et non pour leur talent qui est, d'ailleurs, souvent, discutable<sup>5</sup>. A toute préoccupation d'école, il

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<sup>3</sup> Miller introduit pourtant dans ses descriptions la musique et la peinture ayant pour la dernière une prédilection: il évoque souvent "le Paris de Maugham, de Gauguin, de George Moore"; pour lui "peindre, c'est se rendre à aimer". Ses descriptions de Paris le montrent sensible aux couleurs et jeux de lumière et à la variété hétéroclite du spectacle urbain.

<sup>4</sup> "Tout ce qui était littérature s'est détaché de moi." (*T.C.* 22). George Wickes écrit à propos de Miller: "He shares Lawrence's vision of humanity being ground apart by the machine; his response closely resembles that of Lawrence, Dionysan, anti-intellectual, instinctive; he turns to the same life-giving sources, art, religion, and sex. To use a favorite term of contemporary criticism, both are prophetic, apocalyptic writers. Here the resemblance ends. Temperamentally the two are altogether different, as different as tragedy and comedy. Where Lawrence is inclined to play the messiah, Miller prefers to play the clown." (Wickes 1974: 172).

oppose la vie; "intellectuel" devient chez lui un mot péjoratif qui désigne une abstraction mortelle. Mis à côté le Paris artistique qui n'est là que pour indiquer l'un de ses caractères spécifiques, c'est au contraire le Paris "quotidien" qui intéresse Miller: ses différents quartiers, ses places, ses immeubles splendides ou délabrés, ses rues, somme tout son aspect banal qui accompagne la vie de tous les jours de ses habitants. Cette image de la ville se construit tout le long du récit par la marche dans les rues parisiennes.

La rue dans *T.C.* n'est pas le moyen de se rendre en tel lieu célèbre; elle s'apprécie pour elle-même, elle est le lieu des expériences authentiques: "Ce qui ne se passe pas dans la rue, est faux, dérivé, c'est-à-dire littérature." (*Henry Miller*: 4). C'est là que se trouve la seule réalité, c'est dans la rue qu'on apprend ce que sont réellement les êtres humains" (Miller 1962: 10). L'attirance de Miller pour les curiosités de la rue se traduit dans l'importance du mouvement qui laisse une puissante impression de vitalité. La vie de la rue se manifeste dans la foule où Miller se laisse emporter: la rue est "vivante, grouillante", une "ruche en activité", qui "bouillonne" et qui "donne le vertige".

Mais cette image de vitalité n'exclut pas le tragique de la rue parisienne: la laideur — murs délabrés, cours lugubres, odeurs fétides, grisaille générale — ne choque pas seulement les sens mais aussi révèle la misère. Les êtres humains se confondent avec les lieux dans la même monstruosité: près de "porches moisis" de vieilles haillonneuses dégagent une odeur de pourriture, des enfants rachitiques traînent dans les "rues lépreuses", des épileptiques voisinent avec les gargouilles de Saint-Germain-des-Prés, des vieillards habitent des immeubles pourris et se couchent sur des matelas moisis. Comme Baudelaire, Miller voit dans la rue "toutes

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<sup>5</sup> Selon George Orwell, le monde décrit dans *T.C.* est l'envers de celui de Wyndham Lewis dans le *Tarr*, "la foule cosmopolite des artistes" d'après guerre: "le lumpenproletariat marginal qui a pu survivre à la crise parce qu'il se compose pour moitié d'authentiques artistes et pour moitié d'authentiques crapules. Les génies méconnus, les paranoïaques qui sont toujours "sur le point" d'écrire le roman qui battra Proust à plates coutures, on les y trouve, mais ce ne sont des génies qu'aux très rares instants où il ne sont pas à la quête de leur prochain repas". (Orwell 1991: 18).



les formes de la démence". Les êtres humains sont à l'image de leur ville, subissent la même dégradation dans la misère. Dans *Les Cahiers de Malte Laurids Brigge* les vieillards sont des "déchets, des pelures d'hommes" qui "coulent lentement au fil de la rue en laissant une trace sombre et sale." (Rilke 1947: 17). Comme Rilke qui remarque les mutilés parmi les misérables, Miller a une affection particulière pour les pauvres et les ratés<sup>6</sup>. Les misérables prostituées-qu'il appelle des "vautours" — montrent les mieux l'inhumanité de l'existence urbaine; elles sont répugnantes, mutilées presque toujours malades<sup>7</sup>, roulées par la vie, le ventre creux, le coeur et la tête vides. La ville détruit les âmes avec les corps, dans un abrutissement baveux.

Paris est comme une prostituée. De loin, elle vous paraît ravissante, vous n'avez de cesse que vous la teniez entre vos bras. Au bout de cinq minutes, vous vous sentez vide, dégoûté de vous-même. Vous avez l'impression d'avoir été roulé. (T.C. 193).

La multiplication des perversions témoigne de notre dégénérescence; névrosés, nous ne connaissons plus ni la vraie vie du corps, ni l'amour. Cette double dégradation apparaît dans le milieu urbain qui concentre la civilisation et ses tares. Dans *Le Monde du Sexe*, Miller condamne la civilisation contemporain dont la morale a étouffé le corps avant d'être relayée par le machinisme: "Comme la machine, symbole de notre mode d'existence, le sexe fonctionne dans un vide absolu: il est stérile, désolé. Il est le signe suprême de l'impuissance." (Henri Miller: 8). Dans cet univers où le vide machinal domine et où "chaque individu est potentiellement un zéro", la solitude est inévitable surtout pour l'étranger arrivé

<sup>6</sup> Dans *Entretiens avec G. Belmont*, Miller explique à G. Belmont qu'il a une affection particulière pour les pauvres, les ratés, les misérables, plus que pour les gens célèbres: "Pour la bonne raison que je me dis que moi aussi, peut-être, je ne suis encore qu'un raté. Je m'identifie toujours à ces gens." (Cité dans *Henri Miller*: 7).

<sup>7</sup> "Je n'ai jamais vu une ville comme Paris pour la variété de la pâture sexuelle. Dès qu'une femme perd une incisive, un oeil, ou une jambe, elle se fait prostituée. En Amérique, elle crèverait de faim, si elle n'avait rien d'autre que se mutilation pour la recommander." (T.C. 231-232).

pauvre et sans amis. Miller erre dans les rues de Paris saturées de son angoisse et de sa nostalgie, cherchant le souvenir de June partout où il est passé avec elle. "J'avais les rues pour amies, et les rues me parlaient ce langage triste et amer de la misère humaine." (*T.C.* 261). Etres et choses, tout dans Paris dit la misère de notre vie: c'est cette espèce de "cruauté qui est incrustée dans les rues" (*ib.* 262) et dans les maisons aux "fenêtres aveuglées" qui "paraissent être les gardiennes de crimes secrets." (*Ib.*).

La ville est construite d'univers clos et juxtaposés, un "lieu géométrique de la misère" (Hordequin 1970: 111), un ensemble de cellules qui voient sans communiquer. L'image de l'habitation-prison revient souvent: les blocs de maisons sont des "prisons de pierre" dont "les portes sont bien verrouillées"; des grilles, des barreaux, des verrous et des volets souvent évoqués dans *T.C.*, impliquent emprisonnement et la solitude.

Mais la sensation physique d'emprisonnement correspond à l'étouffement moral de l'homme contemporain, au sein d'une civilisation que Miller ne cesse de maudire: "l'impasse actuelle est sans issue".

Dans *T.C.* la rue est peinte dans un contexte où se multiplient les métaphores de la maladie: la lèpre, la gangrène, la syphilis envahissent les rues: "Tout nage dans un muco-pus divin." (*T.C.* 340). La dégradation de la ville ressemble à celle d'un organisme vivant qui se défait et dont les formes s'effacent dans la masse amorphe et répugnante de la pourriture: "La ville pousse ses bourgeons comme un énorme organisme vérolé de toutes parts." (*Ib.* 73). Comme dans *La Faim* de Knut Hamsun — souvent évoqué par Miller —, la ville apparaît comme une projection typographique de la vie organique et des rythmes biologiques. L'image dominante qui, chez Miller, exprime le mal désignant à la fois la ville-organisme, le corps et l'esprit des hommes, est le cancer qui proliféra aux dépens du vivant. Le cancer est partout: "où que vous alliez, quoi que vous touchiez, il y a le cancer et la syphilis. C'est écrit dans le ciel et flamboie comme un présage sinistre. Nos âmes en sont rongées et nous ne sommes rien d'autre qu'un monde comme la lune." (*Ib.* 263).

Le cancer, lié à l'idée d'engloutissement, est celui "du temps qui nous dévore" (*ib.* 21), d'un monde qui se dévore lui-même, d'un Paris qui vous pousse dans le corps comme "un cancer et qui



grandit, grandit, jusqu'à ce qu'il vous ait dévoré." (Ib. 255). Les habitants de ce Paris malade sont déjà morts: "les gens qui vivent là sont morts" (ib. 106). Cette mort symbolique atteint une vieille culture qui repose sur la méconnaissance de la vie, et que Nietzsche dénonçait déjà. "Nos manières de penser fabriquent la mort" (*Henri Miller*: 10), écrit Miller dans *Le Monde du Sexe*, une mort qui est fixité et froideur; la mort métaphorique, dont Miller voit les manifestations dans les villes modernes. L'idée de la mort envahit *T.C.* en de multiples images-symboles de la grande ville: "les berceaux de la civilisation sont les égoûts putrides du monde" (*T.C.* 259).

Des images bibliques — des références à l'Apocalypse et à l'Enfer — viennent renforcer la monstruosité de la ville: "la petite ruelle qui flamboie comme un enfer", "l'Impasse Satan" et les réverbères aux contorsions démoniaques, toute une présentation de la ville comme un monde de souffrances infernales. La comparaison se trouvait déjà chez Baudelaire et Aragon la reprend dans *Paris vingt ans après*. Le Paris de Jean Sullivan dans la *Joie errante* est la ville de Caïn, bâtie sur le mal, "un vide, une blessure" (Sullivan 1974: 114). Cependant, la ville maudite par tout ce qu'elle peut rassembler de vice humain, ce lieu d'avidité et de crime devient en même temps porteuse de spiritualité. Elle signifie le rassemblement dans l'unité: image de la Cité Sainte, de "l'Eden à venir" (Sullivan 1986: 10). La ville, malgré son aspect maudit, et peut-être même à cause de cela, devient un lieu de renaissance. Le dépouillement matériel, affectif et moral de l'individu précède la renaissance comme la mort de notre civilisation conditionne la création d'un monde nouveau. Il faut passer par l'Enfer parisien, "pour se libérer, pour émerger sain et sauf du passé, Dieu-soleil éclatant et ensanglanté, rejeté sur un rivage étranger" (*T.C.* 258), une espèce de Dionysos ressuscité ayant le pouvoir du Salut. A Paris, Miller se dépouille de ses illusions, et la perte de tout espoir inaugure "une vie nouvelle", "un jour nouveau", "un monde neuf". "Il ne faut jamais désespérer" (ib. 218) affirme Miller et insiste sur sa résurrection parisienne. La ville, remplie de malheur et de poésie, devient une véritable occasion d'initiation à soi-même; les individus y subissent les épreuves qui vont les mener à une régénération. Dans l'enfer urbain, le malaise du corps, la souffrance de



l'amour, la sensation de la mort, constituent les éléments d'un rituel qui aboutit à la découverte de soi.

Doué d'une vitalité prodigieuse, Miller déborde d'activité et d'enthousiasme pour tout. A Paris, en retrouvant l'impératif rabelaisien, il affirme: "Fais n'importe quoi mais qu'il en sorte de la joie." (Ib. 350). Anaïs Nin place cette joie de vivre de Miller dans la sensation d'ivresse: "C'est un homme que la vie enivre, qui n'a pas besoin de vin, qui flotte dans une euphorie qui s'est créée d'elle-même." (Nin 1971). Cette joie de vivre semble trouver à Paris un terrain d'élection. A l'encontre de New-York, Paris sait encore vivre; les Parisiens ont amené l'art de vivre à un haut degré de perfection; même la sexualité, pourtant pervertie ici comme ailleurs, s'y épanouit mieux qu'à New-York où tout est "codifié, matérialisé, asexué"<sup>8</sup>. Le Français reconnaît l'être humain dans la prostituée alors que l'Américain est toujours influencé par son crédo moral.

Dans le roman, la joie de vivre s'exprime en un thème original qui donne de la ville une image singulière, le thème de la coulée. Le chant du grand "flux schizophrénique" que Miller entonne dans le chapitre XIII, retrouve ses échos dans tout le livre. L'essence de la vie est dans la coulée où se manifeste le devenir à l'oeuvre dans l'espace. La fixité incarne la mort. "Plus obscène que tout est l'inertie. Plus blasphématoire que le juron le plus sanglant est la paralysie" (*T.C.* 347). Tout ce qui coule parle de la vie — "J'aime tout ce qui coule" — même "le pus et la saleté qui en coulant se purifient."<sup>9</sup> La ville de Paris est traversée de flux qui servent de balance à la mort sensible dans l'aspect carcéral de ses bâtiments: flux des égoûts et des ruisseaux, flux de la foule, flux de la sexualité.

Le second flux qui traverse la ville est la Seine "à la vue de ce courant sombre et rapide, (...) une grande joie me soulève, et affirme ce profond désir qui est en moi de ne jamais quitter cette

<sup>8</sup> "New York est irrespirable: c'est une ville laide, monotone, inhumaine. Elle reste le reflet de l'Amérique: rythme accéléré, mécanisation exagérée. Tout y reste codifié, matérialisé, asexué." (Roux 1991: 5).

<sup>9</sup> Dans *T.C.* les expressions de flux sont nombreuses: "de flots épais de semence qui envahissent les ruisseaux" (p. 41), "la fesse qui ruisselle dans la rue comme un égout" (p. 226), "flux de la chair" (p. 233)...

terre.” (Ib. 110). La ville est mouvement mais mouvement d’un fleuve qui coule sous les ponts, entre le bord de l’eau et la pierre monumentale des berges, et représente la continuité de l’existence, l’universel de l’expérience humaine de la beauté provisoire.

Dans les dernières pages du *Monde du Sexe* Miller évoque des souvenirs de villes aimées associées toujours à l’image du fleuve.

La nuit, les gens, avec leur solitude, leurs rêves d’amour ou de manque d’amour, s’en vont toujours chercher le bord de l’eau. La fluidité mouvante de l’eau apaise l’espoir de l’homme affolé de souffrance. Le courant, doucement, emporte et dilue les pensées; le corps, soulagé, trouve la paix. L’eau est la grande amie de l’esprit, la grande consolatrice, grande pacificatrice. Elle passe, éternité mouvante. Jetez-lui, un bâton, le grand giron l’accueille et l’entraîne. (Henri Miller: 13).

Le retour à la mère s’entrevoit dans ce poème du fleuve et donne le sens profond de la coulée. (Ib.). “Le grand désir incestueux est de continuer à couler, ne faire qu’un avec le temps, et fondre ensemble la grande image de l’au-delà avec ici et maintenant.” (T.C. 358). La régression va vers l’époque du Moi-Tout, de l’univers indifférencié où le petit enfant n’a pas encore appris à distinguer lui-même et les autres, n’a pas fait l’apprentissage des structures sociales et linguistiques. Ce qui coule est informe, sans structure. Entre l’appel au chaos et la nostalgie de la mère, la relation est évidente puisque la régression opère une déstructuration: “Quand dans la matrice du temps tout se sera à nouveau désolbé, le chaos règnera à nouveau...” (Ib. 23). Ce rêve de régression donne au Paris de Miller une profonde originalité. La ville est ambivalente: prostituée<sup>10</sup> mais aussi mère, puisque toute prostituée a pour Miller la fonction sacrée de permettre un retour au ventre maternel. Plusieurs passages confirment la pulsion de mort qui est manifeste ici. “C’est le grand gouffre, gueule ouverte du néant, que les esprits créateurs et les mères de la race portent entre leurs

<sup>10</sup> “Paris est comme une prostituée. De loin, elle vous paraît ravissante (...). Au bout de cinq minutes, vous vous sentez vide, dégouté, de vous-même. Vous avez l’impression d’avoir été roulé.” (T.C. 293).

jambes.” (ib. 346). Le désir pour la femme cache le désir de retourner au ventre maternel, et c’est désir de mort. L’amour pour Paris le montre d’une autre façon: le voyage en France symbolise pour Miller un retour aux origines, rêve, d’ailleurs, de plusieurs Américains qui désirent trouver leurs racines en Europe. Mais le Paris maternel est monstrueux, comme l’Europe est “médiévale, grotesque, monstrueuse”; le berceau de la civilisation appelle les images de “matrices empuanties” et de “charniers”.

Chez Miller, la fixité traduit la mort, la seule mort à craindre; il s’agit d’une mort métaphorique, celle qui caractérise notre civilisation. L’autre “mort” s’explique comme la pulsion de mort chez Freud: elle vise la déstructuration, la destruction des assemblages, le retour à une énergie libre non “liée”: c’est la mobilité du flux. Or Miller ne semble pas avoir de répugnance pour cet état de fluidité, que, au contraire, il désire comme une expérience authentiquement vivante. La pulsion de mort serait de fait, ici, une pulsion de vie, si la vie n’est pas dans les formes, mais dans l’énergie qui les traverse.

Excepté Paris en tant que lieu qui illustre la dialectique de la vie et de la mort, la ville se présente, à l’encontre de la “métropole” inhumaine et technicienne qu’est New York, comme la “polis” familière et poétique grâce à sa dimension humaine. Quels que soient les défauts des Français et les laideurs de Paris, Miller y trouve de l’humanité. Il écrit que, aller en France — là où “les gens ont bien l’air humain” (ib. 312) — c’est “redevenir un être humain”; “français” devient synonyme de “l’humain”. La ville est humaine et familière pour devenir un territoire intime et pour que Miller s’y sente très vite chez lui: “c’était son Paris à lui” (ib. 110). La découverte d’un “chez soi” est en même temps découverte de soi: “il a fallu que je sois complètement fauché, désespéré vivant comme un clochard dans les rues pour que je commence à voir et à aimer le vrai Paris. Je le découvrais en même temps que je me découvrais”, écrit-il dans *Entretiens avec G. Belmont* (Henry Miller: 13). Dans les rues de Paris se trouve la seule réalité car c’est là qu’ “on apprend ce que sont réellement les êtres humains”. Mais cette réalité d’une vie quotidienne collective n’est pas ternie par la banalité: là seulement se trouve l’aventure. Et Miller est vraiment un flâneur, un rêveur, un aventurier des temps modernes qui a vécu Paris mieux que personne.



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## Notes on Dance and Literature between the 19th and 20th Centuries

SERGIA ADAMO

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The relationship between dance and literature, in a broad perspective which takes into consideration the continuity of cultural forms and their interactions, is of particular interest if one looks at the frequency and the centrality of dance metaphors, symbols, criticism in literature between the 19th and the 20th centuries. At the time when dancers such as Isadora Duncan and Loie Fuller started to perform all around European theatres, provoking a real cultural turnabout in how dance was considered, when the Ballets Russes showed how the Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk* could be successfully achieved in practice, modernist writers such as Mallarmé, D'Annunzio, Wilde, Shaw, Yeats, Eliot, Valéry seriously turned their attention to dance, to its attempts to define itself autonomously, though strictly dependent on other forms of art, to regain a dignity as an art. As D'Annunzio would point out in his novel *Il fuoco* (1900):

le tre arti pratiche, la musica, la poesia e la danza, si sono disgiunte e le prime due han proseguito il loro sviluppo verso una superior potenza di espressione e la terza è decaduta. (D'Annunzio 1989: 356)

Dance decayed, lost its artistic dignity. That consideration, as the whole of the novel *Il fuoco*, was certainly inspired by Wagner's *Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft* (1849) where the composer outlined the characteristic of the future work of art as the enactment of the essence of Greek tragedy. In his opinion only the recovery of this essence could bring to the achievement and the overcoming of true

art by fusion, the union of music, poetry and dance. He therefore proposed an analysis of the system of single arts in which dance was recognized as the most material, the most tightly bound to the human body, able to communicate not only the physical sensations felt by that body, but also all spiritual emotions in a wide range of tones. But the limits of dance were that it had become disconnected with philosophy and poetry, maintaining only the unavoidable and constitutive relationship with the rhythm and measure of music, through musical instruments. It had chosen to use its artistic characteristics and "warf mit leichfertigen Selbstvertrauen sich in die luxusbedürftigen Raume der Welt" (Wagner: 84) in order to celebrate the power of money, to do everything for money. Wagner commented:

Wie mochte diese edle Kunst so tief fallen, dass sie in unsern öffentlichen Kunstleben nur noch als Spitze aller in sich vereinigten Bühlerkünste sich Geltung zu verschaffen, ihr Leben zu fristen vermag? (Ib. 85)

And concluded his analysis with this eloquent exclamation: "O herrliche Tanzkunst! O schmahliche Tanzkunst!" (Ib. 88)

Amy Koritz, who has recently studied the relation between dance and literature in early 20th century British culture, has pointed out how until the 1890s it was commonly assumed that dance was nothing but a form of ambiguously erotic display of the female body "performed by women of questionable moral status." (Koritz 1995: 2) And this was true, although the rigid technique of ballet, based as it was, on the prescription of unnatural positions of the body with the complete *en dehors* of inferior arts and the elevation on tiptoe, apparently tended to reject any material and corporal connotation of the dancer's body. Compared to poetry and music, dance represented a failure in aesthetic consciousness, a lack of control over the creation of art, always connected to women who danced for men's eyes.

One of the most important reasons why major literary figures were attracted to dance might indeed be found in its problematic connotation as a decayed art, which could become a metaphor to express the problematic status of art in general, divided by the need to reach broader audiences and the wish to maintain an elitist



status. Some focused on the status of the performing art by writing *Four Plays for Dancers* (Yeats), by trying to transcend the stereotype of a bestial, highly sexualised dancer (Wilde and Strauss's *Salomé*), by narrating, in a novel, the story of an erotic attraction for a "ballerina" (Shaw's *Immaturity*). Others wrote critical reviews of dance performances: Mallarmé claimed to be first and foremost a critic of dance; the *Nouvelle Revue Française* paid a particular attention to the evolution of the Ballets Russes, seeing in that experience both the realisation of an ideal of art and the source of a new language for describing the peculiarities of a new art; Eliot's attention to ballet was shaped by the problem of the relationship between the work of art and the performer bound to his aspiration to a popular, yet elitist, performed art. (Koritz; Sasportes).

This close link between dance and literature is a feature of a particular period of European cultural history. When, at the beginning of the 19th century, the norms and rules for classical ballet were written, the most frequent comparison, the fundamental term of comparison for it was painting, not literature. The aim of the first *Traité Élémentaire, Théorique et Pratique de l'Art de la Danse* by Carlo Blasis was to offer a theoretical treatise on the mechanism, and the technique of dance, as separate from other cultural and artistic forms. Blasis, having underlined "le très petit nombre d'ouvrages que l'on a écrit sur la danse, et le peu de valeur de quelques-uns" (Blasis 1820: 7), added the following explanation in a footnote:

La majeure partie des écrivains dont je parle, sont, à la vérité de très bon littérateurs, mais qui n'ont jamais été danseurs: ce sont des gens, comme dit plaisamment Berchoux "... connus par leur science. Qui sans être danseurs, parlent beaucoup de danse". Je crois que les écrits de ces hommes, qui ont employé tant de veilles pour l'amour de l'art Terpsicore qu'ils ignoraient, nous sont parfaitement inutiles. Il aurait beaucoup mieux valu pour nous, que ses ouvrages composés pour la simple poétique de l'art, eussent été remplacés par quelque bon traité théorique, sur le mécanisme de la danse, écrit par un Dauberval, un

Gardel, un Vestris, ou par quelque autre grand maitre. (Ib. 8, 1).

It was first and foremost the realm of literature from which dance had to be distinguished. In the same years, the physicist and psychologist Otto Fechner, claiming that dance had first place among the arts (also in a historical perspective), pointed out that, in his times, nobody could yet find a link between dance and literature. Not only because, as Fechner said, dance uses two parallel feet, whereas poetry alternates between the short one and the long one, but mostly because literature had lost its artistic inspiration and dived into the market. Generally, the need to fix rigidly definite patterns for technique corresponded to a search for an autonomy of dance itself. Before Blasis's treatise, the most important dance theoretician, Jean-George Noverre, in his *Lettres sur la Danse et sur les Ballets* (1760), had expressed his claim for a close interdependence between ballet and opera as a means to reach expressiveness. Yet, according to Blasis, dance had to tend to a kind of technical perfection which was the only way to express it as an art, "un art si aimable, si gracieux, si séduisant" (ib. 11). In order to gain that artistic value, incomprehensible to the "mauvais goût" (ib.) of a wide public, dance, through the action of its instrument, the dancer, should follow strictly determined rules, based on the imitation of figurative arts.

Un danseur qui ne sait point se dessiner, et qui, par conséquent manque de cette grace qui séduit, qui charme, ne sera point regardé comme un artiste, et ne pourra jamais intéresser, ni plaire. (Ib. 17).

For this reason Blasis explained the different positions and movements with the help of geometrical lines, of drawings, of similitudes with painting and sculpture. Precision, harmony and balance were the unavoidable starting points to create movements mostly of legs and arms. And these movements could be considered perfect only if in each moment the dancer had a position worth painting, if the movement could be stopped and fragmented in a juxtaposition of plastic poses. Moreover, some positions, such as "arabesque" and "attitude" were directly drawn from works of painting and sculpture.

And if dance tried to distinguish itself from literature, literature, on its part, showed no great interest toward dance. On the one hand the romantic ballet regarded literature only as a device to produce basic narrative patterns, on the other it only occasionally attracted the interest of writers. The only significant exception was Gautier, who contributed to one of the most representative ballets of that time, *Giselle*.

Until the birth of modern dance, it was only ballet that defined what constituted dance as an art form for European culture. Isadora Duncan was the most famous and representative among the artists who created a new kind of free dance, giving rise to a real cultural turnabout. She gave a fundamental philosophical base to her dance, praising the liberating function of it as an art and the spontaneity of movement. She refused to dance on tiptoe to recover the contact with the ground and nature dance represented in ancient Greece. Yet dance for her was not only an art, but mostly a real philosophy of life. As Koritz writes, "Duncan's insistence on the authenticity of her dancing attempted to close the gap between her 'self' and her performance" (Koritz 1995: 49) also trying to dissociate "the female body from sexuality" (ib. 51). All this corresponded to the need to affirm herself as a real creator (see also her central use of metaphors of motherhood to represent the creation of dance and her active proselytism to convince women to dance, to free their body) and not simply an instrument of performance.

On the grounds of these preliminary statements, I will here attempt to analyse three works (Paul Valéry's *L'Ame et la Danse*, Gabriele D'Annunzio's *Il fuoco* and T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*) of different genres (respectively a platonic dialogue, a novel and a collection of poems), where dance seems to be the hinge of literary creation, albeit with differing degrees of explicitness.

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Paul Valéry, although he never expressed his views about the ballets he saw (he certainly saw Duncan's and Fuller's performances and was present at the première of *Le Sacre du Printemps* in 1913) devoted an entire work to explaining his conception of dance. His



choice to express himself in the form of a Socratic dialogue was not only due to the need to present the intertwining and the contraposition of different philosophies of art, but also to his aspiration to catch the absolute, platonic idea of dance, without any declared connection to concrete contemporary enactments. *L'Ame et la Danse* is the epitome of Valéry's meditations about dance. In 1936 he would repropose basically the same ideas in *Philosophie de la danse*, but in the mean time, in 1931 and 1934, he was also involved in staging two *opera-ballets*, *Amphion* and *Sémiramis*, whose results, however he was not satisfied with. (Sasportes 1989). Valéry's considerations were worked out, on the grounds of Mallarmé's ideas about dance, in the ambience where the success of the Ballets Russes had managed to break the artistic isolation of dance, although starting from different premises than those of modern dance artists. The Russians had arrived in Paris in 1909 and proposed a performance where diverse elements, from different cultural sources (from Wagnerism to sensationalism which aroused popular taste), harmonized with a dance form bounded together by a larger narrative unity. The success of the Russian Ballets was largely due to giving greater scope to attractive aspects of music and scenography, to an ability to popularize ballets of fantastic or exotic elements.

Yet Djagilev's decorative conception of theatrical performances appears to be the opposite of Mallarmé's philosophy of dance. His first model could be identified in Loie Fuller, whose body was usually hidden behind disguises and a particular use of light effects during the performances. She used flowing materials and coloured lights to incarnate natural elements and beings, such as fire, water, flowers, butterflies. Thus the presence of the human body of the dancer seemed to disappear; in the same way symbolist poetry tended to efface the personality of the poet to create a pure work of art through symbols, to gain an absolute form of art, deprived of any other accessory than the human body. According to Mallarmé, the dancer is not a woman who dances, but an abstract metaphor that can suggest what the prolixity of words is unable to express so vividly; the sight of her could lead to the abstraction of a philosophical principle because her movements are nothing but an unreal concretisation of existence. As Josè Sas-

portes has pointed out, Mallarmé's notes on dance become abstract, increasingly focusing more on writing than on dance, making only a sign, a token of the dancer's moving body.

Valéry appears to propose himself as the Plato who writes down Socrates'/Mallarmé's oral philosophy, thus recovering in all its significance an ancient literary form. In the dialogue *L'Ame et la Danse* three characters talk to each other: Socrates, Erissimachus and Phaedrus. After a banquet they start to meditate on the nourishment of the human body and human soul while contemplating a group of dancers. The concern posed by the opening remark of the dialogue is the dichotomy between body and soul. Life itself, says Socrates, is a woman who dances, she can reach the borders of infinity but must return to her material femininity. A swarm of dancers seems to appear as if born from Socrates' words, as if words could generate dance. And these dancers are at once recognized as souls, creatures with as many names as the elements they can embody. Through the movements of their legs and arms they can become woods or temples, flowers or stars. Of course this does not depend upon the reality of their bodies, whose material vulnerability is recalled by Erissimachus, the physician, but upon the way the three men regard them. Dance is here, as traditionally in 19<sup>th</sup>-century European ballet, an activity carried out exclusively by women. But, notwithstanding this, it seems to acquire a sense, to become true only before men's eyes. Man is presumed to be the unavoidable spectator of the performance. In 19th century European ballet women were performing instruments in the hands of male choreographers. Only the rise of modern dance, performed by women who by dancing affirmed a stance toward the consciousness of the movements of their own bodies, fostered the independence of female dancers from male choreographers' dictates. From such a perspective, the point of view presented in *L'Ame et la Danse* is opposite both to that of the Russian Ballets, which were mostly a male-dominated art (not only with male choreographers, musicians, painters, poets, but also with the introduction of male dancers), and, of course, to the claims of modern dance. This becomes clearer in the dialogue thanks to the apparition of the main dancer, Athikté, the Untouchable, who stands out among the swarm of the others. The three start describing each of



her movements that actually seem to exist only in their words. She is defined as a little bird, something which has no body, yet is priceless. Thus the main point of the dialogue is not simply the search for the essence of dance, but more specifically the progressive clarification (through Socratic maieuthics) that dance finds its own reality only in words, dance is only what the three men see and describe verbally. Erissimachus declares repeatedly that there is no other definition of dance than dance itself, Phaedrus tries to recognize the images Athikté each time creates with the movement of her body, whereas Socrates asks, in accordance with the model of his maieuthics, "what dance is". And this question leads to a distinction between the concrete materiality of a woman's body and the ideal which takes shape in it when the woman dances. Dancing, she loses her concrete attributes (in accordance with Mallarmé's concern that a dancer is not "a woman who dances"): her body is invisible, they say, if it does not realize itself in the epiphany of movement, the mechanism of her moving body makes her being nothing but a dancer and consecrates her to the totality of movement. Socrates' answer is a paradoxical mediation between the other positions. According to his words, Athikté represents nothing and yet represents everything, through the dance she becomes godlike and offers her godliness to the men's view, she offers to the eyes what one could only try to express verbally.

This last point may seem contradictory, arguing that there could be a lack of efficacy in verbal (poetic) communication. Actually, and not by chance, it comes after a sharp distinction between the woman and the dancer. The dialogue voices a concern as to what Athikté might be like in her real life, (probably an ordinary "silly woman", they say) and about her consciousness of herself as a dancer. She is not autonomous, she obeys invisible geometrical lines, a superior symmetrical order. Soulless, she remains tied to her body, a body that, viewed only through the eyes of rationality, might appear vulgar and disgusting and, for this reason, needs to avoid any stance toward expressiveness.

Here it becomes clear how the specific concerns of the recent evolution of dance are presented and re-discussed in this dialogue (from Noverre's expressiveness to Blasis geometrical technique, from the devaluation of dance as an art to modern dancers'



position toward the autonomy of their art). Yet if dance/the dancer is able to arouse the thoughts in the soul, to reveal the sense of each human act, if it/she (the French pronoun "elle" allows this significant ambiguity) is recognized as a Socrates' pupil for the help she gives men to know themselves, all this becomes possible only in the interaction of the different voices in the dialogue. Athikté's dancing body becomes "natural and mysterious, enigmatic and legitimate" as human nature only through the words that describe it, that look for its essence. Therefore, the main concern of the dialogue is not dance in itself, but the relationship between body and words, movement realized and movement described, dance and literature, reality and art. When, at the end, the dancer falls exhausted, declaring herself to be neither dead nor alive, to have been "inside the movement", she totally effaces herself as a concrete reality, giving this dialogue the function of affirming the superiority of the word which can create reality. The word itself, of course, appears to be insufficient, the energy of the body in movement, the essence of the soul, of life is also needed, but it is indispensable. And the basic ambiguity of these assumptions, the attention paid to different cultural forms to recover a strong sense of literature, lined up with the modernist rage to define the place, the role of literature when the whole of culture questions its elitist autonomy.

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One of the most evocative images of Valéry's *L'Ame et la Danse* was that of the dancer happily living inside an element quite similar to fire, which represented the constant metamorphosis of reality, the principle of the becoming in the movement. Strangely, about twenty years prior to Valéry's meditations Gabriele D'Annunzio had chosen the same element for the title of a novel where dance had a significant, only apparently marginal, role.

*Il fuoco* is the novel in which D'Annunzio outlines his principles for creating a Latin *Gesamtkunstwerk* based on the Wagnerian and Nietzschean idea of the need to give a new birth to the Greek tragedy. The first part of the novel is largely devoted to describing how the main character, Stelio Effrena, poet and musi-

cian, harangues the crowd, whose excitement reaches fever-pitch at his words. The setting is Venice: from the "palco del Doge" in San Marco square he feels the effects of seduction his words have on the mob, the anonymous monster with a thousand faces which takes life only from the discourse of the poet, behind the metaphor of sexual intercourse. All this reinforces the male connotation of the artifex, his virile power which acts on female objects. These objects are not only the audience, the indefinite mob, but mostly the instruments of art, female bodies through which he creates the work of art. According to Wagner's principles there are three female characters in this novel: Foscarina, the actress (for poetry), Donatella Arvale, the singer (for music) and Tanagra, the dancer. Stelio Effrena's attitude toward the three of them is different: he has the closest relationship with Foscarina, is highly attracted by the singer, but seems to reserve only a marginal place to the dancer. In fact Tanagra is not here a full character, as the two others, she is never autonomously described, she has no material connotations, no narrative development. Whereas Foscarina and Donatella Arvale are also mentioned with the names Effrena gives them (respectively Perdita and Arianna), the dancer has no name other than Tanagra. This authorizes us to consider her not merely a secondary figure, but a central metaphor of the whole novel. She first appears during a Wagnerian celebration, after the music and the poem.

Allora quasi a ricondurre verso il gioco delle apparenze lo spirito rapito "di là dal velo", una figura di danza si disegnò sul ritmo dell'ode morente. Entro un parallelogramma inscritto nell'arco scenico, come entro i confini di una strofe, la danzatrice silenziosa con le linee del suo corpo, redento per alcuni attimi dalle tristi leggi del peso, imitò il fuoco, l'acqua il turbine le evoluzioni delle stelle. "La Tanagra fiore di Siracusa, tutta fatta di ali come un fiore di petali!" Così egli evocava l'immagine della Siciliana, già celebre, che aveva ritrovata l'antica arte orchestica quale era al tempo in cui Frinico potè vantarsi di avere in sé tante figure di danza quante onde solleva

una notte procellosa d'inverno sul mare. (D'Annunzio 1989: 296–97)

Dance arrives when the poem, the ode, is dying, it starts on its rhythm. The dimensions of the scenic arc in which a figure dances are compared to the dimensions of a strophe. The dancer with her body, which loses all weight, can imitate fire, water, whirlwind and the movements of the stars. This recalls Duncan's claim for a return to nature also in relation to Wagner's theorisation, according to which man is the mid-point between nature and art (and this was in fact the opening assumption of *Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft*). Tanagra recalls Duncan also because she is described as she who recovered ancient Greek dance, composed of as many movements as a winter night tempest could create on the sea waves (not only the fixed positions prescribed by ballet technique). Moreover, the dancer has a privileged contact with the ground, when she takes a rest she is "congiunta alla terra madre, come la figura d'un bassorilievo appesa al piano in cui è scolpita." (313) An image which recalls both Duncan's need to touch the ground with her feet refusing the dance on tiptoe and the inspiration she took from Greek bas-reliefs. In the novel there is the figure of the poet, that of the composer, but there is no choreographer. The dancer seems to be autonomous, to move herself independently from any specific dictate of the artist, to give her contribution to the creation of the total work of art by finding inspiration in nature and in her body.

Dance can be considered a central metaphor of this novel, as it is the most female-dominated art among the three. The "artifex" needs to have instruments of nature to create and the female body is here the real human instrument. No art as dance is so deeply rooted in the reality of the human body. But the turning point in dance history, determined by the birth of modern dance, gives this metaphor a problematic connotation, underlined by the apparently marginal place it has in the novel. As I said, modern dance was the first elite cultural activity created by women, one of its first principles was the refusal to be a mere instrument of men's dictates and the need to develop its own philosophy. Duncan's claim for an a-erotic performance finds, in *Il fuoco*, a parallel in



the lack of sexual attraction the main character feels toward Tanagra, whereas he is overcome by the different kinds of desire the other two women inspire in him.

Dance is always described here as the completion of the "trinity", and any mention of it goes together with the idea of a regained unity of the three arts. Moreover, Venice, the liquid archetype of the genesis of life and art, the place where Wagner died leaving his artistic heritage, just before the meeting with the German composer seems to start to dance under Effrena's eyes. Thus D'Annunzio re-proposes the basic rhetorical construction of the novel. As *Il fuoco* is his attempt to divulge and adapt Wagner's ideas to a large public (the "mob" Effrena harangues, which is, however, the unavoidable component of the work of art), the microstructure of the novel is founded on the accumulation of symbols, metaphors, allusions which are later carefully explained, mostly through a comparison. All mentions of dance follow the same scheme, but on a broader scale. The view is constantly directed towards the town and towards its apparent movements on its natural element (the water) and this turns out to be a view of a dancing, living body. Dance, the newly redeemed art, ever swinging between devaluation and revaluation, from the spiritual to the material and from the elite to the masses, can provide the bearings for creating a work of art with these characteristics. A work which can assert its power on the large public, presenting to it elitist cultural experiences and affirming, thus, the consciousness of the role of that public.

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To conclude, I would like to point out a few aspects of another use of dance images, which can show how the evolution of dance history interacts with the memory of previous references to dance in literary texts. In *L'Ame et la Danse* Socrates affirmed that the function of dance was to free the human body from slavery to reality. In his opinion the body consists only of what "is", whereas the soul consists in what does not exist: what "was" and "is not" anymore, what "will be" and "is still not". This formulation presents significant analogies with a central point of Eliot's *Burnt Norton*, closely connected to dance as well:

[...]human kind  
 Cannot bear very much reality.  
 Time past and time future  
 What might have been and what has been  
 Point to one end, which is always present

The parabola of dance in *Four Quartets* is placed between a strong reference coming after an increasing use of images of movement in *Burnt Norton*, and the description of an ancient "daunsinge" in *East Coker*. In her work about dance and literature in Britain at the beginning of the 20th century, Koritz has shown how in Eliot's early essays and critical reviews meditation on both Russian Ballets and music hall dance provided a key to represent his ideological and aesthetical concerns about the place of the artists "in an increasingly commodified mass-culture". In later poetical elaboration dance becomes an abstraction with no link with a performing reality. An abstraction which is "at the still point of the turning world". It embodies at the same time movement and fixity, introduced by images of natural movement of all kinds and in all directions which gives life: the dance "along" the artery, the "circulation" of the "lymph", the "drift" of stars, the "ascension" to summer, the movement "above" a moving tree. The multidirectional nature of these movements "neither from nor towards, neither arrest nor movement, neither ascent nor decline" seems to be the negation of all movement and to require the search for a "still point" where time and space can be reconnected, where "there would be no dance and there is only the dance". There is no performer for such a dance, no spectator who looks at it, though this annihilation of the performing act goes together with an ambiguous reference to the body. Which is at the same time, according to a central concern of Western dance history, "neither flesh, nor fleshless". Moreover, there is no gender connotation in this dance. Also when later a dancing scene appears with an apparently realistic description, the dancers are two ("two and two, necessary conjunction"), a man and a woman who dance around the bonfire. They signify nothing else but their association in coupling, they are not performing for someone else. The second person the poet calls to see the scene is allowed to assist almost

secretly, on the condition he does not come "too close to them". Their dance has nothing in common with the sophisticated technique of a theatrical performance:

In daunsinge, signifying matrimonie —  
A dignified and commodius sacrament.  
Two and two, necessarye coniunction,  
Holding eche other by the end or the arm  
Whiche betokeneth concorde. Round and round the fire  
Leaping through the flames or joined in circles,  
Rustically solemn or in rustic laughter  
Lifting heavy feet in clumsy shoes

As Helen Gardner recalls, Eliot himself declared that he was inspired for this dance scene by the legend of Germelshausen; yet the use of archaic language and the terms of the description are drawn from *Boke named the Governour* in which Eliot's ancestor, Sir Thomas Elyot, had praised dance as a symbol of marriage (Gardner 1949: 165). This interest toward the archaic, the primitive finds a correspondence, in the realm of dance history, in Curt Sachs's *Eine Weltgeschichte des Tanzes* (1933), where the author proposed an anthropological perspective. Dance history is described by Sachs in all its evolution all around the world, from primitive to contemporary forms, not necessarily reduced to theatrical performances. In the essay "The Ballet", recalled by Koritz (1995: 147), Eliot had written that the study of dance should begin from "a close study of dancing among primitive peoples" where, of course, it was not merely a performing activity, but mostly a ritual act. That was also a way to take into consideration a kind of chronological exoticism inside the tradition against the increasingly important reference to the dance of different cultures.

I propose to read this effacement of the role of the performer, this effort to gain an absolute abstraction of metaphors of dance by changing the references to real enactments of it as an attempt to reaffirm the autonomy of poetry. An attempt which comes after years of modernist meditation about the interaction between the poet and his readers, about the function and the nature of these readers often suggested by the whole of the new perspectives the



evolution of dance opened to European culture in its relation with the rest of the world.

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The ESTONIAN LITERARY MAGAZINE, a collaboration of the Estonian Institute and the Estonian Writers' Union, is a twice-yearly publication in the English language, founded in 1995. Its aim is to introduce the past and present of Estonian literature. It publishes regular overviews of new literary works in Estonia.

The ELM is distributed on as many cultural events as possible, on book fairs, and it is sent to all Estonian embassies abroad. The ELM is also available in Internet:  
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## interlitteraria

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